

Naming of an existing Public Lane located south of Queen Street East, between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue

Date: June 10, 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 14 - Toronto - Danforth

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the name "Sister Gwen Smith Lane" be approved to identify an existing public lane located south of Queen Street East, between Empire Avenue and Booth 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 [Guiding Principles](#) for Commemoration in the Public Realm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 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 "Sister Gwen Smith Lane" for an existing public lane located south of Queen Street East, between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue.

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

At its meeting on May 28, 2026, Toronto and East York Community Council adopted item, TE33.79 directing the Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report to the July 8 and 9, 2026 meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council with recommendations to name the existing public lane located south of Queen Street East between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue as “Sister Gwen Smith Lane”. [Agenda Item History - 2026.TE33.79](#)

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.

This report responds to item TE33.79 and the application received on May 28th, 2026, from Councillor Paula Fletcher requesting to name the existing public lane located south of Queen Street East, between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue, as “Sister Gwen Smith Lane”, honouring a dedicated member of the Sisters of Joseph for over 70 years.

The following background and rationale was provided by the applicant:

“Sister Gwen Smith Lane”

Sister Gwen was a dedicated member of the Sisters of St Joseph for over 70 years. Sister Gwen was an unflagging social justice advocate who was a founding ministry director of Fontbonne Ministries to address community needs through social services, affordable housing and Outreach.

In 2002 Fontbonne Place was opened with 18 rent-geared-to-income apartments for women. Known for her work among the poor and disadvantaged, Sister Gwen worked to develop Mustard Seed, the community hub at Fontbonne Place that offers food security programs, support services and drop in space. Along with Reverend Ray McCleary, Sister Gwen was an outspoken advocate for the poor in South Riverdale and devoted her life in their service.

With strong support from the local community, I support this opportunity to honour Sister Gwen Smith.

Sister Gwen Smith Lane Research & Review

The Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) has reviewed the application to name the existing public lane located south of Queen Street East between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue in the South Riverdale neighbourhood in commemoration of Sister Gwen Smith (1930–2024). The proposed name is “Sister Gwen Smith Lane.” The application includes a biography of Sister Smith, evidence of community support, and a letter of support from Councillor Fletcher (Ward 14, Toronto-Danforth). The application is accompanied by a motion requesting the naming of a laneway after Sister Gwen Smith (2026.TE33.79). 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 verified through staff research, Sister Gwen Smith was a dedicated social justice advocate and community volunteer and leader. Smith joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto in 1951 at the age of 21 and remained a member for 72 years. The congregation is dedicated to advocacy in areas including Indigenous justice, labour rights, and environmental sustainability. Smith completed an English Language and Literature degree from the University of Toronto in 1956. Following a career in secondary education, Smith transitioned to community outreach in British Columbia before returning to Toronto in the early 2000s to focus her ministry on serving the city’s most vulnerable populations.

Smith was a founding ministry director of Fontbonne Ministries in South Riverdale, an organization that delivers a comprehensive suite of community programs. Key initiatives delivered under her leadership include:

- Mustard Seed: A volunteer-run community garden and kitchen providing food access and social support for unhoused and low-income residents.
- Friendly Visiting: A support program that matches volunteers with isolated seniors.
- Studio on the Hill: An arts-based program for creative engagement.
- Fontbonne Place: An affordable housing complex for older women.

Beyond her administrative leadership, Smith was a dedicated advocate for refugee rights. She frequently spoke against anti-refugee rhetoric and the separation of refugee families. Smith volunteered with the Ralph Thornton Community Centre (RTCC), serving on the Board in 2009. In 2019, Smith received a Ralph Thornton Community Volunteer Award for Contributions to Community Betterment.

The application includes documentation of community support for the proposed name. A petition with signatures from the surrounding neighbourhood demonstrates strong support for the proposed name. Councillor Fletcher has also written a letter of support for the proposed name.

In summary, as outlined in the application and confirmed through City staff research, Sister Gwen Smith was a community leader in South Riverdale. Her dedication to addressing the physical, social, and spiritual needs of vulnerable

community members reflects an enduring commitment to social justice and public service.

A 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.

Sister Gwen Smith passed away on March 23rd, 2024.

Consent was provided by Sisters of St. Joseph (Sister Georgette).

Councillor Paula Fletcher, Ward 14 Toronto-Danforth, supports this naming.

Community support was demonstrated by a petition of signatures from the local community.

The lane is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. PS-2026-023.

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

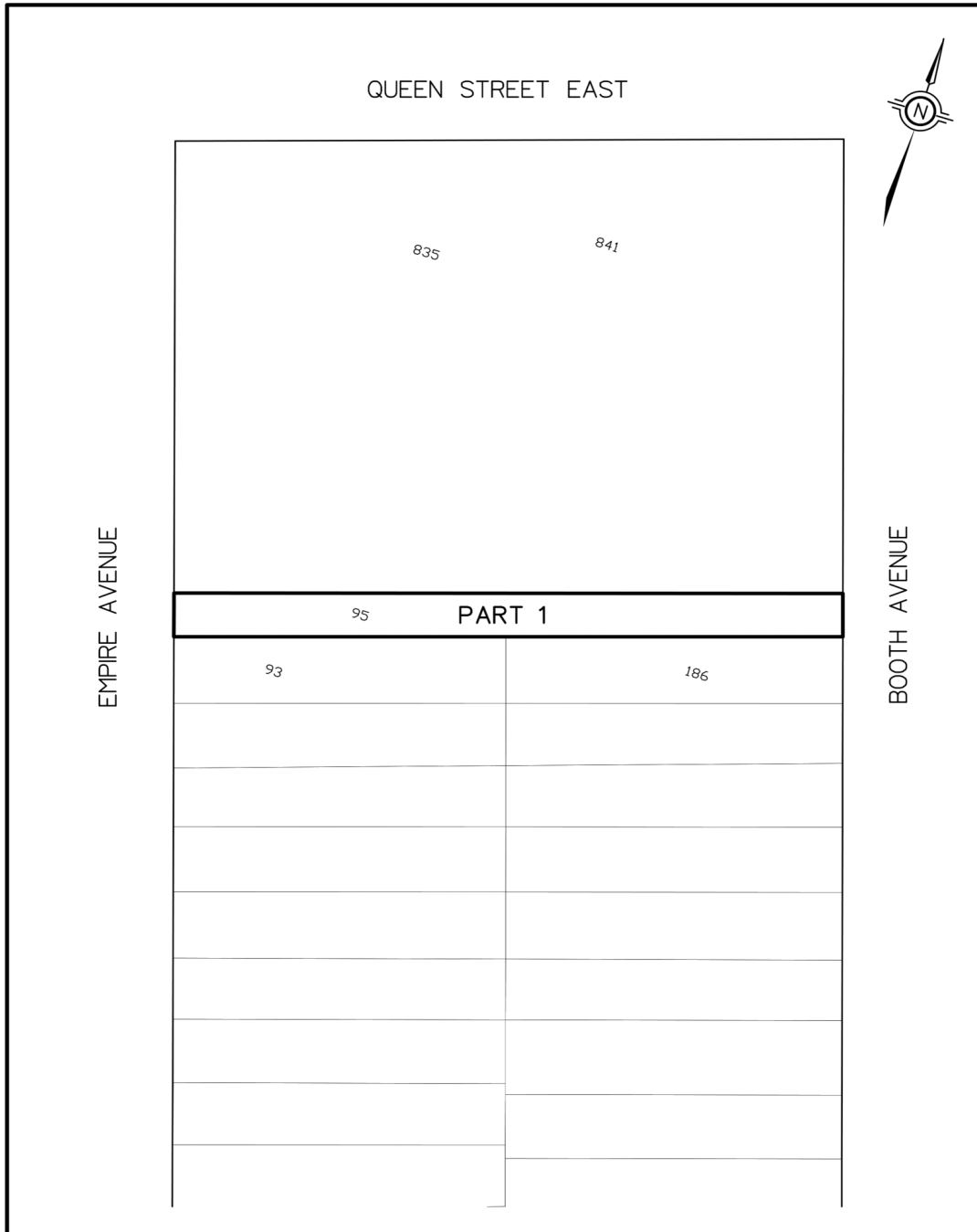
ATTACHMENTS


Attachment 1 Sketch No. PS-2026-023

Attachment 2 – Letter of Support from Councillor Paula Fletcher

Attachment 1

Sketch No. PS-2026-023, showing the location of an existing public lane located South of Queen Street East, between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue



 <p>ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION SERVICES ENGINEERING SUPPORT SERVICES LAND & PROPERTY SURVEYS</p>	PROPERTY INFORMATION SHEET	
	NAMING OF A PUBLIC LANE LOCATED SOUTH OF QUEEN STREET EAST, BETWEEN EMPIRE AVENUE AND BOOTH AVENUE	
	CHECKED BY: R. SEGUIN PREPARED BY: S. LOMBARDO	WARD 14 - TORONTO-DANFORTH DATE: JUNE 3, 2026

Attachment 2

Letter of Support from Councillor Paula Fletcher, Toronto City Councillor for Ward 14, Toronto- Danforth



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City Councillor | Ward 14 Toronto-Danforth

May 28, 2026

Toronto and East York Community Council
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Report request on naming an existing lane Sister Gwen Smith Lane

Dear Councillor Moise and Toronto and East York Community Council,

Sister Gwen was a dedicated member of the Sisters of St Joseph for over 70 years. Sister Gwen was an unflagging social justice advocate who was a founding ministry director of Fontbonne Ministries to address community needs through social services, affordable housing and Outreach.

In 2002 Fontbonne Place was opened with 18 rent-geared to income apartments for women. Known for her work among the poor and disadvantaged, Sister Gwen worked to develop Mustard Seed, the community hub at Fontbonne Place that offers food security programs and support services and drop in space. Along with Reverend Ray McCleary, Sister Gwen was an outspoken advocate for the poor in South Riverdale and devoted her life in their service.

With strong support from the local community, I support this opportunity to honour Sister Gwen Smith.

Recommendation:

Toronto and East York Community Council direct the Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report to the July 8 and 9, 2026 meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council with recommendations to name the existing public lane located south of Queen Street East between Empire Avenue and Booth Avenue as "Sister Gwen Smith Lane".

Sincerely,

Paula Fletcher

City Councillor
Ward 14, Toronto-Danforth



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