

Mill Run Trail

Trail Heads
 Russ St.
 Sheffield St.

Length
 6.5 km

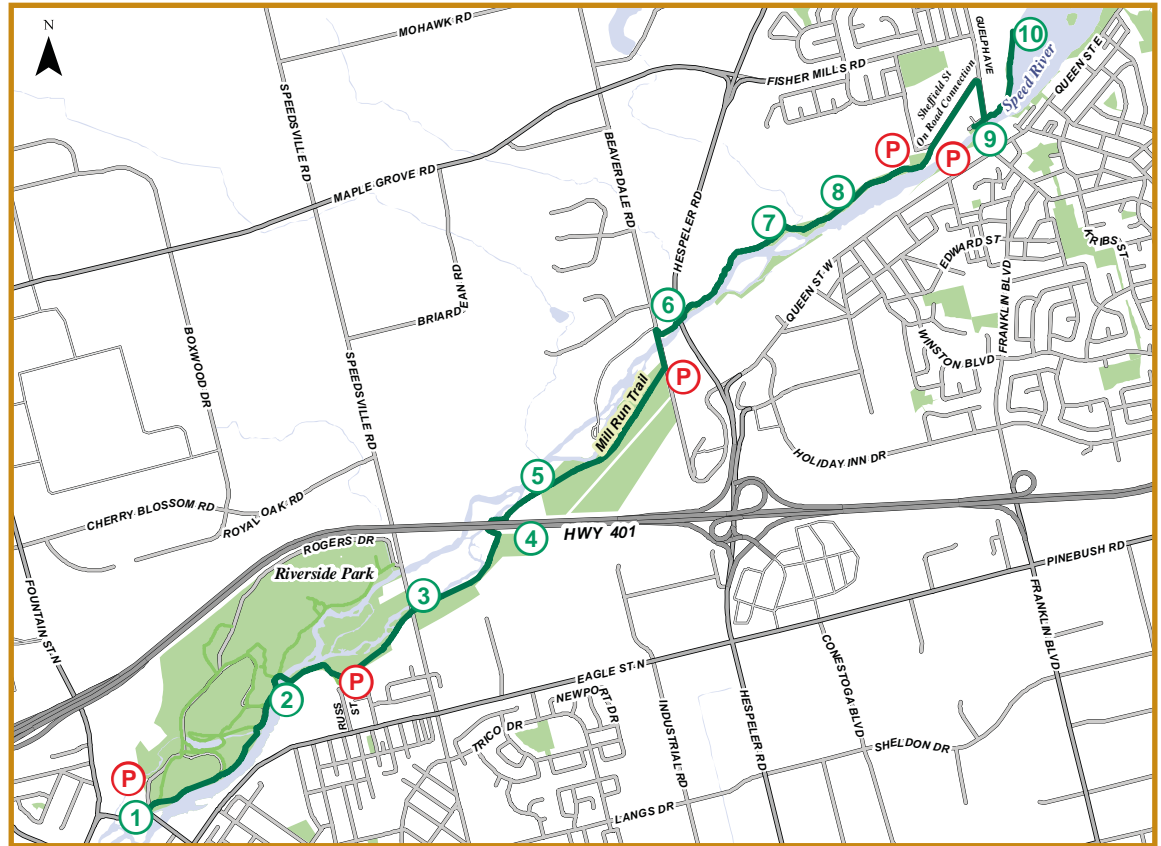
Parking
 Russ St., Sheffield St., Riverside Park,
 Beverdale Rd.

Surface
 Stonedust and Boardwalk

Washroom
 Seasonal at Riverside Park

GPS
 Russ St:
 N43.40655, W80.35424

Sheffield St:
 N43.43068, W80.31560



Silknit Dam Mill Race



Hikers along the Mill Run Trail



Bridge over Ellis Creek

Mill Run Trail

The Mill Run Trail sits on the original 1895 railbed of the "Galt, Preston, and Hespeler Street Electric Railway" which was opened between Preston Junction Station (located at the King St. entrance to Riverside Park) and Hespeler in January 1896. Preston Junction Station offered frequent connections to Galt, Berlin (Kitchener) and Waterloo.

- ① A MILL RUN is the channel for a flow of water that powers the water wheel in a watermill. Along this trail you will view 3 mill runs. This 6.5km trail provides a link between Riverside Park and Jacob's Landing.
- ② Riverside Park entrance gate is a replica of the original 1921 design that was a memorial to the local men who died in World War I.
- ③ A paved trail leads to the pedestrian bridge over the Speed River. While on the bridge, look over the downstream railing to view the remains of the dam, and mill race, that provided the water power for Pattison's Mill.

Speedsville Road was the main street of the hamlet of Speedsville. Joseph Witmer moved here around 1842 and constructed 2 dams, a mill race, a pail factory and a general store. The Speedsville Woolen Mill produced yarns, blankets, tweeds and flannels into the 1870s.

In 1827 John Galt traveled north along Speedsville Road to found the City of Guelph. The 'ford' at this location made crossing the river easy, and it was the stage coach route until the 1880's. In 1860 a timber bridge was constructed.

- ④ You have a 1km walk to reach the footbridge under highway 401.
- ⑤ 200m north of the highway, close your eyes and imagine that you are in the long vanished Idylwild Park. O.A. Kummer gives the following description of the park: "a wooded area with tall elms, maples and evergreens – a perfect setting for one of, if not the most popular playground, picnic and recreational centre in the district. Popular dances of the time included quadrilles, waltzes, two-steps and the cake walk. It was not at all uncommon for the railway to shunt in from Preston Junction a train load of picnickers from as far away as Hamilton bringing hundreds to enjoy the great out-of-doors in the wilds of Idylwild." Idylwild opened in 1899 and closed in 1916, never to open again.

- ⑥ Beaverdale was once the site of a railway station – a simple wooden shed situated near the existing kiosk. Beaverdale Rd. was named after the hamlet that grew up around the buildings of Squire William Ellis. Born in Ireland, he first moved to Pennsylvania and then to Upper Canada in 1810. At Beaverdale Rd., the trail changes to the other side of the river.
- ⑦ The remaining trail runs through fields and forests. The 80m boardwalk and 22m Ellis Creek bridge were community projects.
- ⑧ Soon after crossing over Ellis (Chilligo) Creek, listen for the roar of the mill race outlet at the Silknit Dam. In 1864 a stone woolen mill was constructed and eventually became Forbes Mill. Fire destroyed most of the original mill. The trail runs along the top of the earthen mill pond dike.
- ⑨ After a brief walk along Sheffield St. and Guelph Ave., you will see the square tower of the site of Jacob Hespeler's 1847 grist mill dam. Welcome to Jacob's Landing.
- ⑩ Cross Guelph Ave. and walk along the trail leading to the Hespeler mill pond dam. The original mill race would have been across the dam. The trail continues 800m along the earthen dike built to create the mill pond. The dike provides an excellent view of old Hespeler.