

The background of the cover is a topographic map with green contour lines. A thick, wavy pink line representing a trail path starts from the left edge and winds across the map towards the right.

# Trail Strategy

for the Greater  
Toronto Region

Growing Our Legacy

September 2019



## Acknowledgements

As we strive to create a complete regional trail network in greenspace that connects our growing communities to nature and to each other, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) acknowledges that the Trail Strategy was undertaken within the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Williams Treaty Nations, the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Métis nations. As stewards of land and water resources within the Greater Toronto Area, TRCA appreciates and recognizes the history and diversity of the land, as well as our shared values and interests, and is respectful of working in this territory.

The TRCA Trail Strategy is a product of significant inventory, research, mapping, analysis, writing and editing. It builds upon the foundations of the *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, the *Greenspace Plan*, *Regeneration: Toronto's waterfront and the sustainable city*, and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, and reflects the current and forward-looking directions provided in the *Regional Transportation Plan*, the *Growth Plan*, the *Greenbelt Plan*, and regional official plans.

Throughout this process, intensive consultation with our partners aligned the Strategy with our collective goals. We would like to express our appreciation to our following partners for their co-operation and contributions: the governments of Canada and Ontario, municipal and regional staff and various public and private agencies, boards, associations and grassroots trail groups.

## Executive Summary

The Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region outlines Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) plan to work with partners to complete, expand, manage and celebrate the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network, a connected trail network in our regional greenspace system. It serves as a framework to protect potential trail alignments, and to guide the planning, development, and management of these trails. In addition, the Trail Strategy provides rationale and informs efforts to secure greenspace and should be used to support the *Greenlands Acquisition Project for 2016–2020* and its future iterations. As such, it will facilitate the concerted effort of expanding greenways and building the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network in partnership with our trail community colleagues and partners. The Trail Strategy consists of the following:

- A vision expressing what we want to achieve
- A concept describing our proposal
- Guiding principles to steer our efforts
- Context for our work
- Strategic objectives to translate our vision into specific plans and projects
- Actions required to achieve our concept

The vision for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network sees a complete regional trail network in greenspace and along the Lake Ontario shoreline that connects our growing communities to nature, to culture, and to each other, contributing to active living and enhancing our conservation legacy.

The concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network sees the development of almost 480 km of proposed trails through the Oak Ridges Moraine, the valleys of the Etobicoke, Mimico, Highland, Petticoat, and Duffins Creeks, and the major valleys of the Don, Humber, and Rouge Rivers; along the Lake Ontario Waterfront; and through regional infrastructure corridors, including transit, utility, and electric power facility corridors. It also envisions the introduction of blue trails, which are paddling routes on our navigable waterways. Combined with the 520 km of existing trails in our greenspace system, implementation of this Strategy would see the provision of 1,000 km of regional trails across our jurisdiction.

This concept builds on the existing regional trail system whose foundation is provided in the *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, the *Greenspace Plan*, *Regeneration: Toronto's waterfront and the sustainable city*, and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*. It reflects the current and forward-looking directions provided in the *Regional Transportation Plan*, the *Growth Plan*, the *Greenbelt Plan*, and regional official plans to capitalize on current growth and development opportunities. This concept affirms our commitment to strategically expand publicly owned and accessible greenspace and trails through a variety of mechanisms. It also proposes investment in 10 conservation destination areas to enhance the trail network and provide amenities. This concept, that has been developed with extensive stakeholder input, identifies the existing trail system, prioritizes key missing links within the regional network, and proposes opportunities for trail

connections that would link to both regional and municipal trail systems. Many of the opportunities to be investigated extend beyond TRCA-owned lands and require collaboration with member municipalities, private landowners, utilities, and other agencies.

Five guiding principles form the foundation of the Trail Strategy, underpinning the vision of the document and informing the rationale and methodology for its implementation: lead, collaborate, steward, invest, and celebrate. The following seven strategic objectives along with their associated initiatives and actions, will guide TRCA and its partners towards achieving the vision of the Trail Strategy:

1. Prioritize trail and destination area capital projects
2. Promote greater trail use and awareness
3. Build a sound knowledge base
4. Integrate community enjoyment and protection of our heritage
5. Promote meaningful community engagement
6. Support complete communities
7. Secure adequate and sustainable investment

The Trail Strategy supports *The Living City*<sup>®</sup> vision for a new kind of community where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature's beauty and diversity. In particular, it reinforces TRCA's Leadership Strategic Priority # 3: Rethink greenspace to maximize its value, as identified in *TRCA's Building the Living City*<sup>®</sup>: 10 Year Strategic Plan 2013–2022. The expected outcomes of the Trail Strategy are as listed:

- Protection of opportunities to achieve the regional trail network through the development review process
- Protection of connected routes and corridors for wildlife, recreation, and active transportation
- Provision of natural spaces for play, exploration, and recreation
- Provision and protection of green infrastructure and ecosystem services
- Protection of our cultural heritage and promotion of its understanding
- Creation of opportunities for land-based education
- Enhancement of our physical landscapes, to inform existing and future development
- Encouragement of urban regeneration
- Support for the economic potential of eco-tourism
- Improvement of social inclusion, equity, and accessibility of greenspaces
- Improvement of opportunities to enjoy and connect with nature
- Reinforcement of our regional identity

TRCA will leverage this Strategy to partner with municipal, provincial, and federal colleagues, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community partners, and the development industry to inform our efforts to acquire, protect, and enhance natural assets, and to achieve new and upgraded trails, while connecting people to nature.

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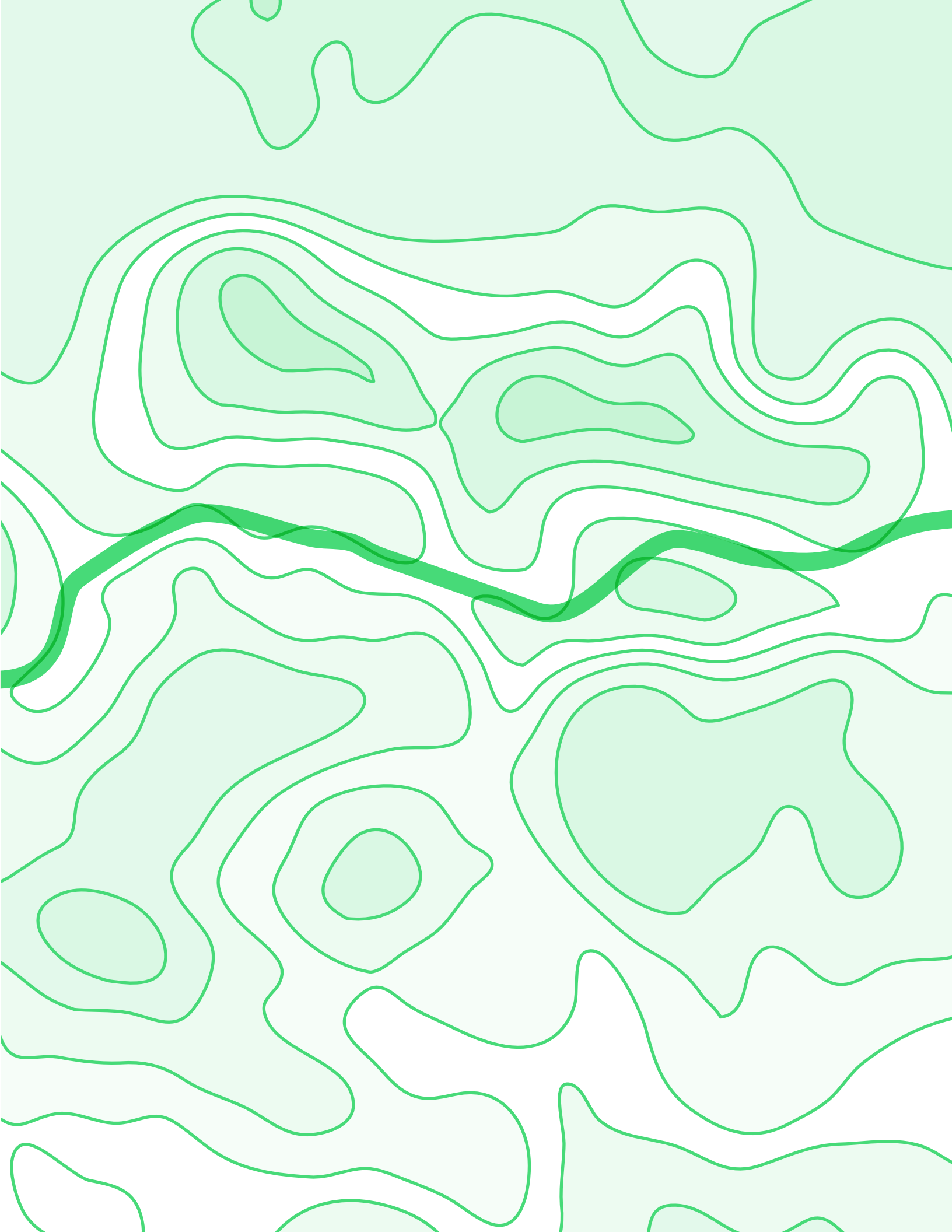
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# Introduction

Trails have become a defining feature of our landscapes. Trails connect residents to nature and to each other, and provide opportunities for community, recreation, active transportation, and healthy living.

**Increasing the amount of publicly accessible greenspace can help to accommodate urban growth while maintaining a high quality of life and ecological functions.**

For more than 10,000 years, trails have woven through the forests, valleys, and meadows of what is now known as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). They were used by traders, hunters, and fishers during the migration of Indigenous people, and later by waves of settlers and immigrants. In the process, trails have become a defining feature of our urban and rural landscapes. Trails connect residents to nature and to each other, and provide opportunities for community, recreation, active transportation, and healthy living. They form a network for movement, linking neighbourhoods in the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) and the Greenbelt to the growing suburban and urban centres that frame Lake Ontario.

Situated in the largest metropolitan area in Canada, TRCA's area of jurisdiction is uniquely positioned with some of the most remarkable natural areas in our region. Making these special places accessible through trails – while growing, enhancing, and protecting our greenspace system – is essential to preserving a high quality of life.

TRCA has a long history of nature-based trail planning, development, and delivery. Over the past 60 years, TRCA has worked in collaboration with its regional trail community partners to provide responsible access to nature through scenic recreational trails and greenways. Inspired by the successful establishment of the Bruce Trail, TRCA proposed the concept of a regional trail network in greenspace that would connect the ORM and the Niagara Escarpment to the shoreline of Lake Ontario in 1989 (see Figure 1.a: Greenspace Plan). This proposed trail

network was intended to provide continuous public access through conservation corridors to the magnificent landscapes of the Greater Toronto Area. TRCA has since worked in partnership with community groups and all levels of government to develop this network. This network was reinforced in landmark planning documents such as *Regeneration: Toronto's waterfront and the sustainable city*, and *Space for All: Options for a Greater Toronto Area Greenlands Strategy*. There are currently 520 km of regional trails in greenspace connecting the municipalities of Mono, Peel, York, Durham, and the City of Toronto, including sections of the Bruce Trail, the Lake-to-Lake Trail, the Oak Ridges Trail, The Great Trail, and the Waterfront Trail. This network has become an important

mechanism to secure greenspace, mitigate climate change, improve human health and well-being, promote responsible public access create more resilient communities, and inspire environmental stewardship.

Presently, our region is experiencing unprecedented urban growth. By 2041, our population is projected to have increased by 40 per cent to reach close to 10 million residents (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2017). Twelve of the urban growth centres in the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017), and 36 mobility hubs identified in Metrolinx's *Regional Transportation Plan* (2018), are in TRCA's jurisdiction. Increasing the amount of publicly accessible greenspace

**Figure 1.a: Greenspace Plan (1989)**



can help to accommodate this projected urban growth while maintaining a high quality of life, and ecological functions. This Strategy encourages the proactive protection of trail corridors to mitigate environment impacts of growth in the GTA while simultaneously preventing negative environmental impact with this coming intensification.

Expanding greenspace and providing trails more equitably across our jurisdiction will provide nature-based amenities and recreation opportunities to communities, while improving our collective health and well-being. The creation of new trails, trailheads, and neighbourhood linkages to our regional system will facilitate access to incredible destinations, allowing people to experience nature through the seasons. We must target our efforts and capitalize on development opportunities to realize these possibilities and service planned growth according to our environmental planning policies and objectives. We must also secure adequate and sustainable investment in this community infrastructure that accounts for the full lifecycle costs of trails to maintain assets in a state of good repair to our desired level of service.

TRCA has developed the Trail Strategy to provide a strategic vision for a complete regional trail network in greenspace and the Lake Ontario shoreline that connects our growing communities to nature, to culture, and to each other. The network contributes to active living and once built will be a lasting conservation legacy. As development accelerates, TRCA will employ this Strategy and partner with municipal colleagues senior levels of government, NGOs, utilities, landowners, and the development industry to continue to acquire, protect, and enhance natural assets while connecting people to nature. Through this collaboration, ongoing public procurement of greenspace and the provision of scenic trail greenways will occur. At our doorstep, we have a precious hinterland network of nature-based recreation trails across the ORM, the Niagara Escarpment, our nine river valleys, and the Lake Ontario waterfront. By working together strategically, we can grow and maintain this legacy in support of complete communities, a thriving economy, and a healthy environment.





# Purpose

The Trail Strategy outlines a plan to protect potential trail alignments, and to guide the planning, development, and management of a network of regional trails.

The Strategy should be read in conjunction with *The Living City Policies* (TRCA, 2014), which state TRCA's environmental planning and development objectives, goals, and policies for the provision of non-motorized recreational trails located within our watersheds. The Strategy provides additional rationale to secure greenspace to increase the natural system while providing appropriately sited scenic greenways. As such, it should be used to support the objectives of the *Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy*

(*TNHSS*) (TRCA, 2007), the *Greenlands Acquisition Project for 2016–2020* (TRCA, 2015), the *Greenspace Strategy* (TRCA, 1989), and their future iterations. The Strategy also aligns with the *Community Engagement Strategy* (TRCA, 2017) by fostering sustainable citizenship towards realizing *The Living City*® vision. This Strategy provides direction regarding regional trails for future TRCA planning documents, including Watershed Plans, Management Plans, and Master Plans for TRCA and publicly owned assets.

The Trail Strategy represents the first product of an ongoing TRCA Trail Program. The Trail Strategy contains the following six major components:

1.

A **vision** expressing what we want to achieve

2.

A **concept** describing our plan that has been developed with extensive input

3.

**Guiding principles** to steer our efforts

4.

**Context** outlining influencing factors

5.

**Strategic objectives** to translate our vision into specific plans and projects

6.

**Actions** required to achieve our concept

This Strategy defines **active living** as a way of life in which physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual activities are valued and are integrated into daily living.<sup>1</sup>

This Strategy defines **active transportation** as using your own power to get from one place to another. This includes walking, biking, skateboarding, in-line skating/rollerblading, jogging and running, non-mechanized wheelchairs, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.<sup>2</sup>

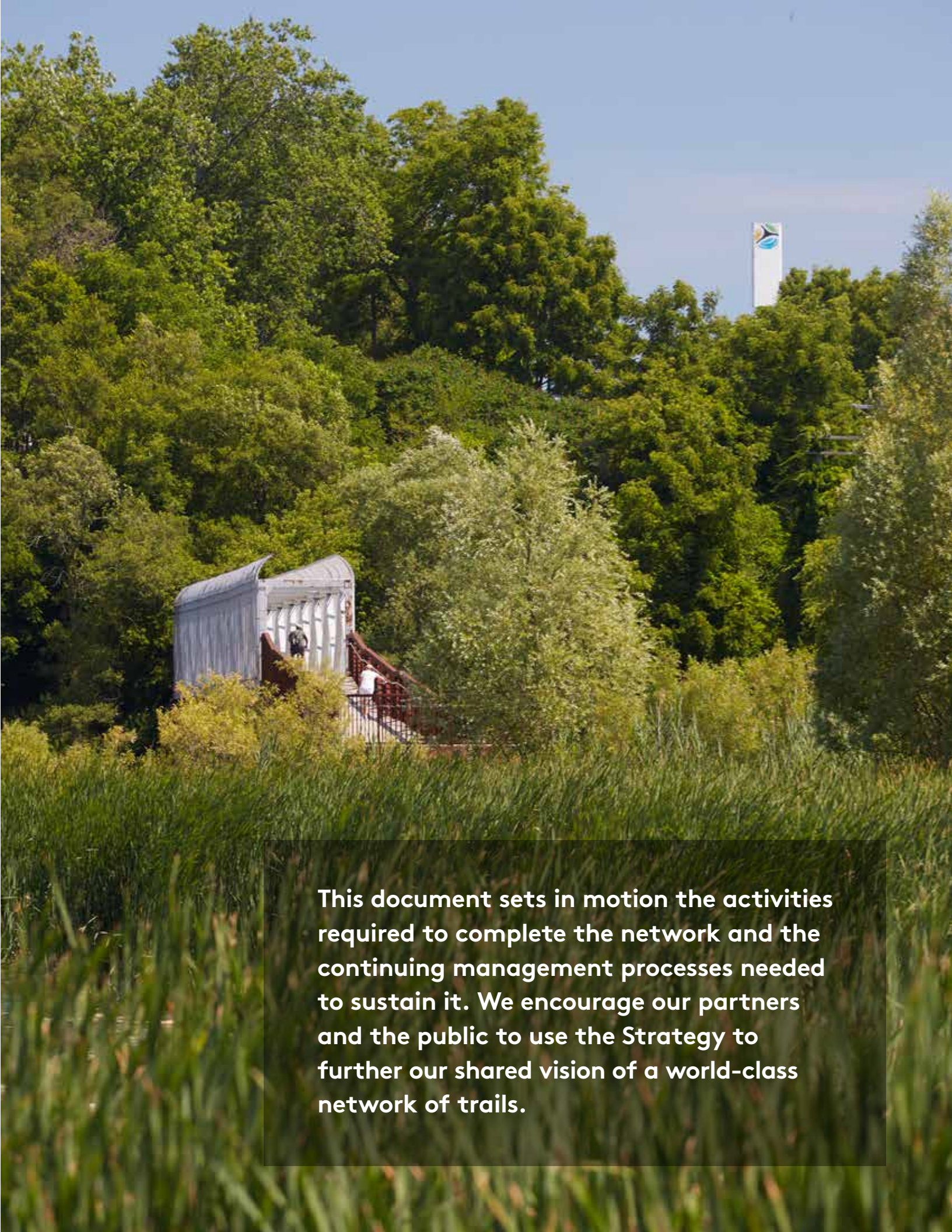
This Strategy defines **recreation** as non-intrusive, outdoor leisure activities that facilitate enjoyment of nature, such as hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, and bird watching.

This Strategy defines a **regional trail** as a non-motorized trail, primarily in greenspace, that crosses municipal boundaries and connects communities throughout our region through recreation and/or active transportation uses.

1. <https://www.activeagingcanada.ca/participants/get-active/active-living/what-is-active-living.htm>

2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/active-transportation.html>

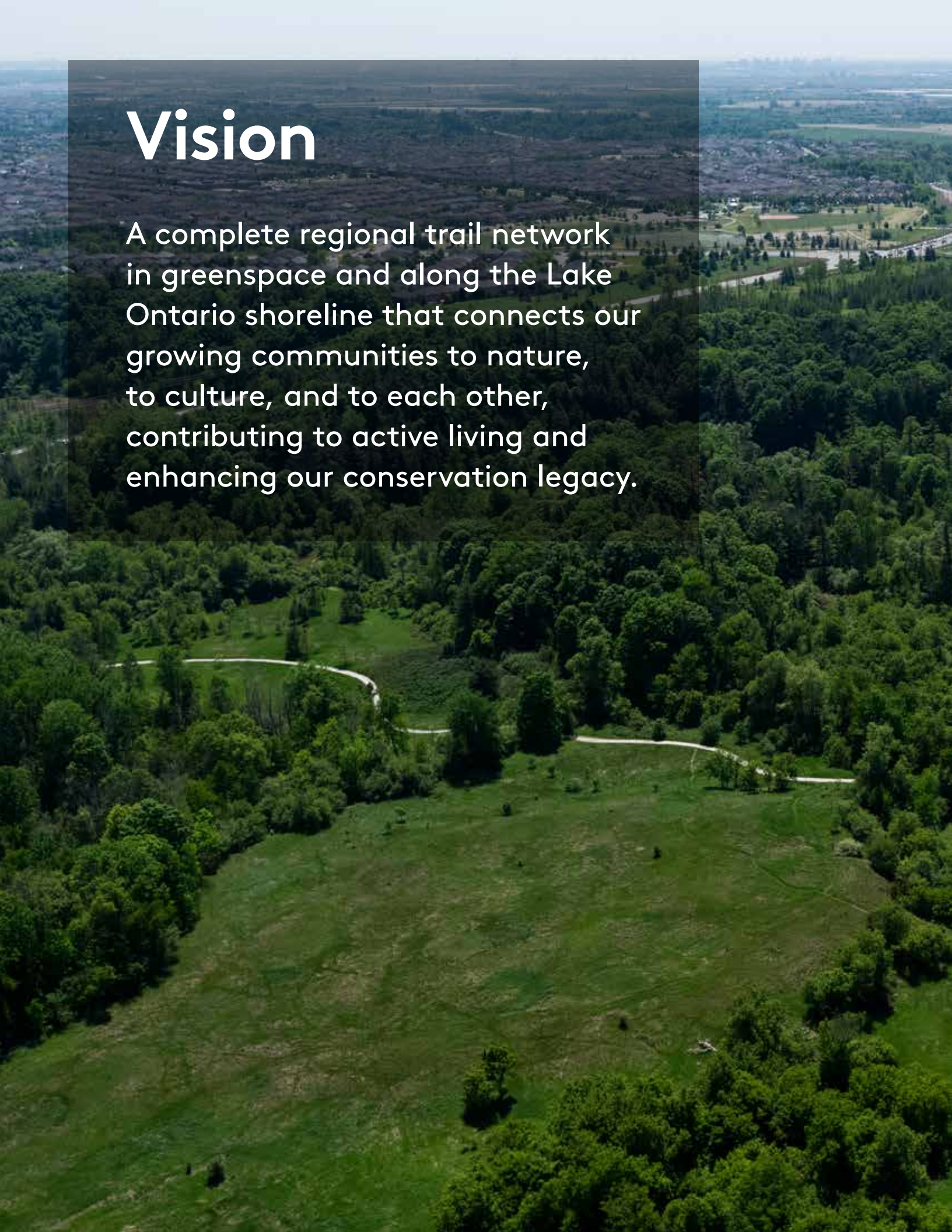




**This document sets in motion the activities required to complete the network and the continuing management processes needed to sustain it. We encourage our partners and the public to use the Strategy to further our shared vision of a world-class network of trails.**

# Vision

A complete regional trail network in greenspace and along the Lake Ontario shoreline that connects our growing communities to nature, to culture, and to each other, contributing to active living and enhancing our conservation legacy.







# Concept

The concept plan for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network provides connections from the headwaters of the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment to the Lake Ontario Waterfront, across the river valleys and tablelands to the conservation destinations of our nine watersheds.



The concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network reflects and serves as our vision by building on existing regional trail systems, provincial and municipal plans, and current growth and development opportunities to strategically expand greenspace and trails through a variety of development mechanisms.

In the growing communities of Vaughan, Richmond Hill, King, Mayfield, and Bolton, opportunities exist for land acquisition to grow, enhance, and protect habitat and provide trails concurrent with planned development. New communities in Markham and Pickering also hold exciting prospects to acquire greenway corridors that would link the spectacular Rouge River and Duffins Creek systems from the Lake Ontario Waterfront to the ORM.

There are approximately 520 km of regional trails in our greenspace system. The concept proposes almost 480 additional kilometres of trail to complete a regional trail system of 1,000 linear kilometres that connects greenspace to conservation destinations, neighbourhoods, employment lands, and transit and mobility hubs. It also proposes investment in 10 conservation destination areas to enhance the trail network and provide amenities.

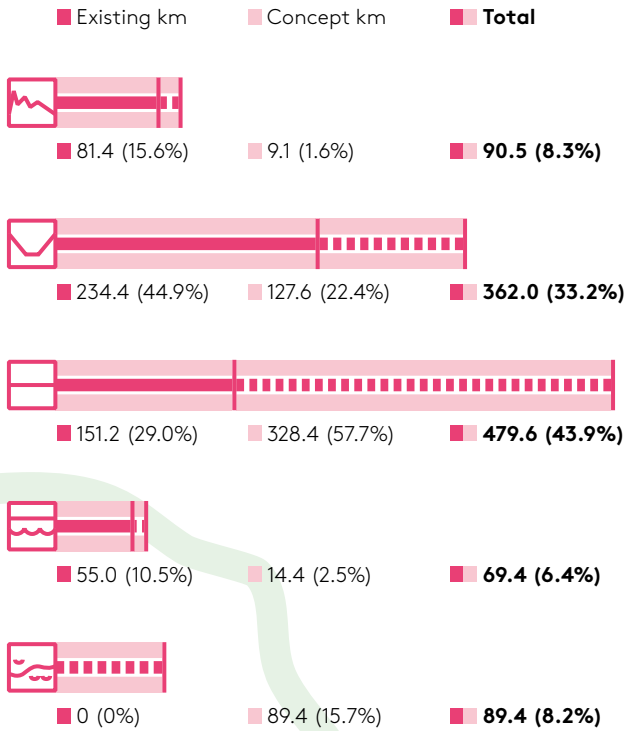
Where possible, conceptual trails are located within the natural system of our watersheds to provide a continuous trail system in greenspace. Where this is not possible, conceptual trails are located within the urban fabric of our communities to facilitate the goal of regional connectivity to greenspace, neighbourhoods, employment lands, and transit and mobility hubs. Many of the trails may serve both recreation and active transportation functions. Each trail must be evaluated to determine its network function and associated design requirements to ensure a positive and safe user experience.

In realizing these future connections, the detailed trail alignments, design, and operation should avoid, mitigate, and/or compensate for impacts to the natural system, and should provide opportunities for natural restoration and cultural heritage preservation. Trails should be sited to avoid sensitive habitats, species, and natural hazards, consistent with *The Living City Policies*. Many of the conceptual trails extend beyond lands that TRCA owns or manages and require collaboration with member municipalities, private landowners, and other agencies. The following is a summary of the concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network.





Figure 4.a: Trail Typologies



Five trail typologies comprise the conceptual framework for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network. These categories are: **Ridge, Valley, Corridor, Waterfront,** and **Blue** trails. Some of the trails described by these typologies are existing regional trails, while others are new corridors or gap connections.

**Ridge trails** feature the historic Bruce Trail, and span the rugged Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Trail, stretching across the ORM.

**Valley trails** comprise existing north-south ravine and valley routes, including the Black Creek, the Etobicoke Creek, the Humber, Lower Don, and Seaton Trails, and the Pan Am Path, as well as proposed expansions of trails that traverse urban forests and valley lands.

**Corridor trails** provide additional east-west greenway linkages integrated into existing roadway, railway, pipeline, and hydro corridors.

The **Waterfront trail** stretches along the shore of Lake Ontario, connecting communities, parks, and natural areas across the waterfront.

**Blue trails** propose opportunities to explore certain navigable shoreline areas of Lake Ontario and the mouths of the Humber, Don, and Rouge Rivers, and Duffins Creek.

This cohesive framework provides the backbone for building out the diversity of experiences found in our regional trail network (see Figure 4.a: Trail Typologies).





Ten destinations provide key places of interest throughout the network where visitors can be immersed in nature, experience year-round seasonal beauty, and observe breathtaking scenery. The concept proposes investment in these conservation hubs to enhance the network as a world-class, nature-based trail experience.

1. At the **Hills of the Headwaters**, the cliffs and caves of the Niagara Escarpment converge with the forests and hills of the ORM, and nature can be explored at Glen Haffy and Albion Hills Conservation Parks.

2. In the **Humber Valley Wilderness**, Nashville Conservation Reserve, Kortright Centre for Conservation, and Boyd Conservation Park form a continuous corridor of mixed forests, valleys, and meadows along the Humber Trail.

3. The **Kettle Lakes** district in the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve provides vistas of Lake Wilcox, Swan Lake, and Bond Lake along the Oak Ridges Trail, through the growing community of Richmond Hill.

4. A national gem, **Rouge National Urban Park** is a rich tapestry of working farms, Carolinian forests, marshes, beaches, and trails.

5. The largest area of interior forest habitat, as well as exceptional hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing trails can be found in the **Forested Headwaters** at TRCA's East Duffins Headwaters properties.

6. Further south, the **Black Creek Parklands** offer urban greenspace in proximity to transit, active transportation routes, and rapidly densifying communities, from the future Vaughan Metropolitan Centre to Downsview Park.

7. Towards Lake Ontario, the **Humber Parklands** connect people to the idyllic greenspaces of the Eglinton Flats, Humber Marshes, and Humber Bay Park.

8. In the heart of Canada's largest city, the **Toronto Harbour** engages us with the shoreline and the water that sustains us.

9. The **Forks of the Don** evokes Toronto's industrial past, with Todmorden Mills and Don Valley Brick Works situated in Toronto's lush ravines.

10. Along the waterfront, the **Scarborough Bluffs** are a natural wonder, soaring up to 90 metres above Lake Ontario.



**Connecting people to recreational and active transportation opportunities in greenspace supports healthy lifestyles.**

The Greater Toronto Region Trail Network will connect people to these 10 exceptional destinations through trail-based recreational experiences that cross regional boundaries. Connecting people to recreational and active transportation opportunities in greenspace supports healthy lifestyles. This is a key resiliency strategy that supports climate change adaptation and mitigation for our region by helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This network contributes to active living by providing a safe off-road network within greenspace for people to move about their daily lives, linking them to greenspace, neighbourhoods, employment lands, and transit and mobility hubs. It helps address the first-and last-mile regional transit issue, and combats road congestion. It will create more equitable access to trails and greenspace by improving accessibility to conservation areas and greenspace across our region. It will also allow a wider population to access a backyard nature experience and move us closer towards building sustainable communities that minimize our collective impact on the environment. The concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network is illustrated in Figures 4.b.– 4.f: Concept Maps.

## Concept Maps

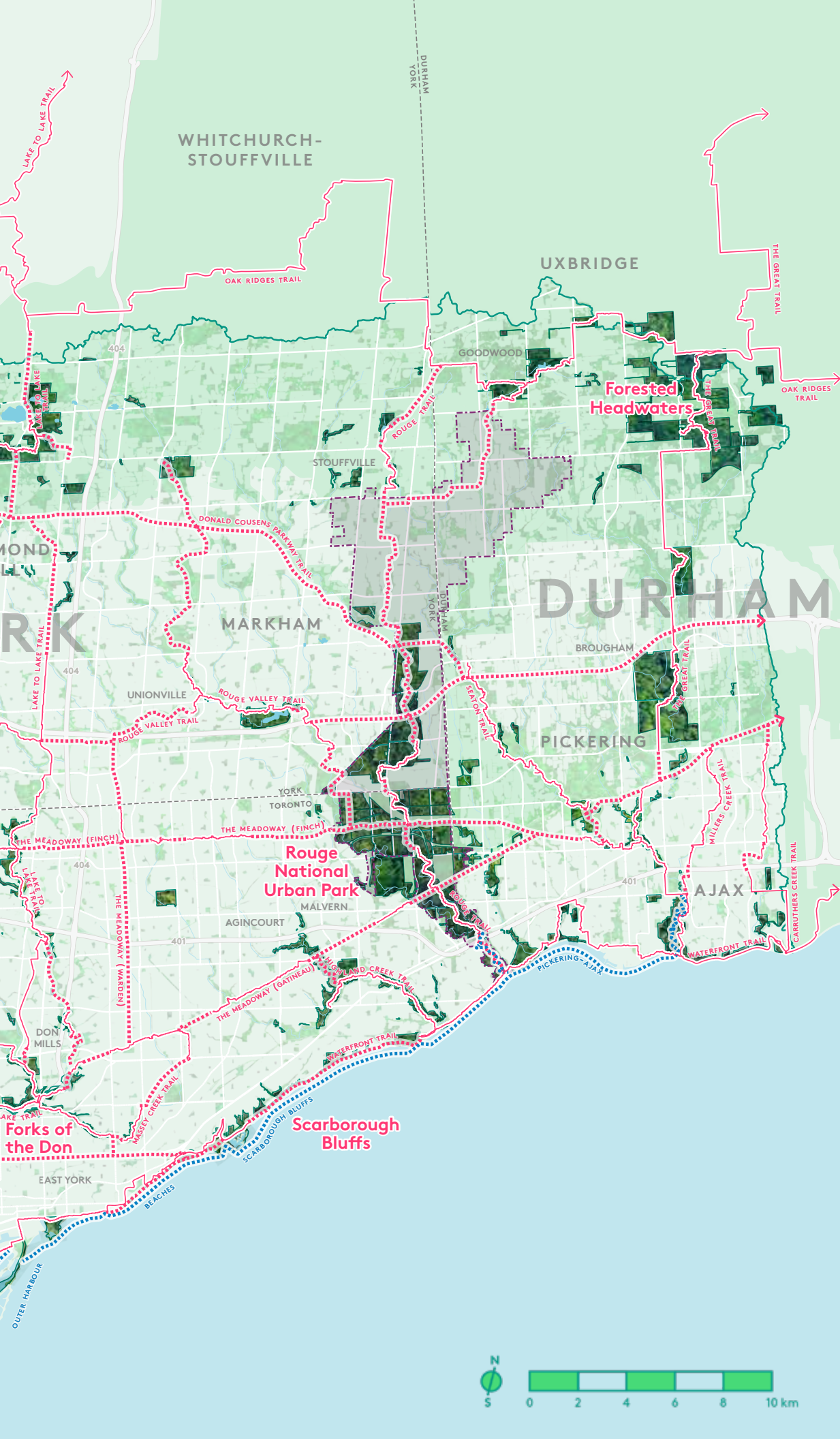
The concept maps on the following pages illustrate the proposed Greater Toronto Region Trail Network that TRCA will strive to achieve. The concept identifies the existing trail system and key missing links, and proposes opportunities for trail connections to TRCA Conservation Parks and destinations that would link into the regional and municipal trail systems. These maps have benefited from extensive input and consultation with our partners and the public. Many of the opportunities to be investigated extend beyond TRCA's greenspaces and will require collaboration with member municipalities, private landowners, and other agencies. The proposed alignments are conceptual corridors that have gone through extensive consultation. These key linkages and corridors should be protected for future trail use.

The information depicted on the concept maps is current as of February 2019.

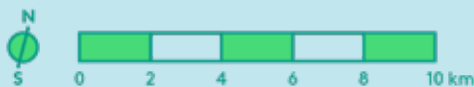




**Figure 4.b:**  
**Concept Plan: Greater Toronto Region Trail Network**



- Existing trail
- - - Proposed trail
- - - Proposed blue trail
- TRCA jurisdiction
- TRCA owned or managed property
- Rouge National Urban Park
- Greenbelt

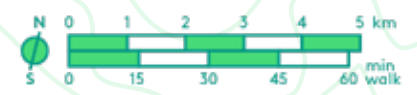




Right →

**Figure 4.c: Concept Plan: North West**

- Existing trail
- Proposed trail
- Proposed blue trail
- TRCA jurisdiction
- TRCA owned or managed property
- Greenbelt



# SIMCOE

MONO

MONO MILLS

Ballycroy

SIMCOE PEEL

SIMCOE YORK

Glen Haffy Conservation Park

Palgrave Forest and Wildlife Area

THE GREAT TRAIL

OAK RIDGES

Palgrave Mill Pond

Caledon Tract

PALGRAVE

Albion Hills Conservation Area

## Hills of the Headwaters

HUMBER TRAIL

CALEDON EAST

Bolton Resource Management Tract

BRUCE TRAIL

THE GREAT TRAIL

Cold Creek Conservation Area

THE MEADOWWAY (KING)

CALEDON

BOLTON

## Humber Valley Wilderness

KING STREET TRAIL

CONNECTION TRAIL

# PEEL

Heart Lake Conservation Park

CASTLEMORE

BRUCE TRAIL

MISSISSAUGA ORANGEVILLE RAIL TRAIL

FOBICOKE CREEK TRAIL

MAIN WEST HUMBER

PEEL HALTON

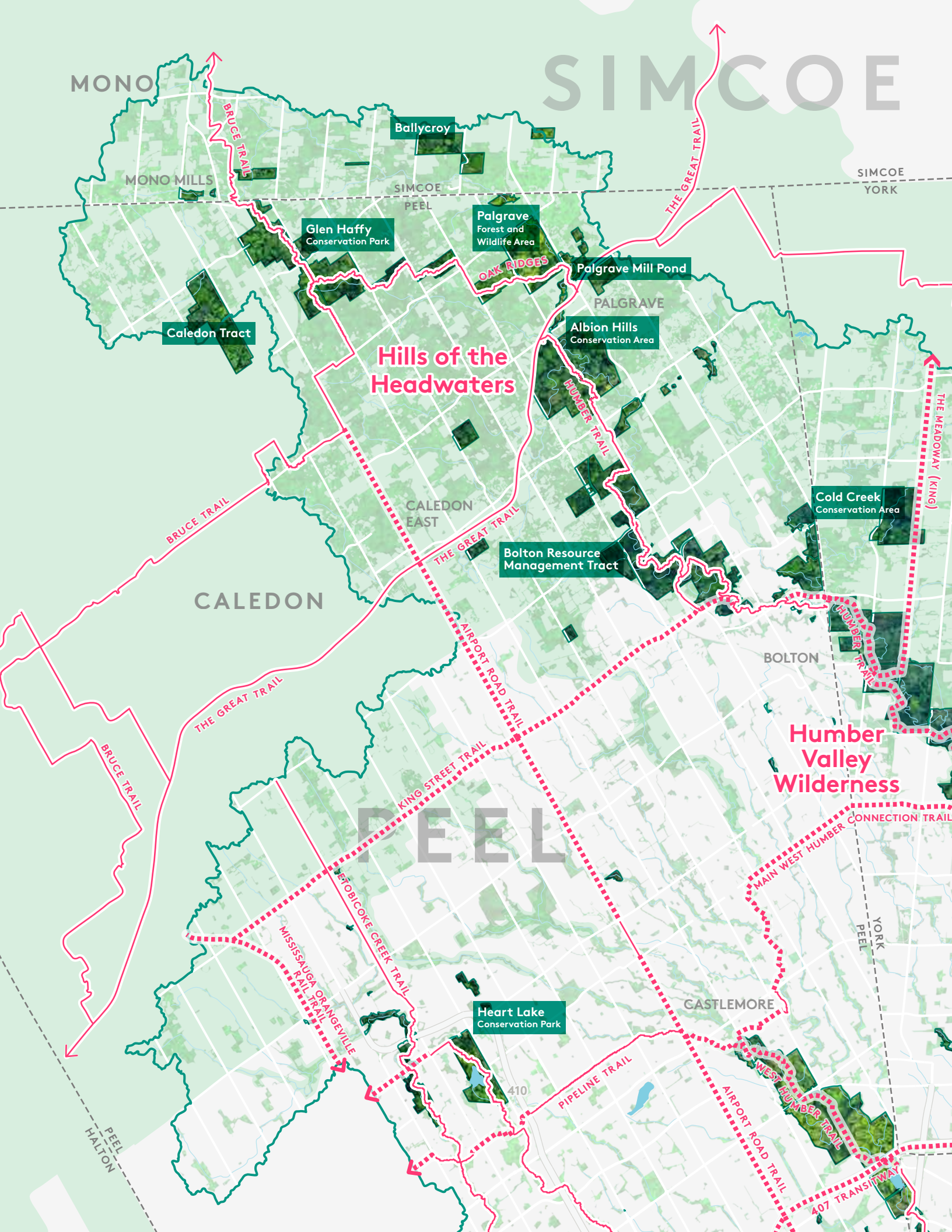
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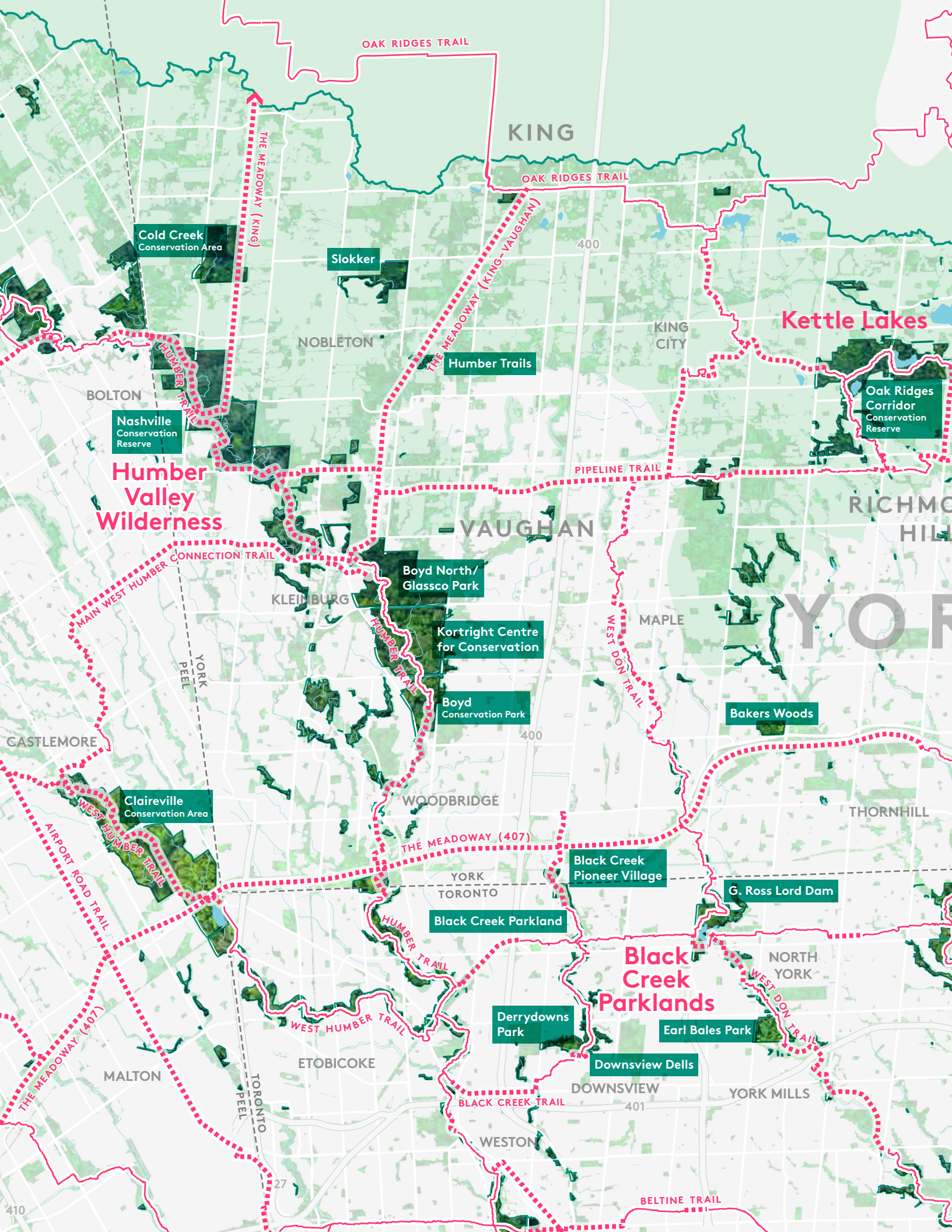
PIPELINE TRAIL

AIRPORT ROAD TRAIL

WEST HUMBER TRAIL

407 TRANSITWAY





# Humber Valley Wilderness

# Black Creek Parklands

Cold Creek Conservation Area

Nashville Conservation Reserve

Slokker

Humber Trails

Boyd North/Glassco Park

Kortright Centre for Conservation

Boyd Conservation Park

Claireville Conservation Area

Black Creek Pioneer Village

Black Creek Parkland

Derrydowns Park

Downsview Dells

Earl Bales Park

Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve

Bakers Woods

G. Ross Lord Dam

Kettle Lakes

BOLTON

NOBLETON

KING

KING CITY

VAUGHAN

RICHMOND HILL

YORK

MAPLE

CASTLEMORE

KLEINBURG

WOODBRIIDGE

THORNHILL

YORK TORONTO

NORTH YORK

MALTON

ETOBICOKE

DOWNSVIEW

YORK MILLS

WESTON

TORONTO PEEL

OAK RIDGES TRAIL

OAK RIDGES TRAIL

THE MEADOWWAY (KING)

THE MEADOWWAY (KING-VAUGHAN)

PIPELINE TRAIL

HUMBER TRAIL

CONNECTION TRAIL

MAIN WEST HUMBER

YORK PEEL

WEST DON TRAIL

AIRPORT ROAD TRAIL

THE MEADOWWAY (407)

WEST HUMBER TRAIL

HUMBER TRAIL

WEST HUMBER TRAIL

BLACK CREEK TRAIL

WEST DON TRAIL

BELTINE TRAIL

410

27

400

400

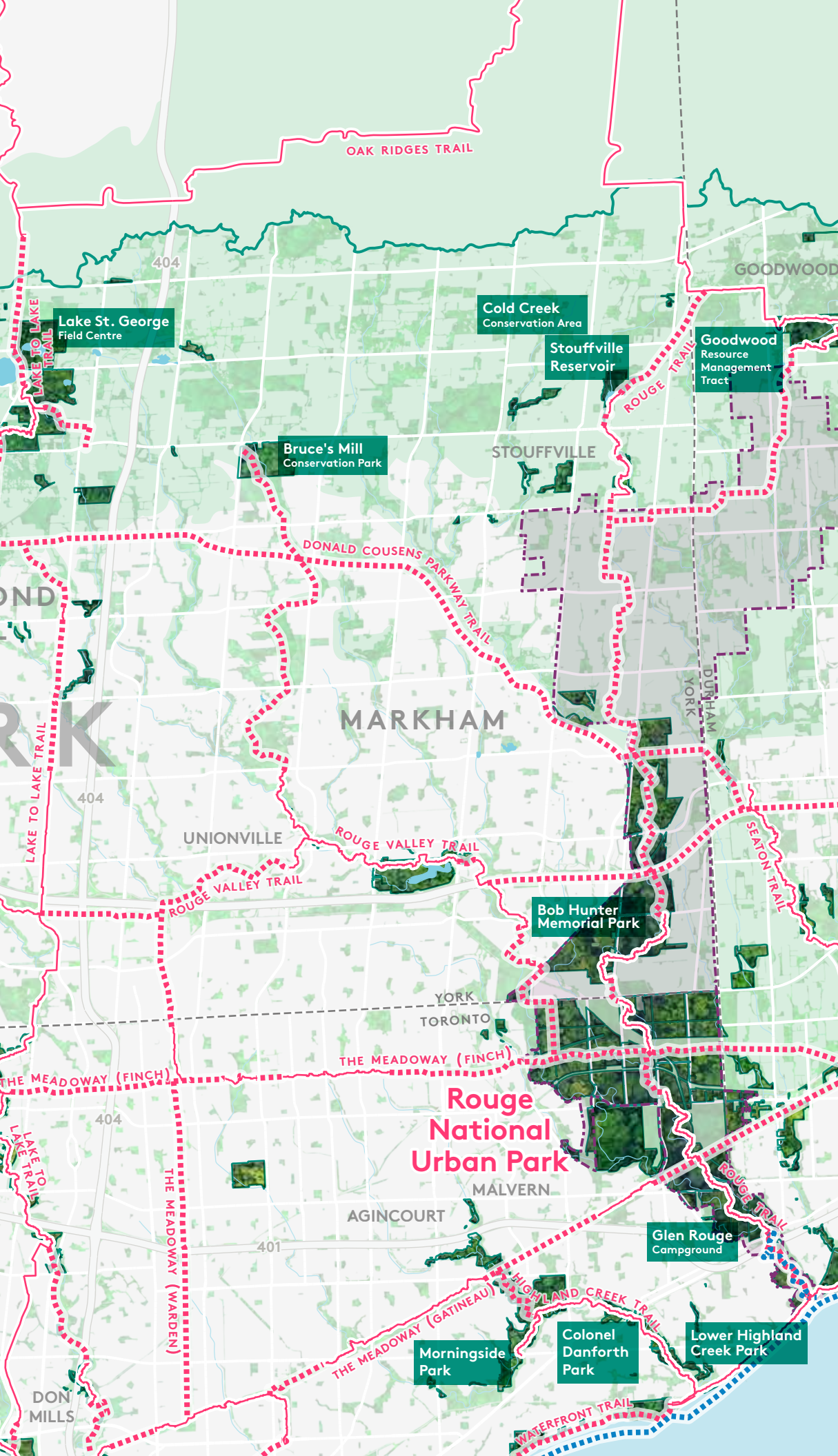
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← Left




Figure 4.d: Concept Plan: Central



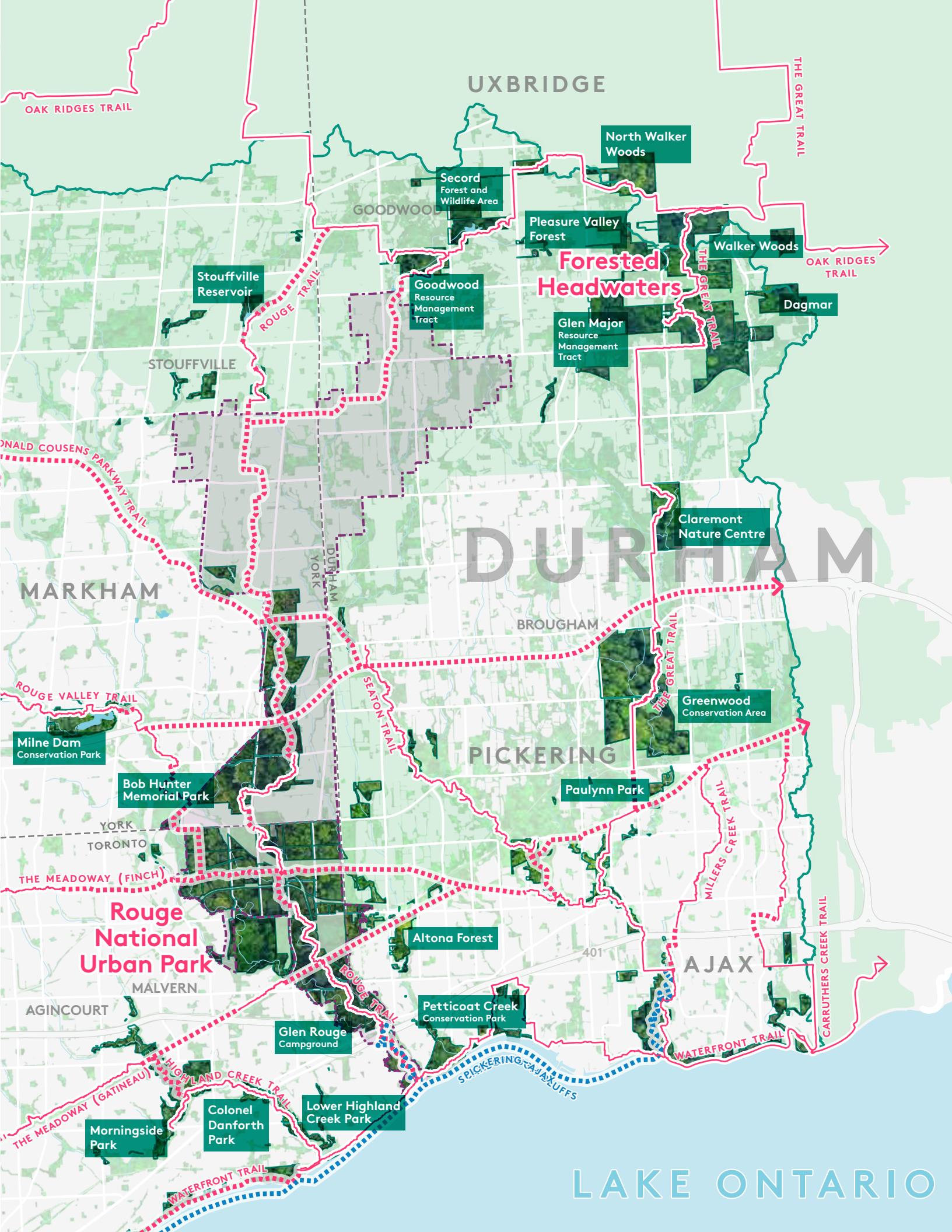


Right →

**Figure 4.e: Concept Plan: North East**

-  Existing trail
-  Proposed trail
-  Proposed blue trail
-  TRCA jurisdiction
-  TRCA owned or managed property
-  Rouge National Urban Park
-  Greenbelt





UXBRIDGE

**Forested Headwaters**

DURHAM

PICKERING

AJAX

LAKE ONTARIO

OAK RIDGES TRAIL

THE GREAT TRAIL

North Walker Woods

Second Forest and Wildlife Area

GOODWOOD

Pleasure Valley Forest

Walker Woods

OAK RIDGES TRAIL

Stouffville Reservoir

Goodwood Resource Management Tract

Glen Major Resource Management Tract

Dagmar

STOUFFVILLE

Claremont Nature Centre

MARKHAM

BROUGHAM

Greenwood Conservation Area

ROUGE VALLEY TRAIL

Milne Dam Conservation Park

Bob Hunter Memorial Park

Paulynn Park

YORK TORONTO

THE MEADOWAY (FINCH)

**Rouge National Urban Park**

Altona Forest

MILLERS CREEK TRAIL

CARRUTHERS CREEK TRAIL

AGINCOURT

MALVERN

Petticoat Creek Conservation Park

Glen Rouge Campground

WATERFRONT TRAIL

THE MEADOWAY (GATINEAU)

HIGHLAND CREEK TRAIL

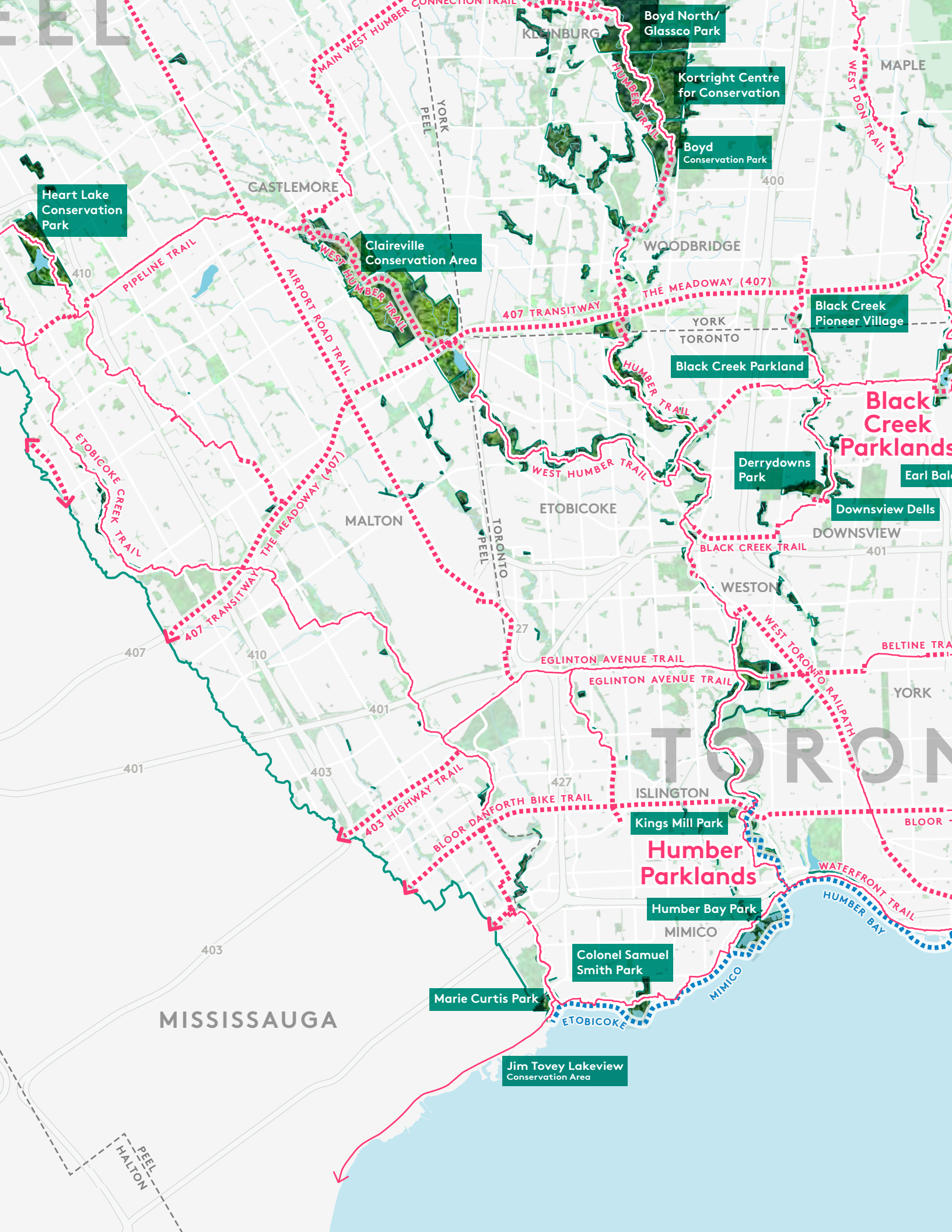
Morningside Park

Colonel Danforth Park

Lower Highland Creek Park

WATERFRONT TRAIL

SPICKERING CREEK TRAIL



Heart Lake Conservation Park

CASTLEMORE

Claireville Conservation Area

KLEINBURG

Boyd North/Glassco Park

Kortright Centre for Conservation

Boyd Conservation Park

MAPLE

PIPELINE TRAIL

AIRPORT ROAD TRAIL

407 TRANSITWAY

THE MEADOWAY (407)

Black Creek Pioneer Village

Black Creek Parkland

Black Creek Parklands

Derrydowns Park

Earl Bala

Downsview Dells

MALTON

ETOBICOKE

DOWNSVIEW

WESTON

407

410

401

401

403

427

EGLINTON AVENUE TRAIL

EGLINTON AVENUE TRAIL

YORK

Kings Mill Park

Humber Parklands

Humber Bay Park

MIMICO

Colonel Samuel Smith Park

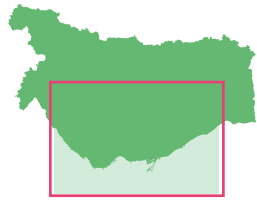
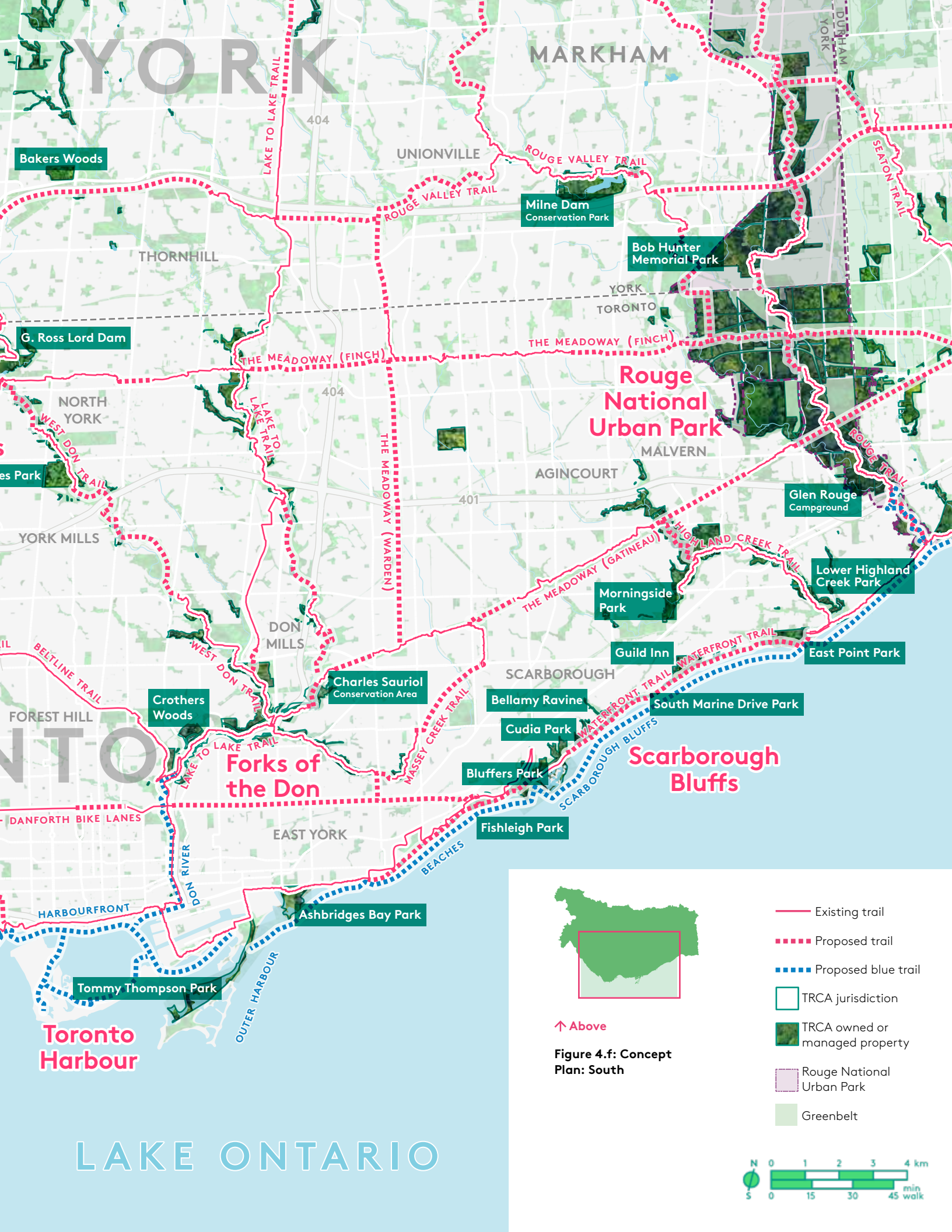
Marie Curtis Park

Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area

MISSISSAUGA

TORONTO

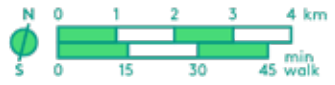
PEEL  
HALTON



↑ Above

Figure 4.f: Concept Plan: South

- Existing trail
- - - Proposed trail
- - - Proposed blue trail
- TRCA jurisdiction
- TRCA owned or managed property
- Rouge National Urban Park
- Greenbelt



LAKE ONTARIO

Toronto Harbour

Forks of the Don

Scarborough Bluffs

# Guiding Principles

Five guiding principles form the foundation of the Trail Strategy, underpinning the vision of the document and informing the rationale and methodology for its implementation.

## Lead

Our region is growing faster than ever before. We must establish our plan early to deliver our region's trails, destinations, and amenities to support this growth in accordance with our environmental planning policies and objectives. We must capitalize on the coming development opportunities to target our efforts to increase access to greenspace, while protecting and enhancing natural features.

## Collaborate

Our trails are critical recreational and active transportation community infrastructure. By working together, we can grow our regional trail network legacy, while enriching the trail experience and enhancing ecological health. Through partnership and collaboration, we can sustainably and successfully expand and maintain our regional trail system in support of complete communities.

## Steward

Our trails are predominantly located in our greenspace system, close to urban communities. Careful and collaborative planning is needed to make informed trail planning decisions that support stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage. We must continue to perform comprehensive site planning and utilize best management practices when planning, developing, and maintaining trails.

## Invest

Our trails are significant assets that require ongoing investment throughout their lifecycle. Changing trends in trail usage, climate change, and population growth have increased the pressures on our trail infrastructure. We must secure long-term and ongoing investment from a variety of sources that supports and sustains their existence and allows us to maintain our desired level of service.

## Celebrate

Our trails are a defining and valuable feature of our urban and rural landscapes. They bring neighbourhoods and communities together and provide access to unique destinations. They connect us to our rich history and present opportunities for reflection, self-awareness, and greater acceptance of diverse cultural origins. We must honour trails and the experiences they enable.





# Context

The context of our regional trail system can be described through the landscapes that frame them, the destinations that define them, and the policies that guide their planning, development, and management. This context provides the necessary groundwork for an informed Trail Strategy.

## Natural System

TRCA recognizes the natural system as the natural green infrastructure of the Toronto Region. Natural green infrastructure includes water resources, natural features and areas, natural hazards, restoration areas of potential natural cover, and buffers. Built green infrastructure also contributes to the health of the natural system and includes urban forests and woodlots, bioswales, rain gardens, engineered wetlands and stormwater ponds, agricultural lands, green roofs and green walls, urban agriculture, and open parklands. Together, natural and built green infrastructure reduces flooding and erosion, filters water and air pollutants, provides additional ecosystem services (such as moderating the urban heat island effect), and provides opportunities for recreation and community aesthetics. This integrated system is fundamental to the quality of life in our region and provides ecological functions and benefits known as Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S). EG&S provide the base resources that sustain our lives, including our health, social, cultural, and economic needs.

Land areas of natural cover most significantly contribute to the health of our natural system. They play a vital role in flood and erosion control, groundwater recharge and discharge, biodiversity, and the overall health and well-being of urban dwellers. The sustainability of communities and economies depends upon our ability to maintain or restore the ecological functions of natural cover in both urban and rural landscapes.

However, the quantity, quality, and connectedness of natural cover in our region is declining (TRCA, 2016). TRCA's *TNHSS* recommends a minimum of 30 per cent natural cover – including forests, wetlands, and meadows – to maintain healthy watersheds (TRCA, 2007). Currently, only 25 per cent of our regional landscape has natural cover – and only 17 per cent of that amount is forest and wetland cover, which provides the greatest ecological value. These natural spaces continue to be fragmented by expanding urban development, reducing their ability to function as meaningful habitat (TRCA, 2016).

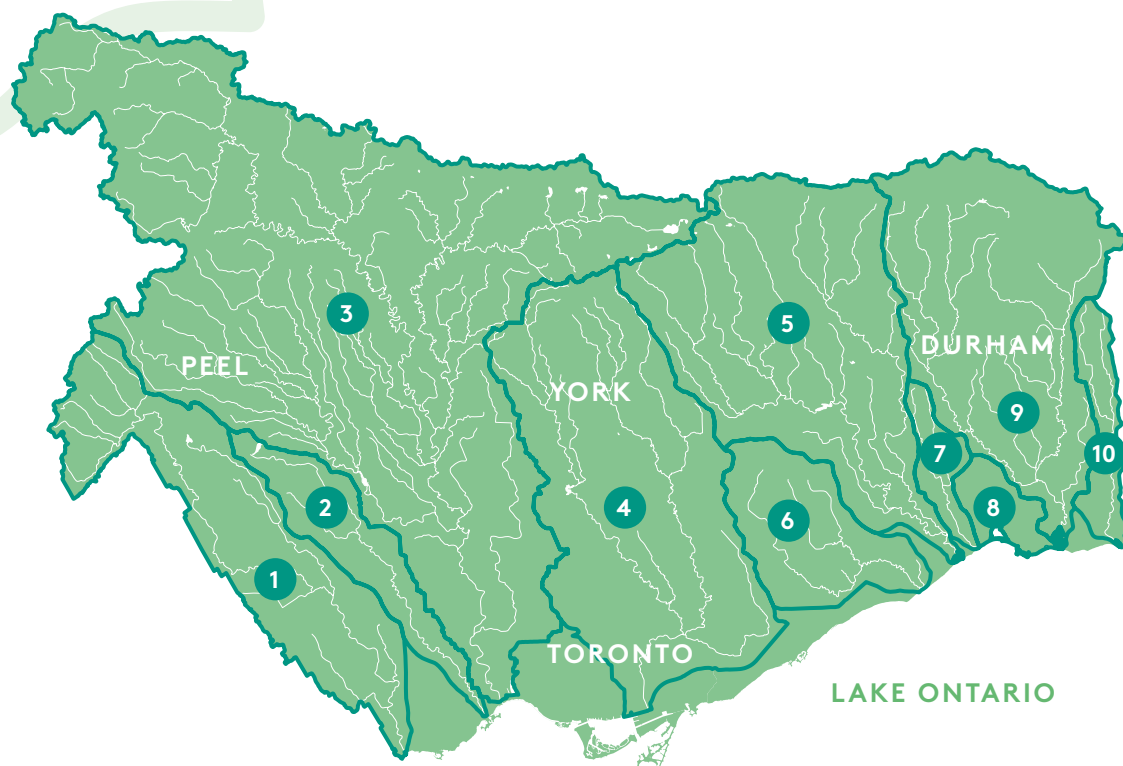
It is in our urban and urbanizing areas where natural systems and the delivery of EG&S are under the greatest pressure. Achieving the *TNHSS* natural cover targets will require an expansion of the natural system. As the population of the GTA continues to increase and the demand for trails grows, it is imperative that the diverse greenspaces of our natural system are increased, protected, and enhanced.

Land acquisition for trail development can also provide a means to increase the natural system through concurrent ecological restoration and mitigation efforts. When sited within the natural system, trails should be located to minimize impacts to significant natural features.

## Landscapes of the Toronto Region


The geological origins of the nine watersheds within the TRCA jurisdiction caused the unique geomorphic characteristics that define the landscapes of our region (see Figure 6.a: Context Map: TRCA Jurisdiction Watersheds). Approximately 12,000 years ago, advancing and retreating glaciers formed the ORM, a pair of large ridges composed of four elevated wedges. The ORM is bounded to the west by the Niagara Escarpment, which was critical to

the formation of the Moraine, and contained in the east by the Trent River and Rice Lake. From these upland areas, water flows through our nine watersheds, from Etobicoke Creek in the west to Carruthers Creek in the east, eventually draining into the northwestern shores of Lake Ontario. These features, which are critical to our region's natural and built environments, can be characterized by four broad landscape types: **headwaters**, **river valleys**, **waterfront**, and **tablelands**.



- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Etobicoke | 6. Highland        |
| 2. Mimico    | 7. Petticoat       |
| 3. Humber    | 8. Frenchman's Bay |
| 4. Don       | 9. Duffins         |
| 5. Rouge     | 10. Carruthers     |

Figure 6.a:  
Context Map: TRCA  
Jurisdiction Watersheds

An aerial photograph showing a vast, dense forest of green trees. A winding path or road is visible on the right side of the image. In the far distance, a city skyline is visible under a hazy sky. The text is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image.

As the population of the GTA continues to increase and the demand for trails grows, it is imperative that the diverse greenspaces of our natural system are increased, protected, and enhanced.

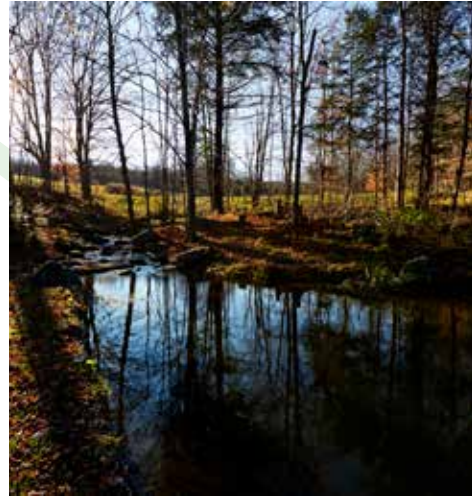


## Headwaters

Our region is framed by headwaters on the rugged Niagara Escarpment and the rolling hills of the ORM. The Niagara Escarpment is a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, designated for its unique characteristics, and a provincial land use plan guides development in its area. The landform is a largely forested ridge of fossil-rich sedimentary rock that extends through the northwest portion of TRCA's jurisdiction, where it is overlain by glacial drift of the ORM.

The Niagara Escarpment is an important area for groundwater recharge, and forms the headwaters of the main branch of the Humber River. The Niagara Escarpment encompasses wildlife habitats, farms, scenic views, mineral resources, and historic sites and towns.

The ORM is a geologic feature that encompasses 190,000 ha of land and water. It is 160 km in total length, located north of, and parallel to, the Lake Ontario shoreline. The ORM is an irregular ridge of sands, gravels, and tills towering up to 300 m higher than Lake Ontario. It was deposited by the melt waters between two receding glacier lobes some 13,000 years ago (TRCA, 2014). Within TRCA's jurisdiction, the ORM serves as the headwaters for the Duffins Creek and Rouge, Don, and Humber river watersheds. From the headwaters, water flows southward through our river systems, woodlands, meadows, wetlands, and farmlands towards Lake Ontario. Our headwaters require significant protection and enhancement to maintain their ecological function and the health of the downstream reaches.



### Glen Haffy Conservation Park

The Niagara Escarpment and the ORM converge at Glen Haffy Conservation Park, forming high, forested hills, and deep, wooded dells (called dingles). Each year, Glen Haffy raises 60,000 rainbow trout at its on-site fish hatchery and releases them into the fishing ponds at Glen Haffy, the Glen Haffy Fly Fishing Club, and Heart Lake Conservation Park. Glen Haffy's hiking trails offer some of the most panoramic vistas in southern Ontario.



### Boyd Conservation Park

Situated in the undulating Humber River Valley, Boyd is a quiet, green oasis. Framed by steep slopes, the heart of the open space is situated in the valley, offering a parkland setting with views of the meandering river for visitors to enjoy. From spring through fall, Boyd offers programmed outdoor activities and experiences in nature. Scouts and Guides often have their first overnight camping experience here, and it's a popular spot for picnics as well. In the fall, the park is used as a venue for cross-country running events, bringing together some of the best runners in the province. Rich in natural character, Boyd offers respite from fast-paced urban life.

## River Valleys

The river valleys that carve through our watersheds provide lush, forested landscapes that vary in scale and terrain from steep, dramatic valleys to wide, open floodplains. Our river valley and stream corridors are the foundation of our greenspace system, creating a network of open spaces that is among the largest in the world. River valleys connect the ORM and Niagara Escarpment to Lake Ontario and act as a greenway for water, wildlife, and people through rapidly urbanizing communities. They also connect us with our region's rich Indigenous heritage and settler history. Ravines offer trails that lead through secluded natural areas in some of the most urbanized areas of our region.

## Waterfront

All of the nine rivers and streams in our watersheds flow towards the Lake Ontario Waterfront, stretching over 70 km from Marie Curtis Park in Etobicoke to Lakeside Park in Ajax. Prior to the infilling and industrialization of the waterfront dating back to the 1800s, the shoreline existed as a marshland estuary in the west and central sections, and a beach bluff landscape in the east. Over the course of 200 years, the majority of the shoreline evolved from natural beaches, bluffs, wetlands, and marshes to man-made edges, harbours, industrial parks, and ports, with only some small remnants of natural beach, bluff shoreline, and wetland river mouths in the eastern waterfront.

In the 1970s, TRCA and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto developed a Lake Ontario Waterfront Plan to establish a series of waterfront parks and revitalize the shoreline. TRCA led the implementation of the plan by working to actively rehabilitate and restore the natural shoreline habitat, while providing water-based recreational opportunities and public access.

Despite these efforts, public dismay over the state of the waterfront properties led the Government of Canada to establish, in 1988, the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, with the Honourable David Crombie as Commissioner. Through this commission and the ongoing efforts of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Waterfront Toronto, the City of Toronto, and TRCA, the waterfront continues to undergo a dramatic revitalization to become a healthier and more vibrant destination for all.



### Tommy Thompson Park

Toronto's urban wilderness is found at Tommy Thompson Park (TTP). Entirely human-made, TTP was constructed out of millions of cubic metres of concrete, earth fill, and dredged sand to create a 250 ha site of lagoons and sand peninsulas that now extends approximately five km into Lake Ontario. This accidental wilderness evolved through both natural processes and a concerted effort by TRCA to restore and enhance this aquatic park to support public access, nature interpretation, and wildlife.



## Tablelands

Below the headwaters and outside of the river valleys are elevated, and generally level, plateaus called tablelands. Tablelands feature the greatest concentration of built features, including agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial development. However, they also contain areas of natural features such as tableland, street, park, and yard trees which contribute to the beauty and ecological function of our natural system. The successful management of our natural system is dependent on good tableland management.

**TRCA's jurisdiction is as diverse as it is large. Landscapes and land uses vary widely across our watersheds, from the headwaters to the Lake Ontario shoreline.**







Cultural heritage plays a key role in building sustainable communities where residents enjoy a satisfying quality of life and sense of place.

## Cultural Heritage

Our region exhibits a rich cultural heritage that intertwines the lives of Indigenous people, European settlers, and immigrants from all over the world. Each of these populations has had an impact on, and has in turn been influenced by, the natural environment. Exploring the history of the people who have lived here for over 10,000 years highlights their experiences and the importance of the natural environment in their daily lives. While our experiences and values may change over time, the connections between natural heritage and cultural heritage remain forever linked. These connections can be explored through cultural heritage resources, which comprise **archaeological sites, built heritage features, and cultural heritage landscapes.**

Cultural heritage builds upon the foundation of TRCA's mandated responsibilities of natural heritage management and is recognized as an integral component of building sustainable communities. As urban development rapidly expands throughout the GTA, intact cultural heritage resources are becoming increasingly rare. The preservation of these resources is regulated under the Ontario Heritage Act, which gives the Province of Ontario the authority to monitor archaeological assessments and preserve archaeological sites, and provides municipalities with the power to preserve built heritage and cultural heritage landscapes. Currently, there are more than 15,000 documented cultural heritage resources within our region.

Trails provide an ideal avenue for understanding our local history and enjoying continued connection to the natural environment. The trail experience enables the exploration of our cultural heritage, helps share experiences between past and present populations, and awakens an appreciation for the community in which we live.

**Archaeological site:** that part of the landscape, both terrestrial and aquatic, which can be identified by the presence of cultural (human-made or altered) remains. These remains can be artifacts or subsoil features of Indigenous and settler archaeological sites.

**Built heritage feature:** one or more significant buildings, structures, monuments, installations, or remains associated with architectural, cultural, social, political, economic, or military history and identified as being important to a community.

**Cultural heritage landscape:** a defined geographical area of heritage significance which has been modified by human activities and is valued by a community. It involves a grouping(s) of individual heritage features such as structures, spaces, archaeological sites, and natural elements, which together form a significant type of heritage form, distinctive from that of its constituent elements or parts.

In our region, cultural heritage resources can be characterized by four common themes: **transportation, settlement, industry, and co-existence with nature.**



## Settlement

Areas of settlement, where people have established communities, inevitably leave a mark upon the landscape. Human settlement presents some of the most visible and recognizable types of cultural heritage resources, such as agriculture, historic buildings, heritage districts, and the remnants of Indigenous villages. They reveal clues to local history, relationships between communities, and how past people adapted to their local environments.



The Seed-Barker Site

Situated on a steep-sided plateau, eight metres above the flood plain and surrounded by the deep valley walls of the East Humber River, can be found the remnants of a large Iroquoian village occupied approximately 475 years ago. The village, strategically located along the Carrying Place Trail, was in a highly defensible location with panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Built during a period of heightened conflict, this farming village was a haven for up to 2,000 individuals whose smaller villages relocated and amalgamated in this location. A truly multicultural community, people in this village traded, hunted, fished, and grew crops in the rich valley.

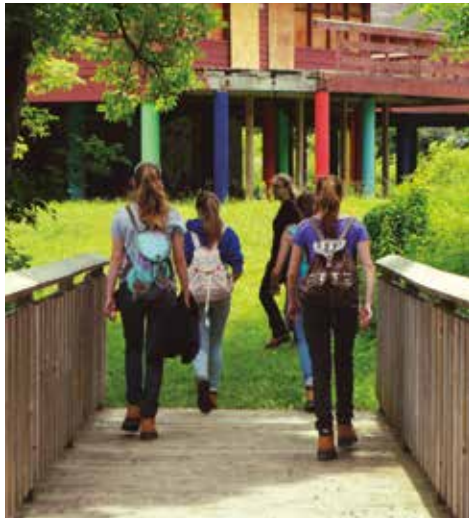


### The Haight Site

The site of a thriving textile industry in the late 1800s, this wool and carding mill complex would have required significant hydraulic power to run the machinery. This power was harnessed by damming nearby Duffins Creek to form a large mill pond and provide a steady supply of water to the mill along a constructed mill race. While the dam and mill pond are no longer present, the scars to the landscape remain visible to this day.

## Industry

The development of industry led to technical innovation, economic development, and the expansion and evolution of villages into thriving towns and cities. The exploitation of natural resources, to feed and power mills, ultimately impacted the surrounding environment: forests were cut down for lumber and agriculture, gravel and clay were extracted for building materials, and waterways were modified for hydraulic power. An examination of past industrial processes and their environmental impacts highlights the need to balance economic progress and natural heritage today.



### Bolton Camp

In 1922, Family Services Toronto opened Bolton Camp as a Fresh Air Camp for low-income, urban families to enjoy nature. During the Second World War, the site was also used as a training centre for the Oakville High School Cadet Corps. When the war ended, the facility continued to serve as a camp for underprivileged children. Although the camp shut its doors in 1999, the local community and municipal partners have since repurposed the camp into a community cultural hub. As part of this revitalization, Bolton Camp will feature a new Indigenous youth program for land-based learning with Elders and traditional knowledge keepers.

## Co-Existence with Nature

Our co-existence with nature is a fundamental relationship for all people and a constant source of inspiration and wonder. Every culture has expressed this bond through various forms of traditional, spiritual, artistic, or cultural associations with the land.



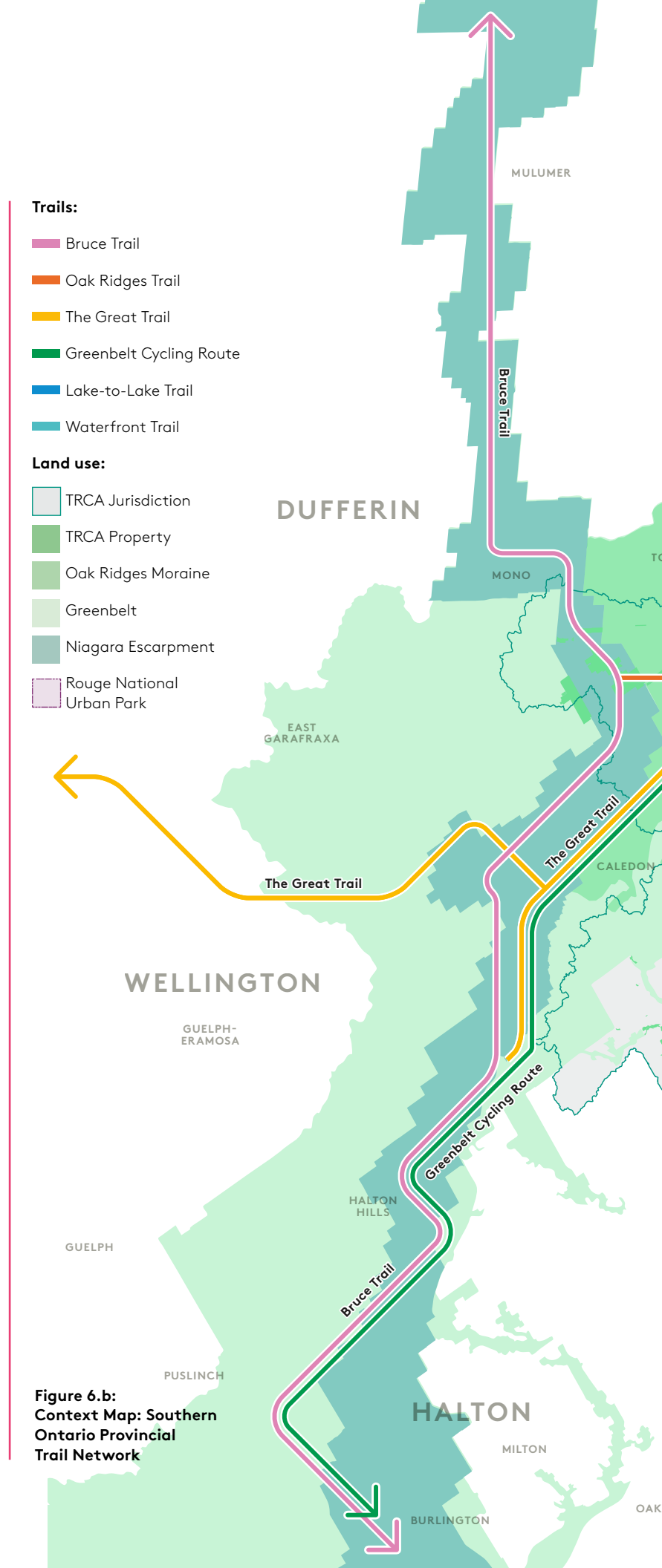


## Trails

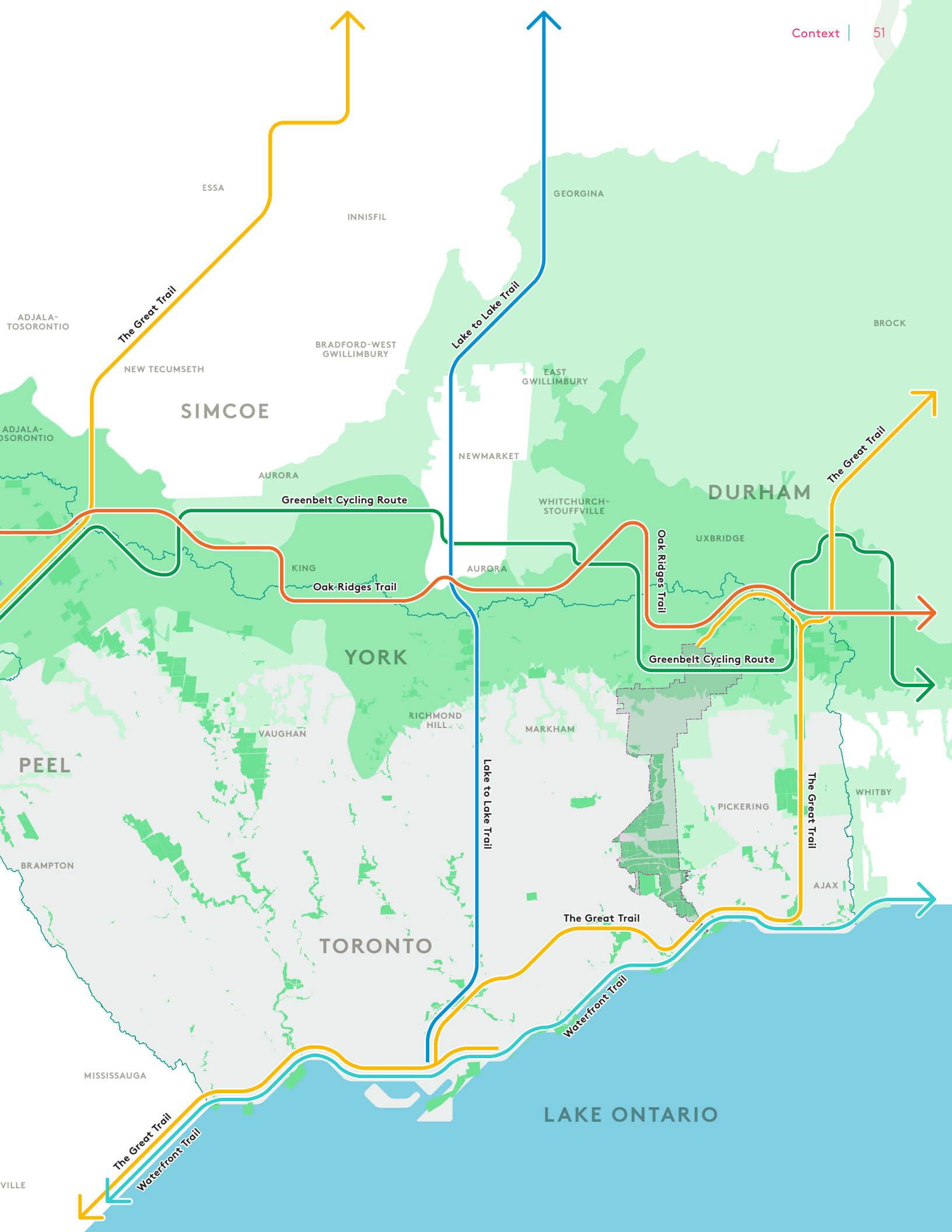
Trails weave through every community, passing through a myriad of neighbourhoods and landscapes. They connect residents of Canada’s largest city region and improve cohesion between our distinctive communities. Our jurisdiction is a key nexus point within the larger provincial trail system where significant inter-regional trails converge, including the Bruce Trail, The Great Trail, the Greenbelt Route, the Oak Ridges Trail, the Lake-to-Lake Trail, the Pan Am Path, and the Waterfront Trail. These larger regional trails facilitate conservation and co-existence with nature, while also serving as a major cultural and socio-economic force.

### Context: Southern Ontario Provincial Trail Network

This surrounding context is illustrated in Figure 6.b: Context Map: Southern Ontario Provincial Trail Network. Many of these national and provincial trails form key connections in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network.



**Figure 6.b:**  
Context Map: Southern Ontario Provincial Trail Network



## Typologies

The Greater Toronto Region Trail Network features a wide palette of regional trails that reflect the landscape context in which they are situated. These five major recreational and active transportation regional trail typologies are **ridge**, **valley**, **corridor**, **waterfront**, and **blue**.



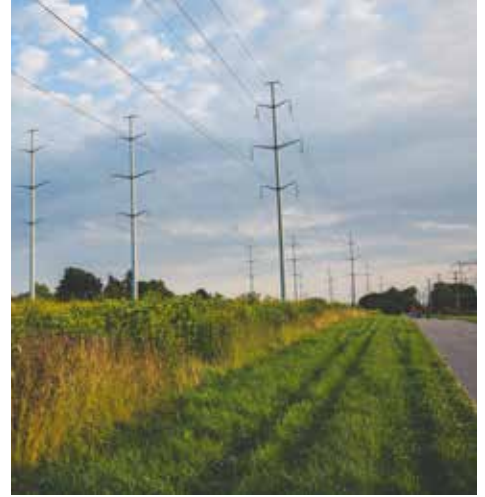
### Ridge Trail

Ridge trails weave their way along the elevation profiles of the Niagara Escarpment and the ORM. These trails tend to follow rugged terrain and often require maneuvering around large obstacles, steep inclines, and sharp drop-offs. They generally have natural surfacing and smaller clearance widths. An example of a ridge trail is the Oak Ridges Trail, which traverses the ORM.



### Valley Trail

Following the paths of major rivers and streams, valley trails fall within our valley corridors. Depending on their location within the terrain of the valley corridor, valley trails can be either undulating footpaths along forested slopes or flat, wide multi-use trails within open meadows or agricultural fields. In the GTA, the majority of valley trails flow in a north-south direction, connecting Lake Ontario to the upper reaches of our watersheds. An example of a valley trail is the Humber Trail, which follows the Humber River Valley.



### Corridor Trail

Corridor trails are linear, multi-use pathways within or adjacent to roadways or infrastructure corridors. Infrastructure corridors can include hydro, pipeline, and railway land uses. Corridor trails provide active transportation-based greenways linking our watersheds from east to west. Where corridors align in a north-south direction, they provide additional connectivity between neighbourhoods in our municipalities and regions. An example of a corridor trail is The Meadoway, which is located within the Gattineau Hydro Corridor in Scarborough.



### Waterfront Trail

In TRCA's jurisdiction, the Waterfront Trail parallels more than 70 km of shoreline along Lake Ontario. It is one section of a larger route that stretches more than 2,000 km along the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, Lake Huron, and the Niagara, Detroit, and St. Lawrence Rivers. In our region, it connects hundreds of communities to TRCA's waterfront parks, such as Marie Curtis Park, Humber Bay Park, and Ashbridges Bay Park, as well as natural areas including wetlands, forests, and beaches. Linking waterfront communities, the Waterfront Trail is a multi-use path for recreational and active transportation use.



### Blue Trail

Blue trails are a relatively new concept to the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network. These trails are the paddling routes on our navigable rivers and certain areas of the Lake Ontario Waterfront that allow paddling access. TRCA has a celebrated tradition of supporting water-based activities and recreation in harmony with the protection and enhancement of natural systems. This includes water access at various waterfront parks and water-based events that provide unique opportunities for people to explore our communities from a different perspective.



## Descriptions

The Trail Strategy offers the following trail descriptions to reflect the variety of trail surface types and uses found in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network. (see Figure 6.c: Trail Descriptions).



**Single-use hiking trails** with natural surfaces and/or manufactured surfaces



Dedicated **bicycle routes** within road right-of-ways

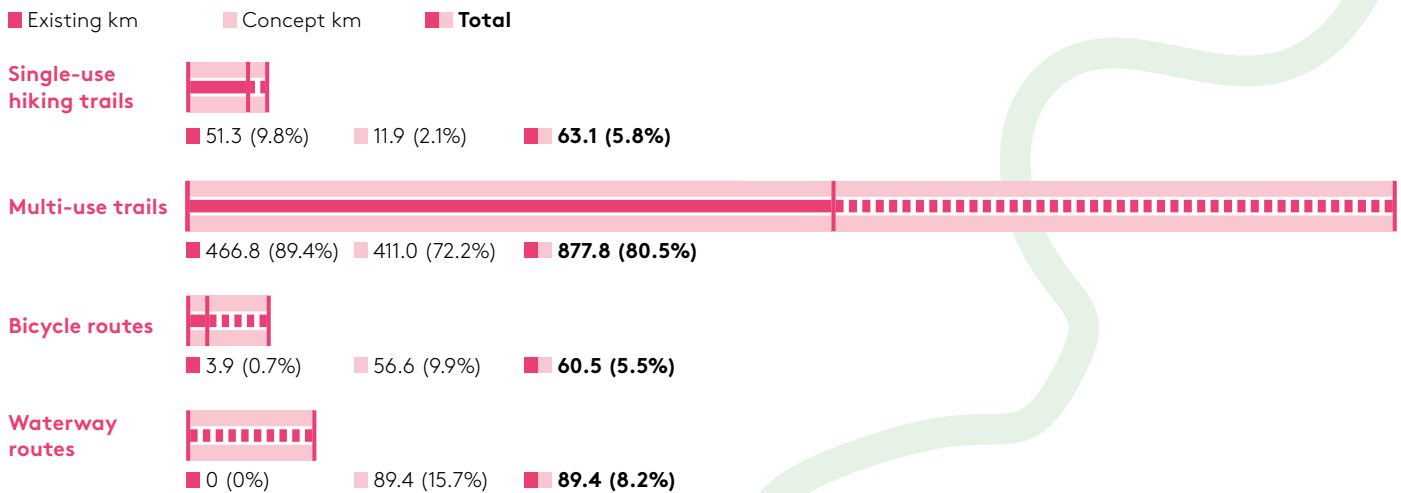


**Multi-use trails** with natural surfaces and/or manufactured surfaces



**Waterway routes** on navigable rivers and lakes

**Figure 6.c: Trail Descriptions**





## Activities

**The Greater Toronto Region Trail Network supports a diversity of activities throughout the seasons. Understanding activity use for specific trails informs appropriate trail planning, design, and maintenance so that impact to the environment is minimized. Trail activities supported by this Strategy include the following:**

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**Active Transportation** | Walking, jogging, cycling, or using a mobility device to travel to transit, workplaces, schools, and other daily destinations supports climate change mitigation, healthy living, and complete communities, while also addressing the first-and-last-mile regional transit issue.

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**Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing** | Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing allows people to embrace the elements and explore our magical winter landscape while being active and outdoors.

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**Cultural Experiences** | Trails support the understanding and exploration of nature through art. Photography, painting, dance, and other arts can be enjoyed in the fresh air while on a trail.

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**Dog Walking** | Dog owners enjoy numerous health and social benefits by walking their leashed dog on trails a few times a week. Benefits include improved cardiovascular fitness, lower blood pressure, stronger muscles and bones, and reduced stress.

---

**Events** | Trails and related facilities support community building, including social gatherings, community events, races, guided walks, sponsorship opportunities, cultural heritage programming, and public art.

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### Hiking, Running, and Walking |

Single-use hiking and multi-use trails provide recreational access to the natural wonders of our region, thereby promoting appreciation and stewardship.

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**Horse Riding** | Riding is a great way to get outdoors and observe the surrounding landscape, bringing the rider closer to nature and boosting well-being.

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### Mountain Biking and Road Cycling |

Mountain biking and road cycling offer opportunities for both recreation and active transportation. Designated mountain biking trails provide mental and physical challenges for all skill levels, while paved cycling routes connect people and communities.

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**Observing Wildlife** | Quietly observing bird species, such as songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors in their natural environment is a great way to relax and learn while on a trail. Small mammals, such as coyotes, deer, fox, and rabbits can often be safely observed from the vantage of a trail.

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**Paddling** | Recreational water activities such as fishing, kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddle-boarding connect people to the water.

## Trends

National trends overwhelmingly indicate a growing demand for trails. Residents and visitors to the GTA desire to use trails for recreation, active transportation, healthy living, community building, and eco-tourism. Some key trends related to trails are:

1. [activeswitch.ca/files/docs//2015%20Walktober%20Workplace/Workplace-Walktober-%20FactSheet.pdf](https://activeswitch.ca/files/docs//2015%20Walktober%20Workplace/Workplace-Walktober-%20FactSheet.pdf)
2. Summary Report, 1998 National Survey on Active Transportation, conducted by Environics International on behalf of Go for Green
3. Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016329
4. Bull FC, Armstrong TP, Dixon T, Ham S, Neiman A, Pratt M. Chapter 10: Physical inactivity. In: Ezzati M, Lopez AD, Rodgers A, Murray CJL, editors. Comparative quantifications of health risks. Global and regional burden of disease attributable to selected major risk factors. Volume 1. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2004
5. [thestar.com/yourtoronto/2014/06/27/plans\\_to\\_shift\\_torontos\\_bicycle\\_strategy\\_into\\_high\\_gear\\_in\\_the\\_works](http://thestar.com/yourtoronto/2014/06/27/plans_to_shift_torontos_bicycle_strategy_into_high_gear_in_the_works)
6. [sharetheroad.ca/opinion-poll-data-s17022](http://sharetheroad.ca/opinion-poll-data-s17022)
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. [rto12.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Ontario-Trail-Tourism-2014.pdf](http://rto12.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Ontario-Trail-Tourism-2014.pdf)
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

In Canada, the top five reasons for walking are:<sup>1</sup>



Exercise/health



Pleasure



Practicality/convenience



Saving money



Environmental concerns



Almost <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> of all Canadians live within a 30-minute walk (or 2.5 km) of a routine destination, like:<sup>2</sup>



Work



Leisure centre



Shopping



Friends/family



School

Over 163,000 people commute to work every day using active transportation (walking, cycling) in our partner regional municipalities (Durham, Peel, Toronto, York).<sup>3</sup>



Physical inactivity accounts for between 19% & 27% of new cases of heart disease, stroke, cancers, and other chronic diseases.<sup>4</sup>



182,000 people ride their bikes daily in Toronto.<sup>5</sup>



Nearly 1/3 of Ontarians would like to cycle to or from work. This means 3.5 million people could be on bikes and reducing traffic congestion.<sup>6</sup>



2/3 of Ontarians agree that the provincial government should invest in cycling infrastructure.<sup>7</sup>



Almost 1/2 of Ontarians are more likely to vote for a candidate if they make a public commitment to fund new cycling infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>



In 2014, residents of the GTA accounted for 3.81 million trail visits in Ontario.<sup>9</sup>

952,000 recreational trail visits took place in the GTA, accounting for 7% of all visits to trails in Ontario and 3.4% of all trips to the GTA.<sup>10</sup>



Trail visitors to Ontario spent \$3.8 billion, accounting for 15.8% of total visitor spending in Ontario.<sup>11</sup>



## Benefits

Trails are overwhelmingly beneficial to our lives. They improve our health, contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation, boost the economy, and support environmental conservation. Some key benefits of trails are:

- 1 [moodwalks.ca/about-mood-walks/infographic-the-benefits-of-nature](https://moodwalks.ca/about-mood-walks/infographic-the-benefits-of-nature)
- 2 [ecohealth-ontario.ca/files/Greenspace\\_and\\_Ecohealth\\_Toolkit\\_2.pdf](https://ecohealth-ontario.ca/files/Greenspace_and_Ecohealth_Toolkit_2.pdf)
- 3 Active Living – Go for Green. 1995. Linkages: Built Environment Wellbeing and Active Living
- 4 [headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/trails-research](https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/trails-research)
- 5 [ecohealth-ontario.ca/files/FO\\_8.5x11\\_EH\\_TOOLKIT\\_nocrops\\_FA.pdf](https://ecohealth-ontario.ca/files/FO_8.5x11_EH_TOOLKIT_nocrops_FA.pdf)
- 6 Andersen LB, Schnohr P, Schroll M, Hein HO. All-cause mortality associated with physical activity during leisure time, work, sports, and cycling to work. Arch Intern Med 2000; 160(11):1621-1628
- 7 Kahlmeier S, Cavill N, Dinsdale H, Rutter H, Gotschi T, Foster C et al. Health economic assessment tools (HEAT) for walking and cycling. Methodology and user guide. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2011
- 8 [news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2016/06/province-passes-act-to-support-ontarios-trails](https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2016/06/province-passes-act-to-support-ontarios-trails)
- 9 Transport Canada, 2011, p. 16
- \* Including gas, oil, maintenance, tires, insurance, license, registration, taxes, depreciation and finance charges
- 10 [headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/trails-research](https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/trails-research)
- 11 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2006004/9516-eng.htm>



A daily walk in nature can be as effective in treating mild depression as taking an antidepressant.<sup>1</sup>



Regular use of nature for physical activity can reduce the risk of mental health problems by 50%.<sup>2</sup>



The experience of walking and bicycling helps us connect people and places. Walkers move at slower speeds and have more time to perceive and comprehend the details of the environment and the community.<sup>3</sup>



Trails are associated with increased physical activity and improved public health, especially in rural places without other safe places to exercise.<sup>4</sup>



From a social well-being perspective, trails in greenspace provide enormous benefits to neighbourhoods, communities, and individuals by improving social cohesion and security, while enhancing the enjoyment of the local environment and creating a sense of place.<sup>5</sup>



**Cycling 3 hours a week to work reduces the risk of death from all causes by 28%.<sup>6</sup>**

**Walking 29 minutes 7 days a week reduces the risk of death from all causes by 22%.<sup>7</sup>**



**Trails tourism has made significant contributions to our economy. In 2014, hiking expenditures by Ontarians added \$559 million to Ontario's GDP and created more than 18,000 jobs across the province, with an annual economic benefit of nearly \$1.4 billion.<sup>8</sup>**



**Active transportation reduces the cost of living in the GTA. Walking and cycling costs approximately \$0.03/km on average. In comparison, Transport Canada estimates the average mid-size car is driven 16,000 km in a year and costs about \$0.46/km (or \$7,574 for the year).<sup>\* 9</sup>**



**Trails are often associated with higher property value, especially when a trail is designed to provide neighbourhood access and maintain residents' privacy.<sup>10</sup>**



**More cyclists find their commute the most pleasant part of their day compared to their motorist counterparts. The probability that a driver would enjoy their commute was only 37%, compared with 59% for cyclists and 46% for pedestrians.<sup>11</sup>**



## Partnerships, Policies, and Plans

**TRCA engaged its municipal partners and more than 20 NGOs with an interest in building trails in the GTA. All have developed policies and plans in support of trail planning, development, and maintenance. Partnership between these entities is critical for prioritized trail investment.**

### Conservation Authority

TRCA approaches trail building in collaboration with all partners, including trail organizations, municipal and regional partners, the provincial and federal governments, and the public. In addition to partnering on the realization of regional-level trails, TRCA plans, implements, and manages recreational trail networks within its own conservation parks.

In 1992, TRCA released the *TRCA Trail Planning and Design Guidelines: A Handbook for an Inter-Regional Trail System in the Greater Toronto Area*. Over the years, this technical handbook has successfully assisted TRCA and partners in the planning, design, and maintenance of trails in our region. TRCA continues to adopt best practices in trail construction and management.

In 2014, TRCA released *The Living City Policies* document to guide the implementation of TRCA's legislated and delegated roles

and responsibilities in the planning and development approvals process. *The Living City Policies* introduced several trail-focused policies and goals, such as supporting recreational and sustainable active transportation trails, promoting increased public access to greenspace through trails, developing a continuous regional trail network, and collaborating with partners to develop trail networks that connect communities, parks, and greenspace. In particular, recreational use policies outline TRCA's environmental planning objectives, goals, and policies for non-motorized trails. Existing and proposed trail alignments within TRCA-owned and regulated areas will be developed and maintained in a manner consistent with *The Living City Policies*.

### Local and Regional Municipalities

Local and regional governments recognize trails as essential green infrastructure through the inclusion of recreational and active transportation trail policies in strategic plans, official plans, and transportation master plans. These policies set out standards for new communities, managing growth and development, and protecting the environment. All of the municipalities in the GTA make recommendations to prioritize walking, cycling, and transit to meet the needs of residents and develop complete communities. Several official plans also include policies to improve connectivity between greenspaces and cover the role of trails in active transportation, recreational service delivery, community engagement, and ecological enhancement.

In response to population growth and changing community needs, municipalities are constructing significant regional trail routes. For example, York Region, the City of Toronto and the City of Richmond Hill are implementing the Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail. New trail segment construction along the Humber Trail, the Etobicoke Creek Trail, and the East Don Trail are also recent examples of successful trail-building partnership projects between TRCA and its government partners.

**TRCA works with our municipal partners to encourage trail connections to streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes.**



In addition to helping plan, build, and maintain trails, volunteers are valuable partners in grant applications, hosting trail building events, and leading stewardship activities.







## Trail Organizations

Volunteer trail organizations were instrumental in formalizing some of the primary trails in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network, including the Oak Ridges Moraine, Humber Valley Heritage, and Bruce Trails. In addition to helping plan, build, and maintain trails, volunteers are also valuable partners in grant applications, hosting trail-building events, and leading stewardship activities. Most recently, a partnership between TRCA, Green Durham Association, and Parks Canada has established the foundation for a key link and gateway to Rouge National Urban Park, near the Town of Uxbridge.

A number of national organizations are working to advocate for, fundraise for, and contribute to the establishment of trails in our region. These include The Trans Canada Trail Foundation, National Trails Coalition, Canadian Trails Federation, International Mountain Bike Association Canada, Hike Canada, and Transportation Association of Canada.

Provincial-based groups advocating for trails in Ontario include Ontario Trails Council, Hike Ontario, Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative, Cycle Ontario Alliance, Cross Country Ontario, Ontario Heritage Trust, Oak Ridges Trail Association, Bruce Trail Conservancy, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, and Waterfront Regeneration Trust.

Local groups that support trails in the GTA include Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association, Durham Outdoors Club, Outdoor Club of East York, Durham Mountain Biking Association, York Hiking Club, Durham Trails

Coordinating Committee, Green Durham, Toronto Bruce Trail Club, Cycle Toronto, the Toronto Field Naturalists, Toronto Outdoor Club, Toronto Off-Road Bicycling Association, City of Toronto's Crothers Woods Stewardship Team, and The Wild Bettys.

## Provincial Agencies

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the Government of Ontario played an instrumental role in developing a legacy of provincially significant trails in the GTA. In the 1970s, the Seaton Trail was created by the Government of Ontario in partnership with the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (now TRCA). Built by high school and university students, the trail was maintained for many years by local Scouts. In 1992, the Government of Ontario established the Waterfront Regeneration Trust to implement 80 recommendations from *Regeneration*, a Royal Commission report produced with the Honourable David Crombie as Commissioner. One of these recommendations was to create a continuous waterfront trail along the Lake Ontario shoreline. Now known as the Waterfront Trail, this route has expanded to reach all of the Great Lakes.

In 2005, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport produced the Ontario Trails Strategy to formulate a long-term proposal for the planning, management, promotion, and use of trails in Ontario. That strategy envisioned a coordinated approach to meeting the challenges facing the trails community. The province increased its commitment to the improvement of trails by enacting

the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 (S.O. 2016, c.8, Sched. 1) to permanently protect trails. The act also established an annual Trails Week to coincide with International Trails Day. Both events strive to promote public access to Ontario's world-class trails system for recreation, tourism, and active transportation, while building a network of trail stewards.

In 2008, Metrolinx published *The Big Move*, a plan to transform regional transportation through nine big moves and 10 strategies aimed at implementing an integrated, multi-modal transportation plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (Metrolinx, 2017). One of Metrolinx's big moves is to advance active transportation initiatives. In 2017, Metrolinx released the *2041 Regional Transportation Plan*, which includes additional recommendations to improve active transportation options, including the completion of a regional commuter cycling network.

In 2014, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs published the Provincial Policy Statement, which provided policy direction on matters of provincial interest relating to land use planning and development. The Provincial Policy Statement included policies relating to healthy, active communities, which should be promoted by facilitating active transportation, providing natural settings for recreation (including trails and linkages), providing opportunities for public access to shorelines, and recognizing conservation reserves and other protected areas, while minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

In 2017, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs published *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The goals of the plan are to manage growth, build complete communities, curb sprawl, and protect the natural environment. To achieve these goals, policies are aimed at expanding access to trails and greenspace and coordinating our approach to trail planning and development. Furthermore, the plan cites trails as key elements of our cultural heritage landscape for recognition. *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, together with the *Greenbelt Plan*, *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, and the *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, build on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a unique land use planning framework for the Greater Golden Horseshoe region that supports the achievement of complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment, and social equity.

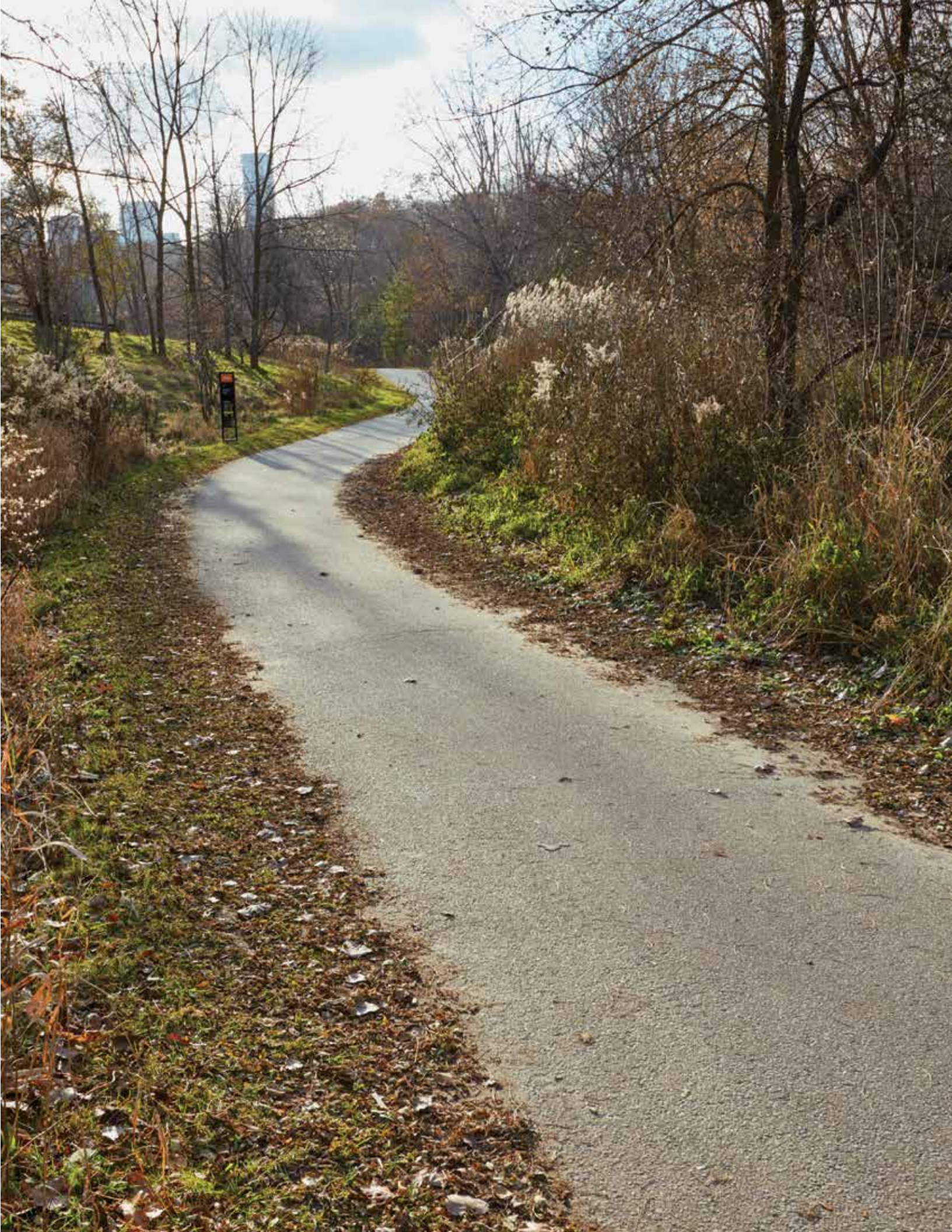
Ontario Parks, a branch of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, manages trails within our provincial parks. Other ministries that support trail projects include the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Plans for Rouge National Urban Park include approximately 50 km of trails connecting to the Lake Ontario Waterfront, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and neighbouring municipal trail systems.**

### **Federal Agencies**

Parks Canada manages trails within our National Parks. In the GTA, Parks Canada oversees the trail network in Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP). RNUP is the result of decades of effort and collaboration among various governments, organizations, and community leaders. In 1994, the Rouge Park Alliance was formed and an \$8.5 million federal endowment fund was created to initiate the park. Through a collaborative effort between the federal and provincial governments and the municipal governments of Toronto, Markham, Pickering, York, and Durham, Rouge Park was initially formed in 1995. In 2011, the Government of Canada committed to work towards the creation of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley. The passage of the Rouge National Urban Park Act in 2015 officially created the largest urban wilderness park in North America.

The Federal Government has also contributed funding to The Great Trail and a number of municipal active transportation projects. For example, the *Economic Action Plan* (2009) funded some 500 recreational trail projects across the country. Infrastructure Canada launched the National Recreational Trails Program in 2014, a \$10 million initiative to expand and rehabilitate Canada's non-motorized, snowmobile, and all-terrain vehicle trail system (National Trails Coalition, 2009). The Federal Government has also provided significant support to trail building in Canada through funding for the National Trails Coalition.



## Challenges and Opportunities

**The Greater Toronto Region Trail Network community must address a number of challenges and take advantage of opportunities to successfully achieve the vision of the Trail Strategy.**

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### **Resolve Trail Network Disconnection |**

While there are many trails in our region, they often fall short of operating as an integrated system that connects communities and destinations. Trails require space for the trail, its supporting infrastructure, and the experience of escape the trail is providing. If this space is lost to development or private ownership, the trail can become exponentially more difficult and expensive to build, potentially resulting in a lost connection. Opportunities for trail connections in the greenspace system must be protected through development and environmental assessment processes so that investments can be leveraged to deliver a comprehensive trail network as quickly and effectively as possible.

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**Meet Growing Demand for Trails |** Trail use is on an upward trend. People are seeking trails that offer opportunities for recreation and active transportation in their communities. Land use planning must accommodate integrated, multi-modal trail networks in existing and future community design. This planning should also strive to provide a variety of quality trail experiences.

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**Ensure Long-term Funding |** Trails are essential public infrastructure that support healthy living, active transportation, climate change mitigation, and complete communities. They require ongoing funding to account for their full lifecycle costs. This investment in the regional trail network must be coordinated between all levels of government and trail building partners to make the most effective use of limited trail funding to deliver the network.

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**Foster Effective Relationships and Partnerships |** Regional trail networks are achieved through partnership. Fostering relationships with the trail community requires ongoing investment. Innovative partnerships must be advanced to maximize budgets, resources, and opportunities to make shared trail connections.

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**Build Capacity |** Trails operate successfully when there are dedicated local stewards and volunteers who care for them. Cultivating a robust stewardship mentality in the trail community requires investment, time, and support from all partners.

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**Promote Active Living |** With our increasingly car-oriented lifestyles, opportunities for physical activity are diminishing. Principal barriers to walking to a destination include distance, time, weather, inconvenience, and disability. To support active living, integrated trail and transit networks must be designed to address these obstacles and provide enjoyable trail experiences.

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**Enhance Overall Trail Experience |** Trails and the places to which they connect are destinations and can draw people from outside their immediate communities. This results in increased demand for supporting infrastructure such as wayfinding, parking, washrooms, and other amenities to enhance the overall trail experience. An opportunity exists to develop further relationships between trail managers, economic development programs, and tourism operators to provide these supports at key locations in a coordinated manner.

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**Ensure Trail Accessibility and Inclusive Design |** Diverse trail experiences should be available for persons of all abilities. An exception to accessibility is defensible only where accessible design would require modifications that would cause substantial harm to natural or cultural resources, fundamentally alter the nature of the setting or the purpose of the trail, require construction methods prohibited by local laws, or would simply not be feasible due to terrain or prevailing construction practices.

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**Address Trail Safety and Maintenance |** Trail maintenance is critical to delivering a safe and enjoyable trail experience. An ongoing feedback loop of inventory, monitoring, and maintenance is required to adaptively manage for risks, hazards, safety, and aesthetics. This responsibility for monitoring and maintenance will increase with more trail users.

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**Manage Trail User Conflicts |** Conflicts between different activities on trails pose issues for trail planning, design, and management.

These conflicts can undermine the trail experience for all users. The demands of different activities must be balanced both on individual trails and across the broader network.

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**Deter Environmental Degradation |** The stresses on our ecological systems will only increase as our population grows and urbanization increases. Many well-loved trails are currently exceeding the carrying capacity for which they were designed. In addition, trails that bisect critically sensitive habitats, areas of species at risk, and/or natural hazards negatively impact our natural system. Keeping trails out of the most ecologically sensitive locations through careful planning will help prevent environmental degradation.

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**Prevent Degradation of Built Heritage |** Trails offer avenues to explore and preserve archaeological sites, built heritage, and cultural heritage landscapes. Conversely, trails can increase the risk to these resources through overuse and vandalism. Without a proper balance between recognition and protection, these valuable destinations will disappear from our collective history.

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**Increase Communications and Marketing |** Our regional trail network is one of our greatest green infrastructure assets. We must increase communications and marketing efforts to generate greater use and awareness, while improving orientation, wayfinding, and trail etiquette. We must convey the value of our network and support appreciation for the stewardship of nature. Improved communication also encourages responsible trail use and protects the environmental health of the trail network.

## Destinations

The Greater Toronto Region Trail Network features an abundance of significant regional destinations. Ten areas, in particular, provide the essential combination of conservation area properties, regional trails, places of interest, amenities, and transit access. Investment in these destinations will further enrich the trail experience.



### Hills of the Headwaters

At the convergence of the ORM and the Niagara Escarpment, the Hills of the Headwaters are the source of all rivers in the Humber watershed in Peel Region. Glen Haffy and Albion Hills Conservation Parks, and the Bolton Resource Management Tract are linked by the iconic Bruce, Oak Ridges, and Humber Trails. Rugged nature is contrasted with charming restaurants, shops, and amenities in the nearby communities of Palgrave and Bolton in the Town of Caledon. The area is supported by The Hills of the Headwaters Tourism Association, a regional non-profit organization that supports local tourism.





### Forested Headwaters

A trail lover's paradise, the Forested Headwaters contain over 100 km of trails in the largest interior forest habitat in the GTA. This destination, in Durham Region, comprises a cluster of conservation lands, known as the East Duffins Headwaters, totalling over 1,400 ha. As Durham's most popular destination for hiking and mountain biking, the internal trail system is well-established and carefully maintained by several trail organizations. The Town of Uxbridge, "Canada's Trail Capital," features amenities and services that support the high-quality trail experience of the area.



### Kettle Lakes

Encompassing over 600 ha of open space, parks, and conservation lands straddling the Humber and Rouge watersheds, the Kettle Lakes are one of the most picturesque destinations in York Region. Formed by retreating glaciers more than 13,000 years ago, this destination features a distinctive undulating topography known as kame-and-kettle. Centred around the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve, this landscape is dotted with wetlands, ponds, and lakes, including Wilcox Lake and Bond Lake. Hiking or cycling along the Oak Ridges Trail allows people to experience this rich moraine landscape in Richmond Hill.



### Humber Valley Wilderness

In the wide valley of the Humber River, a magnificent corridor of forests, valleys, and meadows is formed by the Nashville Resource Management Tract, Kortright Centre for Conservation, and Boyd Conservation Park in York Region. This landscape features upland and bottomland forests, meadows, former agricultural fields, wetlands, and small tributaries that feed the main stem of the upper Humber River. The historic town of Kleinburg and the renowned McMichael Canadian Art Collection draw residents and visitors to the community of Woodbridge to experience this iconic scenery, connected by the celebrated Humber Trail. Significant investment in this destination area is currently underway.



### Black Creek Parklands

Located within the naturalized section of the 45 km Black Creek Ravine System, the Black Creek Parklands are a greenway of trails, forests, parks, and open space. Bisecting industrial lands and residential neighbourhoods, the parklands are located within easy walking distance of Black Creek Pioneer Village Station, eight schools, and thousands of local residents in one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Canada's largest city. The Black Creek Trail provides a well-established multi-use trail connection through the parklands to York University, Tennis Canada, Black Creek Farm, Black Creek Pioneer Village, and the future head office of TRCA.



### Forks of the Don

Situated within the Don River Valley in the City of Toronto, the Forks of the Don is an oasis of water and wildlife carving through the urban landscape. The forested ravine slopes feature a mature canopy of oaks, maple, birch, and cedar. The Lower Don Trail, the Pan Am Path, and Taylor Creek Trail wind through the ravine, connecting communities around the Don Valley to a network of greenspace linking Sunnybrook Park, Taylor Creek Park, and Crothers Woods. Located within walking distance of Broadview Station and the future Sunnybrook Park stop, this destination also features cultural attractions, including Todmorden Mills, the Ontario Science Centre, and the Evergreen Brick Works community hub.



### Rouge National Urban Park

Canada's first national urban park and the largest urban park in North America, Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) is a unique mosaic of natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes in York and Durham Regions and the City of Toronto. Over 7,000 ha, the park stretches from Lake Ontario to the ORM and features working farms, Carolinian forests, marshes, and beaches that may be explored along the Rouge Trail and the blue trail through the Rouge Marsh. In close proximity to RNUP, the historic Seaton Trail and the active transportation corridor of The Meadoway provide linkages to the growing communities of Scarborough, Markham, Pickering, and Uxbridge. At its southern extent, the Waterfront Trail connects into RNUP and is easily accessed by the Rouge Hill GO.

## Lake Ontario Waterfront

**The Lake Ontario Waterfront is a wondrous linear destination featuring dynamic waterfront parks that are like jewels along the shoreline.**

The Waterfront is undergoing natural habitat restoration and revitalization to support public access and recreation. While the Waterfront Trail extends across the Lake Ontario shoreline, the trail links over 70 km of lake frontage in our jurisdiction. It connects the western reaches of the Arsenal Lands and Marie Curtis Park through Humber Bay Parks across the Central Waterfront, the Beaches, and Tommy Thompson Park, past Ashbridges Bay, the Scarborough Bluffs, and East Point Park to the eastern reaches of Port Union Waterfront Park, Rotary Frenchman's Bay, and Paradise Park. Within this waterfront experience, three areas stand out as remarkable regional destinations: **Humber Parklands**, **Toronto Harbour**, and **Scarborough Bluffs**

There are also a number of new and evolving destinations in our growing region. The New Seaton community in Pickering, Claireville Conservation Area in Brampton, Bolton Camp in Caledon, and the northern reaches of Rouge National Urban Park in Markham are all destination development hot spots experiencing current or coming intensification. In the near future, these locations will require investment in trails and amenities to support the increasing nature-based recreational needs of the surrounding communities.



## Humber Parklands

Formed by a corridor of greenspace in the Humber River floodplain that culminates in two peninsulas along the river mouth, Humber Parklands provide an idyllic greenspace in the west end of Toronto. The parklands stretch from the parks and sports fields of Eglinton Flats in the north, through the wildlife-rich Humber Marshes, towards the constructed headlands of Humber Bay Park, along the urban waterfront of Lake Ontario. Easily accessed by Mimico GO, Old Mill Station, or the future Mount Dennis Station along the Eglinton Crosstown, this urban destination offers places to picnic and recreate in nature. The Humber Parklands are enjoyed by thousands who traverse the picturesque routes of the Waterfront Trail and the Humber Trail, part of the official route of the Pan Am Path. In addition to land-based recreation opportunities, the area also offers water-based activities including boating, canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.



### Toronto Harbour

Protected by the Toronto Islands in the downtown core of Toronto, Toronto Harbour is a bustling marine landscape. The Waterfront Trail, The Great Trail, the Lake-to-Lake Trail, and sections of the Pan Am Path carry thousands of residents and visitors to major natural and cultural attractions along the harbourfront. Fort York National Historic Site, Harbourfront Centre, Queens Quay, Sugar Beach, The Distillery District, and Corktown Common animate the lakefront harbour and beachscape with endless opportunities for cultural engagement. Extending into Lake Ontario, the Toronto Islands and Tommy Thompson Park connect us to nature and some of the best opportunities in the city to view wildlife.



### Scarborough Bluffs

The Scarborough Bluffs are a natural wonder located on the doorstep of Canada's largest city. Soaring up to 90 m above the Lake Ontario Waterfront, they offer strikingly beautiful natural greenspaces and support increasingly rare habitats for a wide variety of fish, birds, and other wildlife. Linking more than 11 waterfront parks across 15 km of bluffs, the Waterfront and Highland Creek Trails offer opportunities for people to safely explore this unique segment of the Lake Ontario shoreline. Atop the Bluffs is situated the newly restored Guild Park and Gardens, featuring an historic sculpture garden, restaurant, and event centre. Accessed by Eglinton and Guildwood GO stations, the Scarborough Bluffs offer some of the best beaches, gardens, sports and recreation facilities, and parklands for trail users, including paddlers, to enjoy.

# Making It Happen

Our future decisions related to the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network will be based on this Strategy. It is our goal to empower the regional trail community with a vision to catalyze implementation.



## Strategic Objectives, Initiatives, and Actions

The context for TRCA's trail work is complex and continuously evolving. Therefore, it is important to adapt our strategic direction so that it remains relevant and linked to those of our trail partners. Strategic objectives translate our vision into specific plans and projects to meet the challenges and seize upon opportunities associated with trail development in the GTA.

Seven strategic objectives have been developed in support of the guiding principles. The following objectives, along with their associated initiatives and actions, express TRCA's policy on regional trails, and will guide TRCA and its partners towards achieving the overarching vision of the Trail Strategy.

**Strategic Objective #1:****Prioritize trail and destination area capital projects**

Fully connecting the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network and establishing a standard level of trail amenity will make the trail experience safer, more enjoyable, and accessible.

Trail and destination infrastructure investment at a regional scale involves accounting for a complex, and often shifting, range of priorities. Investment includes greenspace securement, trail construction, and the delivery of trail facilities and amenities to enhance destinations.

**Initiative 1.1: Secure more greenspace to provide trails, grow our natural system, and accommodate growth**

The acquisition, planning, development, and adaptive management of greenspace is critical to growing our natural system, accommodating growth, and providing trails in the current landscape of urban intensification. The Trail Strategy's concept should be used to guide securement of lands for a connected regional trail network that is large enough to accommodate trails, destination areas, and enhancement of the natural system.

We must ensure that greenspace connections are not lost to development and then build our capacity to strategically deliver these projects.

Where possible, TRCA and partners should seek to expand and enhance the natural system in conjunction with trail, development, and other infrastructure projects. Development and infrastructure projects provide the opportunity to integrate community benefits such as trails in to their scope of work, thereby capitalizing on development disturbance by limiting negative environmental impacts and reducing trail development costs.



TRCA's Greenlands Acquisition Project provides the implementation tools for the securement of greenspace where property acquisition and subsequent ecological enhancement would be beneficial to the natural system. This includes securement through the development and environmental assessment process, donations, purchases, and agreements.

#### Actions:

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- A. Secure additional greenspace required for the trail corridors identified in the Trail Strategy through the development and environmental assessment (EA) process in coordination with our government partners

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- B. Employ the Trail Strategy to identify and support land acquisition opportunities through TRCA's Greenlands Acquisition Project

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- C. Incorporate expansion and enhancement of the natural system into all trail projects, where possible

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#### **Initiative 1.2: Develop a business plan to deliver trail and destination capital projects in partnership with our government partners**

TRCA in collaboration with its government partners will develop a business plan to complete priority trail and destination area capital projects identified through the Trail Strategy consultation process. This plan will involve performing high-level cost analysis for capital projects and developing a financial plan to obtain funding and implement these projects with our partners. TRCA will also pursue funding through its municipal budgeting process including adding prioritized capital projects to its list of unmet needs.

#### Actions:

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- A. Perform high-level cost analysis for candidate capital projects

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- B. Develop a corporate-wide work plan to deliver capital projects across divisions

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- C. Develop a financial plan to obtain funding to deliver capital projects

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- D. Pursue and obtain capital funding to deliver trail projects in partnership with government partners

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**Strategic Objective #2:****Promote greater trail use and awareness**

Improved awareness for our regional trail network, its value, and benefits will improve the trail experience and retain and attract trail users. The City of Toronto recently completed a business case outlining the benefits of their TO360 wayfinding system. For every dollar invested, almost four dollars would be returned in transportation benefits over the 25-year lifecycle of the project.

A similar wayfinding plan and communications plan for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network would also deliver additional benefits, such as increased tourism spending, emissions reductions resulting from reduced auto use, a more attractive public realm, and improved health due to increased walking.

**Initiative 2.1: Implement a wayfinding plan for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network**

Informing the public about how to access and properly use our regional trail network is essential to successful trail management. Information should include directions to trailheads and access points, descriptions of trails and features as well as accessibility, etiquette, and educational and safety information. This information helps protect trail users and the trails themselves.

To kick-start this initiative, a digital map will be developed as a complement to this Strategy; A comprehensive wayfinding plan for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network, prepared in consultation with municipal partners, should follow to facilitate improved use of the network.

**Actions:**

- 
- A.** Develop a digital map of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network to provide clear wayfinding information for improved safety and user experience
- 
- B.** Implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network
- 
- C.** Explore new forms of technology to improve natural and cultural interpretation on trails
- 
- D.** Engage in a pilot project to test the Provincial trail classification system, upon its release
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## **Initiative 2.2: Implement a communications campaign for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network**

A communications plan is a key component to raising awareness about the value of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network. It will help to secure ongoing funding, generate support, promote the network, and support local municipalities and businesses. This Strategy recommends TRCA partner with municipalities to fund a communications campaign for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network that builds on existing trail promotion efforts. This campaign should highlight trip-planning opportunities for a range of abilities and experiences, including options for unique, exciting, and well-serviced single-and multi-day trail itineraries across the network that accommodate a range of abilities and experiences. Partnering with private businesses that support amenities (such as lodging, restaurants, and equipment rentals) and tourism organizations would further support this initiative.

### **Actions:**

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- A.** Implement a communications campaign for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network that builds on existing trail promotion efforts by TRCA and partners

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  - B.** Where needed, partner with municipalities, tourism agencies, and private businesses to promote destinations (see **Destinations** page 72) within the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network
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**Strategic Objective #3:****Build a sound knowledge base**

The way people use trails is changing and evolving. Our regional trails are often used for both recreational and active transportation-based purposes in greenspace and in our transportation networks. The relationship between these uses and their cumulative impact must be better understood to improve trail network planning and design. Studying broader usage patterns across our regional transportation network, including the association between trail, road, and transit systems, will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how people are moving about during their daily lives.

Our knowledge base also depends on up-to-date terrestrial monitoring, including biological inventories and assessments. Continued and enhanced ecological data collection and monitoring will provide critical existing conditions information to inform trail planning and management within the context of our urbanizing environment. This comprehensive analysis is critical to planning a sustainable, multi-modal regional trail network that is both integrated into the larger regional transportation network and consistent with The Living City Policies.



### **Initiative 3.1: Invest in a comprehensive regional trail data program**

Currently, TRCA's trail monitoring and assessment program provides data collection for TRCA-owned and managed trails within its jurisdiction. Standardizing data collection, administration, and analysis, as well as sharing this information between regional recreation and transportation delivery partners, will improve the design and quality of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network. Digital assessment tools and measurement devices are utilized to collect the following trail data: alignment, conditions, slope, cross-slope, surface type, surface hardness, obstacles, and hazards. This data is utilized to inform the planning, design, and management of our trail network and infrastructure.

The TRCA trail monitoring and assessment program must be expanded to have the capacity to collect and assess the growing volume of trail data. Additionally, data regarding trail, road, and transit networks, including mobility hubs, must be shared and analyzed comprehensively to understand the relationships and connection opportunities within our larger transportation system.

We must continue to invest in and expand this program, as well as complementary GIS resources and capacity, to monitor, assess, and report on current trail conditions and to facilitate strategic planning and adaptive management. Developing a standardized methodology among regional transportation partners will improve effective use of trail data.

### **Actions:**

- 
- A.** Expand TRCA's trail monitoring and assessment program and explore integration with TRCA's terrestrial monitoring program
- 
- B.** Develop a standardized system of data collection, administration, and analysis for TRCA and regional trail partners to collect and communicate trail and terrestrial data
- 
- C.** Study broader usage trends and connections between local and regional trail, road, and transit systems to design a comprehensive and resilient regional trail network that supports complete communities
- 
- D.** Provide the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network concept plan in TRCA, partner municipality, and agency spatial databases as a reference to inform and assist trail planning initiatives. Refresh on a regular basis with updates
-

### **Initiative 3.2: Partner with domain experts and educational institutions to better understand trails**

New and exciting ways in which people are using trails has made it necessary to rethink how trails are planned, developed, and managed. In order to be resilient and capitalize on the opportunities presented by these changes, innovative research is needed to ensure that trail managers can more effectively guide trail development and facilitate maintenance. The success of our trail system depends on our ability to understand environmental, economic, and social impacts of trails and to adaptively manage our trail network.

Additionally, there is a need to research the impact of trails on the biodiversity of natural areas, cultural features, and nearby communities. Sound data and a better understanding of how trails impact the complex systems through which they pass will help us access our natural spaces in a more sustainable way. Possible collaborative research areas could include how design factors (including trail width, trail configuration, trail density, and user numbers) affect measures of biodiversity, user experience, and the economics of trails. Further research could investigate different trail management techniques to optimize trail design and operation within natural areas.

To accomplish this, partnerships should be established to share resources and capitalize on investigations that improve the development and management of trails as they relate to supporting biodiversity.

#### **Actions:**

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- A.** Undertake a targeted trail ecology study to help inform the relationship between trail use and ecological health over time
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- B.** Map future growth projections against the proposed Greater Toronto Regional Trail Network to identify potential development opportunities and carrying capacity hot spots
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- C.** Continue to implement sustainable trail planning, design, construction, and management best practices
- 
- D.** Explore partnerships with educational institutions to assist in trails research
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**Strategic Objective #4:****Integrate community enjoyment and protection of our heritage**

We must seek to integrate community enjoyment and protection of our natural and cultural heritage through trail siting, design, construction, programming, and operations that prioritizes ecological health integrity. Existing and proposed trails within TRCA-owned and regulated areas should be planned, developed, and

maintained in a manner consistent with *The Living City Policies* and best practices. Maintaining this integration also requires growing our natural system in tandem with the projected urban growth of our region.

**Initiative 4.1: Protect, restore, and enhance habitats through sustainable trail development and management**

TRCA staff should be engaged throughout the trail project lifecycle to provide input on ecological protection and enhancement of surrounding habitat. Siting, design, and operation of trails should avoid, mitigate, and/or compensate for impacts to the natural system. Trails should be routed to avoid critically sensitive habitat, as well as natural features and areas where flooding or soil conditions prohibit sustainable trail design. Trail projects should integrate habitat restoration and environmental enhancement initiatives and should also be used as opportunities, where possible, to restore degraded and fragmented ecosystems through trail consolidation and surface area reduction. Trail construction should be undertaken in a way that minimizes environmental impact and maximizes

long-term sustainability. Sound technical design, site planning, scoped environmental studies, and the incorporation of best management practices can generally minimize impacts of trails to negligible levels.

**Actions:**

- 
- A.** Plan, develop, and maintain existing and proposed trails within TRCA-owned and regulated areas in a manner consistent with *The Living City Policies*
- 
- B.** Identify “no-go” zones for critically sensitive ecological areas based on the *Trail Ecology Study*
- 
- C.** Consolidate and regularly update TRCA policies, procedures, and guidelines relating to trail planning, design, construction, and management to reflect best practices
-

### **Initiative 4.2: Document and interpret cultural heritage resources through the trail development process**

The conservation of cultural heritage is a key component of trail management. Through identification of archaeological sites, cultural heritage landscapes, and artifacts, the history of the region may be documented, interpreted, and explored. TRCA staff should be engaged throughout the trail project lifecycle to provide input on cultural heritage resource protection and management. An archaeological assessment will define the limits of significant heritage locations and archaeologically sensitive areas so that recommendations for avoidance, protection, or mitigation may be developed.

#### **Actions:**

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- A.** Plan, develop, and maintain existing and proposed trails within TRCA-owned lands in a manner consistent with TRCA's *Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Policy (2019)*
  - B.** Identify significant cultural heritage resources and develop appropriate management and stewardship strategies
- 

### **Initiative 4.3: Identify opportunities for trail-based cultural heritage programming**

Trails can connect us to our rich Indigenous and settler history and present opportunities for reflection and self-awareness. This awareness can help foster relations and greater acceptance of diverse cultural origins. Celebrating the vibrant cultural heritage of our region will engage and educate trail users about our past, present, and future.

#### **Actions:**

---

- A.** Invest in cultural heritage interpretation of the Humber River as a Canadian Heritage River and its connection to the Carrying Place Trail (The Humber Trail)
  - B.** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to develop cultural heritage programs that respect and share traditional Indigenous ways and beliefs
  - C.** Support event programming, storytelling, and educational opportunities to engage all communities in celebration of our rich Indigenous and settler history
-

**Strategic Objective #5:****Promote meaningful community engagement**

Indigenous peoples, volunteers, and grassroots organizations are key partners in creating and managing our regional trail network. Working in partnership, we can create meaningful places within our regional trail network to respect and celebrate Indigenous ways and beliefs, improving the quality of life for present and future generations. We must support all community members as leaders in trail and greenspace stewardship.

The Community Engagement Strategy (CES) outlines TRCA's civic engagement objectives, goals, and policies for facilitating community and partner engagement. All engagement initiatives proposed in this Strategy should be developed and refined in a manner consistent with the CES.

**Initiative 5.1: Develop and support trail community stewardship programs to support trail building, monitoring, maintenance, and programming**

Volunteers make key contributions to trail planning, construction, maintenance, oversight, and promotion. We must continue to foster relationships with our robust network of volunteers to support and grow trail stewardship in local communities. This Strategy recommends that TRCA support the Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation (TRCF) and trail organizations in the development of trail ambassador programs relating to trail monitoring, maintenance, and event programming.

**Actions:**

- 
- A.** Work with existing volunteer organizations to develop a trail ambassador program
- 
- B.** Work with the TRCF to offer trail monitoring and maintenance programs to volunteers
-

**Initiative 5.2: Design community engagement programs that enhance the trail experience**

Using trails as venues for activities and programs that promote community health, cultural and landscape appreciation, and togetherness positively animates our natural public realm. Encouraging community groups to take advantage of trail networks for their activities and programs cements the recognition of trails as key infrastructure assets, fostering broad-based community appreciation for trails.

Facilitating environmentally responsible ways for people to engage with our streams, rivers, and lakes will also enable a wider range of people to enjoy outdoor water-based activities. The establishment of waterfront recreational nodes at significant City of Toronto waterfront parks has already improved how people access Lake Ontario and take part in various water-based recreational activities such as fishing, kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding. These nodes incorporate launches appropriate for small vessels and allow the public to safely explore the waterfront, while discouraging shoreline trampling and permitting significant shoreline regeneration. TRCA will work with our municipal partners to establish additional recreational nodes and safe paddling areas in our lakes and rivers where possible.

**Actions:**

- 
- A.** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to develop engagement programs that celebrate and promote Indigenous ways and beliefs
- 
- B.** Partner with community organizations in developing trail-based engagement programs that support active living and social inclusion
- 
- C.** Invest in the expansion and programming of the blue trail network
-





**Strategic Objective #6:****Support complete communities**

**In order to support complete communities, our region needs a trail network capable of providing convenient access to both recreational experiences and transportation options.**

**Initiative 6.1: Better integrate land use and trails planning**

Complete communities meet people's needs for daily living, providing convenient access to jobs, transit, local services, local food centres, and a full range of community infrastructure, including affordable housing, schools, recreation, and open space for residents. Trails link people to recreational experiences, as well as to schools, workplaces, and other destinations. Trail planning is as essential as traffic planning to building complete communities, and requires a similar level of priority in municipal planning. Integrating trail development into community land use planning will help build local and neighbourhood connections into the regional trail network.

Studying broader usage patterns across our regional transportation network, including the association between trail, road, and transit systems, will support more integrated land use planning in support of complete communities. This Strategy recommends representing and incorporating the proposed

Greater Toronto Region Trail Network into regional transportation plans, individual EAs, municipal official plans, transportation master plans, recreational trail master plans, and other projects to align land use and planning efforts and capitalize on development opportunities in support of trails. In addition, this Strategy recommends connecting the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network with Metrolinx's 36 mobility hubs in our region. Metrolinx defines these mobility hubs as places of connectivity between regional and rapid transit services, where different modes of transportation come together seamlessly.

There are two types of mobility hubs identified in *The Big Move*: anchor hubs and gateway hubs. Anchor hubs are major transit station areas associated with an urban growth centre (as defined in the Province's *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*). Gateway hubs are major transit station areas located at the interchange of two or more current or planned regional rapid transit lines with anticipated high levels of ridership. As some of these mobility hubs exist in areas of environmental sensitivity,



we must strive to identify opportunities for trail development as a means to mitigate their impact to the natural system through the EA and land use planning processes.

### Actions:

- A. Work with regional trail partners to implement the proposed Greater Toronto Region Trail Network through regional transportation plans, municipal official plans, transportation master plans, and recreational trail master plans
- B. Strive to identify opportunities to connect the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network with proposed mobility hubs as a means to mitigate impacts on the natural system through the EA and land use planning processes
- C. Co-locate trails with infrastructure design through the planning and development approvals process
- D. Work with approval agencies to ensure that permitting and development approvals support the realization of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network
- E. Regularly review and adaptively update implementation plans to reflect current land use conditions, including property acquisition updates to identify potential connection opportunities early in the planning and development process

### Initiative 6.2: Promote the top 10 destinations in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network

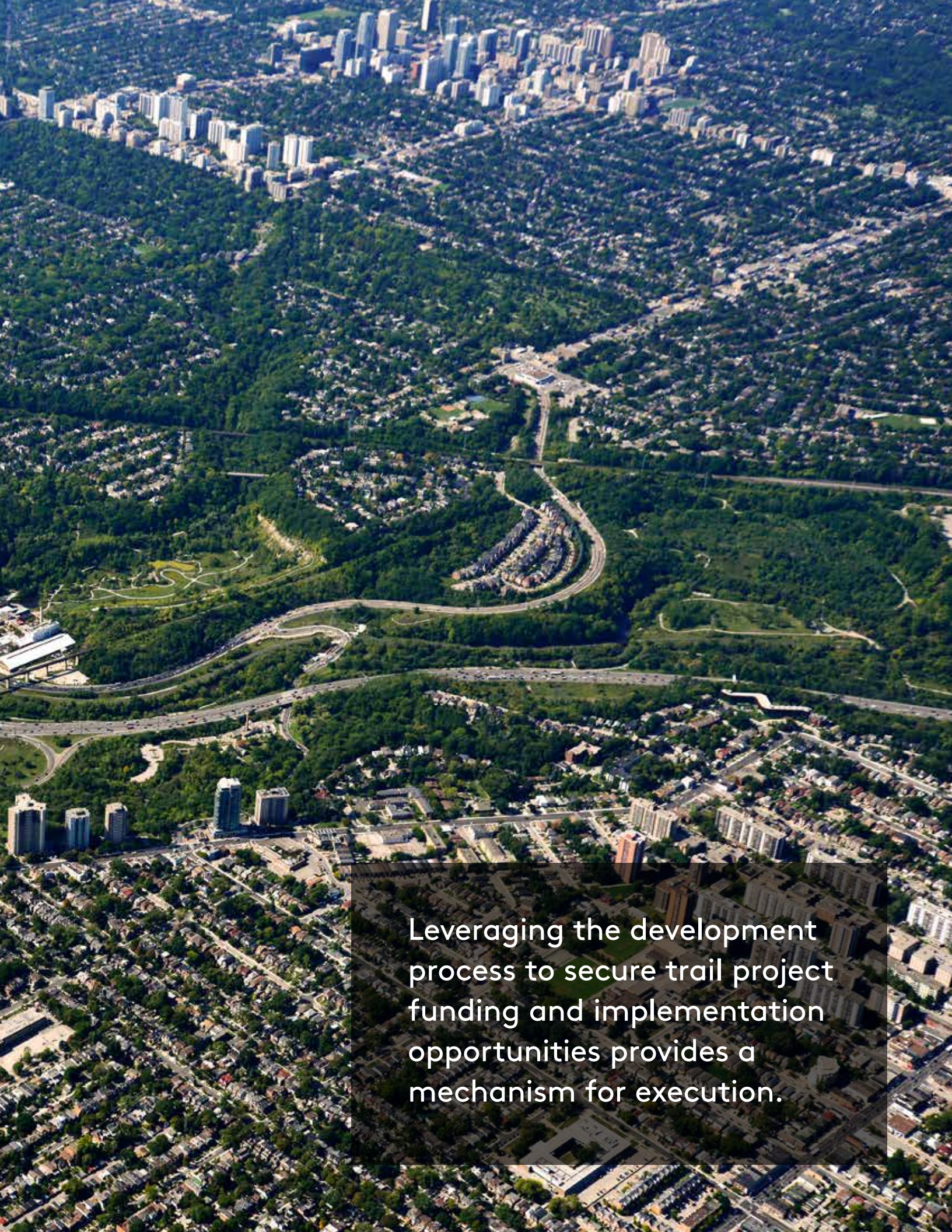
The top 10 destination areas in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network offer distinctive experiences within our natural and cultural environments and provide the amenities critical to a successful trail system. The establishment of these destinations provides exposure for communities, promoting visitor and local activity and catalyzing development that further supports complete communities.

Destinations could be further enhanced through the establishment of trail centres. A trail centre is a regional trails convergence point that offers a well-serviced, actively managed trail amenity area with dedicated trail user and visitor services. Within our existing trail network, several locations have organically become trail centres. This Strategy recommends that a trail centre be identified and promoted within each of the top 10 destination areas.

### Actions:

- A. Partner with interested municipalities, communities, tourism agencies, private businesses, and trail organizations to promote destinations
- B. Establish and invest in trail centres within destination areas





Leveraging the development process to secure trail project funding and implementation opportunities provides a mechanism for execution.

**Strategic Objective #7:****Secure adequate and sustainable investment**

Trails are essential recreational and active transportation green infrastructure assets. They require sustainable and regular investment to guarantee their future. Regional trail projects are funded from a variety of sources, as outlined in Figure 7.a. Funding for Regional Trail Projects. At TRCA, these sources include TRCA revenues and occasional donations and/or government grants.

While capital funding is sourced from all three channels, operating funding is sourced solely from TRCA revenues linked to municipal sources. Financial resilience will require a greater range of eligible funding sources as well as leveraging the revenue-generating potential of trails and related facilities. In addition to these sources, TRCA will continue to engage with regional trail partners to capitalize on future development opportunities that maximize budgets, time, and resources.

**Figure 7.a: Funding for Regional Trail Projects**

	Source of Funds	Description
<b>Current Sources</b>	Development charges	Fees collected from land developers at the time a building permit is issued
	Development plan approvals and municipal infrastructure EA approvals	Co-operative funding agreements obtained through planning and development approvals processes
	Donations/Sponsorships	Funds received through TRCF and/or from trail donation boxes; donations and sponsorships received from volunteer trail associations, the general public, and the private sector; and donations directed through municipalities
	Federal Gas Tax Fund	Local infrastructure priority funding
	Government grants	Municipal, provincial, or federal funding
	Government infrastructure programs	Provincial or federal funding programs
	Municipal taxes	Municipal operating and/or capital budgets
	Revenues	Municipal levies, capital, and special projects
<b>Potential Future Funding Sources</b>	Public-private partnerships	Co-operative funding arrangements and site-specific developer agreements
	Pay-per-use	Trail user fees (parking and membership fees)

**Initiative 7.1: Secure sustained funding for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network**

Trails require sustained investment from both public operating and capital budgets to address planning, design, construction, operation, monitoring, maintenance, programming, and promotional costs. They also require ongoing funding to attain and maintain a state of good repair to preserve their recreational and active transportation functions. We must strive to adopt the principles of asset management in accounting for the full lifecycle of the natural heritage monitoring, planning, design, implementation, and maintenance of trails. This Strategy recommends developing a trail lifecycle costing tool to fully account for these activities in order to improve trail cost analysis. In addition, this Strategy recommends the creation of a trail maintenance reserve fund for ongoing trail operations and maintenance expenditures to improve our ability to adequately maintain our existing and proposed trail assets in a state of good repair. Ongoing operating funding is also required to execute the initiatives and actions outlined in this Strategy.

**Actions:**

- 
- A.** Develop a trail lifecycle costing tool to improve trail full-cost analysis
- 
- B.** Create a TRCA trail maintenance reserve fund for ongoing trail operations and maintenance costs
- 
- C.** Continue to pursue existing funding sources and explore future funding sources to establish and maintain sustained investment in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network (see Figure 7.a: Funding for Regional Trail Projects)
-

### **Initiative 7.2: Capitalize from investment in new and redeveloping communities in support of trails and greenways**

Many of the proposed trail and greenway connections in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network require partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, and the development industry. Leveraging the development process to secure trail project funding and implementation opportunities provides a mechanism for execution. The inclusion, siting, and design of trails should be considered at the initiation of the development process. With proper planning from project outset, trails can be situated in the most appropriate location for a particular development area.

As secondary plans, master environmental servicing plans, and individual projects in new communities are developed, TRCA and partner municipalities should be looking at opportunities to connect the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network to municipal parks and our greenspace system. Redevelopment and intensification projects should also be looked at for opportunities to close gaps and increase trail connectivity. Negotiations through the development process would also include acquisition of major land holdings to facilitate inter-regional trails and community connections. Municipalities should work with trail partners to ensure that short-term trail routes and restoration opportunities are

implemented with development funding, including development charges and Section 37 Agreements. Long-term trail connections should be planned through infrastructure EAs and through the draft plan of subdivision process where these can be registered on title.

Negotiations for trail funding and trail maintenance reserves should also be part of the growth area planning for local and regional trails and greenways. Opportunities exist to pursue this in the 12 urban growth centres, the 36 mobility hubs, and the numerous intensification projects identified in the Toronto Region.

In existing neighbourhoods, or in areas that do not have upcoming development opportunities, trail partners should leverage existing budgets and new funding opportunities through federal, provincial, and municipal budget processes and funding programs that support active transportation, climate change adaptation, and the creation of green infrastructure.

## Actions:

---

- A. Through the development planning process and infrastructure EAs, look to site-specific agreements, development charges, and Section 37 agreements, to obtain funding and to ensure new and upgraded infrastructure investment supports the provision of trails

---

- B. Investigate federal, provincial, and municipal infrastructure funding programs in support of trails and greenways

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- C. Develop and negotiate trail maintenance reserves as part of growth area planning for new communities

---






**Regional trails extend beyond municipal boundaries, involving many partners. To build the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network, we must organize and undertake a coordinated internal and external approach.**

## **Organizing for Success**

The collaboration necessary to deliver the vision of this Strategy in a prioritized and coordinated manner will require efforts on multiple fronts (see Figure 7.b: Collaborative Framework). TRCA is committed to working with our partners to execute the actions.



### **Toronto and Region Conservation Authority**

TRCA will form an internal working group (the TRCA Trails Working Group) to guide the phased implementation of the Strategy, to prioritize trail capital projects, and to ensure that trail-related activities are coordinated within TRCA and with our municipal partners and partner agencies. These activities include preservation of greenspace for and development of trails through development planning and permitting, environmental assessment planning and permitting, land securement, capital infrastructure delivery, habitat restoration and enhancement, and cultural heritage preservation and interpretation.

The TRCA Trails Working Group will coordinate the Strategy across the organization, including developing a work and financial plan to deliver the Strategy that is supported by TRCA's strategic business planning and budget processes. Where appropriate, TRCA will utilize its budget process to pursue and assign funds to priority trail projects and seek to leverage its funds with its government and other partners on collaborative trail projects. TRCA will utilize its grant centre to apply for funds to amplify the impact of TRCA and partner funds.

### **Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation**

The mission of the TRCF is to raise funds for the initiatives undertaken by TRCA. The TRCF will continue to support TRCA's trail efforts by funding projects that encourage people to enjoy the natural environment. Fundraising campaigns and advocacy for priority trail

projects can be administered through the TRCF. These campaigns can support the planning, construction, management, and programming required to deliver the regional trail system. The TRCF's charitable status can provide tax receipts for those who are looking to make donations to TRCA's trail initiatives and allow TRCA to secure funds through grant programs restricted to charitable organizations.

### **Government and Agency Partners**

TRCA will foster relationships with our government and other trail partners. Working Group members will coordinate regular implementation meetings with these partners to develop, prioritize, and manage collaborative trail projects. This will allow TRCA and its trail partners to maximize budgets, resources, and opportunities to make shared trail connections. These efforts can be supported through agreements such as Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding that allow TRCA and its partners to quickly and effectively deliver trail projects of mutual interest.

### **Trail and Community Leaders**

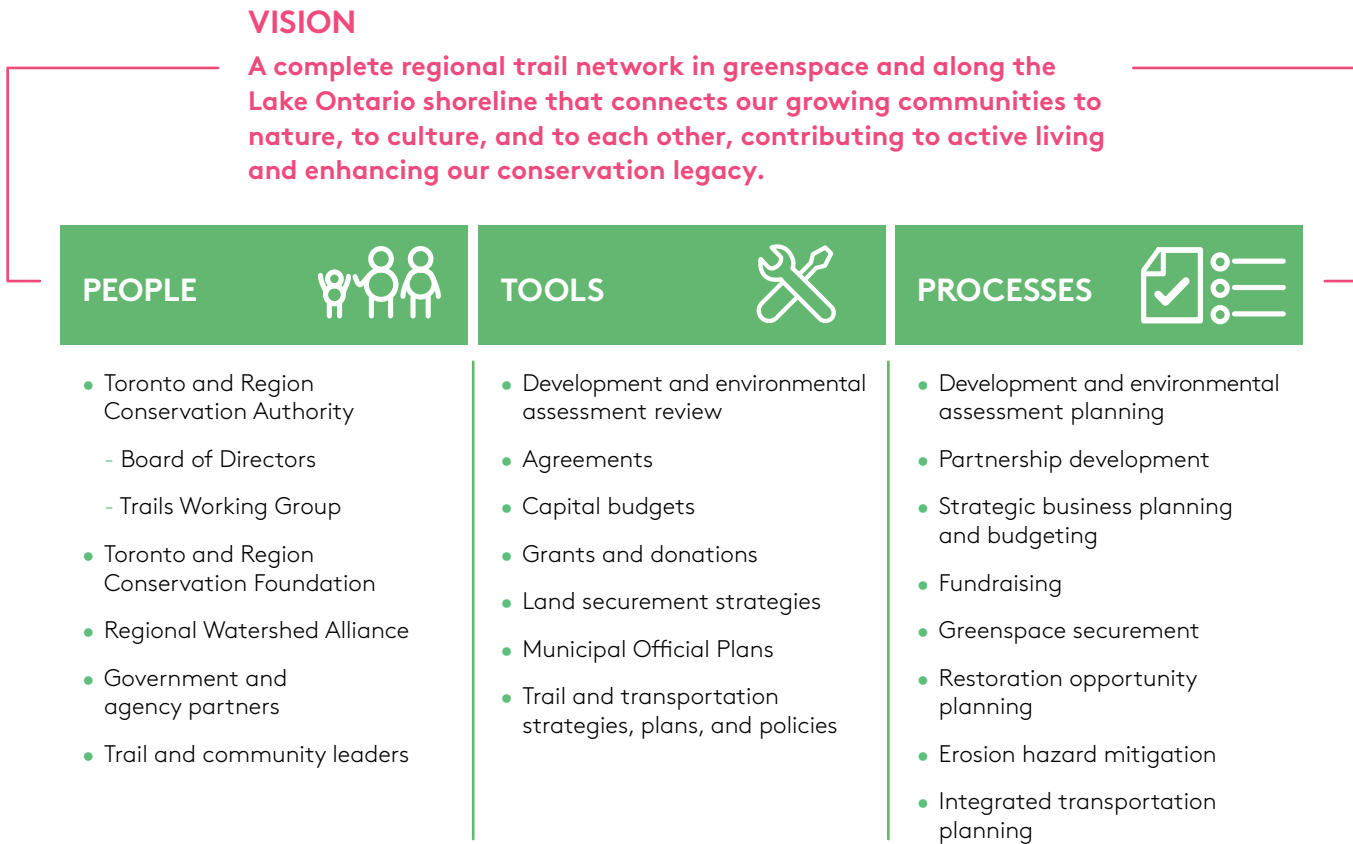
Community members also have a role to play in implementing the Strategy. In 2017, TRCA adopted the Community Engagement Strategy, along with a new citizen governance model, including the establishment of the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA). The RWA is an advisory and action-based committee comprising diverse community members from across TRCA's area of jurisdiction who contribute their unique perspectives and capabilities. The RWA will work to collaborate with the Working Group, as well as our

regions’ trail and community leaders, to create opportunities for all groups, particularly Indigenous communities. Coordinating public consultation efforts through a geographically representative body such as RWA will support consensus-building and ensure trail-based decisions with regional impact are made equitably.

NGOs and private citizens can support the delivery of the Strategy by advocating for trail projects during consultations on government budgets and on development and infrastructure projects. They can

become trail stewards by volunteering their time and expertise to plan, build, maintain, and program trails—efforts that can often be calculated as in-kind services for grant programs. TRCA will continue to work with its partners to cultivate a robust stewardship mentality in the trail community.

Figure 7.b: TRCA Collaborative Framework



## Investment Criteria

This Strategy uses the following criteria to identify priority areas for investment in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network (see **Trail Gap Investment Criteria** and **Destination Investment Criteria**), and recommends that the TRCA Trails Working Group maintain a current prioritized project list based on this investment criteria.

### Trail Gap Investment Criteria

#### Greenspace

Where there is an opportunity to connect to and/or acquire greenspace

#### Population

Where there is an opportunity to connect to neighbourhoods, growth areas, and/or employment lands.

#### Transit

Where there is an opportunity to connect to the regional transportation network

#### Trails

Where there is an opportunity to connect to the existing regional trail network

### Destination Investment Criteria

#### Amenities

Where additional amenities are needed to provide a positive recreational experience

#### Management

Where increased management is needed to support sustainable recreational use

#### Partnership

Where partnership would provide investment to support destination enhancement

#### Programming

Where programming would connect people with culture, nature, and to each other





## Preliminary Costing

Basic unit costs per linear metre for the various trail descriptions and types implemented in the concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network are shown in Figure 7.c: Trail Unit Costs. This costing is based on collaborative analysis with our municipal partners.

**Figure 7.c: Trail Unit Costs**

Trail Description (Type)	Unit	2019 Dollars
<b>Single-use</b>		
Construct new hiking trail in valley/ridge areas	Linear Metre	\$ 130.00
<b>Multi-use</b>		
Construct new asphalt waterfront trail	Linear Metre	\$ 1,240.00
Construct new asphalt trail in valley/ridge areas	Linear Metre	\$ 702.00
Construct new asphalt trail in road right-of-ways	Linear Metre	\$ 555.40
Construct new asphalt trail in utility corridors	Linear Metre	\$ 372.40
<b>Bike-only</b>		
Construct new cycle-track trail along roadways	Linear Metre	\$ 450.00
<b>Other Costs</b>		
Planning	Percentage	10.0%
Design and Engineering	Percentage	10.0%
Permitting	Percentage	10.0%
Contingency	Percentage	25.0%
Natural Heritage and Tree Compensation	Percentage	5.0%

The Trail Unit Costs were used to calculate the preliminary order of magnitude estimates for trail construction project costs per region shown in Figure 7.d: Trail Project Costs.

Figure 7.d: Trail Project Costs includes trail construction project costs per region, according to the high, medium, or low implementation priority phase of work categorized in the Trail Strategy. The chart further itemizes trail project costs according to land ownership, by TRCA and other lands, per region and identifies corresponding expenditures.

**Figure 7.d: Trail Project Costs (\$ millions)**

Region	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	TOTAL
<b>Durham</b>	<b>\$2.24</b>	<b>\$9.53</b>	<b>\$18.88</b>	<b>\$30.65</b>
Durham (TRCA lands)	\$1.26	\$0.24	\$0.22	\$1.72
Durham (Other lands)	\$0.98	\$9.29	\$18.67	\$28.93
<b>Peel</b>	<b>\$10.67</b>	<b>\$10.28</b>	<b>\$40.28</b>	<b>\$61.23</b>
Peel (TRCA lands)	\$7.56	\$0.19	\$0.00	\$7.76
Peel (Other lands)	\$3.10	\$10.09	\$40.28	\$53.47
<b>Toronto</b>	<b>\$46.14</b>	<b>\$34.61</b>	<b>\$7.72</b>	<b>\$88.47</b>
Toronto (TRCA lands)	\$18.34	\$3.07	\$0.00	\$21.41
Toronto (Other lands)	\$27.80	\$31.55	\$7.72	\$67.06
<b>York</b>	<b>\$47.80</b>	<b>\$17.33</b>	<b>\$69.93</b>	<b>\$135.07</b>
York (TRCA lands)	\$16.43	\$2.80	\$1.99	\$21.22
York (Other lands)	\$31.38	\$14.53	\$67.94	\$113.84
<b>Total (TRCA lands)</b>	<b>\$43.60</b>	<b>\$6.30</b>	<b>\$2.21</b>	<b>\$52.10</b>
<b>Total (Other lands)</b>	<b>\$63.26</b>	<b>\$65.45</b>	<b>\$134.60</b>	<b>\$263.32</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$106.86</b>	<b>\$71.75</b>	<b>\$136.81</b>	<b>\$315.42</b>

*Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this report may not add up precisely to the totals.*

Based on preliminary high-level costing of the proposed trail connections, the total cost to construct the proposed 480 km of trails to complete the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network is **\$315.4 million**. **Of this amount, the total cost of these new trail construction projects on TRCA-owned lands is \$43.6 million**. This estimate is considered to be **+/- 20 to 30 per cent accurate**. The cost is expected to increase annually according to projected inflation. Trail construction project costs include planning, design and engineering, permits and agreements, construction, and contingencies. They exclude crossings, lighting, engineering features, site servicing, and trail amenities.

TRCA is already undertaking trail and destination capital project work in support of the concept for the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network within approved capital budgets of multiple TRCA and municipal partner programs. Much of this work occurs on lands owned and/or managed by TRCA.

## Funding

Many of the proposed trail and greenway connections in the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network require partnerships with government, NGOs, and the development industry. Leveraging the development process to secure trail project funding and implementation opportunities provides a mechanism for execution. The inclusion, siting, and design of trails should be considered at the initiation of the development process. With proper planning from project outset, trails can be situated in the most appropriate location for a particular development area. Municipal departments need to coordinate these potential routes with TRCA and landowners as plans evolve for new community growth areas. Upgrades to existing connections should also be considered with wayfinding, parking, and rest areas, as needed.

As Secondary Plans, Block Plans and Master Environmental Servicing Plans are developed, TRCA and partner municipalities should look to opportunities to implement the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network to ensure that new neighbourhoods are well connected to municipal parks and the overall greenspace system. Negotiations through the development process should include acquisition of major land holdings to facilitate inter-regional trails and community connections. Municipalities should work with trail partners to ensure that trail routes and restoration opportunities are implemented with development funding,

including Development Charges and Section 37 Agreements where opportunities exist to do so. Trail connections should be confirmed through the draft plan of subdivision process, agreements, and infrastructure EAs. Transit and transportation infrastructure also provides key opportunities for implementing active trail linkages to the larger community systems and transit hub stations. TRCA will advocate for government projects to include funds for trail investment as part of their project funding envelopes.

Ongoing maintenance of trail routes can be challenging for only one agency with limited budget flexibility. In existing neighbourhoods, or in areas that do not have upcoming development opportunities, trail partners should leverage existing budgets and new funding opportunities through federal, provincial, and municipal infrastructure funding programs that support active transportation, climate change adaptation, and the creation of green infrastructure. Past applicable provincial funding programs have included the Climate Change Action Plan, the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program, the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund, Ontario Trillium Foundation grants, and Greenbelt Foundation grants. Current applicable municipal funding programs include York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Municipal Partnership Program. TRCA and municipal trail partners should also seize opportunities to align upcoming major infrastructure projects with the



inclusion of trail corridors. By capitalizing on complementary regional infrastructure project opportunities to build trails, we can maximize our infrastructure, leverage funding opportunities, and help to complete the remaining gaps that exist.

Trail costs do not end after trails are built. They must be managed in a manner that maintains their recreational and active transportation functions, provides safe, enjoyable trail experiences, and continues to protect nearby natural and cultural heritage resources. This requires sustained investment to maintain a state of good repair and an asset management approach to account for the full lifecycle of trails. The trail lifecycle costing tool and trail maintenance reserve funds recommended in the Trail Strategy will improve our ability to adequately manage existing and proposed trail assets in a state of good repair.

## Performance

Performance speaks to how well something is being accomplished. As we move forward with the delivery of the Strategy, TRCA will track its progress by reporting on performance measures (see Figure 7.e: Performance Measures). These performance measures are aligned with TRCA's Strategic Plan to facilitate consistent reporting across corporate strategic initiatives.

The TRCA Trails Working Group will be responsible for developing baselines and targets for each performance measure. Baselines and targets will be used to demonstrate our progress towards completing strategic objectives, and to report on our collective impact. This information will also enable evidence-based and informed decision making to adaptively achieve our vision.



## 7.e: Performance Measures

Output/Metric	Performance Measure	Key Performance Indicators
<b>CONNECTED</b>		
<b>1. # of km of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network built</b>  a. # of km of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network built on TRCA lands  b. # of km of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network built on other lands	% completeness of the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder Collaboration</li> <li>• Service Excellence</li> <li>• Transparency and Completeness</li> </ul>
<b>2. \$ leveraged for Greater Toronto Region Trail Network capital projects</b>  a. \$ raised through grants for Greater Toronto Region Trail Network capital projects  b. \$ secured through agreements for Greater Toronto Region Trail Network capital projects  c. \$ value of volunteer labour contributed to Greater Toronto Region Trail Network capital projects	% increase of overall TRCA trail budgets spent on Greater Toronto Region Trail Network capital projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Innovation</li> <li>• Financial</li> <li>• Service Excellence</li> <li>• Transparency and Completeness</li> </ul>
<b>ACTIVE LIVING</b>		
<b>3. # of trail users at Destination Area Trail Centres identified as part of the Trail Strategy</b>	% increase in repeat trail use at Destination Area Trail Centres identified as part of the Trail Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Lifestyle</li> <li>• Service Excellence</li> </ul>
<b>CONSERVATION LEGACY</b>		
<b>1. # of properties secured that protect Greater Toronto Region Trail Network corridors</b>  a. # of properties secured through the planning and development process that protect Greater Toronto Region Trail Network corridors	% completeness of secured Greater Toronto Region Trail Network corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and Restore Natural System</li> </ul>
<b>2. # of volunteer hours contributing to the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network</b>	% increase of volunteer hours contributing to the Greater Toronto Region Trail Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Action</li> </ul>



