



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee **Date:** February 1, 2023

From: Todd Gross, Director, Parks Services **File:** 11-7200-20-MBEN1/2023-Vol 01

Re: **Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program Update**

Staff Recommendation

That the Report titled "Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program Update" dated February 01, 2023 from the Director, Parks Services, be received for information.

Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services
(604-247-4942)

Att. 2

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER 	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:
APPROVED BY CAO 	

Staff Report

Origin

This report informs Mayor and Councillors on the progress of the Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program and also provides information on program updates taking place in 2023.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #3 One Community Together:

3.1 Foster community resiliency, neighbourhood identity, sense of belonging, and intercultural harmony.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #4 An Active and Thriving Richmond:

4.1 Robust, affordable, and accessible sport, recreation, wellness and social programs for people of all ages and abilities.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #5 Sound Financial Management:

5.1 Maintain a strong and robust financial position.

Analysis

Background

The City of Richmond's Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program (Program) was introduced in February 1991. The Program was initiated to provide a funding source for trees, benches and picnic tables along Richmond's waterfront and high-use parks and trails. The Program was immediately popular as a means to recognize friends, family members, or important events through plaques placed on park benches and picnic tables or through the planting of trees in select parks or along trails.

The City conducted the first Program review and in March 2003, the original Policy 7004 "Tree and Bench Donation" was repealed and replaced with Policy 7019 "Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication" (Attachment 1). This new policy included an updated fee structure for the Program to account for maintenance and replacement costs, and established a 10-year term associated with each bench and picnic table dedication.

The original 357 program participants were provided an extension through a 10 year dedication term that commenced April 14, 2003. All program participants on file were mailed a letter informing them of this update to the Council policy, and notification that in 10 years there would be an opportunity to renew their dedication at current day costs. During that period, the City would maintain and replace the assets as needed through existing operating or capital budgets.

In 2018, staff conducted another program review. It became apparent that a significant number of those enrolled in the Program did not receive the updated Council Policy in 2003 and neither maintained nor updated their contact information with the City throughout their dedication term. As

a result, staff brought forward a report to Council in 2019 which resulted in a number of approved changes to the Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Policy 7019 (Attachment 1) including:

1. Clarification of the 10 year dedication period;
2. The option to install additional plaques on tables and benches (collectively referred to as assets); and
3. A 10-year exemption for dedications made prior to 2003, with the new dedication period ending in 2029.

Since that time, staff have been administering the Program in compliance with the Council approved Policy updates. Additional information regarding the current Program can be found at www.richmond.ca/parks/about/programs/dedicate.

Program Updates

Between 2020 and 2022 staff successfully completed GIS mapping of all 904 assets (benches and picnic tables), of which 538 have been dedicated. There are 366 remaining assets available to residents for dedication. The following table provides a summary of the current status of the Program:

Dedication Program Assets	Benches	Tables	Total
Total Program-wide Assets:	714	190	904
Total Dedicated Assets:	469	69	538
Total Available Assets:	245	121	366
Waitlist: (awaiting specific locations currently dedicated)			105

As shown in the above table, the number of available assets significantly exceeds the number of residents on the waitlist. Residents interested in dedicating an asset are primarily focused on high-profile locations such as waterfront parks and trails and some of the City’s larger parks, where many of the assets are already dedicated. While staff are working to identify new bench location opportunities at these high-demand locations, a balance needs to be struck with park planning and design considerations and other infrastructure needs.

All of these assets can now be viewed on the City’s GIS mapping network which is publicly accessible for viewing on the Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program Interactive Map (Attachment 2) via the City’s website (<https://maps.richmond.ca/parks/dedicationprogram/>).

The information for each asset includes the location, the type of asset (i.e. bench or picnic table) and whether the asset is “available for dedication” or “already dedicated”.

To better serve residents and more efficiently administer the Program, staff are utilizing Xplor, the City’s program registration and facility booking software to on-board new Program registrants (i.e. dedicators) as well as transition existing dedications onto the platform. Dedicators can now access

their dedication information online through MyRichmond. The transition of dedication information to Xplor also increases administrative efficiencies for staff as they can quickly access dedication information and statuses, and offer a more streamlined method for dedicators to update their contact information as needed.

Tree Dedications

Tree dedications allow residents to contribute financially to a tree that is identified for planting through the City's Urban Forestry Management Strategy. In order to ensure that the tree location, species, and maintenance plan aligns with the overarching Urban Forestry Management Strategy, Parks Programs staff work collaboratively with tree dedicators and park planners to fulfill the dedication request. Similar to the mapping process staff implemented to locate all dedicated bench and picnic table assets, staff are currently conducting an inventory of all dedicated trees.

While there are no memorial plaques identifying tree dedications, the dedication is made on behalf of the dedicator for the lifespan of the tree. Memorial plaques are not installed on living assets as they can negatively impact the health of the tree. Similarly, fixtures are not installed around the tree as they can jeopardize the root structure of the tree. Further, if a tree dedicator chooses to exit the Program, the tree may be critically damaged during the process of removing the structure on which the plaque was installed.

Dedicators' Missing Information

Of the 538 dedicated assets, the City has outdated contact information for 114 dedications, a majority of whom are pre-2003 registrants. In an attempt to update the Program contact information for these 114 dedications, staff have reviewed existing program and recreation registration records, completed internal searches, and reached out to numerous City networks. In order to ensure that the City exhausts all options in an effort to contact the 114 dedicators in question, staff will engage in a final two-fold process:

1. Implement a comprehensive and wide-ranging digital communication plan which would utilize the City's social media accounts, website, a media news release, posters at local community centres and other applicable means to ask residents to contact the City if they have not renewed their existing dedication; and
2. While the outreach campaign is under way, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. The plaques would be replaced with a generic, temporary plaque containing messaging requesting that the dedicator contact City staff with their updated contact information. This temporary plaque would be in place for a 12-month period.
 - b. If the dedicator contacts staff within that 12-month period, staff would collect the dedicator's renewal application and reinstall the original plaque which would remain in place for the duration of their dedication.
 - c. If staff are not contacted by the original dedicator within the 12-month waiting period, the asset would become available for a new dedication. The 'archived' original, bronze dedication plaque, which was formerly affixed to the asset, would be stored for a duration of six (6) years (the remaining duration of the grandfathered term through 2029) in the event that someone comes forward to claim it.

- d. If someone comes forward to claim the “archived” dedication plaque and would like to be reinstated into the Program, staff would work with them to identify available locations and reinstall their plaque.

The primary purpose of this exhaustive search and proposed extended timeline to identify missing dedicator contact information is to ensure that the City has explored all means possible to contact dedicators who have not maintained their records, and provide ample time for them to contact staff regarding amenity renewals. If at the end of this extended timeline the City has not received updated information for any of the 114 assets, new dedicators would be provided the opportunity to enter the Program, including the 105 community members on the Program waitlist.

Ensuring that the City has current contact information for dedicators is crucial to the overall successful administration of the Program. The removal of the original bronze plaques from benches ensures that the finite number of dedicated assets in Richmond are made available to all members of the community. Increasing the available number of dedication assets for new families and individuals builds upon Richmond’s legacy of community connectedness and ensures equitable access to all.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The City of Richmond’s Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program provides unique opportunities for residents to recognize friends, family members or important events. The continual improvement of the Program, such as transitioning existing dedicators to the Xplor platform, enables residents to stay informed and connected with dedications and enables staff to more efficiently and efficiently administer the Program. The current policy along with the updates to the Program ensures that these limited dedication assets remain accessible to a wide range of community members, providing the opportunity to maintain up-to-date dedicator contact information and further enhancing the customer service experience for members enrolled in the Program, as well as community members seeking to enter the Program.



Magnus Sinclair
Coordinator, Parks Programs
(604-247-4453)



Alexander Kurnicki
Manager, Parks Programs
(604-276-4099)

- Att. 1: Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Policy 7019
- 2: Dedication Bench and Picnic Table Interactive Map



Page 1 of 1	Tree, Bench and Picnic Table Dedication	Policy 7019
Adopted by Council: April 14, 2003 Amended by Council: March 12, 2018; July 8, 2019		

POLICY 7019:

It is Council policy that:

1. The cost of the purchase and planting of the tree shall be charged to the dedicator. This is to be based on the average cost for purchase and installation by City forces of a seven-centimetre calliper tree, subject to annual review.
2. The City shall have final approval of the tree type and planting location. All requests for special tree species/varieties or particular planting areas shall be accommodated, whenever possible. Higher costs incurred by these requests shall be charged to the dedicator.
3. The City shall include the tree in its normal schedule of care or maintenance.
4. The cost of the purchase, installation and maintenance of the bench or picnic table shall be charged to the dedicator. This is to be based on the average cost for purchase, installation and maintenance by City forces of a standard City bench or picnic table for a 10-year period. City staff will review costs annually and will adjust accordingly. The maintenance funding is placed into a tree, bench, and picnic table reserve account.
5. City Staff will acknowledge the bench or picnic table dedication for a period of 10 years from the date of installation.
6. Dedicators will have the opportunity to continue their sponsorship of the bench or picnic table after the 10-year dedication period by paying the current fee for replacement of the bench or picnic table. If the dedicator is not interested in continuing the dedication or cannot be contacted (within six months of the 10-year term expiring), the plaque will be removed and the site will become available for a new dedication. It will be the responsibility of the dedicator to keep their contact information current with the City of Richmond.
7. The City shall have final approval of the location and style of the bench or picnic table.
8. The City shall have final approval of plaque size, style, and wording. A maximum of up to three plaques per bench is permitted. A maximum of up to eight plaques per picnic table is permitted. The maximum number of plaques is subject to vary depending on the style of bench or picnic table that is installed.
9. The tree, bench and picnic table shall become City property. Staff reserves the right to relocate or remove the tree, bench, or picnic table whenever necessary. A reasonable effort shall be made to notify the dedicator if their tree, bench, or picnic table is affected.
10. A tree, bench, and picnic table dedication account shall be established for those unable to purchase a whole tree, bench, or picnic table, but who wish to contribute funds. No plaques shall be permitted in this case, but City recognition of some type shall be considered.
11. A City record will be established to record all commemorative trees and contributions.
12. Placement of memorial wreaths, flowers, or other items or any modifications to the tree, bench, or picnic table will not be permitted.

Bench and Picnic Table Dedication Program Interactive Map

