



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: September 2, 2025
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Meeting Date: September 17, 2025
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TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities

FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: 58 Alexander Street - Removal of Property from Single Room Accommodation (SRA) By-law Designation

Recommendations

THAT Council approve, in principle, an amendment to the Single Room Accommodation (SRA) By-law that removes the designation of 30 SRA - rooms at the Alexander Residence, located at 58 Alexander Street;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment the necessary amendment to the SRA By-law.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report recommends that Council approve the removal of the designation of the City-owned rooming house located at 58 Alexander Street (Alexander Residence) from the Single Room Accommodation By-law ("SRA By-law"). In alignment with City policy, the rooms are being replaced off-site with 30 new self-contained social housing units at the City-owned site at 177 West Pender Street as part of a larger social housing project, which is expected to be completed in October 2025.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[Single Room Accommodation \(SRA\) By-law \(2003\)](#) – The SRA By-law was enacted in 2003 to manage the rate of change in the low-income housing stock by regulating the alteration, conversion, and demolition of SRA-designated rooms. The SRA By-law designated all residential rooms and self-contained units in both private and non-market housing that were less than 320 sq. ft. and located within the Downtown Core. Currently, approximately 6,700 open rooms are designated under the SRA By-law.

Vancouver Charter – Section 193D of the Vancouver Charter gives Council the authority to designate rooms under the SRA By-law. This authority includes the power to remove or reverse the dedication.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

58 Alexander Street (Alexander Residence)

Built in 1912, Alexander Residence is a 4-storey rooming house located at 58 Alexander Street and is designated under the Single Room Accommodation ("SRA") By-law. Located in the Gastown Historic Area, the building is listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register and is municipally designated as a historic building. It contains 30 SRO rooms, ranging from 65-117 sq. ft., with shared bathrooms and no cooking facilities. See figure 1 below.

The City of Vancouver acquired Alexander Residence in 1976 through its wholly owned, not-for-profit subsidiary, the Vancouver Public Housing Corporation (VPHC). Since then, the Alexander Residence has been operated by the City's Non-Market Housing Operations team, with all rooms renting at the shelter component of income assistance.

Until 2016, CMHC and BC Housing provided operating subsidies to ensure financial viability. Since the subsidies ended, the City has provided annual operating subsidies to maintain affordability through VPHC.

Figure 1: Project Sites



Discussion

SRO Replacement Strategy

The City's longstanding policy is to replace SROs with self-contained social housing. Alexander Residence has been identified as a priority site for replacement, as it requires extensive capital maintenance and upgrades to remain operational as social housing. The building is assessed as "very poor" on the City's Facility Condition Index (FCI) and "high risk" from a seismic safety standpoint.

Staff evaluated options to convert the building or redevelop the site into social housing, but determined that the small lot size, HA-2 zoning, and municipal heritage designation make redevelopment extremely challenging and cost-prohibitive. Similarly, conversion to self-contained units within the existing building envelope would result in a significant loss of units at a high operating cost per unit, rendering it unsustainable.

Given the limited development potential on site, 58 Alexander has been identified as a priority site for disinvestment. Staff have advanced replacement of the existing SRO rooms at Alexander Residence off-site at the City-owned site at 177 West Pender Street, consistent with SRO Policies.

As a result, the City is not seeking to convert or demolish any rooms in the building, so no SRA permit is required. Instead, Council is being asked to remove the SRA designation to reflect the fact that the rooms have been replaced with self-contained social housing elsewhere in the City and tenants have been relocated. This approach is consistent with Council's long-standing SRO replacement policy.

177 W Pender Street

The Alexander Residence replacement project at 177 West Pender Street is being delivered by the City's partner, Community Land Trust Society (CLT), under a long-term ground lease. The project is currently under construction and is anticipated to be completed in October of this year and be fully tenanted by December 2025. Once completed, the 76 units will be operated by CLT and Atira Women's Resource Society and will house women aged 55 and over. All units will rent at the shelter component of income assistance and will include the provision of light supports, including 24/7 staffing as well as culturally appropriate programming and health services. In addition to replacing the 30 rooms at Alexander Residence, this project will also fulfill the City's commitment to provide suitable housing for Chinese seniors currently living in SROs in and around Chinatown, with 40 units dedicated to Chinese seniors and the remainder prioritizing Indigenous residents.

Relocation of Existing SRO Tenants

Given the condition of the building and in anticipation of the City's plan to divest of Alexander Residence following its replacement, vacancies were not backfilled upon turnover occurring naturally. Staff from Non-Market Housing Operations worked with remaining tenants to communicate the plans for the building and offer them the choice to relocate. The remaining tenants were primarily males between the ages of 30 and 75, able to live independently, and who had resided in the building for two to nine years. Staff worked closely with each tenant to identify rehousing options that met their needs and offered support throughout the process, including assistance with decluttering, packing, and moving. All tenants elected to move out through mutual agreements to end tenancy and were successfully rehoused to self-contained units within the City's Non-Market Housing Operations portfolio, including Roddan Lodge and the New Continental.

Recommendation

Given that all 30 SRO rooms at Alexander Residence are being replaced with self-contained social housing units at 177 W Pender Street and all existing tenants have been relocated to self-contained, appropriate social housing, staff recommend that Council remove Alexander Residence from the SRA By-law to proceed with divesting of the property.

Should Council approve the recommendation to remove the 30 SRA-designated rooms from the SRA By-law, staff will proceed with divesting the City's interest in the building.

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

If the recommendations in this report are adopted by Council, the Director of Legal Services will bring forward for enactment the necessary by-law amendments to remove the designation of the property from the SRA By-law, as authorized by the Vancouver Charter.

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