

COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

From: Administration

Date: January 20, 2025

Subject: Commemorative Bench and Tree Program Review

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council approve the amendment of Council Policy 1.16, the Commemorative Bench and Tree Program Policy, as detailed in the attached report.

BACKGROUND:

Since May 23, 2023, staff have been working on updating the Commemorative Bench and Tree Program Policy. Staff have worked in partnership with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee on creating a template for future memorial benches, four of these benches were trialed in 2023. After this Staff and the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee spoke about ways to improve the template for future versions (ensuring benches are placed on level surfaces, are situated along accessible pathways, and are not obstructed by landscaping, signage, or other elements). In 2024 staff applied for the Imagine Grant for a pilot project to template three park assets, a bench, table as well as a pathway. Staff were successful in obtaining \$10,000 for the project, but due to delays were not able to complete the pilot project before winter set in, project completion is set for 2025.

We are now bringing forward the Commemorative Bench and Tree Policy for Council's review. The changes proposed are as follows:

- 1) **Removal of the \$500 maintenance fee after 10 years:** We recommend removing the \$500 maintenance fee that was previously charged after 10 years. This fee is no longer relevant due to the new benches, which are made from durable recycled plastic that does not deteriorate over time. With a lifespan of 50 years, these benches significantly outlast the previous wooden models. Additionally, this fee has proven difficult to collect, as many purchasers have relocated or changed contact information over the course the 10-year time frame.
- 2) **Incorporation of Accessibility Measures:** The inclusion of accessibility features has been successful, but these measures will require periodic updates to remain in compliance with evolving accessibility standards. Technical design updates will be

managed by Public Works and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

- 3) **Location:** The location of commemorative benches will be prioritized in areas near built assets such as roads, trails, and parks to ensure ease of access and convenience for the public. This prioritization is particularly important for ensuring that the benches are accessible to individuals with mobility challenges, as these locations are more likely to be well-connected and provide easier access. However, other alternative locations on District property may be considered based on specific needs or requests, and will be approved at the discretion of the Director of Operations.
- 4) **Additional plaques:** Staff propose the addition of one additional plaque, which would be at the cost of the purchaser, to allow for greater flexibility and personalization of commemorative benches and trees. Due to rising production and material costs, we also recommend transitioning from the previously offered bronze plaques to more cost-effective plastic plaques. The use of plastic plaques will ensure that the program remains financially sustainable while still maintaining a high standard of quality and durability. Plastic plaques are also lightweight, resistant to weathering, and easier to maintain, making them a practical and long-lasting option for outdoor placements.

A copy of the proposed changes and updated policy have been attached for further information.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

Community and Social Development

- Our investment in the municipality's services and infrastructure, our commitment to principles of social equity and well-being, and our belief in the value of resident engagement, creates a healthy community in which everyone feels valued and enjoys a high quality of life.

Strong Governance and Finances

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Luke Thorne, Land and Environmental Coordinator

Reviewed by: Corporate and Financial Services and Operations

Approved by: Chief Administrative Officer