

NOTICE OF MOTION

Planning for the Centennial Celebration of Guild Park and Gardens (2032)

Moved by: Councillor

Paul W. Ainslie

Seconded by: Councillor

Nick Mantas

SUMMARY:

Guild Park and Gardens is approaching its centennial year in 2032, representing a significant milestone in the history of the community. This anniversary presents an important opportunity to celebrate the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of the site, while fostering civic pride and community engagement.

As a unique cultural and historical landmark within the City of Toronto, the 2032 centennial provides an opportunity to honour this legacy while engaging residents, community organizations, and visitors in a forward-looking celebration. To ensure a coordinated and meaningful commemoration, early planning and collaboration between City of Toronto divisions and community stakeholders will be essential.

Guild Park and Gardens is a unique 88-acre historic site situated atop the Scarborough Bluffs in the Scarborough–Guildwood community. Originally established as a private country estate, the property evolved into an artist colony and later a popular country inn before being transformed into a public park. Today, it is widely recognized for its open-air collection of salvaged architectural elements from demolished Toronto and buildings across the Province. The site is also home to the Clark Centre for the Arts.

The site reflects a rich and varied history spanning several key periods:

- **1914 – The Bickford Estate:** The central Arts and Crafts-style mansion was constructed by Colonel Harold C. Bickford.
- **1932 – The Guild of All Arts:** Rosa Breithaupt Hewetson and Spencer Clark acquired the property and established a rent-free cooperative community for artists, including painters, weavers, and craftspeople.
- **1939–1945 – Wartime Contribution:** During the Second World War, the Guild contributed to Canada’s war effort by supporting training and production activities, including the creation of handmade goods and materials in support of military needs, while continuing to provide space for artistic and craft-based work.
- **1950s–1960s – Architectural Preservation Era:** During a period of rapid post-war development in Toronto, many historic Victorian and Edwardian buildings were demolished. In response, the Clarks undertook significant preservation efforts, working with stonemasons to salvage and relocate architectural fragments from more than 60 buildings to the site.
- **1978 to Present – Public Stewardship:** The property was acquired by the Province of Ontario and Metropolitan Toronto and is now jointly managed by the City of Toronto and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. The historic Guild Inn has since undergone restoration and currently operates as an event and banquet venue.

Guild Park and Gardens feature several notable elements, including:

- The Greek Theatre, constructed from marble columns salvaged from the former 1912 Bank of Toronto building.
- A collection of architectural fragments from significant heritage buildings, including the former Toronto Star building, the Granite Club, and the Temple Building; and
- Extensive natural trails along the Scarborough Bluffs, offering scenic views of Lake Ontario.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council request the appropriate City Divisions, including Parks and Recreation, Economic Development and Culture; Heritage Planning; and Corporate Partnerships, to collaborate and coordinate efforts to support the planning of Guild Park and Gardens centennial celebrations in 2032.
2. City Council request staff from the appropriate City Divisions, including Parks and Recreation, Economic Development and Culture; Heritage Planning; and Corporate Partnerships work with the Guildwood Village Community Association and the Friends of Guild Park and Gardens to establish a planning committee to guide the development of centennial programming, events, and legacy initiatives.

June 23, 2026