



REPORT

Report Date: May 9, 2022
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: June 7, 2022
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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 Appendix A.
- 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.

Approval of Recommendations A and B requires 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. In 2021, Council responded by way of the approved motions referenced in this Report, and approved an allocation of graffiti abatement grants to BIAs totalling \$500,000. On April 12, 2022, Council approved a motion to provide similar grants to BIAs totalling \$500,000. The purpose of this report is to:

- (a) request Council's approval of graffiti abatement grants for 2022, listed in Appendix A;
- (b) approve a source of funds for the grant disbursements; and
- (c) 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 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.

On April 12, 2022, Council approved the following Motion:

THAT Council approve an additional \$500,000 for graffiti abatement and beautification grants in 2022, to be funded from reserves; in order to improve conditions in Gastown, Chinatown, Strathcona, Downtown, and other affected neighbourhoods.

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 the 22 Business Improvement Associations. These grants are recovered through BIA property tax 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 removed over 150,000 tags in 2021, an increase of 49% from 2019.

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, 240 gallons in 2020 and 335 gallons in 2021.

Goodbye Graffiti also removes any hate graffiti, whether on public or private property, when reported. The City works quickly to deal with hate graffiti 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, 2021, and 2022, BIA levies for graffiti-related expenditures totalled roughly \$800,000, \$880,000 and \$930,000 respectively, directly improving the quality of the city's public realm.

During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city and its commercial districts have experienced a significant increase in the number and frequency of graffiti instances. A total of 6,400 case files were created in 2021 for graffiti complaints logged by 3-1-1.

The pandemic-related increase in nuisance graffiti is thought to be largely due to less active streetscapes. 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'. The Downtown Vancouver BIA has noted the urgency of addressing graffiti in time for the return of cruise ships. BIAs have indicated that additional 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 the same allocation formula developed by the Vancouver

BIA Partnership in 2021. The allocation formula is supported by staff as it approximates the 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 Appendix A. As a condition of the grants, the funds can be used only for graffiti removal or related beautification /graffiti abatement measures such as the creation, maintenance and repair of murals and mural coatings. The funds will be granted on condition that they are not used to fund activities already paid for under existing graffiti abatement contracts.

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.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

Council directed that funding for the grants recommended in this report be allocated from reserves. Staff have identified \$500,000 to be transferred from the general revenue stabilization reserve. Reserve policy allows for this reserve to be used to cover unanticipated costs or decreases in revenue. Currently, there is an available balance in the reserve (after commitments) of \$43 million (3% of annual non-utility revenues). The target level of the reserve is \$100-\$200 million (8-16% of annual non-utility revenues). The available reserve balance was drawn down significantly since 2020 as a result of COVID-related revenue losses and will need to be replenished over a number of years to get back to target levels.

The Council direction from May 27, 2021 called for the City to pursue recovery of the recommended grant expenditures from senior government programs. To date, the City has not received grant funding from senior government programs to offset this expenditure, and staff will continue to pursue funding opportunities.

Legal

The recommended grants are authorized by section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

CONCLUSION

The City's BIAs have expressed the need and urgency to address nuisance graffiti in time for the 2022 summer season. This report recommends Council approval of one-time Graffiti Abatement Grants to all 22 BIAs in the amounts specified in Appendix A, in the total amount of \$500,000. The source of funds for these grants is the general revenue stabilization reserve.

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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 |
| Mount Pleasant BIA & Expansion Area 1 & 2 (<i>Mount Pleasant Commercial Improvement Society</i>) | 35,000 |

| Name of BIA/Association | Grant Amount (\$) |
|--|-------------------|
| 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>(Davie Village Business Improvement Association)</i> | 25,000 |
| Yaletown BIA <i>(Yaletown Business Improvement Association)</i> | 25,000 |
| TOTAL GRANTS | \$500,000 |