

## Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Subject: CBO-2025-03 - Property Standards -Vacant Storefront

Report from: Emily Dance, Chief Administrative Officer , Jennifer Isber-Legge,  
Economic Development & Communications Coordinator.

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### **Recommendation**

Be It Resolved that Council hereby approves Report CBO-2025-03 - Property Standards -Vacant Storefront;

AND supports a Vacant Storefront Campaign led by Economic Development, to improve downtown areas to encourage rentals;

AND FURTHER approves the Special Project targeting property standards in the downtown core areas of Arran-Elderslie.

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### **Background**

On June 9, 2025, Council received a [staff report](#) outlining the potential implementation of a Vacant Storefront Tax as a tool to address long-term commercial vacancies and support downtown revitalization efforts.

Following review and discussion, Council endorsed the launch of a Vacant Storefront Campaign, to be led by the Economic Development Department. The campaign will focus on enhancing the appeal of downtown areas and encouraging the activation and rental of vacant commercial properties.

Additionally, Council directed staff to collaborate with Municipal By-Law Enforcement to implement a targeted enforcement initiative focused on property standards compliance within downtown cores. This project aims to enhance the overall appearance, safety, and functionality of vacant and underutilized storefronts, reinforcing broader economic development objectives.

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## **Analysis**

### **Economic Development in Downtowns**

The Municipality's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) provides an opportunity to support improvements in the designated downtown Community Improvement Plan Area (CIPA) through financial incentives. Currently, grants are available to both business and building owners to assist in revitalizing and enhancing commercial properties, offered in partnership with Bruce County's Spruce the Bruce program. In 2025, eligible applicants in Arran-Elderslie can apply for funding to cover eligible project costs, with up to \$20,000 available across the following categories:

- Façade Improvement
- Perpendicular Signage
- Awning Grants
- Fascia Signage

To supplement existing communication efforts—including social media, the website, and direct email newsletters to subscribed businesses—direct mailouts will also be distributed to all property owners within the CIPA. This approach aims to expand awareness of available grant programs and enhance outreach to eligible participants.

This summer, in collaboration with Bruce County, the Arran-Elderslie Community and Business Association, and Trinity Theatre, staff will conduct a Business Retention and Expansion survey. The initiative will involve in-person interviews aimed at gathering insights on the health and climate of our local business community. Every effort will be made to reach both business and building owners for their participation. The results will guide future grant priorities for 2026 and help us strengthen communication with the business community.

### **Special Project - [Property Standards By-Law Enforcement](#)**

The following outlines the proposed timeline, communication strategy, and estimated staff hours required for a special project focused on property standards enforcement. The initiative is recommended to commence on August 1, with an emphasis on identifying and addressing property standard violations within downtown cores.

Specifically:

- Exterior Maintenance: Storefronts must be kept in good repair, free from hazards, and maintained to prevent deterioration.
- Signage: Signs must be properly maintained, securely fastened, and free from damage.
- Cleanliness: Storefronts must be kept clean and free from litter, debris, and graffiti.

## Communication Plan (Pre-August 1)

To ensure transparency and cooperation from property owners, the Municipality will implement a proactive communication strategy prior to the enforcement blitz. This will include:

Direct Mailouts: Notices will be sent to all property owners in the CIPA of Allenford, Tara, Chesley, and Paisley.

These notices will:

- Inform owners of the upcoming enforcement initiative.
- Outline the types of infractions being targeted.
- Encourage voluntary compliance prior to inspections.
- Provide contact information for inquiries or clarification.
- Municipal Website & Social Media: A public notice will be posted on the municipal website and shared via social media channels to reach a broader audience.

Staff Availability: Municipal staff will be available to respond to questions and provide guidance to property owners ahead of the inspection period.

## Estimated Timeline and Workload

August 1 – Initial Patrols and Documentation

Activities:

- Foot patrols in Allenford, Tara, Chesley, and Paisley.
- Identification and documentation of property standard violations (photos, notes).
- Initial communication with property owners.
- Estimated Hours: ~12 hours (including travel time)

August 1–7 – Data Organization and Internal Coordination

Activities:

- Categorization of properties and infractions.
- Coordination with municipal staff to obtain property roll numbers and ownership details.
- Estimated Hours: 5–10 hours (depending on volume)

August 15 – Follow-Up and Order Issuance

Activities:

- Follow-up inspections.
- Drafting and posting of Property Standards Orders, where required.
- Estimated Hours: 5–10 hours (depending on volume)

September 5 – Compliance Review

Activities:

- Re-inspection of properties following the 21-day compliance period (as per Property Standards By-law).
- Documentation of compliance or further action required.
- Estimated Hours: 3–5 hours (depending on volume)

Summary of Estimated Hours:

Task	Estimated Hours
Initial Patrols	12 hours
Data Organization	5–10 hours
Follow-Up & Orders	5–10 hours
Compliance Review	3–5 hours
Total Estimated	25–37 hours

These estimates are intentionally on the higher end to avoid unexpected overages. Actual hours may vary depending on the number and complexity of violations encountered. A more accurate projection will be possible following the initial patrols.

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**Link to Strategic/Master Plan**

6.2 Supporting Businesses and the Local Economy

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**Financial Impacts/Source of Funding/Link to Procurement Policy**

The implementation of By-law Enforcement for property standards is estimated at 37 hours, billed at \$38 per hour, for a total of \$1,431. This amount applies specifically to this special project and is in addition to existing contractual expenditures. This amount includes non-recoverable HST and will be funded from the By-law contract account. Municipal staff time is not included in this estimate.

CIP Grants have been approved in the Economic Development 2025 budget and will be considered for 2026 based on the feedback from 2025.

The BR&E survey is being undertaken by AECBA and Trinity Theatre staff at no direct cost to the municipality other than municipal staff support time.

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Approved by: Emily Dance, Chief Administrative Officer