

Naming of an existing Public Lane South of King Street West, extending between Cowan Avenue and Spencer Avenue

Date: April 13, 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 4 - Parkdale - High Park

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the name "Foon Hay Lum Lane" be approved to identify an existing public lane located south of King Street West, extending between Cowan Avenue and Spencer Avenue.

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 "Foon Hay Lum Lane" for an existing public lane located south of King Street West, extending between Cowan Avenue and Spencer Avenue.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost to install street name signage is approximately \$600 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 August 19, 2024, from a resident requesting to name the existing public lane located south of King Street West, extending between Cowan Avenue and Spencer Avenue, as Foon Hay Lum Lane, in honour of a local community figure.

The following background and rationale provided by the applicant:

“Foon Hay Lum Lane”

“Foon Hay Lum (nee Chiu) was born in the Pearl River Delta in 1908, in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. In 1926 she married Jack Lum, a Chinese labourer in Canada and moved to his family's nearby village. From 1926-1958, she and her husband lived apart, save for one 2-year visit when they had their two children. She raised them through the political turmoil of the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the Japanese occupation (1937-1945), and the establishment of the PRC. At the age of 50, after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, she travelled alone across the Pacific Ocean in 1958 and reunited with the husband of her youth. They worked side by side at Bing's Restaurant [1312 King Street West] helping at their son-in-law's family restaurant and bought a house on Cowan Ave., Toronto. Jack surrounded his home with beautiful roses and carnations. Sadly, they only had 12 short years together before Jack died.

Foon Hay became an activist in her late 70s, joining the Chinese Canadian National Council for Equity seeking a parliamentary apology for the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act. After a 20 year plus Redress fight, she was invited to Ottawa, along with her Chinese community and four generations of her family in 2006 to witness the historic parliamentary apology in the House of Commons delivered by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Foon Hay Lum lived quietly and independently in her Cowan home for 45 years. She turned her husband's flower garden into a vegetable garden, growing vegetables. At the

age of 107, health issues forced her to move to a nursing home. She maintained her mobility, was an avid reader and her days were filled with visits from her grandchildren, other family members and friends. When the pandemic hit, all visits to long term homes were suspended March 13, 2020. On April 24, 2020, at the age of 111, alone in a nursing home unprepared and spiraling out of control from an outbreak of COVID-19 during the first wave, Foon Hay Lum was one of the oldest and earliest people to die of COVID-19. Once again, she was separated from her family, amid a wave of Anti-Chinese racism in Canada.

Upon Foon Hay Lum's death, her granddaughter Helen Lee continues to fight for better long-term care, public healthcare and seniors' rights following her grandmother's community advocacy efforts. Foon Hay Lum has raised two generations of strong female community advocates. Her daughter Har Ying Lee received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award for community service.

While Foon Hay's life was extraordinary, the circumstances of her marriage were not for many wives of Chinese Canadian labourers during this period. The Chinese Exclusion Act lasted 24 years, from 1923-1947. In that time, a whole generation of Chinese boys as young as 12, brought to Canada to join their labouring fathers, came of age, and wanted to marry. With so few Chinese women in Canada, many had to travel to China to marry but were unable to reunite with their wives and children for decades because of the Exclusion Act. The trauma of family separation continues to reverberate in the lives of their descendants but their ingenuity and resilience, passed down to them from their ancestors, has been and continues to be integral to the building of Canadian society.

This laneway, named after Foon Hay Lum, carries forward this story of resilience.”

Foon Hay Lum Research and Review

The Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) has reviewed the application to name the unnamed laneway south of King Street West, east of Cowan Avenue. The proposed name “Foon Hay Lum Lane,” commemorates Foon Hay Lum (née Chiu) (1908-2020), a Chinese Canadian community activist, elder, and long-time Parkdale resident. The submission includes a biography and documentation of community engagement and letters of support for the proposed naming. 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 by the applicant and confirmed through City staff research, Foon Hay Lum’s life was greatly impacted by Canada’s Chinese Immigration Act of 1923. This policy was the last in a series of increasingly restrictive laws meant to prevent Chinese people from immigrating to Canada. Under this policy, it is estimated that only 15 new Chinese immigrants were admitted to Canada between 1923 and 1946. Also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the legislation prohibited Chinese men already in Canada from bringing their Chinese families into the country.

Foon Hay Lum was born in Xinhui, Guangdong, China. In 1926, Foon Hay Lum married Nam Jack Lum (1903-1971), a Chinese Canadian who had returned to China to seek a spouse. Immediately following their marriage, Nam Jack was obligated to return to

Canada in order to maintain his immigration status. The couple lived apart for seven years until Nam Jack was able to save enough money to return to China. During his subsequent three-year stay, the Lums had two children, after which Nam Jack returned to Canada alone. Foon Hay remained in China, where she raised their two children largely on her own.

Nearly 30 years later, Foon Hay reunited with her husband in 1958 in Toronto following the Canadian government's repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Together, they worked at Bing's Restaurant, located at 1312 King Street West in Toronto. In the mid-1960s, the Lums purchased a home near the restaurant on Cowan Avenue. After 12 years together, Nam Jack passed away.

In her 70s, Foon Hay became an active advocate fighting anti-Chinese racism. She was an early member of the Chinese Canadian National Council, an organization dedicated to social justice, equity, and inclusive civic engagement. Over several decades, Foon Hay advocated for a parliamentary apology for the Chinese Exclusion Act and redress for individuals who paid the Chinese Head Tax between 1885 and 1923. In 2006, Foon Hay Lum travelled to Ottawa with three generations of her descendants to witness Prime Minister Stephen Harper's formal apology to the Chinese Canadian community for past discriminatory legislation.

Foon Hay passed away in April 2020 at age 111, during the first wave of COVID-19.

The application includes documentation of community support, with letters from the Family Council at the Mon Sheong Home for the Aged, the family of Foon Hay Lum, the Jean Lumb Foundation, Toronto historian and author Arlene Chan, the Parkdale Village community, and the Sunnyside Historical Society. A documentary by Keira Loughran, *Exclusion: Beyond the Silence*, further demonstrates public engagement with Foon Hay Lum's legacy.

In summary, as demonstrated in the application and confirmed through staff research, Foon Hay Lum made sustained and significant contributions to her community through decades of advocacy addressing systemic discrimination faced by Chinese Canadians. Her efforts supported broader public recognition of historical injustices and contributed to changes in public awareness; her legacy is one of resilience, community advocacy, and the pursuit of justice.

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 Gord Perks, Ward 4 – Parkdale-High Park, supports this naming.

Consent was provided by "Helen Lee", the commemorated party's granddaughter.

Community support was demonstrated with a petition of signatures from the local community as well as letters from the Family Council at the Mon Sheong Home for the Aged, the family of Foon Hay Lum, the Jean Lumb Foundation, Toronto historian and

author Arlene Chan, the Parkdale Village community, and the Sunnyside Historical Society.

The lane is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. PS-2026-011.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2026-011

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2026-011, showing the location of an existing public lane located south of King Street West, extending between Cowan Avenue and Spencer Avenue.

