



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 14, 2010
Author: Paul Whitney
Phone No.: 604. 331.4007
RTS No.: 8815
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: October 5, 2010

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: City Librarian, Vancouver Public Library
SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Branch Library

RECOMMENDATION

THAT City Council authorize the Library Board to proceed with the design of a stand-alone branch library at 720-730 East Hastings Street, with construction costs subject to approval of funding in the next Capital Plan. The source of funding for the design work in 2010 is \$300,000 approved in the 2010 Capital Budget for Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Branch Library Planning.

CITY LIBRARIAN'S COMMENTS

Library and City staff explored various partnering options for the Library development on this site. No economically viable opportunities have been identified that would reduce the City's cost for this project.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager concurs with the recommendation.

COUNCIL POLICY

There is no Council policy related to this matter.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, the City of Vancouver purchased property for the future Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Library Branch, bringing it one step closer the Vancouver Public Library Board's long-time vision for a full service library in the historic city centre to complement the unique service provided by the Carnegie Reading Room.

The Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Branch will be located at 720-730 East Hastings Street on the south side between Heatley Avenue and Hawks Avenue. The library site at 720/730 East Hastings is zoned as light industrial (M1). The site will need to be re-zoned to CD-1 in order to accommodate the library.

At the July 6, 2010 regular meeting, City Council instructed staff to report back on the following motion:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver instruct its staff to work with the Library Board, BC Housing and non-profit housing providers to explore the possibility for social housing for low income people to be built on top of the new library.

DISCUSSION

Over several years Library and City staff have explored various partnering options for this development with a view to expand the civic use of the property. No economically viable partnerships have been identified.

City staff reviewed options for social housing above the library in response to the July Council instruction. A funding shortfall continues to be an issue with the 14 social housing sites already agreed to by the Province and the City. Seeking a Provincial commitment to social housing as part of the Library project would be a time consuming process which would significantly delay the project with no assurance that funding would be forthcoming. As a result, staff proposes that the project proceed without a social housing component.

The Library Board is now ready to retain an architect to proceed with the design stage of the project and the finalization of the construction budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is funding available in the Capital Plan for an environmental assessment (if needed), design, rezoning, and costing. \$300,000 was allocated as part of the 2010 Capital Budget and an additional \$200,000 will be requested as part of the 2011 Capital Budget.

After the design, rezoning and costing have been completed, a report will be brought to Council seeking funds for building construction.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the DTES/Strathcona Library Branch proceed as a stand-alone building. This project is a high priority for the Library Board and is supported by the community.

* * * * *