

## **Naming of Public Lane located north of Bloor Street West, extending between Margueretta Street and Brock Avenue**

**Date:** October 30, 2023

**To:** Toronto and East York Community Council

**From:** Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services  
General Manager, Economic Development & Culture

**Wards:** Ward 9 - Davenport

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that the name "Michelle Senayah Lane" be approved to identify an existing public lane located North of Bloor Street West, extending between Margueretta Street and Brock Avenue.

This naming proposal complies with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy which can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/street-naming/>

This naming proposal is in alignment with the objectives of the [Guiding Principles](#) for Commemoration in the Public Realm.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Engineering & Construction Services and Economic Development & Culture recommend that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. Approve the name "Michelle Senayah Lane" for a public lane located North of Bloor Street West, extending between Margueretta Street and Brock Avenue.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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

## DECISION HISTORY

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

## COMMENTS

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An application was received on September 8, 2021, from a resident requesting to name the existing public lane located North of Bloor Street West, extending between Margueretta Street and Brock Avenue, as Michelle Senayah Lane.

The following background and rationale were provided by the applicant:

### **“Michelle Senayah Lane”**

*“Michelle was a passionate and innovative place maker and city-builder who saw the potential in all of Toronto’s neglected spaces to contribute to the health and vibrancy of our communities.*

*In 2014, she founded The Laneway Project (a non-profit social enterprise) and dedicated the rest of her working life to the integration of laneways into the public realm as complete shared public open spaces – revolutionizing how laneways are thought about, planned for, and used in this city.*

*Her impact on the City of Toronto’s smallest right-of-ways was multifaceted, comprehensive, and undeniable: she spearheaded the activation and transformation of these spaces in over thirty communities, developed best practices from these projects, and ensured this new field of knowledge was integrated into the plans, policies, guidelines and regulations governing the development of the city’s public realm. Beyond her direct influence, Michelle was a staunch believer in the philosophy of a “rising tide lifts all boats”, and also created accessible public planning resources to support grassroots community organizations in sharing in this work. These resources have since been used to improve countless laneways across the city. The Laneway Project is dedicated to carrying on her vision and in that way, Michelle’s heart and soul lives on in the potential of every laneway. We can think of no more fitting way to honour her legacy in Toronto than naming a laneway after her.*

*The laneway selected to be named for Michelle is of symbolic significance to our organization and is a fitting example of her aspirations for this city’s laneways. The Bloordale community welcomed The Laneway Project with open arms in the infancy of our organization and continues to encapsulate the spirit of our work. In September of 2015 (and again in 2016), this laneway and those surrounding it were host to our first “laneway crawl”, a block party with live performances and mural paintings, activities, and local vendors. We returned to the area in 2018/19 to work with the community to revitalize the laneway just east of the to-be-named, as part of our “Light Up the Laneways” series, to demonstrate the essential components of creating a living, people-friendly laneway – pedestrian lighting, public art, greening, and street furniture. In the intervening years, Bloordale residents and businesses have embraced this and adjacent laneways as community spaces”.*

## **Michelle Senayah Historical Research**

Michelle Senayah was a woman who influenced and revitalized the fabric of the City through her work to activate urban space in an accessible and welcoming way.

Ms. Senayah passionately worked to create public spaces that enriched people's lives regardless of economic status, racial background, or immigration status.

Michelle Senayah is best known as the founder and executive director of The Laneway Project. This organization aims to improve the quality of life across Toronto through revitalizations and activations within laneways across the City.

The Laneway Project brings planners and designers together with community members and policy makers to improve how laneways and other neglected urban areas function.

The Laneway Project has held community events, facilitated the creation of public art within laneways, and improved useability through design, landscaping, and infrastructure. Ms. Senayah has worked closely with municipal agents to develop best practices around reclaiming lost urban spaces. In seven years, Ms. Senayah oversaw 30 laneway transformations across Toronto and the creation of how-to guides to support the place making work of grassroots community organizations.

In addition, Michelle Senayah was the principle of her own architectural and urban design consultancy, Senayah Design. Senayah Design focused on bringing together a variety of stakeholders, ranging from residents, BIAs, Community Associations, cultural institutions, business owners to activate urban spaces. One of the key ongoing projects that Senayah Design participated in was Open Streets TO. Open Streets TO is the largest, free recreation program in the City of Toronto that takes shape as a summertime street festival in Toronto's downtown. The pedestrian focused festival highlights healthy, outdoor activities stations and encourages participants to shop locally by not hosting any outside vendors.

Michelle Senayah expressed deep care about the well-being of the City of Toronto throughout her career. Her commitment to improving accessibility and useability of underutilized laneway spaces has laid the foundation for continued improvements across the City. Ms. Senayah's kindness and passion have been widely recognized.

Complete Historical Research Report is available upon request.

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

Councillor Alejandra Bravo, Ward 9 Davenport, supports this naming.

Michelle Senayah passed away on June 29, 2021. Michelle's father (Executor of Michelle's estate), David Smith, and her common-law husband, David Constable, consent to this naming.

Community support was demonstrated with a petition of signatures from the local community.

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

The lane is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. **PS-2023-031**.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Avi Bachar, P. Eng., Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Patrick Tobin, General Manager, Economic Development & Culture

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. **PS-2023-031**

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2023-031

Showing the location of an existing public lane located North of Bloor Street West, extending between Margueretta Street and Brock Avenue.

