

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM31.4	ACTION			Ward: 9
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Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds to Heritage Toronto for Heritage Plaque at 101 Dewson Street - by Councillor Alejandra Bravo, seconded by Councillor Chris Moise

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

1. City Council increase the 2025 Operating Budget for Heritage Toronto on a one-time basis by \$10,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained in the development at 40-42 Westmoreland Avenue (Source Account: XR3026-3700529), secured for researching and identifying heritage resources, for the production and installation of a heritage plaque recognizing the legacy of Dewson House as a hub of Black and racialized 2SLGBTIQ+ activism in Toronto at 101 Dewson Street (Cost Centre: HG0001).

Summary

In the 1980s, 101 Dewson Street was a thriving hub of black, gay and lesbian activism in Toronto.

The house in Dufferin Grove was the home of writer, editor, and activist Makeda Silvera, who started the Dewson House Collective with her partner Stephanie Martin in 1983, turning the century-old home into a hotbed of activity and organizing.

Many important organizations came out of 101 Dewson Street, including Lesbians of Colour and Sister Vision Press. Zami — one of the first organizations in Toronto and Canada specifically for gay and lesbian people of colour — was created around the kitchen table at 101 Dewson by Debbie Douglas, Makeda Silvera, and Douglas Stewart.

Zami meetings were held at the 519 Church Street Community Centre and out of 101 Dewson. They focused on supporting group members, homophobia within the Black community, and racism within the 2SLGBTIQ+ community, as well as political conversations.

The people, groups, and public events that came out of 101 Dewson Street have links to organizations like the Black Women's Collective, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, Blockorama and many more that play vital roles in supporting Toronto's Black 2SLGBTIQ+ communities.

101 Dewson is a significant physical landmark for Toronto's Black and racialized 2SLGBTIQ+ community. A collective home of queer activists in the 1980s and 1990s, Dewson House, as its lovingly known, served as a place of creative activism, refuge, and home for many making their journeys to self.

Featured in two films and anthologies on queer Toronto organizing, Dewson House is the touchstone for many Black and queers of colour. This is also true for many feminist women who came of age during the political activism of the 1980s and 1990s.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM31.4