

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE PLAN

Community Newsletter #11: April 2021

Welcome

This is the eleventh edition of the community update for the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Plan. These newsletters will keep you informed about progress on implementing the plan, upcoming events, and other important information. Since the DTES Plan was approved, we have been moving forward on many quick-start and short-term projects:

Improved Well-being for All

Access to Facilities, Healing & Wellness

In December, Council approved \$2M of capital funding to locate the Saa'ust Centre for Indigenous peoples within the Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT) project's Indigenous Healing Centre.

The City is also expanding the washroom trailer program, relocating the Overdose Prevention Society washroom trailer along with the inhalation tent to 99 W Pender as the ALT project begins construction, and another new washroom trailer on East Hastings was added in March in response to community requests. Parklets are being expanded to provide more spaces for residents across the DTES, including a Drinker's Lounge at 111 Princess.

Healthy Homes for All

Since January 2020, 436 units of new social housing have been approved inside the Downtown Eastside. These include 36 units at 138 Main Street, 46 units at 128-138 E Cordova Street, 111 units at 52-92 E Hastings Street, 114 units at 528 Powell Street, 19 units at 728-296 Main Street, and 110 units at 1015 E Hastings Street. Many of these newly-approved units will rent at \$375 and will provide secure, affordable homes for the City's very low-income residents.



52-92 East Hastings Indigenous housing & healing development

Vibrant & Inclusive Local Economy

Special Enterprise Program (SEP)

The SEP was approved by Council in January 2021. The purpose of this pilot is to address the issues of: commercial vacancies; affordability; upgrade needs; capacity building; and attraction and retention of heritage and community-serving businesses, non-profits and social enterprises, with a special focus in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside.

Council approved an initial \$500,000 to continue supporting the consultants from Dunefield on the community-serving retail project in Chinese Society Buildings. This work will also provide capacity building to heritage and community-serving businesses, and help non-profit and/or social enterprise tenants gain access to vacant or underutilized spaces. The SEP pilot is implemented through a partnership between the City's Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability and Arts, Culture, and Community Services departments.



Keefer Street - one of the city's 'Slow Streets'

Improved Transportation & Public Spaces

R5 RapidBus

RapidBus service started in January 2020, including the R5 on Hastings Street. The R5 replaced the 95 B Line which was one of the top 10 routes in the region for passenger boardings. As part of the upgrade to RapidBus, TransLink bought new hybrid diesel buses, which have reduced emissions compared to standard diesel buses. In addition, the City worked with TransLink to install real-time bus information displays at stops, so passengers know how long they have to wait until the next bus arrives.



RapidBus stop on East Hastings Street

Prior Street Pilot

The pilot responds to traffic safety concerns along the corridor by improving walkability, reducing vehicle speeds and increasing street lighting levels. To date, we've conducted traffic monitoring and implemented temporary measures such as introducing all-day parking on both sides of the street, reducing the speed limit adjacent to Strathcona Park and converting existing street lights to LEDs. Upcoming measures include replacing bus shelters, painting custom crosswalks and installing temporary curb bulges. Due to impacts of COVID-19 and BC Hydro construction on traffic, we expect to report back to Council in early 2022.

Social Service Parklets & Street Spaces

The City has been re-allocating streets and parking for public spaces in collaboration with social service organizations who help manage the space. The new spaces offer patrons and residents a place to rest, safely gather outdoors and access essential services.

Nine spaces have been delivered so far in the DTES with more to be planned in response to urgent needs of the pandemic. Existing

spaces are currently being upgraded for safety, shelter, accessibility, and beautification.

Slow Streets

Slow Streets is one of the City's COVID-19 response initiatives to provide local access and make it easier for people walking, cycling, or rolling to maintain a safe physical distance. Slow Streets have been implemented on Keefer Street (from Gore Avenue to Campbell Avenue), Princess Avenue (from Keefer to Atlantic Street), and on Atlantic Street (from Princess Avenue to Malkin Avenue) to provide segments that can be part of a healthy walk and provide access to green spaces like MacLean Park, Trillium Park and Lord Strathcona Elementary School.

The City is continuing to collect feedback about your experiences with Slow Streets which will help us make adjustments and inform longer-term opportunities for these routes. These responses are kept confidential. Please share your input and questions with us through our slowstreets@vancouver.ca email, or through 3-1-1 or the VanConnect app.





New Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre playground

Arts & Culture Opportunities

City Investments in Local Arts Organizations

In 2020, City Council approved funding support to 55 DTES based organizations for project, community arts, equity-focused, annual and operating grants for a total of \$1,208,100. Capital grants were also provided to five DTES based organizations for a total of \$98,500. In addition, a total of \$566,400 was awarded through the COVID-19 Cultural Impact Critical Assistance grants was awarded to 18 DTES based organizations for emergency support for continuity or adaptation of operations, programs, services, and re-opening or restart planning and implementation, as well as for affordable space operations and capital support.

Celebrate Heritage

Heritage Program

The City is working with Parks Canada on National Historic Site of Canada plaques for Gastown and Chinatown and with the Chinatown Transformation Team on the Chinatown Memorial Square project.

The Vancouver Heritage Program (VHP) was approved on March 10, 2020, including its guiding principles, vision, goals, and

directions. The new VHP expanded the meaning of heritage to include the intangible aspects of cultural and social life that are important to people in the DTES and contribute to community identity and sense of place. Specifically, the VHP supports Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations', and Urban Indigenous peoples' self-expressed histories and heritage. The VHP also supports cultural redress of systemically excluded ethnocultural groups. Additionally, the VHP enables better integration of heritage within citywide planning processes.

Learn more at vancouver.ca/heritage

Parks & Recreation

The Vancouver Park Board is planning several projects for downtown parks this summer. CRAB Park will be home to two new 'Portland Loo'-style washrooms that will replace the existing unusable fieldhouses, with engagement planned around wider park improvements. Andy Livingstone Park will host a program co-led by Park Board and City staff who will work with the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society and Vancouver Coastal Health to support a community-engaged art project and peer

workers. The program's goals are to build skills and capacity, increase awareness and access to harm reduction resources, reduce stigma related to substance use and support neighbourhood resilience. Engagement with local communities will also be underway to help shape emerging designs for Andy Livingstone and Creekside parks.



Portland Loo

The Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre playground opened January 21, 2021 and features a custom treehouse around a sequoia tree and a netted tunnel that wraps around half the tree trunk, as well as an eagle carved by a local resident to keep children safe. "Eagles for my people are considered protectors," said Don Wadhams, who spent a month carving it from yellow cedar. A Kwakwaka'wakw ceremony to bless and unveil the eagle and wake it up was held January 28. The artist was joined by representatives from his nation, by Ray-Cam elders and members of Squamish Nation and Musqueam Indian Band.



DTES Women's Centre parklet

Sustainability

Climate change adaptation through an equity lens

Evergreen, a local non-profit organization, engaged 546 people disproportionately impacted by climate change to better understand their needs during extreme heat and smoke events. A survey and nine engagement activities were carried out in five different languages engaging seniors and residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside as well as frontline service providers.

Access to clean, well-maintained drinking water and indoor and outdoor washrooms was highlighted and has been a focus of COVID response. Additional key findings included providing shaded outdoor spaces with increased tree cover, considering a diversity of needs of individuals in indoor cooling spaces, providing additional cooling and air filtration in locations where services are often accessed and reviewing associated health impacts of building design. The City will continue to seek feedback to improve heat and smoke response while incorporating these findings. To learn more, visit: <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/mcip/climate-change-adaptation-through-equity-lens>

For information on staying safe in summer heat, visit: vancouver.ca/hot-weather



DTES Grants

The DTES Planning group operates a dedicated neighbourhood fund that supports projects that help implement the Plan's vision and strategic directions. The aim is to encourage partnerships with grant recipients sourcing at least half of their funding from other organizations or through their work. Additional funding is also secured from City of Vancouver Social, Cultural, and Infrastructure grants and partnerships with various foundations.



Atira - Enterprising women space



Mission Possible garden



302 Columbia Street parklet

DTES Grants continued

In 2020, Council approved \$203,500 for critical projects, \$670,000 for strategic projects to support COVID-19 response action, and \$543,600 for 19 projects through the annual matching grant program.

Critical projects have a short time frame. For example, funding was approved for the interior renovations and repairs to the office areas of the WISH Society and Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Both office areas were damaged by flooding but the repairs allow the organisations to continue to provide services to people in the DTES.

Four strategic projects that respond to impacts from COVID-19 received funding. One key project helped support the transition of the emergency temporary parklets in the DTES which were created during COVID-19 to provide resting places for the local residents into enhanced community hubs.

Most of the 2020 matching grants approved for the 19 projects were focused on retention of and improvements to valuable assets in the community.

For example, Atira Women's Resource Society received funding to re-establish a critically

needed daycare in the DTES.

The Eastside Culture Crawl received funding to update their interactive website which also acts as an 'official' website for many local artists. The Vancouver Women's Health Collective Society will be using funds to renovate their space to provide washrooms, a shower and a washer/dryer to support the members and users of their organization.

This year's matching grant program closed applications on March 31 with a report seeking Council approval of fund allocations is scheduled for the summer.



Kam Wai Dim Sum space renovations



DTES Women's Centre parklet

Implementation Summary

In October 2020, we shared a memorandum on the DTES Plan Implementation Progress (2017-2019) with Council. When the DTES Plan was approved in 2014, Council directed staff to monitor implementation initiatives and report back every three years on progress and the Social Impact Indicators of change in the neighbourhood. This was the second three-year update, which was accompanied by an in-depth DTES Plan Three Year Summary of Implementation. Inside the summary, you'll find:

- An overview of the DTES Plan, including highlights of demographic trends, evolving community challenges, and major infrastructure changes in the area;
- Summary of public consultation, including community engagement activities, and what we heard from the community;
- Monitoring and evaluation, including targets, social impact indicators, and action plan;
- City-wide initiatives related to the DTES;
- Implementation highlights,

- Emerging three-year priorities; and
- DTES Plan Funding, including implementation funding and public benefit strategy implementation.

See the memorandum to Council and full summary at:

vancouver.ca/dtes

Chinatown Transformation

The Chinatown Transformation Team (CTT) has been working closely with community members and organizations, including the City-appointed Legacy Stewardship Group (LSG), on the long-term goal of seeking UNESCO World Heritage designation for Chinatown and economic revitalization of the area.



A key part of this work is the development of a Cultural Heritage Asset Management Plan (CHAMP) aimed at protecting and strengthening Chinatown's intangible living heritage. In addition to partnering with the BC Government on the establishment of a Chinese Canadian Museum, CTT is also supporting LSG in a series of priority community projects, the implementation of which are expected to lead to a vibrant, sustainable and harmonious Chinatown.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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