



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 Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA), a federal/provincial multi-million-dollar agreement, provided \$685,500 to fund the start-up (including parkade security upgrades, development, and expansion). This funding will run for 14 months starting in July 2002 and ending August 2003.

Partners include the federal and provincial governments, 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.

The Canada/British Columbia Western Economic Partnership Agreement is a joint, multi-million-dollar agreement to encourage economic development in British Columbia. The federal department of Western Economic Diversification Canada and the provincial Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise are the lead agencies for the partnership agreement.