

## City oasis wins short reprieve from sale

Written by Leslie Ferenc, Toronto Star, July 2, 2001

Residents of historic Old Thornhill rallying to save a 0.8-hectare oasis in the midst of the bustling city from being paved over have been granted a reprieve.

Markham's committee of adjustment will decide later this month whether St Volodymyr's Ukrainian Catholic Church will be allowed to hive off a piece of its Church Lane property so it can be sold.

More than 100 residents jammed into a committee meeting recently, urging that the proposal be rejected. They're worried the land will be developed by its new owner.

The church wants the little meadow, near Yonge St south of Highway 407, severed so it can sell the property and use the money to repair its landmark sanctuary

"This is a quiet, secluded little meadow - one of the last bits of green space in our community - and it may go on the chopping block," said resident Valerie Burke, who is shepherding the campaign to save the meadow.

"Our goal is to stop this beautiful table land from being severed and developed, to protect it," Burke said, adding the meadow, next to two old cemeteries and Pomona Mills Park, is home to birds and other wildlife.

Residents were elated after the committee of adjustment deferred the matter until July 18, she said.

The church council has already accepted an offer from a numbered company to buy the land, providing the severance is granted. It's not known who the proposed buyer is or what will happen to the land, which is zoned for institutional uses.

Burke hopes opposition will persuade the purchaser-in-waiting to back off so the town can buy the land to extend the park.

Although the issue has galvanized residents, Burke said there's no animosity toward St. Volodymyr's parish.

"We're not fighting the church," she said emphatically. "The fact is, the Town of Markham didn't get there in time to make an offer and buy the property."