

Firm commits cash to community

Monarch Construction has donated \$50,000 toward the cost of building a bandshell at Toogood Pond.

"It signals our commitment to the community," Monarch's Mark Tutton told council.

That money, added to millennium grant money from the town, will pay for the construction of the bandshell at the corner of Unionville Main Street and Fred Varley Drive.

The project will go to tender before a final cost is determined and should be ready by September.

"It will be a terrific place, not only for Unionville, but all of Markham," said Councillor Joe Virgilio.

Milne land expands Rouge Park

Development shelved near conservation area

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Residents of tiny Sara Jane Court in Markham celebrated with other Rouge Park supporters last night after winning a decades-old fight to preserve a natural area at the end of their street.

What was planned as a spot ripe for condominiums now belongs to everyone, thanks to its recent purchase as parkland with money from the town, York Region and a provincial government fund.

It was saved because its neighbours on Sara Jane and around Milne Dam Conservation Area fought for years against development of the 2-acre (.84 hectare) parcel, which overlooks a steep, forested slope to the point where Robinson Creek flows into the Rouge.

"What a loss this would've been," Tupper Wheatley, president of the Milne Park Conservation Association, said while walking through the property last week.

The newest addition to Milne (and therefore to the expanding Rouge Park) beyond the cul-de-sac at the street's south end was approved for condos during the 1980s, Councillor George McKelvey said.

"When the site was originally zoned it was zoned for 45 units, and they were large units," he recalled.

But the large condo units didn't sell well; Wheatley and others say several attempts were made to market them over the years.

As a natural setting already attached to Milne Conservation Area and up for development, the Sara Jane site was added to a list of acquisition priorities for the Rouge Alliance, the municipal partnership behind Rouge Park.

On June 29, the province bought it on Rouge Park's behalf for about \$735,000, splitting the cost equally with the town and region.

For its share, the province dipped into a \$20-million fund called the Natural Areas Protection Program, which had also been used to buy Glen Eagles, a Scarborough site above the point where the Rouge meets its Little Rouge tributary, from a developer.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE ADLER

Markham Councillor George McKelvey and residents Tupper Wheatley and Shelley Bourne stand in the area to be added to Milne Dam Conservation Area.

The conservation area has been expanded by almost 25 per cent.

Wheatley said the Sara Jane site was as important for the Rouge in Markham as Glen Eagles was in Scarborough.

"For us, this is about as far out of the water as we go," he explained.

Joan Maddock, who lives on Sara Jane, said she'd fought the condominiums for 12 years, hoping the property would one day be parkland.

She and other residents praised Barrie-based developer Angelo Orsi, who held an option on the

land, for agreeing to the sale. Last spring, the provincial government announced it was adding new lands to Milne.

Taken together, the Sara Jane parcel plus last year's transfer of land formerly held by the province's Ontario Realty Corporation have enlarged the conservation area by almost 25 per cent, Wheatley said.

The park's expansion is just what the area needed, said Shelley Bourne, chairperson of the Boyington Heights Ratepayers. "If they're going to cram in more houses, we need more park."

McKelvey planned to plant several black-eyed susans in a ceremony on the site last night.

Rouge heroes wanted

The largest urban park in North America is coming up north, and it's time to thank someone.

The management of Rouge Park is taking nominations this month for the Rouge Park Award, an annual honour for a person or group who has done a lot to help the park or preserve the river.

If you know a group or individual like that, you are invited to send a list of Rouge-related activities that group or person has performed to the park's Aurora office by July 31.

"There are people out there who have done so much over the years to protect the Rouge," park

spokesperson Sue Russell said.

Previous Rouge Park Award winners are Pauline Browne, who was instrumental in establishing the park, and Lois James, a founding member of Save The Rouge Valley System.

This year's award will be presented in November, by which time the long-awaited plan for expanding the park into Markham, Richmond Hill and Stouffville will likely have been approved.

For more information, contact park manager Gord Weeden at 713-7374 or at rougepark@rougepark.com

Are you a charcoal champion or a gas guru?

We're looking for barbecue aficionados to go grill to grill

When it comes to barbecue, there are two camps.

The charcoal champions believe the only way to grill is over real coals, white-hot, ready to impart perfect flavour as the meat is seared.

The gas gurus believe they achieve cooking perfection with the control they can exercise with their backyard grills and a tank of propane or a hookup to natural gas.

We want to know who's right and we want you to help.

We're setting up the charcoal versus gas barbecue cook-off and we're looking for two cooks to take on the challenge.

Are you a charcoal champ or a gas guru? Tell us in 75 words or less why you use charcoal, and only charcoal, or why gas is your method of choice for outdoor cooking.

The best explanation, selected by us, wins the grand honour — a chance to cook meat supplied

by us, followed by a blind taste testing of the work and the verdict of the panel of expert judges.

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Just think of it. You could become York Region's barbecue king.

We'll publish the results of our charcoal versus gas challenge, along with grilling tips from our real chefs, in an August edition of our newspaper.

Send your entry to Barbecue Cook-off, The Economist & Sun/Stouffville Tribune, 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ont., L3P 1M3, by fax to (905) 294-1538 or email at newsroom@econsun.com

Entry deadline is Wednesday, July 26.

Questions about the cook-off can be directed to Brenda Larson at (905) 853-8888.

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