EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan is a comprehensive document which prescribes a multi-use, off-road recreational trail system throughout the City of Hamilton. This system links both the current and proposed off-street as well as on-street systems into a fully integrated, City-wide based system.

The Master Plan completes a process that was started in 1999 by staff of the former City of Hamilton. This document is intended to guide trail systems, development and management throughout the City from the present into the future, providing clear direction and decision making capabilities. The Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan is intended to be utilized as a working tool/document providing comprehensive and valuable information in order to make informed decisions on a system wide basis.

Extensive public involvement, which helped to shape and guide the Master Plan, included a series of five (5) public open houses held in May and June 2005; a public questionnaire (Appendix 4), issued in both paper and electronic format; user group meetings; key stakeholders and user interviews; liaison and discussion with key agencies; soliciting direct input for key user and special interest groups; input from the Cycling Committee; input from City staff, departments (Planning, Community Services and Public Works) and individuals; outside public agency input, adjoining municipalities and Conservation Authorities.

This valuable input was utilized to assist the Consultant Team in development of individual ward initiatives as well as specific recommendations. Input was provided by many who gave generously of their time providing input and comments on draft working copies. These people are appropriately acknowledged in this report in Section 1.9, Acknowledgements.

The structure of the Master Plan Report has been organized in a straightforward manner to reflect the intent that this report be utilized as a working tool. The binder format itself, has been set up to allow for cost effective changes and additions over time by City staff, eliminating the need for costly re-printing and unnecessary consumption of paper. Complete electronic copies of the entire document, including text and all maps, were provided to City staff at the conclusion of the study. These were delivered to the Project Manager and Section Manager of Open Space Development and Park Planning at the City of Hamilton.

The report structure proceeds logically and effectively from large scale planning issues and concepts through to detailed implementation. Chapters are organized as follows:

1.0, Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan System
2.0, The Planning Context
3.0, Master Plan Organization
4.0, Trail Development and Maintenance Standards
5.0, Master Plan
6.0, Summary of Ward Initiatives
7.0, Implementation Strategy
8.0, Conclusions
9.0, References
Appendices (separate document)
The recommendations contained in this report reflect a forward thinking, state-of-the-art approach based on extensive research by the consulting team. Many of the concepts are unique to this study and, to the best of our knowledge, are new, groundbreaking concepts intended to improve the overall success and implementation of the Hamilton Master Plan system.

For example, all projects are organized within each ward under individual initiatives (Section 5.3) with a data sheet and accompanying map of each initiative. This allows Council, staff and the public to clearly understand and consider the individual components in detail that comprise the overall system.

Another unique concept that is introduced in this Master Plan is the concept of a degree of difficulty rating system for each trail. This degree of difficulty will assist users to make choices for trail use. This is discussed in Section 4.6, Trail Signage/Pictograms and further detailed in Section 5.3, Individual Ward Projects on the individual data sheets.

The intent is to create a multi-purpose system that, to the extent practical, caters to the broadest range of users possible. The system is intended to embrace people of varied levels of health, mobility, skill, age and interests. To further enhance this concept, we have developed a signage and pictogram symbology which builds upon the work of the Cycling Committee, Parks and Open Space and others including our team members.

Throughout the document, the concept of improving health, encouraging healthy lifestyles and increasing activity levels is constantly reinforced. From Provincial Planning Policies through to City Policies, the concept of healthy choices and encouraging fitness is considered and addressed throughout the Master Plan. Many positive legislative changes have occurred in the last few years, which will assist in counteracting current poor health and obesity trends within our society.

The Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan is well suited to meet the City of Hamilton’s challenge to improve community’s quality of life by providing opportunities to participate in outdoor fitness and recreation, helping the City meet it’s corporate goal of creating a “healthy, safe and green City”.

The Consultant Team is grateful to have been able to assist the City of Hamilton to improve the quality of life for it’s residents and visitors.

CURRENT STATUS AND BREAKING NEWS

This document is intended as a working tool that will be constantly references and updated. During the summer and fall of 2007, several on-street initiatives, previously shown as “proposed” were completed. To the extent practical, the authors have updated mapping in the Master Plan.

In addition, work is underway in 2007 to update the on-street cycling network and system. This document, together with the Hamilton Recreational Trails Master Plan will form a two-part comprehensive system.