



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: October 3, 2017
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Meeting Date: October 17, 2017

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: Capital Grant Towards Renovations for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association 24/7 Shelter in Partnership with BC Housing

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve a one-time Capital Grant of up to \$250,000 to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association to cover a portion of capital improvements to the ground floor of 412/420 E Cordova Street (PID: 007-209-223, Lot B, Block 57, District Lot 196, Plan 18161); the source of funding is the 2015-2018 Capital Plan (Community Facilities/Granting Programs). Expenditures in 2017 will be managed within the current overall Capital Expenditure Budget; expenditures planned for 2018 will be brought forward as part of the 2018 Annual Capital Budget process.
- B. THAT Council authorize the General Manager of Community Services to negotiate and execute agreements to disperse the grant described in Recommendation A on the terms and conditions set out herein or such other terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the General Manager of Community Services and Director of Legal Services.
- C. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of Recommendation A unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Recommendation A requires 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members per Vancouver Charter S. 206(1)

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends a capital grant of up to \$250,000 to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association (DEWC) to cover a portion of the minor capital improvements at 412/420 E Cordova Street for the DEWC shelter.

The DEWC shelter will improve access to safety and support for women in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) by expanding shelter hours to a year round 24/7 model, from the current 15 hours per day. This unique model will include services and wrap around supports onsite such as: healthy meals; housing outreach; first aid; HIV case management; counselling; referral services; and, connecting women to other women-centred services. Increasing shelter capacity will also provide a greater opportunity to integrate services with BC Housing outreach programs, and will ensure that vulnerable women can connect to social housing and income assistance.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

In 2011, Council passed a Motion, *Ensuring Women's Safety in Vancouver's Housing Shelters*. The Motion states that "Council make its highest priority the creation of 24-hour women's only shelters to provide safe and secure emergency housing options for vulnerable women".

In 2013, Council received a staff presentation on the *Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* and committed to addressing Inquiry recommendations, many of which identify women's safety in the DTES as a priority.

In 2014, Council approved *A Healthy City for All: Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025 - Phase I*, which identifies Being and Feeling Safe and Included as one of its 13 goals.

In 2014, the *Mayor's Task Force on Mental Health and Addictions, Caring for All: Priority Actions to Address Mental Health and Addictions* states that, "Creating safe and inclusive communities is a City priority".

In 2014, Council adopted the *Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan* which identifies "The safety of women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is a priority for both community and the City."

In 2014, Council designated Vancouver as a City of Reconciliation and in 2015, the City identified areas of action under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recommendations.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Women living in the DTES, including Aboriginal women, face significant and extreme challenges as survivors of injustice and exploitation. As the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls begins to unfold, the focus will once again be on the DTES where 67 women went missing or were murdered from 1978-2002.

The City's commitment to the creation of a 24-hour women's only shelter, the DTES Local Area Plan, *Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* recommendations and the City's commitments to Reconciliation and Truth and Reconciliation are supported by funding the DEWC shelter expansion. The need to assist the DEWC to move towards a year round 24/7 shelter model is urgent given the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women who utilize the shelter as a safe place. With the City's contribution, the shelter will also provide women-centred and culturally safe services for more women to access. These recommendations are consistent with the Healthy City Strategy goals in particular that Vancouver be a safe city where all residents feel secure (Goal #6) and where all residents have equitable access to quality services that meet their needs (Goal #4).

The total capital improvements are estimated to be \$860,000. Staff are recommending a City of Vancouver capital contribution of up to \$250,000 which will be directed to the kitchen, storage and asbestos removal.

REPORT

Background/Context

The DEWC provides key services for women in the DTES and needs to make improvements to the existing shelter space to meet needs.

DEWC is a registered charity that operates a women's drop-in centre at 302 Columbia Street and a low-barrier shelter at 412/420 E Cordova Street. The City provides an annual Direct Social Services grant of approximately \$90,000 for the DEWC drop-in centre operations at the 302 Columbia Street. Both the centre and shelter provide safe and secure spaces for women who live and work in the DTES, and DEWC services are identified as among the safest places for women in the neighbourhood. Almost half of the respondents in a 2014 study stated that the DEWC is where they feel the safest (*Getting to the Roots: Exploring Systemic Violence Against Women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver*).

The shelter, located at 412/420 E Cordova Street is on City of Vancouver owned land and Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation (MVHC) owns the building. DEWC has operated the shelter since 2006 in partnership with BC Housing. Presently, the shelter is open for 15 hours per day Monday to Friday, and 24 hours per day on weekends and holidays, creating a safe space for women who are homeless or who live in unsafe housing conditions.

The renovated shelter will provide an opportunity to create up to 20 new shelter spaces - a 25% increase in capacity - while providing a unique service model where women will access meals, health, income, and housing supports onsite.

The DEWC shelter operates at over capacity, with more than 120 women utilizing the services nightly in a space with only 50 cots for sleeping. The shelter accommodates this amount of women through bed turnover during operating hours and by providing mattresses on the floor for sleeping. Presently, there are no specialized services on site to support women using the shelter which includes women who are homeless,

inadequately housed, or who need a safe space. Since 2006, 6,000 women have been sheltered at this location, 75% are Aboriginal women; 80% live with mental health and/or addictions, and 65% are homeless.

The DEWC is sub-leasing the space from MVHC to increase the number of shelter spaces from 50 to approximately 70, relocate some services from the 302 Columbia Street women's drop-in centre and increase hours of operation to a year round 24/7 women's shelter. This will enable increased access to the shelter and ancillary services in one location. The 302 Columbia Street women's drop-in centre will continue to provide services for women not using the shelter.

The shelter space at 412/420 E Cordova Street requires repairs, including asbestos removal, kitchen renovations; washrooms and showers; HVAC system; plumbing, heating and electrical upgrades. Appendix A outlines estimated operating and capital improvement costs and partner contributions.

Strategic Analysis

Participating in this partnership initiative to renovate and expand the DEWC Women's shelter will:

- Support the 2011 Council motion - *Ensuring Women's Safety in Vancouver's Housing Shelters*;
- Demonstrate a best practice for housing and shelters for vulnerable women;
- Address women's safety and gender equity;
- Open new supportive housing options for women set out in *Living in Community 2007 Action Plan identified as one of three recommendations for the City and other orders of Government in the Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry*;
- "make 24-hour shelters and drop-ins available for women in more than one location" set out in *Getting to the Roots: Exploring Systemic Violence Against Women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver*; and
- Demonstrate City of Reconciliation & Truth and Reconciliation in action.

Partners are stepping up to fund renovations and operating costs.

DEWC has attained commitments for capital funding for upgrades from Service Canada, BC Housing and VanCity Foundation.

The need and vision for a 24 hour safe space and shelter for women has been identified as a need by DEWC since 2007 and has come to fruition as a result of community efforts and support from several funders.

The City's annual social grant to the DEWC helps to fund the Executive Director, Alice Kendall, who has provided leadership to the project in partnership with women in the community. The project demonstrates how visions for women's safety can be made possible through collaboration with all orders of government and community.

The City and BC Housing have a longstanding relationship collaborating and partnering on various social housing initiatives and have worked together over the past several months to bring this project forward.

To support the expansion to 24/7 operations, BC Housing is contributing an additional \$440,000 over and above its annual \$1.1M in operating for a total of \$1.54M. MVHC will waive 50% (\$53,000) of the annual rent for the duration of the lease agreement.

Table 1 below outlines partner contributions for both capital and operating. Capital contributions have been secured from BC Housing, Service Canada, and VanCity Foundation. Pending capital requests include up to \$250,000 from the City of Vancouver, for Council's consideration, and up to \$161,000 from BC Gaming.

Table 1 - Partner Contributions, Confirmed and Pending (September 2017)

| Partner | Capital Confirmed | Capital Pending | Additional Operating Confirmed | Total |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| City of Vancouver | | \$250,000 | | \$250,000 |
| BC Housing | \$324,000 | | \$440,000 | \$764,000 |
| Service Canada | \$100,000 | | | \$100,000 |
| VanCity Foundation | \$ 25,000 | | | \$25,000 |
| MVHC | | | \$ 53,000 | \$53,000 |
| BC Gaming | | \$161,000 | | \$161,000 |
| Total | \$449,000 | \$411,000 | \$493,000 | \$1,353,000 |

The City is also contributing approximately \$230,000 to renovate 342 Alexander Street to create a temporary shelter to accommodate the DEWC shelter during the renovations at 412/420 E Cordova Street. Source of Funding is the Community Services Operating Budget.

Timeline: Renovations at 412/420 E Cordova Street will begin in November 2017, and completion is expected in the spring of 2018.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

The total request of up to \$250,000 is to complete necessary capital improvements to the shelter space at 412/420 E Cordova Street. Source of funding is the 2015-2018 Capital Plan (Community Facilities/Granting Programs). Disbursements in 2017 will be managed within the current overall Capital Expenditure Budget; disbursements planned for 2018 will be brought forward as part of the 2018 Annual Capital Budget process.

CONCLUSION

The opportunity to expand DEWC's shelter operating hours and enhance services will increase its capacity to provide safety, basic needs, and support services to a vulnerable population of women.

When basic needs such as safety, security, food and shelter are met, women are able to move forward in accessing housing, health care, treatment, and counseling, and thus move towards wellness and empowerment.

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Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association Shelter Expansion - Operating and Capital Improvement Costs

| Area | Existing | Planned | Estimated Budget | Funder | Confirmed | Pending |
|---|--|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| OPERATING | | | | | | |
| Shelter | \$1.1M annual for 15 hours/day, 24/7 weekends and holidays | \$1.54M annual for 24/7/365 | \$440,000 | BC Housing | \$440,000 | |
| Rent | | MVHC waive one half of rent per month for duration of lease agreement | \$53,000 | MVHC | \$53,000 | |
| Sub-total Operating Costs To Date | | | \$493,000 | | \$493,000 | |
| RENOVATIONS | | | | | | |
| Entire shelter space | | Mechanical engineer report and shelter design | \$25,000 | VanCity Foundation | \$25,000 | |
| Kitchen | Entire kitchen demolished due to rodent infestation | New ventilation system enables meal prep on site | \$200,000 | BC Housing & CoV | \$50,000 BCH | \$150,000 CoV |
| Bathrooms | 2 bathrooms require renovations | Remove urinals; install fans, wheelchair accessibility | \$99,500 | BC Housing | \$99,500 | |
| Sleeping areas | Poor site lines | Improve site lines, add sleeping space | \$100,000 | BC Housing | \$100,000 | |
| Hot water heater | Outdated, needs replacement | Replace hot water heater | \$10,000 | BC Gaming | | \$10,000 |
| Offices | No private space for counselling, medical visits | Increase office space for staff and programs | \$100,000 | Service Canada | \$100,000 | |
| Storage areas | No dedicated storage space | Repurpose space for appropriate storage for shelter use | \$50,000 | CoV | | \$50,000 CoV |
| Security System | Existing system inadequate | Upgrade and replace as required | \$10,000 | BC Gaming | | \$10,000 |
| Phone System | No phone system | Phone system to be installed | \$10,000 | BC Gaming | | \$10,000 |
| Furnishings | Cots and mattresses on floor | Metal frame single beds, dividers, lockers, tables, chairs, office desks, reception, etc. | \$24,500 | BC Housing | \$24,500 | |
| Asbestos | Issues with asbestos in the building | Asbestos removal | \$231,000 (estimated) | BC Housing, CoV & BC Gaming | \$50,000 BCH | \$50,000 CoV \$131,000 BC Gaming |
| Sub-total Estimated Renovation Costs To Date | | | \$860,000 | | \$449,000 | \$411,000 |
| Total Estimated Operating And Renovation Costs To Date | | | \$1,353,000 | | \$942,000 | |