

Downtown Tomorrow Plan 2024

MARCH 24, 2025



Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Orillia is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg, specifically the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, a member of the Chippewa Tri-Council and Three Fires Confederacy, and that it continues to be home to many diverse First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples.

As a City, we honour and value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the area, home to one of North America's oldest human developments, the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs.

We acknowledge that this land is covered by the Williams Treaties and Upper Canada Treaties signed by our governments on behalf of the Anishinaabe and Canadian Peoples, and was once part of the Coldwater-Narrows Reserve.

The City of Orillia is committed to building a welcoming, caring, inclusive and accessible community for all citizens, which includes helping the community understand, acknowledge, and take action toward real Truth and Reconciliation so that we can move forward together with respect, harmony and dignity for all Indigenous Peoples of the past, present and future.

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Section 1

The Project

1.1 Introduction

Orillia's Downtown is the core of its identity and the centre of its economic and cultural vitality. Downtown is where Orillians go to dine, shop, celebrate, stay healthy and enjoy the Lake Couchiching waterfront. It is also where an increasing number of visitors go to enjoy many of Orillia's attractions and spend money. It is a destination and meeting place, where people of all backgrounds come together to share experiences and participate in civic life. Enhancing Downtown will be essential to growing the city sustainably and maintaining its high quality of life.

Recognizing the potential for Downtown to attract more people and more development while protecting its small-town feel, City Council adopted the Downtown Tomorrow Plan: Linking Orillia's Core to the Water in 2012. The plan set out a comprehensive, long-term vision for Downtown and identified 33 strategic initiatives intended to help achieve seven goals. Many of the initiatives were pursued and have resulted in significant improvements, including the Orillia Recreation Centre, reinvestments in historic buildings and new residential developments along the waterfront.

This update to the Downtown Tomorrow Plan builds on the successes of the 2012 plan, reconsiders initiatives that haven't been pursued, and identifies a new set of initiatives to guide actions by the City and others over the next decade. The updated plan responds to global and local issues that are much more pressing today, including climate change, housing affordability, Reconciliation and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In these challenging times for the environment, the economy and cities, Downtowns play a critical role in bringing people together to reinforce shared values and a sense of community.



Figure 1. Downtown's waterfront parkland is one of its greatest assets.
Source: Orillia Matters

The Planning Process

This document is the culmination of a consultative planning process that engaged Orillia residents, business owners, City officials and Rama First Nation. The Downtown Tomorrow Plan Update was launched in July 2022, beginning with a series of interviews with City staff and various Downtown stakeholders, including representatives of the business community, the Ontario Provincial Police, Lakehead University and Georgian College, and Downtown landowners. Following the municipal election in the fall of 2022, interviews were held with Orillia's Mayor and City Councillors. The purpose of the interviews was to raise awareness about the project, gather background information, and discuss the issues and opportunities facing Downtown.

Early in the process, the consultant team also analyzed Downtown to identify issues and opportunities and reviewed relevant background documents, including:

- The City of Orillia Official Plan;
- The City of Orillia Zoning By-Law 2014-44;
- The Downtown Tomorrow Plan;
- The Orillia Port Area Public Realm Plan;
- The Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan;
- The Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan;
- The Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan;
- The Transit Terminal & Parking Structure Study;
- The 2020 Land Needs Assessment; and
- Current and recent development applications.

In May 2023, a two-day Downtown Workshop engaged more than 100 Orillia residents and other stakeholders in conversations about the future of Downtown. The outcomes of the Workshop, summarized in Section 3 of this document, were shared with members of Council and Rama First Nation leaders at an open house that wrapped up the event. The ideas and strategic directions that emerged from the Workshop were subsequently reviewed and refined before forming the basis of this document.



Figure 2. Members of the public provided feedback and input at a public open house in May 2023. Source: Orillia Matters





Section 2

Context for Change



Cities are in a constant state of evolution. At a certain point, all plans need to be updated to respond to current global and local issues and new opportunities. Orillia's context for change also includes its unique history, natural setting, and built fabric. This section summarizes the context for the updated Downtown Tomorrow Plan, including Orillia's history and setting. It concludes with a review of Downtown's strengths and the opportunities for improvement.

2.1 How has the world changed?

Recent trends, changing circumstances, and new planning priorities have informed updates to the Downtown Tomorrow Plan.

Housing Affordability and Homelessness

Once considered a big-city problem, communities of all sizes across Canada are facing an affordability crisis and a growing homeless population. More and more people are unable to afford suitable and adequate housing. In Orillia, the 2021 Census reported that 27% of households were spending 30% or more of their income on housing, an indication of being cost burdened. Tenant households are particularly cost burdened: 45% compared to 15% of homeowners. The lack of affordable housing, together with a lack of health supports for those dealing with addiction and mental health challenges, is a main cause of homelessness. Across Simcoe County, 722 people reported experiencing homelessness in 2022, an increase from 292 in 2016.

Affordable housing is more than a roof above our heads: it leads to better mental and physical health outcomes, contributes to population diversity, and allows people to fully participate in civic life and meet their full potential. When residents are less worried about meeting their necessities, they're also in a better position to support the local economy through discretionary spending.

A key focus of the original Downtown Tomorrow Plan was to develop housing to increase the number of people living downtown. While this remains a priority of the updated plan, more focus is placed on encouraging the development of affordable housing options.

Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 with the objective of documenting the historic and lasting impacts of the residential school system on Canada's Indigenous populations. In 2015, the TRC released an executive summary including 94 Calls to Action—actionable policy recommendations meant to aid the healing process by acknowledging this history and creating systems to prevent future abuses. More broadly, the TRC has shone light on past and ongoing injustices and the need to establish new relationships with Indigenous peoples.

As Downtown Orillia continues to grow and change, it is critical to ensure that the perspectives, rights and interests of Indigenous people are respected and integrated into planning and development processes. This involves meaningful engagement and collaboration, acknowledging their histories, cultures and aspirations, and incorporating their input into revitalization efforts to create an inclusive and equitable Downtown. The process to update the Downtown Tomorrow Plan provided an opportunity to engage with members of the Rama First Nation and learn about their experiences Downtown. The discussions reinforced the need for ongoing dialogue on how changes Downtown can advance Reconciliation.



Figure 3. Lighthouse Community Services & Supportive Housing provides vital services to the County's most vulnerable populations. Like other community across Canada, Orillia is experiencing an affordability crisis and a growing homeless population. *Source: Orillia News*

Climate change

Since 2012, the climate change crisis has only become more acute. The impacts of climate change are far-reaching, affecting the environment, infrastructure, the economy, and our physical and mental well-being, infrastructure, and the economy. While this is a global issue, it requires local action from communities of all sizes to support the creation of complete communities and promote sustainable ways of living. Acknowledging the unique climate change challenges that downtowns face, as well as the important role they play in building climate resilience, the strategies of this plan are intended to support the climate mitigation and adaptation efforts of the City of Orillia's *Climate Future: Our Community Climate Action Plan* and the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy*. As the centre of the city, Downtown Orillia will accommodate higher density, high-efficiency, mixed-use development that limits the need to expand outward and reduces travel by private vehicle. Improvements to Downtown infrastructure, including cycling facilities, streetscape enhancements, and reliable public transit, are also key to encouraging sustainable modes of transportation. Efforts to increase the amount of green space and tree coverage, restore natural areas, and promote green buildings can contribute to climate resilience by mitigating extreme heat, improving air quality, reducing stormwater runoff, and reducing the burden on existing infrastructure.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Orillia's proximity to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) made it a choice destination for remote workers seeking out more space, access to nature and a lower cost of living. In the post-pandemic era defined by hybrid work arrangements, living in Orillia and working in the GTA a few days per week or less is a viable option for many seeking a small-city lifestyle. While this is a boon to Orillia's local economy, it likely contributes to the city's housing affordability issue.

COVID restrictions initially affected retail and restaurants particularly hard, and the trend toward online shopping is having lasting impacts. Nevertheless, Mississauga Street bounced back thanks to an increase in tourism and migrants from the GTA and initiatives like "See You on the Patio". Today, Orillia's main street is fairing relatively well, but high inflation has affected every business. Continuing to increase the number of people living and visiting Downtown will help ensure the long-term viability of existing and new shops and restaurants.

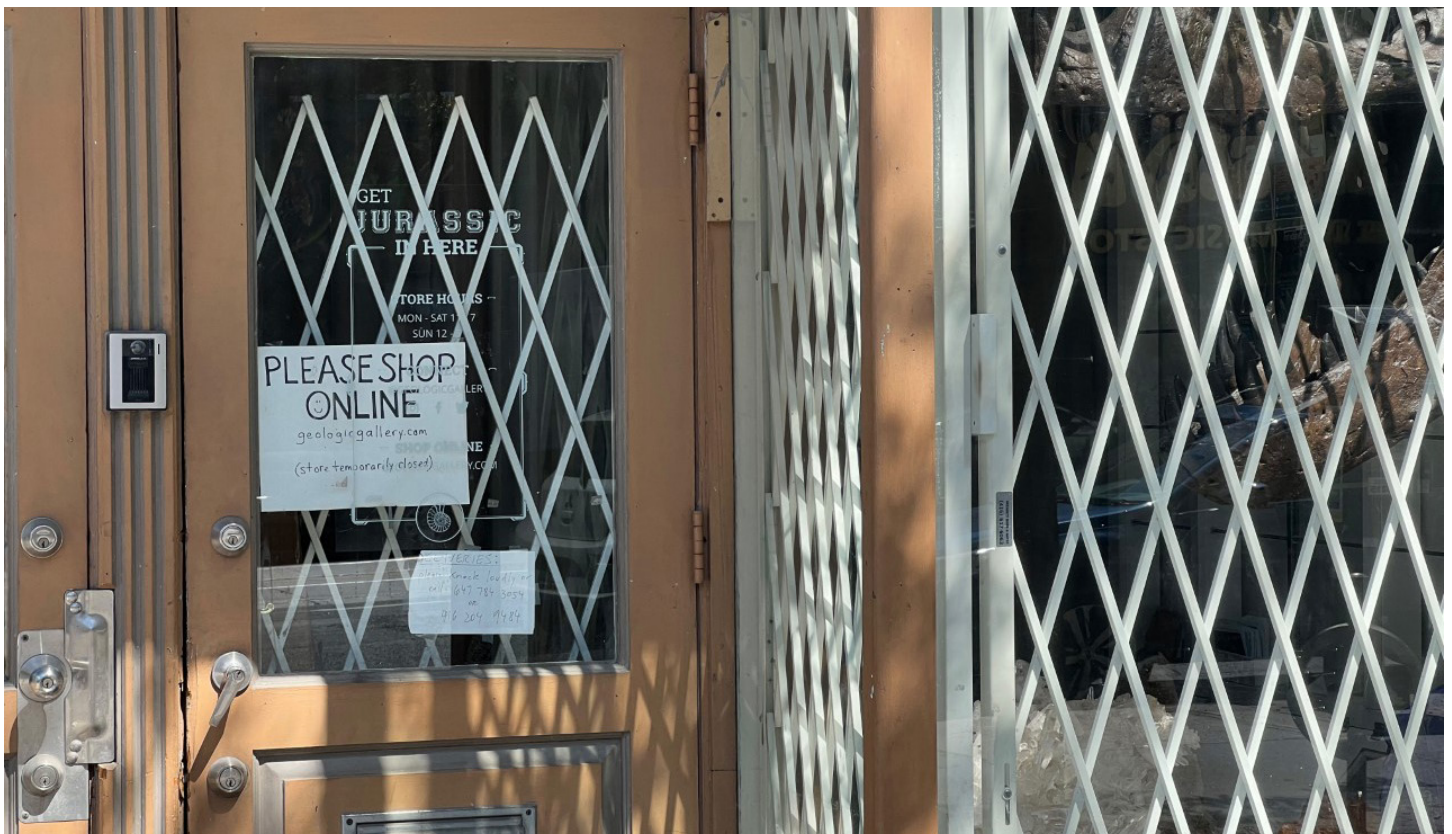


Figure 4. Over the course of the pandemic, retailers and consumers became accustomed to online shopping, a trend that continues to pose a challenge for bricks-and-mortar retail. Retailers that are selling not just a product but also a memorable and personalized experience are more immune.

2.2 How has Orillia changed?

Downtown Orillia is anticipated to accommodate significant growth over the planning horizon, and in recent years, more urban development has started to come forward. A variety of other completed projects has made Downtown Orillia more attractive, vibrant, and liveable.

A Growing & Evolving City

Orillia is a growing city. According to the 2021 Census, Orillia had a population of 33,400, almost 10% higher than in 2011, when the original Downtown Tomorrow Plan was undertaken. Orillia's population has been growing faster in recent years, with seven percent population growth between 2016 and 2021. By 2051, Orillia is targeting a population of 49,000, in line with the Province's minimum allocation per the 2020 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The City of Orillia is undertaking a settlement area boundary expansion process in parallel with its Official Plan Review to ensure there is sufficient land to accommodate forecasted growth. Patterns of growth, however, are expected to be different from the pattern of suburbanization that has prevailed in North America over the past decades and has been repeated in Orillia. With the objective of creating more efficient, compact and sustainable cities that are less reliant on cars and more reliant on public transit and active transportation, the Growth Plan directs that 50% of new residential development take place within the defined built boundary. Although recent planning reforms by the Province may provide more flexibility for how cities grow, maximizing intensification will reduce the costs of building and maintaining infrastructure and further the revitalization of Downtown.

Downtown has the ability to attract more residential development with its many attractions and walkable pattern of streets and blocks, and it also has the capacity for significant intensification. However, not all parts of Downtown should undergo the same scale or intensity of development. Growth in and around Mississauga Street, for example, should generally be compatible with the scale of the existing historic fabric. On the other hand, the former industrial and commercial lands south of the historic core, near the Orillia Recreation Centre, present an important opportunity for more substantial development that will support the vibrancy of Downtown.



Figure 5. Completed in 2021, Matchedash Lofts introduced 76 new residential units in the heart of Downtown. The building re-introduces an urban character along Matchedash Street and its intersection with Mississauga Street, and its scale and materiality complement the historic fabric.

Recent Investments & Initiatives

Downtown Orillia has undergone much change over the past decade, with many of these changes originating as strategic initiatives in the 2012 Downtown Tomorrow Plan:

- The **Lightfoot Drive Area Improvements** is a major project undertaken by the City that will fundamentally alter Downtown's relationship with the waterfront by creating an attractive waterfront boulevard, establishing strong connections, and putting in place the necessary infrastructure to support new mixed-use development.
- **New residential and mixed-use developments** have been built or are underway, including the FRAM project on the former Front Street Plaza site and neighbouring lands, Matchedash Lofts and the Villasola apartments on Barrie Road. These projects add more people to the Downtown, generating more foot traffic to help sustain local businesses and enliven streets. New buildings also fill the gaps in the city fabric and frame adjacent streets, resulting in a more attractive and complete built environment.
- The **Lighthouse Community Services and Supportive Housing project**, which opened in 2021, provides vital services to Simcoe County's most vulnerable populations and ensures that Downtown remains inclusive of people from all backgrounds and circumstances.
- The City has also established the **Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan Grant Program**, which aims to stimulate growth and development in the Downtown. Funding through this program has been used to improve building facades and signage and unlock the potential of Downtown's upper storeys, which are often vacant and underutilized.
- The **Orillia Recreation Centre**, opened in 2020, is another major achievement for the Downtown. This state-of-the-art facility is an important amenity that brings residents from across the city to the Downtown, and its location will help to attract residential development.
- The award-winning **Waterfront Centre**, which replaced the previous structure that was destroyed by fire in 2015, supports Orillia's transient marina operations and includes a public lounge.
- The historic **Orillia Farmers' Market** has found a new, purpose-built home at Orillia Public Library. Here, the Farmers' Market generates more traffic on Mississaga Street to the benefit of nearby businesses and generates
- The public boulevard along **Front Street** has been widened and improved, and bike lanes have been implemented along Coldwater Road, which is a key connection into the Downtown from the west and north.
- The **redesign and reconstruction of Mississaga Street** and key side streets are in the works and identified in the City's 10-year Capital Plan.

Despite the progress that has been made over the past 10 years, there remains work to be done in Downtown Orillia to make it an even more vibrant and prosperous place. This updated Downtown Tomorrow Plan will set the City on the path towards future success by identifying additional strategic initiatives to pursue over the next 20 years.



Figure 6. The City has committed to upgrading the Mississaga Street streetscape, which is showing its age.



Figure 7. The Common Stove on Mississaga Street is a successful outcome of the Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan.



Figure 9. Orillia's Farmers' Market has a permanent, purpose-built home alongside two other city institutions - the Opera House and the Public Library.
Source: Orillia Matters



Figure 10. The Orillia Recreation Centre is a well-loved and well-used community asset. This facility will help attract future growth.



Figure 8. The extension of Coldwater Road to Lightfoot Drive established a new connection between Orillia's historic Downtown and its waterfront. Upgrades to below-grade municipal infrastructure sets the stage for new development.

2.3 Brief History

Orillia and the surrounding region have been home to Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. The Anishnaabe people paddled Lake Couchiching and portaged to Georgian Bay along what is now Coldwater Road. The 5,000-year-old Mnjikaning Fish Fence, one of the oldest human developments in North America, is a testimony to this long presence.

There were few permanent European settlements in the area during the early years of colonization, but, as time passed, villages emerged within and around the Anishnaabe territory. Colonial policies regarding First Nations people aimed to isolate, assimilate or eradicate them. The Coldwater Narrows Reserve, which includes part of what is Downtown Orillia today, was established by the colonial government in 1830 in order to remove First Nations from their territory and way of life. Despite the government's efforts, the Anishnaabe were able to maintain their culture and customs.

British immigration was steadily growing, resulting in increased demand for land for new settlements and farming. Around 1836, Chiefs Yellowhead, Aissance and Snake were misled into surrendering the Coldwater Narrows Reserve to the Crown, and the community was left landless. Using their pensions from the War of 1812, Chief Yellowhead and other members of the community purchased land in Rama Township to create a permanent home. Orillia and Rama First Nation share a history of co-existence and co-dependence, though it has been a relationship fraught with prejudice towards Indigenous people.

Since its Indigenous origins and European settlement, Orillia continued to evolve and seize new opportunities. With railway connections to Toronto and Georgian Bay, Orillia matured from a logging town into a significant industrial and commercial centre. Numerous foundries and various industrial operations were generally established on the south side of the city, focused along West Street and the former rail line. This era of economic prosperity and population growth coincided with major fires that destroyed large swaths of the Downtown area. Mississauga Street and certain side streets were rebuilt in the image of the city's growing wealth, with higher quality buildings of brick and stone. Many of these buildings remain today, lending to the Downtown's historic character and charm. During this period, many of Orillia's landmark buildings were constructed, including the Central School, Opera House, the Peter Street Fire House, and the Post Office and Customs House, among others.

Orillia also has a long history of tourism, with a lakeside resort hotel operating as early as the 1850s. Visitors to Orillia initially arrived by steamboat, but the construction of the railways, the completion of the Trent-Severn Waterway, and the expansion of the road network made it a more broadly accessible destination. Orillia's natural setting, historic charm, arts and culture scene, and proximity to larger population centres make it a popular day trip or overnight destination to this day.



Figure 11. The Coldwater Narrows Reserve, one of the first reservations in Canada, included a portion of what is Downtown Orillia today.

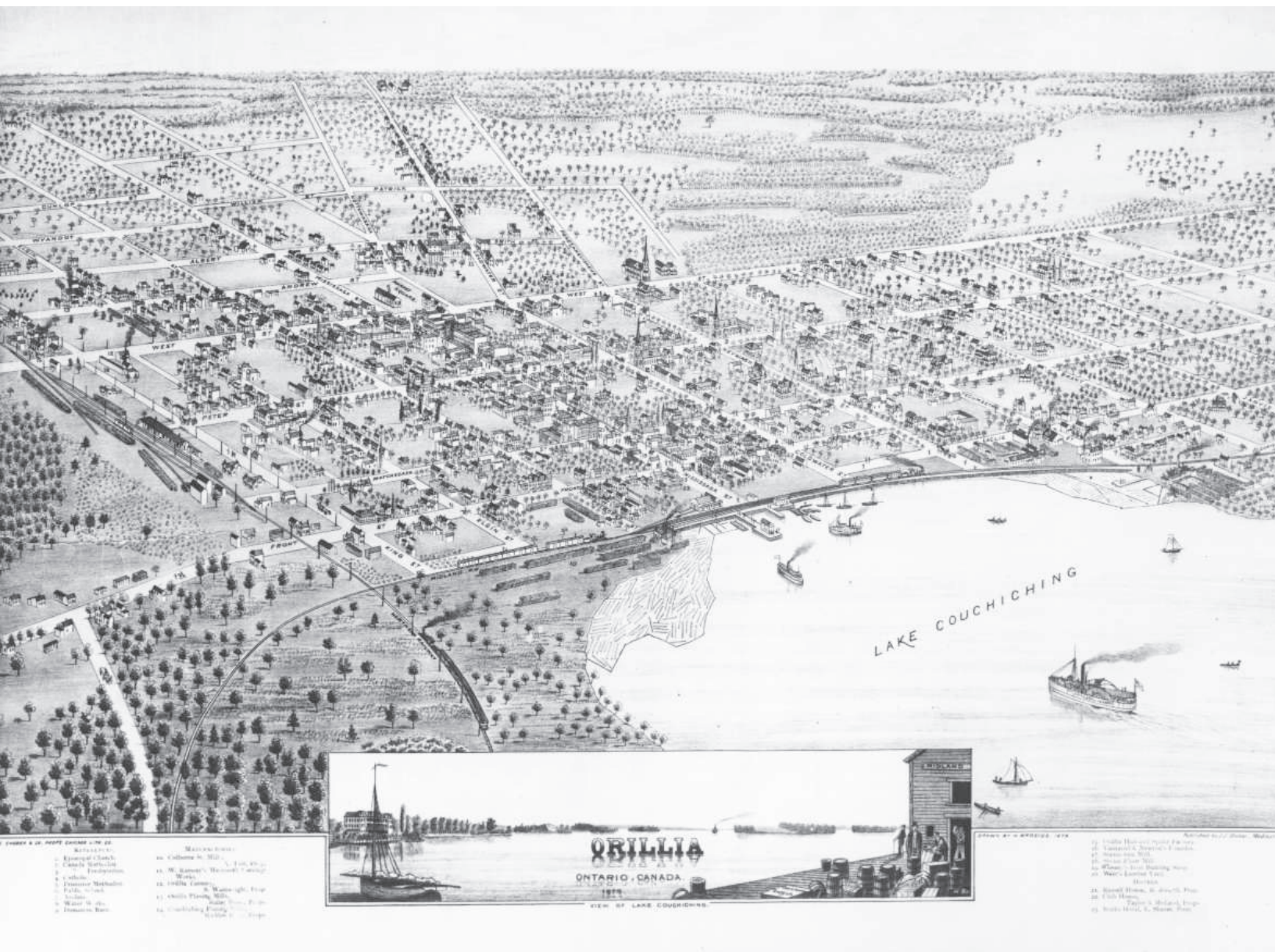


Figure 12. Orillia was a thriving industrial centre. Economic prosperity from the late-19th to the mid-20th century left a legacy of attractive heritage buildings, including landmarks like the Opera House. The former industrial lands south of the Downtown core are another legacy of this period; these also present a key opportunity to increase the Downtown population through comprehensive redevelopment.

2.4 Downtown's Strengths

Downtown Orillia has many assets that should be maintained and leveraged as Downtown continues to grow and improve:

- 1 Waterfront parks and trails.** The Downtown Waterfront, with its parks and trails, is the envy of many communities whose waterfronts are not as publicly accessible or do not offer as many public amenities. The waterfront's parks offer residents and visitors a place to gather, celebrate, play, and relax. The Port of Orillia activates the water's edge and supports tourism during the summer months. Recent improvements to Lightfoot Drive (formerly Centennial Drive) and planned residential and mixed-use developments will further enhance the waterfront and connect it to Downtown.
- 2 Mississauga Street.** The City's historic main street is a charming, well-maintained street that offers a good mix of independent shops and services and few vacant storefronts. The street itself often becomes a gathering space, with festivals and events taking over the street. Planned streetscape upgrades will further enhance Mississauga Street as a Downtown asset.
- 3 Vibrant arts and culture scene.** Venues like the Opera House and creative enterprises centred on Peter Street contribute to Orillia's quality of life, economy, and identity.
- 4 Important civic and Institutional Uses.** City Hall, the Orillia Recreation Centre, the library, Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, and Lakehead University's facilities at Heritage Place help keep Downtown busy throughout the day with workers, students and visitors.
- 5 Heritage buildings.** Downtown boasts an impressive collection of heritage buildings, including landmark buildings such as the Opera House, Orillia Central School and the Sir Samuel Steel Building, as well as heritage "fabric" buildings that collectively contribute to Downtown's historic character.
- 6 Stable, healthy neighbourhoods.** The residential neighbourhoods within Downtown and to the north and west contribute to an attractive environment and provide a population of people living nearby who support Downtown businesses and services and keep Downtown busy.
- 7 Mix of retail, restaurants and professional services.** Downtown is fortunate to have not just unique shops and a variety of restaurants along Mississauga Street, but a broad mix of retail amenities, including a grocery store, liquor store, large pharmacy, large hardware store, and discount department store. Downtown is also the city's hub for a range of professional services.
- 8 A walkable pattern.** The grid pattern of streets and blocks makes Downtown generally easy to get around by foot and is well-connected to adjacent neighbourhoods.



Figure 13. Orillia's waterfront offers a range of public amenities enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.



Figure 14. Mississauga Street offers a good mix of retail, restaurants, and personal services, many of which are independent. Several building owners have implemented building improvements that result in a more attractive main street environment and more people living and working in the area.



Figure 15. Orillia's arts and culture scene distinguishes it from other cities and is fundamental to the city's identity, quality of life, and economic development.

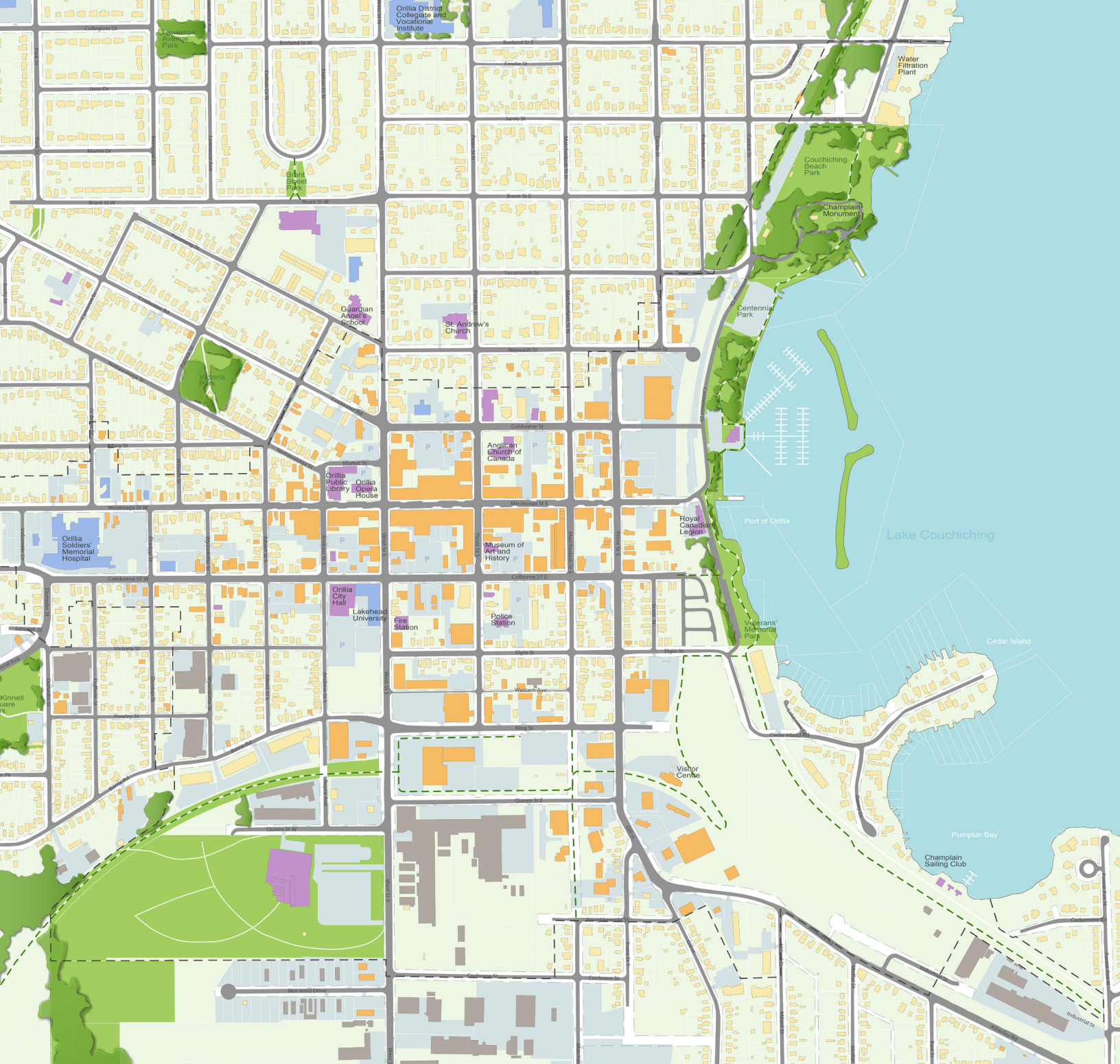
2.5 Physical Opportunities

Despite Downtown's many assets, there are plenty of opportunities for improvement.

- 1 Vacant former industrial lands.** Orillia has a proud industrial past, but industry has also left a legacy of large, contaminated parcels that are challenging to redevelop. There is an opportunity to unlock the potential of these lands for new housing.
- 2 Smaller vacant properties throughout Downtown.** Across Downtown, there are smaller vacant parcels that detract from the image of Downtown. These could be redeveloped for residential or other uses, depending on the location.
- 3 Downtown parking.** Accommodating the parking that is required for new residential uses can be challenging in the context of a historic, built-up area. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed to facilitate smaller-scale infill residential development.
- 4 Institutional growth.** In downtowns with a strong university or college presence, students and staff enliven streets and open spaces and patronize businesses. Lakehead University's presence and opportunities to accommodate space for Georgian College should be promoted, and students should be encouraged to live and visit Downtown.
- 5 Buildings that detract from the traditional character of Mississaga Street.** Mississaga Street is a largely intact, historic main street, though certain buildings detract from this cohesive character.
- 6 Vacant storefronts and buildings.** Along Mississaga Street, there are some remaining vacant storefronts and upper floors that should be occupied. There are vacant buildings elsewhere Downtown that can also be re-used or redeveloped.
- 7 Uncertainty around the future of Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital (OSMH).** If OSMH is eventually rebuilt at a new location, a plan will be needed for how the site and surrounding lands should evolve.
- 8 Neighbourhood repair.** Residential pockets south of the core need reinvestment or, in some cases, redevelopment.
- 9 Transit connections.** Most Orillians arrive Downtown by car. Better transit and cycling connections would provide more options to residents and students, particularly on busy summer weekends during local events.
- 10 New open spaces and recreational amenities.** The Rexton Lands have the potential to become a naturalized public open space destination and amenity. Future parks and other public lands could accommodate facilities that meet the needs of children, youth, adults and older populations alike, such as basketball, tennis and pickleball courts.



Figure 16. Properties such as the above can be redeveloped with buildings that reinforce the traditional scale and character of Mississaga Street.



Downtown is the compact, urban core of Orillia, where much of the city's economic, social, and cultural life continues to play out. Downtown features an impressive collection of heritage buildings, both architectural landmarks and every day “fabric” buildings that lend to the Downtown's cohesive identity and character. South of the core, the urban fabric begins to unravel into small vacant parcels and large swathes of former industrial lands. Over time, these vacant and underutilized lands can be redeveloped to accommodate new residential and mixed use development that brings more people to the core, helping to sustain local businesses and services and enliven Downtown's streets.

Use a sticky note to tell us more about Downtown. What do you like? What needs improvement? Where Downtown have you noticed change, either positive or negative?

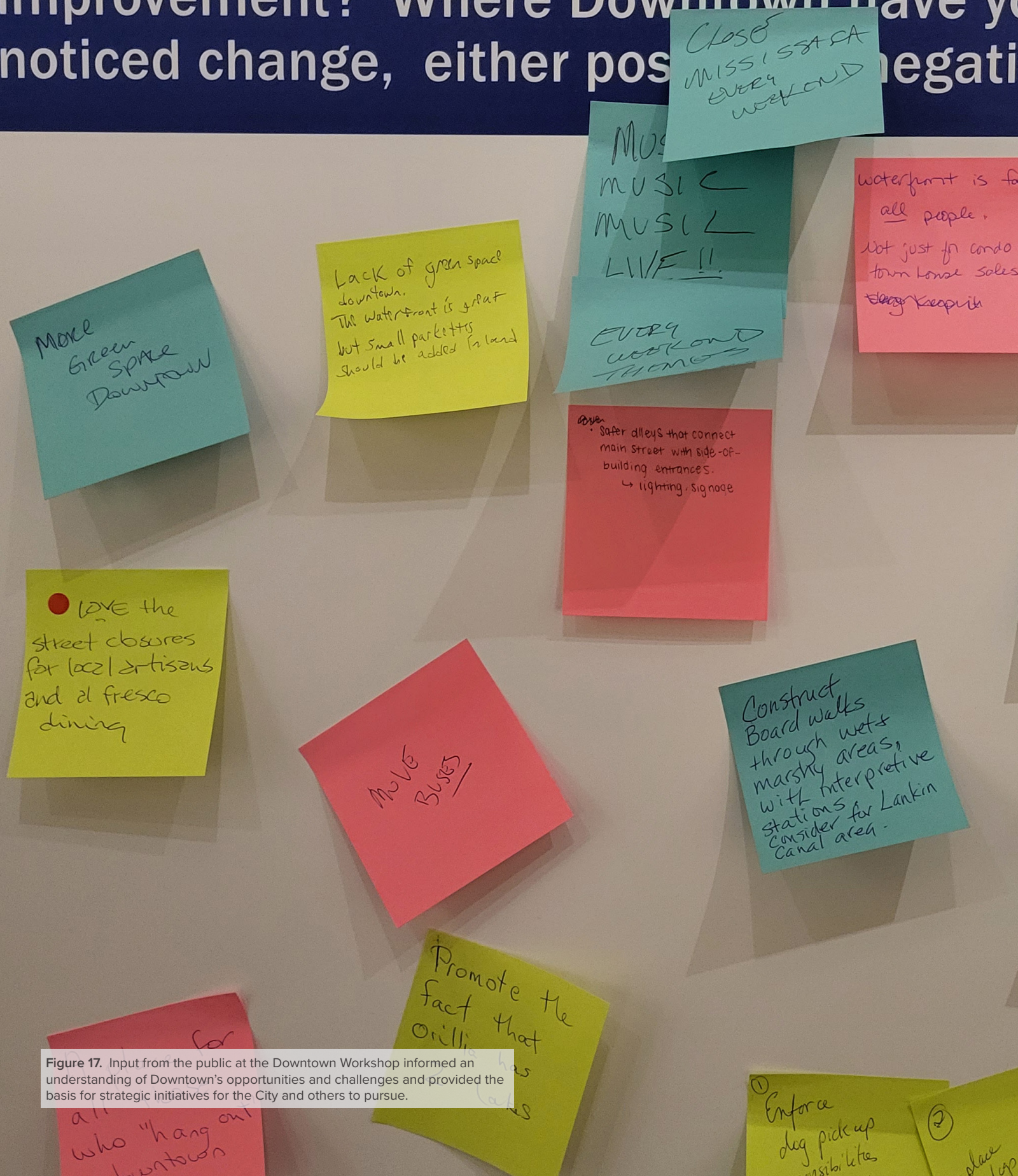


Figure 17. Input from the public at the Downtown Workshop informed an understanding of Downtown's opportunities and challenges and provided the basis for strategic initiatives for the City and others to pursue.

Is
you
ve?

Downtown businesses
have worked hard to
improve streetscape,
good diversity of
businesses over the
past 5-10 yrs.

Increased meter
parking rates are
not inviting people
do meters take only
coins - many people
do not carry cash!

More
Parking for
those living
Downtown +
Shoppers

Cdn.
Music

Section 3

Downtown Workshop



Figure 18. At the Downtown Workshop, stakeholders and the public discussed the issues and opportunities of Downtown and brainstormed ideas to bring about positive, sustained change.

A plan that is built upon the input and ideas of residents and stakeholders will have broader-based support and is more likely to be implemented.

3.1 About the Workshop

In May 2023, a “Downtown Workshop” was held, with activities spanning three days. The workshop provided a forum for residents and stakeholders to openly discuss the opportunities and challenges for Downtown and to provide input on updated goals and strategic initiatives to guide future change and decision-making.

Public Open House

The Downtown Workshop kicked off with an open house and presentations to introduce the purpose of the Downtown Tomorrow Plan Update. Representatives of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation spoke about the First Nation’s history and relationship with Orillia and the broader region.

The project team reflected on how Downtown Orillia has changed since the original Downtown Tomorrow Plan was adopted and discussed emerging trends and challenges – both local and global – that the updated plan would need to consider. The team then shared precedents from other mid-sized Ontario cities, illustrating how downtowns can be made more attractive, dynamic and prosperous through strategic and coordinated efforts by government, non-profits and the private sector.

Following this presentation, participants were invited to provide feedback on draft goals and share their ideas for projects that would bring about positive change in the Downtown. A similar exercise was undertaken through an online survey to cast a wider net and ensure broad-based participation.

Stakeholder Workshop

Stakeholders were invited to participate in a day-long workshop hosted on the second day of the Downtown Workshop. At this event, stakeholders cycled through four thematic round-tables, which focused on living, visiting, playing, and creating Downtown. Participants shared their insights on the challenges and opportunities of Downtown from their various perspectives, and offered ideas for how to make Downtown a more vibrant, attractive, and dynamic place. Key feedback from the stakeholder workshop, the public open house, and online survey are synthesized on the following pages.

City Council & Rama First Nation Council Open House

City of Orillia Mayor Don McIsaac, City Councillors, Rama First Nation Chief Ted Williams, and Rama Councillors were hosted at an open house on the third day of the Downtown Workshop. The project team provided an overview of the Downtown Workshop and the key themes that emerged. Attendees were then invited to peruse the output from stakeholder workshop, ask questions, and share their own thoughts on objectives and projects the plan should pursue.

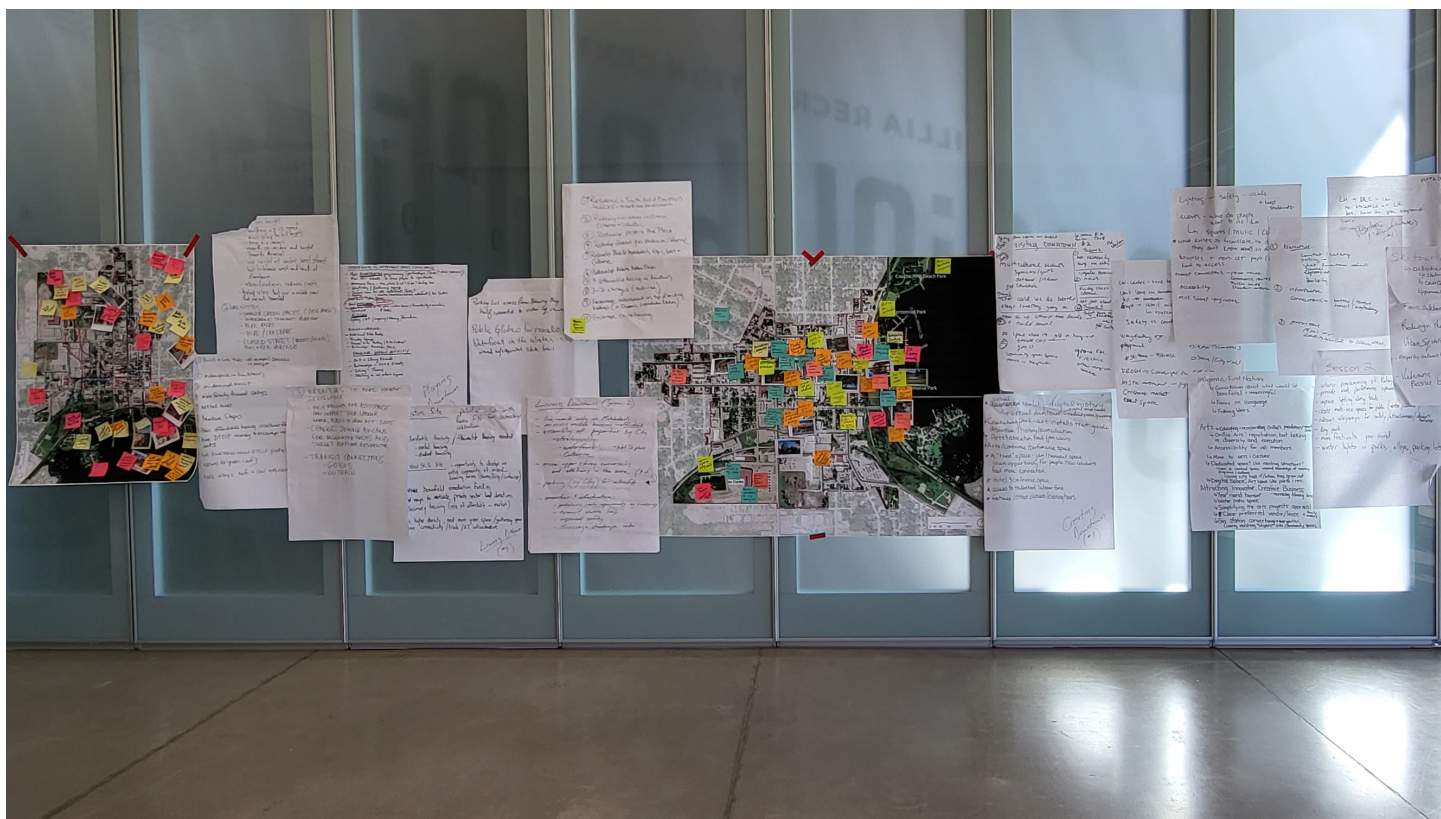


Figure 19. Input from the stakeholder workshop was compiled and shared with the Mayor and Council of the City of Orillia and the Chief and Council of Rama First Nation for their feedback and input.

3.2 What We Heard

The public open house, online survey, and four stakeholder focus sessions allowed residents and stakeholders to discuss their ideas for Downtown. Below is a summary of suggestions that emerged from input from stakeholders and the public, which has informed the recommended initiatives.

Living Downtown

How can we get more housing built Downtown and make it a great place to live?

- New housing development should include options for seniors, students, young professionals, and families.
- More affordable housing options are necessary.
- New housing Downtown should include low-rise, mid-rise, and tall buildings.
- The height of new development should be compatible with the surrounding context (e.g., lower-scale buildings along/ adjacent to Mississauga Street and the waterfront).
- The formerly industrial lands on the south side of Downtown are an opportunity for more significant intensification (e.g., greater height and density).
- More amenities are needed to encourage Downtown living – parks, dog parks, secure parking.
- It is difficult to get around Downtown by transit as most routes take you out of the core. A Downtown loop would be a great service.
- Downtown needs to feel more safe, comfortable and attractive for everybody.

Visiting Downtown

What types of businesses, amenities, and public realm improvements are needed to attract more people Downtown?

- There is a negative narrative and sentiment about Downtown that needs to be flipped.
- Transit connections to the Downtown need to be more direct and convenient. It's more convenient to drive.
- There needs to be a variety of safe and affordable means of getting to and around Downtown (e.g., transit, bike lanes, bike stations, trails).
- Downtown offers many great things, but it needs to be better branded and marketed.
- Downtown needs a broader mix of retail and services, including options at all price points.
- Downtown businesses coordinate their hours and be open longer and more consistently.
- A broader range of events should be held throughout the year - not just the summer.
- Improved wayfinding will help encourage people to get around Downtown by foot and bicycle.



Playing Downtown

How should the network of parks and open spaces be enhanced to support recreation, events, and healthy living?

- The Aquatheatre should accommodate more programming.
- Existing parks should be enhanced with more facilities.
- The waterfront should provide more opportunities to interact directly with Lake Couchiching.
- There should be a place for skating and rollerblading along the waterfront.
- A multi-purpose activity hub along the waterfront for cyclists, skaters, cross-country skiers.
- Young people need more to do – programming and facilities.
- Laneways and passageways should be improved with lighting, landscaping, and other amenities.
- Library Square is underutilized and should be redesigned with a new purpose in mind.
- Downtown needs a dog park.
- Secure, covered bike parking should be available at key locations, like the ORC.
- More outdoor performance spaces would support a broader range of arts and cultural programming.

Creating Downtown

What would help attract more shops, restaurants, and services Downtown, including creative businesses? How can Orillia's arts and culture scene be reinforced?

- An area for industrial arts should be established.
- Vacant and underutilized buildings should be repurposed for arts programming.
- Approvals for arts and culture projects and events should be streamlined.
- Public art should be installed along the waterfront.
- Downtown needs a new hotel with a meeting/conference facility. This could have major economic spin-off.
- There should be more festivals to showcase Orillia's talent.
- Outdoor dining should be expanded and encouraged (e.g., private patios, public patios, biergartens).
- Multi-media / interactive interpretation within the public realm would be a great way to teach residents and visitors about Orillia's past, First Nation's history and culture, and other topics while exploring the city.





Figure 20. Apple Annie's received grant funding through the Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan. The business's expansion included a new accessible entrance at the rear of this Mississauga Street building.



Section 4

The Plan



Figure 21. A view from Lake Couchiching over Downtown Orillia.

The 2012 Downtown Tomorrow Plan included a Master Development Concept that illustrated what Orillia's core could become over the long term. Through the process to update the plan, the development concept has been updated to reflect projects that have been built or approved, changes in circumstances and new opportunities. The updated concept is informed by the City's growth objectives for Downtown, input from stakeholders and the public, and principles of good planning and design.

This section describes and illustrates the overall vision for Downtown, then focuses on four distinct areas with the potential for significant change of varying types and scales. Land use and urban design guidelines are outlined for each of the five focus areas to provide further direction on how the area should evolve.

4.1 Long-term Vision

The updated long-term vision for Downtown Orillia is similar to the one that guided the 2012 Downtown Tomorrow Plan. It builds on the city's rich heritage and natural setting along the shores of Lake Couchiching. It celebrates the city's landmark buildings and open spaces but also imagines new legacies that will be admired by residents and visitors and enhance the setting for ongoing investments.

Mississauga Street, already a dynamic, successful main street, is envisioned as an even more vibrant and bustling corridor. Compatible development fills vacant lots and reinforces the traditional scale and character of the street.

East of Front Street, continual mixed-use and residential redevelopment, including the potential for a hotel, will complete the stitching of Downtown's commercial heart to the waterfront.

Large tracts of former industrial lands in "South Downtown" are replaced by a interconnected network of streets, blocks, and parks that provides the framework for a new compact neighbourhood with a mix of housing options and non-residential uses. Neighbourhoods across the Downtown will vary in their scale, character, and mix of uses, but their overall compact form will enable residents to meet most of their day-to-day needs within a short walk or bike ride from where they live.

The vision for Downtown continues to emphasize connections. This includes new development to fill in the gaps of the city's urban fabric, new streets (where necessary) to enhance connectivity, and improvements that make it safer and more comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists to get around. Orillia's transit network will provide convenient and reliable access to destinations across the Downtown, increasing access to jobs, services, amenities, recreation, and social connections.

The Master Development Concept envisions a Downtown Orillia where thousands of people connect with the City's heritage, institutions, businesses, and culture, and enliven its streets and other public spaces.



Figure 22. A view over Downtown Orillia from the west.

Living Downtown

Downtown Orillia is a place where people of all backgrounds are able to live and enjoy a high-quality of life. Throughout Downtown there are a range of housing options, including ownership and rental housing, apartments, townhouses, and detached housing. Housing is attainable to people of all socio-economic backgrounds, and housing options support a variety of household types and sizes. Supportive housing is available for the more vulnerable members of society. New development in the core takes many different forms but is consistently well designed and complements Orillia's historic character.

Residents of Downtown can access their day-to-day needs within the Downtown without the need of a car. This includes basic retail and services and, importantly, a grocery store and other food options that meet the needs of a diverse population. A mix of shops and restaurants along Mississauga Street and other key streets are kept busy by the larger population of Downtown residents. Attractive streetscapes, bike lanes, and frequent and reliable transit make it easy, safe, and comfortable to get around. A variety of parks, open spaces, events and activities keep people healthy, entertained and engaged in their community throughout the seasons.

Visiting Downtown

Downtown Orillia is a place that people are drawn to visit, whether it's just for the day, the weekend or longer. People come to enjoy long-standing, regionally recognized events such as the Mariposa Folk Festival, but also to attend smaller cultural events and athletic tournaments that are spread throughout the year, drawing visitors to Orillia even into the colder months. Seasonal GO service from the GTA offers an alternative means of getting to Orillia and broadens the city's reach as a regional destination. A new hotel along the waterfront with meeting facilities allows Orillia to tap into the conferencing market and ensures that out-of-town spending supports Downtown's businesses. Enhanced streetscapes and improved and expanded wayfinding make it easier for people to leave their cars behind and get around on foot.



Creating Downtown

Downtown Orillia is a place that fosters and celebrates artistic creation. Peter Street continues to be the backbone of Orillia's arts and culture scene. Public art installations and "tactical urbanism" such as painted crosswalks and temporary pedestrian bump-outs reinforce Orillia's uniqueness while enhancing pedestrian safety and bringing colour to the city. Some vacant storefronts and upper storeys of Downtown buildings are occupied by artists and other creative professionals, either on a short-term or permanent basis. Farther south, light industrial buildings provide space for creative industries that still contribute to a vibrant and successful Downtown but are perhaps less compatible with the traditional main street uses along Mississauga Street.

Playing Downtown

Downtown Orillia is green and beautiful and offers a variety of recreational amenities that support healthy and active living for people of all ages, abilities, and interests. The Orillia Recreational Centre is already a gem in the Downtown, but the surrounding parkland is enhanced with amenities that support a new neighbourhood across the street and draw people from across the city. The city's waterfront parkland is improved with new features that encourage year-round use. An expanded Waterfront Centre takes on a new role as a "recreational hub" where people can stop and take a break, rent skates or skis, enjoy hot chocolate around a bonfire, or lock up their bike while they grab lunch along Mississauga Street. Downtown Orillia's key corridors are improved with wider public boulevards, street trees and other pedestrian amenities.



4.2 Focus Areas

All areas of Downtown Orillia are expected to undergo some degree of change over the next 20 years. The development concept includes four Focus Areas with potential for significant positive change. For other areas of Downtown, major change is not envisioned and existing plans, policies and zoning remain relevant.

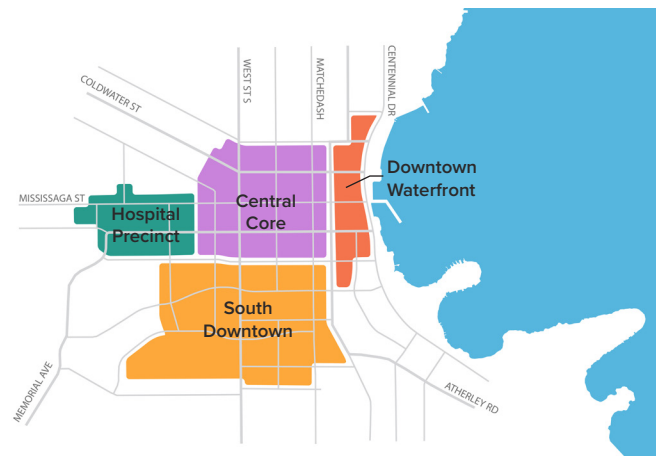
Each of the Focus Areas implements the overall vision for Downtown Orillia through a combination of new development and public realm improvements. On the following pages, the vision for each Focus Area is described and illustrated. Further direction is provided on how each Focus Area should physically evolve through private realm guidelines, which address matters of land use and urban design, and general public realm guidelines. These guidelines clarify specific aspects of the concept, such as building heights and streetscape characteristics. They are

also intended to ensure that a design-based approach is taken on future projects, with the goal of achieving a high-quality built environment and public realm in all areas of Downtown. In some cases, amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law will be required for consistency with the guidelines.

For the Hospital Precinct, there is uncertainty around the fundamental role this area will play in the long term. High-level guiding principles are outlined, which should be used to inform more detailed secondary planning.



Figure 23. Growth in Downtown Orillia will take many forms. In the Central Core, growth will largely take the form of compatible infill development that fills in gaps in the urban fabric while respecting the scale and character of the historic Mississauga Street. South Downtown is an opportunity for more significant intensification to significantly increase the Downtown population. Redevelopment along the waterfront will serve to strengthen connections between Downtown and Lake Couchiching.



While the scale and character of new development will vary across Focus Areas, the form it takes and the uses it contains will contribute to a more complete Downtown that allows residents to meet most of their day-to-day needs within a short walk or bike ride from home. New development across Downtown is encouraged to incorporate sustainable building and landscape design features to contribute to the City's efforts to enhance climate resilience.

Figure 24. Downtown Focus Areas

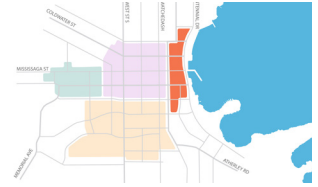


Downtown Waterfront

The Downtown Waterfront, east of Front Street between Jarvis Street and Elgin Street, is Orillia's front door on Lake Couchiching. Recent improvements to the street network, such as the extension of Coldwater Road, have established strong connections between the Central Core and the Downtown Waterfront. The Lightfoot Drive Area Improvements will establish a waterfront boulevard that is more befitting Orillia's green waterfront. Private development has also come forward that will extend the urban fabric to the re-aligned Lightfoot Drive. There are more redevelopment opportunities to encourage - the biggest being the block bound by Mississaga Street, Colborne Street, and Front Street ("the Legion Block").

Private Realm Guidelines:

- New development within the Downtown Waterfront should primarily be mixed-income residential, with condominium or rental apartments being the most appropriate housing type. Apartment buildings may include integrated townhouses at the base. Stand-alone three-storey townhouses are an appropriate housing type at certain locations, such as the north side of Colborne Street.
- Townhouses should have raised entries to provide privacy while maintaining "eyes on the street".
- Mixed-use development should be required along Mississaga Street and wrapping around Front Street, which could include residential, office, or hotel uses above ground-floor retail.
- Along Mississaga Street, new retail storefronts generally should be 6-10 metres wide to extend the fine-grain retail experience along the rest of the street.
- At the bottom of Mississaga Street, new development on the south side of the street should be notched to form a small public plaza, mirroring the plaza that is planned on the north side of the street. Retail and restaurant uses should frame the plaza and may also extend along Lightfoot Drive.
- The Metro grocery store is a valued asset for Downtown. Future redevelopment of the Metro block should relocate the store within a new mixed-use building on the site, or at another central and accessible location within Downtown.
- The development of a new Downtown hotel, ideally with meeting or conference facilities, should be encouraged, with an ideal location being the southwest corner of Mississaga Street and Lightfoot Drive. A new building at this location should be set back from Lightfoot Drive to allow for restaurant patios.
- New buildings should address and frame streets at a comfortable, pedestrian-oriented scale.
- Parking should be located underground where feasible, or at the rear of buildings, along with servicing areas.
- Buildings fronting Lightfoot Drive should be a minimum of three storeys and a maximum of six. Buildings over four storey should include a setback at the fourth storey to respect the dominant low-rise character of Downtown and mitigate shadow impacts on Lightfoot Drive and waterfront parkland in the afternoon.



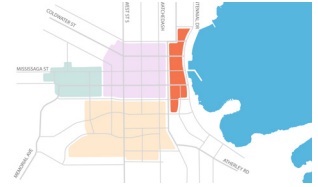
- Buildings along Mississaga Street, east of Front Street, should be 3-4 storeys along the street. Buildings up to eight storeys should be permitted, on the condition that the portion of the building above the fourth storey is set back from the street by at least 10 metres.
- Buildings fronting Front Street, located farther from Mississaga Street, should be a minimum of three storeys and a maximum of six storeys.
- Building materials should be durable, climate resilient, and compatible with the historic character of the Downtown. The use of stone, brick, decorative concrete, and non-coloured glass is appropriate; the use of stucco, vinyl siding, and coloured glass is not.
- Mid-block pedestrian connections should be provided.

Public Realm Guidelines:

- Redevelopment of the Legion site should include a reconfiguration and extension of Lightfoot Drive where they meet Mississaga Street to create a "T" intersection at the bottom of Mississaga. This will extend Lightfoot Drive, resulting in safer conditions for pedestrians (since traffic will be controlled by stop signs at the intersection), and allow the bottom of Mississaga Street to become a public plaza.



Figure 25. Planned development and potential development along the waterfront will continue to improve connections between Downtown Orillia and the waterfront.



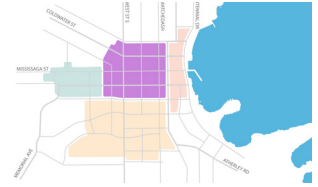
- A civic square should define the intersection of Mississauga Street and Lightfoot Drive and extending out to the concrete pier. A piece of this public space is being delivered through the FRAM redevelopment. A future building on the south side of Mississauga Street should also be notched to contribute to this public space (approximately 460 square metres including the adjacent public sidewalks). On the east side of Lightfoot Drive, the square should extend to the edge of Lake Couchiching, which would require modifying the shoreline south of the existing pier. The four corners should have a consistent paving treatment so that the square is perceived as a single, unified space. For special events, the streets can be temporarily closed, allowing the entire square to be programmed. Altogether, the civic square should have an approximate size of 4,400 square metres.
- As more people start to live in Downtown Orillia, more people may become interested mooring a boat for the season. Conversely, the availability of seasonal dockage may encourage some people to move Downtown. With transient boating on the decline, the City should work with Port of Orillia on a pilot project to dedicate a limited number of slips for seasonal use.



Figure 26. The height of mid-rise buildings along the waterfront should step down to provide a gentle transition to parks and other open spaces.



Central Core



The Central Core captures the commercial heart of Downtown. It is focused along Mississauga Street but includes adjacent streets and blocks. The general intent for this area is to maintain its historic character - one of Orillia's greatest assets. Nonetheless, there are numerous opportunities within the Central Core for infill development that is compatible with the existing fabric in height, scale and materiality. New infill buildings can fill gaps in the urban fabric and frame adjacent streets while providing new residential and commercial space. The ongoing rehabilitation of upper floors is another important opportunity to increase the number of people living and working Downtown.

Mississauga Street has fared well as a commercial street in recent years. It offers a broad mix of mostly independent shops and services and has few vacant storefronts. Some building owners have leveraged funds through the Community Improvement Plan to improve building facades and rehabilitate upper floors, which has enhanced the image and vitality of the street. The vision for Mississauga Street includes further storefront improvements, an enhanced streetscape (which is in the City's Capital Plan), and more space for outdoor dining, sitting and people watching. Along Mississauga Street, there are several properties that detract from the character and continuity of the pedestrian and retail environment; these can be redeveloped as mixed-use buildings with ground-floor retail and residential or commercial uses above.

Private Realm Guidelines:

- Encourage the conversion of upper floors to residential, office and "live-work space". In the interim, encourage the use of upper floors for short-term arts and cultural uses.
- Continue to require active commercial or public uses on the ground floors of buildings on Mississauga Street. Commercial uses that generate low pedestrian traffic, such as professional offices and services, should be discouraged on the ground floor. These uses are more appropriate on side streets leading to Mississauga, where other retail uses should also be permitted, and on Colborne Street and Coldwater Street.
- Along side streets leading to Mississauga Street, ground floor retail uses should be encouraged but not required.
- Additional parking should not be required where upper floors are converted for new uses, including residential uses. Where parking is required or desired, alternative parking arrangements should be encouraged, such as residential permit parking and shared-use agreements.
- Private parking should not be required for new or expanded commercial development. Over time, non-residential parking should be consolidated into public parking facilities. Parking for new apartment buildings should be located underground, if possible, or at the rear of the building.
- New development within the Central Core should be compatible with the historic fabric, with buildings having a minimum height of two storeys and generally a maximum of four. Buildings up to six storeys should be considered on larger sites along Coldwater Street and Colborne Street, where substantial setbacks above the fourth storey can be provided to respect the Central Core's low-rise character and mitigate massing impacts on the pedestrian realm.
- New development should be required to frame and address adjacent streets, with parking and servicing areas provided at the rear where they are less visible.
- Redevelopment along Mississauga Street should re-establish traditional built form and land use relationships. New buildings should include residential or office uses above ground floor retail and be compatible in height with the surrounding context.
- Along Colborne Street and Coldwater Road, new development should be setback to ensure that there is sufficient space within the public boulevard for tree planting.



Figure 27. New development in the Central Core should be compatible with the surrounding built form context. New development on Mississauga Street is required to provide active ground floor uses. Such uses should be encouraged along side streets.

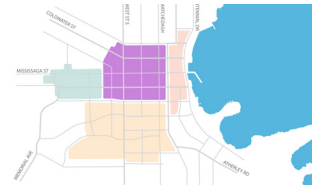
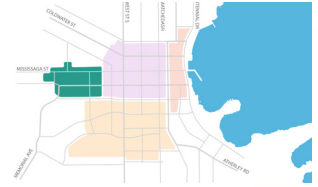


Figure 29. New development along Mississauga Street should re-establish traditional main street built form and land use relationships.



Figure 28. Major change is not anticipated along or immediately adjacent to Mississauga Street, though there are opportunities for compatible infill development and redevelopment that can fill in missing gaps and increase the number of people living along the main street.



Public Realm Guidelines:

- As currently planned, Mississaga Street should be rebuilt with a character in keeping with the historic character of Downtown. A curbless street to allow for parking spaces to be converted to patios may be considered, but extensive use of bollards to separate vehicles from pedestrians should be avoided. A generous boulevard and bump-outs are preferred. Paving materials and street furniture should be simple and traditional, and light standards should be black. Where possible, healthy existing trees should be retained, and new trees should be planted in trenches with adequate soil volumes for growth to maturity. Native, climate resilient species with large canopies should be prioritized.
- A small pocket park should be built at the front of the parking lot on Mississaga Street between Peter Street and Matchedash Street. The design of this space, which could be temporary at first as proof of concept, should help to conceal the surface parking area and reinforce the Mississaga Street streetwall. An alternative location for the two existing accessible parking stalls would need to be identified. This space should be landscaped with trees and plants in planters and include moveable tables and chairs for casual people watching or enjoying a take-out meal. Opportunities to fill other gaps with small pocket parks should be encouraged.
- Library Square should be redesigned to simplify its interface with Mississaga Street and improve visibility and access into the square, which will increase its usage.
- As the focal point of Orillia's arts and culture scene, Peter Street between Coldwater Road and Colborne Street should be enhanced with artistic elements such as locally designed paving, benches, public art installations, and murals.
- Crosswalks at key intersections, including where Mississaga Street intersects with Andrew Street, West Street and Peter Street, should be designed or painted to commemorate special causes and initiatives, while also bringing colour to the public realm and increasing pedestrian safety.
- Public and private laneways and passageways, especially those that connect to parking lots, should be enhanced with distinctive paving, lighting, public art, and other pedestrian amenities. These connections should be given names and signed accordingly to improve wayfinding.
- Streetscape improvements to Coldwater Road and Colborne Street should be implemented incrementally as development comes forward. Streetscape improvements should result in more room for pedestrians, cyclists and street trees, as well as street furniture and other amenities to enhance pedestrian comfort and safety.
- Public parking lots should be paved and designed to include landscaped islands, trees, bio-swales and lighting. Permeable paving and heat-resistant materials should be considered.



Figure 30. Empty spaces, including at the rear of buildings, can be reclaimed as placemaking opportunities or to enhance connections through Downtown.

Hospital Precinct

For more than a century, OSMH has anchored the west end of Mississaga Street, acting as a driver of change in the broader area and drawing hundreds of workers and visitors to Downtown each day. However, OSMH has initiated the process of selecting a site for a new, larger hospital in order to continue providing high-quality care for the growing city and surrounding region. Until a decision is made about a new hospital, there is not expected to be much new development on the existing OSMH site and surrounding lands.

It is anticipated that if OSMH is relocated, the existing site will continue to accommodate out-patient services and potentially other health care services and facilities. Nevertheless, relocation likely will create the opportunity for redevelopment of lands within the precinct. Once the future of the hospital is clear, the City should initiate a study, and potentially a secondary plan, to establish a framework for future development and public realm improvements in the precinct, guided by the following principles.

Guiding Principles:

- The area should continue to accommodate a mix of institutional, commercial, and residential uses, including healthcare uses.
- The area should accommodate a broad range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing.
- New streets and pathways should form a fine-grain, interconnected network.
- New buildings should address and frame streets at a comfortable, pedestrian-oriented scale.
- Parking should be provided in below-grade structures or at the rear of buildings.
- Building heights at the periphery of the precinct should be compatible with the surrounding context, which consists primarily of low-rise buildings. Taller buildings may be appropriate for the hospital site.
- New parks and open spaces should have good proportions and have frontage on at least two public streets or pathways in order to be highly visible and accessible.
- Commercial uses should be focused along Mississaga Street.

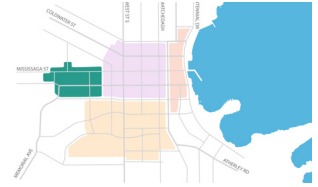


Figure 31. A secondary plan for the Hospital Precinct should consider the future function and character of Colborne Street, which contains many car-oriented uses.



Figure 33. Urban mixed-use buildings with active ground floor uses would extend and reinforce Mississaga Street as a commercial corridor.



Figure 32. Institutions like OSMH bring vitality to the Downtown and attract other organizations and businesses. The site should continue to provide health care services while also accommodating commercial and residential uses.

South Downtown

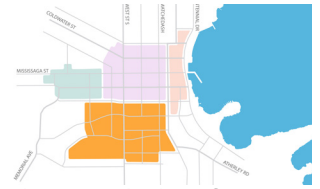
The South Core, the area south of Elgin Street, is characterized by vacant and underutilized parcels of land. North of Queen Street, these primarily include smaller infill sites interspersed within low-rise residential and commercial/light industrial areas. The area south of Queen Street consists mostly of large parcels of former industrial lands.

The South Core is envisioned as a new neighbourhood with a mix of housing and potentially compatible employment uses. The neighbourhood will have a strong connection to the ORC and Foundry Park, which opened in 2020. Improvements to West Street will create a safer and more comfortable connection to the Central Core for pedestrians and cyclists.

Unlike other parts of Downtown, there is minimal existing context in the South Core, particularly the area south of Queen Street (e.g., there are only small pockets of low-rise residential fabric at the edges). The South Core represents an important opportunity to establish a denser, urban neighbourhood that provides a substantial amount of new housing to increase the Downtown population. Higher-density development will also help to unlock the potential of these former industrial lands, which are typically the most costly to redevelop due to the need to undertake environmental remediation. New development should include low- to mid-rise buildings that appropriately frame adjacent streets, and taller buildings with low-rise bases should be permitted in locations where they will not detract from the overall character of Downtown and will have minimal impacts on public spaces.

Private Realm Guidelines:

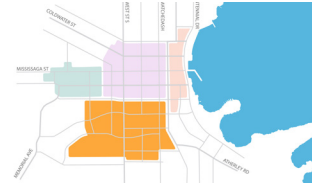
- South Core should be primarily residential, but office, institutional and/or convenience commercial uses are appropriate on West Street. South of Poughkeepsie Street, compatible employment uses within well-designed buildings are also appropriate and would provide a buffer to the more industrial area farther south.
- New local public streets should provide the framework for phased development and create connections to the surrounding network of streets.
- South Core should provide a diverse range of housing in terms of tenure and built form (e.g., town and apartments), unit size, and level of affordability.
- Buildings should have a minimum height of four storeys along major roads and two storeys elsewhere. Mid-rise buildings, or mid-rise base buildings, should have a maximum height of six storeys. Stepbacks should be incorporated above the fourth storey to respect the historic low-rise character of Downtown and minimize the visual impact of buildings.
- In the area south of Queen Street, buildings of up to 16 storeys should be permitted where it is demonstrated that such buildings will contribute positively to the public realm and overall character of the neighbourhood. To mitigate the impacts of taller buildings, the portion above the sixth storey should have floorplates generally no greater than 1,000 square metres.



- In the area north of Queen Street, between Andrew Street and West Street, buildings up to ten storeys should be permitted, but heights should step down to no more than four storeys along Andrew Street to provide an appropriate transition to the neighbourhood to the west.
- In areas of the South Core where there is an established scale and character, such as along Andrew Street north of King Street and along Western Avenue, infill development should be compatible in its height and scale.
- Private development should be encouraged to incorporate renewable or low-carbon energy sources, green roofs, and other sustainable building and landscape design features.

Public Realm Guidelines:

- Poughkeepsie Street should be extended through the new neighbourhood to reconnect the street grid.
- Over time, Matchedash Street should be extended between King Street and Poughkeepsie Street (connecting the two separate segments of Matchedash Street) to establish development blocks and improve connectivity for vehicular traffic and cyclists.
- A new north-south local public street aligned with Peter Street should extend between Cochrane Street and Queen Street to facilitate a continuous connection through the Home Hardware site when it redevelops in the long term.
- Redevelopment of the lands across from the Orillia Recreation Centre, between Queen Street and Cochrane Street, should include a neighbourhood park with a minimum area of 0.8 hectares and frontage on at least two streets.
- Foundry Park should continue to be enhanced with outdoor recreational amenities that serve the immediate neighbourhood and the broader city. Foundry Park should also be considered as an option for the site of a potential new arena to address future recreational demands, which would strengthen the ORC's role as a city-wide destination.
- West Street should be improved, and the right-of-way widened, if necessary, to accommodate dedicated cycling facilities, either in the roadway or on the boulevard, sidewalks and street trees on both sides.
- In conjunction with development on adjacent lands, Queen Street should be rebuilt as an urban street with a sidewalk on the south side and street trees on both sides.
- The public realm around the block bound by Colborne Street, West Street, Barrie Road, and Andrew Street should be improved to create a continuous sidewalk to enhance pedestrian connectivity and safety.
- Western Avenue is a narrow laneway that serves a mix of residential, commercial, and arts and cultural uses. With its narrow width, Western Avenue between Peter Street and Matchedash Street has the potential to become a distinct place that attracts visitors. The City should consider implementing a unique streetscape treatment along Western Avenue, which could include street trees where there is sufficient space, planters, decorative lighting, and



public art/murals on large blank walls. In the longer term, the City should consider resurfacing the street with special interlocking pavers. Future redevelopment of the lot at the northeast corner of Peter Street and Western Avenue should incorporate a small, publicly accessible, landscaped setback that acts as a gateway to the interior of the block. When the blocks bound by Elgin Street, West Street, King Street, and Peter Street are redeveloped, a similar streetscape treatment should be implemented along the segment of Western Avenue located west of Peter Street.

- The block bound by Andrew Street, Barrie Road, Colborne Street and West Street is an important block that bridges South Downtown and Downtown Orillia. The long-term redevelopment of this block will help stitch together the fabric of the city. The current condition of the block's pedestrian realm is poor, with sidewalks missing from the north side of Barrie Road and portions of the east side of Andrew Street. Worn footpaths along Barrie Road demonstrate the need for improvements. In advance of development, the City should complete and upgrade the block's pedestrian realm in order to enhance connectivity and safety for pedestrians traveling from Downtown to South Downtown and the ORC, and from neighbourhoods to the west.
- New and enhanced components of the public realm should employ low impact development methods to contribute to climate resilience (e.g. bio-swales, rain gardens, permeable materials).



Figure 34. South Downtown should accommodate a range of building typologies, including tall buildings.



Figure 35. The large formerly industrial properties of South Downtown are a major opportunity for intensification. Mid-rise and tall buildings up to 16 storeys are appropriate given the separation for the low-rise character of the Central Core.





Section 5

The Strategy

5.1 Goals

This section recommends 31 initiatives for the City and others to pursue over the next decade and beyond to achieve many aspects of the long-term vision for Downtown. The initiatives support the following seven goals, which are generally consistent with the goals of the 2012 Downtown Tomorrow Plan but have been updated to address current opportunities and issues.

1/ Increase the Residential Population and Offer a Full Range of Housing Options

Thousands of people travel to Downtown Orillia on a routine basis to work, shop, attend a cultural event or spend time on the waterfront. The number of people living Downtown, however, is in the hundreds.

Increasing the number of people living in Downtown Orillia will have the greatest impact on the City's revitalization efforts. A Downtown residential population provides a larger, steadier customer base for existing and new businesses. Greater foot traffic enlivens streets, makes them feel safer, and creates vibrancy throughout the day and the week. Young adults, seniors and even many families with children appreciate the benefits of living in urban, mixed-use environments where a range of amenities are within walking distance. The keys to reinforcing Downtown as a great place to live are to encourage and facilitate residential development, locate community services such as childcare facilities in the core, and continue to expand and enhance amenities, including a variety of food options that reflect Orillia's diverse population, other shops and services, and recreation facilities. Diverse housing options, including a range of housing types, tenure, size, and levels of affordability, will ensure Downtown remains a diverse place that is inclusive to people of all backgrounds.

2/ Reinforce Downtown as a Civic and Institutional Hub

Downtown is and should remain a hub for government services, health care and cultural institutions. Civic and institutional uses bring vitality to the core and attract organizations and businesses that provide services to the broader community.

Central civic facilities serving the city's entire population generally should be located Downtown. This will reinforce Downtown's role as a major node of employment and support the goals to increase the Downtown population of residents and visitors. Although Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital plans to relocate from its current site, the City should work with the Hospital to ensure that the area retains a substantial health care presence. Downtown's economic and social diversity would be greatly enhanced if Lakehead University and Georgian College, and potentially other educational institutions, had a stronger presence in the core.



Figure 37. Civic and institutional uses are a stabilizing force in the Downtown and draw hundreds of employees and visitors every day.

3/ Acknowledge Orillia's Indigenous History and Reinforce Its Cultural Richness

Downtown Orillia's history, built heritage, and arts and culture scene are central to its identity and distinguish it from other places.

Downtown offers opportunities for the City to expand initiatives in support of Reconciliation and celebrate Indigenous cultures, in collaboration with the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, urban First Nation people, Indigenous organizations, and other Indigenous peoples. Showcasing and growing the City's arts community will reinforce Orillia as a cultural destination and contribute to economic vitality. As Downtown continues to grow and change, public art, public realm improvements and community events should acknowledge all facets of Orillia's rich history and cultural diversity.

4/ Enhance the Shopping and Dining Experience

Downtown's variety of shops and restaurants are essential to its vitality. More people living, working, learning and visiting Downtown will help sustain existing businesses and services year-round and create demand for new offerings.

Downtown Orillia offers a distinct retail experience, with shops and restaurants along Mississauga Street being predominantly independent. Continuing to grow and diversify the options for shopping and dining will draw more visitors and support residential growth. The Downtown retail experience can be enhanced to compete better with suburban shopping centres and big box stores by upgrading Mississauga Street, extending and coordinating shopping hours, and improving the appearance of neglected buildings.



Figure 38. Downtown features a good mix of mostly independent shops and services that chain stores cannot compete with.

5/ Improve Connections Downtown and Enhance Safety

Most Orillians who visit Downtown arrive by car since this is the most convenient and reliable option. Despite a well-defined grid of streets that supports connectivity and walkability, many people do not feel safe or comfortable getting around by foot or bicycle.

Providing viable options for getting to and around Downtown will be better for the environment and minimize the need for additional parking as more visitors are drawn to the core. Adjustments to transit routes and schedules, particularly in the evenings, weekends, and around special events, could encourage more ridership. Improved cycling infrastructure and streetscape enhancements – including lighting – can also reduce car dependence. Improvements to the active transportation network will benefit not just cyclists but also the growing number of scooter riders and people using mobility devices. Improvements should focus on reinforcing connections between key destinations such as Mississauga Street, the Library and Farmers' Market, OSMH and other service providers, the ORC, the grocery store, along the waterfront, and at commuter parking lots for first/last mile trips. End-of-trip amenities such as bike racks and covered bike parking should also be provided at key destinations.

7/ Promote Orillia as a Year-round Destination and Enhance the Visitor Experience

Orillia has a long history as a destination for tourism. While there's plenty to see and do in the warmer months, the City has not tapped its true potential as a year-round destination.

Extending tourism activity into the colder months of the year can help to sustain local businesses and keep Downtown bustling year-round. The Orillia Recreation Centre creates a new opportunity for hosting sporting events that create economic spin-offs for Downtown, but accommodation options in the core are currently limited. More opportunities for outdoor winter recreation, more cultural programming and simply more promotion of Orillia's many attractions likely will be critical to attracting more out-of-town visitors and creating demand for hotels.

6/ Create and Enhance Space for Playing, Gathering, and Relaxing

Orillia's waterfront parks are the envy of many cities and are enjoyed by Orillians and visitors alike. Foundry Park is a new addition to the core but has not been fully programmed.

Within the core, there aren't many green spaces, and, away from the waterfront, Market Square is the lone civic space for gathering. The residential intensification that is anticipated by this Plan will require more public open spaces to support passive and active recreation. Existing parks within Downtown can also be improved to enhance their function and make them more enjoyable for people of all ages, abilities, and interests. The Rexton Lands in the south part of Downtown creates an opportunity to introduce a new type of public open space in the core – an urban nature park.

In addition to supporting residents' physical, social, and mental well-being, Orillia's network of parks and open spaces play a significant role in enhancing climate resilience by improving air quality, reducing the heat island effect, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and managing stormwater.



Figure 39. Lighting and other modest improvements would transform Downtown's passageways into a secondary component of the public realm.

5.2 Strategic Initiatives

This section describes 31 strategic initiatives to be pursued over the next 20 years by the City of Orillia and its partners. As indicated in the table at the end of this section, many of these strategic initiatives support multiple goals directly or indirectly.

The City will be responsible for implementing many, but not all, of the strategic initiatives. Some will require leadership and support from institutions, landowners, or the business community. Many will involve partnerships among key stakeholders.

The 31 strategic initiatives are not the only projects to pursue over the next 20 years. New opportunities will arise and other initiatives will be proposed that are consistent with the vision and goals for Downtown. These strategic initiatives include active proposals, opportunities, and ideas that were discussed during the planning process, and incorporate best practices to respond to Downtown's challenges. Implementing most of these initiatives will be vital to achieving Downtown's full potential as a place to live, work, learn, shop, play, and visit.



Strategic Initiatives identified with a the "thumbs up" symbol received strong support from the public in a survey conducted following the release of the Draft Downtown Tomorrow Plan 2024.



Figure 40. Library Square would benefit from a stronger relationship with Mississauga Street.

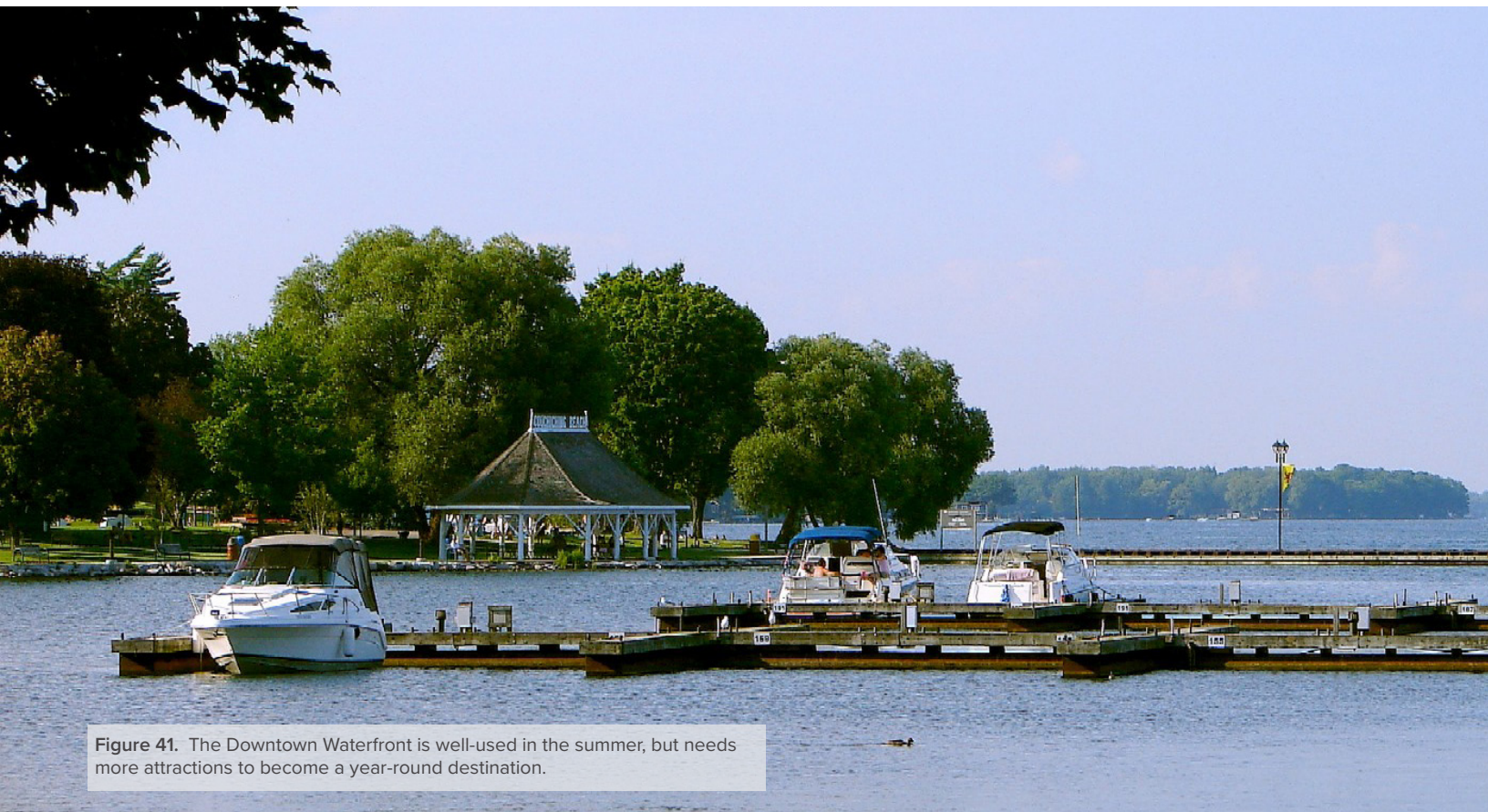


Figure 41. The Downtown Waterfront is well-used in the summer, but needs more attractions to become a year-round destination.

Downtown Orillia Strategic Master Plan

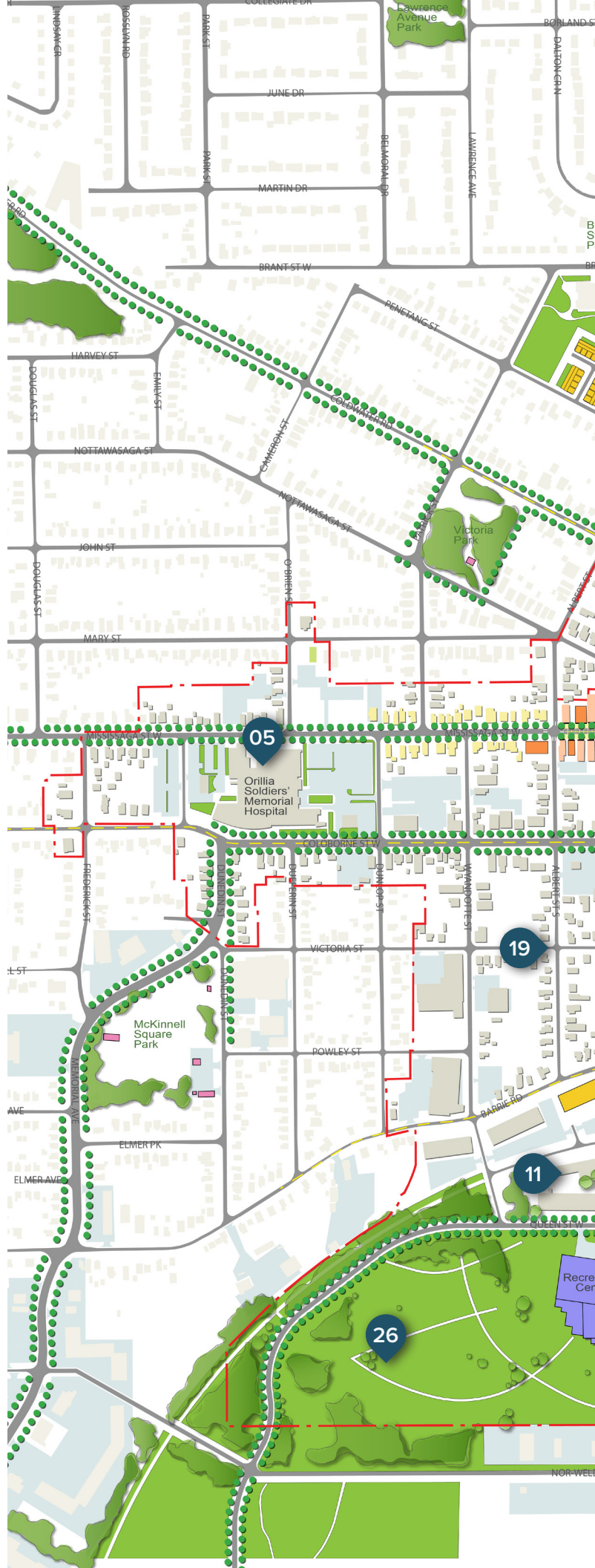
The 31 Strategic Initiatives are illustrated on the Downtown Orillia Strategic Master Plan. While some strategic initiatives are closely linked to a specific place and opportunities, others are more general and may be adapted to the opportunities that emerge and changing circumstances.

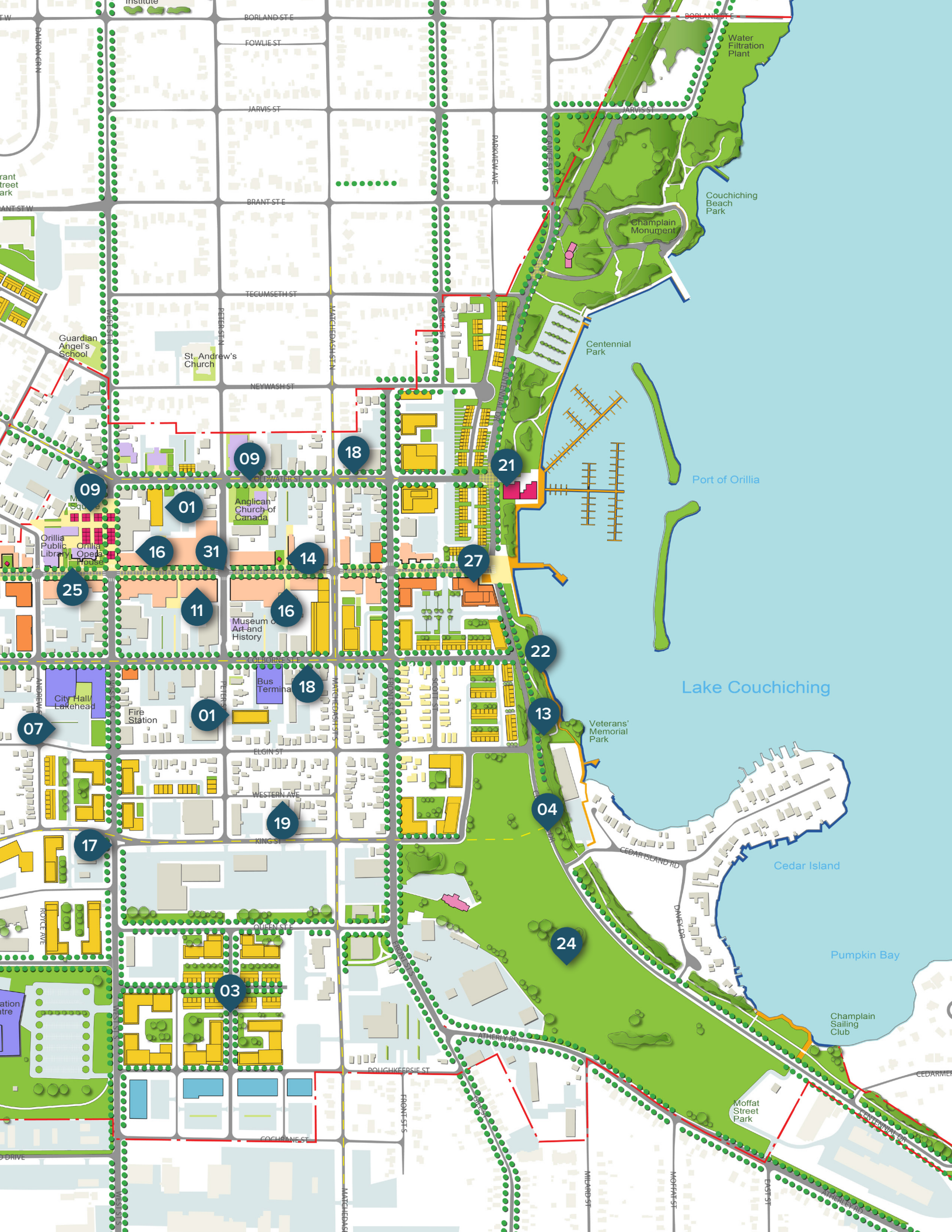
- 01 Affordable Housing** 🍷
- 02 Infill Development* 🍷
- 03 South Downtown Intensification
- 04 Continue Extending Lightfoot Drive
- 05 Hospital District Secondary Plan 🍷
- 06 Enhance the Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan*
- 07 Residential Parking**
- 08 Student Housing and Social Spaces*
- 09 Transforming the Farmers' Market 🍷
- 10 Recalling and Celebrating Indigenous Culture & History** 🍷
- 11 Space for Artists and Community Groups**
- 12 Upgrade Mississauga Street 🍷
- 13 Public Art within the Public Realm** 🍷
- 14 Support Outdoor Dining** 🍷
- 15 Coordinate and Extend Shopping Hours*
- 16 Enhance Key Passageways and Alleyways** 🍷
- 17 Improve Active Transportation Connections 🍷
- 18 Coldwater and Colborne Streetscape Improvements
- 19 Additional Street Trees
- 20 Transit Connections to and within Downtown*
- 21 Multi-purpose Recreation Hub 🍷
- 22 Improve Veterans' Memorial Park
- 23 Develop a 'Sports Court' Plan* 🍷
- 24 Develop an Ecological Restoration Plan for the Rexton Lands
- 25 Redesign Library Square
- 26 Build a Dog Park at the Orillia Recreation Centre
- 27 Attract a New Hotel**
- 28 Develop a Four-Seasons Tourism Strategy* 🍷
- 29 Implement Seasonal GO Bus Service* 🍷
- 30 Expand and Enhance Wayfinding*
- 31 Beautify Downtown with Tactical Urbanism**

* Not shown on map

** Multiple potential locations

🍷 Considered a top priority by the public





1/ Facilitate the development of affordable housing Downtown

As the population of Downtown Orillia grows, it is critical to ensure that living Downtown continues to be attainable for people of all socio-economic backgrounds. Housing affordability has become a pressing issue impacting communities of all sizes across Canada, including Orillia. The City should commit to playing an active role in facilitating the development of affordable housing.

The City should leverage publicly owned land for the creation of affordable housing. By undertaking a review of publicly owned assets, including vacant and underutilized lands and buildings, the City can identify strategic opportunities to increase affordable rental housing through the creation of mixed-income communities in partnership with non-profit and private developers.

Where suitable properties are identified, the City should retain a consultant team to prepare development concepts that optimize the sites for redevelopment while still being contextually appropriate. Development concepts can provide the basis of City-initiated rezonings that prepare sites for conditional sales or long-term leases. Pre-zoning amplifies the City's contribution towards the creation of affordable housing. By advancing projects through a critical stage of the development approvals process, the City can create market-ready development opportunities that reduce risk for development partners and speed up construction and occupancy. At the same time, efforts to fast-track the delivery of affordable housing should result in high-quality housing that is adequate and safe for future residents and located in safe and suitable locations in order to improve quality of life and avoid reinforcing social inequalities. It will also be vital to engage a market consultant to inform a financial plan that makes sense to the development community, and which takes into consideration

the range of incentives and other financial resources available from the City of Orillia and CMHC. Where feasible, the City should retain ownership by providing long-term leases to development partners, or transfer ownership to a non-profit housing provider.

In addition to the Peter Street Bus Terminal site, municipally owned parking lots could also be redeveloped for mixed-income development, with municipal parking replaced in underground parking garages, behind buildings, or in above-ground parking structures enclosed within the building.

Through the City's review of publicly owned assets, there may be smaller properties that the City could simply dispose of to create larger, more practical sites for development by joining a property with an adjacent privately owned property. The sale of public lands for redevelopment should be tied to a commitment from the developer to provide a significant amount affordable housing as part of the new development, and to redevelop the site within a prescribed timeframe.

In other instances, the City should consider strategic acquisition of lands to facilitate redevelopment that includes a significant affordable housing component while achieving other city-building objectives, such as public realm improvements or public art.



Figure 42. Example of modular supportive housing.

2/ Facilitate infill development in the Downtown core

Along Mississaga Street, Colborne Street and other streets in the core of Downtown, there are smaller-scale redevelopment sites that are highly strategic from a city-building perspective. Redevelopment of these sites would not just add new housing and commercial space in the Downtown core, but would help to repair the urban fabric, reinforce key intersections, enhance connectivity to the waterfront, and enliven adjacent streets, all contributing to a better image of Downtown.

As an initial step, the City should engage with the owners of strategic infill properties to understand their longer-term development plans, if any. The City could prepare a “Developer Guide” which includes highlights of key trends and data related to local development opportunities (e.g., population growth, student enrollment projections, remote working, vacancy rates, average housing costs), and profiles of available development opportunities (e.g., lot sites, land use designations and zoning permissions, applicable incentives). The Developer Guide could be circulated to active developers in the region for consideration.

The City may also take a more active role in facilitating the redevelopment of infill sites that are particularly strategic by acquiring and pre-zoning properties to set up a competitive RFP process. The City can use its stake to ensure that the redevelopment of infill sites not only achieves built form objectives but also provides other public benefits, such as affordable housing, public parking or streetscape improvements.



Figure 43. Beyond Mississaga Street, active ground floor uses are not necessary at all locations. New development should be compatible with the scale of the surrounding context.



Figure 44. New infill development along Mississaga Street should match the scale and character of existing buildings and provide active ground floor uses to contribute to the street’s animation.

3/ Facilitate redevelopment and intensification in South Downtown

While there are strategic short-term opportunities for new infill development in the historic core, the former industrial lands in South Downtown, the area generally south of Elgin Street, could be redeveloped over time in a more comprehensive manner and contribute significantly to the creation of new mixed-income housing.

South Downtown is characterized by large, vacant parcels of land and a mix of commercial and industrial uses. Unlike the historic core of Orillia, there are few sensitive uses in South Downtown such as low-rise housing, existing parks, or historic buildings that would typically require new development to be compatible in its form and scale, resulting in lower buildings heights and densities. This area, therefore, is an appropriate location for greater building heights and a key opportunity to intensify Downtown Orillia. As a previously industrial area, some properties in South Downtown may be environmentally contaminated and will require environmental remediation prior to redevelopment for residential or commercial uses, which adds significantly to the cost of redevelopment; additional building heights and densities may be necessary to make redevelopment feasible and unlock the potential of this area.

In the short term, the City can take one of two approaches to encouraging redevelopment in South Downtown:

- **Initiate a secondary plan for the area** to identify a structure of streets, blocks and open spaces, establish built form parameters, and develop a detailed implementation strategy. This would be followed by zoning amendments in line with the secondary plan.
- **Amend the Official Plan to permit intensification as recommended in this Plan**, as outlined in Section 4. The amendment should require master plans for each major block in the area to guide the development of individual buildings, infrastructure and public realm improvements. This could be followed by zoning by-law amendments aligned with the new policies but with a holding symbol to ensure appropriate studies, including block structure plans, are submitted with site plans and plans of subdivision.
- **Putting in place the infrastructure and public realm improvements needed to service and attract development.** This is a strategy pursued by many municipalities seeking to transform post-industrial areas – building parks, streets, and other infrastructure that add value to the lands and make them development-ready. The City has taken this approach along the waterfront, with the reconfiguration of Lightfoot Drive and extension of Coldwater Street. In South Downtown, this could entail implementing an improved streetscape along West Street between Mississauga Street and Cochrane Street, beginning with improved sidewalks and street trees. The upgrading of Queen Street and improvements to the adjacent drainage feature should also be considered. Streetscape improvements for the block bound by Colborne Street, West Street, Barrie Road, and Andrew Street should also

Beyond updating the Official Plan and zoning, the City's role in facilitating redevelopment and intensification in South Downtown could include some or all of the following:



Figure 45. South Downtown is an appropriate location for taller buildings given the limited existing context.

be considered priority. These improvements would set the groundwork for redevelopment and also have an immediate impact by improving pedestrian connectivity between Downtown, the municipal parking lot, and the residential neighbourhood to the west.

- **Enhance the Community Improvement Program.** The added cost of risk assessment and remediation work is a significant barrier to the redevelopment of former industrial lands. The City should consider increasing the overall funding allocation of the Feasibility/Design Study Grant Program (under which environmental studies are eligible) as well as the maximum grant amount per property (see [Strategic Initiative 6](#)).
- **Leverage other tools to incentivize development.** Either as part of or in addition to their Community Improvement Programs, other municipalities have developed tax assistance programs or development charge grant programs to offset the costs associated with site investment and remediation. Under a tax assistance program, the City could cancel municipal property taxes and education property taxes for a determined period, or provide grants to offset the increase in tax assessments. Under a development charge grant program, the City may provide grants equivalent to the required development charges under the Development Charges Act.

There are known stormwater management challenges along Queen Street, which in the past have resulted in flooding during major weather events. The redevelopment of South Downtown is an opportunity to address these challenges comprehensively. Stormwater management solutions should be considered as part of a secondary plan for South Downtown and through the detailed planning of new development in the area. More generally, redevelopment in South Downtown should embrace nature-based design features such as permeable surfaces, rain gardens, green roofs, and new parks and open spaces that integrate stormwater management features into the landscape design.

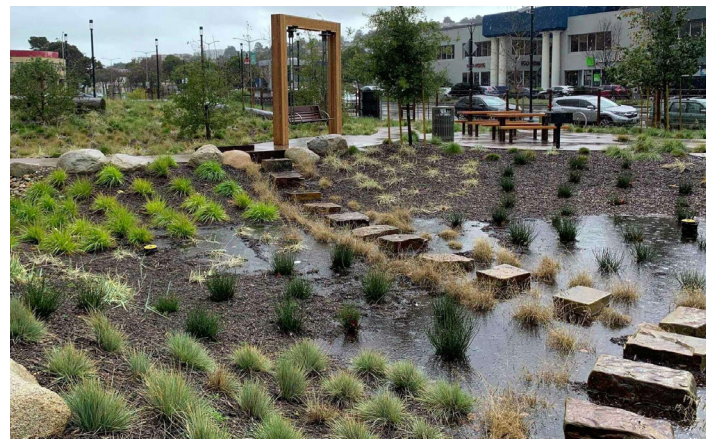


Figure 47. Parks and open spaces can be designed as green infrastructure to allow for the short-term storage of stormwater.



Figure 46. New housing should take a variety of forms to meet the needs of different households and lifestyles.



Figure 48. A bird's eye view of the new South Downtown neighbourhood.

4/ Continue the extension of Lightfoot Drive southward

The recent realignment and upgrades to Lightfoot Drive between Canice Street and Mississaga Street establish Lightfoot Drive as more complete and attractive waterfront street. The extension of Coldwater Street to intersect with Lightfoot Drive was also implemented as part of this project, further strengthening connectivity between Downtown and the waterfront. In addition to its role as a waterfront boulevard, Lightfoot Drive will also provide an attractive setting for new development.

Lightfoot Drive currently terminates at Mississaga Street. Veterans' Way, a municipal parking lot that is used informally as a local road, extends between Mississaga Street and Elgin Street. The City should continue to extend Lightfoot Drive southward to connect to Elgin Street to create an attractive, multi-modal boulevard along the entire Downtown waterfront. As part of this initiative, an extension of Colborne Street to intersect with Lightfoot Drive should also be provided to improve connectivity to the waterfront.

This two-block extension of Lightfoot Drive will likely need to be implemented in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Legion Block since the Legion building is within the area that would be required for the new right-of-way. The Legion Block is a priority for redevelopment given its potential to complete the transformation of the bottom of Mississaga Street and improve connections between Downtown and the waterfront. Therefore, the City should consider initiating an environmental assessment of the extension in due course.

The need to extend Lightfoot Drive beyond Elgin Street will depend in part on the outcomes of the Natural Heritage System Study for the Rexton Lands (see [Strategic Initiative 24](#)). Through this study, it may be determined that portions of the site should not be redesignated as Environmental Protection Areas and instead are appropriate for mixed-use intensification. In this instance, an extension of Lightfoot Drive to Forest Avenue may be necessary for access, connectivity, and traffic management. At the appropriate time, the City should study the need for a further extension of Lightfoot Drive, which could be included in the scope of a secondary plan for South Downtown (see [Strategic Initiative 03](#)) or through a stand-alone transportation study.



Figure 49. Extending Lightfoot Drive will establish a framework for development and provide a continuous, multi-modal connection along the waterfront.

5/ When the OSMH relocates, work with the hospital and the Province to optimize the site for mixed use development that maintains a health services hub

Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is in the early stages of working with the Ontario Ministry of Health through the Ministry's capital planning process to replace the existing hospital. OSMH is one of the oldest hospitals in the region and operates above capacity due to increased demands from a growing population.

Due to the land requirements for a modern, large-scale healthcare facility to meet the needs of the community, it is expected that the new hospital will be developed on another site within the City of Orillia. As a major institutional employer and driver of activity, the potential relocation of the hospital from the Downtown core may have a significant economic impact. At the same time, the hospital's relocation is an opportunity to strategically reposition a large parcel of land at the top end of the city's main street. OSMH does not exist in isolation; it is surrounded by other complementary uses which may or may not relocate alongside the hospital, such as medical offices, pharmacies and laboratory services. Therefore, a broader rethink of the role of this area of Downtown would be required.

Although the hospital's potential relocation is well into the future, as planning proceeds, the City should take a proactive role in developing a vision for the existing site and surrounding area in collaboration with OSMH and the Ministry of Health. A first step will be to engage OSMH and health professionals with a stake in the site to discuss the facilities and services that should remain if the hospital relocates and what new facilities, services and complementary land uses should be considered. With an understanding of what a healthcare hub on the site could include, and might require in terms of parking, the City can then engage the broader community in a planning process to identify the range of uses that would be appropriate in the area and the form they could take within a network of streets, pathways and open spaces.



Figure 50. Redevelopment of the site should accommodate a broad range of housing as well as health care services, such as long-term care.

6/ Enhance the CIP programs that encourage brownfield redevelopment, upper-storey residential conversions, and facade improvements

Community improvement plans that offer a suite of financial incentives to stimulate building improvements and development generally can have a major impact on downtown revitalization. Orillia's Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan (DTCIP), adopted in 2016, has led to significant improvements to many buildings, including façade refreshes and interior renovations to create residential units. Building on the success of the current slate of financial incentives, the City should continue annual funding for this program and consider the following enhancements and modifications to recognize the impacts of inflation on construction projects as well as the positive impacts DTCIP-supported projects have on the Downtown economy and the City's long-term finances:

- Increase the total program budget and maximum grant amount for the Feasibility/Design Study Grant Program. The 2023 budget for this program was \$10,000 and the maximum grant amount is \$5,000, which may be adequate incentive to commission drawings of a façade improvement or upper floor renovations. To encourage feasibility studies for brownfield redevelopments, including phase II environmental assessments and risk assessments, which are costly, the maximum grant for these types of studies should be increased to \$15,000. To support more than one such study in a year, as well as design work for small-scale projects, the total program budget should be increased to \$40,000, at least on a trial basis.
- Increase the maximum grant amount for façade improvements from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and for façade improvements to designated heritage buildings to \$15,000. To support at least four grants each year, the total program budget should be increased to at least \$40,000. To ensure façade improvements reinforce Downtown's historic character, improvements should be approved for grants only if they maintain and do not conceal the original building materials, or replace them with something similar.
- Increase the maximum grant for building improvements from \$25,000 to \$30,000 and the total program budget to \$120,000.
- Given the need for housing, the Residential Type I Grant Program's total budget should be increased to at least \$120,000, and the maximum grant per property should be increased from \$30,000 to \$40,000.
- Allocate \$5,000 for improvements to privately owned passageways, which could include distinctive lighting, landscaping, decorative paving, and public art (see [Strategic Initiative 16](#)). Property owners along the passageway should be encouraged to cooperate in order to extend the improvements and maximize the overall private contribution.

In addition, to encourage the development of vacant or underutilized lands, particularly brownfield sites, the City should consider adopting one of the following programs, as generally outlined in the 2016 Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan:

- Brownfields Tax Assistance Program. This program would reduce or cancel municipal property taxes on a new development for up to three years. The education property tax could also be reduced or canceled subject to the approval of the Minister of Finance.
- Tax Increment Grant Program. Under this program, the increase in municipal property taxes resulting from a new development would be refunded annually, either at a consistent rate of 70% for ten years or a declining rate that starts at 90% and decreases by 10% each year. For developments involving the remediation of contaminated lands, the annual grant could be as high as 100% over a 10-12 year period.
- Similar programs to those above have been implemented successfully in several Ontario cities facing the challenge of redeveloping former industrial lands. The City of Guelph, for example, leveraged \$33 million in tax increment grants over a five-year period to attract more than ten times that amount in private investment. This has resulted in the remediation of 29 hectares of contaminated lands, the addition of 830 residential units, and an annual increase in the City's tax revenues of \$3.4 million.

The City should continue to promote the DTCIP and hold bi-annual information sessions to explain the eligible improvements, the resources that are available, and the overall process. The City should consider targeted, direct outreach to owners of properties that are notably derelict to encourage participation in the DTCIP, as improvements to such properties would have significant impact on the appearance of Downtown.



Figure 51. Facade improvements enhance the appearance of Downtown and can result in increased property tax revenues.

7/ Ensure an adequate supply of parking to support residential intensification

Downtown Orillia's grid pattern of streets and blocks and its compact mix of land uses make it generally easy to get around on foot. Many existing residents of the Downtown area, however, own and use cars either for their day-to-day activities or occasional travel to other parts of Orillia and beyond. The City should work with building owners and developers to ensure an adequate supply of parking to support residential intensification, as the lack of overnight parking may discourage some Orillians from choosing to live Downtown. The lack of available parking may also present an additional barrier to the creation of new housing in the Downtown core.

Actions to ensure an adequate supply of overnight parking could include acquiring new land and/or designating additional portions of existing municipal parking lots for overnight resident parking. Overnight resident parking lots or parking areas should be located in or close to the Downtown core. Where feasible, the City should consider installing covered structures to allow these parking spaces to be used throughout the year, including during snow removal periods. Covered structures could be designed to include solar panels. Additionally, the City should promote and encourage the use of the existing flexible parking regulations of the zoning by-law as development applications come forward.

To enhance the image of Downtown, improve the pedestrian experience and contribute to climate resilience, existing and new parking lots should:

- Be paved with permeable and heat-resistant materials.
- Include landscaping that provide shade, mitigates the heat island effect, and reduces stormwater runoff.
- Provide spaces for electric vehicles.
- Be well-lit.

New parking lots to support residential intensification will be located underground, at the rear of buildings, or above grade, wrapped with active uses.



Figure 53. Parking lots should be landscaped to reduce their impact on the public realm and to reduce stormwater runoff.



Figure 52. Covering more parking spaces in municipal lots and designating them for Downtown residents can help to alleviate the challenge of accommodating parking for rehabilitation projects.

8/ Work with Lakehead University, Georgian College, the DOBIA and landowners on strategies to bring more students Downtown

More than 3,000 students are enrolled at the Orillia campuses of Lakehead University and Georgian College, and both institutions aspire to continue growing. Post-secondary institutions can play a pivotal role in bolstering downtowns, especially in small and mid-sized cities. However, as both institutions are located on the outskirts of town, except Lakehead's facilities for its Faculty of Education at Heritage Place, their benefit to Downtown Orillia is less significant and direct.

The City should work with these institutions to bring more students Downtown, both as visitors and potentially as residents. As a short-term initiative, the DOBIA could work with student associations and local businesses to plan and promote events and programming that would draw students Downtown and showcase what Downtown has to offer. This should include activities during orientation week and others throughout the school year.

The City should also play a role in facilitating the development of student housing Downtown, which could include apartment-style housing delivered by the private sector, potentially in association with Georgian College and/or Lakehead University.

As more students choose to make Downtown their home, there may be demand for student amenity space, such as a social hub, which could be located within a new student housing development or in an existing building in the core. A social hub could provide self-service lounge space for getting together with friends and studying, as well as space that can be booked for events run by the student association or student clubs.

Improved transit connections to the campuses will be key to bringing more students Downtown to visit and live. The City should work with Orillia Transit and student associations to understand how transit services could be made more convenient for students, which could include adjustments to existing routes and schedules, or potentially an express shuttle offered by Orillia Transit or the institutions.



Figure 55. As Lakehead and Georgian continue to grow, there will be more demand for student housing. Better transit connections would make living Downtown more attractive to students.



Figure 54. Flexible student activity space for casual gathering and organized events could increase the student presence Downtown.

9/ Transform the Farmers' Market

As one of the longest-running farmers' markets in Ontario, the Orillia Farmers' Market is a major Downtown attraction and part of the City's cultural fabric. The Market supports local farmers, encourages healthy eating, fosters a sense of community, and draws people to Downtown, who may then visit and help sustain Downtown businesses.

The Market's new home at Orillia Public Library was purpose-built. However, after a temporary set-up in the parking lot at City Hall, some vendors chose not to return, and instead established the Orillia Fairgrounds Farmers' Market at ODAS Park. With vendors split between two markets, the Orillia Farmers' Market is seen as less dynamic and lively than it once was.

Efforts have already been underway for the past five years to attract new vendors and former vendors to the Orillia Farmers' Market to increase its vitality and reinforce its historic role in the city. These efforts could include working with the Orillia and District Arts Council to develop an Artisan Market as a secondary component. While this would expand the Market's draw, primary producers should continue to constitute the majority of vendors so as to maintain the Market's designation under the Farmers' Markets Ontario organization.

Initially, an expanded Orillia Farmers' Market can continue to be accommodated within Market Square. As demand warrants, the segment of West Street North between Mississauga Street and Coldwater Street could be temporarily closed to vehicular traffic using movable planters, allowing booths and other market activities to extend into the right-of-way.



Figure 56. An expanded Farmers' Market could spill out into Peter Street.

10/ Work with Indigenous peoples and organizations to identify opportunities to recall, acknowledge, and celebrate Indigenous culture and history

As opportunities for new public art, parks and open spaces, and other public realm improvements emerge through the implementation of this Plan and more generally, the City should meaningfully engage with Rama First Nation, urban First Nation peoples, Indigenous organizations, and other Indigenous peoples to reflect Indigenous culture and history through the design of public realm improvements, naming and interpretation.

As an immediate opportunity, the City should work with Rama First Nation and Saint James' Anglican Church to reinterpret the history of Chief William Yellowhead, as told on the Chief's headstone in the churchyard. This should include an accurate account of the band as the initial settler of Downtown Orillia, and the Europeans' efforts to force the band to relinquish their lands. Chief Yellowhead's burial site should be better marked to encourage passersby to learn about this history.

The City should also collaborate with First Nations peoples and organizations to develop a multi-media walking tour of Downtown Orillia to teach residents and visitors about Indigenous culture and history. QR codes would be prominently placed as significant locations around Downtown, linking to web-based content, which could include professionally produced audio, visual, and interpretative content.



Figure 57. Marker Trees are coaxed to grow at 90 degrees as a form of Indigenous navigation.

11/ Work with the Orillia & District Arts Council, the DOBIA, and property owners to make underutilized spaces available to artists and community groups

Arts and culture are intrinsic to the identity of Orillia. Public art adorns Mississaga Street, while the Orillia Museum of Art and History and Moose Factory of Orillia anchor the Peter Street Arts District, which features galleries, art supply stores, and other creative businesses. Arts and culture, in fact, contributes significantly to the local economy through the creation of jobs and through tourism.

The availability of suitable and affordable space is key to sustaining and expanding the role of arts and culture Downtown. The City should work with the Orillia & District Arts Council, the DOBIA and property owners to make underutilized spaces available to artists, under-resourced community groups, and pop-up / experimental retailers.

Renting studio space is cost-prohibitive for many artists and creative entrepreneurs, and committing to the long-term leases that commercial property owners typically require can also be a challenge. In some cases, property owners may choose to keep commercial spaces vacant to avoid the obligations that come with having tenants or to deduct rental losses from their taxes.

To overcome this conundrum, where there are vacant spaces despite there being demand, some communities and non-profits have taken on the role of brokering short-term license agreements between building owners and artists, which avoids the costs and obligations of conventional leases. While the tenant benefits from what is typically a cheaper rental rate over a shorter term, the building owner maintains the prospects of longer-term leases at market value. The building owner may also benefit from the natural surveillance and security that a tenant provides, lower insurance costs and potentially lower maintenance requirements.

As a pilot initiative, the City, DOBIA and Arts Council should coordinate to identify a supportive property owner and a local artist and negotiate a license agreement for the use of a vacant space. An upper floor of a building on Peter Street or Mississaga Street would be ideal for a pilot, but a space anywhere in or surrounding the Downtown core would be appropriate. If the pilot is a success and there is demand for studio space based on consultation with the Arts Council and local artists, the City should coordinate with the DOBIA to map vacant space suitable for short-term studios Downtown.

12/ Upgrade Mississaga Street 🍷

In 2019, the City prepared the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan to inform the future detailed design and reconstruction of Mississaga Street and key cross streets, which have begun to show signs of age and are in need of repair. An improved streetscape along Mississaga Street – the heart of Orillia – has several benefits: improving accessibility; promoting sustainability, climate resilience, and public health; creating an attractive setting for existing and new retail; and refreshing the character and image of Downtown. Following on the heels of the Lightfoot Drive project, the City should make the rebuilding of Mississaga Street, which will occur in phases, its highest priority major public realm project.

The Mississaga Street streetscape features mature trees that contribute to the street's strong sense of place and provide shade in the summer. Although the roots of these trees have caused the streetscape to “swell” in certain locations, existing trees should be retained, where feasible. Additionally, the detailed design of the streetscape should promote safety and comfort for people of all ages and abilities (e.g., ample lighting, benches, durable and slip-resistant materials, audible crosswalk signals) and reconsider additional opportunities to expand outdoor dining (see [Strategic Initiative 14](#)). Opportunities to include one or more prefabricated, self-cleaning public washrooms also should be considered, potentially on a north-south street at an intersection with Mississaga Street.



Figure 58. Short-term licenses for vacant commercial spaces were central to the revitalization of Hunter Street in Newcastle, Australia.

13/ Integrate public art into the design of streetscape and open space improvements 🍷

Public art shapes how we experience and enjoy the city in countless ways. Public art can teach and reinforce ideas around local history and culture, it can act as a landmark or wayfinding tool, it can encourage us to reflect, or it can simply be interesting to look at. More and more, public art is designed to be interactive, fulfilling its purpose when we climb it, touch it, sit on it or engage with it in some other way.

Orillia already stands out as a city that has embraced art in the public realm, especially along Mississauga Street. In collaboration with the Orillia and District Arts Council, the Art in Public Places Committee, and local artists, the City should continue to integrate public art into the design of streetscape and open space improvements. As the redesign of Mississauga Street advances through detailed design, opportunities to embed public art in paving, furnishings and intersection treatments should be considered.

Public art in less well-traveled places, such as passageways that connect Mississauga Street to surrounding parking areas, also can create unexpected moments of beauty and should be encouraged (see [Strategic Initiatives 6 and 16](#)). This could include vibrant murals and/or public art installation fixed to walls. Other priority locations for public art include along the waterfront and within new parks and open spaces that are developed to support the residential intensification of Downtown.

The extension of Coldwater Street through the former Front Street plaza revealed the large blank wall of the grocery store, which detracts from the pedestrian experience. The City should work with the property owner to encourage landscape improvements along the street that would soften the impact of the blank wall. The City should also encourage the blank wall to be used for a mural or other public art with lighting.

The City should continue to support public art per the Art in Public Places Strategic Plan, including the recommendations on funding sources. In particular, the City should consider allocating a portion of the budget for capital projects that involve public realm improvements to public art. Many municipalities allocate 1-2% towards public art.



Figure 59. Murals can bring much needed colour to a city, especially in the winter months.

14/ Continue to support outdoor dining 🍷

Initially implemented in the midst of the pandemic as a lifeline for Downtown businesses, Orillia's "See You on the Patio" program has been a tremendous success and continues to take place on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the summer, in coordination with street closures and live music. Given the power of patios to enliven Downtown streets, the City should continue to support outdoor dining. Working with the DOBIA, the City should gauge interest from Mississauga Street businesses in operating patios throughout the week during the summer months, either within the public boulevard where there is sufficient space or within on-street parking spaces. If there is sufficient interest, the City could develop simple guidelines for typical patio placements and configurations to ensure that patios are safe, accessible and attractive and don't obstruct pedestrian movement.

The City should also consider creating a publicly accessible outdoor patio area along Mississauga Street where people can enjoy take-out meals or simply hang out. The entrance to Municipal Lot #5 and adjacent laneway would be an ideal location for an outdoor dining area, as it is one of few gaps in the otherwise consistent urban fabric between Andrew Street and Front Street. The laneway adjacent to the Plum Loco store could be partially closed if access to the buildings at the rear could be provided from Lot #5. With the elimination of four to five parking spaces on the west side of the lot, this would create enough space for an outdoor dining area with artificial turf grass, picnic tables with umbrellas, trees within planter pots, garbage receptacles, and ambient lighting. A permanent condition could be implemented with the planned upgrades to Mississauga Street.



Figure 60. Artificial turf, picnic tables, and umbrellas is a low-cost way to test a public improvement project before investing in permanent infrastructure.

15/ Coordinate and extend shopping hours

The opening and closing times of businesses in Downtown Orillia vary widely. While some business owners set limited store hours to suit their lifestyle, others may wish to extend their hours but struggle to find and retain staff. Greater consistency in store hours will help attract and retain regular shoppers and promote casual shopping that will benefit Downtown businesses broadly. A main street with unpredictable and uncoordinated store hours will struggle to compete with shopping centres and big box stores where opening and closing hours are predictable and consistent.

The DOBIA should work with Downtown merchants to convey the impact and collective benefit of longer, coordinated store hours. This could include inviting store owners who do stay open later in the evening to speak to how it has benefitted their businesses. Ultimately, the DOBIA should aim to have store owners commit to staying open until 9:00 p.m. at least one night per week, and until 6:00 p.m. on the remaining weekday evenings.

Additionally, the DOBIA should encourage business owners to extend their store hours during special events. The City should regularly update the DOBIA on upcoming events and, where possible, communicate the anticipated economic impact in order to highlight the opportunity.

The DOBIA should also consider implementing a marketing strategy aimed at recruiting new businesses that, by their nature, draw people in the evenings, such as restaurants and bars. Such businesses will contribute to more foot traffic spread throughout the day, which may encourage business owners to stay open later.

The DOBIA should also work with the student services departments at Georgian College and Lakehead University to promote available job opportunities at Downtown businesses. This would also expose more post-secondary students to Downtown's offerings and encourage them to spend more time Downtown.



Figure 61. Public art, ambient lighting, and seating can transform passageways into new public spaces.

16/ Enhance key passageways and other connections to parking lots

Many of Downtown's municipal parking lots are linked to Mississauga Street by pedestrian or vehicular passageways. Passageways are often forgotten spaces in the urban environment and sometimes perceived as unsafe. In Downtown Orillia, narrow, poorly lit passageways dissuade pedestrians from using them to access the municipal parking lots located off Mississauga Street, which contributes to a perception of a lack of parking.

With some care and investment, passageways can be transformed into important components of the public realm network to not only increase walkability, but to also create distinctive experiences not offered elsewhere in the city. As Downtown's passageways vary in width, scale, and function, the necessary improvements and opportunities for placemaking will also vary. Beginning with City-owned passageways that connect to municipal parking lots, the City, working in partnership with DOBIA, should consider the following enhancements:

- **Naming and marking passageways.** Many of Downtown's passageways are signed with "Walkway to P". Working with a committee, the City should develop names for Downtown's passageways and install identifying signs, suggesting they are more than just passageways.
- **Introducing lighting.** Where the objective is to deter potential crime and encourage pedestrian use, this could include pedestrian-scale wall lamps. At other locations, LED lights strung overhead can create a distinct ambiance. The City should consider developing a lighting/photometric plan for Downtown's alleys.
- **Installing public art.** Public art is typically located at prominent, highly visible locations where more people will have the opportunity to enjoy it. However, it can also be a pleasant surprise to come across art in an unexpected location like a passageway. The City should work with DOBIA and the Art in Public Places Committee to encourage public art within passageways. This could include murals, artwork affixed to buildings, artistic lighting installations or, depending on the width of passageway, sculptures situated in the passageway itself.
- **Introducing street furniture.** Benches or movable chairs and tables could be situated towards the opening of certain passageways to create rest areas along Mississauga Street.
- **Incorporating vegetation.** Adding plants is a quick and relatively low-cost approach to improving their appearance. In wider passageways, this could include plants in movable planter pots or boxes. In narrower passageways, planter boxes could be affixed to the walls of abutting buildings.

Enhancing privately owned passageways will require cooperation and coordination with property owners. The City should work with property owners to create easements that secure the City's interests in the property and public access to the passageways. This will allow the City to upgrade them to improve drainage, enhance their appearance and safety, and install lighting, public art, bicycle storage, benches, and other features. Successful improvements to City-owned passageways can be helpful to demonstrate the benefits of investing in these underutilized spaces within the Downtown.

17/ Improve active transportation connections to the Orillia Recreation Centre 🍷

Opened in 2020, the Orillia Recreation Centre is a new major destination and node of activity in the Downtown. Improvements to the cycling network recommended in the City's Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan that enhance connectivity to the Orillia Recreation Centre should be considered a top priority for funding and implementation. Specifically, this includes implementation of separated bike lanes along West Street, the most direct route between the north and south ends of the city, which also passes through the Downtown core, connects various schools and other community services and facilities, and intersects with other existing and potential cycling routes. As a key connection, this bike lane should be protected by a curb or other barrier to increase safety and encourage use by cyclists of all ages and levels of experience, as well as scooter riders and people using mobility devices.

Intensification in South Downtown (see [Strategic Initiative 3](#)) provides further rationale for prioritizing this component of the cycling network. An ecological restoration and public access plan for the Rexton Property and adjacent train station site (see [Strategic Initiative 24](#)) will create additional opportunities for more direct cycling connections between the ORC and the waterfront. Bicycle parking hubs should be built in a prominent location near the building's entrance to offer secure and covered parking. Similar structures could be provided at other key nodes in the Downtown.



Figure 62. Ample secure and covered parking encourages people to get around by bike.

18/ Enhance the Colborne Street and Coldwater Street streetscapes as development comes forward

Coldwater and Coldwater Streets have assumed a service-oriented and thru-traffic function. They have wider roadways and provide frequent access points to parking lots; as a result, they are not very pleasant streets to walk along. As key places of arrival in Downtown and direct connections to the waterfront, they should be made more attractive, inviting, safe, and accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

Wholesale improvements like those planned for Mississaga Street are not feasible or necessary on Coldwater Street and Colborne Street. Since they are bordered by several vacant or underutilized properties, the City should seek to implement streetscape improvements incrementally as applications for new developments come forward, with the City stepping in to fill gaps, particularly across public lands. Streetscape improvements should include a wider boulevard to accommodate trees and landscaping (featuring native and climate resilient species with large shade canopies), benches and other street furniture. New development may need to be set back from the property line to provide sufficient space for the various components of an attractive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The need for improvements at intersections to increase pedestrian safety should also be considered (e.g., curb bump-outs, new crosswalks, or signalized intersections). Coldwater Road is an important active transportation connection into Downtown from the neighbourhoods to the northwest. The City should consider upgrading the separated bike lane as a protected bike lane to increase comfort and safety for users of all ages and riding abilities.



Figure 63. Incremental streetscape improvements will transform Colborne Street and Coldwater Road from service corridors to proper components of the pedestrian network.

19/ Plant additional trees on neighbourhood streets

As the City moves forward with comprehensive streetscape improvements to Mississaga Street (see [Strategic Initiative 12](#)) and incremental improvements on Colborne Street and Coldwater Street, ongoing tree planting along secondary streets should also be pursued through the City of Orillia Tree Program. In addition to making streets more attractive and pedestrian-friendly, street trees have an enormous benefit to public health and the environment by providing shade and mitigating the urban heat island effect, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving stormwater management, and creating natural habitats. Simply planting additional trees within the existing streetscapes of streets such as Elgin, Victoria, Albert, Peter and Matchedash would improve the image and character of the neighbourhoods they traverse and Downtown overall. The City should work with Simcoe Muskoka Health District Unit to identify other priority areas for strategic planting (e.g., neighbourhoods experiencing unequal risks to health hazards due to limited tree canopy and lower socio-economic status).

New street tree planting can be implemented on a block-by-block basis (rather than along the length of a street) in order to maximize the impacts on a neighbourhood. New street trees should be planted with sufficient soil to ensure full canopy growth, and native and climate resilient species that provide good shade coverage should be prioritized.

The City should consider expanding community participation in the Tree Program as a way to build community. This could include an educational component to teach citizens how to care for new trees in order to ensure the health of new trees and reduce the City's maintenance burden.



Figure 64. Street trees have enormous value.

20/ Improve transit connections to and within Downtown

Most Orillians visiting Downtown arrive by car. While Orillia Transit's bus routes provide service to all corners of the municipality, it is challenging for public transit to compete with the convenience that a private vehicle offers: the ability to travel on your own schedule and arrive directly to your destination. At the same time, people's preference to get around by car can deter them from venturing Downtown at all. For example, there is a perceived lack of parking in Downtown Orillia, which results in many people choosing to shop instead at the mall and big box stores where finding parking is more certain. Other people may wish to visit Downtown but are unable to leave their vehicle parked overnight if they have a few drinks with dinner. The City should explore options to improve transit connections to encourage higher visitation from Orillians living beyond the Downtown. This could include some or all of the strategies below.

- **Extending transit services later into the evening.** The final departure time for Orillia's bus routes is 10:15pm on Fridays and 7:45pm on Saturdays. Transit is not a reliable option for people hoping to enjoy an evening Downtown. The City should explore the feasibility of extending transit services later into the evening on these nights, with final departures at midnight, at least. Late-night service could be offered as a pilot project through the summer months and/or coordinated with special events (e.g., "See You on the Patio") before being extended, if successful. The City should coordinate with the DOBIA to encourage Downtown businesses to develop special programming when late night service is running (e.g., trivia nights, special menus, live music).
- **Pilot the Downtown Loop.** Orillia's bus routes provide service between the Downtown Terminal and the outlying residential areas; there is no bus route that provides service throughout Downtown. A Downtown Loop could connect key destinations – the Hospital, the Library, the Opera House, the Waterfront, and Orillia Recreation Centre, and the future Peter Street Bus Terminal – to the benefit of Downtown residents, Orillians visiting Downtown and tourists.
- **On-Demand Service.** The City should also explore the feasibility of on-demand bus service. This service should be technology-enabled (e.g., operated through an app) to ensure flexibility and efficiency in the service and to provide an easy and intuitive user experience that encourages uptake.
- **Special Event Shuttle Buses.** During special events, the City should offer free direct shuttle bus service between central hubs in Orillia's outlying residential areas to the Downtown, allowing people to "park-and-ride" or leave their cars at home altogether. During events that are geared towards students or younger people generally, direct shuttle bus service could be provided from Georgian College and Lakehead University.
- **Improved Regional Connections.** Simcoe County's LINX service connects Orillia to Barrie and Midland, but these routes bypass Downtown. The City should work with the County to modify these routes to include Downtown.

Shifting people's travel behavior takes significant time and effort. When implementing transit improvements, the City should allow sufficient time for new services to catch on before determining whether they are successful. Marketing new transit services and coordinating them with major events and activities will be critical.

21/ Build on the Waterfront Centre to create a multi-purpose recreation hub 🍷

Built in 2017 to replace the previous port building that was destroyed by fire, the Orillia Waterfront Centre is a distinctive building serving the transient marina and containing a public lounge. The Waterfront Centre has the potential to become a bigger anchor along the waterfront. While the building has a strong, attractive presence along Lake Couchiching, its west facade, along Lightfoot Drive, could be improved.

With an addition at the rear of the building and outdoor gathering space, the Waterfront Centre could become a community and recreation hub. Programming and events at an expanded Waterfront Centre could also spill into the planned civic square at the intersection of Mississauga Street and Lightfoot Drive.

To become a destination even in the winter months, a significant winter recreation feature is necessary, alongside supporting amenities that make being out in the cold enjoyable.

The expanded Waterfront Centre could include some or all of the following elements:

- Equipment rentals, complementing the existing offering Couchiching Beach, which could include bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, and inline/ice skates.
- An information centre for long-distance trail users with maps of the regional trail network and ideas for what they can see and do on their stop in Orillia.
- A covered bicycle parking area with secure bike parking, a repair station, and e-bike charging stations.
- A snack bar or café with seating.
- Winter recreation amenities, which could include a skating rink or a skate trail, as envisioned in the Port Area Public Realm Plan, for which there is a tender-ready plan. An ice surface for "crokicurl", combining curling and crokinol, would also create a unique draw.

- A warm change room to support winter recreation, for which there is a tender-ready plan. As an extension of the existing building, the change room would create a more attractive frontage along the redesigned Lightfoot Drive.
- An outdoor warming station. A large fire pit or chiminea would act as the focal point of a new gathering place adjacent to the Waterfront Centre to support winter activities.
- An event space. A second storey on the addition would allow for a rentable community space overlooking the lake, much larger than the existing lounge. This space could also be used to host more youth programming in the downtown to supplement the Youth Centre, with creative programming offered in addition to recreational programming.
- A distinctive lighting and public art strategy that incorporates interactive elements (see [Strategic Initiative 28](#)).
- A community kitchen, which could be used for events and for community programming (e.g., programs that promote food skills, healthy eating, and cultural exchange).
- Interpretative displays, which could include information about Orillia's history, Indigenous history and culture, such as the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs, or renowned Orillians.

As an alternative to a building expansion, an outdoor recreation hub could provide wayfinding, bike lock-ups, a shade structure, outdoor gathering spaces and picnic areas, and public art. This could be designed to enhance the building's west elevation.

The City should undertake a focused study involving internal and external stakeholders and the public to understand the uses and programming that an expanded building or outdoor recreation hub should accommodate.

Figure 65. Enhancing the Waterfront Centre as a multi-purpose recreational hub would encourage healthy and active living throughout the year and create a waypoint along the Millennium Trail.



22/ Improve Veterans' Memorial Park

Veterans' Memorial Park, situated along the waterfront between Mississauga Street and Colborne Street, is an attractive public space to pass through or stop for a moment to view the lake. To make the park a place to linger and access the lake, the City should develop and implement a plan to effectively extend the park north to the pier at the foot of Mississauga Street with a landscape that allows people to step down to the lake. Such a feature, at the edge of the proposed civic square where Mississauga Street meets Lightfoot Drive, would allow people to touch and enter the water, which is difficult and unsafe with the large stones along the existing shoreline. The extended park would also be an ideal location for a kayak launch, or potentially a swimming area for dogs.



Figure 66. Steps down to Lake Couchiching can provide a new opportunity for people to directly interact with the water.

23/ Develop and implement a “sports court plan” for Downtown

As the population of Downtown Orillia continues to grow, additional opportunities for recreation will be required to promote healthy and active living and to make life Downtown desirable for people of all ages, abilities, and interests. Accommodating sports fields Downtown for baseball, soccer or cricket is unnecessary, but, building on the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan (PRCMP), the City should develop a “sports court plan” to identify sites for outdoor recreation facilities that are not land-consumptive, namely basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts.

The ORC site has the potential to accommodate some outdoor facilities, including one or more basketball courts (and will be home to a skateboard park). Centrally located facilities will bring more life to the Downtown core and give teenagers an outlet for their energy and places to socialize across three seasons. The City should continue to invest in the ORC site, and should consider undertaking a study to evaluate the impact of expanded facilities at the ORC, including sports courts and a dog park (see [Strategic Initiative 26](#)), in terms of the costs and complexities of brownfield development.

Beyond, the ORC site, sports courts could be provided on other City-owned lands, which could include the conversion of a portion of a municipal parking lot for such purposes. Small-scale recreation facilities dispersed across the Downtown will complement centralized facilities at the ORC to promote equitable access to recreation opportunities. The noise impact of sports courts, particularly pickleball courts, should be considered when choosing potential locations.

Where feasible, water-filling stations, shade structures, seating, and bicycle parking should be provided at sports courts.

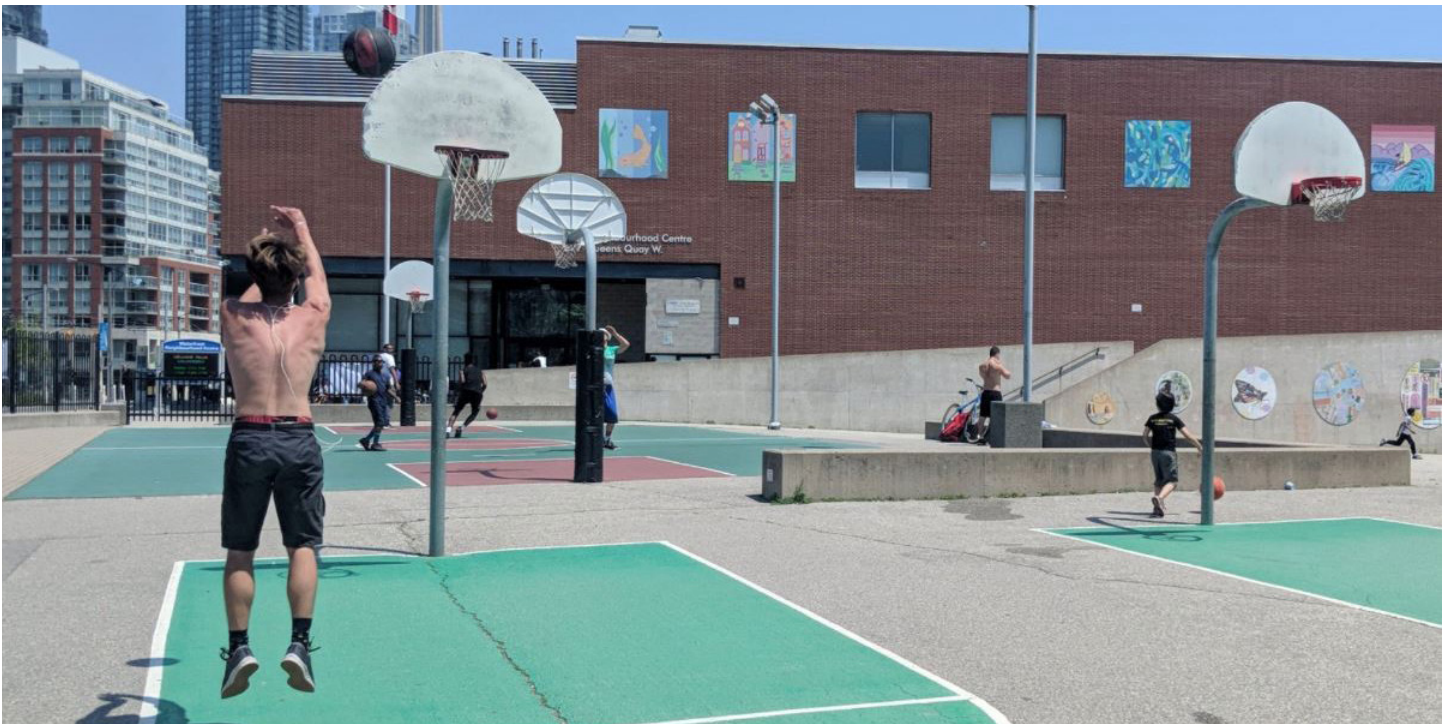


Figure 67. New sports courts can enhance access to recreation across the Downtown.

24/ Develop an ecological restoration and public access plan for the Rexton Property

The Rexton Property is one of only a few large tracts of land remaining in Downtown Orillia. As part of its Official Plan Review, the City is undertaking a Natural Heritage System Evaluation Study, which will consider whether the Rexton Property or a portion of it contains natural heritage features or functions that should be protected and enhanced.

If through this process the Rexton Property is redesignated as an Environmental Protection Area or other open space designation, the City should acquire the land or secure use agreements to develop it as a nature park, providing an opportunity to significantly expand the urban forest canopy and create a new destination in the Downtown that can be designed to appeal to residents of all ages, abilities, and interests. Depending on the extent of the property's redesignation, a park at this location could become a strategic link in the city's overall network of parks and open spaces, facilitating connections between Veterans' Memorial Park, Pumpkin Bay, and the residential neighbourhoods along the waterfront and south of Atherley Road.

The City should develop a plan for the future park, which should prioritize naturalization and habitat restoration to protect and enhance natural features while identifying areas for public access via lookouts, trails and boardwalks. Where trails are appropriate, they should be accessible and connect as directly as possible to the surrounding network of streets and trails. Amenities within the park could include benches, picnic shelters, natural playgrounds and exercise areas, and a community garden, if environmental conditions allow. Open space for lawn sports like disc golf could be considered. The nature park should also provide educational opportunities and experiences, which could include interpretative panels and public art that tell stories of Orillia's Indigenous history, industrial past, and environmental restoration.

Through the Natural Heritage System Study, it may be determined that portions of the Rexton Property should not be redesignated as Environmental Protection Areas and instead are appropriate for mixed use intensification. In this case, the City should work with the landowner to establish development parameters for the remaining portion of the property to optimize its development potential, while ensuring compatibility with the surroundings. Depending on the location of any developable land within the Rexton Property, the City should assess the need to continue extending Lightfoot Drive southward towards Forest Avenue.



Figure 69. Interpretative panels can provide insight into local ecology or tell Orillia's Indigenous history and industrial past.

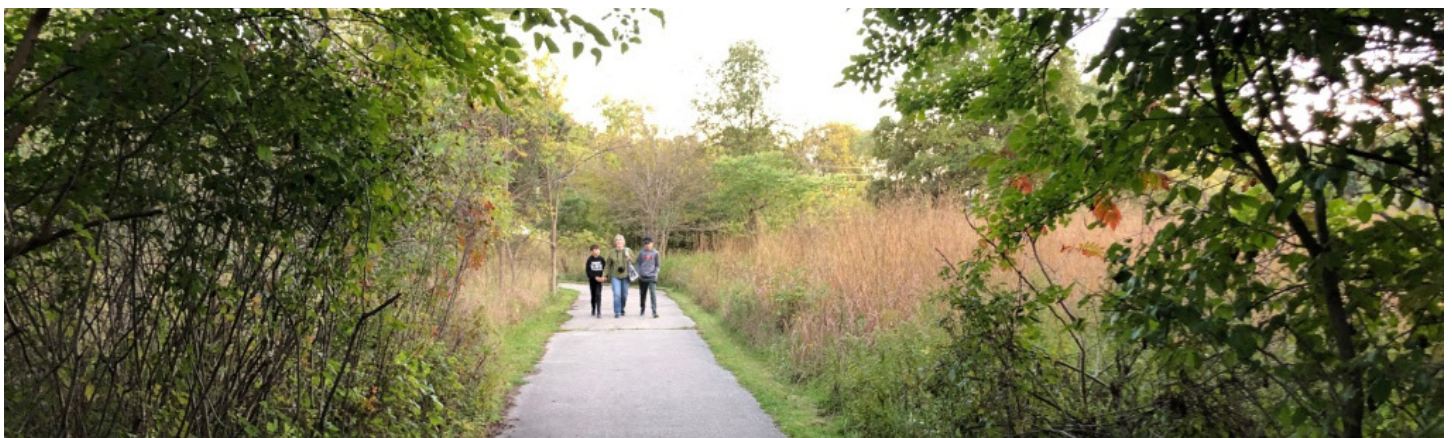


Figure 68. An urban nature park would offer a new experience and form of recreation in the Downtown.

25/ Redesign Library Square and improve its interface with Mississauga Street

Library Square is a relatively recent addition to Downtown's network of parks and open spaces. Tucked between the historic Opera House and the Orillia Public Library, the Square provides a tranquil setting for passive enjoyment – reading a book, having lunch or people-watching.

Usage of the Square is limited by its complicated interface with Mississauga Street, which is the result of grade changes between the Square and the sidewalk below. The combination of ramps, steps, and retaining wall planters used to negotiate the grade changes also limits the permeability of the Square's frontage and its visibility from the street. The public art installations at the edge of the Square create additional physical and visual obstacles.

In the longer term, the Square's relationship with Mississauga Street should be redesigned with a focus on opening the Square up to the street below physically and visually, while maintaining accessibility for those using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Clearer sightlines into the Square and greater porosity would invite more people to enjoy this space, which in turn provides passive surveillance to this area. Where possible, existing trees should be retained.

The Square would also benefit from clearer intended uses. As part of the Square's redesign, the City should consult with the Library and Farmers' Market to understand how their programming and operations could temporarily spill out into the space and the requisite design requirements. More explicit functions, such as a permanent ping-pong table, signal how a space should be used, in turn encouraging more use.

26/ Build a dog park at the Orillia Recreation Centre

Approximately one-third of Canadian households own a dog, and according to the Canadian Animal Health Institute, this number will continue to grow. An off-leash dog park is an amenity that would make living Downtown attractive for more people and serve all Orillians. Beyond being an amenity for existing and future Downtown residents, dog parks encourage healthy living - for both people and pets - and help to minimize people-dog conflicts (and dog waste) in regular parks.

Foundry Park at Orillia Recreation Centre (ORC) is an optimal location for an off-leash dog park. This former brownfield site features capping and venting methodologies to contain the contaminants within the soil, which allowed the property to be transformed into a safe civic facility and naturalized area. The types of uses permitted at the rear of the ORC are limited to those that will not disturb these remediation features. An off-leash dog park could be designed in such a manner.

As a "destination" dog park, a dog park at the ORC could include more expansive and elaborate facilities that cannot be accommodated in smaller local parks. In time, as the Downtown pet population grows, a smaller dog park for day-to-day use could be developed as a component of new parkland.

The dog park should include amenities for human and dog safety, comfort and wellbeing, including a water station, benches, and natural or built shade features.



Figure 70. An improved relationship with Mississauga Street and more clearly defined uses would encourage more people to use Library Square.

27/ Attract a new hotel or other unique accommodations to the Downtown

There are limited options for accommodations in Downtown Orillia, especially relative to the range of sights and events that draw visitors. Most accommodations are located on the outskirts of the city where they have little economic spin-off for Downtown shops and restaurants. The recently built Orillia Recreation Centre, which has the capacity to host various sporting events throughout the year, renews the opportunity to attract a hotel to Downtown. The City should encourage developers and hotel operators to explore the potential for a hotel, ideally with meeting space and part of a mixed-use development, with the Legion Block being a prime site but not the only one.

Boutique hotels, particularly within heritage structures, can act as an attraction in and of themselves. The City should also encourage the rehabilitation of historic Downtown buildings as boutique hotels through the Downtown Tomorrow Community Improvement Plan's Feasibility/Design Study Grant Program and Building Improvement Grant Program. The City's role could also include fostering relationships between boutique hotel developers and the owners of potential buildings, such as the former Orillia Central Public School.

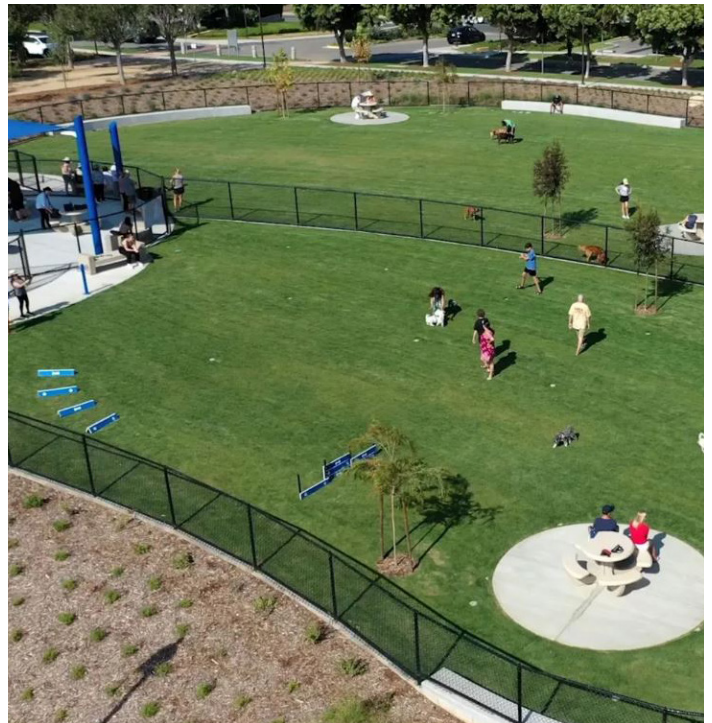


Figure 71. The dog park will be a destination for dog owners across the city and an amenity for future Downtown residents.



Figure 72. Downtown accommodations are limited, and visitors staying at hotels along the highway contribute less to the Downtown economy. A new hotel in the Downtown could be part of a new development along the waterfront or find a home in rehabilitated heritage building.

28/ Update and implement a four-season tourism strategy

In the summer months, Orillia draws visitors from across the region who come either to attend a special event or simply to enjoy the waterfront and Downtown's shops and restaurants. The City should work with Orillia and Lake Country Tourism and the DOBIA to develop a strategy to attract both out-of-town visitors and West Ridge residents to Downtown throughout the year. More tourism activity throughout the year will help sustain existing businesses and create demand for new ones.

The first step is to identify what Downtown offers visitors in the shoulder seasons and in winter and what new attractions should be considered, recognizing that nice restaurants and interesting shops likely will not be enough to grow off-season tourism. The potential for additional cultural events should be explored, including multi-day events that encourage overnight visitation. Permanent winter play facilities, like the proposed skate trail in Lightfoot Park or other casual activities, should be reconsidered. The modern facilities at the ORC also present an opportunity to expand the City's capacity for sports tourism, which can have a significant economic impact on Downtown, especially if it spurs development of a new hotel.

The City should implement public art installations that make being outside fun and enjoyable even in the cold. Creative lighting installations, which can change from year to year, can produce captivating scenes that draw people out. Active/interactive elements encourage people to stay longer and come back again.

Once the City's off-season offerings have been enhanced, a tourism marketing campaign aimed at positioning Orillia as a four-season destination will be the next step. The campaign should highlight both cultural and recreation attractions in the City while also promoting Downtown as a base from which to explore the broader region and its attractions, like Horseshoe Valley or ice fishing on Lake Couchiching.



Figure 73. Crokicurl, combining crokinole and curling, appeals to people of all ages. Lighting and fire pits can extend use into the evening.



Figure 74. Skating trails and ice surfaces draw families and youth and encourage people to stay active through the winter.

29/ Work with Metrolinx to implement seasonal GO Bus service to Orillia

Being less than two hours north of the fast-growing GTA and offering so many attractions, particularly in summer, Orillia has the potential to attract many more day and overnight visitors.

In recent years, Metrolinx has implemented seasonal services to popular destinations such as Canada's Wonderland and St. Jacob's Market. The City and Orillia and Lake Country Tourism should work with Metrolinx to establish a pilot project to test the viability of running seasonal service from Downtown Toronto to Downtown Orillia. Ideally, this service would run Friday evenings throughout the summer, returning on Sunday afternoons to encourage longer stays and more visitor spending. The City should also work with DOBIA to encourage more Downtown business owners and restaurateurs to stay open both evenings on the weekend while the service is running, or to provide special events and services, such as live music and tasting menus, that could be packaged and marketed to prospective visitors.

Depending on the success of this seasonal route, the City could work with Metrolinx to explore the feasibility of more regular service throughout the year.

30/ Continue to expand and enhance wayfinding

The City has recently implemented pedestrian-scale signage to direct visitors to Downtown attractions, such as the Opera House and the Museum of Art and History. A master plan for wayfinding along the waterfront has also been developed. The City should continue to expand wayfinding in the Downtown and along the waterfront, and improve this signage to indicate walk times. Expressing distance in this manner will encourage more people to explore Downtown Orillia by foot. When given a distance in metres or kilometres, many people tend to overestimate the walk time.



Figure 76. A consistent language of wayfinding with distance expressed in time makes getting around more intuitive.

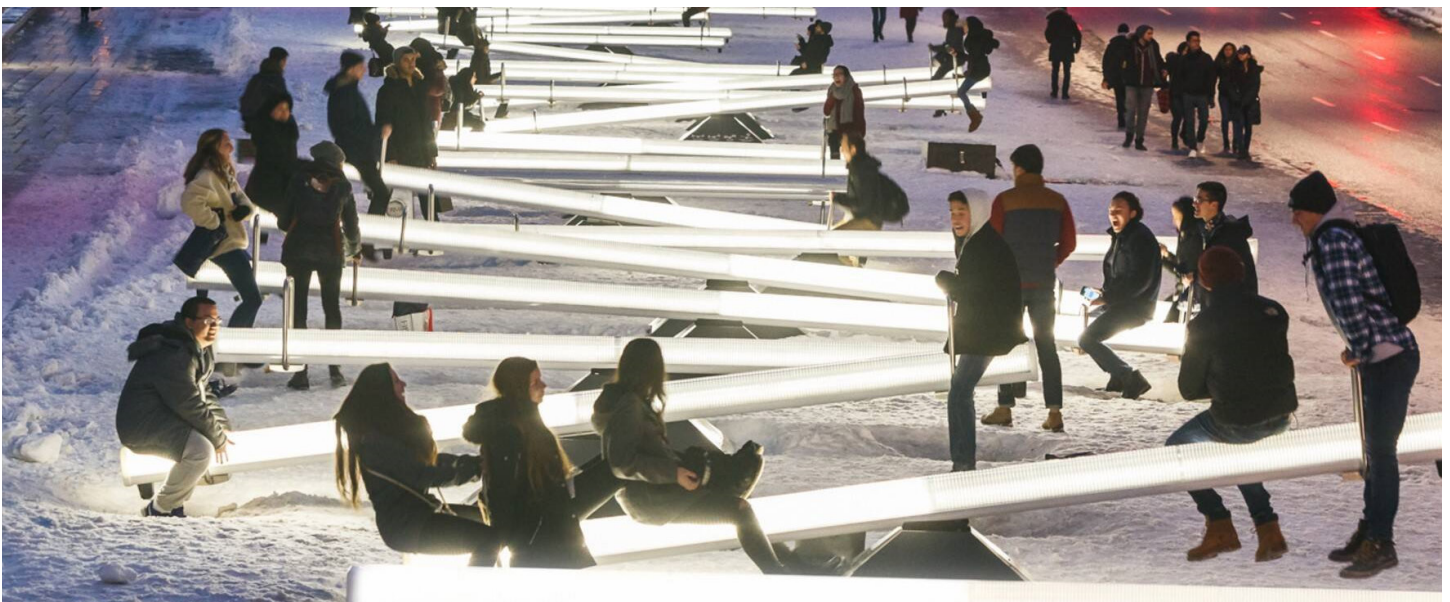


Figure 75. The combination of lighting and interactive elements creates a unique setting that makes people want to stay longer.

31/ Spice up Downtown and increase pedestrian safety with vibrant, low-cost streetscape improvements

The redesign of Mississauga Street and streetscape improvements along Colborne and Coldwater Streets will take time to implement as they rely on the availability of municipal funding and the timing of new development. In the interim, the DOBIA, with support from the City, can pursue low-cost, quick-to-implement, and sometimes temporary public realm improvements that still have the potential to substantially improve the appearance of Downtown and increase pedestrian safety.

Painted bump-outs, for example, can bring more colour to the urban environment while shortening pedestrian crossing distances and calming traffic. Suitable locations for this type of intervention include areas with high-pedestrian volumes such as major Downtown destinations and key intersections, as well as areas frequented by seniors and people with mobility issues, such as the Hospital Precinct. Painted bump-outs at the intersection of Mississauga Street and Peter Street would also reinforce the Peter Street Arts District by conveying that the intersection is the starting point of a unique place. Similarly, boldly painted crosswalks provide an opportunity to celebrate and honour diversity and inclusion in a way that raises drivers' awareness of pedestrians.

The City should also explore low-cost landscaping improvements that would add more vegetation to Downtown streets, especially those with few street trees. This could include movable, self-contained planter pots or boxes placed between the sidewalk and the curb or at the edges of public spaces and parking lots. In certain locations, the City should consider widening existing tree planting pits for additional perennial and annual plantings. The expanded tree pits should be bordered by new pavers, a low ornamental fence, or similar edge condition to define the planting area, but still allowing for stormwater runoff into the soil.



Figure 77. Brightly painted bump-outs signal to drivers that they must drive slowly and carefully.



Figure 78. The intersection of Peter Street and Mississauga Street is a prime location for colourful crosswalks and temporary bump-outs with seating that together highlight the Peter Street Arts District.

5.3 Alignment with the Goals

Many of the strategic initiatives advance more than one of the goals of the Downtown Tomorrow Plan.

	Initiative	Increase the Residential Population and Offer a Full Range of Housing Options	Reinforce Downtown as a Civic and Institutional Hub	Acknowledge Orillia's Indigenous History and Reinforce Its Cultural Richness	Enhance the Shopping and Dining Experience	Improve Connections Downtown and Enhance Safety	Create and Enhance Spaces for Playing, Gathering and Relaxing	Promote Orillia as a Year-round Destination and Enhance the Visitor Experience
01 	Facilitate the development of affordable housing Downtown							
02 	Facilitate infill development in the Downtown core							
03	Facilitate redevelopment and intensification in South Downtown							
04	Continue Extending Lightfoot Drive Southward							
05 	When the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital relocates, work with OSMH and the Province to optimize the site for mixed-use development that maintains a health services hub							
06	Enhance CIP programs that encourage brownfield redevelopment, upper storey residential conversions and façade improvements							
07	Ensure an adequate supply of parking to support residential intensification							
08	Work with Lakehead University, Georgian College, the DOBIA and landowners on strategies to bring more students Downtown							

 Considered top priority by the public

	Initiative	Increase the Residential Population and Offer a Full Range of Housing Options	Reinforce Downtown as a Civic and Institutional Hub	Acknowledge Orillia's Indigenous History and Reinforce Its Cultural Richness	Enhance the Shopping and Dining Experience	Improve Connections Downtown and Enhance Safety	Create and Enhance Spaces for Playing, Gathering and Relaxing	Promote Orillia as a Year-round Destination and Enhance the Visitor Experience
09 	Transform the Farmers' Market							
10 	Work with Indigenous peoples and organizations to identify opportunities to recall, acknowledge, and celebrate Indigenous culture and history							
11	Work with the Orillia and District Arts Council, the DOBIA and property owners to make underutilized spaces available to artists and community groups							
12 	Upgrade Mississauga Street							
13 	Integrate public art into the design of streetscape and open space improvements							
14 	Continue to support outdoor dining							
15 	Coordinate and extend shopping hours							
16 	Enhance key passageways and other connections to parking lots							
17 	Improve active transportation connections to the Orillia Recreation Centre							

	Initiative	Increase the Residential Population and Offer a Full Range of Housing Options	Reinforce Downtown as a Civic and Institutional Hub	Acknowledge Orillia's Indigenous History and Reinforce Its Cultural Richness	Enhance the Shopping and Dining Experience	Improve Connections Downtown and Enhance Safety	Create and Enhance Spaces for Playing, Gathering and Relaxing	Promote Orillia as a Year-round Destination and Enhance the Visitor Experience
18	Enhance the Colborne Street and Coldwater Street streetscapes as development comes forward							
19	Plant additional trees on neighbourhood streets							
20	Improve transit connections to and within Downtown							
21 	Build on the Waterfront Centre to create a multi-purpose recreation hub							
22	Extend and improve Veterans' Memorial Park							
23 	Develop and implement a "sports court plan" for Downtown							
24	Develop an ecological restoration and public access plan for the Rexton Property							
25	Redesign Library Square and improve its interface with Mississauga Street							
26	Build a dog park at the Orillia Recreation Centre							
27	Attract a new hotel or other unique accommodations to the Downtown							



Considered top priority by the public

	Initiative	Increase the Residential Population and Offer a Full Range of Housing Options	Reinforce Downtown as a Civic and Institutional Hub	Acknowledge Orillia's Indigenous History and Reinforce Its Cultural Richness	Enhance the Shopping and Dining Experience	Improve Connections Downtown and Enhance Safety	Create and Enhance Spaces for Playing, Gathering and Relaxing	Promote Orillia as a Year-round Destination and Enhance the Visitor Experience
28 	Update and implement a four-season tourism strategy							
29 	Work with Metrolinx to implement seasonal GO Bus service to Orillia							
30	Continue to expand and enhance wayfinding							
31	Spice up Downtown and increase pedestrian safety with vibrant, low-cost streetscape improvements							





Section 6

The Actions

Implementation of the Downtown Plan will require steady and coordinated actions by the City as well as other Downtown stakeholders. Ideally, the City would assign someone with the part-time responsibility of spearheading and coordinating implementation. This final section assigns a timeframe to each of the initiatives described in Section 5 and identifies “Priority Actions” associated with each. Section 6.2 recommends 12 Priority Actions to be undertaken in the next two years to maintain the ongoing revitalization of Downtown

6.1 Implementation Matrix

The Downtown Strategic Master Plan is a 20-year plan. It will take at least that long to fully realize the major changes that are proposed for Downtown, as reflected in the Focus Areas of the vision, including the extent of residential development and major public improvement projects. Transformative change can and should happen in the short term, and the planning for most longer-term projects should also begin early. Building momentum and maintaining excitement for change will be critical to the ongoing development of Downtown. Small successes make a difference and lead to bigger successes

The matrix on the following pages should be used to guide implementation of the plan. It should inform the City's capital plan and operations budget to ensure appropriate resources are allocated to each project, recognizing the proposed timeframes for planning, design and construction. For the purposes of identifying the relative magnitude of each initiative, dollar signs have been used to identify small initiatives whose costs should be in the tens of thousands of dollars, medium-sized initiatives that will likely cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and larger projects whose costs may be in the millions.

Since this section of the plan has a long-term focus, it should be reviewed and updated regularly to respond to current opportunities and challenges.

#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
01 	Facilitate the development of affordable housing Downtown				\$\$\$	- Review inventory of public lands in collaboration with other public agencies - Seek to acquire strategic properties - Facilitate discussions with landowners and developers to promote opportunities - Undertake development analysis to determine development program - Issue competitive RFP	- City - Planning - City - City - Business Development / Planning - City - Business Development / Planning - City
02 	Facilitate infill development in the Downtown core				\$\$\$	- Facilitate discussions with landowners and developers to understand development plans - Prepare Developers' Guide highlighting key trends, opportunities, and properties - Seek to acquire strategic properties and issue competitive RFP(s)	- City - Business Development / Planning - City - Business Development / Planning - City
03	Facilitate redevelopment and intensification in South Downtown				\$\$	- Facilitate discussions with landowners and developers to understand development plans - Review and Update CIP - Implement DOSIP (West Street improvements) and other streetscape improvements along key corridors - Update Official Plan or undertake secondary plan	- City - Business Development / Planning - City - Business Development / Planning - City - Engineering - City - Planning
04	Continue Extending Lightfoot Drive Southward				\$\$\$	- Initiate environmental assessment for first two blocks. - Study need for further extension through secondary plan for South Downtown.	- City - Engineering - City - Planning



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#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
05 	When the OSMH relocates, work with OSMH and the Province to optimize the site for mixed use development				\$	- Continue conversations with OSMH around future of site - Develop planning policy framework for site	- City Planning - OSMH / Ministry of Health
06	Enhance CIP programs that encourage brownfield redevelopment, upper storey residential conversions and façade improvements				\$\$	Update Community Improvement Plan programs and increase funding	- City - Planning - City - Economic Development
07	Ensure an adequate supply of parking to support residential intensification				\$\$	- Identify or develop areas for residential parking permits - Encourage use of zoning by-law's alternative parking standards - Improve the appearance of parking lots	- City - Legislative Services - City - Planning - City - Engineering
08	Work with Lakehead University, Georgian College, DOBIA, and landowners on strategies to bring more students Downtown				\$	Establish working group	- City - Planning - DOBIA - Lakehead University - Georgian College
09 	Transform the Farmers' Market				\$	- Engage with Farmers' Markets around future aspirations - Undertake pilot project to add arts and craft vendors to market	City - Business Development / Orillia Farmers' Market / Fairgrounds Farmers' Market

#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
10 	Work with Indigenous peoples and organizations to identify opportunities to recall, acknowledge, and celebrate Indigenous culture and history				\$	Work with Rama First Nation leaders, and other Indigenous Peoples and Organizations to identify opportunities to collaborate on city-building initiatives	City - Planning / Rama First Nation, Other Indigenous Peoples and Organizations
11	Work with the Orillia and District Arts Council, the DOBIA and property owners to make underutilized spaces available to artists and community groups				\$	Create an inventory of vacant spaces	DOBIA / City - Planning
12 	Upgrade Mississauga Street				\$\$\$	Implement the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project	City - Engineering
13 	Integrate public art into the design of streetscape and open space improvements				\$	Implement public art projects	City - Culture
14 	Continue to support outdoor dining				\$	- Continue "See You on the Patio" program - Implement public patio on Mississauga Street (Lot 5)	- City - Operations - City - Legislative Services
15 	Coordinate and extend shopping hours				\$	Coordinate shopping hours among DOBIA members	DOBIA

 Considered top priority by the public

#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
16 	Enhance key passageways and other connections to parking lots				\$	- Undertake process to name key lanes and passageways - Implement key passageway improvements	- City - Planning - City - Public Works / Private Landowners
17 	Improve active transportation connections to the Orillia Recreation Centre				\$\$	Implement the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project	City - Engineering
18	Enhance the Colborne Street and Coldwater Street streetscapes as development comes forward				\$\$	Implement streetscape improvements	City - Engineering
19	Plant additional trees on neighbourhood streets				\$	- Identify priority locations for street trees - Promote City's tree planting program	- City - Planning - City - Operations
20	Improve transit connections to and within Downtown				\$\$	Study feasibility of improvements to transit connections and implement pilot projects.	City - Transit
21 	Build on the Waterfront Centre to create a multi-purpose recreation hub				\$\$\$	Undertake study to determine potential uses and programming	City - Recreation
22	Extend and improve Veterans' Memorial Park				\$\$	Develop plan for park improvements	City - Parks Planning
23 	Develop and implement a "sports court plan" for Downtown				\$	- Identify potential sites for sports courts - Build 1-2 basketball courts	City - Parks Planning

#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
24	Develop an ecological restoration and public access plan for the Rexton Property				\$		City - Planning
25	Redesign Library Square and improve its interface with Mississaga Street				\$\$\$		City - Facilities
26	Build a dog park at the Orillia Recreation Centre				\$\$	Design and build dog park	City - Parks Planning
27	Attract a new hotel or other unique accommodation in the Downtown				\$\$\$	- Facilitate discussions with developers to promote opportunities - Update CIP	- City - Business Development / City Planning - City - Business Development / Planning
28 	Update and implement a four-season tourism strategy				\$\$\$	- Identify additional facilities and events needed to attract tourists year-round - Host more sporting events at the ORC	- City - Business Development / Orillia & Lake Country Tourism - City - Tourism

 Considered top priority by the public

#	Initiative	Timing (Years)			Magnitude	Priority Actions	Project Lead / Partnerships
		2-5	5-10	10+			
29 	Work with Metrolinx to implement seasonal GO Bus service to Orillia				\$	- Engage in discussions with Metrolinx around opportunity - Develop marketing strategy	- City - Business Development / City Planning - Metrolinx
30	Continue to expand and enhance wayfinding				\$		City - Operations and Communications
31	Spice up Downtown and increase pedestrian safety with vibrant, low-cost streetscape improvements				\$	Implement painted crosswalks and other tactical urbanism improvements	City - Business Development / Operations / Orillia & District Arts Council

6.2 15 Things to Do in the Next Two Years

Below are the **Top 15 Priority Actions** the City should pursue in the next two years to advance the strategic initiatives described in Section 5. Among these are “quick wins” - projects that have an immediate positive impact and build momentum and excitement - as well as actions to lay the groundwork for larger and more transformative longer-term initiatives.

- 1/ Develop a Downtown Real Estate Strategy that identifies properties the City should seek to acquire or dispose of to facilitate redevelopment (Initiatives 01, 02, and 03) 
- 2/ Update the Official Plan to permit higher-density residential development in South Downtown, or initiate a secondary plan (Initiative 03)
- 3/ Increase funding for existing CIP programs and initiate a tax assistance program to encourage brownfield redevelopment (Initiative 06)
- 4/ Develop a strategy to attract Lakehead and Georgian students Downtown, (Initiative 08)
- 5/ Expand the Farmers’ Market (Initiative 09) 
- 6/ Continue discussions with Rama First Nation and other Indigenous organizations and people and identify opportunities for collaboration (Initiative 10) 
- 7/ Coordinate and extend shopping hours (Initiative 15) 
- 8/ Plan and implement a demonstration passageway improvement on a City-owned lane (Initiative 16) 
- 9/ Beautify and widen the sidewalks on West Street (Initiative 17) 
- 10/ Plant more trees (Initiative 19)
- 11/ Initiate a Waterfront Centre Phase 2 Study (Initiative 21) 
- 12/ Develop and implement a sports court plan (Initiative 23) 
- 13/ Develop a plan for the Rexton Property (Initiative 24)
- 14/ Develop a four-season tourism strategy (Initiative 28) 
- 15/ Work with Metrolinx to pilot seasonal GO bus service to Downtown Orillia (Initiative 29) 

 Considered top priority by the public

Acknowledgements

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Thank you to all City staff, Downtown stakeholders and Orillia citizens who participated in the Downtown Tomorrow Plan process. The plan is now in your hands.

