



REPORT

Report Date: June 22, 2021
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Meeting Date: July 6, 2021
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Graffiti Abatement Grants to Business Improvement Associations (BIAs)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT, pursuant to section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council approve up to \$500,000 for the BIA Graffiti Abatement Grants as described in this Report, to be disbursed to the 22 Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) as set out in Table 1.
- B. THAT Council deem the 22 BIAs to be contributing to the beautification of the City.
- C. THAT the grants be subject to the BIAs executing and delivering a grant letter agreement received from the City of Vancouver and satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services.
- D. THAT the Director of Legal Services be authorized to execute the appropriate grant agreements with each of the respective BIA associations.
- E. THAT Council approve Council's Contingency Budget as the source of funds for the grants.

Approval of Recommendations A and B require an affirmative vote of 2/3 of all Council members in accordance with section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

REPORT SUMMARY

Council has heard from the BIA community about the proliferation of nuisance graffiti in commercial areas, and has responded by way of the approved motions referenced in this

Report. The purpose of this Report is to request Council's approval of one-time Graffiti Abatement Grants listed in Table 1, to approve source of funds for the grant disbursements, and to instruct staff to execute the appropriate grant agreements to ensure the BIAs receive timely funding.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On April 27, 2021, Council approved the following Motion:

THAT Vancouver City Council receive the Report dated April 19, 2021, entitled "One Year In: City of Vancouver Contributions to Covid-19 Recovery and Council Covid-19 Recovery Committee (CCRC) Report Back to Council" for information;

FURTHER THAT Council approve and direct staff to identify a funding source for an additional \$200,000 to the Business Improvement Association Graffiti Removal Program for 2021, and to have this additional funding be restored if, and when, Vancouver receives additional safe re-start funding from senior governments.

On May 27, 2021 Council approved a further Motion (Mitigating and Managing Nuisance Graffiti in Vancouver), paragraph E of which directs:

THAT Council direct staff to allocate an additional \$300K in 2021 toward the BIA Graffiti Management program in the form of direct grants to BIAs with the highest percentage of graffiti incidents and pursue recovery of these funds through provincial and federal COVID-19 recovery grant programs.

The Graffiti By-law (the "By-law") seeks to prevent unsightly property by prohibiting graffiti and requiring properties to be kept free of graffiti. The By-law defines graffiti as "one or more letters, symbols or marks, howsoever made, on any structure or thing" placed without the property owner or tenant's prior, written authorization. Under the By-law, property owners are required to remove unauthorized graffiti within 10 days of receiving a notice. Under the By-law, the minimum fine for anyone applying graffiti without authorization is \$500 for each offence;

Under section 456(1) of the Vancouver Charter, Council annually approves grants to 22 Business Improvement Associations. These grants are recovered through BIA levies on qualified BC Assessment Class 5 and Class 6 properties within the defined BIA areas.

Under section 206(1)(j) of the Vancouver Charter, Council may, by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of all its members, provide for the making of money grants to any organization deemed by the Council to be contributing to the culture, beautification, health, or welfare of the city.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

The City of Vancouver supports an Integrated Graffiti Management Program (IGMP) that provides strategic direction and programs to manage graffiti and graffiti removal services on public property, and has contracted with Goodbye Graffiti for the abatement of nuisance graffiti on City buildings, property and infrastructure city-wide. Goodbye Graffiti logged 106,383 instances of nuisance graffiti in 2019 and 149,837 in 2020, an increase of 41% over the previous year.

The City of Vancouver also supports a Free Paint Program in partnership with Dulux Paints, where Vancouver property owners and tenants can receive up to two gallons of exterior paint in a calendar year for graffiti removal. The City received requests for 175 gallons of free paint in 2019 and 240 gallons in 2020, an increase of 37% over the previous year.

Goodbye Graffiti also removes any hate graffiti, whether on public or private property, when reported. The City works quickly to have hate graffiti dealt with as a part of our commitment to keeping our public realm inclusive and safe.

Many of the City's BIAs have well-established graffiti prevention and abatement programs. The BIA programs supplement the City's program by addressing nuisance graffiti on non-City public property, and on commercial private property within their boundaries. In 2020 and 2021, BIA budgets with graffiti-related expenditures totalled roughly \$800,000 and \$880,000 respectively, directly improving the quality of the city's public realm.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the City and its commercial districts have experienced a significant increase in the number and frequency of graffiti instances. From 2019 to 2020 there was an 87% increase in 3-1-1 service requests. The neighbourhoods seeing the highest number of graffiti tags were Downtown, Grandview-Woodland, Mount Pleasant, Strathcona, Kensington-Cedar Cottage, and Kitsilano.

The pandemic-related increase in nuisance graffiti is thought to be largely due to inactive or boarded storefronts with fewer eyes on the street, providing opportunities for tagging, particularly on upper floors where tagging is harder to access. Some areas, such as Downtown and Chinatown have been particularly impacted. Murals have also been damaged. These factors have significantly added to the cost of graffiti management in the context of overall BIA budget restraint during COVID-19.

BIAs have noted an urgency to address graffiti during the summer graffiti 'high season' and before the return of customers as pandemic restrictions are eased. BIAs have indicated that one-time financial assistance to help reduce nuisance graffiti would be welcome as the city and its commercial districts prepare for recovery and renewed street activity.

Strategic Analysis

Allocation of Grants

If approved by Council, Graffiti prevention and abatement grants totalling \$500,000 would be distributed to all 22 BIAs according to an allocation formula developed by the Graffiti Committee of the Vancouver BIA Partnership, and agreed to by the full Partnership at its June 9, 2021

meeting. The allocation formula is supported by staff as it approximates need for graffiti abatement in the respective areas. Under the allocation formula, each of the BIAs would receive in advance a one-time lump-sum grant as set out in Table 1 below. As a condition of the grants, the funds could be used only for graffiti removal or related measures such as repair of murals and mural coatings. The funds would be granted on condition that they are not used to fund activities already paid for under existing graffiti abatement contracts, nor to produce new murals for prevention of nuisance graffiti. If any grant money remains unspent in the current fiscal year, BIAs would be permitted to carry over those funds to continue graffiti abatement measures.

Table 1 Allocation of BIA Graffiti Abatement Grants

Name of BIA/Association	Grant Amount (\$)
Cambie Village BIA (<i>Cambie Village Business Association</i>)	25,000
Chinatown BIA (<i>Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society</i>)	50,000
Collingwood BIA (<i>Collingwood Business Improvement Association</i>)	10,000
Commercial Drive BIA (<i>Commercial Drive Business Society</i>)	25,000
Downtown Vancouver BIA (<i>Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association</i>)	50,000
Dunbar Village BIA (<i>Dunbar Village Business Association</i>)	10,000
Fraser Street BIA (<i>South Hill (Fraser Street) Business Association</i>)	10,000
Gastown BIA (<i>Gastown Business Improvement Society</i>)	25,000
Hastings Crossing BIA (<i>Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association</i>)	25,000
Hastings North BIA (<i>Hastings North Business Improvement Association</i>)	25,000
Kerrisdale BIA (<i>Kerrisdale Business Association</i>)	10,000
Kitsilano 4th Avenue BIA (<i>Kitsilano 4th Avenue Business Association</i>)	25,000
Marpole BIA (<i>Marpole Business Association</i>)	10,000

Name of BIA/Association	Grant Amount (\$)
Mount Pleasant BIA & Exp. 1 & 2 <i>(Mount Pleasant Commercial Improvement Society)</i>	35,000
Point Grey Village BIA <i>(Point Grey Village Business Association)</i>	10,000
Robson Street BIA <i>(Robson Street Business Association)</i>	25,000
South Granville BIA <i>(South Granville Business Improvement Association)</i>	25,000
Strathcona BIA <i>(Strathcona Business Improvement Association)</i>	35,000
Victoria Drive BIA <i>(Victoria Drive Business Improvement Association)</i>	10,000
West Broadway BIA <i>(West Broadway Business Improvement Association)</i>	10,000
West End BIA <i>(Vancouver West End Business Improvement Association)</i>	25,000
Yaletown BIA <i>(Yaletown Business Improvement Association)</i>	25,000
TOTAL GRANTS	\$500,000

Source of Funding

Staff recommend that Council's Contingency Budget be identified as source of funds for the grants.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

The 2021 Budget included a \$2 million Council contingency which has historically been set aside for unanticipated one-time costs related to external events. The contingency could be used to fund costs related to the unique events of this past year, given the impacts of COVID-19 on the community. Use of Council contingency budget is subject to Council approval. Historically, the remaining balance has been transferred to the general revenue stabilization reserve to build up the balance to the target level of 8-16% of annual non-utility revenues (\$100-\$200 million). As a result of COVID-related revenue losses, the City forecasts that there will be limited available balance in this reserve at the end of 2021 and the balance will need to be replenished over a number of years.

There are sufficient funds available in Council's Contingency Budget to cover the total cost of the recommended grants (\$500,000). To date, \$1.2 million of the Council Contingency Budget has been allocated by Council, to fund permitting improvements (\$1 million) and the integrity office (\$0.2 million). If the recommendations in this report are approved, \$0.3 million would remain unallocated.

The Council motions referenced in this Report call for the City to pursue recovery of the recommended grant expenditures from senior government programs. Sources for recovery of the funds are not currently identified, but avenues to recoup the funds will continue to be pursued.

Legal

The recommended grants are authorized by section 206 of the Vancouver Charter.

CONCLUSION

The City's BIAs have expressed the need and urgency to address nuisance graffiti in time for the summer season, and are appreciative of any funding the City might provide to assist efforts to ready the public realm as part of reopening and economic recovery.

This Report recommends Council approval of one-time Graffiti Abatement Grants to all 22 BIAs in the amounts specified in Table 1, in the total amount of \$500,000. The source of funds for these grants is Council's Contingency Budget.

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