

City Council

Motion without Notice

MM45.47	ACTION			Ward: All
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Digital Main Street - 2022 Program Sponsorship - by Mayor John Tory, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate*

Recommendations

Mayor John Tory, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to contribute and transfer to the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas a total of up to \$550,000.00 per annum in 2022 and 2023 for costs associated with Digital Main Street Program delivery in Toronto.
2. City Council authorize the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to negotiate, enter into and execute on behalf of the City a contribution / funding agreement with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas for a two-year term with a contribution amount of up to \$550,000 per annum, on such terms as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Summary

This Motion seeks City Council authority to continue the City's financial partnership with Digital Main Street through the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas in the amount of \$550,000 in 2022 and \$550,000 in 2023.

Digital Main Street was initiated by the City of Toronto and the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas in 2016 to assist main street businesses to grow their operations through technology with easy to use tools and resources. Digital Main Street is owned and operated by Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas. The City's continued support will be another important element in bringing about a strong post-pandemic recovery for Toronto.

Since 2018 the City has provided funding for Digital Main Street's Digital Service Squads, through the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, to provide hyperlocal targeted support to small businesses in Toronto. This service was initially focused on Business Improvement Areas but has since expanded to be able to assist main street businesses in neighbourhoods across the city. Digital Main Street currently has up to 10 Digital Service Squad members servicing businesses in Toronto as well as delivering bi-weekly workshops for

Enterprise Toronto. In 2021 Digital Main Street assisted roughly 2,000 businesses in Toronto through its Digital Service Squad and workshops series. The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas and Digital Main Street have also supported the development and launch of LocateHere with the City's Business Improvement Area Office, a platform to provide data analytics tools to local Business Improvement Areas.

In 2022 and 2023 certain Digital Main Street staff will be focused on supporting businesses in underserved areas of Toronto not currently represented by Business Improvement Areas. These Digital Main Street Digital Service Squad staff will be trained by the City of Toronto's Business Improvement Area Office on various City (grant and assistance) programs available to small businesses, so that they can make the businesses they work with more aware of these supports and opportunities. This innovative approach is designed to take fuller advantage of the direct touch-points which Digital Main Street Digital Service Squad staff have with local business operators in their own communities.

The City's Business Improvement Area Office will maintain regular communication with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas and Digital Main Street to ensure deliverables are met, and will use various metrics (e.g. number of businesses supported, number of webinars delivered, number of neighborhoods canvassed, etc.) to assess and strengthen the impact of Toronto's investment in this evolving main street business development partnership.

Funding to cover the City's financial commitment related to Digital Main Street is available in the Economic Development and Culture division's base Operating Budget.

This Motion is urgent as it relates to reimbursement for on-going Digital Main Street programming for the 2022 calendar year.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM45.47