

Renaming of former James Short Park and Parkade – Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee

1. Recommend that Council:
 - a. Approve the names “和園 Harmony Park” and “和園 Harmony Parkade” for the park site and parkade located at 115 4 Avenue SW; and
 - b. Direct that the portions of this report and Attachment 4 be heard in-camera pursuant to subsection 23(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and remain confidential pursuant to Section 24(1)(a)&(b) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act until Council rises and reports.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Approval of the naming of this park fits within the criteria outlined in the Municipal Naming, Sponsorship and Naming Rights Policy (CP2016-01) as the name furthers a sense of community.

HIGHLIGHTS

The former James Short Park and Parkade lie just outside the south plan area boundary of Chinatown, and are being recommended for renaming to acknowledge the racial discrimination faced by Chinese Calgarians. This is an important step towards becoming an anti-racist and inclusive city.

DISCUSSION

Through a Notice of Motion in 2020, the renaming of James Short Park and Parkade was added to the Tomorrow's Chinatown program. James Short was a leader in Calgary who petitioned against the construction of the first Chinese-owned commercial building, the Canton block, in 1910. The petition against the Canton block is just one of many examples of the systematic racism Chinese Calgarians faced and continue to face. Throughout the renaming process, the community and Administration have engaged in difficult, yet necessary conversations about historic and systemic racism, which have framed the process of renaming (refer to Attachment 6 for an engagement summary)

Through engagement the name “和園 Harmony Park” and “和園 Harmony Parkade” were selected to put forward to Council for approval. The following is a definition of 和 as described by the Chinese community:

The Chinese word/character 和(he) is used to express the concept of togetherness or the absence of conflict. From a cultural standpoint, the word 和 has very deep philosophical meanings. When 和 is used in combination with another word or character, it gives a very precise meaning. For example, “he-ping” means peace, “he-xie” means harmony or harmonious, “he-jie” means to reconcile or resolve conflicts, “he-shan” means kind and gentle, “he-qi” means friendly and amiable. The common thread is that they all refer to the idea of friendship, good relationship or absence of conflict.

Throughout their long history, the Chinese have encountered all sorts of social situations, periods characterized by conflicts, turmoil, uncertainties, peace and prosperity. Many different schools of thought on social order emerged over time. But one common thread that runs through all of them is the notion of 和. Every school of thought values and encourages personal cultivation so one becomes a better person and a valuable member of society. Therefore, we are to treat each other with respect and tolerance, recognizing and accepting that we are all different as individuals. The underlying principle is 和.

While Western cultures focus on the individuals as a unique member of a society, Chinese culture focuses on the collective, a society which embodies all the components and the individuals within it. Therefore, we each approach the subject matter and various issues from different directions with different perspectives. But what’s important is that we all share the same goal.

In a civilized society, there are three basic characteristics or fundamental principles that define and underpin it. They are mutual respect, tolerance and the right to be different, as articulated and analyzed by many prominent European philosophers and political theorists over the last few centuries. Without any one of these three principles, a civilized society, especially a liberal democracy, cannot be sustained, as it will lead to conflicts and hostilities among the individuals. We do see that certain societies move away from these fundamental principles from time to time. They pay no attention to mutual respect and tolerance. Many of them just want their personal views and beliefs actualized, and their ways of doing thing done. Many of them define themselves by who they voted for in the last election.

Chinese culture also embraces all these three fundamental principles as well. It effectuates mutual respect through rituals and customs, it encourages tolerance through generosity of spirit and understanding, and it fosters the right to be different through recognition and acceptance of the fact that everyone is different. But more importantly, the common thread that runs through all three is the concept and presence of 和.

RISKS

A small reputational risk is associated with proceeding with the Notice of Motion, which has been confirmed to have incorrect or misleading facts. After the Notice of Motion was passed, The City

commissioned additional research on James Short, his role in establishing Calgary's educational system, his practice as a lawyer and his racist opinions regarding Chinatown and the Chinese. Considering this research, Administration acknowledges that the Notice of Motion included the following claims that cannot be verified:

- No evidence could be found to support the claim that James Short was a member of, or lawyer for, the Anti-Chinese League that formed in 1892. While James Short was the lawyer for a group of citizens who opposed the location of the current Chinatown in 1910, no evidence could be found to support the claim that the Anti-Chinese League still existed in 1910 and was the citizen group involved in this dispute.
- No evidence could be found to support the claim that James Short said, "Chinese Canadians would lower property values." That quote was attributed to A.J. McArthur MPP.
- No evidence could be found to support the claim that James Short's attitude toward Chinese Canadians changed later in life.

As the aforementioned inaccuracies were captured in the Notice of Motion, the statements become part of the public record.

To further minimize this risk Administration also acknowledges that the historic record is not something one can access for all answers; rather, it is a collection of related artifacts, documents, and other records (newspaper articles, photos, school records, etc.) that historians can use to piece together a history of a place, person, event, etc. We know that collections within archives reflect the values of the society that created and managed them. In Western Canada, our archives are filled with artifacts that were valued by the majority population of the time. They primarily tell the stories of powerful, successful Caucasians – the same people who established the museums and organizations that house these archives.

Today, society values diversity and inclusion and we are starting to collect artifacts and histories that capture different stories from different voices and perspectives. Renaming the park and parkade reflects the values society holds today and is a small action towards The City's acknowledgment of systematic racism and its commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On July 20, 2020 Council Passed a Notice of Motion (PFC2020-0802) for the Renaming of James Short Park and James Short Parkade.

On 2016 April 11, Council approved the Municipal Naming, Sponsorship and Naming Rights Policy (CP2016-01), replacing the previous Municipal Naming Policy (CS03); the Naming Rights Guidelines – City-Owned, Civic Partners Operated Facilities (CSPS012); and the Sponsorship Policy – City-Owned, City Managed Assets (CS011).