

# Parks, Recreation, Culture

---

# MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014 Parks, Recreation, Culture Master Plan for the City of Orillia is a strategy to achieve the City's vision for a healthy progressive community that respects people and promotes growth in a sustainable environment.<sup>1</sup> The Master Plan focuses on supporting healthier, more active lifestyles through the development of community park, recreation, culture and trail resources. The concept for the plan, "grounds for play" is about providing the spaces, facilities and programs that incorporate play (in all its forms) into community life.

## Grounds for Play

Our lives are commonly thought to be divided into work and play. All too often we dismiss the importance of play and its role in the development of our bodies and our minds. Yet in Orillia, a place known for its cultural, recreational and natural assets, there is an extraordinary opportunity to take a bold approach to community development by concentrating on elements of play as a strategy to improve the community for residents and visitors. This means enhancing aspects of the community that move us (physically, mentally, creatively, emotionally, etc.) for an environment that fosters health and attracts visitors.

This approach is beneficial for residents as it is for the economic well-being of the community. Elements of play, whether they involve sports, culture, recreation, nature or otherwise, can have a substantial economic impact on a community. By enhancing and promoting opportunities to play, Orillia can attract tourists and new

residents as well as new businesses that have the flexibility to locate in places with a high quality of life.

## Achieving Community-Based Goals

The "grounds for play" concept is consistent with the vision and goals for the Master Plan developed based on a thorough public input process. The vision builds on the notoriety of Orillia's regional events to become a place that is known for its system of parks, recreation, culture and trails. Goals address specific topics important to this system including identity, design, linkages, inclusivity, accessibility, health, safety, maintenance, natural environment, programs and events.

## How to Create a System

Orillia has outstanding parks, recreation and culture assets from waterfront parks, to extensive trails, to cultural landmarks, to arenas and more. Yet Orillia also has substantial parks, recreation, culture and trail issues and needs. For example, there is a clear need for a pool and gym facility. This and other specific needs are critical to the development of parks, recreation and culture in Orillia. Still, the system is larger than any individual asset or needs. The system-based planning approach looks beyond individual items to identify how all elements should fit together in the long term. The result is that the system is greater than the sum of its parts.

The plan looks to develop the four primary elements that create the system in Orillia:

---

<sup>1</sup> City of Orillia Strategic Plan.

- **Parks:** Which provide the physical spaces that are the foundation for the Systems Plan.
- **Recreation:** Which activates the Systems Plan for the residents and visitors to utilize the system’s spaces.
- **Culture:** Which showcases the community identity and tells the story of Orillia, past and present, in the system’s spaces.
- **Trails:** Which link the community together by providing the key connections to bring people into the system. (This component is such a critical one in Orillia, that trail improvements are further detailed in the companion document, the Trails Master Plan.)

To develop each of these elements of the system the plan looks at:

- **Connecting the System,** by identifying a network of parks, trails, facilities and other features as well as identifying a new park classification system complete with park prototypes.
- **Activating the System,** by addressing needs and opportunities for facilities, programs and events.
- **Capturing Orillia’s Identity within the System,** by developing an interpretive plan to showcase the culture of Orillia, tying to the 2005 Cultural Master and addressing marketing potentials.

### Implementing the Plan

To achieve the goals of the plan and create a parks, recreation and culture system in Orillia, there are three key priorities of implementation:

#### 1. **Development of the Trails Network:**

*Trails should be the iconic symbol of the City. Widely appreciated by the community and the primary feature that links together all the different elements of the system, trails should be seen as critical not only to parks, recreation and culture development but also community development.*

#### 2. **Development of West Street South Park:**

*The City should develop 255 West Street South as a central outdoor park facility to fulfill many of the outstanding outdoor park needs. As a City owned property, proximate to the downtown, this brownfield site provide is a prime location for community use.*

#### 3. **Focus on Waterfront Celebration Parks:**

*The jewels of the system, waterfront parks should be a focus for water-based used and become the feature location for festivals and events. As part of this focus, the City should acquire the former Huronia Regional Centre (HRC) property, particularly the waterfront portion.*

In addition, the Master Plan includes specific recommendations as well as a capital improvements program for all existing and proposed parks. Finally guiding policies help the City achieve the goals of the future and a proposed management structure focuses the City on parks, recreation and culture.

The resulting plan provides the City with a clear approach to achieving the community vision, enhancing the community with a system of parks, recreation, culture and trails and creating grounds for play in Orillia that welcome residents and visitor from near and far.