

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

3. Piloting Pod Hotels in Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillor Kirby-Yung and Councillor Dominato

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver has a severe lack of hotel rooms as identified in the September 2023 motion Addressing the Hotel Supply Gap to Support the Tourism Economy and Reduce Pressure on Local Housing;
2. Vancouver will be host to a number of upcoming large events including the Invictus Games in 2025 and FIFA in 2026;
3. Council's direction to prioritize new hotels has helped enable a number of hotels proposals that are currently in various stages of the City's zoning and approvals processes, but they will require years to complete rezoning, development approvals, building permit approvals, and construction;
4. Smaller room hotel accommodation (for example, "pod hotels") can meet the near-term (as well as longer-term) demand for affordable, high-quality, and well-managed overnight accommodation as part of Vancouver's hotel room mix, and reduce the immense pressure for short-term rentals on Vancouver's limited rental housing stock;
5. The recent construction and completion of ~3 million square feet of new office space in the Metro Core during last five years, combined with changing workplace attendance post-pandemic, has created significant office space vacancy in the city particularly in older office buildings and commercial heritage buildings; and
6. All other British Columbia municipalities administer the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC), which permits the change-of-use from existing office to hotel use with only project-based building structural upgrades for life safety and seismic hazard due to similar level of risk, while the Vancouver Building By-Law (VBBL) uniquely currently requires cost-prohibitive full-building upgrades for the same change-of-use application.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council acknowledges the hotel shortage in Vancouver, and the potential for Pod Hotels to help fill the gap, support innovation, and provide a more affordable visitor accommodation option, leading up to and in time for FIFA 2026 and beyond.

- B. THAT Council acknowledges there is opportunity to more fully explore Vancouver's specific developmental and building regulatory requirements as they apply to Pod Hotels integration into existing commercial office building stock, particularly with respect to the scope of structural upgrading, while duly considering safety and accessibility, and directs staff to review existing regulations and report back on the findings of the review as soon as possible;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to include in the report back, an assessment of how enabling ongoing temporary use and occupancy as Pod Hotels in existing commercial office space might afford the Chief Building Officer with greater authority to facilitate the administration of such projects under the current set of regulatory requirements (as well as the ability to require periodic review and improvement), vs enabling permanent use or a permanent use pilot program through changes that would align the Vancouver Building By-law with the BC Building Code for required building upgrades for the adaptive re-use of existing office space.