

Shaheed Minar Commemorative Monument

ISSUE

The Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatchewan is requesting permission to donate a Shaheed Minar monument to the City of Saskatoon (City). The monument is to commemorate those killed during the Bengali Language Movement demonstrations of 1952. The applicant's preferred location for the monument is Mahoney Park, in the Kensington neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. The Shaheed Minar monument be accepted by the City of Saskatoon, as a donation;
2. That Mahoney Park, in the Kensington neighbourhood, be approved as the monument's location; and
3. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare the necessary donation agreement between the donor, The Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatchewan and the City of Saskatoon, and that His Worship the Mayor and the City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreement under the Corporate Seal.

BACKGROUND

In March of 2023, the City received an application for commemoration from the Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatchewan to commemorate those killed during the Bengali Language Movement demonstrations of 1952.

As per [Council Policy C09-038, Communications and Monuments Policy](#), a Commemoration Review Committee (Review Committee) was struck to assess whether the subject for commemoration was of significant meaning, importance and relevance to the community of Saskatoon. The applicant's preferred location for the monument, Mahoney Park, was assessed by Administration.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Subject for Commemoration

Shaheed Minar is a national monument, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, commemorating those killed during the Bengali Language Movement demonstrations of 1952, in what was then known as East Pakistan. On February 21 and 22, 1952, political activists and students from Dhaka University and Dhaka Medical College were killed when the Pakistani police force opened fire on Bengali protesters who were demanding official status for their native tongue, Bengali.

February 21 has since been proclaimed around the world as International Mother Language Day by UNESCO. A Shaheed Minar monument, in Toronto's Dentonia Park, is officially named as International Mother Language Monument. In Winnipeg, a

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Shaheed Minar monument is the centre piece of the International Mother Language Plaza, located in Winnipeg's Richmond West neighbourhood.

Assessment by Review Committee

As per policy, a Commemoration Review Committee was struck to assess whether the subject for commemoration was of significant meaning, importance and relevance to the community of Saskatoon. The Review Committee was comprised of the City Archivist, the City's Senior Planner, Heritage and Design Coordinator, a Project Manager from Urban Design, one representative from the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, one representative from the Public Art Advisory Committee and a professor of history, specializing in south Asian history, from the University of Victoria. The review was facilitated by staff from the Recreation and Community Development Department.

Review Committee Decision

The Review Committee unanimously agreed that International Mother Language Day was worthy of commemoration and as such a Shaheed Minar monument be erected in Saskatoon. The Review Committee made the following comments in support of its decision:

- The application included written support from the India-Canada Cultural Association of Saskatoon, the Pakistan Canada Cultural Association of Saskatoon and the Sri Lanka Association of Saskatoon;
- The monument may have both universal and local significance, as it relates to the loss of language experienced by many cultures around the world and more locally, in Saskatchewan, with the loss of Indigenous languages;
- The applicant has pledged the monument will acknowledge its placement on Treaty 6 Territory, a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place and travelling route to the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene, Nakota and Dakota Sioux;
- Such monuments, in line with many others which exist around the world, highlight the sacrifices of students and young people in the context of state repression; a struggle supported wholeheartedly by peoples everywhere; and
- The monument will symbolize the changing demographics of Saskatoon and contribute to the work of building identity and belonging for the Bangladeshi and other South Asian communities in Saskatoon.

Location of Monument

While several locations for the monument were explored, the applicant specifically requested the Shaheed Minar monument be installed in Mahoney Park, in the Kensington neighbourhood (see Appendix 1), for the following reasons:

- The neighbourhood is home to a large and growing Bengali population;
- It is close in proximity to the Temple where community worships; and
- The park's design with a central amphitheatre and related park amenities, such as benches and shade structures, complements the monument's design and ceremonial function.

Following a review of the site, both the Recreation and Community Development Department and the Parks Department support the monument being at this location.

Design

The Saskatoon Shaheed Minar will follow the original and now standard design of five columns arranged in a semi-circle (see Appendix 2). The middle column is intended to be 5 meters in height with 3.5 meter high and 2.5-meter-high columns on both sides. The span of the monument from first to fifth column will be approximately 7 meters. The applicant will be required to make necessary adjustments to the design's scale to ensure compatibility with the space that is available in Mahoney Park.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If approved, all costs associated with fabrication and installation of the monument will be the responsibility of the applicant. The Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatchewan estimated the cost of design, fabrication and installation at \$100,000.

Maintenance and life cycle costs will be identified at the time of the acquisition of the commemoration and will be funded from the City's public art and commemorations maintenance and conservation fund. The estimated annual operating impact to the City for cleaning and maintenance is \$500 and can be supported by the existing operating budget.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

If approved, the monument will be required to undergo a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Review.

NEXT STEPS

If the donation is approved, the Office of the City Solicitor will prepare the necessary agreement, evidencing the donation, for signing by an authorized representative of The Bangladeshi Community Association of Saskatchewan, His Worship the Mayor and the City Clerk.

Following the signing and in keeping with policy, the applicant will have two years to install the monument in Mahoney Park, in the Kensington neighbourhood.

In addition, the applicant will be required, with assistance from Administration, to engage neighbourhood residents about the design, location and thematic significance of the monument before its installation.

APPENDICES

1. Shaheed Minar Location: Mahoney Park, Kensington Neighbourhood.
2. Examples of Shaheed Minar

REPORT APPROVAL

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