



Making connections. Working toward sustainability.

September 12, 2019

## **Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury**

### **Written submission – City of Greater Sudbury Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan Review**

Submitted via Over to You, and to Jeff Pafford, Director of Leisure Services ([jeff.pafford@greatersudbury.ca](mailto:jeff.pafford@greatersudbury.ca)).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. Here are our main comments.

#### **Strategic priorities**

Parks are important to Greater Sudbury Council's Strategic Priorities of: climate change, healthy community, community vibrancy, asset management, and business attraction and retention.

#### **Parks are integral to residents' lives, quality of life, and health.**

Parks are a very important part of residents' lives and neighbourhoods, beyond meeting leisure needs. The wider benefits and functions of parks should be integrated into how parks are planned and managed. These include:

- ***Social engagement and connections:*** Parks are where neighbours can meet neighbours, where daily social interactions take place that are so important for well-being (and avoiding loneliness), where residents can get together, and where community activities and events can take place. The social connections that parks foster make our communities healthier, safer and more resilient.

To support this, neighbourhood and community parks need: benches/seating/picnic tables; gathering places; policies/design/facilities that facilitate community-led activities (impromptu and organized); policies/design/facilities that activate the space; shade (preferably from trees).

Parks can be an anchor for equitable community development, when they become a site for community-led planning (e.g. for park revitalization and programming that meets community needs). When residents come together to make their park better, they form connections and gain experience that help them to continue to work together to improve their community. Park facilities can be a home base for community programming that benefits all, especially the most vulnerable (e.g. community arts program, housing tenant association resident activities, etc).

Parks can be the source of cultural connections and benefits for diverse residents.

- **Physical activity - support passive and active physical activity for all ages:** Parks make it easier for residents to incorporate physical activity in their daily lives.

- **Play/recreation – support passive and active recreation for all ages:** Free play is essential for child development, and there are special benefits of free play in natural settings. Recreation is also very important to adults' quality of life.

- **Access to nature and protection of nature:** Parks are part of our natural heritage, watersheds and ecosystems, and thus of the environmental health of our community. For many residents, parks are also their main access point to nature. Seeing and being in nature have many documented benefits for physical and mental health.

Natural parks and Ecological Reserves are parks that have a special role in protecting nature. However, nature should be present in every park: trees, flowers, and natural areas for people to enjoy and benefit where they live.

- **Economic value and business attraction and retention:** Access to nature, trail and parks contributes to Greater Sudbury's unique quality of life, attractive to existing and new employees.

## **Residents' strongly support natural spaces and trails**

In the 2014 Parks, [Open Space and Leisure Master Plan](#) Review for Greater Sudbury, public survey results consistently showed that passive outdoor recreation activities like walking, hiking or biking on trails, and enjoying outdoor activities are top of the list for Sudbury residents. Hiking and walking are the top leisure activity (90%, see pg. 24). The most common requests for additional parks and leisure activities was for trails and bike paths (pg. 26). Public support for spending on facilities is highest for nature trails (86%, see pg. 28). All the top items are for unorganized leisure activities such as trails, playgrounds, and beaches.

The preference for natural/passive leisure and play opportunities is a growing trend for all ages. Passive recreation is also accessible to more residents. It is free, and adapted to the needs and capabilities of each individual or family.

The way Greater Sudbury plans, manages and invests in its parks should reflect this preference.

## **Integrate Green Space Advisory Panel Reports**

The Green Space Advisory Panel Report should be incorporated into the review, and very importantly, into the park management practices and decisions of the parks services.

Special attention should be given to:

-**Park classification, and park standards:** residents in urban areas should be able to walk to a neighbourhood park, a natural park, and a linear park within 10 minutes without crossing a major barrier; and to a community park within 20 minutes. Proximity is a very important part of accessibility (accessibility also means free or low-cost programming, active transportation links, AODA equipment, etc).

**-Gap analysis and opportunities to fill gaps:** so parks service standards are met for all residents.

**-Acquisition strategy:** to fill park needs, and to protect special natural areas.

## **Parks are part of our natural heritage, and play an important role in ecological health, watershed health and climate change mitigation and adaptation**

It is important to recognize that all parks are part of a network of greenspaces that has habitat value, contributes to ecological and watershed health, and provides natural benefits such as protecting air water quality, flood prevention, moderating temperature and wind, etc. Lakes, rivers and creeks are central to many of Greater Sudbury's parks, while parks are also very important to the health of Greater Sudbury's waterbodies and waterways.

Natural value should be a priority in the way parks are managed and improved. Measures should include:

**- Protect greenspace values in existing parks, and ensure greenspace values are part of decisions around proposed changes in parks and city-owned land:**

- Develop an appropriate management approach for each park classification (including protection/enhancement of natural features and nature trails within the park)
- Develop management plans for larger parks or parks with significant natural features (such as waterbody, waterway, wetland, forest, species at risk..).
- Include scientific and community expertise in developing management plans and approaches.

**-Use a natural value lens for parks and city owned land:**

- Develop and use a lens to protect and enhance natural features and passive recreation opportunities in all decisions concerning parks and city owned land.

**-Protect and enhance natural areas within parks in an integrated fashion,** meeting goals for: climate change mitigation (afforestation), climate change adaptation (protection and enhancement of wetlands, permeable surfaces, trees; stormwater management-keeping rain where it falls; flood prevention; shade/cooling; access to potable water), greening; watershed health and water quality; waste management (waste diversion available at all parks and public events in parks); access to nature.

**-Parks are part of a larger natural heritage system:** foster connections and contributions to this wider network

## **Climate change adaptation and mitigation**

Parks have an important role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Growing the urban forest will be very important in sequestering carbon, but also in providing shade/cooling in extreme heat, and in absorbing rain water during storm events. Parks are among the most accessible and logistical areas for tree planting campaigns. Parks can also serve flood prevention roles, serve as cooling stations, and otherwise contribute to both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

This role should be integrated into decisions and management for Greater Sudbury's parks.

Natural asset management will become increasingly important with climate change. Parks should be recognized as natural assets, and potentially part of green infrastructure.

### **Parks have an important role in urban agriculture**

Urban agriculture contributes to food security, connection to healthy food, and social connections. Parks are often ideal locations for community gardens, food forests, and foraging, and these uses should be supported. Support should include not only access to suitable sites and water, but also access to information and resources to successfully set up and run a community garden.

### **Access**

- Parks should be accessible via public transportation and active transportation networks. Trails within parks should be integrated with active transportation networks (especially when trails through parks serve transportation needs). This includes year-round trail maintenance and access. Bike parking should be provided at all parks.
- AODA compliant options should be available at all neighbourhood and community parks.
- Activities, programs and events at parks should be free (or at least financially accessible) for all resident

### **Community engagement**

Parks are a very important part of residents' lives and neighbourhoods. As such, residents should be supported in contributing to their park, and have a voice in decisions for their park, with:

- **Support for residents and community groups** who are working on: park improvements; community gardens; community events in parks. The process should be simple, consistent and accessible, with a clear access point, good communication, and transparent and reasonable timelines.

Rules/policies/procedures that must be followed should be easily accessible in writing, and easy to follow (for volunteers).

- **Community-led decision-making process for park improvements**

- **Policy requirements for meaningful public notification and input when significant changes are proposed to parkland, or city owned land** (e.g. loss of natural area; change of use; addition of larger facilities). [Currently, this process is required when sale of parkland is considered, but not when the land stays in public ownership].

### **Private donations**

Large private donations can make important contributions to the parks system and park facilities. However, these donations seldom have a connection to the greatest park needs. Additions to the parks system from private donations can also add new maintenance costs or staff time needs, which are finite resources. To best benefit from generous philanthropic gifts, we recommend:

- ***Policies for large private donations:*** that ensure that a portion of the donation is directed to identified city-wide needs; and that ensure that provision for new maintenance costs is arranged from the donated funds.

- ***Clear policies to recognize donors towards park improvements:*** that give consistency to recognition, and that give clarity to community-led fundraising efforts seeking donors.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Contact:

Naomi Grant

Co-Chair, Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury



# Review of Parks, Open Space, and Leisure Master Plan

## Submission by Minnow Lake Restoration Group

The Minnow Lake Area (Ward 11 along North Shore of Lake Ramsey) is well served with parks and recreational areas, bike routes and walking trails. Almost all neighbourhoods have a local playground, many of which have been updated or planned for renewal. There are large public areas around Minnow Lake itself with three waterfront park areas (Bancroft Drive, Bellevue Avenue and Minnow Lake Place). Two “wilderness” hiking trails exist (Blueberry Hill and The Oak Forest Outlook). There are other trails in the area including those in the Moonlight Beach area some which link to trails around the lake. There are baseball fields at the Carmichael Arena location, on Second Avenue and near Moonlight beach. Also volleyball courts at Moonlight Beach and Minnow Lake Place where there are also basketball nets. There are tennis courts behind the baseball field off Bancroft Drive. Public swimming locations include Moonlight Beach and as the end of Portage Avenue which also has a walking trail along the Ramsey Lake shoreline. A large skateboard park is in existence off Bancroft Drive next to the Carmichael Arena. A splash pad was recently constructed on Second Avenue. The first bike lanes in Sudbury were introduced to the Howey, Bellevue, Bancroft corridor. Minnow Lake Place and the Carmichael Community Centre have served many public purposes and are a valuable asset plus auditoriums at local schools and churches..

### **Concerns – Suggestions:**

With the ever increasing frequency of blue-green algae a serious consideration should be the establishment of a splash pad at Moonlight Beach (and possibly at one of the beaches in Bell Park).

Soccer fields could be considered for the Moonlight Beach area. .

Line painting for both bike lanes and ‘edge” lines should be scheduled every year before other line painting to encourage safe cycling

The recent August 13<sup>th</sup> Watershed Studies Information report to City Council recommended that “developers could be asked to mimic the natural system, or a water balance approach, meaning some portion of stormwater may have to remain on the site and not reach the lake while the remainder would be treated. This will require developers to consider low impact development strategies”. We would go further and recommend that “could” be “should” and that those green areas now in existence in the watershed be maintained and no development take place in order to protect Ramsey Lake, already at sodium levels approaching three times the provincial limit for those on salt restricted diets and chloride close to levels at harm of aquatic life.

With City Council declaring a “climate change emergency” it is appropriate to take action to reduce the level of carbon emissions and pollution by encouraging active transportation and creating and protecting our green spaces. Development should be limited to those areas where the least amount of environmental damage can take place and effective mitigation methods are employed. Any development should include green spaces at a greater percentage than is currently enforced. Single detached dwellings should be discouraged in favour of multiple accommodations (apartments, row housing etc., in areas already serviced by public utilities, thereby permitting more green space and recreational areas No further unserviced development permitted. .

When considering leisure activities we agree with survey results which identify what could be considered “passive” and individualistic such as walking, cycling, skating, swimming etc and less “organized” however these are important as well and the need to maintain outdoor playing fields and indoor facilities and close to population centres, especially arenas and community halls.. .

Public expenditures should be directed where they benefit the largest number. While the survey results show over 90 percent take part in personal recreational activities only a small percentage attend commercial sporting events or concerts. Subsidies should be apportioned based on percentages of public usage.

John Lindsay, President, Minnow Lake Restoration Group and former Chair Minnow Lake CAN .

# Vermilion River Stewardship



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10 September 2019

Jeff Pafford  
Director of Leisure Services  
City of Greater Sudbury  
By email: [jeff.pafford@greatersudbury.ca](mailto:jeff.pafford@greatersudbury.ca)

Re: Review of Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan

Dear Sirs:

The Vermilion River Stewardship is writing to offer our recommendations and priorities for the City of Greater Sudbury Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan (the Plan) review.

First of all, it is crucial that we highlight the significant contribution that parks, open spaces, natural heritage, trails and a healthy environment provide to the quality of life and health of Sudbury citizens.

**Popular Pursuits:** Public survey results consistently indicate that passive outdoor recreation activities like walking, hiking or biking on trails and enjoying outdoor activities are top of the list for Sudbury residents. Hiking and walking are the top leisure activities, and the most common requests for additional activities are trails and bike paths. Public support for spending on facilities is highest for nature trails, and the most popular were unorganized leisure activities such as trails, playgrounds and beaches.

**Vermilion River as a Heritage Feature:** The Vermilion River and its connecting lakes should be promoted and recognized as a Heritage Feature because of its rich cultural, historical and social value. The Vermilion River (River) is not even mentioned in the Plan, which we submit is a major gap.

The River provides opportunities for boating, fishing, rough camping, canoeing, kayaking and hiking. Stewardship and enjoyment of this vital natural asset should be encouraged while protecting it from misuse and overdevelopment. The River also provides habitat for numerous



endangered species such as the Bald Eagle, Blanding's Turtle, Whippoorwill, Sturgeon, Common Nighthawk, and numerous other species, and is a popular recreation destination to those seeking enjoyment, adventure and tranquility.

The Vermilion boasts a rich and active Finnish culture and history dating back to the early 1900's, with the River at its center; and an ancient history with artifacts found on its shores dating back to the Archaic period, indicating thousands of years of habitation by First Nation peoples.

VRS recommends the Vermilion River be recognized and promoted in the Plan so it can be enjoyed and appreciated by the public for its diverse beauty, its fishery and its multitude of recreational assets.

**Green Space Advisory Panel Reports (GSAP):** It is important that the GSAP Reports are reviewed, and their recommendations incorporated into leisure activity policy. For instance:

- Residents in urban areas are within a 10-minute walk to a neighbourhood park, natural park, or linear park without crossing a major barrier;
- Community parks are within a 20-minute walk without crossing a major barrier;
- The gap analysis and opportunities to fill those gaps; and
- An acquisition strategy so that action can be taken when opportunities present.

**Natural Heritage:** It is important to recognize the role that parks play in our natural heritage, and their importance to ecological health and climate change mitigation and adaptation:

- Protect greenspace values in existing parks and ensure greenspace values are part of any decisions around proposed changes in parks and city-owned land;
- Use a natural value lens for parks and city owned land to protect and enhance natural features and passive recreation opportunities;
- Protect and enhance natural areas within parks in an integrated fashion to meet goals for climate change mitigation and adaptation (protection and enhancement of wetlands), stormwater management (keeping rain where it falls), flood prevention, greening, watershed health and protecting water quality.

**Donations:** Lastly, there should be policies in place to ensure that a portion of any large private donation is directed towards identified city-wide parks, natural heritage and open space needs.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment!

Sincerely,



Linda Heron  
Chair, Vermilion River Stewardship