

**Date:** 2022-03-09

**Subject:** Recommendation Report – Downtown Advisory Group

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**Report Number:** Planning, Bld & Ec Dev-2022-309

**Recommendations:**

1. **THAT** the report from Ryan Lynn, Downtown Coordinator, dated March 9, 2022, to the Committee of Council Meeting of March 30, 2022 entitled “**Recommendation Report – Downtown Advisory Group**” (2022-309), be received;
2. **THAT** staff create a Downtown Advisory Group to serve as an advisory body to City staff on matters pertaining to issues impacting the economic, social, cultural, environmental, physical and educational conditions involving Downtown Brampton.

**Overview:**

- The intent of this report is to receive Council’s direction on the creation of a Downtown Advisory Group that would act as a group of advisors on the projects and initiatives that intersect the downtown and the ongoing work of the Integrated Downtown Plan and Downtown Projects Centre.
- The Downtown Advisory Group will consist of a cross section of business owners (retail, restaurant, personal & professional services), landlords, innovation district partners, BBOT, BIA, post-secondary institutions, downtown residents, heritage and representative of arts and culture community, and non-profit community organizations.
- This report is consistent with the 2018-2022 Term of Council Priorities as it supports Brampton as a City of Opportunities by using the collective strength of stakeholders to help unlock the downtown and coordinate the Integrated Downtown Plan.

**Background:**

Downtown Brampton is at the intersection of a number of public infrastructure projects, private sector initiatives and organizational changes. Major construction and infrastructure improvements will be underway in 2022, which marks the beginning of substantial changes to the Downtown over the next 3-5 years. During this time, the Downtown will remain open as it recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Downtown is experiencing transformative change as a result of public sector and private sector investment, therefore there is a lot of interest in the Downtown.

*Integrated Downtown Plan*

The City's Integrated Downtown Plan (IDP) is coordinating ongoing initiatives and infrastructure projects in the Downtown Brampton area and will provide an evolving framework to guide future growth and strategic investment in Downtown Brampton to 2051. The Integrated Downtown Plan will focus on achieving mutually beneficial objectives between various projects - defining necessary actions to help advance short, medium and long-term solutions while guiding cross-departmental implementation.

As a result, the IDP team is aligned with the following direct and indirect projects that impact the Downtown:

- Downtown Revitalization Program (Streetscape improvements)
- Riverwalk
- Higher order transit opportunities and CN/Metrolinx Rail Track Expansion
- Ken Whillans Drive Extension
- Innovation District
- Centre of Innovation
- Post-secondary institution attraction
- Heritage Theatre Block revitalization

Post-secondary academic institutions are looking to expand their offerings into the Downtown. The Transit Services Department and the Transportation Planning Section are leading the important transportation initiatives in the Downtown including the all-day GO Service (Anchor Mobility Hub), Main Street-Hurontario Light Rail Transit (LRT), Queen Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and the new Downtown Brampton Bus Transit Terminal (Transit Hub). Metrolinx, in partnership with CN Rail, is undergoing the Kitchener GO expansion that will add a third and fourth track along the rail corridor to support two-way, all-day service from Kitchener to Downtown Toronto. There is also the Transit Station Study, LRT Extension, BRT, Watermain Upgrades, Riverwalk and Streetscape Upgrades – to name a few. Innovation District partners have ambitious plans to grow while the City's Arts and Culture scene along with small main street businesses will continue to be defining characteristics in the Downtown. Private investors are actively showing interest in residential, commercial and institutional opportunities.

The land-use policy framework that governs the activities of the downtown is elaborate as a result of its history, physical constraints, visibility and presence along a major transit corridor. Underlying all these initiatives is the effort to consolidate and protect the City's many heritage properties. Given the number and range of initiatives, the City's Integrated Downtown Plan has been tasked to reconcile these complex issues and maintain consistent communications with all internal and external parties.

Following an extensive public and stakeholder consultation process the Brampton 2040 Vision: Living the Mosaic was endorsed by Council in 2018, which includes the intensification of the Downtown with over 20,000 dwelling units, 55,000 people and 26,000 jobs. The 2040 Vision recommended the need to operationalize strong collaboration by creating more formal ties with business, residents and non-profit organizations to reconcile visions and unleash their collective strength for taking on economic development, planning and design initiatives in the downtown.

In recent years, different administrative strategies have been employed to bridge the gap between broader downtown initiatives and day-to-day operations and activities. More recently, the Downtown Project Centre was created to provide a one window approach for businesses and residents to access, engage and resolve issues of the Downtown.

Along with the establishment of the Downtown Project Centre, Council directed staff to establish a Downtown Advisory team, comprising of stakeholders - selected by the Downtown Project Centre staff, (in consultation with the Downtown BIA, business and land owners, and educational institutions) to assist in providing strategic advice.

### **Current Situation:**

Staff are recommending the creation of a Downtown Advisory Group comprised of a cross-section of business owners and other stakeholders in the downtown. This Group will provide strategic advice to staff on key matters pertaining to economic, social, cultural, environmental, physical and educational conditions involving Downtown Brampton. This Group will provide expertise and advice on the development/delivery of project/program delivery. The Group will guide staff and will be used to test concepts and strategies.

The Advisory Group will act as a champion for Downtown Brampton supporting collaboration amongst the various stakeholders, entrepreneurship and investment. These stakeholders would serve as strategic advisors to the Integrated Downtown Plan (IDP) – facilitating the planning and coordination of projects along with the economic recovery of the downtown. The Group will be comprised of stakeholders who recognize the need to balance growth while remaining sensitive to the historical, cultural characteristics of the City's mature neighbourhoods.

### *Governance:*

The Downtown Advisory Group is a collaborative method for the City of Brampton to engage with external stakeholders and partners. The Group will act as a sounding board for the City to gain new insights and explore new opportunities by stimulating robust conversations. The Commissioner of Planning, Building and Economic Development has the discretionary authority to decide whether a project should/should not be brought to the Downtown Advisory Group.

The Downtown Advisory Group will be chaired by staff from the Planning, Building and Economic Development Department. Staff will provide administrative support, prepare agendas in consultation with the Group and provide the minute's for each meeting. The Advisory Group will have no governance authority or statutory responsibilities, and will be consulted on an ad hoc basis as required. The Group is there to provide advice to staff and be a conduit to the challenges and opportunities generally within the boundaries of the Downtown Secondary Plan.

Group members will be rotated every two years in order to gather fresh, cross-sectional perspectives. Group members should be strategically positioned to effectively promote the goals of their respective organizations. This will allow Group members to effectively communicate as key stakeholders so to receive and better coordinate timely and accurate information. Only one member of any particular firm organization may be allowed to sit on the Group at the same time.

The Downtown Advisory Group will meet not less than six times per year. Meeting dates may be changed or canceled by the Chair, in consultation with the Staff, with prior notice to the Group members.

City Council members and City of Brampton employees are not eligible to participate on the Downtown Advisory Group. Group members will be asked to disclose conflicts of interest and will be recused when there is a perceived lack of impartiality. This will include, but not limited to, financial and/or personal interests, as well as any kind of active involvement that may influence an impartial performance of duties.

It should be noted, the Downtown Advisory Group is not meant to be another layer of bureaucracy. Instead, Group members are meant to add value and provide industry perspectives. Group members are meant to provide real time advice on the initiatives that will contribute to the evolution of the downtown.

- *Chair:* The Downtown Advisory Group will be chaired by City Staff. The Chair will facilitate the formal Group structure to support effective outcomes. They will make recommendations and follow through on commitments and/or implementation plans.

- *Advisory Group:* The Advisory Group will be made up of external stakeholders and partners who will be appointed for their knowledge and direct experience to problem solve, explore ideas and strategic direction. They can contribute to Advisory Group outcomes through value-driven insights and advice.

Best efforts will be made by staff to ensure that the following groups are represented on the Advisory Group:

- Business owners – Retail
- Business owner – Restaurant
- Business owner – Personal services (i.e. physiotherapist, fitness, nail salon)
- Business owner – Professional services (i.e. finance, insurance, legal, marketing)
- Commercial Landlord
- Brampton Board of Trade
- BIA
- Heritage
- Arts and Culture
- Non-Profit Organization serving vulnerable communities
- Post-Secondary Institution
- Business Incubator/Accelerator
- Resident(s)

### **Corporate Implications:**

#### Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. Any financial impacts derived from the advisory group meetings will be included in the 2023 operating budget, pending Council approval.

### **Term of Council Priorities:**

This report is consistent with the 2018-2022 Term of Council Priorities as it supports Brampton as a City of Opportunities by using the collective strength of stakeholders to help unlock the downtown and coordinate the Integrated Downtown Plan.

### **Conclusion:**

As downtown Brampton experiences transformative change as a result of public sector and private sector investment, it is important to maintain communication with downtown stakeholders. A Downtown Advisory Group provides the opportunity for stakeholders to provide advice to staff and be a conduit to the challenges and opportunities of the downtown.

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**Attachments:**

- Appendix 1 - Downtown Secondary Plan Boundary