



Councillor Frances Nunziata
Chair, Etobicoke – York Community Council
Toronto City Council
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June 18, 2010

To: Etobicoke York Community Council

Re: Wallace C. Swanek Park

SUMMARY:

In the 1940's, Wallace C. Swanek built his first house at 161 Queenslea Avenue, and a second house at 165 Queenslea Avenue for his family, with the foresight of having parkland across from it. Wallace continued to build all along Queenslea Avenue, as well as neighboring streets, and in the early 1950's, as part of the approval for one of his developments, was required to set aside some parkland; Wallace always dreamed of having a public place of recreation in the area for his children, grandchildren, and the expanding neighborhood, so he decided to convey to the City much more property than was required of him for the creation of Gary Park. Although Wallace sadly passed away on March 31, 1985, his contribution to the community, and his gift of a park, was never forgotten, and in 1998 Gary Park was renamed to Wallace C. Swanek Park in his honor. This park, which is heavily used by the local community, is valued not only for the vast amount of green space it provides to the community, but also for the history it represents. For over a year, I, along with City staff, have been working with the Pelmo-Swanek Community on a new vision for Wallace C. Swanek Park and on June 24th, 2010 at Neighbors Night Out, City staff will be sharing with the community the new design vision and staged plan that has been developed to see improvements to the existing playground and recreational/sports fields and facilities.

While the community has been working hard to see their vision for Wallace C. Swanek Park come to light, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has indicated interest in pursuing plans to relocate St. John the Evangelist Catholic Elementary School (23 George Street), to the site of this park despite past discussions that were held with them wherein I advised that this park is not an appropriate location for the school, and even suggested alternate sites. The TCDSB have stated that if the school were to be built on this parkland, many, if not all of the 33 houses immediately surrounding the park would have to be acquired or, if necessary, expropriated. After a recent meeting with representatives from the TCDSB and the Pelmo-Swanek Community Association (PSCA), the community was made aware of the school board's intentions and has made it clear that in no way can they support a school being built on the parkland. The Pelmo-Swanek Community Association has since initiated a petition in

opposition of the school board's proposal which, in the two weeks it has been circulated, has already been signed by over 500 area residents, with more signatures to come.

Parkland is meant to be cherished and preserved and the City's Official Plan recognizes that. While the TCDSB has indicated that they would make sure that the same area of parkland that currently exist would exist if the school were to be built on the parkland, they can only accommodate this by demolishing the houses surrounding the park; this is unacceptable, especially because there are other options for the school board including building a new school on the site of their existing location.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Etobicoke York Community Council:

1. Not support the conversion of Wallace C. Swanek Park, for the purpose of school development.
2. Direct the Manager of Heritage Preservation Services to report back to Etobicoke York Community Council on the heritage value of Wallace C. Swanek Park and the feasibility of including the park in the heritage inventory.

June 22, 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frances Nunziata". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Frances" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Nunziata".

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