

# DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE PLAN

Community Newsletter #12: November 2021

## Welcome

This is the twelfth 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, many short and long term policies have been implemented, and some of the most recent are outlined in this newsletter.

### Improved Well-being for All

#### Reduced Fare Transit Pilot

The City of Vancouver launched a Reduced Fare Transit Pilot project this September. The pilot project is in response to the City's emerging Poverty Reduction Plan engagement process, in which the lack of access to affordable transportation came up as a major barrier for people in Vancouver.

Based on these findings, City Council endorsed the #AllOnBoard campaign in January 2019, calling on TransLink to develop a plan for free transit for youth and reduced fare transit for low-income residents based on a sliding scale, which led to the design of the Reduced Fare Transit Pilot project.

The pilot project is a community-based research project in partnership with Embers Eastside Works, Single Mothers' Alliance, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, Urban Native Youth Association and TransLink. It will provide 100 participants with free 1-zone transit passes over a 6 month period and will explore whether free or subsidized access to transit will relieve time and financial pressures for people who are experiencing poverty.

The four community partner organizations distributed free transit passes to participants, as well as recruited and hired a total of 10 community based researchers who will conduct the interviews and collect data. A final report for the pilot project will be available in June 2022.



#### United Nations (UN) Safe Cities

As part of the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Space Initiative, the City of Vancouver has launched a survey to gain a deeper understanding and address gender-based and sexualized violence and harassment against women, girls, trans, Two Spirit, non-binary and gender diverse people in public spaces.

Examples of these types of violence and harassment include unwanted touching, cat-calling, being followed, or homophobic, transphobic and racist harassment.

The survey is available in multiple languages and open until November 30th to anyone who has experienced or witnessed gender-based and sexualized violence or harassment in Vancouver.

Please complete the survey here: [survey.vancouver.ca/s3/UN-Safe-Cities](https://survey.vancouver.ca/s3/UN-Safe-Cities)





DTES Street Market

### Healthy Homes for All

Since April 2021, 105 social housing units at 320 Hastings St were approved, along with multi-purpose facilities and a social services centre for the community. Many of these newly-approved homes will rent at deeply affordable rates, including the shelter rate of income assistance, and will provide secured homes for the city's very low-income residents.

We are also bringing policy updates to City Council in spring 2022 to increase social housing in the DTES. These include proposed zoning changes in the DTES Oppenheimer District (sub-area 2, 3, & 4) and Thornton Park/East False Creek (FC-1). For more information, see the Well-Managed Development section of this newsletter.

Rendering of 320 E Hastings St



### Vibrant & Inclusive Local Economy

#### Special Enterprise Program (SEP)

In January 2021, City Council approved the SEP and an initial \$500,000 with the objective of preserving and strengthening the cultural diversity, long-term viability, and economic opportunity of heritage businesses, social enterprises and non-profit organizations in Chinatown and the DTES.

The three SEP components are being implemented by partner organizations or implementers. The Strathcona Business Improvement Association, with the support of the consultants from Dunefield, has been implementing the community-serving retail project in Chinese Society Buildings. Recently City Council approved the Community Impact Real Estate Society and the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation to assist with the implementation of affordable space activation pilots and the capacity building/business supports, respectively.



Chinatown legacy business owner

### DTES Market Relocation

The Four Directions Trading Post Market was scheduled to move to its new location at 26 E Hastings St for early September. However, due to complications with construction and safety issues on site, the Market continued to operate at 62 E Hastings St until the end of September. It has since moved and is now at its new home.



DTES Street Market

### Improved Transportation

#### Prior Street Pilot

Adding to the measures implemented previously on Prior St, the City installed temporary curb bulges in July at Dunlevy Ave and at Heatley Ave. In addition, two custom crosswalks were painted in June at Hawks Ave and at Campbell Ave. These measures aim to further improve walkability and respond to traffic concerns along the corridor.



Railway crossing at Raymur Ave

### Raymur Ave Railway Crossing

The City is making safety modifications to the Raymur Ave railway crossing (north of Hastings St) to meet Transport Canada’s new “Grade Crossing Standards”, which include closing the crossing and removing the rail crossing warning system. Public engagement with stakeholders occurred in June 2021 and the City is now reviewing community feedback in conjunction with the design requirements. The date of installation is postponed until further notice, pending detailed analysis results.

### Arts & Culture Opportunities

#### Community & Artists Shifting Culture (CASC): Cultural Project Grants Program

CASC grants support a wide range of short-term, one-time, or limited series arts, cultural, and creative projects delivered to registered non-profit organizations, societies, charities, co-ops, and local First Nation Band Councils that advance the goals of our culture plan, Culture|Shift.

For more information, please visit [vancouver.ca/people-programs/cultural-grants-program.aspx](http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/cultural-grants-program.aspx)

throughout the summer that filled the park with art and neighbourhood stories. This programming was led by artist, Sylvan Hamburger, and Carnegie Community Centre Elder in Residence, Les Nelson, who invited the park’s many users and community groups to draw and create prints together to learn about each others’ stories.

Additionally, the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction developed connections as people made art together, and their outreach team were present to provide harm reduction supplies, food, hydration, and community. Altogether, this ‘harm reduction through the arts’ initiative worked to build community connections and resilience while reducing stigma related to substance use. The event has concluded, but art created through this program will be viewable in a number of community spaces for the coming weeks.

In Oppenheimer Park, temporary washroom trailers have been installed on Dunlevy Ave, as the park’s fieldhouse and children’s playground are currently being restored (more updates on restoration will be available in the near future). These temporary washrooms are being operated by Atira, using a staff and peer model, and are open 8:30 am to 8:30 pm daily. Hours will be

### Parks & Open Spaces

#### Parks Programming

In Strathcona Park there were a variety of partner-led activations throughout the summer months, including Powwow Night, West Coast Family Night, and land-based programming led by the Environmental Youth Alliance and the working group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Skate Host will also be continuing programming at the skate park in the fall. Currently, the Park Board and the City of Vancouver are working on reopening plans for the park.

At Andy Livingstone Park art-based programming ran



Traffic bulge on Prior St



Rendering of Blood Alley Square Redesign

**Parks Programming continued** reduced as we enter the fall and winter seasons. The Carnegie Centre will also be offering arts, educational, recreational and social programming at the park 7 days a week.

In Pigeon Park, the totem pole is currently being restored through a community-led process by a local artist in partnership with the Vancouver Moving Theatre and Millennium. In Wendy Poole Park, a bench made by local urban Indigenous woodworkers has been added for community member use.

### Community Place-making

#### Community Hubs

Accessible public spaces and amenities are a top priority for DTES community members. Last year, three City departments (Planning, Engineering and Social Policy) collaborated with community partners to create 10 publicly accessible temporary parklets, as an interim measure during Covid-19, where residents could socialize, feel welcome,

and access essential programs and services safely during the public health emergency.

We are now exploring a pilot to upgrade and transform five of these parklets over time into 'community hubs'. These hubs are intended to be public spaces where people can sit, chat with friends, enjoy a meal, and in future, access other amenities such as charging stations, community information boards, and shelter from the rain and wind.

We want to thank our five partners and parklet users at Kilala Lelum, Evelyne Saller, Portland Hotel Society Outpatient Clinic, Union Gospel Mission and Aboriginal Front Door who worked with us this past spring/summer to determine the initial five sites that will be part of the pilot program.

The report provides an overview of community engagement completed between May and July 2021. The upgrades are set to be completed by 2022.



United Gospel Mission community hub

### Celebrate Heritage

#### Blood Alley Square Redesign

This is an update on the final design and construction plans for the Blood Alley Square Redesign project. Blood Alley Square is a public open space in the heart of Gastown, adjacent to Tronche Alley, located between Abbott St and Carrall St. The Square is a designated municipal heritage area within the Gastown National Historic Site of Canada.

The Downtown Eastside Plan identified Blood Alley Square as a key community asset and priority for rehabilitation with support for community stewardship of this shared space. Between 2016 and 2019, we held public engagement events at each stage of the design process, including open houses, stakeholder workshops and questionnaires.



Strathcona Linear Park



Aboriginal Friendship Society

### Blood Alley Square Continued

Public feedback from residents, area businesses, and community organizations has informed the design and will continue to inform the ongoing stewardship approach to the Square. Construction for Blood Alley Square will begin in December 2021.

In advance of the completion of the Square, we are developing a stewardship plan for Blood Alley Square in collaboration with the community, which will guide its daily management, maintenance, and programming. If you are interested in participating in the stewardship of the Square, or have input to share, please reach out to us at [bloodalleysquareredesign@vancouver.ca](mailto:bloodalleysquareredesign@vancouver.ca).

For more information, please visit [vancouver.ca/bloodalleysquare](http://vancouver.ca/bloodalleysquare)

### Well-Managed Development

#### DTES Policy Review

The Downtown Eastside Plan identified the urgent need for self-contained social housing at affordable rents. This was supported by feedback from recent engagement at the DTES Plan Community Fair (2019).

Under the Housing Vancouver Strategy: Three-year Action Plan (2017), modest increases in density and height to facilitate the delivery

of more social housing were allowed in recently approved community plans.

This policy review was identified as a priority action in order to:

- Enable a modest increase in density and height for 100% social housing through changes to existing zoning
- Create greater flexibility for projects that deliver 100% social housing through the rezoning process
- Clarify policies to improve development processes and reduce application times

The proposed updates to DTES Rezoning and zoning policy in the Oppenheimer District and FC-1 areas engagement took place until September 22, 2021. Detailed proposed amendments and a summary of consultation feedback will be brought to City Council for consideration in spring 2022.

#### DTES Grants

The DTES Planning group operates a dedicated neighbourhood fund that supports projects that help implement the Plan's vision and further the City's other social, economic and ecological sustainability objectives, including the Healthy City

Strategy and Greenest City Strategy. It will also continue to provide support to make the city more inclusive, help marginalised individuals to be more self-reliant, and for organizations to be more sustainable.

In June 2021, City Council approved \$341,000 for DTES non-profit organizations. The DTES Plan Implementation Grants will advance four key priority areas identified in the planning process: protecting community assets, neighbourhood improvement, community economic development, and strategic projects.

Most of this year's matching grant applications relate to Community Asset Management and Community Economic Development priority areas related to much needed access to affordable spaces for non-profits and social enterprises. For example, Community Impact Real Estate Society will use their funds for space improvements to the Washington Community Market to support a social enterprise that provides affordable groceries to the DTES residents.

The grant funding that Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society receives will be used to support the establishment of a preventative dental service



Chinatown Memorial Square

### DTES Grants continued

in their Indigenous Early Year Facility. Funding to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre will support improvements to a commercial space to create a much needed new drop-in centre.

For more information, please visit [vancouver.ca/people-programs/capital-grants-program.aspx](http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/capital-grants-program.aspx)

### Chinatown Transformation

#### Chinatown Community Forum

A three-day community forum organized by the Chinatown Transformation Team in collaboration with the University of British Columbia was launched on October 16, 2021 to spark discussions on the future of Chinatown as a cultural heritage district.

The "Chinatown Reimagined" forum is the culmination of a three-year-long process working with the community to create a cultural heritage and asset management plan and to explore the feasibility of a UNESCO (United Nations) World Heritage Site designation for Vancouver's Chinatown.

Presenters and panelists, comprised of community leaders, business operators, heritage practitioners, cultural groups, as well as representatives of Chinatowns in other Canadian

cities and around the world, focused their discussions on key topics, such as the significance of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, sustainable community capacity-building, and long-term stewardship.



#### Chinatown Memorial Square Redesign

Chinatown Memorial Square is located in the heart of Vancouver's Chinatown at the corner of Keefer St and Columbia St. This project is an important part of the Chinatown Transformation work that came from the recommendations in the Historical Discrimination Against Chinese People in Vancouver report and adopted by City Council in 2017.

We want to improve Chinatown Memorial Square an accessible public space while developing a design that enhances its culture and history. The redesign began in March 2021 with the formation of a Community Advisory Group, which is working with staff.

We are seeking public input on the draft project vision and goals, in addition to ideas on increasing the size of the Square.

For more project information and to complete the survey, please visit: [shapeyourcity.ca/memorial-square-redesign](http://shapeyourcity.ca/memorial-square-redesign) (English) and [shapeyourcity.ca/memorial-square-redesign-chn](http://shapeyourcity.ca/memorial-square-redesign-chn) (Chinese).

### Van Plan

#### Get Involved

How can we make Vancouver more livable and sustainable? The Vancouver Plan is our opportunity to meet key challenges and create a city with: more equitable housing and neighbourhoods, an economy that works for all, and climate protection and restored ecosystems. This fall, tell us how your neighbourhoods, businesses and green spaces could develop to 2050 and beyond.

Your choices will lead to a new plan for the entire city, called the Vancouver Plan.

Sign up to get involved: [vancouverplan.ca/choices](http://vancouverplan.ca/choices)



Planning Vancouver Together

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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