

Main Street improvements continue

Visitors to Markham's Festival of Lights will see the late stages of the beautification plan are taking shape, although officials doubt the work will be complete by Friday.

A strike by Markham Hydro outside workers has halted removal of old utility poles; one of the finishing touches on the project. Councillor Gord Landon said

construction took longer than first expected because contractors didn't know where services were actually placed underground. Progress was also slowed by workers' efforts to save trees lining both sides of Main St.

"In order to save the mature trees, men had to dig down by hand, over four feet below the roots," Landon explained. "While digging underground, old artifacts were discovered, including wooden pipes and ancient root cellars and care had to be taken in order to preserve some of these items."

While residents were temporarily inconvenienced, Landon explained that Main Street wasn't closed during construction because the town didn't want to disrupt merchants.

"The merchants have been very cooperative. We did the best we could to divert trucks during construction," Landon said.

Several contractors were involved in the reconstruction project, including Dagmar Construction Ltd., Markham Hydro, Crupi Ltd. and B & M Utilities Contractors.

More than \$10,000 has been spent by Markham's Business Improvement Area (BIA) on

lights which will be permanently installed on Main Street's 54 trees and will be lit for the first time Dec. 4.

Main Street's facelift, thus far, has cost \$1.5 million with a master plan being worked on for future improvements by the town.

Markham's Town Council recently approved a change in traffic light standards for Main St. at a cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000. While the actual cost nearly totals \$15,000, savings will be met by reusing the old poles.

Landon will be chairing Main Street's opening ceremonies Friday night beginning at 6:45 p.m. with special guests Mayor Carole Bell, Minister of Transportation, Ed Fulton and representatives from Hydro, Crupi, Dagmar, B & M, the BIA, Markham's Engineering Department, various Councillors and MPP Don Cousens present.

The short opening ceremony will be followed by the window judging contest, where Main Street merchants will compete for the best dressed window. This year's theme is "Christmas Around The World."

While the major construction tasks have been completed during the last several months, there are

other projects on the street slated for the upcoming year. Old fashioned street signs, including a sign marking the entrance at Hwys 7 and 48 indicating the historical nature of Markham, will be an upcoming project along with spring flower baskets and banners.

Other projects being considered for the future include the addition of several new parkettes and the redevelopment of present ones.

A consultant has recently been hired to look at Main St. for heritage designation. Presently the old village is a Heritage Conservation Study Area.

Results are due out this month concerning another study done on Main Street which looks at illegal non-conformities, commercial uses and residential properties and their condition.

"A lot of studies and measures are being taken to see that Main St. develops properly," Landon said. "There are many homes north of Parkway Ave. that are selling at present commercial real estate values, but are being rented to students and are being poorly maintained because that are not zoned commercial."

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