

“Vacant Homes Program”



(Image: Global News, January 14, 2016)

Background:

- Began in 2013 as a test arrangement between Chimo Community Services and local developer Balandra Development.
- Vacant properties that were slated for demolition/redevelopment but were otherwise liveable were provided as temporary housing to clients who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The arrangement led to successful outcomes, resulting in additional housing opportunities and other local developers coming forward.

Statistics:

- Since 2013, over 20 individuals have received temporary housing under this initiative, most of whom were deemed high-barrier and difficult-to-house through traditional means. The majority of individuals have since gone on to secure permanent housing.
- Approximately 10 properties were provided by 4 local developers as temporary housing for periods ranging from 3 months to a year.

How it works:

- Developer commits to providing vacant property in liveable conditions. Updates regarding plans for the property should be provided to the occupants and Chimo as soon as possible, including a minimum 30-day notice to vacate when the property needs to be returned. The developer will also take on the role of landlord for the residents.

- The developer continues to pay for all costs associated with maintaining the property as they would if the property was left vacant. Specifically, this includes the cost of property tax and utilities. The developer must also maintain insurance for the property.
- Chimo (and/or a partnering organization) will provide fully robust, wraparound services to the clients in obtaining or maintaining stable income, finding permanent housing, as well as addressing other barriers that may have prevented them from pursuing alternate housing options. Chimo will also act as an intermediary between clients and developers as needed, and to assist with addressing issues that may arise during the occupancy.

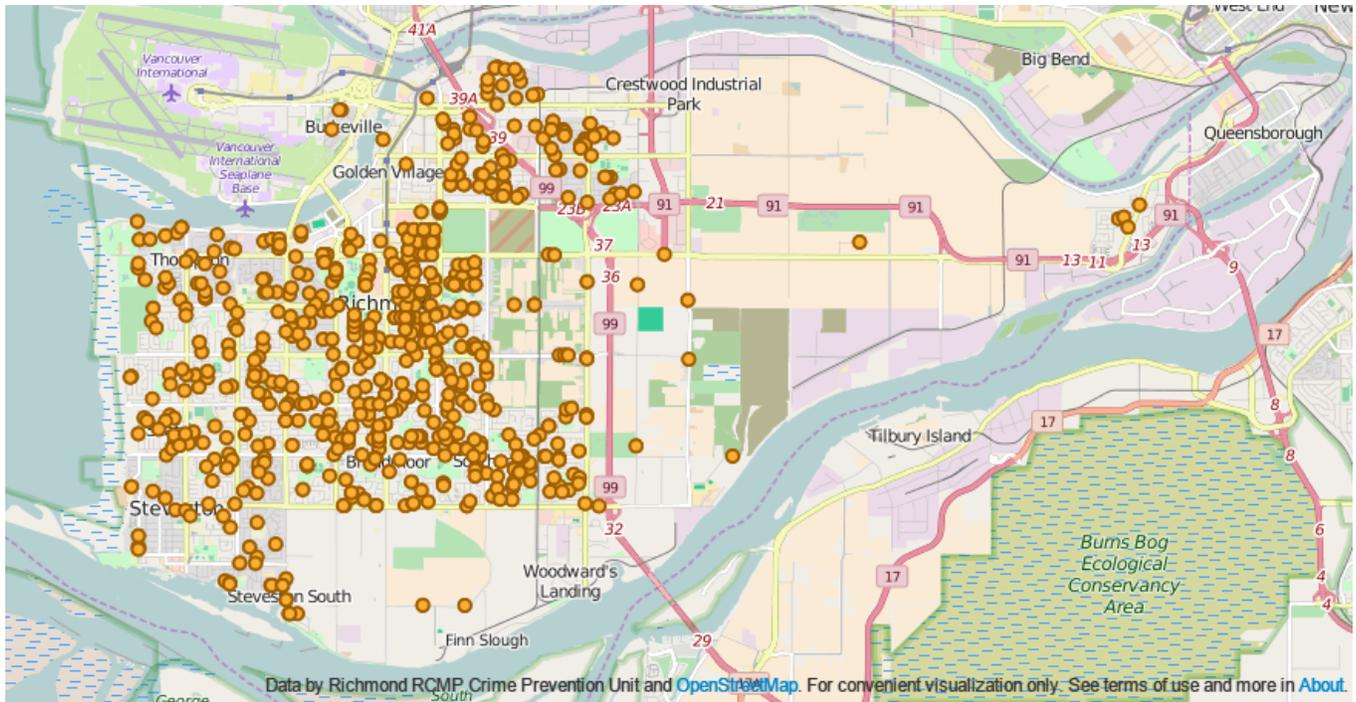
Chimo's Wraparound Service Map



Benefits

- For developers, providing vacant homes as temporary housing can serve as a cost saving measure as security related expenses will be minimized if the properties will be occupied.
- For the individuals housed, temporary housing provides a safe space and valuable time that allows them to plan and tend to other critical needs, such as securing income/employment, health concerns, and finding permanent housing..
- For the general community, less vacant homes means reduced risk of vandalism, break-ins, and other forms of property damage, leading to an increased sense of security in the neighbourhood.

- 709 incidents of break and enters recorded in Richmond in 2015.



(Image: Criminal Activity Map, City of Richmond)

- A reduction in vacant properties equals a reduction of potential targets for criminal activities, leading to reduced enforcement and administrative costs for the city and the community.
 - o A 2009 study in Baltimore found that *each* vacant property increased the city's police and fire expenditures by an average of \$1,472 every year. A similar study in Philadelphia conducted in 2010 found the city's 17,000 vacant properties added \$20 million to the city's expenditures each year, which works out to an average of \$1,176 per property.
- In addition, the National At Home/Chez Soi research project, a 5-year study conducted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and funded by the federal government, concluded that every \$10 invested in housing the highest-need homeless through Housing First (HF) models can result in an average of \$9.60 - up to as much as \$21.72 - in cost savings from reduced psychiatric and general hospital stays, prison incarcerations, police contacts, emergency room visits, and emergency shelter stays. In addition, the study found significant improvements in the quality of life, community functioning, mental health, and substance use outcomes of participants who received HF support.
 - o The average cost to house a high need client is \$22,257 per year, including rental subsidies as well as salaries and administrative costs for HF intervention program staff. While the reduction in service use resulted in average savings of \$21,375 up to as much as \$42,536.