

Authority to Negotiate Agreements Related to Queen's Park North Through Philanthropic Partnerships in Alignment with City of Toronto Priorities

Date: March 19, 2025

To: City Council

From: Mayor Olivia Chow

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mayor recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, for the purposes of conducting public consultations on Queen's Park North enhancements, to negotiate and sign a donation agreement with the Weston Foundations, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor and in compliance with the Donations to the City of Toronto for Community Benefits Policy, in order for City staff and professionals retained by Weston Foundations to undertake a first phase of community engagement and preliminary design regarding Queen's Park North enhancements, including the funding of appropriate City staff resources, that will inform the scope of the larger donation acceptance agreement and the staff report directed in Recommendation 2 below.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to negotiate a donation acceptance agreement with the Weston Foundations to fund the final design and delivery of Queen's Park North enhancements, and provide additional funding support for ongoing maintenance and programming of Queen's Park North park enhancements, on terms acceptable to the General Manager, Parks and Recreation and report to Executive Committee in Fall 2025 with a project implementation update, inclusive of an update on the terms of the recommended donation acceptance agreement.

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

Queen's Park North is a public green space of historical significance and critical importance to Toronto. It was officially dedicated in 1860 as Canada's first municipal park by Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) and named Queen's Park, in honour of Queen Victoria. The property is leased by the University of Toronto to the City of Toronto for a 999-year term.

Queen's Park North is a core piece of the downtown park system and central to the Bloor St. Culture Corridor and University precinct. As our city continues to grow and evolve, the park has unrealized potential and City staff have been approached with an opportunity to unlock it.

In mid-2024, the Weston Family engaged City staff with a potential donation to improve Queen's Park North through an estimated \$50 million commitment for park design, community engagement and construction, as well as further financial support to ensure high-quality park operations, maintenance, and programming over the long term.

Following a series of exploratory conversations with the Weston Family, the University of Toronto, and adjacent cultural and education institutions, City staff are seeking Council's authority to proceed with an immediate donation agreement to advance phase one engagement and design, and authority to proceed with negotiations of a final donation acceptance agreement. Staff recommend initiating a first phase of community engagement and design to inform the project scope and the terms of the final donation agreement. Engagement activities will be funded by the Weston Foundations. Staff will report back regarding the recommended terms of the final donation acceptance agreement and additional authorities required for advancing the project in Fall 2025.

All work toward the revitalization of Queen's Park North remains subject to final City Council approvals and permissions of the land owner (University of Toronto), and final agreements being entered.

This work is closely aligned with Council-approved plans for the future of the Downtown and Toronto's overall park system and will proceed in strategic collaboration with the Weston Family, University of Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, Gardiner Museum, Royal Conservatory of Music, and other community partners.

The Queen's Park North revitalization will prioritize both focused enhancements in the near term and long-term maintenance and programming investments that enrich the park experience while sustaining the park's natural heritage. The design and programming priorities will be developed through extensive public engagement starting this spring. Renewal of Queen's Park North will provide opportunities related to Indigenous place keeping, winter activation, arts and cultural programming and environmental education, as well as access to amenities like food, year-round washrooms, and places to relax.

The City is collaboratively exploring new operational models and opportunities, including the development of a non-profit organization to collaborate with the City on management of the park and integration of programming from nearby nationally-significant cultural institutions.

The Park occupies a critical location in the heart of the city. The City previously undertook a partial revitalization of the park in 2019 and a new entrance to the TTC's Museum Station opened in the park in 2024. While these investments achieved some improvements, additional amenities and investment will allow Queen's Park to realize its fullest potential.

A renewed Queen's Park North will connect with recently improved open spaces at the University of Toronto, support the City's longer-term vision for University Park and advance Council's program of expanding and improving Toronto's park system. This generational city-building initiative will showcase the City's commitment to enhancing public spaces, supporting gathering and culture, fostering community engagement, and elevating the park user experience for years to come.

SIGNATURE

Olivia Chow
Mayor