

## The Journey to Philippine Park

The Filipino-Canadian community in Mississauga has reached a milestone that many once thought was only a dream: the day Max Ward Park officially became **Philippine Park**. On **June 20, 2025**, as the new sign was unveiled, Mayor Carolyn Parrish, Councillor Natalie Hart, community leaders, and proud residents stood together in a moment that felt both historic and deeply personal. With June recognized as **Philippine Heritage Month**, the occasion carried even greater meaning.

### The Journey

The story began quietly in **April 2024**. During a conversation at a Kalayaan Filipino cultural gathering, Kalayaan Centre President **Resty del Rosario** shared a simple but powerful dream with then-mayoral candidate Carolyn Parrish: to have a park named after the Philippines, a place that would reflect the community's roots, identity, and contributions.

A few months later, following the **2024 Philippine Festival Mississauga**, festival organizers Resty del Rosario, Linda Carin, Fely Castelo, Odette Aguinaldo, and Luz del Rosario paid a courtesy visit to the newly elected Mayor to thank her for her years of support. During that meeting, Resty formally presented the request. Mayor Parrish, together with her Senior Strategic Advisor **George Carlson**, immediately began looking into the history and future of Max Ward Park. When asked why this particular park was being proposed, Resty's answer was heartfelt and straightforward: because it stood just steps away from the **Kalayaan Centre**, long regarded as the heart of Filipino culture in Mississauga.

The Mayor responded positively and committed to working with the Ward family to relocate the Max Ward name to a site closer to the airport, where it would continue to carry strong historical meaning.

On **June 11, 2025**, Resty del Rosario, Lauroz Mercader, and Rick Falco appeared before Mississauga City Council to speak about what Philippine Park would mean to Filipino-Canadians in Mississauga and beyond. Their message resonated. Council's vote was unanimous. A dream became a decision and soon after, a reality.

As Resty later said, ***"This is a victory for the whole Filipino community. Philippine Park is a space that belongs to all of us."***

### The Vision

Located just a short walk from the Kalayaan Centre, Philippine Park is more than simply a piece of green space. It is a gathering place, a place for celebration, family stories, shared memories, and community pride. The **Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre**, an affiliate of the City of Mississauga, has adopted the park and committed to helping care for it throughout the year.

Mississauga's Filipino community, now nearly **40,000 strong**, has helped shape the city for decades. Nurses, personal support workers, educators, entrepreneurs, and countless others have built lives, raised families, and contributed meaningfully to the growth and vitality of the city. Renaming the park is a symbolic act, but it is also a powerful one. It acknowledges years of service, sacrifice, resilience, and cultural pride.

Philippine Park now stands as a lasting sign of belonging, a place where heritage is honoured, community is strengthened, and future generations can see themselves reflected in the landscape of the city they call home.

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