



# Waterfront Strategy Design Brief

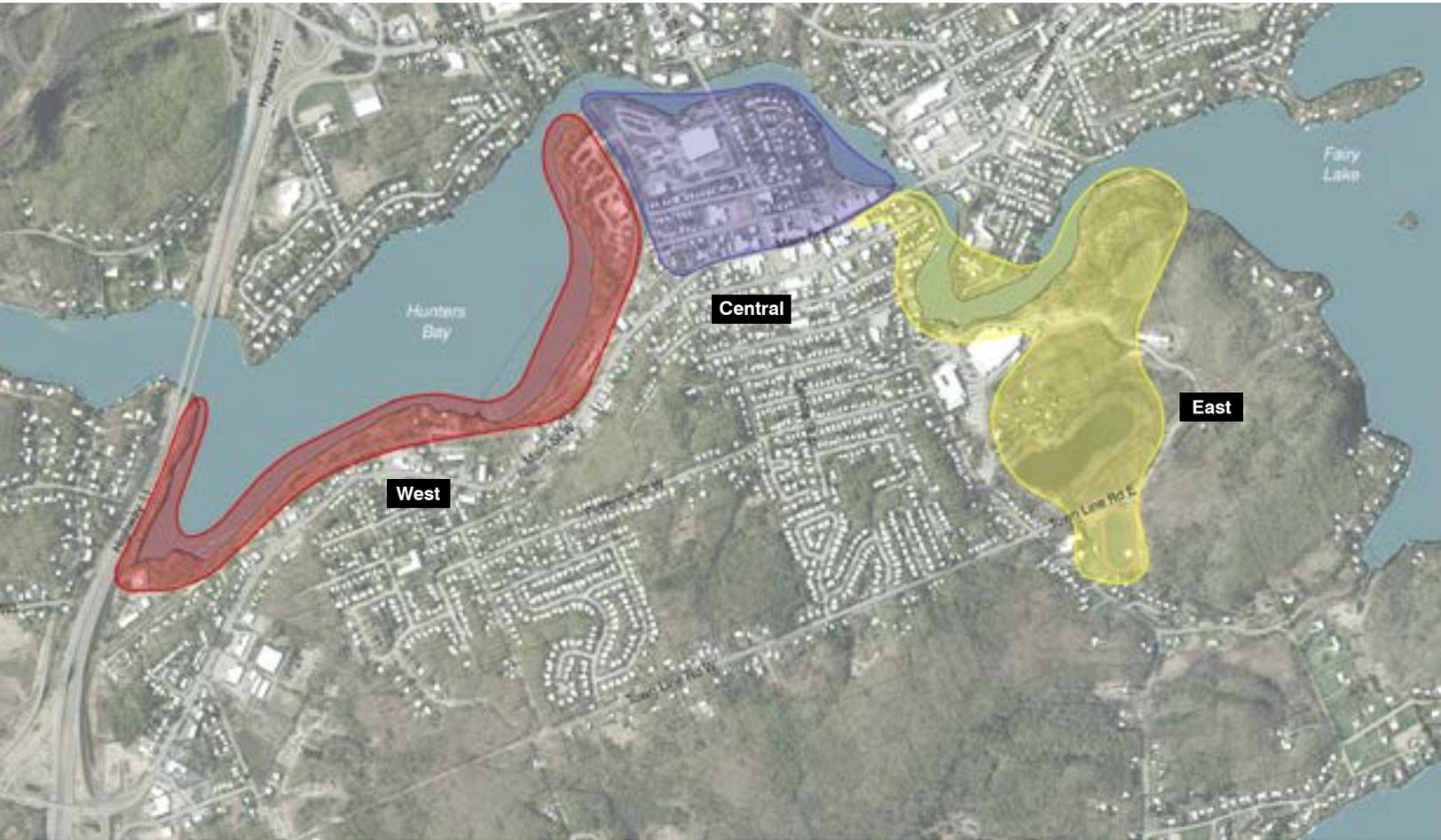


December, 2021

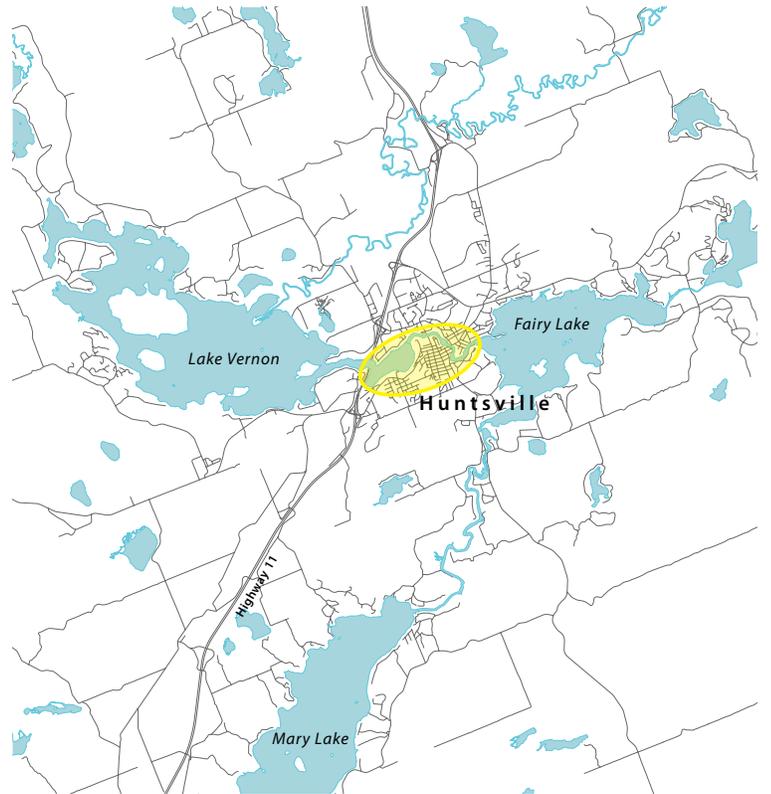


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Huntsville Waterfront Strategy Design Brief Study Area



Huntsville Waterfront Context

# 1 Introduction

The Waterfront Strategy Design Brief is a reference to guide detailed planning and design along Huntsville’s waterfront from Highway 11 to Lions Lookout over the coming years. The waterfront can be defined in three segments: west along Hunters Bay, central up to and including River Mill Park and east along the River to Muskoka Heritage Place.

The waterfront has been a priority for Town Council for many years as reflected in the solid base of previous plans and studies that relate to the waterfront.

The Town’s original **Waterfront Planning Strategy** was prepared in 1991. The purpose was to articulate a vision for the long-term development of the waterfront which would connect the residents and visitors with Hunters Bay and the Muskoka River leading to Fairy Lake. Over the past 30 years, many recommendations have been implemented including:

- Hunters Bay Trail;
- A pavilion and boat launch at the foot of Young Street including parking;
- Purchase of the Martin Lumber property and construction of River Mill Park; and,
- Expansion of the Town Dock facilities to encourage more boaters to stop and shop in the downtown area.

The Town’s **Strategic Economic Development Plan** was completed in 2002. The Plan states “Continued development of our trails, parks and waterfront is an important part of our Strategic Plan. We will enhance our Town Dock area and we will work towards establishing a Park with a connecting bridge on property adjacent to Main Street bridge, currently used as a Treatment Plant”.

The Town’s **Strategic Plan** was approved by Council in 2019. It sets out the following goals which can be directly linked to waterfront development:

- Identify opportunities to ensure vibrant downtown;

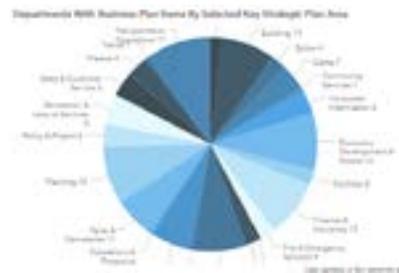


## 1991 Waterfront Planning Strategy

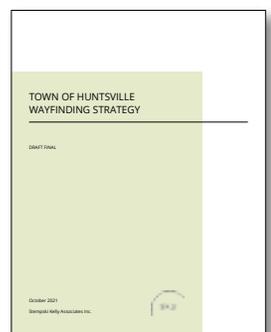
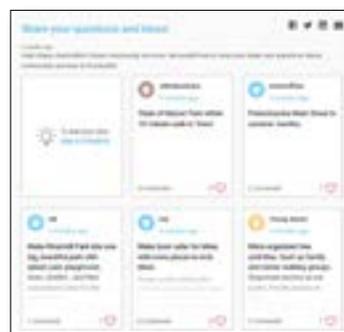
## 2002 Strategic Economic Development Plan



## 2019 Strategic Plan



## Ongoing Community Services Master Plan Wayfinding Strategy



- Create opportunities to ensure vulnerable populations have access to recreation, housing & active living;
- Maintain an up-to-date parks and trails inventory and use that information to develop short term park development, reconstruction and maintenance schedules and to inform long term capital plans;
- Access to water amenities (expand dock and beach areas);
- Complete needs assessment of open spaces;
- Improve pedestrian linkages throughout the Town;
- Extend Town Dock to the edge of River Mill Park;
- Complete improvements to Lion’s Lookout including accessibility improvements; and,
- Establish more boat launches.

In 2020, Town Council purchased the last two pieces of privately owned property on the south side of Hunters Bay. The Town now has ownership of the waterfront from the Centre Street bridge all the way though to Highway 11.

Also in 2020, the District of Muskoka received a preliminary design report for the final stage of the work required to decommission the Huntsville Mountview Clean Water Plant and replace it with a pumping station. The proposed concept site plan shows that there are opportunities for the development of the waterfront area of this property and the Town of Huntsville has entered into discussions with the District for the future use

The Town is currently completing its **Community Services Master Plan** that also reinforces the priority given to the enhancing the waterfront and a **Wayfinding Strategy** with recommendations for various types of signage and wayfinding that directly relates to recommendations in this Waterfront Strategy.

## Western Segment



Existing conditions in the Western Segment

# Central Segment



Existing conditions in the Central Segment

# Eastern Segment



Existing conditions in the Eastern Segment

# 2 Engagement with the Community

The Waterfront Strategy was prepared through broad based consultation with the community from August 2021 to presentation of the draft strategy in November 2021. Many tools were used to encourage people to share their thoughts.

## One-On-One Conversations

An invitation was extended to the community through social media, posting on the project specific webpage and notices placed along the waterfront to contact the team’s project manager and arrange for a one-on-one conversation to share ideas for the waterfront. One-on-one conversations were also held with individual councillors and the mayor to understand the various perspectives on the waterfront, what’s important and opportunities for change. Approximately 30 conversations were held in August and September 2021.

## Conversations with Stakeholder Groups

Conversations were also held with various stakeholder groups in August and September 2021 including:

- Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Area;
- Muskoka Heritage Place;
- Muskoka Conservancy; and,
- Rotary Club.

## Public Workshop

An online public workshop with two sessions was held on September 23, 2021. The workshop was advertised on the project webpage, through social and traditional media and notices placed along the waterfront. Registration occurred through Eventbrite, followed by the distribution of the meeting link to all those who registered. Both sessions were recorded. Approximately 60 people participated in the workshop that included a presentation on the team’s understanding of current conditions and opportunities for change along the waterfront, followed by a facilitated discussion with all those on the call.

## Online Survey

An online survey was posted from October 7, 2021 to November 1, 2021 using the content shared at the public workshop. The purpose of the survey was to seek additional input on key directions explored at the public workshop. A total of 351 people responded to the survey, giving the team hundreds of data points to consider. The following is a summary of the characteristics of those who participated:

### Age

18 years old and younger	1%
19 – 30 years old	9%
31 – 45 years old	34%
46 – 60 years old	36%
65+	20%

### Household Structure

Family with young children	26%
Family with teenagers	12%
Couple	34%
Single	8%
Empty Nester	16%
Other	4%

### Gender

Male	32%
Female	67%
Other	1%

## Years Living in Huntsville

Less than 5 years	17%
6-10 years	14%
More than 11 years	67%
I don't live in Huntsville	2%

## Seasonal or Permanent Resident

Permanent	96%
Seasonal	4%

## Project Webpage

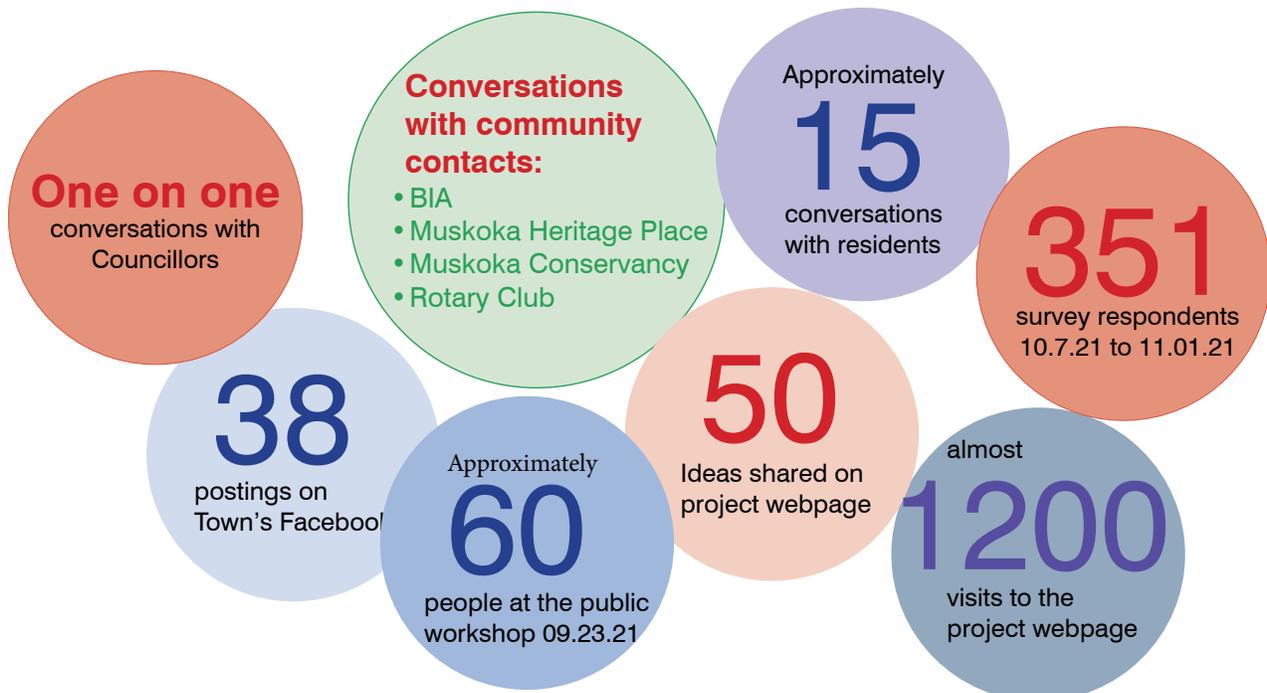
The Town hosted a project specific webpage where information was posted on the work in progress. It also enabled people to share thoughts. There were over 1200 visits to the webpage during the course of the Strategy and over 50 ideas were shared.

## Council Presentation

A presentation of the draft Waterfront Strategy was made on November 24, 2021. The presentation included a summary of community engagement, the underlying principles of the Strategy and the ten layers of Strategy and recommendations.

Through the course of the conversations and input, there were a number of recurring themes:

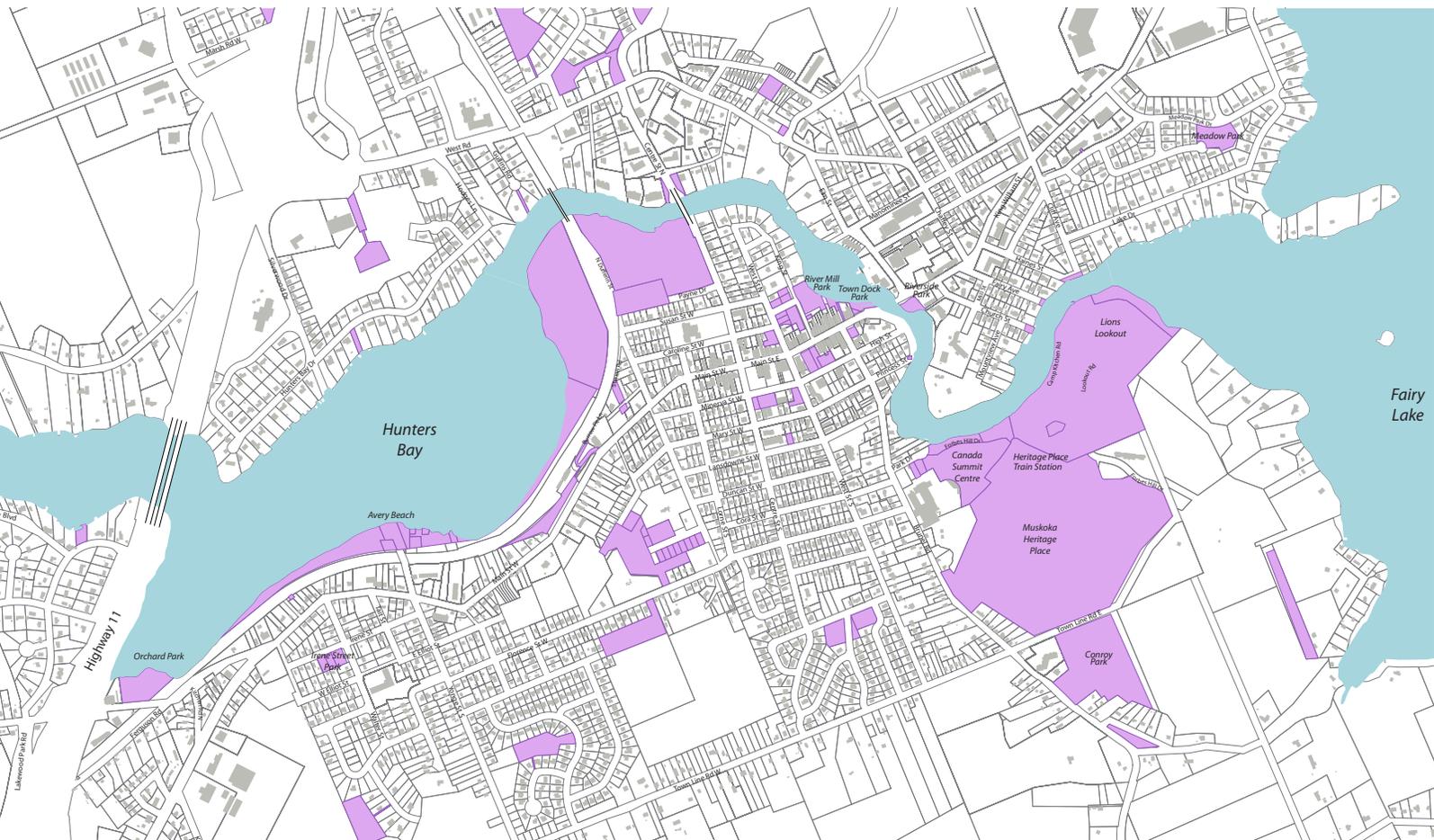
- The route to and along the water's edge can be better signed
- Need to find the right balance:
  - between residents and visitors
  - of access by water and land
  - of commercial uses and no commercial uses
- There's increasing demand for public space and access to and along the water's edge
- The public and private lands along the shoreline should be naturalized to restore the environment and habitats
- Demonstrate best practices
- Provide diverse amenities
- Provide experiences in all seasons



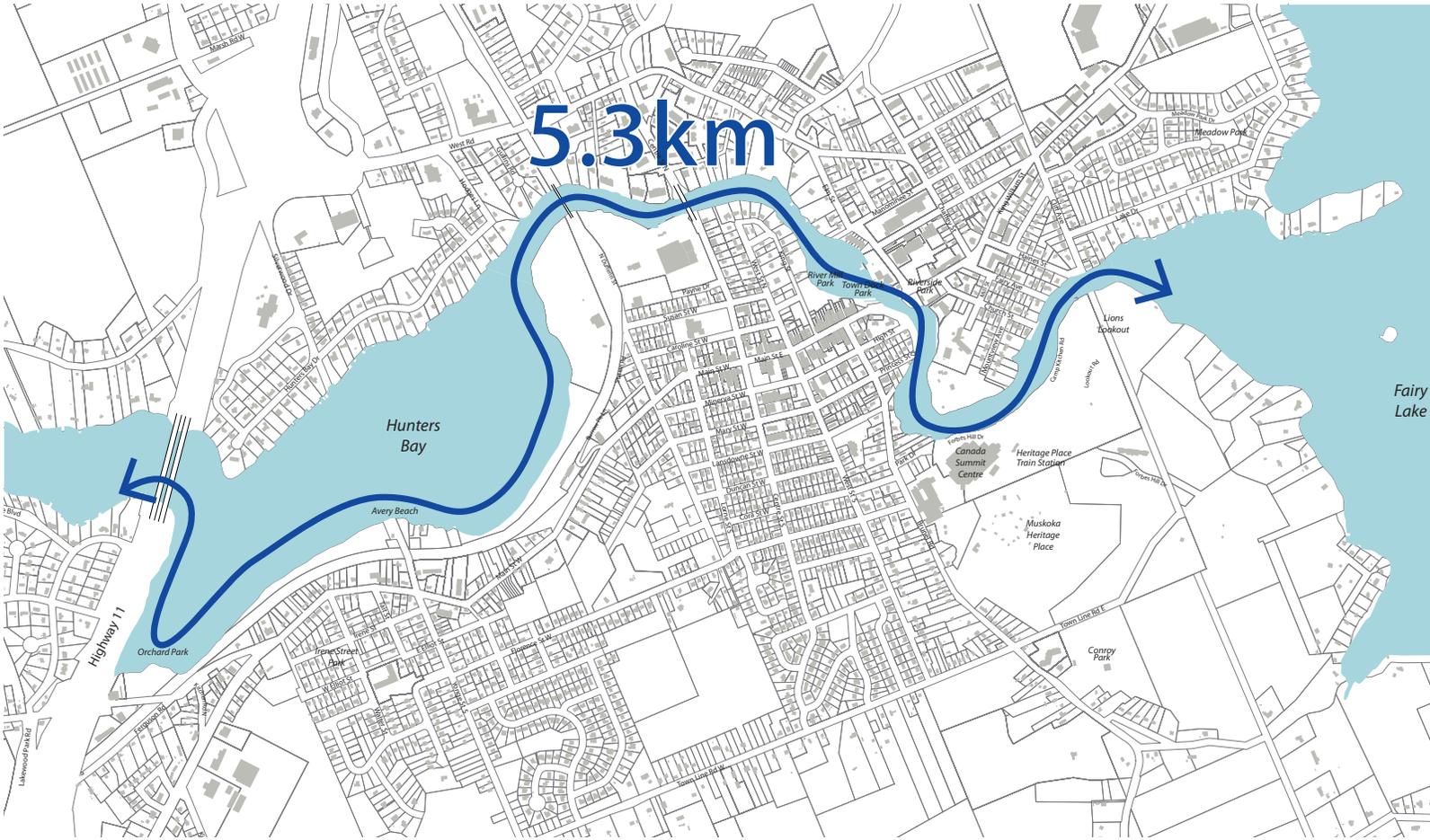
# 3 Understanding the Existing Conditions

The maps in this chapter set out the context of existing conditions of land uses, access and natural heritage for developing the Waterfront Strategy. The Town already owns 31 hectares of land along the 5.3 km water's edge. This is a tremendous asset and resource for a community of 20,000 people.

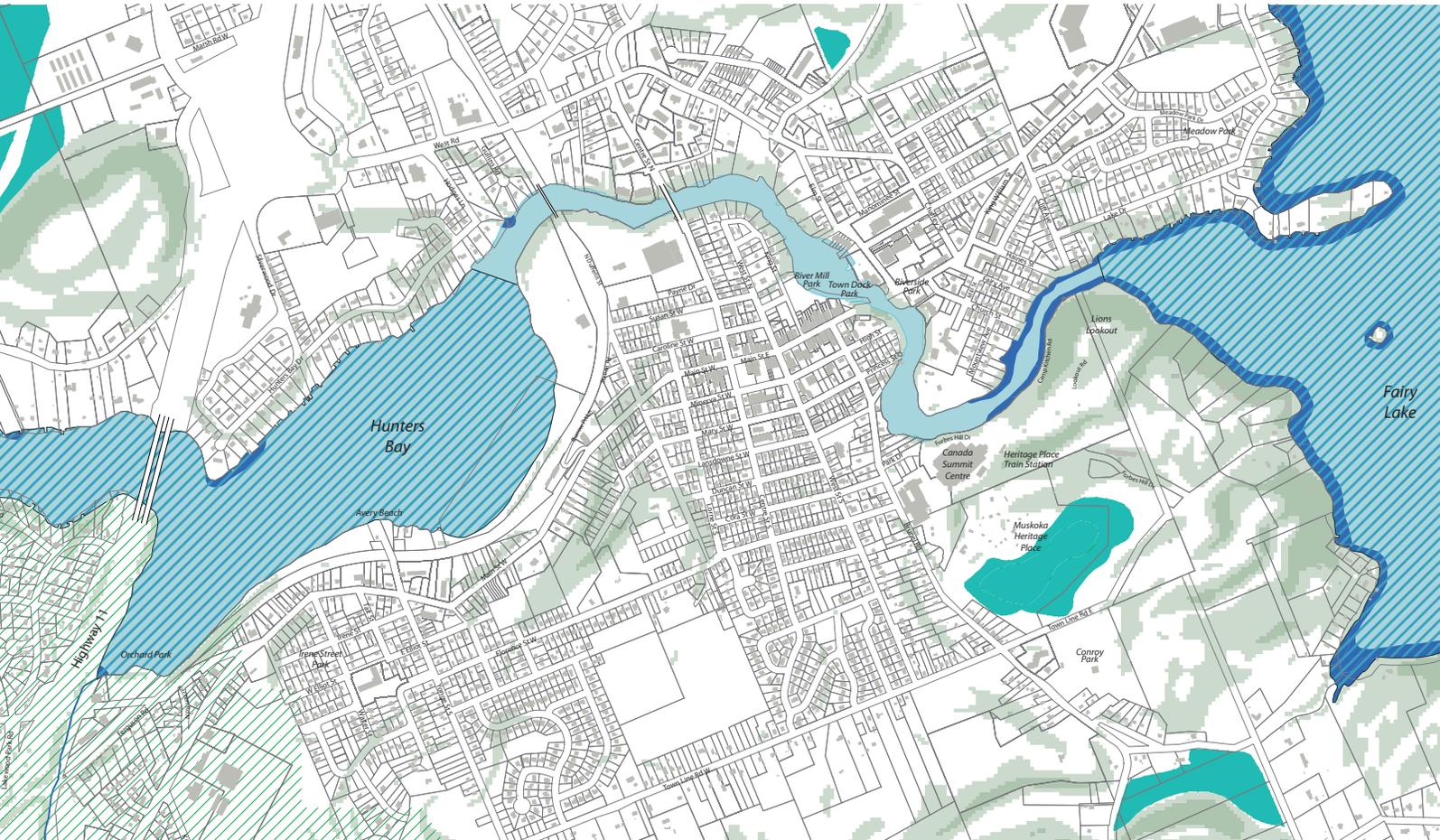
## Town owned land - 31 hectares along the waterfront



**5.3 km of water's edge**



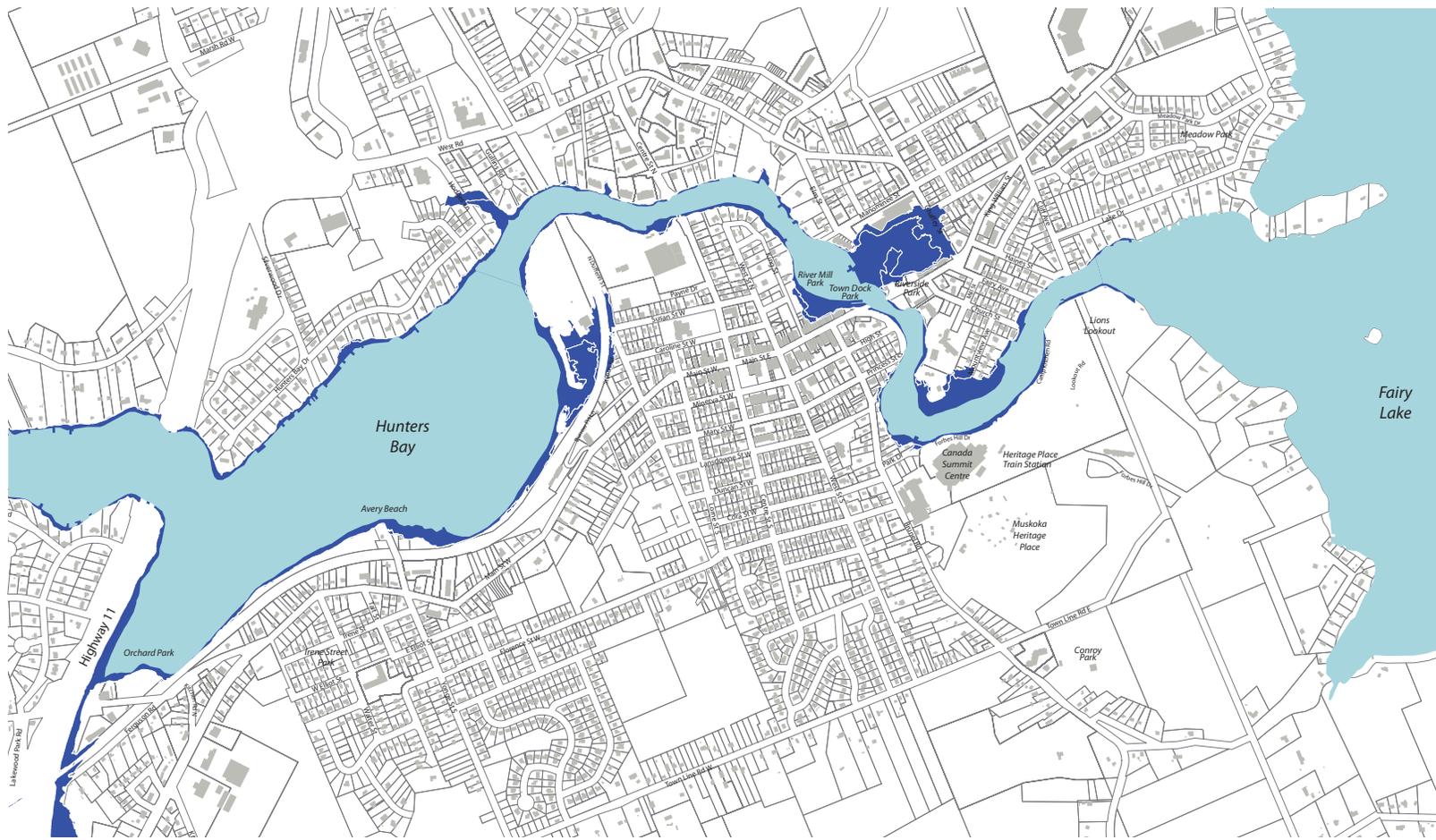
## Natural Heritage + Naturalized Shoreline



Hunters Bay and Fairy Lake are cold water lakes with Type 1 fish habitat primarily in the east segment of the area. Deer are commonly seen throughout the area, particularly in the area near Lions Lookout and Muskoka Heritage Place.

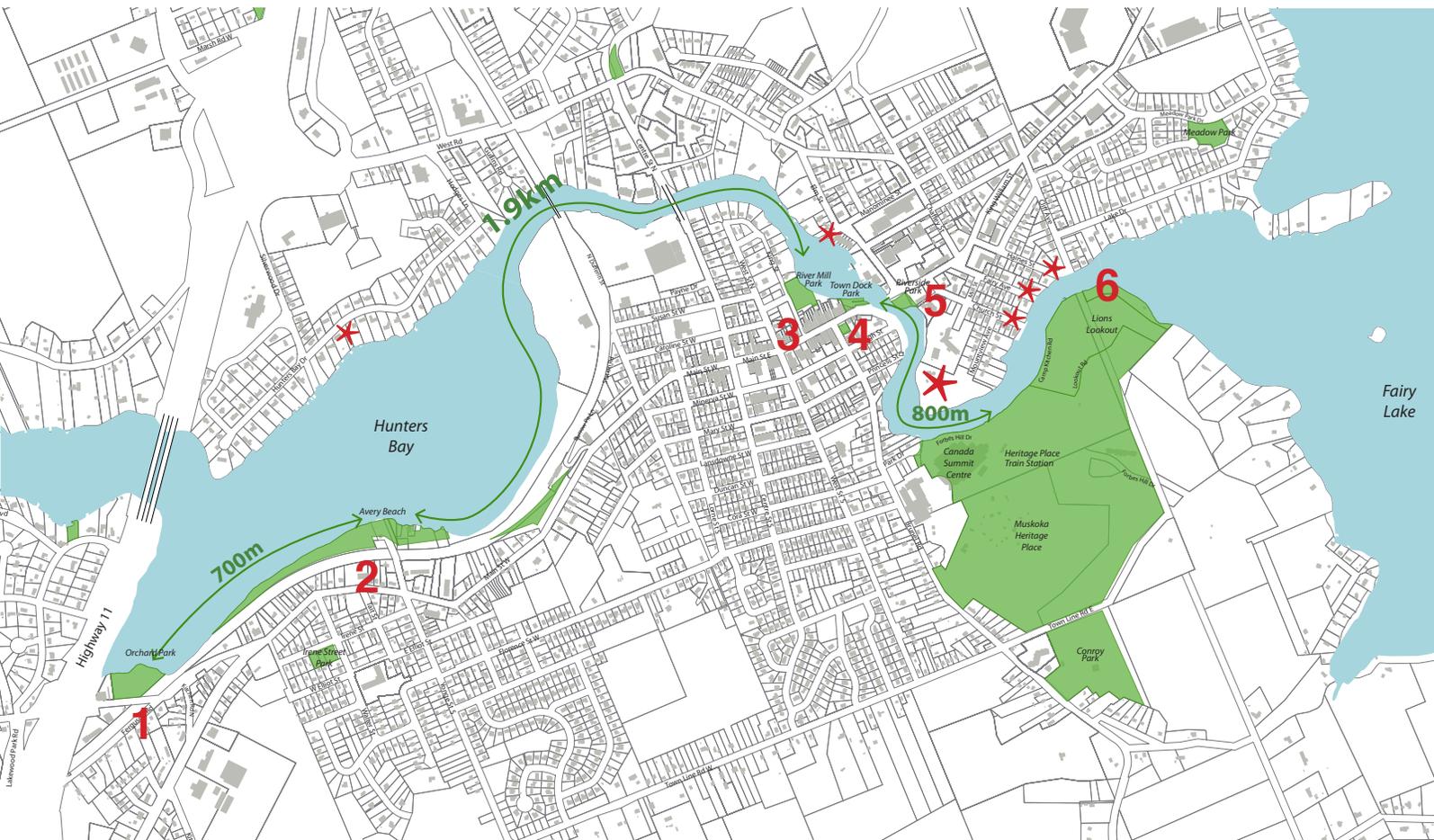
-  Wetlands
-  Deer Wintering Area
-  Slopes 40%+
-  Slopes 20-40%
-  Cold Water Lakes
-  Type 1 Fish Habitat

## Floodline



Floodline mapping data produced for the District of Muskoka in 2018 by Hatch Consulting is based on 2018 LiDAR data. The floodline is an estimate based on modelling of flows and water levels giving an indication of risk for flooding along the shoreline.

## Six Parks + Mountview + Windows to the Water



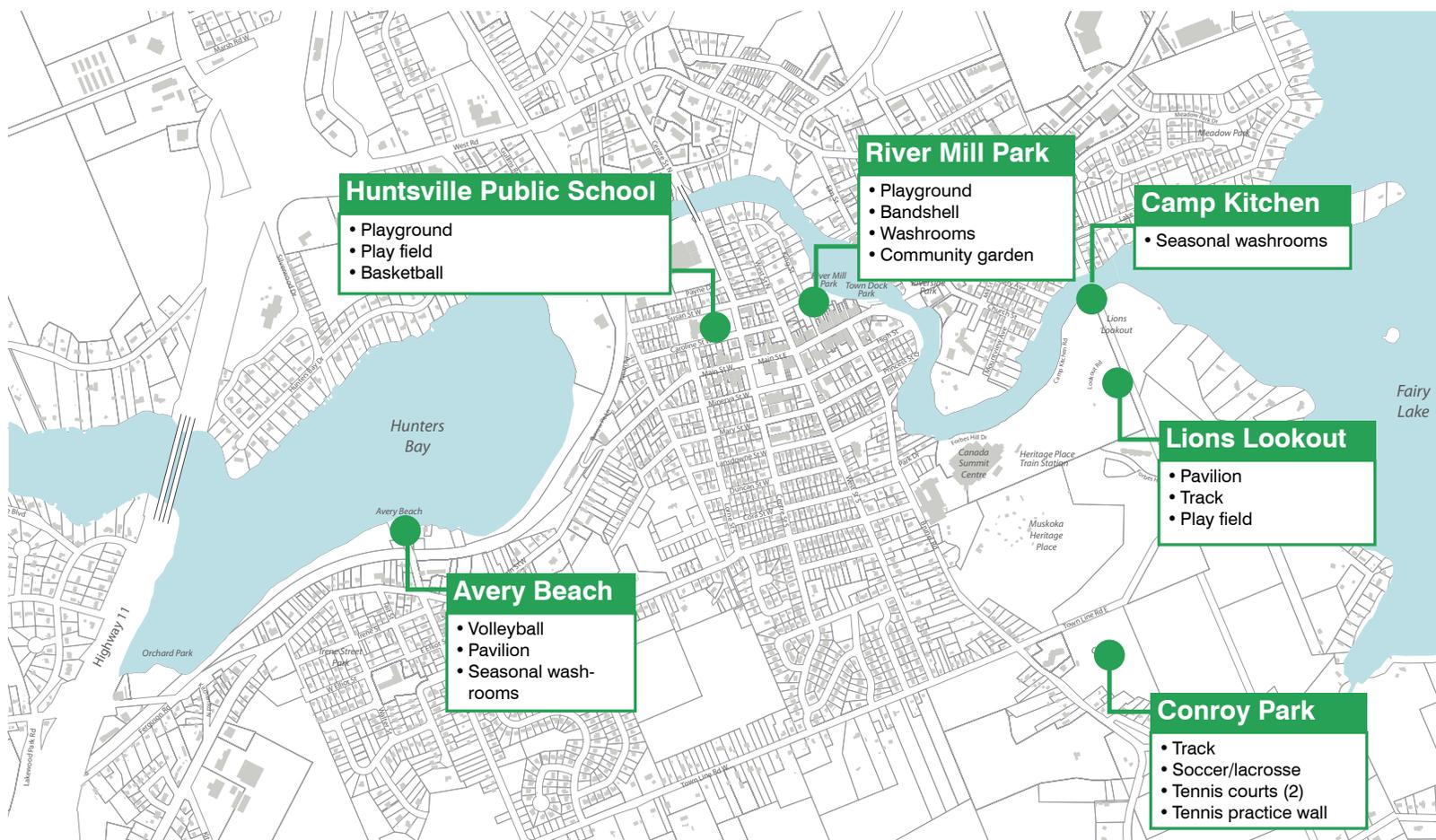
The waterfront has 6 parks that provide an ideal network of destinations for recreation:

1. Orchard Beach
2. Avery Beach
3. River Mill Park
4. Town Dock Park
5. Riverside Park
6. Camp Kitchen Park

There is also an opportunity to create a new public park on the site of the Mountview Clean Water Station after the District of Muskoka replaces the facility with a pump station and greatly reduces the land required for the facility.

In addition, there are a number of road ends (red asterisks on the map above) that offer “windows to the water” for access the water’s edge.

## Existing Facilities - distribution of play, sports and amenities

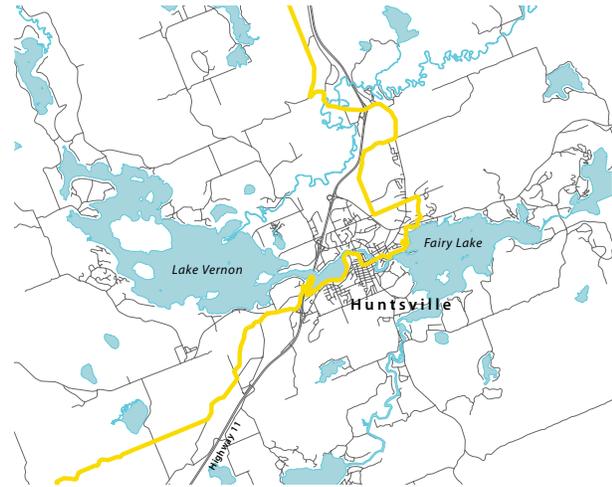


The network of parks provide an ideal framework a distribution of children’s play facilities, washrooms, and other amenities encourage year round use.

Currently, River Mill Park has a playground, Avery Beach has beach volleyball and Lions Lookout has a track. There was discussion at the public workshop about other recreation uses for the parks, including options for the land occupied by the volleyball at Avery Beach.

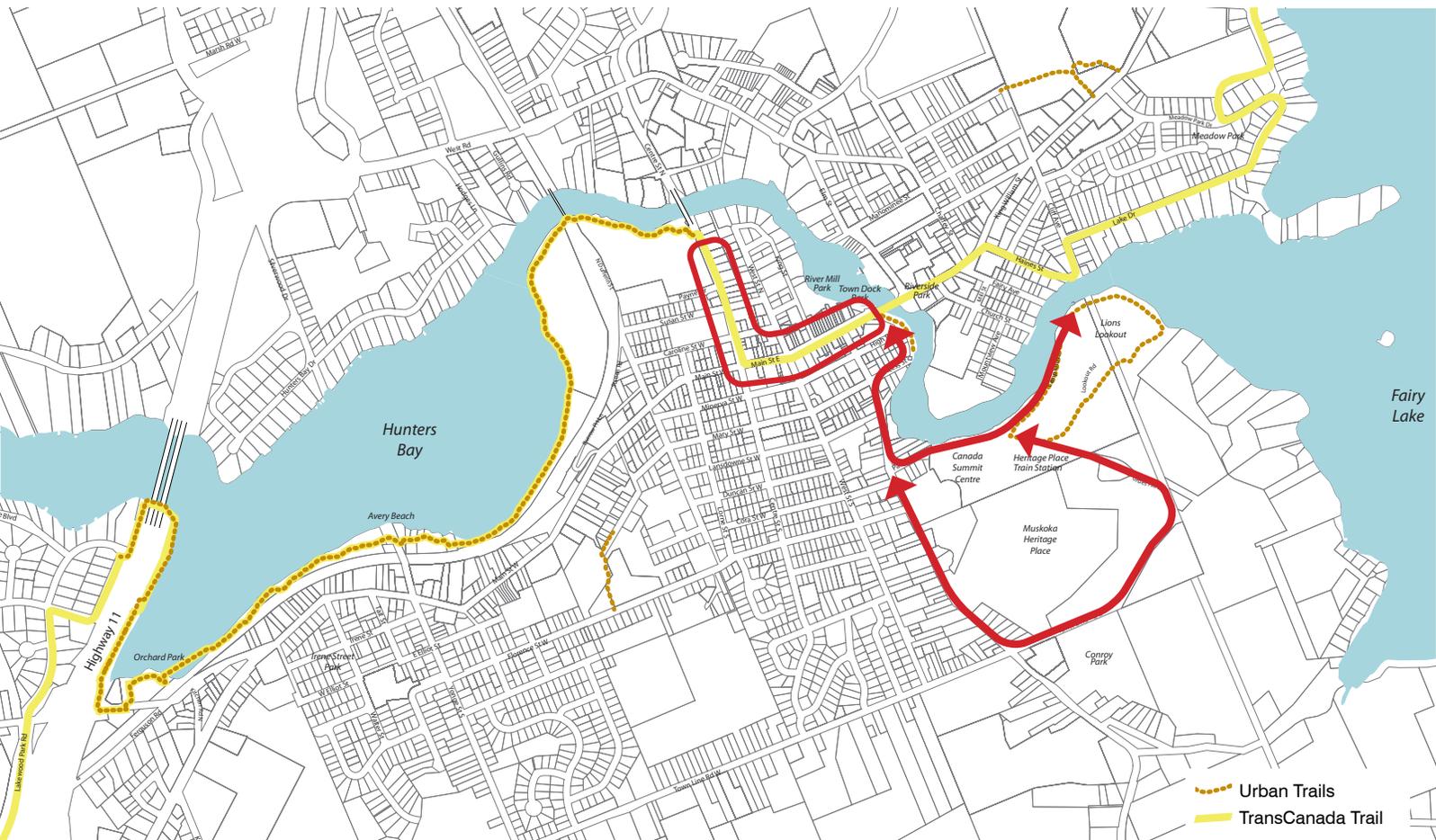
Seasonal washrooms are provided at Avery Beach and Camp Kitchen. Public washrooms are provided in the Tourist Information Centre close to River Mill Park. Each park should have washroom facilities.

River Mill Park is the site of a community garden, an amphitheatre and an information kiosk. Pop up retail was also located in the park in the summer.



Trans Canada Trail route through Huntsville

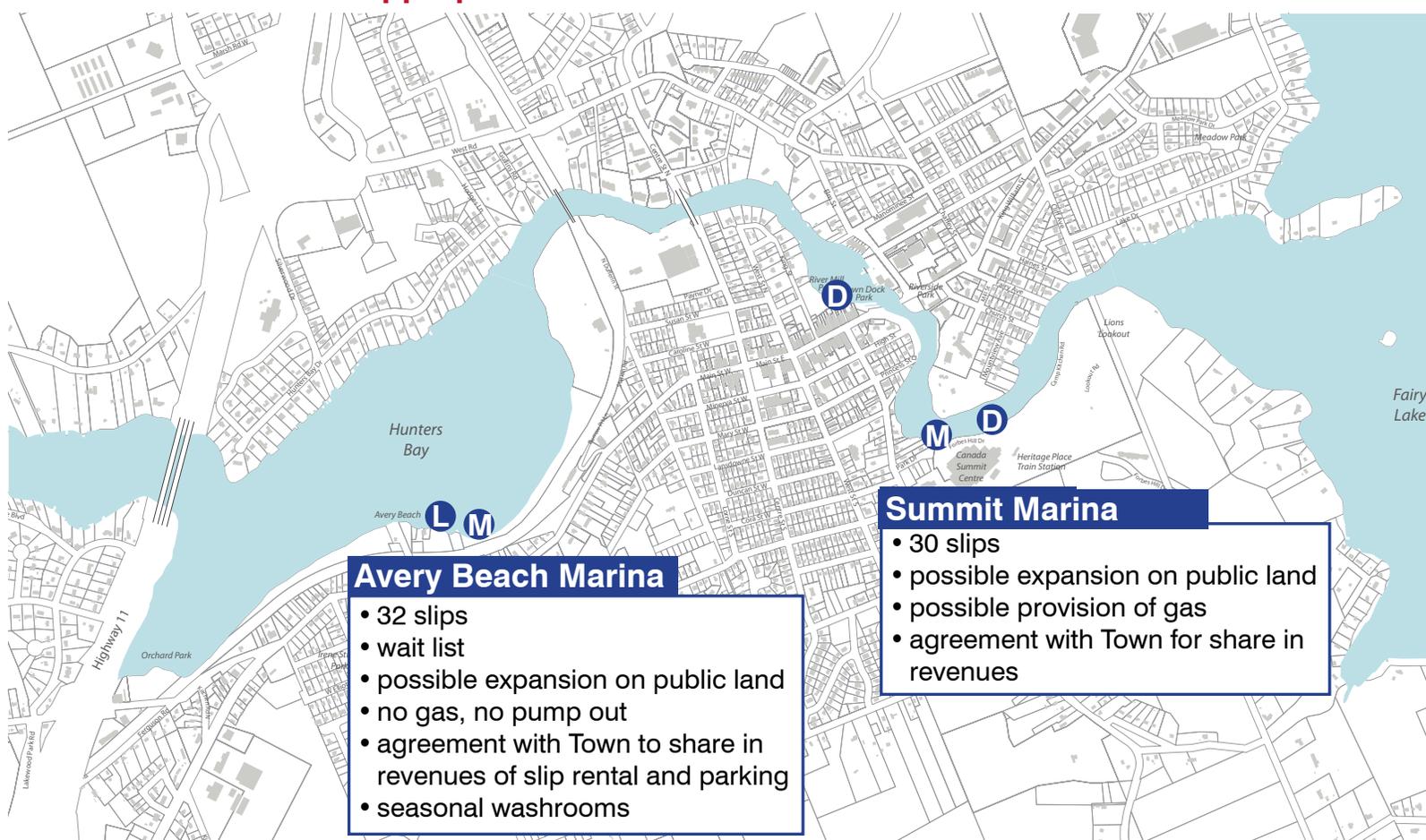
## 6 km of Trails - fill in the missing links and clearly sign the route



The Town's Hunters Bay waterfront trail is a well used and cherished amenity that is part of the larger Trans Canada Trail network (yellow line on the map above). There are opportunities to enhance the link between the Hunters Bay trail and River Mill Park (outlined in purple on the map above) with a sidewalk on the west side of Centre Street and a clearly signed route along Dara Howell Way and Main Street. Another missing link in the trail network exists along River Street

and Princess Street connecting to the sidewalk on Brunel Road and then connecting to a clearly signed route along Camp Kitchen Road (red line on map above). The existing woodland trail up to Lions Lookout to the sidewalk on Forbes Hill Drive completes the 6 km network. The route along Forbes Hill Drive and Brunel Road (red line on map above) should be clearly signed as a part of the waterfront walk.

## Boats - most appropriate location Town-wide



The waterfront has three primary locations for boating: Avery Beach Marina, Town docks in River Mill Park and Summit Marina. Avery Beach Marina provides slips and service for seasonal and permanent residents and includes seasonal washrooms and dedicated parking for marina users. Avery Beach also has a well used boat launch and space for vehicle/trailer parking.

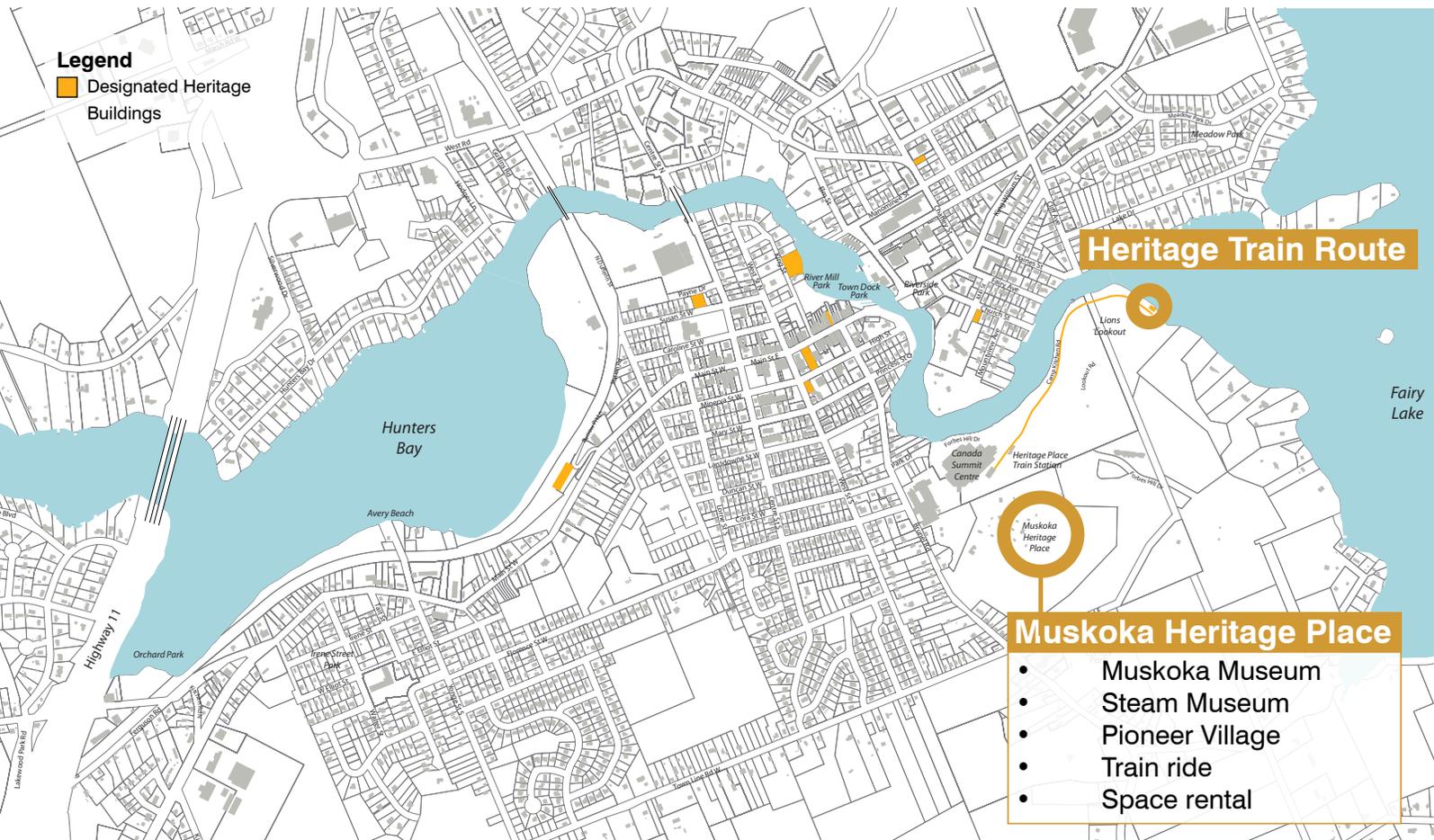
The Summit Marina provides slips, and the operator is interested in expanding and providing

gas. The docks at River Mill Park are used by boaters visiting downtown and provide an important option for visiting downtown without having to drive and park a car.

There is also a dock in the river located close to the Summit Centre, used for summer program activities.

- L** Boat Launch
- D** Public Docks
- M** Marina

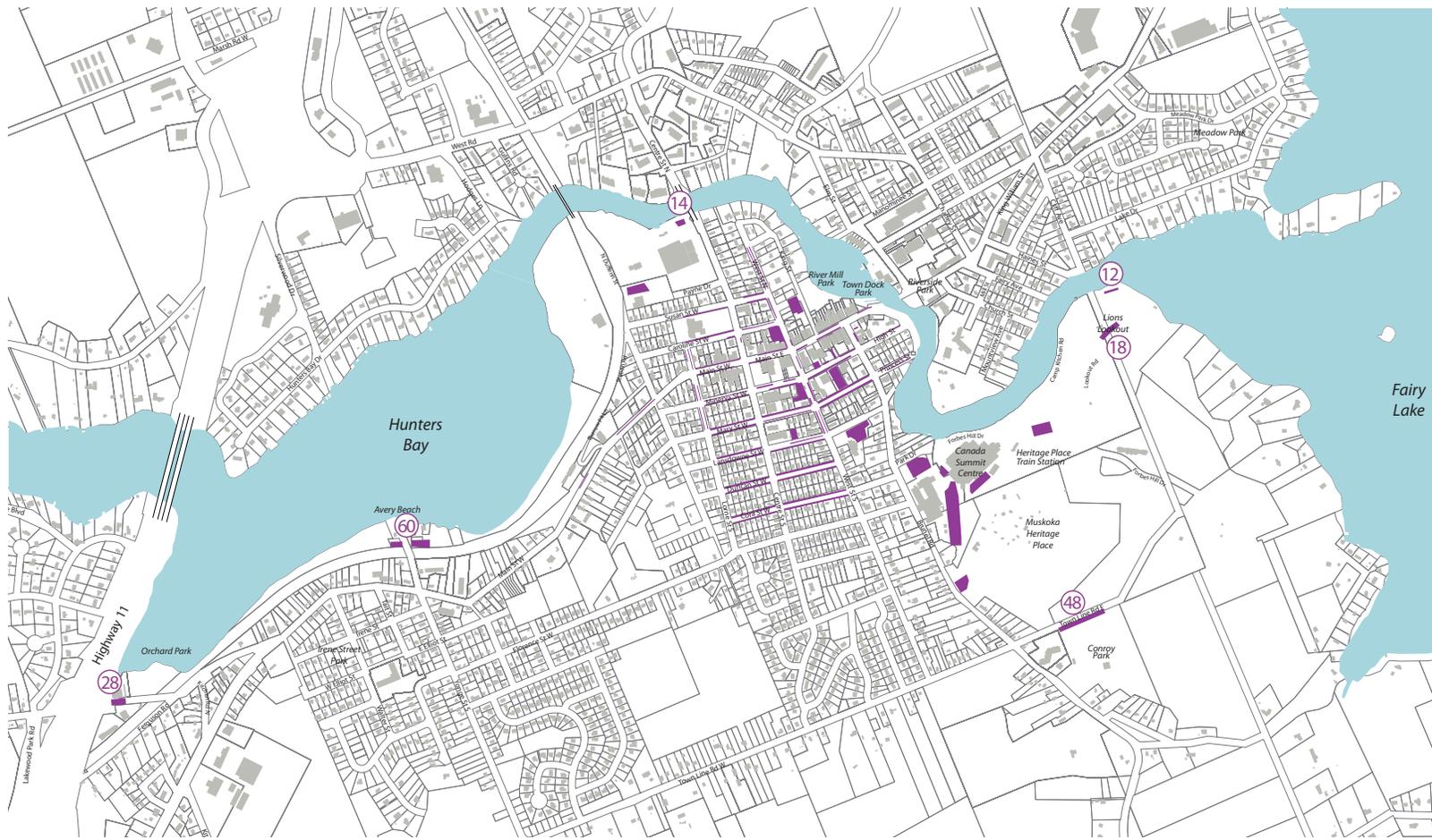
## Heritage



Huntsville's waterfront is anchored by Muskoka Heritage Place, the, Pioneer Village and the very popular Portage Flyer Train. The Portage Flyer travels from the Heritage Place train station in a separated track along Camp Kitchen Road to the terminus beyond Camp Kitchen Park. The building at the terminus of the ride is in need of upgrading.

The grounds are used for special public and private events, celebrations and school programs. Public events include "walk with the light" an interactive sound and light display, the great pumpkin trail, Easter egg hunt and Canada Day celebrations.

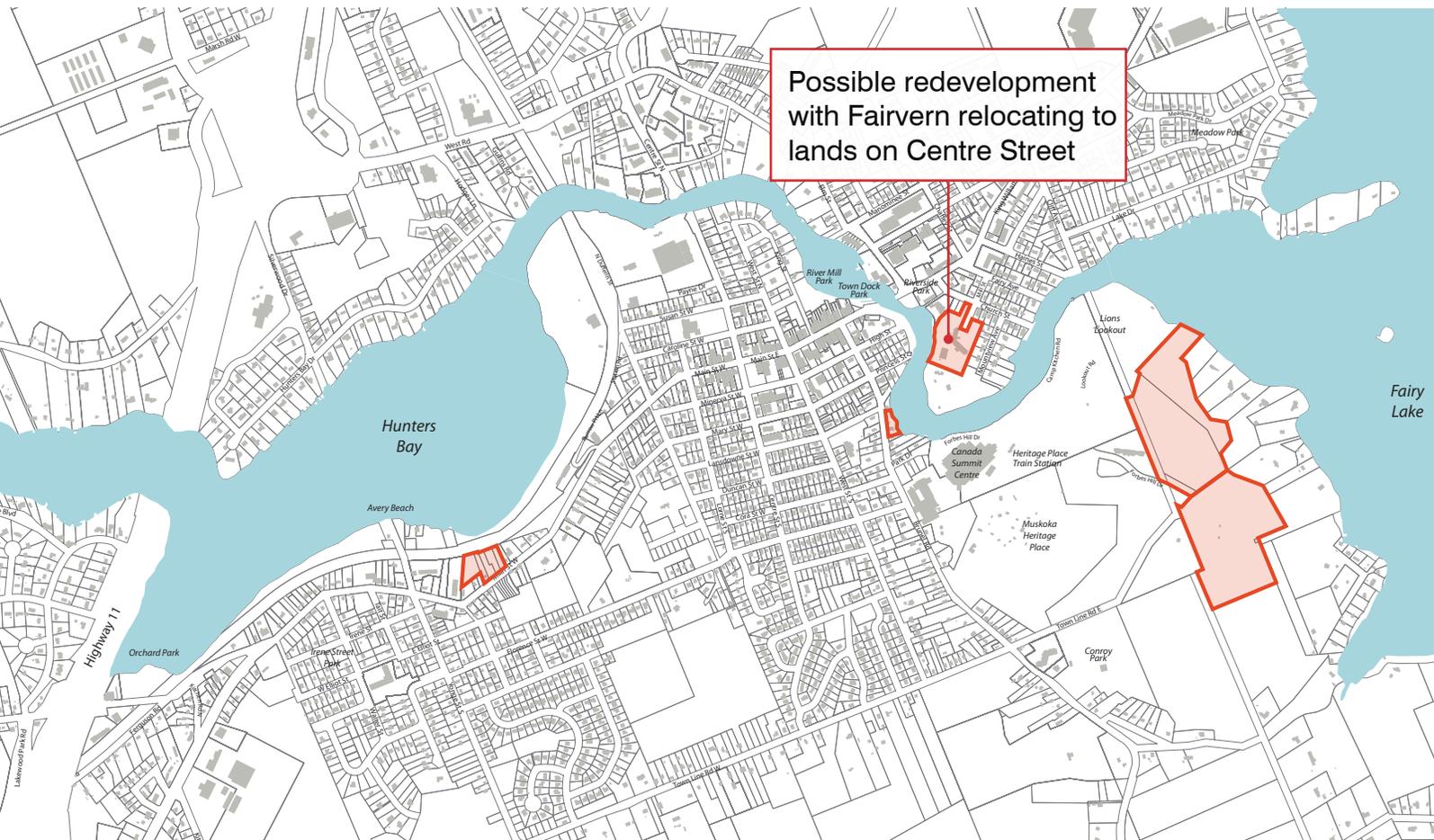
## Public Parking - on-street and off-street, distributed across the waterfront



Parking is located along the waterfront at the parks and on street. There is always a balance that needs to be struck in allocating space for vehicles as opposed to pedestrians and green space. All of the parks have parking. There is an opportunity to expand parking at Avery Beach and demarcating on street parking on Yonge Street.

Active transportation, easy access to information on the locations of parking and enhanced wayfinding should always be considered before expanding parking along the waterfront.

## Development Applications



There are a few development applications being considered close to or on the waterfront. With Fairvern Nursing Home relocating to lands on Centre Street, there will be an opportunity to reconsider use and built form on that site in association with a re-imagined Mountview Clean Water Plant.

Development applications on or close to the waterfront must be carefully reviewed and considered in light of ensuring compatible buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the existing neighbourhoods, landscape treatment to ensure it contributes to a healthy environment, opportunities for public access (physical or visual) to and along the water's edge and transition to adjacent uses, especially if they are public places.



# 4 Principles Forming the Foundation of the Waterfront Strategy

During the early stage of developing the Waterfront Strategy, there were a number of common themes when people spoke of opportunities for change.

People recognize the value of ensuring the waterfront is connected from Highway 11 and beyond to Lions Lookout and Muskoka Heritage Place.

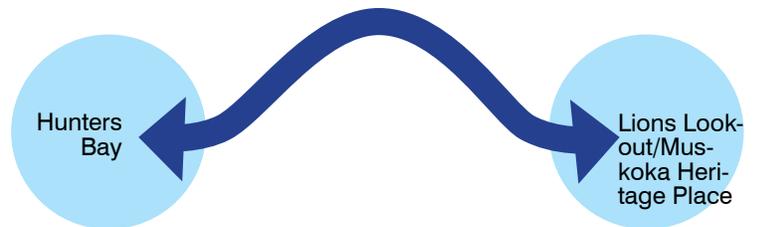
Along the way, there should be a series of destinations that are active year round and offer amenities such as a place to sit, washroom facilities and children's play.

The waterfront already benefits from being the location of well used and cherished parks. A principle of the Strategy is to link the parks through the waterfront trail, enhanced wayfinding and complementary amenities.

Within the network of waterfront parks, there are three primary nodes: Hunters Bay, downtown and Lions Lookout/Muskoka Heritage Place. These locations should have an augmented suite of amenities recognizing the importance of the termini and Downtown Huntsville.

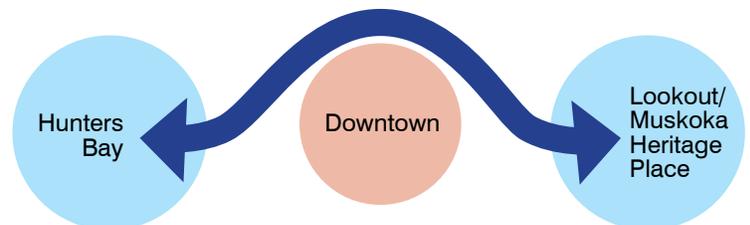
Everyone in town has a role to play in ensuring the shoreline is naturalized and contributes to ensuring the high quality habitat and natural features that blanket the waterfront.

The Town already recognizes the value of enhanced wayfinding as evident with the draft Wayfinding Strategy. The three primary nodes, the waterfront parks and the ways to and along the waterfront need to be clearly marked with beautiful kiosks, destination and route signs.



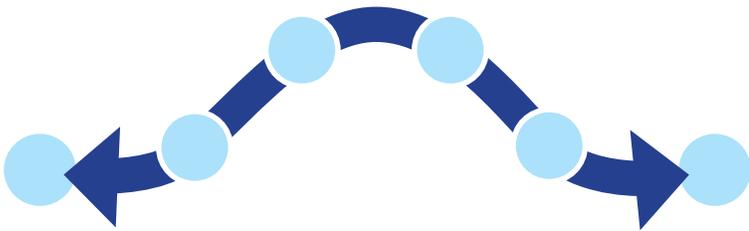
## Connected

A clear pedestrian connection from Hunters Bay to Lions Lookout and Muskoka Heritage Place



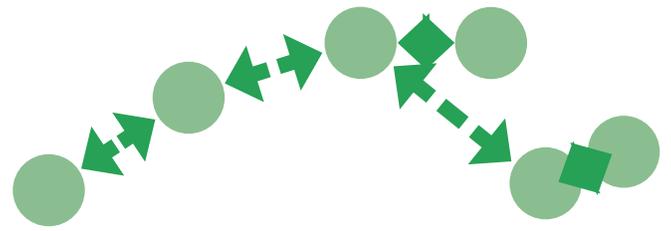
## 3 Primary Nodes

For access from land and water



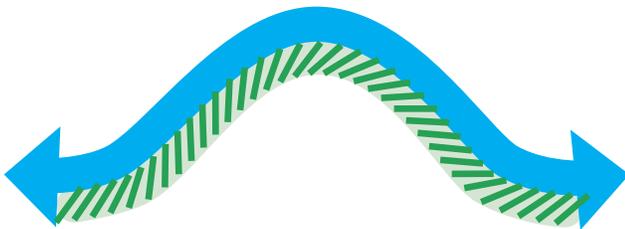
## Destination

A series of year round destinations along the way  
Pedestrian amenities along the way



## Link the Parks

Link the parks: Orchard Park, Avery Beach, River Mill Park, Mountview Park, Camp Kitchen, Lions Lookout, and the Industrial Lands



## Naturalized

Naturalize the water's edge



## Wayfinding

Easy to find your way and know what's here. Signage and a system of identifiers: benches, lighting, washrooms, pavilions to link all of the parts of the waterfront

# 5 Waterfront Strategy Framework

The framework for the waterfront is a compilation of 10 strategies:

- 1 A Network of Parks**
- 2 Wayfinding and a Connected Waterfront Walk**
- 3 Stewardship/Naturalization of the Private Shoreline**
- 4 Windows to the Water at Road Ends**
- 5 A System of Recreation Facilities for Year Round Use**
- 6 Swimming**
- 7 Opportunities for Business**
- 8 Boating**
- 9 Fishing**
- 10 Heritage and Arts**

The following is a summary of the recommendations for each layer of the strategy, including the results of input received from the online survey, and a summary of what we've heard through the process with respect to the various components.

# 1 A Network of Parks

The Waterfront Strategy has a network of existing parks with an opportunity to augment the network with additional parks on the site of the Infra Pipe Solutions site (#8) when and if land becomes available and the Mountview Water Treatment Plant (#7).

Mountview sites. Demonstrations of possible park improvements are illustrated for River Mill Park, Avery Beach and Mountview Clean Water Plant.

The following are the key recommendations for the primary waterfront parks, including the possible parks on the Infra Solutions and



## Some of what we heard...

- Add buoys for swimming at Avery Beach*
- Volleyball at Avery Beach also used for events*
- Volleyball is well used*
- Volleyball at Avery would be better as flexible space for all to use*
- Glad to see public washrooms*
- Pavilion at Lions Lookout is not accessible*

## Legend

- Existing Parks
- Future New Parks

## Orchard Park

Orchard Park provides a starting point for the waterfront system, trail head for Hunter's Bay trail, with parking, green space and access to the water's edge.

- Signage from Muskoka Road 3 and Ferguson Road to direct people to public parking
- Selective clearing at the shoreline for access to the water's edge for fishing and swimming
- Consider adding an adventure playground



## Avery Beach (2.36 ha)

Avery Beach is a well-used destination for activities centered on the pavilion, picnicking, access to the water and volleyball. This park has a relatively small area of usable space at the water's edge. Consideration should be given to removing the volleyball in favour of children's play facilities that would complement the children's programming that occurs in the pavilion. Parking can be limited on summer weekends where the demand competes with parking associated with the boat launch and marina.

- Remove volleyball
- Add a children's adventure playground
- Add a water based play feature
- Expand the parking area located on the west side of Yonge Street
- Provide permanent seasonally operated washrooms
- Provide sidewalks on Yonge Street to provide safe pedestrian access to Muskoka Road 3
- Provide defined on street parking on Yonge Street
- Use the old hanger for canoe/kayak launch
- Demarcate swimming with buoys

## River Mill Park (0.45 ha)

River Mill Park is a destination for visitors and residents. With a mix of boating, children's play, events focused on the amphitheatre, public art and proximity of the shops and restaurants on Main Street, this park has a broad appeal and is a key destination along the waterfront walk.

- Design Dara Howell Way as a shared street for cars and pedestrians. This complements the redesign of King Street as a pedestrian only space.
- Although some have suggested to relocate the amphitheatre, there was little support from the online survey for relocating it. Leave as is
- Relocate the community garden to another easily accessible location in Town in favour of redesigning as green space/picnic and access to the water's edge for swimming. Relocation of the community garden was also identified as an action in the Town's Strategic Plan
- Shift swimming to the north away from the docks.
- Provide permanent year round washrooms
- Redesign the rear access/area to Main Street shops and restaurants as a multi use space for parking, service vehicles and outdoor dining
- Accommodate additional parking through redesign of space at back of Main Street buildings

## Camp Kitchen Park (0.67 ha)

Camp Kitchen is a locally known destination for waterfront access. Not well signed, the park provides access to the water's edge for swimming and fishing. Camp Kitchen Road provides access to the park and parking. The area also provides a trail link to Lions Lookout.

- Design Camp Kitchen Road as a shared space for cars and pedestrians
- Provide a small adventure play structure
- Continue to provide seasonal washrooms

## Lions Lookout (4.88 ha) & Track

Lions Lookout is a beloved destination for visitors and residents. Panoramic views over the town and the landscape provide a year round draw. The track is used as a staging area for events. There is local interest in developing sports fields and skating in the area of the track.

- Consider the design and construction of a new accessible open air pavilion at the Lookout
- Provide permanent year round washrooms
- Selectively clear the vegetation to maintain views from the Lookout
- Add cantilevered lookouts
- Work with local groups to design sports courts, skating rink or trail in the area of the track

## NEW PARK

### Mountview Treatment Plant

The District of Muskoka is decommissioning the water treatment plant and much of the 1.9 ha site will become available for public use. The site has 355 m of naturalized shoreline along the river. With relocation of Fairvern Nursing Home, and possible redevelopment on that site, there is an opportunity to consider future use and access of this area within a larger context.

- Provide access to the site through the Fairvern site
- Provide parking on the site for park users
- Accommodate largely passive uses on the site
- Provide a children's playground
- Possible location for the community garden
- Maintain the naturalized shoreline
- Provide a permanent washroom
- No boat docking

## NEW PARK

### Infra Pipe Solutions Land

The Town purchased the Infra Pipe Solutions property and are leasing the land to the current users. This site is strategically located along the waterfront providing a key link in the network Hunters Bay to Fairy Lake network. Over time, there may be an opportunity to consolidate outdoor storage, making some property available for public use.

- Provide a connection from the trail up the slope to connect with North Dufferin Street
- This is a large site that will be appropriate for a full range of recreation and sports facilities
- A detailed park design is required for the property. A phasing plan will illustrate interim uses that may be possible while the business is still operating

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## River Mill Park



- 1 Redesign Dara Howell as a shared street
- 2 Relocate community garden and create a flexible green space
- 3 Selectively clear shoreline for swimming
- 4 Design rear parking/access as shared/flexible space
- 5 Add permanent year round washrooms
- 6 Prohibit swimming in this location

A sketch for River Mill Park illustrates some of the ideas explored during preparation of the Waterfront Strategy. It is suggested that the existing community garden located along the north edge of the park be relocated elsewhere in Town in favour of expanding the park space and shifting swimming to the north away from the dock and associated boating activity. Selective clearing of the shoreline could accommodate dock.

A new permanent washroom is suggested in this area, especially in proximity to the new park area and swimming. The playground, parking, amphitheatre and kiosk remain.

Dara Howell Way could be redesigned as a shared space for cars, service vehicles and pedestrians with special paving to indicate an important connecting link to the waterfront. The intersection of Centre Street and Dara Howell Way should be marked with a key waterfront destination sign to clearly indicate the direction to and location of a waterfront park.

The area at the rear of the Main Street buildings could also be redesigned as a shared space for outdoor dining, displays, parking, while still providing access for deliveries. This area is starting to evolve with businesses using this frontage for activities and shop entrances that face and feature the waterfront. This should be encouraged as it activates the park edge and provides an ideal edge to this important node on the waterfront.



# Avery Beach



- 1 Relocate volleyball elsewhere and expand open lawn area
- 2 Selectively clear shoreline and expand beach to west
- 3 Expand parking to the west and demarcate stalls
- 4 Use old hanger for canoe/kayak launching
- 5 Add sidewalk to Yonge Street
- 6 Add permanent seasonal washrooms
- 7 Add waterplay structure

Avery Beach is a very popular destination with a boat launch and adjacent marina and a waterside park. The sketch illustrates the opportunity of relocating beach volleyball elsewhere in Town in favour of incorporating an adventure playground into the park that would provide another attraction to the activity focused on the pavilion. The sketch illustrates the location of a water play structure in Hunters Bay as opposed to a splash pad. A wood deck along the shoreline could enhance access to the water.



Selective clearing along the shoreline could open up windows to the water for swimming or fishing.

A new washroom is suggested to be operated seasonally or year round.



The old hangar is suggested as a site for canoe and kayak launching to concentrate boating activity near the existing boat launch. The access road for boat launching is maintained, with parking organized for vehicle and trailer parking. The parking on the west side of Yonge Street is currently for the exclusive use of seasonal boaters at the adjacent marina. Consideration could be given to using the existing parking for public parking from October to May, outside of the time when the marina is operating. The sketch also illustrates an opportunity to expand the parking lot to the west.

A sidewalk is illustrated on both sides of Yonge Street with a crosswalk at Muskoka Road 3. Yonge Street should also have delineated on street parking..



This is one of the locations where a key waterfront destination sign should be located at Yonge Street and Muskoka Road 3 to clearly indicate the direction to and location of a waterfront park.

# Mountview Park



The District of Muskoka is decommissioning the water treatment plant that is located at the end of Mountview Avenue opposite the Summit Centre. The 1.9 ha site will become available for public use. With relocation of the Fairvern Nursing Home, there is a opportunity to consider the future use and access to the new park within a larger context.

The sketch illustrates a possibility for the area with semi detached and townhouses developed on the Fairview site in a way that maintains views through to the water's edge and public access along the water's edge.

Access to the new park could be provided along a new road, to parking that is well buffered from housing.

The new park space could be used for open picnic areas with a children's adventure playground.

Selective cleaning of the shoreline would enable access to the water's edge on decks and maintaining a naturalized shoreline.

A washroom should be provided in association with the playground.

The sketch also illustrates the location of new pedestrian bridges to connect the area around the Summit Centre and Downtown to the area on the other side of the river. The online survey revealed strong support for one or two pedestrian bridges.

It will be important for the Town to consider the design of this new public park and the detailed design of possible pedestrian bridge connections with development scenarios for the Fairvern site.



*Bridge over canal in the Netherlands*

# The results of the online survey reveals strong support for key directions for the Network of Parks.

(bullet points are some of the additional comments shared in the survey)

## Topic 1 Hunters Bay



### Access to the Water's Edge

Selectively clear vegetation at the water's edge in Hunters Bay to make it easy to touch the water.

- Only if it is done sparingly, shoreline vegetation helps prevent erosion.
- Habitat and native species should be maintained.
- Some debris free wading areas with seating would be nice.



### Seating

Add more seating along the trail in Hunters Bay.

- There is enough seating already.
- Benches are a good idea.



### Wayfinding

Add maps and distance markers all along the Hunters Bay trail.

- Unobtrusive signage that does not detract from the surrounding natural environment.
- Clear entry points and more distances posted along the way.



### Trail head

Clearly demarcate parking, add seasonal washrooms and seating at the trailhead east of Highway 11, at the foot of East Airport Road.

- Parking would be great.
- Public washroom facilities are always appreciated.
- Currently, it's not clear where the trail begins or where to park.

## Topic 2 Avery Beach



### Playground

Remove the existing volleyball and replace it with a children's playground.

- Why not include both?
- This is the only volleyball location in Town.
- Naturalized play areas look more appealing.



### Water play

Add water play facilities into Hunters Bay at Avery Beach.

- The Town needs a splash pad for kids.
- Make the beach accessible to people using wheelchairs.
- Keep it simple and eliminate potential hazards.



### Washrooms

Add seasonal or permanent washrooms to Avery Beach.

- Definitely need improved washrooms.
- Avery Beach is already too busy.



### Parking

Expand the parking at Avery Beach.

- There is already enough parking, more would be a poor use of space and disturb the natural environment.
- Private uses along this part of the waterfront limit parking availability.
- Designated trailer parking would be nice.

## Topic 3 River Mill Park



### Community Garden

Relocate the community garden to another location in town.

- Expand the community garden instead of relocating it.
- This is the most central location and nice attraction.



### Amphitheatre

Relocate the amphitheatre to another location in town.

- The amphitheatre is poorly situated, consider redesigning the park.
- The amphitheatre is best located in River Mills Park.



### Swimming

Eliminate swimming from the area closest to the Town dock.

- Add safety buoys demarcating the swimming area.
- Town docks are meant for public access and use.
- Swimming opportunities need to be expanded.



### Pop Up Retail

Consider accommodating seasonal pop-up retail in River Mill Park.

- Support for year-round businesses instead.
- Local businesses should not have to compete with pop-ups.
- Not at the expense of parking.
- Pop-ups should be accommodated in larger public spaces.

## Topic 4 Camp Kitchen



### Road

Redesign Camp Kitchen Road as a shared street for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

- Limit or eliminate vehicle access.
- Yes! We need more cycling routes in Town.
- Keep it as a quiet spot for locals to enjoy.



### Shoreline

Selectively clear vegetation along the shoreline for easier access to the water's edge.

- Designated spots for dogs would be nice.
- Vegetation should be maintained.
- Very open now, not needed.



### Play Facilities

Consider adding children's play facilities in the green space at the end of Camp Kitchen Road.

- This area cannot accommodate additional traffic.
- There are already lots of play structures in Town, green spaces should be kept natural.
- Consider adding play facilities suitable for younger children.

## Topic 5 Mountview Treatment Plant



### Passive Public Use

Greenspace will become available after the plant is decommissioned. Use the green space for picnicking, walking, no active recreation.

- Great idea, don't develop this piece of land.
- There should be a draw to this space, such as active areas.



### Recreation

Consider using the space at the Mountview Treatment Plant for recreation such as pickle ball or volleyball.

- The Town needs a basketball court.
- Need more greenspace, not recreation spaces.
- The space should be kept mostly natural.
- Pedestrian bridge for accessing the downtown.



### Boating

Add a dock to enable the boat to tie up at a future park on the Mountview Treatment Plant lands.

- Not too much dock space, keep it as natural as possible.
- There is already enough boat parking in Town.



### Shoreline

Selectively clear vegetation along the shoreline at the Mountview Treatment Plant to enable easier access to the water's edge when it becomes a park.

- Vegetation should be maintained.
- Cleared plants should be replaced with native species.
- Public spaces provide rare opportunities for naturalized shoreline.

## Topic 6 Lions Lookout



### Pavilion

A new open-air pavilion, fully accessible, at the top of Lions Lookout, to replace the existing structure.

- The pavilion should not be obtrusive, maintaining scenic and natural beauty.
- Consider how attracting more people to the lookout would effect accessibility and traffic.
- More picnic table.



### Cars

Consider limiting vehicle access to the lookout.

- Vehicle access enables people with limited mobility to enjoy the lookout.
- Stairs would help people scale the lookout.
- Encourage more people to walk to the lookout during busy times of year.



### Viewing Platforms

Add viewing platforms along the rock ledge of Lions Lookout.

- The viewing platform should be kept natural.
- A viewing platform would provide for safer photo opportunities at the summit.

## Topic 7 Lions Lookout Track



👍 92%

### Winter Use

Add a skating rink/skating trail to the area.

- Arrowhead already has a great skating trail.
- Skating rink for both skate and classic around the edge.



👍 72%

### Sports Fields

Add sports fields to the area of the Lions Lookout track for baseball, or soccer to enable better use of the area for events.

- This is the only location available for track events.
- Consider adding a soccer pitch, it is safer for people on the track.
- Flexible space for accommodating Town events.



👍 86%

### Washrooms

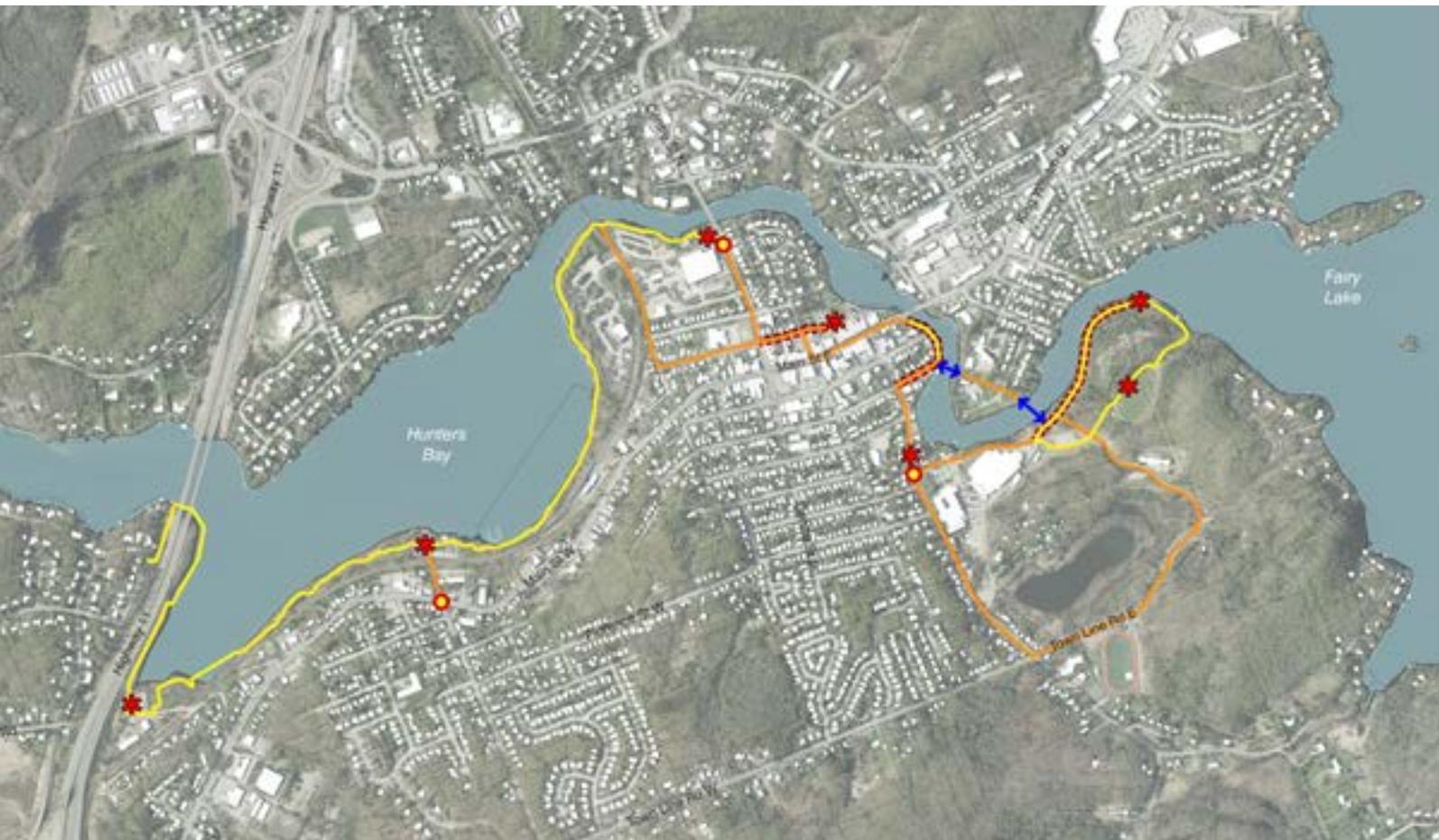
Provide year-round washrooms and warming stations to the area at the Lions Lookout track.

- Change rooms and concession stands for events.
- There are already washrooms nearby.

## 2 Wayfinding and a Connected Waterfront Walk

The Wayfinding and Connected Waterfront strategy knits together the existing trail with new sidewalks/delineating existing sidewalks as being part of the waterfront walk, re-conceiving roads as “shared spaces” for safe pedestrian passage and slow moving vehicles and identifying key locations for crosswalks and wayfinding. This strategy also seeks to connect the north side of the river with a pedestrian bridge(s). A pedestrian bridge has been considered for many years as a way to provide enhanced access to and from the

high school, Summit Centre and Lions Lookout area. There was strong support for a bridge(s) from the online survey. The specific location of the bridge(s) will be determined through detailed planning and design. There was also very strong support for branding, and enhanced wayfinding along the waterfront. The Town’s Wayfinding Strategy provides a signage concept and a palette of sign types for providing enhanced pedestrian and vehicle orientation and direction to key destinations along the waterfront.



### Some of what we heard...

- Need trail signage*
- Great idea for shared street*
- Great idea for pedestrian bridge*
- Fitness circuit on trail*
- Art installations on the trail*
- Make sure trail is accessible to all*
- Need crosswalk at Centre and Main*
- Expand/demarcate parking at Avery Beach*

### Legend

- Existing Trail
- Trail Delineated/New
- Shared Street
- ✱ Wayfinding Point
- Crosswalk
- ↔ Bridge

Specific suggestions for the location of wayfinding/information in each of the three segments of the waterfront follows:

## West Segment

### **Pedestrians**

- Trail Head located east of Highway 11 and west of Centre Street
- Trail/Distance markers along the Hunters Bay Trail
- Trail/Distance markers along Centre Street
- Map showing key destinations along the waterfront trail
- Sidewalk on the west side of Centre Street to Susan Street
- Crosswalk at bridge to Hunters Bay trail head
- Crosswalk at Yonge Street and Muskoka Road 3

### **Motorists**

- Sign public parking
- Waterfront sign at Airport Road and Ferguson
- Waterfront sign at Ferguson and Muskoka Road 3
- Waterfront sign at Yonge Street and Muskoka Road 3

## Central Segment

### **Pedestrians**

- Trail Head/information in River Mill Park
- Trail/distance markers to mark route along King Street, Main Street to River Street, Princess and Brunel
- Map showing key destinations along the waterfront trail

### **Motorists**

- Waterfront sign at West Street and Main Street and Centre Street
- Signs for public parking

## East Segment

### **Pedestrians**

- Trail/distance markers along Camp Kitchen Road
- Trail/distance markers along Forbes Hill Drive sidewalk
- Map showing key destinations along the waterfront trail

### **Motorists**

- Waterfront sign at Brunel and Forbes Hill Drive
- Waterfront sign at Forbes Hill Drive and Camp Kitchen Road

There are three critical links to complete the Connected Waterfront Walk: Dara Howell Way, River/Princess Street and Camp Kitchen Road. Dara Howell Way provides a key connecting link between the Hunters Bay trail and the River Mill Park/Main Street destination. River/Princess Street is a narrow road, with a narrow sidewalk on one side and on street parking. Camp Kitchen is a gravel road with space for parking along its length and at its terminus.

The roads could be designed as “shared space” giving pedestrians the priority in a space where vehicles move very slowly through. This strategy is based on a foundation of having a continuous, safe and defined waterfront walk. The shared space is created through special paving, additional landscape treatment and signage.



### **Camp Kitchen Road**

**Redesign Camp Kitchen Road as a shared street for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.**



*Example of a “shared street” identified with special paving and landscape treatment.*

**Survey Results** (bullet points are some of the additional comments shared in the survey)

**Topic 9 Wayfinding and Signage**



👍 79%

**Information Kiosk**

Provide a network of information kiosks at key locations along the waterfront to orient people to the waterfront parks and facilities.

- Visual pollution should be minimized.



👍 82%

**Branding**

Identify each of the waterfront parks with a sign that clearly brands it as part of the waterfront system.

- It's not clear how some parks should be accessed, more parking would improving usability.

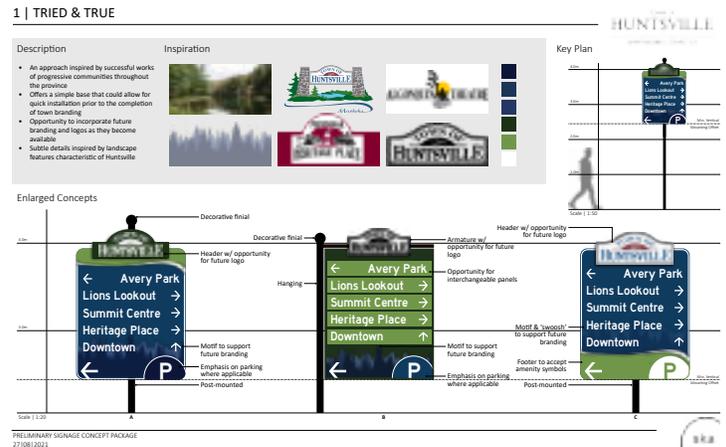


👍 84%

**Directional signs**

Identify the ways to and along the waterfront with signs at the connecting roads.

- Directional signs should only be used on connecting roads.



Wayfinding Signage Concept preferred from public engagement held during the preparation of the Wayfinding Strategy.

The Wayfinding Strategy identifies sign types including: Parking, Vehicle Direction, Pedestrian Direction, Information Guide, Information Kiosk, and Destination .

## Topic 8 Pedestrian Connections



### One Pedestrian Bridge

Add a pedestrian bridge to connect a new park at the Mountview Treatment Station site to River Street.

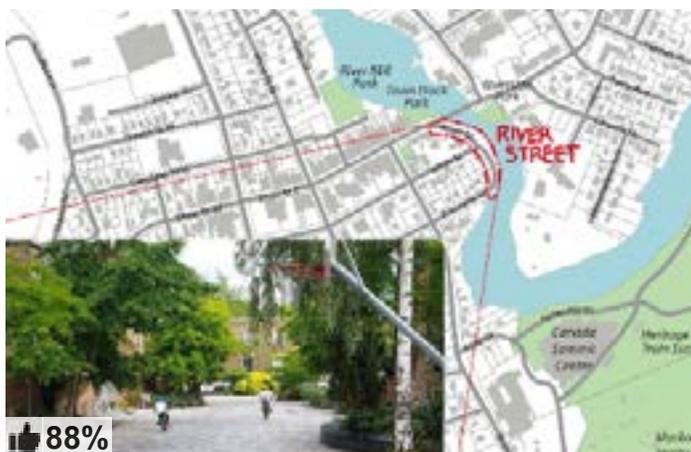
- The connection should be made closer to the summit centre.
- Excellent!
- Will this be maintained during the winter?



### Two Pedestrian Bridges

Add two pedestrian bridges to connect the new park on the site of the Mountview Treatment Plant to River Street and to the Summit Centre and beyond.

- Only one bridge is needed, Summit Centre access would be nice.
- Great idea linking the trail system with active transportation.



### River Edge Walk

Redesign River Street as a shared street providing safe access for pedestrians, cyclists along the river edge, as well as motorists

- Limit or remove access to motorized vehicles.
- Take the opportunity to remove invasive buckthorn.

### 3 Stewardship/Naturalization of the Private Shoreline

All property owners have a role to play in restoring and protecting the shoreline by ensuring a naturalized buffer of vegetation at the water's edge and eliminating use of fertilizers on landscaped areas along the waterfront. This strategy recommends that private owners with shoreline property should be encouraged to naturalize their shorelines with native and indigenous vegetation and minimize hardening the water's edge with retaining walls, terraced boulders etc.

A Stewardship Guide for homeowners should be prepared. The Guide would include information on the role of grass roots stewardship, the need for vegetated buffers, appropriate plants, grading, avoiding the use of pesticides, enhancing habitat, etc. Consideration could be given to recognizing homeowners who are excellent stewards of the shoreline through a plaque.



#### Some of what we heard...

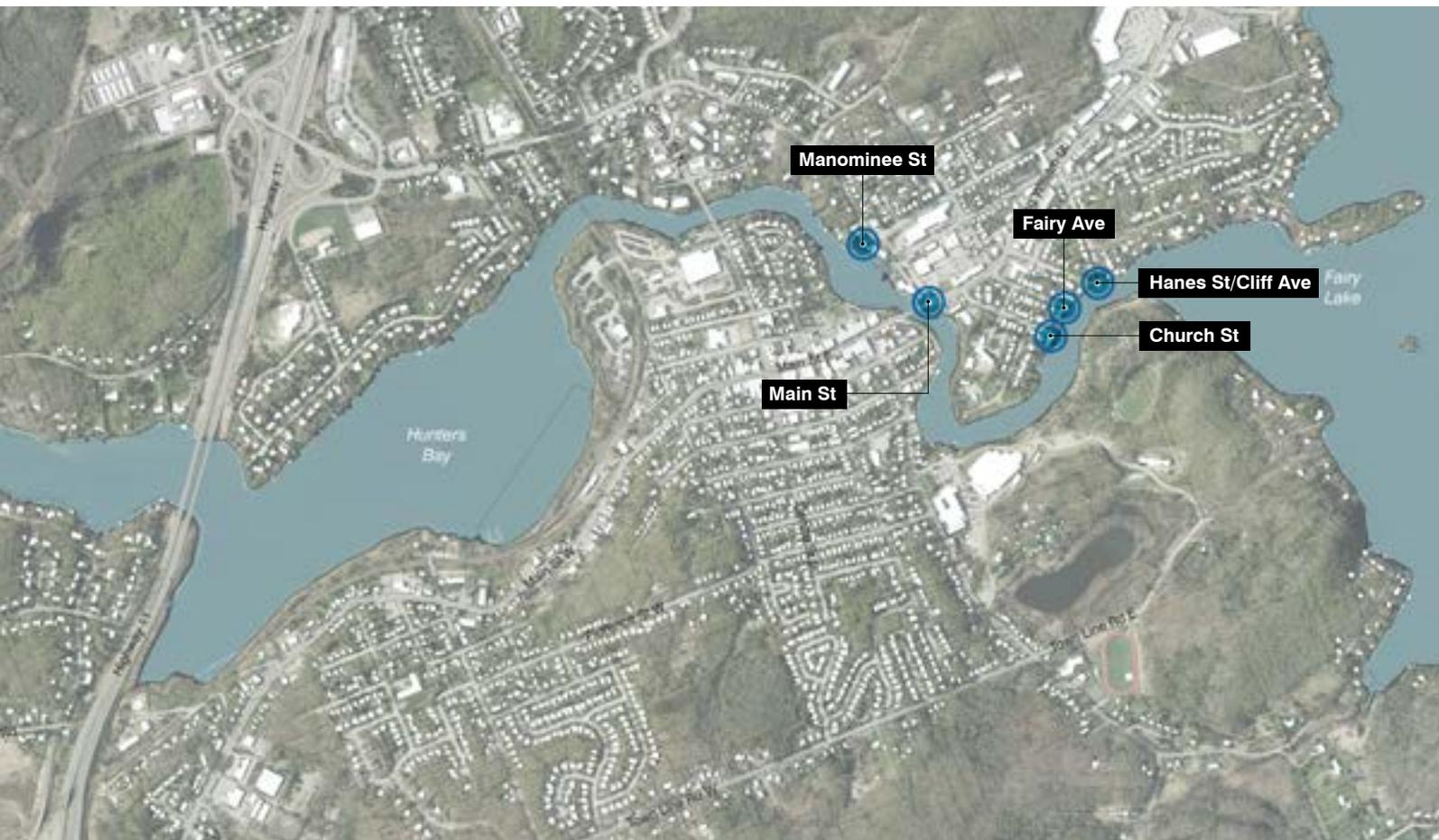
*Natural areas are the primary feature - environment first*

*Concerned about clearing the shoreline - must be balanced*

*Naturalize the shoreline*

## 4 Windows to the Water at Road Ends

Municipal roads that end at the water's edge provide "windows" for access and are appropriate for a bench and launching a canoe or kayak. The online survey revealed strong support (77%) for the idea of enhancing the awareness of these locations. The waterfront windows should be clearly signed as public space, ensuring no encroachment from adjacent private properties.



### Some of what we heard...

*It's difficult finding public water access.*

*Keep the waterfront natural, a small right-of-way is all that is required for people to access the water.*

*Access points should be regularly maintained.*

*Right-of-ways should be used only by non-motorized boat users and swimmers.*

## 5 A System of Recreation Facilities for Year Round Use

The waterfront parks provide a network of destinations that can be augmented with recreation facilities and amenities to encourage year round use. Each waterfront park should include adventure themed playground equipment. River Mill Park has a children's playground.

The Town has a pilot project with a skating rink at the Lions Lookout track. There have also been discussions to add additional sports fields in the area. The online survey revealed strong support

for adding a skating rink or skating trail.

There was also support for the idea of replacing the current pavilion at Lions Lookout with a new open air, fully accessible structure. This should be pursued along with the possibility of adding viewing platforms along the rock ledge.

The trail is the ribbon that ties the network together and could include activity stations, public art and seating.



### Some of what we heard...

- Leave bandshell in River Mill Park*
- Community garden in River Mill could be elsewhere*
- Add a system of fitness stations along the trail*

### Legend

-  Activity Stations (fishing, exercise, public art)
-  Adventure Playgrounds
-  Skating

## 6 Swimming

While the Huntsville waterfront does not have beaches, there are several locations for swimming:

### **Hunters Bay**

The trail and platforms have become a popular destination for swimming.

### **Avery Beach**

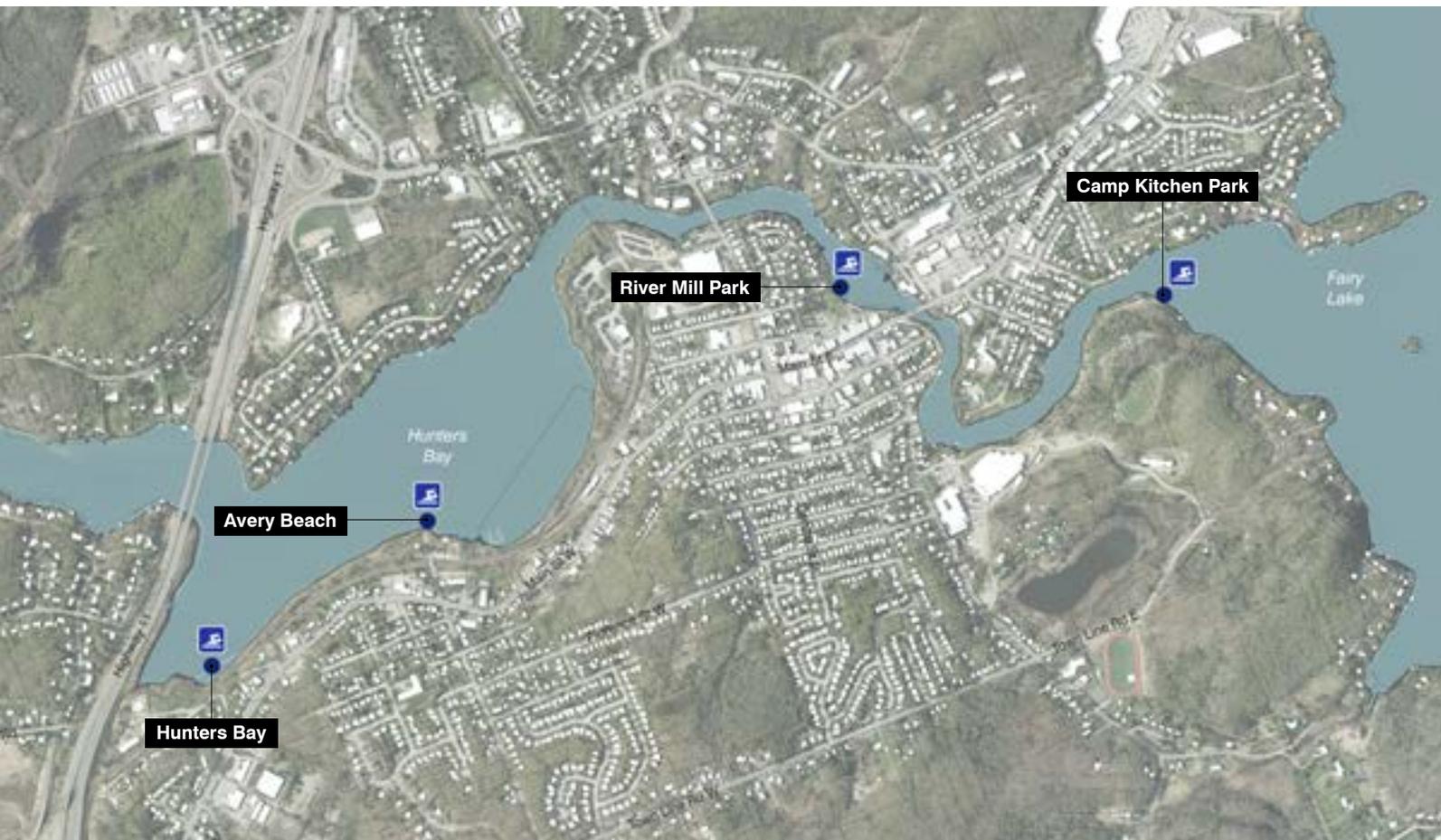
Many suggested the opportunity of clearing some shoreline vegetation to expand swimming at the park.

### **River Mill Park**

With relocation of the community garden to another location in Huntsville, that area could be used for green space adjacent to a new area for swimming. This allows for the required separation of swimming from boating at the town docks.

### **Camp Kitchen**

Camp Kitchen is well used by residents for swimming and people training and racing in marathons. Consider demarcating an area for laps.



### **Some of what we heard...**

*Expand beach at Avery*

*Concerned about swimming at River Mill next to boats*

*Add a swimming platform to Camp Kitchen*

*Demarcate swimming lanes at Camp Kitchen*

*Mark all swimming areas with buoys*

## 7 Opportunities for Business

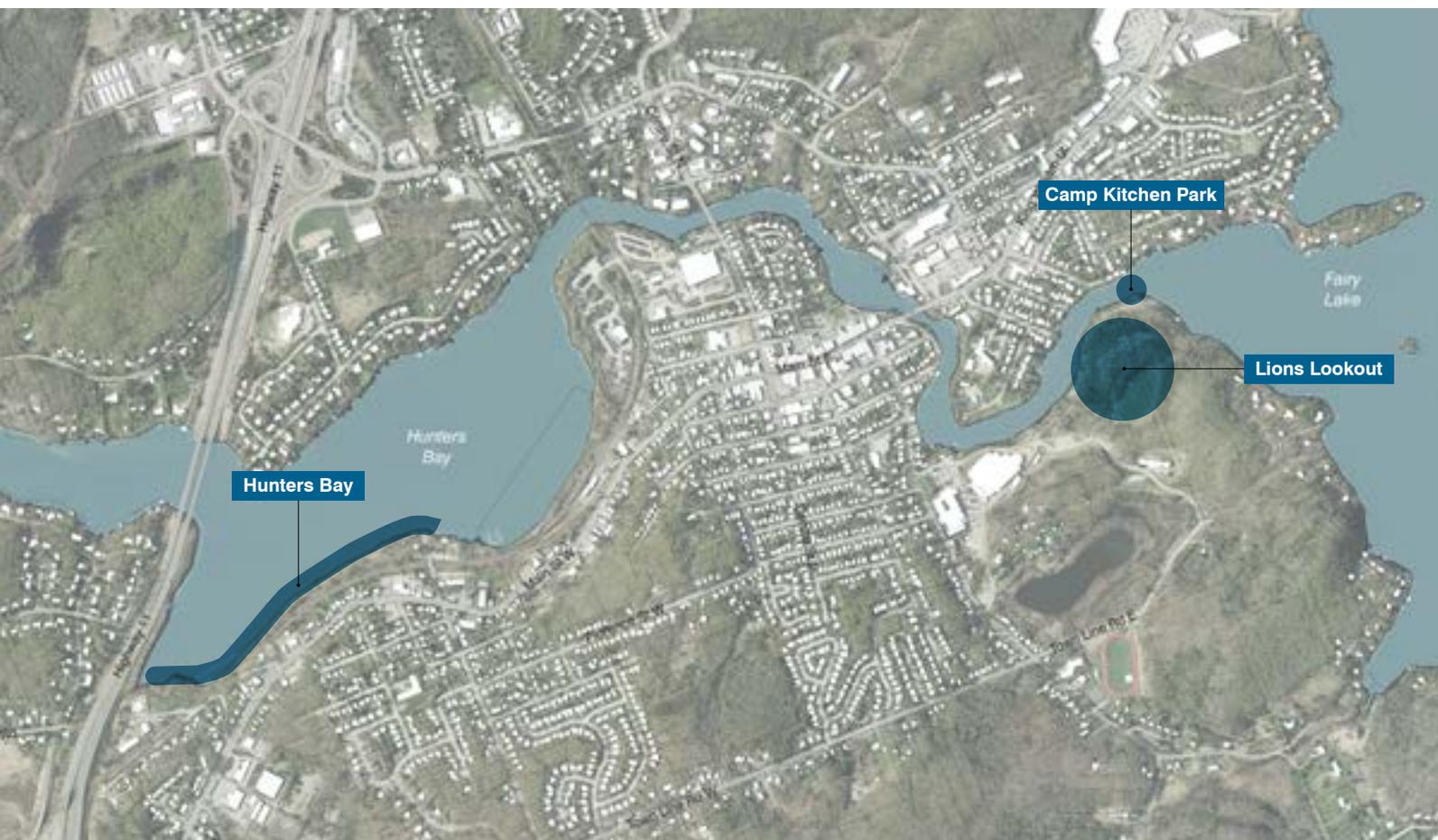
Algonquin Outfitters currently offers rentals of bikes, canoes, cross country skis, kayaks, snowshoes, paddleboards and jet skis.

There was interest expressed during the public engagement for others in the community to develop business ideas for the waterfront.

There is limited commercial activity near Avery Beach along Yonge Street at Muskoka Road 3.

River Mill Park enjoys the full complement of shops and restaurants on the Main Street. The opportunity for pop up retail from current business was offered in the summer of 2021. This should be continued.

The Town could entertain submissions from the community for business ideas for other waterfront parks that could support the active use of the waterfront year round.



### Some of what we heard...

*Give small business/entrepreneurs an opportunity to come up with ideas  
Give people a reason to use the trails*

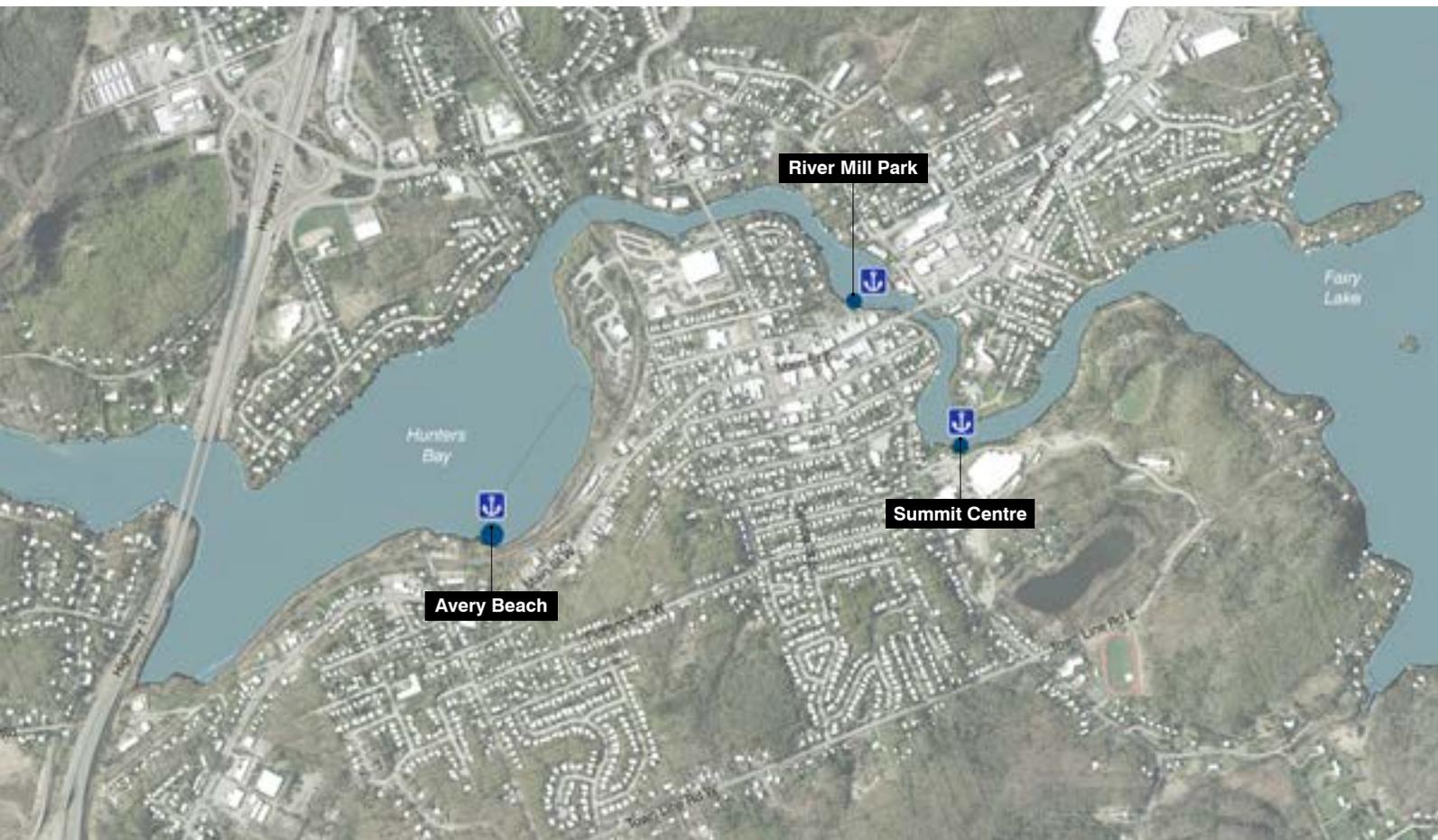
## 8 Boating

Currently, boating is well distributed across Huntsville's waterfront with slips in Hunters Bay, River Mill Park and by the Summit Centre. There is already approval for the Avery Beach marina to expand the slips, although there are no immediate plans to do so. This area also has a boat launch and space for vehicle and trailer parking.

There was little support for expanding boat slips at the Town Dock or in the river by the Summit Centre (current operator is interested in expanding

slips and providing gas) with many saying there is already enough space for boats, and that boating impeded the use of water's edge lands. Only 44% of the survey respondents supported the idea of additional boat launches along the waterfront. No additional boat launches are suggested in this study area

The Town should undertake a town wide assessment of boat launches and slips to put the need for additional boating facilities in this area into municipal wide context.



### Some of what we heard...

*Opportunity for canoe and kayak launching in Hunters Bay at old hanger and east of Highway 11  
Concerned about expanding marinas - environmental impacts and noise*

**Survey Results** (bullet points are some of the additional comments shared in the survey)



**Launch**

**Provide additional boat launches between Hunters Bay and Lions Lookout.**

- Safer areas are needed to launch boats, there is too much pressure on existing boat launches.
- Channel markers are needed to minimize wake effects.



**Town Dock**

**Provide additional docking at the Town dock.**

- There is already enough space for docking boats.
- Prevent overcrowding the waterway.
- Convert some of the docks to be used only for human-powered watercraft.



**River**

**Provide more boat slips in the river near the Summit Centre.**

- Boat slips impede access to the waterfront.
- There are already enough boat slips.

**Boating**

The following is summary of the current supply of marina slips:

**Summit Centre**

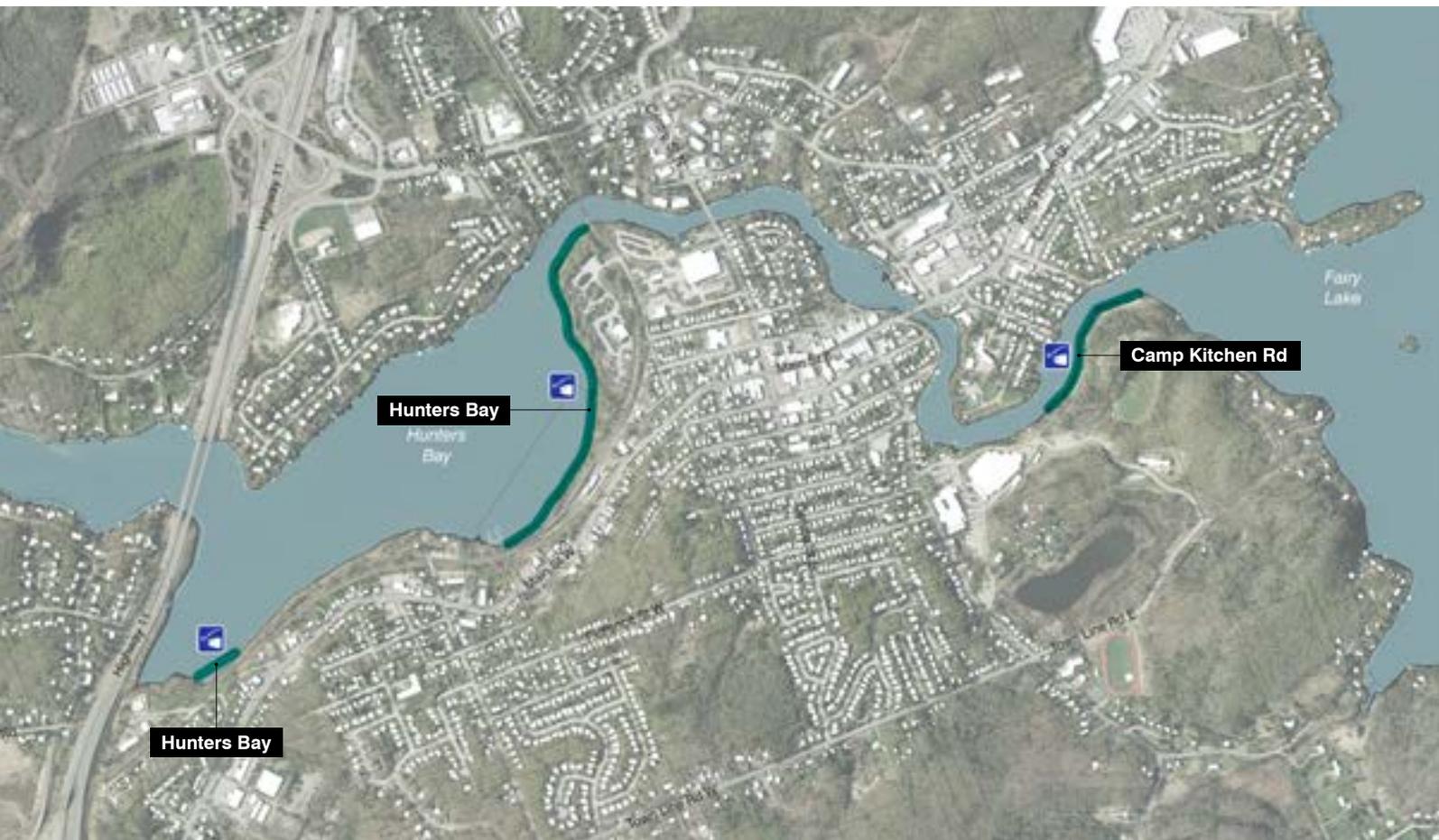
- 30 slips
- possible expansion on public land
- possible provision of gas
- agreement with Town for share in revenues

**Avery Beach Marina**

- 32 slips
- wait list
- possible expansion on public land
- no gas, no pump out
- agreement with Town to share in revenues of slip rental and parking
- seasonal washrooms

## 9 Fishing

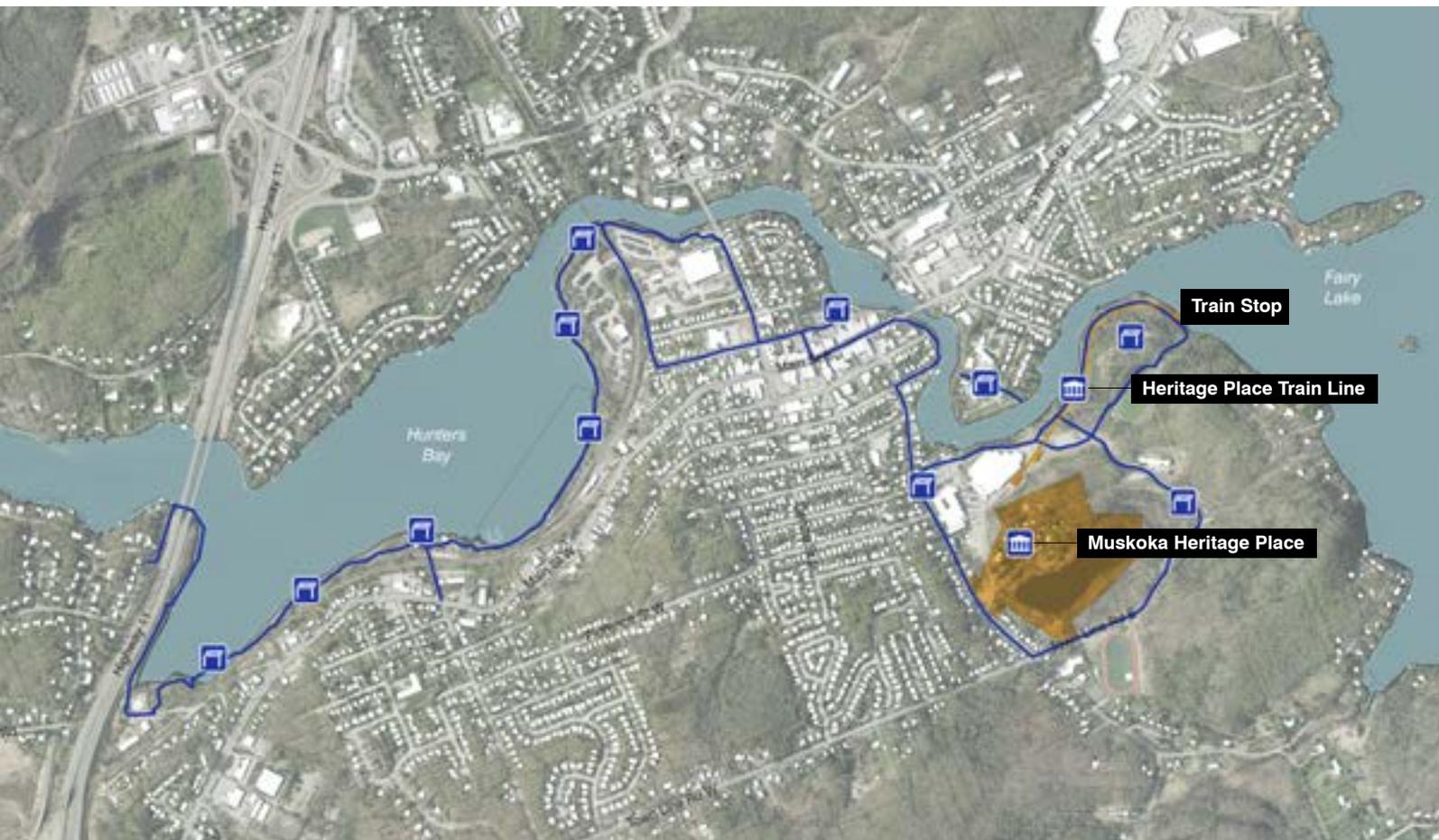
Fishing is an obvious attraction of the waterfront. Anglers fish in Hunters Bay and along Camp Kitchen Road. Both Hunters Bay and Fairy Lake are identified as “Cold Water Lakes” and “Type 1 Fish Habitat” has been mapped along the river edge along Camp Kitchen Road (see Chapter 3). The shoreline could be selectively cleared to enable construction of modest fishing platforms along Hunters Bay and Camp Kitchen Road.



## 10 Heritage and Arts

Huntsville's waterfront is anchored by Muskoka Heritage Place, the, Pioneer Village and the very popular Portage Flyer Train. The grounds are used for special public and private events and celebrations and school programs. Public events include "walk with the light" an interactive sound and light display, Upgrade the building at the terminus of the track, the great pumpkin trail, Easter egg hunt and Canada Day celebrations.

There is an opportunity to expand the use of grounds for broader community events, programming, rentals, education, recreation (indoors and outdoors), day camps, trail connections and workshops. The grounds offer a possible location for the community garden . There is also a tremendous opportunity to locate outdoor permanent or temporary public art along the waterfront trail, linking the entire network from Muskoka Heritage Place to Hunters Bay.



### Legend

 Public Art/Heritage Interpretation

## Overall Framework

The overall framework for the Waterfront Design Strategy builds on the resource of 31 hectares of town-owned land and 5.3 kilometers of water's edge, extensive collaboration with the community through one-on-one conversations, a public workshop, an online survey and input through the project's webpage. The framework is based on six fundamental principles and ten strategies with 75 ideas to continue to create Huntsville's waterfront for its residents and visitors to enjoy.



