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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 6, 2010
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Meeting Date: April 20, 2010

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning, in consultation with the Director of Social Policy

SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside Capital Budget Funding Allocation:
Green Community Projects

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the allocation of \$165,000 to support three community projects as listed below as part of the City's contribution towards the Downtown Eastside Green Community Projects.

Grants:

- 1. \$100,000 to the SOLE Food Urban Agriculture Project;*
- 2. \$25,000 to the LoCo Green Kitchens Project; and*
- 3. \$40,000 to Strathcona Business Improvement Association Green Zone Implementation .*

Sources of funding:

- \$115,000 from the 2008 Capital Budget (Downtown Eastside) and*
- \$50,000 from the 2009 Greenest Neighbourhood Grant Fund.*

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

In 2010, Council adopted the GCAT *2020: A Bright Green Future* goals as City policy in order to set goals and targets for creating a green economy, climate change leadership, green buildings, green mobility, zero waste, access to nature, a lighter footprint, clean water, clean air and local food.

In 2004, Council adopted the Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization Plan to guide City's economic revitalisation activities in the DTES.

In July 28, 1998, Council confirmed a set of principles to guide a program of strategic actions 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.

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council approval to allocate \$165,000 from the 2008 Capital Budget for Downtown Eastside (DTES) Revitalization towards three projects. Approval of the funding will supplement community and business contributions and will help realize the projects. The three projects recommended for funding will assist existing community-based initiatives to better serve the area. These projects are a small step towards achieving DTES economic revitalization and community-building objectives, with a specific emphasis on providing support for community engagement in DTES sustainability projects.

BACKGROUND

Greenest City Action Team:

Vancouver has a long-standing commitment to sustainability. Most recently, the Greenest City Action Team (GCAT) was launched in 2009 to chart out Vancouver's path to becoming the greenest city in the world by 2020. The GCAT 'Quick Starts' report set out 44 immediately implementable actions. This was followed by a comprehensive report that set out goals and actions over the next ten years. Some of the significant opportunities identified by staff for 2010 include a Carbon Neutral Building Strategy, partnerships for large scale renewable district energy projects, financial tools for energy retrofits, development of a Bike Master Plan, and implementation of organic waste collection and composting.

The long term goals set out by GCAT in the areas of the green economy, greener communities, and human health are city-wide in scope. In February, 2010, Council directed staff to proceed with the development of a *Greenest City 2020 Implementation Plan* to meet proposed targets. There is momentum building towards establishing the City as a global leader in climate protection, responsible resource management, and sustainable building and transportation systems.

In order to enhance the *Mayor's Greenest City Action Team* priorities, the Greenest City Neighbourhood Grants fund was established to support urban food projects that provide opportunities for economic development in the green economy sector and capacity building for vulnerable, low income populations. This fund was intended to leverage other funding and advance the well being and civic participation of Vancouver neighbourhoods in the Greenest City initiative.

Opportunities for Meeting Green Objectives in the DTES:

Land use policy exploration

The DTES has unique assets that can help to foster the City's aspirations to become the world's greenest city by 2020. The area has a diverse array of permitted land use classes that are in close proximity to the downtown core, including mixed use and heavy industrial land use zones. The building stock in the area is available for flexible and adaptive re-use over time. The current array of businesses operating in the area is diverse, ranging from commercial through to heavy industrial operations. There is an emerging local green economy that is poised to help achieve GCAT goals and targets, especially in the realm of green job creation.

The DTES Planning Team has been exploring ways to leverage the city-wide momentum to foster green economic development as part of the revitalisation efforts for the area. For example, staff are gaining deeper understanding of key sustainability issues related to green building construction and adaptability to changing local economic capacity over time. Zoning that permits a more flexible suite of residential-compatible uses can yield significant environmental benefits in terms of reducing building-related greenhouse gases, energy consumption, harmful indoor water quality, and material waste in Vancouver. That, coupled with the possibility for low-barrier green job development, makes the DTES a prime location for exploring how to integrate light industrial uses into existing mixed use neighbourhoods. The DTES offers an opportunity to learn more about the incubator role that innovative land uses can play in the City's emerging green economy, providing space for new and existing green industries that have yet undefined or rapidly changing needs.

Grass-roots Sustainability Leadership

There is similar momentum building at the community level in and around Strathcona, one of the neighbourhoods within the Downtown Eastside (DTES). Strathcona, and the DTES area more broadly, are setting clear targets and putting plans in place to establish the area as a leader in green business development in Vancouver. For example, the Strathcona Business Improvement Association (SBIA) is in the process of implementing its *SBIA Green Zone Initiative Strategic Plan*. The SBIA has hosted two successful Sustainability Expos, showcasing local green entrepreneurs and businesses including a keynote address from Majora Carter, who inspired local DTES businesses through the success of her efforts in grass-roots progressive green economic development in the South Bronx.

Another example is the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Kitchen Tables Project, co-led by Potluck Café Society and DTES Neighbourhood House. This project works toward the creation of food security solutions that can be realistically implemented to increase the availability, accessibility, affordability and choice of quality, nutritious food security solutions for residents of the DTES and specifically to ensure affordable access to multiple nutritious meals each day for the most vulnerable of DTES residents.

The *Green Inner-city Cluster* is another example of action-oriented networks of local businesses and organizations who view sustainability as a competitive advantage and a cornerstone of their operations. Facilitated by Building Opportunities with Business Inner City Society, Green Cluster members work together to identify and pursue initiatives that benefit local manufacturers, retailers, and service organizations and contribute to the emerging green economy and community in the DTES. These and other examples build upon a long-standing sustainable infrastructure of businesses, organizations, and community efforts.

Previous DTES Capital Projects:

Capital Budget funds have assisted a number of community improvement initiatives in the Downtown Eastside, such as the Pigeon Park Upgrade and Lighting Project and the installation of neon signs at the Pennsylvania and Rainier Hotels. With these projects, City funds were used to leverage additional public and private sponsorship.

DISCUSSION

Staff are recommending an allocation of Capital Budget funds to assist a number of community sustainability initiatives in the DTES. With these projects, City funds are used to leverage additional sponsorship. Funding the projects proposed in this report will support existing community-based sustainability initiatives and will lend City support to emerging green initiatives in the DTES area that:

- create employment opportunities for DTES residents in green industries;
- integrate green technologies into capital investments for public realm improvements in the DTES;
- reduce the amount of waste produced in the DTES;
- visually brand the SBIA area as a green zone;
- increase urban agriculture opportunities in the DTES; and,
- further the City's understanding of how innovative land uses can help move the green building and green economy agendas forward.

Three projects are recommended as grants to local organisations from the DTES Revitalization Capital Budget. The following describes each project and identifies the recommended level of funding:

1) SOLEfood Urban Agriculture Project (grant to United We Can)

United We Can, in partnership with a number of DTES community organisations, has launched the SOLEfood Urban Agriculture Project in Vancouver's inner-city. The first phase of the project involved construction and installation of raised growing beds in the parking lot east of the Astoria Hotel at 769 East Hastings Street.

Development of the SOLEfood project is ongoing, including start-up operations for the farm on East Hastings Street, staff training programs, planting in late spring 2010, and development of a second farm site on the rooftop of the Golden Crown Parkade (211 East Georgia Street) in Chinatown. Both farms are expected to be fully operational by October 2010. The intention is to not only sell local, organic food to organizations, caterers and restaurants, but to also provide training and employment for DTES residents living with multiple barriers. Securing additional plots of land coupled with innovative farming techniques will allow SOLEfood Farm to produce substantial yields that will increase the amount of available fresh produce in the neighbourhood. A second aspect of SOLEfood Farm involves a composting program that will create employment opportunities for DTES residents.

The total budget for this project is \$220,000, which includes funding for programming, employment, and capital improvements. Staff recommend a grant of \$50,000 from the 2009 GCAT Greenest Neighbourhood Grant Fund and \$50,000 from the DTES Capital Budget to SOLE to manage the SOLEfood project. The balance of \$120,000 is being fund-raised or provided in-kind by United We Can and other partnering organizations.

Total Project Cost: \$ 220,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request: \$ 50,000
Greenest Neighbourhood Grant: \$ 50,000
Non-profit Raised Funding (funding partially confirmed): \$ 120,000

2) Green Kitchens Feasibility Study (grant to LoCo)

There are over 40 charitable food resources in the DTES that serve thousands of meals daily to Vancouver's needy. By and large, these meals are served on disposable dinnerware with disposable cutlery. An unintentional output from charitable kitchens in the DTES is large amounts of garbage - primarily styrofoam, plastic, and food scraps - that enter into Vancouver's waste stream. Managing this waste is not generally in the forefront of social service agencies' efforts in their daily struggle to manage food donations, cooking, serving, and cleaning up after meals.

LoCo is a non-profit organisation that is partnering with the Green Table Network and organisations involved in the DTES Kitchen Tables Project to explore potential opportunities to green the kitchens of Vancouver's DTES charitable food agencies. This organisation supports small local businesses to create a new economy based on relationships, self-reliance, and local economic development. Some possibilities include providing charitable kitchens with reusable (and returnable) plate/container systems, collecting food waste for organics recycling, and reductions in energy and water consumption through sustainable changes in kitchen operations via the Green Table Program. The findings could evolve into a business opportunity for a local enterprising non-profit organisation.

The study will focus on the current purchasing and waste management patterns of charitable food agencies in the DTES, a detailed assessment of alternatives and best practices, and the possible development of a business model to deliver greener charitable kitchens in the DTES.

The total budget for this project is \$25,000. Staff recommend a grant of \$25,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to LoCo to manage the project.

Total Project Cost: \$ 25,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request: \$ 25,000

3) SBIA Green Zone Implementation (grant to Strathcona Business Improvement Association)

Over the past two years, the Strathcona Business Improvement Association (SBIA) has been working to establish their business improvement area as the 'green zone' of Vancouver. They have done this in a number of ways, including assisting their members to green their own businesses, attracting and retaining new green businesses, marketing and branding Strathcona as a green business zone, and fostering eco-industrial activity in the area. This funding from the City will support two projects as part of the implementation of that strategic plan:

- SBIA Materials Exchange Network

The SBIA launched its formal Materials Exchange Network in spring, 2009. The network is to develop waste reutilization projects that view waste as a misplaced resource, offering businesses alternatives to buying brand new materials and diverting goods from the landfill. The outcomes include reduced purchasing costs, local sourcing, reduced disposal costs, new lines of business out of waste products, and resources kept in the community for the benefit of local businesses. The SBIA hosted a waste exchange workshop that provided a forum for discussions between businesses that don't often meet otherwise: manufacturers, non-profit organizations, retailers and service providers spanning diverse sectors from office supplies to bike and textile manufacturing. The workshop succeeded in connecting businesses to exchange wastes, and gaining a commitment from the group to address some waste issues together that are common to many businesses (eg. broken wood pallets, organic waste, cooking oil, etc.).

Following the successful launch of the SBIA's Materials Exchange Network, the SBIA is developing an expansion project that increases both the number of waste exchanges and the number of participants in the network. The project will raise awareness with area businesses through facilitated workshops, identify new opportunities through waste assessments of business waste streams, and facilitate exchanges through a technology platform for online waste exchange.

- 'Green Zone' identified bike racks

The SBIA will purchase 20 standard bike racks to be installed along Hastings Street, Railway and Alexander Streets, and on the 300 and 400 blocks of Powell Street. Art pieces that identify these bike racks as part of the Green Zone will be permanently affixed to each side of the bike rack, along with key messaging about the environmental and health benefits of cycling as a mode of transportation. The bike rack installations can be used to create visual cues in the public realm that one has 'arrived' in the Green Zone of the DTES. The SBIA will work with a local community artist to develop a branding package that portrays a consistent visual personality constructed to represent the Green Zone in the DTES.

The total budget for these two Green Zone implementation projects is \$88,000, which includes program development, coordination, administration, and implementation. Staff recommend a grant of \$40,000 from the 2008 DTES Capital Budget to SBIA to manage and implement the project. The balance of \$48,000 has been fund-raised by SBIA through the Vancity EnviroFund Program.

Total Project Cost: \$ 88,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request: \$ 40,000
Vancity EnviroFund grant to SBIA: \$ 48,000

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of 3 grants totalling \$165,000 is requested in this report to support community projects, improve the public realm, and to contribute to the City's overall revitalization goals for the Downtown Eastside. The source of funds are the 2008 Capital Budget (Community and Social Development) for DTES Revitalization and the 2009 Greenest Neighbourhood Grant Fund. A full report outlining a plan and recommending expenditures for the use of the Greenest Neighbourhood Grant Fund will be presented to Council in June 2010.

The City's funds will leverage \$198,000 in investment from the provincial government, private businesses and other community partners for these projects.

	COV Funding	Other Funding	Total Project Cost
Grants:			
SOLEfood Project (SOLE)	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$250,000
Green Kitchens Project (LoCo)	\$25,000		\$25,000
Strathcona Green Zone Implementation (SBIA)	\$40,000	\$48,000	\$88,000
Total	\$165,000	\$198,000	\$363,000

Disbursement of the grants is contingent upon specified terms and conditions being met by the recipients. Terms and conditions will be specified in detailed in a Terms of Reference and Letter of Understanding with the recipients before disbursement of funds.

CONCLUSION

The alignment of green objectives in the DTES and the city more broadly is clear in terms of tackling climate change, reducing pollution and waste, promoting local food, supporting neighbourhood sustainability initiatives, and stimulating the development of green jobs and the green economy. A key strategy towards the success of the GCAT mission is to support grassroots initiatives that are gaining momentum at the neighbourhood scale. Supporting the community momentum in the DTES provides an opportunity to achieve some of those objectives at a neighbourhood scale, focusing in on the DTES and elsewhere in the inner-city.

Over the longer term, given recent direction from Council to develop an integrated community strategy for the DTES, the ongoing green initiatives in the DTES will play an important role in fostering broader understanding about the role of sustainability principles in shaping new area-wide land use policies. This program will support projects that fall within the parameters of capital funds for projects that result in employment and/or community development. As initiatives like these gain momentum, the opportunity to integrate these experiences into a review of land use policies within the DTES could result in the area becoming the ground for green innovation, including new land use designations and zoning regulations that complement ongoing economic revitalization efforts in the area.

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