



To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 2/24/2026

Subject: **Property Standards and Lot Maintenance By-laws**

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Report No.: 26-005-PG

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Property Standards By-law attached as Appendix B to report 26-005-PG be presented to Council for enactment;

AND THAT Lot Maintenance By-law attached as Appendix C to report 26-005-PG be presented to Council for enactment;

AND FURTHER THAT amendments to Schedule B of the Administrative Penalty By-law 23-050, attached as Appendix D to report 26-005-PG, be presented to Council for enactment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report proposes updates to the Property Standards By-law and Lot Maintenance By-law to enhance regulatory oversight, support Council priorities, and modernize property-related regulations. Key changes to the Property Standards By-law include new rules for nuisance lighting, vacant buildings, fences, mould, barrier-free access systems, and improved protections for heritage properties, while also consolidating vital service requirements to eliminate the separate Vital Services By-law. Updates to the Lot Maintenance By-law introduce standards for accessible parking spaces, stagnant water management, and derelict trailers, along with consolidating graffiti regulations to remove the stand-alone Anti-Graffiti By-law. Together, these updates align with the first recommendation of the Municipal By-law Compliance Strategy and advance Council motions related to maintenance of heritage properties and nuisance lighting.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): Not Applicable

Strategic Action: Not Applicable

OR

Core Service

Program: By-law Enforcement

Core Service: By-law Enforcement

The recommendations in this report demonstrate how the City is improving community safety, livability, and overall quality of life. Modernizing by-laws is a key step in advancing the objectives outlined in the Municipal By-law Compliance Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

Staff are recommending the modernization of the Property Standards By-law and the Lot Maintenance By-law. On November 18, 2020, Council directed staff to prepare a by-law related to nuisance lighting. Then on January 28, 2021, Council approved Motion No. 21-014 requesting updates to the existing Property Standards By-law, including provisions specific to heritage properties. A comparative review of by-laws in neighbouring municipalities further highlights the importance of updating Cambridge's regulations.

ANALYSIS:

Property Standards

Pursuant to the Ontario Building Code Act, the City adopted the Property Standards By-law in 2004 to ensure that all buildings and properties are maintained in accordance with established minimum standards. This by-law regulates some of the more complex and challenging property-related matters. In 2004, the City also adopted the Vital Services By-law that regulates vital services in rented dwellings.

Some examples of issues currently covered under the Property Standards By-law include sewage and drainage, maintenance of buildings, interior maintenance, pest prevention, retaining walls, plumbing, heating and electrical.

Staff recommend replacing the current Property Standards By-law and Vital Services By-law with one updated Property Standards By-law. The proposed by-law combines regulations from the existing by-laws and introduces updated standards related to nuisance lighting, heritage buildings, vacant buildings, fences, mould, and barrier-free access systems.

Lot Maintenance

Pursuant to the Ontario Municipal Act, the City enacted the Lot Maintenance By-law in 2013 regulating exterior yard conditions. In 2013, the City also adopted the Anti-Graffiti By-law.

Some examples of issues currently covered under the Lot Maintenance By-law include long grass, dumping, excavations, garbage containers, composting and pest control.

Staff recommend replacing the current Lot Maintenance By-law and Anti-Graffiti By-law with one updated Lot Maintenance By-law. The proposed by-law combines regulations from the existing by-laws and introduces updated standards related to obstructing accessible parking spaces, stagnant water and derelict trailers.

Public Engagement

On September 13, 2025, By-law staff participated in two public open house events to promote awareness and gather feedback on the Property Standards and Lot Maintenance By-laws:

- Fire Open House: 150 attendees visited the by-law booth
- Newcomer Picnic: 30 individuals attended the by-law booth

Additionally, a survey was made available to the public between September 8, 2025 and November 27, 2025 which was promoted through the EngageWR platform (see Appendix A). There was a total of 542 respondents to the survey.

General Findings from Survey:

- 68.77% of respondents indicated they were moderately familiar with the Property Standards By-law.
- 55.24% of respondents indicated the regulations in the Property Standards By-law are not strong enough.
- 63.83% of respondents indicated they were moderately familiar with the Lot Maintenance By-law.
- 58.16% of respondents indicated the regulations in the Lot Maintenance By-law are not strong enough.
- Generally, respondents were “concerned” or “highly concerned” about issues.

Industry Perspective:

The chart below compares maintenance standards that are regulated under Property Standards in the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo with “yes” meaning it is currently regulated and “no” meaning it is not currently regulated.

	Heritage Buildings	Fence Maintenance	Mould	Barrier Free	Nuisance Lighting	Vacant Buildings
Cambridge	No	No	No	No	No	No
Kitchener	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Waterloo	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

The chart below compares the minimum indoor air temperature that is required under current Property Standards By-laws in the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

	Minimum Heat Requirement
Cambridge	20°C
Kitchener	21°C
Waterloo	21°C

The chart below compares exterior yard maintenance standards that are regulated in By-laws in the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo with “yes” meaning it is currently regulated and “no” meaning it is not currently regulated.

	Obstruct Accessible Parking Space	Stagnant Water	Derelict trailers
Cambridge	No	No	No
Kitchener	Yes	Yes	Yes
Waterloo	No	Yes	Yes

Staff are proposing changes to the By-laws to align with neighbouring municipalities and with recommendations from Council. Having consistent standards across the Region is helpful for the public and for staff to ensure compliance.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

Property Standards By-law 181-04

Vital Services By-law 184-04

Lot Maintenance By-law 189-13

Anti-Graffiti By-law 21-06

Administrative Penalty System Procedural By-law 23-050

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No financial impact.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Not Applicable.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Staff from By-law collaborated closely with colleagues across several departments. Notably, staff from Legal, Building, Engineering, Forestry, Fire Services, Transportation, Heritage and Planning played a key role in providing input to the updates.

During a Council workshop held on November 4, 2025, several items were raised and subsequently reviewed by staff. Based on the feedback received and further analysis, staff incorporated the following regulations into the updated by-laws: owner inspection obligations; a prohibition on water drainage onto entranceways, walkways, stairs, sidewalks, or neighbouring properties; clarification of safety guard requirements; maintenance standards for accessible parking spaces and related signage; and tenant maintenance responsibilities.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommend that Council approve the proposed Property Standards and Lot Maintenance By-laws and the proposed amendments to Schedule B of Administrative Penalty System By-law 23-050. The new by-laws are designed to operate independently while working cohesively to ensure that buildings and exterior yards are maintained in a clean, safe, and hazard-free condition.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **Yes**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

General Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 26-005 Appendix A – Survey Results
2. 26-005 Appendix B – Property Standards By-law
3. 26-005 Appendix C – Lot Maintenance By-law
4. 26-005 Appendix D – APS By-law Schedule B Amendment