

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Buildings

SROs are rooming houses and residential hotels containing small single rooms, usually about ten by ten feet in size. These SRO units represent the most basic and the lowest cost housing available in the city.

Over the past several years, the Provincial Government has acquired a total of 23 SRO hotels and the City provided \$5 million to assist with renovations. The City has also purchased 2 additional hotels - the Drake Hotel and a rooming house at 514 Alexander. Altogether this amounts to over 1,400 units of housing.

The City played an important role in securing the renovation of the Dunsmuir House and the Bosman Residence (scheduled to be opened in April 2010). Both sites will bring an additional 268 units on stream for use as supportive housing over the next three to six years.



Dominion Hotel 210 Abbott Street (above)
May Wah Hotel 258 East Pender Street (left)

For more information
visit our website:
vancouver.ca/housing

Copies of the complete Homeless Action Plan can be downloaded from the Housing Centre website at: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/hap05jun.pdf>

The City of Vancouver has been helping Vancouver residents find affordable, suitable housing for more than 50 years.

Strategies to Address Homelessness

Housing Initiatives from the City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver's goal is to increase the supply of affordable housing in Vancouver with a broad range of dwelling types to meet the needs of a diverse population. This fact sheet provides information on the City's strategies to address homelessness, and is one of five that outline the City's role in housing.

Facts on Homelessness

- The March 2008 homeless count found 1,576 homeless people in the Vancouver, accounting for 60 percent of the regional total. Of those counted, 765 stayed in emergency shelters and 811 were shelterless (e.g. slept outside or in other places not intended for human habitation).
- The March 2008 regional homeless count showed a 22 percent increase in people who are homeless in the Metro Vancouver region - from roughly 2,200 homeless in 2005 to 2,600 in 2008. Since 2002, the year of the first regional homeless count, homelessness has increased 140 percent across the region.
- The number of shelter beds in Metro Vancouver in winter months has increased from 550 beds in 2000 to 1,480 beds in 2008. 1,193 of those beds, or three-quarters of the regional total, are located in Vancouver.
- Between 2005 and 2008, the number of street homeless in the city, on any one night, increased 37 percent, from 591 to 811. Some of the characteristics of homeless people are:
 - Over half reported addictions to drugs/and or alcohol, and one-quarter reported mental illnesses
 - While aboriginal people comprise only 2 percent of the overall city population they make up almost 40 percent of the homeless
 - Long term homelessness is increasing - 50 percent of individuals surveyed have been homeless for more than one year
 - A significant number are 'working poor' - 100 sheltered homeless were working full-time
- Between October 2005 and April 2006, the months for which shelter data is collected in Vancouver, there were over 24,000 turnaways from emergency shelters in the city.



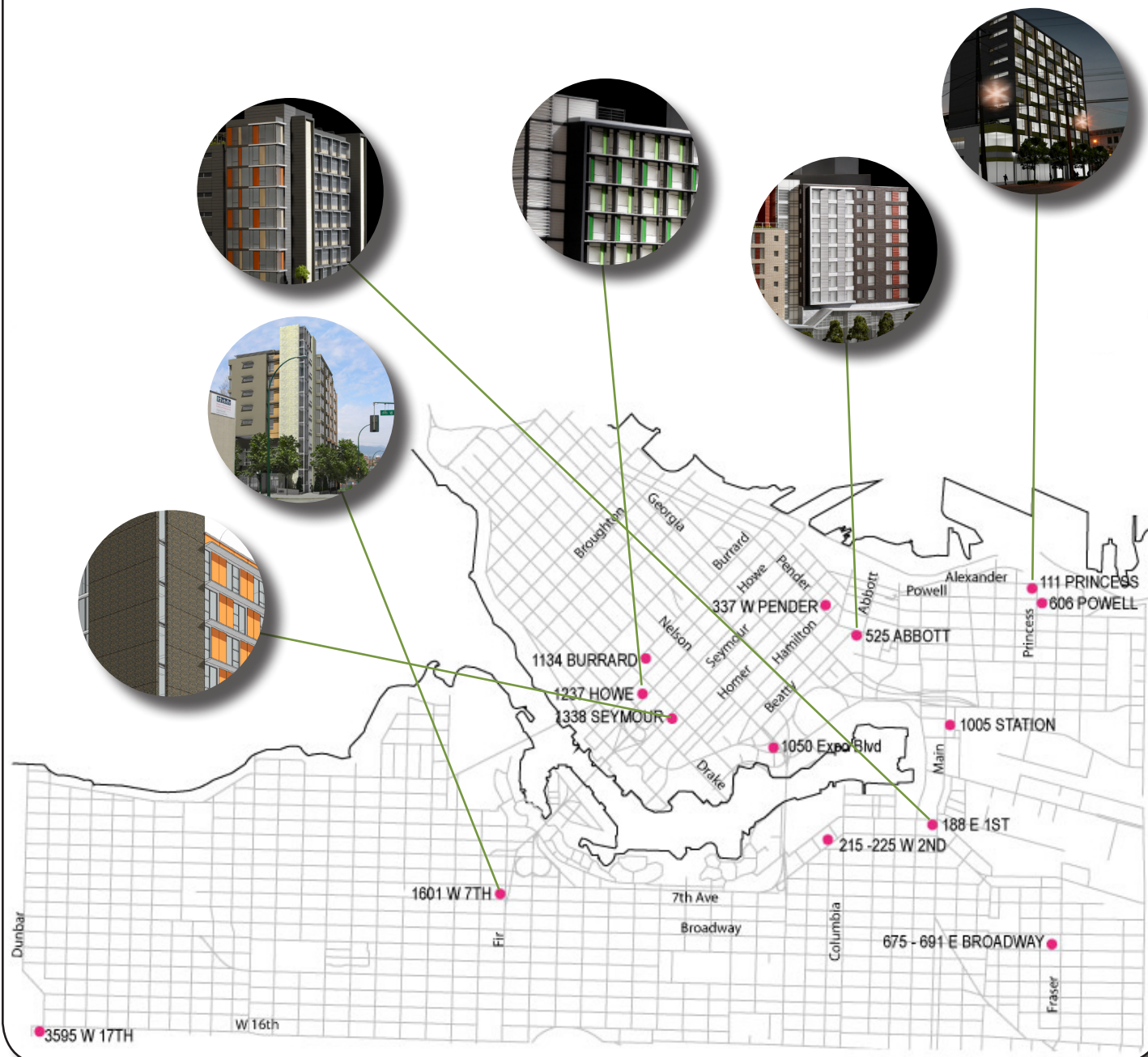
City Policies and Initiatives

Housing and social services are primarily the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments. However, the City has an important role to play in addressing homelessness and has committed significant resources, including contribution of land, buildings, capital funds, waived property tax, as well as poli-

cy and regulatory initiatives that protect affordable housing.

In 2005, Vancouver City Council adopted the **Homeless Action Plan**. The Plan identified the need for 3,800 units of supportive housing from 2005 to 2015.

14 City-owned Sites Reserved for Social and Supportive Housing



Images courtesy of GBL Architects and Neale Staniszki Doll Adams Architects



Dunsmuir House, Dunsmuir Street

Supportive housing is a form of non-market housing that provides links to support staff that assist tenants to stabilize their lives, enhance independent living skills, and re-connect with the community.

Since 2005, there have been approximately 900 units of new supportive housing added. In addition, in 2007 the City signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the provincial government to commit further land for the development of supportive housing on 12 sites. An additional 2 sites (for a total of 14) were added. Of these 14 sites, 6 sites are under construction with delivery of 600 units by spring 2011. Several other projects are also in progress, such as Woodward's and Union Gospel Mission, and will add an additional 216 units.

Taken together, 1,700 units of new supportive housing will be occupied by Spring 2011, leaving a housing gap of 2,100 units needed to address homelessness.

Interim Housing Strategy

A significant amount of permanent supportive housing will be developed over the next three to five years. However, permanent housing takes time to build and the current economic situation has added further delays in the commitment of providing funding for construction and operations.

In early 2010, there is still a significant gap in the number of housing units available to address homelessness. In April 2009, City Council endorsed an Interim Housing Strategy aimed at bridging this gap for three to five years until the permanent supportive housing that is under development is completed.

In addition, to achieve the goal of ending street homelessness by 2015, Vancouver City Council directed staff in February 2010 to update the Homeless Action Plan. The purpose of the update is to identify realistic and achievable actions to end homelessness by 2015.

Interim Actions to Address Homelessness

Shelters

In 2008, the Mayor launched the Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) initiative and five temporary homeless shelters were opened bringing 450 people inside every night over the winter months. Funding totaling \$1.5 million was provided from BC Housing, Streethome Foundation, the City and other donors. During those winter months, 31,000 beds were provided to homeless individuals in Vancouver.

In addition, the City participates in the Extreme Weather Response, a community based response providing mats and shelter during periods of inclement weather. Participating City facilities include the Gathering Place and Evelyn Saller. In December 2009, City Council allocated \$500,000 towards the 2010 Winter Response. Together with a \$1.2 million contribution from the provincial government, a total of seven Winter Response shelters with 500 beds will be available this winter. All 2010 Winter Response shelters will operate for the winter months, closing by April 30, 2010.

These 500 beds are in addition to the 750 spaces available in Vancouver through BC Housing's Emergency Shelter Program.



Granville Street Shelter