

Renaming of Chestnut Street Extending between Edward Street and Elm Street

Date: March 5, 2026

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services
General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: Ward 11 - University - Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the name "Heather McGregor Way" be approved to rename a section of Chestnut Street extending between Edward Street and Elm Street.

This naming proposal complies with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy which can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/street-naming/>

This naming proposal is in alignment with the objectives of the [Guiding Principles](#) for Commemoration in the Public Realm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommend that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. Approve the name "Heather McGregor Way" for renaming a section of Chestnut Street extending between Edward Street and Elm Street.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost to install street name signage is approximately \$600.00 and is included within the Transportation Services Division's approved 2026 Operating Budget.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

This is the first time that this issue is before Community Council.

COMMENTS

At its meeting on July 19, 2022, City Council adopted the City of Toronto Commemorative Framework and approved revisions to the Street Naming Policy. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX34.6>

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

An application was received on February 12, 2026, from YWCA Toronto, requesting to rename Chestnut Street extending from Edward Street to Elm Street, as “Heather McGregor Way” honouring the named party’s community contributions while Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Toronto.

The following background and rationale provided by the applicant:

Heather McGregor

After 31 years of incredible leadership, Heather McGregor, C.M., the Chief Executive Officer of the YWCA Toronto is retiring at the end of March 2026. In her honour, YWCA Toronto is submitting an application to have the laneway located between 87 Elm St. (YWCA Toronto Head Office) and 101 Elm St. (Faculty of Dentistry U of T) to be commemoratively renamed: Heather McGregor Way.

As the Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Toronto, Heather McGregor is the guiding force behind one of the city’s largest multi-service organizations which is committed to a radical transformation of society where all women, girls and gender diverse people can thrive. We offer a range of housing options, employment and training programs, community support programs, girls’ programs and family programs; we also engage in systemic advocacy.

Heather McGregor has been our fearless CEO for the past three decades; every day she has shown up to work with a heartfelt compassion, and unwavering dedication to empowering women, girls, and gender diverse communities. We believe renaming the laneway next to our head office is the perfect way to honour her important legacy.

Since assuming the helm in 1995, Heather’s vision has established a higher community profile, greater financial sustainability and the means to expand services within the broader non-profit sector. Under her leadership, YWCA Toronto is able to annually serve over 13,000 women, trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary community members, helping them escape violence, move out of poverty, and access safe and affordable

housing for themselves and their children. Additionally, the organization has grown from employing 250 staff in the 1990s to over 600 staff today.

In 2011 Heather led a major capital campaign developing Elm Centre which added 300 units of permanent housing with rent-geared-to income, subsidized and market rent units. To do this, she helped raise \$15 million which included a lead gift of \$5 million, the largest ever to a social service organization in the country.

As a volunteer, Heather has also taken a leadership role in too many community organizations to name. She has received the Constance E. Hamilton Award given by the City of Toronto for her commitment to women and girls; YWCA Canada's Clela Herman Award for local, national and international contributions to the YWCA movement; and was the recipient of the Women's Executive Network (WXN) Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women Award in 2010. In 2014 Heather was installed as a member of the Order of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto and in 2015 she received the Frances Lankin Award for her work in the social service sector. And in 2017, Heather was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly known as Ryerson University).

In 2022, Heather was awarded with the Order of Canada. This honour is one of our country's highest and recognizes trailblazers working in all sectors who have made a meaningful difference in the lives of Canadians.

Heather's commitment to feminism, social justice and systematic advocacy fiercely leads the charge towards lasting change for thousands of community members in Toronto.

Heather's dedication and commitment to not only the YWCA Toronto but the City as a whole makes her the perfect candidate to have the laneway next to YWCA Toronto's Head Office at 87 Elm St. be commemoratively renamed in her honour.

Heather McGregor Research and Review

The Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) has reviewed the application to rename the portion of Chestnut Street extending between Edward and Elm Streets in the Bay Street Corridor neighbourhood in honour of Heather McGregor. The proposed commemorative name is "Heather McGregor Way." The following summarizes EDC's research and review of the proposed name, undertaken in accordance with the City's Guiding Principles for Commemoration.

As outlined in the application and confirmed through staff research, Heather McGregor spent over 30 years as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of YWCA Toronto. YWCA Toronto is the largest multi-service organization committed to supporting women, girls, and gender diverse people in the city. It provides support in the form of shelter and permanent housing, employment training, mental health and addiction support, and family and youth programming. Under McGregor's leadership, the organization annually served over 13,000 women and gender-diverse people. During her tenure, the number of YWCA permanent housing units for women, gender diverse people, and their families increased more than fivefold. She also oversaw the development of the YWCA Elm

Centre, one of the largest affordable housing projects in Canada; this involved raising \$15 million in capital funding, including a lead gift of \$5 million, the largest ever to a social service organization.

Within the YWCA's organizational structure, McGregor established the Advocacy and Communications Department to advance the organization's mandate to drive systemic change in support of women and gender diverse individuals leading equitable and violence-free lives. In her role, she engaged all levels of government to strengthen economic and social supports for women and gender diverse people in Toronto, Ontario, and across Canada. McGregor also advocated for stronger gun control measures to reduce the risk of gender-based violence. With a focus on creating lasting change, McGregor ensured the YWCA worked to both support individuals directly and to influence policy and legislative change.

In addition to her leadership at YWCA Toronto, McGregor contributed extensively to community organizations, including serving on the boards of the Social Planning Council, the United Way, and St. Michael's Hospital, among others. She has also been active within the Anglican Church and previously served as a specialized foster parent with the Metro Children's Aid Society.

McGregor's longstanding commitment to advancing equity and improving social outcomes has been recognized through numerous honours. She received the City of Toronto's Constance E. Hamilton Award in 2008 for her advocacy on behalf of women and girls. In 2010, she was named one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network (WXN). Toronto Metropolitan University awarded her an honorary Doctorate in 2017. In 2022, McGregor was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition of her decades of work to advance the rights and well-being of women and gender diverse people.

The application includes multiple letters of support, including submissions from the YWCA's current CEO and the Chair of its Board of Directors. This application is also supported by Ward 11 Councillor Dianne Saxe (University-Rosedale). In summary, as demonstrated in the application and confirmed through City staff review, Heather McGregor has made a significant contribution to the city of Toronto through her leadership in the non-profit sector and her work in support of women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Her record of service has had a lasting impact, and the systems and initiatives she helped establish will continue to benefit Toronto residents into the future.

Complete Historical Research Report is available upon request.

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

Councillor Saxe, Ward 11 - University - Rosedale, supports this naming.

Section 6.1.3 of the Street Naming Policy stipulates in part, that a renaming, requires the applicant to demonstrate a minimum of 75% documented support from the abutting property owners.

“Section 6.1.3 Documented support, including but not limited to petitions and support letters, from at least 75 percent of property owners that abut the Street”

The site being renamed is a section of closed Chestnut Street which currently operates as a walkway, under the Jurisdiction of the City of Toronto. The abutting owner to the east of the site is City of Toronto (leased by YWCA). The abutting owner to the west is University of Toronto. The applicant provided a letter of support from the University dated March 6, 2026. City of Toronto support is achieved via support of the Ward Councillor. Thus, this renaming proposal has the achieved support of all property abutting property owners.

Two letters of community support were received on February 9th from the following community organizations:
YMCA Toronto; and
Grange Community Association

The street is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. PS-2026-005.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

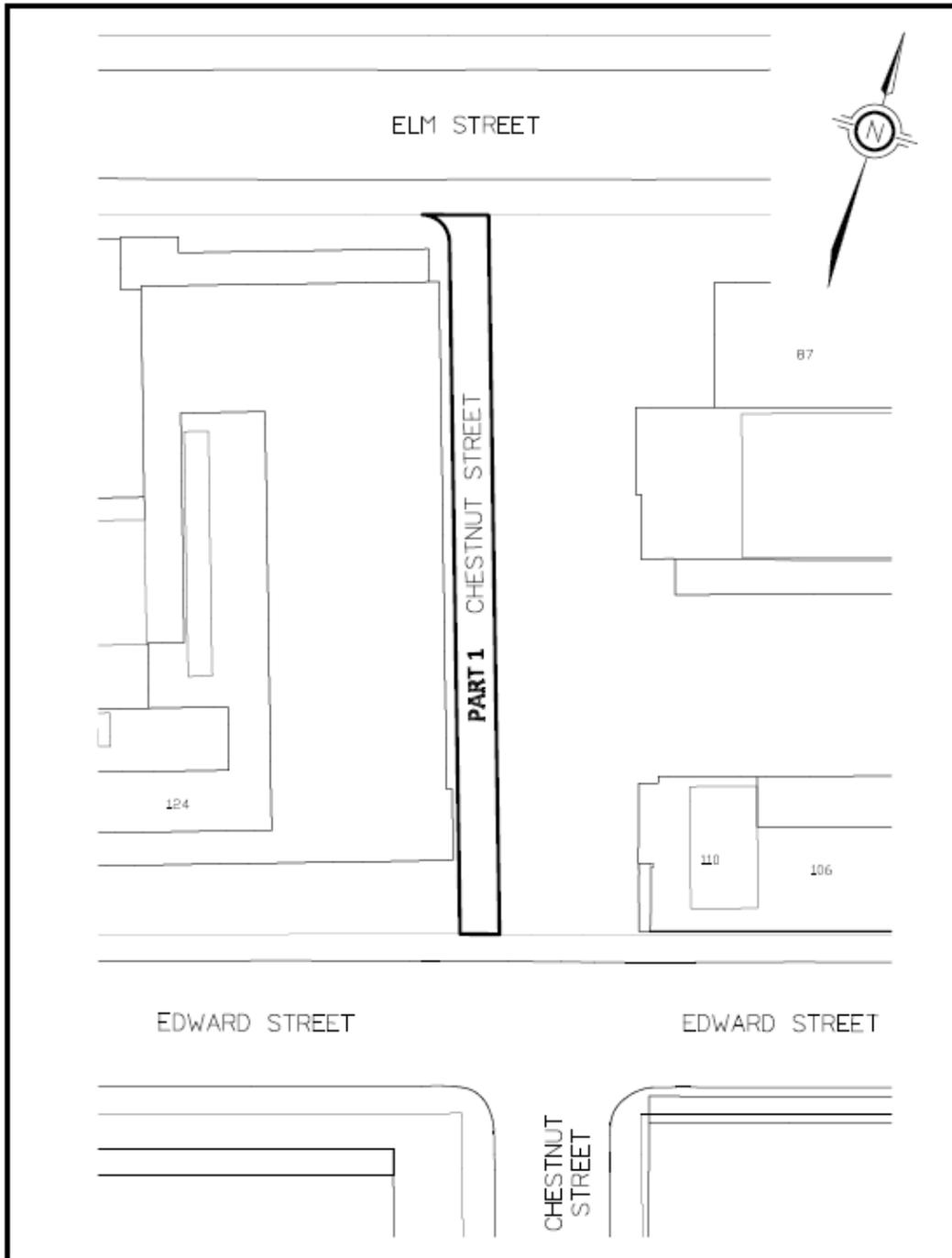
Avi Bachar, P. Eng., Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services

Patrick Tobin, General Manager, Economic Development & Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2026-005

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2026-005, showing the location of Chestnut Street extending between Edward Street and Elm Street



<p>Toronto ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION SERVICES PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES LAND SURVEYING SERVICES</p>	<p>PROPERTY INFORMATION SHEET RENAMING OF CHESTNUT STREET EXTENDING BETWEEN EDWARD STREET AND ELM STREET</p>	
<p>NOTE: THIS SKETCH HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM OFFICE RECORDS. MEASUREMENTS ARE APPROXIMATE</p>		
<p>CHECKED BY: B. SEGUIN PREPARED BY: D. LAAGA</p>	<p>WARD 11 - UNIVERSITY - ROSEDALE DATE: FEB 12, 2026</p>	<p>SKETCH No. PS-2026-005</p>