

LIVING HERE

PH9

*The housing market is booming.
The waterfront is fine. Quaint Orillia up
in cottage country is now the place to live.*

paradise found



Kristen Borland, Ryan Squires and their dog looking out over the Port of Orillia. The couple made the drive from Barrie as they prefer Orillia's waterfront.

BLISS LUTHEKE FOR NATIONAL POST

A WRITER'S HAVEN

SKETCHED IN SUNSHINE

Immortalized for its small-town feel by Stephen Leacock, locals say Orillia hasn't changed a bit.

PH10

PRIME REAL ESTATE

Discover your dreamy second abode in Orillia



Retirees wave bye-bye to the Big Smoke for the Sunshine City's diverse housing choices.

PH12

ON THE WATERFRONT

EAU, YES, IT'S EVERYWHERE

Small town, big opportunity, for those who scoop up a home on the waterfront.

PH14

'Do you remember how when you first began to make money you used to plan that just as soon as you were rich, really rich, you'd go back home to the little town and build a great big house with a fine verandah...' — *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*

ORILLIA



Gene fishin': Boaters spend a lazy evening cruising the Port of Orillia.

An appreciation of the great outdoors and small-town values add to the appeal of this picturesque lakeside town

It's like living at the cottage

BY SHELLY SANDERS GREEN

On the shores of Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching lies a small, picturesque city that closely resembles Mariposa, a fictional locale personified in Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. A quiet downtown spotted with heritage buildings that comes to life in the summer when visitors arrive. Clean air and lake water you can actually swim in. Cozy old homes with gingerbread trim. Orillia, founded in 1807, is one of those rare jewels, about an hour and a half north of Toronto, that has seen no increase in the growth rate over the past decade. In fact, the City of Orillia forecasts a population increase of exactly 463 people each year to 2031. And residents wouldn't have it any other way.

For Susan Lang, who was born and raised in Orillia and is the managing director of the Chamber of Commerce, the small-town feel and "the simple pleasures" are what she loves the most about her city.

"We have a great lifestyle here; it's like living at the cottage," says Ms. Lang. "The Port of Orillia is a huge draw for boaters, and it's a beautiful site, attached to downtown, in a large park. You can swim, take your kids to the playground, and there's even a Casino Rama shuttle bus that picks up people for the casino."

The accessibility of Orillia, on both land and water, brings tourists on wheels and in boats from many faraway places. From Lake Couchiching (an Indian word meaning "Lake of Many Winds"), boaters can go anywhere in the world. The lake connects to the Trent-Severn Waterway through three locks, and has the only marine railway in North America. Since 1955, Ralph Cipolla has lived in Orillia with his family; he's a city councillor, in part because of his desire to see Orillia maintain its slow and steady growth.

"I've had the opportunity to

travel all over the world, but I chose to live in Orillia because it's a great place to raise children," says Mr. Cipolla. "The crime rate here is less than anywhere else in Canada and the U.S. Even complete strangers will say hi to you and offer help if you need it. The atmosphere and people are what make our community better."

Another long-time resident and city councillor, Don Evans, recalls a homogenous Orillia 25 years ago when he moved here from Toronto.

"In order to get a fresh bagel, I had to wait until the one day a week they were for sale in the delicatessen. They were brought in from somewhere else, not made in Orillia."

"To my Toronto eye, Orillia was very insular. None of the multicultural aspects of Toronto I loved were to be found but as time has gone by, things have changed."

One of the biggest shifts resulted from the decision to make Orillia the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters, which Mr. Evans says has brought significant changes to the ethnic mix.

Casino Rama, located in nearby Rama, has also been responsible for bringing new people to Orillia. It's the largest employer in the area, with 3,700 employees.

But with the greenbelt legislation limiting land development in the greater Toronto area, along with the growth of Internet commuting, city planners and economists are preparing for an upward trend in population growth.

"At the end of April this year, we were \$11-million ahead of last year in residential, commercial, institutional and industrial growth," explains Robert Lamb, manager of economic development for the city. "We've already issued twice the number of single-family dwelling permits this year, with \$30.9-million compared to last year's \$8.6-million."

Mr. Lamb stresses, however, that Orillia's growth has been and always will be manageable, by not allowing increases until the services are in place. He

WELCOMING LAKEHEAD U



Lakehead University in Thunder Bay has a campus in Orillia.

This year, Lakehead University started first-year classes in Orillia, with plans to have a permanent base in the city soon. This university presence has been a long-awaited goal for many residents of Orillia, who see it as a way to improve the number of young people with degrees.

"The Simcoe Region was one of the largest population concentrations without a university, and the region has a 10% lower university rate than the rest of Canada, based on 2001 census

data," says Robert Lamb, manager of economic development for Orillia. In its first year, Lakehead had 130 students, and 400 are expected next year. The growth strategy is to have 1,500 students within five years and 3,000 to 4,000 within 10 years. "With a university and a college, there's more housing and more retail business," Mr. Lamb says. "The pieces fall into place. More choices equal more opportunities."

S.S.G., *National Post*

says he sees "Orillia continuing on with a healthy, sustainable growth rate," and points to several major civic projects underway to serve a growing community. A \$70-million expansion to the local hospital is well on its way to completion, and to revitalize the downtown core, a \$50-million multi-use recreational facility is in the planning stages.

"There has been a tremendous interest in development over the last two years," says Kathy Suggitt, director of planning and development for the city. "Lots of investment starts to put pressure on what has been the norm. It stretches the resources but we're in a good position with regard to the services available."

Ms. Suggitt is seeing a lot of residential activity on a wide spectrum, from high-end waterfront condos to standard single-family homes, as well as infill projects and rental apartment buildings. "Retirement growth is another area on the rise, with a mix of services and housing options being developed for this sector."

"We've added another planner this year, which is council's recognition of increased activity," says Ms. Suggitt. "We need to continue to plan ahead so we can meet demands and get ahead of the game."

"Orillia is a gem on two wonderful lakes that is suddenly being recognized and explored."

National Post

TOWN TIDBITS

RECREATION GALORE

With 89 acres of waterfront parks, walking trails, two ice arenas and a new, massive community centre in the works, Orillia is a leader when it comes to recreation.

"We think we're the envy of a lot of other municipalities," says Kay Merkley, who has lived here for 16 years and is director of parks and recreation.

There are actually three waterfront parks — Kitchener Park on Lake Simcoe, J.B. Tadhope Memorial Park on Lake Couchiching and Couchiching Beach Park at the base of Main Street.

"We have integrated our parks to make sure people have public access to water areas," Mr. Merkley says. "Both parks on Lake Couchiching have swimming areas."

Mr. Merkley explains that a 10 km walking trail connects J.B. Tadhope to Couchiching Beach Park through the north part of town. And there is a 230-acre natural environment park called Scout Valley Park with three walking trails on the west edge of Orillia.

Although development has taken place at a much slower rate than that of neighbouring Barrie, new subdivisions have been built and the City of Orillia is committed to developing new parks for the additional population. This includes a seven-acre park in a new area with a splash pad and playground.

"We must meet needs as growth occurs," Mr. Merkley says. "Right now, we're in

the planning stages for a \$57-million recreation centre on a 36-acre former industrial site. Since this site is between downtown and an industrial area, it will act as a transitional area between the two. The centre will have two ice surfaces — one Olympic and one NHL — a three-lane walking track, an aquatic centre with three pools, a water slide and a hot tub therapy pool, four baseball diamonds, eight tennis courts, one skateboard park and an outdoor refrigerated skate trail."

The city is currently working through some environmental issues and once construction starts, Mr. Merkley says it will take two years to build the new recreation centre.

Curling is a popular pastime in Orillia, and the sport will grow as more seniors choose to retire here. Eight years ago, a municipal curling facility with six sheets of ice was built here, reflecting the passion locals have for the game. One of the two ice arenas is named the Brian Orser Arena in honour of the Canadian skating legend who once skated out of the local club.

As growth occurs over the next few years, there are some concerns about the strains that will be placed on the natural resources such as the lake water. Mr. Merkley says, "Water quality is always a stress as we put more use on it, but I'm hopeful we will always have viable water."

S.S.G.

FAST FACTS

Population: 32,000

Ranked 20th best place to live in Canada by *MoneySense* magazine

Founded in 1807

Printed own money to 1936

Became a city in 1969

Had first municipal hydro-electric transmission plant in North America

First municipality in Canada to introduce daylight saving time during First World War

The Champlain Monument, a National Historic Site, has been called one of finest bronze sculptures on the continent

Average family income: \$61,600

Unemployment rate: 6.7%

Property taxes: Residential — 1.33%; Commercial — 3.53% (\$0-\$7-million); 6.09% (over \$7-million)

On average, 110 single detached homes and 72 multiple residential dwelling units are approved for construction per year

Distance to Toronto: 115 km

87 doctors (31 general practitioners; 36 specialists)

21 dentists

Local newspapers: *Packet & Times*; *Orillia Today*

S.S.G.

BUSINESS BASICS

Not only is it cost-effective to set up a business in Orillia, it's also a great place to invest in real estate. A 2006 BMA Municipal Competitiveness Study found that the costs of doing business in Orillia are among the lowest in Ontario.

Robert Lamb, manager of economic development for the city, says commercial growth is on the rise, and that the Real Estate Investment Network in 2004/2005 had Orillia tied for the No. 1 place to invest in real estate in Ontario. In 2007, Orillia came second to Kitchener. Two of the largest employers in Orillia are relatively new — the

Ontario Provincial Police headquarters and Casino Rama — occupied to many of the long-time companies. While the OPP has been welcomed with open arms, there is skepticism as to the benefits of Casino Rama.

Ralph Cipolla, resident for 32 years and city councillor, says "Casino Rama has changed some of the makeup of Orillia. I'm not sure if it is good or bad. It provides good jobs, but the spin-offs are not as great as we expected. People gamble, then they leave." The hope was that people would stay longer in Orillia, helping to fuel the economy.

S.S.G.

GOING GREEN IN ORILLIA

Orillia joined the green movement before it became mainstream, as one of the first communities in Canada to generate its own power. Ralph Cipolla, a city councillor, says the city owns the utility company — Orillia Power Corp. — which produces power that is then sold to the provincial grid.

Last year, we made close

to \$3-million in profit," says Mr. Cipolla. Robert Lamb, pictured, manager of economic development for Orillia, is proud of the city's efforts, stating, "We are always a leader in recycling programs. A couple of years ago, TV Ontario voted us the greenest city in Ontario."

Don Evans, also a city councillor, explains that waste management has been a priority for many years.

"Councils leading up to this one have always worked hard at promoting recycling, to the point where the municipality has been given top marks by the Recycling Council of Ontario on more than one occasion."

S.S.G., *National Post*

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S.S.G., *National Post*

Elvis lives — in Orillia, where tribute artists and tourists mix

Elvis, Buddy, Dean and other celebs will come to town Aug. 10 to 12 for the ninth-annual Orillia Tribute Artists Weekend. The event usually draws about 50 tribute artists and is a hit with both tourists and residents. "Most people are from out of town," says Tribute Artists chairman Terry Jackson. "One legion

SUMMER EVENTS

in Scarborough brings a busload of its members." The weekend includes barbecues (\$10) on Friday and Saturday nights and breakfasts (\$5) on Saturday and Sunday. On June 29, the shindig

kicks off with a three-hour cruise and lunch aboard the Island Princess. For more information, call 705-325-8442. C.A., National Post



ORILLIA



A gated condo community glows at dusk on the shores of Couchiching Lake in Orillia. Singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot paid homage to the lake in the song Couchiching.

Plenty of room for growth in old Orillia

MOVING NORTH

Condo-style amenities attract retirees while low prices pull families

BY LISA VAN DE VEN

Its waterfront access to two major lakes, not to mention its quaint downtown and extensive park system, are making Orillia an ideal choice for second-home buyers or retirees searching for a place to settle. Its affordable house prices, meanwhile, and proximity to Toronto, make it work just as well for young couples and families looking for an affordable way to enter the housing market.

And while Orillia may be known by some as casino country, homebuyers moving to the city are finding it has a lot more going for it than just that.

"Orillia's quite a beautiful place physically, because it's at the confluence of two lakes — Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching," says Joe Calenda, senior planner for the City of Orillia. "It's quite a green area ... it's a really old downtown."

The combination of all that is appealing specifically to a certain demographic, adds Eric Kerzner. The president of Signature Carlton is underway with the second phase of his ongoing Orillia site, Sophie's Landing, a gated community on Lake Simcoe, featuring bungalow designs ranging in size from 900 to 1,800 square feet and priced from \$325,000 to \$650,000.

According to Mr. Kerzner, the site is attracting buyers from the greater Toronto area, many of

them Baby Boomers looking for a second home that can transition into a place to retire in the next five to 10 years.

"We have a lot of people who already have cottages ... their cottages are too far, too big, too much to maintain. So that's a big reason why they come," the developer explains. "Another reason is that there are lots of amenities here."

Besides the casino, Mr. Kerzner says, recreational buyers like that there's golfing, skiing and boating nearby, and festivals throughout the summer, offering plenty to do for buyers who want a home where they can spend their leisure time, but who also

"It's on the south shore, which is a nice aspect of it, because you get the sunshine all day long," Mr. Bowering says. "The waterfront draws people to it."

Also located on the water, on Lake Simcoe — with about 200 feet of shoreline — is Driftwood Bay, by Driftwood Bay Developments. The project features 22 freehold townhouses with condominium common elements, and is again attracting buyers retiring from their primary residence in Toronto, or selling cottages in Muskoka to be closer to the amenities of the city. Homes range in size from 1,600 to just over 2,000 sq. ft. and are priced from \$350,000 to \$550,000.

With a recent expansion to the local hospital and new facilities for seniors in the area, says Todd Goulet, principal with Driftwood Bay Developments, Orillia is poised for exactly the market searching out waterfront properties like Driftwood Bay.

But that's not the only market finding its way to the city north of Barrie, either, he adds. "Some of the larger residential developments are on the other side of town, and they would be geared more to local, younger demographics," he says.

While the retirees and recreational buyers stay close to the lakefront, many of the younger buyers want to be closer to Highway 11, within an easy commute to Highway 400 and Toronto. There, more starter homes and family-oriented fare exist, in projects like developer Orsi Group's West Ridge master-planned site, designated for approximately 4,000 housing units when complete.

Currently at the project, builder Mariposa Homes is underway with The Towns of West Ridge, a community of 130 townhouses ranging in size from 1,200 to

THE PROJECT
FEATURES ABOUT 800 FEET OF SHORELINE, WITH 80 BOAT SLIPS

want to be close to Toronto.

In fact, developers are offering plenty for that particular group of buyers, with a range of products to go with the variety of amenities. Mutual Development Corp., for one, is introducing three condominium buildings to line the waterway separating lakes Simcoe and Couchiching. Its site, Orchard Point at the Narrows, features 155 suites ranging between 1,100 and 1,900 sq. ft. and priced from \$260,000 to about \$800,000.

Company president Mike Bowering sees the project attracting a combination of part-time and full-time residents, many of them empty nesters coming from the GTA. The project features about 800 feet of shoreline, with 80 boat slips on-site and a recreational centre — all of which help add to the project's appeal.



Top: Lorne and Nancy Carson shop in the Mariposa Market for fresh baked goods and locally made treats. Above: This gas bar in 1861 Knots Landing, offers fuel and snacks to Orillia's boaters.

1,500 sq. ft. and in price from \$154,900 to under \$200,000.

A selection of single-detached homes on 40- and 50-ft. lots is also currently available, sized from 1,400 to 2,600 sq. ft. and priced from \$249,900 to approxi-

mately \$320,000.

House prices for product such as that found in West Ridge are better than those a little further south in Barrie, making it an affordable alternative for first-time and move-up buyers, says Henry

Glavic, project engineer with Mariposa.

"Orillia's really a diamond in the rough," Mr. Glavic says. "It's got that small-town feel, with the amenities of an urban centre." National Post

NEXT ISSUE: SATURDAY, JULY 21

LIVING HERE

paradise found

LIVING HERE: MARKHAM

A new monthly feature in Post Homes. LIVING HERE highlights a different community within Southwestern Ontario every month — covering the real estate market, the people that live there, its amenities and much more. Read Living Here: Markham on Saturday, July 21. Only in National Post. A Better Read.

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NEW RELEASE

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The award winning gated
lifestyle community on Lake Simcoe.

Detached bungalows with lofts,
full basement and attached garage

from \$299,900



WATERFRONT
RESORT LIVING IN ORILLIA



Water People

"There's something about living close to water that's peaceful and relaxing yet on the other hand, it's vibrant and exciting. It's the college life year 'round and that's what Orillia is all about. The comfortable, secure small-town atmosphere is infectious; be it a quiet Sunday morning stroll along the waterfront or a busy downtown afternoon with lots of events and things going on. Although I work in Newmarket," says Brenda. "It's still an easy commute back and forth. We are planning early for our retirement, so when the opportunity to run a local business in Orillia came Don's way he was excited. We met some of the homeowners at Sophie's Landing, looked through the gorgeous model home and their personal homes... and that was it. We knew this would suit us perfectly. We have a lovely home, close to everything, a real diversity of friendly and interesting neighbours and soon we'll have our boat at our community dock." "Wow, sometimes I just have to pinch myself!" adds Don.

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Sophie's Landing Phase II is the final release of 36 bungalow villas with optional lofts at Sophie's Landing Lakeside Club. Sophie's Landing is a high end lifestyle recreational-gated community on the north shores of Lake Simcoe, just west of the Narrows in Orillia. Onsite club amenities include pools, spa, fireside lounge, gazebos, private marina, nature trails and more. Casino Rama, golfing, skiing, historical downtown, and a 65 acre park lie just outside the gates of Sophie's Landing.



Sophie's Landing Lakeside Club is an architectural award winning resort community featuring Muskoka and French Country elevations, with dramatic interior and exterior details. Signature Carleton, developer of this planned community, offers customization to ensure no 2 homes are alike.

For more information visit
www.sophieslanding.ca or call (705) 329-7710

They drop by from Ontario, the United States and Europe to enjoy a meal on the water

The thought of dining on the water on a beautiful day or starry night draws visitors from across the province, Europe and the United States to Orillia's Island Princess, says owner Rita Gostick. The 230-passenger, paddlewheel-style ship accommodates 112 for dinner on its heated lower deck, and another 118 people on

ISLAND PRINCESS

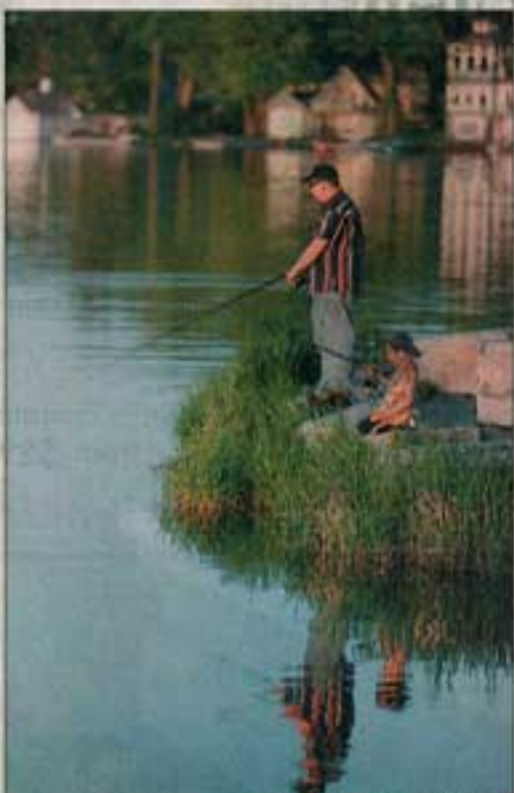
the upper, canopy-covered deck. The Princess offers sightseeing cruises throughout the summer, with barbecues and live music on Wednesday and Thursday nights. In the fall, there are day-long

cruises of Lake Couchiching, the Severn River and Sparrow Lake. A continental breakfast and hot and cold buffet lunch are served. The ship is wheelchair accessible. It docks at the foot of Missisaga Street, Orillia's main street (spelled without the "u"). For information, call 705-325-2638. C.A., National Post

ORILLIA



For kids, Orillia's waterfront is all about the beach. Right, Travis Shirley, 5, casts into Lake Couchiching with his dad, Steve.



GLENN LOWRIE PHOTO FOR NATIONAL POST

Canals, rivers and lakes, oh my

WATERFRONT

Prices rise for Orillia's properties

BY CONNIE ADAIR

When it comes to real estate in Orillia, the waterfront is most coveted.

"There's pent-up demand," says real estate agent Thomas Kinn of Virtual Realty. "There's not a lot of inventory this year. We've reached the point where waterfront owners don't want to sell and demand is strong among Baby Boomers from Toronto," he says.

But there is still a lot of property to choose from. "Right now, there are 217 waterfront homes for sale in our area listed on our board, which includes canal, river and lake properties. Last year, there were around 250," says real estate agent Mark Rousseau of Re/Max Orillia Realty. "But the season is starting just as well as last year."

Known as the Sunshine City, Orillia is located on the shores of Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching, which connects to the Trent-Severn Waterway. "We have two lakes, the region has seven lakes and there are lots of rivers," says real estate agent Brian Doner of Century 21 Don Campbell Real Estate.

Orillia home prices have risen close to 60% in the past five years, Mr. Doner says. "It's been a buyers' market since last July

for everything except waterfront."

The 11-month average price for the city of Orillia is \$225,559, says real estate agent Sakura Torizuka of Century 21 Don Campbell Real Estate. "The highest waterfront resale was \$1.15-million in May, 2006, on the west shore of Lake Couchiching."

"Riverfront is generally much cheaper than lakefront, but there are price differences in the various types of river," Mr. Rousseau says. "For example, a home on a small river that is good for canoeing only is going to be less than a river that feeds into a lake or a river that is much wider and faster moving [and has] better swimming."

Prices will continue to increase as retirees move to Orillia

Soldiers Memorial Hospital, and its recent multimillion-dollar addition, is attracting doctors to the area. "They relocate to Orillia for its ski hills and lake influences. They buy on the lake," Mr. Kinn says.

Orillia, which offers a good mix of young and old, is divided into wards. Each ward offers a distinct flavour and sense of community.

The north ward, which includes Couchiching Beach, is the most desirable, Mr. Torizuka says. The community consists of mostly single-family homes built in the 1950s and '60s on larger lots along the waterfront. Off-lake properties are priced from \$300,000 to \$600,000.

Bay Street and Maple Drive, highly desirable streets, run

The south ward, which has a mix of wartime houses, offers homes in the \$150,000 to \$250,000 range on 40- to 50-foot lots.

Development is starting to spread west. West Ridge is a newer subdivision on the west side of Highway 11 at Highway 12, just beyond the Wal-Mart/Home Depot/Future Shop/Galaxy Theatre mall complex, Mr. Doner says. The subdivision offers townhouses, link houses and smaller 30-ft. lots. "There's a strong market for links. They were \$135,000 when they were bought six years ago and are now selling in the \$350,000 range," Mr. Doner says.

Historic homes, located in the central core of Orillia just north of downtown, are also in demand. The area is zoned heritage residential, but only a few houses in this area actually have a true heritage designation, Mr. Torizuka says.

Prices range from \$375,000 to \$600,000 for heritage homes, says Mr. Kinn. "Buyers want homes that are in move-in condition."

Orillia is among the hot spots listed in Re/Max's recent recreational property report.

"Orillia has a regional population of 45,000 to 50,000 and that doubles or triples in the summer," Mr. Torizuka says.

"We're feeling good about the future," Mr. Doner says. "Boomers are moving up and they have cash. We've never had a recession. With the OPP headquarters, TeleTech call centre, Casino Rama and Lakehead University, Orillia has never gone through bad times. It is steady with jobs."

National Post

'RIVERFRONT IS GENERALLY MUCH CHEAPER THAN LAKEFRONT'

for the lifestyle. The new university campus is also attracting people, Mr. Rousseau says.

Empty nesters and Boomers, who are retiring younger, are also drawn to the area's recreational activities. Ski hills are nearby at Horseshoe and Mount St. Louis, and it's a popular hiking area.

With its small-town atmosphere, Orillia is also popular with young professionals, who are coming from Toronto to buy a second home/cottage, Mr. Kinn says. "Some are buying older cottages from the 1940s with plans to tear down and build a new retirement home later. They're buying waterfront futures."

along the west shore of Lake Couchiching. "On one side of the street are waterfront homes ranging in price from \$650,000 to \$1.2-million. The back lots are in the \$300,000 to \$500,000 range," she says.

In the west ward, 1940s to 1950s houses are priced in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range.

"Interestingly, the south ward can be seen by some as less desirable [than the north ward] yet the bulk of waterfront homes are in this area," Mr. Rousseau says. "As to an up-and-coming area, my feeling is the south ward will be the one to watch, especially once the proposed multi-use recreational facility is built."

Come to Orillia for the cultural events

MORE THAN 300

BY SHELLY SANDERS GREEN

If you add up all the cultural resources in this small city — heritage sites, festivals, events, arts and public facilities — you would get a list of more than 300. The cultural labour force actually represents 20% of the work force, nearly double the provincial average.

As more people have moved to Orillia from Toronto, there have, however, been shifts in the kinds of activities people are seeking. Ralph Cipolla, a resident since 1955 and a city councillor, says he thinks people from Toronto "have brought their ideas and concerns, which are very different from those of long-time residents. There has been a change in attitudes to services and requests," with

former Torontonians not as interested in Orillia's heritage and traditions.

"We're working really hard to maintain the heritage and culture in Orillia," says Mr. Cipolla, who organized the Orillia Peech Festival 26 years ago, now the largest fishing derby of its kind in North America. This fall, Mr. Cipolla is starting a Beatles festival, which he hopes will be as successful as his fishing derby.

"The Beatles festival will run from Sept. 21 to 23 and marks the 50th anniversary of when John Lennon met Paul McCartney," says Mr. Cipolla. "We've had calls from people in London, England, and Vancouver who have already booked rooms for this festival."

Other annual events include the Spring Boat Show, Christmas in June, where boats are decorated and a turkey dinner is enjoyed, the Mariposa Folk Festival and the Turf'n & Surf'n Waterfront Festival.

Don Evans, an Orillia resident for 25 years and a city councillor, says, "The arts are booming with music of all kinds."

"I don't mind suggesting Orillia has one of the finest historic opera houses in the province. The acoustics are certainly as good as Massey Hall."

He also says the visual and graphic arts are becoming more popular, which is seen by the developing promenade of art galleries across the street from the Museum of Art and History.

National Post



GLENN LOWRIE PHOTO FOR NATIONAL POST

During the festival, 150 hand-painted banners show up downtown.

Downtown becomes art gallery

FESTIVAL OF BANNERS

BY CONNIE ADAIR

When Orillia residents say they're going to flash a little colour, they're not kidding. Downtown streets have been turned into a vibrant outdoor art gallery with 150 colourful hand-painted banners dressing up light standards throughout town.

The theme is Sunshine City,

and high school students, children, professional artists, community members and business owners painted everything from mermaids to local landmarks to crazed animals to make the banners, says Sarah Pappé, a festival organizer.

"The benefits of the festival to Orillia are further developing community pride and spirit, reviving the look of our downtown and bringing interest to our culture and heritage," Ms. Pappé says. The banners draw residents and tourists, who arrive by car or boat, to the downtown area. Aside from banner-painting workshops, a concert is planned for July 28. The Festival of Banners Gala is set for Oct. 27 at the Orillia Museum of Art and History. Banners will be auctioned off to support next year's festival. For more details, visit festivalofbanners.ca.

National Post

UPCOMING FESTIVALS & EVENTS

- JUNE**
15-23, Anything You Can Do: Singing the Broadway Song Book An evening with four great ladies of Broadway: Ethel Merman, Mary Martin, Carol Channing and Shirley Jones. Orillia Opera House, 1-888-678-5542
15-17, Spring Boat, Cottage & Outdoor Show In-water selection of new and pre-owned boats. Port of Orillia, 705-326-4424
23, Christmas in June Decorated boat contest, turkey buffet dinner with proceeds to local charity. Port of Orillia, 705-326-4424
- JULY**
16-8, Mariposa Folk Festival North America's longest-running folk festival. J.B. Tudhope Memorial Park, 705-329-2333
17-22, Leacock Summer Festival Ontario's largest summer authors' showcase. Leacock Museum National Historic Site, 705-329-1908
20-22, 30th Annual Orillia Scottish Festival Couchiching Beach Park and Legion, 705-325-1266
- AUGUST**
10-12, Turf'n & Surf'n Waterfront Festival Port of Orillia and Couchiching Beach Park, 705-326-4424
17-18, 9th Annual Rock & Roll Tribute & Classic Car Show Downtown Orillia, 705-325-3261
- SEPTEMBER**
17-9, 157th Orillia and District Fall Fair ODAS Park, 705-325-0353
21-23, Orillia Beatles Celebration Tribute bands, exhibits, Beatles experts. Downtown Orillia, 1-866-329-5959

Sunshine City has its own airport

Access to highways, free Internet and less traffic

Built in 1993, Lake Simcoe Regional Airport, 17 km south of Orillia, serves a population of more than 200,000 in Barrie, Orillia and the township of Oro Medonte. It serves primarily corporate and executive charters, says airport manager Mike Drumm, with a variety of aircraft from helicopters to corporate aircraft. There's a primary 5,000x100-foot lighted runway.

The airport is serviced by the Canada Border Service Agency

and has commercial port of entry status to accommodate international passengers and freight. There is easy access to highways.

The airport provides a full service, including aircraft marshalling, ground transportation arrangements, catering and free coffee for departure. The public terminal airport building has free wireless Internet access. There's also a car park, restaurant, aviation fuel, lease areas for hangars and instrument access.

The Recreational Aircraft Association's Barrie/Orillia chapters meet monthly at the airport. For information, log on to visit lakesimcoearport.com.

C.A., National Post



The Lake Simcoe Regional Airport serves more than 200,000 people, though it primarily serves corporate and executive charters.

Rescue group in Orillia aids traumatized parrots and offers adoption

Parrots in Orillia can squawk "Polly wants a cracker" easier with Second Flight in town. The charity provides permanent sanctuary to traumatized, disabled and sensitive parrots, an adoption program for healthy companion parrots, as well as an educational program that reaches thousands of people through

SECOND FLIGHT

out Canada. Volunteers come in on a regular basis and entertain, care for, and love all the residents. Although they all have their own large cage, the parrots seldom spend time in them and are

always supervised. Second Flight offers a co-op program to college and university students province-wide. For information, visit secondflight.org.
National Post



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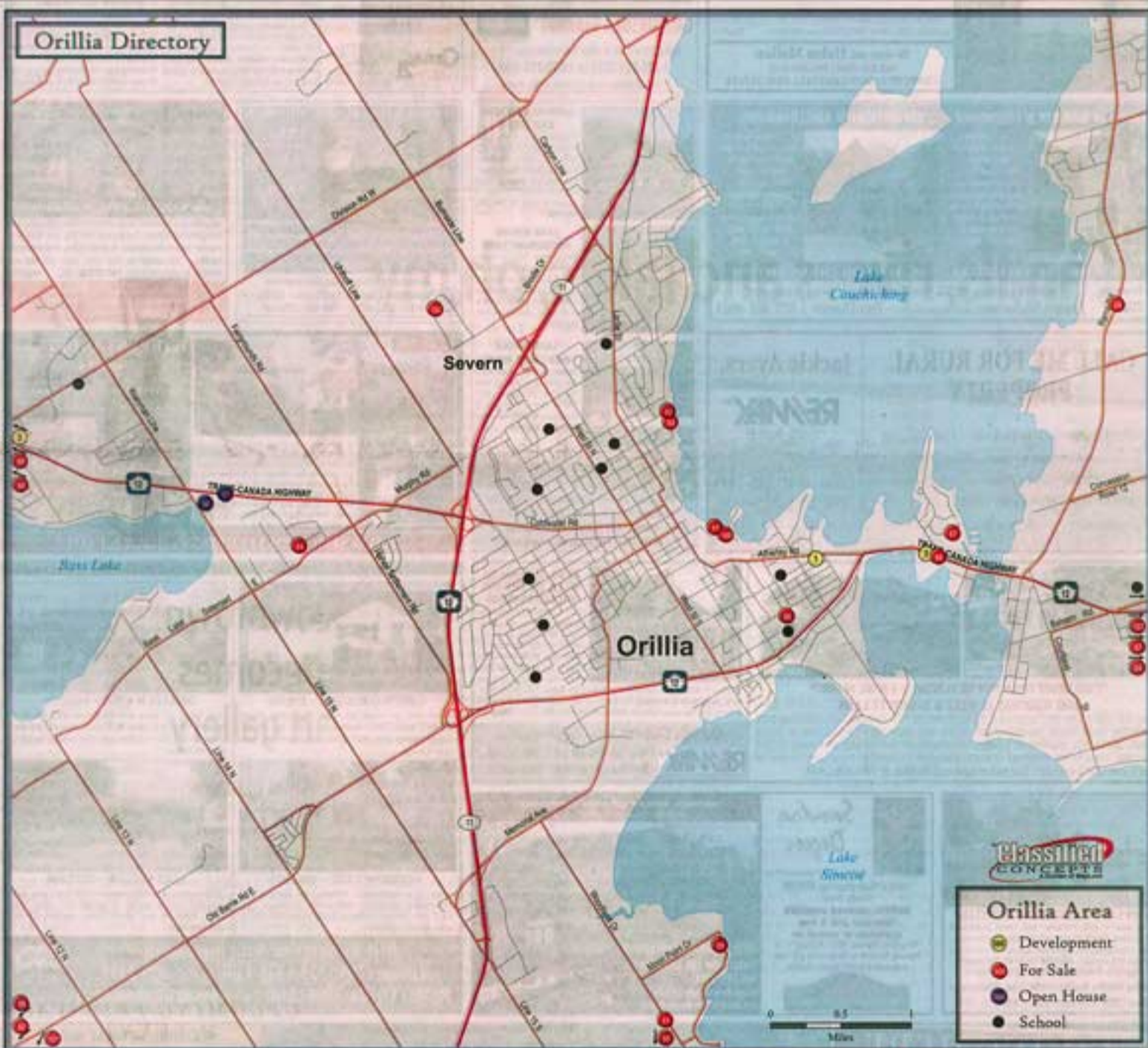


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