

# Report Back on City of Vancouver Renter Office

**Presentation to City Council**

June 11, 2019

# Outline

- 1. Council Direction**
- 2. Background - Vancouver's Renters**
- 3. Exploring a City Renter's Office**
  - Consultation & Engagement
  - Renter Enquiry Line
- 4. Report Recommendations**
  - A. & B. Renter Centre
  - C. Renter Advocacy and Services Team
  - D. Renter Services Funding Program
  - E. Tenant Relocation Specialist Training Program
  - F. Future Consultation & Engagement
- 5. Resources**
- 6. Timeline/Next Steps**

# Approved Council Motion

## Motion B.2: A Renter's Office at the City of Vancouver

<b>Support Vancouver renters</b>	Responsible for tracking, resourcing, and supporting Vancouver renters and renter issues
<b>Central point of contact</b>	For renter and tenancy issues, including Standards of Maintenance, Tenant Relocation and Protections, and reno/demovictions
<b>Coordination with renter advocacy groups</b>	Including but not limited to TRAC, Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB), and the Vancouver Tenants Union (VTU) or providing direct legal advice to concerned parties
<b>Coordination with City permitting</b>	Align with City permits, building inspections, and licensing (including business and Short-Term Rental) departments and data in order to protect tenants from illegal reno/demovictions and monitor rate of change
<b>Advise City committees</b>	Advocate for the needs of market and non-market renters including public, non-profit, and co-op housing
<b>Eliminate service barriers for renters</b>	Ensure services are accessible for residents without full citizenship rights and/or with limited English proficiency by offering services in multiple languages

## Additional direction to staff:

- Report back with a mandate and steps to create a Renter's Office;
- Consider virtual and physical services, and estimated costs in any recommendations;
- Consult with the City's advisory committee that focuses on renters' advocacy issues;
- Update on any measures the City already has or is planning to support renters.

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# Vancouver's Renters

# The Housing Crisis for Renters



## Our Place, Our Home: Belvedere Tenants Fight to Remain in Mount Pleasant

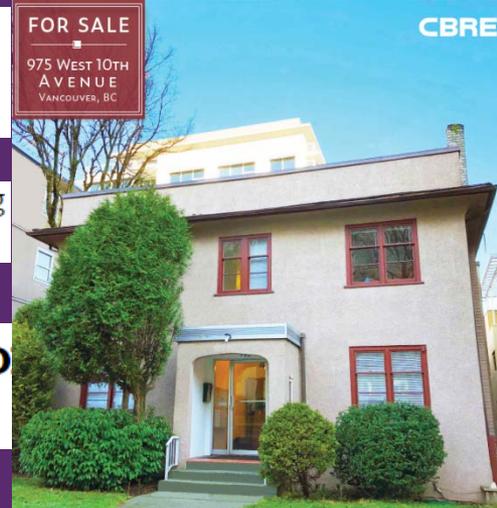
Sean MacPherson / September 5, 2017



## Berkeley Tower tenants (1770 Davie) appeal for urgent action to prevent renoviction: Oct 29 (Mon) deadline for public input

Posted on [October 25, 2018](#) by [cityideas](#)

Residents who have lived at the Woodland Apartments for years say they're being unfairly forced out



## East Vancouver tenants claim they're targets of 'renoviction,' refuse to leave homes



VANCOUVER'S RENTAL REALITY

November 22, 2017 5:00 am

Updated: November 22,

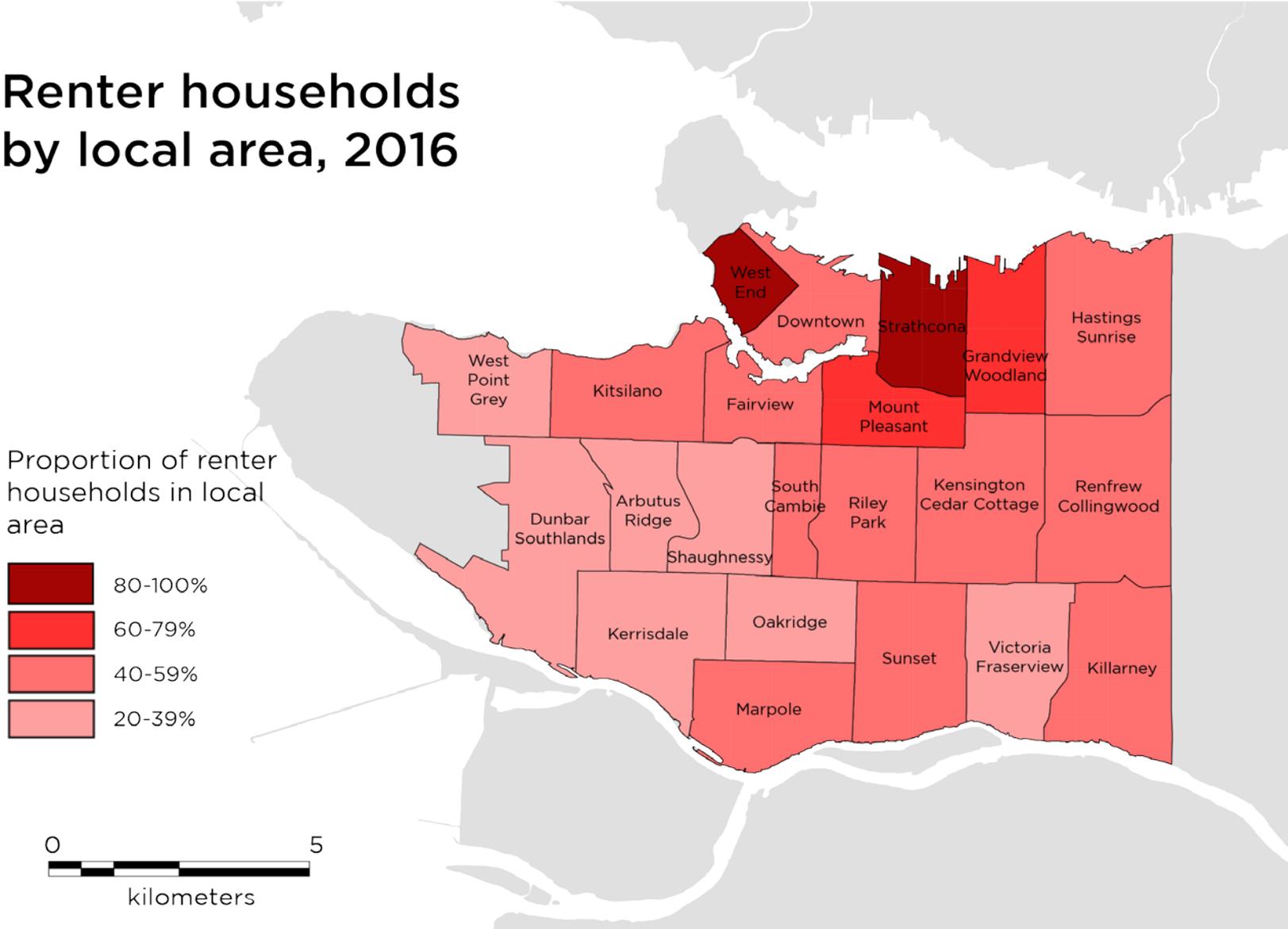
## Vancouver's Rental Reality: Fighting 'demovictions'

By John O'Dowd and Jon McComb CKNW



# 53% of Vancouver households are renters

## Renter households by local area, 2016



# Income and Affordability Challenges

- Vancouver Renters (\$50,250) have a lower median income than Owners (\$88,431)
- 52,065 renter households (35%) spend 30-99% of their income on housing
- 19,240 renter households (13%) earn \$80k/year or less and spend 50-99% of income on housing<sup>1</sup>



Source: 2016 Census.

# Low Income Renter Needs

- 14% of renter households are subsidized
- 1,009 families with children receive BC Housing Rental Assistance
- 3,391 seniors receive Shelter Aid
- 4,302 households are on waitlist for BC Housing social housing



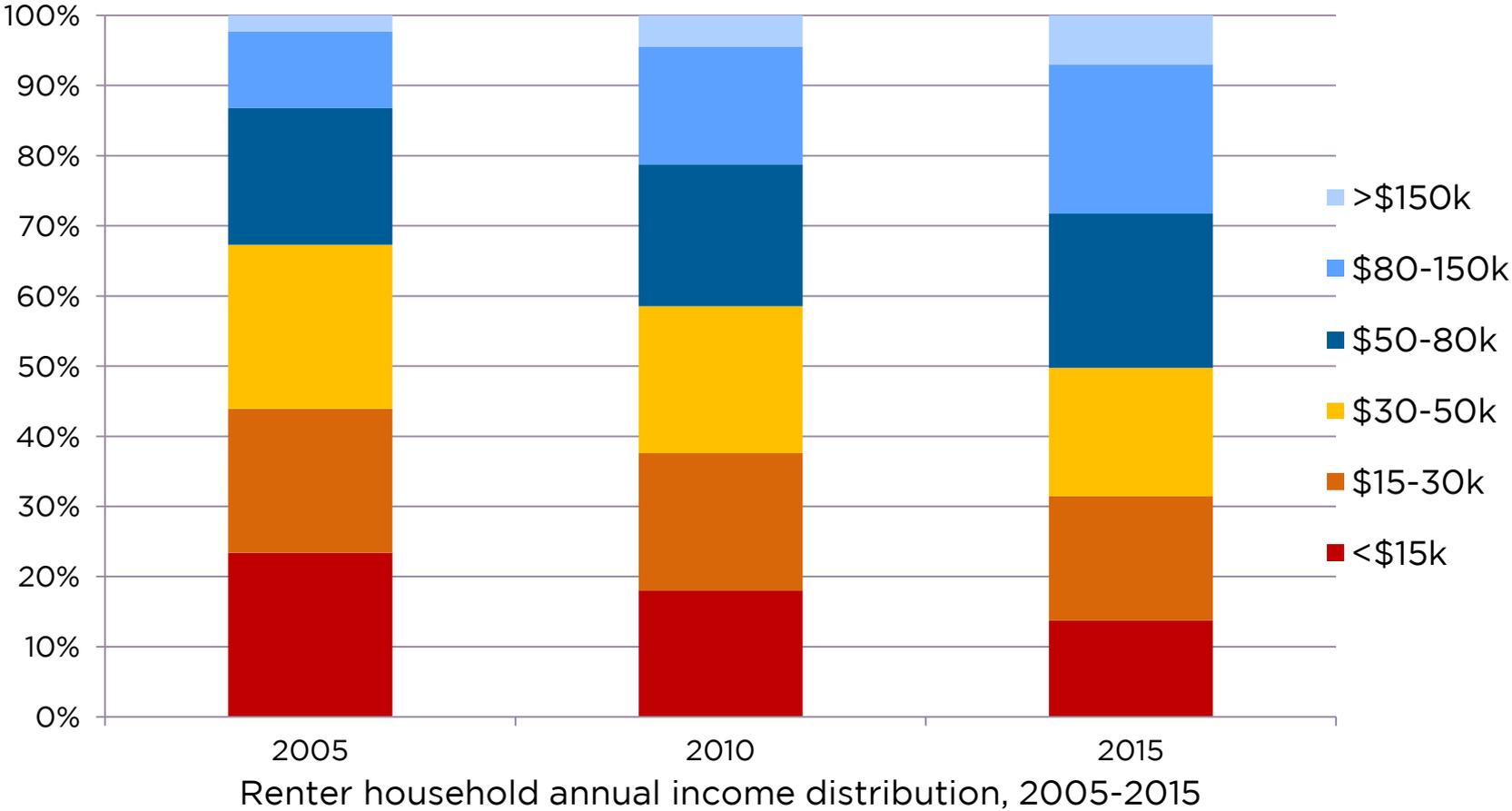
Source: 2016 Census.

# Barriers to Renting

- Long-term tenants in the private market facing “rent shocks”
- Risk of “sale eviction” of unsecured rented condos, houses and basement suites
- Scarcity of family rental
- Scarcity of pet friendly rental
- Prejudice and racism
- Health challenges
- Language barriers
- Renters lack information, time and resources

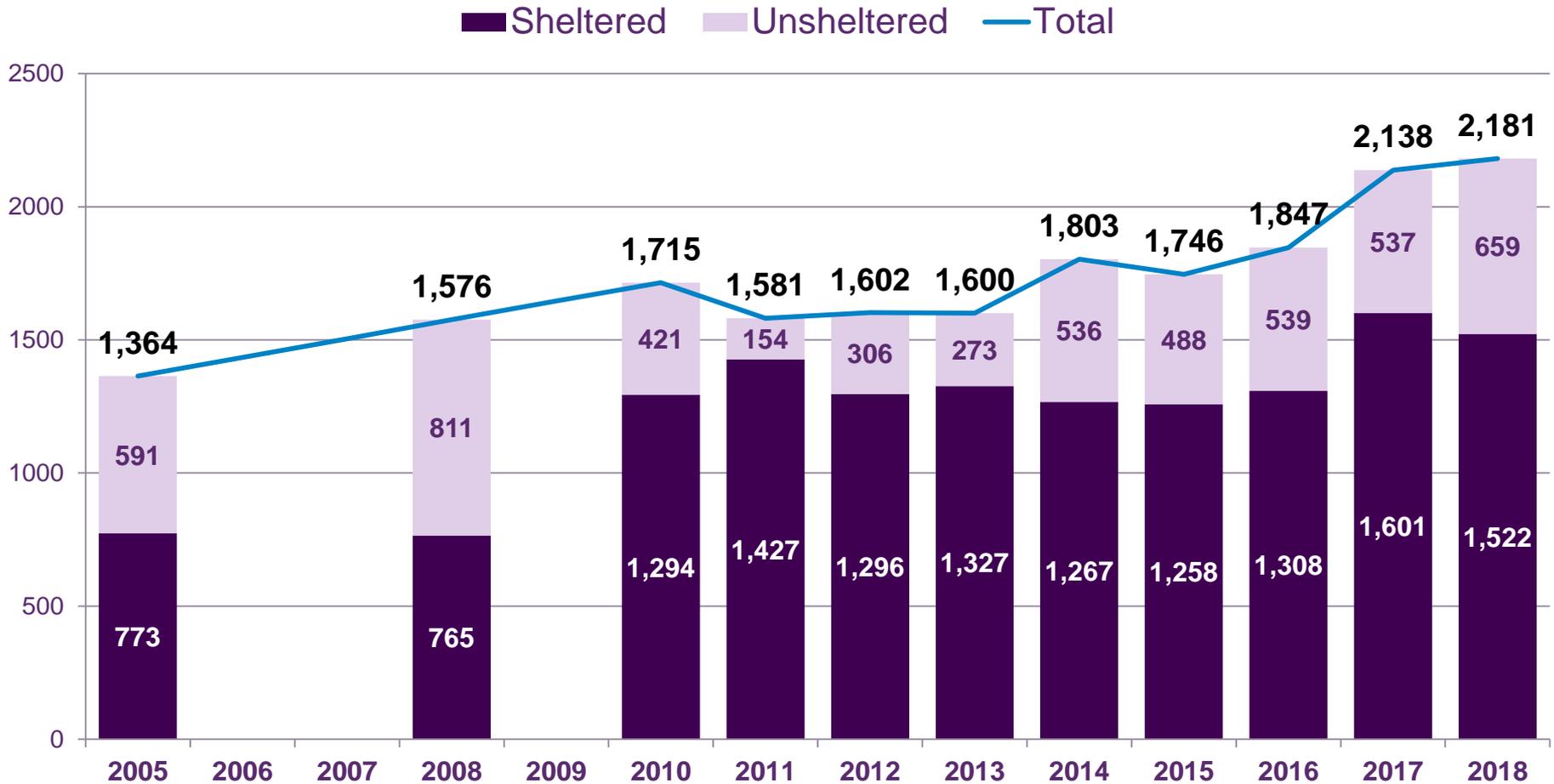


# Risk of Displacing Lower Income Renters



Source: Statistics Canada Census and National Household Survey

# Risk of Homelessness



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# Exploring a City of Vancouver Renter's Office



**HOUSING  
VANCOUVER**

# Current Renter Protection & Services

Province	City	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy development</li> <li>• Residential Tenancy Act</li> <li>• Residential Tenancy Branch</li> <li>• Rental Housing Taskforce</li> <li>• BC Housing / social housing delivery and operations</li> <li>• Homeless Outreach Program</li> <li>• Temporary Modular Housing initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy development</li> <li>• Intergovernmental Relations</li> <li>• Land Use &amp; Planning</li> <li>• Permitting, licensing and enforcement</li> <li>• Renter &amp; rental data tracking/reporting</li> <li>• Tenant relocation policy &amp; implementation</li> <li>• Renters Enquiry Line</li> <li>• Homelessness Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Advocacy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRAC</li> <li>- First United</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Awareness/Education               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SRO Collaborative</li> <li>- Vancouver Tenants Union</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rental Sector               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Landlord BC</li> <li>- UDI</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Consultation and Engagement

- Non-profit renter advocacy and services sector
  - Tenant Resource and Advisory Center (TRAC)
  - First United Church Advocacy
  - Access Pro Bono
  - Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)
  - West End Seniors Network
  - Vancouver Tenants Union
  - SRO Collaborative
- Law Foundation of BC
- Landlord BC
- Province and RTB

# Consultation and Engagement

Key **service gaps and needs** identified by the sector:

- Existing services are challenged to meet service demand and/or provide in-person services
- Sector lacks a strong centre to bring presence, visibility and profile to the needs of renters
- Stable office spaces and/or opportunities to coordinate or co-locate services
- Proactive communication to renters
- Translation services to educate and advise at-risk tenants of their rights

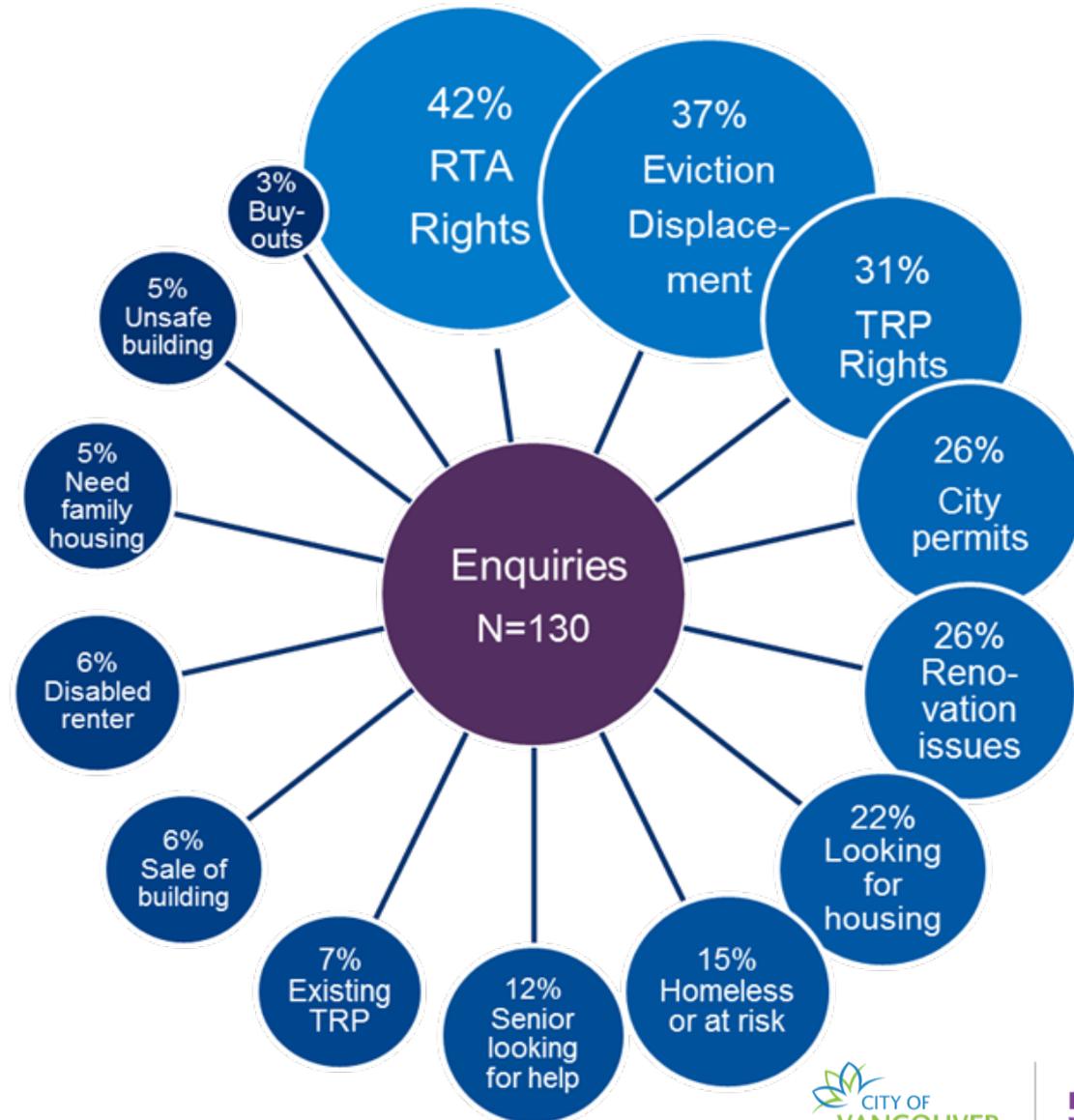
# Consultation and Engagement

Key recommendations **to the City** from the sector:

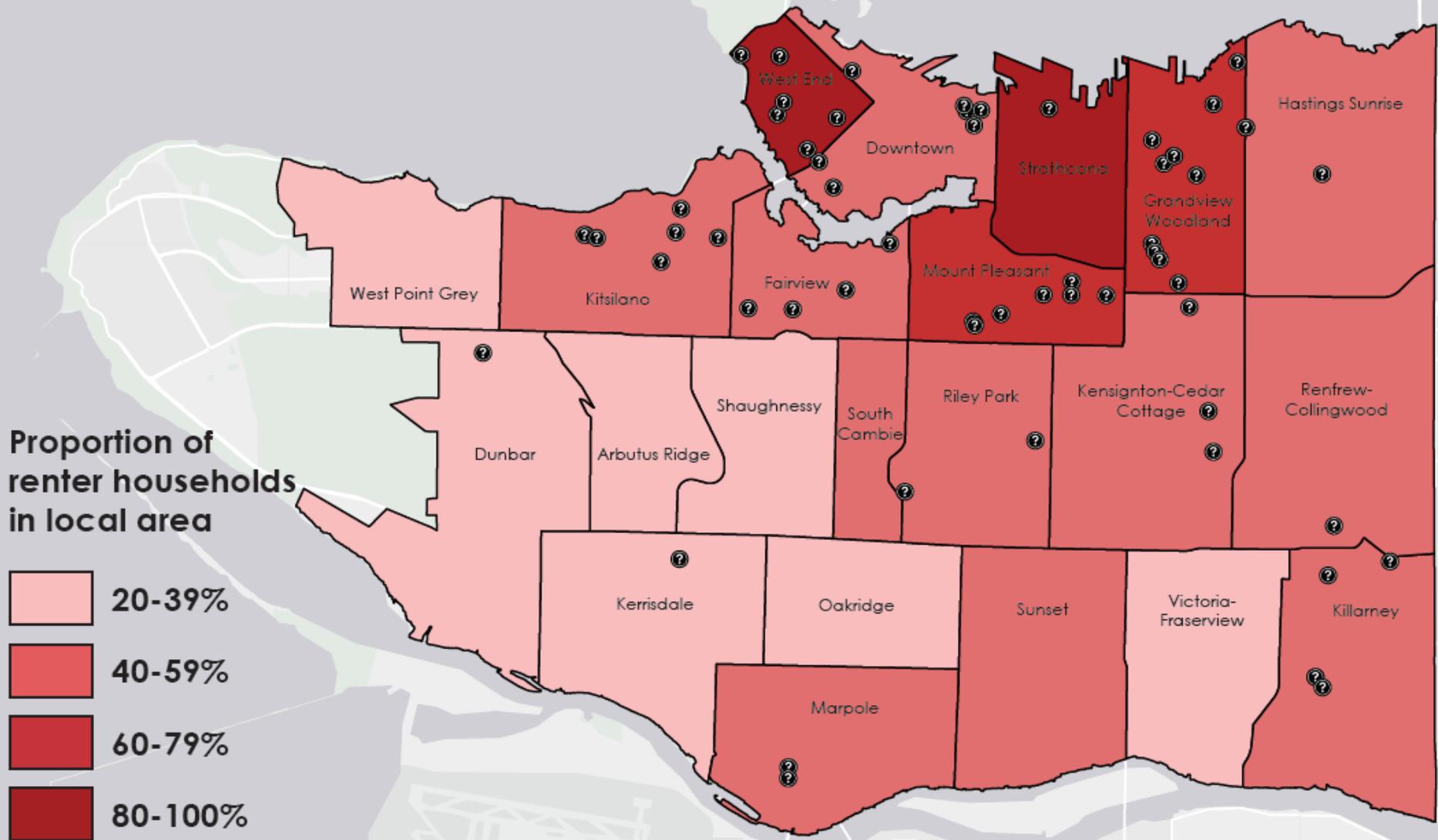
- Efforts should align with and support the existing sector, not undermine or compete with it
- Respond in a more timely manner to requests for information to assist renters
- Improve the tracking of resolution of renter issues

# Renter Enquiry Line

- Soft-launch of “Renter Enquiry Line” phone number and email address
- 130 enquiries December - May



# Renter enquiries (call/emails) recieved between Dec. 2018 and May 2019



# Renter Enquiry Line: Findings

- Diversity of renter issues
- Renters have multiple issues and challenges
- Renter knowledge of policies (RTA and TRP) is moderate to low
- Diversity of renter ability to navigate government systems
- Most at-risk renters require highest degree of service
- Emerging policies and practice can create significant confusion for renters

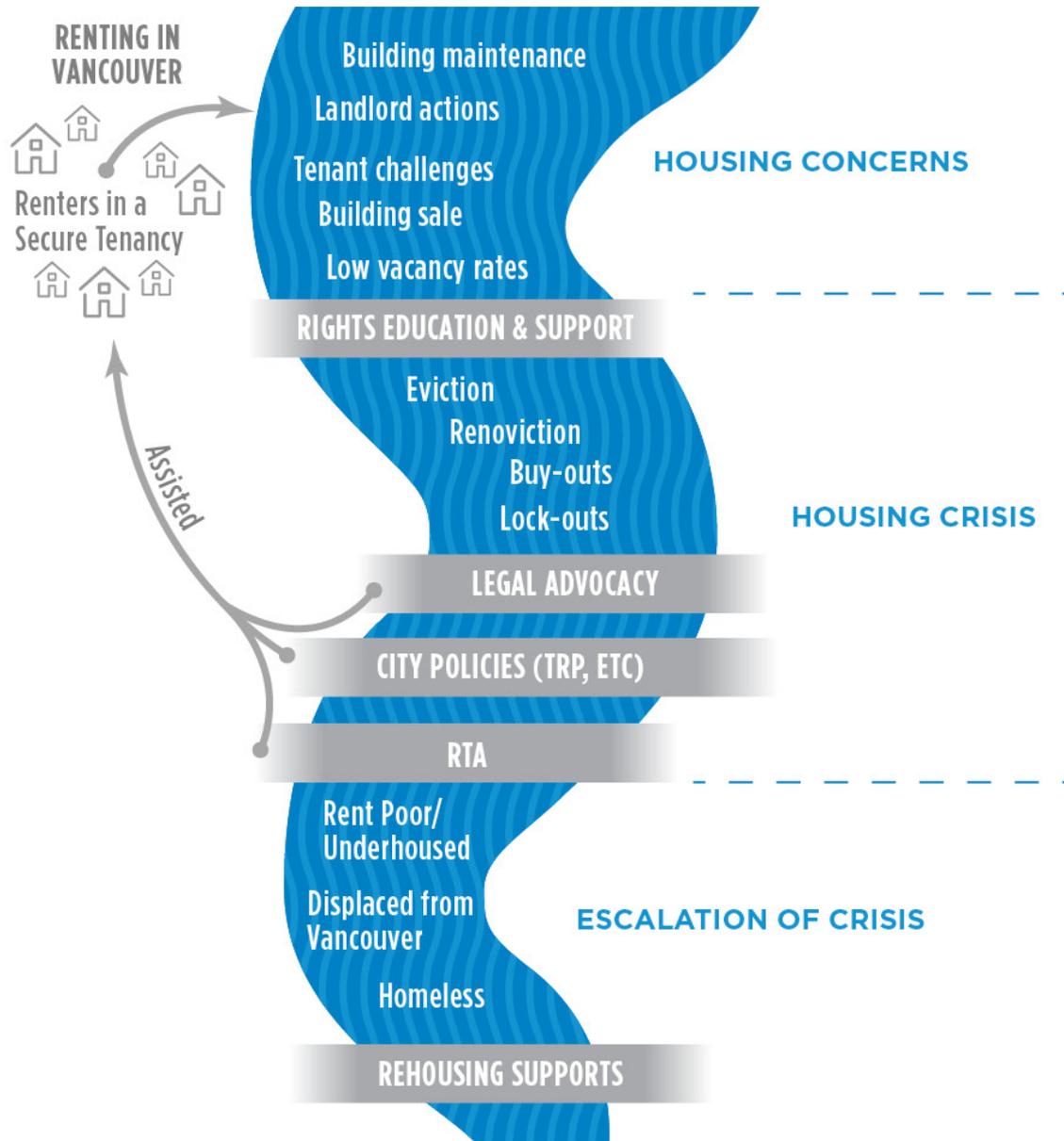
# Renter Enquiry Line: Findings

- Multiple entry points to the City for renters (via Mayor & Council, 311, walk-in, email, phone, referrals)
- Multiple internal City departments required to respond to and resolve cases without appointed response leads
- Approximately half of all cases require RTA interpretation and/or on-going non-profit advocacy assistance
- Room for improvement on current service level:
  - Response times too slow
  - Unclear/inconsistent responses
  - Lack of consistent renter issues tracking and resolution

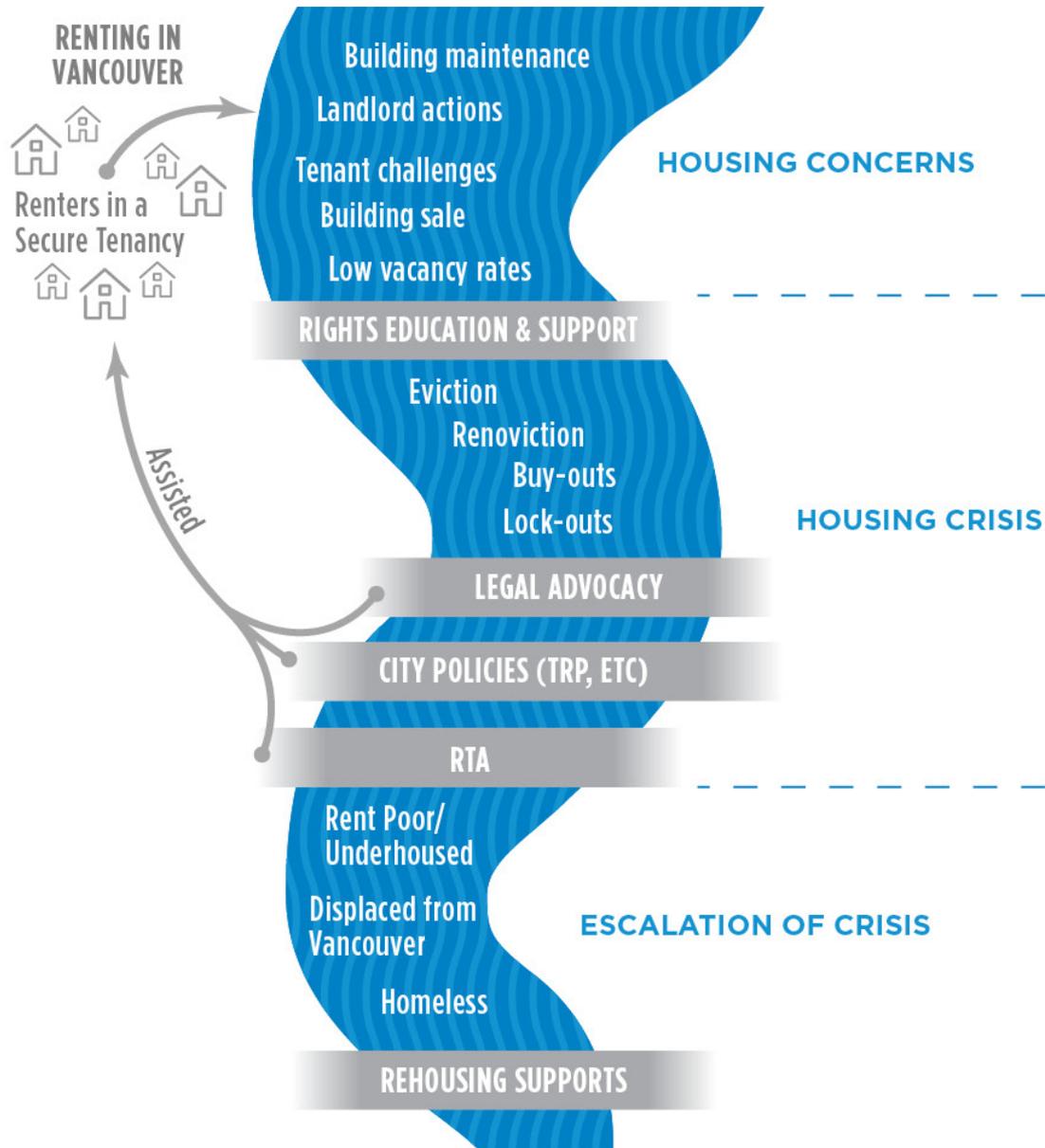
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# **Recommendations: Renter Advocacy and Services**

# Barriers to Pursuing Renter Rights



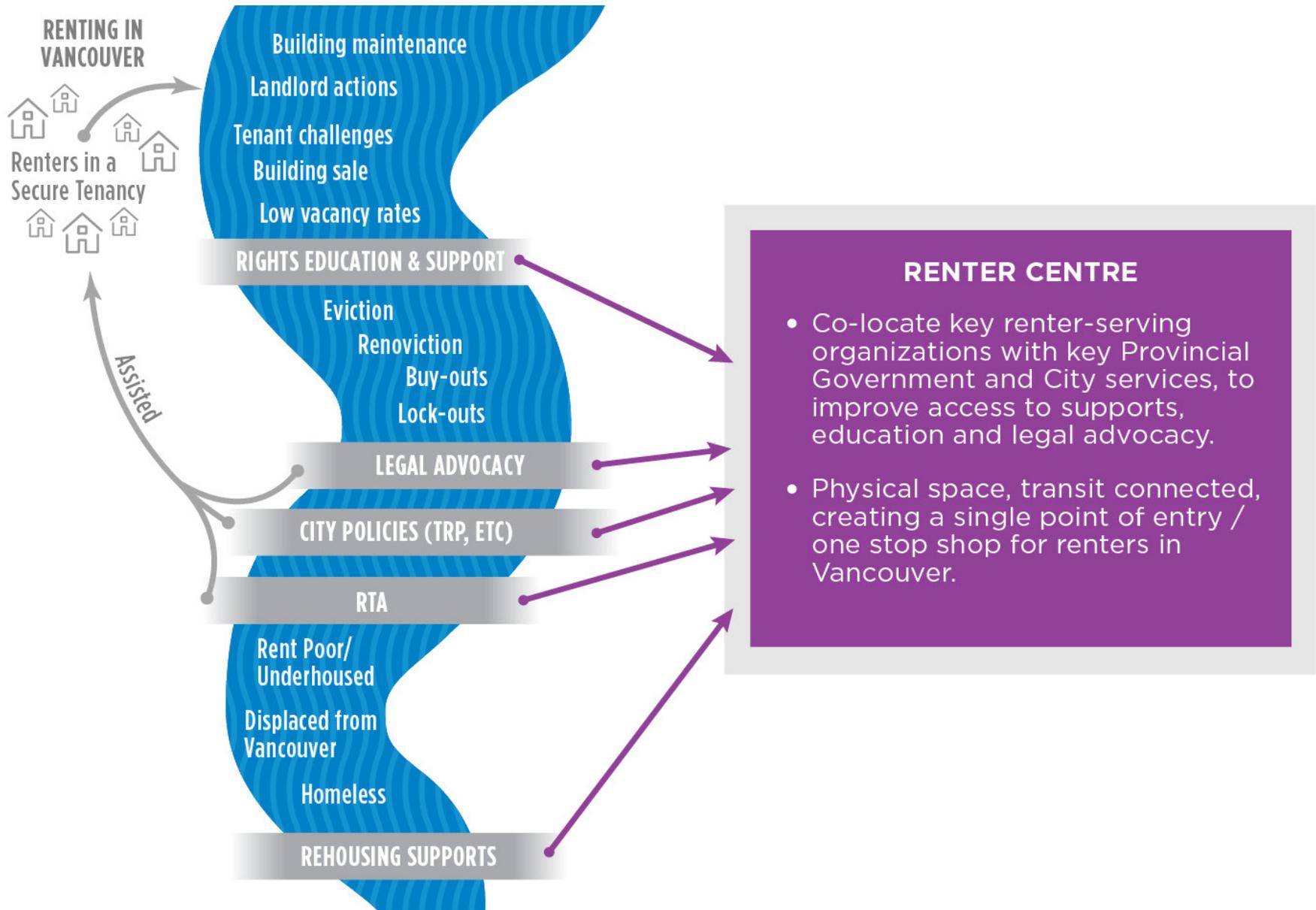
# Supporting Renters to Pursue Their Rights



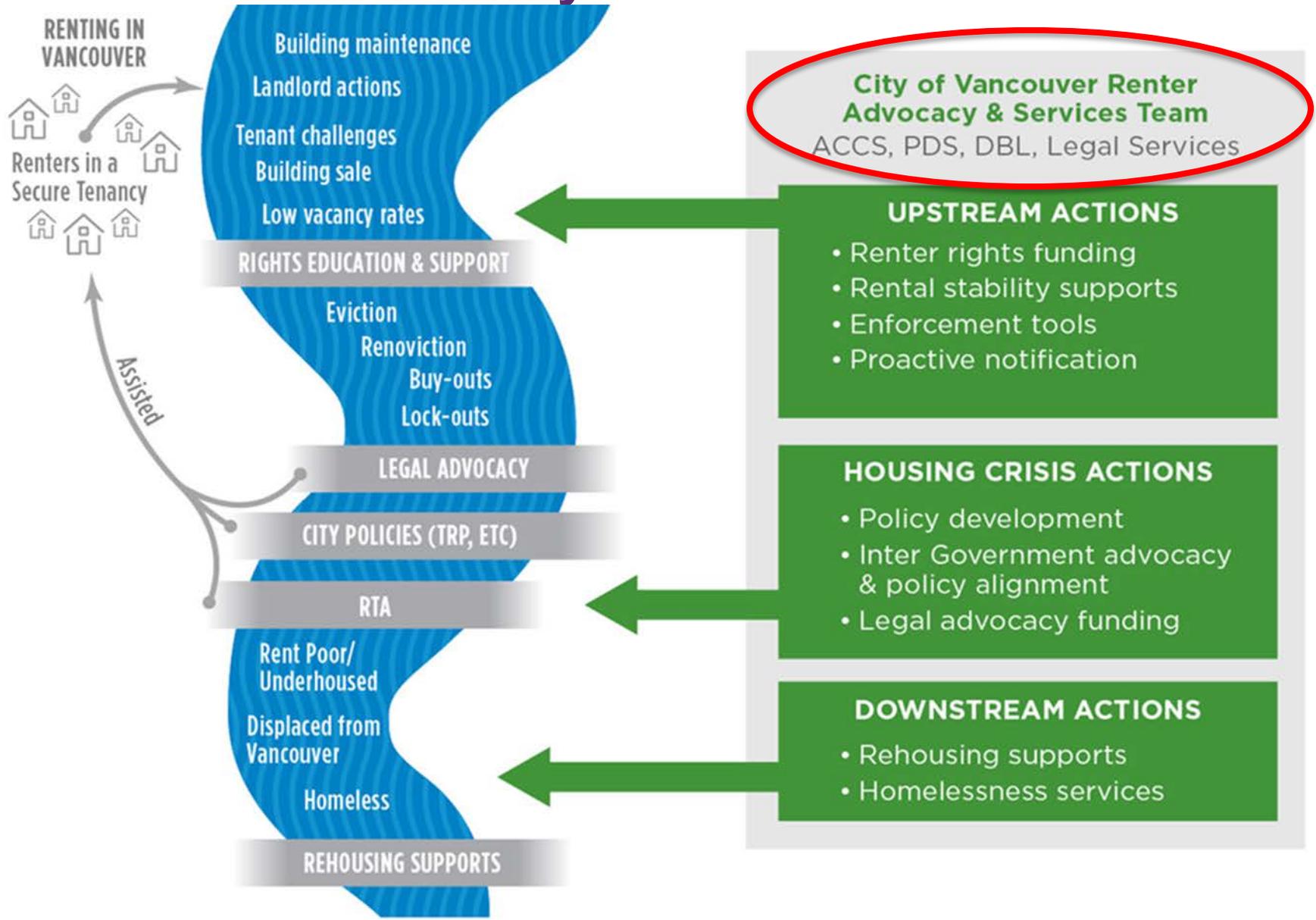
## MANDATE

- Support Vancouver renters to understand and pursue their rights
- Work with renters, building owners, landlords, community partners, and other levels of government to improve renter protections and stability of rental tenancies

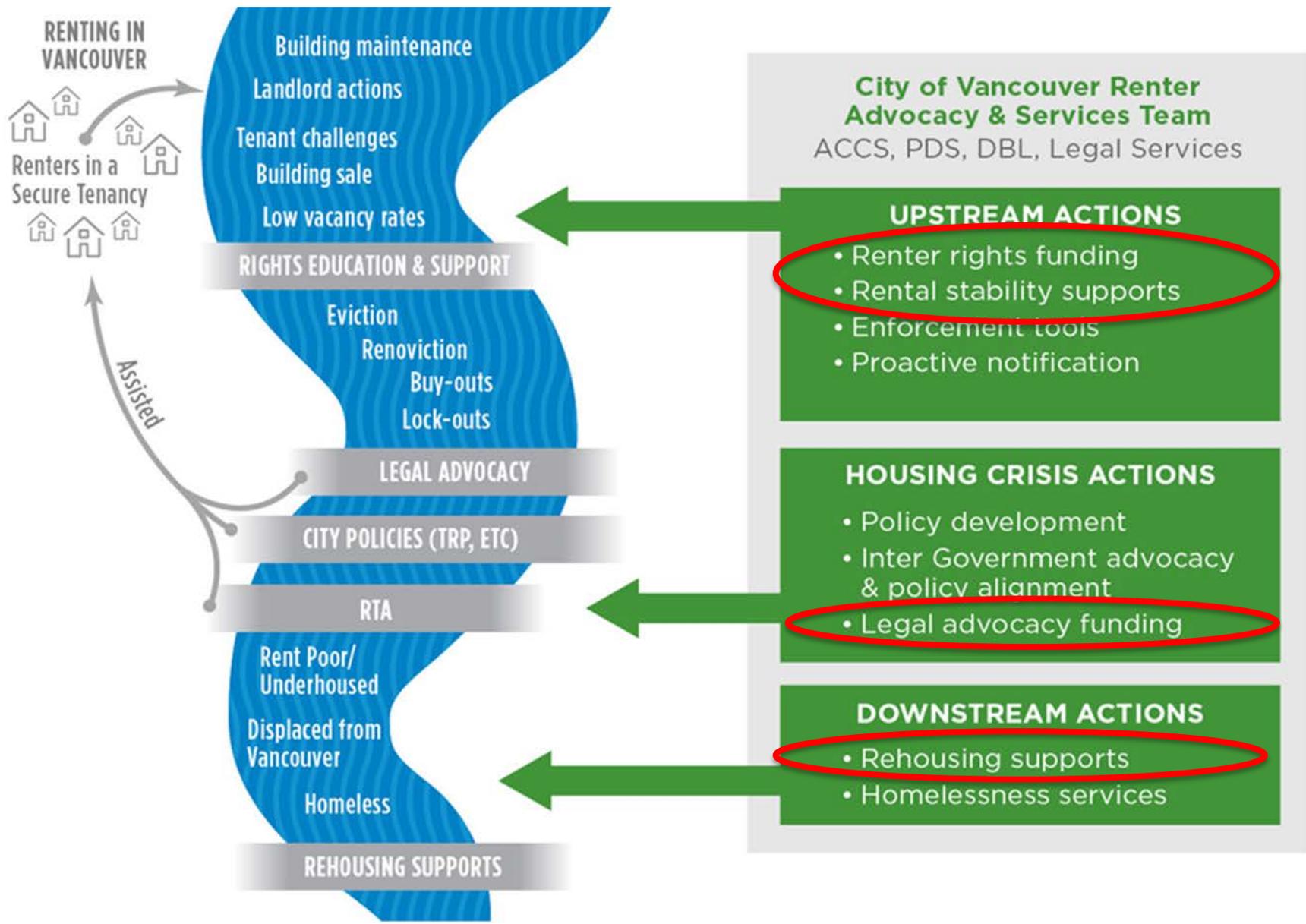
# Recommendation A and B: Renter Centre



# Recommendation C: CoV Renter Advocacy & Services Team



# Recommendation D: Renter Services Funding



# Recommendation A and B: Renter Centre

THAT Council approve the vision for a *community-based Renter Centre* that can co-locate key renter-serving organizations with City services, to improve access to supports, education and legal advocacy for Vancouver renters.

THAT Council direct staff to continue to **work with the Provincial Government** on the implementation of a Renter Centre and its expanded mandate beyond Vancouver to the Metro Vancouver area.



## BENEFITS

- More efficient and effective issues resolution
- Transit-connected single point of entry
- Stability of key renter services
- Raise sector profile
- Increase networking and resource sharing
- In-person, phone and on-line services to overcome barriers
- Compliment rather than replace existing systems

# Recommendation A and B: Implementation

## **Interim Programming (2019-2020)**

- City, Province and Community partners to explore:
  - Workshops on renter rights
  - Training for renter advocates
  - Government to government staff trainings/workshops
  - Upstream renter education notification pilots
  - Developer and landlord education workshops

## **Permanent Renter Centre (Q3/Q4 2021)**

- Partnership development and service design phase
- Examples of future on-site services:
  - Issues navigation
  - Legal advocacy and advice
  - Rehousing supports
  - Translation services
  - City permits and information
  - Education (renter rights, advocacy, etc.)

# Recommendation A and B: Resources

<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Partnership Development - Consultant</b>	\$50K	\$50K		<b>\$100K</b>
<b>Interim Programming</b>	\$200K	\$200K	\$200K	<b>\$600K</b>
<b><u>Renter Centre – Projected Costs</u></b>				
<b>Projected Lease Value (900 Howe St)</b>			\$140K	<b>\$140K</b>
<b>Capital Costs &amp; TIs</b>			\$550K	<b>\$550K</b>
<b>Center Op Costs (not incl. staff)</b>			\$70K	<b>\$70K</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$250K</b>	<b>\$250K</b>	<b>\$960K</b>	<b>\$1.46M</b>

# Recommendation C: City Renter Advocacy & Services Team

THAT Council approve the creation of a City of Vancouver *Renter Advocacy & Services Team* to support Vancouver renters to understand and pursue their rights and to work with renters, building owners, landlords, community partners, and other levels of government to improve renter protections and stability of rental tenancies.



## BENEFITS

- Builds on existing corporate expertise
- Identify opportunities to:
  - improve response time
  - improve access to CoV information
  - improve issues resolution
- Virtual “office” enables nimble membership to address renter issues
- Increase profile of renter needs in City service provision

# Recommendation C: Team Structure



# Recommendation C: Implementation

- Develop an internal renter issues tracking and response system to provide more transparent and timely information to renter enquiries
- Coordinate on departmental initiatives in development that impact renters,
- Support the renters advisory committee
- Improve access to information for renters that can support them in pursuing their rights under the RTA
- Coordinate on initiatives with relevant external partners to improve support for renters facing housing challenges; and
- Other work as required and identified by Team

<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Staff (ACCS, DBL, PDS, Legal, Coms)</b>	\$415K	\$711K	\$711K	<b>\$1.7M</b>
<b>Tech Costs</b>	\$50K			<b>\$50K</b>
<b>Consulting/Research Services</b>	\$200K	\$200K	\$200K	<b>\$600K</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$665K</b>	<b>\$911K</b>	<b>\$911K</b>	<b>\$2.49M</b>

# Recommendation D: Renter Services Funding Program

THAT Council approve the creation of a *Renter Services Funding Program* to support non-profit advocacy and renter serving organizations to help renters understand and pursue their rights, and to provide direct services to support renters to maintain their tenancies or find adequate rehousing options.



## **BENEFITS:**

- Builds up existing high-quality, community services
- Expands capacity
- Enables direct advocacy services to improve outcomes via RTB
- Enable diverse services to meet diverse needs (e.g. seniors, Indigenous community, new immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.)
- Arm's length from the City = unfettered advice

# Recommendation D: Implementation

- Proposed Funding Streams:
  - **Understanding Rights** (legal education for renters; proactive mailings or community outreach)
  - **Pursuing Rights** (legal advocacy at RTB, dispute resolution)
  - **Securing Housing** (rehousing supports, prevention services, etc.)
- Utilize grants to non-profits and service contracts
- Multi-year funding opportunities
- First call for proposals Spring/Summer 2019
- Council Report on Grants - Q4 2019

COMPONENTS	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
Grants or Service Contracts	\$500K	\$500K	\$500K	\$1.5M
Previously Allocated EHT for Seniors Housing Project RFP	\$50K			\$50K
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$550K</b>	<b>\$500K</b>	<b>\$500K</b>	<b>\$1.5M</b>

# Recommendation E: Tenant Relocation Specialist Training Program

THAT Council direct staff to improve the availability and quality of *Tenant Relocation Specialists* to support the implementation of Tenant Relocation Plans, required through policy.



## BENEFITS

- Improves capacity of market rental housing and non-profit sector to implement Tenant Relocation Plans
- Improves experience and outcomes for renters during a required relocation
- Utilizes public-private or public-non-profit collaboration on the design and delivery of training

# Recommendation E: Implementation

- Market Sounding to assess current sector capacity and expertise
- RFP to identify a preferred partner to develop a City-approved Tenant Relocation Specialist Training Program
  - Linked to successful implementation of CoV TRP & updated RTA guidelines
- Implementation of the Training Program
- Creation and publication of City-approved Tenant Relocation Specialist Training Program
  - Aim to expand number and quality of Relocation Specialists
  - Provides Owner/Landlords with more access to experienced & skilled Relocation Specialists

COMPONENTS	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
Contract for program development	\$100K			\$100K
Support for program implementation		\$25K	\$25K	\$50K
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$100K</b>	<b>\$25K</b>	<b>\$25K</b>	<b>\$150K</b>

# Recommendation F: Consultation & Engagement

THAT Council direct the Renter Advocacy and Services Team to establish *on-going consultation and engagement* with:

## **RENTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

- First meeting of new Renters Advisory Committee (RAC) June 2019
- ACCS staff liaison to the RAC

## **RENTER ADVOCACY AND SERVICES SECTOR WORKING GROUP:**

- Hosted by City of Vancouver with interested non-profit renter serving and advocacy organizations
- Share information, coordinate, collaborate, discuss issues and provide recommendations
- Exploration of the Renter Centre

## **PROJECT AND ISSUE-BASED ENGAGEMENT:**

- RTB, Landlord BC, Law Foundation, BCNPHA and social housing providers, etc.

# Resources

- Funded through the Empty Homes Tax revenue reserve
- Increase to the 2019 Operating Budget of \$1.4M for implementation
- 2020 and 2021 Operating Budgets subject to Council approval
- All grants and leases subject to future Council approval

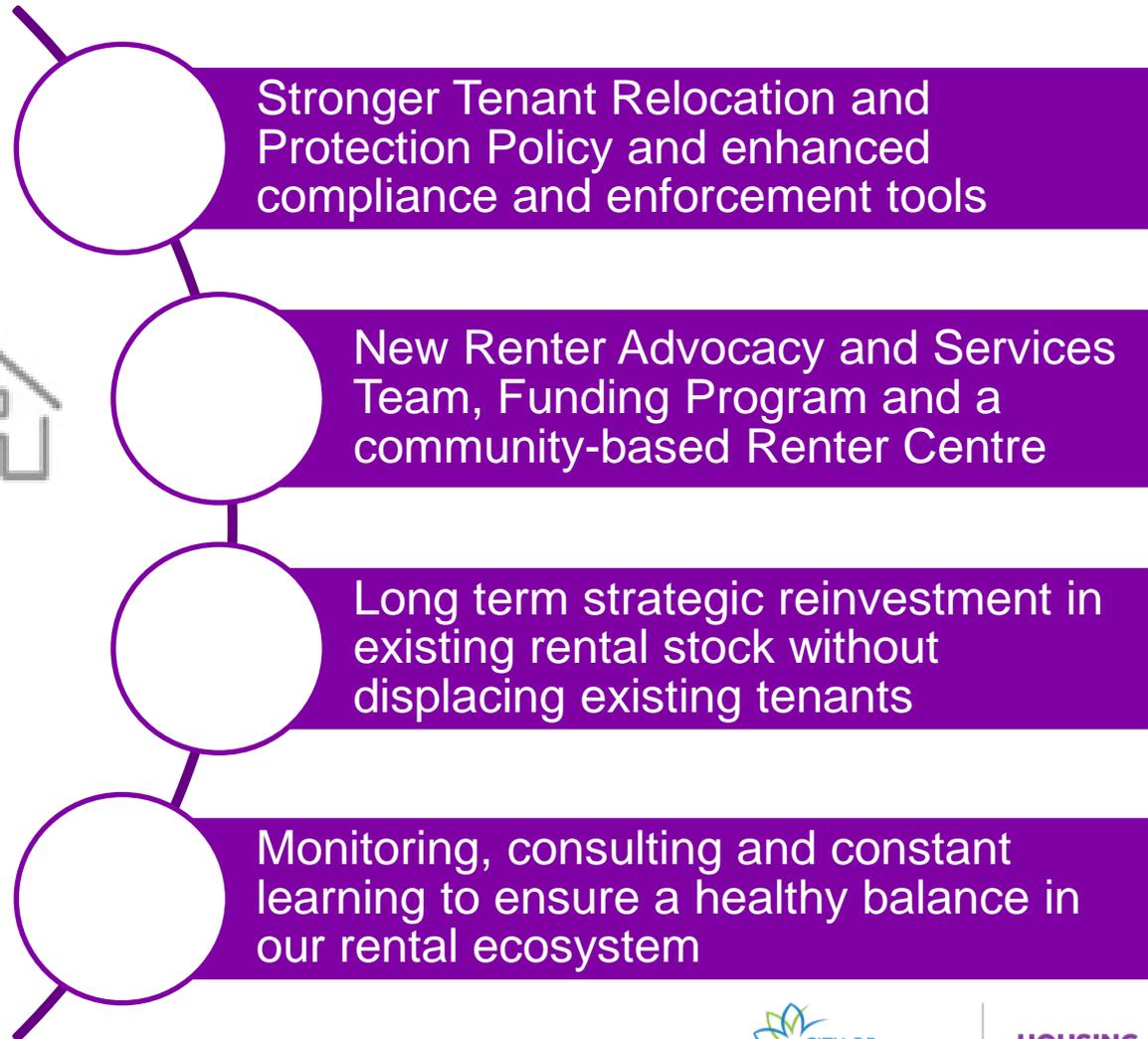
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Total</b>
A and B. Renter Centre	\$250K	\$250K	\$960K	\$1.46M
C. CoV Renter Advocacy & Services Team	\$665K	\$911K	\$910K	\$2.49M
D. Renter Services Multi-Year Funding Program	\$550K	\$500K	\$500K	\$1.55M
E. Tenant Relocation Specialist Training Program	\$100K	\$25K	\$25K	\$0.15M
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1.56M</b>	<b>\$1.69M</b>	<b>\$2.40M</b>	<b>\$5.65M</b>

# Timeline

Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	2020	2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council Motion B.2 – Renter’s Office at the City of Vancouver</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consultation with renter-serving organizations</li><li>• Responding to renter enquiries (phone line &amp; email)</li><li>• Developing scope &amp; work program for Renter Office</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>REPORT #1: Proposed Renter Office</b></li><li>• <i>Renter Centre</i></li><li>• <i>CoV Renters Team</i></li><li>• <i>Renter Services and Advocacy Funding Program</i></li><li>• <i>Consultation with key partners</i></li><li>• <i>TRP specialist</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued consultation with key partners</li><li>• Renter Centre – interim programming &amp; partnership development</li><li>• Grants – receive and adjudicate applications</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>REPORT #2: Renter Office Update</b></li><li>• <i>Funding disbursement</i></li><li>• Continued consultation with key partners</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>REPORT #3: Renter Office Update</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Renter Center Opening (Q3/Q4 - Projected)</li></ul>



# City of Vancouver: Improving Renting for Renters



**Thank you**



**HOUSING  
VANCOUVER**

# EHT Overview

<b>2018 EHT Revenue</b>		38,120,000
Costs for EHT set up and Administration		6,607,923
Uncollected Revenue		15,000,000
<b>Available for Allocation to Housing</b>		<b>16,512,077</b>
<b>Previously approved Funding</b>		
Council approval RTS 12562		8,000,000
Include in 2019 Operating Budget to support housing related staffing		2,045,881
<b>Total Allocate to date</b>		<b>10,045,881</b>
<b>Current balance available for allocation</b>		<b>6,466,196</b>
Revenue is not available for allocation until collected by City of Vancouver		