

**City Council****Notice of Motion**

<b>MM25.8</b>	<b>ACTION</b>			Ward: 11
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**Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds from a Development at 1 and 3 Sultan Street to Fund the Creation and Installation of a Heritage Plaque at 406 Bloor Street East, Commemorating the Underground Railroad Soul Food Restaurant - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.*

*\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam recommends that:

1. City Council increase the Approved 2020 Operating Budget for Heritage Toronto by \$7,500.00 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the development at 1 and 3 Sultan Street, 11 St Thomas Street, and 76-98 Charles Street West (Source Account XR3026-3700004), for the production and installation of a Heritage Plaque commemorating the Underground Railroad restaurant (Cost Centre: HG0001).

**Summary**

This Motion seeks to release \$7,500 in Section 37 funds to Heritage Toronto for a heritage plaque commemorating the Underground Railroad soul food restaurant. The plaque is proposed to be installed at 406 Bloor Street East.

The Underground Railroad soul food restaurant opened at 406 Bloor Street East in 1969. It was one of the City's first major restaurants to serve southern comfort food and became a hot spot for Toronto's increasingly visible Black culture and visiting dignitaries and celebrities. The business was a joint venture between football players John Henry Jackson and Dave Mann (both American players for the Toronto Argonauts) and Torontonians Howard Matthews (whose wife was Broadway star and jazz and blues singer Salome Bey), and celebrated jazz drummer Archie Alleyne.

The menu was a mix of soul food and Cajun, Creole, and West Indian dishes, such as fish gumbo, cornbread, southern fried chicken, hushpuppies, candied yams, and collard greens. The Underground Railroad was a major success and was popular with Torontonians, tourists, and celebrities alike: Harry Belafonte, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, Isaac Hayes, B.B. King, Stevie Wonder, Robert Plant, Peter O'Toole, Lee Majors, O.J. Simpson,

Magic Johnson, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Bishop Desmond Tutu all ate there, and many had their photos framed on the wall.

The restaurant moved from its Bloor Street location to 225 King Street East in April 1973 and remained popular. At Christmas, the owners would serve turkey dinners to those in need and supported Black youth, as well as Caribana during its early years. The Underground Railroad was forced to close in August 1988 and briefly re-opened on Church Street before shutting down permanently in August 1990.

The enacting By-law 1089-2002 for the development at 1 and 3 Sultan Street, 11 St Thomas Street, and 76-98 Charles Street West allocates Section 37 funding for the Toronto Heritage Grant Program. As Heritage Toronto is a directly funded City agency and not considered an "outside party", no undertaking is required to be signed by Heritage Toronto governing the use of the funds and financial reporting.

As the second location of the Restaurant, at 225 King Street East, is in Councillor Wong-Tam's Ward, a similar Motion recognizing that location is included in a separate Motion on the agenda.

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM25.8

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-157751.pdf>)