



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Managers of Corporate and Community Services and the Chief Constable

SUBJECT: Relocation of the Police Evidence Warehouse to 324 Main Street to Accommodate the WISH Wellness Centre at 334 Alexander Street

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the temporary relocation of a portion of the Police Evidence Warehouse from 334 Alexander to 324 Main Street to accommodate the WISH Wellness Centre at an estimated cost of \$300,000; source of funding to be 2006 Capital Budget for the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Managers of Community and Corporate Services and Police Chief recommend approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

In June, 1993 Council directed that City-owned properties occupied by non-profit organizations be held as assets in the Capital Fund and be charged a nominal rental rate. The lease/sublease/license of City assets below market value constitutes a grant and requires eight affirmative votes of Council.

On July 28, 1998, Council confirmed principles to provide general guidance to actions and Planning in the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown, Strathcona and Victory Square which include encouraging legitimate commercial activity, improving conditions at the street level, improving low income housing, reducing crime, and helping community people to find allies and seek a common future.

In 2000, the City entered into the Vancouver Agreement (VA) with the Federal and Provincial Governments to collectively address housing, economic revitalization, health and safety issues facing the Downtown Eastside. In 2005 the all three partners renewed the Vancouver Agreement.

In July 2003, Council approved the inclusion of all City-owned buildings occupied by social service, community or cultural tenants as Capital Assets in the City's structural and Physical Plant Upgrading Program in future Capital Plans.

PURPOSE

This report recommends that Council approve the temporary relocation of a portion of the Police Evidence Warehouse from the upper floor of 334 Alexander to the former City Jail at 324 Main Street to accommodate the development of the WISH Wellness Centre. The estimated cost for the relocation is \$300,000, with funding to be provided from the 2006 Capital Budget for the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program.

BACKGROUND

WISH has operated an evening program out of a small space at First United Church for more than 20 years. It began looking for a site for a 24/7 Wellness Centre in 2003 when it won the VanCity \$1 million award. This has been seen as an important response to the issue of the "Missing Women".

Beginning in early 2005, an extensive process was undertaken by staff, in consultation with WISH, the Police and community stakeholders, to seek a location for this facility so that it could serve approximately 200 survival sex workers, more than 90% of whom live in the Downtown Eastside, while minimizing impacts on neighbouring residents and businesses. More than 18 potential sites were given serious consideration before it was concluded that 334 Alexander was one of the very few feasible sites.

In June 2005, Council approved \$250,000 toward the development of the WISH Wellness Centre as a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week facility.

In December 2006, Council approved a series of actions to help relocate the WISH Wellness Centre from the First United Church to 334 Alexander so that it can expand services for women working in survival sex in the Downtown Eastside. These actions included entering into negotiations for a ten year lease for the upper floor of 334 Alexander Street (a City-owned Capital asset) to the WISH Drop-in Centre Society ("WISH") for nominal rent subject to a number of conditions outlined in the Council report (RTS# 06140), including the approval of a development permit and the identification of an alternative location for a portion of the Police Evidence Warehouse currently occupying the space and a funding source for associated costs.

In April 2007, the development permit for the Wellness Centre is in the final stages of the approval process. Extensive public meetings, an open house and formal notification resulted

in eleven letters being submitted to the Director of Planning, nine of which were in favour and two in opposition of this proposal.

DISCUSSION

The December 2006 report to Council (RTS#06140) indicated there was still uncertainty about how long it would take to develop a replacement for the Police Evidence Warehouse which currently occupies 334 and 344 Alexander and that staff would report back on the options, costs, and timing of the relocation. Where possible, a longer term solution would be sought to avoid the costs of a temporary relocation to accommodate WISH.

After considering a number of alternatives, staff conclude that a permanent solution for forensic property storage and forensic vehicle examination cannot be achieved in the immediate future. At 334 Alexander, the lower floor currently contains high tech equipment that is not feasible to move on a temporary basis. However, it is possible to relocate the bicycles and other evidence currently stored in the upper floor to another site. This would allow that portion of 334 Alexander to be used for the WISH Wellness Centre.

The most suitable site for relocating the evidence currently stored in the upper floor is the former City Jail at 324 Main Street. From an operational point of view it is a highly secure building and is located near the existing facility. There will also be efficiencies because of the existing staff who work in the building.

The VPD is committed to solving the serious issues regarding the current operation of the VPD's Property Office, forensic vehicle examination and storage, and forensic laboratories by consolidating these operations into a purpose built facility on the Force Options Training Centre site. This consolidation is of the highest priority for the VPD who will be seeking funding for this initiative in the next Capital Budget. Once this is achieved and the Police Garage is vacated by VPD, the remaining space in the Police Garage can become WISH's offices providing space for counselling rooms and other services at 334-342 Alexander.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The relocation of Police evidence and related renovation at 324 Main Street will cost approximately \$300,000. Funding will be provided from the 2006 Capital Budget for the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program. This will pay for labour to carry out proper documentation and the physical movement of evidence as well as site preparation, demolition, space design, construction and materials, including security system and reusing existing shelving (see breakdown below).

Site preparation, demolition and construction	\$181,000
Security system	\$ 15,000
Relocation and proper documentation	\$ 60,000
Project management	\$ 10,000
Contingency	\$ 34,000
TOTAL	\$300,000

The freight elevator at 324 Main Street is essential to that building's use for evidence storage. While currently operational, it is well beyond its normal life expectancy and is rated in marginal to fair condition. Since this is a City-owned building, should that elevator require major repair or upgrading, the Director of Facilities Design will provide funding from existing capital.

The Police Chief supports the relocation of the current police evidence at 334 Alexander and the conversion of the space in the old jail to useable storage space on the basis that any cost overrun, or unanticipated expense, or necessary charges that are required to be spent on these initiatives will not be the responsibility of the VPD.

Staff from Facilities Design and Management has worked with VPD staff to define the minimum scope of work and cost estimate required to enable use of the old jail in order to offset the loss of space at 334 Alexander.

The 2006-2008 Capital Plan includes funding to develop a new Police evidence storage facility. However, in April 2007 Council approved proceeding with the Police Training Centre by reallocating funding from the forensic evidence warehouse. As a result, the Chief Constable, Director of Real Estate Services and Director Facilities Design will report back later this year on the long-term Police evidence warehouse options and costs, noting that it is anticipated that development will likely not take place over the coming 5 years.

CONCLUSION

WISH has been delivering services to women working in survival sex in the Downtown Eastside for over 20 years. After an extensive process on site search in consultation with City staff, the Police, local residents, business people and community organizations, WISH is ready to develop the new facility at 334 Alexander. This site currently serves as a warehouse for Police evidence. Before construction and renovation work can begin for the Wellness Centre, the Police evidence will need to be relocated to the interim storage at 324 Main Street. To facilitate this move, this report recommends approval of \$300,000 from the 2006 Capital Budget for the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program to fund the costs for the temporary relocation of a portion of the Police Evidence Warehouse, including the physical move and documentation of the evidence materials, and part of the renovation work at 324 Main Street. This will allow WISH to begin development of the Wellness Centre as soon as possible so it could continue to provide critical services and programs to survival sex trade workers in the Downtown Eastside.

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