



Where everybody knows your name

Burnhamthorpe to Markland Wood C.C., Etobicoke Creek to Bloordale Park

Suzanne Wintrob, National Post

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In 1810, John Silverthorn purchased 400 acres of rich soil east of the Etobicoke Creek and built a home he called Mill Farm. A year later, he and his son, Aaron, constructed a saw and grist mill that operated 24/7 and could cut 10,000 feet of lumber a day. By 1870, Aaron was a full-time farmer and the mill was levelled. His nature-loving son, Newman, bought up the land around Mill Farm and, before his death in 1918, stipulated in his will that no living tree in the 200-acre forest could be cut down by his heirs. In 1958, the Silverthorns sold the land to developer Marc Cavotti, and together with a number of other builders, started putting up houses. To preserve the area's natural beauty, Mr. Cavotti asked potential homeowners to sign a contract that they would preserve any trees on their property. Today, Markland (Marc's land ? get it?) Wood is awash in greenery, charming solid brick homes, and residents who simply can't get enough of each other.

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE No infills here. Rather, this Etobicoke 'hood is about 1960s ranch bungalows, back-splits and sidesplits. Lots average 55x110 feet but can climb to 70x140 feet when backing on to the Markland Wood Country Club or a ravine. An original three-bedroom bungalow with unfinished basement could fetch \$500,000, while renovations could take it up to \$750,000. A typical renovated two-storey, 2,400- to 3,000-square-foot home on the golf course -- with four or five bedrooms and new kitchen, sun room, family room and outdoor pool--could fetch more than \$1- million. Most sell within a week, and supply is limited.

DEMOGRAPHICS Once you arrive, you rarely leave. Empty nesters who winter in Mexico, still live in their original home or have moved to the Masters condos overlooking the golf course. Their kids -- now professionals in their 30s with tots, nanny and cottage -- have bought the family home and renovated it to Yuppie standards. Neighbours host street parties and open houses just because, and are heavily into community happenings. They jog and walk dogs along the 2.5- km circular Markland Drive (their association logo carries the words "Circle of Friends"). Actresses Cynthia and Jennifer Dale grew up here.

LOCAL SCHOOLS Millwood Junior elementary with French immersion, Bloordale middle school and Silverthorn Collegiate; Catholics head to St. Clement elementary and Michael Power high; some students carpool to nearby Mentor College.

LOCAL PARKS Millwood Park with baseball diamond, playground and distinctive trees (residents want to build an outdoor pavilion -- think big gazebo -- and have the park designated as a cultural heritage landscape); Bloordale Park for tennis (residents have launched an \$80,000 "rejuvenation project" to update the playground and landscaping); near Centennial Park ski hill and Etobicoke Olympium sports centre and pool.

TRANSIT Bus on Bloor Street to Kipling subway station; 25-minute car ride at rush hour along Bloor to downtown (seven minutes by QEW on weekends); 10- minute drive to airport.

RETAIL Markland Wood Plaza for Bruno's Fine Foods and Authentic French Pastries; near Sherway Gardens mall.

DINING Unassuming McDonald's at the plaza; Via Allegro with wine cellar and delicious Northern Italian fare; Market Spot with Timothy's coffee and fresh flowers; dining at the golf course

OTHER ATTRACTIONS Biggest draw is the golf course (clubhouse is undergoing \$7- million reno), followed closely by the Markland Homes Association and its numerous activities, including the annual Creek Clean-Up Day in April, Community Garage Sale (this year on May 26), and Family Fun Day in August. At Christmas, Santa boards a fire truck and drives through the streets collecting clothing and food for the needy. A free monthly newsletter is delivered to the doorstep.

LOCAL TRIVIA The golf course's first head pro was local resident Al Balding, the first Canadian to win on the PGA tour.

Sources: Marti Philp, Re/Max Professionals; Maureen Reed, Coldwell Banker Terrequity Realty; Bob Cooke and Greg Rohn, marklandwood.org; resident Julie Riddell

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