



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: June 12, 2024
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Meeting Date: June 26, 2024
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside Plan Implementation and Special Enterprise Program Grant Allocations - 2024

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve the matching grant allocation of \$649,700 to 17 Downtown Eastside (DTES) non-profit organizations to advance the social, economic and environmental objectives of the DTES Plan, as detailed in Appendix A. Source of funds from the previously approved multi-year capital project budget, \$454,700 in the 2023 -26 DTES Plan Matching Grants and \$195,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Strategic Projects Grants.
- B. THAT Council approve a \$310,000 grant allocation to the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization and the Community Impact Real Estate Society (as detailed in Table 2) to support the third year of implementation of the Special Enterprise Pilot Program (SEP). Source of funds from the previously approved multi-year capital project budget, \$185,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Special Enterprise Program and \$125,000 in the 2023-26 Chinatown Heritage Asset Management Plan (CHAMP).
- C. THAT, pursuant to Section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council deems any organization listed in Appendix A of this report that is not otherwise a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency to be contributing to the culture, beautification, health, or welfare of Vancouver.
- D. THAT the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (GM of PDS or their designate) be authorized to negotiate and execute agreements to disburse the grants described in this report on the terms and conditions generally set out below and on such other terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the GM of PDS and the Director of Legal Services.

- E. THAT no legal rights or obligations will be created by the approval of Recommendations A to D above unless and until the applicable grant agreement or letter of agreement is approved by the City in accordance with Recommendation C above and executed and delivered by both the grant recipient and GM of PDS (or their designate).

Approval of the grant recommendations above requires at least 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members under Section 206 (1) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

Purpose and Executive Summary

Council approved the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Plan in March 2014 setting out the policies, strategies, quick-start and short-term actions needed to achieve the long-term vision that:

“The neighbourhood will be made up of mixed-income communities with a range of affordable housing options (including social housing) for all residents, local serving commerce, social services and cultural activities where all feel welcome, valued and at home”.

Vancouver-based non-profit organizations operating in the DTES are invited to submit a grant application once a year. A total of 21 applications were submitted in 2024. This report recommends 17 grants to 17 non-profit agencies totaling \$649,700 to provide critical assistance and support community initiatives in a timely way to benefit marginalized DTES residents, consistent with the implementation strategy in the DTES Plan. An allocation of \$310,000 is recommended to two non-profit organizations to continue with the implementation of the Special Enterprise Program (SEP). This funding will advance the work towards a more equitable and sustainable local economy by strengthening the capacity of small businesses, social enterprises, and non-profit organizations in the DTES.

These grant allocations support an integrated vision of health and well-being in the DTES and will help the City address systemic barriers experienced by the community due to the compounding intersections of poverty, racism and colonialism.

The recommended projects align with the Healthy City Strategy, as well as the City’s social sustainability framework and related initiatives, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Strategy, the Reconciliation Framework, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Response, and the Equity Framework. These projects will also support actions in the DTES Community Economic Development (CED) Strategy and the Chinatown Cultural Heritage Asset Management Plan (CHAMP) Strategic Framework.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- **2022:**
 - Council approved the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\) Strategy](#) that identified specific calls-to-action under the four themes of the BC Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, in partnership with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Indian Band, Skwxwú7mesh Nation, and səliłwətał Nation.
 - Council approved the [Chinatown Cultural Heritage Asset Management Plan Strategic Framework](#) aiming at strengthening and supporting Chinatown’s cultural heritage assets for future generations.

- **2016:** Council approved the [Downtown Eastside Community Economic Development Strategy](#) to help meet the economic goals of the DTES Local Area Plan by empowering communities to shape how the local economy provides for residents and impacts their lives.
- **2014:** Council approved the [Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan](#) that provides a vision, policies and strategies for the DTES focusing on ways to improve the lives of low-income DTES residents and community members.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Community Context

The Downtown Eastside (DTES) is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Indian Band, Skwxwú7mesh and səliłwətaʔ Nations, and comprises the seven mixed income neighbourhoods of Gastown, Victory Square, Chinatown, DTES Oppenheimer District, Thornton Park, Strathcona, and the Industrial Lands.

Census data shows that individuals in the DTES historically have a lower median annual income than other neighbourhoods in Vancouver. The Census 2016 data indicated that 54% of individuals living in the DTES earned less than \$20,000, whereas for the city overall it was 36% of individuals. The median income for DTES families was \$23,359; as a reference, the median income for the City of Vancouver families was \$65,423. Despite the high level of poverty and vulnerability, the DTES is a creative, diverse area with close-knit communities and cultural amenities.

DTES Plan Implementation Grants

The DTES Plan provides the 30-year vision, strategies, and policies needed to achieve a better quality of life for the residents, and to improve opportunities for businesses and industries. The DTES Plan Implementation Grants focus on four key priority areas: (1) supporting neighbourhood improvements and community building; (2) fostering community economic development; (3) protecting valuable community assets; and (4) strategic projects. The objective is to build partnerships with non-profit organizations, charities, social enterprises, Societies and Business Improvement Associations to advance the City's social, economic and ecological sustainability objectives for the DTES.

Applications are invited through an open call once a year. Information on the DTES Plan Implementation Grants is listed on the City's website. Email notifications about the open call are sent to an extensive list of non-profits in the DTES, including small grass-roots organizations. Staff are available to answer applicants' questions and to receive feedback on the application process. Staff review all applications for completeness and to ensure they meet eligibility requirements. An interdepartmental staff team then conduct detailed reviews using grant criteria established in alignment with the DTES Plan priorities, the Social Impact Objectives and the quick start actions and short-term projects of the Plan (Appendix C). Staff also work closely with staff administering other City grant programs to maximize the collective impact of the City's investments. At the end of the grant cycle, grantees are required to complete a report outlining the outcomes of the project and submit invoices showing how City funds were spent.

Since the plan's adoption, the City has approved more than 296 grants, providing \$12.2 million to non-profit organizations and social enterprises. The benefits include a wide spectrum of improvements to workspaces, critical repairs to aging historic and heritage buildings, acquisition of furniture and equipment, creation of low barrier jobs, preparation of feasibility studies, needs assessments, and business plans.

The Special Enterprise Program

In January 2021, Council approved the Special Enterprise Program, a 5-year pilot that aims to preserve and strengthen the cultural diversity, long-term viability, and economic opportunity of heritage businesses, social enterprises, and non-profit organisations in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside (RTS 14172). This report and a subsequent report (RTS 14576) identified the community partners responsible for the implementation of the program. Since the approval of the pilot, the City has approved a total of \$845,000 to the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization, the Community Impact Real Estate Society, the Strathcona Business Improvement Association, and to the Vancouver Chinatown Merchant Association to advance the goals of this program. A Memo to Mayor and Council will be shared to provide a mid-way program update that includes key highlights, challenges, lessons learned and next steps.

Discussion

DTES Plan Implementation Grants

The 17 grants recommended in this report (see Appendix A) align with Council priorities and strategies. Most of the matching grant applications relate to Community Asset Management, Strategic Projects and Community Economic Development, including interventions addressing equity, cultural redress, space improvements, low-barrier employment and access to spaces for non-profit organizations. The funding distribution of the recommended grant applications is summarised in Table 1. Three applications are not recommended for funding (see Appendix B). One application was withdrawn by the applicant.

Table 1: Recommended DTES Plan Implementation Grant allocations by funding area.

Funding Area	Objectives	# of Grants	% of Grants	Total funding
Community Asset Management	A vibrant and inclusive economy through Community Economic Development.	9	53%	\$319,300
Community Economic Development	Retention and improvement of valuable assets identified in the DTES Plan and Social Impact Assessment.	3	18%	\$85,400
Neighbourhood Improvements	Improvements to the neighbourhood places and spaces for community wellbeing, safety, and walkability.	1	5%	\$50,000
Strategic Projects	Supporting strategic interventions to respond to community needs.	4	24%	\$195,000
Total		17	100%	649,700

The Special Enterprise Program

In order to continue this 5-year pilot program, staff recommends the allocation of \$310,000 to two community partners, the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation for Economic Revitalization and the Community Impact Real Estate Society. The program partners will continue to implement two program components: (1) Capacity Building/Business Supports, and (2) Affordable Spaces, respectively. Table 2 outlines the funding distribution of the recommended initiatives.

Table 2: Recommended SEP Grant allocations by community partner.

Partner	Description	Total
Vancouver Chinatown Foundation for Economic Revitalization	Provision of supports to build the resilience and capacity of small businesses, non-profits and social enterprises through various business supports.	\$150,000
Community Impact Real Estate Society	Activation of vacant and under-utilized spaces to support small community-serving activities, cultural organizations, non-profits and social enterprises.	\$160,000
Total		\$310,000

Financial Implications

The total dollar amount of DTES Plan Implementation Grants being recommended is \$649,700. These initiatives are funded from the previously approved multi-year capital project budget, \$454,700 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Implementation Matching Grants and \$195,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Strategic Projects Grants. If approved, the amount remaining in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan for these two programs is approximately \$1.1 million.

A total of \$310,000 is recommended to support the implementation of the SEP in its third year. These initiatives are funded from the previously approved multi-year capital project budget, \$185,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Special Enterprise Program (SEP) and \$125,000 in the 2023-26 Chinatown Heritage Asset Management Plan (CHAMP). If approved, the amount remaining in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan for the Special Enterprise Program is approximately \$1.4 million.

Following Council approval of the recommended grants, Terms of Reference documents will be signed between the applicants and the City of Vancouver outlining the terms and conditions for each grant release.

Legal Implications

If the Recommendations in this report are adopted, Council will authorize the grants detailed above.

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APPENDIX A
DTES Plan Implementation Grants (Recommended)

No	Organization	Project Description	Outcomes	Quick Starts (Appendix D)	Amount Recommended
1	Cheng Wing Yeong Tong Benevolent Society	Restoring a heritage building at 79 East Pender Street.	Restored heritage building that is safe for its members, DTES residents and tourists.	Housing (B1, B2, B3) Arts, Culture & Heritage (D1, D4)	\$50,000
2	MakeWay Charitable Society	Consulting services to develop hardware and software needed to complete the Universal Cart Initiative.	Biners are supported by improving their capacity to bin with purpose-built equipment.	Well-Being (A3) Economy (C6, C7, C9)	\$25,000
3	Gallery Gachet Society	Installing an HVAC system and upgrading exhibition and community gathering spaces at 9 W Hastings Street.	Improved gallery's space, accessibility and safety for staff, community members and artists.	Well-Being (A3), Economy (C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2)	\$33,400
4	Vancouver Buddhist Temple	Capital upgrades to maintain the safety and usability of the temple's social hall, kitchen, and office space.	Improved space to continue providing spiritual, educational, and community programs.	Well-Being (A3), Economy (C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2)	\$50,000
5	Food Stash Foundation	Purchase a used electric vehicle to rescue and redistribution of food to the DTES.	Improved access to good quality, perishable food through the Food Recovery Program.	Well-Being (A2), Economy (C6)	\$50,000
6	Vancouver Chinatown Foundation	Improvements to the storefront main floor at the May Wah Hotel.	Preservation of the heritage building by maintaining the commercial units.	Economy (C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D4)	\$50,000
7	Quest Outreach Society	Improvements to the market space at 637 East Hastings Street.	Improved safety, store functionality, and create a welcoming environment for clients.	Well-being (A2, A3), Economy (C9)	\$15,000
8	Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association	Enhance placemaking and vibrancy to the area by activating the streets with art, colour, lighting, signages, and activities.	Increased economic opportunities and improved business area that is more welcoming, safer, and inclusive.	Economy (C3, C7, C9), Community Place-Making (F1)	\$50,000

9	Chinese Nationalist League of Canada in Vancouver	Façade improvement at the Kuomintang building for community-serving retail tenancy.	Improved building façade to secure a community-serving tenant in Chinatown.	Economy (C1, C9)	\$45,000
10	Mission Possible Compassionate Ministries Society	Purchase and upgrade of equipment for the MP Maintenance program.	Increased capacity and employment opportunities for DTES residents experiencing barriers.	Economy (C8, C9)	\$50,000
11	Vancouver Moving Theatre Society	Purchase of production and office equipment.	Enhanced ability to serve the community and provide local employment and training for DTES residents.	Economy (C4, C9), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2)	\$5,600
12	Exchange Inner City Community Economic Development Association	Develop and launch an interactive and searchable database of low-barrier income generating opportunities and supports in the DTES.	Improved access to information regarding low-barrier employment, training and associated supports in the DTES.	Economy (C9)	\$10,400
13	Chau Luen Kon Sol Society of Vancouver	Capital improvements to the Chau Luen Tower at 325 Keefer Street.	Enhanced well-being, health and safety of low-income seniors living in the building.	Well-Being (A3), Housing (B3)	\$50,000
14	Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association	Commercial kitchen upgrades at 303 Columbia Street.	Improved preparation and delivery of meals for women in the DTES and ensure safe working conditions for staff.	Well-Being (A1, A2, A3), Economy (C9)	\$37,300
15	WISH Drop-In Centre Society	Critical upgrades to security, hygiene and community space at the facility.	Safer, welcoming space for women and gender-diverse folks involved in street-based sex trade.	Well-Being (A1, A2), Economy (C1, C9)	\$50,000
16	221A Artist Run Centre Society	Installation of new gate and garden improvements at the ʁǎws shewǎy New Growth Garden.	Increased safety and garden resilience to sustain community and education programs.	Well-Being (A2, A3), Economy (C9), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2, D3, D4)	\$28,000
17	Watari Counselling & Support Services	Upgrades to the Food Hub & Wellness Centre and the DTES Urban Farm.	Improved food and wellness programs for DTES residents.	Well-being (A2, A3)	\$50,000
				Total	\$649,700

**APPENDIX B
DTES Plan Implementation Grants (Not Recommended)**

No	Organization	Project Description	Amount Requested	Comments
1	Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice	Chinese Seniors HUB Program to address inequities and service gaps in the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown.	\$50,000	Project expenses are ineligible under the program guidelines.
2	Chinese Benevolent Association	Restoration and preservation of the heritage building located at 108 East Pender Street that is over 118 years old.	\$50,000	Project is funded through Chinese Society Legacy Program (RTS 12130) and does not meet the 50% matching fund requirement.
3	YVR Heart Tattoo Society	Upgrade Emergency Hub with two electric bikes to deliver emergent needs.	\$28,948.38	Short-term project with funding for only one year, and limited DTES funds.

APPENDIX C
Quick Start Actions and Short Term Projects
(Summary of Section 18.6 – Action Plan 2013-43 of the approved DTES Plan)

A - Well-Being
1. Enhance residents’ sense of safety, inclusion and belonging, including implementing actions from the City’s Task Force on Sex Work and Sexual Exploitation and Missing Women’s Inquiry.
2. Improve access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate foods.
3. Continue to prioritize that the safety of women, children, seniors, and culturally-diverse groups through well-designed spaces and inclusive programs.
B - Housing
1. Offer grants to non-profits to upgrade SROs while maintaining affordability.
2. Continue working with the Residential Tenancy Branch to improve tenant/landlord relations.
3. Address urgent social housing needs.
4. Explore creative financing using a ‘cost-benefit’ approach for scattered supportive housing sites.
C - Economy
1. Investigate regulatory changes and building code modifications to accelerate small conversions and renovations of business premises (especially in older buildings that are costly to maintain) to allow business owners who wish to make physical improvements.
2. Work with the four Business Improvement Associations to create a neighbourhood-wide business characteristics survey.
3. Work with VEC and BIAs to attract suitable new enterprises with retail strategies.
4. Use City-owned properties, affordable leases, and revitalization tax supports to provide affordable goods and services to the area.
5. Undertake a study of vending alternatives and the establishment of neighbourhood market-selling facilities.
6. Facilitate social and green enterprise practices and innovative business methods to achieve Social Impact objectives and Greenest City Action Plan objectives.
7. Innovate and support opportunities for market-selling, small business and micro-enterprise opportunities for DTES residents to build the survival economy.
8. Identify, secure and maximize economic/business assets that serve the low-income community (particularly in the CBDA).
9. Increase local employment encouraging inclusive local hiring opportunities.

D - Arts & Culture and Heritage
1. Stabilize key existing physical assets and secure ownership in public domain.
2. Retain/create flexible multi-use neighbourhood spaces such as studios, offices, rehearsal/production and indoor/outdoor space.
3. Support community efforts to recognize Aboriginal First Nations heritage and the SalishSea Civilization concept.
4. Support community initiatives such as raising the stature of the Japanese Canadian heritage, preservation and rehabilitation of the Chinatown Society buildings, identify, preserve and improve places with social and cultural meaning to the community, such as CRAB Park, Pigeon Park, Oppenheimer Park, Powell Street (Japantown), Chinatown, Strathcona, historic lane ways and alleys.
5. Initiate the work on updating the Vancouver Heritage Register.
6. Create a framework and business plan for a Chinatown Society Building Grants Program.
E - Parks & Open Space
1. Convert over-paved or under-used areas into mini-parks or plazas where possible.
2. Review existing street trees to fill gaps and replace ailing trees, and prioritize planting new trees in areas with few or no existing street trees.
3. Make existing parks more useable by adding new features.
4. Enhance the public realm to improve walkability, and reinforce the distinct identity of historic areas.
F - Community Place-Making
1. Encourage the revitalization of laneways through temporary installations and development opportunities.
2. Hastings Street and Kiwassa Urban Design Framework and Public Realm Plan.
3. Undertake improvements to Water Street and Maple Tree Square, including the public realm, pedestrian, cyclist, and traffic safety, and introduce amenities for community programming and celebrations.
G - Well-Managed Growth & Development
1. Consider amending land use and development policies and by-laws to support plan implementation, including the adoption of a new DTES Rezoning Policy and Social Impact Objectives.