

Community Centre parking lot plan to be environmental example



By Brock Weir

They may have paved paradise to put up a parking lot, but soon the parking lot around the Aurora Community Centre (ACC) will work to help the nature around it.

Mayor Geoffrey Dawe was joined at the ACC last week by representatives from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, RBC Royal Bank, and Mattamy Homes to officially launch a \$1.4 million project that will overhaul and reconstruct the ACC parking lot to be a leading example in the area of low impact development.

With a combination of new permeable surfacing in the form of interlocking pavers, rain gardens, and other components, the project will address excess runoff flowing into nearby Tannery Creek as well as remove sediment and other contaminants before it hits the watercourse.

"Today we're announcing an exciting initiative to protect Tannery Creek, part of the ongoing efforts to preserve and improve the water quality in the Lake Simcoe watershed," said Mayor Dawe, who is also chair of the LSRCA. "It is most appropriate that we join together on RBC Blue Water Day, supporting their visionary 10 year global commitment to protecting fresh water, our most precious natural resource."

"This is one of the first projects we're undertaking in Aurora with respect to rainscaping. It is all about dealing with the water before it enters the watercourse as opposed to letting it run off non-permeable surfaces like the parking lot. The parking lot here at the ACC was very much in need of repaving and we recognized the opportunity to develop the Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to preserve Tannery Creek."

"With the generous assistance from LSRCA, this \$1.4 million project will include construction of a new trail, restoration of natural areas along Tannery Creek, installation of new and permeable asphalt in the parking lot, [and] rain gardens with grit and oil separators for treating stormwater before it enters Tannery Creek."

Also helping make this project possible was a \$60,000 donation from RBC's Blue Water program.

"Water is such an important part of life," said Stella Partipilo of RBC. "Nobody needs to be told how important water is to sustaining life, and since 2007 when RBC initiated the Blue Water Project, we're proud to stand up beside organizations [like the Town and the LSRCA]. We're proud and honoured to be here to support the great work that you do every day."

Added Brad Rogers of the LSRC Foundation: "Each year, thanks to our incredible donors and supporters, we raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to invest locally in the environmental health of the watershed. The Aurora Community Centre LID project is an important project [for the Town]. The Foundation has been the lucky recipient of three RBC Leadership grants, two in Newmarket, and now this one in Aurora. This really illustrates the level of confidence the RBC Blue Water project team has with both the foundation and the Authority, and we thank you for your commitment to our work."

LID projects are set to become more prevalent in Aurora. According to Anca Mihail of the Town of Aurora, further opportunities are being explored for the future reconstruction of roads like Algonquin Crescent, but the ACC parking lot was a particularly high priority because of the Creek factor.

"There were no controls on water quality or quantity," she explained. "Because it in need of repairs and reconstruction, we thought it was a good opportunity to introduce stormwater quality controls, to green the site with Low Impact Development controls that will take care of the quality as well as the quantity. We're finalizing the detailed design right now and as soon as we have the detailed design finalized and the tender documents ready, we plan on constructing."