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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: July 15, 2008
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: July 22, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside Capital Budget Funding Allocation

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the allocation of \$158,500 to support five community projects as listed below as part of the City's contribution towards the Downtown Eastside revitalization:

Grants:

- i. \$40,000 to Princess Avenue Interpretive Walk Project;
- ii. \$20,500 to Strathcona Community Garden & Kitchen Upgrade;
- iii. \$25,000 to Pennsylvania Hotel Neon Lighting Project;

Public Realm Improvements:

- iv. \$50,000 to Chinatown Plaza Parkade Neon Lighting Project;
- v. \$23,000 to 300-Block Alexander St. Security Improvements.

Source of funds is the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Revitalization Capital Budget.

Eight affirmative votes are required for the approval of the three grants.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

On July 28, 1998, Council confirmed, in principle, the providing of general guidance to actions and planning in the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown and Strathcona, which includes encouraging legitimate commercial activities, improving conditions at the street level, improving existing SROs, reducing crime, and helping community people find allies and seek a common future.

On October 1, 2002, Council approved a funding allocation of \$2.5 million toward Downtown Eastside revitalization initiatives in the 2003-2005 Capital Plan.

PURPOSE and SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to allocate \$158,500 from the Capital Budget for Downtown Eastside (DTES) Revitalization towards five projects. Approval of the funding will supplement community and business contributions and will help realize the projects. The five projects recommended for funding will assist existing community-based initiatives to better serve the community. These projects will help achieve DTES economic revitalization and community-building objectives, with a specific emphasis on improving the public realm and providing support to local women, family, and children living in the area.

BACKGROUND

Community Improvement Projects: Capital Budget funds have assisted a number of community improvement initiatives in the Downtown Eastside, such as the redesign of Main and Hastings Streets and lighting of Victory Square Park. With these projects, City funds were used to leverage additional public and private sponsorship. Funding the projects proposed in this report will help existing community-based services, improve the public realm, and generally improve the quality of life in the community. City funds will also assist in leveraging further investments.

DISCUSSION

Five projects are recommended for funding through the DTES Revitalization Capital Budget. Three projects are recommended as grants, and two projects are City-led public realm improvements. The following describes each project and identifies the recommended level of funding:

1. Princess Avenue Interpretive Walk Project (Grant)

While Strathcona is often characterized as an inner-city neighbourhood with a high percentage of low-income and single parent households, it is also an historic neighbourhood with rich cultural traditions. It has Vancouver's oldest elementary school (built in 1891), which was nicknamed "League of Nations" in the 1930s, indicating the neighbourhood's long-standing multi-cultural flavour.

The Strathcona Community Centre (SCC), together with the Strathcona Elementary School, has proposed a project on Princess Avenue, a street frequently used by families and children, into an Interpretive Walk where the neighbourhood's rich history and diversity can be showcased. Art-making projects involving children are proposed to engage the community in

project implementation. The project includes the following components with an implementation timeline from June 2008 to April 2009:

- "Green Corridor" Murals (three proposed)
- Community markers (proposed for Cordova Street and Princess Avenue)
- Kids Planning and Heritage Day (October 2008)
- Kids "Green Zone" Day (April 2009)
- Digital Photography and Storytelling Lab
- Community Engagement and Workshops

A number of events and activities are planned to develop the Interpretive Walk, coinciding with the school year and curriculum. The project has started its fundraising efforts and has established broad excitement and partnerships in the neighbourhood, including the Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, Union Gospel Mission, the Port of Vancouver, Strathcona Business Improvement Association, as well as local residents, property owners and businesses.

The total estimated budget for the project is \$141,720. Staff recommend a grant of \$40,000 from the approved DTES Capital Budget to the Strathcona Community Centre Association for the planning, design and installation of two murals and three markers along the Princess Avenue.

Project Cost:	\$141,720
DTES Capital Budget:	\$ 40,000

2. Strathcona Community Garden & Kitchen Upgrade (Grant)

The Strathcona Community Centre (SCC) has been providing meal programs to children, youth and seniors over the past decade. The number of children and families using these programs has increased significantly over the past few years. However, kitchen facilities in the community centre cannot adequately meet the current demand and cannot accommodate proposed improvements or expansion. To address these issues, SCC has developed a Healthy Living and Nutrition Project, to improve kitchen facilities and increase awareness of health and nutrition in the community.

The Healthy Living and Nutrition Project proposes to upgrade the two kitchen facilities at the community centre. These improvements would allow existing food programs to be enhanced, and allow new programs to be introduced. In addition, a community garden will be created and managed by members of the community and SCC. The garden would be tended by Out of School Care children, community members and staff, giving firsthand experience to the food growing process as part of healthy living.

The total estimated cost for kitchen equipment and construction of the community garden is \$68,500. Staff recommend a grant of \$20,500 from the approved DTES Capital Budget to Strathcona Community Centre Association for the project. Additional funds will be leveraged from other funders. Disbursement of the grant is contingent upon the Association's ability to secure enough funding for the whole project and upon commencement of the kitchen renovation.

Project Cost:	\$68,500
DTES Capital Budget:	\$20,500

3. Pennsylvania Hotel (412 Carrall Street) - Neon Lighting Project (Grant)

The Pennsylvania Hotel located at 412 Carrall Street is a Single Room Occupancy hotel and is currently undergoing a full heritage building rehabilitation and conversion into self-contained SRO units. The Portland Hotel Society, property owner and developer, received incentives for the project through the City's Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program, along with funding from numerous other partners.

To showcase the finished building, located prominently on the Carrall Street Greenway, and to contribute additional night-time lighting to the neighbourhood, restoration of the historic neon sign is proposed. This sign has not received previous funding; however, it would complete the heritage restoration, and would bring new life to the intersection of Hastings and Carrall Streets. In addition, the sign would be located opposite Pigeon Park, scheduled for improvements in 2009, and would become a landmark in the Downtown Eastside.

The total estimated cost for the neon sign is \$50,000. Staff recommend a grant of \$25,000 from the approved DTES Capital Budget to the Portland Hotel Society for the restoration of the historic neon sign at the Pennsylvania Hotel. Disbursement of the grant is contingent upon the Society's ability to secure enough funding for the whole project.

Project Cost:	\$ 50,000
DTES Capital Budget:	\$ 25,000

4. Chinatown Plaza Parkade - Neon Lighting Project (Public Realm Improvement)

The 2002 Chinatown Vision identifies as a key objective improvements to lighting in Chinatown to enhance it as a night-time commercial destination. A subsequent Chinatown Lighting Study, let by the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee, proposes lighting improvements for private and public buildings and public spaces, including the Chinatown Plaza parkade and Memorial Square (intersection of Keefer and Columbia Streets).

To initiate these improvements, lighting improvements are proposed to the exterior of the Chinatown Plaza parkade. Specifically, a prominent 5-storey neon sign (using traditional neon and/or newer lighting technology) is proposed at the intersection of Keefer and Columbia Streets. The sign will be of a design that echoes the historic neon lights in Chinatown. Additional lighting, such as up-lighting of the building and smaller, tenant-specific neon sign are also proposed. Once installed, the sign will serve as a highly visible landmark for the Plaza, Memorial Square and Chinatown in general, and will contribute to the area's economic revitalization.

The total estimated cost for the neon sign is \$82,000 (tenant specific signs will be cost-shared by tenants and the PEF through existing tenant improvement funds). Staff recommend allocation of \$50,000 from the approved DTES Capital Budget for the project.

Project Cost:	\$ 82,000
DTES Capital Budget:	\$ 50,000

5. 300-Block Alexander St - Security Improvements (Public Realm Improvement)

The City has supported and approved funding for the establishment of the WISH Wellness Centre at 334 Alexander Street (RTS#6140), and directed staff to "review lighting, gating and other physical security issues in the vicinity of the new facility with representatives of WISH

and its neighbours and report back on needed improvements.” The WISH facility is now under construction with completion anticipated for September 2008.

Staff have worked with WISH representatives and community groups to identify the following improvements to the 300-block of Alexander Street:

- Laneway light - one to be installed at the Dunlevy Street entrance;
- Pedestrian lights - cobra heads to be installed on four street poles;
- Building lights - approximately 20 sconces mounted on three identified buildings.

The total estimated cost is \$23,000. Staff recommend allocation of \$23,000 from the approved DTES Capital Budget for the project.

Project Cost:	\$23,000
DTES Capital Budget:	\$23,000

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of three grants and funding for two City-led public realm improvement projects totalling \$158,500 is requested in this report to support community projects, improve the public realm, and to meet City’s overall revitalization goals for the Downtown Eastside. Source of funds is the Capital Budget for DTES Revitalization. The City’s funds will leverage more than \$206,720 in investment from other governments, private businesses and other community partners for these projects.

	COV Funding	External Funding	Total Project Cost
Grants:			
Princess Avenue Interpretive Walk	\$40,000	\$101,720	\$141,720
Strathcona Community Kitchen	\$20,500	\$48,000	\$68,500
Pennsylvania Hotel - Neon Lighting	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
	\$85,500	\$174,720	\$260,220
Public Realm Improvements:			
Chinatown Plaza Parkade - Neon Lighting	\$50,000	\$32,000	\$82,000
300-Block Alexander St - Security Improvements	\$23,000	\$0	\$23,000
	\$83,000	\$32,000	\$105,000
Total	\$158,500	\$206,720	\$365,220

Disbursement of the grants is contingent upon specified terms and conditions being met by the recipients.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends Council approve amounts for three grants and two improvements to City-owned assets totalling \$158,500, to be funded from the Capital Budget for DTES Revitalization. This funding will support five significant community-based initiatives in the Downtown Eastside, as described in this report, with a specific emphasis on improving the public realm and providing support to local women, family, and children living in the area.

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