

BACKGROUND

Business Development in the Downtown Eastside

Under the Vancouver Agreement, the three governments are aiming to stimulate economic development and business revitalization by creating a healthy, safe and sustainable community in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The development of business in the DTES is being hindered by adverse street conditions, making it difficult for individual enterprises to maintain themselves, let alone expand. The Vancouver Agreement's Business Development initiative will help to make DTES tourists, shoppers, businesses and workers feel safer, and will provide skills training for people on the street.

The Business Development initiative includes street lighting in Chinatown and Victory Square; physical improvements to streets to enhance heritage sites and encourage tourism; and upgrading the security of parking lots. These projects are an important signal to the Downtown Vancouver business community, both inside and outside the DTES, that positive change is occurring.

In order to meet one of the primary goals of the Vancouver Agreement, helping to develop an environment in which residents can find jobs and build businesses, the project funded the hiring of a business development outreach worker to encourage business start-up and growth. The outreach officer will consult with the public on a DTES Economic Capacity Study being funded by the City; will develop a program to assess the training needs of residents interested in owning or managing businesses; will help organize potential vendors for a street market; and, will help DTES residents develop proposals for new businesses.

Another two-pronged initiative aims at improving the skills of managers of Single Resident Occupancy Sites (SROS) in the DTES and their tenants:

- For SRO managers: The project will begin with a review of programs already provided by institutions to determine if the material is appropriate to the specific needs of the SROs or whether it could be modified for their use. In the second step, new program material will be developed, and workshop leaders and marketing methods will be identified. Finally, a pilot workshop will be conducted with support provided for the participation of up to 50 people.

- For SRO residents: The project will design programs to improve both life and pre-employment skills for SRO tenants, in the hope of reducing the impact of the haphazard behaviour of many residents on the street, which adversely affects nearby businesses. It will also look at the possibility of starting relevant local businesses (such as pest control companies). Life skills training will include household management and some business development activities.

The costs of these initiatives are shared with the City of Vancouver, who will administer the funds for this project, including contributions from the City of Vancouver, EasyPark (a corporation of the City), and the community.



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Lifeskills Centre

This project, funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada and the private sector, enabled the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation to renovate a space at 412 E. Cordova Street. In order to create a Lifeskills Centre for Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The Lifeskills Centre will provide pre-employment skills for people on the street, as well as opportunities for them to contact social service workers and counsellors. The hope is that this will eventually help lead clients towards full employment.

The Lifeskills Centre is like a teaching centre for people on the street. The Centre will have a lounge for women and another one for men; a teaching kitchen to instruct people on how to cook simple meals for themselves at home; shower and laundry facilities; two classrooms and a large meeting space.

The Lifeskills Centre will help break the barrier between institutional organizations and people on the street so that they can be brought into the system and eventually gain employment.



BACKGROUND

Neighbours First

The purpose of this project is to increase business activity in the Downtown Eastside by improving the sense of security, cleanliness and friendliness of the streets.

The revitalization of the DTES, one of Canada's poorest urban areas, includes economic development initiatives targeting businesses and the unemployed. However, the DTES business environment has been adversely affected by break-ins into parked vehicles and by streets that appear inhospitable and leave an impression of neglect and lack of safety.

Project Components

1. Street crews (trained personnel) who will:
 - be a visible presence on streets and parkades so that property crime is prevented;
 - inform police, or other appropriate services, if those services are needed;
 - provide clean-up services, including graffiti removal; and
 - provide help and direction to anyone in need of assistance, including tourists.
2. Training of residents and businesses so that they are more knowledgeable about:
 - security and safety;
 - hospitality; and
 - handling hard-to-manage confrontations.
3. Information for tourists and other visitors that includes handing out:
 - alerts on sensible security for those with vehicles; and
 - maps and other tourist information.

The program has five focuses:

1. cleaning and safety (led by United We Can, a non-profit society in the DTES);
2. volunteer-based neighbourhood watch programs;
3. marketing and promotion;
4. public awareness/training; and
5. evaluation.

Linkages will be established with other programs operating in the Downtown Eastside, including service programs or security programs to ensure effective support and coordination of project activities.

High-priority areas will be identified for patrols in order to address issues of safety and security at these locations.

The project includes a marketing and promotion component that will, in conjunction with advertising and promotion by local tourist associations, promote the DTES as a revitalized and friendlier place to live, work, and conduct business. The approach will strengthen links among communities, such as Gastown, Chinatown, and the Hastings Street corridor, and among groups such as low-income residents, businesses, and property owners. The entire program is being planned and developed over a three-year period starting July 2002.

The WEPA portion (\$685,500), which is funding start-up (including parkade security upgrades, development, and expansion), will run for 14 months starting in July 2002 and ending August 2003.

Western Economic Diversification's partners include the City of Vancouver; United We Can; the Gastown Business Improvement Society; the Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society; the Chinese Community Policing Centre; EasyPark (the City's parking corporation); and ICBC.

Links will be made with many other organizations in order to market and promote the changes in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. These organizations include: Tourism Vancouver (education of visitors on crime prevention and promotion of the area); B.C. Hotel Association (education of visitors on crime prevention and promotion of the area); E-Comm (phone dispatch support and coordination); Cruise-Ship Association; Tourism BC; Vancouver School Board; the Chinese Cultural Centre; the Vancouver Board of Trade; and the local film industry.

Outcomes

- cleaner streets;
- reduction in property crime; and
- increased business activity.

BACKGROUNDER

Steamworks Tour de Gastown

July 17, 2002

Start time: 7 pm for women's race, 8 pm for men's race

Steamworks Tour de Gastown is an event that brings together elite Canadian and international cyclists for a dramatic criterium-style race through the cobblestone streets of Gastown in downtown Vancouver.

The 1-km loop course starts at Water and Abbott streets, and has excellent opportunities for viewing. The course returns to the start via a series of sharp corners and S-curves. The women's and men's races, which are 30 and 50 laps respectively, start at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m.

The race is being held in the evening for the first time to encourage spectators. With cash prizes for the winners totalling \$10,000, the race will attract international athletes. The Steamworks Tour de Gastown is part of "Super Cycling Week", which includes two other races — the Tour de Delta and Tour de White Rock.

History

The Tour de Gastown was a fixture on the local race circuit, and a fun summer event in downtown Vancouver, for 21 years. Vancouver resident Roger Sumner, who represented Canada in the 1974 world cycling championships organized the first "Gastown Grand Prix" in 1973. The event soon developed into Canada's premier one-day bicycle race. However, due to lack of sponsorship, the race ceased in 1993.

The Gastown Business Improvement Association (BIA), organizers of this year's event, have secured a three-year sponsorship commitment from Steamworks Brewing Company as well as support from a number of other community groups and businesses, including The Vancouver Agreement. The BIA hopes the event will boost local business and tourist activity, and diffuse the perception that the area is a dangerous part of the city.

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Steamworks Brewing Company is the major sponsor with \$7,500 from the City of Vancouver and another \$7,500 from the Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services.

Route:

Start at Water and Abbott
Up Water Street to the Steam Clock
Sharp left up Cambie to Columbia
Sharp left on Columbia to Powell
S curve to Water Street finish line.

For more information phone 604.683.5650 or visit our website:
www.tourdegastown.com

BACKGROUND

Community Historical Markers

The Community Historical Markers are sidewalk mosaics that mark historical events important to communities Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Another 13 mosaic markers will be added this year to the 17 from last year. Each of the 17 mosaic tile markers that are already in place portrays a period of Vancouver's history dating back to the original townsite, 150 years ago, when the first settlers came to Vancouver.

This year there were over one hundred participants organized in six teams under peer leaders with two coordinators to form networks of training opportunities for the participants. The advantage of this approach is that the program was able to engage people in the program who otherwise might not be interested in it.

The Community Historical Markers project builds on what was achieved under an earlier pilot project unveiled in August 2001. With funding from Western Economic Diversification, the Carnegie Community Centre Association developed a life skills and early-employment training program that involved 170 participants from the Downtown Eastside as a vehicle to plan and build the mosaic markers. Western Economic Diversification Canada funded the initiative for \$200,000 under the Vancouver Agreement. The more than 100 participants under the current program have produced the 13 markers and they are now looking for suitable locations for them.

The Carnegie Community Centre Association will:

- produce more historical markers;
- build stronger linkages with training and employment opportunities that can help take graduates to other training or employment; and
- develop a business plan for establishing a business or other self-reliant enterprise to continue pre-employment training activities through the production of mosaic tiles and banners.

The historical markers play an important role in revitalizing the DTES — a primary objective of the Vancouver Agreement — through physical improvements to the environment, making the neighbourhood more attractive for residents and tourists. The project currently underway is a further development that will allow training to be more closely linked to the continuum of training and employment “ladder” offered by agencies, other departments, and provincial ministries.

Mosaic tile making does not require much artistic experience and can be completed quickly, allowing the participants to see the results of their work within a short period of time. Historians and local elders were consulted for direction on topics for consideration. Artists from the community committed their time and skills to design the markers. Businesses from Strathcona, Gastown and Chinatown also contributed ideas and time to this project. Local talent, most of whom are street people, assembled the markers. The project fostered partnerships within the community.

Other initiatives that are being explored include marketing and selling mosaic markers; organizing and conducting guided tours; producing and selling tour-guide booklets; and operating a café and arts and crafts retail outlet as an ongoing small business and job-training opportunity.

Participants from the Downtown Eastside will be trained in higher-skilled activities including customer service, small-business operations, graphic design, website development and computer skills. Through mentoring opportunities with established artists, some clients will learn to become artists themselves.

The project also provides street people in the DTES with opportunities for work that would otherwise not be open to them. In addition to being a part of a continuum of services that are available to these individuals under the Vancouver Agreement, the project will provide DTES businesses with a wider pool of employable resident workers.

This project is an important part of the economic development component of the Vancouver Agreement. It will help to make the Downtown Eastside a more appealing environment for customers by improving the condition and overall appearance of the streetscape. Already there are indications from businesses in the area that changes to the streetscape, such as this, are encouraging them to remain in the DTES, and, in time, these changes are expected to encourage investors to open new businesses.



BACKGROUND

Application Software (PARIS)

The Vancouver Agreement is funding state-of-the-art Application Software, called PARIS, to be used to evaluate the access, use and impact of the Contact and Lifeskills Centres and health clinics in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The PARIS software, and the Oracle database on which it is built, will allow a more comprehensive and integrated approach to monitoring services, and will help ensure that services are integrated, efficient and effective.

The PARIS software, made by *In4tek* in the United Kingdom, is currently used by the UK government to collect integrated, system-wide information. The data is then used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of health, social and economic services in addressing the needs of people in severe living conditions – conditions that are similar to those found in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

Using PARIS for data collection makes it possible to integrate information from different systems – for instance, health and social services information. This kind of integrated approach is essential to coordinating activities in the DTES where clients' needs and problems are complex and inter-related.

This project was funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada and the private sector and is administered by the Vancouver General Hospital, a non-profit society.