

# THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** May 17, 2022  
**TO:** Committee of the Whole  
**FROM:** Tiffany MacLaren, Community Economic & Cultural Coordinator  
**SUBJECT:** Age Friendly Wellness Trail

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### RECOMMENDATION:

**THAT Committee of the Whole recommend that Council approve installation of a 6-part wellness trail on public lands in downtown Almonte;**

**AND FURTHERMORE, that staff be permitted to work with the committee to choose appropriate locations and equipment.**

### BACKGROUND:

The Age Friendly North Lanark Committee, Carebridge Community Support, All My Relations and the St. Paul's Anglican Church partnered on a proposal to develop an age-friendly wellness trail in Almonte. They applied together for funding from the Canada Community Revitalization Fund.

Their application was based on the knowledge that COVID has disproportionately affected Mississippi Mills. The fund offered the potential opportunity to help residents rebound/revitalize and come back safely into shared spaces.

Their objective was the creation a self-guided community activity circuit welcoming seniors & those with disabilities/ promote wellness by bringing people to public spaces/revitalize downtown core/stimulate local economy. On public greenspaces the circuit offers 4-5 stations of safe exercise equipment with large hi-contrast pictograph signage along with 2 stations for contemplation.

### DISCUSSION:

The Age Friendly North Lanark Committee, Carebridge Community Support, All My Relations and the St. Paul's Anglican Church were successful in receiving \$116,063. towards their vision of a Wellness trail through Almonte. A portion of the funding (\$87,047) comes from Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario under the Canada Community Revitalization Fund. The partners have committed an

additional \$29,015.75. towards the project. They are not requesting any funding from the Municipality.

The project objective is to create a self-guided community activity circuit welcoming seniors & those with disabilities/ promote wellness by bringing people to public spaces/revitalize downtown core/stimulate local economy.

The trail will have 6-7 components (or stops). Their request is that these installations weave through downtown Almonte on public spaces. With the exception of one that will be on St. Paul Anglican Church property along the river.

The wellness trail stations are as follows:

- **2 stations for contemplation**
  - **A Labyrinth** installed on St. Paul's Anglican Church private property
  - **Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers Tribute:**  
A permanent sculptural installation beside the river reflecting the Anishinabek Seven Grandfather Teachings.

**Proposed Location:** Kirkland Park, Mill St. Almonte.

**Background:** In parallel to the government's establishment of Residential Schools in order to absorb Indigenous children into Canadian society, the government suppressed the rich cultural heritage and spiritual teachings of the Algonquin Anishenabek and other Indigenous peoples. They were not permitted to practice their religion, tell their stories or to share food as a community. These essential teachings were referred to as the Seven Grandfather Teachings because of the story about how these were received. The concepts are embedded in all the stories told within their communities and were meant to guide people about how to live a good life. They can be summarized with seven words: Wisdom, Love, Respect, Humility, Honesty, Bravery and Truth. They are seen to be in relationship with one another in that none can be understood or pursued alone but rather in association with one another.

The purpose of the Seven Grandfathers Teachings installation is to provide non-Indigenous people an opportunity to learn and to celebrate these teachings and to reflect on them as a way of contributing to their own spiritual health and wellbeing.

**Approach:** In consultation with Elder Larry McDermott of the Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, we will engage a team of artists led by local stone carver, Deborah Arnold, to choose the stone, create their special relationship to one another and prepare the symbols to be affixed to the stones and to do a limited amount of carving of the stones to enhance the

beauty of the stones. Every effort is being made to ensure there is an Indigenous artist who will be part of this team.

**Physical Description of Installation:** Seven vertical stones of quarried rock, either of limestone or marble, sourced locally. They will be placed in close relationship with one another with four on the outside circle, placed with reference to the four directions, and three taller ones in the centre. On each of these stones will be a symbol associated with one of the teachings. They will be cut to various heights (approx. 4 to 7 feet) and securely adhered to a circular cement pad surrounded by a fully accessible walkway. A sign explaining the meaning of the symbols and an accessible bench will be placed nearby. Footprint of the installation will be a maximum of 25 feet in diameter. The bench will be chosen based on the benches the Municipality uses for the Bench Donation policy. This bench style has been approved by the Municipal Accessibility Committee and are long lasting, maintenance free.

- **4-5 stations to encourage physical activity:**

Safe exercise equipment with large hi-contrast pictograph signage.

The Village of Carp and Town of Smiths Falls have similar outdoor exercise stations already in use. Since the pandemic more people are exercising outdoors.

Equipment designed to provide access to physical activity for all ages. Some of the pieces are designed to be accessible by those with reduced mobility.

Outdoor exercise equipment has become popular as important environmental infrastructure to provide opportunities for physical activity and social connectedness in public settings. With higher sedentary behaviour and physical inactivity reported among older people, infrastructure changes and safe environments that promote older peoples' health and mobility are required. Due to ageing-related functional decline and health conditions associated with ageing, older adults may have special physical needs that require careful consideration when choosing outdoor equipment.

The exercise equipment will be purchased from a play structure/ public infrastructure company and will meet all current rules and regulations for safety and accessibility. Recreation department staff will work with the committee to select appropriate equipment. Pieces will require no ongoing maintenance after installation.

Examples of outdoor exercise equipment:



## **Locations:**

Recreation Staff met with members of the All My Relations committee to discuss an appropriate location for the Seven Grandfathers Teachings station. The theme requires a position along the river for quiet contemplation. Staff agreed with the committee that Kirkland Park off Mill St. would be a suitable location. Space was measured and the tribute could be accommodated in the existing space and as a bonus the benches would provide additional seating for downtown visitors.

The additional 4-5 exercise stations are intended to weave through the downtown to create a circuit. The trail would include the Riverwalk and OVRT. This could include the Library Gardens, near the Alameda, Almonte Old Town Hall green space along the river and Esplanade Park on the island. The group would like to include the Riverwalk staircase as an 'exercise' highlight on the map.

Upon discussion and approval of the MRPC Board of Directors; Metcalfe Geoheritage Park and Des Houston Park may also be considered for exercise stations with small footprints. Metcalfe Park does have many other features already in place and the Board would like to avoid adding too much.

Staff would help to select appropriate locations based on the footprint of the equipment and would report back to Council for information prior to installation.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The Municipality will be receiving a donated value of \$116,063 with this equipment. The fund and project partners will cover all costs associated with this project, this includes equipment and all installation costs. Similar to the Municipal Bench donation policy or a play structure donation to a public park the municipality will own this equipment after installation. Staff will work with the committee to ensure selected equipment requires no ongoing maintenance.

## **SUMMARY:**

An age friendly exercise circuit through downtown Almonte will enhance our community and provide a donated value of over \$116,063.

Since the pandemic more people of all ages are exercising outdoors. The proposed wellness circuit will include stations for spiritual reflection and physical exercise. Equipment will be selected to provide access to physical activity for all ages. Some of the pieces are designed to be accessible by those with reduced mobility.

Recreation staff is in support of this proposal and requests permission to work with the committee members to select appropriate equipment and locations.

Respectfully submitted by,

Reviewed by:

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Tiffany MacLaren,  
Community Economic &  
Cultural Coordinator

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Ken Kelly,  
Chief Administrative Officer