

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM5.29	ACTION			Ward: 18
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Exploring an Iranian Cultural District in Willowdale - by Councillor Lily Cheng, seconded by Councillor Brad Bradford

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Lily Cheng, seconded by Councillor Brad Bradford, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, in consultation with the local Councillor's office, to engage with community organizations in Willowdale to explore designating Yonge Street, between Steeles Avenue and Drewry Avenue, as a Cultural District in recognition of the area's vibrant Iranian culture, following City Council's consideration of objectives and criteria for the Cultural Districts Program.

Summary

Following direction from City Council Item 2021.EC25.3, Economic Development and Culture is developing a Cultural Districts Program in response to community-based advocacy and efforts to support local culture across several neighbourhoods. The Cultural Districts Program will celebrate the culturally rich neighbourhoods of Toronto and recognize their distinct geographies, histories, patterns of migration and displacement, and forms of cultural expression. It will support community-led placemaking/placekeeping projects and initiatives for a range of distinct cultural communities under threat of displacement.

To advance this work, the City retained Jay Pitter Placemaking to develop a program proposal for a city-wide Cultural Districts Program. Working from this program proposal, an interdivisional City staff team is developing eligibility criteria, an application process, and implementation plan for the Cultural Districts Program, which will be brought to City Council for consideration later in 2023.

Following City Council's consideration of the program framework, this motion requests that Economic Development and Culture engage with community organizations in Willowdale to explore designating Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue and Drewry Avenue as a Cultural District in recognition of the area's vibrant Iranian culture. The proposed stretch of Yonge Street is a vibrant and thriving community that has become the heart of Toronto's oldest Iranian settlement. This area is home to a diverse range of businesses, including grocery stores, cafes, book stores, and art galleries, that have become important gathering places for the Iranian community. Beyond serving as a present-day cultural hub, this area is a living testament to the decades of Iranian newcomer migration to Toronto. The community's perseverance and hard

work have helped to establish a sense of belonging and connection, making it a vital part of Toronto's multicultural fabric. Recognizing this section of Yonge Street as the Iranian District would honor the contributions and achievements of this community and celebrate the richness of Iranian culture in Toronto. Although this will not be initiated until the Cultural Districts Program framework is established, passing this motion today will be meaningful to the Iranian community who have endured much grief and turmoil as they fight together for "women, life, freedom" in Iran.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM5.29