

From: "Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

Date: 4/27/2023 11:23:12 AM

Subject: Council Memo for M&C re: Renter Office Transition - RTS 14850

Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Renter Office Transition - April 2023 - RTS 14850 (2023-04-26)_.pdf

Dear Mayor And Council,

On January 18, 2023 (RTS 14850), staff brought forward the Renter Office Update and Direction report for Council's consideration. As directed by Council, the attached memo outlines the work to close the City's Renter Office and the transition of the work, as feasible to other service providers.

Should Council have any further questions please contact Sandra directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and she will make sure to respond through the regular weekly Q&As.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətəl (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

April 26, 2023

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office
Theresa O'Donnell, General Manager, Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability
Andrea Law, General Manager, Development, Building and Licensing

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Renter Office Transition

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on the closure of the City's Renter Office, and the transition of work, as feasible, to other service providers.

BACKGROUND

On January 18, 2023 (RTS 14850), staff brought forward the [Renter Office Update and Direction](#) report for Council's consideration.

The final motion, as amended and approved by Council, is attached in Appendix A. The key recommendations for the transition plan included Council direction to:

- Continue the Renter Services Grants program for 2023 with \$750,000
- Sublease 900 Howe to TRAC and that the City undertake Tenant Improvements (costs estimated at up to \$1.2M)
- Have the GM of ACCS to report back on a plan to transition, as feasible, the work of the City's Renter Office to other service providers.

DISCUSSION

The Renter Office is comprised of an interdepartmental team of staff across five City departments: Arts Culture and Community Services (ACCS), Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (PDS), Development, Building and Licensing (DBL), Corporate Communications and Legal Services. These staff lead and collaborate on a variety of internal and external initiatives to support and advocate for the needs of renters at risk of displacement from their homes. This work is being transitioned as the Renter Office winds down.

Renter Office Work in ACCS

Four full-time Renter Office staff work as part of the Housing and Homelessness Services team in ACCS: a Senior Planner, Social Planner II, Social Planner I and Planning Analyst. The team works/worked on the following initiatives:

Renter Services Grants

Renter Services Grants support non-profit programs that assist and empower renters to understand and pursue their rights and stabilize their housing. The 2023 Renter Services Grants report (RTS 15388) went to Council on March 28 and Council approved grant allocations totalling \$750,000 to 20 renter-serving non-profits. This is the last year of grant funding, however, there is an opportunity to continue the grant program for one year using the remaining funds from the Renter Office budget (see Financial Implications section below), should Council direct staff to do so.

This work is led by the Social Planner I and supported by the Planning Analyst. In addition to managing the regular grant application and adjudication processes, staff transitioned the administration of the grant program to the new ACCS Grant Management System (GMS) and manage GMS updates, and strengthened the integration of equity principles into granting decisions.

Transition Plan: After the closure of the Renter Office, Housing and Homelessness Services staff will ensure that 2023 grant recipients are aware of any decisions regarding the future of the program and that reporting requirements and grant agreement conditions are met. Recommendations for future years will be brought forward as part of the 2024 budget process.

Development of Co-located Services for Renters at 900 Howe St.

The work to develop the concept and physical space of co-located services for renters at 900 Howe St, a City amenity bonus facility, has been led by the Social Planner II, with support from the Social Planner I and Planning Analyst. The work has involved a market sounding, engagement with non-profits, renters and Provincial partners, a feasibility study and report with options analysis, and procurement of a lead non-profit operator. Staff are currently working with Legal Services and REFM to finalize the sub-lease of 900 Howe to the Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre (TRAC), and develop a plan for managing the tenant improvements. Housing and Homelessness Services staff will continue to be the prime contact for REFM as the renovation work progresses.

ACCS Renter Office staff would have continued to work with TRAC and the renter-serving sector on co-location opportunities to develop the renter services centre concept.

Transition Plan: As staff will no longer be leading this work, they are exploring the feasibility of providing a service contract or grant to TRAC to take on the role of convening the sector (see below) and engaging renters to identify issues and opportunities, including the further development of services and programs to support renters at 900 Howe.

Renter Advocacy and Services Team (RAST)

The ACCS Renter Office staff coordinate an interdepartmental team of staff from PDS, DBL, Communications, and Legal Services. Working collaboratively with staff across departments whose work impacts renters enhances staff responsiveness to and support for renters at risk of displacement, improves staff understanding of programs and policies across the Organization that impact renters, and informs the improvement of those programs and policies.

Transition Plan: This work will end due to insufficient staff capacity to coordinate.

Sector Convening

Since 2019, the Social Planner II has led the regular convening of the non-profit renter-serving sector with support from the Planning Analyst. These quarterly meetings are used to share information, identify emerging issues and trends, and serve as a forum for staff in ACCS, PDS and DBL to present and seek feedback on policies and programs impacting renters.

Transition Plan: A service contract with or grant to TRAC would enable the continuation of these meetings. Staff are exploring this option.

Broadway Plan Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy (TRPP) Renter Education Campaign and other Renter Education Campaigns

Since early fall 2022, the ACCS Renter Office Social Planner II, with support from the Planning Analyst, has collaborated with Housing Policy staff in PDS on the development and implementation of the campaign to inform renters of their rights under the Broadway Plan TRPP. The campaign launched on March 1 with flyers sent to over 50,000 households in the Plan area. The original plan had been to direct renters to the Renter Enquiry Line (REL) for phone and email support and response to questions, and to the Renter Office website for more information and listing of upcoming in-person educational events.

After the Council direction to transition Renter Office work, ACCS staff worked with Housing Policy PDS staff to make a limited number of changes prior to the March 1 launch:

- Remove REL phone / email from all publicity materials and replace with 311. 311 staff are triaging renter-related calls to Renter Office staff in ACCS (as originally planned) until May after which PDS will take on renter enquiries related to the Broadway Plan.
- Rebrand the Broadway Plan website landing page and remove reference to the Renter Office and add new point of entry contact information for Broadway Plan.

- ACCS Renter Office staff continued to coordinate and staff three in-person Renter Connect events at neighbourhood houses and information tables at two local colleges in March and April as originally planned as part of Phase 1 of the campaign. Staff are still working to identify whether future events can be transitioned to a consultant or non-profit service provider or if PDS will assume the work and associated costs.

Transition Plan: Work related to Broadway renter education on City policies and processes will be transferred to the PDS Housing Policy and Regulation Division to manage and support within existing resources as feasible. Resources required for any additional renter education work will be determined at a future date.

Renter Enquiry Line (REL)

Since December 2018, the REL phone and email lines have provided a single point of entry/contact to the City for renters; the staff serve as City system navigators for renters needing support. Staff respond to questions about a variety of topics, including status or implication of City permits and policies, involving coordination of information and collaboration with other departments such as DBL and PDS. Staff also refer callers to external partners including renter-serving non-profits and the Provincial Residential Tenancy Branch when renter needs transition from support navigating City systems and information to exercising their rights under Provincial legislation. The REL is managed by the Planning Analyst for an average of one to two hours per day with more complicated enquiries requiring more time to resolve.

Transition Plan: The REL will be discontinued as of May 31, 2023 and staff have updated 311 to redirect calls to other internal departments as needed and feasible.

Tenant Relocation Specialist Research

The Social Planner II with support from the Planning Analyst led research on ways to improve the implementation of tenant relocation plans under the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy (TRPP), conducting and analysing interviews with key stakeholders, including third-party specialists, developers, landlords, regional partners and policy staff.

Transition Plan: ACCS Renter Office staff will share recommendations with the PDS Housing Policy and Regulation Division who will continue this work as feasible.

Data Collection and Analysis to Understand Renter Issues and Needs

ACCS Renter Office staff collect, analyze and share data related to renters to inform and improve City policies and programs that affect renters, as well as enhance the capacity of the renter-serving sector. Projects include data collection and analysis led by the Planning Analyst to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Vancouver renters, engagement and data collection led by the Social Planner II to inform renter services needs, and supporting non-profit research on evictions.

Transition Plan: This work will be discontinued.

Renters Advisory Committee to City Council

The Senior Planner in the ACCS Renter Office has been the staff liaison to the Renters Advisory Committee to Council.

Transition Plan: This responsibility has been reassigned to PDS staff.

Renter Office Work in Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (PDS)

The Renter Office funded one staff position in Housing Policy in PDS for 2.5 years. This allowed for re-distribution of work items amongst staff in Housing Policy so that additional work could be undertaken to support renters, including research and data tracking to better understand issues related to rental projects and renters, supporting complex tenant relocation plan cases requiring policy interpretation, and collaborating with ACCS Renter Office staff on intergovernmental work, relationship building with the Province, major projects such as the Broadway renter education campaign, and adjudication of Renter Services Grants.

ACCS Renter Office staff also acted as a resource to the Housing Policy and Regulation team in cases where renters impacted by the TRPP required additional support beyond the policy requirements of their Tenant Relocation Plan.

Transition Plan: The staff person in this position is now regularized without funding from the Renter Office. Research related to renters will continue in Housing Policy for policy development and ongoing monitoring, as well as intergovernmental work, tenant relocation policy support and data tracking. Opportunities to hear from renters actively experiencing issues, which happened through collaboration with the Renter Office, will be limited. Housing Policy and Regulation staff will not have additional assistance from the Renter Office for renters requiring supports beyond the TRPP.

Renter Office Work in Development, Building and Licensing (DBL)

Identifying and Supporting Renters at Risk

Since 2019, ACCS Renter Office staff have worked closely with the Community Standards, Property Use and Proactive Enforcement teams in DBL to support renters impacted by City by-laws, such as the Standards of Maintenance By-law, the Vancouver Building By-law, the Licence By-law, and the Zoning and Development By-law. Where DBL staff focus on compliance with City by-laws, ACCS Renter Office staff support the renters impacted by those by-laws, particularly those at risk of displacement or eviction from their homes. DBL and ACCS staff work together to prevent the displacement of renters into homelessness where feasible. As part of this, ACCS Renter Office staff educate renters on their rights, and connect them to appropriate community services, such as legal aid, temporary housing, and immigration and translation services.

Transition Plan: This work will be discontinued.

Secondary Suites

In October 2022, DBL hired its first dedicated Renter Office staff on the Proactive Enforcement team. This position is working on developing a strategy for enforcing the

legalization of illegal or unsafe secondary rental suites in Vancouver and ensuring that appropriate considerations and supports are in place for renters who may be displaced.

Transition Plan: This temporary position funded through the Renter Office ends in October 2023, after which time this work on secondary suites policy and policy administration which this position is involved with will be transitioned to other DBL staff to complete as feasible, subject to workload. The planned service work to ensure support to renters facing displacement will not be implemented.

Renter Office Work in Corporate Communications

The Renter Office maintained an information website for renters, an e-newsletter and other communications with renters.

Transition Plan: This work will be discontinued.

Renter Office Work in Legal Services

The Renter Office funded a temporary part-time lawyer position in Legal Services for 2.5 years to provide legal advice and support to Renter Office work.

Transition Plan: This work will be discontinued.

Financial and Labour Relations Implications

Financial Implications

In 2019 (RTS 13180), Council approved \$5.65 million for the Renter Office and in January 2023 (RTS 14850) approved a further \$750,000. A summary of funding and expenditures is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Renter Office Budget

	\$ Million
Approved	
Approved 2019 (RTS 13180)	\$5.65
Approved 2023 (RTS 14850)	\$0.75
Total approved	\$6.40
Expenses and Forecast	
Expenses 2020-2022	\$3.09
Forecast 2023 (staffing, grants/service contracts, 900 Howe TIs & operating costs)	\$2.74
Total expenses & forecasted	\$5.83
Amount remaining (est.)	\$0.57

Staffing Implications

The Renter Office was comprised of six full-time and two part-time positions across ACCS, PDS, DBL, Communications and Legal Services.

The six full-time staff members each hold regular full-time status as per the Collective Agreement. They will be assigned to other positions in their respective departments through attrition. The two part-time staff members are temporary. Once the Renter Office closes, their contracts will end. These staffing decisions are being made in consultation with HR, and the Union is engaged.

TIMELINE

Renter Office work in ACCS, PDS, Communications, and Legal Services will end by May 31, 2023, and in DBL by October 3, 2023.

FINAL REMARKS

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.



Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

sandra.singh@vancouver.ca

APPENDIX A

FINAL MOTION AS APPROVED (lettering changed to reflect approved amendment)
Renter Office Update and Direction Report to Council (RTS 14850)
Standing Committee of Council on Policy and Strategic Priorities Minutes,
Wednesday, January 18, 2023
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20230118/documents/pspc20230118min.pdf#page=7>

- A. THAT Council acknowledges the expertise of non-profit, renter-serving community groups and organizations in supporting renters and tenants in the community;

FURTHER THAT Council approve the continuation of the Renter Services Grants program for 2023 (\$750,000, source of funding Affordable Housing - EHT Allocation), and that staff be further directed to consider and make recommendations as warranted for enhanced and/or expanded grants within the Renter Services Grants program to ensure that renters are fully and appropriately supported in the city of Vancouver.

- B. THAT Council approve TRAC Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre Society (“TRAC”) as the subtenant (the “Subtenant”) and non-profit operator of a social facility with services for renters at the City amenity bonus facility at #150 and #200 - 900 Howe Street, being a portion of the building situated on lands legally described as:

Lot 1-6, Block 72, District Lot 541, Plan 210

PID's: 003-774-686; 003-774-741; 003-774-791; 003-774-864; 003-774-937; and 003-774-961

(the “Leased Premises”)

FURTHER THAT Council authorize the Director of Real Estate Services to negotiate and execute a sublease agreement (the “Sublease”) with TRAC. The Sublease shall be based on the City's Precedent Lease for Non-profit Entities (Cultural/Social), on the following terms and conditions, and as further set out in the signed term sheet attached as Appendix F (the “Term Sheet”), and upon other terms and conditions to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management (“REFM”), the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services (“ACCS”) and the Director of Legal Services:

- i. Term and Renewal Options: initial term of three (3) years commencing on the first day of the month following the end of the Fixturing Period. Two (2) renewal options for five (5) years each; Each renewal option is conditional upon the City as Sublandlord being satisfied that the Society has the capacity to operate, maintain and program the Leased Premises in accordance with the lease terms and the stated public service requirements for the duration of the renewal term contemplated;
- ii. Total Rent and Operating Costs: Nominal base rent of Ten Dollars (\$10.00) for each of the sublease terms, each payable in advance, plus applicable taxes. TRAC is responsible for all costs and obligations related to the operating

expenses for the Leased Premises, referred to in the Head Lease as “Allocable Operating Expenses” (\$73,025 for 2022);

- iii. Sub-subleasing & sub-sublicensing: The Subtenant shall be permitted to sub-lease or sub-sublicense portions of the Leased Premises to nonprofit organizations or renter-serving government agencies for public service use, upon the prior written consent of the Sublandlord’s Managing Director of Housing and Homelessness Services. Priority shall be given to non-profit organizations or government agencies that provide services to Vancouver renters. Other non-profit organizations that provide social services to residents of Vancouver shall be given secondary consideration for sub-subleases;
 - iv. The Subtenant shall be permitted to collect rent or fees from any nonprofit or government sub-subtenant or sub-sublicensee of the Leased Premises in accordance with the Term Sheet:
The nominal rent in D above represents a grant valued at approximately \$144,000 per annum based on the first year of the term, and approximately \$432,000 over the initial 3 year term.
- C. THAT the City undertake Tenant Improvements at suites #150 and #200 - 900 Howe prior to TRAC taking possession of the premises, in order to bring the space up to code in terms of accessibility and energy, as well as minor refreshes of finishes. The Tenant Improvements represent a grant to TRAC, with costs estimated at up to \$1.2M (Source of funds: Empty Homes Tax).
- D. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council’s adoption of C above unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.
- E. THAT Council direct the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services to report back to Council on a plan to transition, as feasible, the work of the City’s Renter Office to other service providers.
- F. THAT Council direct staff to engage with provincial counterparts in relevant ministries and provincial agencies, such as the Residential Tenancy Branch, to explore opportunities to align on renter and tenant protection goals, objectives, and policies such as the City’s Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy (TRPP) to ensure that services and resources are appropriately directed, coordinated, and fully supported.