



**INVEST BARRIE
CREATIVE ECONOMY DEPARTMENT
MEMORANDUM**

TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: A. KELLY, SENIOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OFFICER

NOTED: K. DUBEAU, DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE ECONOMY
Z. LIFSHIZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INVEST BARRIE
M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: BARRIE COMMUNITY WOODSHOP AND BRIX MAKERSPACE

DATE: MARCH 18, 2019

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of City Council with an update of the progress made by Barrie Community Woodshop, which had operated out of space in Victoria Village with funding from the City of Barrie, until its closure in December 2016. The closure was related to issues with the environment of the facility being appropriate for the purposes of operating a woodshop. Under direction from Council, staff were to work with the Barrie Community Woodshop representatives to determine a potential alternate space and a sustainable business model for the woodshop that would retain affordable membership rates for community users, in particular, seniors.

Last spring, staff in Recreation and Creative Economy met with representatives of the former Barrie Community Woodshop with the goal of exploring potential models that would be suitable for a woodshop given available rental spaces. During the discussions it was identified that a broader engagement of community makers, through offering additional services and disciplines beyond woodworking, would create a broader value proposition and increase the potential for a more sustainable business case. Two public community consultations were held to identify other interested organizations and individuals. The result of the consultations showed strong support for such a model, including members of the Barrie Community Woodshop.

Staff in the Creative Economy Department facilitated conversations between several interested groups, including the Woodshop, SimCoLabs Makerspace, the Barrie Public Library and interested individual creators and clubs in the greater Barrie area. The group moved forward with establishing a registered not-for-profit organization called the Barrie Region Innovation Exchange (BRIX). The Board was formed with representatives of the Woodshop, as well as organizations SimCoLabs, and Firebird Cycle, with community volunteers and staff from Creative Economy and the Barrie Public Library. Their current focus is on developing a sustainable business model for operations of a community workshop space that will deliver training in creative trades and provide affordable access to specialized tools and equipment; this will include workshops for youth and seniors in woodworking, digital fabrication/3D printing, coding and electronics/robotics, and textile and ceramic arts.

BRIX aims to develop a multi-disciplinary makerspace to build capacity of local creators, inventors, entrepreneurs/start-ups, and hobbyists. Such a community makerspace also achieves the objectives of community engagement, provides opportunities for skills development for all ages including seniors, and supports access to technology equipment and expertise. All of these benefits are key to building a resilient and inclusive community.



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In January 2019, BRIX launched a unique partnership with the Simcoe County District School Board that forms a significant initial step in the business planning process. Through this pilot partnership, Barrie North Collegiate has made access to their classroom woodshop available for members of BRIX's woodworkers' club - which comprises 130 members - with specialized training on woodworking safety and equipment maintenance. The pilot will enable the not-for-profit to validate their business model concept while building their revenue streams. As the first partnership of its kind in Ontario, it is an innovative approach to addressing Council's strategic goals of growing Barrie's economy, fostering a safe and healthy city, and building strong neighbourhoods.

In celebration of this pilot, BRIX is hosting a Partnership Appreciation event at Barrie North Collegiate Institute on March 23, 2019 at 2:00 pm. Invitees include MPP Doug Downey, MPP Andrea Khanjin, and representatives from the Simcoe County District School Board, Georgian College, and local media outlets. The event organizer is extending an invite to all members of Council and a formal invitation is forthcoming.

With the woodshop pilot underway, BRIX has taken important steps to develop a business model that will scale to all trades and crafts within the makerspace collective. The Board has initiated consultations with social enterprise business coach Lindsay Telfer of Innoweave, a Canada-wide initiative of the J.W. McConnell Foundation and Social Innovation Generation. Through Georgian College's Centre for Changemaking and Social Innovation and the Social Enterprise Network of Central Ontario, BRIX has also applied for a Traction Grant in the amount of \$5000 to support research and online community development.