

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM32.15	ACTION			Ward: 11, 12
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Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds to Support the Redesign of the Vale of Avoca Ravine to Include a Missing Walking Trail Connection - by Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Mayor Olivia Chow

** 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.*

Communications have been submitted on this Item.

Recommendations

Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Mayor Olivia Chow, recommends that:

1. City Council increase the 2025-2034 Capital Budget and Plan for Parks and Recreation by \$250,000 gross and \$0 debt, fully funded by:
 - a. Section 37 community benefits obtained from the development at 5 Scrivener Square, 4-10 & 10R Price Street, and 1095-1107 Yonge Street, secured for community benefits (Source Account: XR3026-3701326), in the amount of \$250,000;for the purpose of funding the detailed design of a comprehensive restoration of the Vale of Avoca Ravine, including erosion control, slope stabilization, trail access, native planting, and the creation of a continuous and accessible ravine trail.
2. City Council direct that the Vale of Avoca design work be coordinated as an interdivisional project between Parks and Recreation and Toronto Water, and consider integration with the City's Ravine Strategy and long-distance trail network, including connections to the Beltline, Loop Trail, and other adjacent natural assets, in consultation with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Midtown Ravines Group.
3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to negotiate and enter into any agreements, including with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Midtown Ravines Group, as required to undertake the project, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, subject to available funding.
4. City Council direct that prior to any capital funds from the Midtown Ravines Group being accepted by the City for this project, staff report back to City Council to seek authority to accept the funds, and that such authority be obtained before any associated project costs are added to the 10-Year Capital Budget and Plan for Parks and Recreation.

Summary

The Vale of Avoca is a much loved ravine that straddles Wards 11 and 12, in a rapidly intensifying part of Toronto close to Toronto Transit Commission subway Line 1. Yellow Creek runs through this steep-sided ravine, which is managed cooperatively by Toronto Water, Toronto Parks and Recreation and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

A century ago, the Vale of Avoca was a major destination park close to newly constructed homes in the St. Clair area. The creek bed was protected with beautifully built ashlar walls, and flanked with lawns, gardens and trees. Walking trails were built, as well as staircases for convenient access up and down its steep sides.

Since that time, the Vale of Avoca has been allowed to substantially deteriorate. The creek walls, trees and walking trails have been undermined by erosion and neglect. Few working staircases remain. Invasive species have displaced native trees, shrubs and flowers. The increasing intensity of climate breakdown storms, combined with the spread of hard surfaces, are causing ever-more rapid erosion. The valley walls are being eaten away at perhaps a foot a year, toppling trees. The remaining trails are rough, bare and often muddy. Some homes at the top of the slope are threatened. The one remaining pedestrian bridge across Yellow Creek is now at imminent risk of destruction.

Patchwork repairs in 2019 were washed away in the first big storm of 2020. Since then, several major storms have done further damage, and the city continues to spend millions on short-term fixes. Toronto Water's Geomorphic Study identified the high risk of failure of a large stormwater outfall in the Vale, which they hope to repair in five years. It also confirmed that erosion is likely to accelerate.

The Ravine Strategy recognizes the enormous importance of Toronto's precious ravines, and identifies many threats and opportunities, but it remains largely unfunded. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority cannot fill the gap, since the province has cut its funding and authority.

There is already substantial public demand for access to the Vale of Avoca, and this demand will soon increase sharply. Despite limited wayfinding, poor quality trails, toppled trees and missing staircases, many residents and visitors walk in the Vale seeking respite from the heat and from heavy traffic. Meanwhile, the city and the Ontario Land Tribunal have approved many thousands of new residential units close to the Vale. These units are expected to accommodate an additional 15,000 people in the next few years.

If restored, the Vale would create a major increase in useable greenspace for a very dense midtown neighborhood. It could also provide an important missing trail link. The City and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority have invested in long-distance trails that allow walkers and cyclists to safely enjoy our ravines, and Evergreen has been working for years on a nearby Loop trail. A safe trail through the Vale of Avoca would provide a transit-accessible connection to the Loop, the Beltline and other well-used trails. It would make our ravines accessible to many more people, and would knit together local landmarks such as the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, David Balfour Park and Evergreen Brickworks.

Given the city's very difficult financial situation, there is no reasonable prospect of this ravine being restored without an innovative approach to financing. The Midtown Ravines Group is an incorporated group of residents associations that surround the Vale of Avoca. They have volunteered to fundraise the \$35-\$40 million that they estimate would be required to restore the Vale to a safe, stable and beautiful condition. This could include erosion protection, slope stabilization, reestablishing safe access points, planting native vegetation, and creating a accessible trail from one end to the other. For this purpose, they require a detailed design of what is needed, what can be achieved and what it would cost. Parks and Recreation staff

estimate that this detailed design will cost approximately \$1.5 million and take 18 months to prepare.

The successful completion of this project could take a major step towards realization of the Ravine Strategy, and provide a template for restoring some other badly damaged and heavily used ravines across the city.

For all these reasons, the Ward 11 and 12 councillors have agreed to each contribute \$250,000 in section 37 funds for the redesign. The remaining \$1 million in capital funding required will be allocated through in-year budget adjustments/reallocations by Toronto Water and Parks and Recreation.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM32.15

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-257502.pdf>)

Communications (City Council)

(July 19, 2025) E-mail from Peter Blaiklock (MM.Supp)

(July 20, 2025) Letter from John Bossons and Tim Ross, Co-chairs, The Midtown Ravines Group (MM.Supp)

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/comm/communicationfile-195092.pdf>)

(July 22, 2025) E-mail from Kathy Falconi and Catherine Morton (MM.Supp)

(July 22, 2025) Letter from Ian Carmichael and John Caliendo, Co-Chairs, The ABC Residents Association (MM.Supp)

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/comm/communicationfile-195164.pdf>)