

City Council**Motion without Notice**

MM35.41	ACTION			Ward:9
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**Transfer of the "William Baker" District Lands to the City of Toronto -
by Councillor Maria Augimeri, seconded by Mayor John Tory**

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

Recommendations

Councillor Maria Augimeri, seconded by Mayor John Tory, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the City Manager and Planning staff to pursue the transfer of Federal lands currently designated in the "Downsview Area Secondary Plan" as the "William Baker District" located at the north-east quadrant of Sheppard Avenue West and Keele Street to the City of Toronto for the purpose of establishing this area as municipal park land.

Summary

William Baker was a portion of land expropriated from local farmers in order to expand the Downsview military operation and airport runway to aid in the war effort.

Upon closing of the military base at Downsview in 1994, the Government of Canada designated that the 572 acres of Federal land at Downsview Park was to "be held in perpetuity and in trust primarily as a unique urban recreational green space for the enjoyment of future generations."

Since this proclamation, various federal policy pronouncements and designs were established for Downsview Park but none came to fruition until 2008 when the government began to sell parcels of Downsview Park for housing developments, in contrast to the 1994 policy promise to hold the lands "in trust" as a "unique urban recreational green space".

One of these parcels of land that sold is the "Stanley Greene District" amidst sharp local protest. The plan and sale was approved at the Ontario Municipal Board.

The building out of the "Stanley Greene" neighbourhood not only created 1,356 units of housing on prime and rare green space in Toronto, it has also created a multitude of problems including flooding (local and adjacent), traffic, low water pressure, poor build quality, and other predictable and avoidable infrastructure issues.

The area designated as the "William Baker District", like Stanley Greene, is pristine green space that is rare in Toronto's urban environment. This area will soon be adjacent to two subway stations and a GO station making the space a prime local for parkland and recreation opportunities given it's convenient accessibility to the entire greater Toronto area, not unlike a central park for the Greater Toronto Area.

William Baker is currently a mixture of mature trees, a bicycle path, and open green space. It is under federal ownership and the local community fears the plans to sell and build 3,534 apartment units.

These lands are the last remaining large contiguous portions of green space left in Toronto. It is for the future growth and residents of Toronto that these lands should be protected as "unique urban recreational green space" in perpetuity. Given the actions of the Federal Government are in contrast to this goal, it is up to the City of Toronto to protect these lands.

It is prudent to acquire the William Baker lands now while they still exist.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM35.41