

City-owned Spaces for DIY Music Organizations

What are “DIY music organizations”?

Vary widely in

- organizational structure
- **cultural or demographic communities they serve**
- genres of music / art they present, and how it's presented

In general:

- embrace an **ethic of self-sufficiency**
- master a range of business and event production functions in order to meet their needs with limited financial resources and institutional support
- operate across the city
 - provide opportunities for **artists and audiences to build community through live music**
 - generate economic activity and social vibrancy
 - contribute to Toronto's cultural fabric

How do DIY music organizations operate?

- don't consistently operate in the same bricks-and-mortar properties via either ownership, leasing, or regular rentals
 - **typically present "pop-up" performances in temporary spaces**
- program around a **clearly defined artistic character or social group**
 - often vital to strategy and operations (vs generating revenue)
- often curate events blending music with other art forms
- frequently include knowledge sharing, mentorship, and advocacy in programming and use of space

The Need to Assist Toronto's DIY Music Communities

Essential to the artistic lifeblood of Toronto's music community

- often **provide performance opportunities to artists working in marginalized genres**

City of Toronto commitment to equity and inclusion

- aligns with supporting the existence of spaces for every kind of artistic and cultural community to gather and create art

DIY music organizations face challenges related to access to space:

- minimal staffing, infrastructure; little long-term financial stability
- difficulties in obtaining permits
- some DIY events happen "under the radar" – safety concerns

Consultations

Nov 2019 – Jan 2020: Music Office consulted DIY music event organizers (including TMAC members)

- **many groups would value the stability** resulting from a tenancy in a City-owned space
- access to the space at low / no cost ➡ **adventurous programming & uses** that connect with groups' artistic & social communities **without constant concern around generating revenue on each event**
- many groups would be **open to forming collectives** to operate a City-owned space while delivering equitable and diverse programming and activities prioritized by the City

Consultations - detail

Location

- downtown core
 - Roncesvalles / Lake Ontario / Parliament / Bloor
- Stirling Rd; Geary Ave
- east end
- Scarborough

Building details

- performance space
 - stage, PA, FOH, lighting
 - 3 sizes (150, 500, 1,000+)
- food / bev sales
- co-working / meeting space
- rehearsal, recording, instruction
- basic infrastructure
 - accessible washrooms, upgraded electrical, lighting fixtures, phone / Ethernet jacks, and Wi-Fi
- general state of good repair

Consultations - detail

Programming models

- partnership or collective
- **anchor organization or organizations to oversee operations**
 - consultation with the local community
 - managing revenue and expenses
 - hiring staff
 - scheduling events and activities
- space could be rented to other DIY organizations for pop-up events
- **daytime / nighttime programming**
- diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility - including all-ages
- mentorship and incubation
- rehearsal
- community radio station operations
- **bar/cafe/restaurant operations**
- “social mixing” - bringing people together from different walks of life

Consultations - detail

Financial models:

- main obstacles:
 - expense of renting space & equipment
 - cost and difficulty of obtaining necessary permits
 - uncertainty of being shut down by regulators
- **if City provided (at no or low cost) a secure space, up to code, DIY tenants could cover annual operating costs:**
 - staffing
 - event production
 - promotion
 - minor structural improvements

Assessment of interest:

- Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)
 - identify organizations interested in interim tenancy to deliver agreed-on programming
 - encourage risk-taking, innovation, inclusive programming, community connections w/o need for constant financial success
- **“interim tenancy” = 1 yr to 5 yrs**
 - City determines case-by-case for each property

Jurisdictional Review

Interim tenancy by music/arts organizations in City spaces:

- Paris, France ("a responsibility to support creation"):
 - "La Station Gare des Mines" (unused railway coal depot) occupied by DIY music organization
 - "Les Grands Voisins" (shuttered hospital) occupied by a coalition of DIY arts organizations including music, visual arts, artisans, and community gardens
 - "Ground Control" (former rail / bus depot) renovated and occupied by food and art entrepreneurs, with theatre, live music, children's activities
- Seattle, Washington:
 - "Project Vera" operates out of the City-owned Seattle Center complex as a music incubation hub for youth – hosts several performances / week; provides recording studio & gallery space
- Sydney, Australia:
 - "Creative Space" program makes City-owned properties available at subsidized rates to organizations working in the cultural sector, offering tenancies of varying length for live/work spaces and arts organizations. As of 2018, the program had supported 23 music and performance artists or organizations.

Assessment of Opportunities

- The **City of Toronto owns 5,500+ properties**
 - Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM) is responsible for their management
 - CreateTO handles any properties slated for redevelopment
 - 142 City-owned or managed spaces are leased at lower than market value, either under Community Space Tenancy policy or through special lease arrangements
 - **the City's real estate portfolio also has a number of properties that are unused or under-utilized**
- Staff in EDC have met with staff in Real Estate Services and CreateTO re the recommendations in this report
 - Real Estate Services now have information about ideal property location, description, and other details from the Music Office consultations with DIY music organizations
 - they **have begun identifying possible properties for this purpose**
 - additional suggestions have come from DIY music organizations / event organizers
- **Developing an inventory** of City-owned properties suitable for use by DIY music organizations **will require coordinated effort across several City divisions and agencies**
 - Real Estate Services' extensive portfolio
 - need to fully assess any properties potentially usable by DIY music organizations

Recommendations

The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to work with the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management to **develop the terms of a pilot program for DIY (do-it-yourself) music organizations to use City-owned spaces at lower than market value**, and report back to the Toronto Music Advisory Committee at their meeting in September 2020.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to work with the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management to **develop an inventory of City-owned properties suitable for tenancy by DIY (do-it-yourself) music organizations at lower than market value**, and report back to the Toronto Music Advisory Committee at their meeting in September 2020.

TMAC involvement?

Assist with developing recommendations:

- Consult further with DIY organizations re models, roles / responsibilities
- Help generate / coordinate additional specific property suggestions

Questions / comments?