



## COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: November 12, 2024  
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Meeting Date: November 27, 2024  
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities  
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services  
SUBJECT: 2024 SRO Upgrading Grant and Arts and Culture Grant

### Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve an SRO Upgrading Grant of \$185,000 from the 2024 SRO Upgrading Grant Program Capital Budget to the Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver ("Toi Shan"), a charity registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, for building upgrades to the Phoenix Hotel, an SRA-designated building located at 237 East Hastings Street, subject to the conditions outlined in this Report, including:
  - i. the City's issuance of all required development and building permits to Toi Shan; and
  - ii. the registration of a housing agreement on title to the property with the terms outlined in Appendix A.
- B. THAT Council approve a grant of \$30,000 from the 2024 ACT Operating Budget to the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance to support REFLECT, a program to develop and enhance leadership in the cultural sector for equity-deserving individuals and communities.
- C. THAT pursuant to Section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council deem the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance to be an organization contributing to the health and welfare of Vancouver.
- D. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that include terms and conditions that are consistent with this report, that satisfy the City's Director of Legal Services, and that disburse the grants described in this report to the City's General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate).
- E. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of these Recommendations unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

## Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval of two grants:

- Recommendation A is for an SRO Upgrading Grant to the Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver, totalling \$185,000 with the source of funds being the SRO Upgrading Grant Program Capital Budget. The recommended grant will contribute towards critical building upgrades including electrical, roof and interior renovations to common kitchen and washroom, as well as a Building Condition Assessment to determine other areas of critical need. As a condition of grant approval, the Society will enter into a 10-Year Housing Agreement with the City that will secure 1/3 of the rooms (11 rooms) at shelter rates (currently at \$500 for a single individual).
- Recommendation B is for an Arts and Culture Grant, totalling \$30,000 to the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance. The Arts and Culture Grant will support REFLECT, a program to develop and enhance leadership in the cultural sector for equity-deserving individuals and communities.

## Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- Chinatown Housing Partnership Grants (2024)
- Establishing a Chinatown Cultural District (2024)
- The City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy (2024)
- Vibrant Vancouver: City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 (2023)
- Chinatown Cultural Heritage Asset Management Plan Strategic Framework (2022)
- Downtown Eastside Plan Implementation and Strategic Allocation (2022)
- City of Vancouver Equity Framework (2021)
- Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture and Making Space for Arts and Culture, and the Vancouver Music Strategy (2019)
- Final 2019-2022 Capital Plan & Plebiscite Questions (2018)
- Historical Discrimination Against Chinese People in Vancouver and Formal Apology (2017/18)
- Housing Vancouver Strategy 2018-2027 (2017)
- Chinese Society Legacy Program (2015)
- Downtown Eastside Plan (2014)
- Downtown Eastside Social Impact Assessment (2014)
- SRA By-law (2003)

## City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

## Context and Background

### The Phoenix Hotel (237 East Hastings Street) (Recommendation A)

SRO buildings contain small rooms with shared bathrooms and kitchens and are often considered a last resort before homelessness for many of the city's low-income residents. Most SROs are over 100 years old and face numerous issues with aging infrastructure and

poor liveability. Chinese Societies (also referred to as Chinese Benevolent Associations) own 2% of the SRO stock and provide some of the lowest rents in the city for low-income residents, many of whom are seniors.

The Phoenix Hotel, located at 237 East Hastings Street, is an SRA-designated property with 32 rooms. Built in 1908, the building is owned by The Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver.

Like other Chinese Society-owned SROs, the building represents a key cultural, heritage and housing asset and provides deeply affordable rents ranging from \$270 to \$480. Like other aging SROs, the Phoenix Hotel is facing mounting financial pressure to adequately maintain and improve its building while keeping rents low.

The SRO Upgrading Grant Program, approved by Council in 2014 as part of the Downtown Eastside Plan, supports non-profits operating SROs to invest in capital repairs while maintaining affordability for residents. In July 2024, Council also approved up to \$36,000 in grant funding to Toi Shan ([RTS 16230](#)) to implement fire safety upgrades in their building in accordance with Fire By-Law amendments that require the installation of sprinkler isolation valves.

#### Arts and Culture Grant – REFLECT (Recommendation B)

The City of Vancouver invests in critical operating and project grants to local arts and culture non-profit groups through various grant streams to support arts and cultural activity in Vancouver. This investment is guided by key goals in civic policy and strategic directions including *Vibrant Vancouver*, *City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026* and the City's 10-year arts and culture plan *Culture|Shift*. *Culture|Shift* centres the voices of underrepresented artists and organizations to achieve greater equity for those who have been systemically excluded in funding programs.

The Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance is a non-profit charitable organization that is committed to strengthening the local theatre industry, and is involved in projects to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in theatre and across disciplines and sectors.

## **Discussion**

#### The Phoenix Hotel (237 East Hastings Street) (Recommendation A)

The recommended SRO upgrading grant of \$185,000 will support essential building improvements, including electrical upgrades, roof repairs, and interior renovations to the common kitchen and washrooms, as well as a Building Condition Assessment to identify other critical needs. The Society will be supported by an experienced bilingual Project Facilitator to assist them through the renovation process, including hiring contractors, monitoring project scope and managing project budget. By investing in these capital upgrades, the Phoenix Hotel will be better equipped to continue offering essential, low-cost housing while preserving its significant cultural, heritage, and housing contributions to our city.

#### Arts and Culture Grant – REFLECT (Recommendation B)

Radical Empathy for Leaders: Equity, Connection, Time (REFLECT) was launched in 2023 as a pilot project by Arts, Culture & Tourism at the City of Vancouver in partnership with the Greater

Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance (GVPTA) and The Cultch. REFLECT is a cohort-based program focused on fostering leadership among underrepresented arts communities. Designed for arts leaders from Indigenous and equity-deserving groups, REFLECT emphasizes radical empathy, community-building, and project-based learning. Eight participants engaged in monthly workshops, intergenerational mentorship, and self-directed projects, receiving a stipend for their involvement. The program's goals are to support inclusive leadership, provide equitable access to resources, and nurture diverse cultural perspectives within Vancouver's arts sector. This grant will allow REFLECT to serve a second cohort, starting the second iteration of the program in 2025.

The Arts and Culture Grant for the REFLECT program represents an impactful investment that aligns with the City of Vancouver's Culture|Shift and Vibrant Vancouver objectives, advancing inclusivity, reconciliation, and cultural vibrancy across the city. By nurturing underrepresented arts leaders, REFLECT will enhance the city's arts sector, strengthen diverse cultural representation, and contribute to the realization of Vancouver's broader cultural vision. Funding this program aligns with Council's priority to create a culturally rich and inclusive city where all communities feel represented and supported.

This grant decision is being brought forward outside of the Arts and Culture grant streams because it is an extension of an existing partnership with the City. The timing did not align to bring this decision forward with the November 13, 2024, Arts and Culture grant report; if there are future decisions related to this partnership, staff will endeavor to bring them forward as part of the fall or other Arts and Culture grant reports.

Information on this program can be found at: <https://www.gvpta.ca/programs/reflect>

### **Financial Implication**

This report is recommending a total of \$185,000 to support capital improvements for the Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver to improve the condition, safety and liveability of The Phoenix Hotel at 237 East Hastings Street. The source of funds is the 2024 SRO Upgrading Grant Program Capital Budget. It also recommends the approval of a grant of \$30,000 to the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance from the 2024 ACT Operating Budget to support REFLECT, a program to develop and enhance leadership in the cultural sector for equity-deserving individuals and communities.

### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SRA UPGRADING GRANT HOUSING AGREEMENT TERMS**

<b>Society/Building</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>Terms of Housing Agreement</b>
Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver  Phoenix Hotel (237 E Hastings Street)	\$185,000	1/3 of the units at 237 E Hastings, must remain at or below the maximum current income assistance shelter rate for a single person for 10 years.