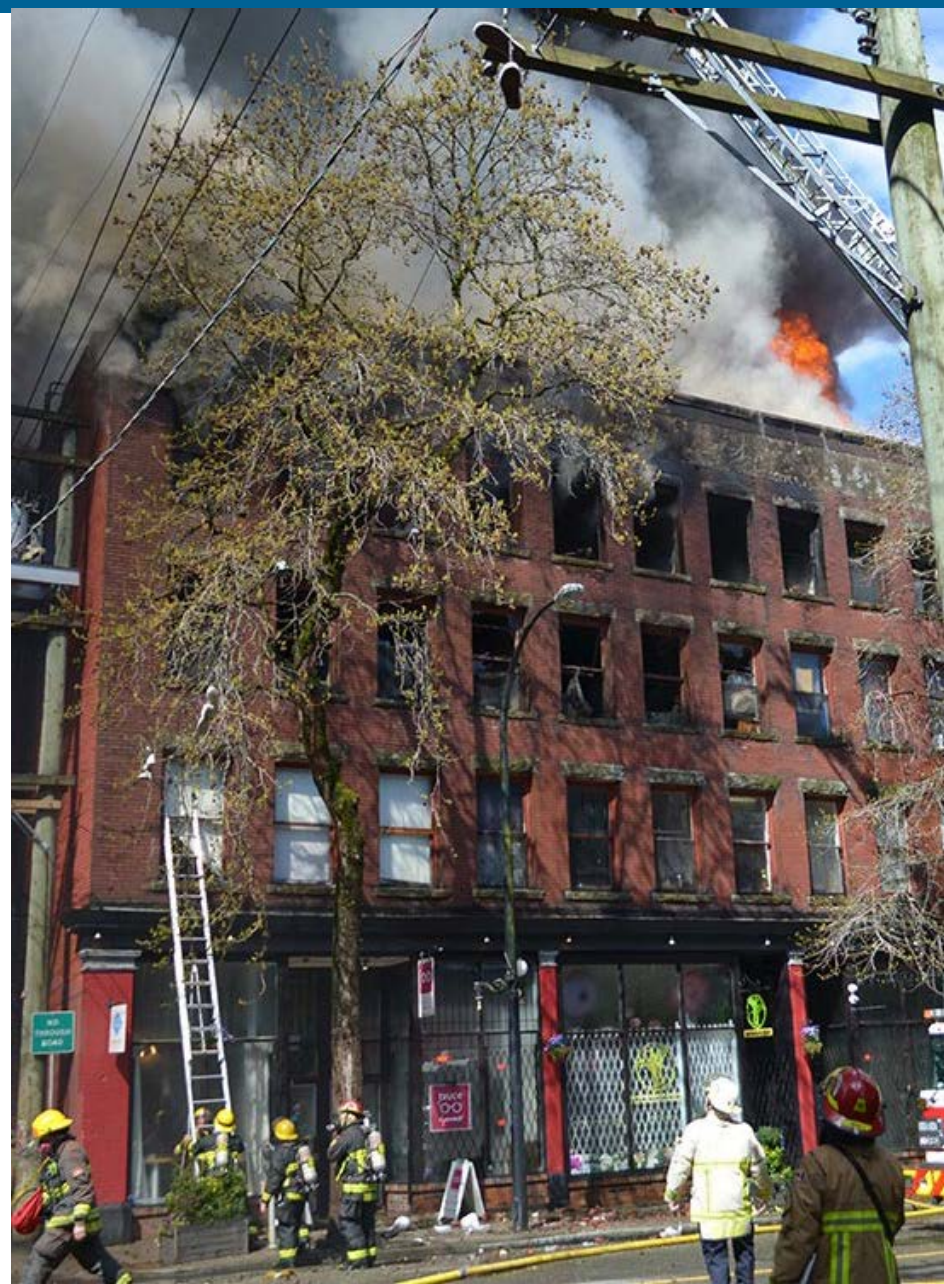


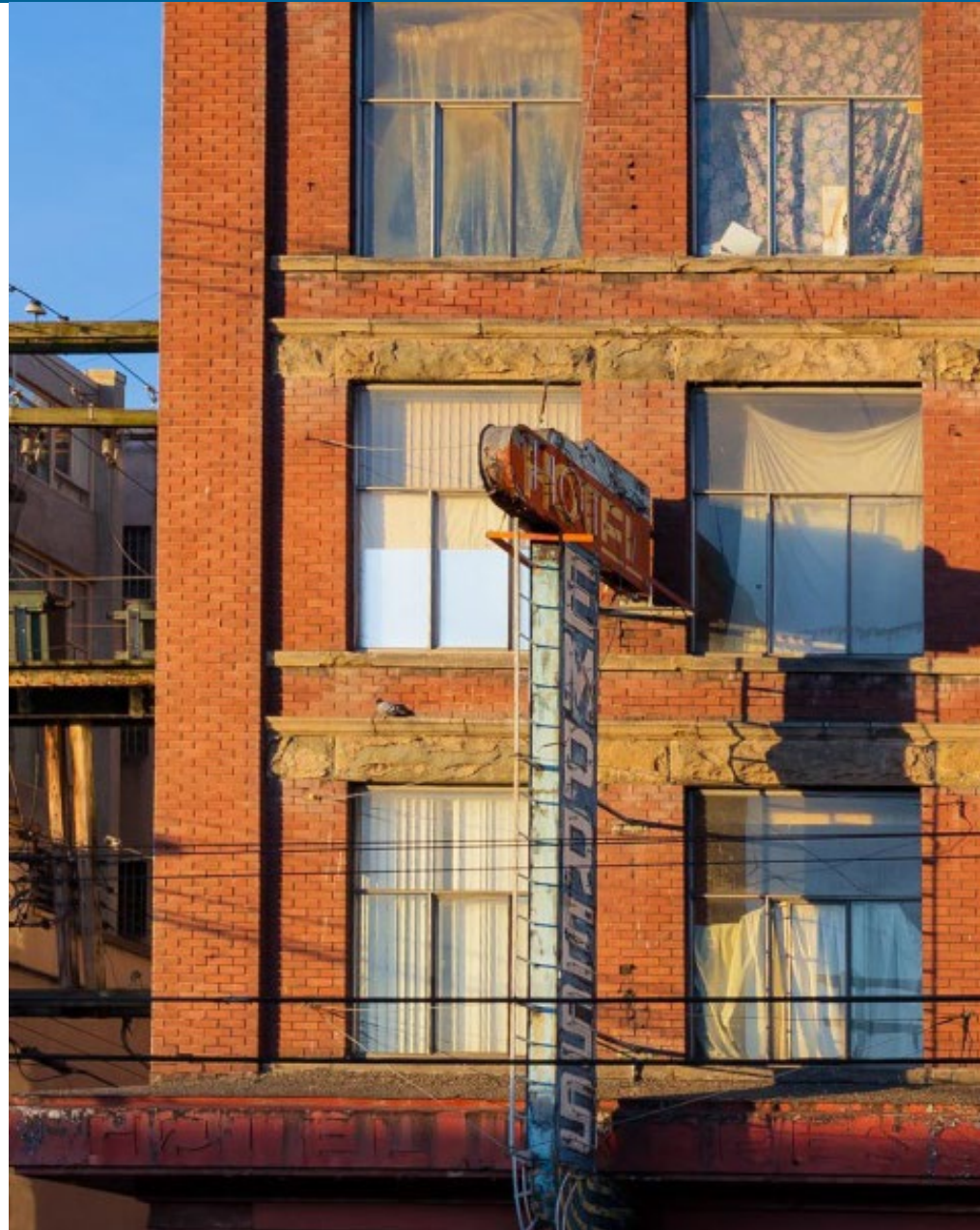
Improving Life Safety in SROs: Updates and Grant to SRO-C

Council Presentation

January 31st, 2023



1. Overview of SROs in Vancouver
2. Fire Risk in SROs
3. Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs
4. City-Led Initiatives to Address Life-Safety in SROs
5. Recommendation: Grant to SRO-C
6. Other Actions on SROs



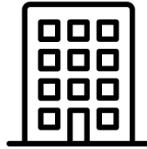
1. Overview of SROs in Vancouver



Unsheltered



Shelters



SROs



Supportive
Housing



Social
Housing



Market
Rental



Ownership

- SROs considered housing of last resort before homelessness for many marginalized low-income residents
- 154 buildings (~7,200 rooms) located primarily in DTES
- All rooms protected from demolition or conversion by the SRA By-Law
- About half are privately owned and half are government or non-profit owned
 - CoV owns 7 open SROs
 - BCH owns 34 open SROs, majority operated as supportive housing

2. Fire Risk in SROs

- SROs are 100 year old buildings with small (~10 x 10ft rooms) with shared bathrooms and kitchens
- SRO buildings are at increased risk of fire due to ageing systems, older alarm systems, poor heating, and storage of electric bikes by tenants
- SRO tenants are at increased risk of fire-related harm due to:
 - Lack of proper ventilation
 - Limited egress in congregate housing (clutter, fire escapes)
 - Multiple/ complex health challenges (mobility issues, use of drugs/alcohol)



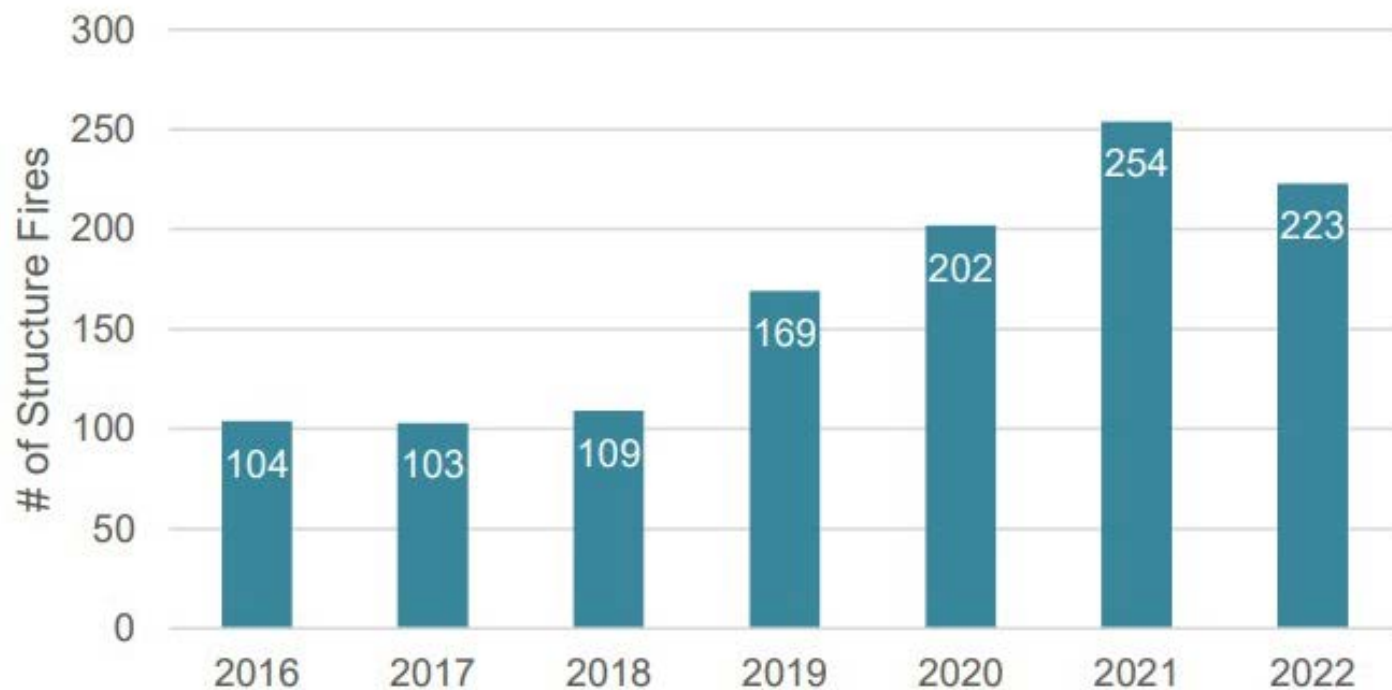
2. Fire Risk in SROs

- Rise in fire incidents – 7 significant fires in 2022, resulting in displacement of residents, including permanent displacement of over 230 tenants
- Includes Winter's Fire in April 2022 – 71 tenants displaced and two people died; building ordered demolished by CBO



3. Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs

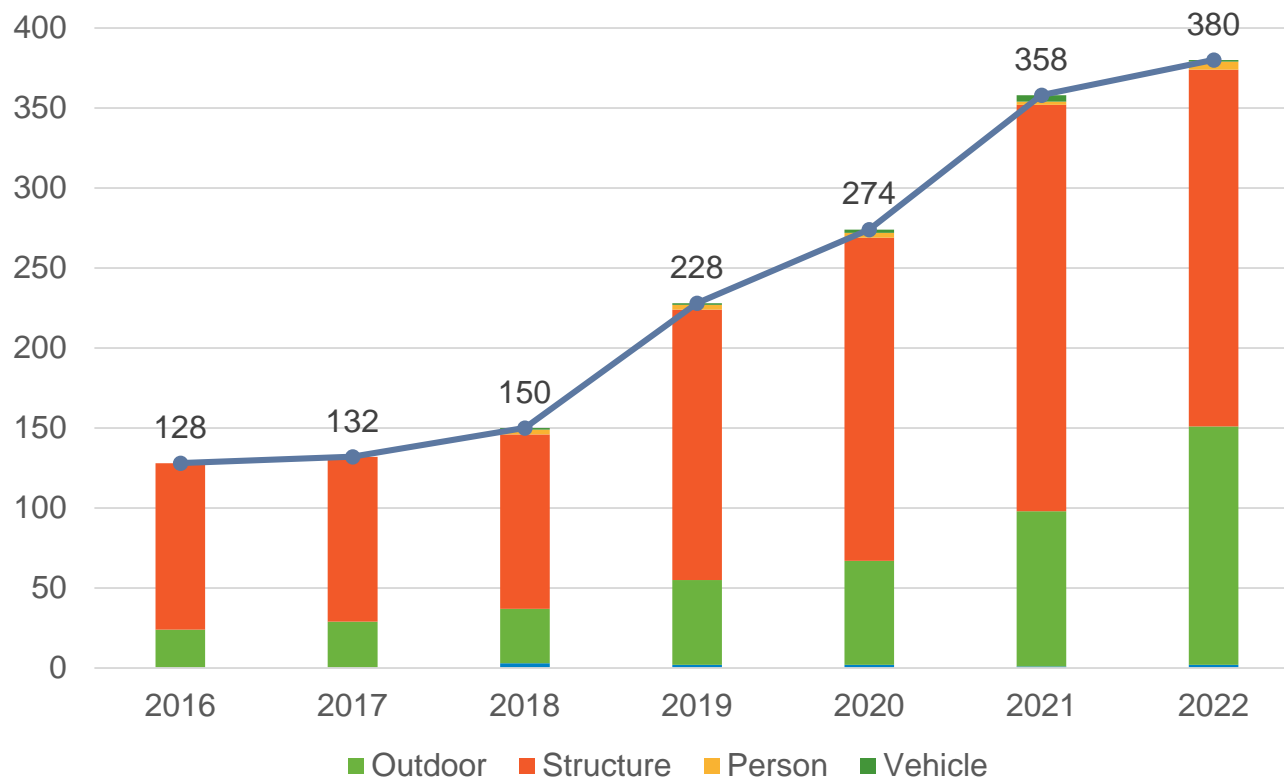
Annual Structure Fires in SROs, 2016-2022



114% increase in
structure fires in
SROs between
2016 and 2022

3. Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs

SRO Fires by Report Type, 2016-2022

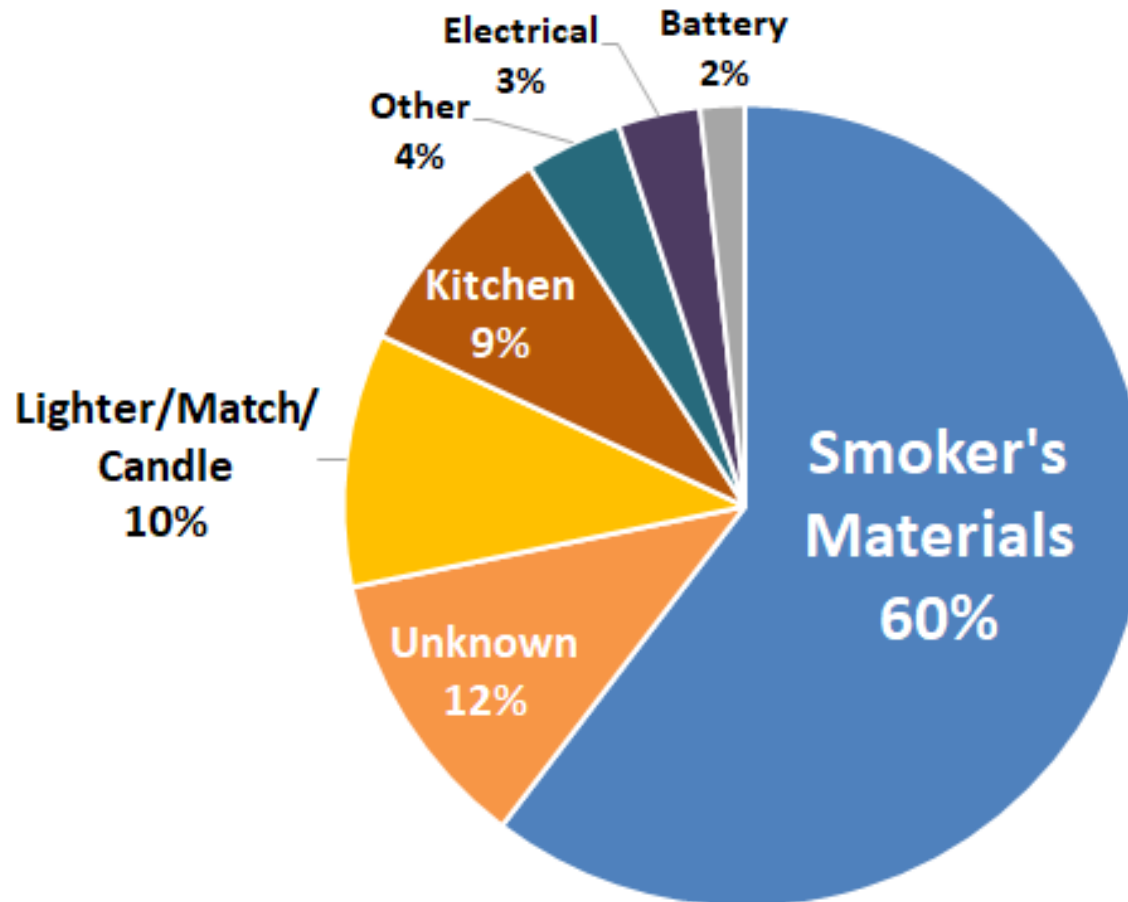


Total # of fire incidents in SRO's has almost tripled on an annual basis from 2016 to 2021

SRO fires as a % of total fires in the City has increased from 7% in 2016 to 11% in 2022

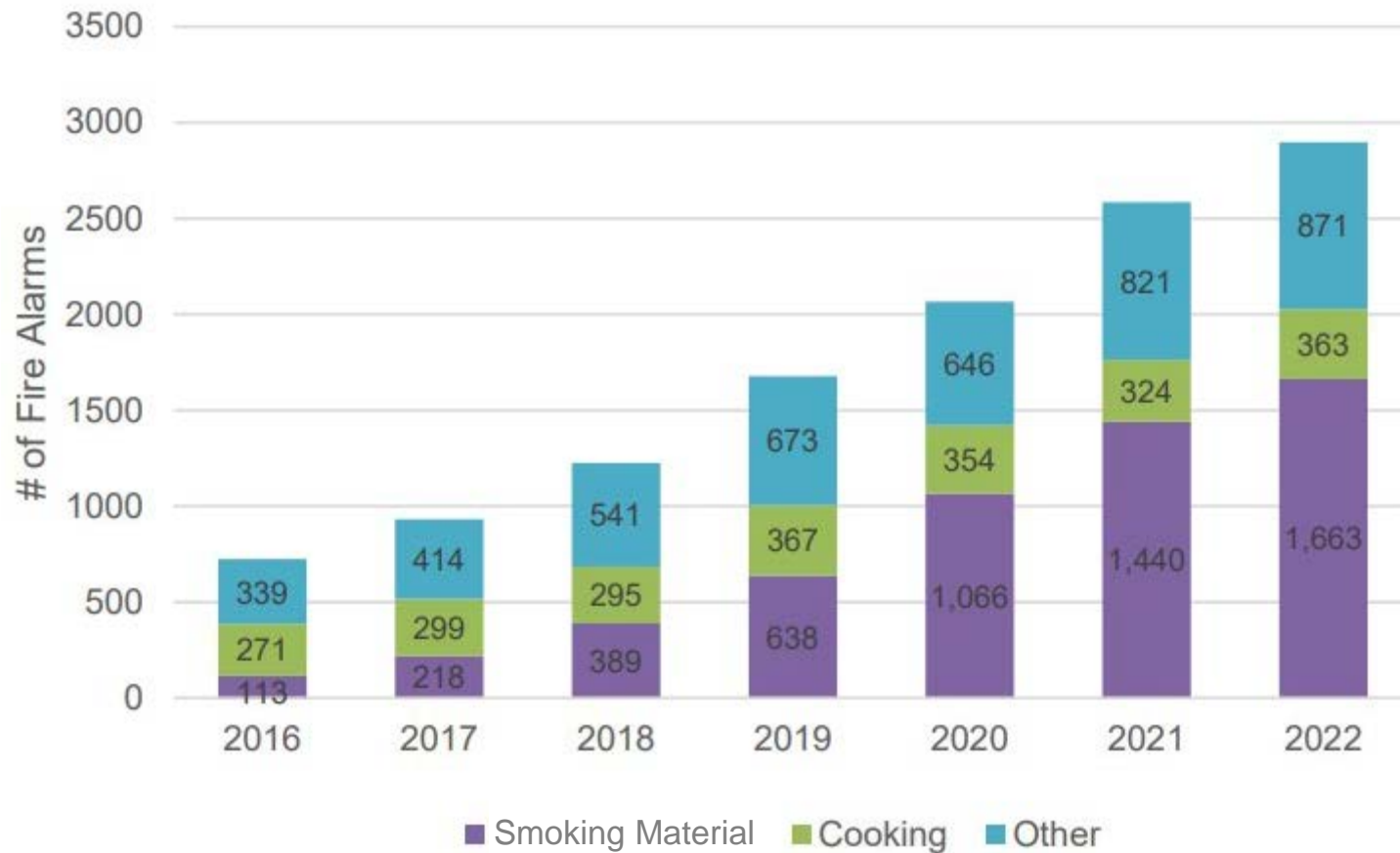
3. Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs

Igniting Object of SRO Fires, 2022



3. Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs

Causes of Fire Alarms, 2016-2022



4. City-Led Initiatives to Address Life Safety in SROs: Inspections and Enforcement

- SROs are inspected both annually and on a complaints basis to ensure compliance with City's by-Laws (ie: Standard of Maintenance, Fire By-Law, etc)
- Enforcement on non-compliance can include:
 - Municipal Ticket Information (VFRS)
 - Enforcement letter (DBL)
 - Legal Order (DBL)
 - Prosecution
 - Injunction
- City's tactical team (VFRS, VPD, Housing, DBL, Legal) meet monthly to prioritize SRO issues and coordinate actions



4. City-Led Initiatives to Address Life Safety in SROs: Fire Education

- In Summer 2022, VFRS introduced fire prevention education program for SRO owners and operators
- Includes on-site training, fire safety walk through, review of fire procedures
- To date, staff from 28 SRO buildings (16 non-market and 12 private) have attended
- Ongoing discussions between VFRS and BCH to address impacts of fire alarms in BCH SROs



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- Assisted living
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FIRE PREVENTION

Educating staff and tenants on how to create a safer building by recognizing unsafe situations and the need for Fire Watch procedures.



BUILDING SAFETY

Prevention inspection of housing locations with supervisory staff to address safety concerns and identify building fire safety components.



FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Identifying common problems and issues with fire protection systems and fire code expectations for maintenance and service.



FIRE EXTINGUISHER USE

Opportunities to have hands-on-training on the use of fire extinguishers to prevent fire spread and risk.

WE PROVIDE EDUCATION ON

5. Recommendation: Grant to SRO-C

- DTES SRO Collaborative Society established in 2015 to improve habitability, safety and housing security for residents living in private SROs
- Focus is on tenant-centered, peer to peer initiatives
- Resources a network of over 2,000 tenants with harm reduction, room repairs, cleaning, food, Indigenous cultural support and tenant committees



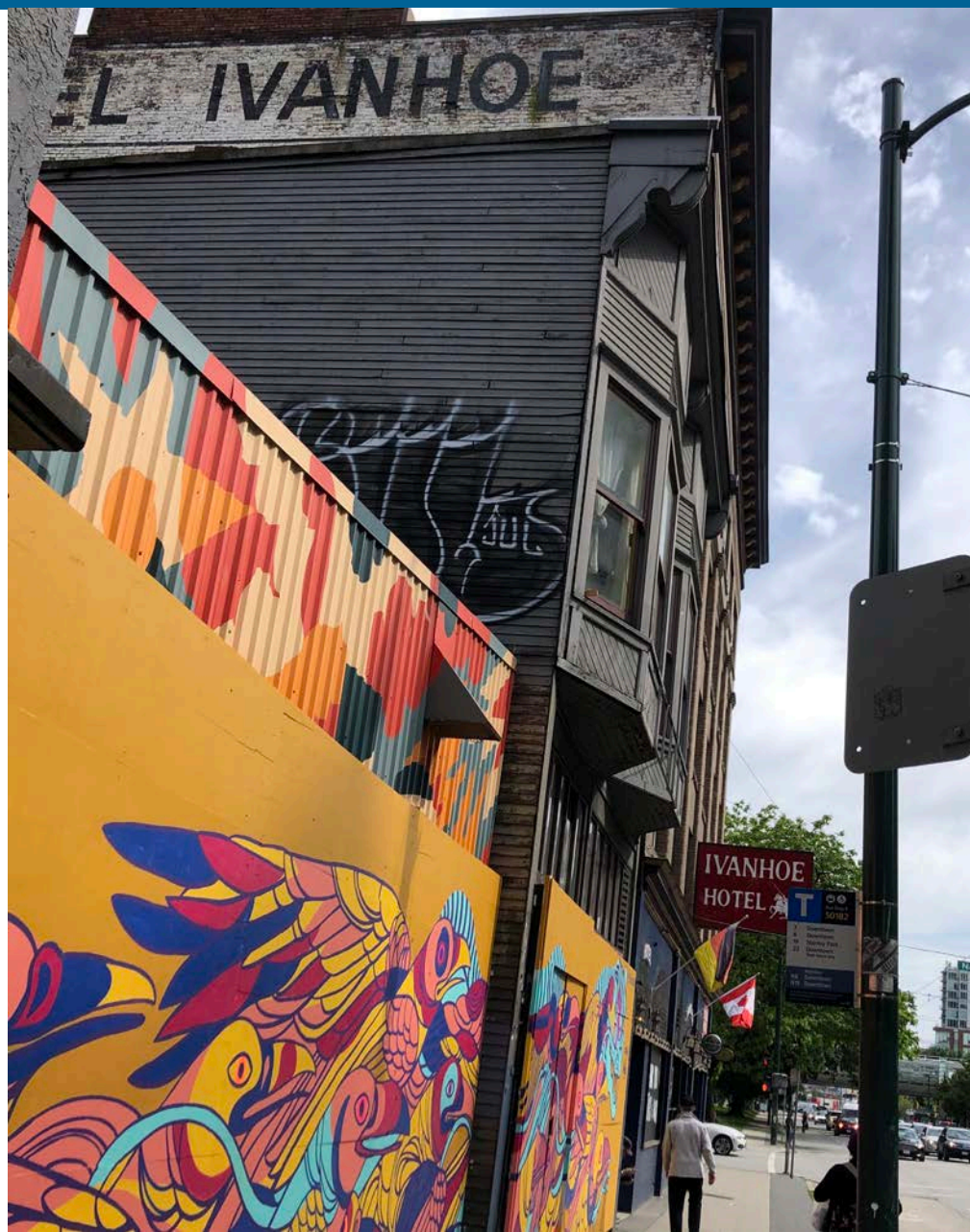
5. Recommendation: Grant to SRO-C

- Staff recommend grant of \$110,000 to SRO-Collaborative to implement a fire safety preparedness pilot program for SRO tenants
- Target 18 SROs (8 private and 10 Chinese Benevolent Society-owned) to reach ~740 tenants
- Fills a gap by **reaching residents directly** through tenant-centered approach:
 - fire safety workshops for lead tenants
 - development of building maps/escape routes
 - tenant needs survey
 - distribution of multilingual fire safety materials
- Builds on success of previous SRO-C tenant-centered initiatives



6. Other Actions on SROs

- VFRS to continue with owner/operator fire safety training
- SRO Intergovernmental Investment Strategy (led by ACCS) to identify priority SRO buildings for renovation/ replacement with self-contained social housing
- Comprehensive review of City By-Laws (with focus on Standards of Maintenance By-Law) to improve life safety of residents, particularly SROs



Thank You!

