



## **PORT DOVER LIONS REDEVELOPMENT OF IVY'S PROPERTY - COMMUNITY-BASED LANDSCAPE RESTORATION - A DELICATE MIX OF HUMAN USE AND HABITAT RESTORATION**

Authors: **Mary ELDER and Herb ROGERS**

---

### ***Abstract:***

*In the heart of Port Dover, land and buildings used to grow Ivy's roses were abandoned. The 25-acre parcel was purchased by the Port Dover Lions.*

*The property stretches along the west side of Silver Lake. It represents an excellent opportunity to redevelop an industrial site into a site that serves both human uses and habitat restoration. At the north end of the lake there is a wetland which, under the third edition of the Ontario Wetlands Evaluation System, did not retain its provincially significant rating. Most of the structures are on the south half of the property.*

*While searching for uses for the buildings and tearing down the greenhouses, habitat restoration was discussed for the north end of the property. Restoration with Carolinian Canada tree species was agreed upon and a landscape architect drew diagrams showing the possibilities.*

*This spring, about 2,000 trees were planted. The basis for the road network has been laid. The former location of the green houses has been seeded for a soccer field. The berms at the sides are planted with Carolinian trees.*

*The knowledge obtained from this local citizen led restoration project should be shared with other communities.*

≈

In the heart of Port Dover, land and buildings used for 84 years to grow Ivy's roses were abandoned in October 1992, as Ivy's was bankrupt. The trustees in the bankruptcy listed the property at \$1 million. When traces of endosulfin were found in the soil, the Port Dover Lions Club were finally able to negotiate purchase of the 28-acre parcel for \$124,000 in January 1995. They were responsible for outstanding back taxes of about \$104,000. This was the clubs third major land purchase for "community purposes". The property represents an excellent opportunity to redevelop an industrial site into a site that serves both human uses and habitat restoration. This newest property holding stretches along the west side of Silver Lake.

At the north end of the lake there is a wetland which, under the third edition of the Ontario Wetlands Evaluation System, did not retain its provincially significant rating.

There were many buildings on the site. The floor from a quonset hut and paved parking area were located at the north end of the property. A large complex of greenhouses was south of that. The powerhouse and several other buildings were located in the centre of the property. South of it the second large complex of greenhouses and west of them two large warehouses

could be found. In total, 13 acres were under glass. At the south end of the property, the main office, sorting and packing rooms and retail outlet were located in several buildings.

The Lions knew they had a large multi-year project ahead of them. A special Ivy's property committee was set up. Scott Cowe, president of the club was reported to say that "the Lions want to bring the property back, so the community can use it. The land is ideal for parkland." The old mill or commercial outlet and garage was sold to a veterinarian. Two warehouses were sold to local businessmen. Revenues from these sales paid for the retained property and back taxes. Other buildings had to be torn down. Seven tons of office paper were recycled. Thirteen acres of greenhouses presented special problems. The beds within the greenhouses contained dried rose bushes, stakes and fine supporting wires which had to be painstakingly removed. All the glass had to be removed. One local farmer purchased several greenhouses for his own farm. Asbestos removal occurred in April 1995. Community work days were the Lions solution to much of this labour of love. About 150 people came out to each work day. The industries at Nanticoke contributed machinery while trained operators who lived in Port Dover operated them. Space was rented to local businesses as early as the spring of 1995.

Soil testing had revealed low levels of endosulphin, a common agricultural fertilizer in the area of the greenhouses. After consultation with the Ministry of the Environment, these areas were capped with 1 metre of new soil.

While searching for uses for the buildings and tearing down the greenhouses, habitat restoration was discussed particularly for the north end of the property. Restoration with Carolinian Canada tree species was discussed and a landscape architect drew diagrams and prepared lists to indicate the possibilities.

A soccer field has been developed on the form, south greenhouse area. The berms at the sides are planted with Carolinian Canada tree species. This spring, about 2,000 trees were planted by the Lynn Valley District Scouts, Cubs and Beavers in a prepared field where the most northerly section of greenhouses had been. Ash, honey-suckle, Kentucky coffee, dogwood, maple, cedar and oak trees were planted. The remaining portion of the north greenhouse area has been levelled and this fall, seeded with common grass seed. Duck boxes have been placed around the property. The basis for the road network has been laid.

Although the Lions have a general idea of what they want to do next with the property, they are keeping their options open. Ideas of locating a seniors home, an education, youth or research centre near the south end of the property have been discussed. Negotiations with a community college have occurred but appear unsuccessful. Rental of the main building by three or four businesses has provided an income flow for operating expenses. In the spring of 1999, a recreational rowing club found a home at the Ivy's property. This club joined the businesses, karate classes, line dance club, dog obedience school and Leo club in sharing the facilities. It is expected that the soccer field will be in full use next spring and this will bring the organized users of the property per month, to over 2,000 persons.

In its first year, the Silver Lake Rowing Club has attracted 85 youth members and 35 adult recreational rowers. The Lions contributed \$10,000 in seed money. Trillium and Bingo grants, membership fees and private sponsorships have financed the start-up year. Three, eight oared shells, three cox fours and three, ten foot aluminum coach boats, oars and ten ergometers (rowing machines) have been purchased or borrowed and utilized this year. Grants have been approved for the development of a temporary clubhouse in part of the remaining main building. A sewer line was installed in the summer. The main building is being brought up to fire code standards and washrooms will be installed. Every Thursday night, anyone who wants to help with the main building renovations is welcome to come and help out. Future rowing club goals include renovating the old powerhouse as the permanent clubhouse and developing a 1000 metre competitive rowing course. An application has been submitted to host the Ontario Recreational Rowing Championship in 2001.

In order to host this rowing event some changes to the lake area needed. Silver Lake is created by the damming of the Lynn River, by Misners Dam. A second dam, a bit north of the lake, has deteriorated in the last several years and, as a result, silt is filling the north end of Silver Lake. Traditionally, rowing clubs work closely with the environment, as they do not want to damage the environment. In order to have three to four feet of water depth, some sediment will need relocation. In order to have a straight 1000 metre course one of the points of land will need to be altered. Many approvals are needed for this type of work. Help will be needed in finding the best ways to undertake this work and not harmfully alter the environment. Many questions are unanswered related to this proposed work.

Lions club members have indicated that they are a year ahead of where they thought they would be. The rowing club has really spurred them on. They would like to improve the lake banks by clearing some of the brush along the banks and removing the garbage from the lake.

It has been suggested that the Lions would like the Federation of Ontario Naturalists or a similar organization to help restore the more natural part of the property. In the meantime they plan to keep it in a much more natural state than the south section of the property.

The knowledge obtained from this local citizen led restoration project is being shared with other communities. It is hoped that Port Dover citizens can learn from other interested persons or other similar community experiences.

### **CONTACT:**

*Mary Elder*  
Region of Haldimand-Norfolk  
70 Town Centre Drive  
Townsend, Ontario  
N0A 1S0

Phone: (519) 587-4911 ext. 182

Fax: (519) 587-5554

E-mail: [planning@haldimand-norfolk.on.ca](mailto:planning@haldimand-norfolk.on.ca)