



 VANCOUVER | L'ACCORD
AGREEMENT | DE VANCOUVER

2000-2010 highlights



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

BACKGROUND 7

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Economic Revitalization 12
- Safety & Security 20
- Housing 27
- Health & Quality of Life 32

CHALLENGES

- Continuity in the Face of Change 38
- Planning & Reporting 38
- Structure 38
- Financial Model 38
- Community Voice 39

CONCLUSION 40

Chinatown
Millennium Gate



Left: Dr. Sun Yat-Sen
Classical Chinese Garden

319



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vancouver Agreement (VA) was a bold and demanding collective effort among three levels of government to address a serious social and economic situation in Vancouver's inner city. The VA was a dynamic initiative that embraced a wide spectrum of citizens in government, community and the private sector. It adapted to a decade of social and political change as it grappled with complex systemic community issues. The Agreement succeeded in leveraging nearly \$28 million over 10 years to support 96 projects with close to 50 partners. These projects actively addressed four strategic initiatives in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES):

- **Economic Revitalization,**
- **Safety & Security,**
- **Housing, and**
- **Health & Quality of Life.**

The VA helped to revitalize the DTES while respecting the heart of the community, in particular its long-term residents and businesses. The VA leaves a legacy of knowledge, policy change, inter-governmental understanding, new relationships and a solid foundation from which progressive community organizations such as Building Opportunities with Business (BOB), the Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS) and Living in Community can continue to foster sustainable economic, social and community development in the DTES.

Carnegie Centre



Left: Wall art in a DTES alley

ARMY

& NAVY

**You won't believe
what's in store.**



BACKGROUND

The VA was signed in 2000 and renewed in 2005 by the governments of Canada, British Columbia and the City of Vancouver. Its purpose was:

“to cooperate in promoting and supporting sustainable economic, social and community development of the City of Vancouver, focusing initially on the area known as the Downtown Eastside”.

The VA vision was to create:

“healthy, safe and sustainable communities where all organizations, from informal groups to governments, work effectively together to improve the quality of everyone’s life”.

The VA was triggered by an acute health crisis in the DTES. Although the area had experienced decline for more than two decades, the late 1990s brought a spike in fatal drug overdoses and HIV infection. With the inter-related problems of poverty, crime and mental illness, the crisis in Vancouver’s inner city was bigger than any one government or organization had the mandate, resources or expertise to solve. The situation urgently needed comprehensive strategies and solutions that could only be addressed by collective action. The VA, a visionary concept at the time, was a tripartite commitment that focused the interest of all levels of government on the issues and developed coordinated approaches.

The three government partners were:

- the federal government, led by Western Economic Diversification Canada,
- the provincial government, led by the Ministry of Community and Rural Development, and
- The City of Vancouver, led by the Office of the City Manager.

Supported by their many departments and agencies, the three governments worked with community organizations and the private sector to combine resources, expertise and grass-roots knowledge. The goal was to break out of old patterns and find new ways to approach the debilitating problems that afflicted the DTES.

The organizational challenge of the VA, and its greatest opportunity, was to maximize the potential of intergovernmental cooperation to solve tough problems. To unlock this potential, the VA struck a balance between autonomy and cooperation that was guided by the spirit of the VA. Each level of government determined how best to participate and align its own departments while retaining its mandate, accountabilities, and reporting requirements. The parties jointly identified issues to address using their own resources, supplemented by VA funding where required.

VANCOUVER AGREEMENT STRUCTURE



The Governance Committee operated with unanimous decision-making and held ultimate authority for decisions made under the VA.

The Management Committee oversaw inter-governmental relations, external communication, monitoring and evaluation, investment decisions and operational activities. Despite substantial differences in jurisdictional authority and financial capacity, a decision rule of unanimous consent ensured that each government partner exercised equal power.

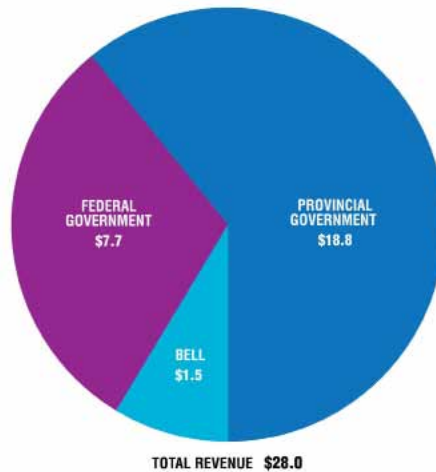
The Planning Table developed operational approaches to address the strategic goals specified by the Management Committee and provided due diligence on funding proposals.

Task Teams designed strategies to address specific issues. In addition, *ad hoc* committees were struck to bring together government and community around particular issues.

A Coordination Unit operated as the secretariat to Management Committee, Planning Table, Task Teams and all other committees as well as reporting to Management Committee on finance, communications and monitoring.

Revenues

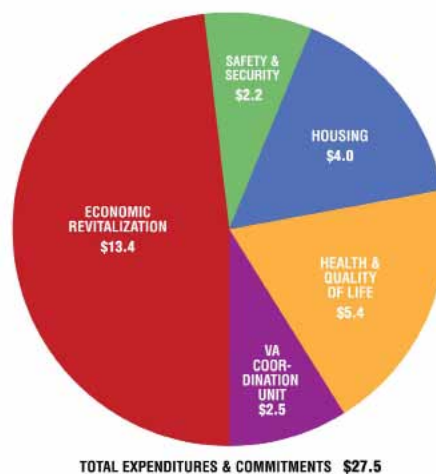
The total revenue for the VA, including interest, was \$28 million over 10 years, a relatively small government program at less than \$3 million per year.



In addition, the federal government contributed \$5 million through the Urban Aboriginal and Urban Aboriginal Homelessness programs. The City of Vancouver's contribution was in-kind through administration, financial, legal, facilities and dedicated staff resources working with the community to implement program activities. From the private sector, Bell Canada made a \$1.5-million grant to the VA.

Expenditures

VA funds often leveraged funding from other sources to activate projects that were beyond the scope of a single agency. Funds were allocated to 96 projects managed by at least 50 community partners to support four strategic initiatives.





ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To achieve its vision of creating healthy, safe and sustainable communities, the VA was guided by the principles of coordination, innovation, policy change, investment and monitoring and evaluation. It realized its mandate through four strategic objectives:

- **Economic Revitalization**
- **Safety & Security**
- **Housing**
- **Health & Quality of Life**



Community growth had to complement the needs and aspirations of long-time residents and businesses.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

The Situation

Although the DTES suffered two decades of social and economic decay, at its heart was a vibrant community that was key to the renaissance of the area. The Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization Plan, adopted by the City of Vancouver in 2005, was guided by the principle of ‘revitalization without displacement.’ This meant that community growth had to complement the needs and aspirations of long-time residents and businesses while welcoming new people and businesses. The challenge was to revitalize the area without disregarding the community at its heart.

Making a Difference

The Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization Plan goals were to:

- increase demand for DTES products and services,
- strengthen the capacity of local suppliers, and
- increase employment opportunities.

To achieve these goals, the VA invested \$13.4 million in economic revitalization and worked with 28 partners to deliver 61 projects, some of which are highlighted on the following pages.

Sunrise Market



Building Opportunities for Business (BOB) is the primary agency for implementing the Economic Revitalization Plan. Its purpose is to strengthen community capacity in the DTES; identify and capitalize on untapped business opportunities; improve employment opportunities for inner-city residents; and increase investment and visitors to the area. Since 2008 BOB has:

- created, maintained or expanded 194 businesses;
- developed 50 training courses resulting in 364 participants trained;
- served 354 business clients;
- mentored or otherwise assisted 168 businesses;
- involved 112 purchasing partners and 54 supplier partners in the Social Purchasing Portal (procurement estimated at \$4.5 million);
- placed and supported 358 people in employment since BOB's inception;
- enabled \$42 million in goods and services to be purchased from DTES businesses as a result of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs);
- dispersed \$145,050 in grants leveraging \$494,839 in private investment;
- supported 7 clients with loans totalling \$266,000 (leveraged investment of \$647,500); and
- placed 124 people in construction jobs through CBAs including 87 on the Olympic Village Site.

"I think my life is on the upswing. Tradeworks started me off on this upward trend. But it was Ramesh and his colleagues at BOB that helped me pick up the ball and run with it."

Frank



Frank is a graduate of BOB's Supported Employment Program and a RONA employee.



“EMBERS opened my doors because I had no connections.”

Hinda Abdillahi



Hinda Abdillahi of Hinda's Fine Foods is a graduate of EMBERS Micro-enterprise Development Program. (above)

Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS) is an economic development agency located in the DTES that delivers business support programs and employment training to local residents. VA support helped to build and stabilize the organization and its business model while providing funding for three different programs: Business Development Support, Entrepreneurship Training, and Micro-enterprise Development. Since 2003, more than 600 people accessed EMBERS training and business services including workshops, business plan development, business start-up and expansion, and business networking.



A Rickshaw Adventures pedicab (above)

Richard Lorenze of DTES Pest Control Ltd. benefited from EMBERS business training and financial literacy classes, matched equity savings program and business advisory support.

The Four Pillars Employment Project provides supported employment to individuals in recovery from substance abuse. By providing counselling, social and professional skill training and post-employment assistance, the project aims to prevent relapse and support transition towards regular employment and reintegration into society. Over a three-year period, 17 people received temporary employment from the City of Vancouver with 13 in long-term employment after graduating from the project.

The City of Vancouver worked closely with DTES business-improvement organizations and their memberships to implement economic revitalization initiatives that would attract new businesses, customers and tourists to the area. Targeted investments through the VA helped catalyze this work. Projects were developed to build a holistic experience including increased promotion, better business services, diversification of goods, a more attractive public realm and promotion of culture and heritage – all while employing local residents when possible.

The Strathcona and Chinatown Business Improvement Associations, which together represent close to 1,200 businesses, each implemented branding and marketing plans and leveraged synergies between their two strategies.

Joint projects between the City and the Chinatown BIA include customer-service training programs and the “We Speak English” bilingual campaign. In addition, the launch of the Dragon Rickshaw Adventures Pedicab business helped draw tourists to the area. Capital projects such as Awning Replacement and Chinatown Murals brought visible, positive changes to the street. The pilot Active Storefront project at 163 Keefer Street successfully recruited a new business to occupy a previously vacant storefront.

The City partnered with Strathcona BIA to expand the website, develop a professional services directory and prepare a corporate recruitment model to attract and retain businesses. The Green Zone Initiative Strategic Plan introduced various projects such as the Community Hanging Baskets, which provide community work for Downtown Community Court clients and create a positive environment for residents and shoppers alike.

The Gastown Business Improvement Society, which represents 450 businesses and 50 property owners, created a newly branded website. The Modern Urban District (MUD) project provides business members with marketing tools such as micro-site templates and web referrals, and provides consumers with an overview of Gastown offerings. In addition, the City partnered with the Gastown BIA to

“I love my job, I’m trying to learn as much as I can. What’s made the difference is what I’ve decided to do with my life, I don’t want that [drug-using life] anymore. I just really don’t want to be in that lifestyle. Everything that has happened in the last year has been just amazingly crazy.”

Terrance Sim

Terrance Sim was hired by the City of Vancouver through the Four Pillars Supported Employment Program.



Social enterprises provide jobs to residents and support community services.

create a business plan for a “Dumpster Free Alley” project with United We Can to beautify historic Gastown and create employment opportunities for low-income local residents.

The VA supported several social enterprises that provide employment to community residents and return a share of the profits to community services.

United We Can (UWC) is a highly successful social enterprise that provides income, employment and some social services to “binners,” individuals who generate income by selling recyclables collected from garbage bins and recycling boxes. The 2005-2010 UWC business plan, which was developed with VA funding, calls for expansion of services. These include bottle depots in other areas of the downtown peninsula and new offerings in multi-material waste collection. VA project funding supported the site search and depot relocation initiative.



United We Can (above)



Wall art in a DTES alley

Potluck Café Society is a café and catering social enterprise that provides job training and employment opportunities for residents in the DTES, offers free or subsidized meals to marginalized area residents, and serves hundreds of corporate customers. This project funded a business plan to assess the feasibility of expanding the rental equipment portion of the business to a full-service event rental stream.

The Arts & Culture Strategic Framework and Investment Plan, completed in 2007, was the foundation for several VA projects that helped fuel the burgeoning arts and culture industry in the DTES. In addition to positive economic outcomes, many of the activities built community and enhanced safety and security for residents and visitors.

Bladerunners Creative Industries provides jobs and life skills training in film, video, stage and multi-media for at-risk youth. It is based on the international award-winning employment model that prepares at-risk youth to enter the construction industry. The Firehall Arts Centre, W2 Community Media Arts Society and Intersections are collaborating on this project.

Atira Women's Resource Society Artisan's Cooperative provides women in the DTES with an opportunity to develop and enhance their skills and introduces alternative employment options. The first phase targeted residents of Bridge Housing for Women, a supportive housing program, and the second phase supported renovations to increase capacity and open the project to more women in the community. This was a partnership with Central City Mission Foundation.

Atira Women's Resource Society



Potluck Café and Catering





The Carnegie Centre founded the **Heart of the City Festival**, which promotes local artists and contributes greatly to community pride and inclusivity. The festival is a popular event that celebrates the people, culture and history of the DTES. Although it welcomes people from throughout Vancouver, The Heart of the City Festival was specifically developed to celebrate and build collaboration, cohesiveness and revitalization within the local community.

In cooperation with the City of Vancouver, the VA funded the following projects to help revitalize the streetscape of the DTES and attract new businesses and visitors to the area.

The Carrall Street Greenway physically links the popular and historic Gastown and Chinatown neighbourhoods, and also improves the appearance and physical environment of the community.

The DTES Northeast Sector Industrial Strategy identified industrial employment opportunities and business potential for this industrial area, which is a significant asset for the future growth of the DTES.

The Strathcona Public Realm Design Project explored options for streetscape improvements in the historic Strathcona community, as well as ways to improve public safety and security and enhance local storefronts.

Carnegie Centre



Going Forward

The VA laid solid foundations for economic revitalization in the DTES both through the individual projects it funded and through its support for key agencies and community organizations. Many of these organizations and initiatives will build on the VA's work into the new decade. BOB will continue to champion an inclusive revitalization process for the inner city with funding from both the public and private sector. The Four Pillars Employment Project will continue to provide supported employment to people recovering from addictions. And EMBERS will continue to foster the start-up and growth of small businesses.

The **Great Beginnings Program**, which was created by the City of Vancouver and funded by the provincial government, celebrates the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver's first urban areas. Great Beginnings will continue to support many projects that were inaugurated and funded by the VA, including The Heart of the City Festival. It will also continue the Public Realm Improvement program started by the VA. These projects include the Awning Improvement, Main Street Lane Improvement and Hastings Street Renaissance programs.

The VA was one of the first, but certainly not the only, player in the economic revitalization of the DTES. The Woodward's development, an initiative supported by the VA, also helped catalyze positive change. The private sector plays a much greater role in the local economy now than it did a decade ago. New stores and restaurants bring visitors to the area, business improvement associations are active and social enterprises thrive. A new air of optimism pervades as the DTES progresses towards 'revitalization without displacement.'

The Woodward's building combines market and non-market housing with commercial/retail and institutional arts space, all designed to be socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.



The new mixed income residential towers stand out over the DTES heritage buildings and rail yard.



Without a sense of safety and security, the spiral of crime will continue and healing cannot begin.

SAFETY & SECURITY

The Situation

In the early days, Vancouver's first neighbourhoods, Strathcona, Chinatown, Japantown, Gastown and Victory Square, were the city's commercial hub. Beginning in the 1980's, the financial and business districts migrated to a newer city centre, which slowly undermined the economic viability of what is now known as the DTES. By the 1990's, many storefronts were vacant, leaving mostly convenience stores and pawnshops, many of which fronted illegal activities. Despite a solid community of long-term residents at its heart, the area also became home to operators in the drug and sex trade. And with them came crime, street disorder and degeneration.

Without a sense of safety and security, the spiral of crime will continue and healing cannot begin. To realize social and economic revitalization in the DTES, the community must be safe for those who live, work and visit there.

Making a Difference

Crime in the DTES is inextricably linked to other entrenched debilitating realities of the area – drug addiction, poverty, mental illness and limited education and life skills. Therefore, tackling crime in the inner city requires dynamic coordination of various resources – a role that the VA wholly embraced. It marshalled the resources of municipal, provincial and federal enforcement agencies as well as Vancouver Coastal Health, Ambulance Services, Fire & Rescue, and provincial government ministries for Employment Standards and Employment Assistance. Together they developed innovative ways to build a safer community. The VA invested \$2.2 million in safety and security and worked with five partners to deliver eight projects including the following:

Below: Building detail



The Enhanced Enforcement Initiative – Dismantle the Open Drug Scene was a major initiative focused on safety and security. It was a multi-agency, coordinated approach involving municipal, provincial and federal enforcement agencies, working collectively on problems that contribute to the drug trade in the DTES. This initiative targeted the infrastructure of illegitimate businesses that perpetuate the cycle of drugs and crime. It also included components to address public order and safety around the Supervised Injection Site (SIS), as well as joint health and safety training of Vancouver Police Department and Vancouver Coastal Health staff whose work includes the SIS.

The Enhanced Enforcement Initiative developed and strengthened inter-agency connections and fostered a sense of unity that led to results. In one coordinated effort, 30 premises were investigated in 30 days, all resulting in either substantial suspensions or revoked licenses. These included pawn shops, convenience stores and licensed premises that were associated with illegal activities. There were 57 criminal charges, including some for welfare fraud. An additional seven drug-trafficking charges resulted from the development of a major drug file.

Over the two-year period of the project, the city realized significant drops in some crimes. Although not solely responsible for the improvement, the Enhanced Enforcement Initiative was the largest enforcement initiative at the time and significantly contributed to the following crime reduction:

- commercial break-ins down by 58%,
- residential break-ins down by 38%, and
- all crime categories down by 25% on average.

Over the two-year period of the project, the city realized significant drops in some crimes.

Community policing



The Hotel Analysis Project brought together municipal, provincial and federal enforcement agencies as well as Vancouver Coastal Health, Ambulance Services, Fire & Rescue, and provincial government ministries for Employment Standards and Employment Assistance. The project carried out a detailed assessment of 54 Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) to provide comprehensive information on living conditions. Many of the recommendations were implemented, including the following:

- **Establish a permanent tenant advocacy position** for residents of DTES rental premises. New funding is in place until 2012 for a Residential Tenancy Information Officer available five afternoons per week.
- **Expand supports available for existing housing.** (Read “Housing” to learn more about extensive provincial government and City of Vancouver supportive housing initiatives.)
- **Survey residents living in SROs and social housing** (See The DTES Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants in “Housing”.)
- **Make tools and educational aids available to assist building owners and managers.** (See SRO Managers Training Program in “Housing”.)

The Coordinated Youth Alert System enhanced early intervention and case management of at-risk youth through coordinated information-sharing among agencies such as schools, the Provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development, police and health departments. This coordinated approach ensured that youth in need of assistance received appropriated support before their health, safety or educational opportunities were compromised, or before the entrenchment of high-risk behaviours such as drug use or prostitution.

The Pedestrian Safety Project focused on improving safety for people on foot in the DTES. Since the city’s two worst hotspots for pedestrian accidents are in the DTES, the project engaged residents to increase safety awareness and propose improvements such as special crosswalks, signals and bulges to reduce traumatic pedestrian injuries.



Chinatown merchandise display

The Afton Hotel



Princess Avenue Interpretive Walk was a pedestrian safety project created by Strathcona Community School and Centre in partnership with the City of Vancouver to make Princess Avenue an appealing and safe child- and family-friendly pedestrian route. Murals, sidewalk stamps, ramps, crosswalks and a traffic signal all enhanced the strong sense of community that exists in this historic neighbourhood.

Short Term Cart & Belongings Storage First United Church ran a six-month pilot project to explore the service needs for a cart storage facility in the DTES. The service provided safe storage for carts and bins owned by homeless individuals. This allowed them to access services without worrying about the safety of their belongings. Participants also had opportunities to gain valuable work experience. Phase II of this project has been approved and will be undertaken by the Great Beginnings Project.



Cart storage



Princess Avenue Interpretive Walk

Going Forward

The increased collaboration fostered by the **Enhanced Enforcement Initiative** led to the development of a community emergency drug overdose fan-out system. It heightens awareness of “bad drugs” on the street and detects spikes in drug overdoses so agencies can alert the community to increased health and safety risks and prevent unnecessary deaths.

An additional project benefit was the implementation of a number of recommendations to improve accountability, information-sharing, coordinated enforcement and the overall effectiveness of agencies with enforcement responsibilities.

Vancouver’s Downtown Community Court opened in 2009. Proposed in 2003 by the VA partners, this initiative exemplifies the spirit of the VA. The first of its kind in Canada, the community court is defined by partnerships and new relationships. It encourages cooperation and understanding within the justice system and with health and social services, community organizations, area residents, merchants, faith communities and schools. The City of Vancouver’s Great Beginnings Program has continued to support the Community Court, including funding a Community Services Supervisor who assists court clients in meeting their community service requirements.

Downtown Community Court



A DTES community garden detail (right)



HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA

For
SMOK
CORN
MARKET
ICE CREAM



ATM

HOUSING

The Situation

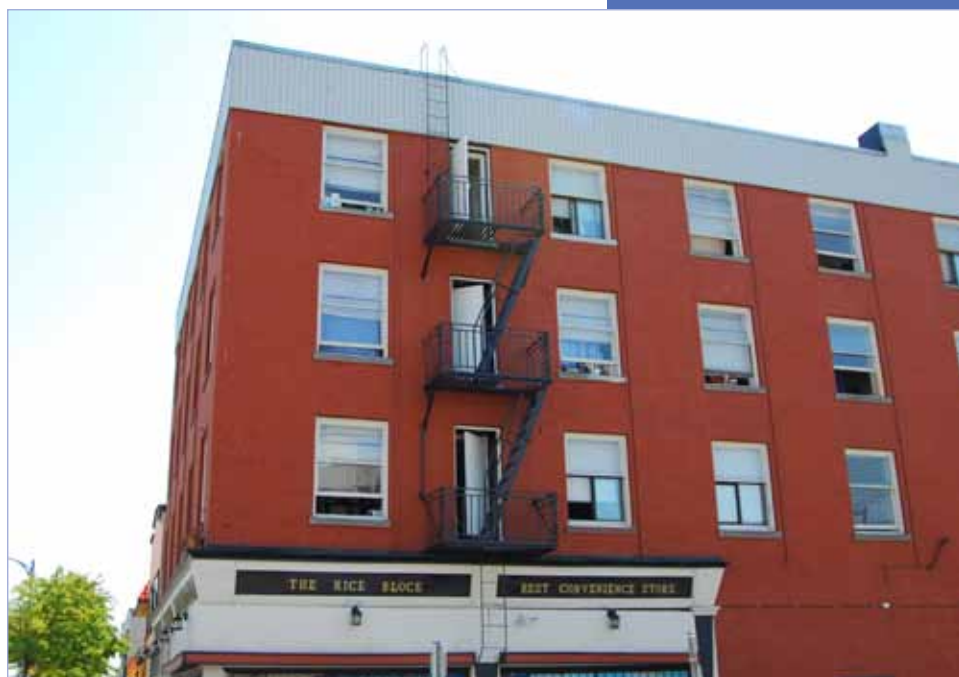
Of the four interdependent VA strategic initiatives, perhaps the one that best sets the others up for success is housing. Without safe, reliable housing, it is difficult to pursue training, hold down a job, make healthy choices, or keep one's family together. For many people in the DTES, supportive housing is the route to a better life. Tenants in supportive housing receive help to overcome addiction or mental health issues, enhance independent living skills and stabilize their lives.

Since the city's early days, the DTES has provided affordable housing for resource workers, immigrants and those with low incomes. However, in recent years the availability and quality of affordable housing has drastically declined. Although there is a large component of social housing in the DTES, a significant number of people still live on the street, particularly youth and people suffering from addiction and mental illness. In addition, the poor quality of SROs has left many people struggling to survive in substandard accommodation that is often infested and lacks proper security and safety measures.

In keeping with its commitment to 'revitalization without displacement,' the VA focused on facilitating a range of housing options, including a balance of market and non-market housing in the community.

For many people in the DTES, supportive housing is the route to a better life.

The Rice Block



“Because I live down there and I was part of the problems originally, I have more desire to make things work. The changes directly impact me so it motivates me more. I also see it in the people who have been hired and went to this program – a sense of pride, accomplishment and belonging.”

Aaron Boney
SRO manager and
SRO Management
Training Graduate

Kindred Place is a leading-edge building for people who previously lived in SRO hotels.



Making a Difference

The VA partnered with the City of Vancouver, BC Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to implement joint initiatives that would address homelessness and the poor quality of much of the affordable housing stock in the DTES.

The approach was initially guided by the *City of Vancouver’s Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (2005) followed by Vancouver Coastal Health’s *Mental Health and Addictions Supported Housing Framework* (2006) and the City’s *Supportive Housing Strategy* (2007). The VA invested \$4 million and worked with three other organizations to deliver seven projects in housing.

Kindred Place is a leading-edge 87-unit apartment building for people who previously lived in inner-city SRO hotels. This supportive housing project provides a variety of services to its tenants, which include people with mental illness and addiction issues. The VA vision and commitment was critical to the development of this important project. The initial VA investment of \$2.7 million not only kick-started the project, it also helped attract other funding to make this much-needed type of housing a reality. The future of Kindred House is secured by a long-term sustainable plan, thanks in part to early VA negotiations that ensured ongoing management and support services for the facility.

The Hotel Analysis Project (see Safety & Security) was a coordinated effort by several agencies that took a hard look at the state of SRO housing in the DTES. The resulting recommendations guided further VA work and inspired multi-stakeholder programs that directly addressed serious problems in the area. The following projects were all generated by the Hotel Analysis Project:

- **The DTES Demographic Study of SRO and Social Housing Tenants**, completed in April 2008, provides a socio-demographic and economic profile of residents living in the SROs and social housing in the DTES. This data provides critical information and insights that continue to help craft policy decisions and programs in the DTES.



VANDU members used a peer-to-peer support model to combat bedbugs.

- **The SRO Managers Training Program** is an innovative 10-week program funded by the VA for SRO building owners and managers in the DTES. It is specifically designed to help those who are working with the very hard to house. Historically, SRO managers have had little support and training, yet they routinely confront problems related to mental health, addiction, violence, crime and pest control. With curriculum tailored to the unique needs and learning styles of the students, the program covers a wide range of topics including city by-laws, life safety, employment and WorkSafeBC standards, addiction and mental health, and de-escalating violence. It is taught by experts who work in the community and who become ongoing resources for the students. As of July 2009, the SRO Management Training Program has trained 113 people from 58 hotels.
- The **Bedbug Pilot Project** developed a unique approach to combating and preventing the bedbug infestation that has plagued buildings in the DTES. The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) managed the project and employed its members to do pest control, education and consultation using a peer-to-peer support model. Not only are bedbugs notoriously difficult to eradicate, there are a number of factors specific to the DTES that complicate the process. Many of the chronically infested buildings house higher-need residents who cannot live elsewhere during treatment. In addition, they lack support and easy access to laundering facilities. VANDU developed a model where resident liaison and support was as important as the infestation treatment itself. This meant that residents were better prepared to deal with the treatment and follow-up, both essential to success in eliminating infestation.

The Bedbug Pilot Project treated 79 rooms, surveyed 95 tenants during and after spraying, and washed 2,566 pounds of laundry. Six tenant and public information workshops attracted 111 people. Thirty tenant assistants were hired, which provided low-barrier employment to DTES residents.

“The SRO Management Program plugged me into all the resources in the downtown eastside. It was a doorway to information and now I feel like I’m a member of the community.”

*Charles Haynes,
retired businessman &
owner of Ross House,
a DTES SRO hotel*

Ross House



*SRO Management Training
Program graduates*

The **Private SRO Pilot Project** provides support to private-sector SROs to enhance liveability and improve the health of tenants. While the provincial government is actively increasing quantity and quality of publicly funded social housing, privately owned and operated accommodation also requires attention. This project provides assistance from outreach workers, SRO management courses, and accommodation supplements.

The **Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study** was commissioned by the Youth Funders Committee, a partnership with the City of Vancouver; the provincial government (BC Housing and the Ministry of Children and Family Development) and Vancouver Coastal Health. The study identified appropriate youth housing services for Vancouver in the next five years. The study assessed the potential number of youth requiring housing and the range of housing options and support necessary to meet their needs.

The Housing Strategy for Girls was a three-year initiative that identified issues and barriers related to safe, supportive and sustainable housing for street-involved young women and girls. The project provided leadership opportunities for marginalized young women, who helped develop creative options for housing as well as ways to avoid involvement in street life. VA funding was directed at capacity building and leadership development in the project's first year.

The Dominion Hotel



Going Forward

The momentum to revitalize social housing in which the VA was so active continues with both the City of Vancouver and the province dedicating significant resources to providing safe, affordable and supportive housing in the inner city.

For the City of Vancouver, an important priority in addressing homelessness is the preservation of existing SRO stock. In addition, supportive housing, a VA priority, is under development at 14 sites, with provincial capital funding to create approximately 1,500 new apartments.

Housing Matters BC, launched in 2006, is the provincial housing strategy developed to reduce homelessness and improve the lives of British Columbians facing housing challenges. While the strategy addresses the full housing continuum – from homelessness to home ownership – the main focus is on ensuring those most in need of help have improved access to housing and supports.

The province is investing in long-term housing solutions and support services to address the critical areas of housing for people who are homeless, have mental health issues, or addictions. Since April 2007, the provincial government acquired 23 SROs for a total of 1,312 units in the DTES – an important step to preserving a vital stock of housing. Non-profit groups were selected to manage the SRO hotels and to offer support services to tenants. In addition to SROs, the province collaborates with the city to provide ongoing support for three Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) shelters for homeless people.

The **Streethome Foundation** is a multi-partner initiative that advances the VA work. With collaboration among the Vancouver Foundation, the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia, the Streethome Foundation takes a systematic approach to addressing both homelessness and its root causes. Streethome brings together people from all sectors of the community – business, non-profits, government, and citizens – to find and implement real solutions. This broad-based coalition furthers a basic mission of the VA – to focus the combined strengths of the public and private sector to address housing issues in the inner city. Its goals are to:

- provide permanent stable housing with appropriate support services;
- prevent people who are most vulnerable from becoming homeless; and
- build broad public support and commitment for permanent solutions to homelessness.



DTES health care must address the life circumstances of patients as well as their health issues.

Insite users are twice as likely to engage in addiction treatment as non-InSite users.

HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE

The Situation

Historically, low-income housing in the DTES has attracted people who are particularly vulnerable due to poverty, unemployment or limited education. These also included psychiatric patients who were reintegrating into the community as a result of de-institutionalization.

People who struggle with mental illness and addiction have unique and often complex health problems and needs. When their options are limited by poverty and they are transient or homeless, it is even harder to maintain good health. Health care providers in the DTES need to address the life circumstances of their patients as well as their health issues. This calls for a multi-agency approach to health and quality of life in the inner city.

Making a Difference

In keeping with its commitment of ‘revitalization without displacement,’ the VA’s strategic focus on health and quality of life emphasized rebuilding a community that welcomes all residents. The VA brought together governments, community organizations and influential individuals to develop innovative approaches to addiction and the associated health problems. Working with 20 partners, the VA invested \$5.4 million in 20 projects that support health and quality of life, some of which are highlighted below.

The Four Pillars Drug Strategy, A Framework for Action proposed a strategy of prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. The strategy was a blueprint for a comprehensive and holistic approach to drug addiction and its attendant social problems. The VA strongly supported the overall strategy and facilitated several of its initiatives including:

Insite, North America’s first legal Supervised Injection Site (SIS), opened in 2003 to provide direct services to drug users including referral to detox, counselling and treatment, as well as to reduce the level of drug use on DTES streets. The Enhanced Enforcement Initiatives (see Safety & Security) helped fund a coordinated approach to starting up this service, as well as Onsite, a detox facility located above Insite. The foundation of cooperation among the three levels of government combined with high-level leadership in the VA was a major driving force.



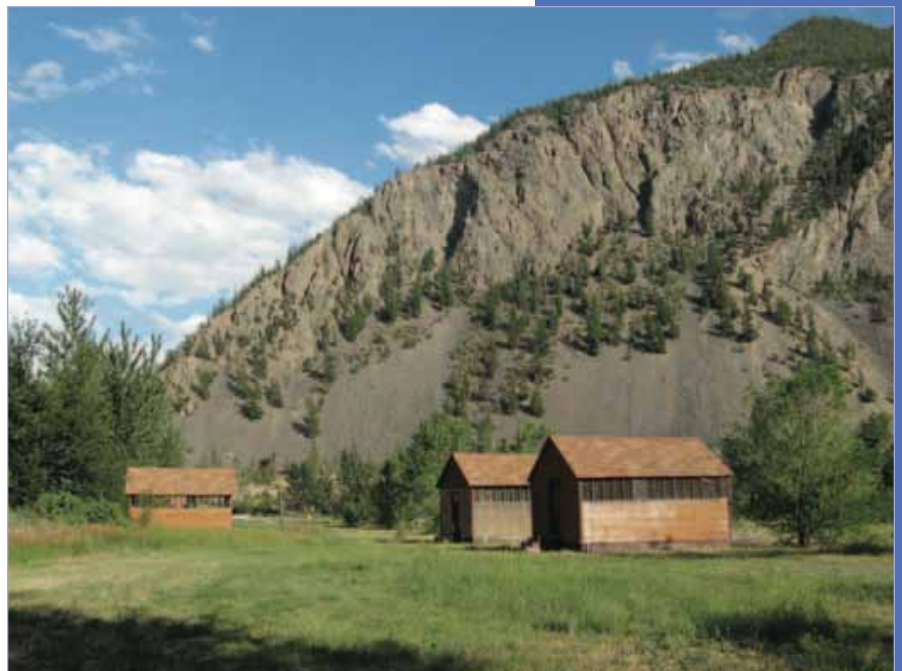
SIS Wraparound Services, supported by \$2 million of VA funding, was the largest health and quality of life initiative. These support services included access to methadone treatment; adult outpatient withdrawal management services, including medication substitutes and acupuncture; and expanded, centralized youth withdrawal management services. Since its inception in 2003, the project has helped to significantly reduce fatalities as a result of overdose. The financial benefits of prevented HIV infections and deaths are significant. In addition, Insite users are twice as likely to engage in addiction treatment as non-Insite users.

The North American Opiate Medications Initiative (NAOMI) demonstrated that providing addicts with access to free heroin could help stabilize their lives, move them towards recovery and abstinence and reduce the negative impacts of their drug use on the community.

The Crossing at Keremeos, which opened in fall 2009, is the first long-term residential treatment centre for B.C. youth who are withdrawing from drugs and alcohol. The VA supplemented other funders to open this facility.

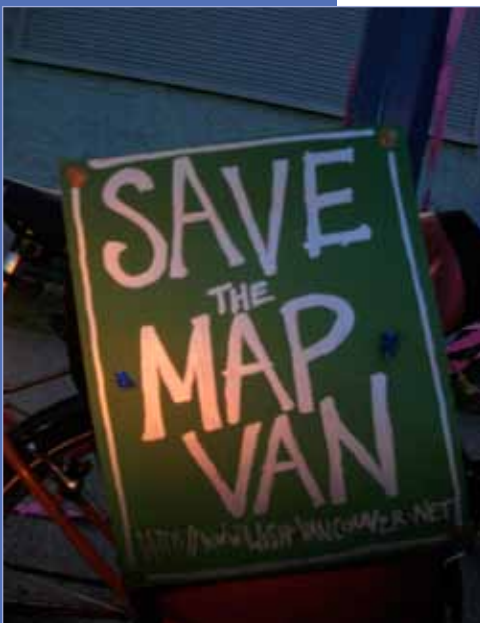
Crystal Clear was a project that focused on methamphetamine prevention and harm reduction for low-income youth. It included an education campaign and peer-training program; professional training and a resource website for front-line workers; and a youth-led theatre and film project.

The Crossing at Keremeos is B.C.'s first long-term residential treatment centre for youth.



The MAP Van provides safety and respite to sex trade workers seven nights a week, making approximately 1,400 connections with women each month.

Mobile Access Project (MAP)



The Youth Service Integrated Centre supports at-risk youth in the downtown core and is operated by Family Services of Greater Vancouver. VA funding contributed towards a new centre to operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day throughout 2005. In 2006, Vancouver Coastal Health assumed funding for the centre. The centre provides a range of services to street-involved and homeless youth, including a resource centre and day school, housing assistance, vocational and employment programs, addiction and mental health services, primary health care services, peer support and outreach, life-skills training, counselling, and recreational activities.

Collaboration for Change, led by the City of Vancouver, developed an action plan to assist Vancouver residents who have mental health and addiction problems, and who are homeless or living in substandard conditions. This innovative action-oriented approach brought together a broad range of institutional and community stakeholders including 700 people to a public meeting and 125 people to an all-day forum.

In addition to addressing addictions issues, the VA partnered with various agencies to fund projects with the potential to improve the health and well-being of local residents.

The Portland Community Dental Clinic has been open for seven years with a high volume of emergency walk-in care. The clinic treats, on average, eight to 12 patients per day, four days a week, with two staff dentists. It provides dental care to residents of the DTES at a reduced fee or through the patient's dental insurance plan. A VA grant to the University of British Columbia Portland Dental Clinic Endowment Fund supports the clinic's ongoing operations.



717 Princess Street Child-Care Centre has 90 much-needed care spaces to support children and families in the DTES. The VA contributed funds, along with other community and government agencies, to purchase the building to ensure continued child care services at that location.

An important focus of the VA was to address the health and safety impacts of sex work that all community members face.

Living in Community (LIC) was a two-year community-based project that focused on the development of a well-informed, coordinated approach to issues associated with child and youth sexual exploitation, and adult sex work in Vancouver. Funded by the VA, the project was a collaboration of community, business and government organizations. LIC facilitated dialogue and build relationships among sex workers, residents, community groups and businesses to develop strategies to make communities healthier and safer for each and every community member.

Bad Date Reporting Pilot Project focused on reducing the high rate of violence perpetrated against street-based sex workers. A bad-date reporting and response strategy was developed through evidence-based research that included the active involvement of sex workers. The objectives were to increase the safety of sex workers; educate sex workers, police and protective services personnel about bad dates; and increase the effectiveness of prosecution for assault crimes against sex workers.

A Community Tool Kit was the next step in creating awareness and understanding of safety issues related to street-based sex workers. The VA contracted Prostitution Alternatives Counselling & Education Society (PACE) to produce a tool kit resource for neighbourhoods, businesses, community groups and sex workers on strategies to increase personal and community safety. The tool kit was disseminated through community policing offices, neighbourhood houses and residents groups.

Mobile Access Project (MAP) is a mobile drop-in centre that provides respite and safety to sex workers, and offers emergency medical advice and assistance, resource and referral information for counselling and drug treatment, and condoms and clean needles. The MAP van provides services to women working on the street from 10:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m., seven nights a week, making approximately 1,400 connections with women each month. The VA provided operating funds for two years.

The WISH Wellness Centre, a 24/7 facility for women working in survival sex, receives between 80 and 120 women a night and serves up to 2,500 women a month.

Women's Information Safe Haven (WISH) Drop-in Society received a \$1-million Vancity Award to house the WISH Wellness Centre, a 24/7 facility for women working in survival sex (2009). The drop-in centre receives between 80 and 120 women a night and serves up to 2,500 women a month. The VA contributed several years of operational funding for the centre.

The Women's Leadership Institute is an innovative training program started in 2009 and funded by the VA. The institute will:

- strengthen capacity of women's organizations and services in the DTES;
- develop leadership skills of front-line staff and emerging leaders; and
- build a network of women's organizations to strengthen the continuum of services for marginalized women, foster collaboration on shared initiatives and create a practice community for peer support and shared learning.

HomeGround was an event created by the Carnegie Centre that occurred in 2009 and 2010. It offered homeless and under-housed DTES residents a comfortable refuge where participants could enjoy a meal, receive access to social services and be entertained by, or participate in, community-based art and music activities and workshops. The 2009 event served as a pilot for a larger event during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Both events were highly successful and further funding and support is being sought to make this an annual event.

HomeGround offered homeless and under-housed DTES residents a comfortable refuge.



Going Forward

Coordinated efforts to foster better health and quality of life in the DTES continue, both with new initiatives and with the continuation of important projects that laid their foundation with VA funding.

Creating a Culture of Prevention, led by the City of Vancouver with partners, is a series of community dialogues and presentations directed at the prevention of substance abuse.

Living in Community (LIC) laid a solid foundation on which to continue to address the health and safety effects of the street-based sex trade. LIC will continue to foster dialogue about adult sex work and the sexual exploitation of children and youth. It will support existing multi-stakeholder teams in neighbourhoods to address ongoing concerns and develop appropriate local strategies. LIC has begun this process with a demonstration project at Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

The WISH Wellness Centre continues to thrive and the MAP van continues to provide support seven nights a week to street-based sex workers. In addition, with the BC Centre for Excellence (BC-CfE) in HIV/AIDS, WISH is a participant in a community-based research project, An Evaluation of Sex workers' Health Access (AESHA). The findings to date have been presented at community, policy and public forums. The research identifies the social and structural barriers faced by Vancouver women who work in street-based sex work. The barriers inhibit access to health care, HIV prevention and safety from violence. Building on the Bad Date Reporting Pilot Project funded by the VA, WISH and BC-CfE have developed a bad date database to increase monitoring and response to violence against sex workers.

Living in Community (LIC) laid a solid foundation on which to continue to address the health and safety effects of the street-based sex trade.



Maintaining continuity in the face of change required a significant investment of time and effort.

There were no precedents for the collaborative initiatives required to address the systemic societal problems in the inner city, so the VA had to learn and adjust its strategies as it evolved.

CHALLENGES

Continuity in the Face of Change

Much of the success of this multi-party agreement was based on relationships. As the key leaders got to know each other over time, they came to appreciate other perspectives as well as the related opportunities and limitations. During the VA's 10-year mandate, federal, provincial and municipal governments all changed. This resulted in changes on the Governance Committee, which held ultimate authority for VA decisions. Senior government officials also turned over on the Management Committee and Planning Table. With these changes came the need to build new relationships as well as to adapt to different ideologies, priorities and leadership. Maintaining continuity in the face of change required a significant investment of time and effort as it would with any collaboration.

Planning & Reporting

The VA had a clear vision and objectives and developed a strategic plan in the first few years. However, due to the urgency of the crisis in the DTES, attention quickly moved from planning to implementation. There were no precedents for the collaborative initiatives required to address the systemic societal problems in the inner city so the VA had to learn and adjust its strategies as it evolved.

Structure

For any ambitious collaboration such as the VA, it is a challenge to find the right balance between a clearly defined structure with the resources to collaborate and communicate broadly, and one that is nimble enough to adapt to change while continuing to deliver innovative initiatives. At the onset, all the partners aspired to develop a structure that could both respond quickly to evolving demands and connect with multiple stakeholder communities. This balance was difficult to achieve. The need to consult and communicate broadly required a complex structure that at times compromised efficiency. In addition, the need to respond simultaneously to changing government mandates and to immediate inner-city crises required a flexible reporting structure that sometimes resulted in confusion of roles and responsibilities.

Financial Model

The VA funding model changed over the course of the Agreement. In the first three years, funding was limited to administration, collaboration, intergovernmental priority setting and identification of joint initiatives. VA initiatives were funded through respective departments, ministries and agencies consistent with their mandates, policies and programs and in the spirit of the VA. This financial model meant that funding for inner-city initiatives continued to be part of the normal government funding cycle inspired by the VA vision.

In 2003, the funding model changed when the provincial government began to contribute funds directly to the VA. These funds were managed by the Agreement, which created a perception in the community that the VA had become a granting entity.

The federal government took a different approach allocating funds to the VA but retained final decision-making authority and project management by its departmental funding program.

Both approaches effectively funded activities consistent with VA priorities. However, the two different approaches, coupled with the funding role change in its third year, made it difficult for the VA to communicate how, why and what funding decisions were made. Given the scope of stakeholders and the fact that some projects addressed a pressing need, some transparency was compromised.

In recent years, the VA took a more systematic approach that clustered several projects under a funded strategy. It streamlined the decision-making process, enhanced transparency and provided greater assurance that separate projects were directed towards common goals.

Community Voice

Given the diversity of stakeholders and in some cases, the polarization of views, broad consistent community engagement was difficult and costly to achieve. VA task teams led considerable community engagement on a project-by-project basis to inform, and receive input from, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and coalitions of the public. This meant VA stakeholders contributed to solutions to shared challenges. Contrary to some expectations, stakeholders did not determine which strategies and projects would be implemented. The VA was always responsible for the final decisions, with some projects requiring approval from a government agency or department. A robust community engagement strategy for a wide-reaching collaborative effort between governments and community is time-and-resource intensive and requires extensive community-wide communication. Despite the challenges, the VA was careful to maintain a lean overhead and to manage expenditures on engagement. This allowed the VA to dedicate the majority of its funds to its strategic initiatives and to swift, targeted response to urgent needs in the DTES.

Given the diversity of stakeholders and in some cases, the polarization of views, broad consistent community engagement was difficult and costly to achieve.



The VA leveraged a comparatively small budget to seed, support or fund 96 projects with more than 50 partners.

What began with VA funding of the Carrall Street Greenway has grown into new awnings, neon signs, hanging baskets, community murals, cleaner streets, lane improvements and a renaissance on Hastings Street.

CONCLUSION

The VA brought people together to tackle tough problems in Vancouver's poorest community, a community with a rich history and a good heart. In the process it crossed many boundaries – political, geographical, philosophical and financial. It brought together three levels of government, and many of their departments and agencies, to combine resources and expertise. It embraced the community and the private sector, and it found new ways to approach previously entrenched problems. The VA leveraged a comparatively small budget to seed, support or fund 96 projects with more than 50 partners – projects that often reached beyond the boundaries of any one partner and might not have happened without this unique collaboration.

As is inevitable with any ambitious undertaking, the VA faced a number of challenges. Perhaps the most significant challenge was to maintain an efficient, effective organization that could respond quickly to urgent community needs, while simultaneously communicating and collaborating with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and partners.

Although one agreement cannot completely erase serious systemic problems such as poverty, drug addiction and homelessness, it can spark a renewal. The VA directed fresh people, ideas, policies and practices at old problems. Intergovernmental cooperation stimulated new commitment, new relationships, new funds and new energy for social and economic change. The VA was the first coordinated effort that set the stage for 'revitalization without displacement' in the DTES.



Chinatown

Carrall Street Greenway



Today, many agencies and community partners continue to work towards the VA vision of a “healthy, safe and sustainable community where all organizations, from informal groups to governments, work effectively together to improve the quality of everyone’s life.” While many new initiatives stem from the VA, they are tailored to fit a very different environment than 10 years ago.

The VA helped launch two important players in economic revitalization in the DTES. BOB and EMBERS continue to rebuild the economic base by supporting business development and employment for local residents. The business improvement associations in Strathcona, Chinatown and Gastown have seen a dramatic increase in the number of private-sector entrepreneurs and continue to service the needs of their growing memberships.

Public-realm improvements spearheaded by the City of Vancouver with support from the B.C. government make the area safer and more attractive to business and residents. What began with VA funding of the Carrall Street Greenway has grown into new awnings, neon signs, hanging baskets, community murals, cleaner streets, lane improvements and a renaissance on Hastings Street.

The arts community continues to be a vibrant sector of the local economy that also builds community pride and inclusiveness. Initiatives brought forward by the VA such as HomeGround, The Heart of the City Festival and the Japantown Neighbourhood Celebration, are now highlights in the community calendar.

Although significant improvements have been made, affordable supportive housing for vulnerable residents of the inner city is an ongoing challenge. The City of Vancouver Housing Centre, BC Housing and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation continue to work with community organizations to develop and operate housing, particularly for people with mental health and addiction issues. The vanguard Woodward’s development, inspired by the VA and others, sets an example for more positive change in housing over the next decade.

Living in Community (LIC) is now firmly established with strong leadership and continues to support inner-city communities living with street-based sex workers. The current LIC project in the Renfrew Collingwood neighbourhood is designed to embed changes that can be maintained long after funding ends.

The VA was a beacon of inspiration, hope and innovation at a dark time in Vancouver’s inner city. The energy generated through planning sessions, meetings, forums and conferences resulted in substantial community development. The VA was an important catalyst. Empowered by the vision and energy of the VA, community organizations and agencies, the three levels of government and the private sector continue to advance the efforts begun a decade ago.

Awards

The Vancouver Agreement received a series of honours: in 2004, the Institute for Public Administration of Canada’s highest annual prize for innovative management; in June 2005, the United Nations Public Service Award for improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the public service, one of eight recipients worldwide; and, in 2005, the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada’s Partnership Award for best practice in achieving unique and inspired partnerships and for being a model for other cities in Canada and around the world. Further praise came from the Office of the Auditor General, identifying the VA governance model as a promising one in its November 2005 Report.

PHOTO CREDITS

Pages 2-6, 10, 12-13 (Tradeworks photo), **16-17** (Wall art, ATIRA Potluck photos), **19** (Woodward's photo), **20, 22, 24-26, 30-31, 37, 39-40** (Chinatown and Carrall Street Greenway photos), **42-43**, and back cover: Gillian Dusting, Dusting Communications

Page 11: (Live Dream) City of Vancouver

Page 13: (Frank photo) Building Opportunities with Business

Page 14: (Hinda photo) Vancouver Courier, (Richard photo) www.bcbusinessonline.ca photographer, Hubert Kang

Page 15: Four Pillars News Feb 2009

Page 16: (Pedicab photo) Vancouver Courier, (United We Can photo) Vancouver Agreement

Pages 18-19: City of Vancouver

Page 21: (Community Policy photo) courtesy of the VPD / City of Vancouver

Page 23: City of Vancouver

Page 27: BC Housing

Page 28: City of Vancouver

Page 29: (Ross House photo) Charles Haynes, SRO Management Training Program

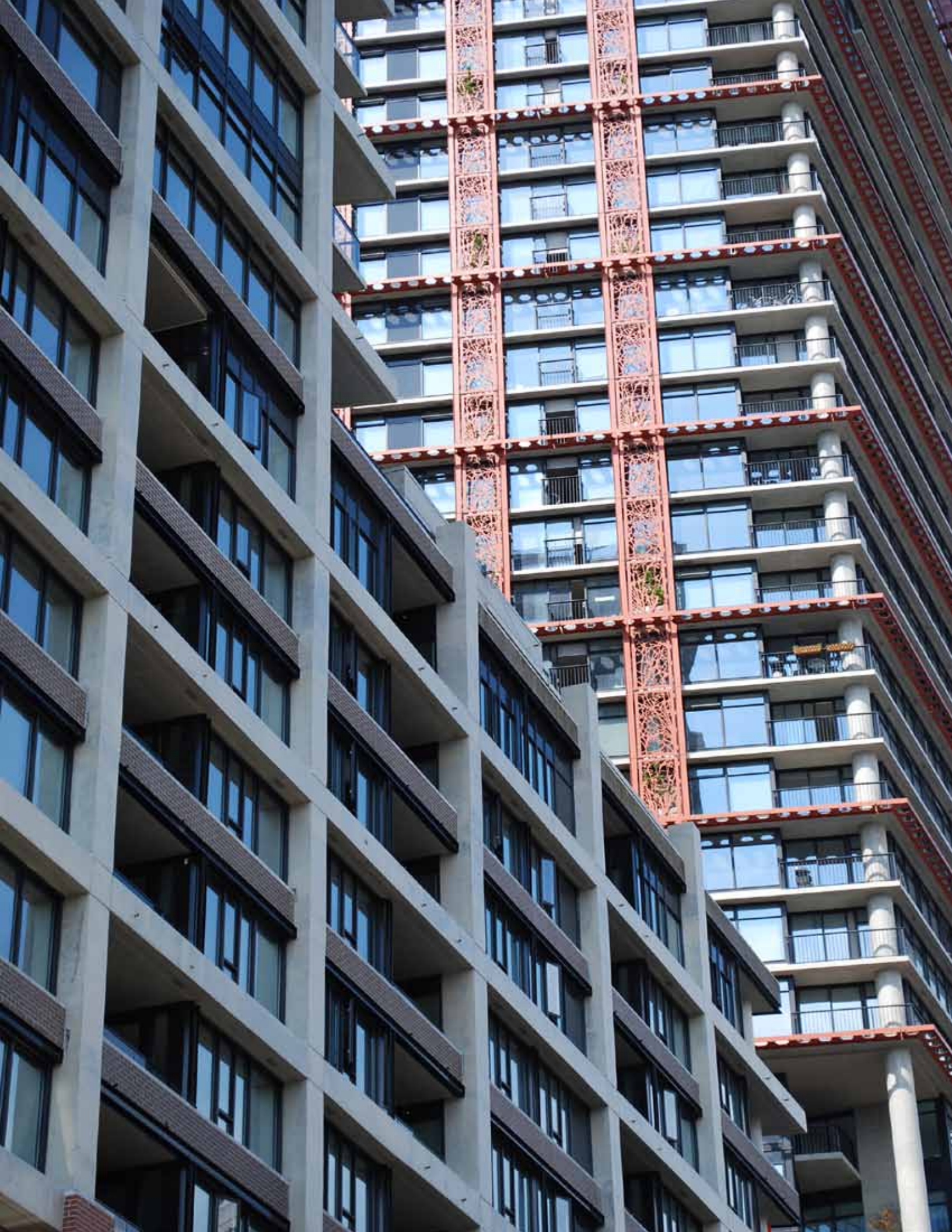
Page 32: (Insite photo) Vancouver Coastal Health

Page 33: (Crystal Clear photo) City of Vancouver, (The Crossing at Keremeos photo) <http://www.centralcityfoundation.ca/Crossing/>

Page 34: WISH Drop-in Centre Society

Page 36: City of Vancouver







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