

## MOTION

### **Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds for accessibility and performance upgrades to cultural facilities in Ward 11 (TRANZAC, Annex and Al Green Theatres)**

Moved by: Councillor Saxe

Seconded by: Councillor Myers

#### **SUMMARY:**

Ward 11 has a vibrant and popular collection of small theatres which host a variety of performances, including the heart of the ever-popular Toronto Fringe festival. These small theatres are essential for Toronto's performing arts community and for everyone who benefits from their performances.

Unfortunately, many of these theatres are in desperate need of upgrades, particularly for accessibility, climate resilience, and performance quality. Capital funds for these purposes have been in very short supply for a long time.

TRANZAC, at 292 Brunswick Ave, is a vibrant not-for-profit performance arts organization dedicated to nurturing artistic expression and fostering community connections. The building contains three performance spaces that accommodate audiences of 20 to 150 people each. TRANZAC has a long history of supporting the performing arts. TRANZAC is home to dozens of artistic communities, the Toronto Zine Library, and over 70 performance residency artists. It hosts 1400+ events a year.

TRANZAC operates as a low-barrier community arts venue, thus having an outsized impact on the arts in our city. There is no cover charge to enter the venue and no drink minimum. Many events operate on a pass-the-hat model, with voluntary audience contributions directed to artists. A significant portion of programming is offered on a Pay-What-You-Can or No-One-Turned Away basis, helping ensure community members can access live performance regardless of income.

TRANZAC needs to upgrade its aging and unreliable HVAC and electrical systems, reduce energy leaks, and upgrade its washrooms. Gender-neutral accessible bathrooms will increase human dignity, privacy and safety for all, while reducing water waste and unpleasant odours. Modern efficient heat pumps will allow TRANZAC to operate reliably in all weathers, and while reducing operating costs. They could also allow TRANZAC to act as a cooling centre for members of the public during extreme heat events, as part of Toronto's Heat Relief Strategy, <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX28.4>. The Annex Residents' Association has been consulted on these improvements.

The Al Green Theatre at 750 Spadina Avenue hosts a variety of cultural arts events including theatre, music, dance, film and literature. These events are attended by about 25,000 people a year of various ages, cultures, and demographics. However, use of the theatre is limited by its outdated wiring, lighting, projection and acoustic facilities, by doors that are not accessible, and by the rickety narrow stairs that provide access to the stage. Proposed capital upgrades will improve accessibility, enhance the audience experience and allow the theatre to host a wider range of cultural arts events, including current films.

The Annex Theatre in the Randolph Centre at 730 Bathurst Street hosts a variety of cultural arts events including theatre, music, dance, film and literature. It has been a very popular venue for the Toronto Fringe Festival, offering one of the larger theatres in the immediate area. However, the Fringe cannot use this theatre in 2026 unless it is made accessible to all by installing an AODA compliant ramp. The theatre has committed to install such a ramp in time for the 2026 Toronto Fringe Festival if we approve these funds now.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. City Council increase the 2026 Operating Budget for Non-Program on a one-time basis by \$550,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the development at 316 Bloor Street West (Source Account: XR3026-3701257), secured for capital improvements to new or existing cultural and/or community space, to be used to update HVAC and associated systems at TRANZAC, and to install fully accessible gender-neutral washrooms (Cost Centre: NP2161).
2. City Council direct that the \$550,000 be forwarded to TRANZAC upon the signing of an Undertaking by TRANZAC that governs the use of the funds and the financial reporting requirements.
3. City Council increase the 2026 Operating Budget for Non-Program on a one-time basis by \$300,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the following developments:
  - a. 50-60, 62 and 64 Charles St. E. & 47 and 61 Hayden St. (Source Account: XR3026-3700671), secured for cultural space, in the amount of \$187,750.51; and
  - b. 27-37 Yorkville Ave. & 26-32 and 50 Cumberland St. (Source Account: XR3026-3701297), secured for cultural space, in the amount of \$112,249.49

to be used to update wiring, lighting, projection and acoustic facilities at the Al Green Theatre and to improve accessibility (Cost Centre: NP2161).
4. City Council direct that the \$300,000 be forwarded to the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre upon the signing of an Undertaking by the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre that governs the use of the funds and the financial reporting requirements.
5. City Council increase the 2026 Operating Budget for Non-Program on a one-time basis by \$50,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the

development at 50-60, 62 and 64 Charles St. E. & 47 and 61 Hayden St. (Source Account: XR3026-3700987), secured for cultural space, to be used to install an AODA compliant ramp at the Annex Theatre in the Randolph Centre for the Arts at 730 Bathurst Street (Cost Centre: NP2161).

6. City Council direct that the \$50,000 be forwarded to the Randolph Centre for the Arts upon the signing of an Undertaking by the Randolph Centre for the Arts that governs the use of the funds and the financial reporting requirements.