

November 18, 1971

TO: Standing Committee on Health and Welfare
SUBJECT: Skid Road Report
CLASSIFICATION: CONSIDERATION

The Director of Social Planning/Community Development reports as follows:

"FORWARD

In February, 1971 Council asked the Department of Social Planning/Community Development to report on the problems of persons forced to relocate because of the demolition of their dwelling units. On September 14, 1971 Council asked that SP/CD report on means of improving housing conditions in the Downtown East Side. Both studies are closely related in their subject matter, results, and policy implications. They reveal that the process of demolition of old housing across the city and the construction of new is resulting in a net loss of low cost units.

As new dwellings replace old, residents, frequently elderly, are displaced from their homes. They then have two alternatives - to remain in their area of choice and pay rents beyond their means or to move to another area. For those on fixed incomes and meagre pensions who have depleted their savings, one of the few areas that provides accommodation at rents they can afford happens to be the Downtown East Side and Skid Road.

More than twice the percentage of persons over 65 years of age live in the Downtown East Side as in the city at large. For many, this is the area of choice. It is where the action is and for them may be preferable to the nirvana of a suburban nursing home. But for others it is the ashcan where a society that gives its opportunities to youth, places its elderly.

The aim of any policy dealing with this or any other area of the city should be to correct the kind of population imbalance that has developed. And while all groups may require safe, sanitary and decent housing, it is the aged and infirm who are most helpless when it comes to improving their lot. The recent trend of young, middle-income persons moving into the Historic Precinct can result in a healthy population mix as long as the poor and elderly are not once again displaced. The purpose of this report is to suggest how this can be achieved.

CAUSES OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

In order to suggest means of improving housing in the Downtown East Side it is necessary to review some of the theories of slum formation.

1. Tenant Fault: This theory suggests that the unemployed poor, having not been culturally assimilated into middle class society, have not acquired the habits or customs that are necessary to live in a community. Violent, disruptive types vandalize buildings, intimidate other residents, or maintain such unsanitary conditions that their presence is inimicable to decent housing.

2. Landlord Greed: Lewis Mumford in 'The City in History'¹ observes that, 'What the steamship companies discovered in the 19th century in their exploitation of steerage passengers, the ground landlords discovered long before: maximum profits came not from providing first class accommodation for those who could well afford them at a handsome fee, but from crowded slum accommodations, for those whose pennies were scarcer than the rich man's pounds. ... The worse the

¹Mumford "The City in History" (N.Y. 1961)

dwelling, the higher the total rent of the property. The only limit to this happy achievement of wringing profit from the necessities of the poor came when the cost of crime, vice and disease in slums, reflected in taxes and poor rates, began to lessen the net gains from rents.'

3. Government Laxity: According to this theory the failure of regulatory bodies to establish and stringently enforce codes and health bylaws, coupled with the fault of tenants and landlords gives rise to urban decay.
4. Prisoner Dilemma: Otto Davis and Andrew Winston (1966) have described the 'Prisoner Dilemma' in the housing market. The dilemma is that it is profitable for an owner to improve or maintain his building's quality only if all the buildings in the neighbourhood are improved. If he proceeds alone, he will have a large investment and little increase in rents - his rate of return will fall. His neighbours who have done nothing will have the same investment with a small increase in rents - a small rise in return. In the open market the obstacles to co-ordinating improvement of all the buildings lead to an increase in the supply of low quality housing.
5. Interest Rates: Higher interest rates or the unavailability of loans on property in declining areas expand the supply of low quality housing.
6. Depreciation Allowance: Federal income tax laws on depreciation of residential real estate create incentives for retaining a building in the housing supply beyond its useful life. The depreciation fosters turnovers that extend the building's existence without compensating renovation. As a result the supply of low quality housing is expanded.
7. Property Taxes: Local property taxes discourage renovation and maintenance, thus expanding the supply of low income housing.
8. Occupant Income: Some of the traditional theories concentrate only on the buildings and disregard the occupants. According to Richard Muth, author of 'Cities and Housing' (1969) low quality housing results from poverty itself. Landlords are supplying a service to people at economic levels they can afford. Hence, to irradiate bad housing it is necessary to increase occupants' incomes either by way of direct cash assistance or by public housing.
9. Excess Housing: J.W. Forrester of M.I.T.'s Sloane School of Management proposed a theory based on computer simulation studies that, the fundamental cause of depressed areas in the cities comes from excess housing in the low income category rather than the commonly presumed housing shortage. The legal and tax structures have combined to give incentives for keeping old buildings in place. As industrial buildings age, the employment opportunities decline. As residential buildings age, they are used by lower income groups, who are forced to use them at a higher population density. Therefore, jobs decline and population rises while buildings age. Housing, at the higher population densities, accommodates more low income urban population than can find jobs. A social trap is created where excess low cost housing beckons low income people inward because of the available housing. They continue to come to the city until their numbers so far exceed the available income opportunities that the standard of living declines far enough to stop further inflow. Income to the area is then too low to maintain all the housing. Excess housing falls into disrepair and is abandoned. There is extreme crowding in those buildings that are occupied, while other buildings become excess and are abandoned because the economy of the area cannot support all the residential structures. But the excess residential buildings threaten the area in two ways - they occupy the land so that it cannot be used for job creating buildings, and they stand ready to accept a rise in population if the area should start to improve economically.

Any change that would otherwise raise the standard of living only takes off the economic pressure momentarily and causes the population to rise enough so that the standard of living again falls to the barely tolerable level. The self-regulating system thus drives the condition of the depressed area down far enough to stop the increase in population. (J.W. Forrester, Technology Review 1971)

10. Social Functions of Skid Road and Slum Areas: In spite of the dissatisfaction with the narrower qualities of housing, various kinds of slum residents have demonstrated a strikingly persistent commitment to some of the features offered by slums. It is this commitment that resulted in a withdrawal from the policy in the 50's of demolition of slum areas.

In Skid Roads a vicious cycle is established between social service agencies and their clients. Agencies move into the area because that is where they are needed. Derelicts choose the area because the services of some agencies in effect support them as alcoholics by providing them with the means to buy liquor.

Some of the elderly on fixed incomes may prefer Skid Roads to other parts of the city because it is one of the few areas where they find acceptance, a sense of community, and proximity to the downtown where the action is. For them, Skid Roads are an adaptive response by the aged in a society that places its priorities elsewhere.

OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

Landlords: There is no doubt that owners, lessees, and managers are sometimes the culprits. In some cases they may earn unconscionable rates of return on substandard housing, providing little in the way of maintenance or service to poor, elderly tenants who are in no position to complain or relocate. Such landlords and managers are probably a small minority. The Downtown East Side report revealed that over two-thirds of the buildings studied had no Health Bylaw violations. Only 8% had serious violations and in some of these the tenants were to blame.

Many hotels in the area are reasonably well looked after and provide residents with safe, sanitary and decent housing at rents they can almost afford on incomes of \$95 to \$140 per month. Moreover, social workers have reported that some of the owners or managers of those establishments serving indigents and alcoholics take a genuine interest in the well being of their tenants, caring for them when they are ill or intoxicated and allowing generous periods of grace when they do not have the rent. Some have not raised the rents of long term tenants for years being satisfied with a rate of return lower than what the market can bear.

It may be that the Assessment Equalization Act is as much to blame for rent increases as the avariciousness of landlords. This act provides an incentive for landlords to raise rents since assessors are required by law to value buildings at their market value. The market value of a hotel or apartment depends in part on what income it is capable of earning a prospective buyer. When a landlord maintains a low rent structure in a building capable of sustaining higher rents, he is nevertheless assessed and taxed on the basis of the higher rent.

Tenants: The Downtown East Side report revealed a total population for the study area of 6,800 persons; 5,380 men, 950 women and 461 children. 46% were over 55 years of age and 27% over 65. Most of these persons are single.

As of August, 1970, 86% of the population were unemployed; 41% received cash assistance from CSSD; 30% received pensions or the D.V.A. allowance; 3% received meals and lodging.

With respect to housing needs, tenants in the area may be considered to fall into two categories: Type I - those persons (the majority) who desire safe, sanitary and decent housing, and Type II - those who by virtue of personality, mental defect, alcoholism or some other

cause either do not want decent housing, or are unable to care for themselves to the extent that in the absence of special custodial services their presence is inimicable to decent accommodation.

There are some 800 - 1,000 chronic alcoholics known to be in the area, only 122 of whom are on CSSD's alcoholic caseload. The remainder receive either pensions or the D.V.A. allowance. Many, but not all alcoholics are undesirable tenants, and not all undesirable tenants are alcoholics.

It is essential to understand the problems of trying to provide decent housing for the group of undesirable tenants. In one case not long ago the Health Department required that a Skid Road hotel be closed until it could be brought up to standard. The building was vacated and extensive renovations were completed. It reopened and admitted the same kind of tenant. Within a matter of four months it had deteriorated to its original condition. 

In another case one tenant over one weekend did \$1,700 damage to the plumbing in a hotel by demolishing the fixtures.

Inspectors report that lightbulbs and fire extinguishers are stolen almost as fast as they can be replaced.

Landlords who maintain accommodations of reasonable quality for good tenants cannot accept the others even though their rent may be guaranteed by the Social Service Department. On more than one occasion, reports the CSSD alcoholic caseworker, landlords have advised that they have had to evict an objectionable tenant because the good tenants were leaving.

Tenants in the area are loath to complain about their housing to police or City officials. Although the Health and Fire Departments receive few complaints, this does not necessarily mean that tenants are satisfied. Rather, it may suggest that tenants do not know how to complain, or are afraid to do so. However, the Downtown East Side surveys revealed that fully 24% of interviewees had serious complaints about their accommodations. All of the elderly residents of the Downtown East Side interviewed in the course of SP/CD's study of relocation complained about their accommodation.

Health and Fire Inspectors report that it is common after fires have gutted buildings, for Type II tenants to move in to the abandoned shells even though there is no plumbing or heat, and to live in conditions of abject filth.

From the foregoing it should be plain that flop houses perform some useful social functions. They provide housing for a class of persons who are difficult to accommodate, allowing the others the quiet enjoyment of their premises.

Various strategies to improve housing including demolition of sub-standard housing or more stringent Health and Fire Bylaw enforcement will drive these places out of existence. Homeless tenants will either have to survive on the street, move to other areas in the city where equivalent accommodation is available or be accommodated in housing presently occupied by good tenants. New institutions may have to be developed if we want to renovate or demolish substandard buildings presently used as flop houses. 

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The dilemma of housing reform is that programmes that seek to upgrade neighbourhood and housing quality may result in the eviction of the very tenants such programmes are supposed to protect and lead to the disappearance of the infra structure - the low cost restaurants and shops on which poor tenants depend. Therefore such programmes must be coupled with subsidies and other measures that will assure that low income tenants will not assume the full burden of these changes.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

A. Strategies to Upgrade Housing Quality

Lodging House Bylaw Amendments: Lodging House Bylaw section 5(2)(a), (9), 25(1), (2) read as follows:

- '5(2)(a) Any room in which is installed any of the sanitary facilities detailed in subsection (1) hereof shall be adequately ventilated and shall be provided with artificial lighting equipped with a globe of at least 40 watts.
- (9) Every lodging house keeper shall, during the hours of darkness, maintain to the satisfaction of the Fire Chief sufficient artificial lighting to illuminate every stairway, passage, hall, landing and fire escape within the lodging house.
- 25(1) Every person who commits an offence against this Bylaw is liable to a fine and penalty not exceeding \$100.
- (2) Where an offence against this Bylaw is of a continuing nature, it shall be lawful for the convicting magistrate in his discretion, to impose a fine against the offender, not exceeding \$50 for each day such offence is continued by him.'

The Vancouver Legal Assistance Society has advocated a number of amendments to the Bylaw so as to provide for increased penalties against owners as well as operators, licensing of managers and increase lighting in common areas. In a report to Council of October 21, 1971 the City's Law Department pointed out that amendments to the City Charter would be necessary to effect some of these changes.

The following amendments would be desirable:

1. Sec. 25(1) and (2). An amendment to the Charter should be sought so that there can be minimum and maximum fines, and the maximum fines should substantially exceed the existing fines in order to be effective.

2. Sec. 5(2) (a) and (9). The Law Department in its report of October 21, 1971 to the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare re Brief by Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society on Skid Road Housing Conditions, observed that: 'The degree of lighting is in the discretion of the Fire Chief; since there are so many factors to be taken into consideration no hard and fast rules can be laid down in the Bylaw.' If an intolerable situation with regard to lighting in common areas continues to exist while this Bylaw is in effect, it is just possible that there is something wrong with the Bylaw. The Bylaw should be amended so as to bring about an improvement in the amount of lighting in these areas. Consideration should be given to methods of encouraging the painting of hallways and common areas in fire resistant paint of lighter colours, higher wattage requirements for lightbulbs, requirements for damage-resistant light fixtures, and other ways of more effectively enforcing these sections of the Bylaw.

3. Operating Permits. At present under the Lodging House Bylaw it is extremely difficult for the Medical Health Officer to cancel a license quickly. A building may physically comply with bylaw requirements but the operator may do or fail to do certain things so that the premises no longer provide an acceptable environment. For example, a building may have a good furnace and hot water heater, but the operator may choose to turn them off. It would be desirable for the Health Department to be able to take prompt action under such circumstances.

The Lodging House Bylaw should be amended so as to require a responsible manager on the premises and establish a system whereby operating permits would be issued by the Health Department. The retention of a permit would depend on the competency of the operator to provide an acceptable living environment on a day to day basis. Wide discretionary authority would be given to the Medical Health Officer, who could withdraw permits for cause without Court action. A charge could be made for these operating permits and revenues could be utilized to provide much needed inspectional staff.

The Provincial Health Act as recently amended gives authority to the Medical Health Officer to issue and charge fees for such permits.

The Bylaw if so amended would of course have to provide for adequate notice to the operator, notice to tenants, a mechanism for relocation of tenants, and provide for a right of appeal to Council.

4. Charging of Owners. In his report of October 21, 1971 re Brief of Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society on Skid Road Housing Conditions, the City Solicitor advised that under the Charter only the operator of a rooming house could be charged and not the owner. Therefore, a charter amendment should be sought in order to permit the charging of owners of lodging houses as well as operators.

5. A new section should be added to the Lodging House Bylaw that would require the posting of notices in each room advising tenants of the salient features of the Lodging House Bylaw and encouraging tenants to register complaints with the Health Department. This provision should also apply to hotels.

B. Policies to Enable Low Income Groups to Afford Improved Housing

Bylaw Enforcement and Demolitions: Richard Muth in 'Cities and Housing' (1969) observed that programmes of demolition and code enforcement alone do not increase housing opportunities. Demolitions decrease the supply of poor quality housing thus driving up its price. This of course depends on whether the housing market is tight. If the general housing market is experiencing a rapid increase in supply, then the harmful impact of demolitions would be more than offset. If it is tight demolition would undoubtedly be harmful to low income groups. Code enforcement, rent strikes and rent receiverships are aimed at forcing improvements in dwelling conditions. But improvements cost money. As the investment in a building rises, the owner has two choices: take a capital loss on a sale, or raise the rents. The latter is the usual path; it reduces the supply of low rent housing available to the low income demand.

Income Strategy: Although landlord greed and tenant inadequacy may play some part in the creation of substandard housing the primary cause of bad housing is poverty itself. Low income households are only able financially to demand a certain level of housing service, and the market responds fairly efficiently in providing that level. If City Council wants every household to occupy standard housing and some households have insufficient incomes to demand that level of service, the Government must provide those households with the necessary purchasing power. It can do this by subsidizing the household or by subsidizing the producer of housing. One may be more efficient than the other.

Considerable research is already available on the relationship between substandard housing and income ranges. One sophisticated study subjected data from six U.S. cities, to computer regression analysis and revealed that if incomes rise by 10%, the proportion of substandard units in an area will decrease by 32%.

There is persuasive evidence that over the long run a 10% increase in income produces a 10% rise in housing expenditures. However, the supply side of the housing market would not respond immediately to the increased demand fostered by income assistance. Rather, for

the first five or six years increased purchasing power would produce higher rents, unaccompanied by improved quality, and for a period of time standard housing would be overpriced. This period of overpriced service could extend to a decade. Such a possibility is a powerful argument for coupling a supply strategy to any income strategy.

Supply Strategy - Creation of New Units: If programmes recommended to improve housing quality are implemented the need for housing in the Downtown East Side will initially be greatest among Type II undesirable tenants.

Removal of flop houses may be a boon to those who are concerned with neighbourhood eyesoars, but it is doubtful that placing the residents in better housing will affect their life styles. Rather, it will ruin the housing for the better low income tenants. Recent evidence indicates only marginal relationships between social improvement and changes in the physical environment for certain types. (Glazer, 1967; Schorr, 1960)

France has dealt with this problem by establishing special housing for tenants who cannot fit into public housing and who could not appropriately be placed in hospitals, mental institutions or prisons. The Hostel of Nanterre is one of many such places. Located near Paris, this Government-run institution provides medical care, meals and lodging to alcoholics and other persons unable to look after themselves. A feature of the management of these hostels is that they seem to impose minimum restrictions on the life styles of residents, who are free to come and go as they please. Institutions such as the Hostel of Nanterre are worth looking into as an alternative to our domestic, private enterprise flop houses.

Financings: New units could be financed either by constructing new buildings, renovating old structures, or leasing space in existing hotels and rooming houses. It is beyond the scope of this report to recommend which method is preferable. Rather, we will briefly describe the alternatives.

Construction, Renovation, Conversion: The City of Vancouver would be eligible to borrow from C.M.H.C. money at 7 3/4% to finance up to 95% of the construction costs of innovative low cost housing. The ground floor of such a building or buildings could be reserved for commercial usage. Although the C.M.H.C. loan would not cover the commercial portion of buildings, the income derived thereby could help carry the cost. The 103-room Stanley-New Fountain Hotel is such a demonstration project.

Leasing Arrangements: The Social Service Department rents space in the Stratford Hotel (100 rooms), and a few other places. Certain categories of people are placed in these rooms at a cost of about \$40 per week. Because the landlord is assured of his rent he is willing to supply premises at a rate somewhat under the market and is willing to perform his responsibilities as a landlord. The leasing of space in this manner provides a simple short term expedient.

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Those persons who are placed in previously leased space including the Stratford Hotel are said to receive meals and lodging rather than direct cash assistance. 221 persons receive assistance in this way and are referred to the Stratford Hotel, Catholic Charities Hostel (60 rooms), Dunsmuir House and several other places in the area. They tend to be transients over 40 years of age who are awaiting a more permanent welfare classification, or who are passing through town. Many are alcoholics.

One Family Dwellings: A study on relocation conducted by the Department of SP/CD revealed that many landlords, particularly owners of dwellings with one or two self-contained suites prefer not to have elderly residents. One way of adding to the housing stock for senior citizens would be to encourage owners of homes in RS-1 districts (one family dwelling districts) to make space available in their homes for this purpose. If the Zoning and Development Bylaw were amended so as to permit self-contained suites

within one family dwellings in RS-1 districts for persons over 65 an incentive would be provided to homeowners to add such units or to rent presently illegal suites to older persons. In the alternative the present policy of relaxing restrictions against self-contained suites in RS-1 districts in cases of tenant hardship could be extended to all cases where tenants were 65 years of age or older. In this case no Bylaw amendment would be necessary.

C. Strategies to Retain Residential Uses

A number of possibilities exist to enact legislation to retain residential uses. These should all be more carefully studied by the Planning, Social Planning and Law Departments and if found to be desirable, implemented.

Vertical Zoning: One reasonable method of control, which certainly might be useful in preserving residential uses, in the Historic Precinct, is that of vertical zoning: i.e. we could, in rezoning the area (presently proposed) vertically separate the uses - commercial on ground floor, residential on upper floors, etc.

Restriction Against Conversion From Residential Use: With the changes, particularly the economic changes, that are occurring in the Gastown area the existing low income housing stock is threatened. The objective must be to retain the present decent residential premises in continuing residential use and, indeed, to supplement this by new residential development or conversions. However, at the present time there is no legal way of preventing a building owner from changing the use of his property from residential to commercial; neither is there any legal means of preventing him from changing his clientele from low income to high income.

Bearing in mind that this is the Historic Precinct, and that the present mix of residential/commercial/warehousing uses is a character of this area that we wish to preserve, legislation could be sought whereby existing residential premises could only be converted to a non residential use where equivalent other housing is supplied by the building owner. We have no knowledge of North American legislation which presently does this.

Tax Concessions or Other Subsidies to Preserve the Infra Structure: Unless the infra structure of the Gastown area - the utilities and amenities that sustain the low income residents can be preserved, the residents will be without the basic necessities for their continued existence in the area. Such amenities include the public and private social service agencies, cheap restaurants, food and second hand clothing stores.

It is just as necessary to ensure retention of this infra structure within the area as it is to ensure the continuation of the shelter. Therefore the question of tax concessions or financial incentives needs to be studied with these sorts of enterprises in mind.

Amendment of the Assessment Equalization Act: The Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society recommended that landlords be granted tax rebates for any improvements made to their buildings. The City Law Department has advised that a charter amendment would be necessary to achieve this.

Since high degrees of maintenance and renovations are required to bring the residential accommodation in the Historic Precinct into reasonable shape it has been suggested that such improvements should not result in an increased assessment, at least in these special areas. This would require an amendment of the Assessment Equalization Act.

As mentioned earlier this act also provides an incentive for landlords to raise rents since an assessment is based on what the land and building is worth on the market. The fact that one owner is sympathetic and retains low rents is not reflected in the assessed value because a prospective buyer would know that he could charge a higher rent. The rent potential of the building is what determines its market value - hence, assessed value.

Since an amendment to the A.E.A. may not be possible or desirable, the Law Department should be asked to report on methods of granting rebates or special subsidies to landlords who make improvements and on methods of subsidizing landlords who retain low rentals.

SOCIAL SERVICES

No Western country has found the single social service solution to the chronic alcoholism problem, perhaps because the causes are so varied and complex. For some reason, however, European countries do not have Skid Roads - places of high concentrations of chronic alcoholics.

For some people with no hope and no future, alcoholism is a problem of loneliness.

Perhaps, for lonely, aged people it is not such a bad thing if they eat and drink alone in their rooms waiting for the Grim Reaper. Others may be wretched degenerates lacking in all sense of decency or humanity. There is no reason to treat them all the same way.

The Social Service Department presently has a policy of providing chronic alcoholics not with the usual cash payment, but with vouchers for meals and lodging plus a very small cash 'comforts allowance' of \$2 per week. Lodging is provided by a number of Skid Road hotels willing to accept the alcoholic and his voucher, and meals of a reasonable quality are provided at the Alpine Lodge.

Some City officials are of the opinion that the practice of providing meals and lodging instead of cash is one of the only immediate measures that influences alcoholic consumption. Skid Road alcoholics subsist on a simple equation - cash out equals alcohol in. The effect of decreasing cash allowances to alcoholics may increase the amount of panhandling, but hardly affects the crime rate since this group are completely ineffective criminals. If funds are administered for alcoholics so that they are provided with meals and lodging their inebriation period will be shortened. Some of course will sell their meal tickets for liquor but most will receive three square meals a day. In the opinion of these officials, the Social Service Department should examine its entire caseload in the Single Men's Unit and transfer any additional alcoholics (the numbers may be considerable) to the administered load so that they receive meals, lodging and the comforts allowance.

However, before lending support to the idea of increasing the number of persons on the City's alcoholic caseload and urging the Department of Veteran Affairs to take the same action with respect to those on the War Veteran's Allowance, a number of questions have to be answered. Who determines whether a person is a chronic alcoholic? How? What are the rights of appeal? How does the caseworker decide whether the client has improved enough to be removed from this classification? Do all persons respond positively to this approach? Is the prognosis of chronic alcoholics presently on the administered load better than that of alcoholics receiving cash? How many sell their vouchers? The system of meals and lodging is somewhat more expensive than direct cash payments. Do the benefits justify the added expenditures?

Discussions with several physicians who have had a great deal of experience dealing with chronic alcoholics unfortunately did not provide any simple solutions or even a consensus. One felt it would be preferable to give them alcohol and then try to treat their problem. Many chronic Skid Road alcoholics, he argued, achieve their sense of purpose from the challenge of getting their liquor. Only when the challenge is removed as distinct from the liquor, can treatment begin.

Another argued that the only solution was to provide meals and lodging in a hostel environment far removed from the city and to virtually sentence alcoholics to institutions for periods of 6 months to a year until they were cured.

light of the lack of agreement among experts on this problem we are unable at this stage to recommend any change in policy for the Social Service Department in its handling of chronic alcoholics.

SALES OF LIQUOR

If one visits the liquor store serving the Skid Road area it is a common sight, particularly on payday, to see alcoholics lining up to purchase supplies. The Provincial Government should be urged to take steps to bring an end to this situation. Government liquor stores should not sell to people in a state of inebriation.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends a code enforcement strategy coupled with a supply strategy and an income strategy. The Downtown East Side has a population of low income, single persons about 13% of whom are chronic alcoholics. Many are old age pensioners attracted to the area by low cost housing.

Most of the housing meets code requirements but a minority of buildings are substandard in some way or another. Frequently, the tenants are responsible for these conditions and are satisfied to live in dwellings that could not be considered as safe, sanitary or decent. The Health, Fire and Permits and Licenses Departments have conscientiously tried to enforce existing bylaws against operators but the problem persists.

In the area of the Historic Precinct rising property values threaten low cost housing.

Therefore, a policy of strict Bylaw enforcement under an amended Lodging House Bylaw will result in the improvement of some buildings, particularly those occupied by low income tenants. Since there is a substantial vacancy rate in the area (15%) this may not, at least in the short run, result in an increase in rents.

The very worst flop houses, however, occupied by a class of tenants who destroy housing may require substantial expenditures in order to be upgraded resulting in either an increase in rents, ejection of tenants, and/or demolition.

To compensate for the displacement of the undesirable tenants and to avoid the situation of their being shipped into housing presently occupied by those who desire good, clean accommodation, a new form of public accommodation may be required.

To maintain low cost housing stock various legislative and economic strategies should be considered. Most important, the City should take the initiative in pressing for a substantial increase in the amount of pensions, for in large measure, bad housing is a response to low incomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council instruct the Legal Department in consultation with the Health, Fire, and Permits & Licences Departments to seek a change in the City Charter and any other enabling legislation to permit amendments to the Lodging Housing Bylaw described in pages 5 and 6 of this report as follows:

- i) Sec. 25(1) and (2). The penalty provisions of the Bylaw should be amended so that there can be minimum and maximum fines, and the maximum fines should substantially exceed the existing fines in order to be effective.
- ii) Sec. 5(2) (a) and (9). These provisions in the Bylaw should be amended so as to bring about an improvement in the amount of lighting in common areas. Consideration

should be given to methods of encouraging the painting of hallways and common areas in fire resistant paint of lighter colours, higher wattage requirements for light-bulbs, requirements for damage resistant light fixtures, and other ways of more effectively enforcing these sections of the Bylaw.

- iii) Operating Permits. The Lodging House Bylaw should be amended so as to require a responsible manager on the premises and establish a system whereby Operating Permits would be issued by the Health Department. The retention of a permit would depend on the competency of the operator to provide an acceptable living environment on a day to day basis. Wide discretionary authority would be given to the Medical Health Officer, who could withdraw permits for cause without Court action. A charge could be made for these Operating and revenues could be utilized to provide much needed inspectional staff. The Bylaw, if so amended, would have to provide for adequate notice to the operator, notice to tenants, a mechanism for relocation of tenants, and provide for a right of appeal to Council.
2. Since a policy of stringent enforcement of the Fire Bylaw and Lodging House Bylaw as amended will result in a reduction of low cost housing stock presently occupied by derelicts and difficulty of house persons, SP/CD should report to Council on the feasibility of establishing residential accommodations for derelicts and other difficult to house men and women. This report shall evaluate similar accommodations in other parts of Canada as well as in other countries. recommend methods of administration, suggest suitable sites, determine whether it is preferable to proceed by new construction, renovation, conversion or leasing of rooms and estimate costs. \$2,000 for consultants services will be required.
3. The Planning Department continue to investigate methods of providing housing for senior citizens and give priority to these items in a forthcoming report on Housing to be submitted to Council shortly.
4. The Planning Department and the Department of Permits and Licences in consultation with the Department of Social Planning/Community Development to report to Council as soon as possible in 1972, on additional methods of increasing the amount of housing stock available to senior citizens in RS-1 one-family areas. This report should consider extending the hardship procedures to permit self-contained suites for single-family dwellings where these are required for citizens over 65 years of age as well as amendment of the Bylaw and Charter, if necessary, so as to permit self-contained suites within one-family dwellings in RS-1 districts for persons over 65 years of age.
5. The Planning Department in consultation with the Department of Social Planning/Community Development should report to Council on measures to retain appropriate residential stock in the Historic Precinct as part of the CD-1 Bylaw now being studied. Regulations should be investigated which would permit both commercial and residential uses in the same building.
6. The Corporation Counsel report further in consultation with the Department of Social Planning/Community Development and the Department of Planning and Civic Development on such matters as:
 - a) restricting the conversion of existing buildings from residential use;
 - b) tax incentives, subsidies or means to preserve the low cost stores, restaurants, servicing the low income people in the area;
 - c) legislation to create incentives to landlords to improve residential accommodation without increasing rents;
 - d) legislation to retain low rental dwellings in areas of increasing land value.

7. Since substandard housing ultimately stems from low incomes, and since the City is forced to assume the social costs of such conditions and to suffer a reduction of its tax base, Council should actively take the initiative in seeking greatly increased pensions and assistance for persons over 65 from senior governments. This will in the long run do more to improve housing quality than any other measure."