



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 26, 2007
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Director of the Housing Centre
SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside Demographic Survey

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve a City contribution of \$25,000 towards a Downtown Eastside SRO and Social Housing Residents Survey, contingent on receipt of matching contributions of \$25,000 each from BC Housing and Vancouver Agreement, and further approve the disbursement of \$75,000 in consultant fees for this Survey, source of funds to be the Affordable Housing Fund.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends APPROVAL of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council approval is required to appoint consultants where the gross cost exceeds \$30,000.

The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside recommends that staff initiate a demographic analysis of Downtown Eastside residents to ensure that new social housing meets current and future needs.

PURPOSE

This report recommends funding of a demographic study of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) and social housing residents of the Downtown Eastside. The survey builds upon previous similar surveys and will provide information on the general socio-demographic and economic characteristics of these populations, their health and social service utilization and needs, the condition and cost of their housing, and their housing history and future housing intentions. A comparative analysis of SRO and social housing residents would be integral to the study.

BACKGROUND

The *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* was adopted by Council in September, 2005 after an extensive public process. The plan provides a policy framework for the work that needs to be done in the DTES to support the development of a healthy integrated community. One of the recommendations within the *Housing Plan* is a demographic analysis of residents to make the most effect use of scarce housing funds when implementing housing and other programs.

A number of studies have been done in the past to provide a demographic profile of SRO residents in the downtown core. The last study was completed in 2002. Both the *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* and the *Vancouver Agreement Hotel Analysis Project (2007)* have recommended the need for more current demographic information.

DISCUSSION

Since 1990 the Housing Centre has completed a biannual *Survey of the Low-Income Housing Stock in the Downtown Core*. This survey has tracked important changes in the housing stock including vacancy rates, rent levels and the rate of daily and monthly rentals. The most recent survey is scheduled for completion by June, 2007. Information about the tenants living in these buildings has not been as systematically tracked.

There have been a number of demographic surveys of the residents of the Downtown Eastside over the last 17 years. They have been more intermittent with the last one now 5 years old. Previous studies include: *Single Room Occupancy Hotel Residents of Downtown Vancouver (1991)*, *Residents of Victory Square Resident Survey (1993)*, *The Downtown Core Housing Project: A Community Self-Portrait (2000)*, *LIUS Study - A Study of Six Lower Income Urban Singles Developments (2002)*.

The proposed study will compile data in the following areas: general demographic information such as age, sex and education; general information about housing and income; language and cultural heritage; condition and cost of their housing; housing history; future housing intentions; health self-assessment; support services utilized within their buildings; and support services utilized in the community.

A consultant will be selected to undertake the work, through a request for proposals to targeted consultants experienced in this work. Proponents will be expected to outline how Downtown Eastside residents will be employed in conducting the survey, for example with job opportunities and any required training.

In the analysis we expect to document and more accurately understand the population characteristics among residents of SRO and social housing buildings; population characteristics among larger SROs (more than 40 units) versus smaller SROs (less than 40 units); differences in SROs with for profit/non-profit management; individual building profiles (though they may not be statistically significant); profiles of sub-areas of the DTES population; profiles of male and female residents; aboriginal heritage profile; and profiles of service usage. The final report will also include an analysis of the specific issues faced by women living in the DTES.

A clearer profile of DTES residents is essential to matching existing needs with future housing program objectives. The *Vancouver Agreement Hotel Analysis Project* recommends the “[initiation of] a survey of residents living in the DTES SROs to better understand their demographic characteristics, health and service needs, quality and cost of housing, and housing history” and says that a “parallel survey of residents of social housing would provide a comparative analysis for residents of the two housing types.” The proposed study would address both of these points.

This consultancy is being initiated by the Vancouver Agreement Housing Task Team and City representatives have agreed to take the lead on managing this study. A Steering Committee will oversee the work and include representatives from Planning and Social Planning.

The final research report will be completed and provided to the Steering Committee by September, 2007. Staff will report back to Council in the fall of 2007 on the study's conclusions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The consultancy will be jointly funded by the Vancouver Agreement, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver. The total funding for this consultancy is \$75,000 including GST. The City contribution is \$25,000, source of funding the Affordable Housing Fund.

CONCLUSION

It is time to have an updated and expanded understanding of the current housing situation and demographic profile of residents living in both SRO and social housing in the Downtown Eastside. Both the Vancouver Agreement and BC Housing have committed funding for this study.

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