

SUBJECT: Community donation toward a new leash-free park at Palmer Park

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Community Services
Recreation, Community and Culture

Report Number: CSS-21-25

Wards Affected: 4

Date to Committee: October 6, 2025

Date to Council: October 14, 2025

Recommendation

Support the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture in accepting a donation from a resident, made in memory of a family member, to support the development of a leash-free area within Palmer Park, as outlined in recreation, community and culture report CSS-21-25. This acceptance is conditional upon Council's approval of the City's funding for the project in the 2026 Capital Budget; and

Authorize the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to execute a donation agreement with the donor, subject to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services, to formalize the contribution toward the leash-free area in Palmer Park as outlined in recreation, community and culture report CSS-21-25; and

Authorize the Director of Engineering Services to incorporate the leash-free area, funded in part through the aforementioned donation, into the design and implementation plans for Palmer Park, as outlined in recreation, community and culture report CSS-21-25.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

To seek Council's support for the acceptance of a donation exceeding \$50,000 and approval to execute an agreement with the donor, in accordance with the Delegated Authority By-law, and to proceed with the planning and development of a leash-free area within Palmer Park, contingent upon approval of the 2026 Capital Budget.

Key findings:

A resident approached the Ward 4 Councillor with an offer to donate funds in memory of her late husband to support the development of a leash-free area at Palmer Park. This initiative aligns with the City's Live and Play Plan, which identifies a gap in leash-free amenities within a one-kilometer radius of the Palmer neighbourhood. Following collaborative discussions regarding scope, timing, and cost, staff and the donor agreed upon a design and a donation amount of \$100,000. The proposed 2026 capital budget includes the remaining \$40,000 required to complete the project. Subject to budget approval and receipt of the donation, staff will proceed with the development and construction of the leash-free area, with a community celebration anticipated in Fall 2026. Finance staff will issue a charitable tax receipt in Q1 2027 for the donor's 2026 tax reporting.

Implications:

Acceptance of the donation and approval of the associated capital budget funding will enable staff to proceed with the development of a leash-free area at Palmer Park, including collaboration with the donor on a community awareness campaign. Legal staff will support the Recreation, Community and Culture (RCC) department in preparing the formal donation agreement, while Engineering staff will oversee the design, tendering, and construction phases of the project. RCC will also lead the coordination of a community celebration upon completion, and Finance staff will issue a charitable tax receipt to the donor in accordance with applicable reporting timelines.

The project is contingent upon Council's approval of the 2026 Capital Budget. Should the capital funding not be approved, the donation will not be accepted, and the project will not proceed.

Recommendation Report

Background

In early 2025, the Ward 4 Councillor was approached by a resident wishing to make a memorial donation in honour of her late husband, with the intent of supporting the creation of a leash-free area within Palmer Park. In response, Engineering and Recreation, Community and Culture (RCC) reviewed the City's Live and Play Plan and confirmed a service gap in leash-free amenities within the Palmer neighbourhood.

Palmer Park was identified as a suitable location, offering a large open space adjacent to an existing parking lot. The proposed site meets required setback criteria from existing sports fields and aligns with operational and planning standards.

Following multiple iterations and cost evaluations, the preferred concept was estimated at \$140,000. In support of the initiative, the resident increased the original donation amount from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

To address the remaining funding requirements, \$40,000 has been included in the proposed 2026 Parks & Open Space proposed capital budget. In accordance with the City's Delegated Authority By-Law, an executed donation agreement between the City and the Donor is required for donations exceeding \$50,000.

Analysis

Option 1 – Proceed with the Donation and Project Integration

Under this option, the City would accept the memorial donation and proceed with incorporating a leash-free area into Palmer Park. This approach aligns with the donor's preferred timeline and ensures that operational costs are included in the proposed 2026 Capital Budget, contingent upon its approval. The new amenity would be added to the City's asset inventory and maintained in accordance with established service standards. Staff would also facilitate community engagement through targeted outreach efforts, such as distributing informational flyers and installing onsite signage.

Option 2 – Decline the Donation

Alternatively, the City may choose not to proceed with the donation due to workload or budgetary constraints. This decision would be inconsistent with the Live and Play Plan's recommendation to pursue alternative funding sources and may adversely affect future donor relationships. Declining the donation would result in the loss of a \$140,000 community asset in

an area currently underserved by leash-free amenities, for a City investment of \$40,000.

Recommendation Details

Staff recommend that Council support the proposed community donation, which will enable the development of a \$140,000 leash-free area in Palmer Park at a municipal capital investment of \$40,000. This initiative directly addresses a documented service gap in off-leash amenities in the Palmer neighbourhood and represents a cost-effective opportunity to enhance recreational infrastructure through community partnership.

Key Dates & Milestones

- **Q4 2025:** Council support of the memorial donation and approve the project as outlined in the proposed 2026 capital budget.
 - **Q1 2026:** Execution of donor agreement; issuance of project tender; community notification distributed via postcards.
 - **Late Q1 2026:** Tender awarded, and donation funds received.
 - **Q2–Q3 2026:** Construction of the leash-free area commences.
 - **Q3 2026:** Community celebration event held to mark project completion.
 - **Q1 2027:** Issuance of charitable tax receipt for 2026 tax reporting.
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Implications

The estimated annual operating impact of the new leash-free area at Palmer Park is \$15,000. This amount will support routine maintenance activities including repairs to fencing and gate access, woodchip replenishment, vegetation trimming, winter operations, and associated staff time. This will be included in the multi-year forecast for inclusions in the 2027 budget once the park is fully operational.

While accepting the \$100,000 memorial donation promotes public goodwill and encourages civic generosity, it may result in the reallocation of resources away from existing infrastructure priorities.

References

- [PR-12-19](#) Proposed changes to the leash-free area criteria
- [RCC-07-22](#) Leash Free site application options for Ward 1 and Ward 5

- [RCC-12-24](#) Live and Play Plan - recommendations for future recreation infrastructure needs
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Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

A. Concept Design: Leash-Free Park (Palmer Park)

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.