

REGIONAL NEWS: Volunteers to kick off fundraising in November

Group needs site for safety village

BY RICK VANDERLINDE
Staff Writer

Safety comes first. But there's still a lot of work to be done before the first York Region child learns the rules of the road by driving a miniature electric car through a \$5-million Community Safety Village.

Finding a location for the miniature village is the biggest roadblock to clear.

A volunteer community group called Police and Community Together (PACT) is looking for five acres of centrally located land to get the project off the ground.

The group made a pitch to York Region's police services board last week looking for support for an idea that has already seen success in regions across the GTA. And they may have got more than just moral support.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said the region's politicians may be able to get land from developers who are adding about 30,000 residents to York Region each year.

Fisch suggested a park land guarantee — property set aside in residential subdivisions — be used.

"We should be able to get a site in a number of different ways," he said. "There are a lot of developers out there who are anxious to be community minded."

Fisch also suggested the York Region municipality where the village is eventually built could allow tax breaks and waive building permit fees for the non-profit village.

Aurora Councillor Steve Hinder, a member of PACT, said the group originally hoped to build the village in Aurora because of its central location.

But it has since broadened its site

selection by considering 25 possible locations. The group is looking for a location with:

- a minimum of five acres (preferably more for future expansion);
- a reasonably central location;
- access to regional roads and transit;
- land that can be serviced;
- a relatively flat topography to cut down on grading costs.

Building the village, which would be run by York Regional Police officers and a full-time civilian manager, depends on both public sector and corporate donations. Corporations, such as fast food outlets, have their buildings replicated in the miniature village and pay an annual maintenance fee.

The annual operating cost, not including salaries for two officers and a site manager, would be about \$100,000.

Chief Julian Fantino has backed the concept by placing his endorsement on a fundraising brochure.

"One of the underpinnings of this is education," Fantino told the board. "You have to get to the children."

Hinder said a major fundraising campaign will kick off in November.

While there is little statistical information to prove the villages prevent accidents, there is anecdotal evidence.

"There was a young girl who recently got into a bike accident and when police spoke to her, she told them that having been at a safety village allowed her to handle herself better," Hinder said.

The village would be used by school children, as well as adults and other groups at night. The site would include a classroom, as well as the miniature village to give road tests to children riding electric cars and bicycles.

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Announcement



Pictured above is the Village Grocer team which won the Unionville Slow Pitch League Championship Tournament in a hard fought final game with Mason International. Left to right, back row is Greg Strike, Steve Seymour, Craig Berry, Kevin Thistle, Lindsey Kehoe, Bert Hesselink, Patrick Pasani and Mark Barbara. Front row, left to right is John Poucher, Don Turner, David Gebe, Evan MacDonald, John Harding and Robbie McLeod.

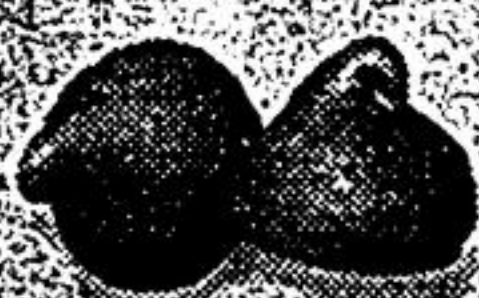
Consolation round winners were The Unionville Arms team in a tight game over Jones Wood Products. This caps a great season of ball for our league and we wish to thank Village Grocer and the seventeen other team sponsors. It's a great league with a lot of heart!

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