Revitalizing the Beachway Park: Recommendations for Improving the Waterfront Trail along the shores of Burlington, Ontario

By

Samantha J. Romlewski

A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
August 2015

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Acknowledgments

Firstly, thank you to my supportive and loving family – Mom, Dad and ‘the bros’.

To the great friends I’ve had the pleasure of meeting during my time at SURP – I feel fortunate to have formed friendships with you all and create memories that will never be forgotten.

To Professor Ajay Agarwal – thank you for your encouragement and guidance throughout my time at SURP and in writing this report.
Executive Summary

Topic and Purpose
This report aims at understanding how urban design features can be used to help create more livable and beautiful waterfront areas by focusing on the design of the Waterfront Trail running through Beachway Park in Burlington, Ontario. In June 2014, the Region of Halton released a Request for Proposals for consulting services to develop a new Master Plan, environmental management and restoration plan, implementation plan and communication strategy for the Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park. Amongst all these future changes and revitalization of the Waterfront, it will be important for planners to develop the most effective urban design strategies to improve the Waterfront Trail in order to meet the overall vision for this public space. The report will utilize a variety of research methods with the ultimate objective to provide recommendations for future trail design that will contribute to creating a more vibrant public realm and improve the Waterfront Trail to build a better, more attractive park.

The following research question will be addressed:

What design and planning interventions could be implemented to improve the Waterfront Trail running through the Beachway Park in Burlington, Ontario, to contribute to the creation of a vibrant and successful public space?

Study Area:
The study area is located at the Beachway Park in Burlington, Ontario, close to the downtown area. The park is located on the shore of Lake Ontario and features a 2-kilometre portion of the Waterfront Trail starting from the edge of Spencer Smith Park to the Burlington Canal Pier. In addition to the multi-use trail, the park also features green space, a sandy beachfront, a beach pavilion area and playground.
Methods
This report will first conduct a literature review of urban design manuals and waterfront strategies, focusing on best practices in design and planning strategies for walkways and public space. Information will be gathered concerning various design features and trail support facilities, such as signage, materials, access points, landscaping, parking areas and other amenities including benches and restrooms (Flink, et al., 2001). Collection of design guidelines will help to compile a literature review of best practices, which can then be used to guide the analysis of Burlington Beachway’s existing conditions, analyses of each case study in Hamilton and Mississauga, and ultimately, inform the recommendations for improvement to the trail along Burlington’s waterfront.

Evaluation
An evaluative index was adapted from a collection of design guidelines and best practices was used in this report to analyze Burlington Beachway Park’s existing conditions and each case study. Ultimately, these evaluations will help to inform recommendations for improvement to the Waterfront Trail along Burlington’s shoreline. The following urban design features were focused upon in the report:

1. Seating
2. Signage
3. Lighting
4. Landscaping
5. Trail Design
6. Access to Water
7. Parking Considerations
8. Trail Support Amenities

Recommendations
1. Seating – Provide additional seating along the walkway that is uniform in design and material.
2. Signage – Provide signage that is legible, clear and provides good information to help inform park visitors about available amenities, park features and how to navigate through the park system.
3. Lighting – Add lighting to allow park users to use the trail into the evening.
4. Landscaping – Introduce plantings, trees and flowers beds to create a more vibrant public realm.
5. Trail Design – Ensure a consistent and smooth multi-use pathway, and consider creating separated lanes.
6. *Access to Water* – Provide better access to the water by creating more paths down to the water and improving lookout points, especially at the Burlington Canal pier.

7. *Parking Considerations* – Ensure landscaped buffers between the trail and parking areas, and consider sustainable paving methods.

8. *Trail Support Amenities* – Introduce amenities such as picnic pavilions, a naturalized playground and interpretive elements to facilitate gathering, play and enjoyment along the Waterfront Trail.
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1.0 Introduction

With a limited amount of public land along the shores of Lake Ontario, it is important that waterfront public spaces are vibrant areas that create opportunities for both the local community and visitors. Cities seek to create waterfronts that are places of enjoyment with visual and physical access to the land and water, while elevating quality of life for users (Fisher B., 2004). As a natural sand beach located in a downtown, Burlington’s Beachway Park is a premier public space in the City of Burlington. One of the most important components of the park is the 2-kilometer Waterfront Trail running through the park, extending from Spencer Smith Park to the Burlington Canal Pier.

Figure 1: Study Area. Beachway Park is located on the shore of Lake Ontario (Google Maps, 2015)
Currently, the City of Burlington and Halton Region are committed to enhancing the park through an updated Master Plan, which is focused on improving the park to meet the following council-approved vision:

“An inviting and publicly accessible waterfront park that will provide the community with a wide range of recreational, cultural and tourist opportunities, while respecting the natural hazards and environmentally sensitive and complex ecosystems.” (City of Burlington, 2013).

In June 2014, the Region of Halton released a Request for Proposals for consulting services to develop a new master plan, environmental management and restoration plan, implementation plan and communication strategy for the Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park (Halton Region, 2014). Amongst all these future changes and anticipated revitalization of the park, it will be important for planners to develop the most effective urban design strategies to improve the Waterfront Trail in order to meet the overall vision for this public space. This report will offer recommendations for future trail design that will contribute to creating a more vibrant public realm and improve the Waterfront Trail that will ultimately help create a better, more attractive park. Recommendations will focus on urban design features related to:

1. Seating  
2. Signage  
3. Lighting  
4. Landscaping  
5. Trail Design  
6. Access to Water  
7. Parking Considerations  
8. Trail Support Amenities

1.1 Background and Context

Burlington’s Beachway Park is located steps from the city’s vibrant downtown core, nestled between Spencer Smith Park and the City of Hamilton. Two kilometers of the Waterfront Trail span the length of the Beachway Park, creating opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in a variety of activities close to the water. The park is situated on a unique landform known as a baymouth bar, a natural sand feature formed
over thousands of years. As a designated Environmentally Sensitive Area, the park is characterized by a dune ecosystem and sandy shoreline, making the park a unique recreational resources and a regional destination (Halton Region, 2013).

Beachway Park sits upon a baymouth bar, a sandbar separating Burlington Bay form Lake Ontario. It was formed over 10,000 years ago from and gravel sediment deposits resulting from colliding waves. The land was first used by aboriginal people in the area as a shortcut around the head of the lake and was known as ‘Daonasedao’, which translates to ‘where the sand forms a bar’ (Halton Region, 2013). In the early 1800s, European settlers established communities in the area, creating a popular destination for trade and transportation. The beach remained a vibrant area into the 1900s, as a popular site for recreational activities, and even the construction of lakeside cottages and entertainment spots. With the addition of a railway spur line from Hamilton in the early 1900s, the area became more of a transportation corridor and less exclusive, ending its attraction as a resort community. Although the Burlington and Hamilton area experienced great success during industrialization of the early twentieth century, the Burlington Bay was so polluted that people no longer wanted to swim in it, and the Burlington Beachway Park became an undesirable destination (Halton Region, 2013). Since the 1970s there have been efforts to restore the park to its former greatness. The railway tracks along the length of the beach were removed in 1984 and incorporated in to the Waterfront Trail. There have been several Master Plans for the area which establish a vision for the beach strip, focused on developing a vibrant waterfront park and restoring many of the characteristics that initially attracted the First Nations people and European settlers to the area (Halton Region, 2013).

1.2 Using Urban Design to Revitalize Beachway Park

Design excellence plays a key role in creating a more livable and beautiful waterfront areas. Where possible, design features should compliment each other to create consistency and sense of place. The design of features that are placed throughout a park space, such as seating, lighting, waste receptacles and signage, should compliment the natural environment with a unified design or motif to help foster a sense of identity along
the waterfront and the walkway (City of Mississauga, 2008). Urban design literature points to subtler qualities that may influence choices about active travel and active leisure time referred to as perceptual qualities of the urban environment, or urban design qualities. Such qualities are presumed to intervene between physical features and behavior, encouraging people to walk. (Ewing & Clemente, 2013). This report will explore opportunities to not only help to create a more vibrant public realm along the Waterfront Trail at Beachway Park, but also help create a park identity that is memorable and attractive to the local community and regional visitors.
2.0 Methodology

This report will recommend design and planning interventions that could be implemented to improve the Waterfront Trail running through the Beachway Park in Burlington, Ontario, to contribute to the creation of a vibrant and successful public space. This will be achieved by conducting a review of urban design literature to develop an evaluation index to analyze Beachway Park existing conditions, analyze each case study, and ultimately, inform recommendations for improvement to the walkway along Burlington’s waterfront. This report will then undertake a qualitative case study of two similar areas in the Great Golden Horseshoe to see how urban design practices are used in practical situations and help identify successful aspects of these cases. Best practices identified through the process of review of urban design literature and case studies will inform recommendations to the City of Burlington and Halton Region regarding the revitalization of the Waterfront Trail in the Beachway Park.

2.1 Evaluation Index

To assess the urban design features at each site, an evaluation index was created to analysis existing conditions at Burlington’s Beachway Park and examine features that make each case study a successful public space. Urban design features included in the evaluation index were based upon evaluation tools used in past research reports (Grabowski, 2014; Miranda, 2009), design manuals and various other waterfront park strategies and design guidelines. A review of these documents focused on best practices in design and planning strategies for trails and public spaces. Information was gathered concerning various design features and trail support facilities, such as signage, materials, access points, landscaping and various other elements. A collection of design guidelines and best practices from these sources were used to develop the evaluation index to analysis Burlington Beachway Park’s existing conditions and each case study. Ultimately, these evaluations will help to inform recommendations for improvement to the Waterfront Trail along Burlington’s shoreline.
A qualitative approach to this evaluation index was chosen to allow for a descriptive analysis of urban design features located at each study site using various direct observation strategies. This method will allow for record of more detail regarding presence of various elements, their condition and location within each park. This evaluation index involves recording the type of feature, the number of features present in the area, and a comment section to record relevant information such as condition, materials and overall design. To assess each site and complete the evaluation index, various fieldwork strategies were used. First, boundaries of the study site were established to identify the area to be studied and then walking through the park to become familiar with the same (Ewing & Clemente, 2013). Evaluation Indexes were completed while in the field, while observing the site and assessing urban design features first-hand. While completing the evolution index various tools were used including counting, looking for traces, photography and keeping a diary. Looking for traces of human activity is a method of indirect observation used to discover things that have been used in ways not originally intended. Trace could include trampled paths over grass or gravels, showing the lines people follow when travelling through a space, or traces of skateboards on park benches. Photography and a field diary were also utilized to document site conditions that could be used later for further analysis. Studying notes and photos at a later time can help to discover new connections and details (Gehl & Svarre, 2013).

2.1.1 Literature Review for Evaluation Index

Seating
As an essential feature of any public space, seating provides the opportunity for users of all ages and abilities to sit, gather and enjoy their community. Whether users are using a park for active or passive recreation, seating allow for people to stay in a space for longer periods of time, as it provides a chance to relax and rest. A variety of seating types should be made available such as fixed benches, picnic tables, retaining walls and steps, as well as multi-functional and innovative seating options such as planter walls and stone blocks or boulders (City of Mississauga, 2008; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005). Seating should be located in areas that provide good views of the water and other landmarks, at frequent intervals along walkways, or
locations offering shelter from wind and sun. Busier gathering areas and quieter locations should have seating, to accommodate a variety of user needs and slightly setback from walkways as to not disrupt pedestrian flow (City of Mississauga, 2008; Flink, C., et al., 2001; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005). Further, benches and other seating should be designed with durable materials and constructed to compliment other furnishings such as waste receptacles (City of Hamilton, 2010).

**Signage (Wayfinding)**

Important to the functionality to any public space and park, signage is a tool to guide users through a space, mark entrances, provide information about the area and point out nearby facilities and local points of interest. All signage, especially welcome and information signs, should be designed with a consistent logo and materials to establish a dominant image, highlight uniqueness of a space and help define a strong identity. Signage should also be legible to all visitors and be placed within the public realm to be highly visible, but not act as obstacles in spaces (City of Hamilton, 2010; Flink, C., et al., 2001).

In particular, signage for parks is three-fold (Refer to Figure 2). Primary park markers should be placed at vehicle entrances, identifying the park from the road to draw drivers to the park. Secondary park markers should be pedestrian scaled and located where pedestrians enter/exit the park. These signs should be inviting and provide information such as a park map, and a list of available activities and facilities. Lastly, minor orientation signs should be located within the park and along pathways to provide directional information and identifies park features (City of Mississauga, 2008). Regardless of the scale and type of park signage, all signs should be complimentary with repeating design to create a sense of continuity and consistency through the space.
**Lighting**

Lighting is a key feature in any public space to extend hours of use, provide good visibility and create a sense of safety. Lighting design should include tall standard where appropriate and pedestrian scaled features and low bollards, especially along pathways and facilities. To reduce intensity, glare and spillover, lighting should be designed to minimize light pollution and should produce white lighting. Lighting features are encouraged to be consistent throughout the public space and be attractive features that contribute to the sense of place. Further, sustainable lighting options should also be considered, such as alternatively-sources energy, including solar powered lights (City of Mississauga, 2008; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005).

**Landscaping**

Landscaping is an important aspect of the public realm, adding visual interest and giving the space a personality of its own. First, trails and paths running through parks should have plantings along edges that include a minimum two feet wide mowed shoulder on each side to create a groomed appearance and increase visibility (Flink, C., et al., 2001). Parks should feature a variety of plants, trees and shrubs that are complementary to the natural environment and suit the scale and character for the area (City of Mississauga, 2008; Flink, C., et al., 2001).

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**Figure 2: Categories of Park Signage (City of Mississauga, 2008).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Orientation</th>
<th>Secondary Park Marker</th>
<th>Minor Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Park Marker</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary Park Marker</strong></td>
<td><strong>Minor Orientation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vertical Scale</td>
<td>- Pedestrian Scale</td>
<td>- Pedestrian scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Located at vehicle entrances to the park</td>
<td>- Located where pedestrian circulation enters/exits park</td>
<td>- Located within park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visible from traffic routes</td>
<td>- Located at north/south street connections at Lakeshore Road</td>
<td>- Provides directional information for park features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifies park name and street address</td>
<td>- Provides map of park and location in park system</td>
<td>- Provides identification of features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Completes with lighting and landscaping</td>
<td>- Identifies park activities available</td>
<td>- Consistent in materials and design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identifies permanent and event information</td>
<td>- Uses internationally acceptable symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Includes some comfort features such as seating, lighting, emergency buzzers, telephones or audio information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where appropriate, naturalization can be used as a landscaping method, which can be left to develop with minimal intervention and reduces maintenance costs. Naturalization should utilize indigenous species that are sustainable and respect the existing environment. Ornamental planting features such as flower beds and colourful shrubs should be considered for spring/summer months and planted in high traffic areas such as park entrances, gateways or major facilities. These eye-catching features can add visual interest to the public realm, attract people into the park and contribute to the space’s overall vibrancy (City of Mississauga, 2008).

Figure 3: Ornamental plant clusters can be located at park entrances for visual interest.

Trail Design

Multi-use recreational trails extending through parks and along waterfronts provide opportunities for active travel in public spaces and are also a source of active and passive activities such as walking, cycling and inline skating. Considerations for trail design include width, materials and separation features. To accommodate all users, trails should be wide enough to have wheeled travelers and pedestrians travelling at the same time and in both directions. Design must also consider smooth and barrier-free paving surfaces such as asphalt and concrete, as hard surfaces can accommodate a diversity of users. Access to trails should accommodate users of all abilities by clearly defining the trail
with markers and signs, and avoiding all barriers such as gates or steps. Harder surfaces also provide long-term durability and reduced maintenance costs. Further, to reduce conflict between different types of park visitors, trails should ideally be physically separated using barriers or painted lines to create different lanes for pedestrians and wheeled users (City of Mississauga, 2008; Flink, C., et al., 2001; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005).

![Figure 4: Example of separated trail lanes (City of Mississauga, 2008).](image)

**Access to Water**

An important aspect of waterfront parks is the ability for park users to access the water to appreciate the natural resources and participate in recreational activities. Access to the water could include swimming and enjoying sandy beaches, or as simple as walking along the shoreline. The extent of public access to the water depends on the scale and character of the waterfront, as interaction with the water may be dangerous in some instances. Where water access is safe and desirable, users should be provided with generous access to the water using steps, pebble beaches, paths and boardwalks to reach the water with ease. In addition to physical interaction with the water, facilities should also provide water-viewing opportunities (City of Portland, 2002).
Parking Considerations

Design considerations for parking facilities in parks should include both automobile parking and bike racks. The layout and orientation of parking lots should be minimized to conserve open and recreational space, and support alternative modes of transportation other than the automobile. New or existing parking lots should be constructed to minimize the amount of pavement and more sustainable practices should be considered, such as permeable surfaces. When possible, parking lots should be screened with gardens, trees and other plants to minimize visual impact, or a landscaped buffer, between the lot and the trail should be provided to promote pedestrian safety (City of Mississauga, 2008; Flink, C., et al., 2001).

Figure 5: New and redeveloped parking areas should utilize ‘green paving’ solutions (City of Mississauga, 2008).
To promote the use of active transportation to and from parks, bicycle racks are important feature to provide so park users can safely store their bicycles while enjoy park amenities. Bicycle racks should be placed at active areas of the waterfront such as pedestrian entrances, parking areas, play areas and other gathering spaces. Further, all bicycle racks should have a uniform appearance to create consistency of design throughout the park area (City of Mississauga, 2008).

Another important consideration for supporting sustainable modes of transportation to and from the park is the presence of transit stops near the park. Transit stops must be easily accessible to users of all ages and abilities by providing barrier-free pathways to the stop and other features such as bus shelters and benches.
**Trail Support Amenities**

In addition to the above, there are other supportive amenities that contribute to a park’s overall vibrancy and help shape a sense of place by providing enjoyable features that encourage people to gather, play and spend time in a public space. These supportive amenities include:

- Interpretive Elements
- Public Art
- Shelters, Picnic Areas and BBQs
- Public Facilities (Food Facilities, water fountains, playgrounds, splash pads and restrooms)
- Waste and Recycling receptacles

Interpretive Elements are design features that can be installed in waterfront parks to add interest, provide educational opportunities for the public and enrich the user experience. These elements should be constructed with durable materials and use innovative designs to convey information. Such designs could include plaques in pavement, attractive signboards with pictures and games, or interpretive features on benches, planters or low walls. There are many ways that interpretive elements can be used to relay information to park users. Elements can be used to identify unique natural, historical or cultural features of the park area or the larger community. These design features help people connect with the park and the community as whole, encouraging them to return and spend more time at the waterfront (City of Mississauga, 2008; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005).

The addition of public art to communal spaces and parks can elevate an area as a great local destination by helping to create a vibrant and festive atmosphere, while improving aesthetic quality. Along trails, public art serve as nodes for social activities and gathering, and acts as trail markings, while increasing connectivity and enriching the user experience along the trail. Similar to Interpretive and Educational Elements, public art should compliment the setting and reflect the community, local heritage and the
environment to create a sense of discovery. Art installations should be durable, accessible and visible from the trail. To contribute to the recreational aspect of parks, public art could also be interactive, allowing for visitors to sit, climb and stand on the piece, if deemed appropriate (City of Hamilton, 2010; City of Mississauga, 2008; San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005).

Figure 7: Some interpretive elements function as public art while providing education information. Location: Embarcadero Promenade, San Francisco (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 2005).

Shelters, picnic tables and BBQs are all public amenities that help visitors enjoy their time in the park, stay for longer periods of time and gather with other people. Large formal picnic areas, with multiple tables, should be located on a firm surface and set back from pathways, as to not disrupt trail users. Individual picnic tables should also be made available for smaller groups and distributed throughout the park. Further, picnic tables and other seating areas that are shelters with roofs should be considered to protect park visitors from sun, wind and rain, while providing a place to gather. BBQs are another amenity that contributes to the enjoyment of park users and should be surrounded by hard paving and mounted at an appropriate height. All shelters, picnic tables and BBQ
facilities should be constructed from durable materials and well maintained to remain an attractive feature for the public to use frequently (City of Mississauga, 2008; Flink, C., et al., 2001).

Public Facilities such as food establishments, water fountains, playgrounds, splash pads and restrooms are all features attract people to parks and public spaces, while providing recreational activities and allow for people to remain in the area for an extended period of time. Facilities should be located in areas that are most used by park visitors, well maintained, clearly demarcated using signs and accessible by users of all ages and abilities (City of Mississauga, 2008).

Waste and recycling receptacles are necessary in any public space to keep the area clean and attractive. These features should be constructed in a contemporary design that is repeated throughout the space and complimentary to other features such as benches and lighting (City of Hamilton, 2010).

2.2 Burlington Beachway Park Analysis

An important component of this report is the examination of existing conditions of the Waterfront Trail in Burlington in order to determine what aspects of the waterfront space can be improved upon. Analysis of Beachway Park’s existing conditions included review of relevant municipal documents and direct observations conducted on-site and documented through photographs. In conjunction with photographs, direction observation utilized the evaluation index to assess existing urban design features throughout the park.

2.3 Qualitative Case Study Review

This report will undertake a qualitative case study of two similar areas in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to see how urban design elements are used in practical situations and help identify successful aspects of these cases. The reviews will seek to assess each trail in regards to urban design elements that contribute to the area’s vibrancy and improve the waterfront experience for users. Each case study will involve the examination of municipal documents, such as applicable Master Plans and Strategies and will also involve on-site, direct observation to complete the evaluation index for each site. The
outcome of such an analysis will help to determine whether design elements in each case can be used to inform recommendations for the Waterfront Trail in Burlington. This report will examine two different cases in Hamilton and Mississauga, both of which have a section of the Waterfront Trail extending along their shoreline.

2.3.1 Hamilton Confederation Park

The first case study that will be examined is Confederation Park in Hamilton, Ontario. The Waterfront Trail extends along the Hamilton Waterfront and also runs through Confederation Park. This waterfront area is similar to Burlington’s Beachway Park, as they are located beside each other along Lake Ontario and have similar characteristics such as a sandy beachfront and a more naturalized environment. The development of Confederation Park has been guided by the Confederation Park Master Plan, last reviewed and updated in 2010 (City of Hamilton, 2010). Although Burlington Beachway Park is smaller than Hamilton’s, Halton Region has acknowledged the Hamilton Beach area as a vibrant communal space and believe that the experience of the development of the Hamilton Beach can help to inform decision making on the Burlington side (Halton Region, 2013).

2.3.2 Mississauga Waterfront

The second case study is Mississauga’s waterfront, which is comprised of 22 waterfront public areas. This area has been examined through a Waterfront Strategy that identifies priority parks for future development (City of Mississauga, 2008). The case study will focus on two existing parks, including Lakefront Promenade Park and J.J. Plaus Park, to observe urban design features in these portions of the Waterfront Trail.

Information for each case study will be collected by way of document review, an analysis of available maps and direct observations utilizing the evaluation index. Best practices identified through the process of literature review and case studies will guide the preparation of recommendations for the City of Burlington and Halton Region regarding the redevelopment of the Waterfront Trail running through the Burlington Beachway Park.
3.0 Burlington Beachway Park Analysis

3.1 Purpose and Background

To understand how the Waterfront Trail running through Beachway Park can be improved using urban design features, an analysis of current conditions must first be conducted. This process can reveal what aspects of the public realm along the trail could be improved upon to create a more vibrant and attractive waterfront park. Analysis of Burlington’s Beachway Park includes document review of relevant municipal and regional documents, and an evaluation of existing urban design features.

Call for Proposals

The City of Burlington and Region of Halton are committed to ensuring that the Beachway Park is an inviting and accessible waterfront park, by improving the park experience for all existing and future residents. To facilitate the advancement of Beachway Park, the Region of Halton issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in June 2014 for consulting services to develop a new master plan, environmental management and restoration plan, implementation plan and communication strategy for the Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park. It is a fundamental goal of the new Master Plan to balance current and future public recreational and educational use of the lands with the need to protect the natural and cultural heritage attributes of the park. The RFP calls for plans and strategies that will guide all aspects of park development and implementation program including park infrastructure and amenity composition program, location and integration, natural area protection and restoration works, streetscape and pathway design and service infrastructure improvements (Halton, 2014).

The RFP calls for design excellence, through strategies and plans that will elevate the Park’s public realm to foster a greater sense of place and create a more livable and beautiful waterfront in the Burlington Beach area. The Master Plan will be a document used to clarify planning and design direction and demonstrate the manner in which future
development will unfold. In addition to protecting this sensitive environmental area, the City and Region have identified goals and objectives to guide park design to facilitate the creation of inviting and accessible public spaces that will:

- be attractive, inclusive and visionary in nature
- contain a variety of linked open spaces a both the water’s edge and the backshore areas, including programmed and unprogrammed open spaces, trails, animated and diversely used pathways and promenades and multiuse plazas and amenity areas
- explore the design of a trail connection to the Hamilton beach by way of a pedestrian link on the lake side of the Federal lift bridge
- be active and animated throughout the day, the week and the year as a four seasons destination
- offer a variety of attractions to both residents and visitors
- create a streetscape vision for Lakeshore Road, south of Northshore Blvd.
- consider the role and location of multi-use amenity spaces and plazas, alternative vending, cultural, art and heritage display opportunities, public events and concerts
- explore the use and structure of the spine pathways system to accommodate a variety of users, animated nooks and spaces, passive uses (such as nature viewing, benches and water vistas), entertainment and buskering, portable food vending, active recreation, etc. and;
- display pride in the Region’s and City’s heritage and excellence in design (Halton Region, 2014).

3.2 Evaluation of Existing Conditions

Seating
Along the Beachway Park trail, there is a good amount of seating available for visitors consisting of benches and picnic tables that provide people the opportunity to sit, relax, gather and spend more time in the space. Seating is concentrated around the Beachway Park Pavilion and along the trail between the Pavilion and Spencer Smith Park. Seating
becomes scarce between the Pavilion and the canal, which only a few benches available for users. Some of the seating, including many of the picnic tables are in poor condition, which could deter park visitors from using them for gathering purposes. Picnic tables tend to be placed in random grass areas, with Further, seating along the trail lacks cohesiveness in regards to design and use of materials, with over 5 different designs present in the park. Majority of the benches along the trail are facing the trail, with very few opportunities for park visitors to sit and view the water.

![Image of poorly maintained picnic tables](image1.jpg)

**Figure 8**: Poorly maintained picnic tables positioned off the trail in random open spaces (Romlewski, 2014).

![Images of benches with varying designs](image2.jpg)

**Figure 9**: Lack of uniformity in seating design (Romlewski, 2014).

**Signage/Wayfinding**

Signage throughout Beachway Park is quite poor with small and out-of-date entrance signs and little in terms of wayfinding elements. The entrance sign to the park from Spencer Smith Park is not visually impactful and the text on the sign indicating entrance into Beachway Park is small and hidden behind tree branches. As a major pedestrian gateway into the park, this transition between Beachway Park and Spencer Smith Park should be distinct and signage should inform park visitors of the change.
Entrance signage to the park is good at the vehicle entrance off Lakeshore Road, adjacent to the Beach Pavilion. The older sign indicates the park name, and various amenities available at that location including swimming, washrooms and picnic tables. Although there is good signage located at the pavilion, wayfinding signage along the trail is fairly poor with small text and arrows, and trail maps that are illegible.

Figure 11: Example of good entrance signs at the vehicle entrance to the park (left) and poor wayfinding signs found along the trail (middle & right). (Romlewski, 2014).
Lighting

There are no lighting fixtures present along the Waterfront Trail in Beachway Park, except for a few small lighting fixtures located at the park pavilion, to provide some light near the washrooms. Portions of the park that are closest to the road may receive some light from the street lights on Lakeshore Road, however there are not lights directly illuminating the path. This would make it difficult for park visitors to enjoy the park into the evening.

![Light fixture at Beachway Park Pavilion](image)

**Figure 12: Example of a light fixture located at the Beachway Park Pavilion (Romlewski, 2014).**

Landscaping

Landscaping along Beachway Park is very minimal, as the vast majority of plants have grown naturally over time. There are no planters, flowers or other organized plantings along the trail. A portion of the trail has been designed to include a mowed shoulder on each side to create a groomed appearance and increase visibility.

Trail Design

The Waterfront Trail running through Beachway Park is a multi-use trail, designed to accommodate various park users, including pedestrians, cyclists and inline skaters. Although most of the trail is paved with smooth asphalt, there is a lengthy portion of the trail that is inconsistent. As seen in Figure 13, this wide portion of trail is half asphalt and
half gravel, which may be problematic for some recreational activities or modes of transportation that require smooth surfaces.

![Image of trail and pier](image)

**Figure 13:** Example of the mowed shoulder along trail and inconsistent use of trail materials (Romlewski, 2014).

Located at the most eastern side of the park is the Burlington Canal South Pier. This canal provides access from Hamilton Harbour into Lake Ontario and is located under the Skyway Bridge. This pier provides spectacular views of the rest of Beachway Park, the City of Burlington, and on a clear day, even Toronto’s skyline can be seen across Lake Ontario. As seen in Figure 14, the canal pier is poorly connected to the rest of the Waterfront Trail, only linked by an informal dirt path, created by many pedestrians utilizing the same pathway over time. Further, the pier provides no opportunities for visitors to comfortably spend time, as there is no seating other design features present.
Figure 14: Informal dirt pathway connecting the Waterfront Trail and the Burlington Canal South Pier (Romlewski, 2014).

Figure 15: View from the Burlington Canal South Pier (Romlewski, 2014).
Access to Water

There are several access points to the water from the trail including the Beachway Pavilion, paved pathways and informal pathways that have been formed over time. Informal pathways can be identified by disturbed vegetation between the Waterfront Trail and the beach, which have been created by people using the same path consistently. This may be an indication that there are not enough formal paths for park visitors to access the water, so they have created their own. Along the portion of the trail stretching from the park entrance near Spencer Smith Park and the Beach Pavilion there are at least five informal pathways leading down to the beach.

The portion of the Waterfront Trail running through Beachway Park does not offer very good views of the water, due to the thick vegetation of trees between the trail and the lake. Despite this challenge, there are three lookout points along the trail that allow park visitors to stop, sit and enjoy views of the beach and Lake Ontario. These lookout points are designed as wooden platforms, with some available seating that overlook the lake.

![Example of informal pathways along the trail (left) and lookout points (right). (Romlewski, 2014).](image)

Parking Considerations

There are several parking lots adjacent to Beachway Park that allow people to park their cars and visit the park or enjoy the beach in the summer. While most of the lots are well designed, a large portion of the most western parking lot is a gravel lot with a very narrow buffer between the multi-use trail and the parking lot, which impedes feelings of
pedestrian safety. Further, along the Waterfront Trail there are two locations where bicycle racks are available. The first location is in front of the Beachway Park Pavilion, where the design of the racks is utilitarian and has no relation to the design of any other features in the park. The second location is located in the western side of the park. Bicycle racks in both locations are rusted, bent and in poor condition.

Figure 17: Example of Beachway park parking lots with a wide, landscape buffer (left), and very narrow space with concrete blocks between the trail and the lot (right). (Romlewski, 2014).

Figure 18: Bike racks located along the trail in Beachway Park (Romlewski, 2014).
**Trail Support Amenities**

The Beachway Park features various recreational facilities and trail support amenities along the Waterfront Trail that provide opportunities for park visitors to engage in enjoyable activities and spend time in the space. These amenities include a playground facility, a snack shack, washrooms and a drinking fountain. All of these trail support amenities are concentrated in one small area located at the Beachway Park Pavilion. There are no other trail supportive amenities located anywhere along the trail. With only one destination along the trail with support amenities, this may limit the extent to which park visitors travel through the park.

### 3.3 Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Feature</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
<td>• good amount of seating along the trail, including benches and some picnic tables&lt;br&gt;• seating is concentrated around the Beach Pavilion&lt;br&gt;• existing seating is in poor condition and there are multiple bench designs throughout the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage/Wayfinding</td>
<td>• entrance signage to the park is very poor&lt;br&gt;• wayfinding elements throughout the park are inadequate with small text and maps that illegible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>• No lighting along the trail&lt;br&gt;• some small light fixtures at the Beach Pavillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>• landscaping along the trail consists of natural vegetation&lt;br&gt;• no planters or organized plantings, such as flower beds&lt;br&gt;• mowed shoulder on both sides of the trail provide a groomed appearance and increases visibility for trail users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail Design</td>
<td>• a multi-use trail that is paved with asphalt&lt;br&gt;• there is a lengthy portion of the trail that is half gravel and half asphalt&lt;br&gt;• the western edge of the trail ends at the Burlington Canal Pier, however the trail does not fully connect to the pier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Water</td>
<td>• there are formal and informal pathways from the Waterfront Trail to the water&lt;br&gt;• some lookout points that offer good views of the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Considerations</td>
<td>• two main parking lots – one is paved with a buffer between the trail and the pavement, while the other is a gravel lot with no buffer to the trail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Trail Support Amenities | • bike racks are only located in two locations along the trail and are in poor condition  
| | • vast majority of amenities are concentrated at one location along the trail – the Beach Pavilion, which has a playground, washrooms, snacks and washrooms.  
| | • there are no other trail support amenities along the trail, limiting the extent to which park visitors travel through the park |
Chapter 4: Hamilton Confederation Park Analysis

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to provide an example of a waterfront park that has been successful in providing great recreation and commercial activities for users, while respecting the natural landscape. In addition to the Hamilton Waterfront Trail, which runs through Hamilton’s Confederation Park and connects to the Waterfront Trail in Burlington, this park is home to a variety of outdoor attractions that provides visitors with fun and adventure. The Park is an example of a vibrant communal space, with many similarities to Burlington’s Beachway Park, including a more natural environment and a sandy beachfront. An analysis of Hamilton’s Waterfront Trail running through Confederation Park, with particular emphasis on urban design elements, will help to inform lessons and recommendations for the revitalization of Burlington’s Beachway Park.

4.2 Background

Located north of Hamilton’s east end, Confederation Park is a linear waterfront park on the shore of Lake Ontario. The site is known for its excellent trail development and, commercial and recreational opportunities, which continues to expand and develop (City of Hamilton, 2010). Confederation Park has become an essential aspect of the municipal fabric, as it has contributed to Hamilton’s complete communities by protecting important natural heritage features and providing opportunities for active, healthy recreation.
The Park area is home to various features and amenities that contributes to its vibrancy and attractiveness to all park visitors. The Hamilton Beach Trail is a paved pathway that runs along the shoreline, providing access to the water and various park facilities, while providing a great environment for pedestrians, cyclists and inline skaters. The area also includes two restaurants and various recreational facilities such as the Lakeland Centre and Pool, picnic areas, a water park and Adventure Village, featuring miniature golf, batting cages and rock climbing.

The Beach Strip has been a vibrant, community destination for over a century. Beginning in the early 1900s, the beach became a popular destination for residents to beat the summer heat and escape the bustling city, which was growing in size and expanding its industries. The beach became a destination for fun, relaxation and a chance to visit the amusement park after 1912, when a ferris wheel and merry-go-round were installed (City
of Hamilton, 2010). After in the construction of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) and the establishment of an electricity corridor along the beach strip, many seasonal cottages become permanent residences, and within 20 years, as many as 3000 people lived in the community.

Beginning in the 1950s, Hamilton’s Beach area began to face various environmental challenges such as air and water quality issues, traffic congestion and noise encroachment from nearby industries and the Queen Elizabeth highway (City of Hamilton, 2010). These problems threatened to diminish quality of the beach environment and made community life difficult for residents living along the water’s edge. In 1971, the first Official Plan for the Beach Strip community was approved, resulting in fewer beach residents. The second Official Plan for the Strip, approved in the mid-1980s, striving for environment reconciliation and exploring ways to introduce more recreational opportunities to the area. Through this new Plan, a stable community was created that was compatible with the waterfront recreation. Further, Hamilton’s Beach Trail was constructed from Burlington to Confederation park, known then as the “Breezeway”, as a multi-purpose recreation trail.

Past master plans for the Beach strip and Confederation Park recognized the area’s recreational and environmental importance to the over City. The most recent Master Plan Review and Update for the area, completed in 2010, has been developed to not only achieve municipal objectives, but also meet the needs of the Hamilton community and consider local infrastructure. The master plan not only maintained objectives regarding the mitigation of surrounding traffic and industry influences, but also focused on making the Park more accessible and attractive to the local neighbourhood. The plan also aims to relocate underutilized and inappropriately situated recreational uses to better meet the needs of the community. Further, the plan recognized the important to apply signature design principles to trail development and provide trail and public transit interconnections with surrounding neighbourhoods (City of Hamilton, 2010).
4.3 Evaluation of Design Features

*Seating*

The waterfront trail running through Confederation Park has an abundance of seating available for visitors including benches and picnic tables that are well-maintained and attractive features of the trail. All benches along the trail are constructed in a uniform design and made of wood materials that are strong, durable and sustainable to reflect the surrounding natural environment. Benches are positions facing the water and the path, providing a variety of views and allowing users with the choice of where they would like to sit. Benches are also set back from the path as to not interfere with trail users and placed in appropriate intervals along the path. Many of the benches also feature bump-outs from the path, directing people to the seating and provide concrete at the feet to prevent grass from being disrupted. Picnic tables are also present along the trail to provide people more options to sit, gather and eat in larger groups. All seating is position in both shaded and sun areas, allowing for users more options in regards to where they would like to sit.

![Image of benches along Hamilton's trail featuring consistent wood design and bump-outs from the pathway. Benches are also positioned in variety of locations that provide users options to sit in the sun or shade, and face the trail or have a view of the water (Romlewski, 2014).](image)

*Signage/Wayfinding*

Signage is good at vehicle entrances, but wayfinding features along the path itself are poor. There is a lack of maps, showing visitors where they are and where various amenities are located. There is a map present along the trail, but it is in very poor
condition. However, the trail does feature distance markers, which help recreational users identify how far they have travelled along the Waterfront Trail.

Lighting
Lighting along the Waterfront Trail is poor along the path, however there is sufficient lighting at larger facilities such as the Grill and other activity areas. Lighting fixtures are very tall, and not at a pedestrian scale, but do have a distinct design.

Figure 20: Example of tall lighting fixtures located at sites along the trail that experience more activity from park visitors (Romlewski, 2014).

Landscaping
The trail running through Confederation Park features great natural landscaping that is well manicured and adds to the overall natural character of the park. The trail features a mowed shoulder along each side of the paving, creating a well groomed, attractive appearance and prevents vegetation from creeping onto the path.
Figure 21: Example of natural landscaping and mowed shoulder along the trail (Romlewski, 2014).

**Trail Design**

The waterfront trail running through Hamilton’s Confederation Park is a multi-use recreational trail used by many different visitors, whether walking, running, biking or rollerblading. The trail is constructed of a uniform asphalt material that accommodates a variety of users, and is straight and well accessible with no major barriers. Paths to parking lots and facilities are also paved and provide good connections to the trail. Further, the trail also features a wooden lookout point that provides a great seating area with a clear view of the water.

Figure 22: The lookout point along the trail provides seating and a great view of Lake Ontario (Romlewski, 2014).
Access to Water

Although there are not any formal trails leading down to the water, there are multiple natural trails made by park users that connect the trail to the sandy beach. Park visitors have constructed these informal paths over time, by walking the same route to the beach. Further, from the trail, park visitors have a great view of the water because there are not many trees between the trail and the beach that could disrupt views.

Parking Considerations

There are numerous parking lots located at the park; however, there is adequate buffer of landscaped space from the multiuse trail. Regarding public transit, there is a bus stop available for park visitors near the Grill with a concrete pad. However, the stop does not feature seating or shelter for people to utilize when they wait for the bus.

Trail Support Amenities

Hamilton’s Confederation Park features a variety of amenities that help to create an attractive and vibrant public space for the local community and regional visitors. Firstly, the Grill located along the trail features great public art on the building’s walls. The murals reflect the character of the community by illustrating Hamilton’s rich history and culture. The trail also features interpretive design elements with information to educate visitors. These interpretive signboards are at an appropriate height, which is accessible for park visitors of all ages and abilities. There are also multiple food and drink facilities along the trail that draw people to the area and provide an amenity that encourages park users to stay for a longer period of time. Further, there are various other amenities available in the park including volleyball courts, a waterpark, picnic pavilions and go-karts.
Figure 23: Public art featured on the Grill building depicting Hamilton’s local history and culture (Romlewski, 2014).

Figure 24: Interpretive signboards create an opportunity to educate the public on park history and provide ecological information to allow visitors to interact with the space and enrich the overall user experience (Romlewski, 2014).

4.4 Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Feature</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Seating          | • abundance of well maintained seating along the trail, including benches and picnic tables  
|                  | • all benches are constructed using a uniform wood design  
|                  | • seating provides views of the water and is placed in both sunny and shady areas |
| Signage/Wayfinding | • there is good entrance signage to the park  
|                  | • wayfinding elements within the park, including maps, |
| Lighting | • lighting along the trail is generally poor, however, larger facilities such as the Grill and activity areas are well lit with well designed fixtures |
| Landscaping | • natural landscaping along the trail that is well manicured  
• mowed shoulder on either side of the trail |
| Trail Design | • a smooth multi-use trail with no barriers  
• paths also connect well to parking areas and trail facilities  
• a wooden lookout point provides seating and views of the water |
| Access to Water | • there is little vegetation between the trail and the beach, which provides great views of the water  
• formal and inform paths exist, providing access down to the beach area |
| Parking Considerations | • numerous parking lots are located in the park and are well buffered from the trail |
| Trail Support Amenities | • the park features a variety of amenities adjacent to the trail including, food vendors, volleyball courts and a waterpark  
• along the trail there are also design features such as public art murals and educational elements including signboards. |
Chapter 5: Mississauga Waterfront Analysis

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to provide an example of a waterfront park, located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) that has successfully created recreation opportunities along its waterfront with a high standard of urban design. Similar to objectives for Burlington’s Beachway Park, the Mississauga Waterfront Parks Strategy is committed to providing diverse recreational opportunities and providing public access to the lake, while respecting the waterfront as an invaluable natural and cultural resource. While analysis of the Mississauga Waterfront Parks Strategy document will review overall objectives and urban design standards, site observations were completed at 2 of Mississauga’s 25 parks: Lakefront Promenade and J.J. Plaus Park. Lessons can be learned from the Strategy and the two parks regarding planning and urban design elements that provide active and passive recreation opportunities while respecting the natural environment. These lessons can then be used to inform recommendations for the revitalization of Burlington’s Beachway Park.

5.2 Background

Mississauga’s lakeshore is recognized as a valuable and significant part of the City’s composition, as well as its natural and cultural heritage. With a total of 25 parks located along the shoreline, Mississauga’s Waterfront Parks are premier destinations, providing public access to Lake Ontario and an array of recreation options. The parks are most popular in the summer with people of all ages, abilities and cultures participating in passive and active activities such as walking, picnicking, swimming, playing in splash pads, fishing, boating and dog-walking.
In addition to redeveloping existing and new parks throughout the years to best serve the immediate and wider community, the Waterfront Trail is now continuous. The Trail stretches from one side of the City to the other, hugging the shoreline and travelling through private lands, along roads, through industrial lands and the Port Credit Village. This has been made possible through trail development efforts and cooperation with local industries. For example, 600m of the Waterfront Trail system was constructed upon an old refinery site in October 2005, due to cooperation between the City and Imperial Oil (City of Mississauga, 2008). This continuous trail along the City’s shoreline increases connectivity and allows for people to travel from one side of the City to the other using active modes of transportation.

The City initiated the Waterfront Parks Strategy to provide a long-term vision for parks located along the lake and continue its leadership of sustainable, creative and resourceful planning, conservation and lakefront development. The strategy outlines a framework to ensure the enhancement and creation of unique and desirable waterfront recreational opportunities and public spaces in a sustainable manner that recognizes the lake as an important natural and cultural resource (City of Mississauga, 2008).

Strategies in the document set comprehensive, long term plans that involve development priorities, recommend park programming for each park, identify possible areas for park expansion and guides park design. Primary goals of the strategy include:
a) better integration and connectivity of Waterfront Park with surrounding communities and the city-at-large
b) introduce more sustainable elements into the parks
c) promote stronger relationships between the par and the existing natural system

The strategy involves guiding principles that shape the recommendations. These guiding principles involve protection, preservation and restoration of natural systems, while balancing with the needs of the community. Principles are also concerned with achieving a sustainable park system of vibrant destinations for people to enjoy and visit for leisure and activities related to where land and water meet. The last guiding principle is for Design Excellence and Innovation, which notes that Mississauga’s waterfront parks will incorporate meaningful design of high quality and best value. The principle also describes that park elements should be appropriate scaled, constructed from durable materials, have low impact on surroundings, and incorporate innovative products and technologies that support sustainable environments (City of Mississauga, 2008).

5.2.1 Lakefront Promenade Park

Lakefront Promenade Park is the first Mississauga Waterfront Park to be examined through site analysis for its urban design elements. This park was chosen to be examined, as it features the Waterfront Trail, provides water access, has a beach area and is the location of various recreational facilities. Although, Lakefront Promenade Park differs from the Burlington Beachway site in regards to its larger size and less naturalized environment, the park can still provide valuable information on urban design elements that have helped make this park a successful community space.

As the eastern gateway to Mississauga’s waterway, Lakefront Promenade Park is categorized as a waterfront recreational park. The park was created from lakefill and is made up of 3 parks connected by trails: R.K McMillian (mainly natural areas); A.E. Crookes (boating and fishing) and Douglas Kennedy (playgrounds, splash pads and picnic areas) (Peel Walk and Roll, 2014). The park has a diverse shoreline that consists of
a sand beach, cobble beach, a sheet piled wall, armourstone and the marina. It is one of
the largest waterfront development in Ontario with more than 40 hectares of public
parkland dedicated to outdoor recreation and the protection of wildlife habitat (City of
Mississauga, 2008). The park includes amenities such as an extensive boardwalk and
walking trails, a beach area, a playground with splash pad, picnic shelters, cycling paths,
a marina and a licensed outdoor patio and grill (City of Mississauga, 2015).

5.2.2 J.J. Plaus Park

The second park to be examined for the Mississauga case study is J.J. Plaus Park. This
park is part of the Urban Waterfront Centre: a collection of 7 parks in close proximity to
downtown Port Credit at the mouth of the Credit River that form a continuous open space
along the water, increasing accessibility to the lake for the community. J.J Plaus Park is a
small area with a well-manicured boardwalk that allows for people to walk out to where
the Credit River empties to the lake. The park also features provides opportunities for
leisurely activities such as sitting and lake viewing.

Although the park is very small in size and does not feature a beachfront area, this
waterfront park is a good example of a small park, near an urban area that has provided
users opportunities for active and passive activity. Examination of the park’s urban
design features within the smaller and narrower landscape could help to inform recommendation for Burlington’s Beachway Park, which also features a narrow boundary.

5.3 Evaluation of Design Features

Seating
Mississauga’s Lakefront Promenade Park features an abundance of well-maintained seating, including benches and picnic tables. All seating has been constructed with a uniform design and a reddish wooden material. Benches are setback from the trail and positioned in a manner that provides views of the water. Further, benches are also well positioned along trails and boardwalks in appropriate intervals. Similar design conditions are found at J.J. Plaus Park, where all benches are in a uniform design consisting of blue, metal materials. Secondary seating is also provided in the form of stone planters that could be used by park visitors.

![Seating features](image)

Figure 27: Seating features a uniform design throughout the park and is positioned along the trail to provide park users with a great view of the water (Romlewski, 2014).

Signage/Wayfinding
Signage along the trail itself is relatively poor, however, the park features an excellent entrance sign into the area, which is clearly visible and well landscaped to attract people into the area.
Figure 28: Excellent entrance sign for Lakefront Promenade Park, which includes a map and is well landscaped (Romlewski, 2014).

Lighting
The waterfront trails at both Lakefront Promenade Park and J.J. Plaus Park are well lit, allowing park visitors to remain in the space into the evening. Light fixture design is uniform in each space, with a simple brown design in Lakefront Promenade Park and blue metal design in J.J Plaus Park, which matches the blue garbage bins and benches. The vast majority of these fixtures are very tall and not constructed at a pedestrian scale. However, there are several low bollard lighting fixtures along a portion of the boardwalk at Lakefront Promenade Park.
Figure 29: Simple lighting fixtures at Lakefront Promenade Park (left & middle) and tall, blue fixtures at J.J Plaus Park are constructed with the same materials as the park benches and garbage bins (right). (Romlewski, 2014).

Landscaping

Landscaping at both Mississauga waterfront parks consist of simple naturalized plantings and many trees. At both locations, stone planters are used to create visual interest along pathways. Plantings consisted of mostly small bushes and long grass. There were no flowers or other bright plants found at either locations.

Trail Design

The waterfront tall at each park location is constructed using asphalt paving, providing a smooth and uniform surface to accommodate many different recreational activities. Lakefront Promenade Park also features boardwalk sections of the waterfront trail, constructed of wooden boards. There are also elevated seating areas that overlook the marina and provide a great view of the water.

Figure 10: Boardwalk with seating areas that provide good views of the water (Romlewski, 2014).
Access to Water
Direct access to the water at both park locations is very limited, with only a small beach access at Lakefront Promenade Park. However, views of the water are excellent at each location with the waterfront trail following the shoreline very closely, providing park visitors good interaction with the lakefront.

Parking Considerations
Vehicle parking is provided at each waterfront park, consisting of asphalt parking lots that are adequately buffered from park space by grass and plantings. In regards to public transit, there are no transit stops directly adjacent to each park; however, stops can be found north of each park on Lakeshore Boulevard.

Trail Support Amenities
Lakefront Promenade Park features many different amenities that attract people to the park and enjoy their time in the space. This waterfront park has a marina, food and drink facility, a playground and multiple picnic pavilions with barbeques that can be booked for special events and large group gatherings.

Figure 31: Park amenities such as playgrounds and picnic pavilions at Lakefront Promenade Park provide activity options (Romlewski, 2014).

J.J. Plaus Park is a much more simple park area consisting of only a small greenspace and a walkway along the shoreline. However, there is a popular restaurant located at the entrance of the park, which features views of the water and a patio. This park may also attract pedestrians for nearby areas, as it is in walking distance from Port Credit Village.
### 5.4 Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Feature</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Seating**          | • abundance of well maintained seating along the trail, including benches and picnic tables  
                        • all benches are constructed in a uniform design  
                        • seating provides views of the water  
                        • benches are well positioned along the trail in appropriate intervals                                                                                                                                 |
| **Signage/Wayfinding**| • excellent park entrance sign to the park that is visible, large and features landscaping with colourful shrubs and grasses  
                        • poor wayfinding along the trail                                                                                                                                                                   |
| **Lighting**         | • trail is well lit with tall lighting fixtures  
                        • some bollard, pedestrian-scaled, lighting fixtures at Lakefront Promenade Park                                                                                                                                 |
| **Landscaping**      | • natural landscaping along the trail that is well manicured, mostly consisting of small bushes and long grasses  
                        • no flowers or other bright plants found at either locations                                                                                                                                 |
| **Trail Design**     | • a smooth asphalt multi-use trail with no barriers  
                        • Lakefront Promenade Park also features wooden boardwalk sections of the trail to compliment the adjacent Marina  
                        • elevated lookout point with seating and views of the water                                                                                                                                 |
| **Access to Water**  | • direct access to the water is limited however, the waterfront trail follows the shoreline very closely, providing great views of the lake                                                                 |
| **Parking Considerations** | • numerous parking lots are located in the park and are well buffered from the trail                                                                                                               |
| **Trail Support Amenities** | • great amenities are provided including picnic pavilions, barbeques, playgrounds and food establishments                                                                 |
Chapter 6: Recommendations

This report has explored best practices in design and planning strategies relevant to multi-use trails by conducting a review of literature and planning documents, as well as using case studies to examine successful urban design elements in Hamilton and Mississauga. An analysis of existing conditions of the Burlington Beachway Park revealed deficiencies in the public realm and available amenities surrounding the Waterfront Trail and throughout out the park. Burlington’s Beachway Park is challenged by a lack of cohesiveness in regards to design resulting in a lack of identity and also has a poor relationship to the water. The addition of urban design features to the trail, redevelopment and increased maintenance will help to revitalize the park and make it a local and regional vibrant destination. This chapter presents the following recommendations that can be implemented into the future design of the Waterfront Trail.

6.1 Seating

Analysis of existing conditions at Burlington’s Beachway Park revealed that although seating is available along the path for park users, the design and materials of seating including benches and picnic tables is very inconsistent and many are in poor condition. The implementation of new seating should incorporate a uniform design and material to create consistency along the trail. Further, creation of a new bench design should reflect the natural environment of the park, such as a wood material, which is both durable and attractive. There is significant potential to harmonize the design of seating options along the trail and ensure a consistent treatment of street furniture to help create a more attractive social space and attract park users s to sit and gather.

6.2 Signage/Wayfinding

Similar to the Lakefront Promenade Park in Mississauga, Burlington’s Beachway Park is a gateway to the city and to the water. With added importance for being a waterfront park, it should be fitted with prominent entrance signage that will help potential park
users identify the park and attract more people to visit the area and use park facilities. As identified in analysis of existing park conditions, the sign located at the entrance to the park from Spencer Smith Park is small and visually insignificant, and there is no entrance signage located at the opposite side of the park, closest to Burlington Canal Pier. In addition to more attractive signage at park entrances, improvements to wayfinding signage would significantly improve and enhance park user experience. Existing wayfinding signage that is outdated and often illegible should be replaced with signs that are legible, clear and provide good information to help inform park visitors about available amenities, park features and how to navigate through the park system. Pedestrian scaled trail markers can also be beneficial to help inform users that they are on the Waterfront Trail and how far they have travelled. Similar trail markers are found in Kingston and Hamilton.

As suggested in information gathered in the literature review of urban design documents all signage thought the park should be designed with a distinctive brand and logo to highlight unique qualities of the park and help define a strong identity.

Figure 32: Waterfront Trail markers along Kingston’s waterfront (Romlewski, 2014).
6.3 Lighting

Currently, the Waterfront Trail in Beachway Park is poorly illuminated with only a small amount of light located at the Beach Pavilion. It would be beneficial for future park design to introduce a variety of lighting standards that will help park users feel safer and enable people to stay in the park and along the trail for longer periods of time, especially into evening hours. This could include pedestrian scaled lighting and bollards to illuminate the trail appropriately.

6.4 Landscaping

As discussed in the evaluation of existing landscaping conditions in the park is limited to natural vegetation that has grown over time. Future landscape plans for the Beachway Park should consider an elevated design to introduce plantings, trees and flowers which could help contribute to creating a more vibrant public realm. As seen in both case studies, Hamilton and Mississauga’s waterfront parks have introduced manicured natural and low maintenance plantings, such as grasses and shrubs to complement the natural shoreline environment and help form a distinct park character.

Ornamental planting features could also be considered, including bright coloured flowers in spring and summer months in areas most used by park visitors, near main entrances and at the Beachway Park Pavilion to add interest to the public realm and attract visitors to those areas.

6.5 Trail Design

As one of Beachway Park’s main features, the multi-use Waterfront Trail must be designed and maintained in a manner, which attracts users and creates a comfortable, enjoyable and safe trail user experience. This good experience and trail design will ensure that current users will keep coming back and will help attract new park visitors.
Both case study sites had wide multi-use trails, which could accommodate a variety of users including pedestrians, cyclists and inline skaters. The trails at both sites were also well designed, using a uniform asphalt material to create a safe and smooth surface to accommodate passive and more active users. To ensure this is the case for the Waterfront Trail at Burlington Beachway Park, future park design should ensure the trail surface is constructed with a smooth, uniform material. This must be taken into consideration at the northeastern edge of the trail where the trail is divided into two different materials, gravel and asphalt.

Future trail design should also consider creating physically separated lanes on the pavement to differentiate between pathways for pedestrians and wheeled users. This could contribute to a safer trail and also both types of users to move easier through the park. An example of separated lanes is the trail along Vancouver’s Spanish Banks Beach Park, which features a landscaped barrier between the two lanes and clear signage to notify users of the separation.

Figure 33: Separated trail lanes with landscape buffer at Vancouver’s Spanish Banks Beach Park (Romlewski, 2015).
6.6 Access to Water

As Beachway Park’s greatest assets is its location along Lake Ontario, it is important to highlight the park’s relationship to the water by animating the shoreline and providing a great trail that allows park visitors to travel along and interact with the water’s edge. However, water access is challenging at the park, as the Waterfront trail is physically separated from the waterfront by the sandy beach, grass and trees. It is imperative that future park design improves access to the water along the trail by providing more points of access and areas where people can spend time by the water, such as lookout points which provide great views of the lake.

One of the best opportunities for future park design to improve access to water by capitalizing on the park’s close proximity to water could be the redevelopment of the federal pier at the southern tip of the park. As identified in the analysis of Beachway Park earlier in this report, the Burlington Canal pier extends out into Lake Ontario providing spectacular views of Burlington and even far off Toronto on a clear day. However, this public space severely lacks amenities such as seating and adequate lighting, which prevents people from being able to spend time on the pier to enjoy the views. A successful example of public spaces extending Lake Ontario is J.J. Plaus Park in Mississauga, which was examined earlier in this report. This public space includes benches, lighting, garbage receptacles and planters that are also great as seating allowing park visitors to enjoy time by the water. The addition of design features such as seating options, lighting, landscaping and signage at the Burlington Canal Pier would greatly improvement the public realm on the pier and help make it a popular destination in the park for users to visit and spend time.
Figure 34: Mississauga’s J.J. Plaus Park, which extends into Lake Ontario, provides public amenities including seating and lighting (Romlewski, 2014).

6.7 Parking Considerations

Future design for parking at Beachway Park should ensure that there is a landscaped buffer between the trail and all parking lots to ensure the safety of trail users. Further, existing parking lots that are not yet paved could be redeveloped using sustainable paving methods such as permeable surfaces to facilitate better stormwater management. This type of design would fit into the park’s character of being a more naturalized park and meets Council’s approved objectives of creating a more environmentally sustainable park through the Master Plan update.

6.8 Trail Support Amenities

Trail support amenities are essential features to include along a trail to ensure park users have amenities, which facilitate gathering, play and enjoyment in the space. Although Beachway Park does have some amenities such as washrooms, a playground and snack bar, they are all concentrated at one main area called the Beach Pavilion. This limits park
visitors from exploring the rest of the park as they may tend to stay in one area. Future park design should provide amenities all along the length of the Waterfront Trail.

One such trail support amenities could be the addition of another play area. A naturalized play park could be included to better represent the park’s natural and environmentally sensitive character. Such a design was included in Hamilton’s most recent Confederation Park Master Plan Update. The Naturalized Play Facility included features such as a tree fort, wood play structures, sand pits and rock climbing (City of Hamilton, 2010).

Similar to picnic areas found on Mississauga’s waterfront, Beachway Park could greatly benefit from the addition of covered picnic areas. Future design of picnic areas would provide park visitors a great place to sit, gather and spend time near the water, while being protected from the sun.

Other trail support amenities that could be considered in the future design of Beachway Park is the introduction of interpretive elements and public art along the Waterfront Trail. Interpretive elements that reflect Burlington’s history and culture could be installed as a design feature that is educational, interactive and enjoyable for park users. An example of this a successful interpretive element is along Kingston’s waterfront, where a book-like installation allows users to flip through the feature while learning about the local history. Public art installations would be beneficial along the trail to help strengthen the park’s sense of place and contribute to a more vibrant public realm.
Figure 35: Interpretive element along the Waterfront Trail in Kingston, Ontario, which allows users to flip through a book feature and learn about the City’s history (Romlewski, 2014).

6.9 Further Study – Winterization

Although waterfront park facilities are primarily enjoyed in the spring and summer months, future park design for Beachway Park should consider winterization, through the inclusion of amenities and trail design to support activities enjoyed in cold, snowy months. A great example of winterizing parks and public spaces is Edmonton’s For the Love of Winter that includes strategies and design features to transform Edmonton into a World-Leading Winter City. The goal of winterizing is to make it easier and more fun to be outside in winter months and make public spaces more accessible year round. Some examples of features include fit pits, ice rinks, warming stations and ice slides (City of Edmonton, 2012). It is also important to improve winter transportation, which could be accomplished at Beachway Park by encouraging snowshoeing and cross-country skiing along the Waterfront Trail in the winter.
Figure 36: Example of a warming station in Winnipeg (left) and a fire pit in Edmonton (right). (City of Edmonton, 2012).
Chapter 7: Conclusion

As one of Burlington’s premier waterfront spaces, Beachway Park offers local residents and regional visitors with a natural space to enjoy, explore and be active. As an integral part of the space, the Waterfront Trail provides access throughout the park and opportunities for activities. Although the park is in a prime location, analysis of existing design features along the trail revealed that the condition of urban design features is quite poor and could benefit from upgrades and additions to the public realm. This report utilized a variety of research methods with the ultimate objective of providing recommendations for future trail design that could contribute to creating a more vibrant public realm and improve the Waterfront Trail to build a better, more attractive park.

It is hoped that the analysis and recommendations offered in this report will be of use to those involved in the design and planning process for the new Burlington Beach Master Plan. Parks, public spaces and multi-use trails are great spaces in our communities that merit design excellence and good planning principles to ensure they are safe, comfortable and vibrant spaces for all users.

Since the inception of this report topic in August 2014, Halton Regional Council approved the Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park Master Plan on May 27, 2015. The plan was developed by Brook McIlroy, an internationally recognized design-consulting firm with extensive experience in planning, design and construction administration of waterfront projects. Further information including the regional staff report, conceptual photos and documents relating to the public process can be found at Halton Region’s website (Halton Region, 2015).
References


Halton Region. (2015). Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park Master Plan


Romlewski, S. Photos. Taken October 2014.

**Appendix A: Evaluative Index**

Data collection index developed for the purpose of collecting information.

Site: _______________________________  Date: ________________________

**Trail Design Features**

Seating (e.g. benches, chairs, picnic tables)

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Landscaping (e.g. grass, flower beds, tree cover)

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### Access Points to Water

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### Transportation Considerations (i.e. Parking Areas, transit stops, bike racks)

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### Support Amenities (e.g. washrooms, drinking fountains, trash bins, public art, food services etc.)

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