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Fourth Section

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McCowan Road and Hwy. 7

Changes planned for Markville corner

By FRANCIS KING
Staff Reporter

McCowan Road and Hwy. 7. Most of us drive through that intersection at least once each day, and usually without giving it much thought.

But the area around that intersection has exploded into a maze of commercial and residential development, making it one of the most important areas in the Town of Markham. But exactly what is happening there, and why?

According to Town Planning Director Tom Januszewski, the impetus for development occurred over 10 years ago.

"We were always conscious that 70 cents out of every dollar of department store spending was being done by Markham residents outside the Town," he said in an interview last week.

Mr. Januszewski, who has been Markham's planning director since 1975, said a concept that developed from that realization — Markville Shopping Centre — first came about 11 years ago.

"It's a very suitable location for a shopping centre, not only to serve the Markham-Unionville area, but also the surrounding areas," he explained.

The 500,000-square foot facility was approved by council in 1976, and opened in March, 1982. It is the centre of a concept the Town and the area's principal landowner — JDS Investments — have created.

The area in question is from Conlin Motors on the east to the Rouge River bridge on the west, and from Milne Park on the south to the CN rail line on the north. The land is a mixture of zonings, with residential from Bullock Drive to the rail line west of McCowan and commercial in the remaining areas.

Development

The area's concept — homes bordering on a major commercial site — will bring change to the few residents living along Hwy. 7.

"They're basically large residential lots, leftovers from a gracious past," explained Mr. Januszewski.

Those lands are designated for industrial use, and will eventually be developed.

"They are nice lots, well treed, and yet they are on Hwy. 7," he said. "So anyone redeveloping has to try and maintain those trees."

At the moment, the homes still on Hwy. 7 are near the southwest and northeast corner. Part of the southwest has already been developed with a McDonald's restaurant and a large Dominion grocery store, while the southeast corner has had a small strip plaza since 1967.

Ward 3 (Unionville/Milliken) Councillor Fred Cox said he believes the homeowners on the south side of Hwy.

7 are agreeable to selling their lots, and have been discussing the formation of a group to "put something together that would be conducive to Hwy. 7."

Mr. Cox told the Economist and Sun he doesn't want "patchwork" development of those lands.

"We want to do the whole area at once," he said, thereby having better opportunity to develop the lands in a compatible way with the rest of the area.

The northeast corner of the McCowan Rd./Hwy. 7 intersection is now undergoing construction that will result in no less than four new restaurants vying for the public's dollar. The impending opening of Harvey's, Swiss Chalet, Mother's Restaurant and Baskin Robbins (an ice cream parlour franchise) is sure to give McDonald's competition.

But the prospect of competition is not unsettling to McDonald's Owner/Manager Dick Cohen.

"I went into this business knowing part of it is competition," he told the Economist and Sun, adding he considers it a "bonus" having two years without strong competitors.

"If we keep our quality, service and cleanliness high, then we won't lose that much business in the long term," he said. "Competition keeps us all strong."

Both Harvey's and Swiss Chalet are owned by Foodcorp Ltd., and Operations Vice President Mathew Chodorowicz said the expansion of the McCowan Road/Hwy. 7 area was one reason for the firm's move up here.

"We're under-represented for now and we'd like to correct that," he said in a telephone interview. "There are certainly a lot of Markham people who have been customers of ours in Scarborough."

The prospect of stiff competition not only from McDonald's, but from Mothers Restaurants, did not bother him.

"We've encountered it before and we usually have our loyal customers," Mr. Chodorowicz explained, adding both Harvey's and Swiss Chalet will be opening this coming spring.

"We have a unique product to sell and we're very strong in Toronto," he pointed out. "We don't have to shy away from McDonald's locations too often."

Unworried

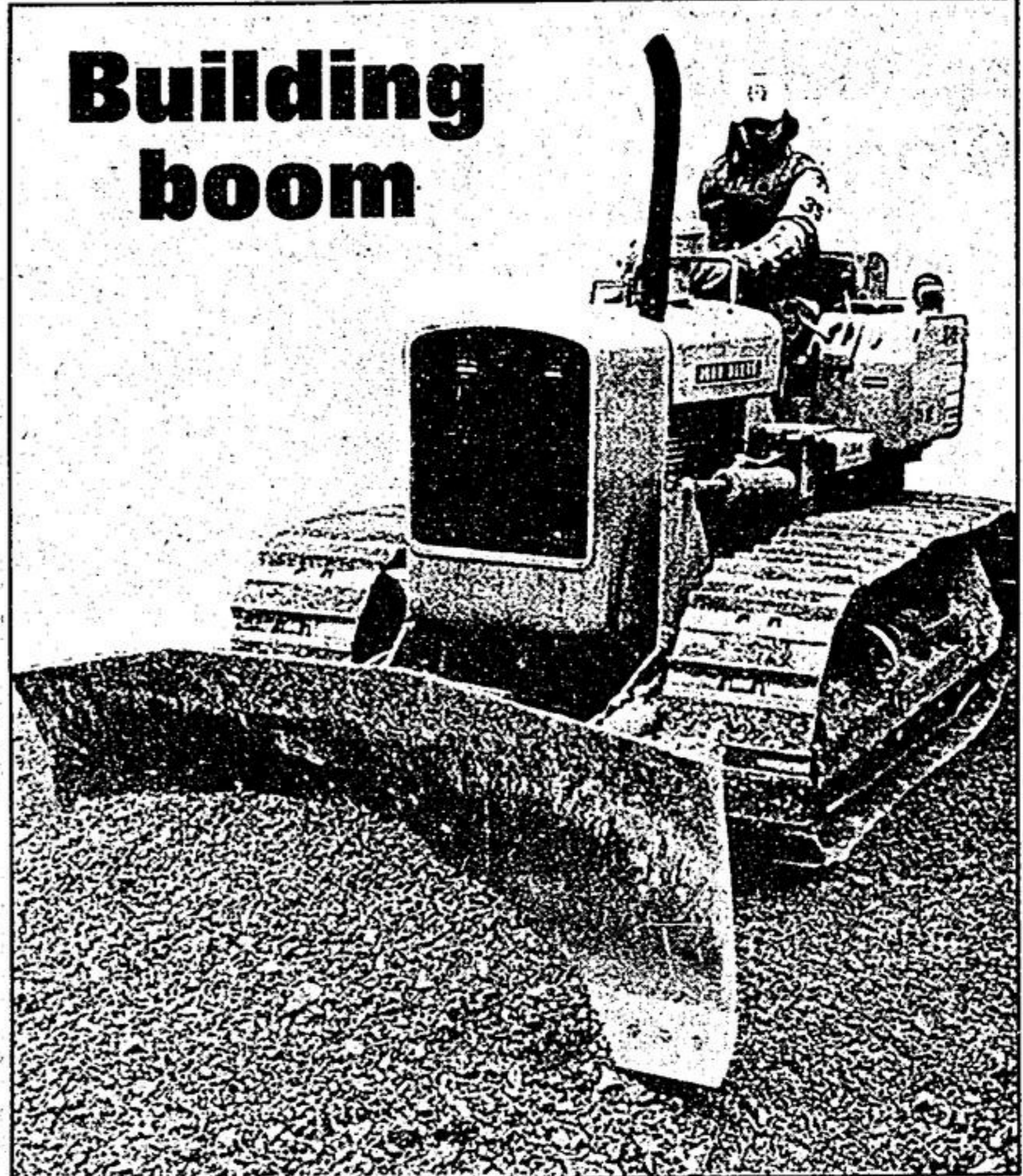
Markville Manager Mitchell Scharf was not worried about the competition presented to the various eating establishments in his shopping centre.

Noting the facility has had a 30 per cent sales increase over this time last year, he said, "I think the area itself has grown to the point where it can accommodate everybody. I'm very confident we'll still maintain our customers."

Meanwhile the area's developer, JDS, is looking to change some of the original plans for developing the land around Bullock Drive.

The firm has already received permission to move a planned block of apartments from a strip along Bullock behind Markville, to a block of land at the northwest corner of Bullock and Hwy. 7. That block, originally slated for a hotel complex, will now hold both projects.

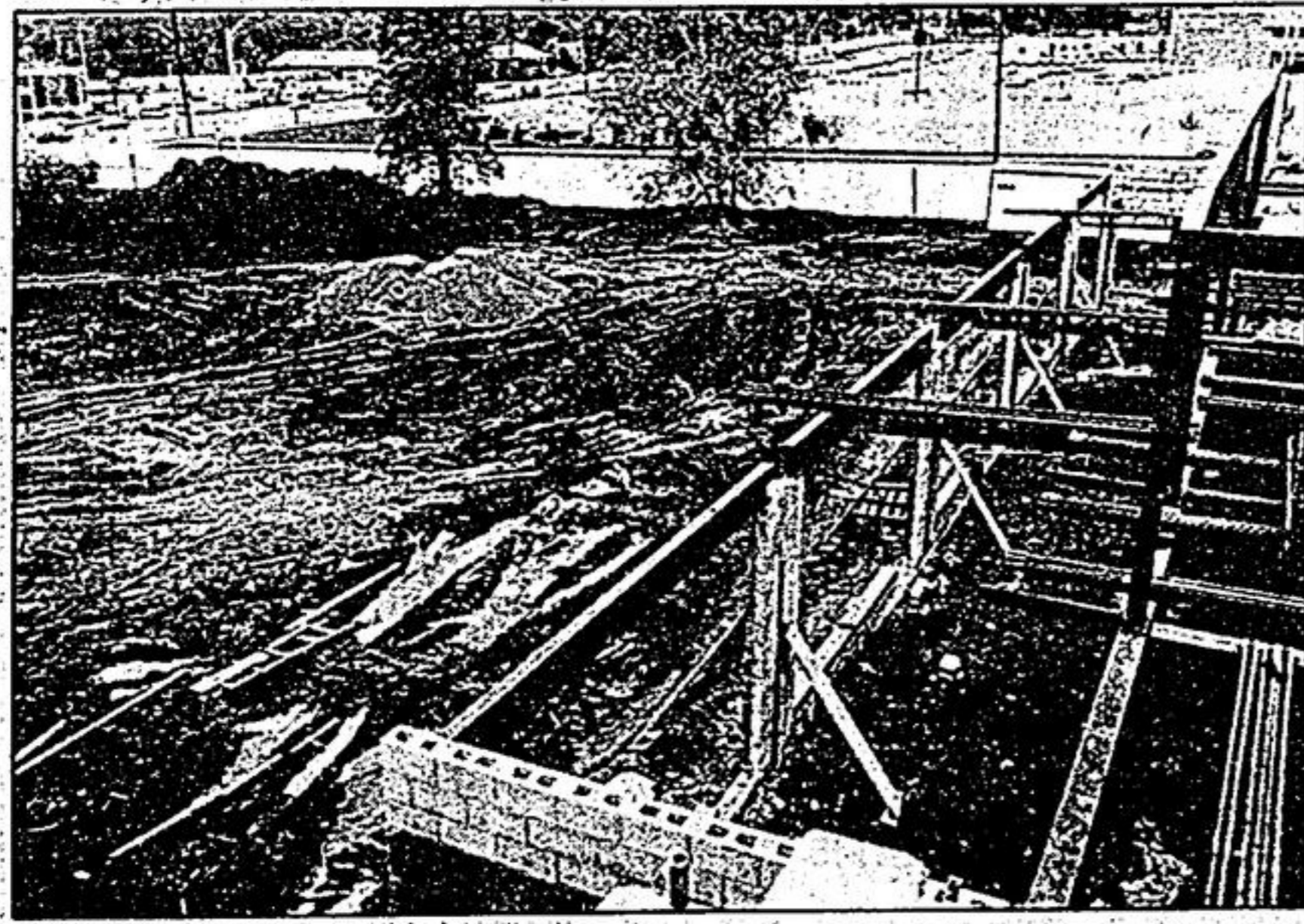
"JDS argued the apartments weren't viable at the time, and it felt the



Building boom

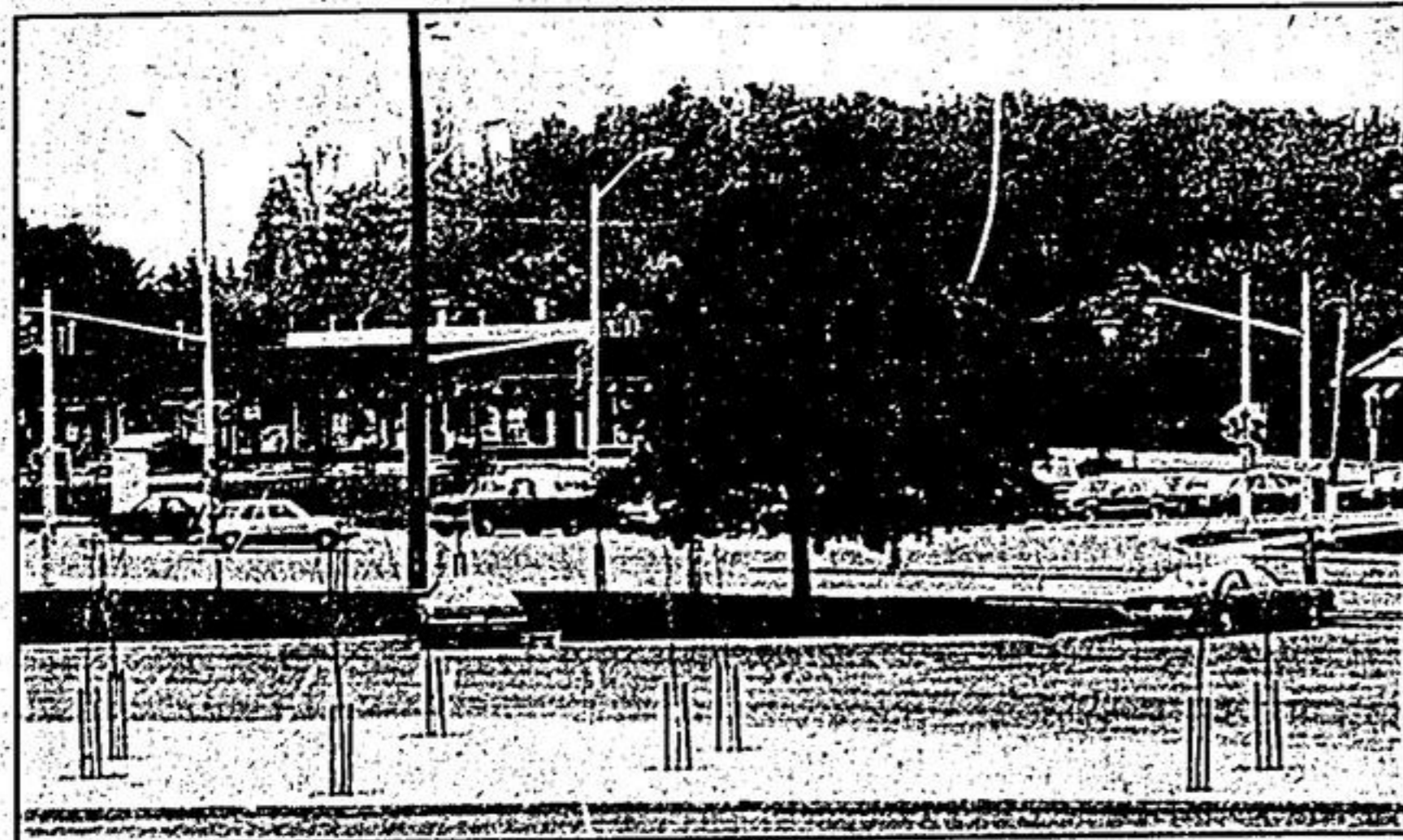
The worker here grades a lot with a bulldozer near McCowan Rd., and Hwy. 7. A flurry of businesses are under construction at the northeast corner of the intersection.

— Sjoerd Witteveen



Shown above is a rooftop view of development at the northeast corner of McCowan Rd., and Hwy. 7. New undertakings will include office buildings and fast food outlets. Below, the southeast

corner of the intersection, with a strip plaza and some homes nearby, is shown from the Markville Shopping Centre parking lot.



hotel site was too large," explained Planning Director Januszewski.

JDS also wants to change plans for the southwest corner of McCowan Road and Bullock Drive (near the Centennial Centre).

A concept of office buildings was originally slated for the corner, but JDS has asked the Town staff to find out what other projects the land can be used for immediately.

"There apparently is no immediate demand for office space, so they've been asking the Town for zoning amendments," said Mr. Januszewski.

But Councillor Cox said, "we have to look at this over the long-range. JDS's concern is there's no demand for office space, and I disagree with that. Once you build the office space, it will be leased. There's a drastic need for good office space."

One area project that JDS is going ahead with is the expansion of Markville Shopping Centre. In a proposal approved by council this past summer, Markville will have 350,000 square feet added on the north end. The expansion will connect with the food section and about 100,000 feet of it will be a third department store (the others are Woolco and Eaton's).

Mr. Januszewski said the Town would like to complement the expansion with a streetscape concept for McCowan Road. The plan, prepared by a consultant, would mean inclusion of trees, sidewalks and landscaping, with special attention given to developing the streetcorners.

The planning director said the only stumbling block is that the road is controlled by the Region of York.

"I would like to see the plan approved, but the Region has been sitting on it for six months," he said.

With the entire area around Bullock Drive residentially developed, some people may be wondering about the pond on the north side of Hwy. 7 at the Rouge River Bridge.

Mr. Januszewski said the pond was dug to control the Rouge River water flow, especially during storms.

Not recreational

It was not built for recreational uses, and Councillor Cox noted, "it certainly wasn't designed like Unionville's Toogood Pond."

"The plans are for a golf course to go around it and that pond is near one of the holes," he explained.

However, he did not rule out cross country skiing around it, and Mr. Januszewski added, "I can't imagine the pond without benches."

Overall, he stated, his prime desire for the McCowan/7 area is for it to be successful.

"Most of our concepts are still valid, but it takes time for them to materialize," he pointed out. "We shouldn't rush into approving things for approval's sake. One thing the Town has is time."

"The bottom line is the area is going to be very nice," said Councillor Cox. "Certainly, we've made good use of vacant land."

McDonald's owner Dick Cohen agreed, saying, "I'm pleased to see the Town is being careful about growth on McCowan Road. You have to be careful how concentrated business and housing gets. I'm looking forward to when we have a McCowan Road Businessman's Association."

Local JA program is off to quick start

By DENNIS SMITH
News Editor

The Markham area's fledgling Junior Achievement program is off to a quick start, and has already become the largest one in southern Ontario.

"We've had a really outstanding turnout," said Randall Edge, co-ordinator for the JA youth business centre at Thornhill Secondary School.

The centre's five JA companies have 20 students each, compared to 11 or 12 that are usually in such groups. Mr. Edge said the program is the largest in southern Ontario.

Mr. Edge who has participated in JA

programs elsewhere, said the interest level in the local centre is the highest he has seen. The co-ordinator is confident that the centre, comprised mainly of Markham and Thornhill high school students, can win awards when it comes up for judging against other programs.

Mr. Edge said a similar program in York Region, Project Business, which is designed for younger students (Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8) has helped foster enthusiasm for the new JA program in this area.

The Thornhill program is the first in York Region, but it's hoped that others

in Richmond Hill and Newmarket-Aurora can be established next year.

There were plans to have centres in Thornhill and Markham this year, with three JA companies apiece, but it was more viable to run one centre with five firms, said Mr. Edge.

The JA companies formed at the Thornhill centre include:

- J.A. Accutime (sponsored by Honeywell), which will produce and sell wall-mounted clocks.
- Innovations Plus, which will manufacture and sell a triangle/peg puzzle game. This company is sponsored by IBM.

Handy Holder Company, which will produce and sell a novelty storage box, with trick openings. This group is sponsored by Trans-Canada Pipelines.

Time After Time, which will also manufacture and sell wall-mounted clocks. This group is sponsored by the Canada Corporate Consultants.

Creative Novelties (sponsored by CIL), which will produce and sell gumball dispensing machines.

The Junior Achievers will run these companies like regular businesses, issuing shares, and manufacturing, marketing and selling their products,

with the hopes of turning a profit.

A few employees from each sponsoring company will work with the Junior Achievers, and provide them with advice.

Also lending support is the Markham Board of Trade, which will sponsor awards for the local undertaking. "We're very enthusiastic about the program," said Doug Norman, the Board of Trades liaison person for the program.

Products will be marketed for the Christmas season and the Thornhill JA centre will be open every Tuesday (from 7 to 9:30 p.m.) for 26 weeks.

War veterans recall their battles — Page D-2