

Entering into a Fundraising Agreement and Management Agreement with Friends of Allan Gardens

Date: June 15, 2022

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: Toronto Centre - Ward 13

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek authority from City Council to enter into agreements that will advance aspects of "Refresh: Unlocking the Opportunity to Revitalize Allan Gardens" a vision for Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory (herein referred to as "Refresh"); enter into a Fundraising Agreement with the Friends of Allan Gardens to accept donations for capital improvements to Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory; and enter into a Management Agreement with Friends of Allan Gardens for the Children's Conservatory and adjacent Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden.

This report also outlines a process to review and evaluate the governance and operating model for Allan Gardens Park and the Palm House Conservatory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to negotiate and sign on behalf of the City of Toronto a Fundraising Agreement with the Friends of Allan Gardens to raise funds for capital projects in Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory, in keeping with the "Refresh" vision for Allan Gardens, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and in form and content satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to accept third-party funds raised by Friends of Allan Gardens, as described in the Fundraising Agreement, and to allocate the funds as they become available to Allan Gardens capital projects in Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 10-Year Capital Budget

and Plan for the purpose of capital improvements to Allan Gardens, subject to the budget process.

3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to negotiate and sign on behalf of the City of Toronto a Management Agreement with Friends of Allan Gardens, for a term of five years with an additional term of five years at the General Manager's discretion, for the purposes of managing a portion of Allan Gardens Conservatory, namely the Children's Conservatory and adjacent Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden, on the City of Toronto's behalf, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and in form and content satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

This report seeks authority for the City of Toronto to enter into a Fundraising Agreement with the Friends of Allan Gardens in order for the Friends to fundraise to support future City capital projects in Allan Gardens. One project, for example, may include the fit-out of the Palm House building following a City-led state-of-good-repair project that is currently included in Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 2022 Council-Approved Capital Budget and 2023-2031 Capital Plan at a cost of \$3.4 million, with funding from debt. The interior fit-out, which is currently not funded, is estimated to cost up to \$0.400 million. A future fundraising campaign may focus on the proposed Link Building, which was the subject of a City-led architectural visioning study completed in 2019, with a high-level cost estimate of \$39.3 million. The actual contributions will be contingent upon the ability of the Friends of Allan Gardens to raise the funds in collaboration with the City of Toronto. Capital projects will only proceed after full donated funding is secured by the City of Toronto, subject to the budget process.

Services provided to the City of Toronto by Friends of Allan Gardens under the Management Agreement, as described in the report, would be funded through the existing Parks, Forestry and Recreation operating budget, subject to the annual budget process.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its April 6 and 7, 2022 meeting, City Council adopted MM42.21 *Green Future Forward: Establishing an Effective Governance and Operating Model for Allan Gardens and the Palm House Conservatory* requesting the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report back to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on a

process to review and evaluate the governance and operating model for Allan Gardens and all the assets in the park.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.MM42.21>

At its April 9, 2018 meeting, the Parks and Environment Committee adopted PE26.1 *Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory: Planning and Governance*.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PE26.1>

At its January 31 and February 1, 2018 meeting, City Council adopted MM36.13 *Refresh: Unlocking the Opportunity to Revitalize Allan Gardens*.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.MM36.13>

At its October 30, 31 and November 1, 2012 meeting, City Council adopted EX23.17 *Amendment to the Donations to the City for Community Benefits Policy*.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.EX23.17>

At its meeting on September 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2006, City Council adopted its Donations to the City for Community Benefits policy.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060925/pof7rpt/cl003.pdf>

COMMENTS

Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory (herein referred to as "the Park") has been a jewel of Toronto's park system for more than 150 years. The City of Toronto owns the conservatory located in the gardens. The Park has been known not only for its excellent horticultural displays, but also as a gathering place for activists, artists, residents and visitors.

In recent decades, the Park has struggled to evolve in a coherent manner, due in part to two competing sets of pressures. Allan Gardens acts as a neighbourhood park serving a diverse local community, while at the same time, it is a regional destination featuring a landmark conservatory that attracts tourists, school groups, and other visitors. Reconciling these distinct uses and expectations for the Park underscored the need for a clear guiding vision.

Refresh was developed by the Friends of Allan Gardens (herein referred to as "the Friends"), supported by City staff and formally adopted by City Council in 2018. Refresh provides themes, principles and opportunities to focus efforts and energies.

Since that time, the Friends have been offering a range of community programming in the main conservatory, adjacent Children's Conservatory, Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden, and within the community at large. Programming includes horticultural workshops, seminars, children's programs, a volunteer greeter program, and an outreach program for residents at Seaton House. The Friends have also developed relationships and collaborations with other local community groups including Indigenous organizations such as Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, where the Friends are assisting with garden development, and with the Toronto and York Region Métis Council, which maintains planters in the Teaching Garden. While

some of this programming was temporarily suspended due to COVID-19, other programming continued during the peak of the pandemic, including educational webinars and the Edible Allan Gardens project which provided fresh food from the Teaching Garden to the Building Roots food hamper program in Moss Park. With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, a return to more robust programming is anticipated for 2022.

In addition to this ongoing work, the Friends wish to take the next steps to advance the vision of Refresh, specifically to enter into a Fundraising Agreement with the City of Toronto, and Management Agreement for the Children's Conservatory and the Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden, which together comprise about 1.5 per cent of the entire area of Allan Gardens Park and Conservatory.

At its April 6 and 7, 2022 meeting, City Council adopted MM42.21, *Green Future Forward: Establishing an Effective Governance and Operating Model for Allan Gardens and the Palm House Conservatory* which directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) to establish a process to review and evaluate the governance and operating model for Allan Gardens and all assets on the park, and to do this work in consultation with park users, stakeholders, Friends of Allan Gardens and the local ward Councillor and to report back to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee in the second quarter of 2023.

In April 2019, a unified management model was implemented to streamline the governance and operations for Allan Gardens. This model has received positive feedback from community groups including the Friends, permit holders and members of the general public for improving the horticultural and visitor experience at Allan Gardens. PFR commits to working with park users, the Friends, stakeholders, and the Ward Councillor to explore areas for improvement.

Fundraising Agreement

The Friends have been successful in fundraising to support the organization's programming and administrative needs. The Friends wish to leverage this success and fundraise for capital projects in the Park, in collaboration with the City. A Fundraising Agreement will facilitate these efforts.

Among the projects envisioned in Refresh is the proposed Link Building. This building, located on the west side of the conservatory complex, would greatly expand horticulture exhibit space, roughly equalling the existing space in the Palm House, Arid House and Tropical House combined. The building would create a more accessible horticultural experience, include new community rooms, and would improve the delivery of services. Today, visitors reach dead-ends as they explore each wing, forcing them to double-back on narrow pathways which get crowded quickly. The Link Building would enable a unidirectional "loop" experience through the entire collection, which is not possible under the current configuration.

In 2019, PFR completed an architectural visioning study for the Link Building. The study created an energy-efficient concept plan for a new Link Building which would also

respect the heritage character of Allan Gardens, preserving sight-lines to the historic Palm House, a listed building. The study provided a high-level cost estimate of \$39.3 million. With construction cost inflation since that time, new cost estimates will be required in the future

A Fundraising Agreement with Friends of Allan Gardens will authorize the Friends to raise funds for capital projects in Allan Gardens. Capital projects will be completed by the City and will proceed only when full funding is secured, subject to the budget process. Under the Donations to the City for Community Benefit Policy, any donation valued in excess of \$50,000 requires Council approval for the division to accept. Recommendation 2 included in this report authorizes the General Manager, PFR to accept donated funds.

Management Agreement

Refresh highlights the need to explore models for park governance and operation. Referencing a 2014 report by the Martin Prosperity Institute and Park People that encouraged the Friends to pursue a new collaborative relationship with the City, Refresh envisions a public space supported and owned by the City of Toronto with spaces, facilities and programming delivered through partnership.

In 2018, the City commissioned Lord Cultural Resources to produce a best uses and operating model study for Allan Gardens. This study recommended an expanded role for the Friends based on its evolving capacity, in partnership with the City.

Since 2018, the City has also funded the Friends to provide horticultural programming to the community, based on a work plan approved annually by City staff. Programming includes, for example, public outreach in the conservatory, family drop-ins, plant sales, discovery cart program, Seaton House gardening outreach, tours, classes and workshops, and children's programming. Similar services were previously provided by Toronto Botanical Garden for many years. The funds, approximately \$100,000 per year, are sourced through PFR's Operating Budget and approved annually. It is important to note that funding was suspended through the COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 with the cancellation of most programming. Funding was approved through the 2022 PFR Operating Budget.

Based on the work to date and the opportunities, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that Council authorize the division to enter into a Management Agreement with the Friends to manage the Children's Conservatory, a specialized space on the north-west corner of the conservatory complex, with a meeting area, an office, a washroom and storage areas, and the adjacent Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden. The indoor space is approximately 278 square metres or 2,992 square feet. There are no permanent horticulture displays in the Children's Conservatory, which is not normally open to the public. The Children's Conservatory Teaching Garden is an adjacent outdoor space of approximately 519 square metres or 5,586 square feet. This fenced space is also not normally open to the general public, and is used for supervised programming, including the Edible Allan Gardens program managed by the Friends in collaboration with PFR.

The Friends have been operating in these spaces under permits. A Management Agreement would clearly define and increase the responsibilities of the Friends to include custodial and upkeep in the defined spaces. It would affirm shared priorities between the Friends and the City, and give the Friends the authority to manage the defined space for community use under the terms and conditions of the agreement. The City, as the owner, would remain responsible for state of good repair of the facilities.

This model leverages the community-building capacity of the Friends and its ability as a non-profit to raise funds from sources that may not be available to a municipality. There would be no impact on existing City staffing levels.

Outside of the managed area, the activities of Friends of Allan Gardens would continue to be governed by existing processes including permits for special events in the outdoor park spaces at Allan Gardens.

A joint leadership team consisting of members of the Friends and City staff has assembled and has met regularly for three years to collaborate and advance a number of shared initiatives related to public access, communications, indoor and outdoor displays, and future visioning and planning for landscape and capital projects. This shared approach creates an environment of collaboration and adaptation, and is reviewed annually to identify areas for improvement.

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SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Site Plan for Allan Gardens

Attachment 2: Refresh: Unlocking the Opportunity to Revitalize Allan Gardens, a vision document for Allan Gardens

Attachment 1: Site Plan for Allan Gardens

Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory and Teaching Garden (area in red, overview and close-up)

