

The Downtown Eastside is rich in history, culture and diversity. Countering the areas's challenges which include crime and unemployment, City initiatives such as the Clean Streets project are restoring public spaces and community pride.

Clean Streets

CLEAN STREETS, NEIGHBOURHOOD PRIDE

Neighbourhoods need clean streets to help foster community pride. The Clean Streets project, part of the City's Great Beginnings initiative and supported by the Vancouver Police Department, covers 65 blocks within the Downtown Eastside (DTES). It provides extra City street cleaning shifts, an extra Street Use Inspector for education, enforcement, and services for special events.

Clean Streets has created part-time jobs for 100 residents, many of whom carry out local micro-cleaning. These broom-and-shovel workers tackle awkward corners and alleys that bulky cleaning equipment can't reach, creating more inviting street spaces – some are even used by film productions after cleanup.

An Urban Binning Unit, started by United We Can (UWC), provides recycling services at major city events including the Celebration of Light and Chinatown Festival. Using mobile carts, workers collect beverage containers and return them for deposit refunds at the UWC depot. Over 6,000 containers have been collected and recycled this way, building a more positive public awareness of binning.

SHARED SUCCESS

Both UWC and Coast Mental Health Foundation have played central roles in engaging people who have struggled with multiple barriers to employment, like addictions and mental health problems. One inspiring story is that of a former sex trade worker, now living entirely on her earnings as a micro-cleaner. Another cleaner says his job helped him rebuild his self-esteem, giving him structure and motivation – he's planning a return to his pre-addiction career in information technology.

The decrease in litter and needles has improved both the reality and the perception of public safety, benefiting residents, businesses and visitors. Business Improvement Associations and community groups have commended the program for cleaning up the streets and revitalizing the neighbourhood through a stronger sense of shared responsibility and common interest.



FOUNDING A GREAT LEGACY

In 2008, to celebrate British Columbia's 150th anniversary, Vancouver launched its Great Beginnings initiative with funding from the provincial government. The program celebrates the history, heritage and culture of Vancouver's oldest urban area, the Downtown Eastside, and has built a legacy of improved physical, social, and economic conditions.

Projects are selected to create attractive and welcoming physical environments, improving streets, buildings and public spaces to restore their original public appeal. Support also goes to arts and cultural activities, celebrations and street festivals.

Work is coordinated through the City's DTES Revitalization Program, Project Civil City, the Vancouver Agreement, and the 2010 Winter Games Inner-city Inclusivity Commitments made by the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee. The focus is on ways to build and support the community's own capacity, providing a broad range of opportunities for people to engage with a neighbourhood renaissance.



GREAT BEGINNINGS AIMS TO IMPROVE FIVE MAIN ASPECTS OF LIFE IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

Public Spaces: physically improve parks, streets, sidewalks and lanes

Private Property: offer assistance to owners interested in making physical improvements to their property

Arts and Culture: expand existing events

Community Living: engage local residents in community activities to increase livability

Community Pride: create more opportunities through the promotion of neighbourhoods in the DTES

