## The Journey to Philippine Park

The Filipino-Canadian community in Mississauga has reached a moment many never imagined they would witness: the day Max Ward Park officially became **Philippine Park**. On June 20, 2025, as the new sign was unveiled, Mayor Carolyn Parrish, Councilor Natalie Hart, community leaders, and proud residents stood together in a moment that felt both historic and deeply personal. With June being Philippine Heritage Month, the timing could not have been more meaningful.

## The journey

The story began quietly in April 2024. During a conversation at a Kalayaan Filipino Cultural Organization event, Kalayaan Centre President Resty del Rosario shared a simple dream with then–Ward 5 Councillor Carolyn Parrish: a park named after the Philippines. A place that reflected the community's roots, identity, and contributions.

Months later, after the 2024 Philippine Festival Mississauga, the organizers of the Festival (Resty del Rosario, Linda Carin, Fely Castelo, Odette Aguinaldo and Luz del Rosario) visited the newly elected Mayor to thank her for years of support. In that meeting, Resty made the request official. The Mayor and her Senior Strategic Advisor, George Carlson, immediately began exploring the history of Max Ward Park. When asked why this park, Resty's answer was heartfelt—because it stood just steps from the Kalayaan Centre, the heart of Filipino culture in Mississauga.

The Mayor agreed, promising to work with the Ward family to relocate the Max Ward name to a site closer to the airport, where it would remain meaningful.

On June 11, 2025, Resty del Rosario, Lauroz Mercader, and Rick Falco stood before City Council to share what Philippine Park would mean to Filipino-Canadians west of the GTA. Their message resonated. The vote was unanimous. A dream became a decision—and soon after, a reality.

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

## The vision

Philippine Park, just a short walk from the Kalayaan Centre, is more than green space. It is a gathering place for celebrations, family stories, and shared memories. The Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre, an affiliate of the City of Mississauga, has adopted the park and committed to caring for it year-round.

Mississauga's Filipino community—nearly **40,000 strong**—has shaped the city for decades. Nurses, PSWs, educators, entrepreneurs, and countless others have built lives and raised families here. Renaming the park is a symbolic gesture, but a powerful one. It acknowledges years of service, sacrifice, and cultural pride.