

Engraved Bench Donation for McCowan District Park

Date: December 12, 2016

To: Scarborough Community Council

From: General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation

Wards: Ward 36 - Scarborough Southwest

SUMMARY

Parks, Forestry and Recreation provides a commemorative tree and bench program for families and communities wishing to pay tribute to a loved one. The proposed granite non-standard bench donation poses maintenance, installation and location challenges, which does not make it ideal to accept as a Parks, Forestry and Recreation asset. It also does not constitute public art and as such, cannot be donated through the public art program.

Where there are existing city programs which achieve the intended goal of the donation, staff recommends the community pursue this option.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. Scarborough Community Council receives this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

If accepted, the cost to install the donated bench is estimated at \$1,000 for staff and material costs. The current 2017 Preliminary Operating Budget does not include provision for this type of work or recovery thereof.

The current fees for the [commemorative tree and bench program](#) offered by Parks, Forestry and Recreation, as described herein this report, includes the cost of installation and care. As this is a non-standard bench, the City will incur additional future repair and maintenance costs which cannot be estimated at this time.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On October 13, 2016 Scarborough Community Council directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR), in consultation with Economic Development and Culture (EDC) to report back on the feasibility of accepting the donation of one engraved granite bench from Resthaven Memorial Gardens.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.SC17.24>

COMMENTS

The City recognizes that there is a strong desire from the public to publicly commemorate loved ones, which is why Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers a [commemorative tree and bench program](#). The program is popular. In 2015, 48 benches were donated through this program, and a further 37 existing benches received plaques. This is a positive way for donors to honour both their loved ones, as well as increase seating amenities in parks, which helps Parks, Forestry and Recreation increase passive recreation space for all residents and visitors to our parks. Fees for the commemorative program are as follows:

A tree with a plaque	\$ 738.00
A bench with a plaque	\$2,530.00
Addition of a plaque to an existing bench	\$1,753.00

Maintenance & Repair

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has a standard bench design which was designed with input from health professionals and representation from seniors and persons with disabilities. These benches meet rigorous safety and durability standards and are standardized across Parks, Forestry and Recreation. Maintenance and repair to these assets is simplified because standardized parts are stocked for repair; staff are able to purchase, maintain and repair these assets cost effectively. Amenities in parks must also meet AODA legislation, which the standard park benches do. The proposed granite bench does not meet Parks standards for accessibility or maintenance.

Although the cost of the physical bench will not be incurred by the City, the costs of installation, maintenance and repair do not form part of this donation. The typical cost to install a bench is approximately \$1000, which includes staff obtaining locates (necessary in order to dig), pouring a concrete base on which to install the bench (this is necessary in order for the bench to be secured in the park), and staff time to install the bench. These costs are built into the cost of a commemorative bench purchased through the commemorative tree and bench program.

Other Considerations

McCowan District Park has recently undergone a major upgrade, and the donor's preferred location, at the entrance to the park, will be difficult to accommodate as the entrance has a new large horticultural display. The bench is proposed to be engraved

with both the name of the deceased, as well as the donor, Resthaven Memorial Gardens, which may give the appearance of advertising in the Park.

Public Art

While the bench may have been made by skilled craftspeople, it is expected that works of public art, which are accepted into the City of Toronto's public art collection, are made by respected professional artists who have created an independent body of work and have a history of public exhibitions. In addition, public artworks are primarily commissioned through a competition process which includes an open call to artists and the selection of a proposal by a panel made up primarily of art experts. This process is also intended to be followed in the case of memorial donations to the public art collection. As this bench was not made by a professional artist and was not created through the City's competition process, it cannot be considered public art or accepted into the City's collection.

Conclusion

It is the objective of PFR to provide clean, safe and well-maintained green space and park amenities. Parks, Forestry and Recreation does not have expertise in maintaining the proposed donation; if the donated bench were to be accepted and then damaged, it would be challenging for PFR staff to repair it in a timely fashion. Additional costs will be incurred beyond the value of the bench for installation, maintenance and repair, costs which are recovered if the donor pursued the commemoration through the existing program.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers a commemorative tree and bench program; the cost of each bench is cost recovery to the bench and the asset is easily maintainable by staff. Parks, Forestry and Recreation, therefore, recommends that the donor pursue this commemoration through the existing commemorative program.

CONTACT

Richard Ubbens, Director, Parks, Tel: 416-392-7912, Email: rubbens@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation