

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM20.4	ACTION			Ward: 11
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Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds from the Development at 1 Bloor Street West to St. Clare's MultiFaith Housing for the Construction and Fit Out of a New Theatre and Rehearsal Space at 877 Yonge Street - by Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Josh Matlow

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Josh Matlow, recommends that:

1. City Council increase the 2024 Operating Budget for Non-Program on a one-time basis by \$600,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the development at 1-11 Bloor Street West, 768-784 Yonge Street, and 760-762 Yonge Street (Source Account: XR3026-3701060) secured for capital improvements for new or existing cultural and/or community space, to be utilized for the construction and fit out of a theatre, office and rehearsal space at City-owned 877 Yonge Street (Cost Centre: NP2161).
2. City Council direct that the \$600,000 be forwarded to St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society for construction of a theatre, office and rehearsal space at 877 Yonge Street, upon the signing of an Undertaking by St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society to govern the use of the funds and the financial reporting requirements, on the same terms as for the original \$1.25 million.

Summary

Nightwood Theatre and Tapestry Opera have jointly agreed to lease the sub-basement of City-owned 877 Yonge Street to become their new theatre, office and rehearsal space. The sub-basement requires substantial renovation to be turned into a community theatre, rehearsal studio, and offices, and to be made wheelchair accessible. The space will be shared with other community performing arts groups and used not only for performances to the broader community, but also for workshops involving performing artists, students, and residents of 877 Yonge St.

The Nightwood Theatre and Tapestry Opera operated for many years out of a theatre, office and rehearsal space in the Distillery District. Dozens of other performing artists and arts groups also used these facilities for rehearsals and performances.

The pandemic was brutally difficult for all performing artists and arts groups, including the Nightwood Theatre and Tapestry Opera. In addition, the Distillery District closed the theatre on

which they depended and converted it to other uses. They have therefore been searching the city for replacement facilities that they can afford, with little success.

877 Yonge Street is owned by the City of Toronto, and is used primarily to provide supportive housing to disabled and other tenants. The City has contracted with St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society to manage the building. St. Clare's welcomes the opportunity to add a community cultural facility to the building. Among other things, this helps to build a stronger, more positive relationship between St. Clare's, its supportive housing tenants, and the surrounding community.

The developer of 208 Bloor Street West agreed to contribute \$500,000 to fit out the performance room (auditorium) as part of its in-kind Community Benefits; this was approved by Council in March, 2023. Council also approved \$1.25 million in s. 37 funds from 1 Bloor Street West, earmarked for community or cultural space, to renovate the rest of the space and to make it wheel-chair accessible. The project has earned the strong support of both neighbourhood residents' associations, ABC Residents Association and the Greater Yorkville Residents' Association, and is important to Toronto's performing arts community.

Unfortunately, due to the collapse of the condo market, development of 208 Bloor Street West has been indefinitely delayed, as has payment of the associated Community Benefits. The renovation of 877 Yonge is well underway, and the theatre companies have commitments to commence performances in January of 2025. Accordingly, the ward Councillor proposes to reallocate the Community Benefits from 208 Bloor, and to make up the missing funds with additional s. 37 funds in hand from 1 Bloor Street West.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM20.4

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-247775.pdf>)