



# PLACE MAKING DISCUSSION PAPER

OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW  
PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES  
OCTOBER 2015



# INTRODUCTION

This Discussion Paper is being submitted to the Town of Innisfil as part of “Our Place,” an update to the Town’s Official Plan. This Official Plan Review process puts an emphasis on developing a community-driven vision for the future of Innisfil, and special attention is being given to engaging residents in discussions about the future of the settlements, streets and places where they live, work and play--the places that they experience everyday and hold close to their hearts. To this end, Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) was asked to integrate its Place Making process into the Official Plan Review.

PPS is a New York-based nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. The organization was founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William Holly Whyte, author of “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces”. Our pioneering Place Making approach helps citizens transform their public spaces—streets, parks, plazas, downtowns and

waterfronts--into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs. Since our inception, we have completed projects in more than 3000 communities in 43 countries and all 50 U.S. states and are the premiere centre for best practices, information, and resources on Place Making.

In March of 2015, PPS, with assistance from SGL Planning Associates and Sue Cumming of Cumming + Company, conducted a three-day public engagement process with the goal of providing a Place Making framework for Innisfil’s Official Plan Review – “Our Place.”

PPS engaged the public and community stakeholders through four pop-up workshops capturing over 250 participants, three focus group sessions with 75 local high school students, and a public visioning workshop attended by over 65 individuals. Participants of these outreach activities represented a broad range of people from town residents and local businesses, to community groups, institutions and city departments. The results of this community

engagement are described in detail in Our Place “Community Engagement Feedback Report,” June 2015.

This discussion paper (1) introduces the concept of Place Making, (2) describes the Place Making process undertaken in Innisfil, (3) provides overall Place Making strategies that can help to guide how Innisfil evolves over the next 20 years, (4) describes recommendations for seven key sites-- commercial areas, settlements and community destinations-- that are based on the common vision that emerged from the Place Making activities, and (5) describes next steps that includes a “lighter, quicker, cheaper” implementation process that focuses on interventions that are lower risk, lower cost and easily implemented in the short-term and that can continue to involve the community.

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# WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

Place Making is a collaborative process that engages people in creating and sustaining the public destinations at the heart of their community: the places where they recreate, shop, eat, gather, interact, and most of all build the social and emotional ties that hold the community together. The main objective in incorporating Place Making into the planning process for “Our Place” is to give town residents the opportunity to re-imagine their public spaces—main streets and commercial areas such as Alcona’s Innisfil Beach Road, parks and natural areas like Lake Simcoe’s beaches, or community facilities and gathering places—in order to strengthen connections between Town residents and these places: “Our Place will focus on identifying and planning for community elements that make us love where we live, work and play.” Through this Place Making process, the planning team gained tremendous insight into residents’ desires, needs and dreams for the future.

In its 40 years studying what makes public spaces work, PPS has found that four key attributes are key to the success of any place.

## Activities and Uses

Activities are the basic building blocks of a place. Having something to do for people of all ages gives people a reason to come to a place again and again. Users describe the space as “fun”, “special”, “vital,” and “real.”

## Access and Linkages

You can judge the accessibility of a place by its connections to its surroundings, both visual and physical. A successful public space is easy to get to and get through; it is visible both from a distance and up close. The edges of a space connect to the surrounding streets, which themselves should be vital and interesting. The space should be linked to the rest of the city through pedestrian, cycle, and transit routes.

## Comfort and Image

Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit. Image refers to how inviting the space is, and whether it maintains a distinct identity in line with the surrounding neighborhood. Users describe the space as “safe”, “clean”, “green”, “charming”, “attractive” and “historic”.

## Sociability

A sociable place is one where people want to go to meet friends and interact with a wide range of people who are different from themselves. This at the very heart of what makes a great place.



# POWER OF TEN

The “Power of Ten” is a simple planning tool that magnifies the impact of Place Making. To be successful, cities and towns need places. They need destinations that give an identity and image to their communities and that help attract new residents, businesses and investment, and they also need strong community places for people to go. A place might be a downtown square, a main street, a waterfront, a park, or a library.

Towns and cities of all sizes should have at least ten destinations where people want to be. What makes each destination successful is that it has sub-places within it. For example, a park needs at least ten sub-places: a café, a children’s play area, a performance area, a place to bird-watch or to experience water, a place to sit, somewhere to meet friends, etc.

Within each of the sub-places, there should be at least ten things to do. The Power of 10 framework can be applied on a smaller scale, suitable to the size of the community but the goal is for every place to have multiple things to do.

Cumulatively, these activities, places and destinations are what make a great town. This is a big idea that PPS calls the “Power of 10”.

Innisfil should offer the destinations, places and activities that will continue to attract people again and again. Innisfil should strengthen and connect its destinations by building a series of places within each destination. With this objective in mind, Community Visioning Day participants identified key places at each of the seven sites identified initially by the consultant team, in conjunction with the Community Roundtable and town staff, and at each of these places a number of activities and uses serving a broad cross-section of the population were imagined.

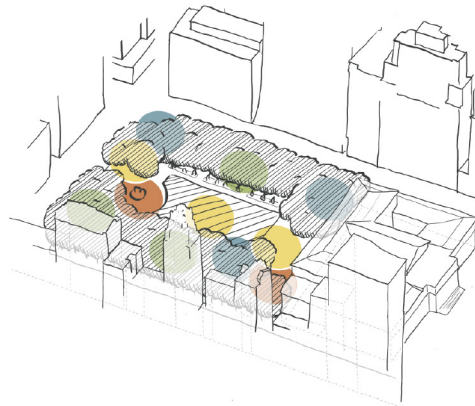
# POWER OF 10+

## HOW CITIES TRANSFORM THROUGH PLACEMAKING



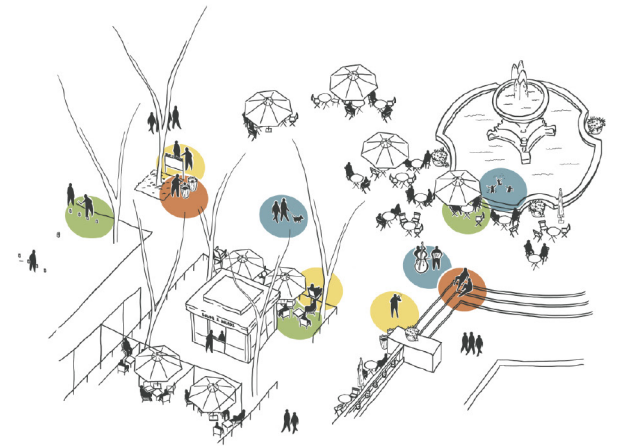
### City/Region

10+ MAJOR DESTINATIONS



### Destination

10+ PLACES IN EACH



### Place

10+ THINGS TO DO,  
LAYERED TO CREATE SYNERGY

# THE PROCESS: PLACE MAKING IN ACTION

In order to develop a shared vision for Innisfil, PPS elicited specific ideas from residents and local stakeholders for seven key destinations – those that were identified as having the most potential to become great places – during pop-up workshops, high school brainstorming sessions and Community Visioning Day breakout sessions.

The seven destinations that were the focus of the workshop were selected from a list created by the Community Roundtable at our request which was further narrowed down through discussion amongst the planning consultants and the town staff. The seven, which encompassed a variety of settlements, streets and public spaces, were intended to demonstrate how Place Making can be applied throughout the town. They are not the only places in Innisfil where Place Making principles and methodology can be used to engage the residents in envisioning the future of their neighborhoods. Indeed, the town is full of character with streets, waterfronts and public spaces that can become more

active and people-friendly places.

## *Pop-Up Workshops*

PPS led four Pop-Up Place Making Workshops in four key locations in Innisfil:

1. Innisfil Library Idea Lab on Thursday, March 26th, 2015 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm
2. The YMCA at the Innisfil Recreational Complex on Thursday, March 26th, 2015 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm
3. Nantyr Shores Secondary School on Friday, March 27th, 2015 from 10:55am to 11:55am (during lunch)
4. Cookstown Foodland on Friday, March 27th, 2015 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm

The objective of the pop-up workshops was to capture ideas from passersby who would not necessarily attend the public Community Visioning Day on Saturday, March 28th or participate in other scheduled outreach events. The pop-up workshops took place at different

times and locations to try to reach diverse audiences. PPS consulted with the Town of Innisfil and SGL Planning Associates on where and when to set up the pop-up workshops.

At the pop-up workshops, passersby were asked the question, “What would you like to do on Innisfil Beach Road?” and “What would you like to do at Innisfil Beach Park?” At the Foodland in Cookstown, we asked the question, “What would you like to do in Cookstown?” People were asked to write their ideas on sticky notes and post them up on the boards provided.





Except for a display of inspiration images of a variety of active public spaces—sidewalks, parks, squares, waterfronts—and a variety of activities in public spaces, people surveyed were not given much information to help them form ideas or opinions. Thus, this data is the most pure in terms of immediate emotional response. Respondents were Innisfil residents of all ages—teenagers and adults at the Idea Lab, families at the YMCA, high school students outside the cafeteria at Nantyr Shores Secondary School and shoppers at Foodland and LCBO in Cookstown. There were over 500 responses elicited from over 250 people at the four locations.

### ***High School Sessions***

On Friday, March 27th, 2015, PPS spent a day at Nantyr Shores Secondary School leading three brainstorming sessions during Periods 1, 3 and 4 with 75 high school students from grades 9 through 12. During each session, PPS gave a brief slide show presentation introducing the concept and principles of Place Making,

the Power of 10 and Qualities of Great Places. Following the presentation, the students split up into three groups with each group assigned one of the following sites:

1. Innisfil Beach Road
2. Innisfil Beach Park
3. Town Hall & Recreational Complex
4. Lefroy – Belle Ewart

Students were asked to come up with ideas for how to improve their site based on the four key qualities of a great place.



They were asked the following questions:

Uses & Activities: What kinds of things would you like to be able to do here?

Access & Linkages: How would you like to be able to get to and from here?

Comfort & Image: What kinds of things would make this place special or unique?

Sociability: What would encourage you and your group of friends to come here?

### ***Community Visioning Day***

A Community Visioning Day was held at the Innisfil Town Hall on Saturday, March 28, 2015 from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. A broad representation of over 65 community members and local stakeholders attended the sessions including residents, local business owners, elected officials, city department representatives, local community organizations and interest groups.

During the morning, participants wrote their responses to the statement, "It is the year 2030 and Innisfil is fantastic

because...” on a giant piece of paper in the foyer. They also identified special places within Innisfil on a large map.

PPS kicked off the participatory workshop with a presentation to introduce the ideas and principles of Place Making, the Power of 10 and Qualities of Great Places. Following the presentation, participants broke up into seven groups. Each group was charged with evaluating and coming up with ideas for improving one of the seven Innisfil Destinations:

1. Innisfil Beach Road
2. Innisfil Beach Park
3. Town Hall & Recreational Complex
4. Cookstown
5. Sandy Cove
6. Innisfil Heights
7. Lefroy – Belle Ewart

Each group was asked, “What do you like most about your destination? What is missing?” as well as “Can you identify 10 places or potential places?” These two questions were designed in an effort to understand what qualities people

valued most about their sites and to distill the places that should be prioritized for improvements and development. Participants were then asked to brainstorm ideas for their site based on the four key attributes of a great place:

*Uses & Activities: What kind of things would you like to be able to do here?*

*Access & Linkages: How would you like to be able to get to and from here? How could this place be related to adjacent places?*

*Comfort & Image: What could make you more comfortable here and add to the character of the place?*

*Sociability: What kinds of opportunities are there for social interaction? What would bring people of all ages and backgrounds here?*



Finally, participants were asked to create an Idea Map, or a vision collage, of their destination, by pasting on inspiration images, and adding sticky notes and drawings. Each group presented five key messages and their Idea Map to the entire group in the final plenary session.

The general ideas and input that came out of this Place Making process have inspired the vision and recommendations for Innisfil in this report. Findings from all the community engagement exercises are described in detail in “Our Place Community Engagement Feedback Report,” June 2015, prepared by PPS and Sue Cummings of Cummings + Company.

# PLACE MAKING GOALS

Innisfil is a town blessed with many natural assets, from its rolling farmland to the shores of Lake Simcoe, charming historic settlements such as Cookstown and Lefroy, and an engaged and community-minded population that is interested in culture, fitness, education and the future of their town. It is also a town in transition, in which farmland is being developed and rural crossroads are becoming commercial strips. Without a clear vision for how the town wants to grow, and the proper regulations in place, this growth could quickly get out of hand. The citizens of Innisfil are fortunate to have the opportunity to direct this growth and decide the type of place they want to live in through the “Our Place” planning process.

Building consensus on Place Making steps enables residents, stakeholders, and town staff and officials to address together what they want their community to be like in the future—what positive attributes, quality of life and community benefits

they will strive for. The Place Making steps or strategies are intended to meet the following goals that emerged from the Place Making process:

## PLACE MAKING GOALS FOR “OUR PLACE”

### *1. Preserve community character as the Town of Innisfil grows*

Small town feel: Residents praised the village or small-town feel of Cookstown, Lefroy, and Alcona and stated that even as these communities intensify, their character should not change.

Rural landscape and agriculture: Participants mentioned the natural and agricultural landscape around the settlements as an important part of the identity of Innisfil that should be preserved.



### *2. Protect the natural heritage of the Town*

Ensure the health of Lake Simcoe: The Lake is an essential part of the character of Innisfil, and its value as a natural and community resource must be emphasized.

Protect woodlands and streams: Another aspect of the rural landscape that is highly valued by residents are

the remaining woodlands and streams that border the farmlands. These are appreciated for their habitat value as well as the opportunity to create nature trails through them.



### *3. Strengthen attachment to place throughout the Town*

Place Making is about creating emotional place attachment—a sense of belonging and caring for a street, neighborhood or public space. Innisfil residents feel that, in addition to protecting the existing character of the town, a local sense of place, which is being eroded by suburban-style development, could be stronger.

### *4. Improve mobility for all residents*

Residents of all ages, but especially youth, expressed the desire to travel around the town and beyond without being dependent on the automobile. Transportation options, including public transportation, and safe pedestrian and bike paths, are a priority for a large number of the residents we spoke with.

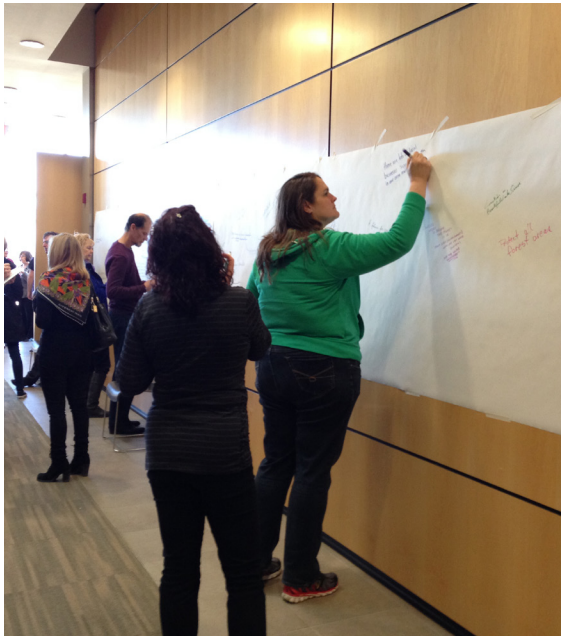
### *5. Strengthen social ties within the community*

Many residents of all ages expressed the desire to have more opportunities for social interaction and to come together as a community. Community-oriented activities at both the local level—within settlements—and at the town level were mentioned as important for building a stronger sense of community.

### *6. Create more local economic opportunities for residents*

Residents support new business growth and expansion, rather than just more chain stores, and would like to see more local job opportunities. They would also like to see new employment uses and investment in Innisfil Heights, and they see this area as important to creating “Our Jobs” for the future.

# PLACE MAKING STRATEGIES FOR INNSIFIL



To meet the goals described above, PPS recommends focusing on the following general Place Making strategies for the town. In the next section, we will describe ideas and concepts for each site that was examined in the community consultation.

## 1. CONTINUE TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY –THE PRINCIPAL PLACE MAKERS

The citizens of Innisfil have played an important role in developing “Our Place,” the update to the Town’s Official Plan. But their involvement should not stop there. The people who live, work and play in and around the public spaces are the people who know best what will draw them to the place and entice them to linger. They are the ones who will continue to engage with, activate and transform the place long after the professionals are gone. They are the principal place makers and by having an ongoing role in implementing the plan, and in continuing to evolve and shape the public spaces, they will also build a stronger emotional attachment to these places.

## 2. PLAN FOR PEOPLE AND PLACES, NOT CARS AND TRAFFIC

If you plan for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places. Put people first, on foot and on the ground, not speeding by at 50 mph. Ask “What will the pedestrian experience be?” NOT, “How can we get cars through as quickly as possible?” In *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, William H. Whyte said, “What attracts people then, it appears, is other people.” To transform a suburban, car-oriented environment into a lively, sociable people-oriented environment, people must get out of their cars and be visible on the streets, in the parks and on the waterfronts. This simple idea will transform the way public spaces are perceived and used in Innisfil, promoting social cohesion and building identity.

### 3. CREATE DESTINATIONS IN A UNIFIED TOWN OF INNISFIL

While in previous plans, Innisfil was described as a community of communities, now residents describe it as one, unified town with many attractive destinations whose unique identities should be celebrated and enhanced. As was illustrated in the Power of Ten exercise: every town needs at least ten great destinations to create a critical mass of places where tourists and residents alike will become immersed for hours. Taking the next step, each destination needs at least ten things to do – activities and smaller scale experiences that make it a must-visit, beloved destination. This approach will help residents become attached to and care for their special places, while appreciating the benefits of being a part of the larger Town of Innisfil. Connections between destinations can be strengthened with bike paths, walking trails and public transit.

### 4. PLAN FOR A MIX OF USES AND ACTIVITIES IN CLOSE PROXIMITY

Residents value the community centres, such as Cookstown, that historically have offered a wide range of uses and activities within easy walking distance of each other, where housing, shopping, recreation, entertainment, and civic uses can be easily reached on foot. Likewise, most successful parks or other public spaces are lively, secure and distinctive places because they offer many things to do and reasons for all kinds of people to be there without having to drive to another place. In addition, by targeting development to existing settlements and ensuring that they are walkable, compact and offer a mix of uses, the town can ensure that farmland and natural areas will not be lost to development and sprawl.





## 5. PLAN FOR THE COMMUNITY FIRST

When planning, the Town must put the community's needs ahead of tourists. Residents acknowledge that visitors are critical to the local economy and should be accommodated, but Innisfil residents' needs must be taken into account first. This will create a more authentic and livable place whose unique characteristics will appeal to both residents and visitors.

## 6. PROVIDE MORE PLACES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO GATHER

Residents would like to see more community gathering places, both large and small, both for a variety of events such as a music festival or outdoor performance and simply to have more spontaneous interaction with neighbours. They value this as an important aspect of community life and a key for building strong connections. In each of the settlements or sites there are opportunities to create a range of public gathering spaces, from village squares to large performance venues.



## 7. PROVIDE MORE ACTIVITIES AND PLACES FOR YOUTH

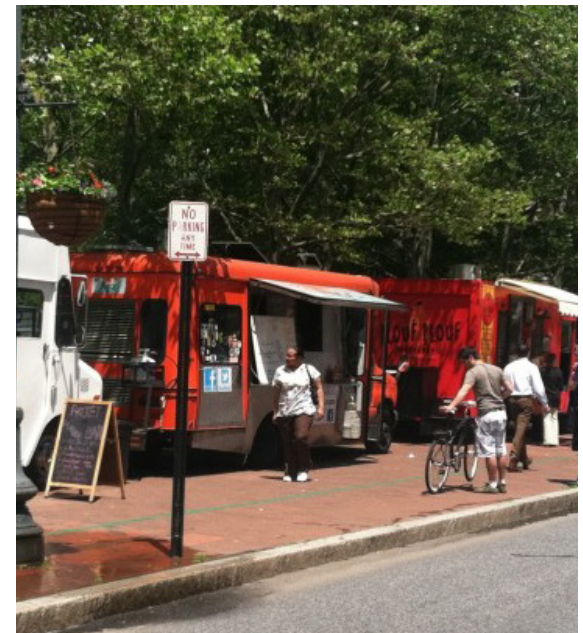
Many members of the community suggested more food and retail options geared to youth, particularly in central Alcona and at the Recreation Centre. A “teen hang out” was frequently mentioned, such as a coffeehouse or non-alcoholic bar with live music.

Greater youth involvement in the planning process could lead to more jobs and positive activities for youth, both indoors and out. For example, teens were interested in outdoor stages where they could perform music or improv comedy shows.

## 8. PROVIDE MORE FOOD OPTIONS

William H. Whyte said, “if you want to attract people, seed a place with food.” A wider range of food options throughout the town is needed, along with more locally-owned restaurants and cafes. Residents suggested more quick food options for teens, sit down restaurants for families and adults, coffeehouses for more social interaction, outdoor dining opportunities on the streets and lakefront, and food trucks at events.

An economic development committee could work to recruit small food businesses and to create an incubator program for food entrepreneurs with a shared commercial kitchen, vending cart storage and grants for food trucks. These food sellers should then be allowed to park on the streets and sell in public spaces and on waterfronts.







## 9. PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

*Public transit.* Residents of all ages, but particularly the youth, expressed a desire for public transit to connect the settlements in Innisfil, to connect to a future GO Station and to serve Innisfil Beach Road, where a frequent service line or shuttle could connect a series of destinations. The town could experiment at first with a low-cost shuttle on Innisfil Beach Road to test the demand and expand gradually on an as-needed basis to connect key destinations.

the street. Lighting and amenities will also encourage more people to walk. Making sure that sidewalks and trails connect key destinations is also an important strategy, as people tend to walk where there are places to go.

*Bike lanes and paths.* Residents, particularly the youth, asked that the bike lanes on Innisfil Beach Road be extended to the Recreation Centre and Town Hall, and beyond. Bike lanes and trails to connect settlements and create opportunities for recreational use are in high demand.



*Improve walkability.* At each site or settlement, residents expressed a desire to walk safely around the community and between key destinations. The suggested solution was to introduce new sidewalks and to connect more distant destinations with a network of trails. Trails were also mentioned as providing an important recreational activity.

New development should be built to the sidewalks, rather than behind parking lots, to enhance pedestrian safety and security, and put more eyes and life on

## 10. CELEBRATE INNISFIL'S ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Residents value the heritage and cultural resources that exist and would like to see more investment in live music and plays, theatres, heritage preservation and education, galleries, and innovative art spaces where the community can learn about its past and share in a vibrant hub of arts and culture for the future. Public art, performances and movies are great Place Making tools when moved outside and triangulated with other uses such as restaurants, cafes, food trucks, children's playgrounds and pedestrian access, so that parking does not become an issue.

## 11. IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS TO LAKE SIMCOE

The more Innisfil residents use the Lake, learn about it, and get close to it, the more they will appreciate it and work to conserve it as a natural and public resource. This is especially true for those who do not live on or near it.

Public access points to the lake at the ends of the roads and Innisfil Beach Park should be enhanced as public spaces with amenities such as swimming beaches, seating, shade, food vendors, restaurants and access for boats or boat rentals. The town should look for opportunities to expand publicly-owned open space on the water through acquisitions and gifts, and build up a fund to purchase it.

More commercial uses on the Lake could also provide greater access for all residents. Restaurants and cafés with outdoor terraces, boat rentals, public marinas, and transitional boat docks would make the Lake more accessible to the broader public. The town should look for opportunities to rezone some of the lake front for commercial use.





## 12. BRIGHTEN UP WINTER

Public spaces should be enlivened through the winter as well. Ice skating, hockey, curling and cross country skiing can activate parks and trails. Outdoor heaters and fire pits can extend the season for outdoor dining. Community events around tree lighting, holiday markets and spectacular light shows will pull people outside to socialize, even in the cold.

## 13. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

Many of the strategies described above require coalitions of stakeholders to implement them; the town cannot complete all of these alone. Public/private partnerships between the town and local business alliances or business improvement districts could help to achieve more in commercial districts than the town could do on its own. Likewise, homeowners and lake property owner associations, and environmental organizations could work with the town to find opportunities for neighborhood, waterfront and natural area preservation and enhancement. Local cultural organizations, the library and the schools can all play an active role in programming public spaces throughout the town.



## 14. START IMMEDIATELY WITH “LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER” INTERVENTIONS

PPS has found that short-term, low-cost and immediate implementation through programming, amenities, food and beverages, and low-cost, “light” development will do a tremendous job in activating an underutilized public space. The LQC approach allows for coordinated experimentation to determine what works best to ‘jump start’ the community’s visions into physical reality, allowing for a more flexible way of testing ideas, trying alternative approaches, and providing an iterative learning process to inform public improvements.

Through creating a “pop-up” place, residents can be rapidly mobilized, building enthusiasm and capacity, while the town can also experiment before committing a lot of funds to major capital improvements. It can also be a good way to test out partnerships in a cost-effective way and attract long-term development.



# SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Place Making in communities is not about defining just one or two anchors or destinations; it is about creating a number of great places or destinations that connect to and complement each other. Place Making is based on the recognition that great places are more than the sum of their parts. As described above, PPS approached Place Making in Innisfil by starting with a number of key destinations—main streets, parks, new and established settlements-- and then worked with the community to define the places and activities within each destination that will help to achieve the community's overarching goals, such as creating social cohesion, providing more economic opportunity and offering more recreational activities.

The next section presents our recommendations for the following areas within Innisfil—the key destinations and the places within them-- based on feedback received from the community workshops and outreach events.

- Innisfil Beach Road
- Innisfil Beach Park
- Recreational Complex and town Hall
- Innisfil Heights
- Lefroy - Belle Ewert
- Cookstown
- Sandy Cove



## INNISFIL BEACH ROAD



Innisfil Beach Road has the potential to become a strong, vibrant and unified main street in Alcona. We have focused on the stretch of the road that extends from Jans Boulevard, adjacent to the Sobeys Supermarket, to Innisfil Beach Park as this has the most potential to become a cohesive main street environment. The Town's significant investment in new pedestrian and bike-friendly treatment is helping to transform the road into an attractive commercial boulevard that will become the heart of Innisfil. New sidewalks, street trees, lighting and bike lanes are a part of that streetscape improvement, and could be extended further, possibly to the

Town Hall and Recreation Centre, but the commercial core should remain compact and walkable. Additional street amenities such as well-designed wayfinding signage, attractive planting, bike racks and benches located where they will be most useful will contribute to the success of the street.

Streetscape alone, however, does not make a street vibrant and walkable. A lot depends on the architecture of the buildings that front it and the uses--retail, restaurants and public gathering places--along it. Complying with the Urban Design Guidelines developed for Innisfil Beach Road which includes provisions to create a more coherent street frontage,

with buildings fronting the sidewalks, no or minimal setbacks, parking to the rear, and more active and transparent ground floors and storefronts will make the street feel more physically connected and visually coherent, as well as safer and more interesting to walk.

Encouraging people to leave their cars behind will also depend on having inviting destinations to walk to. With the right mix of commercial and civic uses, active parks and plazas, and opportunities for community gatherings, Innisfil residents will have more reasons to walk.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a town square to serve as a gateway to the commercial core of Alcona that could include a coffeehouse, outdoor seating options and a play area visible from the street. Introducing visible activity at the entrance to the commercial district will encourage people to park their cars and explore.
2. The parking lot at C.W. Coops is currently underutilized and has the potential to become redeveloped as a semi-enclosed public space with benches and a fountain. Parking can be relocated to the rear allowing for more visible activity on the street.
3. Create a bike/pedestrian loop via roads and trails connecting Alcona to other destinations in Innisfil.
4. Strengthen and intensify the corridor by encouraging mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground floor and residential above, fronting the sidewalks. Limit building heights, and consider the architectural treatment of the buildings and storefronts with the goal of enlivening the street and creating an attractive retail environment.
5. Program the spaces in front of and behind the library to include outdoor activities such as concerts and performances, outdoor reading rooms, art displays, movies, children's play and small maker fairs or markets.
6. Create a teen hangout space with a plaza where the Idea Lab is currently located, providing indoor uses such as a pool hall and coffee bar with unique seating, and outdoor activities that could occur in the area currently occupied by the parking lot such as games, outdoor study areas, an outdoor skate park, and a lounge area.











## INNISFIL BEACH PARK



Innisfil Beach Park is home to ball fields, a playground, a public boat launch and beaches. First and foremost, the park should serve the Alcona community and encourage community programming and gathering. The park should be more than a green space viewed only in passing or used only during an event. It should be one of the most visible gathering spaces in Innisfil, inviting residents and visitors to stop everyday to explore its trails and gardens, restaurants and shops, or to relax and socialize at the water's edge. Providing more food options, such as an attractive waterfront restaurant with outdoor dining, and commercial activities,

such as a beach shop, boat and bike rentals, or water trampolines, will create a more dynamic and fun environment, while also reaping revenue to support the park. Daily programming should encourage residents of all ages and abilities to play, eat, swim, boat, fish, garden, walk, cross country ski or just relax on the green, while special events like festivals, outdoor movies, concerts and team sports will create more opportunities for the entire community to gather.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A community garden and outdoor oven to be used by the community for communal dinners, gardening events, plant sales and children's classes.
2. Beer garden and picnic area
3. An environmental education and welcome centre that functions all year to showcase the ecological assets of the park area and connects to the nature trail along the creek.
4. Waterfront restaurants with outdoor dining
5. A quiet area to sit and relax on hammocks and lounge chairs
6. Opportunities for water activities such as such as canoeing, kayaking, water trampolines and boat rentals, supported by cafes, food kiosks and a beach shop.
7. Provide a complete walking loop around the park that can also be used for cross country skiing in the winter.
8. Transform one of the existing structures into an information and snack kiosk that opens into the park with outdoor seating options near by and located in close proximity to the playground.











# RECREATIONAL CENTRE AND TOWN HALL



Already a major indoor community space where health and wellness facilities draw diverse groups of people together, the Recreational Centre could eventually become the anchor for a Civic Centre for all of Innisfil, featuring cultural, governmental and educational institutions clustered around a new civic square. Here, people could come to gather, learn, shop at the farmers market, dine, play, exercise, attend concerts and art exhibits, and exchange ideas. Future development should be pulled all the way out to Innisfil Beach Road and parking should be in the rear or in smaller, discreetly located lots.

Sidewalk and bike lane connections to Alcona and Innisfil Heights would increase accessibility for all.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS - SHORT TERM

1. A pocket park with a focal point such as a fountain surrounded by benches and an information kiosk will create a gathering spot adjacent to the Town Hall. Parking should be buffered and moved behind the buildings.
2. Building on the current uses of the Recreational Centre, the farmers market could also be a place for entertainment and food trucks, attracting a larger audience and creating opportunities for entrepreneurship. Outdoor movies, concerts, fitness and classes could be scheduled too.
3. An outdoor café or coffeehouse with seating options and a stage will give families another reason to gather



## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS - LONG TERM

1. A Town Square that is very visible and accessible from Innisfil Beach Road could serve as a community hub in Innisfil inviting visitors to stop and socialize, dine outdoors, play and enjoy and participate in numerous activities and programs. The Square would be a central gathering space that has a variety of smaller "places" within it to appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafés, fountains, sculpture, reading rooms, games areas or a bandshell for performances. It should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use over the course of the year and be flexible in design to accommodate changing uses and low cost experiments.
2. Civic, cultural, hotel and some commercial uses could be mixed with residential, and support community needs in a village-like setting.
3. A grid of small-scale streets could break down the super blocks and large parking lots, and create better pedestrian and vehicular connectivity.











## INNISFIL HEIGHTS



Innisfil Heights is the gateway to Innisfil from Route 400, but its hodge podge of uses and services is confusing and lacks a welcoming environment. This highway exit at Innisfil Beach Road now serves motorists as a highway-oriented service centre (gas and Tim Horton's), it offers some visitor attractions (400 Flea and Georgian Downs) and it is zoned to be an employment hub, with light industry, office and retail businesses. While residential development sits close-by, it is not a primary, or even visible use, in Innisfil Heights.

We propose a new "on route" experience at this intersection. Unlike

most cookie-cutter highway exits in North America, this service area could give visitors a taste of Innisfil, providing an attractive gateway to the town and enticing them to stay longer. By creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs, instead of chains, to provide food, convenience items and family recreational activities, local products could be showcased and new businesses created. Building on the 400 Flea and Georgian Downs as anchors, additional family attractions could be added, such as mini-golf, driving ranges, go carts, ice cream kiosks and family restaurants. Visitors could also be encouraged to access the Trans-Canada Trail at this

location by providing parking, bike rental and refreshments for bike riders. This could be a great opportunity to orient passers-by to the resources and attractions Innisfil offers with a tourist information centre. Activities on both sides of the highway could be linked by a path that runs under the highway, adjacent to the underused railroad tracks.

The office/industrial park could be a more inviting employment area with the addition of a public space that offers a lunchtime or after-work gathering opportunity, meeting space or business start-up facility for local employees that could feature a cafe or food trucks.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Beautify the corners with plantings, improve directional signage at the intersection.
2. Provide a rest stop destination with opportunities for family-friendly recreational activities such as mini golf, lawn games and outdoor food options.
3. Provide a visitor/information kiosk at the TransCanada trailhead and visually connect it to the recreational and dining destinations. This will create an inviting cluster of activities that expresses the strong local character of Innisfil and welcomes visitors and locals to town.
4. Extend the seasonal uses of the parking lot at 400 Flea. Large tents during the cold months could allow for vending opportunities throughout the year, with special holiday events and outdoor markets drawing in crowds from all over the region.
5. Connect Alcona and other destinations in the town to Innisfil Heights along Innisfil Beach Road with a multiuse trail that also links to the TransCanada Trail and provides a connection under the highway.
6. Create a central meeting and dining area with food, games, vendors, conference space and incubator spaces that is walkable and connected by paths both internally (within the employment hub) and externally back to rest stop.











## LEFROY - BELLE EWART



Lefroy would benefit from a stronger “Main Street” identity. The small scale and historic character of Lefroy should be enhanced with continuous sidewalks, street trees and historic lighting along Killarney Beach Road. Street amenities such as benches, seating, planters and bike racks would create comfort and would give the district a unique identity. Small-scale multi-family and mixed-use infill development that is in keeping with the village character of the settlement should be encouraged.

Opportunities for community gathering could be enhanced. For example, the Lefroy Community Centre and the area around it could become a

livelier and more inviting place for local residents to come for events or everyday activities. In addition, the lake access area could be enhanced for recreational and social activities.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a compact mixed-use and retail core along Killarney Beach Road. As one approaches the Church Street intersection, ground floor retail, small restaurants and shops could welcome visitors and strengthen the section of the street leading to the lakefront. The area to the east of Church Street could allow a wide variety of commercial uses with residential above to improve the approach to the water, while west of Church Street, limited commercial uses and offices could be allowed on the ground floor of residential buildings to maintain the residential character. Gaps should be filled with new buildings that recreate the scale, spacing, setbacks, height and character of the existing houses, on both sides of the street.
2. Create a vibrant community centre with more programming for residents of all ages, additional opportunities for play, indoors and out, and ice skating in the winter.
3. Enhance lake access and the public space at the end of Killarney Beach Road with water related attractions such as boating, boat rental, fishing, beach shops, play areas and restaurants or pop up food kiosks.
4. Maximize opportunities for for a mix of uses at the Marina (as the zoning allows for), including restaurants, cafe's, information kiosks and small scale shops and a convenience store.









# COOKSTOWN



The historic main street along Queen Street is already a major destination within Innisfil. The handsome architecture and beautiful storefronts are key assets to build on in extending and strengthening this street as a traditional commercial centre, and the heavy through traffic, while viewed as an annoyance, could also be seen as an potential customer-base to capture. More restaurants, cafes, shops, galleries and local small businesses along both sides of Queen and King Streets would add energy to what is already there and add to the list of destinations that draw people to Innisfil.

Residents see Cookstown as a potential arts district for Innisfil, as it already has a theatre and several galleries. A focus on attracting more artists and creative young people with studio space, co-working environments, live-work spaces as well as public art and outdoor performances could be a successful strategy to encourage young people to live in Cookstown as well as visit. By making this activity visible on Queen Street—outdoor gallery displays, performances in public spaces visible from the street, temporary public art in key places and banners designed by artists—would encourage those passing through

to stop. In the winter, interesting light displays or light art, attractive building and storefront lighting, and outdoor holiday sales or markets would carry this activity throughout the year.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Additional commercial uses on the ground floors would extend the commercial district and also provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and enhance the vibrancy of the street. A focus on art galleries and food would attract more visitors to Cookstown.
2. A small plaza at the main intersection of the village, in the vacant space next to Hambly Insurance, could host small-scale events, and offer seating options and table games. At the heart of the village, this space could bring new life to Cookstown and catalyze more outdoor activity, such as outdoor dining, along the street.
3. The Library is an important community anchor and the spaces surrounding it have the potential to become very active gathering places for Cookstown residents. Concerts, farmers markets, arts and crafts and food festivals could occur here during all seasons and create a destination for locals and visitors. Making these activities visible from Queens Street would help pull in those passing through as well. On a daily basis, a small library café or daily food trucks would invite people to stay for lunch and offer a place for youth to frequent after school. Recreational activities such as a skatepark or fitness amenities would draw youth, as well, and create opportunities for a families to spend the whole day at the Library.
4. The area around the trailhead for the TransCanada Trail on Queens Street, west of the commercial district, could become a welcoming place for bike riders to stop and rest. An outdoor café with bike racks and an interactive playground, art and a playful seating area would invite bicyclists and pedestrians to refuel and explore.











## SANDY COVE



Sandy Cove is now largely a residential retirement community, but several sites along Lockhart and 25th Side Roads are slated for development, which could create a more diverse population, and provide more commercial activity and services for all residents. New mixed-use development could create a walkable village environment oriented to Lockhart and 25th Side Road with public spaces and gathering places within the new development that could serve the whole community. With the increase in population, the town could consider recreation fees that would allow for the creation of a recreational park on Lockhart Road. Engaging current

residents in discussions about what kind of development they would like to see on the vacant parcels should start right away to ensure that their needs are met.

Expanding public access to Lake Simcoe at the three road termination points – the ends of Mapleview Drive, Lockhart Road and 10th Line--and providing community uses along the water will increase the support for protecting the lake as more people gain a sense of ownership and attachment to the lake. Parking, beaches, play areas, boat rentals and food options will help to grow these places into important destinations for all Innisfil residents.

In addition to building sidewalks and bike lanes on the streets to expand mobility options, the town could consider building trails through easements adjacent to streams on private property. Nature trails could link all lake access points with the current settlements and new developments, expanding recreational opportunities and providing access to natural areas.

## PLACE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide lake access with parking, beach amenities, food and boat rental.
2. New, street-friendly mixed use development: multi-family residential with retail and restaurants on ground floors built to sidewalks, with no or minimal setbacks, and parking behind or within the development.
3. Create a public space/town square on corner with retail adjacent to it.
4. Recreational park with ball fields, tennis courts and community centre.
5. Nature trails along streams to create a recreational loop and link lake access points.









# NEXT STEPS

## *1. Conduct Place Making Workshops for Key Destinations*

PPS suggests that the town engage the public in planning many of the destinations covered in this report in greater detail. For example, Innisfil Beach Park, Innisfil Beach Road and Cookstown are excellent candidates for Place Making workshops in which participants divide into groups that each look at an area within the park or a potential infill development site and brainstorm ideas for that site. The community would then have the opportunity to think more deeply about commercial uses, amenities, public gathering areas and programming that would activate the park or other sites while meeting its specific needs.

## *2. Seek Public Input on Development Sites*

The town could proactively engage a surrounding community in discussing the goals for development sites that will

have an impact on that community. By then using zoning, form-based codes, incentives or other land use planning tools, the town can ensure that the new development meets the needs of the existing community.

## *3. Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Interventions*

A rapid, low-cost way to begin to activate streets, parks and even parking lots right away is by experimenting with programs, amenities and light structures. This is a way to achieve Place Making without expensive capital investments and infrastructure. If information is gathered before and after the event or intervention that measures the number of users, the increase in sales or other metrics, LQC initiatives are a good way to test the effectiveness of a strategy. For example, a simple, low-cost temporary outdoor restaurant or beer garden could be created in the park for next summer, with the help of a local restaurateur, to test the concept before committing funds to a permanent structure.





#### *4. Explore Management Strategies*

The town can explore innovative ways to operate its public spaces and step up its programming through a variety of management models: main street managers, outside event planners, friends groups, public-private partnerships and partnerships with cultural or educational institutions are a few of the many strategies cities have adopted to activate their public spaces and revitalize their business districts.



#### *5. Explore Commercial Opportunities on Public Land*

As we suggested, commercial activity can help to activate a park or waterfront, and provide needed revenues for improving or sustaining it. Commercial leases or vending agreements for cafes, restaurants, boat rentals, food truck fees, etc. can help to make a park more self-sustaining if the rents go into a fund dedicated to that park.