



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: July 09, 2025
Contact: Helen Ma
Contact No.: 604.873.7919
RTS No.: 17794
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: July 9, 2025
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Downtown Eastside (DTES) Plan Implementation Grant Program Allocation 2025

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve the matching grant allocation of \$546,055 to 15 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, \$496,055 in 2023 – 26 DTES Plan Matching Grants and \$50,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Strategic Project Grants.
- B. 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 welfare of Vancouver.
- C. 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.
- D. THAT no legal rights or obligations will be created by the approval of Recommendations A to C 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 17 applications were submitted in 2025. This report recommends 15 grants to 15 non-profit agencies totaling \$546,055 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. These grants allocations align with several City of Vancouver priorities and strategies and support an integrated vision of health and well-being in the DTES to help address systemic barriers experienced by the community due to the compounding intersections of poverty, racism, and colonialism.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- [Chinatown Cultural District Framework](#) (2024).
- [Vibrant Vancouver: City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026](#) (2023).
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\) Strategy](#) (2022).
- [Accessibility Strategy](#) (2022).
- [Equity Framework](#) (2021).
- [Downtown Eastside Community Economic Development Strategy](#) (2016).
- [Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan](#) (2014).
- [Healthy City Strategy](#) (2014).

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.

DTES residents continue to be more likely to experience lower incomes than residents of the city overall. In 2022 income tax returns, people living in V6A postal codes had a median individual income of \$26,650, the lowest of any area in the city and 40% lower than the city

overall¹. Nearly 60% of V6A residents made less than the equivalent of the Metro Vancouver Living Wage in 2022². The most recent Homeless Count identified 2,420 people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver in 2023, a 16% increase in the number of people counted in 2020³. The neighbourhood has significant community assets and networks of support, shown in higher rates of community belonging in the DTES (48%) compared to the city overall (43%)⁴. However, DTES residents continue to face significant systems failures and barriers to well-being. In 2023, only 40% of adults in the DTES reported good general health and 30% reported good mental health. 42% of adults in the DTES were concerned for food security, compared to 26% of people across the city⁵.

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 priorities for the DTES.

Applications are invited through an open call once a year. Information on the 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. 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 approximately 313 grant and \$12.8 million to non-profit organizations and social enterprises. The benefits include a wide spectrum of improvements to job spaces, 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.

¹ Statistics Canada, T1 Family File (income tax return data), accessed through Community Data Program.

² Calculation by City staff based on Living Wage BC calculation, adjusted for family size and matched to Statistics Canada, T1 Family File data.

³ Metro Vancouver, 2023 Homeless Count.

⁴ BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions and Knowledge, 2023).

⁵ BC Centre for Disease Control, SPEAK (Survey on Population Experiences, Actions and Knowledge, 2023).

Discussion

The 15 grant recommendations align with Council priorities and strategies (see Appendix A). The majority of the recommended grants relate to Community Asset Management, followed by Community Economic Development, Strategic Projects and Neighbourhood Improvements. The funding distribution of the recommended grant applications is summarised in Table 1. Two applications are not recommended for funding (see Appendix B).

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

Funding Area	Objectives	# of Grants	% of Grants	Total funding
Community Asset Management	Retention and improvement of valuable assets identified in the DTES plan and Social Impact Assessment.	11	64%	\$346,355
Community Economic Development	A vibrant and inclusive economy through Community Economic Development.	2	18%	\$99,700
Neighbourhood Improvements	Improvements to the neighbourhood places and spaces for community wellbeing, safety, and walkability.	1	9%	\$50,000
Strategic Projects	Supporting strategic interventions to respond to community needs.	1	9%	\$50,000
Total		15	100%	\$546,055

The recommendations align with the City's commitment to equity by supporting community-led projects that improve social and cultural spaces, and delivery of programs and services that ensure DTES communities feel included and respected. The recommendations advance the City's commitment to reconciliation by supporting Indigenous-led projects that honour Indigenous traditional knowledge.

Financial Implications

The total dollar amount of DTES Plan Implementation Grants being recommended is \$546,055. The 15 community-led initiatives are funded from the previously approved multi-year capital project budget, \$496,055 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Implementation Matching Grants and \$50,000 in the 2023-26 DTES Plan Strategic Projects Grants. If approved, the amount remaining in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan for the two programs is approximately \$0.8 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 in Appendix A.

* * * * *

APPENDIX A
DTES Plan Implementation Grants (Recommended)

No	Organization	Project Description	Outcomes	Quick Starts (Appendix C)	Amount Recommended	Conditions
1	Cheng Wing Yeong Tong Benevolent Society	Restoration of a heritage building at 79 East Pender Street	Restored heritage building that improves safety for its members and the local community.	Arts, Culture & Heritage (D1, D2, D4)	\$50,000	
2	Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association	Enhance placemaking and vibrancy to the area by activating the streets with art, lighting, and activities.	Increased economic opportunities and an improved, welcoming, and safer business area.	Economy (C3, C7, C9), Community Placemaking (F1)	\$50,000	
3	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	
4	221A Artist Run Centre Society	Capital Improvements at 236 East Pender Street	Upgraded space that is safe, accessible, and affordable for local artists and creative non-profits.	Well-Being (A1, A3), Economy (C9), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2, D4)	\$50,000	
5	Pacific Community Resource Society	Undertake a feasibility study to explore opportunities for redevelopment of Thompson Court.	A plan that improves housing for youth and adds other uses to better serve the needs of the DTES.	Housing (B3, B4), Economy (C1)	\$30,500	

6	Hope In Shadows Society	Purchase of vendor gear and equipment to support organizational capacity.	New vendor gear and equipment for vendor support.	Well-Being (A1), Economy (C7, C8, C9)	\$5,500	
7	Wongs' Benevolent Association	Life and safety upgrades to the 4 th floor of the Hon Hsing building.	Upgraded space, retention of culturally relevant tenant, and stable income for the Society.	Economy (C8, C9), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D1, D2, D4)	\$50,000	Submission of final scope of work and approved DP.
8	Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver	Installation of automated doors, technology, and minor Hall upgrades.	Improved physical access, technology, and quality of the Centre.	Economy (C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2, D4)	\$48,000	
9	Chinese Canadian Museum Society of British Columbia	Creation of Chinese rooftop garden as a multifunctional outdoor and community event space at the Wing Sang Building.	A safe and welcoming outdoor space for community programing	Well-Being (A1, A3), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D4)	\$50,000	
10	Uya'am Gaak Cultural Society	Fence replacement and purchase of equipment for V6A Gardens.	A safe, welcoming garden with art, multilingual signage, and equipment for food and traditional medicine distribution.	Well-Being (A1, A3), Economy (C8, C9), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D4)	\$29,700	
11	Powell Street Festival Society	Purchase of portable equipment to support the Powell Street Festival and culture programming.	Enhanced production of the annual festival and expanded year-round cultural programming.	Well-Being (A3), Economy (C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D4)	\$7,655	
12	Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society	Undertake a feasibility study on the re-opening of the historic Gain Wah in Chinatown.	A plan to retain and re-open a cultural appropriate and affordable heritage business in Chinatown.	Economy (C6, C8), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D1, D4)	\$49,700	

13	Wish Drop-In Centre Society	Safety and accessibility upgrades to the Centre.	A safe, accessible and functional Centre to better support women and gender diverse individuals.	Well-Being (A1, A3)	\$15,000	Confirmation of reopening date.
14	Vancouver Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization	Space renovations, repairs, and purchase of equipment for The Learning Lab.	A community hub for cultural programming, artefact conservation and educational opportunities.	Arts, Culture & Heritage (D2, D4)	\$50,000	
15	Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice	Purchase of equipment and materials to build a community garden and deliver workshops with Chinese Elders at MacLean Park.	Enhanced sense of belonging through gardening and food workshops with elderly Chinese community members.	Well-Being (A2, A3), Arts, Culture & Heritage (D3), Parks & Open Space (E3, E4)	\$10,000	
Total					\$546,055	

APPENDIX B
DTES Plan Implementation Grants (Not Recommended)

No	Organization	Project Description	Amount Requested	Comments
1	Vancity Community Foundation	Undertake an event business plan for 312 Main that identifies the needs and opportunities of DTES groups to ensure the space is accessible to them and the community they serve.	\$15,000.00	Application was withdrawn by the applicant.
2	Thi Luu Huong Le	Updating plumbing, electrical and windows in the SRO building.	\$50,000.00	Applicant doesn't meet the eligibility criteria.

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 & 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 Salish Sea 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.