

Presentation to Committee of the Whole
on
Guelph Trail Master Plan 2021

By
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An Accomplishment

The Guelph Trail Master Plan 2021 is a major step forward toward the long-held goal of establishing a Trails and Open Space System for Guelph that respects, sustains and honours the beauty and recreational values of its natural heritage areas with special focus on river valleys as the core structure of the Open Space System.

How did we accomplish this ?

- Planning began in 1973 with a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that envisioned a proactively-established Open Space System anchored by Conservation Areas at Guelph Lake on the Speed River, Arkell on the Eramosa River and Niska Nature Reserve on Hanlon Creek. Guelph's river-valley corridors formed the connective linkage.
- The key principle undergirding the Open Space System was a holistic definition of Guelph's Greenway System. All types of open space were encompassed in the system with Natural Heritage features and areas composing the majority of the system

How did the Open Space System Plan evolve ?

- The 1973 Open Space Master Plan was renewed by a succession of Open Space Master Plans followed culminating in the adoption of a River Systems Management Master Plan in 1993 and an overarching Greenways Vision and Plan in 1997.
- Each Open Space Master Plan was incorporated into the Official Plan and formed the basis for protection of essential Open Space areas and acquisition of land for retention as Open Space.

Why a Trails Master Plan ?

- Both the 1993 River System Management Master Plan and the 1997 Greenway Vision and Plan emphasized the importance of trails for providing visual and physical access to the beauty and restorative atmosphere on natural settings and the need for accessible linkages to provide access.
- Based on these Master Plans the 2001 Official Plan required the City to prepare a Trails Master Plan. The result was the first Trails Master Plan of 2005.

What is needed for the future ?

- The 2021 Trails Master Plan must be considered a living document subject to revision and expansion as circumstances change and new opportunities arise.
- A Trails Master Plan cannot be a stand alone document. An Overarching Open Space Master Plan is essential in identifying the land use protections needed to provide a setting for trails that can persist in perpetuity.
- A River System Management Master Plan and an overarching Greenway Master Plan have proven effective for Guelph and both should be retained.

Specific Actions for Official Plan Update

- In adopting OPA 48 City Council chose to abandon the decades long policy of planning an Open Space System that included and relied on Natural Heritage features and areas and focused on the river corridors as the connective structure for the Open Space System.
- To allow the excellent progress that has been made, and is evident in the Guelph Trails Master Plan 2021, to continue into the future we must restore Natural Heritage Features to our City's Open Space System in an overarching Master Plan and honour our exceptional river corridors in a River Corridor Master Plan.