

Housing now or rooming-house mayhem

May 12, 2012 | [Jino Distasio \(IUS\)](#)

In recent years there have been occasional calls to close downtown SRO hotels, and perhaps a few rooming houses have been shut due to violations or fires. But we continue to see rooming houses and inner city hotels as forming an integral part of our affordable-housing solution. What is disconcerting about this is that we lack an alternative.

Prior to the housing market takeoff in the mid-2000s, city council enacted a bylaw to deal with vacant properties and struck a task force to inspect and deal with the worst offenders and unlicensed rooming houses. The task force was effective in dealing with that situation but little followup has taken place. While the city does require a licence to operate a rooming house, few comply and we continue to see suspect housing on the market.

The development of alternative housing options has seen some modest progress. This has included the early and innovative pocket-suite project -- the unique blue infill units located in the inner city. They contain compact suites that are just over 200 square feet and provide safe and secure housing for those wanting modest accommodation.

These were touted as a viable alternative to rooming houses and provide the highest standards possible. It is also important to note many people who have chosen rooming houses and SRO hotels have done so because they prefer small and inexpensive shelter. This includes many working individuals and perhaps a few pensioners.

For more on this story, [click here](#).

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