



A2

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 6, 2010
Contact: Jessica Chen
Contact No.: 604.873.7754
RTS No.: 08630
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: April 20, 2010

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

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the allocation of \$150,000 to support three community projects as listed below as part of the City's contribution towards Japantown Revitalization:

Grants:

1. \$100,000 Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall (VJLS-JH) Renovation and Expansion Project;
2. \$40,000 Powell Street Open Door Project; and
3. \$10,000 Community History Map Project.

Source of funds is the 2008 Downtown Eastside (DTES) 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

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

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to allocate \$150,000 from the 2008 Capital Budget for Downtown Eastside (DTES) Revitalization toward three projects. Approval of the funding will supplement community and business contributions and will help realize the projects. The three projects will assist existing community-based initiatives to better serve the area. These projects help achieve DTES community-building and economic revitalization objectives, with a specific emphasis on providing support for community-led initiatives towards the revitalization of Japantown.

BACKGROUND

History of Japantown

The area now referred to as Japantown is one of the founding neighbourhoods of Vancouver. While the First Nations have a long-standing presence in the area, the first Japanese residents arrived to the Powell Street area in the early 1890s to support the sawmill and docks of the city's thriving waterfront economy. By 1912, Powell Street and Cordova East was "the business centre of the Japanese community" with over 578 ethnic Japanese stores and organizations clustered in the area. The neighbourhood has always been multicultural, serving as the homeground for many immigrant groups including Yugoslavs, Scandinavians, Chinese, and Afro-Canadians.

With the forced departure of the Japanese Canadians on the eve of WWII, the localised economy took a downturn. It was not until the 1950s that the local economy began showing signs of revival. The few Japanese Canadians who returned to the area opened ethnic grocery stores and restaurants. The Vancouver Japanese Language School and Hall on Alexander Street has continued to provide language lessons and cultural opportunities for the greater community since the turn of the century, through fluctuating economic and social conditions. The retail stretch along Powell Street has also experienced cycles of prosperity and loss, and represents an opportunity within the DTES to focus revitalisation efforts. Oppenheimer Park, which was the site of many protest rallies organised by the poor and unemployed in early twentieth century, remains a long-standing location for community gatherings and events.

The Japantown/Oppenheimer area has always been a welcoming and inclusive neighbourhood. The majority of residents in the area are low income, with a shared sense of local history of struggle, perseverance, and resistance. These community assets, coupled with the momentum building from local community organisation, provide a foundation for creating a successful future for Japantown.

Recent City-supported Projects and Initiatives

Recently the City has initiated and supported a number of initiatives in the Japantown/Oppenheimer area. The following section provides a brief overview of these projects and initiatives:

1) Historical and Cultural Review: Powell Street/Japantown (“Review”)

The Review, commissioned by the Planning Department in 2008, provided a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural significance of Powell Street and Japantown, the community’s heritage and cultural values, and approaches to heritage management for future planning of the area. It was conducted as part of the Vancouver Heritage Register Upgrade Program and as the background research to inform future planning work in the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District (DEOD). With the completion of this study came broader-based community interest in shaping the connection between history and future of this area within the DTES.

2) Oppenheimer Park Redevelopment and Commemoration

Over the past two years, the Vancouver Park Board worked closely with DTES community members on the re-design and re-development of Oppenheimer Park. In Spring 2008, community concerns arose over the proposed removal of a number of cherry trees resulting from relocation of the field house in the approved concept plan for the redevelopment of Oppenheimer Park. There were twenty-one original cherry trees (“Legacy Sakura”) planted in 1977 to commemorate the centennial of the first generation of Japanese who came to settle in Canada.

In response to that community concern, the park concept plan was revised, and approved by the Park Board in July 2008. The newly developed park has retained all but two trees. Park Staff continue to work with the community to develop appropriate historical commemoration of the Sakura as part of a larger commemorative effort for Oppenheimer Park. The Park Board has committed \$35,000 to commemorate the following key themes in Oppenheimer Park as identified by the community:

- Japanese-Canadian settlement;
- First Nations presence;
- resilience of the community against social exclusion; and
- the community as a common ground and a welcoming gathering place.

3) Commemoration and Community Revitalization Projects

As previously reported in the Memorandum to Council dated March 23, 2009, the City has supported several local projects that have captured the community’s imagination and built excitement around the stories that enrich the neighbourhood feel of the Japantown/Oppenheimer area:

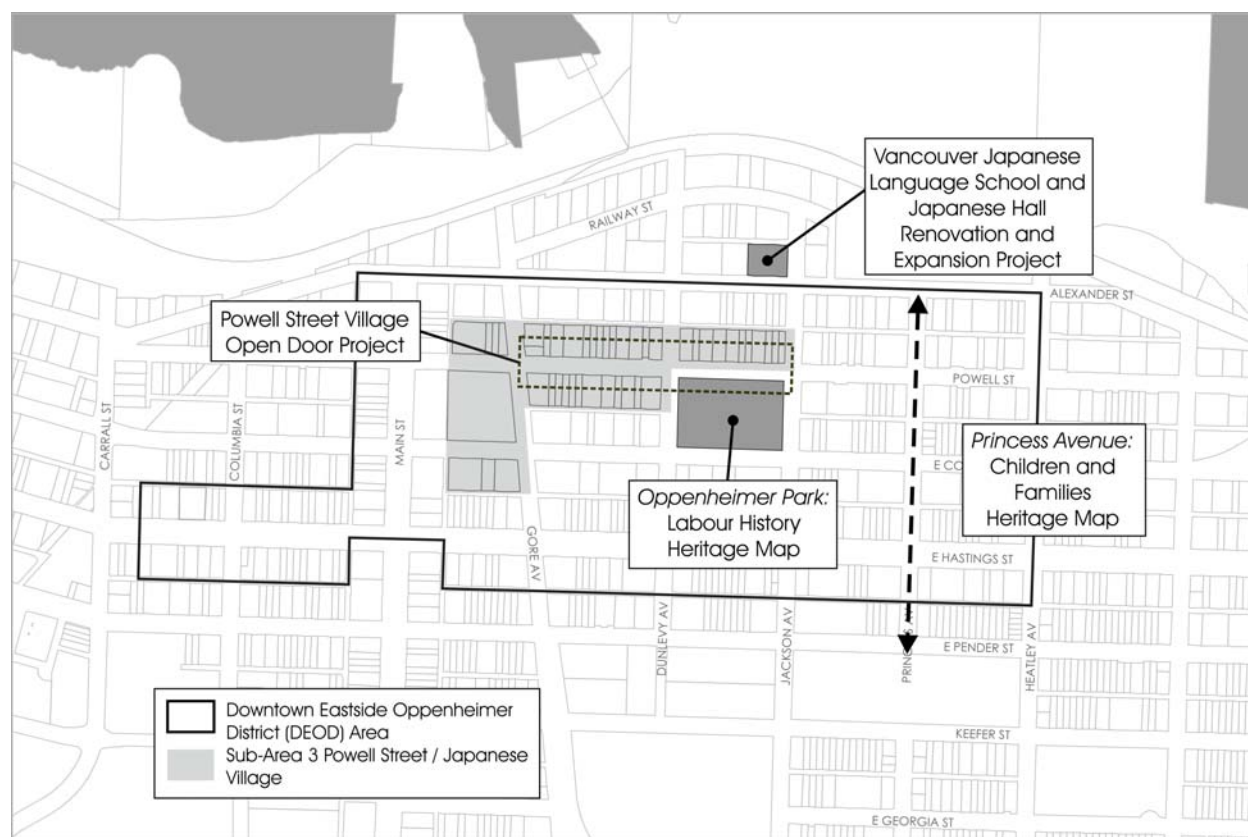
- **Japantown Neighbourhood Map Guide:** The City collaborated with the Vancouver Heritage Foundation to produce a user-friendly historical map guide for Japantown to profile heritage buildings and places that tell the community’s history.
- **Legacy Sakura Documentary of the Akebono Cherry Tree Transplanting Ceremony:** The City funded filmmaker Linda Ohama to document the Legacy Sakura transplanting ceremony (February 12, 2009), to ensure that the stories of the *Issei* (first generation Japanese) and Legacy Sakura are not forgotten.

- **Japantown Multicultural Neighbourhood Celebration (March 28th, 2009):** An array of DTES community organizations held a festival at Oppenheimer Park and surrounding locations that included a parade to launch the event, walking tours, multicultural performances, historical and cultural exhibits and presentations from local and professional Japanese-Canadian, Latino, and Aboriginal arts groups, and an early evening gala performance.

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko's stop at the Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall (VJLS-JH) in May 2009 and the recognition of Mr. Cy Saimoto, as the recipient of Japan's Order of the Rising Sun and the DTES Unsung Hero Award, further built on the community excitement and put Japantown on the map at the local, regional, national, and international level.

DISCUSSION

Staff recommend Capital Budget funds to support three community-led projects in the Japantown/Oppenheimer area (see map below). These projects have been developed by local community organisations and they already have partial funding support secured through other sources. The City's funding will ensure that the projects are delivered in the community in a way that creates opportunities for ongoing community dialogue in advance of the area-wide zoning review for the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District.



Map: Community-led projects in Japantown/Oppenheimer Area

The following paragraphs describe each project and identify the recommended level of funding.

1. Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall (VJLS-JH) Heritage/Green Renovation and Daycare Expansion

VJLS-JH was established in 1906 as a non-profit volunteer-run community organization. The heritage building it occupies at 475 Alexander Street is the only property that was returned to the Japanese-Canadian community after WWII. This building, along with the five storey wing built in 2000, accommodates an annual student population of about 500. This project responds to community needs and helps achieve multiple City objectives to:

- 1) Provide much needed childcare spaces in the Downtown Eastside - Expansion of the Japanese immersion morning program (est. in 1999) and addition of 50 daycare spaces to become a fully-licensed preschool and daycare center. Ongoing operation costs for the childcare centre will be funded through the VJLS-JH.
- 2) Celebrate the past - The heritage building will also function as an interpretative centre that highlights the history to the users and the larger public.
- 3) Heritage/Green renovation - Adaptive re-use of the building and specification of recycled and natural building materials in the renovation, as well as ongoing environmentally sustainable practices shows a commitment to a sustainable future.

The renovation project is in the detailed design phase. To date, the VJLS-JH has been working toward their fund-raising target by securing \$280,000 with \$120,000 still in progress. Staff recommend a grant of \$100,000 be put toward this project to enable them to leverage additional resources towards the completion of the project.

Project Fundraising to date:	\$500,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:	\$100,000
Fundraising confirmed by VJLS-JH	\$280,000
Fundraising in progress by VJLS-JH	\$120,000

2. Powell Street Open Door Project

The Powell Street Festival Society (PSFS), in collaboration with the Japanese Canadian National Museum (JCNM), is proposing a multidimensional project to help commemorate and animate the Powell Street area. This project will include the creation of panels/signage describing the history of key locations along the 300/400 block of Powell Street, an Open Door event that engages ground floor occupants, and enhanced walking tours in Japantown.

This event will be held in conjunction with the Powell Street Festival (July 31 to August 2, 2010) to enhance an existing community celebration that is extremely popular and well-supported by the community, and connect Powell Street to Oppenheimer Park where the Powell Street Festival is held. The project will proceed in two phases, with the second phase expanding on the first phase by increasing the number of locations for panels/signage and developing panels/signage that is more permanent in nature. The deliverables from the second phase will be identified at the Powell Street Festival in 2011.

The total estimated budget for this project is \$60,000 for project development, coordination, administration, and implementation. Staff recommend a grant of \$40,000 to the Powell Street Festival Society to manage and implement the project. The balance of \$20,000 has been approved through the Great Beginnings Inter-governmental Initiative.

Total Project Cost:	\$60,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:	\$40,000
Great Beginnings Program:	\$20,000

3. Community History Map Project

- **Labour History**

Japantown's long history includes people of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. This area has a vibrant multi-cultural community, children and families, blue-collar workers and residents, and a strong sense of community resilience. In addition to its ties to the Japanese-Canadian community, the neighbourhood has connections to the city-wide labour movement. For example, Oppenheimer Park, originally known as Powell Grounds, was the historical staging ground for large gatherings and protests for labour action. Labour rallies were common during those days due to the concentration of unemployed men in the city seeking jobs. The best known action was the March to Ottawa during the Depression in 1935. The Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) will be the community partner in producing a map that highlights various places of historical significance for the labour movement in Vancouver.

- **Children and Families**

The presence of children and families is another untold story in the area. Contrary to public perception, the Japantown/Oppenheimer Park area is home to many families with children. In 2008, the Strathcona Community Centre, together with the Strathcona Elementary School, worked with lead artist Anne Marie Slater on the Princess Avenue Children's Interpretive Walk project, to make this street more family friendly. Artwork has been installed along Princess Avenue to strengthen it as a pedestrian corridor for all ages, connecting Japantown to the Strathcona neighbourhood across Hastings Street. The Strathcona Community Centre will be the community partner in producing a map that highlights the Princess Avenue project, as well as the role many families have had in building the neighbourhood.

The production of these two public history heritage maps is an opportunity to work with local community groups to tell the colourful stories of the neighbourhood from their own perspectives. The total budget for this project is \$10,000. Staff recommend grants totalling \$10,000: \$5,000 to support the Carnegie Community Action Project to develop and produce the Labour History Map and \$5,000 to the Strathcona Community Centre to produce the Children and Family Map.

Total Project Cost:	\$10,000
City of Vancouver - DTES Capital Budget Request:	\$10,000

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of three grants totalling \$150,000 is requested in this report to support community-led projects and meet the City’s overall revitalization goals for the Downtown Eastside. Source of funds is the 2008 Capital Budget for DTES Revitalization (Strathcona/Oppenheimer Revitalization). The City’s funds will leverage more than \$400,000 in investment from other governments, private businesses, and other community partners for these projects.

Grants:	COV Funding	Other Funding
VJLS-JH Heritage/Green Renovation & Daycare Expansion	\$100,000	\$380,000
Powell Street Open Door Project	\$40,000	\$20,000
Community History Map Project	\$10,000	
TOTAL	\$150,000	\$400,000

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

This report recommends Council approve amounts for three grants totalling \$150,000, to be funded from the 2008 Capital Budget for DTES Revitalization. This funding will support three significant community-based initiatives in the Japantown/Oppenheimer area. The projects will build bridges between past and present communities and provide an opportunity to embrace a shared and common future.

* * * * *