

CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND



REDISCOVER OUR PARKS takes into account the existing political, physical and social fabric of the community to help provide background for strategic direction to formulate an action plan. Described in this section are the geographic, social and economic factors that are impacting the community, as well as the physical characteristics embodied by both the built and natural environments.

GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

The City of Windsor is Canada's southern-most metropolitan municipality. Lying at the extreme western end of Southern Ontario, the city's primary transportation connections to the rest of Ontario and Canada is Highway 401.

The City of Windsor lies within Essex County which is comprised of eight individual municipalities. Along the southeastern edge of Windsor is the Town of Tecumseh with a population of just over 23,000 and a land area of approximately 95 sq km (36.5 sq mi.). The west half of the city shares its southern boundary with the Town of LaSalle with a population slightly under 29,000 people and an area covering just over 65 sq km (25 sq mi).

The northern and western boundaries of the city are shared with the Detroit River; which acts as a physical international border with the United States of America and the City of Detroit, Michigan.

This area was inhabited by First Nations People prior to the arrival of the French who established an agricultural colony on the south banks of the Detroit River in 1749 to support the military and fur trading post at Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit. Cultural and economic relations between the two cities have played an important role in Windsor's development.

From the settlement of the area through to the current circumstances (both physically and economically), the interrelationship between both sides of the Detroit River has played an integral part in the development of the urban environments of the two cities. Due to its strategic position as a military and trading post; then with the establishment of railways in the late 1860's on both sides of the Detroit River, along with the industrialization of the area through the advent of the automobile industry, the Detroit Metropolitan Area, including Windsor, emerged as one of North America's most significant urban areas. The growth of the Detroit-Windsor Metropolitan Area trended until the late 1950's and early 1960's when the U.S. Interstate Highway system grew, connecting all of the fifty United States. In Canada, the construction of the Highway 401 which connected Windsor to the rest of Canada through the Toronto Metropolitan Area had similar impacts on the area. Over time this connection resulted in the Detroit-Windsor border crossings as the most significant international land crossing between Canada and the United States, and remains of high importance to trade between the two countries.

To maintain a strong relationship with the surrounding communities including the City of Detroit, it is essential that the City of Windsor include, and reinforce connectivity from a natural and recreational perspective.

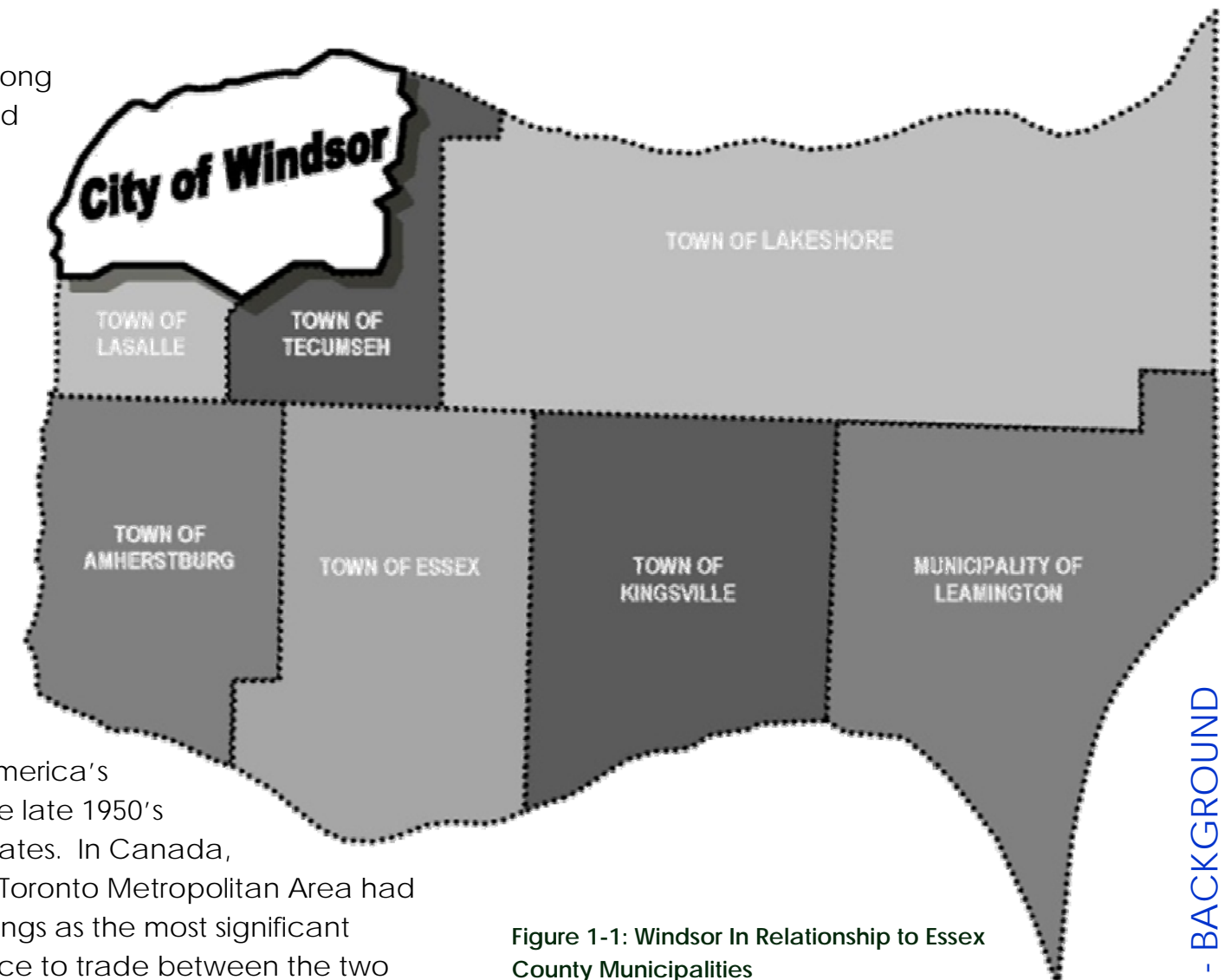


Figure 1-1: Windsor In Relationship to Essex County Municipalities

Schedule J: Urban Structure Plan

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|---|---|---|---|
|  | Growth Centre |  | City Corridor |
|  | Regional Employment Centre |  | Neighbourhood Corridor |
|  | Regional Commercial Centre |  | Expressway |
|  | Regional Institutional Centre |  | Provincial Highway |
|  | Regional Open Space System |  | Railway |
|  | Neighbourhood Node |  | City of Windsor Boundary |
|  | Linkage To Neighbouring Community |  | Waterway |
|  | Neighbouring Regional Employment Centre |  | Neighbouring Regional Commercial Centre |

LEGEND

-  E.C. ROW EXPRESSWAY
-  WATERCOURSE / DRAINAGE
-  TRAIN TRACKS
-  PREVIOUSLY INDUSTRIAL LAND
-  PRINCIPAL WARD BOUNDARY
-  EXISTING MULTI-USE TRAIL
-  HERB GRAY PARKWAY TRAIL



Prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation
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PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Windsor's parks and trails system is closely tied to the historical growth and development of the city. The importance of parkland dates back to the 1900's with the first established park in the urban core at southeast corner of what is now Erie Street East and McDougall, currently named after the Mayor that ushered in its establishment; Colonel Ernest Samuel Wigle. Since then, the City's parks and trails system has expanded considerably, providing opportunities for both active and passive recreation.

This section describes the physical characteristics, including both the built and natural environments, found throughout the City of Windsor and discusses the relevance to parks and recreation programming.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment includes constructed systems or structures such as homes, businesses, factories and public buildings, roads and utilities. Windsor serves as the major business/economic centre, cultural, entertainment and recreation centre for the Greater Windsor-Essex County Region.

LAND USE

The Official Plan outlines the various land use designations in order to manage development in a sustainable manner to achieve a balance within its built environment, social and economic considerations. The Official Plans goal from a land use perspective is to promote "a compact urban" and direct "compatible development" within new and existing neighbourhoods.

The current Official Plan has twelve land use designations.

Residential	Industrial
Business Park	Commercial Centre
Commercial Corridor	Major Institutional
Open Space	Natural Heritage
Mixed Use	Waterfront Residential
Waterfront Recreation	Waterfront Port

In total the City of Windsor covers 144.75 square kilometres. The primary land use is residential occupying roughly 48% (including waterfront residential and some Mixed Use residential) of the total area.

"A healthy and livable city is one in which people can enjoy a vibrant economy and a sustainable healthy environment in safe, caring and diverse neighbourhoods."

Employment Lands consist of Industrial & Business Parks, Waterfront Port, and Airport Lands occupy the next largest area at approximately 22%. Commercial (Including Mixed Use & both commercial designations) is 7.7%, while Institutional and the Downtown Core are each 2% of the land area. Green Districts which include publicly owned Open Space & Natural Heritage designations, as well some Private Recreation constitutes roughly 10.1% of the total land area. The remaining 8.2% is future development lands in the Sandwich South Planning District, which are currently under secondary plan review.

The Urban Structure Plan (See Figure 1-2) demonstrates how the current employment lands are concentrated around the major transportation arteries. Along with the Natural Heritage Green Districts and the major transportation infrastructure, these three items create a mosaic of separate and distinct communities. Recreational parkland acts as a centralized focus for each of these communities, while the smaller parks serve individual neighbourhoods.

Figure 1-2: Urban Structure Plan of the City's Official Plan overlaid with major physical barriers that create physical Planning Districts (left)

TRANSPORTATION

The historic and current strategic location of Windsor in relationship to Detroit, Michigan as a trade link between Canada and United States is reinforced by road network that stretches north-south from the Detroit River. The Urban Structure Plan of the City's Official Plan overlaid with major physical barriers that create physical Planning Districts (left) illustrates the transportation infrastructure and how it impacts the structure of the city.

Chapter 7 of the City's Official Plan details guidelines to the infrastructure in order to provide *"a safe, healthy and efficient living environment"*; including accommodation of transportation infrastructure that is sustainable, accessible, balanced between multi-modal forms of transportation, cost effective and responsive to the anticipated growth of the City.

One major goal of the City's transportation objectives is to ensure that any new development or infrastructure alterations near or within significant natural areas, especially those with identified or potential 'species at risk', designated Provincially Significant Wetlands; area of natural heritage features, are protected. Currently, the development of the Herb Grey Parkway has set precedence for the protection of the natural significant lands in the western end of the city. Its development has impacted the potential growth of the parkland inventory with preservation of natural forest and prairies in the area, as well as wetland habitats; greatly expanding the profile of the City's natural heritage.

SCENIC DRIVES

Currently, Riverside Drive and Sandwich Street (west of Huron Church) form the city's only continuous Scenic Drive. It is the original river route road from the time of European settlement, still used today, running east and west along the south bank of the Detroit River connecting a chain of riverfront parks, while offering many spectacular vistas towards the downtown Detroit Skyline.

Riverside Drive and any new Scenic Drives are to provide Connection of the eastern and western ends of the city, as well as abutting municipalities of LaSalle, Tecumseh, and Lakeshore where appropriate.

Figure 1-3: Ganatchio trail along Riverside Drive acts as a pedestrian and bicycle path and a gateway from the eastern end of the city to the Town of Tecumseh



GATEWAYS

Several of the Official Plan's objectives recognize the importance of the City of Windsor as a Gateway between United States and Canada. Whether by road network, air or rail, the first image that the city presents is an important aspect to convey in a positive manner. The location and quality of the recreational open spaces provided by the city can play an integral role in achieving the following Official Plan objectives:

- To uphold and advance Windsor's role as Canada's foremost international gateway.
- To ensure accessible and viable port facilities.
- To facilitate safe recreational boating from Windsor on the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair.
- To support an expanded role for the Windsor Airport in the provision of facilities, infrastructure and operational capabilities.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PATTERNS

Section 7.2.2.6 of the Official Plan recommends a balanced transportation system that includes all traditional forms of transportation infrastructure including, vehicular, multi-modal freight transport, air and rail. As well promotion of sustainable transportation infrastructure through alternate development patterns to include and emphasize; pedestrian, cycling, and other forms active transportation to improve street environments, especially at the neighborhood and community scale environments.



Figure 1-4: The Windsor Loop

B.U.M.P. AND THE WINDSOR LOOP

In a response to transportation goals of the Official Plan, planning objective 7.2.1.13 reads:

“To establish and maintain a city-wide walking and cycling network”.

Along with the direction for an increased emphasis on active transportation, The City of Windsor’s Transportation Department retained Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited, to prepare the Bicycle Use Master Plan (B.U.M.P.) as a 20-year guide to the city’s *“commitment to develop a visible and connected cycling network that is easily accessible, safe and actively used by all types of cyclist.”*

B.U.M.P. provides one direction along guidelines to achieving the Official Plan’s Recreationways objectives, while integrating the existing transportation network infrastructure as alternate routes until more off-road multi-use trail parkland can be developed.

The major goal of the B.U.M.P. is to establish ‘The Windsor Loop’.

The Windsor Loop is a 42.5 km (26.4 miles) circular loop that connects the city around its perimeter, joining city neighbourhoods and providing access to the Trans Canada Trail. A majority of the Loop is in place with the exception of a few key segments.

In addition to completing the remaining 12.4 km (7.7 miles) gaps in the Windsor Loop, funding is allocated to construct 17.8 km (11.1 miles) of planned cycling facilities to connect currently low-serviced neighbourhoods.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

NATURAL AREAS

Windsor and Essex County are located in one of the most diverse forest regions of Ontario. Referred to as the Deciduous Forest Region of Ontario, and more specifically as the Carolinian Forest, today less than 5% of the original forest remains as a result of agricultural and urban development.

Many of the plant and animal species found here are unique to this area with respect to the rest of Ontario and Canada. The primary tree species of the Deciduous Forest are oak, basswood (linden), maple, and members of the nut family including hickory, butternut and walnut. Also found within this region, and especially within Windsor and Essex County, is the Eastern Tall Grass Prairie which has its unique variety of plants.

CAROLINIAN FOREST AND OAK SAVANNAH

Found more extensively in the north-eastern portion of the United States, the Carolinian Forest stretches into the Essex County and further into the remainder of Southern Ontario as far as the Greater Toronto Area. As the City of Windsor lies further south the diversity of plants characteristic of this forest is far greater than what is found in the northern limits in Ontario. The Carolinian Forest is noted for plant species as hickories, tulip tree, cucumber tree, pawpaw, red mulberry, Kentucky coffee tree, sassafras, black and pin oak, eastern dogwood, hop trees, and Eastern redbud. Conifers are few and more typical of the northern limits in Ontario and mountainous areas of the Appalachians in the United States. In the Windsor and Essex County area only two conifers are found; Eastern Red Cedar and White Pine, but are quite rare due to our southern limit and heavy clay soil type. A predominance of oak trees in the Ojibway Complex along with the tallgrass prairie constitutes that the indigenous forest type is more that of an Oak Savannah. Further east is Devonwoods Conservation Area which lies under the the Essex Region Conservation Authority's control, which is more traditionally characteristic of a Carolinian Forest.

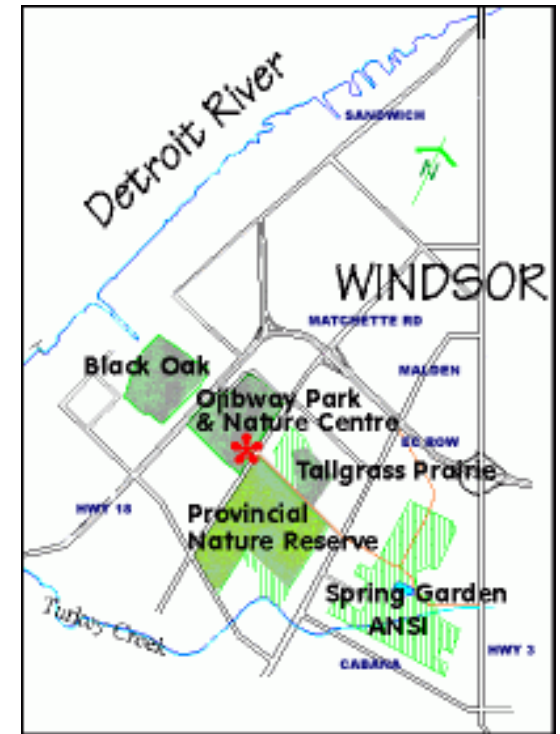


Figure 1-5: Components of the Ojibway Nature Complex

*"... much of the original natural resources of the Essex region have either been totally destroyed or have become extremely degraded as a direct or indirect result of clearing and drainage for timber, agriculture, and urban development."*¹

EASTERN TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

The City of Windsor hosts one of the largest remaining vestiges of what was once the typical grasslands found in the Deciduous Forest Region of Ontario.

A detailed listing of the native plant species found in this area is available from the Ojibway Nature Centre's website (www.ojibway.ca)

VEGETATION AND TREE COVER

Though the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) has been maintaining records of the natural environments including tree cover in the Essex Region since their inception in 1973, they have empirical data from other sources dating back to 1958. In an initial study completed by ERCA 2002, it was identified that the natural resources of Essex County were reduced to 3% of all wetlands and 5% of all forested areas. *"The remaining small, isolated remnants of natural habitats constitute the lowest percentage of any region in all of Ontario."*¹

Through combined efforts of ERCA, the City of Windsor and other municipalities in Essex County, 1,600 hectares of natural lands have been acquired for preservation in addition to 3,600 hectares that have been rehabilitated through naturalization by planting over 5.85 million trees; increasing the total percentage of forest cover in the county to 8.5% in 2012. ERCA's goal is to achieve a 12% cover for the Region.

1958	3.9% forest cover (calculated for Essex County)
1975	3.4% forest cover (calculated for the ERCA watershed)
1981	2.6% forest cover (calculated for Essex County)
1992	3.7% forest cover (calculated for the ERCA watershed)
2002	7.5% natural areas cover (calculated for the ERCA watershed and includes 5.0% forest, 2.5% wetland, 0.05% prairie and 0.01% alvar)



ESSEX REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

ERCA has worked with the City and both the Provincial and Federal Governments to help mitigate the losses, through various programs and reforestation techniques. The recent work with the Province and development of the Herb Gray Parkway has seen several biological ecosystems restored through naturalization of the lands impacted by the development of the highway and bridge plaza.

As well ERCA has cooperated with the Ojibway Nature Centre and several other volunteer organizations in the city to help reforest the City parks, especially along the Little River Corridor and the E.C.Row Expressway.

CNHS

In 1992 the City of Windsor and ERCA initiated a review process through the Official Plan that included documentation of the environmentally significant areas of the city. The *Candidate Natural Heritage Site Biological Inventory* was to assist City Administration and Council with determining land use designation and developing special policy to reduce any impact or loss of significant natural heritage features and biological communities.

Under Section 3 of the Provincial Planning Act, a Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) was established in 2005 which read; "*provincial plans and municipal official plans provide a framework for comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning and supports and integrates the principles of strong communities, a clean and healthy environment and economic growth, for the long term.*" This was supported by the City of Windsor Official Plan under the Environmental Section supports the CNHS through the City of Windsor Greenway System.

In 2007, the document was updated to include the lands the new Sandwich South Planning District² based on the following evaluation criteria:

- Significant wetlands
- Habitat of threatened and endangered species
- Significant woodlands
- Significant wildlife habitat
- Significant valleylands
- Ecological function
- Diversity
- Significant species
- Significant Communities
- Condition

Figure 1-6: Black Oak Heritage Forest



Figure 1-7: Physical development pattern of the City Windsor from European Settlement to Present Day

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



Settled in 1749 by French colonists who later established a French parish in 1762, Windsor is the oldest European agricultural settlement in Canada west of Montreal. While other eastern Canadian cities are older they were primarily established as fur trading and military posts. Those roots are reflected in its corporate Coat of Arms, which hangs in the Council Chambers of City Hall. The motto, *"The River and the Land Sustain Us"* reminds us of the foundation of our city's well being and the need to care for the environment (See Appendix 'E').

In 1854 Windsor was connected by the Great Western Railway (est. 1853) to Niagara, operating as the first Canadian railway line. Establishment of the railway along the city's waterfront reinforced the city's relationship with Detroit through rail barge transfer until 1980's when the riverfront railway lines were abandoned for other modes of transportation of goods. With the abandonment of the railway lines along the Windsor waterfront, the city embraced the opportunity to provide public open space along the former railway properties and developed them into a 73 acres (30ha) ribbon of riverfront parks. Today those parks are regarded as one of the primary outdoor open spaces of the city.

At the time of Incorporation of the City of Windsor in 1854, the establishment of city parks was becoming a predominant pressure to reduce the negative impact of industrial towns and provide 'elegant' open green space in new North American cities.³ This movement came to be called the Garden Cities Movement. Early maps of the City of Windsor from this time demonstrate that a notion of developing Windsor as a Garden City was evident. Two core area parks were proposed. One park centred along Victoria Avenue between Park Street and London Street (now University Ave. West). The second was set aside centered on Windsor Street immediately south of London Street. Neither park was ever formally established. The second space had been purchased in 1840 and was initially used as a military barracks, then later used as a refugee camp associated with the "Underground Railroad", eventually being re-designated as parkland in 1859 where it held a school, barracks once again and finally in 1904 becoming a park with its continued use as City Hall Square.

The first official public park in the City established in 1906, rests on a 5.3 acres parcel of undeveloped land just south of the core area of that time and bears the name Colonel Ernest Samuel Wigle, a two-term mayor. Wigle Park cultivated urban development southward from the river. Though having gone through some redevelopment, Wigle Park continues to offer outdoor recreation for downtown residences.

Since then the city's park system has grown to 209 parks with just under 2,400 acres (960 ha) of which 1,061 acres (430ha) are in natural landscape settings.



Figure 1-8: Proposed layout of City of Windsor downtown circa 1900 showing proposed parks and street patterns

LEGACY OF THE WINDSOR PARKS SYSTEM

The City of Windsor has maintained and updated A History of Windsor's Parks since 1996⁴. Last updated in 2009 by the Parks and Recreation staff, it documents each of the parks in the City's system including the date it was officially designated, how it was acquired and special historical relevance of the park or open space.

1854-1923

Industrialization brought on by the railway and automobile manufacturing in the area, saw the first swell of population in the area. Shortly after its incorporation the Town of Windsor had a population of 4,253 people. By the time General Motors established its factory in 1920, the population had risen to 38,591 people. As in other industrialized cities the need for parks was stimulated by the health concerns being created by the urban environment. With Wigle Park's establishment in 1906 as the city's first park, the movement was slow, however not an after sight. Many early maps of the area identified dedicated parkland. In a 1923 Map of the Border Cities of Windsor, Walkerville, Ford City, Sandwich and Ojibway, proposed town planning clearly depicted parkland in the form of town squares and parks, tree-lined street car lines along London Street (now University) and Bedford Street (now Sandwich), Wyandotte Street (east of Ouellette), Walker Road and Howard Avenue as well as Sandwich Street (now Riverside Drive) from Wellington Street to Strabane Street. Park line river courses were also identified, connecting Little River Corridor (then part of the Town of Riverside) and Turkey Creek (part of the Town of Ojibway) as a green belt along Grand Marais Road through the proposed Town of Ojibway which was to be developed with the Canadian Steel Corporation. This was all part of the "City Beautiful Movement" stemming out of the works of Frederick Law Olmstead in the United States and Frederick Todd in Canada, both landscape architects who promoted the need for public green space with open greens, tree and shrub clusters, shelters, ornamental plantings, and long winding paths for family gatherings. Town planners used these principles which bolstered the popularity of cities by stressing the economic benefits of parks to prospective developers.

During this period, the Border Cities saw 14 new parks established including the first of the riverfront parks at Heppenstal Park (now Assumption Park) in 1915 and Lanspeary Park in 1917. Later in 1921, the Willistead property was transferred by the Walker family to the Town of Walkerville, to remain as public land. In 1923, the former Windsor Barracks Square was officially named Windsor Civic Square.

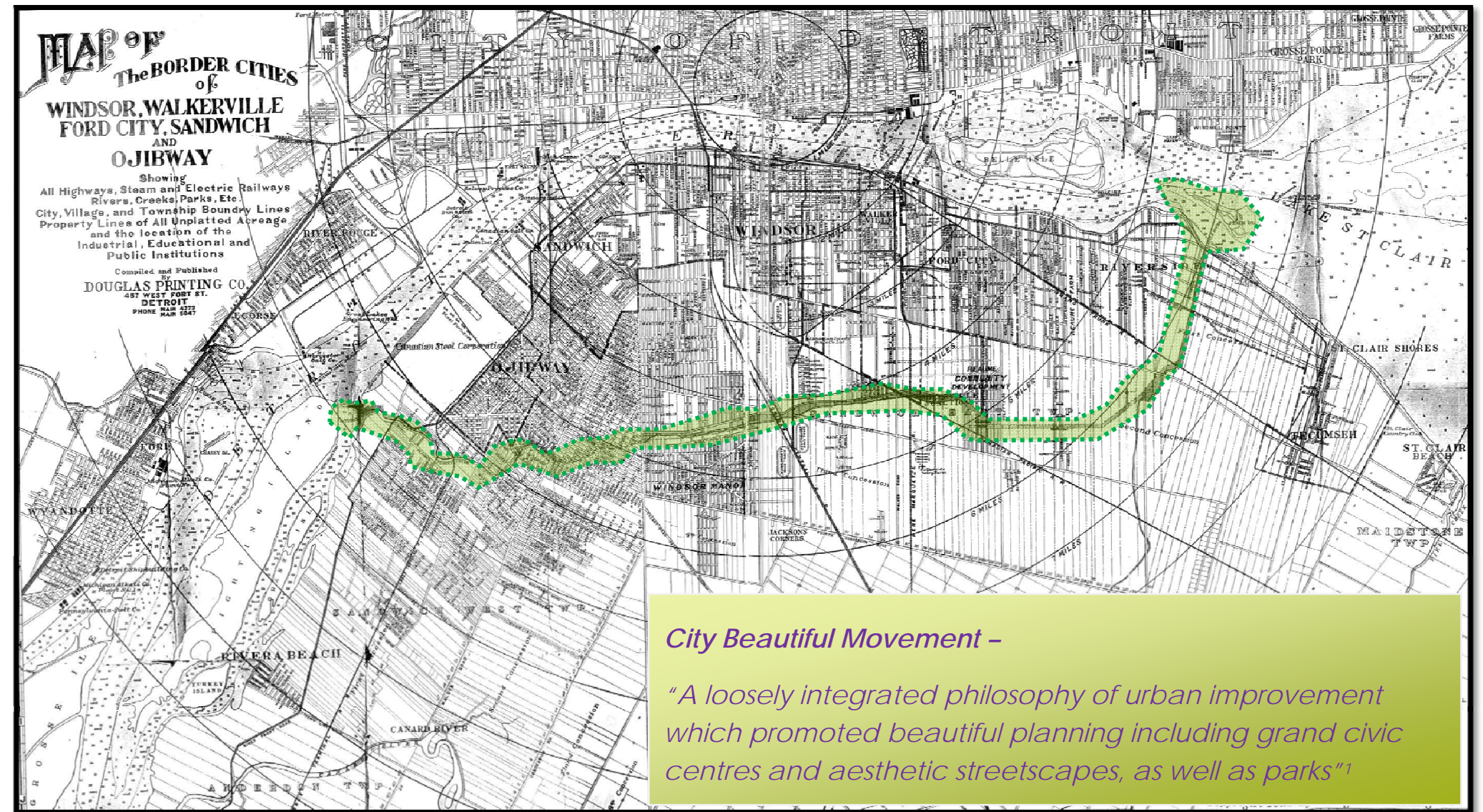


Figure 1-9: Map of the Border Cities of Windsor, Walkerville, Ford City, Sandwich and Ojibway circa 1923. Enhanced to illustrate the proposed recreation linkage of Little River and Turkey Creek along the Grand Marais drainage channel.

1924-1930

By 1924 the, interstate highways in the United States were being established and priority to privately owned automobiles was becoming more evident. By the end of the decade, both the Ambassador Bridge (1929) and the Detroit Windsor Tunnel (1930) had opened, allowing free movement of automobiles between the two countries.

With Chrysler Canada establishing a plant in Windsor in 1925, so too came many workers who require additional parkland. The 1931 census identified the Windsor population as almost doubling in 10 years to 63,108 people. Both Ford City and east Windsor became cities officially with the influx of people. The City Beautiful Movement was still alive and in 1928 Hamilton had adopted its scheme which saw Canadian Steel Corporation abandon its prospects for the Town of Ojibway leaving the lands which they amassed undeveloped. Whether it was the loss of the steel plant to Hamilton or a realization that the need for more large scale parkland was necessary, seven parks were established, including many of those still regarded highly today.



Figure 1-10: World-famous golf architect Donald Ross' original plan for Roseland, on Windsor's south side drawn by his chief draftsman in Pinehurst, North Carolina, Walter Irving Johnson

MEMORIAL PARK

Memorial Park, 1925 started as a natural park with a donation from the Essex Real Estate Board, who later constructed the stone pillar archway that adorns the park today. In 1927 establishment of a drain secured the preservation of the Memorial Park forest. In 1939 the final 20 acres of land were acquired and the sports recreation component of the park was established through the Optimist club. Further private donations by the Optimist Club and a private family saw the realization of some of the parks major features.

ROSELAND GOLF AND CURLING CLUB

Established as a private country club in 1926, Roseland Park Country Club was designed by Donald Rose, a prominent golf course designer of the time. It established a central greenspace for the affluent community which surrounded the facility. In 1979 it was turned over to the City of Windsor.

MIC MAC PARK

Originally named Prince Road Park, the park was one of the first three parks founded in the Towne of Sandwich. Initially established in 1928, the park was to rival anything that the City of Windsor had to offer at the time including; baseball diamonds, public tennis courts, wooded areas, and a wading pool (in 1929). The current name was established as result of the efforts of twenty WWI veterans who began sponsoring youth sports teams. In subsequent years MicMac Park has expanded with assistance of the MicMac Club to its current premier sports complex (primarily baseball and soccer).

JACKSON PARK

Late in 1928, Mayor Cecil Jackson presented the idea of purchasing the former Windsor Jockey Club to establish a prestigious public park including sunken gardens, baseball diamonds, Lawn Bowling and fairgrounds. During deliberations by Council, North America unexpectedly experienced the crash of the stock market in October 1929 which ushered in the Great Depression that characterized the next decade. Determined to see the park established, Mayor Jackson was ultimately successful and thus the park bears his name.

Through federally assisted funding, in 1930 construction was started in the sunken gardens which now bear the name of the longest reigning monarch in the British Commonwealth (Queen Elizabeth II). The original Norman-style entrance gates were erected at the corner of Ouellette Avenue and Tecumseh Road. At this time the South African War Memorial honouring those who fought in the Boer War was moved to the park from its original location at the downtown post office. This eventually became the impetus for many of the other monuments and commemorative sculptures that currently exist in the park today including the iconic Copernican Monument donated in 1954 by the Polish-Canadian congress.

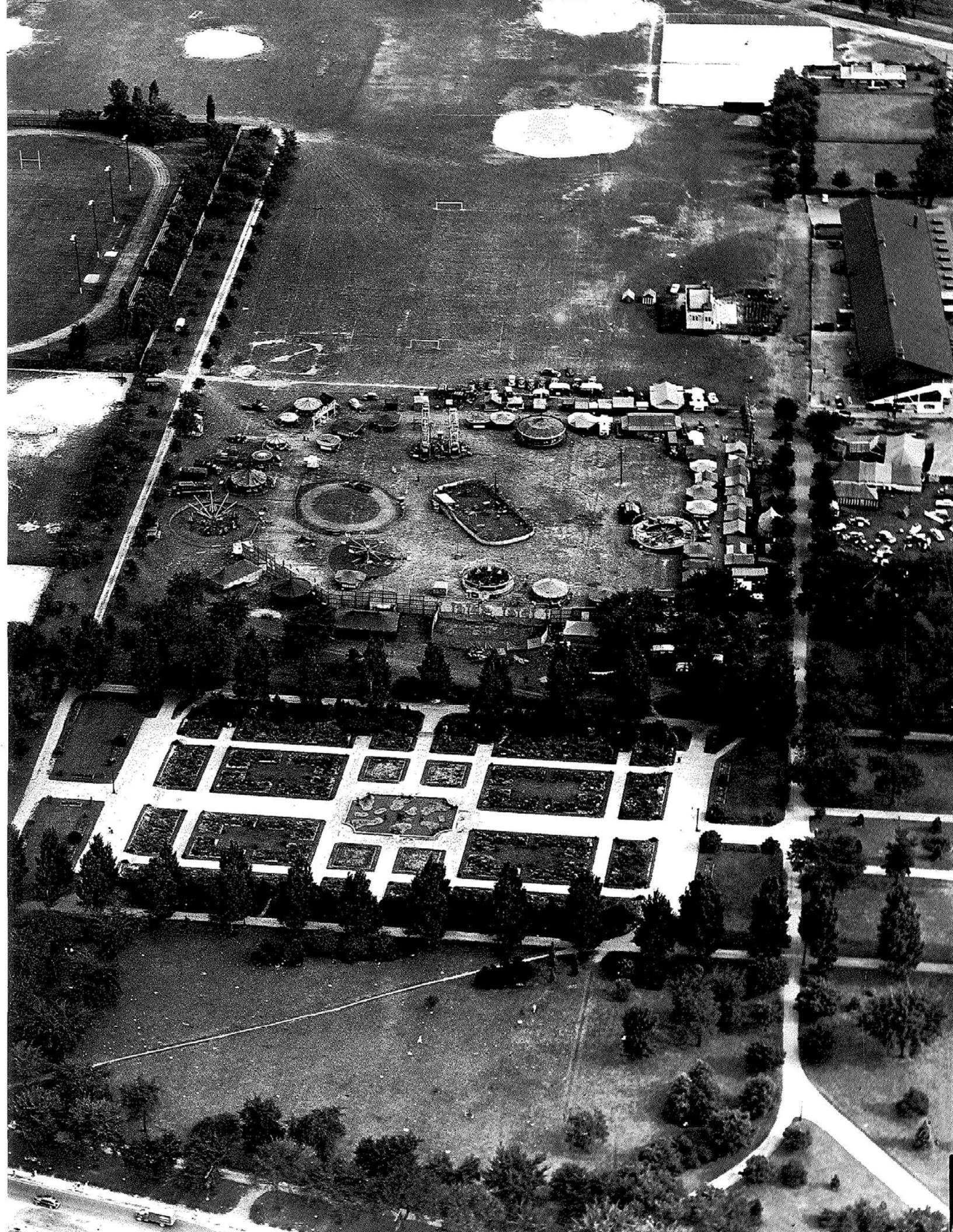
Shortly after the Second World War, a band shell was constructed on the west side of the park in combination with the former Jockey Club Grandstand. A devastating fire in 1957 destroyed both features. Though reconstructed in 1959 on the other side of the park, only the grandstand is in use through a lease with the Windsor Essex County Board of Education. Many requests have been made to revitalize the bandstand.

Many other improvements have been made to the park over the years primarily through sponsorships, including the Lancaster Bomber and Rose Garden which since been replaced with two Spitfire airplanes and a more manageable annual bedding plant display, Soroptimists Garden, Pergola (replaced in 2013), basketball court, Rugby and Soccer fields, a cricket pitch and tennis courts.

1930-1950

Aside from the Great Depression this period was dominated by Dust Bowls in the Prairie Provinces and World War II. As a result very little park development took place. As the depression waned, factories offered work, which saw more people move to the bigger industrialized centres such as Windsor and Detroit. In 1935, the Border Cities amalgamated into the City of Windsor, which saw Ford Street Park (now Coventry Gardens and Reaume Park), Alexander Park (aka. East Windsor Bathing Beach) and Willistead Park, added to the cities inventory. With efforts to establish Jackson Park as the city's premier park very few parks were developed, however eight neighborhood parks were established in the 1940's.

Figure 1-11: Aerial photo of Jackson Park (c. 1945)



1950-1970

By 1951 with Amalgamation and when those serving in the war had returned and started families, the City of Windsor's population had escalated to over 120,000. During the next twenty years the City of Windsor boomed in development and population, due to the relationship with the Detroit automobile industry. By 1971, the city of Windsor's population had reached 209,000. Since then the population has stayed relatively the same. In all 57 Parks were developed in association with new neighbourhoods, community centres, and school grounds.

OJIBWAY PARK AND OJIBWAY PRAIRIE PROVINCIAL PARK COMPLEX

In 1966, the Towns of Ojibway and Riverside were annexed and became part of City of Windsor, as well as parts of the Townships of Sandwich East, Sandwich South, and Sandwich West. In that action, the undeveloped lands of the Canadian Steel Corporation fell in to the cities inventory. As no development had ever occurred, the lands remained in a pristine natural condition. In 1973, with the efforts of the Province and the Essex Region Conservation Authority, Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve were established formally as natural parks of significant natural heritage to the region.



Figure 1-12: Ojibway Parks Boardwalk

DIEPPE AND RIVERFRONT PARKS

It is also during this time period that the initial efforts to acquire all lands north of Riverside Drive as future parkland began. As a result, by 1970 the City had acquired and established all the parks along the Detroit River from the Ambassador Bridge to the foot of Ouellette Avenue in the downtown with exception to the Caron Street docks and a hotel at the foot of Janette Avenue. Though primarily passive in nature, they offered the residents of the city an opportunity to access the waterfront for a variety of recreational purposes, including strolling, ship watching and fishing. Dieppe Gardens (est. 1959) showcased annual display gardens and historically significant monument.



Figure 1-13: Tall ship docked at Dieppe Park – photo by Cathy Masterson

1970-1990

Though the population fell by nearly 8.5% to just over 191,000, this period found the greatest number of new parks being established in the City of Windsor. In all 72 additional parks, trails and open spaces were established; partly due to Ontario legislation that required parkland dedication in association with all development especially where lower income family housing was being developed. During this period, the provincial government offered developers incentives through financial assistance to provide parkland associated with any lower income or senior-oriented housing. In 1990, under Section 51.1 (Parkland) of the Ontario Planning Act, it was legislated that all development would convey parkland to municipalities for public recreational purposes.⁵ As well as these incentive supported opportunities, the City of Windsor experienced significant commercial and light industrial development which afforded the city with an ability to improve lands for parks and recreational purposes, especially in new neighbourhoods in the eastern half of the city.

At this time in the western half of the City, there were very few housing starts which saw less need for additional parkland, however several improvements were made to the existing infrastructure that provide legacy, including:

- Erection of Father Ronald Cullen (1972) and Bernie Soulierre (1987) Baseball Stadiums in MicMac Park
- Designation of Natural heritage significance of Ojibway Nature Complex (1973)
- Mackenzie Hall Park Improvements (1982)
- Black Oak Heritage Park added to the Ojibway Nature Complex (1989)

REAUME PARK AND COVENTRY GARDENS

Though much of the land was acquired in 1935 with the Amalgamation of the Border Cities, it wasn't until 1975 that the City purchased a parcel of land from the Glengarda Ursuline Convent and underwater lots from the Windsor Harbour Commission that saw much improvement in the park. In a desire to encourage the expansion of riverfront parkland into the residential areas along the Detroit River the park was developed through community participation including donations of plant material from local residents and businesses. The key attraction of the park is the Charlie Brooks Memorial Peace Fountain which was partially financed through public subscription, matching Provincial Lottery funds, labour, industrial and business donations, as well as a contribution from the Town of Granby, Quebec, a twin city to Windsor.

Today the park still features the floating fountain, trees and horticultural displays as well a newly erected monument commemorating the War in Afghanistan. Like many of the parks along the river and those that have a horticultural component, the residents of the city identify this as one of their favourite parks.

The early success of the park along with the impetus from the western end riverfront parks, spawned interest in acquisition of riverfront parkland along Riverside Drive East. During the 1970's and 1980's many of the eastern waterfront parks as well as the Lakeview Marina and Sandpoint "the Beach" Park were acquired and developed as access points to the water for the community.

Figure 1-14: Coventry Garden Terraces in Reaume Park



FOREST GLADE PARK AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

With the production of the mini-van at the Chrysler plant in the eastern end of the City, one of the last suburban neighbourhoods in the City of Windsor is that of Forest Glade. Forest Glade Optimist Park, built in 1974, is a 30-acre park that serves this community and was built as a centre to attract residents. It is still a highly desired community park in the city. The park offers a variety of year-round recreation options for people of all ages including an arena, community centre and library, baseball diamonds and a skateboard park.

GANATCHIO TRAIL - CLAIRVIEW BIKEWAY

Associated with the acquisition of parkland along the waterfront, the city between 1979 and 1983, acquired the 8 kilometre Ganatchio Trail and Clairview Bikeway, which constitutes the first multi-use trail in the city. Funded primarily by the City of Windsor and Windsor St. Clair Rotary Club, with additional funding in 2004 by Saturn of Windsor, as well subsequent funding from other private and public foundations, the park bears the local First Nations word for Lake St. Clair. The trail parallels Riverside Drive in the eastern end of the City from the Town of Tecumseh to just west of Kiwanis Park near St Rose Beach. In 1995 the trail was widened through National Infrastructure funding to better serve a wider group of users including joggers, roller-bladers, and cyclists.

LITTLE RIVER CORRIDOR

In 1966 with the annexation of the Town of Riverside, Little River Corridor Park became part of the city's park inventory. This park had been identified in the 1923 Border Cities Map as an integral part of a green belt to surround the City of Windsor. Establishment of the Ganatchio Trails brought public attention to the unsightliness of this relatively neglected water channel. Initial efforts in the 1980's and 1990's were to clean up the river as a North American wide social awareness of the value of these parkland parcels was made prominent. Organizations, such as Habitat 2000 and the Environmental Youth Corp, who saw the need to address environmental sustainability as a key to future generations in the next millennium, eagerly participated in clean-ups. Currently the park is testament to the efforts of community participation with city staff and private funding organizations, with 200 acres of vegetative naturalized parkland, trails and amenities for public use.

Figure 1-15: Little River Corridor Trail.





Figure 1-16: Current Parks Greenway System

1990-PRESENT

Following the Culture and Recreation Master Plan, the City of Windsor had a framework by which to expand the parks and recreation system. Major accomplishments included the development of 54 new parks, establishment of playgrounds in all neighbourhood parks, formalization of the bicycle and multi-use trail system through B.U.M.P., a major recreation complex at WFCU Centre, and Aquatic Centre in the downtown, establishment and increase to the Natural Heritage Sites, parkland development along the downtown waterfront, and an ongoing effort to work with the community and other agencies to ensure that the park system grows appropriately. Planning guidelines with respect to park land development were also added to the Official Plan in order to address areas of deficiencies, acquire land through planning and development applications, and determine the type and design of parks as they were implemented.

FORD TEST TRACK

Though leased since 1979 from the Ford Motor Company, the property was acquired by the City in a land exchange with the Ford Motor Corporation in 1994. The site has evolved into the city's premier soccer complex. A site Master Plan has been developed for Ford Test Track including future field expansion, more community related passive park amenities at the south end of the property, as well as formal repurposing of the automobile test track.

NATURALIZATION - MALDEN RECREATION PARK & EAST RIVERSIDE (BLUE HERON LAKE) PARK

Formerly the city's west end landfill facility, Malden Park has evolved into a regional recreation facility with winding scenic trails through wooded areas and over several hills, and along storm water management ponds. Through a National Infrastructure Program in 1994, the property was redeveloped as a naturalized area, complementing the Ojibway complex which lies south of the site. A key feature of the property are the large landfill hills which have been formally transformed into toboggan facilities and hiking and cross-country skiing trails, making the park one of the city's primary winter recreational facilities.

Similarly, in 1996 the eastern landfill site was transformed by Council Resolution to include a naturalization of the site with trails, toboggan facilities, and a large storm water management pond, know as Blue Heron Lake.



Figure 1-17: Aerial Photo of Ford Test Track Park showing soccer fields



Figure 1-18: Malden Park Visitor Centre

CENTRAL RIVERFRONT LANDS (C.R.I.P.)

In 1981, C.N. Railway announced that it would be terminating its operations along the downtown riverfront land in Windsor, making a 13.35 hectare parcel of waterfront property available for the City of Windsor for parkland development. In 1990 after much public consultation, several concept plans, and negotiation with the Federal Government and C.N. Railway, the lands were transferred to the City through a land exchange. Many recommendations in the 1989 Culture & Recreation Master Plan were focused on the acquisition of the C.N. and C.P. Riverfront Lands.

The following parks were developed along these lands shortly after the city's acquisition to provide residents with much needed green space in the downtown core.

- 1994 Bert weeks Memorial Gardens
- 1995 CNR Lands
- 1995 Caron Street Parkette
- 1995 Festival Plaza
- 1997 Windsor Sculpture Park

In September of 2000, the City adopted the Central Riverfront Implementation Plan (CRIP) which outlined a 25 year plan. As part of the overall concept for the C.N. Riverfront Lands development and success, ideas of a physical link to connect the riverfront with the Civic Campus were proposed



Figure 1-19: Bert Weeks Memorial Fountain in the Central Riverfront Lands



Figure 1-20: Aerial view of Peche Island Nature Preserve

PECHE ISLAND

Pecche Island is a culturally and naturally significant island at the source of the Detroit River where it meets Lake St Clair. It was once owned and partially developed by the Hiram Walker family before becoming a Provincial Park in 1974. Home to a rich biodiversity of fauna and flora, the City of Windsor acquired this Natural Heritage site in 1999 when the Province proposed to divest its interests in it. Though no parkland development has occurred on the property, it is operated as a natural refuge for indigenous species.

SPRING GARDEN ANSI

In conjunction with the Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources, the City of Windsor in 2000, rezoned this area immediately east of the Ojibway Nature Complex. Though much of the land is privately owned, the city has been acquiring properties in order to preserve the rich natural environment, and diverse species of plants and animals that exist in this area; some that are exclusive and unique to this area in Ontario, and the rest of Canada. Presently the city owns 137 of the 289 acres of land. The city's acquisition of these properties has influenced, and has been positively impacted by the development of the Herb Gray Parkway project, which will expand the natural heritage value of the area with naturalized landscaped bridges over the highway.

CITY OF WINDSOR CULTURE AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (1989)

In 1989, Council adopted the City of Windsor Culture and Recreation Master Plan prepared by Laventhol & Horwath. The document proposed 138 recommendations including a strong focus on parkland improvements to the Riverfront and Downtown, and programming for seniors and persons with disabilities. The study made 138 recommendations, of which 120 had an impact on Parks and Recreation; the other 18 were culturally based.

- *60 Recommendations have been completed in their entirety to date.*
- *39 Recommendations adopted as guidelines or have on-going implications with respect to development and operation practices.*
- *17 Recommendations require further input as they have impact with other agencies external to the City.*
- *4 Recommendations no longer have relevance to City supplied parks and recreation.*

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Including the previously mentioned parks that were completed from 1990 to 2015 as a result of the master plan, several major accomplishments were made with respect to parks and recreational facilities from 1989 to 2015.

- ✓ *54 new parks were developed on 800 acres of acquired parkland (primarily neighborhood) in all planning districts.*
- ✓ *All neighborhood parks have been equipped with a children's playground.*
- ✓ *16 Accessible playgrounds were installed in community and regional parks.*
- ✓ *The 10 recommendations for Criteria Prioritization have become standard practice in park development throughout the city.*
- ✓ *3 NEW Recreation complex completed including: Lanspeary Outdoor Rink, the WFCU Centre and South Windsor Recreation Complex.*
- ✓ *NEW Aquatic Facility constructed downtown.*
- ✓ *Sports fields and Stadiums improved for extended use including: Mic Mac Baseball Complex, Ford Test Track, Riverside Baseball.*
- ✓ *Indoor and Outdoor track facilities in cooperation with the University of Windsor.*
- ✓ *Parkside Premier Tennis Facilities established at Jackson Park and lighted facilities at Central and Forest Glade Parks.*
- ✓ *Establishment of a Seniors Advisory Council (Age-Friendly Windsor).*
- ✓ *Establishment of a Youth Advisory Council.*
- ✓ *Establishment of a Bicycle Technical Committee and implementation of the B.U.M.P.*
- ✓ *Increased public awareness of natural heritage sites through nature trails and completion of the Ojibway Nature Centre in 2010.*
- ✓ *Added 5 NEW Picnic shelters in most active Community and Regional Parks.*
- ✓ *Acquisition of C.N.R. Lands.*
- ✓ *Acquisition of Little River Valley Lands.*
- ✓ *Riverfront Development on CNR Lands including implementation of the Central Riverfront Implementation Plan as guideline for development.*
- ✓ *Establishment of Willstead Manor and Park, as well as Mackenzie Hall as Cultural Heritage Sites.*
- ✓ *Consolidation of major sports facilities into Regional Parks.*
- ✓ *Defined Public Open Space through the City of Windsor Official Plan including: Hierarchy of parks, open space standards for development and definition for deficiencies.*
- ✓ *Provided recommendations for parkland deficiencies.*
- ✓ *Establishment of a Parkland Reserve Account through parkland development contributions as outlined in the Official Plan.*

SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE THE 1989 PLAN

Though the 1989 Culture and Recreation Master Plan has had many successful accomplishments as per the recommendations, several events have occurred that preclude the process from a simple update; necessitating a revision that focuses on Parks and Outdoor Recreation only.

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY CHANGES

- As part of a reorganization of Essex County, approximately 23 square kilometres (8.9 sq mi) of the Town of Tecumseh, known as Sandwich South, was transferred to the City of Windsor in 2003. Currently, it is sparsely populated as farmland, and when acquired it increased the city's population to 216,000; however, the prospective development of this area holds a great potential for parkland and the need for recreational services.
- In 2004, the Federal Government along with the Province of Ontario, announced the proposal to build a new international crossing between Windsor and Detroit; expanding Highway 401 into the west end of the city near the significantly sensitive lands of Spring Garden ANSI and the Ojibway Nature Complex. Through the negotiations of the Mayor and Council with other levels of government, the proposal included an expansion of the public open green space in the city, through a series of elevated landscape bridges and multi-use trails. Though these facilities will remain under Provincial and Federal jurisdiction, these connections will impact the recreational infrastructure of the City Parks and Open Spaces.

ECONOMIC CHANGES

- Though the population of the City of Windsor expanded slightly due to the acquisition of Sandwich South Lands, several negative factors occurred that resulted in an economic downturn in 2006, as well as a reduction in population recorded in the 2011 census. : Though other parts of the country saw increased production as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994), Windsor saw much of the automotive industry and associated manufacturing sector leave the area, causing many people to look for work elsewhere in the country. Already weakened by the displacement caused by NAFTA, the global Automotive Industry Crisis of 2008-2010 saw more economic downturns in the local automotive industry. As result, in 2010 General Motors officially closed all of its operations in Windsor. This left Windsor's Chamber of Commerce, and the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation looking at different employment strategies for the area to make the city competitive in the global market.

END NOTES

¹ ERCA, 2002; *Essex Region Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Guidelines and Priorities*, pg 1x

² Lands annexed from the Town of Tecumseh in 2003

³ P. Goode; M. Lancaster: *The Oxford Companion to Gardens* New York : Oxford University Press, 1986, pg 209

⁴ originally named " *The First Ninety Years: The Growth of Windsor's Parks*", 1996

⁵ Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, Part 51.1 Parkland