



ADMINISTRATIVE

Report Date: May 28, 2014
Contact: J.De Hoop
Contact No.: 604-873-7479
RTS No.: 10590
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: June 11, 2014

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: General Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: Grant to The Bloom Group - 329 Powell Street

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve a capital grant of up to \$60,000 to The Bloom Group to assist with costs associated with soils remediation for the women's shelter expansion underway at 329 Powell Street (PID 015-715-922, Lot 37, Block 40, District Lot 196, Plan 196 and PID: 015-605-612, Lot 38, Block 40, District Lot 196, Plan 196); source of funds for the grant to be a reallocation from the Capital Project Budget for Environmental Assessment/Soil Remediation no longer required for the 12 Affordable Housing sites.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council's approval of a grant of up to \$60,000 to The Bloom Group to assist with costs associated with soils remediation to address pre-existing contamination found on this City-owned site during the course of construction for the expansion of the women's shelter located at 329 Powell Street.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On July 28, 2011, Council endorsed the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021 with a goal of ending street homelessness by 2015.

On June 22, 2012, Council approved a capital grant of \$500,000 to The Bloom Group (then known as St. James Community Services Society) towards the renovation and expansion of the Powell Place women's shelter. The required lease extension was also dealt with at this time.

The approval of a grant requires that eight members of Council vote in the affirmative.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends the approval of the foregoing recommendation.

REPORT**Background/Context**

Council has a priority to end street homelessness by 2015. As part of the housing continuum shelters play an important role, often acting as the 'first step' for an individual in getting off the street.

Powell Place women's shelter at 329 Powell Street is on a City-owned site, which was leased to The Bloom Group (formerly St. James Community Services Society) in 1986 for the development of a 26 bed shelter.

In July 2012 Council approved a \$500,000 grant towards the low barrier shelter and also approved a ground lease extension to 2053 at nominal rate. After securing funding from all three levels of government and launching a fundraising campaign, the Bloom Group applied for a Development Permit to renovate and expand the shelter services available on site. Construction has been underway since January 2014 to double the shelter capacity on site from 26 to 52 beds. Other building improvements will be made at the same time, such as the addition of an elevator for shelter users. The shelter is currently operating out of a temporary space at 625 Powell Street, with 52 beds. Construction at 329 Powell Street is expected to be completed in January 2015.

In late March 2014 soil contamination was found on site, the result of previous uses associated with the site. The Bloom Group has approached the City as owner of the site and has requested assistance in covering the costs of this work.

Strategic Analysis

Without additional funding sources to help defray these unforeseen costs there is a risk that the shelter expansion project currently underway would be put on hold pending the securement of added financial supports.

Powell Place remains an important resource and has earned a name in the community for its specialized services, its collaborative approach and for offering a women-centered resource. Intensive case management services resulted in a placement rate into permanent housing or treatment programs of nearly 35% last year. This type of resource is in alignment with recommendations stemming from the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry and the City's own Task Force on Sex Work and Sexual Exploitation where the need for enhanced safe and secure housing options for sex workers and sexually exploited youth has been identified as a priority. Additional wrap-around supports and services provided by Powell Place for Women respond to the needs for survival sex workers who are ready to transition to alternate lifestyles.

Staff recommend that, as owner of the site, the City assist The Bloom Group with some of the costs of remediation, such that Council approve a grant of up to \$60,000.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)***Financial***

The total costs for soils remediation on site are estimated at \$120,000, based on \$40,000 for consultant fees, \$40,000 for soil excavation and removal and a further \$40,000 related to construction delays. Staff recommend that the City contributes 50% of the estimated costs, up to a maximum of \$60,000, in the form of a capital grant subject to Council approval. Disbursement of the grant is subject to the review and approval of submitted invoices.

The source of funding for the \$60,000 capital grant to The Bloom Group is recommended to be a reallocation of funding from the Capital Project Budget for Environmental Assessment/Soil Remediation which is no longer required for the 12 Affordable Housing sites; current available funding from this source as of the date of this report is approximately \$114,000. The 2014 expenditure budget will be adjusted as part of the Quarterly Capital Budget review process.

Environmental

Soil contamination identified onsite during construction was caused by previous site activities, namely the presence of an oil burning facility in the 1950s and a scrap metals yard from 1955-1985. Contamination concentrations were measured in exceedance of the BC *Contaminated Sites Regulation* standards for residential land use and as such, remediation was appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The General Manager of Community Services recommends that the City provide a grant of up to \$60,000 to The Bloom Group to assist with the costs associated with soils remediation at 329 Powell Street, where a major renovation to expand shelter services for women is currently underway.

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