



City summit produces real ideas

Chris Clay

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Ideas culled from a summit of international and national leaders who met to discuss the need for sustainability, innovation and diversity in Mississauga were presented to City Council on Wednesday.

The Mississauga Summit was held in 2007 at the Living Arts Centre to find solutions to issues facing "the fast-growing and increasingly complex urban landscape of Mississauga and to create a more sustainable, resilient city."

Another forum was held in 2009 to localize the conversations. Leaders from business, non-profit, education and labour sectors held brainstorming sessions, which led to dozens of suggestions that were whittled down to four key priorities: human service infrastructure, creating a post-secondary education strategy, waterfront development and sustainability, and cultivating Mississauga as a centre of excellence for diversity and immigration.

Last year, a look at employment and joblessness was addressed through the Mississauga Works: Mayor's Jobs Summit.

On Wednesday at Council, co-chairs of The Mississauga Summit, Shelley White and Brian Crombie, passed along results of the meetings and discussions.

"I've got to tell you the amount of work they've done, the amount of research and presentations they've received, has been fantastic," said Crombie. "I think you should be very encouraged the citizens of Mississauga, on a volunteer basis, wanted to participate in (this)."

Councillors heard a Post-Secondary Task Force found that students are being trained for jobs that don't exist and that research and innovation is critical to participating in the global market. The suggestion was to create a Mississauga Innovation Network that would bring together universities, colleges, school boards and other partners.

The Waterfront Task Force was tasked with what to do with the city's waterfront, described as a "jewel" of Mississauga. The plan presented to councillors was to establish a Mississauga Waterfront Development Corporation.

After looking at other cities that had redeveloped their waterfronts, such as Toronto and Cleveland, Crombie said the cities that did it best tended to have an

entity that worked separately from government, but was owned by government. The Human Services Task Force found the city has a deficit of services and looked at how to build a network so that needs are met. It also considered how to ensure vulnerable members of society — seniors, those with disabilities and people living in poverty — have access to programs they need to reach their potential. The idea was to create a Neighbourhood Development Commission to strengthen neighbourhoods and the services they need.

The Diversity and Immigration Task Force found the city's wealth of diversity in areas such as age, culture and faith is "a very rich asset to reach out and connect globally." The plan was to create a Council for Diversity and Inclusion to tap into that.

The job summit produced several ideas as well, including a challenge to local companies to hire more youth last summer, which White noted would be built upon this year, and a move to create an Accelerator Centre for young companies.

Results of the summit will be presented to the public on May 5.

Ward 1 Councillor Jim Tovey lauded the participation of residents in the process.

"I can't imagine what we would have done without the involvement of citizens," he said. "What would the cost have been if we had to pay for all these great, innovative ideas citizens provided?"

cclay@mississauga.net

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