

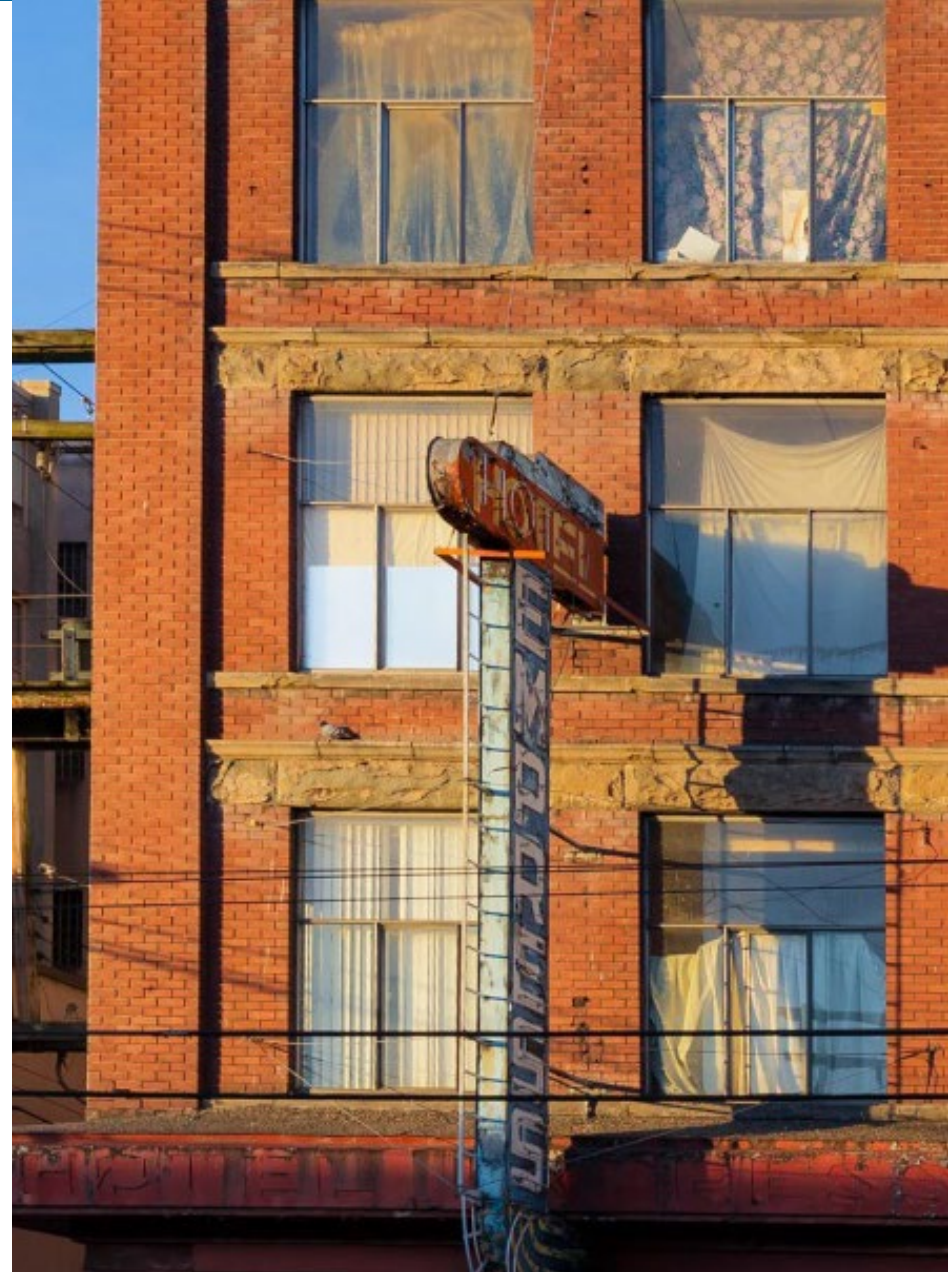
SRO Update, 2023 Low-Income Housing Survey and Proposed SRA By-law Amendments

Council Presentation

May 30th, 2023



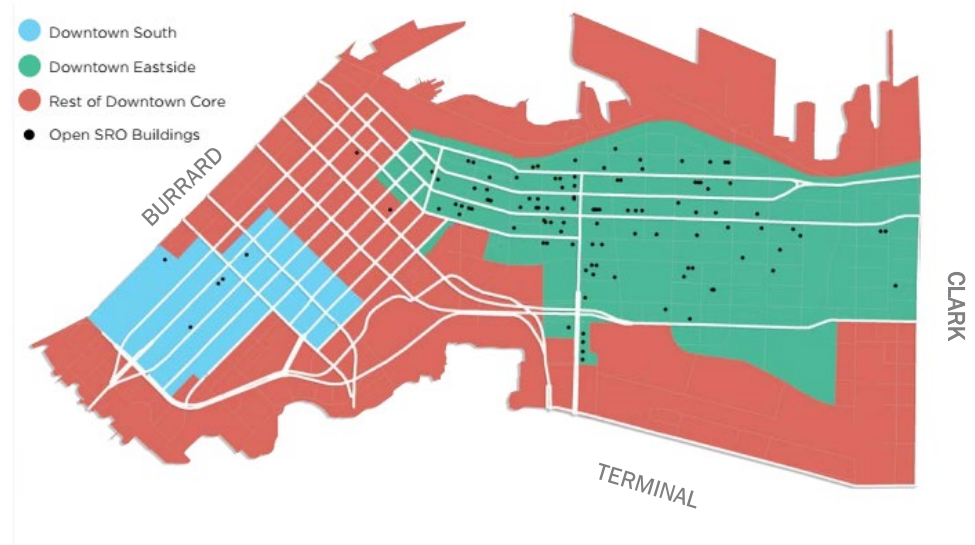
1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs
2. Low-Income Housing Survey and Recent Trends in SROs
3. SRO Replacement and Update on SRO Investment Strategy
4. Proposed Recommendations to Improve Life Safety, Livability and Affordability for Tenants in SROs



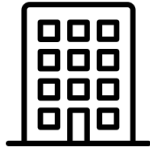
What is an SRO?

SROs are all rooms that were designated under the Single Room Accommodation By-Law in 2003.

- Rooming houses and residential (SRO) hotels in the Downtown Core
- Non-market housing with rooms or self-contained units less than 320 ft².
- Most are ~100 sf with shared bathrooms and cooking facilities



1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs



Unsheltered

Shelters

SROs

Supportive
Housing

Social
Housing

Market
Rental

Ownership

SROs are an important part of the housing continuum and are considered a **housing of last resort before homelessness** for many low-income residents.

There are currently **146 open SRO buildings (~6,500 rooms)**, mostly located in the DTES.. About half are privately owned and half are government or non-profit owned.

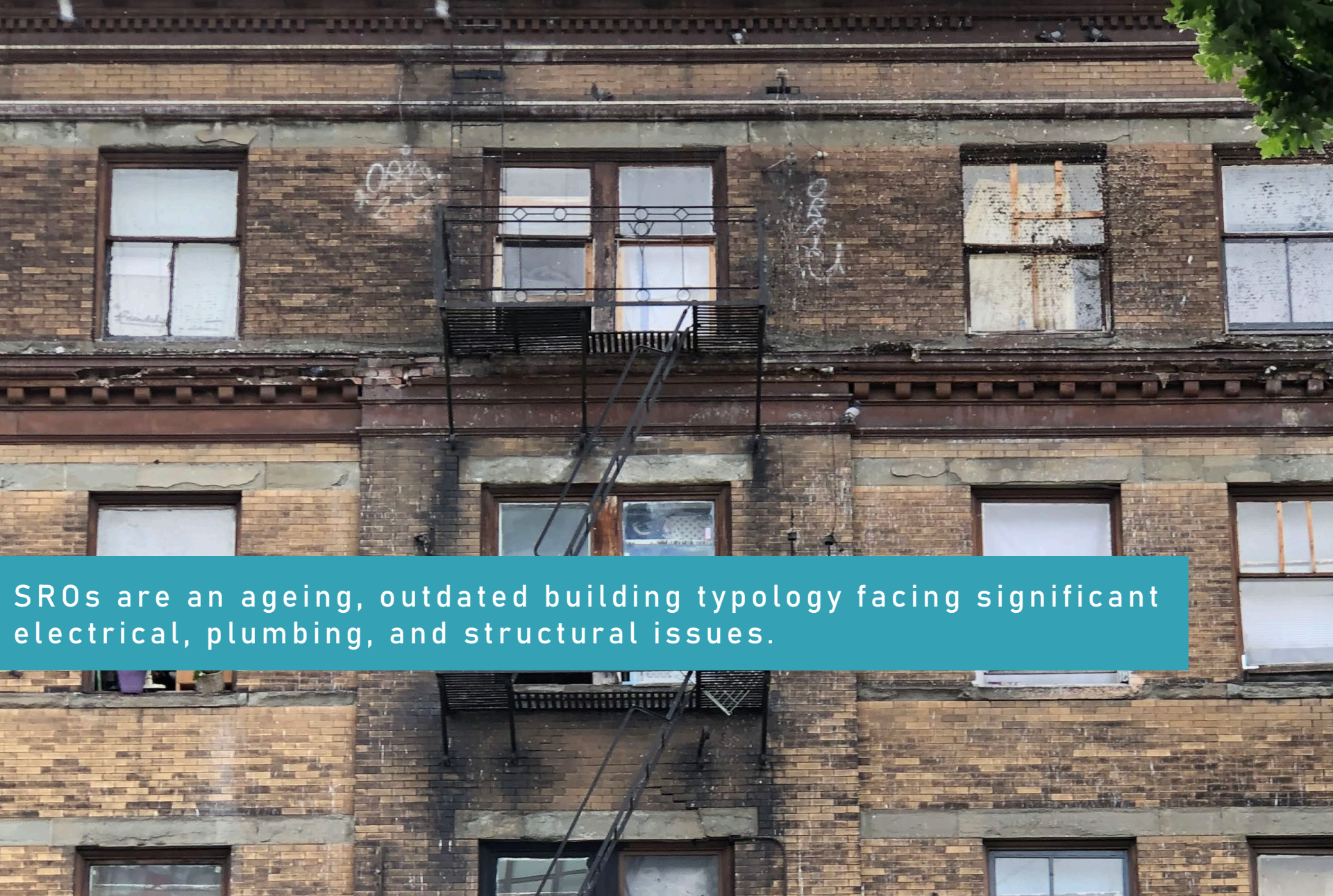
1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs



~6,500 residents make their homes in private and non-market SROs.

- Most SRO residents are on income assistance and many experience complex health and/or substance use challenges.
- Many residents report poor living conditions: pests, mold, no heat or hot water, broken elevators, and mobility challenges.
- Other residents report fear and intimidation and pressure to leave so landlord can raise rents in privately-owned SROs

1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs



SROs are an ageing, outdated building typology facing significant electrical, plumbing, and structural issues.

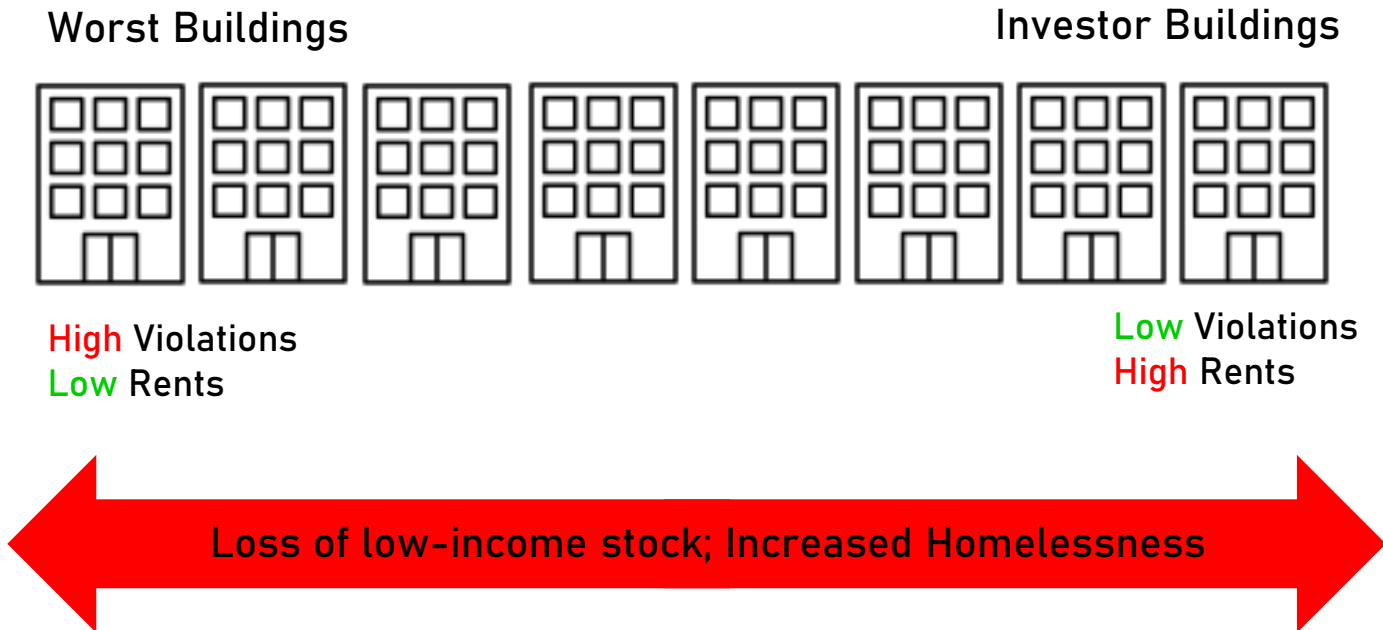
1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs



In privately-owned SROs, the economics of adequately operating and maintaining ageing buildings at rents affordable to those on income assistance **are no longer feasible without external subsidies.**

1. Introduction: Vancouver's SROs

This is intensifying two troubling trends in the private SRO stock: **unsafe conditions and building closures** in the worst buildings, and **loss of affordability** in the better buildings.



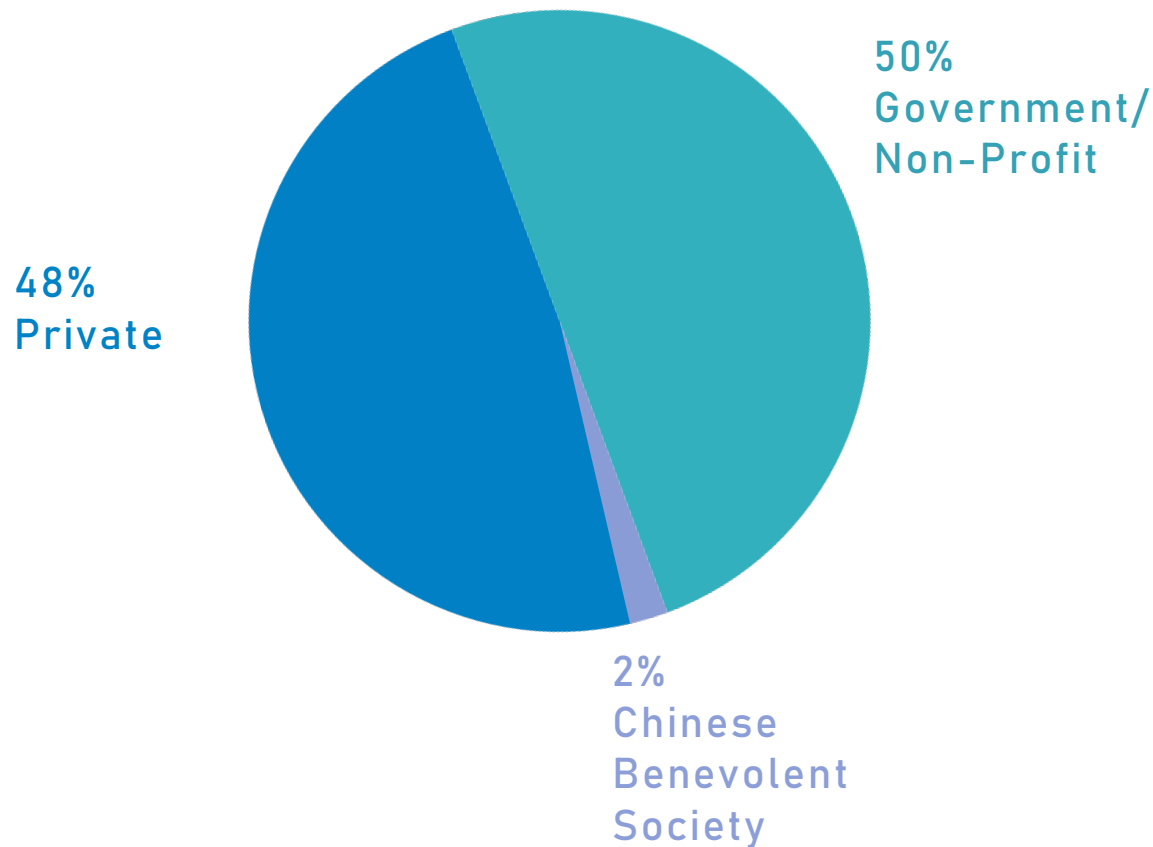
2. Low-Income Housing Survey and Recent Trends in SROs

- Low-Income Housing Survey of Downtown Core conducted every two years since 1992
- Tracks changes in low-income housing (private SROs and non-market housing) over time in Downtown Core
- Reports out on openings, closures, vacancies and rents in private SROs.
- City also tracks trends in SROs through other data sources, including VFRS data, sales reports, data from government partners, SRO Tenant Surveys



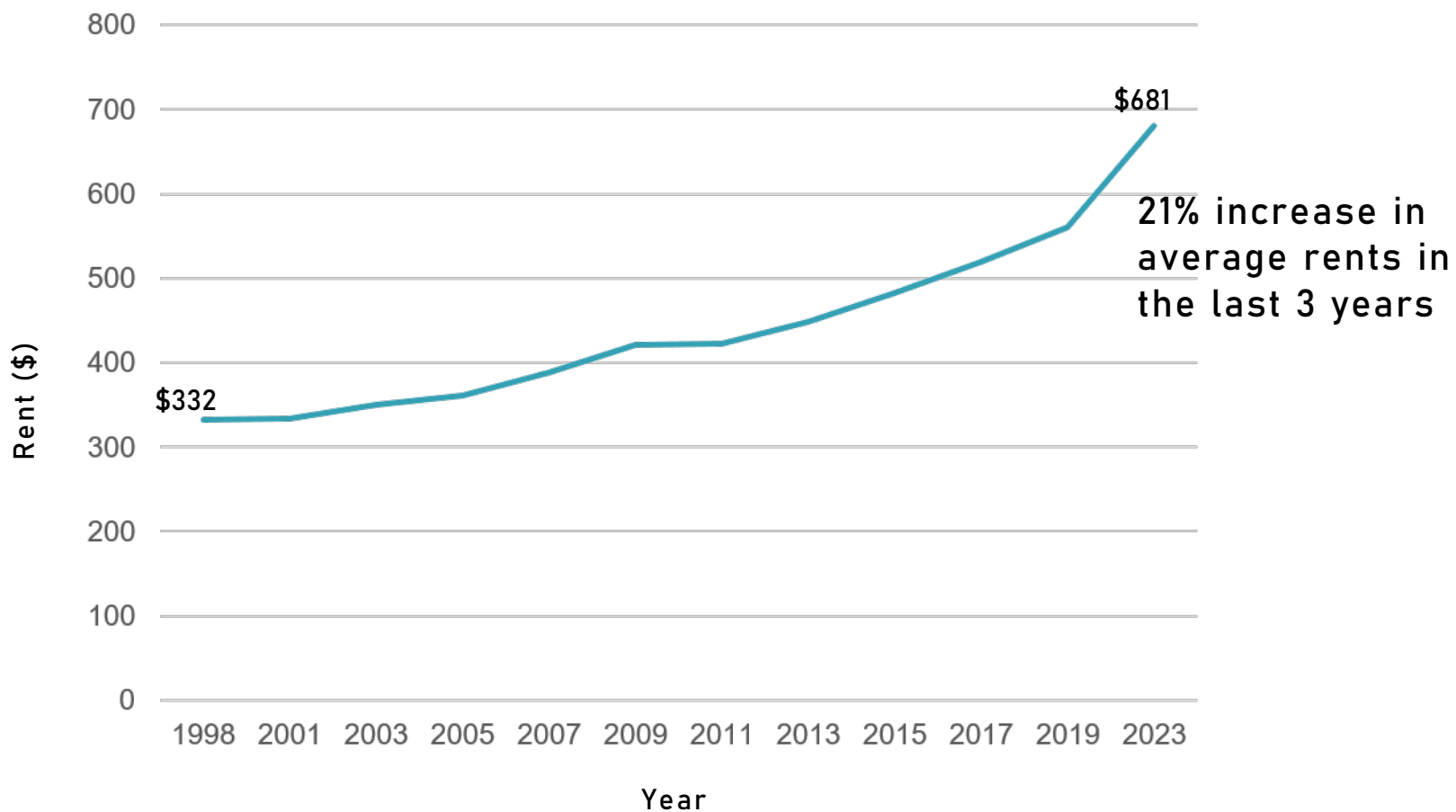
2. Low-Income Housing Survey and Recent Trends in SROs

Private SROs are increasingly being brought under public ownership.



2. Low-Income Housing Survey and Recent Trends in SROs

Private SRO rooms are no longer affordable to those on income assistance.



2. Low-Income Housing Survey and Recent Trends in SROs

Private SRO rooms are no longer affordable to those on income assistance.

- Only 25 privately-owned and operated SRO rooms rent at shelter rates (currently at \$375 for a single, will increase to \$500 this July)
- Over 900 rooms rent at \$700+
- Rents increase faster in buildings that are sold (average 10% annually compared to 4%)



Building Closures from System Failures and Fires are Increasing

- In last 3 years, 9 SROs with over 360 rooms were closed due to fires or City orders
- In total, 16% of the SRO stock (22 buildings with over 1,200 rooms) is closed or was recently demolished



3. SRO Replacement and Update on SRO Investment Strategy



The increasing number of fires and building closures, the Covid-19 pandemic and recent climate events (heat dome/ arctic snap) have all highlighted **the urgent need to replace existing SROs** with new, self-contained, shelter rate social housing.

3. SRO Replacement and Update on SRO Investment Strategy



Despite collaborative government efforts to deliver new shelter rate and supportive housing, the demand is outpacing supply.

Increasing homelessness means we continue to rely on SROs for housing.

3. SRO Replacement and Update on SRO Investment Strategy

- Intergovernmental Strategy underway to accelerate replacement of SROs through portfolio-based approach
- City, BC Housing/ Province and CMHC have each contributed one third of ~\$2 M required for staffing/ consultancies to develop strategy
- Primary work streams include engagement and project prioritization/ building assessments



3. SRO Replacement and Update on SRO Investment Strategy

SRO replacement projects already underway:

- Balmoral Hotel: demolition underway to make way for redevelopment, commemoration efforts in partnership with Indigenous partners
- Regent Hotel: lease being finalized for renovation to self-contained units
- Other SRA redevelopments approved or underway, Shaldon, Creekside, 307 Main St.



4. Recommendation B (i) and (ii): Protect SRO Tenants from Displacement and Mitigate Speculation

Proposed SRA By-Law amendments:

- Recommendation B (i): Expand definition of “demolition” in SRA By-Law to include owner’s neglect or intentional action that leads to rooms being uninhabitable or unsafe
- Recommendation B (ii): Increase SRA By-Law Conversion fee from \$230,000 to \$300,000



4. Recommendation B (iii) (iv) and (v): Expedite SRA Permits

Proposed SRA By-Law amendments to expedite SRA Permits and Improve Efficiency:

- Recommendation B (iii): Enable application for SRA permit and other permits concurrently
- Recommendation B (iv): Authorize GM of ACCS to approve all SRA permits where 3 or fewer rooms are being lost and operations/ livability is being improved
- Recommendation B (v): Authorize GM of ACCS to approve all SRA permits where applicant is provider of social housing and rooms will be secured as social housing



4. Recommendation C: Grant to Improve Life Safety in SROs

- Proposed Grant of \$50,000 to DTES SRO Collaborative to expand fire safety preparedness and response pilot in private SROs , including un-sprinklered buildings
- Expansion to additional 18 buildings (36 buildings total), reaching additional 500 residents
- Tenant-centered, peer to peer activities: fire safety workshops and building walkthroughs with lead tenants and VFRS



Next Steps

- Update Council as work progresses on Intergovernmental SRO Investment Strategy
- Advance redevelopment/renovation sites: Balmoral, Regent
- Conduct SRO tenant survey to better understand demographic profile and safety and security needs of SRO tenants
- Work with Planning on DTES Plan review



Thank You!!

