



Joe Cressy 周凱捷

City Councillor | Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

November 4, 2019

Toronto and East York Community Council
City Hall, Committee Room 1
100 Queen St W
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Members,

Re: Expansion of Victoria Memorial Square Park

As our downtown communities grow and become more dense with residents, jobs, and visitors, it is increasingly important that we are making the most of our existing parks and public spaces. Downtown already has a parkland provision 67% below the City-wide average, and the residential population is projected to more than double by 2041. The Council-approved Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan includes four objectives to support liveable and healthy downtown communities: acquire and expand; improve; share; and connect.

Victoria Memorial Square Park is a heavily-used public park near the intersection of Wellington Street West and Bathurst Street, which has at its centre the earliest known cemetery associated with Fort York and the Town of York. At least 400 people were buried there before the cemetery was closed in 1863. In the 2000s, as a new residential neighbourhood grew up around it, the local community and the City of Toronto undertook a major revitalization to rehabilitate the park and celebrate its past. Due to the high volume of activity in the park today, it requires intensive ongoing maintenance by City staff to keep up with wear and tear.

Wellington Street West is a public street that forms the northern limit of Victoria Memorial Square and for most of this boundary, the pavement is unusually wide. The extra pavement does not extend to the Bathurst Street intersection so it is not useful for the movement of vehicles or bicycles; instead, it is presently a common location for illegal parking. The local residents' group, the Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association, has advocated for Victoria Memorial Square Park to be expanded into this surplus paved area, and I am writing in support of this initiative. It will be a small increase to the area of the park and in the local context every square metre is meaningful. Re-allocating existing City right-of-way to parkland is a relatively fast undertaking compared to land acquisition for new parkland.

I am requesting that City staff report back with a plan to transform this space into new public realm in the short-term, and to advance the process to formally redesignate the surplus right-of-way to parkland.

Recommendation:

1. Toronto & East York Community Council request the Director, Public Realm Section, Transportation Services, to report back on:
 - a. the temporary closure, to vehicular traffic, of the southerly curb lane of Wellington Street West, west of Portland Street and adjacent to Victoria Memorial Square Park for near-term public realm and pedestrian improvements; and
 - b. the permanent closure of the southerly curb lane of Wellington Street West, west of Portland Street, for the purpose of enlarging Victoria Memorial Square Park.

Sincerely,

Joe Cressy