

**City Council****Motion Without Notice**

<b>MM24.26</b>	<b>ACTION</b>			Ward: 13
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**Continuing to Support Small Businesses Through Partnership with Digital Main Street - by Councillor Chris Moise, seconded by Councillor Alejandra Bravo**

*\* Notice of this Motion has not been given. A two-thirds vote is required to waive notice.  
\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.  
\* This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Chris Moise, seconded by Councillor Alejandra Bravo, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to provide a financial contribution to the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas to a total of up to \$250,000 in 2024 and a further \$200,000 in 2025, subject to funds being available in the 2025 budget, for costs associated with Digital Main Street Program delivery to benefit small businesses in Toronto.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to negotiate, enter into and execute on behalf of the City a funding agreement with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas for a two-year term with a total contribution amount of up to \$450,000, subject to funds being available in the 2025 budget, on such terms as deemed necessary and appropriate by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, 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 \$250,000 in 2024 and \$200,000 in 2025.

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. 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. In 2022 and 2023, Digital Main Street focused on supporting businesses in underserved areas of Toronto not currently represented by Business Improvement Areas. 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.

These Digital Main Street Digital Service Squad staff are 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.

This agreement advances Sidewalk to Sidelines: An Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2024 EC.16.2). Specifically, it helps to implement the "Strong Main Streets" priority and Action 11, "Keep small businesses open and thriving." Small businesses on main streets are critical to a locally robust economy, and contributes to making Toronto a dynamic, desirable and inclusive city.

On November 13, 2024 City Council approved the following recommendation to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan, "City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to apply for, negotiate and enter into agreement(s) with other governments, institutions, agencies, and vendors as required to advance the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2025-2035), including partnership agreements, data sharing agreements, and funding agreements, in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor."

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 retaining staff for on-going Digital Main Street programming for the 2024 and 2025 calendar years.

This motion is urgent as the funding agreement will allow Digital Main Street to retain staff and maintain service levels for the 2024 and 2025 calendar years.

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM24.26

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-251583.pdf>)