

INSIDE AURORA: Groundhog Daze VI

By Scott Johnston

Celebrating that we were well over halfway through winter, I was taking a brisk stroll through the Arboretum the other day when I spied a small figure sitting on a bench.

Upon closer inspection it turned out to be Aurora Annie, our local weather prognosticating groundhog. She looked depressed.

'What's wrong,' I asked, brushing away the snow and sitting beside her. 'Do you think your forecast for spring is incorrect?'

'It's not that,' she sniffed. 'I may have to leave Town!'

'Why would you have to do that? You've been a fixture in Aurora for years. We love having you around.'

'Oh, I feel welcome. It's just that I may not have a place to stay, anymore.'

'Why not?' I asked.

'It's the ongoing development that's taking over all the open spaces. I live over near Industrial Parkway, and do you know what Council wants to do?'

Before I had a chance to say anything, she told me.

'Widen it. That's what they want to do. Do you know how much land that will take up? And how much more traffic that will cause?' She shuddered.

'It's hard enough getting across two lanes, but four?' She sighed, and flexed a knee, which emitted an audible crack. 'I'm not as young as I used to be.'

'But the additional road surface will only take up a small amount of green space,' I said. 'It's not that bad.'

'Are you kidding?' she exclaimed. 'It all adds up. And besides,' she continued, 'I already had to move once to make way for the new Joint Operations Centre.' She added, with amazement, 'that place is huge.'

'Well, there must be somewhere else in Town you can go.'

'Where, the 2C lands? That's the last remaining open area of Town, but it's all under development.'

Checking them off on her tiny fingers, she continued: 'Highland Gate? Soon to be houses. Timberlane? Ditto. Industrial Parkway? It's getting the Family Leisure Complex expansion and proposed turning lanes. Leslie Street? More commercial and headquarters space going in. Bayview Avenue? There, too.'

'No,' she said, slumping a little lower on the bench, 'I think my days in Aurora are numbered.'

'Well, there must be some solution,' I noted, pondering the snowy landscape.

We sat companionably for a minute, the silence broken only by the occasional, muffled, rodent-sized sob.

'I've got it!' I exclaimed. Annie looked up at me with red-rimmed eyes.

'You like this area of Town, right?' She nodded.

'And you're looking for a place that's available now?' Another nod.

'And is unlikely to be developed or used for anything in the foreseeable future?'

'Yes.'

'Then why not Petch House?'

Her eyes widened.

'It's been there for years, with no sign of anyone using it. In fact, the Town just bought the Armoury with no confirmed tenants, and is looking at purchasing additional properties in Heritage Square, so there's little chance they'll find uses for them all.'

'Best of all,' I concluded, 'you could move in right now.'

'That might work,' she nodded, sitting up a little straighter. 'In fact, I may head over there right now to take a look.'

With that she bounded up off the bench and headed towards the south end of the park.

As I watched her disappear into the distance, I just hoped that for Annie's sake, the recently-elected Council would continue to focus on new initiatives, and not what to do with leftover projects from previous years like Petch House.

At least, not right away.

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