



# OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST STAFF REPORT

OSCT26-07  
July 16, 2026  
Regular Business

## AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	Bench Donation Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Discuss the status of the bench donation program, provide input to staff for development of a future work plan item.	

<b>STAFF:</b>	Casey Troy, Interim Parks Operations Manager Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Program Manager
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	Lisa Anderl
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mercer Island Public Bench Donation Guidelines</li> <li>2. Pioneer Park Bench Location Map</li> </ol>

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Open Space Conservancy Trust with an update on the current process for identifying available bench donation locations, discuss how to address requests for donated benches in unspecified locations, and determine whether there is interest in adding a future work plan item for staff to evaluate additional bench locations within Pioneer Park.

### BACKGROUND

The Bench Donation Program is administered by the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department and provides community members with an opportunity to donate the purchase and installation of a commemorative park bench. Donated benches may include a bronze plaque with a limited amount of approved text. The program is intended to be mutually beneficial by allowing donors to recognize a loved one or share a positive community message while helping offset the cost of providing park amenities for the public. The Public Bench Donation Guidelines (Exhibit 1) have been refined over time to provide clarity and transparency for prospective donors regarding donation amounts, plaque standards, approved locations, and maintenance expectations.

In 2006, at the request of staff, the Open Space Conservancy Trust approved the Pioneer Park Bench Location Map (Exhibit 2) identifying designated locations for benches within Pioneer Park. The purpose of establishing approved locations was to provide a consistent framework for bench placement focused on the visitor experience, park aesthetics, maintenance, and staff capacity. The locations identified presented limited impact to the surrounding area for installation and sought to maintain the natural feel of the park- with a goal of balancing community need while specifically limiting the number of assets in the park. The development of the map was designed to reduce staff time needed in evaluation of other locations.

In 2019, the Trust reviewed and recommended adding an additional bench location in the northwest quadrant of Pioneer Park near the intersection of SE 68th Street and 84th Avenue SE. The Parks and Recreation Director subsequently approved the additional location- recognizing the community benefit of the proposed location.

The current Pioneer Park Bench Location Map identifies existing donated benches and approved available locations.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff periodically receive requests from prospective donors to install commemorative benches in locations that are not identified on the approved Pioneer Park Bench Location Map. In these cases, staff have historically directed donors to the approved locations in order to maintain consistency with the adopted bench plan while still providing an opportunity to participate in the Bench Donation Program.

More recently, staff have received an increased number of inquiries for benches in specific, donor-selected locations that are not currently designated for donation benches and at times inconsistent with program goals. While the Public Bench Donation Guidelines allow staff to consider requested locations on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to park master plans and maintenance needs, Pioneer Park has historically relied on the Trust-approved bench location map to guide these decisions in a fair and transparent way.

These requests present an opportunity to revisit whether the existing inventory of approved bench locations continues to meet community demand and the park's long-term management objectives. In considering this topic, the Trust may wish to discuss:

- The desired outcomes of the Bench Donation Program.
- Whether requests for benches outside the approved locations should continue to be discouraged or evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Whether staff should dedicate time to identifying additional donation bench locations within Pioneer Park for future Trust and Director consideration.

Staff recognizes the challenges associated with a case-by-case, situation by situation approach and recommends that requests for donation benches within Pioneer Park, at locations not currently identified on the approved bench location map, be declined until the Open Space Conservancy Trust has evaluated the appropriate number and placement of donation benches and provided recommendations for a future work plan item.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Discuss the status of the bench donation program, provide input to staff for development of a future work plan item.