
Meeting Date: October 21, 2024
Department: Community Services
Report No.: CS-2024-48
Submitted by: Robert Lilbourne, Director of Community Services
Approved by: Trisha McKibbin, Chief Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: **Holiday Bench Display – BIA and Municipal Partnership**

RECOMMENDATION: THAT: Council receive Report CS-2024-48 titled Holiday Bench Display – BIA and Municipal Partnership for information, and further; THAT: Council approve/deny the use of Progress through Partnership (PTP) program funds to a maximum of \$2,938.00, matching the funds provided by the Strathroy BIA, for the purchase of the Holiday Bench display as described in this report for the Downtown Strathroy.

BACKGROUND:

The Downtown Strathroy BIA is partnering to purchase a festive "Gingerbread" bench along with two accompanying statues to be placed on either side. (See image below.) This installation will serve as a holiday photo spot for residents and visitors, encouraging people to visit the downtown area during the holiday season. The plan is to have the display set up on Front Street for the Hometown Christmas Market on November 29, 2024, and then relocate it in front of the "Tree of Lights" at Town Hall, where it will remain until mid-January.



COMMENTS:

The importance of working with the Downtown Strathroy BIA to create meaningful experiences for residents and visitors is key to maintaining a vibrant downtown. This partnership aligns perfectly with

the goals of the PTP, which was created to support initiatives that enhance the community. Working together, an asset can be procured that will be enjoyed for years to come.

The purchase of the holiday "Gingerbread" bench and statues supports the Community Services Department's strategy to build an inventory of seasonal assets that elevate community events and improve visitor experiences while not unreasonably impacting staff resources. It not only draws people to the downtown core but also boosts social media engagement, enhances the holiday atmosphere, and provides long-term value through reuse.

The purchase of the holiday "Gingerbread" bench and statues is a great way to draw people to the downtown area:

1. **Attract Visitors:** The festive display will create a unique, visually appealing space that encourages both residents and visitors to explore the downtown core, particularly during the busy holiday season. This can boost foot traffic to local businesses and create a more vibrant atmosphere in the heart of the community.
2. **Social Media Engagement:** The photo-friendly display will likely attract people to take pictures and share their experiences on social media platforms. These shared posts can help promote the town, the downtown area, and local businesses to a wider audience, both locally and beyond. Social media-driven word-of-mouth marketing can be a powerful tool in attracting new visitors and creating buzz around the holiday season.
3. **Seasonal Community Spirit:** The festive bench and statues contribute to the overall holiday decor, fostering a sense of community pride and seasonal spirit. By offering a designated photo spot, the display provides families and friends with a memorable experience to share, reinforcing Strathroy as a destination for holiday celebrations.
4. **Long-term Value:** This holiday installation is not only an investment for one season but can be reused in future years, enhancing the town's holiday displays annually without requiring repeat purchases.
5. **Supporting Local Events:** Positioned for the Hometown Christmas Market and remaining in front of Town Hall "Tree of Lights" through mid-January, the display ties into existing holiday events and decorations, further amplifying their impact and drawing attention to local festivities.

Overall, the purchase can play a key role in driving increased downtown activity and expanding the town's visibility on social media, contributing to both short-term and long-term economic and community benefits.

As Walt Disney once said, "Laughter is timeless, imagination has no age, and dreams are forever." This holiday display creates lasting memories, blending festive fun with community spirit.

CONSULTATION:

Supervisor of Recreation, Programs and Community Liaison
Events and Booking Coordinator
Downtown Strathroy BIA

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The BIA has approved the allocation of \$2,938.00 towards the purchase of the Holiday Bench display. The matching Municipal funds of \$2,938.00 would come from the PTP program, which will have zero impact on taxation or reserve fund depletion. If approved balance of \$7,000.00 would remain for projects that may develop during the remaining months of 2024.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO THE RECOMMENDATION:

1. Council to provide alternate direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This matter is in accord with the following strategic priorities:

Community Well-being and Quality of Life: Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing.

ATTACHMENTS:

None