

Vancouver Housing Update

April/May 2010



Guest Editorial

Jonathan Oldman, Executive Director, St. James Community Service Society



Well, the Olympic sprint is over - it seemed to come and go so quickly after such a long build-up. There was much to both celebrate and wonder about (whether you were in either the pro or anti camp), though not all was as predicted: downtown Vancouver did not grind to a gridlocked halt, and Fox News correspondents weren't camped on every corner in the DTES. Of course, the overall costs and benefits will be analyzed and debated for a long time to come. What I do know for sure is that the not-for-profit sector has returned all too quickly to our own long-distance, endurance event.

We're entering a new financial year where public finances and individual agency budgets are as tight as ever (those of us who receive health funding have, in particular, faced some extremely hard decisions). Around us is the ongoing swirl of plans, initiatives, reorganizations, media stories, development processes, and politics that make working in the field so rewarding and yet often so frustrating all at the same time.

It doesn't stop for anyone. At St. James we're trying to stay as focussed as we can on our key goals: sticking closely to services and populations of expertise; strengthening service delivery and practice; and investing time and energy in improving organizational capacity.

These strands have come together in our housing portfolio to good effect. We've worked with partners to transition out of some projects (direct SRO ownership, forensic housing), focussing more on women and children and an older, aging-in-place population with more complex care needs. We've restructured programs to create increased practice leadership capacity (at the same dollar cost), while at the same time centralizing and reorienting operational and corporate support services.

This has helped us move forward in a positive way. For instance, in November we opened 26 permanent new emergency housing (shelter) beds for women in the DTES. In less than two months we were able to

Contents

Guest editorial	1
Downtown Eastside Connect	2
SRO hotels	3
Partners	5

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harness the energy of private donors, contractors, and program staff (with BC Housing support) to convert an empty warehouse into a welcoming new facility.

St. James has a lot more development to undertake both internally and with our fellow not-for-profit partners in the community. However, we're staying with the pace, and are better prepared for that inevitable next sprint – something we all need to achieve, individually and collectively.

St. James Community Service Society is a multi-service health and social care provider in Vancouver. Details of our new women's shelter, and our current strategic plan, are available on our website at www.sjcss.com.

Downtown Eastside Connect

Information centre raised awareness

Like many people who live in Vancouver, a woman who came into the Downtown Eastside Connect public information centre during the Olympics believed that more affordable housing is needed in our city. However, as a resident of Mount Pleasant, she was opposed to a proposed supportive housing site on East Broadway.

"She was concerned about the location, what it would look like, its height, and its density. She also thought that because there were so many people in the community voicing concerns, the fears must be legitimate," said Karen O'Shannacery, Lookout Emergency Aid Society's executive director, who was at the centre at the time. The two engaged in a lengthy conversation during which Karen was able to show the visitor that the Broadway site is part of an integrated strategy for supportive housing throughout the city.

"It was a great opportunity to try to dispel some of the myths she had heard," added Karen. "I explained that a higher number of tenants allowed for a greater number of support staff to help the tenants move forward with their lives. In the end, she thanked me and said she would now support the project in her neighbourhood."

Lookout was one of 40 non-profit organizations participating in Downtown Eastside Connect and Karen's conversation was one of many that participating housing providers engaged in during February when the centre was open. Over 1,500 people visited the centre to learn more about innovative initiatives underway in the Vancouver neighbourhood.

"The opportunity to meet people who either lived in the community or who were curious about what is happening there was a major benefit of participating in Downtown Eastside Connect," said Karen. "It was great to be able to raise awareness. We were facing a potential onslaught of media in the area looking for sordid tales. It was wonderful to be able to turn that around and instead show some successes."



Forty non-profit organizations that work in the Downtown Eastside participated in Downtown Eastside Connect. This public information centre was open during February and welcomed visitors from Vancouver and around the world including international media from the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and the LA Times. Journalists from Switzerland, Japan, Germany, Finland, Brazil, the Czech Republic, and France also stopped by and most were connected to non-profit groups to assist with stories.

Single Room Occupancy Hotels

Supportive Housing Registry process streamlined

The Supportive Housing Registry was created by BC Housing and non-profit housing providers to ensure an equitable system of access by street-entrenched homeless people to newly available supportive housing units in Vancouver. Launched in late 2008, the Registry has achieved significant success in housing nearly 1,000 people in provincially-owned single room occupancy hotels and other supportive housing sites. Over 90 per cent of those placed remain housed.

With most units in the SROs now occupied, the Registry is ready to enter its next stage. The SHR application and intake process has been streamlined, providing the non-profit operators with more autonomy. These changes provide the housing providers with the tools and flexibility to manage the day-to-day activities in their buildings. The Registry still operates as a central point of access and anyone wishing to live in a supportive housing unit in Vancouver must still apply through the Registry. This provides accountability in ensuring equity of access.

Reno updates

Renovations are nearing completion at Dunsmuir House. New plumbing has been installed in the building and the common washrooms on each floor are being thoroughly updated. Common area kitchens are being installed on every floor and select units are also being renovated. Repairs are also being made to the roof.

A roof replacement tender is in process for the Shaldon Hotel. Plumbing repairs are completed at Tamura House and plans are underway to convert the building's radiant hot water heat to electric baseboard. The Gastown Hotel's elevator is being restored and building envelope repairs are being conducted in a localized area of the building. Localized repairs are also happening on the Arco Hotel's north elevation, including some window replacements. The Park Hotel, which has taken its historic name of the Hutchinson Block, has seen its restaurant storefront redone, and will include the installation of a new neon sign.

Scaffolding is up on the front of the Beacon Hotel. Lead paint is being stripped off the façade and the building will be left with its heritage brick front. The window trims will be repainted, the cornices repaired, and the storefront upgraded. PHS Community Services Society has applied to the City of Vancouver for a grant from the Façade Grant Rehabilitation program to improve the façade of the building. These upgrades are expected to be complete by the end of June.

Agencies collaborate to support tenants

In early April, staff with Vancouver Coastal Health's Inner City Youth Mental Health Program and Coast Mental Health support workers held the first of what will become regular meetings regarding five young tenants who now live at the St. Helen's Hotel on Granville Street. The tenants, who all have mental health issues as well as addictions, work with the program's psychiatrists, social workers, and support workers. The purpose of the joint meetings is to ensure the youth have successful tenancies.

The Inner City Youth Mental Health Program began in 2007 by linking psychiatrists from St. Paul's Hospital with youth at Covenant House, a shelter and transition house in the Downtown Eastside. The program recently approached BC Housing looking for homes for the homeless youth it works with and was given five units at the St. Helen's, where Coast Mental Health provides support services. The location works well given its proximity to St. Paul's Hospital as well as to Granville Residence, a City-owned building where another nine program participants live.

In addition to the support the five youth receive through the Inner City Youth Mental Health Program, they can also access the supports offered by Coast Mental Health. This additional support can be as simple as Coast workers reminding the youth to attend appointments. Other youth are ready to socialize more with their new neighbours and are already attending organized events such as movie nights. Over time, the hope is the youth will develop trusting relationships and a larger network of support which will be vital to them as they become adults.



EXISTING ELEVATION ON W HASTINGS
1/8" = 1'-0"



PROPOSED - NORTH ELEVATION

Far left: the Beacon Hotel as it looked before repairs to the façade began. Left: an architectural drawing of how the building will look once the renovations to the building's front are complete.

Tentative SRO construction schedule as of April 22, 2010

Hotel	Units ¹	Tenancy status	Non-Profit Operator	Renovation Status	Estimated Completion Date
54 East Cordova	34	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
566 Powell Street ²	12	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	No renovations required	COMPLETE
Arco Hotel	64	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	Pre-renovation	TBD
Beacon Hotel	44	Tenanted	PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Carl Rooms	44	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Dominion Hotel	64	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Drake Hotel ³	27	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Dunsmuir House ⁴	162	Phased renovation /partially occupied	Atira Property Management with support services provided by RainCity Housing and Support Society	UNDERWAY	April 2010
Gastown Hotel	93	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	Pre-renovation	TBD
Hazelwood Hotel	110	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Hutchinson Block (formerly the Park Hotel)	50	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
London Hotel ²	73	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Marble Arch Hotel	142	Phased renovation /partially occupied	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	UNDERWAY	Ph. 1: COMPLETE Ph. 2: COMPLETE Ph. 3 & 4: TBD

Marr Hotel	29	Tenanted	Atira Women's Resource Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Orange Hall	27	Tenanted	S.U.C.C.E.S.S.	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Orwell Hotel	55	Tenanted	Vancouver Native Housing Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Pender Hotel	23	Empty	Vancouver Native Housing Society	Redevelopment under consideration	TBD
Rainier Hotel	41	Tenanted	PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
The Rice Block	42	Tenanted	Atira Women's Resource Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Roosevelt Hotel	42	Tenanted	PHS Community Services Society	Pre-renovation (moderate renovations complete)	TBD
Savoy Hotel	25	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Shaldon Hotel	54	Tenanted	RainCity Housing and Support Society	Pre-renovation	TBD
St. Helen's Hotel	86	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by Coast Foundation Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Tamura House	110	Tenanted	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	Pre-renovation	TBD
Walton Hotel	48	Tenanted	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE

¹ Unit numbers are best estimates of how many units there will be in each building post-renovations.

² Five-year renewable lease.

³ This City-owned building is being used for tenant relocations. It will be replaced with a new building managed by RainCity Housing and Support Society.

⁴ Three-year lease.

Partners

Sixteen of the city's most experienced and respected non-profit groups work to deliver housing, shelter and support services to those in greatest need. These community partners operate the SROs, deliver the Homeless Outreach Program, and/or provide emergency shelter in Vancouver. This chart outlines the work that the group does with BC Housing and is not a complete list of the organizations' activities.

Group	Contact information	Participation
Atira Women's Resource Society and Atira Property Management	www.atira.bc.ca 604-331-1407	SRO Operator (566 Powell Street; Arco Hotel; Carl Rooms; Cordova Residence; Dominion Hotel; Drake Hotel; Gastown Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel; London Hotel; Marble Arch Hotel; Marr Hotel; Park Hotel; Rice Block; Savoy Hotel; St. Helen's Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Bridge Women's Emergency Shelter)
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Vancouver	www.rcav.org 604-443-3219	Emergency Shelter Program (Catholic Charities)
Coast Foundation Society	www.coastmentalhealth.com 604-872-3502	SRO Support Services (St. Helen's Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Yaletown)
Collingwood Neighbourhood House Society	www.cnh.bc.ca 604-435-0323	Homeless Outreach Program (Collingwood/Renfrew)
Covenant House Vancouver	www.covenanthousebc.org 604-638-4438	Emergency Shelter Program (Covenant House; Rights of Passage Shelter)
Kettle Friendship Society	www.the-kettle.ca	Homeless Outreach Program (Grandview)
Lookout Emergency	www.lookoutsociety.bc.ca	SRO Operator (Tamura House; Walton Hotel);

Aid Society	604-255-0340	Emergency Shelter Program (Yukon Shelter; Lookout Downtown Shelter)
MPA Society	www.mpa-society.org 604-482-3700	SRO Support Services (Savoy Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Kitsilano)
PHS Community Services Society	604-683-0073	SRO Operator (Roosevelt Hotel; Rainier Hotel; Beacon Hotel); SRO Support Services (Carl Rooms; Marble Arch Hotel; Park Hotel)
RainCity Housing and Support Society	www.raincityhousing.org 604-662-7023	SRO Operator (Shaldon Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Triage Shelter); Homeless Outreach Program (DTES)
St. James Community Services Society	www.sjcss.com 604-606-0300	Emergency Shelter Program (St. Elizabeth's Home; Powell Place Emergency Shelter)
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.	www.successbc.ca 604-684-1628	SRO Operator (Orange Hall)
The Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada	www.salvationarmy.org 604-299-3908	Emergency Shelter Program (Belkin House; The Haven; The Beacon; Crosswalk)
Vancouver Native Housing Society	www.vnhs.ca 604-320-3312	SRO Operator (Orwell Hotel; Pender Hotel)
Vancouver Recovery Club	www.thevrc.ca 604-708-9955	Homeless Outreach Program (Mt. Pleasant)
The Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society	604-736-2423	Emergency Shelter Program (Vi Fineday Family Shelter)