



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	December 8, 2021
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Multi-Purpose Community Hub for Diverse and Marginalized Communities (HSC21045) (City Wide) <b>(Outstanding Business List Item)</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Jennifer Hohol (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7857
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Grace Mater General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

The General Issues Committee at its meeting of November 6, 2019 approved the following:

- (a) That staff be directed to convene with residents, community groups and organizations engaged in serving equity-seeking communities that are interested in collaborating to develop a business case for a multi-purpose community hub;
- (b) That the multi-purpose community hub aims to strengthen community capacity, resilience and responsiveness to address safer space, programming and service needs and gaps for historically marginalized communities; and,
- (c) That the business case for the creation of a “hub” include viable locations, possible sustainable funding sources, and a multi-year operation plan and report back to the General Issues Committee in Q2 2020 for review and consideration.

## INFORMATION

Following direction from the General Issues Committee at its meeting of November 6, 2019, staff connected with residents, community groups and organizations engaged in

---

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

serving equity-seeking communities that were interested in collaborating to develop a business case for a multi-purpose community hub. Engagement took place through in person conversations and an online survey.

In early 2020 prior to completing the consultation process, staff working on this portfolio were redeployed to support the City of Hamilton's COVID-19 response efforts placing this work on hold.

Though there has been significant change in the community since the initial engagement took place, it is still believed that a phased approach to implementation must be taken to create a multi-purpose community hub that is one day able to meet the needs of all equity seeking communities. As a first step towards this goal, staff will focus on two specific actions: the creation of a community hub for 2SLGBTQ+ communities and increasing access to meeting space for all equity seeking communities. 2SLGBTQ+ communities must be re-engaged to inform the details of a business case for a future community hub.

### **Community Engagement**

In November 2019, staff began engagement with individuals, community groups and organizations supporting equity-seeking communities. Engagement focused on listening to the space and service needs of communities as well as asking what a safe space looks like for them and their communities.

Staff conducted conversations with:

- all delegates at the General Issues Committee on November 6, 2019 to speak to the motion;
- individuals who expressed interested in the motion;
- community advocates;
- Councillors;
- City of Hamilton and community committees including the LGBTQ Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee for Immigrants and Refugees, Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, Youth Steering Committee, Sudanese Youth Group;
- community organizations including the John Howard Society, Immigrant Working Centre, Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, Spectrum, Hamilton Legal Clinic, SACHA;
- City staff including Xperience Annex Youth Engagers and Urban Indigenous Strategy Project Managers; and,
- a site visit to The 519 in Toronto.

To seek additional feedback, a survey was also made available online between January 15th, 2020 and March 13th, 2020. During this time, 56 surveys were completed. The survey asked community members to provide insight into what programs and services

should to be part of a community hub, where the hub should be located and what needs to be done to ensure the hub embodies a safe space.

### **Outcomes of Community Engagement**

Initial community engagement efforts provided important insights as to what a multi-purpose community hub might look like in Hamilton. Though there were varying perspectives, the one consistent message heard from all communities is the need for meeting space - a place for people to come together, an opportunity to share ideas and a space for celebration.

Other themes from the community conversations included:

- Differences in needs for meeting space varying in size to accommodate 10 to 200 people;
- Varied amenities needed to support community activities including offices, large and small meeting spaces, kitchens, gymnasiums and large event spaces;
- The main barriers to securing meeting space are difficulty in finding event appropriate space and associated costs;
- Need for online space for some communities to effectively communicate to members about available programs, services or events;
- A range of health and human service needs were identified with a clear absence of space and services for 2SLGBTQ+ communities;
- Some communities expressed coming from an environment where gender choice is regulated by law and will not visit space that has 2SLGBTQ+ supported services, staff recognize there may be a hidden intersectionality;
- Equity seeking communities are not limited to a single location within the city;
- Discomfort from some equity seeking communities in attending programming offered within government operated spaces; and
- Any future community hub should be designed, driven, planned and governed by the community members it serves.

Where the motion infers a shared single location for all equity seeking communities to utilize, initial engagement brought awareness that not all equity seeking communities are comfortable sharing the same space.

It is important to note that it has been almost two years since community engagement took place. It will be critical for staff to reconnect with those who were involved in the initial conversations as well as welcome new voices to see if anything has changed over this time or if new needs have come forward as a result of the pandemic.

### **Development of a Business Case for a Multi-Purpose Community Hub**

Though there has been significant change in the community since the initial engagement took place, it is still believed that a phased approach to implementation

must be taken to create a multi-purpose community hub that is one day able to meet the needs of all equity seeking communities.

As a first step towards this goal, staff will focus on two specific actions: the creation of a community hub for 2SLGBTQ+ communities and funding for meeting space for all equity seeking communities. By starting with these two actions, the City will be offering support in response to the immediate needs of equity seeking communities while still being able to learn how communities use space across Hamilton. These learnings will be used to make informed decisions on future development and expansion of community hubs in Hamilton.

#### 1) Creation of a Community Hub for 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

Due to the absence of space and services specific to the 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Hamilton, staff will focus on exploring the development of a single community hub to serve 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Understanding the need to first build a sense of community, sites for this hub will be investigated that provide a space to gather focused on supporting conversations within the community in an inviting atmosphere. From community consultation and review of other hub models, it is envisioned that the hub will grow offering programs and services based on the use of the space and needs that are brought forward by the communities. Many space requirements were captured through the initial community engagement to inform the development of a business case as per the motion. It is unknown if these needs are still accurate two years post-engagement or if they have changed as a result of the pandemic. Reconnecting with community members will be essential to understand their current needs.

#### 2) Funding to Support Meeting Space

Unlike the 2SLGBTQ+ community, there are community partners who provide a range of services for other equity seeking communities, such as newcomers to Hamilton, however, there is a lack of ability to find and fund space for meeting, gathering and celebrating. To improve access to community space, a list of rentable spaces across the city and relevant information on each space will be developed. Where financial barriers exist, staff are investigating the feasibility of establishing a funding pot to help eliminate financial pressures. By supporting equity seeking communities in finding, securing and paying for space, the City will be able to continue to engage on their needs. The size, type, frequency and cost of requests for space will be tracked to inform development of future community hub spaces, services and resources. Opportunities for online space will also be investigated to support communities in effectively communicating to members information on available programs, services or events in Hamilton.

## **Next Steps**

The community engagement that was completed prior to COVID-19 was just a small representation of the voices from equity-seeking communities across Hamilton. Despite this, it was clearly heard through engagement that any future space should be designed, driven, planned and governed by the community members it serves. To address the entirety of the motion, a third-party will be engaged to facilitate the development of a business case by 2SLGBTQ+ communities for the creation of a community hub for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. As per the motion, the business case will include viable locations, sustainable funding sources and multi-year operational plans. City staff will act as a support role to the communities should they require any assistance in the development of the business case. The business case will also identify meeting locations, booking information, funding support and booking criteria available for all equity seeking communities that will be complied by City staff. Updates on this work will continue to be brought forward throughout 2022.

Looking forward, the City will continue to support the development of future community hubs through facilitating the partnerships needed for equity seeking groups to secure space, build leadership capacity and connect to services in Hamilton.

## **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None