

Donation from High Park Initiatives for Outdoor Classroom

Date: April 18, 2024

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: Howie Dayton, Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: Parkdale-High Park - 4

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request authority from City Council to accept a donation in the amount of \$0.075 million and enter into a donor agreement with High Park Initiatives, and to amend the 2024-2033 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Capital Budget and Plan accordingly for the establishment of an outdoor classroom and publicly accessible nature education space called the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space 2.0 in High Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council authorize the Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to accept a donation of \$0.075 million from High Park Initiatives, to provide financial support for the development of an outdoor classroom and publicly accessible nature education space called the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space 2.0 in High Park, in collaboration with Parks, Forestry and Recreation and in compliance with the Donations to the City of Toronto for Community Benefits Policy.
2. City Council authorize the Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to negotiate and sign on behalf of the City a donor agreement with High Park Initiatives, outlining the agreed-upon uses of the donated funds and donor recognition, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Acting General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
3. City Council approve an amendment to Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 2024 Capital Budget and 2025-2033 Capital Plan to create a new capital sub-project known as High Park Outdoor Urban Restoration Space Donation, in the Trails and Pathways project, with a project cost and cash flow of \$0.075 million in 2024, fully funded from the

High Park Initiatives donation, for the purpose of the development of the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space 2.0 in High Park.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The 2024-2033 Capital Budget and Plan for Parks, Forestry and Recreation will be amended by the creation of a new capital sub-project known as the High Park Outdoor Urban Restoration Space Donation, in the Trails and Pathways project, with a project cost and cash flow of \$0.075 million in 2024. This project will be classified as Service Improvement and will be fully funded from the High Park Initiatives donation, for the development of the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space 2.0 in High Park, which includes a trail connection and new fencing that will be designed and installed adjacent to the underutilized turf area directly south of the High Park Forest School building.

There are no additional annual operating costs associated with the planned improvements as the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space will be maintained by High Park Initiatives. The space will naturalize existing turf areas with plantings native to the black oak savannah of High Park.

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 meeting on October 30, 31 and November 1, 2012, City Council amended its Donations to the City for Community Benefits policy:

[Agenda Item History - 2012.EX23.17 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

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

[Agenda Item History - CC060925 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

COMMENTS

High Park Initiatives is a registered charity operating as the High Park Nature Centre ("Nature Centre") in the High Park Forest School building. The organization has provided a wide range of nature-based indoor and outdoor education and programming for all ages through successive licence agreements with the City. Annually, the Nature Centre attracts more than 14,000 participants.

Through a collaboration with Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR), the Nature Centre developed the Outdoor Urban Restoration Space ("OURSpace") just south of the Forest School building. This program has provided hands-on education about nature and

helped to restore turf areas back to High Park's natural state with native plantings associated with the locally rare black oak savannah.

Through the OURSpace program, 3,800 native seedlings were planted by volunteers in the savannah demonstration and additional paths were installed. The outdoor classroom space created to support the program also helped reduce programming traffic into High Park's environmentally sensitive areas while providing access to nature and educational experiences for children and adults. PFR also supported the program by creating a shaded seating area with large tree limbs and stumps, the space is available and welcoming to the public, with interpretive signage maintained by the Nature Centre.

The Nature Centre has identified an expanded program, OURSpace 2.0, that is intended to provide further opportunities to educate while reducing foot traffic into environmentally sensitive areas. Expanding on existing work being completed by PFR to upgrade various trails and fences in High Park, the program will provide a trail connection and new fencing that will be designed and installed adjacent to the underutilized turf area. The Nature Centre has identified a donation to the City in the amount of \$0.075 million to fund the expansion of the program and any incremental cost will be offset by the donation from the Nature Centre.

The proposed new space will be similar in design as the existing OURSpace program. The space will be installed adjacent to the underutilized turf area directly south of the High Park Forest School building.

If approved, the proposed work will take place through the spring and summer of 2024. The space will aim to naturalize existing turf areas with plantings native to the black oak savannah of High Park.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Howie Dayton
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