"Peace is not some abstract concept far removed from our everyday lives. It is a question of how each one of us plants and cultivates the seeds of peace in the reality of daily living." Daisaku Ikeda

In an effort to provide an outward model for a more welcoming city, Culture of Peace Hamilton embraces the concept and the responsibility of stewarding the co-creation of symbolic Fields of Peace Gardens. The peace gardens are designed and maintained by neighbourhood garden stewards to serve as a concrete embodiment of neighbourhood commitment to sustainability and peace. We believe this follows our city's strategic plan to green and beautify our communities.

These peaceful gardens incorporate diverse multicultural peace symbols as spiral paths and labyrinths, special flowers and native botanicals, local art, and peace poles, as symbols to embody at the municipal level, Hamilton's commitment to developing and sustaining a global model for a Culture of Peace.

Culture of Peace Hamilton, working closely with UNESCO is founded on six principles created by Nobel Peace Laureates at the United Nations. These are behavioural guidelines towards a more inclusive, less adversarial, society, a goal that cannot be achieved by legislation or force alone.

Since the start of the Millennium, Culture of Peace Hamilton and the United Nations Association in Canada, Hamilton Branch, have worked with international partners, local City Hall Departments, Ward councillors, many civic and educational institutions and many diverse organizations and agencies in the city to foster peace in our diverse communities. In 2008, David Adams who helped create UNESCO's concept of a Culture of Peace, spoke to a committee of City Council about the possibility of Hamilton becoming one of the first cities in the world to have a Culture of Peace Commission. This ties in with Hamilton's early and pioneering role as a model sustainable city under the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) which was instrumental during the
Vision 2020 process in the late 90’s.

It is our hope that these peace fostering reflective gardens will be supported and adopted widely by the city, by businesses, residents and the diverse and hard working organizations across this city and region that in their own special ways work to create a Culture of Peace in our City

Proposal: Fields of Peace symbolizing Hamilton’s commitment to local and world peace

The labyrinth basic design is fundamental to nature and many cultures and religious traditions. Walking in a labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight. It calms people in the throes of life’s transitions. It is not surprising that labyrinths are installed at hospitals (two at St. Josephs’), schools and health spas since they so effectively deal with stress

Under the umbrella, Fields of Peace, Culture of Peace Hamilton, will facilitate the design of peace gardens with community/neighbourhood gardeners. The central symbol of the peace gardens is the labyrinth or spiraling pathway leading walkers to the centre. The peace gardens are identified with narcissus, lavenders, native species and other botanicals. In addition, each garden will host a “Peace Pole”, a global symbol of peace, and host creative installations by local artists themed around peace. Each garden is designed by the host community with elements of the garden selected and maintained by a community of local volunteers/stewards.

In designing the gardens we have worked closely with city staff in parks and planning and public works to insure that all elements of the design follow park planning policy and regulations guiding design in public space.

Background:

Urban Peace Gardens are a worldwide phenomena. Their healing healthy qualities allow for reflection, rest, restoration and regeneration amidst the fast pace of city life. All elements within the garden space conspire to lead the visitor into a relaxed, receptive state of quiet. Children are especially drawn to such gardens and are an integral component of the design outcomes. They are interactive teaching gardens, connecting children and adults within the cycles of nature

Hamilton has a long history associated with gardens, education and ecological restoration. At the turn of the century Thomas B. McQueston began his life long task of reclaiming land to build one of the foremost royal botanical gardens in North America along the shores of Burlington Bay. Under the influence of City Beautiful city planning philosophy he planned and commissioned most of our parks, the great sunken gardens at Gage Park (and McMaster), the York Boulevard entranceway with its spanning bridge, planted Cootes Paradise as a restoration site, and persuaded McMaster University to locate here. In so doing, he united botanical restoration and intellectual and scientific research. Indeed it would be safe to say that the ecological consciousness of this great city and its protection of the natural world was directly a result of his public landscape redesign. Without McQueston there would be no higher institute of learning to diversify our economy and make this city a great place to live, learn, work and play. McQueston was also a champion of peace, as evidenced by his work as
cabinet minister in commissioning the International Peace Bridge seeking to make visible our peaceful relations with the United States.

In the spirit of McQueston we seek to continue the work of building bridges between our communities.

But our influences are much nearer to our period and our educational institutions. In 2002, one of the founders of the Peace Studies Department at McMaster, Dr. Joanna Santa Barbara, held a conference focused on the impact of war on children. Paul Hogan, a Canadian Peace Garden designer, was invited to travel to Sri Lanka to develop a peace garden there to work with the children and families of warring neighbours. The success of his interactive peace garden in transforming the numbing hatred and depression of these war abused children into creative and resourceful members of their communities has been nothing short of miraculous. The interactive peace garden model has been followed with great success in other settings and communities. And its inspiration was born in Hamilton.

In 2011, following consultation with the Culture of Peace and the local community, the first labyrinth garden was conceived to commemorate the other side of war, namely, a public space memorializing peace located adjacent to the Battle of 1812 memorial. This quiet sanctuary of reflection was recently completed. Under the capable direction of Ken Coit, Public Manager of Art in Public Spaces, this has become Hamilton’s first labyrinth garden, a field not of battle, but of the peace it so honourably defended.

In 2012, working closely with city hall staff in parks and planning, under the guidance of Councillor Brian McHattie, the first peace garden and peace pole was planted in Hamilton on the south western boundary of City Hall, at Hunter and Bay. Indeed, with the planting of this peace pole Hamilton made an historic declaration to all, made visible by the garden, its blooming narcissi and the peace pole. Since then it has joined by the gift of the Ghandi Statue, and has been the site of many peace ceremonies. The Culture For Peace Hamilton and its sister organisations applauds council’s leadership in making this profound statement of our commitment to peace locally and globally.

The Fields of Peace labyrinth gardens are currently in development/design stage at Churchill Park in the Children’s Teaching Garden. A second is planned for the Temple Anshe Shalom whose current teaching garden skirts the border of Churchill Park. The design has been facilitated by Culture of Peace members working closely with city staff and volunteers who have a long working relationship with the city and the RBG staff directly involved in the care and maintenance of these gardens. These volunteers provide a model of the method whereby the peace gardens and labyrinths are designed and maintained. Further fields of peace are being developed in Flamborough, on Hwy Five near Clappison Corners, at Meizner’s Antiques and Artisans Market. And Councillors have individually requested meetings to consider locations in their region. It is this partnership between civic custodians and local neighbourhoods, citizens will enable the spread and sustainability of peace gardens across our region.

We ask members of council to join with us to transform this region into a model City of Peace, a city of restorative gardens making visibly beautiful that commitment. Symbolized by these artful site
specific public gardens of restoration across the urban landscape, Hamilton stands to become one of the few dozen cities worldwide who have pledged to support peace. We are not alone and nor are you. We are but one of many community organizations and citizen-led groups who realize that peace starts here with us... in our families, and spreads through our neighbourhoods, in our cities and in our nation.

Our partners and supporters include:

History, Heritage,

Hamilton Department of Tourism,

McQuesten Society,

Many interfaith groups,

Aboriginal partners.

Parks and Planning staff working with established volunteer committees,

Public Works

Hamilton Wentworth Board of Education, (neighbourhood schools work closely with peace garden educators)

Ward Councillors,

McMaster Department of Peace Studies,

McMaster UN office, Sherk),

Environment Hamilton,

UNESCO

Sustaining the Vision

The Culture For Peace Hamilton has developed a bulb selling campaign to further support initiatives that sustain peace and enable us to expand our organizational capacity to carry out even more needed work to further peace goals. We support and collaborate with all those who educate, uplift, inspire and nurture dialogue in communities in conflict. Join with us in declaring Hamilton an international city of peace, a city of restorative gardens, like our waterfalls, sharing, celebrating and preserving our natural heritage for generations to come. I
UNESCO GLOBAL PEACE PRINCIPLES

Respect All Life:
Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice.

Reject Violence:
Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.

Share with Others:
Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression.

Listen to Understand:
Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.

Preserve the Planet:
Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and developmental practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.

Rediscover Solidarity:
Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

CULTURE OF PEACE HAMILTON
Peace is in your hands