

Oshawa Beautiful: Accessing Your Green Spaces

Project Components

This project has 3 key components that are all in service of our overarching goals. First, there is a website that introduces Oshawa as a city with ample green spaces: parks & gardens, trails, and natural areas. The website has clear messaging: Oshawa is a city with natural beauty, you deserve to explore the benefits of these public resources, and we all must take ownership and care of these natural spaces. The website aims to inspire Oshawa residents to explore these spaces, take pride in them, and in turn, prioritize them.

The second component, which the website will lead to, is an interactive map that aims to make these spaces more accessible. The map outlines the natural spaces featured in the website. Within these spaces, accessible features such as transportation options, washroom access, information boards and accessibility features are listed, with the intent of making planning a trip to an Oshawa green space more seamless.

Lastly, we created a QR-code poster that we intend to put on public message boards around the city of Oshawa to promote our website and map. By directing people to these resources in the actual community, we hope to be able to reach more people with our messaging — ideally populations that currently have low access to natural resources. We will target locations such as public libraries, community centres, and laundromats.

Guiding Principles

In the conception of this project, we began with several specific goals we wanted to achieve: improve access to green spaces, change perceptions of Oshawa, and encourage pride and stewardship in natural areas. We know that use of green spaces is unevenly distributed within the population, and primarily serves people who have time and previous experience with nature. Therefore, we attempted to break down some of the barriers and uncertainties that might be preventing individuals from enjoying these resources. We laid out the green spaces in order of what we considered to be an easy way to get used to accessing these resources: starting with parks and gardens that are more manicured and tame, with paved pathways, and ending with conservation areas with off-road trails and sensitive habitats. The hope is that this provides options to everyone, regardless of their comfort level. This is also why it was important to include information about each space in our map, so that residents could be sure that these spaces would have what they needed: parking or transit stops, washrooms, additional information or accessible walkways.

Because these are publicly owned resources, it was important to us to encourage residents to see these as their parks, that they have ownership and responsibility for these resources. By making nature more accessible, we intend to change the perception of Oshawa. Oshawa has long been known as an intense industrial city, and perhaps dirty and contaminated. By highlighting the natural beauty within this city, we hope to inspire civic pride in residents. This changed opinion of Oshawa may encourage residents to feel a connection to the natural environment. When people care, they are more likely to prioritize these spaces, supporting conservation efforts. By encouraging residents to get out and explore natural spaces, we're hoping to build connection, which will in turn lead to a stewardship mindset that will encourage a sustainable, resilient city.

Sustainable Development Goals

This project is a sustainability initiative, because it speaks directly to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, goal 11.7: “provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.” By prioritizing this goal, we hope to have indirect effects on other goals by encouraging residents to value these green spaces. We anticipate positive impacts on mental health and physical activity levels and conservation efforts on life in the water or on land, and a greater protection of natural resources. We believe that when people are involved with nature, they will become more sustainability conscious.

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