

October 17, 2015

Media Release

A Celebration of The Weston Family Parks Challenge in the Jane and Finch Neighbourhood

TORONTO, ON – More than 4,000 people in the San Romanoway community are enjoying a vibrant green space, thanks to the leadership of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation in collaboration with the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The celebration took place on Saturday, October 17, at the San Romanoway Revival project site - one of 19 city-wide projects supported by the Challenge. Residents, community groups, provincial and local politicians celebrated the ongoing revitalization and the [Weston Family Parks Challenge](#). Everyone was greeted with apple cider and a corn roast while kids enjoyed games and activities. The San Romanoway Revival project is an initiative of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Black Creek SNAP program.

The Weston Family Parks Challenge supports projects that enhance the natural elements in parks, engage a broad range of partners and the local community, offer new solutions to manage and maintain green spaces, and have the potential to be replicated in other jurisdictions. The San Romanoway Revival project exemplifies the Challenge as an innovative model that brings together public, private and nonprofit partners for the management and long-term maintenance of Toronto's parks and green spaces.

The San Romanoway Revival Project is transforming lawns surrounding three apartment towers into vibrant community green space and serves as an example for similar tower communities. On the north-east corner of Jane and Finch, the site is a 3.2 hectare area space surrounding three apartment towers, which house over 4,300 people. Nature improvements to the site include an orchard, vegetable gardens, and native plants and trees to increase biodiversity and connect community members to nature. In this densely populated neighbourhood, a landscape skills training program and a small market will create income opportunities for residents. The results of this public, private, and nonprofit partnership are demonstrating how innovative solutions can be found to revitalize community green space.

The grant and the revitalization respond to community needs. Over 80 per cent of San Romanoway residents expressed a desire to grow their own food, and the plans for the site involved the input of over 400 residents.

The San Romanoway Revival Project fulfills the mandate of several prominent city-greening initiatives, including the City of Toronto's Tower Renewal Program. Most of the revitalization efforts are now complete, with the remaining work to be finished in 2016. The San Romanoway Revival project is creating vibrant community green space on residential tower land to improve access to nature and quality of life. This model has the potential to be replicated on other sites surrounding Toronto's 1,200 towers and could improve the lives of tens of thousands of people.

With a commitment of \$5 million over three years, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation launched the Weston Family Parks Challenge to ensure the long-term sustainability of Toronto's parks. Building on the success of the first year, the Ontario Trillium Foundation joined in 2014 with an additional commitment of \$1.125 million. Toronto Park People brings expertise and is administering the program.

QUOTES:

"The San Romanoway site is a shining example of the impact the Weston Family Parks Challenge can have on green spaces across the city. This green space will flourish at the intersection of public-private partnerships and strong community involvement, benefitting both the community and the city as a whole as an example of what is possible." — Camilla Dalglish, Director, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

"What an innovative solution to revitalize community green space. Through the collaborative initiative, local residents can enjoy the green space in their own backyard, be engaged in growing local food and feel more connected to their environment. I commend The W. Garfield Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation in making such a great impact in our communities." — Hon. Mario Sergio, MPP for York West

"This is a great moment for the Ontario Trillium Foundation as we celebrate an innovative partnership with The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. Both organizations recognize that green space is vital for building healthy and vibrant communities. In Toronto especially, we need to create opportunities for people to connect with nature and get a break from their busy lives. I believe in collaborative initiatives. When we work together we can double the change we want to see in our communities." — Andrea Cohen Barrack, CEO of Ontario Trillium Foundation

"This grant from the Weston Family Parks Challenge marks a significant milestone in the revitalization of this neighbourhood. The latest funding will enable fruit orchards, fresh produce and a community garden to flourish on the doorstep of this high needs community, and the native species gardens and landscaping will return the site to one of natural beauty and enjoyment." — Brian Denney, CEO, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

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