



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: May 6, 2025
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Meeting Date: May 20, 2025
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Upgrading Grants

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve two grants totaling \$660,000 from the 2025 SRO Upgrading Grant Capital Budget to Raincity Housing and Support Society ("Raincity") to support capital improvements to the SRA-designated properties at 215 Princess Avenue (Princess Rooms) and 514 East Cordova (The Vivian) subject to:
 - i. All required development and building permits having been issued by the City and;
 - ii. Raincity entering into and registering on title two separate Housing Agreements with the terms outlined in Appendix B and otherwise upon such terms and conditions as the Director of Legal Services in consultation with the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services may require.
- B. THAT Council approve two grants totalling up to \$36,000 (\$6,000 per building floor) from the 2025 SRO Upgrading Grant Capital Budget to Raincity Housing and Support Society ("Raincity") to implement fire safety upgrades at 215 Princess Avenue (Princess Rooms) and 514 East Cordova (The Vivian) in accordance with recent Fire By-Law amendments that require the installation of sprinkler isolation valves.
- C. THAT Council approve one grant of \$200,000 from the 2025 SRO Upgrading Grant Capital Budget to Community Builders Benevolence Group ("CBG") to support capital improvements at 1060 Howe Street (The Metson Rooms), subject to:

- i. All required development and building permits having been issued by the City and;
 - ii. CBG extending the existing lease with the owner, Prima Properties, for an additional 5 years (until 2030).
- D. THAT Council approve one grant of \$25,000 from the 2025 SRO Upgrading Grant Capital budget to The Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society to support capital upgrades to the SRA-designated property at 237 East Hastings.
- E. THAT Council approve three grants to the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society ("SRO-C"), including a grant of \$75,000 towards the "Building Operations Led by Tenants" (BOLT) program, a grant of \$99,800 to fund the "Heat Preparedness and Response" program, and a grant of \$120,000 to fund fire safety initiatives in private SROs. Source of funds is the 2025 SRO Upgrading Grant Capital budget and the 2025 Housing and Homelessness Services Operating Budget.
- F. THAT, pursuant to Section 206 (1) (j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council deems any organization that is to receive a grant pursuant to the above recommendations which is not a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency, to be an organization contributing to the health and welfare of the City.
- G. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that include terms and conditions that are consistent with this report, that satisfy the City's Director of Legal Services, and that disburse the grants described in this report to the City's General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate).
- H. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of these Recommendations unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Approval of recommendations A, B C, and D require 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members per section 206 (1) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval of nine grants totalling \$1,215,800 to support capital improvements and initiatives that support maintenance and fire safety in SROs.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

Please see Appendix A for all aligned Council Authority and Previous Decisions.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Most SROs are over 100 years old and require significant investment and upkeep to remain operational and safe for residents, including addressing the ongoing need for capital maintenance and upgrades.

The Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Upgrading Grant Program was first approved as part of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Local Area Plan implementation in 2014. The grant program provides funding to non-profit housing operators to improve livability and life safety conditions in SRO buildings, while also securing affordability for low-income residents. Grants are received on a rolling basis, and must demonstrate that they contribute to increased safety and liveability for tenants living in SROs.

Discussion

Staff are recommending Council approval of nine grants totalling \$1,215,800 that will contribute to capital improvements in aging SRO buildings, as well as projects that support ongoing maintenance and fire safety in SROs. A summary of each grant recommendation is below.

Recommendations A

215 Princess Avenue (Princess Rooms)

The \$420,000 grant recommended to Raincity will support capital upgrades to the Princess Rooms, a 42-room SRO located at 215 Princess Avenue that is currently vacant. A significant portion of the building was damaged by a fire in August 2022, resulting in the closure of the building and the emergency relocation of 42 residents. Raincity has also secured capital and operating funding from BC Housing. The proposed upgrades being recommended in this report include the replacement of windows (including new trim and coverings), new cabinetry, and the replacement of the plumbing system, including new showers and sinks throughout the building. The capital upgrades enabled by this grant will contribute to the building being able to re-open as much-needed housing for 42 low-income residents.

The funding will be subject to Raincity entering into and registering on title a Housing Agreement that secures the rents to the shelter component of income assistance (currently at \$500 for a single individual) for a period of 15 years.

512 East Cordova (The Vivian)

The second grant recommended to Raincity in the amount of \$240,000 will be used for capital upgrades to the Vivian, a 24-room supportive housing SRO located at 512 East Cordova Street. Raincity also owns this property and has secured capital and operating funding from BC Housing. The proposed upgrades recommended in this report include mold remediation, roof repairs, building envelope investigation to identify energy efficiency issues, and window retrofits to improve insulation and reduce energy consumption.

The funding will be subject to Raincity entering into and registering on Title a Housing Agreement that secures the rents to the shelter component of income assistance (currently at \$500 for a single individual) for a period of 10 years.

Recommendation B

Additional funding of up to \$36,000 is being recommended to Raincity to comply with recent fire by-law amendments implemented in response to the Winter's Hotel Fire in 2022.

The fire by-law amendments require owners of residential and care occupancy buildings to add sprinkler isolation valves so that sprinkler shutdown and maintenance can be limited to one floor without impacting sprinkler protection in the remainder of the building. The new measures will need to be implemented within one year of By-Law enactment (June 2025) and are anticipated to cost approximately \$6,000/floor, which can be cost prohibitive for buildings with very low rents.

The additional funding will support installation of the isolation valves on three floors at 215 Princess Avenue (Princess Rooms) and three floors at 512 E Cordova (The Vivian). Council has previously supported non-profits to comply with the by-law amendments through the approval of grants to 10 Chinese Societies that own and operate SROs (RTS 16230).

Recommendation C

1060 Howe Street (The Metson Rooms)

The \$200,000 grant to CBG recommended in this report will be used for capital upgrades including repairs to all windows and doors, as well as plumbing upgrades. The Metson Rooms provides 100 tenants with supportive housing, including six beds for the recovery program for patients being discharged from St. Paul's Hospital, as well as a 40-bed shelter. CBG leases the building from a private developer, Prima Properties. This grant will be subject to CBG and Prima Properties extending their existing lease for an additional 5 years, until 2030.

Recommendation D

237 East Hastings Street (Phoenix Hotel)

The grant of \$25,000 to The Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society being recommended in this report will contribute towards roof repairs to the Phoenix Hotel, a 32-room SRO located at 237 East Hastings. The Society received an SRO Upgrading grant in November 2024 for \$185,000 to complete extensive interior upgrades to common bathrooms, showers and kitchens, on the condition that they enter into and register on Title a Housing Agreement that secures 11 rooms at the shelter component of income assistance for a period of ten years. The additional grant will fund roof repairs to further improve the safety, liveability and longevity of the building.

Recommendation E

SRO-Collaborative

The three grants to the SRO-C being recommended in this report will support the organization's ongoing initiatives to improve safety and liveability for residents living in private SROs. Should Council approve this recommendation:

One \$75,000 grant will enable the BOLTS (Building Operations Led by Tenants) program to expand from 8 privately-owned SRO buildings with 492 rooms in 2024 to 12 privately-owned SROs with 762 rooms in 2025. BOLTS crew members contribute to building upgrades and maintenance by undertaking minor repairs, as well as responding to cleaning and maintenance requests from neighbors in their buildings.

The second grant of \$120,000 will enable the SRO-C to expand its SRO Fire Safety Preparedness and Response program from 22 SRO buildings with 1,300 rooms in 2024 to 38 privately-owned SROs 1,493 rooms in 2025, including 13 Chinatown SROs. Specific program initiatives include recruiting fire safety volunteers, developing literacy-friendly SRO fire safety educational materials, delivering fire safety training workshops, conducting fire safety drills, and coordinating training with tenants and Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) on specific topics (for example, use of fire extinguishers).

A third grant of \$99,800 will enable the SRO-C's Heat Preparedness and Response program to operate from June to September, 2025 in 41 SROs (2,078 rooms), including 10 buildings in Chinatown. The program supports tenants during the summer months through initiatives like bottled water distribution in the community, wellness checks with vulnerable neighbours, regular indoor temperature measurements to alert tenants when temperatures reach dangerous levels, and training for tenant volunteers on how to prevent and respond to heat-related illness.

Financial Implications

This report is recommending a total of \$1,215,800 in funding to nine projects that support capital and life safety improvements to the existing SRO Stock. The source of funds is the SRO Upgrading Grant Capital Budget for five grants totalling \$996,000, and the 2025 Housing and Homelessness Services Operating Budget for two grants totalling \$219,800.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On March 12th 2014 (RTS 010175) Council approved the Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan and reaffirmed the program to provide grants (\$5,000 per door) (SRO Upgrading Grants) to non-profit societies to upgrade rooms designated under the Single Room Accommodation Bylaw <https://council.vancouver.ca/20140312/documents/cfsc5.PDF>

On January 24th 2023 (RTS 15419) Council approved the disbursement of \$110,000 to the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society to fund the SRO Fire Safety Preparedness and Response in SROs pilot project. The source of the funding was the 2023 City of Vancouver's Operating Budget. (<https://council.vancouver.ca/20230131/documents/r1.pdf>)

On February 14th 2024 (RTS 15934) Council approved the disbursement of \$75,000 in SRO Upgrading Grants to the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative for their pilot BOLTS (Building Operations Led by Tenants) program. The source of this funding was the 2024 Capital Budget. (<https://council.vancouver.ca/20240312/documents/r2.pdf>)

On June 26th 2024 (RTS 15985) Council approved \$99,800 to the Downtown Eastside Single Residency Occupancy (SRO) Collaborative Society ("SRO-C") for the SRO Heat Preparedness and Response Program. Source of funds the 2024 Operating Budget. <https://council.vancouver.ca/20240626/documents/cfsc4.pdf>

On July 23rd 2024 (RTS 16230) Council approved 6 grants totalling \$1,600,000 to support improved safety and liveability in Chinese Society-owned SROs (<https://council.vancouver.ca/20240723/documents/r4.pdf>)

APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF HOUSING AGREEMENT TERMS

Project (Address)	Grant Amount Requested	Terms of Housing Agreement
<p style="text-align: center;">215 Princess Avenue (Princess Rooms)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">\$420,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure the tenant contribution of rent at the shelter component of income assistance (currently \$500 for a single person) for all 42 rooms for a period of 15 years Such other terms and conditions as the Director of Legal Services and General Manager of Arts Culture and Community Services may require.
<p style="text-align: center;">514 East Cordova Street (The Vivian)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">\$240,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure the tenant contribution of rent at the shelter component of income assistance (currently \$500 for a single person) for all 24 rooms for a period of 10 years Such other terms and conditions as the Director of Legal Services and General Manager of Arts Culture and Community Services may require.