

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction and Study Purpose

The Town of Markham is located in the Greater Toronto area, with significant development to the south, while the northern portions of the Town remain rural in character. The Town is blessed with a beautiful natural landscape which includes the Little Rouge River and Rouge Park and is also near the Oak Ridges Moraines. The Town is well known for its recreational and leisure attributes, including the existing pathways and trails throughout the Town.

Trails through Markham’s urban areas, like Toogood Pond and Milne Park continue experiencing a significant increase in the number of users. As Markham continues to grow, pathway and trail use is expected to increase the demand on existing facilities and provide opportunities for the establishment of new ones.

This Pathways and Trails Master Plan sets out the means for improving and expanding Markham’s trail system. The Master Plan reviews a short term as well as a long term (50 year) vision for the pathways and trails system.

Pathways and Trails serve many benefits to the community:

- Are an amenity that improves the quality of life of residents, employees and visitors.
- Facilitate active transportation (walking, cycling etc) and thus supports a healthy lifestyle.
- Support if not enhance property values in communities where they are located.
- Connect neighbourhoods and people to places where they want to go (schools, recreation centres, libraries, shopping, parks, playgrounds etc.).
- Connect people to parks, creeks and rivers, hydro corridors, valley lands, open space and the natural environment.



*“The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide a long term strategy, together with short and mid-term guidance for the Town.”*

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

- Pathways: generally include major paved surface paths
- Trails: generally include smaller, soft-surface linkages through more ecologically sensitive areas.

The Goals of the project are:

- Develop a long-term pathways and trails plan within the Town
- Provide guidance for the future delivery of pathways and trails
- Identify pathway and trail users, specific user needs and requirements through public consultation
- Develop an implementation strategy that describes routes, method of delivery, construction, costs, and priority connections to link existing systems
- Create a data management tool that can be updated and adapted as the trail system evolves over time.

## 1.2 Study Approach / Process

The study began in January of 2006 and included the following steps:

1) *Review of background information* including related key planning documents:

- Review of previous studies, Official Plan;
- Collect GIS data relating to existing pathway and trail conditions in Markham;
- Collect and map data related to potential pathway and trail destinations and significant barriers to trail development;
- Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to be integrated with the current Town base map;
- Identify and understand the needs of trail users by the use of an on-line survey on the Town's website, and a newsletter announcing commencement of the study; and
- Research regarding best management practices for trail design, management and implementation.

2) *Develop a Vision for pathways and trails:*

- Undertake a Visioning process with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Town of Markham

3) *Identify the Master Plan Network and Design Guidelines:*

- Identify preliminary routes using GIS mapping and aerial photography for review with the TAC;
- Establish design guidelines to determine the parameters of different types of pathways and trails;
- Field investigate and review routes identified on the preliminary mapping to determine overall feasibility, and identify any site specific constraints;
- Refine routes based on Council, staff and public feedback; and
- Identify a final master plan network, including facility types.



*Evaluating various routes in the field provided key information used to develop the Pathways and Trails Master Plan.*

4) *Defining an Implementation Strategy:*

- Develop an implementation plan which included prioritizing pathway and trail linkages;
- Define budgetary pathway and trail development costs over the short, medium, long and ultimate term;
- Outline methods for raising awareness, encouraging use, promoting pedestrians, and education opportunities;
- Make recommendations for operations and maintenance of pathways and trails; and
- Summarize all that was learned into a comprehensive report.
- Recommend priority routes to implement in the short term.

5) *Public Consultation:*

- Interact and consult with the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the Town (CPAC)
- Develop an online survey on the Town’s website
- Produce a study newsletter and survey
- Hold six public meetings at critical phases of the project (Fall 2006 and Spring/Summer 2007);
- Produce comment forms at each of the public meetings;
- Conduct meetings and correspondence with stakeholders and groups interested in the project; and
- Assist in developing a project website on the main Town website with the information on the study

The Study area included the Town of Markham, and is shown on **Map 1 Study Area and Existing Conditions.**

*Public consultation activities were recognized as a key element at the outset of the study.*



*Public Open House at the Markham Museum, Markham, Ontario*



*Pathways & Trails Master Plan Brochure*

### **1.3 Organization**

This Pathways and Trails Master Plan sets forth a vision and strategy to develop Markham's pathway and trail network. The Plan builds upon the municipality's existing successes, programs and policies, and is organized as follows: Introduction, Creating a Vision, Background Information, Design Guidelines, Pathway and Trail Enhancements, Route Selection and Evaluation, Public Input, the Master Plan Network and Implementation.

The Pathways and Trails Master Plan is intended to be a living document and therefore has been designed to be flexible. As the network is developed and the urban fabric evolves, the routing and priorities identified in this Master Plan may change. Similarly, as new technologies and design opportunities emerge, they will have to be considered and applied where appropriate.

The overall direction of the network should remain consistent with the Pathways and Trails Master Plan. Residents have expressed their desire for a trail network that connects all the neighbourhoods within Markham to unify the community, improve health and decrease automobile dependence.

Therefore, while on-going monitoring and adjustments will be required, implementing the vision and principles of this Pathways and Trails Master Plan should remain focused on the desired outcomes which are outlined throughout this report.





*Photograph: Toogood Pond, a destination within the Markham Pathways and Trails.*