

2SLGBTQ+ Small Businesses and Cultural Spaces

Date: January 6, 2022

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Interim General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The City of Toronto has long led efforts to address challenges facing small businesses and the need to make cultural spaces available to local communities. However, Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (2SLGBTQ+) spaces continue to be in danger of disappearing. 2SLGBTQ+ communities have historically been marginalized and face significant systemic barriers. Small businesses and cultural spaces are important for their sense of identity, safety and belonging. They are also critical for Toronto's economic and cultural vitality, and for it to continue to be a city where all feel included and welcome.

This report provides an update on work regarding City Council's direction to protect 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces. It thus outlines the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) division's work focused on the Church-Wellesley Village and on 2SLGBTQ+ communities across Toronto. It also includes findings from engagement with stakeholders, and a review of relevant City of Toronto programs and services with a focus on whether and how they specifically support 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

As an immediate next step, the Economic Development and Culture division will work on outreach, educational and awareness initiatives to support the retention and growth of 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses. Reports on individual initiatives will be brought to the Economic and Community Development Committee in 2022. These will include a staff report on final recommendations for a Cultural District Program to protect small businesses and cultural spaces in the Church-Wellesley Village.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications arising from the actions contained in this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on January 29, 2020, City Council directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to conduct a comprehensive review of relevant City of Toronto programs, and develop recommendations to support the retention and growth of independently owned and operated 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural space in Church-Wellesley and across the city.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.MM14.8>

At its meeting on December 16, 17, and 18, 2020, City Council adopted the Building Back Stronger report and its recommendations. Among recommendations: pursue a program of specific community investments to promote the encouragement, scaling and sustainability of business and cultural enterprises led by Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving groups.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EC18.15>

At its meeting on April 7 and 8, 2021, City Council directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to explore opportunities, including expanding existing programs and creating new ones, to protect and preserve independent live performance venues and drag bars.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.MM31.33>

At its meeting on November 9, 10, and 12, 2021, City Council directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to develop a cultural district program for Toronto as a long-term approach to protect small businesses and cultural spaces in community hubs, including the Church-Wellesley Village.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EC25.3>

COMMENTS

City of Toronto Programs and Services – Key Considerations

City staff conducted a review of relevant City of Toronto programs and services and an analysis of whether and how they support 2SLGBTQ+ communities. The 25 programs and services included in the review were selected because:

- They support businesses and/or cultural spaces in one or more of the following categories: supports for starting small businesses, supports for retaining/expanding small businesses, supports for creative businesses, access to City space for arts and culture, supports that promote a commercial and cultural neighbourhood identity.
- They were ongoing City of Toronto programs as of November 2021, occurring on a regular basis (yearly, quarterly, etc.).

Attachment 1 provides a brief description of each program and service included in the review, and summarizes how they support 2SLGBTQ+ communities, focusing on:
(a) Whether the program, or part of it, has an explicit focus on 2SLGBTQ+ communities,
(b) Whether 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are accessing and/or benefiting from the program.

The review, based on the two criteria above, demonstrates that City of Toronto programs and services that support small businesses and cultural spaces:

- do not have a focus on 2SLGBTQ+-owned and/or operated businesses and cultural spaces. The exception is the Social Procurement Program, which provides opportunities to diverse suppliers, including 50 2SLGBTQ+-owned vendors certified by the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC).
- with a few exceptions, do not capture sociodemographic data on whether they are being accessed by 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and/or if 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are benefitting from them. Exceptions are as follows:
 - A total of 323 Enterprise Toronto Seminars attendees (16% of the total, 2048) self-identified as 2SLGBTQ+ between January 27 and October 31, 2021.
 - A total of 14 Starter Company Plus Grant (12% of the total, 123) were approved for clients who self-identified as 2SLGBTQ+ during the period of April 1, 2020 – October 31, 2021.

Findings of the review do not mean that 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are not accessing City of Toronto programs and services – instead, findings illustrate that there is insufficient information to determine whether 2SLGBTQ+ communities are benefitting from them. Programs and services regarding small businesses and cultural spaces are open and available to all residents regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

In addition to the programs and services outlined in Attachment 1, funding for artists and organizations is provided through the Toronto Arts Council (TAC). The success rate for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual (2SLGBTQIAP) for grants through TAC was of 40% in 2020 – representing 269 grants and a total of \$3,983,559, thus being slightly higher than the overall success rate of 37%. Other TAC priority groups' success rates were as follows: Indigenous (49%), Persons of Colour (40%) and Deaf Persons, Persons with a Disability and/or Persons Living with Mental Illness (34%).

Examples of TAC-funded organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIAP community are:

- Buddies in Bad Times Theatre – Theatre Operating grant
- Toronto Queer Media & Arts Centre – Visual & Media Arts Operating grant
- Inside Out Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Inc. – Visual & Media Arts Operating grant
- Glad Day Bookshop Proud Voices Collective – Literary Project grants (2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015)
- Hot Damn It's A Queer Slam – Literary Projects grants (2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017)
- That's So Gay Collective – Visual & Media Arts Project grants (2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015)

Engagement with Stakeholders – Key Considerations

Between January and March 2020, City staff consulted stakeholders on general challenges that 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces have been facing in Toronto. Additional engagement on this topic was conducted in August and September, 2021. They included organizations, experts on heritage conservation and the Church-Wellesley Village BIA. Attachment 2 outlines the list of meetings and stakeholders consulted.

The following key considerations were identified during stakeholder engagement:

- 2SLGBTQ+ spaces are meaningful to 2SLGBTQ+ communities, being important to their sense of safety and their sense of belonging. These spaces are also significant to Toronto's multiculturalism and economic prosperity.
- Cultural venues and businesses, including places seen as community hubs by the 2SLGBTQ+ community, have been disappearing because of increased costs and new developments. This has negatively impacted 2SLGBTQ+ visibility.
- Development speculation, increasing unaffordability, and the negative and ongoing impact of COVID-19 in retail make it essential to make the protection of 2SLGBTQ+ spaces a priority, proactively supporting Toronto's economy, culture and history.
- The Church-Wellesley Village, in particular, has historically been a community hub and tourist destination, concentrating unique cultural spaces, stores, bookshops and eateries that are meaningful to the identity of Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ community.
- Although it is essential to protect the Church-Wellesley Village and what it represents for the 2SLGBTQ+ community and for the city, it is also important to support, protect and promote 2SLGBTQ+ spaces across Toronto.
- A focus on 2SLGBTQ+ youth, women, and Black and racialized communities is needed to ensure a fulsome and intersectional approach to protecting 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces.
- To ensure long-term positive outcomes, it is important to protect long-standing meaningful spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and also encourage the formation and creation of new 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces.

In addition, local stakeholders and community leaders were consulted specifically on how the City of Toronto can support independent live performance venues. Two consultations on this topic took place in November and December, 2021. Attendees are outlined in Attachment 2, and included Space Space Revolution, #IndieUnite, the Assembly Theatre and Buddies in Bad Times. Stakeholders provided the following recommendations, which will help inform next steps on potential supports for live

performance venues:

- Developing a City-promoted campaign to encourage audience development and appreciation for the arts, especially do-it-yourself arts;
- Leading broader and proactive information-sharing on City resources, including the ones that support businesses;
- Providing micro-grants to make spaces more accessible for cultural activities;
- Implementing forms to reduce fees for organizations seeking to animate public spaces.

An update on preliminary work, including considerations identified during stakeholder engagement, was presented to the 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee on June 22, 2021. Another update, with a focus on obtaining strategic advice for the development of tools to protect cultural hubs such as the Church-Wellesley Village, was presented to the 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee on September 27, 2021.

Initiatives to Protect 2SLGBTQ+ Small Businesses and Cultural Spaces – Updates

The below outlines work that Economic Development and Culture has initiated and/or will initiate in 2022 to protect 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces. Based on advice provided by the 2SLGBTQ+ Council Advisory Committee, they are categorized as specific to the Church-Wellesley Village and to 2SLGBTQ+ communities in general. It is important to note that these are in addition to:

- The ongoing City of Toronto programs and services that are outlined in Attachment 1 and that are open to all residents regardless of gender and sexual orientation;
- The small business property tax subclass approved by City Council on November 12, 2021, which will help small businesses within downtown and growth centres through a 15 per cent reduction in the tax rate.

Church-Wellesley Village Small Businesses and Cultural Spaces

- As part of the City's ShowLoveTO, a hyper-local tourism campaign that supports the city's economic and cultural recovery, one of the 24 six-foot LoveTO red heart installations was placed in Barbara Hall Park. In addition, three organizations in the area participated in the ShowLoveTO Partner Program, which enables organizations to create programming with an emphasis on equity and inclusion:
 - Singing Out! The Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Toronto - \$5,000
 - Story Planet - \$10,000
 - Seeds of Hope Foundation - \$5,000
- StrollTO, a campaign developed to highlight neighbourhood points of interest that are culturally and historically significant, compiles 140 self-guided walking itineraries. The Church-Yonge Corridor itinerary includes points of interest that are meaningful to the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the Church-Wellesley Village, such as GladDay Bookshop and the John Kuna mural at Barbara Hall Park.
- As an immediate step to advance recovery, the City supported the Church-Wellesley Business Improvement Area (BIA) with a Community Economic Development grant of \$20,000 for "Recovery and Rebuild to Support and Strategize" sessions for local business owners/entrepreneurs in the Church-Wellesley Village. This was in addition to the following supports to the Church-Wellesley BIA in the past 2 years:
 - Winter Activation Grant (2020) - \$12,500
 - Mural and Street Art Grant (2021) - \$5,000

- CaféTO Grant (2020) - \$5,000 each year
- CaféTO Grant (2021) - \$5,000
- Downtown East Action Plan Grant (2021): \$50,000 Some of the “Signs of Safety” Winter Activations in the Village
- BIA Streetscape Master Plan funding approved (2020) and study underway (2021) – 50% of final cost up to \$25,000
- Based on the key considerations identified during stakeholder engagement, a Cultural District Program is being developed as a long-term approach to protect small businesses, and cultural and heritage spaces within areas that are community hubs, including the Church-Wellesley Village. A staff report was considered by the City Council on November 12, 2021. As part of this work, City staff will also explore the possibility of a legacy business program and broader engagement will begin in early 2022.

City-wide 2SLGBTQ+ Small Businesses and Cultural Spaces

- ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art 2021-22 has prioritized voices traditionally excluded from public art. Over 85% of the more than one thousand artists supported by ArtworxTO are Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. Some examples that focus on gender dynamics include a 70 foot mural, 'Untitled,' on Bay Street by artist Jorian Charlton and Esmaa Mohamoud's monumental mural, 'The Brotherhood FUBU (For Us, By Us),' at Bay and Queen's Quay West.
- The City's new festivals program will ensure that key anchor festivals, such as Pride Toronto, have reliable multi-year access to funding. Although not specific to 2SLGBTQ+ communities, guidelines also allow for smaller organizations to apply for a project funding. The festivals program was considered at City Council on November 12, 2021.

Next Steps

As next steps, the Economic Development and Culture division will:

- Consider options for further support for live independent venues based on the key considerations identified through community engagement.
- Conduct broader engagement with Church-Wellesley Village residents to ensure that the Cultural Districts program reflects their priorities. A report on final recommendations will be brought to City Council in Q3 2022.
- Explore a potential partnership with the Church-Wellesley BIA and the Toronto Public Library to organize small business information sessions in the Church-Wellesley Village and offer business consultations in the area.
- Explore initiatives to better support 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses through education and awareness activities. These may include a potential partnership with the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) to co-develop and co-host small business information sessions for their members, and co-hosting a "Doing Business with the City and Social Procurement" session targeted at 2SLGBTQ+ communities.
- Increase existing efforts to promote awareness of various EDC culture and business support programs -- including Toronto Main Street Recovery and Rebuild initiatives such as the Retail Accelerator Program, Main Street Innovation Fund, and Commercial Space Rehabilitation Grant program – through targeted social media advertising to the 2SLGBTQ+ community, advertising and media coverage pitching

with 2SLGBTQ+ focused media outlets, and community outreach to organizations.

The division will also seek direction from the Gender Equity Office – through the Gender Equity Strategy to be developed – for initiatives regarding 2SLGBTQ+ small businesses and cultural spaces to be implemented in upcoming years.

CONTACT

Mariana Mota, Policy Development Officer, Economic Development and Culture, 416-392-6835, Mariana.Mota@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Cheryl Blackman
Interim General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Review of Programs and Services
Attachment 2 - Engagement - List of Meetings