

PRELIMINARY BACKGROUND REPORT

2024

RECREATION
MASTER PLAN



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

This report compiles all relevant information that will support the creation of the 2024 Master Recreation Plan for the Township of Ramara. It is recognized that there is an existing Master Recreation Plan completed in 2012 that will help inform the recommendations of the 2024 plan.

Critical issues related to challenges and opportunities for the Township are also identified.

1.2 Township Characteristics

Ramara was formed in 1994 through the amalgamation of the townships of Rama and Mara. The municipality stretches along the northeastern shore of Lake Simcoe from Gamebridge to Orillia, and along the entire eastern shore of Lake Couchiching from Orillia to Washago. Farming, tourism and aggregate are the primary industries, and are supported by a wide variety of local enterprises. The area is perhaps best known for its proximity to Casino Rama, which is located on the neighbouring First Nations reserve of Chippewas of Mnjikaning First Nation in Rama.

With a growing population, currently at 10,377, Ramara offers year-round beauty and grows immensely during the summer months due to seasonal visitors and residents. Ramara is comprised of nine settlement areas: Atherley-Uptergrove, Brechin, Cooper's Falls, Gamebridge, Lagoon City, Longford Mills, Sebright, Udney and Washago. Brechin is one of the township's largest communities.

The Township of Ramara owns and operates the Ramara Centre, located at 5482 Highway 12, between Atherley and Uptergrove. The Township of Ramara also owns community centres in Longford, Udney and Brechin that are operated by Community Centre Boards of Management which are composed of volunteers.

2 Summary of Key Policy Directions

The following policy documents were reviewed, and the comprehensive documentation of these policies is included in Appendix A.

- Existing Township policies related to recreation
- The 2012 Recreation Master Plan
- Township of Ramara Strategic Plan 2023-2026
- Township of Ramara Official Plan
- County of Simcoe Official Plan
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and Draft 2024
- Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023
- Township of Ramara Active Transportation Plan
- Accessibility Plan
- Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- Recreational Mapping
- Fees and Charges By-law

This section of the report summarizes the key policy directions related to recreational planning.

Table 1: Key Policy Directions

Key Policy Direction	Policy Document
Create healthy, active communities by providing a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources.	2020 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)
Provide public access to shorelines.	2020 PPS
Coordinate and co-locate public service facilities, including parks and open space where appropriate.	2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Optimize existing facilities and consider opportunities for adaptive re-use.	2024 PPS

Key Policy Direction	Policy Document
	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Integrate public services with schools and childcare facilities.	2024 PPS
Achieve complete communities and integrate service delivery through community hubs.	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Métis communities.	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Develop a system of publicly accessible parkland, open space and trails (including access to shoreline areas).	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
A more livable, compact, complete urban structure with good design and built form will support the achievement of economic and environmental benefits. Through effective growth management, municipalities will ensure that the natural environment is protected from the impacts of growth in the Simcoe Subarea, while providing amenities for the residents and visitors to this area from across the GGH and beyond.	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (special Simcoe Sub-Area direction)
Protect, conserve and enhance natural and cultural heritage.	County of Simcoe Official Plan, 2023 Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2003 Proposed Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2024
Promote socially and physically accessible rural and urban communities.	County of Simcoe Official Plan, 2023
Maximize the recreational facilities already existing and provide the necessary facilities to meet the future needs of the permanent and seasonal residents and tourists.	Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2003
Provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational activities throughout the Township.	Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2003 Proposed Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2024

Key Policy Direction	Policy Document
Create recreational and cultural opportunities for the residents of the Township and that contribute to the overall attraction of Township.	Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2003
The Township will encourage the establishment of passive and active parks to enhance access to recreation and nature.	Proposed Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2024
The Township may provide for public and private linkages such as all-season trails, pedestrian paths and bicycles lanes as part of its transportation network.	Proposed Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2024
Formalize the Organizational Structure and Budget	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Procedures for Delivery of Recreation	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Consolidate and Adopt a New Approach to Municipal Parkland Allocation	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Identify Waterfront Park Development Priorities	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Expand the Ramara Centre	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Complete the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs Project	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Work in Partnership with Severn to Improve Washago Outdoor Rink Opportunities	Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012
Promote, partner and develop awareness around event opportunities in the Township.	Township of Ramara Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026
Expansion and connection of the on-road trail, adjacent to road trail and off-road trail corridors.	Township of Ramara Active Transportation Plan, 2010
Support economic development in the Township through increased awareness of local parks and recreation opportunities.	Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2023
Purchase and install wayfinding signage.	Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2023
Develop and re-develop public recreational spaces to be fully accessible.	Accessibility Plan 2019 – 2024
Enhance recreational mapping to support awareness and promotion of recreational facilities and programming.	Recreational Mapping

Key Policy Direction	Policy Document
Appropriate development fees and allocation of fees for strategic recreational investment.	Fee and Charges By-law

The recommendations in the Recreation Master Plan will be guided by the above policy direction and guidance.

3 Key Demographics

A key factor in the success of recreational programs or facilities is the question of serving the appropriate user groups. To understand the user groups available, the basic demographics of an area must be considered. Table 2 below provides a summary of the age demographics of Ramara Township and surrounding areas, and Table 3 provides the growth projections for the same areas.

Table 2: Township of Ramara and Surrounding Area Age Demographic¹

Area	Total 2021	0-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Simcoe	533,170	116,295	60,055	102,280	148,620	105,920
Ramara	10,375	1,670	895	1,400	3,520	2,880
Brock	12,565	2,730	1,255	2,375	3,435	2,770
Severn	14,575	2,810	1,395	2,390	4,565	3,420
Orillia	33,410	6,250	3,865	5,930	8,700	8,670
Oro-Medonte	23,020	4,860	2,035	3,850	7,345	4,925
Rama First Nations	1,000	230	160	200	285	140

¹ [Census of Population \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2018001/article/00001-eng.htm)

Table 3: 2051 Population Growth Projections for Ramara and Surrounding Areas²

Area	2016	2021	% Change	2051 Projection
Ramara	9,488	10,375	9.4	12,870 (1)
Brock	11,642	12,565	7.9	20,900 (2)
Severn	13,462	14,575	8.3	17,790 (1)
Orillia	31,166	33,410	7.2	41,000 (3) *
Oro-Medonte	21,036	23,020	9.4	26,230 (1)
Rama First Nations	878	1,000	13.7	Unavailable

An informative statistic is also the household income available to users. This helps to determine if activities requiring user rates vs. activities that have minimal municipal cost are better suited to an area. Table 4 illustrates the medium household incomes of Ramara and surrounding areas.

Table 4: Median Household Income for Ramara and Surrounding areas³

Area	Median Total Income of Household 2015	Median Total Income of Household 2020	% change
Ramara	\$72,160	\$85,000	17.8
Brock	\$73,072	\$92,000	25.9
Severn	\$77,009	\$94,000	22.1
Orillia	\$55,082	\$71,000	28.9
Oro-Medonte	\$95,667	\$114,000	19.2
Rama First Nations	\$44,800	\$67,500	50.7

² [Census Profile, 2016 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2016001/article/14861-eng.htm)

(1) [HEMSON - Revised Simcoe County Growth Forecasts and LNA Results - 31May22](#)
 (2) [Durham GMS Phase 2 Area Municipal Growth Allocations and Land needs 2051 - Final Report](#)
 (3) [OP-Text-Consolidation-June-1-2024.pdf \(orillia.ca\)](#)

³ [2016 Census of Population \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2016001/article/14861-eng.htm)

3.1 Population Growth in Neighbouring Communities

Table 5 below represents the recent population growth trends in Ramara Township and Neighbouring Townships and communities. Almost all communities, including Ramara, have seen an increase in their average growth rate.

Table 5: Population Growth of Neighbouring Communities⁴

Census subdivision (CSD) name	Population		
	2021	2016	% change
Ontario	14,223,942	13,448,494	5.8
Simcoe County	533,169	479,635	11.2
Ramara, Ontario	10,377	9488	9.4
Brock, Ontario	12,567	11,642	7.9
Severn, Ontario	14,576	13,462	8.3
Mnjikaning First Nation 32 (Rama First Nation 32), Ontario	878*	870**	0.9
Orillia, Ontario	33,411	31,166	7.2

*There is no population update for Mnjikaning First Nation 32 in 2021. The population that falls under the 2021 column is from 2016.

**The population that falls under the 2016 column is from 2011.

It is noted that the projected population by 2031 in the 2012 Master Plan was 15,500, which was an estimated increase of 5,700 people from 2006-2031. A revised County of Simcoe Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment from 2022 estimated that by 2051 Ramara

⁴ 2016 Census of Population (statcan.gc.ca)

would reach a population of 12,870. This revised forecast provides an estimated growth of 3,070 people between the years 2022 and 2051.⁵

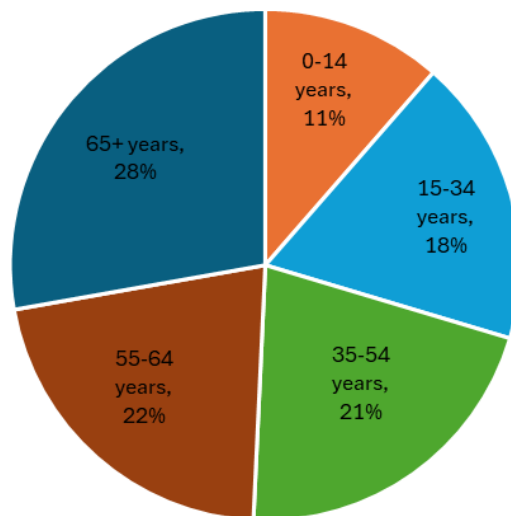
3.2 Age Distribution

Ramara’s population has been on a similar trend since 2011. The 2021 Census data shows that now the percentage of adults over 65 years of age is 28%, which is a 5% increase from 2011. Adults 55 and over make up 50% of Ramara’s population, which is a 10% increase from 2011. Table 6 and Figure 1 illustrate the age distribution of Ramara residents.

Table 6: Age Distribution of Ramara Residents, 2021

Age Group	0-14	15-34	35-54	55-64	65+
2021	1185	1885	2190	2225	2880
Percent	11%	18%	21%	22%	28%

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Ramara Residents, 2021



⁵ [County of Simcoe Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment, Hemson Consulting Ltd., May 2022](#)

3.3 Household Income

The average household income in Ramara after taxes was \$86,100 in 2021, which is slightly lower than the average provincial household income. The chart and graph below represent average and median household incomes for Simcoe County, Ramara, and Ontario.

Figure 2: Average Household Income, 2021

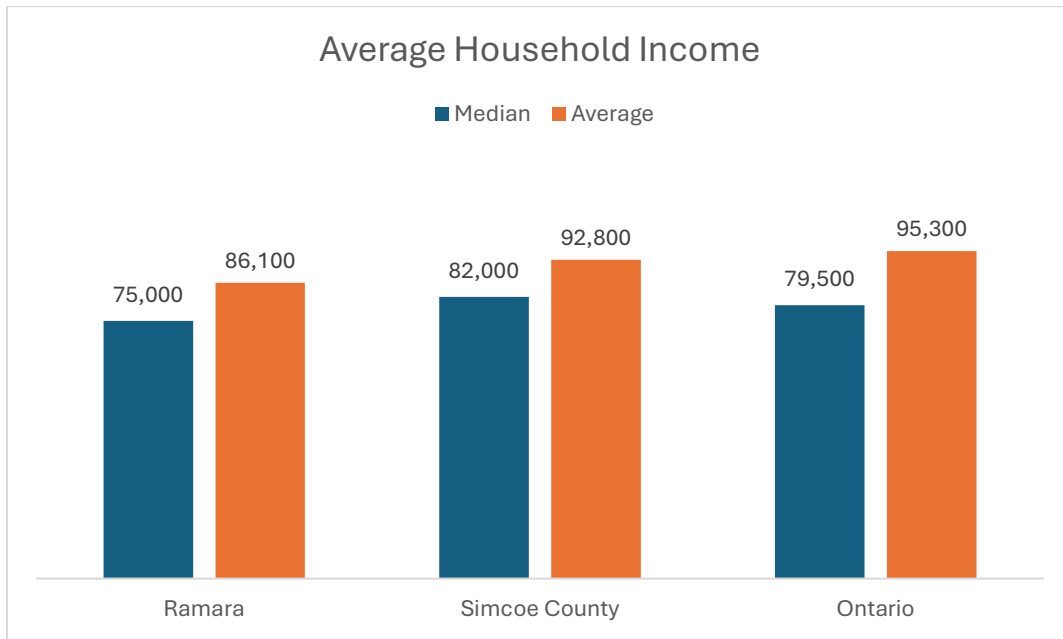


Table 7: Average Household Income, 2021

Description	Ramara	Simcoe County	Ontario
Median after-tax household income 2021	\$75,000	\$82,000	\$79,500
Average after-tax household income 2021	\$86,100	\$92,800	\$95,300

4 Market and Sector Trends in Recreation

The Townships of Severn, Oro-Medonte and Brock are neighbouring municipalities to the Township of Ramara, each of which recently updated or created a new Parks and Recreation Plan and have formed the basis of our investigations. These plans have been used as the source of market and sector trend information for the purposes of this project.

4.1 Township of Severn Recreation Master Plan, 2022

The Township of Severn completed an updated Recreation Master Plan in September 2022. The document was completed shortly after the end of the pandemic and the issues and trends correlated accordingly. Key issues included:

- Increased demand and importance of open space, parks and trails for individuals or families;
- Reluctancy to return back to organized activities, programs or sports;
- Lack of access to indoor facilities based on temporary pandemic uses;
- Increased awareness of accessibility concerns;
- Not all activities residents participate in are available in Severn and many travel to programs offered by neighbouring municipalities (Orillia, Barrie and Midland); and
- 60 % of survey respondents indicated the need for more programs.

The following priorities were identified:

- Importance of local community events and the need to support;
- Work with and expand relationships with township and local arts, cultural and community groups to explore low-cost events, communicate and promote existing events;
- Opportunity to expand and/or improve outdoor activities;
- Improvements needed to local trails and parks;
- Water activities are major importance and water access improvements needed with regard to boat launches, access to lakes, rivers for swimming, canoe and kayaking;
- Need for upgrades to washrooms, parking and waste receptacles;
- Demand for pickleball and to resurface and develop courts (Washago);

4.2 Oro-Medonte Parks & Recreation Master Plan, 2023

The Township of Oro-Medonte completed their Parks and Recreation Master Plan in April 2023. The project identified key capital priorities and delivery framework. The resulting document formed two different vision approaches, one focused on “Outdoor Leisure” and the second based on “Village Recreation.” Key issues identified during the consulting exercise include:

- Need for new and appealing facilities, there was large recognition for the importance and value of the local community halls but also the demand for new modern facilities to meet the needs of their residents;
- Population growth in the area and the future needs of facilities;
- Open space not necessarily within proximity to growth and settlement areas; and
- Oro-Medonte relies on neighbouring municipalities for access to facilities (indoor swimming pools and arenas).

Some of the main wants and needs of the plan are:

- Increased and enhanced trail-based activities and community links, connections and outdoor hubs;
- Emergence of Pickleball and need for courts indoor and outdoor or the possibility to use local schools;
- Increased needs for sport field supply in the future (soccer, baseball etc.);
- Need for study into boat launches;
- Possibility of an outdoor rink and future expansion of arena;
- Community wants more and updated playground equipment; and
- To investigate opportunities to partner and create cost sharing agreements with neighbouring municipalities.

4.3 Township of Brock Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan, 2023

The Township of Brock recently undertook a comprehensive review of their Parks, Recreation and Master Plan with a final product delivered in December of 2023. Key issues identified in the review were:

- Decrease in volunteers running sports and programming, recognizing volunteers run many of the available activities;
- Underused facilities and aging facilities and equipment;

- Decrease in users for all age level activities, noting that many programs offered by the township could not get the minimum number of participants to continue to run activity; and
- Increased vandalism in public spaces and parks.

The community consultation identified several wants and needs, that include:

- Access to in-door/multi-purpose gymnasiums or rooms, currently they use local schools or churches, none owned by the township;
- Increasing demand for pickleball both in-doors and outdoors;
- Off-leash dog parks
- Increased and expanded trails for walking and connections within the 3 towns;
- More water access points, beaches and public boat launches; and
- The need for more senior-based programming and accommodation.

4.4 Additional Information by Sport

4.4.1 Pickleball

Trends from across North America show that pickleball participation is growing exponentially. Pickleball Canada notes that 11% of households now have at least one household member that plays pickleball at least once per month which extrapolates to approximately 1.37 million Canadians and represents a near tripling of players in two years. It was also reported that a recent growth in numbers comes from players between 18 and 34 indicating a change in demographics. Neighbouring municipalities such as Orillia, Brock, Severn, and Oro-Medonte all have plans to install new pickleball courts due to increased interest from residents. Brock and Oro-Medonte note that multi-purpose courts cause conflict between pickleball and tennis players and are not optimal.

4.4.2 Splash Pads

Residents in neighbouring municipalities have expressed interest in the addition of Splash pads to existing parks and playgrounds. Orillia has identified the need for two additional splash pads and Brock has identified the need for one additional pad at Sunderland Park. In Brock's Recreation Master Plan there is reference to a potential increase in the use of splash pads due to climate change. During heat waves splash pads can be used as cooling

stations for residents. Although there may be an increase in interest for splash pads, Oro-Medonte mentions in their Master Plan that splash pads can be difficult to install due to on-site only water production and septic field requirements. There is also the issue of very age-specific uses of younger children being the users.

4.4.3 Playgrounds

All neighbouring municipalities are invested in making new and existing playgrounds accessible. Recommendations in Master Plans mention ensuring existing playgrounds are altered to make them more accessible by adding ramps, altering ground surfaces, or creating sections where there are no differences in elevation between pathways and play areas. Another emerging trend from neighbouring municipalities such as Brock and Severn are tree planting plans. Planting trees surrounding playground areas creates shade and additional green spaces for residents.

4.4.4 Green Space Parks

Neighbouring municipalities indicate their plans to increase green spaces and canopy cover. The Township of Brock mentions that a Survey by Park People indicate Canadians appreciation for green spaces has increased since the pandemic. Severn also mentioned a survey from 2020 that revealed 70% of Canadians expressed an increased appreciation for parks and green spaces. Both Severn and Brock have recommendations in their Master Plans to provide more canopy cover in parks by planting more trees.

4.4.5 Skate Parks

Skate parks have seen successful in neighbouring municipalities and cities throughout Ontario. Orillia and Severn both currently have one skate park that is well used, and Orillia has requests to relocate and expand this facility to better suit users. Oro-Medonte does not have a permanent skate park but has implemented temporary skate parks in the past with varying degrees of success. Brock has two skate parks – one in Beaverton and one in Cannington that are housed in existing park areas.

4.4.6 Cricket

Although Cricket is a growing sport in North America there is not a current demand for cricket fields in neighbouring municipalities, but there is potential for this sport to grow in the Area. Simcoe County District School Board held their first ever cricket tournament in Bradford this year, signaling a future growth in the sport. Students at the new Beaver River Public School in Beaverton participated in a sports dome in Durham in 2024. Oshawa and Whitby have both created outdoor pitches in recent years. Currently the nearest cricket fields can be found in larger cities like Mississauga, Markham, and Etobicoke.

5 Existing Recreational Facilities in Ramara and Surrounding Areas

The Recreational Master Plan requires a fulsome understanding of the existing facilities available in the Township as well as the facilities in the surrounding areas given that we know users cross municipal boundaries to take advantage of recreational opportunities. The following is a list of the existing recreational facilities in the Township of Ramara:

Main Parks and Centres

- Ramara Centre
- Udney Community Hall
- Longford Mills Community Centre
- Brechin Community Centre Park
- Atherley Community Park

Parks

- Bayshore Drive Park
- Bluebird Park
- Furniss Crescent Park
- Kurtis Drive Park
- Lagoon City
- Laguna Parkway Park

- Longford Community Centre Park
- Lovely Day Park
- Thicketwood Place Park
- Val Harbour Park

Beaches

- Atherley Community Park
- Brechin Beach
- Lagoon City Park Beach
- Sandy beach
- The Steps

Boat Launches

- Bluebird Street
- Courtland Street
- Dalrymple Drive
- Fern Resort Road
- Glenrest Drive
- Lovely Day Park
- Poplar Lane
- Suntrac

Trails

- Ramara Trail
- Lagoon City Trail
- Washago Trail
- Ganaraska Trail (not a Ramara Township Trail)

5.1 Facilities and Amenities

The Township of Ramara has three community centres, Ramara Centre, Udney Community Centre, and Longford Mills Community Centre.

Table 8 provides a table count of the indoor facilities available in Ramara, Orillia, Severn, Brock and Oro-Medonte.

Table 8: Number of Indoor Facilities by Type and Location

Facility Type	Ramara	Orillia	Severn	Brock	Oro-Medonte
Population (2021)	10,377	33,411	14,576	12,567	23,017
Banquet Hall	3	1	4	4	6
Library	2	1	1	3	1
Arena		2	1	3	1
Fitness Centre		1			
Auditorium/Theatre	1	2		2	
Meeting rooms	2	10	2	2	2
Kitchens		1	3	2	5
Sports Field (Indoor)	2	1			
Pool		1			
Multi-purpose courts/gymnasiums		6			1
Pickleball Courts	2				

Table 9 provides a count of the outdoor facilities in Ramara, Orillia, Severn, Brock and Oro-Medonte.

Table 9: Number of Outdoor Facilities by Type and Location

Facility Type	Ramara	Orillia	Severn	Brock	Oro-Medonte
Population (2021)	10,377	33,411	14,576	12,567	23,017
Sports/Soccer Field	2	7	3	2	1
Ball Diamond	5	8	6	6	7
Basketball Court		2			
Tennis/Pickleball/Multi-sport Court		9	2		2

It is also important to understand the facilities and various amenities offered through Ramara and the surrounding municipalities of Orillia, Severn, Brock and Oro-Medonte.

Table 10: Amenities in Ramara and Surrounding Areas

Amenity Type	Ramara	Orillia	Severn	Brock	Oro-Medonte
Population (2021):	10,377	33,411	14,576	12,567	23,017
Playgrounds	4	30	5	8	5
Green Space Parks	7	2	5		2

Beaches	5	2	1	2	1
Off-leash Dog Parks	1	2	1		
Pavillions	2	2	4		3
Washrooms	4	9	3	1	
Basketball Courts				3	
Splash Pads		5		1	
Outdoor Rinks		9	1	2	7
Skate Parks		1	3	3	

5.2 Trails

As noted in the 2012 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and data collected during and following the COVID 19 pandemic, trails play a significant role in community recreation. Table 11 and 12 provide information relating to trails in Ramara and surrounding areas.

Table 1: Trails in Ramara

Trail	Length	Notes
Ramara Trail	6 km	Part of Trans Canada Trail
Lagoon City Trail	2.5 km	
Washago Trail	13 km	Part of Trans Canada Trail
Ganaraska Trail	500 km	Developed by volunteers

Table 12: Trails in Ramara and Neighbouring Municipalities

	Ramara	Orillia	Severn	Brock	Oro-Medonte
Population (2021):	10,377	31,411	14,576	12,567	23,017
Number of Trails	4	6	6	5	3

5.3 Boat Launches

Access to the lake is an important consideration for the Recreation Master Plan. Policy direction from the provincial level to the local level indicates that public access to shorelines is a valuable and important consideration.

Table 13 and 14 outline the available boat launches in Ramara and surrounding areas.

Table 13: Boat Launches in Ramara

Boat Launch	Access to	Parking
Bluebird Street	Lake St. John	Permit parking
Courtland Street	Lake Simcoe	Limited permit parking
Dalrymple Drive	Lake Dalrymple	Limited on road parking
Fern Resort Road	Couchiching Lake	No parking
Glenrest Drive	Lake Simcoe	Limited on road parking
Lovely Day Park	Lake Simcoe	Limited parking
Poplar Lane	Couchiching Lake	No parking
Suntrac	Lake Simcoe	No parking

Table 14: Boat Launches in Neighbouring Communities

	Ramara	Orillia	Severn	Brock	Oro-Medonte
Population (2021):	10,377	31,411	14,576	12,567	23,017
Number of Boat Launches	8	2	9	1	4

5.4 Recreational Programming

There are several programs currently offered in Ramara as summarized in Table 15.

Table 15: Programs in Ramara

Program	Age Group	Season	Location
Tee ball	4-6Y	Spring	Ramara Centre
Recreation Nation	5-10Y	Spring/Fall	Ramara Centre
Family Dance Fitness	3-9Y	Spring	Udney Community Centre
Cuddle and Cardio	0-2Y	Spring	Ramara Centre
ARTventure	8-14Y	Spring/Fall	Ramara Centre
Kinder Dance	4-7Y	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
PA Day Camps	4-12Y	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
Canadian Safety Council: Babysitter Training	12-15Y	Spring	Atherley Fire Station 2
Canadian Safety Council: Home Alone Course	9-12Y	Spring	Atherley Fire Station 2
Pilates	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall	Ramara Centre
Line Dance	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
Pottery	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall	Ramara Centre
Strength & Stretch Fusion	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring	Ramara Centre
Quillin by Dillon	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring	Ramara Centre

Program	Age Group	Season	Location
Yoga	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
Zumba	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
Photography Workshop	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring	Atherley Fire Station
Pickleball	Adults & Actively Aging	Spring/Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
Summer Day Camp	4-15Y	Summer	Ramara Centre
Nerf Wars	6-10Y	Fall/Winter	Ramara Centre
FUNdamentals	7-12Y	Fall	Ramara Centre
Hunter Safety	12Y+	Fall	Ramara Centre
Acrylic Painting	Adults & Actively Aging	Fall	Ramara Centre
Badminton	Adults & Actively Aging	Fall	Ramara Centre
Minds in Motion	Adults & Actively Aging	Fall	Ramara Fire Station 2
Stay and Play	1-3Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Friday Night Fun!	4-12Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Play All Day	5-12Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Dodgeball	6-12Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Drop and Shop	4-12Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Baking Club	6-12Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Activity Time	4-9Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Jr. Dance	6-7Y	Winter	Ramara Centre

Program	Age Group	Season	Location
Little Adventures	1-3Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Youth Council	12-18Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Monthly Youth Nights	12-15Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
RRW Club	10-15Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
March Break Camp	4-14Y	Winter	Ramara Centre
Public Provider Programs			
Ramara Book Club	Adults	Year round	Ramara Public Library
Fibre Friends	All ages	Winter/Spring	Ramara Public Library
Summer Reading Clubs	0-18Y	Summer	Ramara Public Library
Build It in Brechin	All ages	Summer	3227 Ramara Rd 47
Variety Hour	6-12Y	Year round	Ramara Public Library
EarlyON	Parents/Caregivers and Children 6 years or younger	Year round	Ramara Community Centre

As with physical facilities, it is important to understand the programming available in neighbouring communities (Table 16).

Table 16: Programming in Neighbouring Communities

Program	Age Group	Season	Location
Orillia			
Swimming lessons	Parent and tot, up to lifesaving courses	Summer	City pools & Lake Couchiching

Camp Orillia	6-12Y	Summer	
Fun Orillia – various drop-in programs	Various	Various	Various
Preschool programs (Little/Junior Warriors Soccer, kinder gym, dance, swim etc.)	Up to 6		Various
Summer drop-in programs (Zumba, baseball, badminton, table tennis, lane swim, fitness classes, yoga etc.)	Various	Summer	Various
Children and youth (gardening, babysitting, tennis, karate etc.)	6-16Y	Year round	Various
Adult (acting, ballroom dance, fitness classes, martial arts, tennis, gardening etc.)	16Y+	Year round	Various
Senior (fitness classes, gardening, tennis etc.)	55Y+	Year round	Various
Seniors At Play Programs (table games, socials, knitting clubs, book club etc.)	56Y+	Year round	Rotary Place
Severn			
Public Skating	All ages	Winter	Coldwater CC
Children and youth programs	6-16Y	Year round	Various
Adult programs	Adult	Year round	Various
Senior programs	Senior	Year round	Various
Tee ball	3-7Y	Spring	Coldwater Ball Diamond 2
Zumba	6Y-Seniors	Winter	Coldwater CC & PS
Little Kickers Soccer	6Y	Spring/Summer/Fall	Washago Centennial

			Park, Marchmont PS
Curling Club	7Y-Adults	Year round	Coldwater Curling Club
Minor Ball	5-20Y	Spring/Summer	Coldwater Fairgrounds
Ball Hockey	4-13Y	Spring	Coldwater CC
Brock			
Children and youth programs	4-16Y	Year round	Various
Adult (Yoga, Tai chi, Drumming, fitness classes etc.)	Adult	Year round	Various
Senior (fitness classes, Yoga, drumming etc.)	Senior	Year round	Various
Summer Day Camp	4-12Y	Summer	
PA day Camps	7-12Y	Spring/Fall/Winter	16 York St. Cannington
Summer Sports	Various	Summer	Various
Oro-Medonte			
March Break Camp	4-12Y	Winter	Oro-Medonte CC
Summer Camp	4-12Y	Summer	
Public Skates	All	Spring, Winter	Oro-Medonte CC
Free skate for seniors and homeschoolers	Senior and children	Spring, Winter	Oro-Medonte CC
Preschool programs	0-6Y	Year round	Community Centre Banquet Hall, Jaratt

			Community Hall
Children and youth	3-15Y	Year round	
Adult	Adult and Senior	Year round	Various
Senior	Senior	Year round	Various

6 Key Stakeholders

To effectively identify priorities for the Master Recreation Plan, the key impacted, involved and interested stakeholders must be consulted. The following stakeholders are known and will be engaged early in the project process. Additional stakeholders will be added throughout the process to the project list to be fully informed of the project outcome and opportunities to participate.

- Township of Ramara Staff
 - Department Heads
 - Committees
 - User Groups
- Community Groups
- Sports Associations
- Rate Payers
- Other Agencies
- Indigenous representatives

7 Progress on 2012 Master Plan Recommendations

The 2012 Recreation Master Plan provided for 70 recommendations with suggested timeframes for action. These priorities should be reported on in terms of status and be reviewed to determine if they are still relevant and if they should be carried forward to the 2024 plan.

Table 17: 2012 Master Plan Recommendations and Status

Recommendations	Timeframe	Status
Facility and Sport Field Recommendations		
1. Review facility expansion options at Ramara Centre with “shovel-ready” plans for a full-size gymnasium and provision of lighting for the major soccer pitch.	2018+	No action. Library has plans to expand.
2. Ensure all entrances to facilities have consistent Township of Ramara logo/signage situated at roadways leading to the facility. Major facilities should have a floral arrangement (perennial/annual mix) and a consistent major sign.	2014-2018	Complete
3. Follow recommendations in the Frank Cowan insurance report including immediate action on all Priority #1 recommendations that could endanger life.	Immediate	Complete
4. Ensure that there is a standard format for facility, park and equipment inspections in Ramara Township using generally accepted facility inspection templates (OMRA – Ontario Municipal Recreation Association or be equivalent).	Immediate	Complete
5. Continue research into best practices in recreation facilities, sport fields and parklands to find new and innovative and/or cost effective means of providing municipal recreation.	Ongoing	Ongoing

<p>6. Establish a formal “damage covered” policy for any liabilities or breakage that may occur as a result of recreational program access to schools; maintain such access with an intent of establishment of a formal joint use community access agreement with both County of Simcoe school boards in Ramara Township.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>No school agreements in place</p>
<p>7. Seek opportunities for joint use agreements and partnerships with Severn Township for the Washago outdoor rink.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>8. Publicize all recreation facilities, trails, access points to lake and parks within Township on Ramara website (after completion of inventory work). Provide a limited publication of inventory of available programs, clubs, events, etc. with sections devoted to each geographic area.</p>	<p>2014-2018+</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>9. Prepare an inventory of all community assets including government facilities, agencies, churches, historic sites, private and public facilities.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>10. Provide appropriate vehicular and bicycle parking at all major facilities and Township road “right of way” access points to lakeshore swimming.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>11. Establish and/or expand three multi-use sport pads at Udney, Ramara Centre and Brechin to allow installation of moveable skateboard ramps.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Multi-use sports pad installed in Atherley park</p>
<p>12. Add a playground to Udney ball diamond.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Ball diamond not in use, Pre-existing playground removed</p>
<p>13. Establish unit cost measures (cost per acre for park maintenance, cost per sq. ft. for indoor recreation facilities, cost per person in recreation programs, etc.) to allow benchmarking, best practices and continuous improvement and to document budget efficiencies.</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>14. Involve planning, recreation and parks staff with the Township Treasurer and CAO to map out a development</p>	<p>2014-2018</p>	<p>Complete</p>

charges strategy within land holdings and acquisitions along with 10 year capital planning. Such a strategy should be formally reviewed and submitted to Ramara Council.		
15. Develop capital asset plans for all community centres and parks, recreation and culture amenities.	Immediate	Complete
Parkland, Waterfront and Land Consolidation Recommendations		
16. Eliminate use of all boat ramps until such ramps can meet an acceptable service standard through the Township's insurer.	Immediate	No action
17. Select one waterfront site to establish a fishing platform to further expand the range of recreational opportunities to residents.	2014-2018+	No action
18. Separate water treatment facilities from public viewing on public parkland where possible or locate such facilities on separate land areas where possible.	2016-2018+	No action
19. Develop a long-term Municipal land strategy with all Township Departments working together.	2016-2018+	Complete
20. Consolidate existing parcels of parkland into five recreation areas: Brechin, Udney, Atherley, Washago area and Ramara Centre. If new land parcels are offered that do not fit the plan, take cash in lieu to fund the long-term park planning strategy.	2016-2018+	No action
21. Involve the Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee in all future 5% in lieu of parkland discussions with Planning Department.	2016-2018+	Committee no longer exists.
22. Improve public access to the waterfront by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Making access to waterfront lands/facilities part of parks and recreation system in Ramara b) Developing appropriate water access facilities at north, central and south locations. c) Creating a focused, long term strategy to assemble road end allotments, waterfront access and parklands. This may require completing a waterfront study. 	2016-2018+	Complete

23. Review Township grass cutting policies and procedures in light of Species at Risk legislation and identify environmentally sensitive locations (e.g. nesting areas) for later scheduled grass cutting.	Immediate	Complete
Recreation Programs Recommendations		
24. Support continued efforts to provide high quality, innovative children and youth recreation programs in locations throughout the municipality.	2014-2018+	Ongoing
25. Implement quality assurance measures for children and youth recreation programs by implementing provincially-recognized programs such as the Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) “High Five” program.	2014-2018+	Ongoing
26. Measure annual resident recreation program satisfaction levels to improve current overall rating of “good” to “very good” and “excellent” over the decade ahead. Use surveys to monitor and review program demands or priorities and to change program offerings when necessary.	2014-2018+	Ongoing
27. Support expansion of adult/older adult programs, given the demand for programs from this age group and the importance of recreation to the residents’ quality of life.	Immediate	Ongoing
28. Support the funding of additional signs at strategic locations across the vast geographic area of the municipality.	2014-2018	Complete
29. Make full use of the township mailings, press releases to media, community newspapers and newsletters, and other electronic, computer-based methods to improve communication about and participation in recreation program opportunities and events.	Ongoing	Ongoing
30. Authorize Ramara Township recreation staff to pursue additional partners within and on the borders of the municipality to create mutually beneficial joint recreation programs and services.	Ongoing	Ongoing

31. Support expansion of parks and recreation programs and services that enhance the quality of life for residents as a key strategy to improve the tax base of the municipality.	2014-2018+	Ongoing
32. Continue research into best practices in leisure and recreation to find new and innovative and/or cost effective means of providing municipal recreation programs and services.	Ongoing	Ongoing
33. Add components of physical activity to leisure and recreation programs and community events as a means to heighten community awareness of its vital health benefits.	Ongoing	Complete
34. Build upon staff's current success with recreation programs and develop a plan based on the Master Plan survey findings to incorporate feasible residents' ideas about new and existing programs, locations, and other suggestions for the future of recreation programs and services.	Ongoing	Complete
Community Development Recommendations		
35. Ensure that Recreation staff play a key role in developing Ramara's parks and recreation volunteer leadership by drafting a volunteer policy for adoption by Council.	2014-2018	Ongoing
36. Conduct research into grant and other funding opportunities for Centre maintenance, and capital projects.	Immediate	Ongoing
37. Work with the municipality's insurance agency to assess risks associated with voluntary Community Centre board-managed properties and voluntary organizations that offer programs and events for Ramara residents and visitors.	2014-2018	Ongoing
38. Keep abreast of legislative requirements affecting voluntary Community Centre board managed properties and voluntary leisure and recreation organizations, and inform volunteer leaders about compliance requirements.	Ongoing	Ongoing

39. Keep the Township's parks and recreation website information up-to-date including the Community Centre board-managed properties.	Ongoing	Complete
40. Provide more training and orientation opportunities for all councillors and community centre boards and volunteer committees.	2014-2018+	Complete
41. Formalize the relationship between Community Centre Boards and Municipality over five years.	2014-2018	Ongoing
Trails Recommendations		
42. Upgrade and develop Ramara trail and active transportation system using a 2-phase strategy.	2014-2018	Ongoing
43. Review and upgrade existing trails and build new trails to meet the following standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard surface (either stone dust, asphalt) • 10 feet/3 metres wide with 2 feet/1.5 metres clear cut zones on each side 	Immediate	Ongoing
44. Be proactive in Township planning department to create new trail connections within all new site developments.	Ongoing	Complete
45. Coordinate efforts between Trails Committee and Ramara Planning Department to work with Share the Road initiatives and develop a trails master plan for Ramara with wayfinding system.	2014-2018+	Complete
46. Promote 1.5 m edge to all new County and Municipal roads.	2014-2018+	Complete
47. Connect trails with community facilities and places people want to go, such as schools, parks, shops, businesses, restaurants and food concessions, etc.	2014-2018+	Complete
48. Review existing subdivisions, making improvements to trail accessibility and safety.	2014-2018+	Complete
49. Require all new subdivisions, commercial and public areas to connect their on-site pedestrian routes to offsite sidewalks and trail access points.	2014-2018+	Complete

<p>50. Provide the following conditions on all pedestrian routes to promote and enable walking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian routes should be placed within 150 metres (or closer) of all residential areas. • Cul-de-sacs and other types of dead ends need to provide connection of a minimum of 3 meters wide which should be hard surface (compacted gravel as a minimum). 	<p>2014-2018+</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>51. Incorporate changes to the current job description of Recreation Supervisor (formerly Coordinator) to include the following trails responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact with and provide support to volunteer groups working on trail initiatives. • Begin and maintain a basic and regular trails standards inspection system. • Coordinate trail budget plans with volunteers and seek financial support from available funding sources and grant opportunities. • Work with North Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit to increase awareness of trails and their importance. 	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Part of Infrastructure Department & Trails Committee</p>
<p>52. Change the reporting methods of the Trails Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on a monthly basis to the Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee, • Vet all projects, activities, grant applications with RPCAC and adoption by Council. 	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Part of Infrastructure Department and Trails Committee</p>
<p>53. Comply with AODA legislation for accessible trails. Practice principles of sustainable design.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Human Resources: Staff and Volunteer Recommendations</p>		
<p>54. Reclassify existing Recreation/Community Development Coordinator position to Recreation Supervisor. Write new job descriptions with additional responsibilities (including but not limited to duties in support of the trails committee, community centre boards, youth activities and playground equipment</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Complete</p>

maintenance.). Identify additional compensation required.		
55. Create a staff flow chart outlining responsibilities and relationships between CAO and Recreation Supervisor.	Immediate	Complete
56. Reflect costs and proposed additional costs per recreation sector in new detailed budget accounts: Ramara Recreation Centre, Staff, Building Maintenance, Field Maintenance, Equipment Maintenance, Staff Training. Prepare capital asset management plans.	Immediate	Complete
57. Commence Canadian Standards Association approved staff training in playground equipment and trails maintenance as first priority.	Immediate	Staff have undertaken training
58. Include Planning staff, Recreation Supervisor and Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee on future parkland acquisitions and/or 5% in lieu park land dedication decisions.	Immediate	No Action
59. Present Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee meeting minutes to Council for adoption. Share regular budget printouts with RPCAC at monthly meetings. Present five-year forecasts, prepared jointly by RPCAC and Recreation Supervisor to Council.	Immediate	Committee no longer exists.
60. Rename Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee to Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee.	Immediate	Committee no longer exists.
61. Restructure the relationship of the Recreation, Parks and Culture Advisory Committee to the Township and formalize.	Immediate - 2016	N/A
62. Formalize the relationship between Community Centre Boards and Municipality over five years.	2014-2018	Ongoing
63. Work with Community Centre boards to create standard rental forms with site-specific rental rates, rules and regulations based on amenities and an on-line rental and payment process.	2014-2018	No action
64. Work with Community Centre boards to create an operational policy and procedures manual for the	2014-2018	Ongoing

facilities, including the board members' roles and responsibilities.		
65. Prepare a 10-year capital budget forecast and capital asset plan for each Community Centre.	2014-2018	Complete
66. Coordinate joint purchase of supplies and services as per Community Centre board requests.	2014-2018	Ongoing
67. Facilitate the development of a formal agreement with Community Centre boards that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of boards, municipal staff, and municipal council.	2014-2018	Complete
68. Streamline Community Centre bookings to reduce volunteer workload and maximize revenues.	2014-2018	No action, Township has streamlined Township bookings
69. Liaise with boards and provide ongoing assistance and support according to the formal agreement between the boards and the municipality.	Immediate	Ongoing
70. Recruit youth members for all Community Centre Boards.	Immediate	Ongoing

8 Critical Issues Considerations

Based on the review of background documentation and site visit to four facilities in June 2024, the following preliminary list of critical issues has been assembled. These issues will be carried forward and considered when recommendations are formulated.

- Underutilized recreational facilities.
 - Decline in use of facilities (baseball diamonds, community halls).
- Declining users (sports organizations have decreased in size or never rebounded following the pandemic).
- Decreasing volunteers.
 - Many sports programming and hall boards are experiencing loss in residents willing to organize and manage.
- Aging Facilities.
 - decreased use and maintenance is also contributing to the deterioration of facilities and equipment.
- Accessibility.
 - Older buildings and facilities still require upgrades for accommodation.
- Lack of facilities or programming.
 - Ramara relies on neighbouring communities for multiple recreation opportunities, including rink sports, pools, in-doors multi-purpose courts.
- Shared programming delivery.
 - Like many small municipalities, not all programming or activities are run, managed and operated by municipal staff and control is external.
- Large geographical township and small population.
 - Settlement areas and growth are not always in proximity to amenities provided by Ramara.
- New recreational trends.

- While some activities are declining, others are expanding with increased investment demands, with uncertain program longevity.

- Aging population.

9 Conclusions

The Township of Ramara has a lot of similar characteristics to many rural communities in Ontario. There are significant challenges and opportunities associated with the rural nature of the municipality that limit some types of large recreational facilities more commonly found in urban centres but can allow for much more extensive natural and cultural heritage resource activities and programming.

Additionally, rural residents are accustomed to travelling for various activities which offers the opportunity to evaluate the recreation master plan in the context of the surrounding facilities and programming available. Although it is recognized that walkability and accessibility to facilities and programs is ideal, the reality of such a geographically large area with a relatively small population is that centralized urban facilities may not present the best alternative for the Township of Ramara.

The use of the 2012 recommendations list to evaluate success in those initiatives should be considered in the 2024 demographic context with the status of existing facilities in mind, and in consideration of input from residents, to determine the most strategic way forward for providing complete and healthy communities that are supported by a well-planned and executed recreational plan and system.

Joint and cooperative efforts to co-locate or co-facilitate recreational facilities and programming should be explored within the Township and with neighbouring jurisdictions to provide the most fulsome recreational opportunities for residents and visitors possible.

Appendix A: Policy Summary

Various policies exist from the provincial to the local level that set the framework for recreation planning in Ontario. This section of the report summarizes the direction provided in each of the key land use planning and other policies that apply to the Township of Ramara.

9.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS) is issued under the Authority of the Planning Act and is intended to provide policy direction on matters of provincial interest relating to land use planning. Current policy direction in the PPS of Section 1.5 relates to Public Spaces, Recreation, Parks, Trails and Open Space where:

1.5.1 Healthy, active communities should be promoted by:

- a) planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;
- b) planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources;
- c) providing opportunities for public access to shorelines; and
- d) recognizing provincial parks, conservation reserves, and other protected areas, and minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

9.2 Proposed Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

The Province of Ontario has a proposed updated PPS, 2024. When implemented and approved the policies under Chapter 3 would be relevant where:

3.1 General Policies for Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities

1. Infrastructure and public service facilities shall be provided in an efficient manner while accommodating projected needs.
 - a) Planning for infrastructure and public service facilities shall be coordinated and integrated with land use planning and growth management so that they:

- a) are financially viable over their life cycle, which may be demonstrated through asset management planning;
 - b) leverage the capacity of development proponents, where appropriate; and
 - c) are available to meet current and projected needs.
2. Before consideration is given to developing new infrastructure and public service facilities:
 - a) the use of existing infrastructure and public service facilities should be optimized; and
 - b) opportunities for adaptive re-use should be considered, wherever feasible.
 3. Infrastructure and public service facilities should be strategically located to support the effective and efficient delivery of emergency management services, and to ensure the protection of public health and safety in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5: Protecting Public Health and Safety.
 4. Public service facilities should be planned and co-located with one another, along with parks and open space where appropriate, to promote cost-effectiveness and facilitate service integration, access to transit and active transportation.
 5. Planning authorities, in consultation with school boards, should consider and encourage innovative approaches in the design of schools and associated child care facilities, such as schools integrated in high-rise developments, in strategic growth areas, and other areas with a compact built form.

9.3 A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Township of Ramara is located within the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Relevant guiding principles for the Parks and Recreation Master plan include:

- Support the achievement of complete communities that are designed to support healthy and active living and meet people’s needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime.
- Improve the integration of land use planning with planning and investment in infrastructure and public service facilities, including integrated service delivery through community hubs, by all levels of government.
- Conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Métis communities.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan shall have regard for policy of Section 3.2.8 Public Service Facilities where:

1. Planning for public service facilities, land use planning and investment in public service facilities will be coordinated to implement this Plan.
2. Public service facilities and public services should be co-located in community hubs and integrated to promote cost-effectiveness.
3. Priority should be given to maintaining and adapting existing public service facilities and spaces as community hubs to meet the needs of the community and optimize the long-term viability of public investments.
4. Existing public service facilities that are located in or near strategic growth areas and are easily accessible by active transportation and transit, where that service is available, should be the preferred location for community hubs.
5. Municipalities will collaborate and consult with service planning, funding, and delivery sectors to facilitate the co-ordination and planning of community hubs and other public service facilities.
6. New public service facilities, including hospitals and schools, should be located in settlement areas and preference should be given to sites that are easily accessible by active transportation and transit, where that service is available.

As well Section 4.2.5 Public Open Space policy would apply:

1. Municipalities, conservation authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties are encouraged to develop a system of publicly-accessible parkland, open space, and trails, including in shoreline areas, within the GGH that:
 - a. clearly demarcates where public access is and is not permitted;
 - b. is based on a co-ordinated approach to trail planning and development; and
 - c. is based on good land stewardship practices for public and private lands.
2. Municipalities are encouraged to establish an open space system within settlement areas, which may include opportunities for urban agriculture, rooftop gardens, communal courtyards, and public parks.

Additionally, within the plan is specific policy under Section 6 Simcoe Sub-area that identifies Simcoe County and the cities of Barrie and Orillia as a subsection of the plan where:

A more livable, compact, complete urban structure with good design and built form will support the achievement of economic and environmental benefits. Through effective growth management, municipalities will ensure that the natural environment is protected from the impacts of growth in the Simcoe Subarea, while

providing amenities for the residents and visitors to this area from across the GGH and beyond.

9.4 County of Simcoe Official Plan, 2023

The Official Plan of the County of Simcoe, consolidated in 2023, provides “policy context for land use planning taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental impacts of land use and development decisions.” The goals of the plan under Section 1.3 are:

- To protect, conserve, and enhance the County's natural and cultural heritage;
- To achieve wise management and use of the County’s resources;
- To implement growth management to achieve lifestyle quality and efficient and cost-effective municipal servicing, development and land use;
- To achieve coordinated land use planning among the County's local municipalities and with neighbouring counties, districts, regions, and separated cities, and First Nations lands;
- To further community economic development which promotes economic sustainability in Simcoe County communities, providing employment and business opportunities;
- To positively influence the creation of built environments within the County for people of all ages and abilities, which serve to establish complete healthy communities and enhance the quality of life for our residents;
- To promote socially and physically accessible rural and urban communities; and
- To promote, protect and enhance public health and safety.

9.5 Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2003

The 2003 Official Plan of the Township of Ramara sets out “goals, objectives and policies that guide Township Council, its committees, boards, officials and the public with regard to land use and physical changes and their effects on economic, environmental and community considerations in the Township.” Section 3.3.7 outlines the Official Plan Comprehensive Goals and Objectives of recreational use, where:

Goal

To ensure that sufficient land is provided for recreational purposes as development takes place, by maximizing the recreational facilities already existing and by

providing the necessary facilities to meet the future needs of the permanent and seasonal residents and tourists of the Township.

Objectives

1. Provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational activities throughout the Township.
2. Recreation activities should be consistent with the objective of protecting and conserving natural heritage resources.
3. Create recreational and cultural opportunities for the residents of the Township and that contribute to the overall attraction of Township.

Additional policy within Section 5.5 identifies the framework for Community Services:

5.5.1 This Plan provides the framework for services needed by the permanent and seasonal occupants of the Township. The Township provides the opportunities to establish and maintain education, recreation, public safety, health and social support, and religion in conjunction with other government agencies, the non-profit sector and the private sector. In particular, one of the considerations in designating new residential areas will be the adequacy of school sites and facilities in consultation with the school boards serving the Township.

5.5.2 One of the primary considerations of any proposed development is the well-being of the community, taking into account the diversity of the population.

5.5.3 The Township may provide for public and private linkages such as all season trails, pedestrian paths and bicycles lanes as part of its transportation network.

9.6 Proposed Township of Ramara Official Plan, 2024

The Township of Ramara is currently under an Official Plan Review. The draft plan has updated goals, objectives and policies. Section 3.5 of the Plan proposes a Tourism and Recreation Goal:

To encourage the establishment of tourism and recreational uses within the Township and to encourage the expansion and/or redevelopment of existing tourist establishments. The Township shall promote recreational opportunities for the both the permanent and seasonal population. The Township also recognizes the Rama Road Economic Employment District and area near Casino Rama as a vital tourism area that stimulates economic prosperity within the Township.

Section 5 is proposed policy for Public and Private Infrastructure. Parks and Open Space policy of 5.11 states:

1. The Township recognizes that forests, parks and trails are integral to the enjoyment of all residents of the Township.
2. The Township will encourage the protection of existing woodlands within existing settlement areas as recreational urban forests for use by residents and visitors.
3. The Township will work jointly with the provincial and County governments to establish a strategy for the implementation of a Parks and Recreation Plan. Part of the implementation measures may include public acquisition, conservation easements, development rights bonus, property tax incentives and other measures permitted and encouraged by provincial statute, regulation and policy.
4. The Township will encourage the establishment of passive and active parks to enhance access to recreation and nature.

As well, general development policies of Section 6.5 relate to Community Services where corresponding policy proposes:

1. This Plan provides the framework for services needed by the permanent and seasonal occupants of the Township. The Township provides the opportunities to establish and maintain education, recreation, public safety, health and social support, and religion in conjunction with other government agencies, the non-profit sector and the private sector. In particular, one of the considerations in designating new residential areas will be the adequacy of school sites and facilities in consultation with the school boards serving the Township.
2. One of the primary considerations of any proposed development is the well-being of the community, taking into account the diversity of the population.
3. The Township may provide for public and private linkages such as all-season trails, pedestrian paths and bicycles lanes as part of its transportation network.

9.7 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2012

The Township of Ramara Parks and Recreation Plan prepared in 2012 by Dunbar & Associates generated 70 recommendations following extensive public consultation. The report summarized the key priorities as:

- Formalize the Organizational Structure and Budget Procedures for Delivery of Recreation
- Consolidate and Adopt a New Approach to Municipal Parkland Allocation

- Identify Waterfront Park Development Priorities
- Expand the Ramara Centre
- Complete the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs Project
- Work in Partnership with Severn to Improve Washago Outdoor Rink Opportunities

The public survey conducted in 2012 concluded with the top 10 wants of that community:

- Trails for biking and walking
- Outdoor ice rink
- Natural areas/parkland
- Waterfront access with parking
- Playgrounds
- Open space for fairs, events, etc.
- Canoe/boat launch
- Display/community gardens
- Baseball diamond
- Ball hockey court

9.8 Township of Ramara Strategic Plan 2023-2026

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan was developed in collaboration of the Ramara community, staff and council with a vision of:

“A connected community that focuses on responsible and sustainable growth while preserving our rural heritage and unique features.”

The key strategic priorities include: Service Excellence, Sustainable Infrastructure, Community Connection and Strategic Growth. A main initiative under the Community Connection priority is to update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The action plan includes:

- Put together a working committee to Draft a Special Events policy and meet with user groups and community centres on the interests and types of special events held in the area.
- Develop partnerships to revive, develop and promote events around Ramara.
- Continue to increase public awareness around the community calendar and promote how organizations and the public can add to the calendar.
- Investigate financial opportunities to assist in new and revived community events in Ramara.

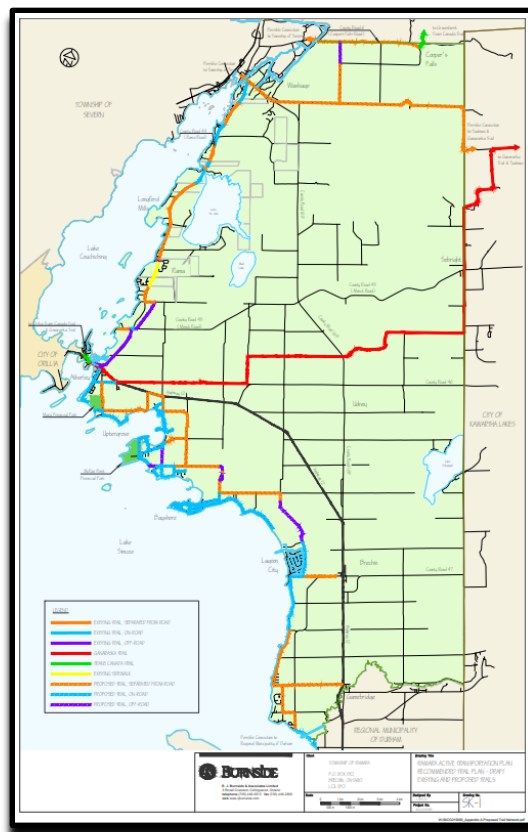
Other initiatives relevant to the Parks and Recreation Master plan include an update to the Active Transportation Plan and working with partners to create a Program Outreach to increase awareness to social services and programs.

9.9 Township of Ramara Active Transportation Plan, 2010

The Township of Ramara Active Transportation Plan recognized three multi-use trails back in 2010: a Lagoon City to Brechin Trail, the Ramara Trail and the Rama Road Trail. The Active Transportation plan recommended the expansion and connection of a township wide direction, recognizing expansion would follow three main corridor types: on-road trail, adjacent (to road) trail and off-road trail corridors. Both existing and proposed trails systems are illustrated in Figure 1.

An active Ramara Trails Committee is an advisory committee to the Township of Ramara Council and an Active Transportation Plan update is an initiative of the Township of Ramara Strategic Plan.

FIGURE 1: Active Transportation Plan Map, 2010



9.10 Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023

“Through extensive consultation and planning,” the Township of Ramara Economic Development Strategy was developed and includes 5 strategic goals:

1. Increase the amount of infrastructure available to the businesses and community, including internet, natural gas, water, wastewater and transportation
2. Enhance and increase the level of capacity and service for economic development in Ramara Township
3. Identify and address barriers to development
4. Support Business Retention and attraction from start-up to expansion
5. Promote Investment in Ramara

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan should consider the strategic objectives that can help promote economic development and increase awareness of local parks and recreation locations and opportunities. Specifically, the strategic goal to:

Promote Investment in Ramara

Objective 1: Complete a branding exercise

Action Areas

- Perform a branding exercise
- Roll-out and implementation of recommended actions
- Communicate out new brand
- Update Township materials to reflect the brand

Object 2: Improve Township signage

Action Areas

- Explore feasibility of digital signs to advertise community events
- Update Township signage to reflect new brand
- Identify locations and attractions for wayfinding signage (ex. Beach, library, farmer’s market)
- Purchase and install wayfinding signage

Objective 3: Market available land and investment opportunities

Action Areas

- Create marketing materials for Township and industrial park: Materials should include a community profile, information on doing business in the Township, information on available properties, etc.
- Identify channels to promote the industrial park
- Promote industrial park lands
- Continue to partner with OLC/County/Small r regional group for investment attraction projects (including: regional marketing partnership, tourism attraction/investment, etc.

9.11 Accessibility Plan 2019-2024

The purpose of the Accessibility Plan is to implement and improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities with respect to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. The Township of Ramara's Statement of Commitment reads as follows:

Ramara is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. Ramara believes in integration and equal opportunity. Ramara is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The plan recognizes that "the Design of Public Spaces Standards applies to public spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped on or after January 1, 2016," and would be relevant to the on-going planning, development and improvements of Ramara Parks and Recreation facilities. The plan and standards will apply to:

- Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes
- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas
- Outdoor Play Spaces
- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Accessible Parking
- Obtaining Services
- Maintenance Planning of Public Spaces

It is our understanding that the Township of Ramara is currently undergoing an Accessibility Audit and proper consultation with the Accessibility Committee will help ensure future development removes barriers and increases access to people with disabilities.

9.12 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan was a collaboration between the County of Simcoe and the lower-tier municipalities. The plan is committed to working “together towards improved social outcomes” for the residents of the county. The plan seeks to improve equity, access and quality relating to mental health, access to service, employment, and social connectiveness.

Recreational and leisure programming can play a major role in the wellbeing of residents, their social connections and feeling of belonging to a variety of individuals and demographics. The plan identifies many factors and goals aiming to improve wellbeing. Specifically, two areas of focus the Parks and Recreational Plan directions could address are:

- Social Isolation in Seniors
- Transitional Age Youth Services

9.13 Recreational Mapping

The Township of Ramara Website hosts a great deal of information regarding parks and recreational assets within the municipality. Parks, halls, beaches, trails and other Ramara facilities can all be found. There is the possibility of simplifying the process as not all facilities are connected or linked to one another.

9.14 Fees and Charge By-law

The information to rent a facility is online, but often confusing to get the information you need. There are some facilities that are managed by township staff and associated fees are easily found. The halls or groups managed by community boards do not share fees and individuals need to be contacted to obtain correct information. This can be a challenging process.