

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The central text is set against a white background that is partially framed by these blue shapes.

Town of Cochrane Parks and Trails Master Plan

May 2018

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Preface

The Cochrane Recreation and Special Events Board has undertaken a review of existing parks and trails with the view to assess current and future needs in the community. Agreement was reached to perform the exercise in-house with members contributing through brainstorming and opportunity identification sessions which resulted in this product.

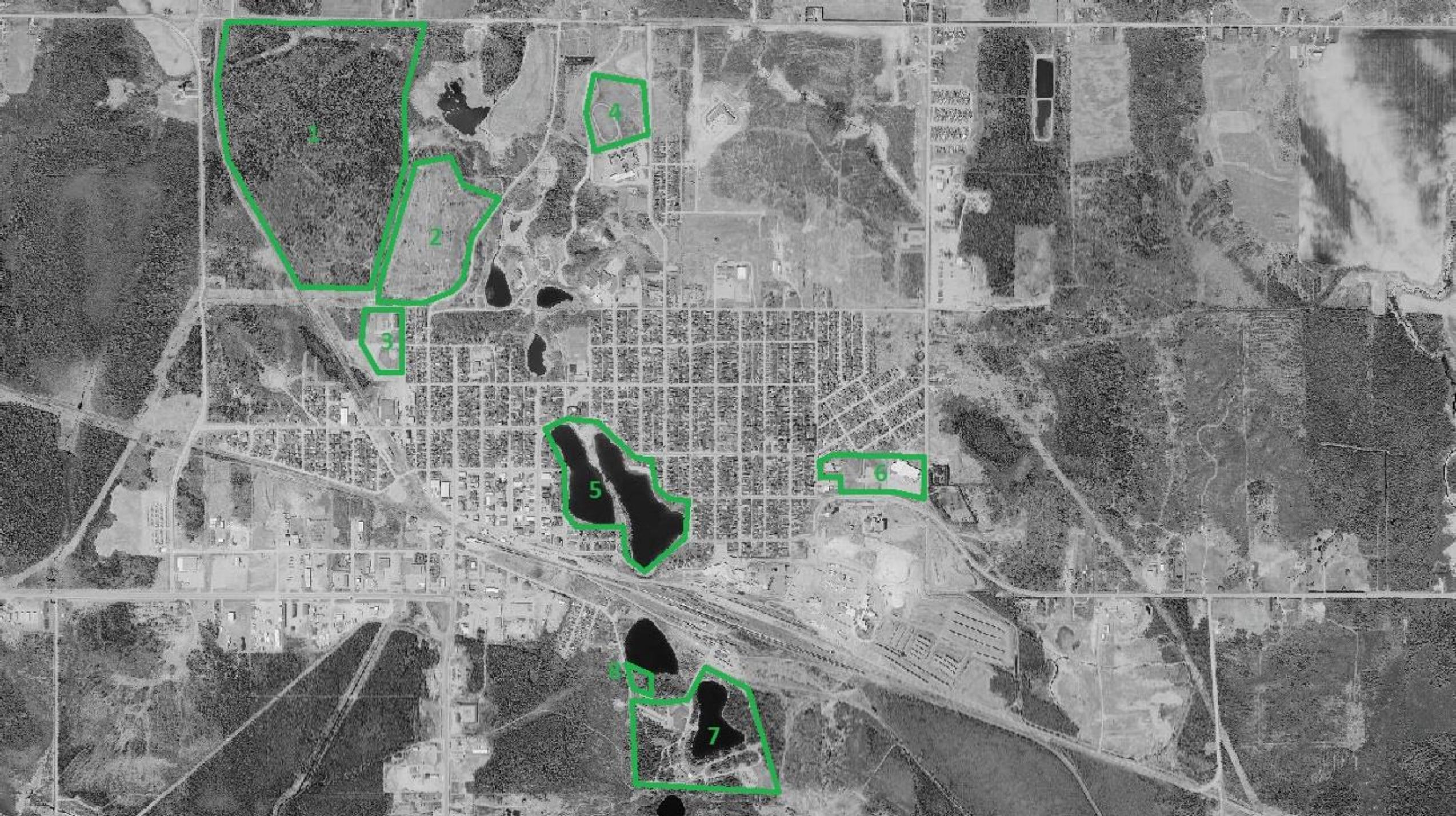
Previous studies or reports were reviewed in the analysis phase of the project, with many concepts repeating themselves over decades, reinforcing their value and need. The town being just over 100 years in existence, with a stable population and tax base, would benefit from having a planning document for future leaders to consider.

This project will provide both visual and editorial context to existing and proposed facilities.

The report is intended to provide high-level conceptual projects and facilities which may require further analysis and consideration.

Existing Parks and Facilities

- ▶ The next slide depicts the areas within the urban core of the municipality where parks or facilities exist.
- ▶ The map provides some context for which areas currently promote recreational pursuits, those offered by the town and by recreational groups / organizations.
- ▶ Cochrane is fortunate to be geographically compact, with ease of access within minutes.
- ▶ The community could be described as “Active” with most of its residents participating in several recreational pursuits. Widely popular is walking around Commando Lake.
- ▶ The town encourages the use of snowmobiles and atvs/utvs as all streets are legally accessible under by-law.



Existing Parks and Facilities Summary

Refer to matching numbers on the previous map

1. Cochrane Cross Country Ski Club - the facility is operated in the winter months for groomed cross country skiing. Wood chips were added at one point to create a trail base for mountain biking but this idea was abandoned after one summer season. The property is large and privately owned, restricting possibilities for other uses.
2. Lee Golf Club - this facility features a 9-hole golf course that operates summer only. Of recent note, the club struggles maintaining membership and with escalating operating costs has announced potential closure after 2018.
3. Cochrane Curling Club / Cochrane Agricultural Society - The curling club leases property from the Ag Society. It features 4 sheets of ice and have been able to work through its financial challenges with some degree of success. The Ag lands are primarily utilized once per year for the Annual Fall Fair. South of this area is the municipal George Ash Memorial ball park.
4. E.S.C.H.S. Athletic Field - Operated by the DSBONE school board, the facility features a running track, soccer/football field, baseball diamond, and two tennis courts. As a public facility, added usage could be requested and formalized through the municipality.

5. Commando Lake - Deemed “the jewel of the town” we are fortunate to have this natural resource in the centre of the municipality. The lake is a focal point for many recreational activities and special events. The lake features the following amenities:
- ▶ Commando Beach: Supervised beach area, change-rooms, parking, slip n’ slide, beach volleyball, docks, bbq’s, pop-up piano, equipment rentals including bikes, canoes, kayaks, paddle-boats, SUP’s, etc. Winter uses have included carnival sliding hill. A splash pad is under development.
 - ▶ New Peninsula Project: Construction almost complete, the facility will be opened for January events. Features an ‘open’ or viewing building that includes a hall for over 400 people, full commercial kitchen, restrooms, host 4-season events. Large stage building near peninsula bridge for concerts and carnival activities, features restrooms and smaller kitchen, serving area. The park area surrounding the facilities will be used for outdoor concerts, fountain, pergola, multi-use paths, path lighting for year-round access.
 - ▶ Winter Carnival and Summerfest events are traditionally held at the lake area, the added infrastructure will encourage additional special events.
 - ▶ Commando Boardwalk - funded by Canada150, this is a new multi-use path connects the Downtown area to Memorial Park to access the Peninsula. Completely constructed of wood, the facility is a nostalgic replica of wooden sidewalks that existed when we were a pioneer town.
 - ▶ Memorial Park - central to the lake, Remembrance Day ceremonies, new lockstone multi-use path. Bandstand structure.
 - ▶ Queen Elizabeth Park - greenspace, picnic area, winter sliding hill, illuminated.

6. Tim Horton Events Centre - The facility and area features the main recreational area for the community. Constructed in 2006, the recreational complex includes an NHL-sized arena with 500 seats plus box seating for 80, a Caribbean themed leisure pool, gym, a community hall for 500 as well as the Tim Horton Museum. Surrounding the complex the following recreational facilities exist:

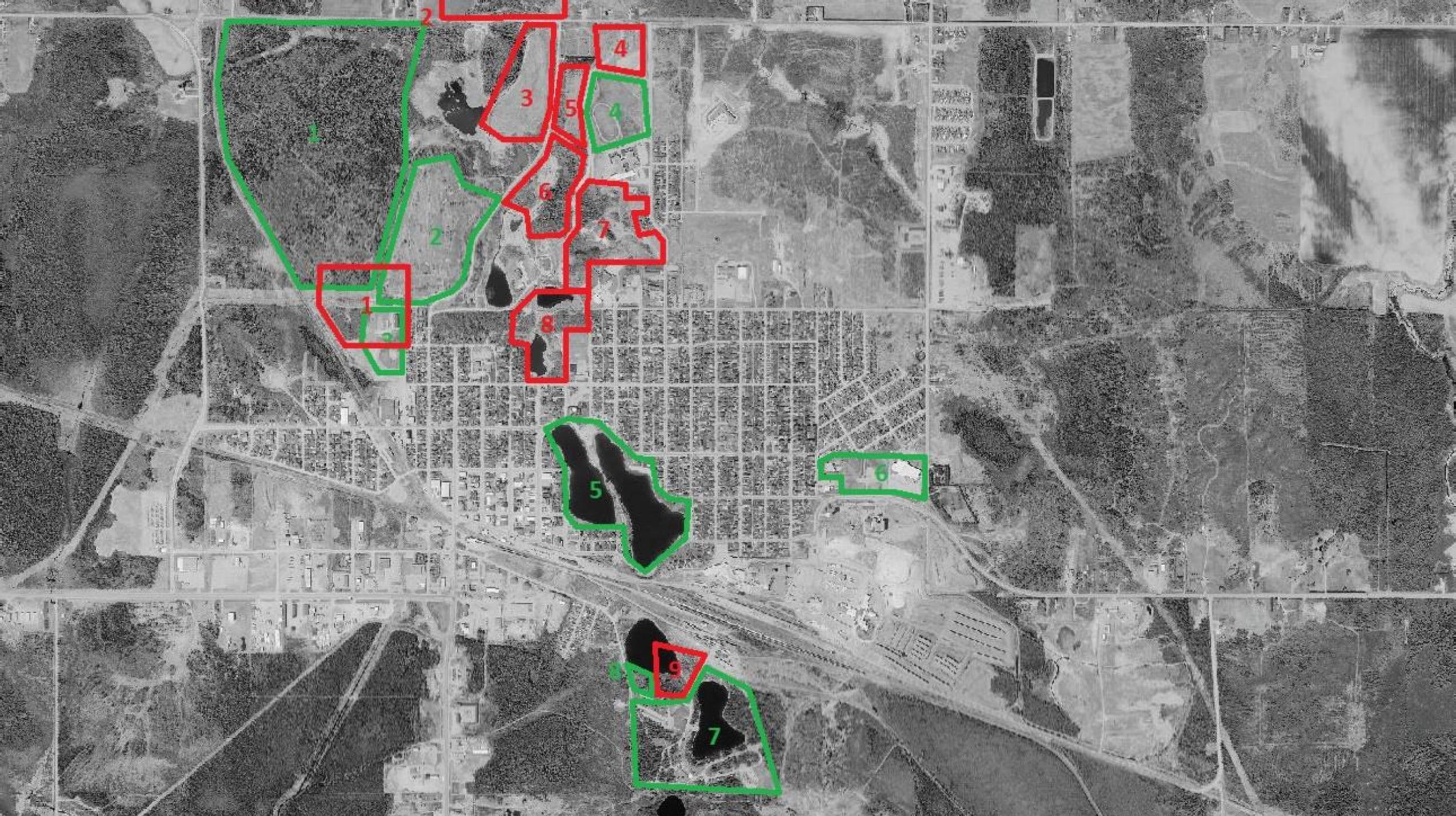
- ▶ Glackmeyer Field of Dreams Ballpark
- ▶ 2 soccer pitches
- ▶ Outdoor skating rink
- ▶ Hillcrest Playground
- ▶ Skateboard park

7. Polar Bear Habitat and Heritage Village - a unique, world-renown conservation and rehabilitation facility for polar bears, our town's brand, this facility features the largest enclosures ever created for the specie, including a lake. The Heritage Village features a pioneer main street themed village which is also utilized to host special events.

8. Healing Garden - operated in partnership between the Ininew Friendship Centre, Metis Nation of Ontario and the Minto Counselling Centre, the facility serves as a community garden for members and outdoor activities are hosted.

New Parks and Facilities Opportunities

- ▶ The next slide depicts the areas within the urban core of the municipality where parks or facilities exist, and where new parks could be established.
- ▶ The map provides some context for which areas currently promote recreational pursuits, those offered by the town and by recreational groups / organizations and where new facilities could be considered.
- ▶ Next steps following new park identification are considerations for evaluating and prioritizing projects



New Parks Opportunities Summary

Refer to matching numbers on the previous map

1. Curling / Golf Course area - in recent years, the clubs have indicated financial hardship operating their facilities. A review of the opportunity finds 5 clubs in the vicinity who each could benefit from a new, centralized and modern facility. A design was prepared and presented to the clubs. Without this proposed concept clubs may fold impacting recreational services.
 1. Lee Golf Club
 2. Cochrane Curling Club
 3. Cochrane Cross Country Ski Club
 4. Cochrane Agricultural Society
 5. Second Mile Seniors Club

We also need to look at incorporating a playground in this area for residents on the west side of the urban area to have a play area within reasonable walking distance with small kids.

2. Community Forest - The municipality owns a full farm 150 acres. In reviewing potential recreational uses, the site could be studied more closely for possible applications. The site contains Lillabelle Creek which is the municipal waste-water discharge recipient. Winter applications could include a boon-docking or freestyle snowmobile trail.



3. Glackmeyer Landfill Site - this facility was closed as a landfill area over a decade ago but presents recreational opportunities, subject to MOECC restrictions. The Cochrane Model Airplane Club operated from this site for about 10 years. Lee Golf Club's initial preference for driving range but site requires engineering report to satisfy MOECC.
4. North Snow Dump - another municipal site which may present summer opportunities. The site was levelled with fill recently and provides a flat surface.
5. West of ESCHS - this site was being reviewed by the Lee Golf Club for the installation of a Driving Range. They received funding but have not proceeded at this time.
6. ESCHS Trail - This site was recently requested by the school to be utilized for outdoor programming. A class program hopes to create a trail.
7. Chalmers Hills - this site has been a formidable snowmobile hill-climb when sleds were less capable. The site possesses great opportunities for a mountain bike park, or become part of a larger mountain bike trail network.
8. Lilly Lake - currently utilized as a off-leash dog park, the site provides a host of opportunities. Former ski hill offered a tow rope service, MNR fire tower was once situated there and could be re-established. Area is currently used as connecting trail for ATV's snowmobiles, and mountain bikes. Adjacent to the site is the former St-Joseph school site includes a field and forested area, connects to Chalmers Hills.
9. Drury Park - while the former park area was re-established as a Polar Bear Habitat, this remnant area on Norman Lake could provide campground and RV park services. Alternatively, the Healing Garden could be expanded.

Cycling

- ▶ Cycling activity and interest has increased tremendously worldwide, partly as an efficient and sensible approach to commuting to work. In Ontario several initiatives have been launched to provide municipalities with resources to enable the trend.
- ▶ Cochrane, chosen by 8-80 Cities as a pilot for a Doable Neighbourhood Project has embraced the idea and created cycling lanes where practical. A free Bike Share project was launched, new lanes and paths created or re-established into a network. As new road design and construction occurs, cycling is promoted and incorporated.
- ▶ Cochrane features both cycling lanes as well as multi-use paths. The differentiation is that lanes are created on each side of a street as unidirectional whereby a path is single and bidirectional. Each are shown on the next slide.
- ▶ Department and Council need to re-evaluate Bylaw #126-2001 and consider repealing to support future cycling initiatives
- ▶ Further, we need to establish an Active Transportation Policy that will support future development of pathways so that as roads are reconstructed new cycling infrastructure can be developed if financially feasible.

Snowmobile Trails

- ▶ In a recent survey undertaken by a Northern community partnership entitled “the Worlds’ Greatest Snowmobiling Destination” OFSC members from across Ontario were surveyed on a number of questions including “which is your favorite snowmobiling destination in Ontario?” The clear indication is that Cochrane stood head and shoulders above all others in the Province.
- ▶ Cochrane needs to embrace the concept and opportunity that this presents. Snowmobiling interest is ever increasing as new technologies are keeping pace with concerns for the environment and operating costs. Conversely, climate change is shrinking the geography where reliable snow can be found.
- ▶ Cochrane should become the Mecca for this activity and pursue a development plan which could include:
 - ▶ Variety of short trails, designated, with ranging difficulty, boon-docking (fields), hill-climbing areas; promoting riding within the community to extend visitor stay
 - ▶ Signature Festival for snowmobiling
 - ▶ Marketing Strategy and Product Development plan
 - ▶ Potential for some product to translate to ATV tourism

— Snowmobile Trails



Considerations for Development

- ▶ A wide range of considerations should be reviewed in analyzing and prioritizing projects:
 - ▶ Financial: Leveraged funding, return on investment, motivated partners
 - ▶ Imminent loss of existing community recreation
 - ▶ Environmental: sustainable use, protection, beautification
 - ▶ Demand: community, tourism, trending, leading
 - ▶ Social: health, wellness, sociability, quality of life, cultural

Development Phases

- ▶ Opportunities to work towards parks and trail improvements can be generated from a number of angles. While Council or the Rec Board may be the leadership we would expect to create new facilities, nothing prevents a service club or recreationists to assist toward this cause. This plan can serve as a tool to guide or inspire community members to champion a project.
- ▶ Just as the Commando Lake Development Plan suggested a multitude of initiatives, it's not likely that all of these amenities immediately appear. What matters is once the concepts are captured and visualized, they can almost become self-fulfilling.

Conclusion

- ▶ A Parks and Trails Master Plan should be a living document which Community Leaders review and update from time to time.
- ▶ History has demonstrated that sound project ideas will survive and outlast inactivity either due to economic or regime circumstances
- ▶ Prioritization needs to carefully consider sustainability in all its forms:
 - ▶ Environmental, Return on Investment, Market or Community Demand, Funding Leverage, etc.
- ▶ Cochrane is fortunate to have bountiful natural resources within it that offer amazing opportunities for people to recreate and enjoy.