



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: July 6, 2009  
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Meeting Date: July 21, 2009

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

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the allocation of \$231,000 to support five community projects as listed below as part of the City's contribution towards the Downtown Eastside revitalization:

Grants:

1. \$30,000 to Rainier Hotel Neon Lighting Project;
2. \$50,000 to Chinatown Yue-Shan Society Courtyard Improvement Project;
3. \$50,000 to 300-Block Main Street Lane Improvement Project;

Public Realm Improvements:

4. \$50,000 to Pigeon Park Upgrade and Lighting Project;
5. \$51,000 to Blooming Boulevard (300-Block Alexander Street) Project.

Source of funds is the 2008 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. To assist with these efforts, Council has approved \$8.6 million in the past three Capital Plans for Downtown Eastside Revitalization.

## PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to allocate \$231,000 from the 2008 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 for community engagement in greening and arts projects.

## 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 in this report. 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. Rainier Hotel Neon Lighting Project (Grant)

The Rainier Hotel, located at 309 Carrall Street, is a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel and is currently undergoing a heritage building rehabilitation and conversion into self-contained SRO units. BC Housing, the property owner and developer, is investing \$1.8 million in repairs and renovations to the interior and exterior of the building. The façade upgrades are already underway, including a reinstatement of the ground floor retail facade. BC Housing has received incentives for the project through the City's Heritage Facade Rehabilitation Program, along with funding from numerous other partners. They are working in partnership with the Portland Hotel Society to manage the ongoing operations for this hotel.

To showcase the finished building, located prominently on the Carrall Street Greenway, and to contribute additional night-time lighting to the neighbourhood, this project proposes to restore the historic neon sign for the Rainier Hotel. A similar historic sign was funded last year for the revitalized Pennsylvania Hotel at the intersection of Hastings and Carrall Streets. The Pennsylvania sign has received many accolades for improving the public realm and complementing the revitalization of the SRO hotel. The proposed sign for the Rainier Hotel has not received previous funding; however, it would complete the heritage restoration by making it a landmark in the neighbourhood, and would complement other projects that are breathing new life to the Carrall Street Greenway. In addition, the sign would be located on the same block as Pigeon Park, which will have its upgrade completed by fall 2009.

The total estimated cost for the neon sign is \$60,000. Staff recommend a grant of \$30,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to the Portland Hotel Society for the restoration of the historic neon sign at the Rainier Hotel. The balance of \$30,000 is being requested from the "Great Beginnings" inter-governmental initiative.

	<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$ 60,000</b>
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:		\$ 30,000
"Great Beginnings" Funding:		\$ 30,000

## 2. Chinatown Yue Shan Society Courtyard Improvement Project (Grant)

Courtyards and alleyways were unique and integral to Chinatown's early pattern of development in the late 1800s. Historically, internal courtyards, and the alleys and breezeways that connected them, formed an intricate network of semi-public spaces that supported the economic and social life of Chinatown and helped foster a sense of community.

The City's last remaining original courtyard is within the Yue Shan Society building at 33-39 E Pender Street. The courtyard is connected by two breezeways from Pender Street through to the historic Market Alley. Although the last shop on Market Alley closed in the 1990s, many Chinatown residents and community members alike retain vivid memories of the vibrant night life that was once there and hope that it will be revitalized. Through visible capital improvements to the important semi-private space of the Yue Shan courtyard, the first step towards the reactivation of historic Market Alley will begin.

The proposed upgrades in this improvement project, which would be done by the Yue Shan Society in collaboration with the Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association (CSHBA) and the UBC Design and Development Centre, would include cleaning, painting, and improved lighting. Once upgraded, the intimate nature of the courtyard will present opportunities to partner with cultural organizations and youth groups for public programming such as arts and media installations.

The total estimated budget for the project is \$60,000. Staff recommend a grant of \$50,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to the Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association for the upgrade of the courtyard. The balance of \$10,000 is being requested from the "Great Beginnings" inter-governmental initiative.

	<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$ 60,000</b>
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:		\$ 50,000
"Great Beginnings" Funding:		\$ 10,000

### 3. 300-Block Main Street Lane Improvement Project (Grant)

This project provides a unique introduction of community arts into an unlikely space - the lane behind the 300-block of Main Street between Hastings and Cordova Streets. The key transformation of this space involves securing public use of a semi-private parking lot for use as a stage, a screen, and an outdoor art gallery, thereby fostering active utilization of an otherwise under-utilized space in the DTES. Building on other interim physical improvements focused in targeted geographic areas within the DTES, this project complements other streetscape upgrade projects currently in development for Hastings Street between Cambie and Gore Streets.

This project involves renewal of physical space, community programming, and the potential for local employment opportunities. The physical upgrades include re-surfacing, securing, and landscaping an open parking lot at 150 East Cordova Street, including the addition of living walls and indigenous plants. The fencing to secure the parking lot will become an art wall that integrates community arts programming and adds to the neighbourhood as an expression of the community's artistic vision. The programming will include mural and visual installations, movie projections, and special community events. The overall aim is to "re-purpose" the current use of this parking lot into a new, public-friendly urban environment. Finally, there will be local employment opportunities associated with this project ranging from retrofitting and landscaping the area through to ongoing operations for the secured parking.

The operating partner for this project is Intersections Media, a film-training program for at-risk youth. Intersections Media will involve several community stakeholders throughout the project and will identify key community partners to co-host arts-based events. Some targeted organizations to partner with Intersections on various parts of this project include United We Can, Atira Women's Resource Society, Portland Hotel Society, Carnegie Outreach, and the Interurban Gallery. The project will run from September 2009 through to Fall 2011.

The total cost of this project is \$185,000, which includes funding for programming, employment, and capital improvements. Staff recommend a grant of \$50,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to Intersections Media to manage this lane improvement project. The balance of \$75,000 is being requested from the "Great Beginnings" inter-governmental initiative. The balance of \$60,000 will be contributed by the property owner.

<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$ 185,000</b>
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:	\$ 50,000
Private Funding:	\$ 60,000
"Great Beginnings" Funding:	\$ 75,000

### 4. Pigeon Park Upgrade and Lighting Project (Public Realm Improvement)

Often described as the "living room" of the Downtown Eastside, Pigeon Park (also known as Pioneer Place) is situated at the intersection of Hastings and Carrall Streets, near the centre of the Carrall Street Greenway. This summer the Park Board is undertaking a renovation of the popular resting and gathering place of the local low-income residents with the intention of upgrading it for the Downtown Eastside community and current park users.

The construction of the park is being coordinated with the construction of the 300-block of the Carrall Street Greenway (Hastings to Cordova Streets). In addition to renewed surfaces and street furniture, the work in Pigeon Park will also include some new features, such as side tables next to benches, an automated public toilet, reference to the historic CPR rail line that once ran through the park, and the addition of electrical outlets which will be available for community use for activities and events.

The above improvements will have a tremendous impact on the park which has not been renovated since the 1970s; however the community has also expressed a desire for additional ambient lighting for the space. While an integral component of the redesign, funds for supplemental lighting in the park cannot be covered under limited budget for the park upgrade, which is fixed at \$187,500 from the International Village Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) Reserve (RTS# 8011).

Therefore, staff recommend that Council approve an additional \$50,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to pay for the additional ambient lighting to fulfill the community vision of the park.

**Total Project Cost: \$ 237,500**  
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request: \$ 50,000  
International Village CAC Reserve: \$187,500

#### **5. "Blooming Boulevard" (300-Block Alexander Street) Project (Public Realm Improvement)**

In 2007, a group of neighbours came together to discuss concerns and areas of interest regarding the 300-block of Alexander Street. This group of businesses, social service organizations and residents coalesced into the 'Safety for All Community' (SFAC) - a collective of concerned neighbours that share an interest in creating a safe and healthy community. In 2008, the SFAC Committee engaged a facilitator to bring this diverse group of stakeholders together around common goals and objectives, to assist the group to develop networks and relationships and to identify common goals and solutions to begin to address the group's main issues of concern.

The first action item that the SFAC Committee identified through this facilitated process was to build a 'community garden'. The idea of building a community garden is intended to provide a space where neighbours can work together on a tangible project, develop community pride, and strengthen communication and relationships in addition to bringing much needed greenery into the area. In its initial phase, this community garden will take the form of a 'blooming boulevard' or growing wall located in the north boulevard of the 300-block of Alexander Street.

Project funding will be used to support the SFAC Committee to create this 'blooming boulevard', with the City providing assistance related to Engineering works in the boulevard. The process of building and creating the growing wall will further support the Committee in working towards its broader goal of fostering relationships between neighbours to build a safe and healthy community for all that live, work, and move through this area.

The total estimated budget for this project is approximately \$66,000, for a total of three years. The costs include both expenses to build the garden, and to maintain it over a three-year period. Staff recommend that Council approve \$51,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to cover these costs. A private company will be providing approximately \$15,000 towards ongoing maintenance and irrigation costs.

	<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$ 66,000</b>
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:		<b>\$ 51,000</b>
	Private Sector Funding:	<b>\$15,000</b>

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of three grants and funding for two City-led public realm improvement projects totalling \$231,000 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 2008 Capital Budget for DTES Revitalization. The City's funds will leverage more than \$190,000 in investment from other governments, private businesses and other community partners for these projects.

	COV Funding	Other Funding	Total Project Cost
<b>Grants:</b>			
Rainier Hotel Neon Lighting Project	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$60,000
Yue-Shan Society Courtyard Improvement	\$50,000	\$10,000	\$60,000
300-Block Main Street Lane Improvements	\$50,000	\$135,000	\$185,000
	<u>\$130,000</u>	<u>\$175,000</u>	<u>\$305,000</u>
<b>Public Realm Improvements:</b>			
Pigeon Park Upgrade & Lighting Project	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
Blooming Boulevard (300-blk Alexander St) Project	\$51,000	\$15,000	\$66,000
	<u>\$101,000</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>	<u>\$116,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u><b>\$231,000</b></u>	<u><b>\$190,000</b></u>	<u><b>\$421,000</b></u>

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 \$231,000, to be funded from the 2008 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 for community engagement in greening and arts projects.

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