



Compulsive Hoarding Project

Update on Hoarding Action Response Team



Compulsive hoarding



- The extreme collection of possessions that may seem to be unusable or of limited value to others (e.g. old newspapers, clothes, broken or old gadgets)
- Living spaces so cluttered they are no longer functional
- Outdoor clutter (e.g. yard filled with items)
- Significant stress caused by hoarding and isolation

The look of hoarding







Hoarding without intervention



Compulsive hoarding can lead to:

- Fire
- Eviction and homelessness
- Isolation
- Loss of services or care
- Threat to health
- Loss of housing stock
- Increased costs to landlords and building managers

City and VCH resources

Dedicated Hoarding Action Response Team “HART”



1
COV PROPERTY USE
INSPECTOR



2
VCH MENTAL
HEALTH WORKERS



1
COV
FIRE INSPECTOR

Under joint direction from COV Assistant Director of Inspections and VCH Manager Mental Health and Addiction Housing

The team is supported by:

- Fire - additional resources, as dictated by case load
- Sanitation - as required

Our dedicated team



Through relationship-building and support, the team:

- Makes home visits and conducts inspections
- Works with clients in order to prioritize steps that need to be taken
- Assists clients to organize and de-clutter
- Refers clients to appropriate community resources

Additional HART partners



City Partners

- Building Inspections
- CoV Social Policy and Housing
- Legal Services, VPD

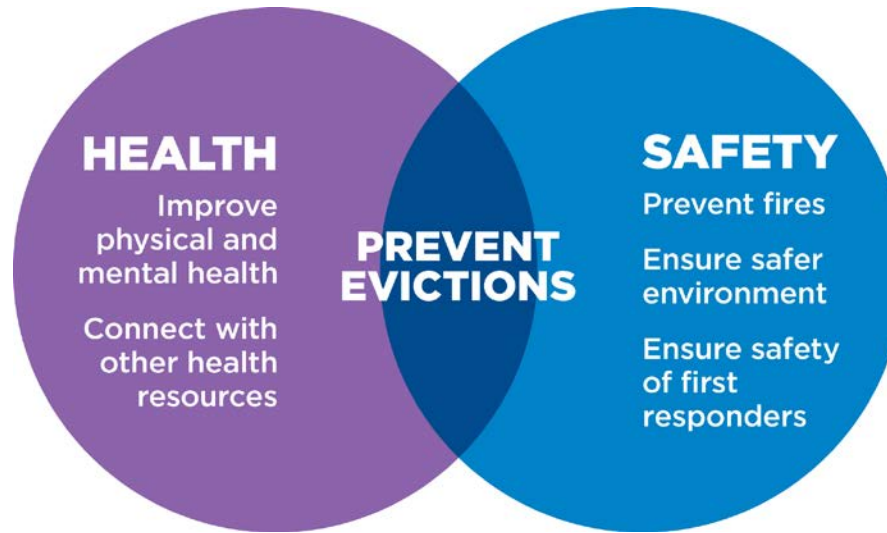
VCH Partners

- Mental Health and Addiction Housing Program
- Older Adult Mental Health Program

Other Partners

- UBC Centre for Collaborative Research on Hoarding
- Public Guardian and Trustee, Province of BC

HART goals



City of Vancouver goals:

- Safe and Inclusive Cities
- Affordable Housing
- Housing and Homelessness

Vancouver Coastal Health goals:

- Provide best care
- Promote better health for our communities
- Innovate for sustainability

What the research says...

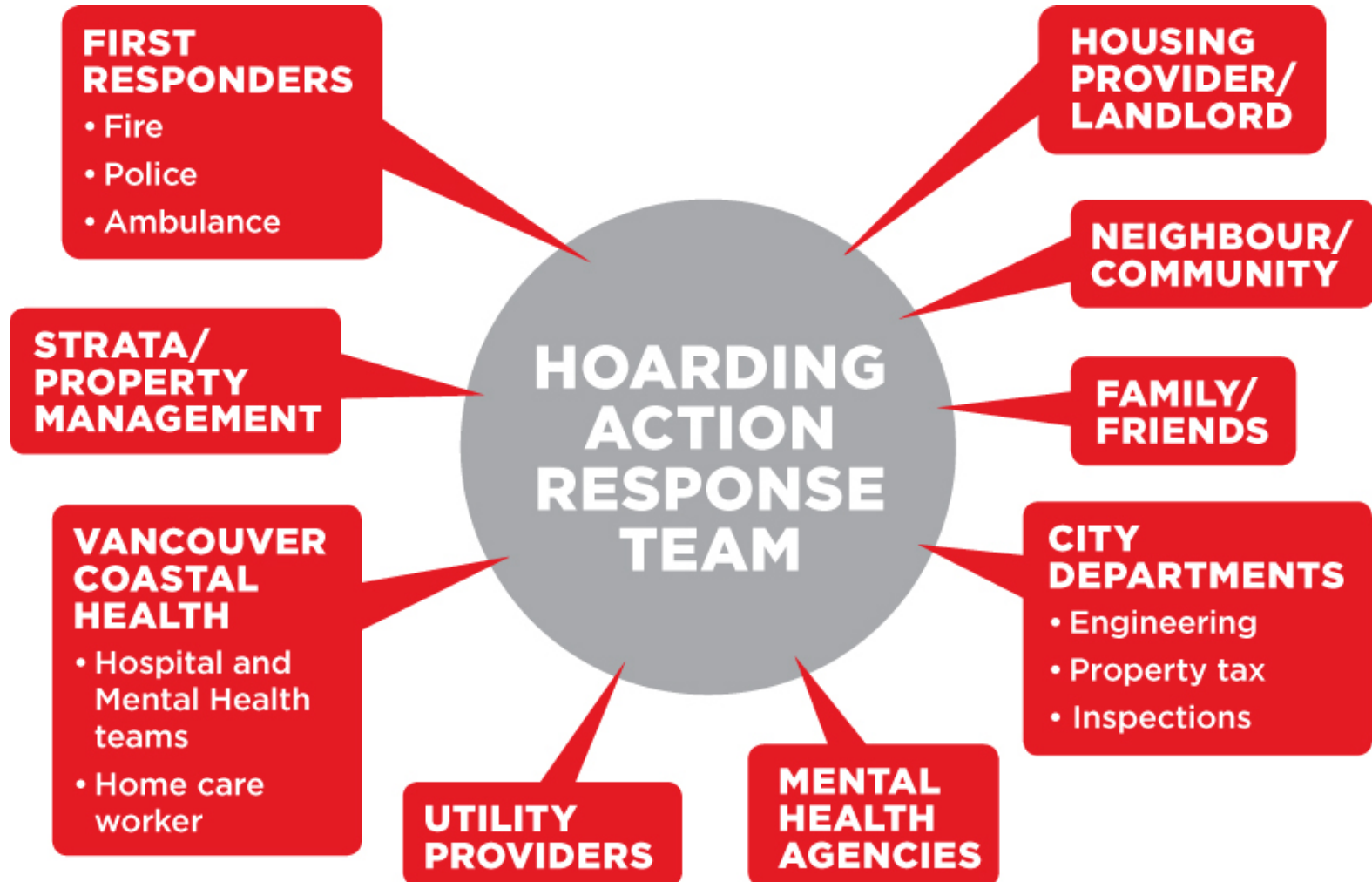


“Vancouver is setting the standard for coordinated community responses to hoarding:

- ... (many) cities have volunteer task forces that are poorly coordinated across relevant agencies.
- Vancouver leads North America in addressing jurisdictional challenges of the complex problem of hoarding.”

Quote from Sheila Woody (UBC) Principal Investigator funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

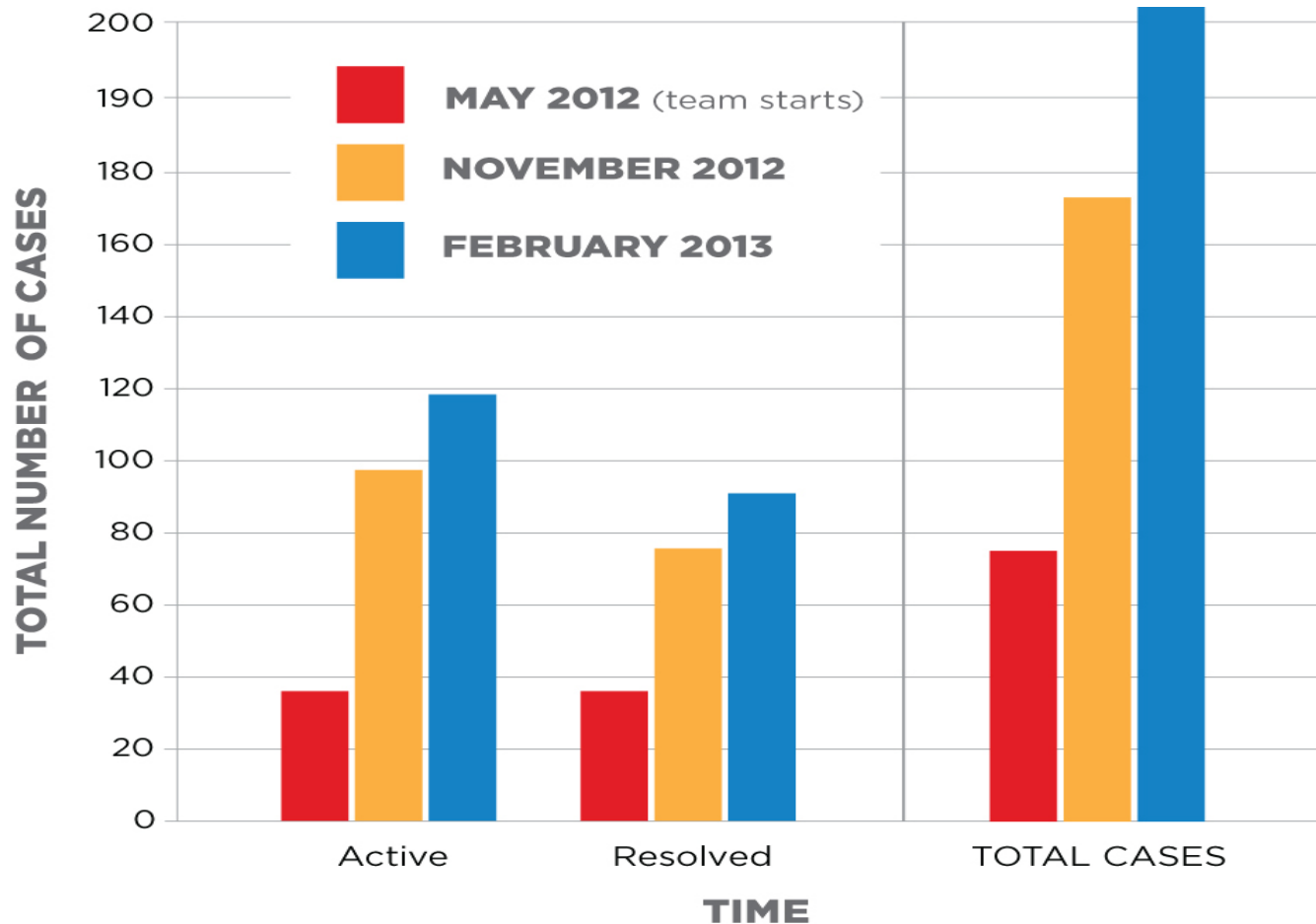
Referrals come through many sources



Disposition of referred cases



May 2012 - February 2013



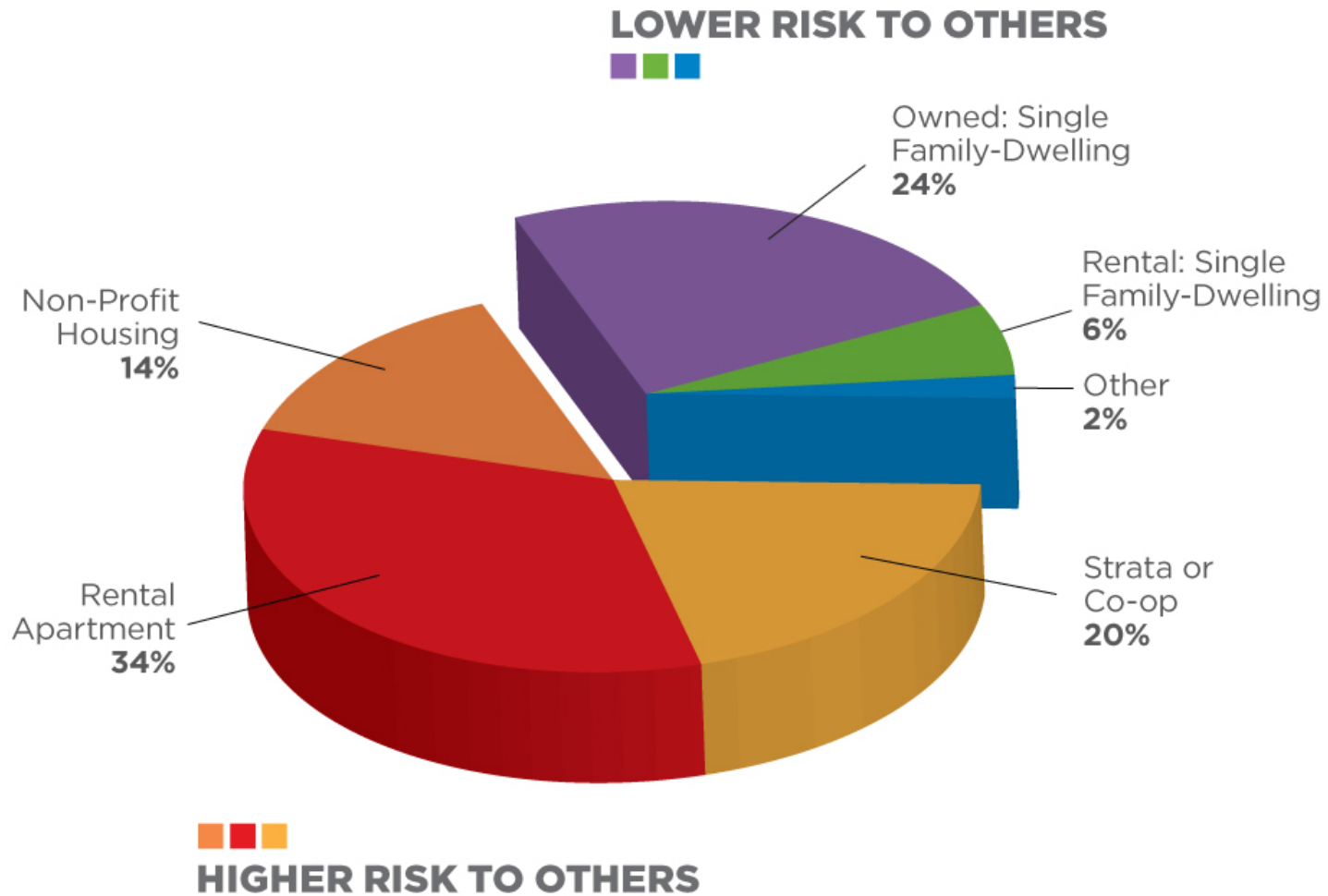
Resolution means...



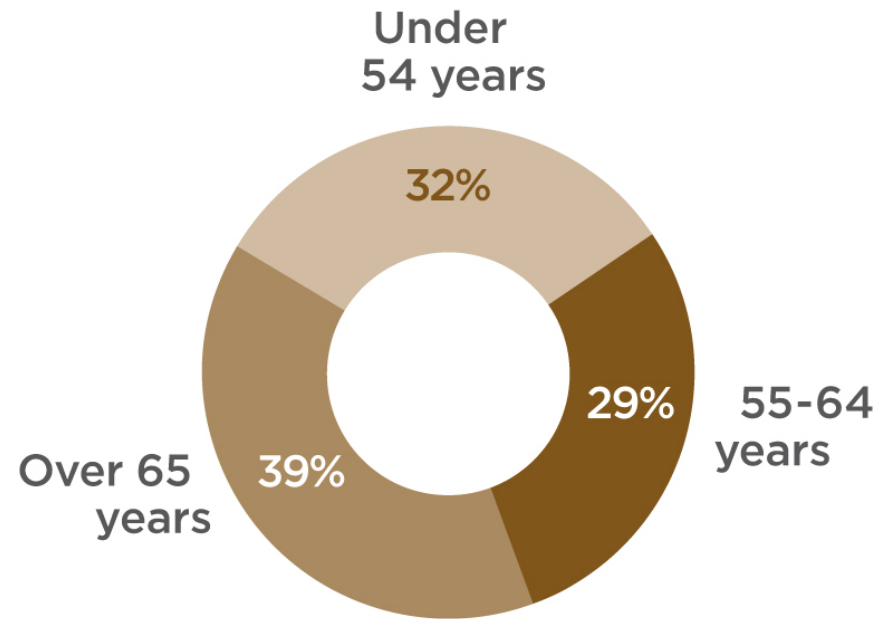
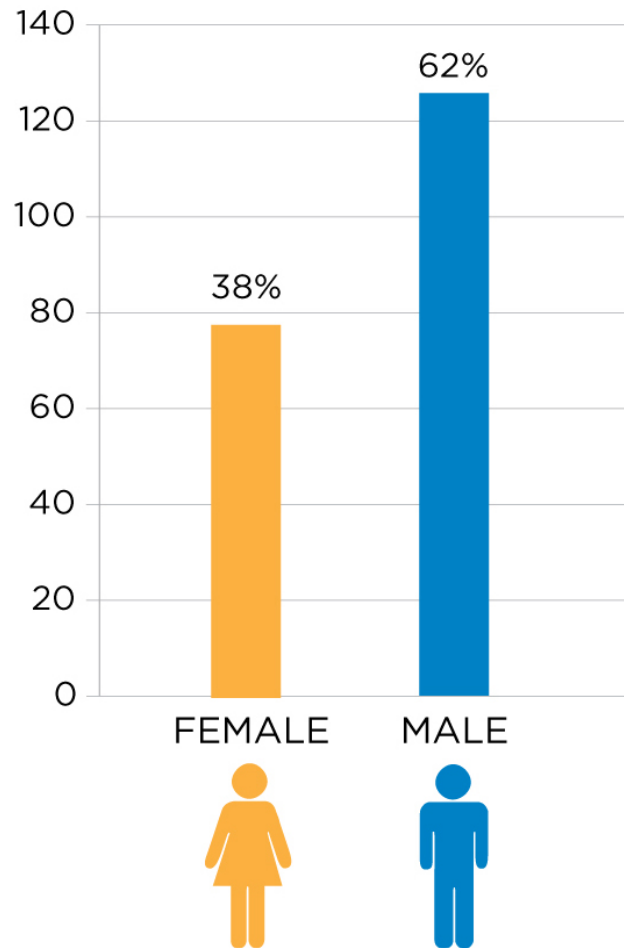
Cases are resolved when:

- Occupant of home is safe
- Access to windows and doors are clear
- Living spaces can be used for intended purpose (i.e. kitchen, bedroom, bathroom)
- Client is linked with appropriate health resources

Cases by Housing Type

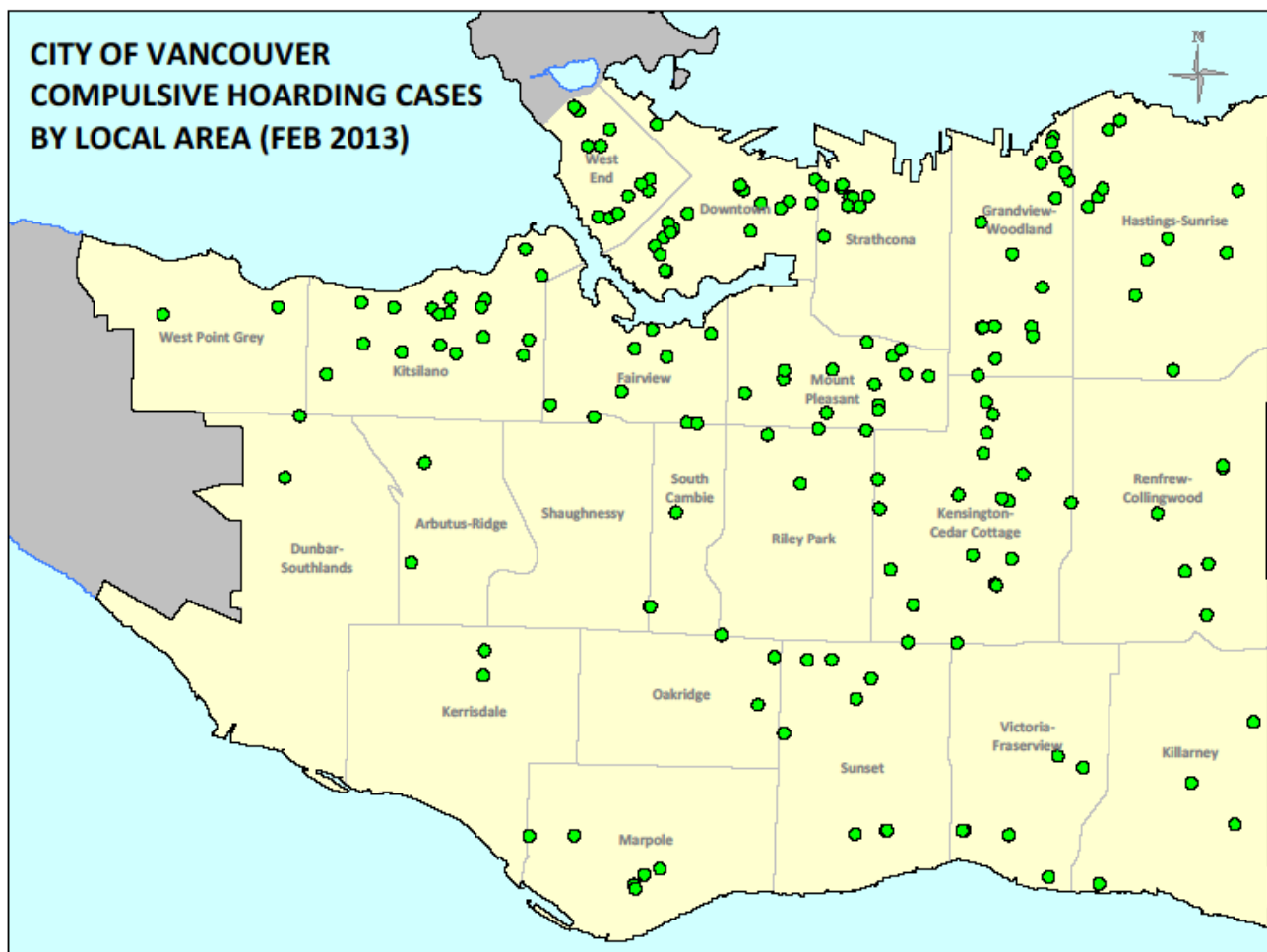


Demographics



39% of clients are seniors

Distribution of cases



Source: Inspection Services City of Vancouver, Feb 2013

Case study #1



Before the HART project

- 1996-2009 Reports of untidy yard: City issues Orders to clean yard, Owner complies, but City Inspectors continuously called back to re-inspect and re-issue Orders
- Sep 2010 House is vacated and secured (boarded up and power disconnected) and yard is clean
- Oct 2011 Fire destroys house and it is discovered that house had been re-occupied by Owner's family member and fully hoarded. Fire crews are unable to rescue occupant due to blocked windows and doors



Case study #2

Utility referral

- Nov 2011 City crews discover leaking water service and contact Inspections because of conditions of house. Case forwarded to VCH Mental Health Team
SPCA notified of potential animal hoarding
- Dec 2011 City works closely with VCH, SPCA, VPD and VF&RS
-Feb 2012 to evaluate living conditions and mental and physical health of the single male occupant
- Feb 2012 Owner/occupant of house is Certified under Mental Health Act
- Mar 2012 Large coordinated effort from VPD, VF&RS, City Inspectors, VCH and SPCA to finally apprehend individual and rescue approximately 20 cats
- Apr 2012 City coordinates clean-up of the yard
- Jul 2012 Individual released from hospital but home remains unsafe for occupancy



Case study #3



Apartment leak goes undetected due to hoarding

- Oct 2012 Water leak in hoarded apartment goes undetected until damage is done to three apartments in floors below hoarded apartment
- Residents from four apartments are evacuated in order to commence repair and clean-up
- Nov 2012 Repairs and clean up take six weeks and all furniture, carpeting and appliances are damaged beyond repair
- Dec 2012 occupant of hoarded apartment accepts help of HART workers and process begins to unpack, sort and dispose personal items that were packed up before the move.
- Boxes fill two rooms in hoarded apartment.



What do I do? Call 3-1-1



If you suspect that a family member, friend or neighbour has compulsive hoarding issues, and you see:

- ☐ debris, personal items or boxes blocking
 - access to parts of the house, windows or doors
 - stoves and cooking facilities
 - access to sinks, bathing facilities or toilets
- ☐ the yard is filled with items other than gardening supplies and yard furniture
- ☐ occupant of home has mobility challenges impacted by the collection of debris inside the living spaces

The pilot so far...



Through the past nine months, the Team and partners have gained valuable insight into how to improve the work they do. However, there are ongoing challenges to be addressed:

Handling of debris:

- What do you do with 14 bags of video cassette tapes?
- Occupational health and safety of staff

Sustained resolution:

- Cases can be resolved from a safety perspective, but often have ongoing health requirements
- Need for skills in health community

Next phase - The pilot continues



The Team and partners will continue to work together to:

- provide support to people with hoarding issues, and their families
- raise public awareness of the team to more fully understand the magnitude of the issue in Vancouver
- develop and refine the processes that best support clients to a sustained healthy and safe future



Thank You

