

## Homelessness and the need to replace the SROs addressed

On May 12, 2008 the development application was submitted for 1601 West 7th Avenue, a 9-storey multiple dwelling containing 62 dwelling units with associated amenity areas and a social service centre. A third to a half of the units will be occupied by persons with a mental illness. All units will be tenanted by core-need singles with a priority for those living in Fairview and Kitsilano.



The Single Room Occupancy Hotel stock in the city of Vancouver has become increasingly vulnerable due to age (most existing SROs are a century old); lack of revenue (frozen welfare rates); a more difficult tenant profile (increasing mental illness and addiction); and competing uses (conversion to tourist hotels and demolition for condominium development). There are 6,000 SROs in the city that need to be replaced. It is estimated that there are at least 1,000 -2,000 homeless (on the street or in shelters) in the city on any given night.

The foundation of this project is a commitment by BC Housing, the City of Vancouver, Katherine Sanford Housing Society, and Motivation, Power & Achievement Society (MPA) to build on the City's network of social and supportive housing projects. It is one of twelve City owned sites which are being developed as social housing in an effort to address homelessness in the City of Vancouver.

Council policy is to replace the single-room occupancy hotels and rooming houses in the downtown on a 1-for-1 basis; to maintain or increase the percentage of social housing in the City; to develop social and supportive housing throughout the city; and to eliminate homelessness with a 50% reduction by 2010.

One urban design panel member describes the social housing models that are starting to appear at city hall for approval as "gems", stating that projects "...show a real respect for the community they're serving. They are quite ennobling for a group that is generally not given that level of care."