

NO: R204

COUNCIL DATE: October 21, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **October 18, 2024**
FROM: **General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture** FILE: **7800-01**
SUBJECT: **Designated Ash Scattering Pier on the Fraser River**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct staff to proceed with next steps (Appendix "I") to provide a designated pier for ash scattering along the Fraser River, at either Brownsville Bar Park or Surrey Public Wharf, as generally described in this report and subsequently report to Council with recommendations for Council's consideration.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information related to a designated ash scattering pier on the Fraser River and to seek support to proceed with next steps.

BACKGROUND

The scattering of a loved one's ashes is a sacred ritual, and it can bring comfort when this can be done in your local community.

Currently, the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Facilities Bylaw No. 13480 states that "No person shall deposit cremated remains within a park, except in an area designated and posted for such purpose by the General Manager or except as carried out in a City cemetery in accordance with Surrey Cemeteries Regulation By-law, 1993, No.11840 as amended." As such, the City currently provides a 'scattering garden' at Sunnyside Lawn Cemetery that provides families with a location to formally scatter the ashes of loved ones in an appropriate setting (on land).

Notwithstanding the above, for many groups, ash scattering in water fosters a more profound sense of connection, bringing peace and closure and symbolizes the return of the individual to nature.

In 2021, staff began exploring the option of building a pier for ash scattering at Brownsville Bar Park. While a preliminary assessment was initiated, no formal direction was provided by Council and no budget was allocated for this project.

DISCUSSION

Ash Scattering in British Columbia

In British Columbia, the scattering of ashes can take place on both private and public land although families require permission from landowners or the appropriate level of government to scatter ashes on properties.

The Province has advised the City that the scattering of ashes on a purpose built pier is possible but may require the City to attain a Crown Land Tenure to build and operate a pier for this purpose as well as for the Province to evaluate this use on environmental grounds. In addition, Transport Canada will be required to assess and approve the ash scattering use from a waterway navigation perspective. Additional approvals may be required.

Potential Locations on the Fraser River

Several preliminary locations were identified as potential sites to build a pier where ash scatterings could take place, all located along the Fraser River. Sites included Tannery Park, 28A Greenbelt, Brownsville Bar Park and Surrey Public Wharf.

Following a preliminary review, the Tannery Park and 28A Greenbelt sites were not explored further due to the complexity of the sites and the anticipated higher costs associated with building a pier at those particular locations. Conversely, both Brownsville Bar Park and Surrey Public Wharf were assessed as locations that can accommodate space (at lower costs) for families seeking a peaceful and private moment to ensure the dignity of bereaved community members while minimizing the risk of user conflict on Surrey's waterfront.

The proposed pier could have designated times for ash scattering and booking/reservation options to allow for other park visitors to utilize the pier at other times for other purposes.

Location 1: Brownsville Bar Park

Brownsville Bar Park is located on the Fraser River between the Pattullo and SkyTrain bridges (location shown in Appendix "II"). The park offers views of New Westminster and the Fraser River and includes a walking loop, parking lot, washroom facilities, beach and open green space ideal for picnics and gathering.

A pier does not exist at this location. The cost to develop a pier and supporting amenities at this location is estimated to be \$3.8 million dollars. The property is leased from Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and formal approval is required to build a pier on this site. Approval is also required from Provincial and Federal agencies in relation to environmental and navigational issues.

Location 2: Surrey Public Wharf

Surrey Public Wharf is located on the Fraser River at the north end of 130 Street. Parking is available at the site and an existing pier offers public access to the water (location shown in Appendix "III").

While there is an existing pier at this location, improvement of the park space and pier would be required to provide improved parking, a formal entrance, washroom, seating and better space and access to the water. The cost to improve the park space and pier at this location is estimated to

cost \$2.5 million dollars. Improving the pier also requires approval from Provincial and Federal jurisdictions.

Legal Services Review

This report has been reviewed by Legal Services.

FUNDING

The cost to construct a designated pier for ash scattering on the Fraser River is estimated to cost in the range of \$2,500,000 to \$3,800,000, depending on the site. This funding is currently not in the City's Capital Budget. Pending Council's approval of next steps and approvals from appropriate levels of government, staff will bring forward a 2025 Capital Budget request for Council's consideration through the annual budget process.

CONCLUSION

Creating a designated place for Surrey residents to scatter ashes with dignity will create peace and closure for many families. Staff are seeking Council direction to proceed with the next steps to provide a designated pier for ash scattering on the Fraser River.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation & Culture

Appendix "I": Project Schedule and Next Steps
Appendix "II": Map of Brownsville Park Location
Appendix "III": Map of Surrey Public Wharf Location

Project Schedule and Next Steps

1. Seek formal approval from appropriate Provincial and Federal jurisdictions as necessary for the preferred location;
2. Consult with other municipalities that have implemented ash scattering in their waterways;
3. Consult with Consumer Protection BC who regulates Cemetery and Funeral Services in BC;
4. Create appropriate booking and reservation system to minimize conflict with other park users; and
5. Bring a report back to Council in 2025 seeking final approval from Council.

Brownsville Bar Park



*Areas outlined in red are City Parkland. Area outlined in yellow is leased land from Vancouver Fraser Port Authority.

Surrey Public Wharf



*Area outlined in red is City Parkland.