

Towards a master plan for trails in Merrickville-Wolford: the next step

Introduction and guide to this document:

The Merrickville District Trails Society (MDTS) produced a discussion paper on this subject in November 2010. An integral version of this paper can be found at the end of this document, and can be used to find necessary or desired information - we will not repeat it here. It was presented formally at a meeting of the Municipal Council in May 2011 and, after a generally very favorable and encouraging reception, was tabled for further discussion by Council. Council subsequently asked us to present a Master Plan for development, including timelines and estimated costs, including capital costs. We understand that Council would prefer to defer any decisions about governance of a municipal trails system until we are further along in the Master Plan.

The MDTS Executive was very pleased with the favorable response of Council, but we were concerned about our capacity at this time to develop a Master Plan proposal with sufficient detail, particularly with respect to generating accurate capital costs. After some discussion we did decide, however, that we certainly would be able to move this project forward another useful step by further describing our projects and needs, establishing some priorities and timelines, and providing sufficient detail on the desired outcomes. We have also taken this a step further, quantifying as best we can the resources, in terms of materials and labour, necessary to reach the desired end states. This in turn has permitted us to estimate the value of the likely overall capital improvements, and these are submitted for each project, as well as for the whole trails network over the next five years. We have not attempted to break these values down by year, or indeed to decide where the funding will come from, whether it be volunteer labour, donations in kind, or cash contributions, or other. This would all need to be done as part of the implementation of the Master Plan.

As a result this document contains four major new sections, in addition to the November 2010 report:

1. A series of “**Trails files**” which describe in narrative form each of the individual projects, including the desired end state and our best estimate at this time of the materials and other resources that are necessary to reach the end state. These files fall into two groups
 - a. Organizational and governance objectives
 - b. Trails and similar projects
2. Value estimates of the various projects, and of the whole 5-year plan.

3. A flow sheet that suggests some “**Priorities and approximate timelines**” for the above projects and objectives over the next five years. These are all indicative, and propose more the order in which we should proceed rather than absolute timelines. These could be determined as each individual project comes to its turn. The flow sheet is a separate file, as an appendix.
4. **Maps**, in various states of development, of the trail proposals, also as an appendix
5. **Previously circulated, November 2010: Towards a master plan for trails in Merrickville-Wolford: a discussion paper**

A brief conclusion and our recommendations for our priorities in the first year of the Master Plan can be found after section 2.

First section: “Trails files”: these are a narrative description of the identified activities and trails that appear in the Master Plan, to be used in combination with the 5-year overview flow sheet and the maps. They are presented in the following order:

1. **Governance**
 - a. **Integration into municipal structure**
 - b. **Private land use package**
 - c. **Funding strategy and package**
 - d. **Other**
2. **Ongoing support activities**
 - a. **Trail information: brochures, guides, general information**
 - b. **Publicity**
 - c. **Maps**
 - d. **Web site**
 - e. **Trail maintenance mechanism**
 - f. **Organizational support: routine functions and expenses**
3. **Trails**
 - a. **Merrickville-Limerick Forest North (Scotch line)**
 - b. **Woodland-Toboggan Hill Loop**
 - c. **Schoolhouse -Armstrong Roads Loop**
 - d. **Bird Sanctuary Trail and Fairgrounds Loop**
 - e. **Paved shoulders or paths along highways**
 - i. **Road 43 Village access east and west**

ii. **Municipality (County) wide**

- f. **Links with existing walks within and without the Village, and new routes within Village**
- g. **New long distance trails throughout Wolford**
- h. **Long term vision for Trails network in Merrickville-Wolford**

1. **Governance**

- a. **Integration into municipal structure** (also see item 2, November 2010 discussion paper)

We believe that the governance of the trails network project must be formally incorporated into our municipal structure. The MDTs realizes that this implies a considerable loss of control for us over the destiny of trails development, but we also believe the benefits far outweigh the risk. As a group and as individuals (whenever eligible), the MDTs will collaborate and participate actively as much as is desired in the eventual Trails governance arrangement. Our preferred model would be a Committee, or the equivalent, reporting directly to Council, such they have in Gananoque, or as we have for the Blockhouse Museum or the Library, but we would be willing to endorse any functional variants on this model.

- b. **Private land use package**

Several projects would benefit from being able to pass through private land, and this obviously requires informed permission from the landowners. While success in such negotiations can never be assumed ahead of time, a well structured information and agreement package would always be helpful, which sets out expectations and limits ahead of time, makes sure that the landowners retain all their rights, as well a mechanisms to deal effectively with any problems that might arise. We can seek advice from associations such as the Rideau Trail Association and Snowmobiling clubs on this; one key to success might be to identify some real advantages or incentives for landowners who agree to participate.

- c. **Funding strategy and package**

We can anticipate that all major funding for development projects will need to come from outside sources. The MDTs can organize and provide volunteer resources, the Municipality could provide general organizational support and some services which fit in well with overall daily operations, but major funds for material and labour will need to come from donations in kind and successful requests to pure funding sources. We have obtained significant but small funding for several projects in the past, so we are not starting from zero, but we need to move this activity towards a much more active and pro-active part of our efforts. Good information packages, both general and project specific, as well as a well thought out continuous approach to fund-raising, will be essential.

- d. **Other: to be determined**

2. **Ongoing support activities**

- a. **Trail information: brochures, guides, general information**

At the moment limited to one brochure, describing trailheads, but no detailed maps or guides for trails. Small but regular funding is necessary for reprinting brochures. We will need to decide on the content, the format and the distribution of this information as it is developed, as well as the budgetary requirements. Do we want to eventually have a fairly complete pocket guide to walking in and around Merrickville-Wolford?

b. Publicity

What is to be our strategy for both local and distant publicity, and how will we measure success, for both residents and visitors? We clearly need to develop a plan for this.

c. Maps

In spite of great help from various individuals and use of some available on-line resources, this continues to be a source of frustration, and our maps are not as we would like them to be. The type of content, simplicity and production quality we would like to achieve would be similar to those used by Limerick Forest, at various levels (from pocket maps and guides to major trailhead maps). All of our trails will need good maps and guides, so the capacity to generate these maps on a regular basis is likely to be present for several years to come - it is not a one time need. Well-produced maps in digital format could then be used wherever there is a need: trail signs, trail guides, web site posting, poster and print publicity, events, etc.

d. Web site

We have been fortunate enough to have a web site created for us, but we have not succeeded in populating it with the desired material, or maintaining it. It is live but it is of very limited usefulness to anyone at this time. In spite of this realization, we are still convinced that a good and functional web site is one of the major keys to a successful future. So we need to rethink our web strategy, and find some new solutions, perhaps in collaboration with others, to make sure it responds to its promise as the main communication tool and archive for Trails related issues and activities.

e. Trail maintenance mechanism

As each trail is developed it will need to have a maintenance schedule, which will be done by a combination of volunteer work and some regular activities by municipal works. The exact nature and intensity of these regular maintenance activities remain to be determined, but they will need to be pragmatic, as well as sufficient and active, if we wish the trails network to thrive for years to come.

One urgent matter that falls most logically under this rubric, and which illustrates the need for some simple planning and action, concerns the dumping of snow and other heavy materials (e.g. rocks from sewage plant construction) in large amounts at the edges of the "parking lot" around the Toboggan Hill, where also runs the Woodland-Toboggan Hill Loop trail. This dumping unfortunately has and still does encroach progressively on the trail in this area, pushing over trees and so irreversibly changing the landscape (so necessitating continual rerouting and repair of the trail). While we clearly recognize the need for the municipality to use this space, it would seem that the dumping areas could be better delimited, and dumping directed away from the trail and other protected areas, and so preserve the differing functions in a harmonious fashion. Some simple planning and reminders (or enforcement) may be all that is necessary.

f. Organizational support: routine functions and expenses

The MDTs does not have any official corporate identity: no address, no bank account, no telephone, no real capacity to receive or disburse funds, no permanent place for records, etc. Although we do not wish to have an organizational structure and infrastructure just for the sake of having one, some basics would make things a lot easier and reliable over the long term. We would like to explore how the municipality could help us with this rubric. This is somewhat independent of the overall trails governance issue, but will obviously be influenced by decisions about the larger picture, and the ongoing role that needs to be played by the MDTs (if any at all).

3. Trails: see following pages

Trail name: Merrickville-Limerick Forest North Trail (4 km one way, 8 km return, plus loops)

Map -see appendix

Special notes:

1. much of this trail is within Limerick Forest , so development is under the direction of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and of the Friends of Limerick Forest. All plans are subject to their priorities, input and approval; all development will continue to be collaborative, as it has been to date.
2. The Merrickville segment also provides direct access to the Schoolhouse-Armstrong Roads trail, a trail, which once revised and improved will add another very desirable dimension to our longer distance trails.

Current state of development:

1. An improved natural path throughout, slightly rough in places but dry and useable all seasons.
2. Well signed, with large maps at Merrickville trail head and entrance to Limerick Forest, and good directional signs throughout. No interpretive signs at the moment.
3. Fine boardwalk overlooking Hanlan’s marsh (a destination)
4. Good large scale personal interpretive trail map available
5. Leads into the trail network throughout Limerick Forest north. Full of potential for well planned further development
6. The current trail head is 2 km from the Village centre, along paved roads with no protected pathway.

End state desired:

1. Interpretative signs throughout, including a major one at the current boardwalk, and more detailed historical information on the Scotch Line segment
2. A second boardwalk further east (would be an upgrade)
3. Add a connecting trail from the western edge through the Sand Dunes (private land) and a Limerick Forest block to join the Old Schoolhouse Road - Armstrong Road trail
4. Secure access to sites of historical interest (foundations ,bridges , etc) : to protect both the sites , and ensure safety for visitors
5. Improved (slightly) trail maps and guides, with information, with some larger scale
6. Explore need for additional paths (new routes , away from railway line and Scotch line road allowance, etc)
7. Integrate information on the Bolton Road access into our trails information
8. An alternative off-road (as much as possible) route from the Village centre to the Trail head

Requirements:

1. Project to gather historical information
2. Funding for interpretive signs, content for signs
3. Additional maps and guides (some larger scale, more detailed)
4. Routine maintenance of roadways and drainage systems
5. Explore the feasibility of an alternate “green” route from Village centre to trailhead.
6. Manage effects of evolving residential development at Merrickville entrance to trail
7. Explore possibilities of adding to public lands in critical places.

Value of requirements to end state (Merrickville-Wolford portion)

1. Historical information project: research, report, interpretive signs content	\$5,000.00
2. Interpretive trail signs: material and production	\$1,000.00
	Total: \$6,000.00

3. Trail name: Woodland-Toboggan Hill Loop (1- 2 km)

Map -see appendix

Current state of development

- Large trail maps at two entrances
- Well established trail that has required rerouting in Toboggan Hill and Sewage plant areas , so trails are rough in these areas
- Previous access near old cemetery has been lost
- Large segments are rough with sharp rocks, path at an angle, areas of narrow access through cedar forest, some very wet areas in spring

End state desired

- this would become an improved trail, with two abreast walking capacity, easily accessible for most of the village residents, including children, and even those with some limitations of mobility. We would preserve, however, its natural look and features, so that it would be a haven for those living in the village.

Requirements

- improved footpath throughout, with improved signage and perhaps some lighting
- repair and some rerouting , now that the sewage plant works are advanced
 - clear (trees and stumps) the whole path to adequate width, and level as necessary (heavy work)
 - graveled walkway most of length, requiring abundant gravel , some excavation and /or small retaining walls, and a few stepped areas
 - could benefit from 30 to 50 metres of boardwalk over wet areas
- a new and secure access through the old cemetery
- improved integration with the toboggan hill and parking area, including signs, access paths and stairs;
 - clear policy to direct dumping in parking lot area and avoid damage from piled up snow at the edges.
- emphasize natural and historic and recreational features
 - Flora, maple grove, wildlife: these projects may interest the public school
 - Old rail fences: could have workshops to repair or extend , using own cedar
 - Interpretive signs
 - Consider picnic areas , and seats and/or tables at strategic sites;
- New maps and interpretive guide pamphlet

Value of requirements to end state:

1. Trail improvement: excavation , gravel fill, boardwalk, stairs and steps	\$89,240.00
2. Trailhead signs renewal and addition	\$1750.00
3. Picnic tables , benches , garbage , solar lighting in rest areas	TBD
	Total: \$ 90,990.00

Trail name: Schoolhouse- Armstrong Roads Trail (15 km loop)

Map -see appendix

Current state of development:

1. Little used because of water obstruction on east side, some longer segments along Road 16 on western side, and lack of familiarity with other segments on this western side
2. A variable natural trail , rough walking in places, but much is also along well established trails

End state desired

1. A year round natural trail, with manageable natural difficult areas (water)
2. A trail which does not have to use major roads (i.e. Rd 16) for any significant distance.
3. An easily taken choice for a longer distance country walk which loops back to the Village
4. Integrated with new trails to sand dunes and Limerick Forest

Requirements:

1. Environmental permission to affect watercourse
2. Causeway/ drainage to provide year round passage (approx 200 metres?) over swamp area south of Scotch line
3. Would benefit from re-routing of several segments of the trail on west side (near to municipal dump), which would require negotiating again with several private land -owners (some previous refusals). Right of public access to all segments of trails requires confirmation.
4. Maps, guides , interpretive and directional signs

Value of requirements to end state

1. Causeway with drainage culverts	\$14,510.00
2. Trailhead and other signs	\$5,000.00
	Total: \$19,510.00

Trail name: Bird Sanctuary Trail and Fairgrounds Loop (0.5 to 4 km)

Map -see appendix

Current state of development

- Undeveloped; the bird sanctuary itself is little viewed or visited
- An earlier well developed project was suspended in 2007 for mixed reasons
- Terrain is wet and slightly boggy in places from edge of fairground to water

End state desired

- Close to the village, the fair grounds and the library, this trail would be extremely attractive and easily accessible to visitors and residents alike.
- this trail would go from near the library, along the shore line or along the old race track upstream to the bird sanctuary, finally moving to the waters edge where there would be a viewing boardwalk and platform
 - platform would be high enough to see over growth at water’s edge, to see the abundant water fowl at various seasons. Might be better as a two level structure.
 - other bird watching in the waterside woods and shrubs
- the trail simply return , or could loop back through the fairgrounds, link to Ste Marguerite Bourgeoys School trail; or find another available route back to the village.
- The best routes to and from the viewing platform remain to be determined
- The path would either be full boardwalk from the edge of the fairgrounds, or a mixture of graveled path and boardwalk, to the water’s edge: distance is approximately 200 to 400 metres, depending on route
- Should be well integrated with the old race track, which provides predictable loop walking over even ground. Storage area at west end of fairgrounds could do with some clean up, and setting of parameters for future use.

Requirements

- Permissions are critical: Parks Canada, RVCA, municipality , others to be identified
- A clear, detailed and well developed proposal before the submitting for approval
 - The route must first be clarified
- some seats and rest areas, interpretive signs, and trail maps and guides

Value of requirements to end state

1. Trail (mixed gravel and boardwalk: \$17,120.00)	Full boardwalk \$30,000.00
2. Access path improvement from Fairgrounds	\$2,000.00
3. Viewing platform	\$11,410.00
4. Trail head and interpretive signs	\$4,000.00
5. Picnic tables , benches , garbage , solar lighting	TBD
	Total: \$47,410.00

Trail name: Paved bicycle /walking path along critical areas of Rd 43 entering and leaving Village

Map -see appendix

Current state of development:

- suboptimal safety for walking and cycling along this major road
- major access routes to Village, high vehicular traffic
- Rideau Trail follows Rd 43 on east side, major cycling route to the west

End state desired

- A secure paved path (along shoulder or separate from roadway)
- Approximately 900 metres from railway bridge to River Road (Cty Rd 23) on the east side
- Approximately 2300 metres from end of sidewalk to first River Road exit on the west side

Requirements

- Major road reworking: will require detailed and formal plans (more than our capacity)

Additional comments:

- Mixed jurisdictions : Counties
- May need to wait for planned road works, but should be submitted for approval ASAP in order to take advantage of nearest opportunity

Value of requirements to end state : TBD

Trail name: Paved shoulders or paths along highways: Municipality (County) wide

Map -no map

Current state of development

- There are no roadside protected bicycle or walking paths
- There are no clearly identified entirely safe cycling routes (though Cycle Merrickville has identified and mapped three routes)

End state desired

- a network of connected routes that extend between a series of selected destination points across the whole municipality, integrated with surrounding county networks
 - made up of protected road side paths (busy roads), quiet and safe roads, and alternate trails or paths that are easily cyclable and walkable.

Requirements

- concept approval , then an extensive exploration and planning process to come up with a concrete proposal for consideration
- “ early” submission of any plan developed, as will need to be integrated into major works projects (for any roadside paths) that are likely to be part of a longer term county development and renewal plan.

Value of requirements to end state: TBD

Trail name: Links with existing walks within and without the Village, and new routes within Village

Map -see appendix

Current state of development: Several shorter walks/trails have already been developed, and are maintained, by other groups. They are well documented and extremely popular, and are an important part of the planned trails network:

- Depot to Dam Trail (Rideau Canal)
- Industrial Heritage Complex Walk (Rideau Canal)
- Historic Properties Walks (MD Historical Society)
- Main Rideau Trail comes through the Village
- Nearby Rideau Canal walks at Nicholson’s Locks , and at Burritt’s Rapids

End state desired: Other routes could be developed, to provide interesting choices for easy walks in the village, with a variety of measured distances for those using this as a means of regular and quantified exercise. The aim is to have a whole series of level and easy walking routes throughout all corners of the village and the immediate surrounding roads.

- Merrickville -North
- Fairgrounds -racetrack
- Village perimeter routes (e.g.: Read St., Rd 16, Harry MacLean, Collar Hill, Charlotte, Main Street) and routes within the perimeter.

Requirements: these are quite minimal, as no trail footpath improvements are necessary. Routes need to be traced, distances measured, signage provided, and simple interesting interpretive pamphlets prepared and integrated with existing materials

Value of requirements to end state:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Trailhead, directional and interpretive signs and maps and pamphlets | \$5,000.00 |
|---|------------|

Trail name: New long distance trails throughout Wolford and Long term vision for Trails network in Merrickville-Wolford

Map -no map at this time

Current state of development: none at this time. This project would start at the very beginning

End state desired: a network of trails throughout Merrickville-Wolford, linking communities and points of interest (e.g. Eastons Corners and Jasper, Cranberry Lake, towards Bishops Mills) listing features and facilities along the way” should link where possible to trail in adjoining municipalities

Requirements:

- routes, permissions, only minor footpath improvement, inventories , signs , maps and pamphlets.
- Most of this is dedicated volunteer work

Value of requirements to end state:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Trail head signs, directional signs, maps and pamphlets for multiple trails | \$20,000.00 |
| 2. Comprehensive guide to walking in Merrickville -Wolford | \$5000.00 |

Second section: Estimated value of the projects in the Master plan proposal, and of basic annual coats of MWTS

These estimates are first estimates only, and may be subject to major changes once final detailed plans are made for each project. We do believe however that they do provide an accurate idea of the challenges we need to meet as far as the types of contributions we will need (human labour, equipment , materials, and cash), and of the required investment to bring the Merrickville -Wolford to its desired fully developed state over the next five years

The amounts for each project have been generated by combining the estimates of the different types of intervention required for the trail footpaths: clearing, simple fill, excavation and fill, boardwalks, steps or walls or stairs or platforms, culverts. Other values are estimated for signage and pamphlets, as well as accessories such as benches, picnic tables , garbage cans, lighting , etc.

The detailed estimates and calculations used are available, and can be used as a starting point when final plans and estimates are being made for approved projects.

Project	Estimated Capital costs to completion
Merrickville - Limerick Forest North Trail	\$6,000.00
Woodland-Toboggan Hill Loop	\$90,990.00
Schoolhouse -Armstrong Roads loop	\$19,510.00
Bird Sanctuary Fairgrounds trail	\$47,410.00
Paved shoulders: a) Rd 43, b) municipality wide	Other budgets
Links with existing trails and new walks within and around the village	\$5,000.00
New long distance trails throughout Wolford	\$25,000.00
Total 2012-2016	\$193,910.00

Value of basic ongoing support of MDTs activities:

At the moment we estimate this at about \$2,000.00 annually, half of which has come from multiple small cash donations by various means, and about half from contributions in kind for which reimbursement has not been sought. This assumes that reimbursement will still not be requested for many other contributions to our daily operations, so the real value of this element is probably closer to \$4,000.00.

These basic costs go to printing brochures (the largest portion) , support for the AGM and other meetings and activities, office supplies and expenses.

A brief conclusion and our recommendations for our three priorities in the first year of the Master Plan:

The members of the MDTs continue to work enthusiastically on the trails project for Merrickville-Wolford. We remain more convinced than ever, however, that any further real progress can only take place once the Trails Project has achieved a clear and official status within the municipality. Once this is done, then the order in which the various individual trails should be developed is fairly self evident if we look at the ratio of the beneficial impact of a trail to the effort and resources required to bring it to completion. Moreover, there are trails at all stages of development, so progress can be made on at different levels on several fronts at once every year, even for projects that are not at the top of the list, and so slowly move the whole project to the completion side of the flow sheet.

With respect to our value estimates for the various projects, we would expect to revise these carefully with the municipality, filling in missing information and correcting estimates as required. And as the projects come forward for realization, we would also like to identify what proportion of the funding requirements might be met by internal or volunteer resources, and what proportion will require actual outside funding

Our three suggested priorities for the first year of the Master Plan would be

1. Settle the governance issues: situate the Merrickville-Wolford Trails Network within the municipal governance structure, and clarify the operational relationship of the Merrickville District Trails Society to this new structure
2. Move forward with the Bird Sanctuary Trail and Fairgrounds loop - this project combines the qualities of feasibility with an immediate and major impact for visitors and residents of the Village.
3. Develop our capacity to generate high quality trail maps (large and small) with interpretive information for our current trails, and make them freely available in downloadable form on our website, and for printed pamphlets.

From the Merrickville District Trails Society, March 2012.

Towards a master plan for trails in Merrickville-Wolford: a discussion paper, November 2010

Purpose of this document:

The Merrickville District Trails Society (MDTS) is proposing that the municipality of Merrickville-Wolford have a master plan for the development, maintenance and use of an integrated system of trails throughout the municipality. One of the essential steps for success in developing such a plan is to consult widely throughout the community early and often. Such consultations are more effective when there is something concrete as a starting point for discussion, and that is the purpose of this document.

Table of contents:

1. What is the Merrickville District Trails Society?
2. What are we looking for and why?
3. What will be the outcomes?
4. Justification for a trails network.
5. Some of the recent history of trails in M-W.
6. Outline of current and future projects for trails in our community.
7. Conclusion and timelines.
8. Appendices and Trails Brochure

“We make the path by walking”

-Antonio Machado

1. What is the MDTs and who are we?

The Merrickville District Trails Society was established by a memorandum of intent (appendix #1) on August 20th, 2009. Our last annual general meeting was Jan 21, 2010, and was attended by 25 members. We have a membership list of over 50; membership is open and there is no annual fee. An executive meets about once a month, and all meetings are open to the public.

We are a volunteer organization devoted to the development and promotion of trails in Merrickville-Wolford and the area. The organization grew out of a smaller group of dedicated individuals who first conceived of a trails 'Millennium Project' in 1999, and who have laid the foundations for our trail network proposal today.

2. What are we looking for and why?

We propose that Council set up a functional mechanism to review and approve all trail-development projects in Merrickville-Wolford and to oversee and manage the trails network in Merrickville -Wolford.

This is desirable for the following reasons:

- a. A trails network is a very important community resource, too important to be subject to the whims of interest groups such as the MDTs. We see the trails network more as the community equivalent of the library or the blockhouse museum, where volunteer groups and associations play the major role, but governance is clearly established within our municipal structures.
- b. Trails cross both public and private property. Their development can require a considerable investment of time and money, so both volunteers and funding sources require some assurance that the project they support will endure.
- c. Trails must be compatible with other community projects.
- d. Funding for hiking, cycling and multi-use trails is available from varied sources (government, community benefit, private). Support from the municipality would facilitate fundraising from these sources.

For all these reasons, projects need review and a stamp of approval from the municipality, so the municipality needs a clear mechanism for doing this.

3. What will be the outcomes?

- a. A master plan will be developed as a reference to permit a variety of individual projects to be considered as part of a whole, and that will help to establish priorities on a regular basis.
- b. Detailed plans for each "acceptable-in-principle" project will be produced, carefully describing the final product, costs, timelines and possible impacts on the community.
- c. Each individual project can be presented as required for
community consultation, including owners of private land,
funding requests, both outside the community and within (community organizations have expressed an interest in supporting trail development),
review and approval by Council, and
implementation by the joint efforts of all volunteer groups who are able and willing to participate.

- d. A varied and accessible trails network will become a Merrickville-Wolford point of excellence for residents and visitors alike.
- e. Although all significant projects should be funded through volunteer work and specific external funding sources, the municipality would be assuming an overall responsibility and a degree of administrative support. The costs of these activities should be modest, but need to be anticipated.

4. Justification for a trails network

In terms of contributing to the well-being of our community, both economic and personal, it would be hard to find something more effective than a good trails network. Merrickville-Wolford has both the potential and the opportunity to develop a trails network second to none, responding to the various needs of the different members of our rural community, both resident and visitor. Volunteer resources are available, as are sources of support and funding.

Some specific examples follow:

- Consider the huge potential of Merrickville being a trails hub (including water trail along the Rideau): the Rideau Trail comes through Merrickville; other popular trails are close by (Burritt's Rapids Tip-to-Tip, Nicholson's locks trail); the Scotch Line-Limerick Trail is currently under development linking the village to Limerick Forest Trails and the North Grenville Trail network.
- We are an important cycling destination, and there are several cycling circuits around and to Merrickville (e.g. Kilmarnock, Burritt's Rapids, Easton's Corners).
- We are also an important walking destination as this is the 14th year that the Ottawa and Kingston Volkssport walking clubs have been walking 5 km and 10 km walks through our village.
- Here's another way to 'get people off their boats' and out of the water to enjoy a light adventure hike on trails, circling the village and/or walking about the town.
- There is widespread agreement about the importance of providing safe, accessible recreation in a rural environment and of increasing physical activity opportunities for all.
- We have the ongoing support of MDCHSC with a vision of 'Healthy People in a Healthy Community'.
- Trails provide a venue for our historical society to offer a walk and a learning experience that explores settlements of old roads in our area (Scotch Line, Armstrong, etc). This can involve local schools as well.
- Trails facilitate interpretive walks through natural environments - woodlands and bird sanctuary - to schools, groups.
- We can apply for financial support of Tri Health - the Ontario Heart Health Coalition and Ministry of Health Promotion funds to promote trail use.
- The Lions Club of Merrickville recently provided funds to reprint our MDTs hiking brochures and cycling brochures.
- All municipalities have been encouraged to work with local trails groups through the implementation of the 'Ontario Trails Strategy'.

Finally, the Industry, Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (IEDTAC) recognizes the importance of trails at many places in their The M-W Economic Development

Strategy Phase 2 draft report of Feb 2010. It suggests that the municipality is paying too little attention and making insufficient investment in enhancing the community's natural resources including the beaches, walking trails, bird sanctuary and Limerick Forest. The Report recommends placing increased emphasis on enhancing all the community's natural resource assets for the benefit of both residents and visitors including such initiatives as improved signage, trail development, improved beach facilities and enhanced river activities.

5. Some brief historical information on trails in Merrickville -Wolford

A Millennium Project: Wilderness Recreation Area and Hiking Trails: Council received this document in 1999 and again in 2007 - a copy is available for reference. This document summarized the many excellent reasons for developing such trails in Merrickville-Wolford, and all these reasons remain just as pertinent, or more so, today. Two basic trails were proposed - a series of loops on municipal land above the public school, and a longer cross-country trail east along the Scotch Line, down a trail to Armstrong Road, then back across Cty. Road 15, and finally back up to the village area by a route across private land, along roads, and by the municipal dump.

Council approved and supported this project, but this was done essentially on a one time-basis.

The continued development of these trails, and the development of others, seemed to have stalled in recent years. There have also been some inadvertent conflicts between the trails and other recreational projects. Given the ongoing difficulties, there was a question of abandoning the trails project altogether, so a general meeting was called, advertised in the Phoenix, inviting input from all members of the community.

This meeting in the spring of 2008 was well attended, and all expressed support for the trails - interestingly enough this was the first time most attendees had heard of the trails. A smaller group assumed the role of a steering committee, to analyze the situation and to come up with a plan to move the trails project forward.

The initial analysis identified the following major factors in the genesis of the difficulties:

1. The lack of a clear and ongoing status within the municipal governance structure.
2. The lack of a functional group structure to lead this project forward.
3. The lack of volunteer manpower to support the development and maintenance of the trails.
4. The lack of a master plan to guide trail development, in harmony with other community projects, and according to municipal priorities.
5. A lack of publicity and information on the use of the trails.

Representatives of the steering committee met with the Recreation and Parks Board on June 2, 2008, to discuss developing trails. The Board was very supportive, and we discussed preparing a master plan for trail development in and around Merrickville-Wolford.

Since that time, volunteers have made good progress on items 2, 3 and 5, and we consider them to be in need of continuing attention but mostly resolved as problems. Progress on item 1 has not been as successful, though the dialogue has been good, the lines of communication are open, and Council has provided approval and support for some specific requests on a case-by-case basis. Progress on the master plan has been waiting, perhaps erroneously, for a more complete resolution of item 1, but we are able to present here the

main elements of a de facto master plan for discussion by the community and by Council and its committees.

6. Outline of current and future projects for trails in our community:

- ii. **Woodland -Toboggan Hill Loop (1-2 km):** this would become an improved trail, with two abreast walking capacity, easily accessible for most of the village residents, including children, and even those with some limitations of mobility. We would preserve, however, its natural look and features, so that it would be a haven for those living in the village. Possible improvements include:
 - improved footpath throughout, with improved signage and perhaps some lighting (Council has already authorized MDTs to place two signs at the main entrances);
 - seats and or tables at strategic sites;
 - improved integration with the toboggan hill and parking area, including signs, access paths and stairs;
 - repair and rerouting are necessary once the sewage plant works are advanced or completed, and
 - emphasize natural and historic and recreational features
 - Flora, maple grove, wildlife
 - Old rail fences
 - Interpretive signs
 - Consider picnic areas and sites

- iii. **Bird Sanctuary Trail (0.5 - 4 km):** this trail would go from near the library, along the shore line upstream to the bird sanctuary, where we could build a viewing boardwalk and platform; the trail could loop back through the fairgrounds, link to Ste Marguerite Bourgeoys School trail; or find another available route back to the village. Needs include:
 - Natural footpath, some seats and rest areas
 - Interpretive signs
 - Close to the village, the fair grounds and the library, this trail would be extremely attractive and easily accessible to visitors and residents alike

- iv. **Merrickville Limerick Forest (Scotch Line) Trail (5-15 km):** this trail is already under development under the direction of Limerick Forest. The MDTs and the Friends of Limerick Forest have established a good working relationship for volunteer work. Recently the Ottawa Rideau Trail Association hiked this trail with members of MDTs.
 - Directional signage and interpretive signage are being prepared this year: the Scotch Line is an historic road, and many vestiges of previous occupation and activity remain.
 - A viewing boardwalk was built last year in the wetlands; this is an attractive destination for walkers and leads to the many trails within Limerick Forest - so attractive to the longer distance walker and other trail users.
 - Some minor pathway improvements are underway: the trail is to remain natural and multi-purpose.

- Access from the village to the Scotch Line is currently along regular roads, which is not the most attractive or the safest for walkers, cyclists and children. Alternate routes need to be explored and consideration given to widened road beds and reserved paths along the edge of the pavements. The Merrickville Estates are keen to cooperate in the alternate route project; some possible pathways are already owned by the municipality.

v. Roadside cycling and pedestrian paths:

As paved roads are upgraded or first made it would be useful to consider widening the roadbed and having a reserved path for pedestrians and cyclists. An inventory of desirable stretches of roads that have been studied and provisionally designated would permit Council to deal more expeditiously with these questions as the opportunities arise.

Three stretches of road that could already be considered:

Hwy 43 as it leaves the village in both directions, to the first reasonable off-road on the walking and cycling circuits

- East: from just past the Railway Viaduct to where it is joined by River Road: this would provide a more secure transit for those cycling or walking from Burritt's Rapids or Nicholson's Locks. This segment is about 900 metres long.
- West: from the flashing light towards Kilmarnock Road

Up Collar Hill and through Merrickville Estates along the Scotch Line to the end of the pavement: this is the main route towards Limerick Forest from the village.

vi. Longer distance trails in Merrickville-Wolford:

- a. **Rideau Trail:** the main Rideau Trail is being re-routed through the village, so provides direct access, either transiting the village or as a starting point.
- b. **Wilderness (Armstrong Road) Trail:** goes south along Old Schoolhouse Road from Scotch Line to Armstrong Road, then across Cty Road 15, and back up to the Village over private land and roads, and passing near the dump.
 - Was part of the Millennium Trails project in 1999.
 - Still an interesting trail, with many interesting natural features, but significant water obstruction during the summer, and less used than it might be.
 - The return portion to the west of Cty Rd 15 needs clarification.
- c. **Other long distance trails: to Easton's Corners.** A network of accessible and safe trails through all corners of the municipality would be very attractive to serious walkers (and other users), and would be a key feature if Merrickville- Wolford is to become a trails hub and draw people to the region.
 - This is a longer term project which will require extensive consultation and planning, but the potential benefits are great.
 - Unused and unopened road allowances are potential routes, even though the cooperation and permission of landowners is also essential. The routes will also

likely need to cross private land. An early activity will be to identify likely potential routes, so that acquired rights are maintained, and discussions with landowners and other stakeholders can be started very early in the process, before any decisions have to be made.

vii. Other trails/walks in or close to the village:

- a. Several shorter walks/trails have already been developed, and are maintained, by other groups. They are well documented and extremely popular, and are an important part of the planned trails network:
 - Depot to Dam Trail (Rideau Canal)
 - Industrial Heritage Complex Walk (Rideau Canal)
 - Historic Properties Walks (MD Historical Society)
- b. Other routes could be developed, to provide a series of interesting choices for easy walks close to the village, with a variety of measured distances:
 - Merrickville -North
 - Fairgrounds -racetrack
 - Village perimeter route (e.g.: Read St., Rd 16, Harry MacLean, Collar Hill, Charlotte, Main Street)

7. Conclusions and timelines:

**“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.”
Chinese proverb**

We think that this information is sufficient to stimulate our community and our municipal Council to move ahead and make some fairly simple decisions that will make a Trails Master Plan a reality within a short time, well before next summer (2011).

We have had our say - it is now time for others to indicate whether they have heard, and whether they share our dreams for this unique opportunity.

In the meantime, MDTs, the Merrickville District Trails Society will continue to promote the project as a whole, and organize walks on our existing trails, as well as other activities.

- ✓ We are designing and installing interpretative and directional signage on some trails, and we are striving to improve our maps and pamphlets for trail users.
- ✓ We will also be proposing one specific trail project for planning, funding and development this winter and next summer.

Working together on trails is a great builder of friendship, goodwill and community spirit, so we would not miss out on this for anything.

We invite all who are interested, in no matter what way, to join us.

Appendix #1: **MERRICKVILLE AND DISTRICT TRAILS SOCIETY.**

MEMORANDUM OF INTENT

The undersigned persons, desiring to record an understanding concerning the use and development of trails in Merrickville and the surrounding district, have resolved and agreed by this document to have established a not-for-profit society, to be known as the Merrickville and District Trail Society, (the Society). The Society intends to execute its activities according to, but not limited to, the following objectives, (the Objectives):

- 1 To carry out those activities it judges prudent and necessary to identify, plan, promote, build and maintain trails for use by walkers, bird-watchers, naturalists, joggers, runners, pedal cyclists, skiers and snowshoers, or other non-vehicular users.
- 2 To concentrate its activities on trails that are located, or will be principally located, in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford or in contiguous areas of adjacent townships such as, but not limited to the townships of Montague and North Grenville, subject to Objective 3 below.
- 3 To integrate and/or coordinate its activities and provide assistance, as it judges prudent and necessary, with such groups, entities or organisations which plan, maintain, operate or develop trails on other private or public land or property, both within Merrickville-Wolford and in other municipalities or jurisdictions.
- 4 To enter into discussions with the Council of the Corporation of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford in order to obtain recognition of the Society, as the organisation of record in regard to trails, in the Village of Merrickville-Wolford, and to agree which board or committee of Council, the Society shall be placed.
- 5 To develop, agree and approve the constitution and by-laws of the Society.
- 6 To seek and obtain registration of the Society as a designated Canadian Charitable Organisation under the appropriate category established by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Signed in Merrickville-Wolford on this.....20th day of.....August 2009

Tim Allen
Denis Faulkner
Fred Grodde
Joann Helmer
Rhys Knott
John Mundy
Anne Tener
Rod Fournier

Rev August 2009

Appendix #2:

Outside organizations that have contacted/supported M-W trails over the last 24 months:

North Grenville Trails

North Grenville Municipal Offices

Andy Brown, Chief Administrative Officer

Friends of Limerick Forest

Geoff McVey, Forest Manager, United Counties of Leeds & Grenville

Rideau Trails Association

Nigel Brereton

Tri Health - Ontario Heart Healthy Coalition

Lois Dewey, Coordinator

Lanark Leeds & Grenville Public Health Unit

Tri Health Trails Committee

Danielle Shewfelt, Coordinator

Northern Trails Collaboration

Gananoque Trails

Bill Stevens, Chair

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Land Information Ontario

Carol-Anne Albertson, Project Manager

Trans Canada Trails Ontario

Kirsten Spence, Regional Trails Coordinator

Ontario Trails Council

Patrick Connor, Ex-officio - Executive Director

Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve - Biosphere Trails Council

Arden K Henry

RealOntario

Gary Clarke

Local organizations that have contacted/supported M-W Trails over the last 24 months:

1st Merrickville Scouts

Merrickville and District Community Health Centre

Merrickville District Chamber of Commerce

Merrickville Lions Club

Appendix #3: Brochure – see separate document