

Rotarians gear up for second phase of park facelift

By Brock Weir

If you have walked the dog, gone for a jog, taken your evening constitutional, or perhaps even taken a snapshot or two in the Gurnett and Kennedy Street area, chances are you have noticed a bit of a change.

The Rotary Club of Aurora, in conjunction with the Town's Parks department have been hard at work giving their namesake park a much needed facelift.

The Gurnett entranceway of the park now features enhanced landscaping, new trees, new commemorative stones, and places for people to stop and literally smell the roses. Now, with a new influx of Rotary money to the Town, the facelift could soon extend to its Cousins Drive entrance.

"Rotary Park is one of the Town's oldest parks, running through the valley system from Cousins Drive in the south to Gurnett Street in the north," said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, in a report to Council. "The park has been a passive but picturesque location; however, given its age, the park will definitely benefit from this second investment of landscaping being proposed by the Rotary Club."

The proposed changes include further landscaping, an improved entrance slope that is more accessible for people who might have difficulties, all leading down to an enhanced crossing at the footbridge.

These are extensive changes and Rotary continued to put its money where its mouth is last Tuesday with a formal cheque presentation for a further \$15,000.

Presented by Grace Marsh, along with Rotarians George Gonsalves, Greg Foster, and Frank Mete, the cheque brings their total contributions towards the \$50,000 project to \$30,000 so far, with more to come in the future.

"This is a successful partnership," said Ms. Marsh on the joint efforts between the Club and the Town to improve the park for generations to come. "[The park is now] just beautiful compared to what it looked like before when it was badly in need of an upgrade."

"We would like to move on and do phase two of this beautiful park at the Cousins Drive Entrance. [Parks Manager] Jim Tree and his staff have prepared a concept design from Cousins Drive coming into the park, to a walkway and a bridge. One of the things we are very, very proud that Jim has built with this design is a photo spot, which is a little place where Jim will have some beautiful gardens. He has told us he often gets calls from people in Aurora saying it is a great place to go and do some family photos, wedding photos, grad photos and all sorts of things, and we are very, very pleased that Rotary Park can become the destination of Aurora."

Now well over halfway past their overall fundraising goal, there is still much to be done. One of the ways Rotary continues to raise funds for park improvements is through the sale of commemorative walkway stones which, when purchased, can be engraved with your name, the name of a loved one, or a message for people who visit the park. For more information on the program, contact the Rotary Club of Aurora.