

Community Engagement Process to Assess Local Community Support for Echoes and Nighttime Closure of Barbara Hall Park

Date: May 7, 2026

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: City Council

Wards: 13 – Toronto Centre

CITY COUNCIL DECISION

City Council on April 22 and 23, 2026, referred Motion MM40.25 to the Economic and Community Development Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Chris Moise, seconded by Councillor Jamaal Myers, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to continue to review the Echoes proposal brought forward by AIDS Service Organizations and explore the feasibility of incorporating all, or parts, of the proposed elements in the final design of Barbara Hall Park.
2. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to undertake a community engagement process to assess local community support for the nighttime closure of Barbara Hall Park, and to consult with relevant Divisions on any operational considerations, and to report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the second quarter of 2027 on findings and next steps.

SUMMARY

Barbara Hall Park is a critical urban green space in the Church-Wellesley Village, home to two memorials of profound importance: the AIDS Memorial and the Trans Memorial. The park has experienced persistent health and safety concerns, significantly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and a rise in opioid-related incidents. These issues,

particularly pronounced during overnight hours, include vandalism, violence and lateral violence, and maintenance challenges – especially around the Memorials which are in secluded areas in the park. These memorials are central to the 2SLGBTQ+ community and are located in sections of the park that make them particularly vulnerable to damage and misuse.

In response to ongoing issues, the City of Toronto established the Barbara Hall Park Response Team, comprised of municipal staff, local agencies, and community partners, to pursue sustainable solutions. This work aligns with the Downtown East Action Plan (adopted July 24, 2024, 2024.EC14.8), which emphasizes the need to balance public safety with support for community members and businesses.

Current mitigation measures include:

- a. Routine Maintenance: is serviced for litter and maintenance three times per day;
- b. Needle Collection: twice daily visits to remove sharps, hazards and debris;
- c. Crisis Outreach and Support Team Patrols: daily multidisciplinary crisis intervention and de-escalation;
- d. Here to Help (H2H): is a multi-service, community-based mobile team that responds to immediate concerns in the community to assist with conflict resolution, crisis intervention and de-escalation. This program is funded through the Downtown East Action Plan; and
- e. Security Presence: mobile contracted guards as part of the Interdivisional Protocol for Encampments in Toronto.

Despite these efforts, overnight safety challenges persist. The Community Response Unit in Toronto Police Service 51 Division conducts regular bike patrols and responds to high-priority incidents in the park, including violent behaviour, threats to public safety, and medical emergencies. However, due to the high volume of priority calls in the area, officers must prioritize urgent responses, limiting their ability to consistently address ongoing lower-priority nuisance and quality-of-life issues in the park.

Residents and community members have called for stronger interventions to address late-night activity through public feedback, meetings, and direct communications to staff and 311.

As part of the ongoing Barbara Hall Park Master Plan project, there is an opportunity to consult the broader public and stakeholders on the potential nighttime closure and other safety enhancements to determine public support and identify potential mitigation measures. The Master Plan's extensive process of stakeholder and public engagement to date has identified safety and vandalism concerns from the community members, specifically late-night crowding.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM40.25

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2026/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-286231.pdf>

Communications (City Council)

(April 21, 2026) E-mail from Ian Mcnicol (MM.Supp)

(April 22, 2026) E-mail from Nicole Corrado (MM.New)