

## **REPORT**

### ***Climate Action, Planning and Development***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** September 25, 2023

**From:** Jackie Teed, Acting Director,  
Climate Action, Planning and  
Development  
**File:** 13.2630.09

**Item #:** 2023-621

**Subject:** **Update on Council Motion Regarding the Chinatown Community Stewards Program**

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#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That** Council direct staff to pause other projects in the Community Planning work program to conduct further research on the Chinatown Community Stewards Program, including its implications for the New Westminster “I’s on the Street” Program, and that staff report back the findings to Council.

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#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is threefold: (1) to seek Council direction to conduct further research on the Chinatown Community Stewards Program; (2) to identify the similarities with and implications for the New Westminister “I’s on the Street” Program; and (3) to inform Council of work program impacts should the City explore a similar initiative.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On June 12, 2023, Council endorsed a motion to bring an initiative similar to the Chinatown Community Stewards Program to New Westminister. This program, which was developed in 2019, employs people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty to act as stewards for the Chinatown neighbourhood. Duties include but are not limited to assisting with litter collection and needle pick-up; liaising with businesses; offering resource information to people experiencing homelessness; providing directions to tourists; and reporting and, when appropriate, de-escalating problematic situations.

To understand the work required to carry out the motion, staff have conducted some preliminary research on the above cited program. Staff has determined that the duties of this program significantly overlap with the New Westminister “I’s on the Street” Program

which was established in 2010 and is operated by the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society. That program is funded by senior government grants, including through Strengthening Communities, the majority which will end as of December 31, 2023. The annual operating cost is between \$130,000 and \$140,000.

To determine how the City might proceed with an initiative similar to the Chinatown Community Stewards Program, staff would need to conduct further research and consultation related to program costs, benefits and success; implications for the New Westminster “I’s on the Street” Program; and if the latter program can be augmented to provide an expanded scope of services and the related costs. Staff would then report back to Council with a recommendation as to a program, including costs to the City, and implications to staff’s work program.

To pursue this initial stage of work, staff will have to temporarily pause other projects in the Community Planning work program, including related to child care and poverty reduction.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Previous Council Direction***

At the June 12, 2023 Regular Meeting, Council endorsed the following motion:

*Whereas the City of New Westminster is focusing on enhancing livability in the downtown and throughout the entire city; and*

*Whereas the City of New Westminster prioritizes compassion and proven solutions;*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

*THAT Council directs staff to report back on opportunities to bring a program similar to the Chinatown Stewards model to New Westminster.*

## **ANALYSIS**

### ***Chinatown Community Stewards Program***

The Chinatown Community Stewards Program was established in 2019 and is operated by EMBERS Eastside Works. It employs people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty to act as stewards for the Chinatown neighbourhood. Duties include but are not limited to assisting with litter collection and needle pick-up; liaising with businesses; offering resource information to people experiencing homelessness; providing directions to tourists; and reporting and, when appropriate, de-escalating problematic situations. The annual operating cost is in the range of \$175,000 to \$225,000.

***New Westminster “I’s on the Street” Program***

The “I’s on the Street” Program was established in 2010 and is operated by the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society. It employs people who are experiencing homelessness and mental health issues. Duties include but are not limited to collecting litter, including drug paraphernalia, and disseminating resource information, including the Food Resources Calendar and the Survival Guide. Participants receive training in administering Naloxone and handling hazardous materials. The program operates in the Downtown, Sapperton and Uptown neighbourhoods, with the primary source of funding being senior government grants, including through Strengthening Communities. Regarding these grants, the majority of this funding will end as of December 31, 2023. The annual operating cost is between \$130,000 and \$140,000.

**DISCUSSION**

To date, City staff have conducted Internet research on the Chinatown Community Stewards Program, and have held preliminary discussions with the City of Vancouver, which funds the program, and EMBERS Eastside Works, which operates the program. The City has also held preliminary discussions with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, which operates the “I’s on the Street” Program.

If directed by Council, staff will conduct further research and consultation and will report back to Council, including on implications for the “I’s on the Street” Program, and if the latter program can be augmented to provide an expanded scope of services, as well as the related costs, and potential implications to staff’s work program.

If Council directs staff to pursue the initial exploratory stage of work, staff will have to temporarily pause work on Community Planning work program items, including the Child Care Needs Update and the new Community Poverty Needs Assessment and Strategy.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

If Council directs staff to pursue option #2, which involves retaining a consultant to assist staff, then the up to \$5,000 in funding would be derived from the Climate Action, Planning and Development budget under Consultants and Studies.

**OPTIONS**

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to pause other projects in the Community Planning work program to conduct further research on the Chinatown Community Stewards Program, including its implications for the New Westminster “I’s on the Street” Program, and that staff report back the findings to Council.

2. That Council direct staff to both conduct further research on the Chinatown Community Stewards Program and to not pause other projects on the Community Planning work program through a financial enhancement of up to \$5,000 to retain the services of a consultant to assist staff.
3. That Council direct staff not to proceed with any further work on the Council motion of June 12, 2023 regarding the Chinatown Community Stewards Program.
4. That Council provide staff with other or additional direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

### **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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This report was approved by:  
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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer