



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Proposed Designation of Bloor Street as a Cultural Corridor from Bay Street to Bathurst Street

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| Date: | August 17, 2016 |
| To: | Economic Development Committee |
| From: | General Manager, Economic Development and Culture |
| Wards: | All |
| Reference Number: | AFS: 23223 |

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend the designation of Bloor Street as a Cultural Corridor from Bay Street to Bathurst Street (refer to Attachment No. 1 of this report).

Toronto's Bloor Street between Bay Street and Bathurst Street is a vibrant 1.5 kilometre corridor with more than a dozen permanent world-class arts organizations presenting professional arts and culture events in destination venues. They include: Alliance Française de Toronto, Bata Shoe Museum, Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, Gardiner Museum, Instituto Italiano di Cultura, Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), Royal Conservatory of Music/Koerner Hall, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra & Chamber Choir, Talisker Players, Toronto Consort and the University of Toronto - Faculty of Music.

These organizations are part of a consortium called the Bloor Street Cultural Partnership who have requested that the City officially recognize Bloor Street between Bay Street and Bathurst Street as a Cultural Corridor. By doing so the City will help the promotion and development of the area as a cultural destination that enhance Toronto's position as a creative city regionally, nationally and internationally.

RECOMMENDATION

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council officially designate Bloor Street as a Cultural Corridor from Bay Street to Bathurst Street as defined in the map in Attachment No. 1.

Financial Impact

Similar to other cultural corridor designations by the City in the past, there are no financial impacts as a result of this report.

The Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

Toronto has had a history of creating Cultural Corridors beginning with the Waterfront Culture and Heritage Infrastructure Plan which was approved by City Council in 2001 - the goal was to create a distinctive framework to visualize the cultural landscape of Toronto's central waterfront using seven distinct Cultural Corridors and then to connect it to the larger waterfront to integrate it with important cultural and heritage resources in the city core.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/council/cc011204/edp12rpt/cl001.pdf>

Since 2001, a significant amount of cultural infrastructure along Yonge from Dundas Street north to Davenport Road has been established, reinforcing the concept of extending Yonge Street as a Cultural Corridor. City Council adopted city staff's recommendations to extend this portion of Yonge Street north of Dundas Street as a Cultural Corridor in 2013.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/ed/bgrd/backgroundfile-63561.pdf>

While the proposed cultural corridor is an idea generated from outside City Hall, it aligns with the TOcore initiative specifically as it relates to City Planning staff developing a Secondary Plan for the Downtown as well as City Planning working with Economic Development and Culture staff to develop a creative industries strategy for Downtown.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE12.43>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

A cultural corridor is a cultural district with a concentration of arts organizations, ranging from visual arts, music and museums, along a stretch of road like New York City's Museum Mile or Montreal's Quartier des spectacles. The collective often shares a website, social media and a mobile app to promote exhibitions at its member institutions.

The City already has several designated "cultural corridors". The designation assists in

the planning and creation of clusters of cultural activity. For example, the John Street Cultural Corridor helped advance the development of the TIFF Bell Lightbox. By providing high level guidance about opportunities to cluster cultural activity, more strategic long term planning and economic development decisions can be made by the City.

The Bloor Street Cultural Corridor was launched publically in April 2014 by existing cultural organizations along Bloor Street West to help Torontonians and tourists connect with what's happening on their street more easily; including visiting multiple destinations in an afternoon or a day. Each year more than three million members of the public go to the Bloor Street Cultural Corridor to attend exhibitions, performances, and events. Together, the cultural organizations along Bloor Street generate more than \$629.5M in economic impact annually based on the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model.

In 2015, the Bloor Street Cultural Partnerships approached City staff to discuss the group's work to date. On July 24, 2015 the founder of the Bloor Street Cultural Partnership wrote to the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to ask that Bloor Street, between Bay Street and Bathurst Street, officially be recognized as a cultural corridor. The official recognition would support the group's current and future activities to develop the area as a cultural destination.

The Bloor Street Cultural Partnership is actively involved in the planning of local infrastructure improvements; providing future free Wi-Fi in the locale; developing Canada 150 celebration initiatives; and participates in Culture Days, Doors Open and Nuit Blanche. The Bloor-Annex Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Bloor-Yorkville BIA are within the Bloor Street Cultural Corridor. The BIAs work collaboratively with the *Bloor Street Cultural Partnership*.

Similar to other designations by the City in the past, there are no financial impact as a result of the proposed designation of Bloor Street between Bay Street and Bathurst Street as a cultural corridor. The Bloor Street Cultural Partnership has not requested any funding from the City of Toronto. The Partnership is funded by the individual arts organization that make up the Partnership. When the Partnership applies for funding grants, the application is submitted by the incorporated not for profit partner organizations on behalf of the whole Bloor Street Cultural Partnership.

The Councillors of Wards 20 and 27 have been contacted and are in support of this initiative.

COMMENTS

Bloor Street between Bay Street and Bathurst Street is located between Bloor-Yorkville and The Annex neighbourhoods to the north and the University of Toronto to the south and culturally has developed organically over the last several decades. The Bloor Street Cultural Corridor is 1.5 kilometres in length and has an abundance of arts, entertainment

and cultural experiences that are easily accessible by public transit including museums, film screenings, art exhibitions, music concerts, culture talks, theatre and architecture. It also offers opportunities to experience some of Toronto's most accessible cultural diversity, including French, Jewish, Estonian, Italian, Japanese and Aboriginal arts and culture.

This section of Bloor Street has long been steeped in culture, starting with the hippie subculture in the Sixties. Yorkville flourished as Toronto's bohemian cultural centre. It was home to some of Canada's most noted musical talents, including Joni Mitchell, Neil Young and Gordon Lightfoot, and then-underground literary figures such as Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn MacEwen and Dennis Lee (Toronto's First Poet Laureate). Yorkville was considered the Canadian capital of the hippie movement.

The Annex, a neighbourhood of students, professors, academics and intellectuals, is also a neighbourhood of rooming houses carved out of once-grand homes and a place where some of the 40,000 American draft resisters who fled to Canada settled. In 1963, the experimental Rochdale College at the University of Toronto was opened on Bloor Street. Ultimately it did not survive as an experiment in student-run alternative education and cooperative living, but many enduring Toronto cultural organizations were born there including Theatre Passe Muraille and Coach House Press. Stan Bevington was the founder and the original publisher of Coach House Press, and began publishing writers and artists such as bpNichol, Michael Ondaatje, Sarah Sheard and David Young. Coach House Press has since published hundreds of important Canadian writers including Toronto's current Poet Laureate, Anne Michaels. Today the McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology (U of T) hosts open and frank discussions in the same intimate Coach House with a range of participants including academics, business people, scientists, artists, designers and planners – exploring the mosaic of the metaphoric city as a source of knowledge and inspiration.

The cultural renaissance in the early 2000's added the ROM Crystal, the new Koerner Hall at the Royal Conservatory of Music, and the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Arts. These new and improved cultural institutions, alongside the other cultural producers have sought to increase their collective impact by working together to promote each other's programs, and participate collectively in others. For example, this past spring's Jane's Walk was titled *From the ROM to VEMU: Exploring institutions, architecture, and stories of Toronto's Bloor Street Cultural Corridor* - exploring the history, architecture, and stories of Toronto's Bloor Street.

The *Bloor Street Cultural Partnership* operates as a consortium, with the following member cultural organizations:

| Cultural Organization | Address |
|--|-----------------------|
| Alliance Française de Toronto | 24 Spadina Road |
| Bata Shoe Museum | 327 Bloor Street West |
| Bloor Hot Docs Cinema | 506 Bloor Street West |
| Gardiner Museum | 111 Queen's Park |
| Istituto Italiano di Cultura | 496 Huron Street |
| Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre | 750 Spadina Avenue |
| Native Canadian Centre of Toronto | 16 Spadina Road |
| Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) | 100 Queen's Park |
| The Royal Conservatory / Koerner Hall: | 273 Bloor Street West |
| Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra & Chamber Choir | 427 Bloor Street West |
| Talisker Players | 427 Bloor Street West |
| The Toronto Consort | 427 Bloor Street West |
| University of Toronto Faculty of Music | 80 Queen's Park |

Each partner organization in the Bloor Street Cultural Partnership is a not for profit organization. The Bloor Street Cultural Partnership is not a legal entity at present. The consortium functions like a collective or cooperative. Much of the work on projects and initiatives is coordinated by different people working at the various organizations. Each Partner organization is equal within the structure. This means each have an equal say in organizational development and projects. When the Partnership applies for funding grants, the application is submitted by one of the incorporated not for profit cultural organizations, on behalf of the Bloor Street Cultural Partnership. Future plans include incorporating the Partnership as a not for profit organization.

In addition to the *Bloor Street Cultural Partnership* members there are also the *Bloor Street Cultural Corridor Associates* who are located slightly beyond the geography of the Bay Street to Bathurst Street range of the corridor's core but are within an easily walkable few blocks and present a variety of additional professional arts and cultural events for the public. The *Bloor Street Cultural Corridor Associates* include: 918 Bathurst Centre for Culture, Arts, Media + Education; The Japanese Foundation, Museum of Estonians

Abroad; The Randolph Centre for the Arts; Soundstreams and the Toronto Reference Library.

A free mobile app provides access to special offers exclusive to app users, and a convenient way to easily see the richness of cultural destinations and events on offer in the Bloor Street area. The app's social feed connects users with the latest news and announcements from the Twitter feeds of all of the arts and culture destinations on the Bloor Street Culture Corridor.

Uniquely Torontonians in cultural richness, diversity, and community, the arts and culture organizations along Bloor Street are interested in partnerships with the University of Toronto, Tourism Toronto, local residents and businesses and the City of Toronto to achieve future mutual goals. By recognizing Bloor Street between Bay Street and Bathurst Street in an official capacity, the City helps to promote the development of the area as a cultural destination that enhance Toronto's position as a creative city regionally, nationally and internationally.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment No. 1: Map of Proposed Bloor Street Cultural Corridor (Bay to Bathurst)

Attachment No. 1
Map of Proposed Bloor Street Cultural Corridor (Bay to Bathurst)

BLOOR STREET CULTURAL CORRIDOR

