

Proposal to Name New Art Park – "Lee Lifeson Art Park"

Date:	July 17, 2014
To:	North York Community Council
From:	Janie Romoff, Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 23 – Willowdale
Reference Number:	P:\2014\Cluster A\PFR\NY34-081214-AFS#20063

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter for which Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

The Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division reviewed this naming proposal and acknowledges the significant contributions of Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, to the music world, the Willowdale neighbourhood and the City of Toronto. In researching this naming proposal, Parks, Forestry and Recreation reviewed the Council-approved *Honourific and Street Naming Policy* and found that this naming proposal met policy criteria.

Parks, Forestry, and Recreation is recommending naming the new park, currently a section of an existing linear park called "Willowdale Park" and located between Hillcrest Avenue and Princess Avenue, immediately east of Gladys Allison Place, as the "Lee-Lifeson Art Park".

RECOMMENDATION

The Acting General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division recommends that North York Community Council:

1. Officially name the new art park, located between Hillcrest Avenue and Princess Avenue, immediately east of Gladys Allison Place, "Lee Lifeson Art Park" in honour of two world famous Willowdale musicians.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No financial impacts arise from this report; as per the City's Honourific and Street Naming Policy the proposed naming is to be cost neutral.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of June 18, 2014, North York Community Council directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division to report back on naming the new art park currently a section of an existing linear park called Willowdale Park and located between Hillcrest Avenue and Princess Avenue, immediately east of Gladys Allison Place, the "Lee Lifeson Art Park" (Item NY33.60):

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.NY33.60#>

COMMENTS

The City has acquired lands to expand a section of an existing linear park, currently known as Willowdale Park, which winds itself through the Willowdale neighbourhood in central North York from Sheppard Avenue at the south end to Kingsdale Avenue at the north. The additional lands are adjacent to the section of park between Princess Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue (see Attachment 1: Site Map). The expanded parcel is being designed this year around an arts theme, specifically related to music and sound and will be constructed in 2015. It is appropriate to consider naming the park after musicians with a connection to the Willowdale area.

Geddy Lee was born Garry Lee Weinrib on July 29, 1953, in Willowdale, Ontario. As a highly respected musician and songwriter, Lee is known for his unique and stylized skill on the bass guitar. He has won numerous awards such as six time winner of Guitar Player magazine's - Best Rock Bass, Bass Hall of Fame, Best Album for Bass (Snakes and Arrows), Coolest Bass Line in a Song (for Malignant Narcissism) and Best 2007 Cover Feature (for Northern Warrior). Lee's voice has been described as an astoundingly high tenor and coupled with characteristic style and personality has inspired many other rock musicians.

Alex Lifeson (Živojinović) was born in Fernie, British Columbia but moved to Willowdale at the age of 8. Lifeson, a musician, songwriter and producer, plays electric and acoustic guitars, as well as other stringed instruments such as mandola, mandolin, keyboard, bass guitar and bouzouki. Lifeson currently ranks 98th in Rolling Stone Magazine's list of 100 greatest guitarists of all time and 3rd in the Guitar World Readers poll of 100 greatest guitarists. He is part owner of The Orbit Room bar and restaurant located in Toronto's "Little Italy" neighbourhood which features live entertainment. He is also an accomplished visual artist and licensed aircraft pilot.

Lee met Lifeson while attending Fisherville Junior High School, in Willowdale, where they became friends and later, band members of the world famous band Rush. Lee became the lead vocalist, bassist and keyboardist and Lifeson – guitarist.

The two Willowdale musicians were later joined by Neil Peart, a drummer from Port Dalhousie, Ontario, in the final lineup of the band Rush – one of the most successful Canadian music groups in history. Among their many awards, they have received 23 Gold and 14 Platinum records, 9 Juno awards, 7 Grammy nominations, have been inducted into Canadian Music Hall of Fame (1994) and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (2013) as well as received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and on Canada's Walk of Fame (2010). On May 9, 1996, Rush received the Order of Canada (the first rock band to be honoured as a group). In 1999, the members of Rush were all given an honorary doctorate degree from Nipissing University.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff have exercised due diligence in researching this naming proposal. As part of the research, Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff compared the proposal with the eligibility and criteria set out in the Council-approved *Honourific and Street Naming Policy*. This naming proposal meets all criteria identified in the *Honourific and Street Naming Policy*.

Public Consultation

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff produced and posted a sign in the park advising of the request to name the new art park "Lee Lifeson Art Park" and requested that anyone interested send comments to parksnaming@toronto.ca.

To date, three comments were received: one responded was not familiar with the musicians and suggested another name, two others supported this naming request.

Willowdale Park North and South

Should North York Community Council adopt this report, the current linear park will be divided by the new park which will have a different name. To avoid confusion, the section of Willowdale Park located north of Princess Avenue will be renamed to "Willowdale Park North", and the section located south of Hillcrest Avenue will be renamed "Willowdale Park South" (see Attachment 1: Site Map).

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
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ATTACHMENT 1: Site Map