



The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle

To: Mayor and Members of Council

Prepared by: Peter Marra, P.Eng. – Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Department: Administration

Date of Report: April 24, 2024

Report Number: AD-2024-10

Subject: Healing Hearts Forest Upgrades and Tree Memorial Program Discontinuance

Recommendation

That the report of the Deputy CAO dated April 24, 2024 (AD-2024-10) regarding the Healing Hearts Forest Upgrades and the existing Tree Memorial Program be received;

And that Council approves the upgrades to the Healing Hearts gazebo, being the installation of stone columns and memorial railings;

And that the Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program be initiated and Administration be directed to prepare a Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program Policy for Council consideration at a future meeting;

And that the existing Tree Memorial Program be discontinued after the 2024 fall planting season.

Report

This report is prepared to speak on the matter of proposed upgrades to the Healing Hearts Forest, as well as introducing a new Healing Hearts Memorial Program. This report also speaks on the matter of the existing Tree Memorial Program and the proposed elimination/discontinuance of that program.

Healing Hearts Forest Upgrades

The Healing Hearts Forest was installed in 2023 and is located on the property at the Vollmer. This area consists of a gazebo and the land surrounding the gazebo has been planted with approximately 300 trees. This area was created as a quiet, serene location for people to attend and reflect/heal after the loss of loved ones. The original installation was mostly paid for by a generous donation from Mary-Lynn and Brian Parent and Families First.

When the gazebo was built, due to budget constraints, the columns of the gazebo were not finished as per the original design. Originally the columns were meant to be covered in stone. The stone finish was left out when the gazebo was built to save on costs. It is now proposed to complete the columns with stone.

In addition, since we opened the Healing Hearts Forest, we have received several requests to have names added to the gazebo so that people can purchase and recognize/memorialize passed loved ones. We have now developed a concept of installing railings to allow people to be recognized at this location.

The enclosed renderings show what the stone columns and the memorial railings will look like.

The cost for the railings is estimated at \$30,000 and to complete and cover the columns with stone is estimated to cost \$42,000.

It is recommended that Council approve Administration to move forward with the memorial railings and to complete the columns.

With the introduction of these railings, we are proposing to introduce a new Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program. This would include an opportunity for individuals to purchase a spot to have the names of passed loved ones recognized. It is proposed to have individual names sold for \$250/each so that people, if they so wish, have an opportunity to purchase. It is estimated that we can accommodate approximately 800 names in total. Proceeds from this program will be placed in a reserve for the future maintenance/upkeep and eventual replacement of the gazebo.

Is it recommended that Council concur with the introduction of a new Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program and that Administration be instructed to prepare a policy for managing the Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program.

Tree Memorial Program

Administration is seeking Council approval to discontinue the existing tree memorial program. It is proposed to have the existing tree memorial program replaced with the new Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program noted herein.

The existing tree memorial program has been in place for many years. As part of the program, orders are accepted twice per year, with a spring and fall planting. The spring 2024 planting deadline has now closed and 4 memorials will be installed.

Should Council agree with the discontinuance of the existing tree memorial programs, it is proposed to make the fall 2024 planting the last time we accept memorials through this program. This will allow the Town to communicate this out to the public over the coming months so that residents do not miss their last opportunity.

The representative cost contained in the existing tree memorial programs is \$200 for a plaque at an existing tree or \$600 for a new tree and plaque. These prices have not been adjusted in at least a decade.

Furthermore, the existing tree memorial programs have had some unintended consequences over the years. For example, a memorial placed as part of the tree memorial program from time to time has needed to be removed as a result of the decline of the memorial tree's health.

Another more recent example, at the LaSalle Landing project, is that existing memorials needed to be removed to accommodate Town infrastructure. When these situations arise, the Town will look for options and alternatives, where appropriate to recognize any of the existing tree memorials disrupted resulting from a Town project.

Finally, with the memorial plaques installed at ground level, these memorial plaques have become overgrown and/or buried over the years. This proposal will eliminate the existing tree memorial program and will assist in addressing these concerns for anything new beyond the end of 2024.

It is recommended that Council concur that the Fall 2024 planting will be the last planting season through the Tree Memorial Program and that this program discontinue to be used after 2024.

Consultations

The proposed upgrades to the Healing Hearts Forest have been reviewed with the original sponsors and they are in general support of these upgrades.

Furthermore, this report has been prepared in consultation with the Public Works Department, responsible for administering the various memorial programs. Furthermore, the Finance department has been consulted with respect to the financial implications noted below.

Financial Implications

The total cost for upgrades is estimated to be approximately \$72,000, plus HST. This was not part of the original 2024 budget, however, this can be easily funded through the Vollmer Reserve. Should Council approve this report, money for this project will come from the Vollmer Reserve.

In addition, with the proposed introduction of the Healing Hearts Forest Memorial Program, there is a potential to generate revenue, over time, of approximately \$200,000.

Prepared By:



Peter Marra, P.Eng. - Deputy CAO

Link to Strategic Goals

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Not Applicable
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Not Applicable
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Yes

Communications

Not applicable.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Healing Hearts Forest Upgrades and Tree Memorial Program Discontinuance.docx
Attachments:	- 22-101 - Render with background image.jpg - 22-101 - Close-up render.jpg
Final Approval Date:	Apr 29, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia