

Renaming of a Portion of Pears Avenue, extending west of Yonge Street

Date: April 3, 2019

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services

Wards: 11 University-Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends approval of the renaming of a portion of Pears Avenue, west of Yonge Street to "Basil Johnston Terrace"

Community Councils have delegated authority to decide street naming matters which comply with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engineering and Construction Services recommends that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. Approve the name "Basil Johnston Terrace" for the renaming of a portion of Pears Avenue, west of Yonge Street.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost to install 2 street name signs is approximately \$500 and is included within the Transportation Services Division Operating Budget.

DECISION HISTORY

This is the first time that this issue is before Community Council.

COMMENTS

On September 9, 2018, an application was received from Ian Carmichael, President of ABC Residents Association, requesting that the portion of Pears Avenue, west of Yonge Street be renamed in order to improve wayfinding. Pears Avenue is currently comprised of 2 segments which are not connected due to the location of Ramsden Park separating them. The westerly segment runs easterly from Bedford Road and terminates within Ramsden Park. The easterly segment runs westerly from Yonge Street and terminates within Ramsden Park. Vehicles using the eastern segment in the hope of accessing addresses on the western segment has caused confusion and incidents of vehicles driving directly into Ramsden Park.

The proposal is to rename the easterly section of Pears Avenue in honour of Basil Johnston, an Ojibway author and former educator at Earl Haig Secondary School just a few blocks away from the location of this street.

The applicant provided the following rationale:

Basil Johnston Terrace

"This name would commemorate the significant contribution of a brilliant Ojibway author and educator, recognized in his 2015 Globe & Mail Obituary as the "foremost scholar of Anishinaabe life" and in the Canadian Encyclopedia as "one of the foremost indigenous authors in Canada."

A residential school survivor (who managed as an adult to live successfully in 2 cultures — in Toronto and Cape Croker), Johnston wrote widely about Anishinaabe traditions, language and modern life. His over 25 books (the earliest written in the 1970's when there were very few books by indigenous writers) are credited with paving the way for the current flowering of First Nations literature. Many contemporary indigenous writers and artists, like Drew Hayden Taylor and Donald Chretien, credit him as a key inspiration. Tomson Highway said of Johnston, "We wouldn't have been able to do what we are doing today, this current generation of writers, including myself, without people like him coming before us."

But Johnston also has a direct link to this particular neighbourhood. Hired as a history teacher at Earl Haig Secondary school in the 1960s, he soon caught the attention of the Head of Ethnology Department at the Royal Ontario Museum, and spent 25 years as a full-time lecturer and story teller at the ROM. This is where he did his ground-breaking work collecting and recording Anishinaabe stories and folk tales. And writing about Ojibway history and language. All this just blocks from the street that we propose to name after him.

"He was a great speaker and gave talks around the city" one colleague recalled. He also created the Museumobile, which toured the province filled with educational materials about native heritage and languages. Convinced language was the key to culture, he developed tapes, CDs and other aids to teach Anishinaabe, the 2d largest Indian language group in North America. His Ojibway Language Lexicon is still in use.

Amongst his other Contributions to Toronto: In his early years in Toronto, as his youngest daughter Elizabeth (“Tibby”) Johnston recalls, he helped start Toronto's Indian Club. He was also an athlete. Having played Varsity hockey at college, he continued to play into his 50's with the Toronto Islanders, a Native hockey team.

Basil Johnston died recently at age 86 (in 2015). His daughter “Tibby” was delighted that her father might be remembered in this way. “He lived with one foot in each world. Dad would be so pleased to have it happen,” The Cultural Director at The Native Centre of Toronto was also very supportive of this proposal, as their first choice option.”

Consent was given by Tibby Elizabeth Johnston, daughter of the named party.

The proposed name has been circulated for comment and is acceptable to Toronto Police Service, Toronto Fire Services, and Toronto Paramedic Services.

Councillor Layton supports this renaming proposal.

There are no addresses off of the eastern portion of Pears Avenue. The abutting properties are all owned by the City of Toronto. Given this, support for this naming was provided by Councillor Wong-Tam and current ward Councillor Layton

The street is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. PS-2019-019.

This naming proposal complies with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy.
[Street Naming Policy](#)

CONTACT

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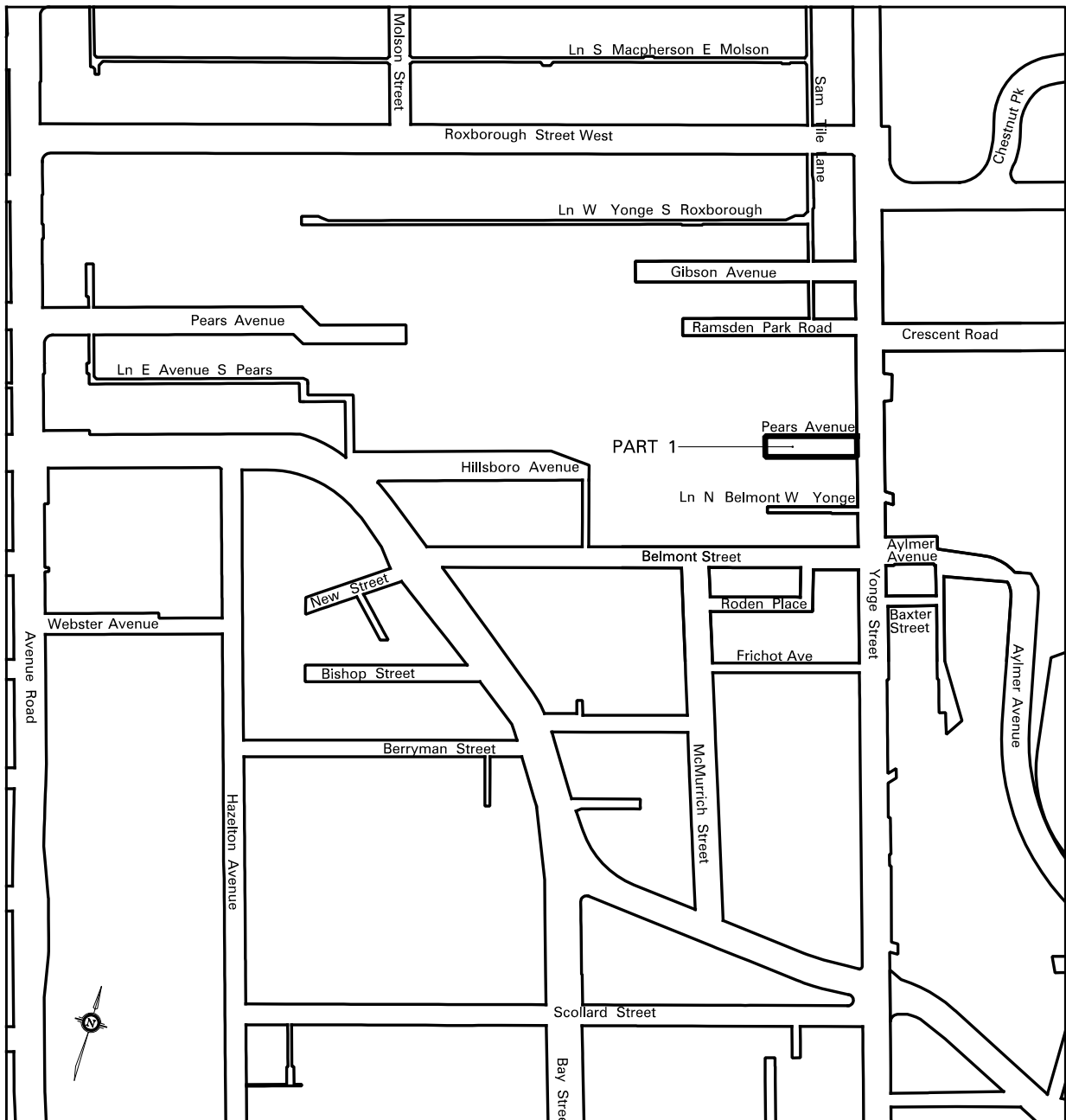
SIGNATURE

Mika Raisanen, P. Eng., Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services

ATTACHMENT

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2019-019

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2019-019, showing the location Pears Avenue, extending west from Yonge Street



NOTE:
THIS SKETCH HAS BEEN
COMPILED FROM OFFICE
RECORDS. MEASUREMENTS
ARE APPROXIMATE

CHECK BY JOHN HOUSE
PREPARED BY: DWAYNE PITT

PROPERTY INFORMATION SHEET

**RENAMING A PORTION OF PEARS AVENUE,
EXTENDING WEST OF YONGE STREET**

WARD 11 – UNIVERSITY-ROSEDALE
DATE: APRIL 04, 2019

SKETCH N . PS-2019-019