

## Civic Square could get royal honours

By Brock Weir

Civic Square Park, the popular soccer pitch on John West Way near Town Hall, could soon be known as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park.



Canada's Diamond Jubilee emblem will be incorporated into park signage along with its British counterpart.

Councillors are set this week to ratify a decision made last Tuesday to re-name the park in honour of the Queen's 60th anniversary on the throne, a milestone which was marked in celebrations throughout the Commonwealth last year.

The decision comes after an initial recommendation from Town Staff to name a parkette near St. John's Sideroad and Bayview Avenue to commemorate the anniversary, but Council decided earlier this year that a parkette wasn't 'significant' enough to mark such a significant anniversary. They tasked staff with coming back with a shortlist of parks neither named after a person in the community or a significant anniversary that could get a name change.

Among the short list of parks were the originally suggested parkette, Town Park in Aurora's historic downtown core, and Civic Square Park, and the latter won the day.

Renaming Civic Square Park was originally suggested by Councillor John Gallo, who lives in the area, who said the name always bothered him because the park never fulfilled its original purpose to be a community hub.

'It is close to Town Hall, the park is a little bit underused, and maybe then it might get a little bit more used,' said Councillor Michael Thompson in support of the motion.

Other Councillors, such as Chris Ballard said he agreed with the Civic Square idea because of its proximity to what is now the geographic centre of Town, while Councillor Evelyn Buck heralded its possibilities.

'It has a high visibility and it has the potential of having a beautiful garden created that will be enjoyed every day criss-crossing to go shopping,' she said of the park, which lies between significant residential development and the plaza housing the Cineplex movie theatre, Sobeys, and recently opened Target store. 'I believe people should be given an opportunity to say whether or not they would be in favour of creating a beautiful garden and whatever else that would make it a place where people would like to linger and enjoy.'

While there was support for the name change, others were a slightly more hesitant in giving the idea their overall support until there was more of a vision on just what might be included in the park. Councillor Paul Pirri, for instance, said he was not opposed to

renaming the park but the end result should be a 'destination park' where people would want to come.

'If I were the Queen, I wouldn't want an empty patch of grass [to] commemorate me,' he said. 'I would want to go to a place where there is a nice garden and where there are children playing and amenities that people want to go and want to enjoy. I am not opposed to this park being our Diamond Jubilee Park in commemoration of what the Queen has done over the past 60 years, but I think we need to make it a destination for people, either a playground, a garden, a location for a small concession stand to get people out and enjoy it.'

Councillor Thompson, however, said that might be getting a bit ahead of what is on the table. A name should be settled on first and then a discussion of what amenities, if any, needed to be added in the future. Civic Square Park, he said, has many possibilities that can be made without sacrificing the soccer field, a commodity which is in short supply in Aurora, but any further plans should be run by area residents to make sure they have no objections.

'This is a great example of scope creep,' agreed Councillor Ballard. 'What started off as a way of simply honouring the memory of the Diamond Jubilee has turned into the beautification of a park and probably spending a lot of money, but hopefully not. If it is the intent of Councillors to have a destination park in honour of the Queen, we shouldn't be passing anything tonight except to make that intent known and ask staff to report back on the possibilities of creating a destination park in honour of the Diamond Jubilee.'

'If we go and pick a park tonight and then ask staff how to make it beautiful, this is putting the cart before the horse. I don't think the Queen would be amused if we were spending a lot of taxpayers' dollars in honour of her. I think she would be quite happy to see youngsters kicking a football around.'