



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: May 21, 2025
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-25
Meeting Date: May 21, 2025
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TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: City Manager
SUBJECT: Chinatown Strategic Priority Grants

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve four Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan grants totaling \$387,000 to the organizations and for the amounts listed in Appendix A of this report, to support the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan, from the City's 2025 Operating Budget.
- B. THAT Council approve a grant of \$17,000 to the Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (Chinatown BIA) from the City's 2025 Operating Budget to support a process to develop advice on a draft vision and program for an economic development pilot project for Chinatown Plaza, which will support key goals in the Chinatown Cultural District Framework.
- C. THAT pursuant to Section 206(1)(j) of the Vancouver Charter, Council deems any organization listed in Appendix A that is not otherwise a charity registered with Canada Revenue Agency to be contributing to the culture, beautification, health, or welfare of the city.
- D. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that disburse the grants described in this report to the City's Director of Legal Services.
- E. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of Recommendations A through D unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Recommendations A and B require at least 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members under section 206(1) of the Vancouver Charter.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval for a total of five Chinatown strategic priority grants, totaling \$404,000 to support implementation of the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan and a community-led process to inform an economic development pilot project, under the Chinatown Cultural District Framework.

- Recommendation A – Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan (\$387,000 – included in 2025 City Operating Budget as an ongoing budget for the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan)
 - Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (Chinatown BIA) (\$150,000) – Ongoing implementation of the Graffiti Removal and Abatement Enhancement on Private Property Pilot Project;
 - Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (Chinatown BIA) (\$50,000) – Ongoing implementation and improvement of the Chinatown Safewalk pilot program;
 - Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC) (\$10,000) – Ongoing implementation of the Expanded Volunteer Graffiti Removal Program Pilot Project; and
 - Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS Eastside Works) (\$177,000) – Ongoing implementation of the Chinatown Community Stewards Program as a pilot action.
- Recommendation B – Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (\$17,000 – City's 2025 Operating Budget) – Development of a draft vision and program for an economic development pilot project at Chinatown Plaza, in partnership with the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association (VCMA).

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- 2025 Draft Capital and Operating Budget ([RTS 16180](#), [December 10, 2024](#)): Mayor and Council approved the 2025 Operating Budget, which included funding to continue initiatives from the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan.
- Establishing a Chinatown Cultural District ([RTS 15529](#), [June 12, 2024](#)).
- Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan ([RTS 15432](#), [January 17, 2023](#)).

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

On June 12, 2024, Council approved the *Chinatown Cultural District Framework* ("Framework"), which establishes a comprehensive approach to supporting the renewed vibrancy of the neighbourhood, including both economic and community development. The Framework incorporated key initiatives from the Council-approved Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan, which consists of a series of actions and pilot projects related to cleaning and sanitation, graffiti abatement strategies and placemaking, and community supports in Chinatown.

Discussion

This report recommends five grants that are critical to the ongoing implementation of the Chinatown Cultural District Framework and the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan. These grants fund organizations working in partnership with the City to continue projects related to graffiti abatement/removal and community supports, and community-led projects that support key goals in the Chinatown Cultural District Framework.

Recommendation A: Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan Strategic Priority Grants - \$387,000

If approved by Council, Uplifting Chinatown grants totaling \$387,000 will be disbursed from the City Operating Budget to the following organizations:

1. Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (Chinatown BIA) – Pilot Project: Graffiti Removal and Abatement Enhancement on Private Property (\$150,000)

The Chinatown BIA, similar to other BIAs across the city, has an established graffiti prevention and abatement program which supplements the City's public property graffiti removal by addressing graffiti on commercial private property within their boundaries.

In 2024, the Chinatown BIA was provided additional funding through Uplifting Chinatown for a graffiti removal and abatement pilot project focused on: expediting response times; addressing street-front and eye-level facades; alleys; highly visible and repeatedly targeted locations; anti-graffiti coatings; removal of large-scale graffiti; and addressing challenges such as buildings with graffiti on upper facades and laneways. In 2024, the grant supported the removal of 772 graffiti incidents.

In 2025, approximately \$56,200 of this grant will be allocated towards a Carrall Street Alleyway Graffiti Removal Project. The project will focus on an alley between the 0 Block of East Pender and East Hastings Street and is a collaboration between the Chinatown and Hastings Crossings BIAs. The project will take place over nine months, focused on intensive graffiti removal and supporting ongoing maintenance to ensure the area remains clean and monitored. The remainder of the grant funding will support graffiti abatement on private property throughout the rest of Chinatown.

2. Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society (Chinatown BIA) – Ongoing Implementation and Improvement of the Safewalk Pilot Program (\$50,000)

The Safewalk program aims to support individuals who may require or request accompaniment to their desired location. In 2024, the emphasis was on supporting Chinese-speaking seniors living in the area, many of whom are low-income and face systemic and language barriers. In 2025, the grant will support the Chinatown BIA in continued provision of a Safewalk program, and additional outreach measures to support increased education and awareness on public safety and access to resources.

3. Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC) – Ongoing Implementation of the Expanded Volunteer Graffiti Removal Program Pilot Project (\$10,000)

The Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC) is located at 44 East Pender, and operates a number of community outreach and safety-oriented programs. In 2024, the grant supported the expansion of the existing volunteer graffiti removal program to support proactive graffiti removal and expediting response times, including funding for supplies needed for ongoing graffiti

removal. In 2025, the grant will support the continuation and improvement of this program by focusing on graffiti prevention education and initiatives.

4. Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS Eastside Works) – Ongoing Chinatown Community Stewards Program (\$177,000)

Chinatown Stewards operate seven days per week to patrol the neighbourhood to support businesses and residents, de-escalate situations, provide directions to visitors, provide information on resources and outreach for those experiencing homelessness, and identify locations for rapid response (e.g. feces, garbage and graffiti).

In 2024, Stewards have reported:

- 319 interactions with merchants to support businesses directly and keep doorways ready for operations, with an average response time of 10 minutes;
- 4,880 interactions with community members, including assisting seniors, de-escalation, and referral to health clinics and other supports;
- Performing wellness checks, calling for paramedics and other emergency services when medical assistance was needed, and responding to 21 overdose situations with naloxone; and
- Provided additional support to overall cleanliness of streets and sidewalks while on daily patrol in the neighbourhood.

In 2025, the Stewards program and City staff will engage with businesses to ensure that the program continues to support them effectively, and with stakeholders around a broader community safety role for Stewards to address incidents that occur in the public realm. The program currently provides monthly reporting on neighbourhood trends and metrics, such as: number of requests and incidences addressed, number of calls to other agencies, number of storefront interactions, number of issues identified for rapid response. EMBERS Eastside Works will be winding down operations at the end of June 2025, and will operate the Chinatown Stewards program through to Spring 2026 per previously agreed upon program dates.

Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan: Next Steps

Now in its third pilot year, learnings from the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan pilot programs have been incorporated into other City initiatives addressing public realm and public safety. The Working Group continues to evaluate and refine the overall Action Plan's scope and needs, including understanding potential challenges and opportunities to strategically optimize integration with other initiatives related to public realm at the City. As the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan is proposed to run as a pilot project until the end of 2025, staff will return to Council in early Q4 2025 with an update report on outcomes, achievements, and next steps. This will include information on associated costs needed to continue the program, should that be a recommended next step for Council decision.

Recommendation B: Grant to the Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society - \$17,000

If approved by Council, a grant totaling \$17,000 will be disbursed from the City's 2025 Operating Budget to the Chinatown BIA. Together, the Chinatown BIA and the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association (VCMA) are leading the development of a draft vision and program to inform an economic development pilot to revive Chinatown Plaza's main concourse as a commercial and community hub. The project working group includes representatives from the wider Chinatown business and cultural community to support concept development.

This grant is a top-up to a \$30,000 grant that the Chinatown BIA received in October 2024 ([RTS 16099](#)). This top-up will support the Chinatown BIA and VCMA with an expanded public engagement, consultation, and outreach strategy with broader Chinatown stakeholders. The engagement and consultation will contribute to the draft vision and program that will inform City advice to Council on the future of Chinatown Plaza.

Financial Implications

Staff are seeking Council approval of five strategic priority grants totaling \$404,000 in support of the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan and other initiatives to support key goals in the Chinatown Cultural District Framework. All five grant budget allocations were approved as a part of the 2025 Operating Budget. Funding sources and organizations receiving strategic priority grants are included in Appendix A.

Legal Implications

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

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APPENDIX A

ALLOCATION OF CHINATOWN STRATEGIC PRIORITY GRANTS

Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan				
Organization		Program	Amount	Funding Source
1	Chinatown BIA (<i>Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society</i>)	Ongoing pilot project to further enhance graffiti removal and abatement on private property, with a focus on: expediting response times; addressing street-front and upper facades; alleys; highly visible and repeatedly targeted locations; anti-graffiti coatings; and removal of large-scale graffiti.	\$150,000	2025 Operating Budget
2	Chinatown BIA (<i>Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society</i>)	Ongoing implementation of the Safewalk pilot program.	\$50,000	2025 Operating Budget
3	Chinese Community Policing Centre	Ongoing pilot program to support expansion of volunteer graffiti removal program to further supplemental graffiti abatement and removal efforts.	\$10,000	2025 Operating Budget
4	EMBERS Eastside Works (<i>Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society</i>)	Continuation of the Chinatown Community Stewards Program as a pilot action alongside other Action Plan initiatives.	\$177,000	2025 Operating Budget
Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan Total			\$387,000	
Other				
Organization		Program	Amount	Funding Source
1	Chinatown BIA (<i>Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society</i>)	Chinatown Plaza Economic Development Pilot – Draft Vision and Program	\$17,000	2025 Operating Budget
Other Total			\$17,000	
Overall Chinatown Strategic Priority Grants Total			\$404,000	