Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – June 17, 2025

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – June 11, 2025

Moved by Councillor

That Rule 10(3) of The Procedure By-law No. 50/2007 be suspended in order that the following item, which was received less than four business days preceding the committee meeting, be considered by Committee.

Item No. 1 Unsafe Conditions Response Team Pilot Project

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 11, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to Council:

1. That three new temporary full-time equivalent (FTE) positions be approved for Planning, Property and Development Department to staff the Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT) from July 1 to December 31, 2025, at an estimated cost of $130,482 to be funded from within the Department's 2025 Council-approved operating budget.

2. That the operating budget requirement of $267,001 in 2026, $272,143 in 2027 and $278,755 in 2028 and $284,330 in 2029, to continue the UCRT on a permanent basis, be referred to the 2026 budget update process.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – June 11, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 11, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 16, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and granted an extension of time of 30 days to report back with a six-month initial progress report on the Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT) pilot project.

STANDING COMMITTEE DECISION:

On December 2, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, as amended, which included the following:

2. That the Public Service be directed to report back in April 2025 with a six-month initial progress report on the Unsafe Conditions Response Team pilot project.

David Grant submitted a communicated in opposition to the matter.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 3, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation, and granted an extension of time of 60 days for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

On May 9, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development passed the following motion:

WHEREAS there is a noted increase in properties across Winnipeg where unsafe conditions are present, stemming from fires, improper maintenance, or neglect;

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – June 11, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

AND WHEREAS there are gaps in the Winnipeg Building Bylaw 4555/87 on what constitutes an unsafe condition;

AND WHEREAS the penalties for failing to address or remediate unsafe conditions are inadequate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Public Service be directed to report back in 120 days with options to enhance the Winnipeg Building Bylaw 4555/87 pertaining to unsafe conditions, and enhancing the enforcement options for violations pertaining to unsafe conditions.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT) – Pilot Project Progress Report

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
R. Klassen	H. Borys	T. Graham	M. Dryburgh, Acting Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning, Property and Development Department's (PPD) Enforcement Services Unit (ESU) created a pilot project in November 2024 called Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT). The goals of the UCRT are to respond quickly to properties affected by fire, accidents or neglect, and engage the property owner(s) to remediate any unsafe conditions related to built structures (houses, garages, decks, commercial buildings, etc.).

During the pilot project, UCRT:

- Responds to properties referred to it by various channels, including the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS), the residential or commercial Inspections Branches, and from complaints sent in through 311.
- Manages the safety fencing program at unsafe properties.
- Took over all existing files of properties with existing "rubble piles," partial demolitions, or other unsafe conditions.

During the pilot project reporting period, UCRT:

- Installed information awareness signs on sites where security fencing is erected.
- Participated in field training with Building Inspectors.
- Conducted more than 300 inspections at new fire-affected/unsafe properties.
- Conducted 131 site visits to existing unsafe conditions files.
- Conducted 46 follow up inspections to address safety fencing issues.
- Added 13 previously un-assigned properties to the UCRT task list for follow up.
- Attended to four vacant building properties to remove boarding to allow Inspectors or Manitoba Hydro access.
- Issued 20 Fire Damage Reports/ By-law Violation Notices to property owners.
- Issued 9 Orders to property owners to Remediate Unsafe Conditions.
- Managed the referrals of 79 properties from PPD ESU to Municipal Accommodations (MA) for remediation where the owner has failed to comply with an Order.

- 12 properties have been returned to the owner to complete the remediation (at their request) and are in progress.

PPD has also reviewed and made improvements to allow demolition permits to be issued with fewer delays.

The PPD ESU is currently comprised of both permanent and temporary staff (FTEs), including resources which have been redirected from other tasks to support the pilot project. The continuation of the UCRT is currently subject to competing departmental priorities. If the existing resources are required elsewhere, the UCRT program would be ended.

The Public Service recommends that three new temporary FTEs be approved for 2025, to be funded from within PPD's existing budget. Further, the Public Service recommends that the funding to continue the UCRT on a permanent basis be referred to the 2026 multi-year budget update process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That three new temporary full-time equivalent (FTE) positions be approved for Planning, Property and Development Department to staff the Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT) from July 1 to December 31, 2025, at an estimated cost of $130,482 to be funded from within the Department's 2025 Council-approved operating budget.

2. That the operating budget requirement of $267,001 in 2026, $272,143 in 2027 and $278,755 in 2028 and $284,330 in 2029, to continue the UCRT on a permanent basis, be referred to the 2026 budget update process.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On December 2, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development directed the Public Service to report back with a six-month initial progress report on the Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT) pilot project.

Subsequent extensions of time to report back have been granted by the Standing Committee.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff currently assigned to the project are in temporary positions or are assisting the pilot project on top of their regular duties, which makes for a level of uncertainty as to how long the resources will be available.

The Department is conscious of the legal obligations to meet shorter provincially-legislated timelines for inspections that took effect in March 2025, and these obligations may impact where resources are required.

If these positions are not funded as permanent FTEs, continuation of the UCRT would be subject to departmental priorities. If the existing resources are required elsewhere or are eliminated through the budget process, the UCRT pilot project would be stood down.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Background

There has been a marked increase in unsafe and derelict properties across the City of Winnipeg. These properties are in states of disrepair, neglect, or unsafe conditions, which are hazards to the immediate community and to first responders, and should be addressed by property owners in a timely manner.

An overview of the Planning, Property and Development (PPD) Enforcement Services Unit (ESU) Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT), including activities, findings, and actions for the initial six months the pilot has been running is outlined in this report. The UCRT is tasked with ensuring that all unsafe conditions reported to the Department are promptly addressed.

By dedicating appropriate resources that are able to respond within two business days of the situation being reported, the UCRT pilot project is demonstrating faster remediation and fewer unsafe properties. This will enhance the safety of the property, the immediate neighbourhood and the City overall.

PPD ESU currently is comprised of:

- Four permanent Enforcement Services Officers (ESOs),
- Two temporary ESOs,
- Two permanent Clerk Bs
- Two temporary Clerk As

Discussion

Prior to the start of pilot project, the Department undertook a review of the process in place to address unsafe conditions at properties.

The process saw complaints assigned on a “first in-next out” basis to the Inspections Branch, who would prioritize possible unsafe situations and attend within service level requirements (i.e.: less than 48 hours). However, the follow up to the initial inspection and connecting with the property owner could, in some cases, take weeks or months. The Public Service identified this as a gap and implemented steps to close it. The UCRT pilot project now receives these complaints directly and begins engagement within two business days.

The UCRT pilot project focuses on reducing the length of time a property remains in a state of disrepair or unsafe conditions. This is being achieved through improvements to the following:

- The referral process, including clarifying 311 scripting on what constitutes unsafe conditions, and referrals from partners such as Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) or other departments.
- Working with property owners to achieve compliance with their remediation.
- The compliance time frame, resulting in faster remediation.

- Having dedicated staff to deal with complaints or referrals within one to two business days.
- City-led remediation of properties where owners are unresponsive to City-issued Orders.

The UCRT focuses on addressing the remediation of:

- Post-fire rubble remains (existing and new).
- Structures on properties that are found to be deteriorating that create unsafe conditions.
- Structures on properties that were built without permits (where permits are required).

The Department will enhance the process to accept referrals of unsafe conditions from other City Departments. Referrals that are submitted by the public via 311 already have an established process to be handled correctly.

Identification and referral of unsafe conditions to UCRT

UCRT attends to:

- All new fires reported through the City of Winnipeg newsroom, as well as any new fires directly referred from WFPS with reported estimated damages in excess of $50,000.00.
- Properties referred from the residential or commercial inspections branches.
- Properties where complaints are sent in through 311 for unsafe conditions.

UCRT also manages the safety fencing of unsafe properties, where owners either refuse or fail to, through a contractor.

The UCRT absorbed all known files of properties with existing rubble piles, partial demolitions, or other unsafe conditions.

Response Time and Effectiveness

The UCRT acted swiftly in response to the identified unsafe conditions.

As mentioned, the existing process to respond to unsafe conditions was to assign it to the next available Inspector in that particular district, on a “first in-next out” basis. Where unsafe conditions were reported, they were assigned as a priority for response within 24-48 hours, which was occurring. However, the follow-up to the initial inspection and connecting with the property owner could take weeks or months.

UCRT committed to responding to these fire-affected or unsafe properties and to contact the property owner(s) within two business days. This target is currently being met, as UCRT is responding within one business day to the affected property.

In addition, UCRT is engaging follow up with the property owner within seven days, providing written direction through the issuance of By-law Violation Notices. If required, the UCRT is issuing Compliance Orders with 30-day compliance time frames and, if compliance is not achieved, the matter is referred to Municipal Accommodations (MA) for remediation. If the remediation is completed by MA, then the costs incurred by the City are added to the property tax bill.

During the pilot project, UCRT:

- Created signs that are placed on all sites where security fencing is erected. These signs indicate how to report concerns via 311.
- Participated in field training with Building Inspectors at nine sites.
- Conducted more than 300 inspections at fire affected / unsafe conditions properties.
- Added 13 properties, not previously assigned to ESU, to the UCRT task list to follow up with owner(s).
- Conducted 131 site visits to existing unsafe conditions files.
- Conducted 46 follow up inspections to address safety fencing issues (i.e.: breaches, missing panels, etc.).
- Attended to four vacant building properties to remove boarding to allow Inspectors or Manitoba Hydro access.
- Issued 20 Fire Damage Reports/ Bylaw Violation Notices to property owners.
- Issued nine Orders to property owners to Remediate Unsafe Conditions.
- Managed the referrals of properties from PPD ESU to MA for remediation where the owner has failed to comply with an Order.

In 2024/25, PPD ESU referred 79 files to MA for remediation. Of these, MA has completed remediation on 37, and 30 are in progress.

Two properties have the remediation paused by MA and are being held in abeyance while the matters are before the courts.

Twelve properties have been returned to the owner to complete the remediation (at their request) and are in progress.

Lastly, PPD has made process improvements on the permitting side to allow demolition permits to be issued with fewer delays.

<u>Areas of Improvement</u>

A review of the first six months identified several area where improvements have been made, including:

- Allowing a demolition permit to be issued without a requirement to have a plan for re-build. The approval of this criterion previously required Standing Policy Committee (SPC) approval. It now can be approved by the area planner, resulting in a quicker time to decision, as the applicant does not need to apply to be heard at SPC.
- Improved communications with Manitoba Hydro, where the utility will accept expedited request for service removal directly from ESU.
- Improved communications with MA regarding City-led demolition/remediation to advise when compliance dates on properties with Orders will expire.
- An approved demolition contractors list is available on-line to help guide property owners to choose an approved and knowledgeable contractor to perform the demolition work, especially where asbestos is a concern.
- Permits Online has undergone a series of improvements to allow all permit applications to be done fully online.

- Improved communications with Assessment and Taxation to have permits released for City-led demolitions when there are taxes owing.

Recommendations for Improvement

While the UCRT has demonstrated effective actions in a short time period, the following identified improvements will further enhance the Public Service's response:

1. **Approve funding to fully staff and support UCRT (Recommendations 1 and 2)**

    - Adding FTEs for three new staff members will ensure enhanced responses to problem properties can continue into the future.

    - If these positions are not funded as permanent FTEs, continuation of the UCRT would be subject to departmental priorities. If the existing resources are required elsewhere or are eliminated through the budget process, the UCRT pilot project would be stood down.

2. **Training**:

    - Cross train additional staff to remove gaps in response times. Currently there is 1.0 ESO assigned, and 0.5 Clerk assigned. As a result, there is no coverage if staff is away sick or on approved leave.

    - Continue cross training with Building Inspectors to improve knowledge of Code Compliance and requirements.

3. **Clear Communication:**

    - Enhance 311 scripting to be able to obtain the best information available when complaints are submitted.

    - Continue to improve inter-departmental referral processes.

    - Constantly review and revise UCRT mandate and responses.

    - Track UCRT data to help support continued improvement.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: April 17, 2025

Project Name:

Unsafe Conditions Response Team (UCRT)- Pilot Project Progress Report

First Year of Program **2025**

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - Internal	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Debt - External	-	-	-	-	-
Grants (Enter Description Here)	-	-	-	-	-
Reserves, Equity, Surplus	-	-	-	-	-
Other - Enter Description Here	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 130,482	$ 267,001	$ 272,413	$ 278,755	$ 284,330
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 130,482	$ 267,001	$ 272,413	$ 278,755	$ 284,330
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	130,482	-	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ -	$ 267,001	$ 272,413	$ 278,755	$ 284,330

Additional Comments: Direct costs in 2025 consist of estimated salaries and benefits for three (3) temporary FTE from July 1 to December 31, 2025 to staff the Unsafe Conditions Response Tearm (UCRT). The $130,482 will be funded from within the Planning, Property and Development Department 2025 Council-approved operating budget.

Direct costs in 2026 to 2029 consist of annualized operating budget requirement to continue the UCRT on a permanent basis with estimated salaries and benefits increasing annually under the terms of the CUPE collective agreement. Funding requirements for 2026 to 2029 are requested to be referred to the 2026-2029 budget process.

Beth Anema on behalf of Mike McGinn on April 17, 2025

Mike McGinn, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

Legal Services (as to legal issues)

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Good Health and Well-Being

4.8 – Building Safety:
Enforce compliance with building codes and property maintenance standards, to ensure housing quality, safe building occupancy, and extended building lifecycles.

Leadership and Good Governance

1.4 – Integrated Knowledge and Resources
Coordinate inter-departmental systems, projects and resources, making the best use of internal and external expertise to better understand service needs, find the most appropriate solutions, optimize resources, and maximize community outcomes

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

N/A

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

N/A

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Planning, Property & Development
Division: Development & Inspections- Enforcement Services Unit
Prepared by: K. Happychuk
Date: April 17, 2025
File No: N/A

Attachments: N/A