

St. Anne's, Town, Shining Hill reach deal on new turf field

A new artificial turf field will increase sports and recreation opportunities in Aurora.

Last week, a deal was reached between the Town of Aurora, St. Anne's School (SAS), and Shining Hill Group to construct a state-of-the-art \$7 million turf field and park for the Aurora community.

The facilities will be located near St. Anne's, which is located on the north side of St. John's Sideroad, just west of Yonge Street, and will be part of Shining Hill's Gates of St. Anne's community, currently being constructed at the intersection's northwest corner.

In partnership with St. Anne's School and Shining Hill Group, the Town of Aurora is proud to support the development of this state-of-the-art neighbourhood park inclusive of an artificial turf, splash pad, playground, and pickleball courts, said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. Partnership plays an important role in fostering a strong sense of community and has proven successful in Aurora. The addition of the turf field and park will not only benefit the students of St. Anne's but will enhance the overall quality of life for all residents. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this project will have on our Town for years to come.

The new turf field and park will include the field itself, which will be branded appropriately for St. Anne's and the Town, 500-seat stadium-style bleachers, lighting for evening games, facilities suitable for flag football, rugby, field hockey and soccer, pickleball courts, multi-use courts for basketball and like sports, a splash pad, parking, and washroom facilities.

St. Anne's Head of School Sabrina D'Angelo says the new field and facilities will help the school move into next-level programming, which is really exciting.

It is a unique situation in that we have partnered with the Town and Shining Hill group. We have been conversing about it since Shining Hill Group purchased all of this property.

As St. Anne's is partnered with the nearby St. Andrew's College, which lies on 126 acres, there has been no shortage of field facilities for SAS students, but this new deal was a missing piece that will enable St. Anne's to serve the needs of its growing population and develop a comprehensive athletics program that will parallel SAC's offering.

It's important that we invest in our student-athletes," says D'Angelo. "Because of the unique connection and partnership we have with the Town of Aurora and Shining Hill Group, we started to devise a plan around the various opportunities that could be afforded to the school, that would complement and strengthen the relationship. For us, it was important to be able to leverage some of the Town land for the school, and we are also very big believers in having strong connections with the community, so it was a win-win-win - a win for St. Anne's, a win for the Town of Aurora and the local community, and a win for Shining Hill Group," says D'Angelo.

One of the really great features, particularly with the two-acre turf field, is that it is outfitted for field hockey, flag football, soccer, and rugby, but we are also really excited about it being lit, which we don't have at St. Andrew's. Currently at SAC, games can't be played post-dusk, but now we have an opportunity to leverage the facility and host different events. St. Andrew's is very eager to see this introduction as well as it adds a dimensionality to their offerings.

Under the shared user agreement, St. Anne's will have the opportunity to use the turf field for academic and co-curricular purposes throughout the academic calendar.

Construction of the field is underway, and it is hoped to be operational and open to the public by the start of the 2024-2025 school year this fall.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter