

City Council

(Deferred from December 15, 16 and 17, 2021 - 2021.MM38.21)

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| DM39.2 | ACTION | | | Ward: All |
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Making Space to Save The Arts in Toronto - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, in consultation with the Toronto Arts Council, to consider the feasibility of a grant which supports the promotion and preservation of independent live performance venues and art spaces in Toronto and to report back through the 2022 budget process, including but not limited to:
 - a. a new grant stream pilot, to be administered by Toronto Arts Council;
 - b. add-on to existing grant structures to direct operational funding toward obtaining, or maintaining a venue;
 - c. scalable options for a variety of venue sizes, operational costs, and
 - d. estimated additional funding required to implement the recommended program.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, in consultation with Strategic Communications, to provide recommendations on outreach and educational campaigns promoting existing programs at the federal, provincial and municipal programs to support cultural recovery.
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report on recommendations for granting reform for all municipal cultural granting programs to better advance Equity-deserving groups and new organizations by July 2022.
4. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to develop comprehensive plans and policy recommendations that will sustain the arts and culture sector, including the possibility of working with for-profit organizations, structured partnerships, Business Improvements Areas, and CreateTO to develop smart, long-term policies for operations of City-owned cultural spaces, and to report back to City Council by July 2022.
5. City Council direct the City Manager, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, to recommend a cost estimate for interim financial supports for arts and culture

spaces through the 2022 budget process, and to consider a segregated fund to assist with the replacement of existing cultural space for artists and venue operators lost through the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and consistent with Part 18 of the Building Back Stronger Report adopted by Council December 7, 2020.

6. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, in consultation with the City Solicitor, the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, to determine recommendations for alternative location for the displaced arts organizations and vendors in the Distillery, including a review of the City's portfolio of available spaces in the Distillery District and the local community and opportunities to fill vacant storefronts and report to City Council on outcomes in 2022.

7. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to prioritize efforts to secure new affordable and permanent space for arts and culture uses through new development applications in the Distillery District and the local community.

8. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, in consultation with the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management and the local Business Improvement Area, to explore the feasibility of providing pop-up storefronts and other accessible spaces from across the City for both non-profit and for-profit arts businesses and to report back to City Council in the first quarter of 2022.

Summary

Arts and culture make up the fabric of every major city, and it is integral to tourism, hospitality and the well being of life in our downtown. The arts have been a critical piece to the collective well-being of residents, and it will be essential in the recovery of the downtown and the City of Toronto.

Over the past two years, we have seen many businesses shutter permanently, and have seen many arts organizations lose their venues and spaces to operate and rehearse. Most recent examples are Rehearsal Factory, a substantial building dedicated to rehearsal for live music; Sterling Lofts, an intimate artistic hub, and now several artisans from the Distillery District. Not only is the loss of these arts organizations a detriment to arts and culture in Toronto, but further perpetuates empty storefronts and lost businesses to our streets.

If the City of Toronto is serious in its recovery, we cannot afford to forget about an investment in arts and culture, especially for the two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (2SLGBTQ) and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. If we wish to remain a hub for the creative industry, we have to find creative and supportive solutions to sustain the future of arts and culture or we risk losing our innovators, creators, storytellers and performers forever. It cannot wait.