



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: November 23, 2012

SUBJECT: Request received from Community Organization to provide Municipal Support for a Chinese Memorial Garden in Markham

PREPARED BY: Sara Tam, Manager of Business Planning & Innovation, ext.7533

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) THAT the report entitled, "Request received from Community Organization to provide Municipal Support for a Chinese Memorial Garden in Markham" dated November 13, 2012 be received; and,
- 2) THAT Council support the project being proposed by the local community organization, Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham (FCCM), to develop a Suzhou-style Chinese garden in the City of Markham and their application for funding from the Province of Ontario; and,
- 3) THAT the City of Markham's contribution to the FCCM project consists of the provision of the land on which the proposed Chinese garden will be situated, without foregoing ownership of the land; and,
- 4) THAT Council endorse the contribution of City-owned land within an existing or future park towards the FCCM project and subject to
 - a. FCCM receiving funding from other levels of government, fundraising the remainder from the private sector, and providing a satisfactory business and operating plan; and
 - b. City of Markham finalizing a suitable location and community access terms, completing its due diligence review, and concluding other related requirements; and,
- 5) THAT the City of Markham is not responsible for any costs or responsibilities associated with the design, construction, and operation of the proposed FCCM project; and
- 6) THAT staff be authorized to work with FCCM on finalizing a location and terms of an agreement for Council approval; and
- 7) THAT staff report back to Council no later than Q2 of 2013; and further,
- 8) THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Markham has been approached by a long-standing community organization, the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham (FCCM), to be a contributor to their project to develop a Suzhou-style Chinese garden in Markham. The garden is conceived to honour Dr. Norman Bethune, a famous Canadian who has connections to the Chinese community, particularly the People's Republic of China. The request from FCCM is for the City of Markham to contribute the land on which the proposed garden will be situated. The garden will be constructed on land owned in its entirety by the City of Markham.

PURPOSE:

The report purpose is two-fold:

1. To communicate the request received from the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham seeking Markham to be a contributor to the FCCM project to develop a Suzhou-style Chinese garden in Markham; and
2. To seek Council approval for the City of Markham to be a project contributor by providing the land on which the garden will be situated.

BACKGROUND:

The Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham has been working on a proposal to seek funding from the Province of Ontario to develop a unique Suzhou-style Chinese Garden in Markham. Both the style of the garden and the act of honouring the contributions of Dr. Henry Norman Bethune by means of a Chinese garden is a first in Ontario and Canada, respectively.

Last year, Markham's Mayor provided a general letter of support for the project to the Honourable Michael Chan, Ontario Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Province has expressed an interest in considering the project for funding.

Tangible support from the local government is a necessary ingredient in the approval of funding by the Province. Recently, City staff received a request from Dr. Ken Ng, Chairman of FCCM, for Markham to demonstrate its support by way of the contribution of municipal land towards the project. The land will remain in the ownership of the City of Markham.

In considering the request from FCCM, information pertaining to the FCCM, Dr. Bethune, and Suzhou gardens is provided in the remainder of this section.

FCCM Celebrated its 20th Anniversary this Year

The Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham (FCCM) described itself as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the provision of services to the Chinese community and the integration of Chinese Canadians into mainstream Canada. Established in 1989, it was formally incorporated on May 22, 1992 and is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors. FCCM has four main divisions:

1. Markham Chinese Seniors Association
2. Chinese Canadian Sports and Recreation Club of Markham
3. Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Markham
4. Markham Chinese Cultural Centre

FCCM is the organizer of the annual community event, Taste of Asia. In 2011, Taste of Asia was recognized as one of the Top 100 Festivals and Events in Ontario. The event received \$15,000 from the City's Celebrate Markham Grants program in 2012.

Legacy of Dr. Henry Norman Bethune

Born in Gravenhurst, Ontario, Dr. Henry Norman Bethune (1890-1939) - a Canadian surgeon and medical innovator - is a historically significant and much-admired figure. Dr. Bethune invented the mobile blood transfusion service during the Spanish Civil War in 1936, which was credited as the inspiration for the creation of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H.) used in the Korean War.

From 1938 until his death in 1939, Dr. Bethune served the 8th Route Army as a doctor in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). For his selfless service to the Chinese people, Chairman Mao Zedong recognized Dr. Bethune as a national hero in the People's Republic of China. Mao's essay "In Memory of Norman Bethune" was required reading and venerated Dr. Bethune as an example of internationalism and devotion to others. In present-day China, Dr. Bethune's past contributions continue to foster goodwill for Canada.

Suzhou Gardens are World Renowned

Suzhou is a city situated in the Jiangsu Province in the People's Republic of China. Suzhou has over 2,500 years of history and is well known for its classical gardens. Nine of its gardens were added to the list of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Sites in 1997 and 2000. These gardens range in size from 0.2 to 5.2 hectares.

A Suzhou garden is intimate and simple and was built for the enjoyment of a private family. According to UNESCO, "Classical Chinese garden design, which seeks to recreate natural landscapes in miniature, is nowhere better illustrated than in the nine gardens in the historic city of Suzhou. They are generally acknowledged to be masterpieces of the genre. Dating from the 11th-19th century, the gardens reflect the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture in their meticulous design." Classical Chinese garden is an embodiment of traditional Chinese culture and art.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Staff corresponded and met with the Chairman of FCCM (Project Proponent), to gather information about the overall project and the request for Markham to be a project contributor. A number of key findings are provided below:

Project Concept

A Suzhou-style garden will be designed and constructed to commemorate Dr. Henry Norman Bethune. In addition to a bronze statue of Dr. Bethune, the garden will create a sense of place within a limited space. Common elements may include mountains, winding paths, waterways, partitions, rockery, pavilions, plants, and animals. FCCM anticipates using the expertise of Suzhou and Jiangsu Province to ensure the aesthetics and quality of the garden are achieved.

Project Governance

As part of the project, FCCM is in the process of setting up a charitable foundation. The charitable foundation will be responsible for overseeing the project in all aspects, including design, construction, facility operations, fundraising for capital construction, and financial planning and management. Markham's role currently is to work with FCCM to finalize a location for the garden and to provide the land at a value of no more than \$2 million or 1 hectare, whichever is greater.

Project Contributors

FCCM identifies the following potential project contributors:

- Province of Ontario – Contribution of \$1 million in funding (request in progress)
- Overseas Government – With the assistance of the provincial officials, Jiangsu Province, sister Province to Ontario, may be approached to provide funding, services or materials in kind.
- City of Markham – Contribution of land, estimated at \$2 million (request in progress)
- Private Sector – Funds to be raised by FCCM and the charitable foundation it is in the process of setting up.

Project Timing

A decision from the Province on the funding request is expected in the first quarter of 2013. FCCM is optimistic that the project will commence in 2013 or when fundraising efforts are completed.

Project Benefits

The anticipated local and provincial benefits as communicated by FCCM include:

- **Tourism** – The garden is anticipated to be a premier tourist destination for the City of Markham and the Province of Ontario, thereby, strengthening the local economy and adding to Ontario's tourism inventory and reputation.
- **Cultural Awareness** – According to the 2011 Census data, there were 508,345 Ontarians whose mother tongue was identified to be Chinese. There is a large concentration of Chinese Canadians living in the Greater Toronto Area, including Markham. Markham had 94,690 residents or 31% of the population whose mother tongue was identified to be of a Chinese dialect (2011 Census). The project will explore the cultural heritage of our Chinese Canadian citizens, the

connection between Canada and China, and share the aesthetics of a Suzhou garden with all nationalities.

- **Societal Cohesion** – The exposure to diversity and cultural practices strengthen multi-cultural understanding and harmony. The project will deepen that understanding.
- **Canadian History** – A memorial garden to Dr. Bethune highlights the contribution made by a fellow Canadian who has made a difference to others abroad. Canadians continue to make a difference around the world today. It resonates well with Markham's own motto, "Leading While Remembering".
- **International Relations** – The project strengthens the relationship with China that may generate additional cultural and economic opportunities for Markham and the Province of Ontario.

Good examples of Chinese Gardens in North America include:

- Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, Vancouver, British Columbia – operated by the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden Society of Vancouver, <http://vancouverchinesegarden.com/>
- Lan Su Chinese Garden, Portland, Oregon – operated by a non-profit organization without taxpayer funding, www.lansugarden.org
- Montreal Botanical Garden – The Chinese Garden – <http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/en/chine/societe.htm>
- New York Chinese Scholar's Garden – operated by Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, <http://www.snug-harbor.org/chinese-scholars-garden/>

Considerations and Conclusions

The proposed project is a good fit for Markham in reflecting the cultural composition of its community, Markham's aspirations in the areas of inclusion, sustainability, community engagement and city building, and the appreciation for a high quality of life.

As a result, it seemed appropriate the City of Markham should consider the request from FCCM. A specific location has not been finalized although possible location includes Buttonville redevelopment and Markham Centre. The contribution of municipal land to the project requires additional work and due diligence from staff to ensure the best possible site is selected and agreement is reached with FCCM.

This project is the responsibility of the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham and the provision of a satisfactory business and operating plan by FCCM will be a reasonable condition for which Markham will provide its contribution in land.

A cross-Commission staff team will work with FCCM on the terms of an agreement and operating expectations and will provide progress updates to Council. Staff will continue to work with Mayor Scarpitti as he has been active in advocating this project.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

At this time, there are no direct financial implications, other than valuing the space provided within one of the city parks.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:


The report recommendations support a number of strategic plans:


- Diversity Action Plan – “Governments can make a profound difference in peoples’ lives by enhancing this sense of belonging, both through practical measures and by leading the way.”
- Greenprint – “Identity and Culture – Promote and celebrate all that makes Markham great”
- Integrated Leisure Master Plan – “Markham provides and maintains parkland to satisfy the broad range of active, passive, cultural and natural heritage needs of the community.”
- Official Plan (draft) – “The parks and open space system is an integral component to the liveability of Markham. The system includes parks, open space links, multi-use trails and pathways, valleylands, vegetation protection zones, and natural heritage features.”

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Staff from Culture, Operations, and Planning & Urban Design have been involved in the preliminary review of the project concept from FCCM.

**RECOMMENDED
BY:**


Brenda Librecz
Commissioner, Community
& Fire Services


Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer