



York University Coming to Swan Lake Park? Maybe

by Fred Peters

In July, the Friends of Swan Lake Park (“FOSLP”) asked the Markham Subcommittee to approve a proposal from York University to launch a Swan Lake Citizen Lab supported by Friends of Swan Lake Park. The committee referred it to staff for review. They are expected to report back to Council in the fall.

The York proposal states that the “Swan Lake Citizen Science Lab aims to foster community engagement and scientific inquiry and knowledge translation through regular community engaged monitoring, data collection, analysis and knowledge translation at Swan Lake Park.”

Utilizing drones, Virtual Reality (VR) technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Geographic Information System (GIS), and documentary filming, the lab’s initial focus will be on water conditions and biodiversity. The project will involve collaborating with local NGOs, schools, community members, and city staff with the goal of providing valuable data for environmental stewardship and educational opportunities for the community.

The Citizen Science Lab may also expand to incorporate FOSLP’s Park Habitat Project. During the summer, volunteers were busy taking inventory of all the plant species in the park. The goal is to integrate the plant inventory data with the preferred habitat of 36 bird

species found in the park that the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority rates to be at risk in an urban environment. The goal is to see if anything can be done to minimize the loss of species that currently live in the park.

The Markham Subcommittee was not as receptive to FOSLP’s request that the city follow through on our request for \$600,000 for the installation of two recreational nodes and a new viewing site on the western shoreline. FOSLP cited over 80% support for the proposal from 125 community residents who responded to its shoreline rehabilitation questionnaire in June. The Committee Chair, Alan Ho, suggested FOSLP lobby the provincial government for the money.

In June, FOSLP launched a campaign to raise \$60,000 to engage environmental consultants to provide recommendations on the rehabilitation of the lake and park.

The campaign got off to a great start with a \$5,000 contribution from the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 46, and a \$2,500 sponsorship contribution from Walker Parker Real Estate, followed by an offer from Amica Swan Lake to host a fundraising event in the fall.

The goal is to raise \$30,000 locally with the balance coming from environmental foundations or government programs. Markham Lions have offered to apply for a \$30,000 matching loan from Lions International. FOSLP continues to pursue this and other sources.

FOSLP offered funding support for the hiring of environmental consultants for the city’s 2026 review of the water quality plan. We asked Markham to contribute \$15,000 toward a \$60,000 target while FOSLP would focus on raising the balance of the funds. The committee also sent the funding proposal to staff for review. □

Swan Lake Citizen Science Lab

Co-monitoring, Co-analyzing, Co-creating, Co-learning, and Co-protecting Swan lake and Its Environment

July 29, 2024, Markham Sub-committee Meeting

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