

## Expansive park and open space dedicated in Highland Gate community



Mayor Tom Mrakas, members of Council, and representatives from Geranium Homes, came together on Saturday morning to formally dedicate a 50+ acre park and greenspace within the new Highland Gate development.

The new park, Highland Gate Central Park, boasts more than 50 acres of open parkland and environmentally-protected lands, ponds and wetlands, playgrounds, 7.5 km of new public trails, a meditation circle, and a re-naturalization of Tannery Creek, which flows through the site.

Saturday's grand opening was held in conjunction with Recreation & Parks Month in Aurora and was heralded by John Webster, Aurora's Official Town Crier, as "the culmination of years of effort" on the part of many of the dignitaries in attendance.

"It's great to see everyone out here for the opening of this beautiful new park - it has only taken six years to do!" said Mayor Mrakas with a laugh. "Honestly, we're thrilled and it's very, very exciting."

"I'm so honoured to be here to open up this gorgeous new park and I want to thank Geranium for working so closely with Town Staff and residents on a shared vision," the Mayor continued, recognizing Councillors Ron Weese (Ward 1), Rachel Gilliland (Ward 2), and Wendy Gaertner (Ward 3) in the crowds. "The reality is Aurorans care so deeply about our natural spaces, so I am absolutely thrilled that we have been able to add so many new acres of public parkland to our community. This park really is stunning; from the 7.5 km of new trails to the playgrounds to the new vegetation that is being planted, I know Aurorans are going to love using this new outdoor space. I'm also really happy we were able to work with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, the Federal Department of Fisheries and the Ministry of Natural Resources to reinstate Tannery Creek to its original natural condition and develop a healthier ecosystem."

"What makes me incredibly proud is the opening of this new park aligns so closely with the goals and objectives of our (Parks and Recreation) Master Plan at the Town as well, not only by adding new parkland to our community but by the Town working together with our partners in the development community and in collaboration with residents to create outdoor spaces that enhance the quality of life for everyone."

Cheryl Shindruk, Executive Vice President of Geranium Homes, said when the company came to see the Highland Gate property in Aurora, they saw "a rare opportunity" within "an existing mature neighbourhood, available for redevelopment."

"We knew we had a special responsibility as stewards of this piece of property," she said. "We immediately saw the potential for this area as having for our beautiful park, so we're just really grateful and very, very happy to be here today. It was really the combined efforts of Town Council and the staff at the Town, the area residents - of course, our team, our consultants and our team at

Geranium, that we have been able to create this beautiful park that we're here to celebrate today?. This park is a milestone in our development and is something we're very proud and delighted to be sharing with our community of Aurora.?

Thanking municipal staff past and present for their collaborative work on making the park a reality, Shindruk said all worked together on a design that ?matched the aspirations of the community.? This was done through a working group that included neighbouring residents ? many of whom from the Highland Gate Ratepayers' Association were in attendance and recognized.

?The result of that collaboration is that this park offers something for all ages. There are playgrounds and open areas ? the trails system was mentioned, the remediated Tannery Creek and ponds and wetlands and the meditation and yoga circle?. This park is part of almost 50 acres of open space land and environmentally protected lands that are being placed into public ownership through this process, for the ongoing enjoyment in perpetuity by the community. We are very happy and proud to be able to do that.?

Highland Gate Central Park can be accessed off Cranberry Lane.

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