
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM22.5	ACTION			Ward:All
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Protecting Live Music Venues in Toronto - by Councillor Josh Colle, seconded by Councillor John Filion

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Josh Colle, seconded by Councillor John Filion, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture and the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to:

- a. develop a co-ordinated strategy to preserve existing live music venues in the City of Toronto;
- b. designate senior staff members in the City Planning, Municipal Licensing and Standards and Toronto Building Divisions to act as liaisons with the City's Film and Entertainment Industries staff to provide advice to individuals or organizations wishing to establish music venues;
- c. examine changes to regulatory frameworks to encourage the establishment of both traditional and temporary (pop-up) new live music venues in Toronto, such examination to include whether such venues could be included in employment land use categories;
- d. review strategies which have been successfully used in other jurisdictions, including financial incentives, to support live music venues;
- e. create an inventory of live music venues currently operating in the City of Toronto; and
- f. consult with the Toronto Music Advisory Council and other industry stakeholders on a to e above,

and report to the Toronto Music Advisory Council and the Economic Development Committee as soon as possible in 2017.

Summary

Being home to countless live music venues and music festivals, the City of Toronto is North America's third largest and Canada's largest music market, having an estimated economic impact of at minimum \$700 million per year. However, the City of Toronto's rapid gentrification and redevelopment could negatively impact its live music industry.

The City of Toronto continues to experience massive amounts of redevelopment, especially in its downtown core. This development not only drives up property values and commercial rents, but also creates new residential neighbourhoods that often conflict with the business operations of live music venues. In recent years, gentrification in Toronto has led to the loss of critical venues like The Big Bop, The Kool Haus, The Hideout, Not My Dog, and many more, and threats to cutting edge live music spots like Geary Lane and legendary establishments like the Silver Dollar Room.

Between 2007 and 2015, the City of London, United Kingdom lost 35 percent of its live music venues. This tremendous decrease is believed to be the result of a number of issues, mostly relating to development, gentrification and rising property taxes caused live music venues to close their doors either because they could not afford their increased rent or because their properties were sold to developers. Those venues that were able to survive this redevelopment were then crushed by stricter licensing standards enacted because of complaints made by people living in newly-built residential areas near their properties.

All of these development related factors contributed to the closure of many of London's iconic music venues, thus impacting the City's grassroots music scene and, ultimately, the United Kingdom's booming music industry. In light of these issues, the London established the Mayor's Music Venues Task Force, which aims to halt the decline of live music venues in London, both by setting forth a rescue package to protect existing venues and by promoting the creation of new venues.

Cities around the world – including: London, United Kingdom; Melbourne, Australia; San Francisco, United States of America; and Toronto's Music Alliance partner, Austin, United States of America - have explored the use of tax incentives, heritage designations, zoning changes, noise mitigation measures, reducing red tape, and many other strategies to preserve and encourage robust live music scenes.

In light of these pressures on its live music scene, the City of Toronto should follow the lead of cities like London, Austin, and San Francisco by taking proactive steps to protect its existing live music venues and encourage the establishment of new venues.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM22.5