Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – February 5, 2026

REPORTS

Item No. 5 Requirements for Demolition Permits

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and recommended to Council:

1. That a By-law to amend the Development Procedures By-law No. 104/2020 (draft amending by-law is attached as Appendix A to this report) be approved.

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

Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – February 5, 2026

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Wyatt,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in and forwarded to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Carried

K. Happychuk, Chief of Enforcement and Inspections, Planning, Property and Development Department, provided a verbal report on the matter.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On December 4, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development laid over consideration of the matter for up to 90 days, and directed the Winnipeg Public Service to include the following additional items in its verbal report:

1. Changes to implement a more streamlined demolition process.

2. Removing any requirement for elevation and/or floor plans when applying for a demolition variance.

3. Requirements for the Public Service to render a decision on a demolition variance application within 10 business days.

4. Changes to require that any decision with respect to a demolition variance application be made with the approval of the relevant Ward Councillor.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On November 27, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and adopted the following:

1. That the Public Service, for purpose of reducing red tape and enhancing public safety, report back to the Standing Committee in 90 days on the following:

    A. ending the practice of requiring a Development and/or Building Permit

    B. ending the practice of requiring the issuance of a Demolition Variance

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

C. ending the practice of requiring Water Blockage Deposit and Sewer Blockage Deposits

2. That the Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Committee in 90 days on requirements to maintain the vacant lot, once fully remediated and relandscaped, to City of Winnipeg By-law Standards.

3. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide a verbal report to the Standing Committee for consideration at its December 4, 2025, meeting, on the following:

A. All known derelict/burnt out buildings, and their addresses

B. Length of time the said buildings have been derelict/burnt out

C. photographs of each property to ensure properties are secure with fencing to not allow access

D. A list of which properties have filed for Demolition permits

E. a breakdown of each property and the length of time/days it take for the Public Service to issue the Demolition Permit, following application made.

F. A list of the properties now being subject to Demolition by the City of Winnipeg

G. a list of all vacant properties that are now being monitored to ensure grass is cut and maintained, as fully landscaped and remediated

H. all other steps the Public Service is actively taking to end the derelict and burnt out building crisis now under way in our city

I. a process and steps to immediately speed up the demolition of buildings that are known or possibly known to have asbestos

J. a target date that will have our City derelict and burnt-out building free

K. to provide to Council, via the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, a one-time request on what resources, in terms of staffing and financial funding, is required, in terms of the re-assignment of existing resources, or new resources, to accomplish the above said items.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

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

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Streamlining Demolition Practices

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

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
J. Veitch	H. Borys	N/A	J. Dunford

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 27, 2025, Council directed the Public Service to report back on how to demolish unsafe buildings faster and enhance public safety by no longer requiring:

- A development permit and/or a building permit for demolitions.
- A demolition variance.
- A water blockage deposit and a sewer blockage deposit.

Council also directed the Public Service to report back on requirements to maintain vacant lots to City of Winnipeg By-law standards.

Summary of Proposed Changes

- The Public Service does not recommend removing the requirement for demolition permits. Demolition permits help make sure demolitions are done safely.
- The Public Service recommends changing the Development Procedures By-law to remove the need for a “demolition variance.” Right now, a demolition variance is needed when someone wants to tear down a home outside Downtown and has no plans to rebuild right away.
- The Public Service does not recommend ending water or sewer blockage deposits. Water and sewer blockage deposits help prevent erosion and protect nearby properties and City infrastructure.
- The report includes updates on the requirements applied to vacant lots to ensure they are maintained to City of Winnipeg By-law standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a By-law to amend the Development Procedures By-law No. 104/2020 (draft amending by-law is attached as Appendix A to this report) be approved.

2. 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

At its November 27, 2025, meeting, Council adopted the following motion:

1. That the Public Service, for purpose of reducing red tape and enhancing public safety, report back to the Standing Committee in 90 days on the following:

   A. ending the practice of requiring a Development and/or Building Permit.

   B. ending the practice of requiring the issuance of a Demolition Variance.

   C. ending the practice of requiring Water Blockage Deposit and Sewer Blockage Deposits.

2. That the Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Committee in 90 days on requirements to maintain the vacant lot, once fully remediated and relandscaped, to City of Winnipeg By-law Standards.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

If the recommendations of this report are concurred in, the Development Procedures By-law will be amended as per the attached by-law (Appendix A). The changes to the Development Procedures By-law will:

1. Remove the requirement for approved construction plans prior to the issuance of a demolition permit for a residential structure.

2. Maintain the requirement that an applicant must submit a demolition permit when seeking to demolish a residential structure.

3. Maintain the requirement for an applicant to provide a Water Blockage Deposit and Sewer Blockage Deposit when applying for a demolition permit.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Demolition Process

Development Permits and Building Permits

The City of Winnipeg uses two main types of permits for land use and construction: "development permits" and "building permits."

"Development permits" deal with how land can be used. They make sure a proposal follows the Winnipeg Zoning By-law and any other City requirements. Sometimes, before a development permit can be issued, an applicant may need extra approvals like a "Rezoning" or a "Variance." However, there are no sub-types of development permits, there is just one kind.

"Building permits" deal with how something will be built or demolished. They make sure construction meets the Manitoba Building Code and other rules that keep people safe. Unlike development permits, building permits refer to a category of permits rather than one specific permit. Electrical work, new construction, and demolition permits are all issued under the category of building permits.

Both development permits and building permits are important. Together, they make sure that land is used in the right way, that buildings are constructed or demolished safely, that all projects follow the City's By-laws and policies, and that the City's financial interests are protected.

Demolition Permits

Demolition permits are classified as a type of building permit. Demolition permits are important because they ensure a demolition is done safely and responsibly. A demolition permit confirms that a licensed contractor will do the work, that the property owner agrees to the demolition, and that the building will be taken down in a safe way. This is especially important because many buildings are close to other structures, may contain asbestos, or still have active utility connections that must be handled properly. A building demolition is considered a construction site.

Demolitions are exempt from development permits and thus do not need a development permit on their own. Only a demolition permit is required. However, when someone wants to remove a residential building and does not have construction plans in hand to redevelop the site, they must apply for what is often called a "demolition variance." A demolition variance is the process that allows a residential building to be demolished without redevelopment plans, meaning no new structure is proposed to replace the old one. Because construction plans are required for the demolition of a residential structure unless a demolition variance is approved, a development permit is indirectly required before the demolition permit can be issued.

This process exists to balance two goals that are described in greater detail under the "Demolition Variances" section of this report: removing unsafe or abandoned buildings quickly, while also preventing the demolition of homes when there are no construction plans to rebuild or improve the site.

Water Blockage and Sewer Blockage Deposits

When a building is demolished, all associated water and private sewer service pipes must be properly abandoned in accordance with the City of Winnipeg's Standard Construction Specifications. Failure to do so can pose significant risk to City infrastructure and surrounding properties.

This work is subject to deposits as identified in the Sewer By-law 106/2018 and the Water By-law 107/2015 which are under the jurisdiction of the Water and Waste Department (WWD).

Deposits act as a form of security to ensure the work is completed and are returned to the Permit Applicant once the work has been inspected by WWD and confirmed to have been completed correctly. Accordingly, should Council wish to pursue changes to this deposit system, then a separate motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment, who oversees WWD, is required.

Site Maintenance

When a building is demolished, the Winnipeg Building By-law requires the owner or their contractor to leave the site in a safe, level, and sanitary condition that fits the character of the surrounding area. In practice, this means all debris must be removed, any hazards must be addressed, and the lot must be properly filled and graded if no redevelopment plans have been submitted. These steps help prevent safety issues, such as open pits, unstable ground, unsightly sites or water pooling on the site. Demolition standards are regulated through the requirement that all demolition contractors be licensed with the City, and through the requirement for inspections prior to the permit being closed.

The Neighbourhood Livability By-law builds on the Winnipeg Building By-law by adding ongoing maintenance requirements for vacant lots. It requires property owners to control noxious weeds, keep plants and vegetation trimmed so they do not become unsightly, and maintain turf at a maximum height of 15 cm (6 inches). It is primarily enforced on a complaint-basis, with enforcement typically dispatched after the City receives a complaint about a property. Together, the two By-laws help vacant lots created through demolition remain safe, clean, level, and appropriately maintained until redevelopment occurs.

Neither the Winnipeg Building By-law nor the Neighbourhood Livability By-law currently require a lot made vacant by demolition to be sodded or seeded. Presently, this requirement is applied as a condition of approval through the demolition variance. If demolition variances are removed, this condition can no longer be applied, thus creating a gap that allows some properties to remain unsodded or unseeded. To address this, the Public Service is exploring an amendment to the Winnipeg Building By-law that would require residential properties to be sodded or seeded if no plans of redevelopment are submitted within a to-be-determined time frame. The Public Service will report back prior to Q3 of 2026 on the required changes to ensure vacant lots due to demolition are sodded or seeded.

Demolition “Variances”

Rationale

Demolition variances are required when a residential structure is proposed to be demolished and there are no construction plans submitted to redevelop the site. Demolition variances are not required when there is an order from the City requiring the structure to be demolished or a structural engineer’s report determining the structure is unsafe.

The purpose of demolition variances is to ensure there are clear plans for future redevelopment that help prevent long-term vacancies and underused lots. When a site is demolished without a corresponding construction plan, it can remain empty for extended periods, leading to issues

such as overgrown vegetation, nuisance activities, and littering. Requiring a redevelopment plan helps ensure the land is returned to active use in a timely and orderly manner.

A redevelopment plan is also important to maintain housing supply and to support broader planning objectives. Demolishing a dwelling without replacing it can create a net loss of housing and undermine neighbourhood density. For example, in situations where a home is removed without redevelopment, vacant lots often attract litter, illegal surface parking, and ongoing complaints from nearby residents. Ensuring redevelopment is planned and reviewed alongside demolition helps avoid these impacts and supports stable, predictable change in neighbourhoods.
At present, when a demolition variance is received, the Public Service reviews the application against three criteria contained in the Development Procedures By-law:

(a) would not have an undue detrimental impact on the maintenance and use of adjacent properties;
(b) would not create a visual detriment to adjoining properties; and
(c) would not increase pressure to approve a new land use that is not supported by policies in Plan Winnipeg or any secondary plan that applies to the subject site.

If an application does not meet these criteria, the Public Service will not approve the demolition variance application. By removing the requirement for demolition variances, these criteria will no longer be applied. It is possible that by removing the requirement for demolition variances, the City will experience a larger number of vacant residential lots.

Streamlining

Before 2023, demolition variances were decided by Community Committees. This process could be time consuming. Each application had to be reviewed by the Public Service, a report with a recommendation had to be written, and the item then had to be scheduled for a Community Committee meeting. If Council was prorogued and meetings were not being held, delays were even longer.

In 2023, Council changed this process by giving the Public Service the authority to approve demolition variances. This removed the need to schedule these applications for a Community Committee meeting, allowing demolition variances to be reviewed and approved more quickly.

In 2024, 12 demolition variances were processed, with only one being rejected. While avoiding vacant lots remains an important goal, the Public Service recognizes that many neighbourhoods are currently struggling with a high number of vacant and derelict buildings, which continue to place significant pressure on neighbours living near these structures and on the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service. Removing the requirement to submit redevelopment plans for a replacement structure would also remove the need for demolition variances. This change would allow demolition permits to be issued more quickly when there is no immediate plan to redevelop the property.

The Development and Inspections Division currently aims to issue decisions on complete demolition permit applications within 10 days. Eliminating the need for a demolition variance will help ensure applications can consistently be processed within this timeline. It will also reduce staff workload, as demolition variance applications will no longer need to be reviewed. Notably, the vast majority of demolition variances are already approved.

Summary of Proposed Changes

Ending the Practice of Requiring a Development and/or Building Permit

The Public Service does not recommend ending the requirement for a demolition permit. This is a safety issue, and enabling demolitions to proceed without a demolition permit poses significant risks. Demolitions are already exempt from development permits.

Ending the practice of requiring the issuance of a Demolition Variance

The Public Service recommends an amendment to the Development Procedures By-law that will allow demolitions of residential structures without construction plans submitted to redevelop the site to be processed without the need for a demolition variance. In practice, this will allow demolitions to proceed directly to a demolition permit.

Ending the Practice of Requiring Water and Sewer Blockage Deposits

The Public Service does not recommend ending the practice for a demolition Permit Applicant to provide a Water and / or Sewer Blockage Deposit. Should Council wish to pursue changes to this deposit system, a separate motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment is required.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: January 12, 2026

Project Name:

Streamlining Demolition Practices

COMMENTS:

There are no material financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Mike McGinn Jan. 12, 2026
Mike McGinn, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with: n/a

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

City Building
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

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and its Goals and Objectives, and it was determined that the PRS is not applicable to this specific report.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Planning, Property and Development
Division: Urban Planning and Design
Prepared by: Dylan Chyz-Lund
Date: January 12, 2026

Attachment:

Appendix A: Amending By-law – DRAFT Development Procedures By-law No. 104/2020