

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM16.10	ACTION			Ward: 11
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Upgrades to Paul Martel Park - by Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Jamaal Myers

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Toronto and East York Community Council. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Jamaal Myers, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with others as appropriate, to report to Toronto and East York Community Council, in the second quarter of 2024, on the feasibility, timing and potential funding for:
 - a. renaming Paul Martel Park as an Indigenous Botanical Garden;
 - b. installing a yurt or similar meeting structure in the locked, fenced rear area for Indigenous cultural and environmental activities;
 - c. improving soil quality and reducing trampling of plant material by installing raised beds in the park and adjacent boulevard;
 - d. improving the lighting; and
 - e. installing and maintaining a public toilet once the Toronto Transit Commission has completed its construction work.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to negotiate and sign on behalf of the City a nominal fee Licence Agreement with Earth Helpers Gardens Inc., to facilitate Indigenous participant horticultural training, gardening and cultural programming at Paul Martel Park, for a three-year term, renewable at the General Manager's discretion for one additional three-year term (six years total) to April 30, 2030, on terms and conditions acceptable to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Summary

This motion is to evaluate requested upgrades to Paul Martel Park, and to permit continuing Indigenous uses of it.

Paul Martel Park is a small park just behind the Spadina Subway Station. Originally named Ecology Park, it was designed and built by Paul Martel, an architect who volunteered and helped to design many community green spaces in the Annex and across Toronto. Ecology Park was designed to celebrate the ecosystems of Southern Ontario, and he helped maintain it for ten years. It was re-named in his honour in 2014.

After Paul Martel became ill, the space became neglected. Since his death in 2020, a group of Indigenous tradespeople and Elders known as the Earth Helpers have made it their mission to restore and maintain this park. They have removed invasive species, improved the soil, planted and tended native species, and installed an Indigenous Storytelling mural. They also conduct environmental and cultural activities in the park, under a licence from the city. The current licence expires April 30, 2024.

Some of the park is being excavated by the Toronto Transit Commission to expand the streetcar loop. Other parts have been repeatedly damaged by patrons of the adjoining pub, despite the recent installation of a fence.

With the support of the Annex Residents Association, Earth Helpers have requested several upgrades to Paul Martel Park, including raised beds, improved lighting, a yurt or similar meeting structure and a public toilet. They also wish the park to be officially recognized as an Indigenous Botanical Garden, the first of its kind in Toronto. Earth Helpers has recently incorporated as Earth Helpers Gardens Inc., a non-profit corporation.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM16.10