



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: January 24, 2023
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Meeting Date: January 31, 2023
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Arts Culture and Community Services, Fire Chief and General Manager of Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services, and General Manager of Development, Buildings and Licensing, and Fire Chief

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

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council authorize a grant totaling \$110,000 to the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society to fund the *SRO Fire Safety Preparedness and Response in SROs* pilot project outlined in Appendix A. Source of funding is the 2023 City of Vancouver's Operating Budget.
- B. THAT Council delegate its authority to the City's General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate) to negotiate and execute legal agreements disbursing the grants described in Recommendation A and containing the terms and conditions described in this Report and any other terms and conditions that the City's General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services and its Director of Legal Services deems necessary.
- C. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of Recommendations A through B unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Approval of Recommendation A constitutes a grant and requires an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of all of Council pursuant to Section 206(1) of the Vancouver Charter.

Purpose and Executive Summary

The following report is a joint effort between Arts, Culture and Community Services (ACCS), Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS), and Development, Buildings and Licensing (DBL). Over the past two years, there has been an increased number of significant fire incidents in Vancouver's Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings. This report seeks Council's approval

of a Grant valued at \$110,000 to the SRO-Collaborative to implement a tenant-led fire safety pilot program in 18 SRO buildings, reaching approximately 740 tenants. The report also outlines fire safety education and prevention work currently underway to decrease fire risks in SROs.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

Resilient Vancouver Strategy: In April 2019, Council approved the Resilient Vancouver Strategy which outlines holistic steps to identify and address shocks and stresses faced by Vancouver, and cultivate Thriving and Prepared Neighbourhoods, Proactive and Collaborative City Government, and Safe and Adaptive Buildings and Infrastructure.

Housing Vancouver Strategy: In 2017, Council approved the Strategy including endorsing the SRO Revitalization Action Plan as part of Housing Vancouver, which includes actions to improve the liveability of SRO rooms and buildings for existing residents while working to accelerate replacement of SRO rooms with new, self-contained shelter rate social housing units inside and outside the Downtown Eastside (DTES).

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

Context and Background

Overview of the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing Stock

For many of the City's very low-income residents, SRO rooms in 100-year old hotels and rooming houses provide a necessary housing of last resort. Located primarily in the Downtown Eastside, approximately 7,200 residents make their homes in this congregate-style housing, usually sharing bathrooms and cooking facilities.

As of December 2022, there were 154 open SRO buildings containing approximately 7,200 rooms. Fifty-two percent of SROs are privately owned while 48% are considered non-market owned, meaning they are owned by Government (municipal or provincial), non-profits, or Chinese Benevolent Societies. See below for a breakdown of open SRO rooms by ownership type. An additional 13 SRO buildings (778 rooms) are currently closed. SRO rooms (both open and closed) make up approximately 7% of the entire rental stock.

Table 1: Open SRO Stock by Ownership Type

Owner	# SRO Buildings	# SRO Rooms
Private	91	3,724
BCH Housing	34	2,232
City of Vancouver	7	419
Non-Profit	13	660
Chinese Benevolent Society	9	155
TOTAL	154	7,190

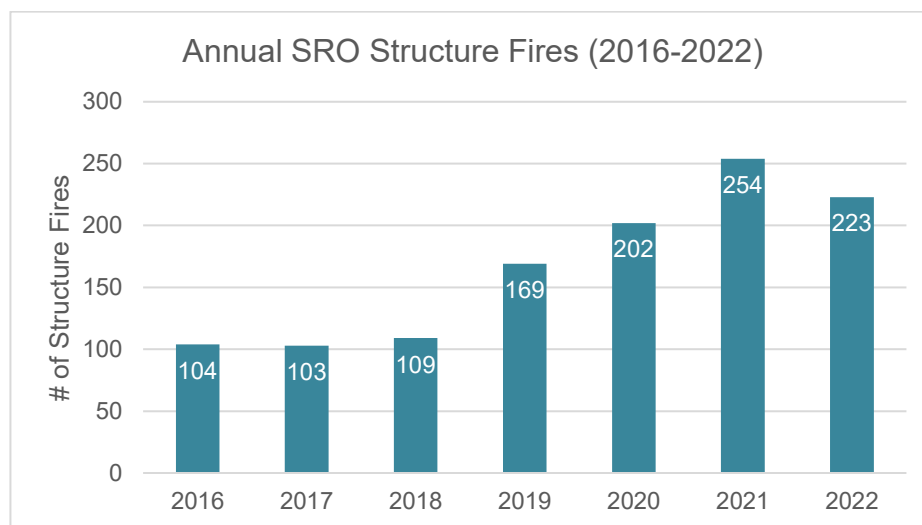
Overview of Recent Fire Incidents and Alarms in SROs

SROs are at increased risk of fires due to their ageing infrastructure, including electrical systems that may be overloaded, sprinkler systems designed to an older standard, and older alarm systems that require constant maintenance or repair. In buildings with poor heating systems, tenants may resort to other methods to keep warm that increase fire risks. Furthermore, many SRO tenants use electric bicycles for transportation, which they store in their rooms, putting them and their buildings at risk of lithium battery explosions.

SRO tenants are also at increased risk of fire-related harm due to factors such as a lack of proper ventilation and the limited means of egress in congregate housing. Tenants with health challenges and/or older age, mobility difficulties, or disabilities (e.g., deafness) are particularly vulnerable to fire-related harm, as are tenants who may be impaired by the use of opioids, other drugs, or alcohol, as well as tenants with heavily cluttered rooms.

Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in fire incidents in SRO buildings. Data from Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) indicates that the number of structure fires in SROs increased by 114% between 2016 and 2022 (104 structure fires in 2016 compared to 223 in 2022, as shown in Figure 1). In 2022, there were 380 fire incidents¹ in SROs, defined as any fire related response that VFRS may have responded to, with or without reportable fire damage. Of these fire incidents, 70% were caused by smoking materials and the mishandling of lighters, candles and matches, 5% were electrical and battery-related, and 9% were kitchen related. In 2022, fires in SROs accounted for 11% of all fires citywide, compared to 7% in 2016.

*Figure 1: Number of Structure Fires in SROs (2016 – 2022)**



**Data collected by Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services*

The fire at the Winters Hotel (located at 102 Water Street) on April 11, 2022 was the largest and deadliest SRO fire in Vancouver in recent years, causing two deaths and the permanent displacement of all 71 tenants. Due to extensive damage, the Chief Building Officer subsequently issued an emergency demolition order for the building. An additional six significant fires occurred in SROs in 2022, resulting in the temporary or permanent displacement of over 400 residents, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: 2022 SRO Building Fires Resulting In the Temporary or Permanent Displacement of Tenants

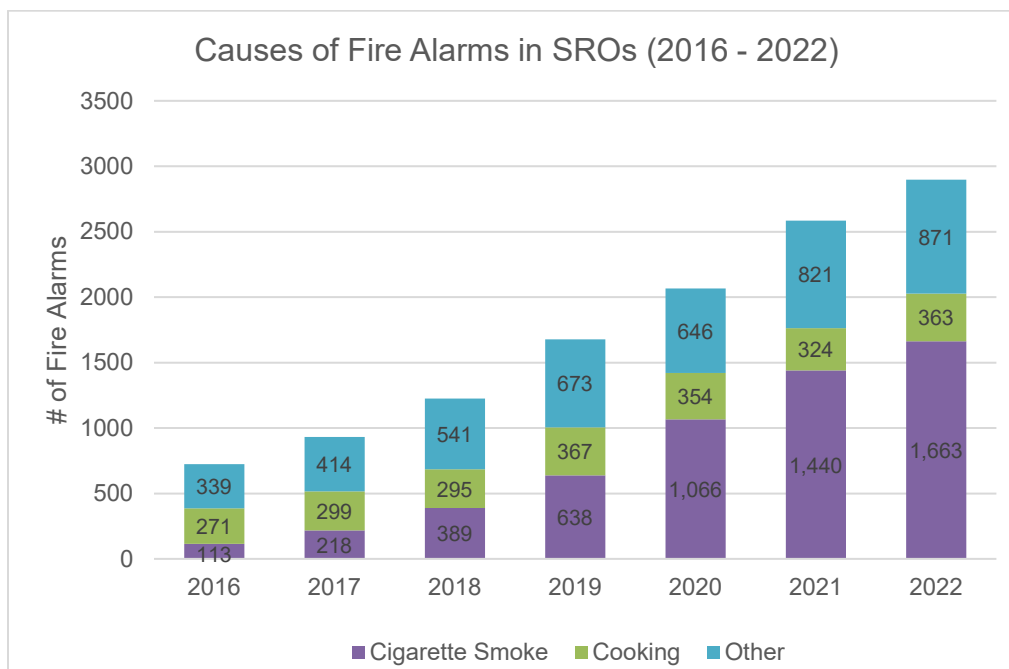
¹ Fire incident is categorized as any fire related response that VFRS may have responded to, with or without reportable fire damage. This can include interior and exterior fires, and illegal burning of combustibles controlled or not.

Building Name	Address	Date of Fire	Number of Tenants Displaced*
Winters Hotel	102 Water St	April 11, 2022	71
Gastown Hotel	112 Water St	April 11, 2022	90
Princess Rooms	212 Princess Ave.	August 22, 2022	38
Hampton Rooms	568 Powell St	August 22, 2022	25
Keefer Rooms	727 Keefer St	September 9, 2022	39
Sereena's Place	143 Dunlevy Ave	September 24, 2022	54
Hazelwood Hotel	344 E Hastings St.	September 29, 2022	100
TOTAL			417

*Tenants were displaced for up to two weeks or longer, or in some cases tenants were permanently displaced due to significant fire damage (i.e. Winters Hotel)

VFRS data also highlights the increasing over-representation of SROs in regards to alarm responses compared to other buildings over the same time period. Fire alarms in SROs requiring VFRS response made up 22% of all alarms in Vancouver in 2022, a rise from 16% in 2019. Fire alarms in SROs averaged at nearly 8 per day in 2022, compared to 2 per day in 2016. Figure 2 shows that fire alarm responses in SROs are increasingly being triggered by the detection of smoking material, often in the common areas such as hallways.

Figure 2: Causes of Fire Alarms in SROs (2016 – 2022)*



*Data collected by Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

In addition to the potential life safety impact indicative of this high number of fire alarms, there is also a significant financial and resource impact on VFRS, as the department is required to respond to all alarm activations. For fire alarms in SROs, a typical VFRS response requires two apparatus (i.e. firetruck), and eight VFRS staff.

Current City-led Initiatives to Address Life Safety in SROs

The overall goal of City staff is to maintain and improve living standards for tenants living in SROs. Staff from various inspections departments including Property Use, Building and Trades, and Vancouver Fire, work with SRO building operators and owners to promote by-law compliance. The City proactively inspects all SRO properties through an annual inspection process to ensure compliance with all City by-laws, including the SRA By-Law, the Fire By-Law, and the Standards of Maintenance By-Law. In addition to the proactive inspection, City staff also investigate all complaints received concerning SROs. During the inspection process, inspectors identify life safety and non-life safety issues for follow up. Should a violation be noted during an inspection, enforcement action is taken to bring the property into compliance. The enforcement escalation process may include a Municipal Ticket Information (VFRS), enforcement letter and/or a legal order. If there is continued non-compliance following the expiry of an order, the City may refer the file to prosecution, proceed to injunctions and/or place a notice on title.

In addition to the individual department's inspection and enforcement processes, the City has a Tactical Team, which includes representatives from Proactive Enforcement, Buildings, Property Use, Legal Services, VFRS, VPD, and Affordable Housing. This team meets monthly on cross departmental items to review, discuss and identify actions for SROs that are at higher risk of non-compliance with various municipal by-laws. A dedicated Property Compliance Inspector, under the Proactive Enforcement branch, coordinates reviewing all outstanding violations, complaints, VPD and VFRS data to prioritize the groups' actions on SRO buildings through a coordinated, integrated approach.

In response to the rapidly increasing number of fire incidents and alarms in SROs over the last few years, VFRS initiated a fire prevention education program for SRO building owners and operators in the summer of 2022. The program, led by VFRS' Community Safety and Risk Reduction team, includes individual on-site training, fire safety walk-throughs with building owners and operators, and a review of fire safety procedures. VFRS has been reaching out to all SRO buildings to encourage participation in this free training program. As of December 2022, 175 building operator staff in 28 SRO buildings (including 16 non-market SROs and 12 private SROs) have attended this training.

VFRS have also met with BC Housing to discuss the impacts of fires and alarms in their buildings and have worked on strategies to address this, including ensuring that all staff working in BCH-owned SROs have the opportunity to receive fire safety training. Staff from VFRS are also working on implementing a data sharing agreement with BC Housing to assist in identifying and addressing buildings that are most impacted by fire/alarm responses.

Discussion

Grant Proposal: SRO Fire Safety Preparedness and Response

Staff are seeking Council's approval of a grant totalling \$110,000 to enable the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society (SRO-C), a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency, to improve fire safety preparedness and response through a tenant-centred approach. This one-year pilot project (March 2023 – March 2024) will operate in 18 SROs, including eight privately-owned buildings and ten Chinese Benevolent Society buildings, reaching approximately 740 tenants in total. The SRO-C has established a strong foundation with tenants and landlords for tenant-led initiatives in these buildings, which is a key factor for the successful implementation of this pilot. This relational foundation was strengthened through the supports the SRO-C provided to tenants during the summer of 2022 as part of the City-funded *Preparing for Extreme Heat in SROs* pilot project.

The grant will enable SRO-C to hire an SRO Fire Safety Coordinator and the development and implementation of fire safety materials and training in 18 SRO buildings. Key components of the pilot include:

- Development and delivery of three workshops for 18 lead tenants (one per building) in partnership with VFRS on fire prevention, safety and response, including training on conducting weekly fire safety checks in common areas in buildings and proactively flagging fire safety issues with SRO-C staff.
- Distribution of multilingual fire safety pamphlets to 2,000 SRO rooms.
- Coordination of fire safety surveys among tenants to collect baseline data on fire preparedness and specific supports needed in the event of a fire.
- Creation of building maps for each building with the support of the SRO Fire Safety Coordinator that highlight fire risk factors, escape routes, and information on tenants with pets or additional assistance needs in the event of a fire.
- Organization of annual fire drill by the SRO Fire Safety Coordinator and 18 lead tenants
- Development of a systemic fire safety checklist for the SRO-C's BOLTS (Building Operations Led by Tenants in SROs) to incorporate into their regular maintenance routine.

The complete grant proposal submitted by the SRO-C is available in Appendix A, including the list of buildings, a detailed work plan, and a budget breakdown for the requested grant amount.

Staff from both ACCS and VFRS are supportive of the grant as a strategic investment in supporting ongoing efforts to address an alarming increase in fire incidents and fire alarms in SRO buildings. The pilot project will build on current City-led fire prevention and education initiatives implemented by VFRS in the SRO stock, filling a gap by reaching and educating tenants directly. Through previous and current initiatives, including the *Emergency COVID-19 Response* and the *Tenant Overdose Response Organizer (TORO)* program, the SRO-C has demonstrated its extensive experience in implementing tenant-based initiatives that educate, mobilize and empower SRO tenants to improve health and safety conditions in their buildings.

Ongoing Actions to Address Life Safety in SROs

The magnitude of the challenges associated with ageing SROs that house tenants with multiple, complex challenges requires significant investment across all levels of government to ultimately replace this outdated stock with self-contained, dignified, and deeply affordable housing. Staff are currently working with CMHC, the Ministry of Housing and BC Housing on an SRO Investment Strategy to evaluate and identify SRO buildings for renovation, redevelopment, or replacement off site. In the interim, other City actions are being explored to address habitability and life safety in SROs.

In response to a Council motion in February, 2022, Staff in VFRS, DBL, ACCS and Legal services are undertaking a review to improve effectiveness of City By-Laws that protect the life and safety of occupying residents, especially those living in SROs. The review is focused on the Standards of Maintenance By-law, but amendments to other by-laws including the Vancouver Building By-law, Fire By-law and the Single Room Accommodation By-law may be considered. Areas of review include maintenance monitoring and reporting, enforcement tools and incentives to encourage compliance, education for tenants and landlords, cooling and heating requirements, pest control, and fire safety systems and related requirements. Staff expect to report back to Council with recommendations in November 2023.

Emergency preparedness, particularly around fires and extreme temperatures, is an urgent priority in SROs, most of which are over 100 years old and house tenants with multiple, complex challenges. This report seeks Council's approval of an SRO Grant valued at \$110,000 to the SRO-Collaborative to implement a tenant-led fire safety pilot program in 18 SRO buildings, reaching approximately 740 tenants. Approval of this grant will increase SRO tenants' fire safety awareness and preparedness as part of larger efforts to reduce fire alarms and fire incidents in the already deteriorating SRO stock, reduce the financial and resource impacts on VFRS and, most importantly, help protect the safety and lives of SRO tenants.

Financial Implications

Funding for the Grant included in Recommendation A will be provided through the 2023 City of Vancouver's Operating Budget.

Funds will be released in two payments, with release of the second payment conditional on receipt of a report to the satisfaction of the Managing Director, Housing and Homelessness Services.

Legal Implications

Once the City and the grant recipient have executed the grant agreements contemplated in the Recommendations, the City must disperse the grant described in Appendix A to the grant recipient.

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APPENDIX A

DTES SRO Collaborative Grant Proposal: Fire Safety Preparedness and Response



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December 6, 2022

PROPOSAL

Fire Safety Preparedness and Response in SROs

"And we have a restaurant under there, and I always have this feeling: what happens if a fire starts from the restaurant? Who is going to get it first? I'm above the parking lot so I'm way in the back, right, so I wouldn't get hit, but it would be people who are in the front. Now if there was an explosion in there, we would get hit also. You know, and that's my biggest issue is the downstairs. It scares me, mainly because they're always cooking, constantly, and there's lots of grease down there, cause my son goes and cleans out their vats. And he comes back and he's like, 'Woah!' Cause sometimes they're like 6 to 10 inches thick on the ground. Now think about how much he has to clean, a small area of grease all around? And that's underneath the stoves and stuff, like, why are you doing that? That's not very hygienic! Or even safe!"

- Tenant from Keefer Rooms, Spring 2022

ABOUT US

The Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society (SRO-C) exists to improve habitability, safety, and housing security in the privately-owned Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs), which is the housing stock of last resort before homelessness. Currently, we resource a network of 2,325 tenants with harm reduction, room repairs, cleaning, food, Indigenous cultural support, and tenant committees. We are a non-profit society that has raised over \$2M/year thanks to support from diverse government and foundation partners. We have helped

dozens of community groups to get more involved supporting tenants in these privately-owned SRO hotels, and together we all represent a crucial contribution to this sector of the Downtown Eastside, Granville, and Chinatown communities.

From April 2020 to March 2022, the SRO-C operated a COVID-19 Emergency Tenant Response program in 60 SROs, including in Chinatown, supporting tenants with food, PPE, prevention supplies/training, and support to get immunizations. This was necessary because SROs are congregate living environments with shared bathrooms and common areas, with a small few having shared kitchens. Between June and July, there were 619 heat-related deaths across BC, with 457 (75%) of these occurring within the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Health authorities.¹ Many of these deaths occurred in the Downtown Eastside, and several in privately owned SRO hotels.² From July 2022 to September 2022, the SRO-C operated an Extreme Heat Emergency Response program in 20 SROs, including 11 Asian-language majority SROs, supporting tenants with water, cool kits, first aid training, and education around extreme heat.

WHAT'S THE CHALLENGE?

Through our work, we have learned that emergency preparedness, particularly around fire and extreme temperatures, is an emerging and urgent priority for SROs, which have an average building age of over 100 years and where a majority of tenants face multiple vulnerabilities. The SRO Collaborative's emergency preparedness and response programs have provided life-saving support for vulnerable SRO tenants.

SROs are at great risk of fires. Many of these aging buildings are in a state of disrepair, including electrical systems that can be overloaded. In the context of poor heating systems, tenants may resort to using candles to stay warm. While SROs do have sprinkler systems, there are many challenges when it comes to fire prevention and response: sprinkler systems are outdated, fire alarm bell wires are sometimes severed, and we have learned that many tenants are unaware that their landlords/building managers are responsible for resetting fire systems after they have been activated. Many SRO tenants rely on electric bicycles for transportation, which they must store in their rooms – putting them and their buildings at risk of lithium battery explosions.

¹ Extreme Heat and Human Mortality: A Review of Heat-Related Deaths in B.C. in Summer 2021. Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia. Release Date: June 7, 2022

² 10% of total heat-related deaths occurred in social housing, single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, or supportive housing. Extreme Heat, 2022.

Several factors increase the risk of fire-related harm for SRO tenants in case of fire, such as a lack of proper ventilation and the limited means of egress in congregate housing. Tenants with health challenges and/or older age, mobility difficulties, disabilities (e.g., deafness) are particularly vulnerable to fire-related harm, as are tenants who use drugs and tenants with heavily cluttered rooms.

In April 2022, the Winters Hotel was destroyed by fire, killing at least two tenants, in part because protocols were not in place to reset the fire system after a previous fire. In September 2022, Keefer Rooms suffered major damage as a result of a fire that started in the restaurant below. Thankfully, the SRO-C had strong relationships with the tenants of Keefer Rooms, and all the tenants (and their pets) made it out of the building safely and found replacement housing. These recent fires bring home to us the disastrous consequences of SRO fires which result in tenant displacement, the destruction of tenants' belongings, and sometimes the tragic loss of life. The Winters fire scared many SRO tenants, and they are increasingly advocating for more support around fire safety. Tenants have a vested interest in fire safety in their buildings, and increasing their knowledge can save lives.

THE SOLUTION

Through this proposal, the SRO-C aims to improve fire safety in 18 privately-owned and -operated SROs and Chinese Benevolent Society buildings in the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. This pilot program will build on our extensive experience implementing tenant-based initiatives and ability to motivate and mobilize SRO tenants (as well as landlords) into action. Our approach puts tenants at the centre of programming because we know that, in many ways, SRO tenants are the experts at identifying issues within SRO housing and coming up with solutions. This one-year pilot project will operate in 18 SROs, including 8 SRO Hub buildings (where the SRO-C has established a strong network of tenant-led programming) and 10 Chinese Benevolent Society buildings, representing a total of 739 rooms.

Three of the target buildings have relatively good property management and, as a result, generally have no fire violations and effective caretakers. Nevertheless, they have experienced fires/explosions caused by lithium batteries and restaurant grease in the last year. Five of the buildings could be labelled 'more challenging', and the remaining 10 buildings are owned by Chinese Benevolent Societies.

Our rationale for proposing these particular SROs for this fire safety pilot project is as follows:

- The 8 Hub buildings are in relatively fair condition, and preserving this middle-of-the-road SRO stock is critical.
- We have already built a strong foundation for tenant-led initiatives in these buildings with our existing tenant programs, including a tenant maintenance program in the 8 Hub buildings, and the Chinatown Grocery Program in the 10 Asian-language SROs.
- We have good working relationships with landlords, management, and tenants in these target buildings.
- These buildings have a balance of tenants with varying capacity and willingness to help their neighbours.
- The Chinatown buildings are in disrepair and are frequently ticketed. Caretakers/management often do not understand why they are being ticketed, nor do they have access to multilingual contractors who understand fire systems or who can help resolve the issues.
- Our relationships with these caretakers and tenants, and the structures for tenant-based organizing we already have in place within these buildings, will enable us to rapidly implement successful turn-key fire safety operations.

Table 1. Target Hotels for SRO-C Fire Safety Pilot

List of SRO Buildings for Fire Safety Pilot			
Name	Address	# Rooms	Chinatown Buildings
Arlington Hotel	575 E Pender	29	
Cobalt Hotel	917 Main	98	
Ferrara Court (Shon Yee Benevolent Assoc.)	618 E Hastings	50	X
Hing Mee Society	553 Prior	7	X
Hildon/Bourbon	50 W Cordova	131	
Keefer Rooms	218 Keefer	48	
King Rooms	322 Powell	33	
Lew Mao Way Tong 廖武威堂	349 E Pender	9	X
Lion Hotel	316 Powell	76	
Mt. Everest Rooms	242 E Hastings	25	X
Shakespeare Rooms	224 E Georgia	12	X
Summer/Sunwest	341 E Hastings	30	
Toi Shan_Phoenix 台山	237 E Hastings	33	X
West Hotel	488 Carrall	98	

Wu Chuk On Tong	359 E Pender	9	X
Vancouver Tsung Tsin (Hakka) Assoc. 客家	542 Keefer	8	X
Yin Ping Benevolent 恩平	414 Columbia	13	X
255	255 E Georgia	30	X
TOTAL		739	10

OVERVIEW OF WORKPLAN

In the **first two phases** of the pilot we will be onboarding staff and tenant workers, developing fire safety workshops, and training lead tenants to:

- Conduct multilingual fire safety surveys;
- Create building maps;
- Conduct walkthroughs with lead tenants and the Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) in each of the buildings; and,
- Connect with caretakers and management to identify fire safety issues.

These activities will help lead tenants, the SRO-C, and our funding partners better understand and respond to tenants' needs and challenges around fire safety in SRO housing.

The **third phase** of the pilot includes implementation of turn-key fire safety operations in each of the buildings, with tenants workers performing regular fire safety checks as part of their day-to-day responsibilities as well as organizing fire drills on an annual basis.

The project Evaluation will be completed as the **fourth phase** of the pilot. Activities include:

- Finalize the Evaluation plan;
- Conduct meetings, focus groups, as well as one-on-one with participants and key stakeholders
- Fire Safety Follow-Up Survey with a sample of tenants in each building; and,
- Complete Final Project Evaluation Report.

THE ACTIVITIES

Phase 1: Planning and Development

Activity	Description of Activity	Timeline
Recruitment and Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire and onboard staff for the SRO Fire Safety Coordinator position • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator works with relevant SRO-C Program Coordinators to recruit and onboard 18 tenants to lead fire safety operations in their buildings • Hire multilingual fire consultant to meet with Benevolent Society hotel owners in Chinatown to help them understand how to upgrade their fire systems so they no longer receive fire violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mar-Apr 2023: Hire and onboard SRO Fire Safety Coordinator • May 2023: Hire multilingual fire consultant • May–Jun 2023: Recruit and onboard 18 lead tenants
Develop educational materials and structures for turn-key fire safety operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator consults with VFRS, SRO-C Tenant Advisory Committee, and other stakeholders while working directly with SRO Hub, Chinatown Organizing, BOLTS and SRO Degree Program Coordinators to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant worker contracts • Data collection tools • Shared terminology on fire risks and prevention in English and Chinese dialects • Multilingual fire safety workshops • Multilingual fire safety pamphlet • SRO Degree Program Coordinator adds multilingual fire safety education as module in the SRO Degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May–Jun 2023: All materials and protocols complete by July 1, 2023

Phase 2: Education and Training		
Activity	Description of Activity	Timeline
Fire Safety Training & Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 lead tenants complete 3 multilingual workshops on Fire Safety and Response, and place sticker on their door so their neighbours know they are trained in fire safety. Workshops will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of SRO fires and how this relates to tenants' hotels in the present day • Causes, prevention, and preparedness • Protocols that landlords and the VFRS follow before, during, and after fires in SRO buildings • How to conduct surveys and create building maps • Train lead tenants to flag fire safety issues that will be documented during weekly one-on-one meetings with staff • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator helps organize fire safety training walkthroughs with lead tenants and VFRS for each of the 18 buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note: We will use the first set of building walkthroughs to work with VFRS to develop and solidify a train-the-trainer approach for walkthroughs, with the aim of building capacity to carry out walkthroughs without direct presence of VFRS in the long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun–Jul 2023: First 18 lead tenants complete workshops and CIR training • Jul–Nov 2023: 18 building walkthroughs with VFRS and lead tenants
Fire Safety Awareness Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute multilingual fire safety pamphlet across the 18 buildings as well as other SRO buildings where the SRO-C has programming (2,000 rooms total) • Include multilingual fire safety pamphlet in SRO move-in kits • Produce two special editions of the Raven Newsletter on fire safety, with anecdotes and real life stories that educate and inspire tenants to take action around fire safety • Distribute two Fire Safety editions of Raven newsletter to 2,000 rooms • SRO-C staff, including Fire Safety Coordinator, consult with SRO and Chinese Benevolent Society building caretakers to understand what support they need and provide referrals for caretakers/managers interested in VFRS fire safety training, and facilitate dialogue with the City, VFRS, and landlords about gaps and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jul 2023: Pamphlets distributed to 2,000 units • Jul 2023: First Raven fire safety newsletter distributed to 2,000 units • Jul-Aug 2023: Consultations with building caretakers

Phase 3: Tenant-Led Fire Safety Operations		
Activity	Description of Activity	Timeline
Multilingual Fire Safety Surveys & Building mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator supports lead tenants to conduct 75 multilingual Fire Safety (baseline) Survey with tenants across the 18 buildings (reaching ~10% of tenants in these buildings) in order to engage in informative conversations on fire safety with their neighbours and gather: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline information on tenants' experiences around building fires, fire safety, false alarms, etc. • Tenants' understanding of existing fire safety protocols/plans in their building • Interest in receiving fire safety training • Any pets that need rescuing if fire occurs when tenant is not home • Tenants requiring assistance in the event of a fire (e.g., mobility difficulties, health challenges, alternate way of alerting those with hearing impairments) • Existing or potential buddy systems • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator supports lead tenants to create building maps that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathered through surveys, • Pre-existing information on tenants with pets/tenants in need of assistance in the event of fire, • Fire risk factors such heavy clutter (i.e., hoarding) • Building layout, marshaling areas, and escape routes • Lead tenants maintain up-to-date building maps and share them with relevant tenant committees, caretakers, and SRO-C staff so all parties can be more helpful before, during, and after a fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun-Jul 2023: Complete 75 'baseline' surveys with tenants in 18 buildings • Jun-Aug 2023: Complete building maps for all 18 buildings
Fire Safety Checks and Fire Drills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator and lead tenants organize annual fire drills in the 18 buildings, which will jointly function as BBQs so as to encourage participation of all tenants in each of the buildings • BOLTS (Building Operations Led by Tenants in SROs) tenant workers incorporate systematic fire safety checklist into their regular maintenance routine in SRO units, ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoke detectors are connected and working • Outlets in rooms are not burnt, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun - Nov 2023: Fire drills and BBQs • May 2023 - ongoing: BOLTS crew completes Fire Safety Checklist in rooms whenever

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rooms have clear path from door to window• Door hinges are functioning and doors can close properly• Whether doors have or need weather stripping• Windows can be opened• Nothing hanging from sprinkler system• Make note of any other potential fire hazards (e.g., toaster ovens, space heaters, e-bikes/lithium batteries, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRO Fire Safety lead tenants carry out systematic fire safety checklist once per week in the common areas in their buildings, ensuring:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fire alarm wires not snipped/disconnected,• fire hoses folded,• points of egress are clear of obstacles and exits are accessible in the event of fire,• nothing hanging from sprinkler system, and• fire extinguishers are full and not expired	<p>they do maintenance work (~3 times per week), continuing indefinitely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jul 2023 - ongoing: SRO Fire Safety lead tenants complete fire safety checklist in their buildings once per week
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Phase 4: Evaluation		
Activity	Description of Activity	Timeline
Evaluation Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO-C staff, including SRO Fire Safety Coordinator, develop evaluation plan and framework in consultation with lead tenants and funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr–May 2023: Develop Evaluation plan and framework
Meetings, focus groups, interviews, and follow-up survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator and lead tenants organize one (1) meeting with VFRS and all tenants involved in the training and education activities to discuss SRO Fire Safety Pilot's successes and challenges • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator holds two (2) evaluation focus groups with lead tenants • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator interviews lead tenants • SRO Fire Safety Coordinator works with lead tenants to conduct up to 75 Fire Safety Follow-Up Survey (~10% of tenants in the buildings) to measure impact of project activities on fire safety issues, awareness, and response in their buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–Early Mar 2024: Evaluation
Final Project Evaluation Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluator to analyze data collected from surveys, interviews, focus groups • Complete final Project Evaluation Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb - Mar 2024

BUDGET

The total proposed budget for this project is \$110,000. This includes program funding for:

- 1 FTE Fire Safety Coordinator (\$67,580.00) who will coordinate this project;
- A multilingual fire consultant (\$3,000) who will work with the project Coordinator and other SRO-C Chinatown staff to help managers and caretakers of Chinese Benevolent Societies-owned SROs develop a better understanding of fire-prevention requirements, needs and resources;
- Peer-pay honoraria (\$14,420) for lead tenants who will implement project activities in their buildings (see Table 2 detailed honoraria budget);
- Printing costs (\$3,000) for a fire safety pamphlet and two editions of the Raven focused on fire safety;
- Food costs (\$3,000) for 18 fire drill BBQs and other workshops/meetings;
- Evaluator (\$9,000) to produce final Project and Evaluation Report;
- 10% for admin costs (\$9,000).

Budget Table 1. Overview

Item	Units	Cost
Fire Safety Coordinator (1 FTE)	52 weeks (April 1 2023 - Mar 31, 2022) x \$1299.60/week (based on 40 hours/week x \$28.50/hour plus 14% MERCs in lieu of benefits)	\$67,580.00
Multilingual fire consultant	\$75/hour x 10 Chinatown SRO buildings x 4 hours / building	\$3,000.00
Peer Pay Honoraria for tenants	See Table 2 below for details	\$14,420.00
Printing for fire safety pamphlet and two special editions of the Raven Newsletter on fire safety	Printing 2,000 copies (\$0.50 per copy) x 3 publications	\$3,000.00
Food costs	Food (\$100 per event) for 18 fire drill BBQs, other meetings and workshops	\$3,000.00
Evaluator	Data collection/analysis, writing	\$9,000.00
Program Costs: SUBTOTAL		\$100,000.00
10% Admin		\$10,000.00
TOTAL		\$110,000.00

Budget Table 2. Honoraria Details

Item	Units	Cost
Multilingual fire safety workshops	18 tenants x \$40/workshop for 3 workshops	\$2,160.00
Safety training walkthroughs with lead tenants and VFRS	18 tenants x \$40/walkthrough	\$720.00
Distribution of fire safety pamphlet and two (2) editions of Raven newsletter	3 tenants x \$60 x 3 distribution runs	\$540.00
Multilingual Fire Safety Surveys	75 (10% of tenants in the 18 buildings) x \$10 (Gift cards) x 2 surveys + 75 hours of lead tenant honoraria (\$20/hour)	\$3,000.00
Building maps (by lead tenant working closely with Fire Safety Coordinator)	18 lead tenants x 6 hrs per building x \$20/hour	\$2,160.00
Fire drill BBQ	18 BBQs x 10 tenants per BBQ x \$20	\$3,600.00
Evaluation — successes/ challenges meeting with VFRS	18 tenants X \$40	\$720.00
Evaluation — tenant focus groups	10 tenants per focus group x \$40/focus group x 2 focus groups	\$800.00
Evaluation — interviews with lead tenants	18 lead tenants x \$40	\$720.00

SUBTOTAL (Honoraria)	\$14,420.00
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APPENDIX 1

DRAFT: JOB OPPORTUNITY

SRO Fire Safety Coordinator

Term of Employment: April 1st, 2022, to March 31, 2023
Hours: 40 hours/week

ABOUT THE JOB

The Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative (SRO Collaborative) is introducing an fire safety pilot program for tenants in privately-owned Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. The program will specifically address fire safety concerns facing SROs and help develop better fire safety planning and response systems in 18 privately owned SRO hotels. The SRO Fire Safety Coordinator will oversee implementation of this new program, including fire safety surveys and building mapping, organizing building walkthroughs with lead tenants and the Vancouver Fire Department, delivering fire safety education and training for tenants, and organizing annual fire drills.

BACKGROUND

There are 100 privately-owned SRO hotels in Vancouver's downtown area housing 4,000 tenants. The SRO-C works to improve habitability, health and safety for tenants of this housing stock, which oftentimes serves as a last resort before homelessness. The SRO-C provides programming in over 40 privately-owned SROs (~2,325 rooms), including tenant-led initiatives around building maintenance, food, harm reduction, indigenous cultural safety, and immunization. Currently, 130 tenants are employed as part of these tenant-led initiatives.

Through our work, we have learned that emergency preparedness is an emerging priority for SRO hotels, which have an average building age of over 100 years and where a majority of tenants face multiple vulnerabilities. In June 2021, Vancouver experienced unprecedented temperatures of over 35 degrees for six consecutive days. SRO hotels generally have no cooling systems and lack proper ventilation. A majority of SRO tenants are over 50 years of age and face multiple health challenges. And SRO hotels are at great risk of fires, with disastrous consequences – as demonstrated by the recent Winters Hotel fire.

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Community-based research:

- In cooperation with SRO Collaborative staff and tenant leaders, train tenants to carry out fire safety surveys with neighbours in their buildings.
- Ensure confidentiality and community-based research ethics standards while collecting and analyzing survey data.
- Research and review best practices of the San Francisco SRO Fire Safety Program and Training program.
- Present findings from fire safety surveys and best practices review to inform development of the SRO Collaborative's fire safety pilot program.

Oversee fire safety training for tenants:

- Recruit and train tenants with initial one-on-one meetings to onboard them into the project.
- Develop educational materials and co-facilitate fire safety workshops for lead tenants in 18 buildings.
- Work with SRO-C staff to tap into our existing networks to recruit tenants for all training sessions and workshops.
- Plan and coordinate fire safety building walkthroughs in 18 buildings in cooperation with the Vancouver Fire Department.
- Support lead tenants to create and maintain up-to-date building maps to assist with the development of fire safety plans and evacuation response.
- Coordinate and facilitate 'wrap-up' surveys and events with lead tenants.
- Write a report to funders about lessons learned and a plan for the program to be extended into future years.
- Work with lead tenants to publish articles about the fire safety program in two editions of the SRO-C's Raven Newsletter.

You will also be working closely with the Chinatown Organizing staff who will be helping you engage with Chinese-language tenants in 10 Chinatown SRO buildings to facilitate surveys, education, training opportunities.

QUALIFICATIONS

Experience

- A university degree and/or work experience related to public health, community development, or related field.
- Living/ working in the DTES community.
- Integrated Harm Reduction praxis.
- Integrated knowledge of structural oppression, cultural safety, and anti-racism.

Skills

- Solid organizational abilities, including planning, delegating, program development and task facilitation.
- Strong writing and oral communication skills.
- Excellent research skills, organization and attention to detail.
- Strong analytical and critical thinking skills.

- Sound judgment to navigate diverse perspectives and sensitive relationships.

WORKING CONDITIONS

- The position is a full-time position (40 hours per week) from April 1st, 2022, to March 31st, 2023 (with possibility of renewal, dependent on funding).
- The wage is \$28.50 per hour depending on experience.
- The position reports to the Executive Director of the SRO-C

HOW TO APPLY

Please submit your resume and cover letter that clearly documents how you meet the requirements outlined in this job posting to michelle@srocollaborative.org

ABOUT US

The **SRO-C** is a non-profit organization that works to improve habitability, affordability, health, and sense of belonging for 4,000 tenants living in Vancouver's privately-owned Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs). Tenants who live in this niche of the last market housing before homelessness are living in the worst housing conditions in Vancouver with shared bathrooms and no kitchens. Established in 2015, the SRO-C has grown to operate multiple tenant-based initiatives in fifty hotels, including ten in Chinatown, around immunization, food, harm reduction, maintenance, culture and tenant committees. These initiatives are supported by 15 staff members, over 100 peer workers, as well as dozens of funders and community partners. Our goal is to create a large, long-term network of tenants who can grow to support each other, address collective needs and plug into a stronger community. Through this network, tenants are part of longer term efforts to redevelop the SRO housing that they currently live in, into decent, affordable, self-contained housing. About 150 of SRO tenants are seniors who live in Chinatown Hotels with an average of 15 units in each building. These seniors speak mostly in multilingual Chinese dialects. All of these seniors face enormous social and economic systemic barriers to good health care, housing and other social support.

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT: SRO Fire Safety Survey

Ethics statement:

This survey was created by, and will be administered by, the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative. The purpose of this survey is to find out if your building is prepared for fires, what (if any) fire safety protocols are in place, and to learn how to help you and other tenants make your buildings more safe. Your answers will be handled with care and confidentiality in our office. This survey is anonymous – when we analyze the answers, they will not be attached to any names. Please feel free to use an alias. One exception is that if you would like us to help make a plan to protect your pet in case of a fire, we can do that if you ask us to in that part of the survey.

Demographic Questions:

Name(or alias):	Address:
Date of birth:	Room #:

What is your gender identity? What are your preferred pronouns?

Do you identify as indigenous? If yes, what nation?

Y N _____

Fire Safety:

1. How long have you lived in the building, in years? (ex. 6 months = 0.5 years)

_____ years

2. How frequently do fire alarms go off in your building?

☐ More than once per week

☐ More than once per month

☐ More than once per year

☐ Less than once per year / Never

Comment: _____

3. Have there been any problems with the functioning of fire alarms?

- Y N If yes, what problems?

4. Have there been any problems with the fire department being alerted?
- Y N If yes, what problems?

5. Have there been any problems with the sprinkler system?
- Y N If yes, what problems?

6. When an alarm goes off, do you leave the building right away?
- Y N
- a) If not, why not?

- b) If not, when do you decide to leave?

7. Are there any problems with tenants exiting the building?
- Y N If yes, what problems?

8. What is your opinion of the fire escape?

9. Does your building have an elevator?
- Y N If yes, what % of the time is it functional? _____ %
10. Have you been provided with information on how to respond to fire in your building?
- ☐ Fire safety drill ☐ Fire safety training ☐ Written materials
- ☐ Other _____ ☐ No
11. Would you like to be involved in paid training around fire safety in your building?
- Y N Maybe
12. (Optional) Do you require assistance evacuating the building in the event of a fire?

Y N

13. (Optional) Do you have a pet(s) that may need rescuing if you're not home?

Y N

- a. If yes, would you like us to contact you about finding a way to protect your pet in the event of a fire?

Y N

Pet Info:

Comments:

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?
