

FACT SHEET

SINGLE ROOM ACCOMMODATION (SRA) BY-LAW

The SRA By-law

On October 21, Council enacted the Single Room Accommodation By-law. The By-law will act as a tool to regulate the rate of change in the supply of low-income housing in the downtown core. Single Room Accommodation includes Single Room Occupancy Hotels (also known as SROs), rooming houses and non-market housing units 320 square feet or smaller. The By-law is a response to a number of factors:

- Increasing development pressures in the downtown core;
- The provincial government's cancellation of the Homes BC program; and,
- Council's commitment (vis-à-vis its role as a signatory to the Inclusive Intent Statement) to the goal of ensuring no evictions or homelessness occurs as a result to the 2010 Winter and Paralympic Winter Games.

An owner wanting to convert designated room(s) to another occupancy or use, or to otherwise convert or demolish a designated room, must apply for and obtain a conversion or demolition permit. Council will decide whether or not to grant the permit, and may attach conditions to the permit, including a demolition/conversion fee (currently \$15,000) per room. The monies generated will be deposited into a reserve fund earmarked for the creation of replacement low-cost singles housing.

The proposed By-law will achieve the following policy and Council objectives:

- Help to protect the supply of very low-cost housing;
- Put SRA housing conversion rules in line with those that apply to the conversion of rental housing to condominiums;
- Satisfy the City of Vancouver's commitment to protect rental housing and prevent homelessness as a result of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Background on the changes

In 1997, the Province of BC - at the request of Vancouver City Council - amended the Vancouver Charter to allow the City to regulate the conversion and demolition of single room accommodation (SRA) units, following a number of conversions from residential hotels to budget tourist and backpacker hotels.

At that time, there were 7,528 SRA rooms in the core of downtown Vancouver. Since then, there has been a net loss of more than 1,200 rooms (or 16 per

cent). During this period, however, 1,190 units of replacement housing were also created through the provincial Homes BC program, keeping pace with the loss of rooms. Today, the future of non-market housing development - and replacement for lost SRA rooms - is uncertain, given the cancellation of Homes BC. Unregulated, an estimated 1,500 to 1,800 SRA rooms (or an average of 114-128 per year) could be lost between 2001 and 2015.

Who does the by-law apply to?

The proposed by-law will apply to Vancouver's downtown core - the area bounded on the north by Burrard Inlet, on the west by Burrard Street, on the south by False Creek and on the east by Clark Drive. This area has been chosen because:

- the City maintains an inventory of the SRA stock in this area; and
- the area contains the majority of the city's SRA stock.

Only rooms used primarily for permanent residential accommodation are to be designated as SRA. Rooms that are 320 square feet or larger, or are used for transient guests (tourist) or other purposes not including living accommodation for permanent residents, may be eligible for exemption. Council approval is required. Applications for exemption can be obtained by contacting the SRA By-law Coordinator at 604-873-7975. Each application will be reported to Council on a case-by-case basis.

Penalties for Conversion or Demolition without a Permit

A person who does not comply with the proposed By-law is punishable upon conviction by a fine of not less than \$50 and not more than \$2,000 for each offence per room. Further, every person who commits an offence of a continuing nature against the By-law is liable to a fine not exceeding \$50 for each room for each day such an offence is continued. In addition to other possible remedies, the City also has the ability to seek an injunction to prevent an owner from proceeding with the conversion or demolition.

For more information, contact the SRA By-Law Coordinator at 604-873-7975.