



**SUBJECT: Pride (rainbow) Benches and City Bench Programs**  
**TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.**  
**FROM: Engineering Services**

Report Number: ES-40-21

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 795-10

Date to Committee: November 15, 2021

Date to Council: November 23, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file engineering services report ES-40-21 regarding an overview of all bench programs offered by the city; and

Authorize the Director of Engineering Services to incorporate the inclusion of Pride (rainbow) themed benches as an option in the Council Bench Program; and

Authorize the Director of Engineering Services to implement a revised Recognition Celebration Program utilizing the amendments included in Appendix C of engineering services report ES-40-21.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the various bench programs offered by the City and to introduce the inclusion of Pride (rainbow) themed benches as part of the Council Bench Program. This report will also serve as an opportunity to recommend minor amendments to the current Recognition Celebration Program (Memorial Bench Program) and to deliver recommendations on a preferred approach to implementing future bench requests at city parks, trails, sidewalks and facilities.

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
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## **Background and Discussion:**

Benches are an important asset in and along our parks, trails, sidewalks and facilities. A public bench is a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone to use. In many cases they provide more than just a place to rest. They are popular ways to pay tribute to honouring memories and can serve as a symbol, like the Pride (rainbow) bench which means welcoming, friendship and community. This section will provide an overview of the existing programs related to building new benches in the City and introduce a new style of bench; the Pride (rainbow) themed bench.

1. Pride (rainbow) Benches
2. Council Bench Program
3. Recognition Celebration Program (Memorial Bench Program)
4. Capital Program
5. Public Art Program
6. Maple Park Rotary Memorial Forest

### **Pride (rainbow) Benches**

In recognition and support of Burlington's 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) Community, staff reviewed options for the inclusion of Pride (rainbow) themed benches. Staff have reviewed the procurement requirements, bench model types with respect to cost, durability, maintenance and funding needs based on estimated useful life and full lifecycle costs.

There are several different styles of rainbow benches currently on the market. For consistency with the City's bench standard, the preference is to implement the same bench type except with custom colours. The City's standard bench model is a black metal bench. The exceptions to this include areas of the City that are associated with specific design plans such as the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines and Plains Road Corridor Urban Design Guidelines. The procurement for the vendor and bench model will follow the City's procurement process.

### **Council Bench Program**

As part of the Council Bench Program, each council member can select one bench each year to be installed at a qualifying location of their choice based on constituent requests. It will be each member of Council's responsibly to provide Engineering Services with their

preferred location for a bench by March 30<sup>th</sup> of each year to allow enough time to site verify that the proposed locations meet the design criteria and to allow for public engagement on the site selection. Once the site selection has been confirmed, Engineering staff will look for the best opportunity for implementation. Appendix A outlines the guidelines for bench placements and Appendix B itemizes the specific process for implementation for the Council Bench Program.

The bench model chosen here is to match the standard or approved bench style for that area of the City. Currently there are standard styles set for the Downtown area, Aldershot area, Alton Village and most parks. As a new addition to this program, Council members may now request that a Pride (rainbow) themed bench be adopted in lieu of the standard or approved style. It should be noted that any new Council bench will not have a recognition plaque attached to it. City staff will work with each Council member to select their preferred site by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. Council members may wish to communicate with their constituents on this program. This consultation is to be done through the Mayor's and Councillor's office. Once this step is complete, staff will incorporate the installation of the benches into their work plan for installation in fall of the current year.

### **Recognition Celebration Program (often known as Memorial Bench Program)**

The 2008 council approved Recognition Celebration Program, through PR 3/08 (2008) and PR-17-11 (2011), includes guidelines for the process and implementation of the program. This program is an opportunity for a resident to donate a park amenity with a personalized plaque to honour a special person(s) or to celebrate an important occasion. A bench is the most popular asset for this program. Here, the donation is for the lifespan of the bench which is typically 15 years. After this time, the bench is removed from inventory.

The program details are made available online: <https://www.burlington.ca/en/your-city/Donations-in-Honour-and-Memory.asp>

The bench model chosen here is to match the standard or approved bench style for that area of the City. Pride (rainbow) themed benches are not included under this program. As requests come in, they are evaluated based on their appropriateness of the requested site. As part of continuous improvement, there are lessons learned and an opportunity to improve the process and consistency with implementation. Appendix C outlines the amended process and implementation guidelines. Highlights include a new flat fee of \$5,000 per bench (which includes the inclusion of a memorial plaque), the ability to adopt a pre-existing bench at a reduced fee and offer Donors an opportunity to change out the plaque if requested.

### Maple Park Rotary Memorial Forest

The Rotary Club of Burlington Central operates a memorial tree program at Maple Park, under agreement with the City. Although the focus of this program is the donation of trees, the agreement allows for up to ten memorial benches within the Rotary Memorial Forest area. The City charges Rotary the same amount as charged under the Celebration program to cover the cost of the bench. Rotary provides the coordination with the donor, and the City manages the installation of the bench on behalf of Rotary. Under this program, at the recent request of a donor, a Pride (rainbow) themed bench will be installed in the Rotary Memorial Forest this fall.

### Capital Program

The City's Capital Program for infrastructure projects is an opportunity to add new or replace older benches on city properties. Examples of these capital projects include new park developments, the creation of recreational multi-use trails, renewal of park infrastructure, road re-construction and improvements to facilities.

Increasing the opportunities for seating is generally a design criterion in most capital improvement projects. Adding new or replacing benches as part of a larger capital project is the preferred and most economical way to include benches throughout the city. Based on community need and suitability of the site, staff determine the quantity and location placement of benches. Public engagement does influence decisions related to need. Upon approval, these benches can be added to construction contracts for installation.

Outside of capital project engagement process, staff regularly receive requests for individual benches at specific locations, e.g. beside a trail or at a street corner. Each request is evaluated by staff to determine the need and ability to accommodate. Where a planned capital project does not exist, staff will look for an opportunity to bundle or add to other capital improvements as a cost and time saving measure if applicable.

The bench model chosen under this program is to match the standard or approved bench style for that area of the City.

### Public Art Benches – Public Art Program

Public art benches may be commissioned as part of the Council approved Public Art Program. The Public Art Program guides how artwork is commissioned, acquired and managed. Selected public art projects are planned a year in advance and included in the annual workplan approved by PADIT (Public Art Development Implementation Team). The inclusion of public art benches is subject to needs, trends and budget.

Public art benches are original works of art that are functional, aesthetic and created with the intention of reflecting and/or engaging the community. They are typically in city-maintained areas that are publicly accessible and frequented by many visitors.

The City's Capital Program identify locations for upcoming improvement. These are preferred candidates for public art bench locations as it negates the need to include site works which reduces the overall cost of the art bench installation work. A Councilor may also request planning and implementation of public art benches via Section 37 negotiations and contributions for a specific area when opportunities arise. PADIT will work with various city service owners to determine potential public art bench sites. These are then identified and prioritized by the Public Art Master Plan and a scoring matrix.

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## **Financial Matters:**

Funding to support the various bench-related programs is financed through the capital budget process. The following provides a further breakdown of financial impact specific to each bench program.

### **Council Bench Program**

As part of the annual capital budget process, \$40,000 is allocated each year to support this program. This funding is an all-inclusive cost supply and installation of seven benches and does not include replacement or maintenance costs. The total installation cost of a standard black metal bench is approximately \$4,700 as it includes a large concrete pad for accessibility, locates, shipping, labour and taxes. The total cost for a Pride (rainbow) bench is \$5,700 because they are considered custom because of the various colours.

Based on historic maintenance records and current data provided by manufacturers, the anticipated service life of a bench is typically 15 years. This life expectancy is based on benches being supported by prescribed maintenance throughout its years of service. Using a 15-year horizon, the Council Bench Program will yield 105 new benches at total average lifecycle cost of \$550,440. The operating impact is estimated at \$12,000 over the same period.

### **Recognition Celebration Program** (often known as Memorial Bench Program)

The program fee paid by the Donor is intended to cover all costs associated with the purchase and installation of the bench or amenity. The fee does not account for operating costs related such things as graffiti removal. The donation is not perpetual; the bench will be removed after the 15-year period and the plaque returned to the Donor.

## **Capital Program**

This section addresses supporting and funding individual bench requests from the Community. When staff receive a request for a new bench, the first order of business is to confirm if there is a planned capital improvement project in that specific location in the city, if there is available funding in the project budget to accommodate and if the proposed location meets the placement criteria. For benches that cannot be accommodated here, submitting a formal request through the Councillor's office for consideration is another option.

As a new step related to City bench programs, both the Council Bench Program and the Memorial Bench Program will now require locations to be finalized by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. By bundling the procurement of bench programs, it could yield cost savings by reducing shipping costs and unit cost per bench. There may be additional savings if a concrete pad is not required because there is an existing sidewalk or concrete surface that can be used to accommodate the bench and accessibility requirements. These savings may provide an avenue to fund an individual bench request(s) that cannot be accommodated as part of a larger capital improvement project or through the Council Bench Program. The cost savings will vary year by year.

## **Public Art Benches – Public Art Program**

Financing for a public art bench may be a combination Park Dedication Reserve, Capital from Current and/or Public Art Reserve Funds. Benches may also be 100% funded from the Public Art Reserve Fund. These benches have the same estimated useful life of 15 years; however, the initial capital costs are higher at \$10,000 to \$15,000 per bench. Once installed, the artwork becomes part of the public art inventory. The Public Art Reserve Fund supports costs associated with insurance, maintenance and/or de-installation of the artwork.

## **Other Funding Opportunities**

As part of Site Plan Approval applications, developers are responsible to make good the streetscape beside their new build as per the City standards and guidelines. This means the developer is responsible for the initial capital costs for new street furniture. Once these assets are assumed by the City, they become the capital and maintenance responsibility of the City (but only if they are installed on the public road allowance). Benches built on private property remain the capital and maintenance responsibility of the land owner. Also, as part of development process, currently Section 37 is an eligible funding source to build new publicly accessible benches. Section 37 will be replaced by a Community Benefits Charge in Q4 of 2022.

## **Climate Implications**

Not applicable

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## **Engagement Matters:**

The City conducted a survey in May 2021 on the inclusion of Pride (rainbow) Crosswalks throughout Burlington as visible signs of support and inclusion to our 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Questioning) community. This survey did not specifically include Pride (rainbow) themed benches, however it generated Council's interest for inclusion as part of the Council Bench Program.

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## **Conclusion:**

The intent of this report is to provide an overview and clarity related to the various City programs that present the opportunity to build benches throughout the City, including the introduction of Pride (rainbow) themed benches as part of the Council Bench Program. It is recognized that the future installation of Pride (rainbow) themed benches in different areas of the city act as symbols of diversity and inclusion and the City's on-going commitment to the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

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Respectfully submitted,

Marion Rabeau, OALA, CSLA  
Manager Park Design & Construction  
Engineering Services, x7716

## **Appendices:**

- A. Guidelines for Bench Placements

- B. Council Bench Program Implementation Process
- C. Recognition Celebration Program Implementation Process

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.

## **Appendix A - Guidelines for Bench Placements**

The following is a list of criteria for new bench installations. Bench locations should;

1. Compliment the functionality of the site and surrounding park features.
2. Contribute as a support to existing park assets (e.g. trails, playgrounds).
3. Meet accessibility requirements (e.g. immediately adjacent to a hard surface, gravel or woodchip trail).
4. Be in a location that is flat with minimal grading at and around the bench.
5. Not impact existing vegetation or utilities.
6. Have adequate spatial buffer between private residential property and bench (evaluated on a case by case basis, physical distance and existing vegetation are determining factors).
7. Have natural surveillance (not hidden away and can be seen from a distance).
8. Does not pose maintenance difficulties (grass mowing and snow removal).
9. Does not pose safety issues (e.g. impedes sightlines for vehicles).

## **Appendix B - Council Bench Program Implementation Process**

The following outlines the process for site selection, supply and installation for benches requested by members of Council.

1. Each member of Council (Ward Councillor and Mayor) is to submit a location(s) for a new bench to the Manager of Parks Design and Construction between January 1st and March 30th each year.
2. Requests can include a very specific location or a general area. Multiple locations can be submitted with a priority ranking.
3. Staff will review each location request using the Guidelines for Bench Placement criteria (Appendix A). Any location request that cannot be accommodated will be communicated back to the Mayor/Councillor's office and in such cases, staff will work in partnership to find an alternative location.
4. Once the preferred location is site verified for suitability, Council members may wish to consult with their constituents on the preferred bench location before design and construction is initiated. This will typically be in April and May of each year.
5. Locations are to be finalized by June 30<sup>th</sup> so that Engineering Services staff can incorporate the installation of the benches and all related site works in the work plan for installation in the current year.

## **Appendix C - Recognition Celebration Program Implementation Process**

The following outlines the current process for the Recognition Celebration Program and includes new recommendations to improve process and consistency with implementation.

1. An information web-page is currently set up on the City of Burlington Website showcasing an overview of this program. Service Burlington and other frontline staff may direct residents to this web-page.
2. Residents interested in pursuing the program are required to submit a signed Donor Form with a preferred site via email to the Parks Design and Construction Section. Staff review the location request based on the Bench Placement Guidelines. Location requests that cannot be accommodated will be communicated back to the resident and staff work with the resident to find alternative locations that are equally meaningful.
3. Locations are to be finalized by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.
4. The program is intended to be self-funding, thus the fee to the Donor includes purchase of the bench and all site construction costs. For simplicity, site construction costs (concrete, utility locates and site amendments) are included in the fee regardless whether there is a need because the program fee is established at the beginning of each calendar year and the assumption is made that every request will require all site works.

### **Amendments to the Process**

- Set the total cost per bench installation in 2022 to a flat fee of \$5,000 (after tax) regardless of the bench style. This fee will be reviewed regularly to reflect inflation.
- Service Burlington to arrange for tax donation receipts with Finance Dept once bench payment is made and to ensure the tax donation receipts are mailed out to the Donors.
- Parks Design and Construction staff to bundle the installation of memorial benches, Council benches and all related site works in the workplan for fall installation each year.
- The program was intended for the donation of 'new' benches (or other amenities) and does not speak to adoption of 'pre-existing' benches; however, in

accommodating bench donation requests in sites that do not have the capacity to take on additional new benches, there is the ability to offer 'pre-existing' benches at a reduced fee. This recommendation is to include the adoption of 'pre-existing' (with minimum of 8 years of life remaining) and good condition benches at a reduced fee. Here the Donor is to accept the bench in its current condition; no work will be done by the City to upgrade the physical appearance. Staff will establish the fee in accordance with the age of the bench.

- The current program does not have a provision to change the plaque on the memorial bench. This recommendation is to allow for replacement of the plaque at a standard fee of \$1,500 upon request by the Donor of the bench. The replacement plaque will be returned to the Donor when the bench is removed at year 15.