

COVID-19 Memorial**Report Purpose**

To present on tangible memorial options and placement locations to recognize the hardships and losses experienced by Strathcona County citizens due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation

THAT a temporary COVID-19 community memory installation, as set out in Option 1 of the December 6, 2022, Recreation, Parks and Culture report, be approved.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 2 - Healthy and Safe Community

Goal 2 Priority - A diverse, welcoming, inclusive, and an accessible community for all

Report

A small committee made up of representatives from Family and Community Services, Emergency Services, Economic Development and Tourism, and Recreation, Parks and Culture met to discuss the concept of a COVID-19 memorial for the community. The committee looked at temporary and permanent memorial options, potential locations, costs and what other communities are doing to recognize the pandemic.

Everyone in Strathcona County has been impacted by the pandemic. The biggest impact has been on those who have lost friends and family to COVID-19. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on:

- first responders;
- teachers and students;
- small business owners;
- families with members in long term care facilities and hospitals;
- people graduating or getting married;
- people who had children during the pandemic; and
- people working in industries shut down for months at a time.

In some way, every single person has experienced life differently due to COVID-19. Countless individuals or groups to whom the severity of impact may be or may not have been as visibly evident. Strathcona County has adapted and is continuing to recover from the pandemic which is the definition of community resilience. This community resilience throughout the pandemic is something to be recognized. A COVID-19 memorial can reflect on not only the impacts of COVID-19, but also how the community adapted and thrived.

The committee explored projects being completed in the region and around the globe, from temporary art installations to commemorative gardens.

Examples from other communities:

- City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Arts Council are working with an artist to create a memorial that talks about remembrance and how it's touched all Edmontonians' lives.
- The Town of Edson is working on "The Resilience Project". It is a three-part initiative that includes murals, a documentary and a commemorative book exploring resilience through the pandemic.

- To help the City of St. Albert move toward hope and celebration, they created *The Healing Project* art installation. It was created to help process collective grief. Residents were invited to participate in the development of a temporary art exhibit by contributing their thoughts, feelings and experiences over the past few years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One element of a memorial that the committee felt was important is to create a space for reflection, connection, and mindfulness. There are many memorial options for the community.

There are three options that can be completed for under \$5,000 that can be covered within operational budgets.

1. A temporary option is to do a community memory installation where residents can bring memories of the pandemic as a way of healing and moving forward. This can be done at the Community Centre or at an existing event.
2. A permanent option is creating a small memorial in an existing park space. This would include a memorial plaque and a bench for people to sit to remember and reflect on the pandemic. Three location options include the Volunteer Plaza, Broadmoor Lake Park near the Prairie Sound Garden, and the Emerald Hills Regional Park.
3. Another permanent option is the development of an interpretive sign. The sign would highlight the impacts of the pandemic in Strathcona County and showcase community resilience. To include the whole community, interpretive signs could be placed both in the urban and rural communities.

There are two more options that can be completed for up to \$50,000. These projects are not included in the 2023 budget. These two projects would be a budget ask for 2024:

4. A mural that showcases community resilience. The cost would depend on the size and the artist selected for the project. Exterior murals that are in the 12' x 50' range cost between \$20,000 - \$40,000.
5. A small garden or water feature. Three location options include the Volunteer Plaza, Broadmoor Lake Park near the Prairie Sound Garden, and the Emerald Hills Regional Park.

Council and Committee History

July 5, 2022 Council approval: THAT Administration prepare a report for Council's consideration by the end of the fourth quarter of 2022 on tangible memorial options and placement locations to recognize the hardships and losses experienced by Strathcona County citizens due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Financial/Budget: \$5,000 - \$50,000

Interdepartmental: Family and Community Services, Emergency Services, Economic Development and Tourism

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Enclosure

1 COVID-19 Memorial Options presentation