



# CITY OF DEL REY OAKS

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**DATE:** September 23, 2025  
**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** John Guertin, City Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Direction Regarding Development of a Memorial Bench Policy  
**CEQA:** Not applicable.

## Discussion

The City periodically receives requests from residents and community members to donate and install memorial benches in honor of family members, friends, or other individuals. While these requests demonstrate strong community engagement, the City currently does not have a formal policy to guide how such requests are processed, how locations are determined, or how costs are assigned.

To ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency, staff recommends the City Council provide direction on the development of a Memorial Bench Policy. Such a policy would establish clear guidelines for:

### Application Process

- Establishing a formal application form and submittal procedure.
- Outlining eligibility (e.g., residents, individuals with community ties).
- Setting review and approval authority (e.g., Parks & Recreation Committee, City Manager, or City Council).

### Bench Location and Placement Strategies

- Identifying preferred areas such as parks, trails, open space, and civic facilities.
- Providing criteria to avoid over-concentration in a single location.
- Ensuring benches are consistent with park design standards and do not impede accessibility or public use.

### Cost Recovery and Fees

- Requiring applicants to cover costs of bench purchase, installation, plaque, and future maintenance.

- Establishing a standard fee schedule (e.g., a fixed fee or actual cost recovery plus administrative overhead).
- Considering an option for “term-limited” dedications (e.g., 10–20 years) to allow turnover and ongoing availability of sites.

Staff has reviewed policies from comparable jurisdictions and found that many cities implement a full cost recovery model, with the City responsible only for installation oversight and long-term maintenance. Most policies also provide standard plaque sizes and wording limitations to ensure consistency.

At this time, staff seeks City Council direction on preferred approaches to each of the above elements so that a draft policy may be prepared and returned for formal consideration at a future meeting.

### **Fiscal Impacts**

There are no immediate fiscal impacts associated with this item. Adoption of a policy may result in the establishment of fees to recover costs for memorial benches, ensuring that City funds are not used for private dedications. As an example, Pacific Grove’s current Master Fee Schedule shows the following fees:

- Memorial Bench Installation Fee: \$632
- Memorial Bench Materials: Actual Cost
- Memorial Bench 5 Year Term Maintenance Fee: \$759

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the City Council provide direction regarding the development of a Memorial Bench Policy, including:

- Guidelines for application and approval processes;
- Criteria for location and placement of benches; and
- Cost recovery structure and fees.

Following Council direction, staff will prepare a draft policy for review and adoption.

### **Attachments**

- Memorial Bench Policy Options Matrix
- City of Pacific Grove Memorial Bench Policy

Respectfully submitted,

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John Guertin  
City Manager

### Memorial Bench Policy Options Matrix

<b>Policy Element</b>	<b>Pacific Grove Example</b>	<b>Regional/Typical Practices</b>	<b>Potential Del Rey Oaks Options</b>
<b>Application Process</b>	Formal permit required; five-year term; waiting list maintained by Public Works.	Many cities require an application form, eligibility criteria, and approval by Parks staff or City Manager (not City Council).	Create an application form; allow staff-level approval; establish a waiting list when sites are full.
<b>Bench Location Assignment</b>	Locations offered only when existing benches replaced or new sites identified by staff. No Council review/appeal.	Some cities allow donors to suggest preferred parks, but final assignment is staff's decision.	Adopt staff-level placement authority, with published list of available sites; avoid over-concentration.
<b>Term of Use / Permit Renewal</b>	Five-year permit; renewable every five years with additional fee.	Terms vary: 10–20 years common; some offer “lifetime” dedications.	Consider five-year renewable permits (align with PG) OR offer 10–15 year terms for flexibility.
<b>Fees &amp; Cost Recovery</b>	Fees set in Master Fee Schedule; updated annually; covers purchase, installation, and staff oversight.	Most cities charge full cost recovery plus admin overhead (\$2,500–\$5,000 typical for bench + plaque).	Establish fee schedule; ensure 100% cost recovery; option for additional endowment/maintenance fee.
<b>Maintenance Responsibilities</b>	City ensures structural condition; permittee responsible for cosmetic upkeep; painting prohibited.	Many cities assign full maintenance to City, funded through fees. Some split responsibilities.	Consider shared model: City handles safety/structural issues; permittee responsible for cosmetic upkeep.

<b>Policy Element</b>	<b>Pacific Grove Example</b>	<b>Regional/Typical Practices</b>	<b>Potential Del Rey Oaks Options</b>
<b>Plaques / Inscriptions</b>	Standardized plaques with limited wording; must be approved by staff.	Typically require uniform size, material, and message content restrictions.	Establish standard plaque design, size, and approval process to maintain consistency.
<b>Transferability</b>	Rights may be transferred within family if plaque remains the same.	Often non-transferable; some allow family transfers.	Allow family transfers with unchanged inscription.
<b>Removal / Relocation</b>	City may remove benches at its discretion (safety, public use needs) with no refund.	Common provision; protects City control.	Include removal clause for safety, accessibility, or redesign needs.
<b>Use of Vendors</b>	City may contract with outside vendors for ordering, engraving, installation.	Common in many cities.	Allow City to contract vendors as needed to reduce workload.

# City of Pacific Grove, California

## City Council Policy

Policy Governing	Policy No.	Effective Date	Page
City Bench Naming Rights Policy	100-7		Page 1 of 3

**PURPOSE** Throughout the City, there are benches that have been permitted to various persons on City property. These benches are installed for various reasons, such as memorials to deceased family members, to commemorate charitable organization, and to otherwise recognize persons and entities. The fees associated with the City Bench Program are for naming rights. Unless the bench requires extraordinary repairs, the bench maintenance is the responsibility of the permittee.

**POLICY:**

- 1 Public Works staff shall generate and maintain an inventory of existing benches.
  
- 2 If new bench locations are identified by the Public Works Department, then the locations shall be offered to person(s) on the bench waiting list maintained by the Public Works Department, in the chronological order of requests made.

Effective upon the adoption of this policy, the following policy shall be followed with respect to existing as well as new benches placed in the City:

- (a) Person(s) on the list waiting for a bench location shall be contacted only in the case of replacement of an existing bench in an existing location or if a new location becomes available
- (b) The costs associated with the bench program shall be adopted annually in the City's fee schedule;
- (c) Benches are a "permitted" activity in the City, and bench location holders shall be required to obtain a permit to continue their holding of the bench location. The permit is valid for five (5) years, and the initial permit fee shall be set by resolution by the City Council in its master fee schedule. At the end of five years, and every five (5) years thereafter, all bench location holders/owners will be contacted, and a renewal fee as established in the master fee schedule will be due and payable. For this naming rights fee, City staff will ensure the bench's structural condition is in good condition as determined by the Public Works Director or their designee--wood slats, metal supports, and associated hardware. Any cosmetic maintenance (e.g., cleaning) or any improvements will be/remain the responsibility of the bench location holder who has the naming right for the bench. Cosmetic maintenance may include stains or varnishes but painting of the benches will not be allowed. Treatments must maintain a wood appearance. Any deviation request from typical staining or varnishing must be approved by the Public Works Director or their designee.

(d) If a current bench location holder/permittee should not obtain or renew the permit with the City, the City will offer the naming rights of the bench location to the next person on the list of persons waiting for a bench location. Prior to relinquishment, the City will make every attempt to contact the permittee. Notifications will occur by email, Postal Service mail, noticed in the newspaper, by telephone and if required a physical posting on the bench. Reasonable attempts will be made to contact all noted parties associated with the bench. Bench rights may be transferred amongst family members if the language on the bench remains the same through the duration of the current permit.

(e) The City Council will not consider bench placement requests, nor entertain appeals of bench placement decisions of the Department. Should the City, at any time, not be able to provide the services for ordering, engraving, installing, etc., any bench, the City reserves the right to contract with outside vendors for such services.

(f) Notwithstanding the terms set forth in any permit issued pursuant to this policy, if, in the sole discretion of the Director of Public Works, a bench must be removed in the interests of public health, safety or welfare, the bench may be removed, and the bench location holder shall not be entitled to any refund of permit fees or any other expenses associated with the installation.

Adopted:

December 18, 2002, Resolution 2-064

December 18, 2019, Resolution 19-029