



ARTISTIC ENHANCEMENT TO DEDICATED PARK BENCHES

Report Back

Park Board Committee Meeting
Monday, June 8, 2020



- Reporting back on Board approved motion titled Artistic Enhancement to Dedicated Park Benches.
- Seeking approval to not consider artistic enhancements to dedicated park benches while colonial audit work is underway, which will inform a new commemoration policy.





BACKGROUND



Dedicated Park Bench Program

- Philanthropic donations support the enhancement of city parks.
- Residents can celebrate a special occasion or honour a loved one.
- Similar to programs in other Canadian and U.S. cities.



Dedicated Park Benches

- 1,173 dedicated park benches.
- Terms and conditions:
 - 10-year term, renewable.
 - Bench and Plaque - property of the Park Board.
 - No alterations to bench, plaque or surrounding area are permitted.



- June 21, 2019 – Staff became aware of painted dedicated park bench.
- Donor was advised bench would be removed and replaced since alterations on dedicated park benches is not permitted.
- July 22, 2019 – Board motion was passed in response to feedback from the artist and the public, directing staff to:

Investigate options to accommodate artistic enhancements that do not include paint or other coatings to be applied to the natural wood of dedicated park benches under the Park Board's Dedicated Bench Program.

DISCUSSION



Several policy considerations inform the evaluation of artistic enhancements to dedicated park benches.

- December 2003 – Park Board reconfirmed its commitment to the arts & adopted the renewed Park Board Arts Policy.



- January 11, 2016 – Park Board adopted Eleven Reconciliation Strategies in response to Calls to Action provided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).



- April 16, 2018 – Park Board endorsed the Mission, Vision and Values to guide and support the implementation of the Reconciliation Strategies.

- February 24, 2020 – Board received presentation on Arts & Culture Planning.
 - Proposed new Cultural Framework will guide the development of a new Commemoration Policy, Collections Management Plan, and Plaque Guidelines.
 - Inform options for pending commemoration requests and motions to establish commemorative tree and shrub planting program.

Recognizing broader concerns while Colonial Audit is underway, staff explored potential options to accommodate artistic enhancements to dedicated park benches.

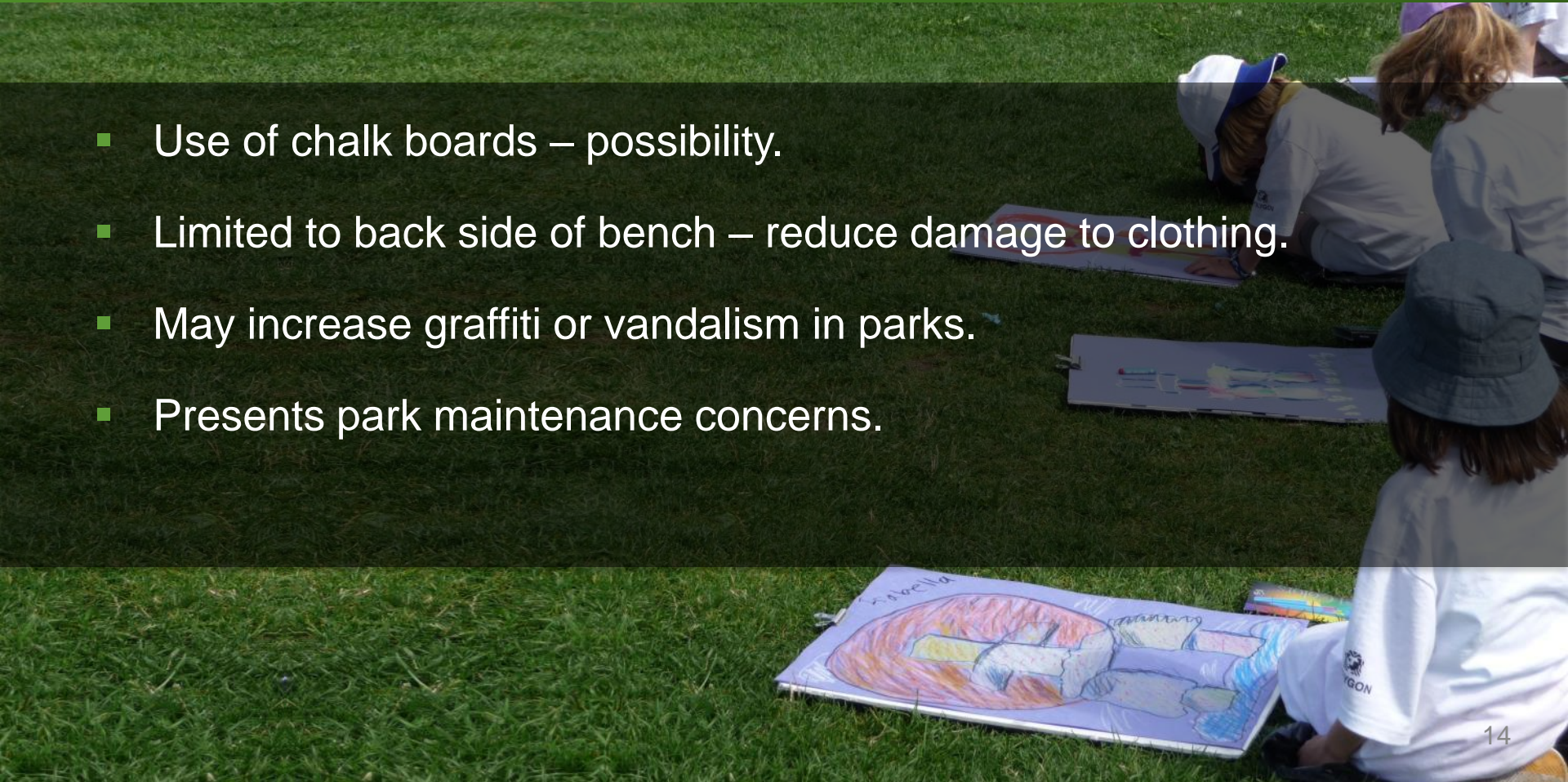


- Adding art on bronze plaque?
Limited to size of plaque & board.
- Adding additional bronze plaques?
Limited to size of bench board & would increase the cost.



Temporary/Chalk Based Artwork

- Use of chalk boards – possibility.
- Limited to back side of bench – reduce damage to clothing.
- May increase graffiti or vandalism in parks.
- Presents park maintenance concerns.



- Storytelling with no direct application onto bench – possibility.
- Family stories about their connection to parks would be promoted online, through social media and via other channels.
- Does not provide tangible enhancement.

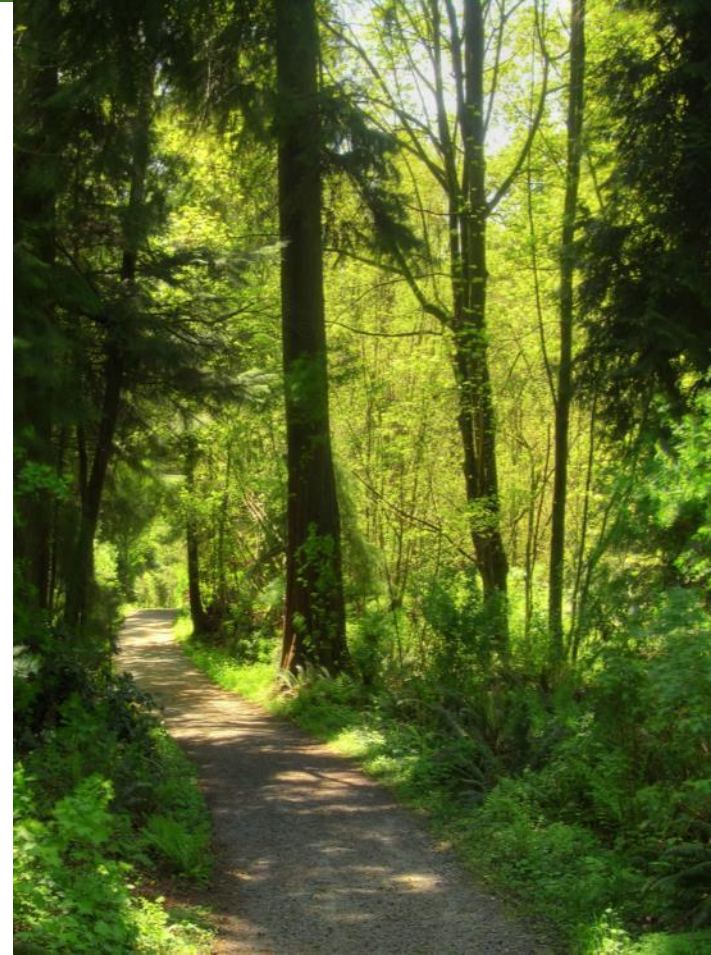


- Standards would need to be developed to determine what is considered acceptable artistic expression.
- Need to align with standards required by Guidelines for the Donation of Public Art or Memorials.



- Park Board staff are currently engaged with City's Cultural Services Department to develop an aligned Commemoration Policy. New policy will:
 - Advise on the management and development of monuments, memorials and donations for dedicated park benches.
 - Ensure process for commemoration is equitable, transparent and reflects the Park Board's commitment to decolonization.
- Pending the Board's approval, staff will work with the donor and artist to identify a sensitive and compassionate path forward.

Until a new Commemoration Policy is developed and approved, staff recommend that the Park Board continue to adhere to the existing terms and conditions regarding dedicated park benches and that any artistic enhancements not be accommodated at this time.



THAT, in recognition that a new Commemoration Policy is being developed to establish the criteria and process for donations, commissions and collection conservation, and that this new policy will be informed by the Colonial Audit also underway, the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to adhere to existing policy regarding park bench dedications, as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix A, and not consider any artistic enhancements to dedicated park benches at this time.

