

## **Renaming Rosebank Park in Memory of Councillor Cynthia Lai**

**Date:** June 19, 2025

**To:** Scarborough Community Council

**From:** General Manager, Parks and Recreation

**Wards:** Scarborough North - 23

### **SUMMARY**

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On December 6, 2024, Scarborough Community Council requested through item 2024.SC18.20 that the City Manager and the General Manager Parks, Forestry and Recreation undertake a review of the name “Cynthia Lai Park” in order to rename Rosebank Park to honour the late Councillor Cynthia Lai, who represented Ward 23 – Scarborough North, in accordance with the City of Toronto’s Commemorative Framework and the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy.

Parks and Recreation worked with Strategic Partnerships in the City Manager’s Office and consulted with the local Councillor to identify Rosebank Park as an appropriate location to commemorate the life, public service, activism and lasting impact of the late Councillor Cynthia Lai.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Interim General Manager, Parks and Recreation recommends that:

1. Scarborough Community Council adopt the renaming of Rosebank Park, located at 1051 Progress Avenue, to Cynthia Lai Park.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Funding for the costs associated with the production and installation of the new park sign will be accommodated within the 2025 Approved Operating Budget for Parks and Recreation.

Funding for the costs associated with the production and installation of the biographical plaque will be accommodated within the 2025 Approved Operating Budget for Economic Development & Culture.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on December 6, 2024, Scarborough Community Council adopted Motion SC18.20 - Renaming Rosebank Park in Memory of Councillor Cynthia Lai. The motion directed "the City Manager to undertake a review of the name "Cynthia Lai Park" in order to rename Rosebank Park, Scarborough to honour the late Councillor Cynthia Lai who represented Ward 23 - Scarborough North and direct the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation report back in the second quarter of 2025, in accordance with the City of Toronto's Commemorative Framework and the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy, and with the inclusion of a biographical plaque."

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.SC18.20>

## **COMMENTS**

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Cynthia Lai (1954-2022) was a Toronto City Councillor who represented Ward 23 Scarborough North from 2018 until her death in 2022. Research conducted by City staff, along with input from the applicant and the community, indicates that her impact on the Scarborough community was considerable and multifaceted.

During her time in office, Lai served on the Budget and Economic and Community Development Committees and represented the constituents of Scarborough North on the Scarborough Community Council. Councillor Lai was also a TTC Commissioner and served as the Mayor's designate on the Toronto Zoo Board of Management.

In the commemorative naming application, applicant City of Toronto Councillor Jamaal Myers describes how Councillor Lai, as an immigrant woman of Asian descent elected to City Council, broke barriers and became a trailblazer, representing the many diverse voices of Scarborough North. As a City Councillor, Lai championed initiatives that promoted equity, diversity, and inclusion within Toronto, as noted by the applicant and confirmed through the research and review process conducted by City staff.

In addition, as a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Board of Directors, Councillor Lai participated in standing committees focused on anti-racism and equity, increasing women's participation in municipal government and international relations.

Councillor Lai immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in the 1970s and established her home in Toronto. Before entering public service, she had a distinguished career in real estate and was notably the first Chinese Canadian woman elected as President of the Toronto Real Estate Board. Her contributions have been recognized with several honours, including the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Medal and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

The applicant actively engaged the local community to garner support for the proposed renaming of Rosebank Park by collecting 76 signatures on a petition and gathering additional endorsements through community meetings and social media outreach. Residents described how Councillor Lai spearheaded numerous initiatives that not only addressed the immediate needs of her constituents but also fostered long-term community growth. They shared how she championed environmental stewardship, supporting clean-up and maintenance efforts at local parks, including Rosebank Park, and how she advocated for the safety and well-being of seniors. Additionally, Councillor Lai's focus on youth career development through fellowship programs, as demonstrated in her amendments to City Council directive 2021.26.1, reflected her dedication to creating opportunities for the next generation.

Lai's role as the Councillor for Ward 23 in Scarborough has been extensively recognized in various news articles. Through her work and dedication, Cynthia Lai cultivated a strong sense of connection within Scarborough North, earning the respect and appreciation of those she served.

## **Recommended Park**

*Rosebank Park (1051 Progress Avenue)*

Following an interdivisional review with relevant divisions, Rosebank Park was identified as the preferred option for commemorating the late Councillor Cynthia Lai. Rosebank Park is located at the intersection of Progress Avenue and Rosebank Drive. This 4.3-hectare park features open green space, horticultural displays and basketball courts. This park has benefitted from the care, passion and involvement of the late Councillor Cynthia Lai. Cynthia Lai's family also confirmed this location as the preferred location to commemorate.

## **City of Toronto Property Naming Policy**

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

Parks and Recreation consulted with Strategic Partnerships and Economic Development and Culture to ensure the naming was in compliance with the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy and was in alignment with the Guiding Principles for

Commemoration. Parks and Recreation initiated the process for identifying an appropriate park for commemoration. A naming application was received on November 8, 2024, formally requesting to rename "Rosebank Park" to "Cynthia Lai Park." A completed consent form was also received.

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

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Tom Azouz  
A/ General Manager,  
Parks and Recreation