

## **Civic Hall Toronto**

**Date:** March 15, 2018

**To:** Government Management Committee

**From:** General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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The City of Toronto has made significant progress towards incorporating innovation into the work of its municipal government. Generally, across the City of Toronto's divisions, staff are seeking innovative solutions to help make the City more accessible and to deliver better services to residents.

To help facilitate and support staff teams and Divisions in approaching projects and community challenges with new ideas and more effective programming, City staff explored a range of models used in other jurisdictions to promote innovation within local government. One such model was New York City's Civic Hall, which provides a platform for government to co-create projects and solutions with the community. This report builds on the model created in New York and provides the details of a 'made in Toronto' approach to promote innovation in the City: Civic Hall Toronto.

Civic Hall Toronto is an answer for the many individuals and teams across the City who want to collaborate with innovation practitioners from all orders of government, as well as civic tech start-ups and social entrepreneurs, in order to develop and test new solutions to long-standing problems. Offering space, training and project support, Civic Hall Toronto will be driven by a non-profit partner, Code for Canada, and a hosting partner, the Centre for Social Innovation. Civic Hall Toronto will be launched in the spring of 2018 and will become a home for the civic innovation community.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council authorize all City of Toronto Division Heads to purchase memberships from and enter into any necessary agreements with Code for Canada to carry out delivery of training and innovation-related projects that advance Divisional goals.

2. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report back to the Government Management Committee in the fall of 2019 with an update on the implementation of Civic Hall Toronto.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Economic Development and Culture (EDC) has provided \$100,000 in start-up funding to support Civic Hall Toronto through its 2018 Business Incubation Grant fund as approved in the EDC 2018 operating budget.

City of Toronto divisions that are interested in becoming members and utilizing Civic Hall Toronto for their projects and training will use their existing 2018 budgets to pay for annual memberships.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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In January 2016, Government Management Committee requested a review of opportunities for the creation of a "Civic Hall", following a letter from Councillor Paul Ainslie. The request was to review and report on:

- The concept of a "Civic Hall" based on the civic model which has been developed in New York City (<http://civichall.org/about-civic-hall/>);
- Civic Hall envisioned as a vibrant year-round community centre, collaborative work and event space, where diverse civic innovators work, network, learn and organise to solve civic problems - and at scale. It will include, but not be exclusive for technologists, social entrepreneurs, government officials, organisers, philanthropy professionals, journalists, researchers, and is dedicated to cutting-edge problem solving;
- Opportunities for the space to be operated in either a government, or a private facility; and
- Opportunities for both government funding, as well as sponsorships from corporate entities.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.GM9.14>

## **COMMENTS**

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Since the introduction and widespread adoption of the Internet and, more recently, social media and smartphones, most innovation and productivity gains in service delivery have been in the private sector. Whether it is banking, travel, retail or telecom, a dramatic change has taken place. On-demand, personalised services, conducted

transparently and efficiently, delivered through easy and responsive user experiences, are the norm.

In the public sector, technology, policy and program innovation have taken longer to be embraced. For a variety of reasons, and despite the goodwill and passion of many government employees, governments have been slower to adopt solutions that could significantly increase resident satisfaction. There is a growing movement to promote civic technology - which is technology co-created with the public to provide open, transparent and accessible technology to improve government services and cities.

At the same time, there is increasing interest amongst residents in engaging with and gaining greater transparency around, public policy and implementation. As more residents are comfortable with technology, accustomed to personalised on-demand services, and as policy challenges become more complex and require collaboration across many government entities as well as the private sector, it is imperative to create spaces and structures that support the building and testing of new solutions before they are widely deployed.

## **City of Toronto Initiatives**

To address these demands and opportunities for innovation, the City of Toronto has implemented a number of initiatives, including the Civic Innovation Office and the Transformation Office.

### **Civic Innovation Office**

The Civic Innovation Office, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and located at City Hall, was established in 2017. The office focuses on a challenge theme each year, taking on one or two complex city problems, with the goal of solving them through collaboration between internal and external innovators. The introduction of the Civic Innovation Office has highlighted the appetite for innovation and new approaches towards civic problems internally with City staff.

### **Transformation Office**

The Transformation Office develops strategies to help the City become more effective, efficient and able to adapt to future challenges. The office transforms public services to allocate resources in more modern ways to drive social, economic and environmental benefits while delivering the greatest value for public dollars by transforming operations, programs and services.

### **The Opportunity**

Both of these offices are essential tools to help modernise the City of Toronto's service delivery and engagement with the public. However, there are elements from other global communities that are not addressed, such as:

- *Smaller Projects* - there is a high volume of smaller projects and problems that are not large enough to fit the mandates of each of these offices. Projects such as data

hackathons or user testing with at-risk communities, or using design thinking to develop new program approaches provide an opportunity to highlight how innovative approaches can improve public services and create a culture of innovation within the public sector. Like the Civic Innovation Office, Civic Hall Toronto will use these best practices to achieve its outcomes on smaller scale projects.

- *Community-of-Practice* - for innovation to be successful there is a need to build a community-of-practice between colleagues. Building this community requires distributing the opportunities for approaching change across an organisation and encouraging staff to learn from other teams. The Civic Innovation Office, for instance, is building a “Culture of Innovation” within the municipal government. Civic Hall Toronto will amplify this effort, and extend the community-of-practice to all members, including other orders of government, other Greater Toronto Area municipalities and various government agencies.
- *External-Focus* - getting government innovators outside of their government offices is often a way to get them to think outside the box, but also provide them with an opportunity to engage with other innovators in both the public and private sector, allowing natural collisions to occur where new ideas and thinking can lead to solutions to problems.
- *Different Orders of Government* - other models for promoting innovation bring together various orders of government to encourage collaboration and problem solving across organisations.
- *Economic Development* - there is potential for economic development through civic innovation, as civic tech and social enterprise focused startups can work with government staff to address problems and use these experiences to achieve initial market traction locally and expand it to national and global markets.

The work of the Transformation Office and Civic Innovation Office are already setting Toronto as a leader in civic innovation; however, there is much more that can be done to accelerate the adoption of innovative thinking to improve how the City engages and works with its residents to deliver services and solutions.

## **Global Models for Civic Innovation**

To understand these opportunities City staff reviewed several other models of civic innovation globally (New York City, San Francisco, Atlanta and Tel Aviv), with a specific focus on Civic Hall in New York City.

### **Civic Hall New York City**

Civic Hall is a collaborative work and event space that supports civic tech to serve the public good. Located in the heart of New York City’s Silicon Alley, Civic Hall provides a place where diverse civic innovators work, network, learn and organize to solve civic problems.

Established in February 2015, the operation grew in its first year to more than 850 technologists, social entrepreneurs, government officials, philanthropy professionals, journalists, activists and change-makers. In many regards, the operations are very similar to those of Toronto's Centre for Social Innovation (CSI). That said, unlike CSI, Civic Hall is very focused on civic technology itself.

The programming delivered by Civic Hall includes:

- *Civic Xcelerator* – providing space, training, advisory support and mentorship for early-stage civic tech startups.
- *Government Challenges* – working with various government agencies on challenges and hackathons to solve civic problems. This has included programming like BigApps for New York City, where the City engaged civic tech companies in developing solutions that could be used by government to improve services for residents.
- *Government Engagement* – various government agencies provide office hours at Civic Hall using it as an opportunity to engage with the innovation community, solve problems and identify partners for delivering solutions to citizens.
- *Networking and Training Events* – Civic Hall delivers and hosts a range of networking events, technology meetups and training events.
- *Innovation Symposiums* – bringing together leaders in government and innovation to talk about embracing tools and resources to transform government and include greater innovation. As an example, Civic Hall brought together stakeholders around innovation in the procurement of IT solutions for government.

The business model is focused on event space and membership – with individuals and organisational members purchasing memberships. The current membership includes 844 members, which includes 448 individual members, with the remaining members comprised of individuals from 68 member organisations that include sponsors. Corporate sponsorship (Microsoft, Google, IBM, Airbnb and others) and grants from foundations (Omidyar, New America, Robin Hood Foundation and others) have provided the most significant source of funding for Civic Hall.

The City's role in Civic Hall is based on membership – there are more than 10 New York City agencies and departments that are paying members of Civic Hall. This approach allows each agency or division to focus on their specific needs and how they would like to engage the civic tech community. Municipal members include New York City 311, New York City Economic Development Corporation, New York Attorney General's Office, and others.

### **Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, San Francisco**

This organisation advances Mayoral priorities by introducing new approaches, resources, and technologies to City departments using a challenge-based process called Startup In-Residence. The Office of Civic Innovation works with City departments to identify challenges and then promotes those challenges to the innovation community. Teams from the innovation community then respond to those challenges, pitching their capabilities to work with those divisions on solving the identified problems.

Currently, the focus is on supporting the Mayor's Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Promise to enhance the quality of life for San Franciscans; expanding the City's capacity through partnerships, and creating a more digitally inclusive and connected City. This model is most like Toronto's Civic Innovation Office.

## **Centre for Civic Innovation, Atlanta**

The mission of the Center for Civic Innovation is to push Atlanta to be a smart, equitable and engaged city by investing in community-driven ideas, supporting social enterprises and engaging people in dialogue and action. This is accomplished by supporting and investing in people and organisations who are already on the ground with products or services that make the public sector more effective, innovative, and participatory. Programs are hosted for community-based social entrepreneurs at all stages; investments are focused on early stage, untested projects.

## **The Library, Tel Aviv**

The Library is the home of the startup community in Tel Aviv-Yafo. Opened in October 2011 by the municipality of Tel Aviv, it is located in the heart of Tel Aviv's business centre where it offers co-working office facilities, hosts networking events, and provides professional infrastructure for young technological visionaries.

The Library's Space for Entrepreneurship provides shared working space and hub facilities for teams dedicated to developing internet startups and technology companies. Also, The Library offers networking events, meetups, and professional infrastructure for young entrepreneurial visionaries.

## **A Civic Hall Model for Toronto**

These and many other cities around the world are recognising the increasing value and importance of civic technology and civic innovation. Not all models bring government practitioners into the civic innovation space to interact with innovators and social entrepreneurs. Research and consultation have led City staff to recommend that government entities and individuals be considered primary stakeholders of any Toronto-based civic innovation undertaking.

Staff have reviewed the opportunities in Toronto based on the New York Civic Hall model and have identified a demonstrated need, an enthusiastic and qualified community partner, a viable model, and potential members, industry and community partners and sponsors for Toronto.

## **Civic Hall Toronto Governance and Operation Overview**

Civic Hall Toronto will be operated by Code for Canada (C4C) and hosted at the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI).

Code for Canada is a non-profit organisation with a nationwide reach that connects government innovators with the technology and design communities to build better digital public services. They have helped to create a network of over 10,000 civic tech innovators nationally, including more than 3,000 civic tech innovators in Toronto who meet regularly to apply their skills to government challenges. Overall, they provide in-depth knowledge of civic technology, and the ability to operate Civic Hall Toronto, by delivering training and programming and convening all stakeholders.

The Centre for Social Innovation was started in 2005 as one of the first co-working spaces in the world with 5,000 sq. ft. and 14 tenants. CSI now has a network of more than 2,500 members and several properties including 64,000 sq. ft. in downtown Toronto. CSI will host Civic Hall Toronto, offering physical space, as well as significant experience in community building, with over 200 civic innovators as members.

Civic Hall Toronto will be overseen by an advisory board that will include a range of stakeholders, including the City of Toronto.

### **Civic Hall Toronto Objectives**

The primary objective of Civic Hall Toronto is to build the civic innovation community in Toronto through meaningful interaction between government practitioners, civic technologists and designers, social entrepreneurs, corporate innovators and city residents. More broadly Civic Hall Toronto aims to:

- Identify, create and test solutions to government challenges in a safe environment before full deployment.
- Foster a culture of collaboration among the multiple stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors to encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving.
- Provide space, training, programming and additional supports to all those engaged in civic innovation.
- Ensure that challenge identification and solution creation are undertaken with input from a diverse range of voices that reflect the diversity of Toronto.

Civic Hall Toronto is expected to increase the technological and innovation capacity of government and to accelerate the adoption of solutions that deliver enhanced customer experience and efficiencies in implementation.

### **Civic Hall Toronto Programming**

From a programming perspective, Civic Hall Toronto will offer a range of training, project development and implementation, as well as public engagement through a robust calendar of events. More specifically, Civic Hall Toronto will offer the following programming:

- *Training* - various kinds of training workshops, such as digital government, design thinking, online civic engagement, ethical AI, and human centred design, will be conducted for government, the tech community and the general public, including youth and equity-seeking groups.
- *Project Support* - Civic Hall Toronto will be equipped to provide its government members with support for a variety of projects, ranging from community consultations, hackathons, dataset discovery, user design, website testing, etc. These projects will leverage both the civic tech community and the broader community to realise their full potential.
- *Collaboration Space* - Civic Hall Toronto will be a vibrant, accessible, 24/7 home for government practitioners, civic innovators, entrepreneurs and City residents that serves as a hub for the civic tech community.

- *Office Hours* - as part of their membership government practitioners will provide 'office hours' (an organized free-form opportunity to ask questions of an expert) to civic tech practitioners to provide feedback and insight into ideas.
- *Networking and Engagement* - a robust calendar of events will facilitate opportunities for government members and the broader innovation community to engage with each other. This will include hackathons, meetups and education/social events held in the space.
- *Business Incubation Support* - Civic Hall Toronto will support the iterative development of civic innovations and test them with residents and relevant government departments and agencies.

A full overview of Civic Hall Toronto can be found as Attachment 1.

### **Civic Hall Toronto Business Model**

The business model for Civic Hall Toronto calls for multiple revenue streams including a range of memberships, with a specific focus on government departments, corporate sponsorships and fee-for-service offerings.

With the objective of achieving financial sustainability within two years of full operation, Civic Hall Toronto is focused on selling memberships to government teams from municipal, provincial and federal departments across the Greater Toronto Area, as well as to teams from the agencies, boards and committees of these organisations. These memberships range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 annually and include some specific benefits, including staff training, access to collaboration space, project development and implementation, and office hours.

To support the launch of Civic Hall Toronto, \$100,000 in startup funds was provided from Economic Development and Culture's Business Incubation Grant fund. The remaining operating costs for Civic Hall Toronto will be covered through memberships from government teams. It is expected that Civic Hall Toronto will launch in the spring of 2018 with at least seven government teams. By the beginning of the second year of Civic Hall Toronto, there will be 15 government teams utilising the training, programming and collaboration space.

Additional revenue sources include membership fees from civic innovators, fees-for-service to non-members, corporate innovation memberships and sponsorships.



## **Civic Hall Toronto Members**

To date, the following organisations and divisions have expressed interest in having one or multiple teams from their organisations become members of Civic Hall Toronto:

- Children's Services, City of Toronto
- Economic Development and Culture Division, City of Toronto
- Employment and Social Services, City of Toronto
- Information and Technology, City of Toronto
- Municipal Licensing and Standards Division, City of Toronto
- Transportation Services, City of Toronto
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto Police Services
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- Policy Innovation Hub, Cabinet Office, Government of Ontario
- Ontario Digital Service, Cabinet Office, Government of Ontario
- City of Markham

Additional municipal and provincial departments and corporate innovators are potential members and are being engaged by the Civic Hall Toronto team.

## **Role of Transformation Office and Civic Innovation Office with Civic Hall Toronto**

In addition to the members listed above, the City of Toronto's Transformation Office and Civic Innovation Office would be members of Civic Hall Toronto and would leverage the community of innovators and the community-of-practice developed to further their objectives.

Both Offices have identified Civic Hall Toronto as a complementary initiative that will help accelerate their work, as projects that are not large enough to fit their mandates, or that they do not have the resources to address, can be referred to Civic Hall Toronto to be completed.

## **Alignment with Toronto's Open Data Master Plan**

Toronto's Open Data Master Plan acknowledges that the City's thriving and diverse communities are central to the open data movement. The "Connection" theme in the master plan in particular recognizes that partnership development, which can be achieved through avenues like Civic Hall, is mutually beneficial and necessary for achieving the vision and goals of a mature open data program.

## **Next Steps**

City staff will continue to work with Code for Canada and the Centre for Social Innovation to finalise the plans for launching Civic Hall Toronto in the spring of 2018. That will include working with interested City Divisions and their teams to get engaged as members and get them involved in leveraging Civic Hall Toronto to further their specific goals of improving public services through engagement with the community.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Civic Hall Toronto Overview