



Urban Forest Management Plan

YEAR 1 ANNUAL REPORT



The background of the page is a photograph of a large, mature tree with thick, dark trunks and dense green foliage. A white crane arm is visible on the left side, extending upwards. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

With nearly four million trees across our community, Vaughan is truly a green city.

Trees provide oxygen, improve mental and physical health, and offer shelter and food for humans and animals. They also cool the air, save water, reduce noise pollution, capture stormwater runoff and beautify the community.

For these reasons and more, the City of Vaughan needs to be their biggest champion. That's where the Urban Forest Management Plan comes in. The plan reflects the City's unwavering commitment to preserving Vaughan's natural beauty.

After just one year of the plan's implementation, we've already made significant progress. For the fourth consecutive year, Vaughan was recognized as a Tree City of the World by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2024, reaffirming the work we are doing to create a greener, healthier city for our children, and their children, too.

Thank you to the Public Works portfolio for being leaders in sustainable urban forestry management. I look forward to seeing what will be accomplished over the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven Del Duca". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "S" and "D".

Steven Del Duca
Mayor, City of Vaughan



MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

The City of Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan outlines our long-term vision and strategy for effectively managing Vaughan's urban forest. It is a plan of the future – and for the future.

The plan includes tailored strategies and actions to address specific pressures on Vaughan's urban forest, including urban development, climate change and extreme weather, invasive pests and asset management. Over the last year, we have implemented new systems to increase our operational efficiency, updated key policies, secured grant funding, expanded community engagement and education and much more. Through this plan, the City continues to foster a greener, more connected and climate-resilient city.

I would like to recognize all the incredible staff in Public Works, whether in the office or in the field, who tirelessly work to achieve the goals outlined in this plan.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Z. Postic'.

Zoran Postic
City Manager



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

As a truly green city, Vaughan continues to expand our urban forest – one tree at a time! Trees are a huge piece of the foundation of the city of Vaughan’s health, wellness and beauty. Our staff pride themselves on protecting and maintaining Vaughan’s trees in alignment with the City’s Urban Forest Management Plan.

While the plan was first introduced in 2024, it has already made significant impacts across the city.

We have implemented a formal planting strategy and a proactive seven-year pruning cycle for street trees to improve tree health and reduce storm-related risks, allowing staff to address forestry service requests more efficiently. Additionally, through the City’s Green Guardians program, we’ve expanded community engagement by educating and empowering residents to participate in tree planting and stewardship initiatives. The City is also committed to increasing its overall tree canopy cover by 25 per cent by 2051— a goal we can achieve, in part, through initiatives in the Urban Forest Management Plan.

I am grateful to the amazing staff in the Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations department who spearhead this important work. With this plan, we are well-equipped to maintain a beautiful and sustainable urban forest for years to come.

Emilie Alderman
Deputy City Manager, Public Works



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps to transform this vision into action. From developing a formal planting strategy that prioritizes low tree equity areas, to launching innovative pilots like the edible food forest, the City is embedding environmental justice and climate resilience into the way we grow our urban forest.

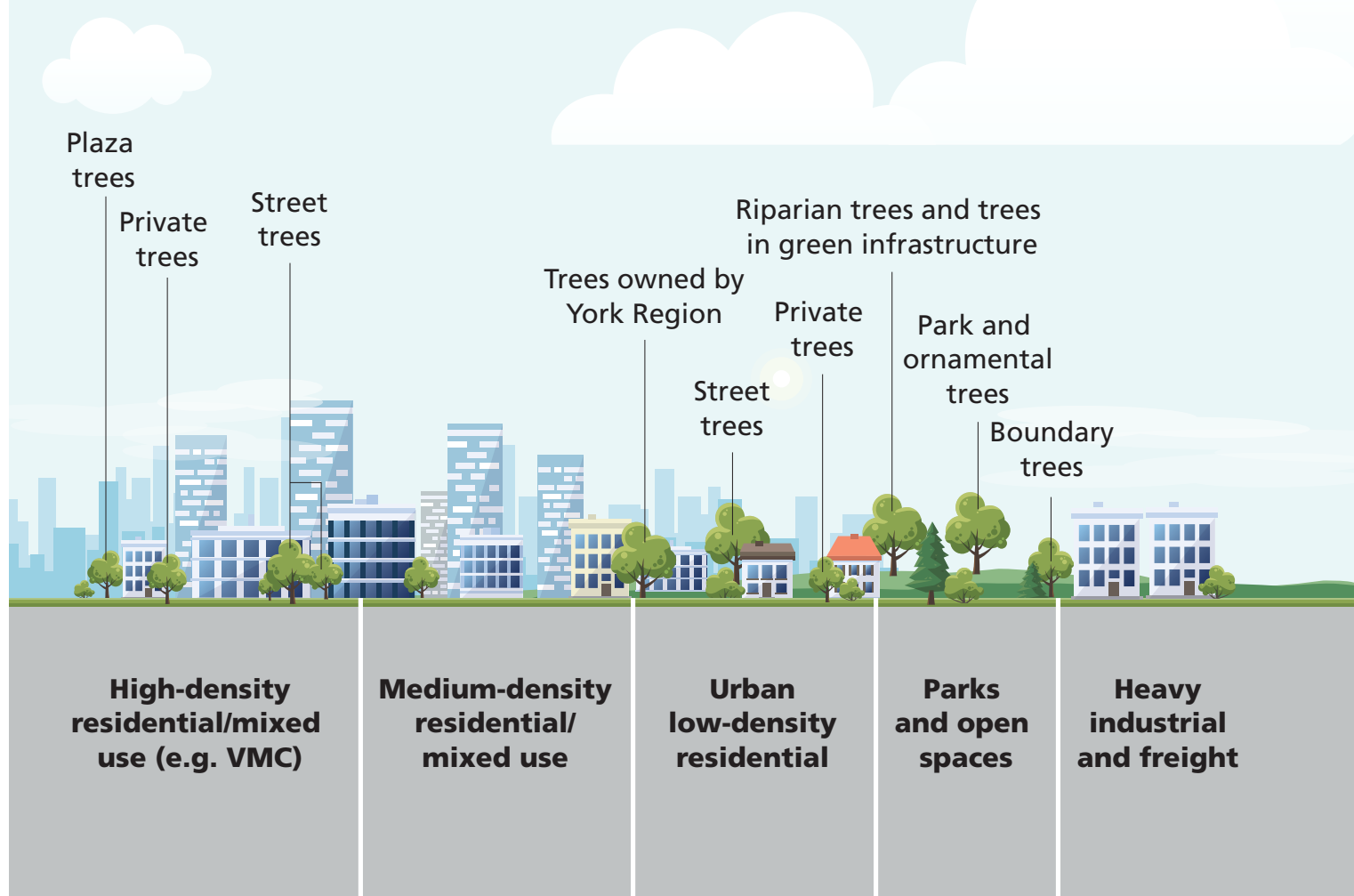
This work has been made possible by continued investment in staff capacity, operational sustainability and strategic funding. With nearly \$2 million in external grants secured and partnerships forged with organizations such as Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, LEAF, Tree Canada and TD Friends of the Environment, our collective efforts are creating lasting impact.

Together, we planted over 5,600 trees and 4,400 shrubs, increased street tree diversity and implemented a proactive seven-year pruning cycle — all while doubling our service efficiency through a newly introduced triage system.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to growing Vaughan's canopy cover to 25 per cent by 2051, advancing equity-driven planting and strengthening policies that protect our green infrastructure. These achievements reflect the dedication of our Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations team and the strong partnerships that make this work possible.

Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo
Director, Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations

What is an “urban forest”?



URBAN LAND USES

Vaughan's urban forest includes all trees in the city encompassing both private and public ownership structures.



Approximately
four million trees in Vaughan

~ York Region Forest Study, 2012

Trees on
Provincial
property

Private
trees

Trees on
Toronto and Region
Conservation
Authority
property

Private
trees

Agricultural
treelines

**Highway and
major roadway**

**Golf courses
and recreational**

**Natural areas
and features**

**Rural and
agricultural**

RURAL LAND USES



Urban forest management at a glance

VALUES, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS



VISION STATEMENT AND GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is for a healthy, growing and sustainable urban forest canopy that supports biodiversity, human health, recreation and community climate to provide a greener future for generations to come.

GOALS



GOVERN: Align urban forest planning and management with best practices



MAINTAIN: Maintain a healthy and safe urban forest



EXPAND: Expand the urban forest and associated benefits



PROTECT: Protect trees and woodlands for future generations



PARTNER: Increase community stewardship

Urban Forest Management Plan strategic framework

GOAL 1: Prioritize good program governance



Strategy 1:

Continue to strengthen and develop program governance, build urban forest collaboration and develop the City's urban forestry reputation amongst peer programs.

Strategy 2:

Ensure program resourcing is sufficient to broadly implement the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

Strategy 3:

Integrate all urban forest asset classes into the City's broader asset management approach.

Strategy 4:

Prioritize equity in program delivery and operational planning.

GOAL 2: Maintain a healthy and safe urban forest



Strategy 5:

Formalize monitoring, reporting and review standards and processes.

Strategy 6:

Transition from a reactive to a proactive urban forest management paradigm.

Strategy 7:

Formalize the City's approach to managing risk across all urban forest asset classes.

Strategy 8:

Develop a fulsome approach to managing tree health issues, including pests, invasive species and disease.

GOAL 3:

Expand the urban forest canopy and associated benefits



Strategy 9:

Ensure design, development and planning processes support the desired urban forest outcomes.

Strategy 10:

Increase the rate of new tree planting to support achievement of the canopy cover target.

Strategy 11:

Prioritize forest restoration and biodiversity conservation.

GOAL 4:

Protect trees and woodlands for future generations



Strategy 12:

Ensure the City's regulatory tools, standard processes and compliance measures are consistently lending to desired outcomes in terms of tree protection.

GOAL 5:

Partner in urban forest stewardship



Strategy 13:

Utilize community capacities to build urban forest management capacities.

Strategy 14:

Improve educational programming to build public awareness and understanding of the benefits of the urban forest and its management.





Executive summary

The City advanced its 20-year [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) by building strong relationships to improve co-ordination across departments and increase arboricultural capacity.

Investments in staffing, budget analysis and the dedicated Canopy Reserve Fund enhanced operational sustainability and service delivery across the Forestry Operations team. External funding opportunities increased financial resilience, allowing for an increase in innovative opportunities.

A formal planting strategy was also created to target low tree equity areas and promote environmental justice and resilience. Additionally, piloting the concept of an edible food forest engaged communities in sustainable urban greening. These actions reinforce Vaughan's leadership in evidence-based, equitable and sustainable urban forestry management.

For the fourth year, Vaughan has been named a Tree City of the World by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2024, affirming its commitment to sustainable urban forestry. The City also received the

2024 Willis Award for Innovation from Canadian Associations of Municipal Administrators in recognition of its new triage system that successfully doubled service efficiency.

DID YOU KNOW?

The City of Vaughan has been recognized as a Tree City of the World — one of only 210 cities across 24 countries — for its commitment to urban forestry.



Vaughan's Forestry Operations team received nearly \$2 million in grant funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, TD Friends of the Environment and Tree Canada, enabling the planting of more than 5,600 trees and nearly 4,400 shrubs — advancing biodiversity, climate resilience and community engagement citywide.

To enhance urban forest health and safety, the City implemented a proactive seven-year pruning cycle for street trees. This shift improves tree health, reduces storm-related risks and aligns with best practices, allowing staff to

address 38 per cent of forestry service requests more efficiently. Additionally, species and genera planting limits were introduced to increase street tree diversity, strengthening resilience to pests, diseases and climate change. These initiatives support ecological functions, public safety and operational sustainability, while enhancing Vaughan’s streetscapes. Together, they represent a strategic investment in long-term environmental health and improved quality of life for residents.

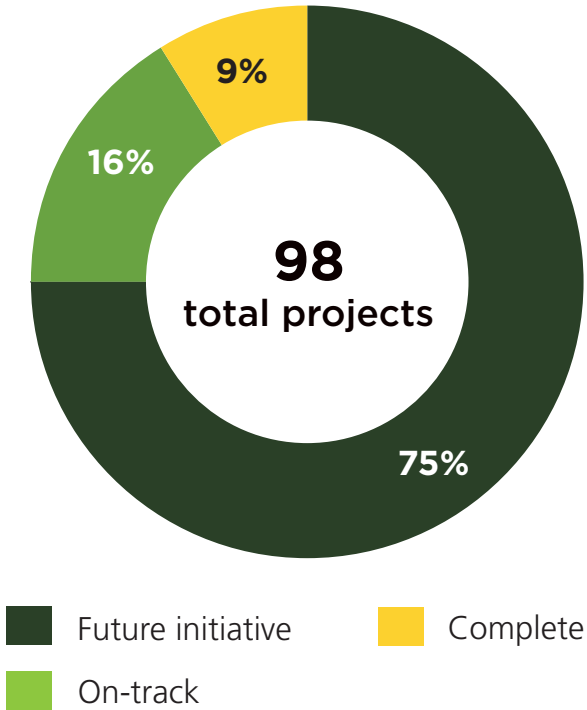
To help expand the urban forest, the City committed to increasing its canopy cover to 25 per cent by 2051. This commitment is proposed for inclusion in the City’s New Vaughan Official Plan 2025 and key policy documents, positioning the urban forest as vital green infrastructure. New policy language supports tree protection, equitable planting and climate adaptation. In 2024, annual tree planting rates increased to 1,400, above and beyond the routine replacement trees. Strategic partnerships with Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) and York Region enable private property planting and community engagement. These efforts promote sustainable growth, enhance environmental equity and ensure long-term canopy expansion across public and private property in Vaughan.

To protect trees and woodlands for future generations, the City advanced key regulatory and policy updates in 2025. Enhancements to the Tree Protection By-law and Tree Protection Protocol improved clarity, enforcement and flexibility, aligning with urban growth and sustainability goals. New standards address legacy encroachment issues, strengthen developer responsibilities and clarify tree-related language in planning agreements. Annual regulatory reviews by the Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations department ensure alignment with evolving legislation and urban

forestry priorities. These efforts reinforce tree preservation across public and private property, promote equity and biodiversity, and safeguard Vaughan’s urban forest as a critical long-term community asset.

The City advanced partnerships in urban forest management through its [Green Guardians program](#), expanding community engagement and empowering residents to participate in tree planting, education and stewardship initiatives. Public outreach on pests, diseases and invasive species improved awareness and proactive reporting, supporting urban forest health. Strategic partnerships with organizations like LEAF enabled educational programming, increasing reach and impact. These efforts foster community ownership, enhance ecological resilience and build long-term capacity for urban forest management. Through inclusive, hands-on engagement and environmental education, Vaughan continues to cultivate a greener, more connected and climate-resilient future for all.

FIGURE 1: Urban Forestry Management Plan Project Implementation, Year 1





Forestry Operations awards

VAUGHAN RECOGNIZED AS A TREE CITY OF THE WORLD

Vaughan's ongoing commitment to our trees and forests is not going unnoticed! For the fourth consecutive year, the City has been recognized as a Tree City of the World by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for 2024.

The Tree Cities of the World program recognizes municipalities committed to ensuring urban forests and trees are properly maintained, sustainably managed and celebrated. The Arbor Day Foundation's goal is to connect cities around the world in a new network dedicated to sharing and adopting the most successful approaches to managing community trees and forests.



To become a Tree City of the World, a community must meet five core standards that illustrate a strong commitment to caring for its trees and forests, including:

- establishing responsibility for tree planting, care and planning.
- setting rules to govern the management of trees.
- maintaining an updated inventory of local tree resources.
- allocating resources for tree management.
- celebrating city trees and forests.



2024 WILLIS AWARD FOR INNOVATION

The City has been honoured with the 2024 Willis Award for Innovation by the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators for its approach to improving response times for forestry-related service requests.

The City's Forestry Operations team developed a new location-based triage and dispatch system to streamline operations to better manage the high volume of service requests.

The new system utilizes a live map interface integrated with the City's Customer Relationship Management system to dispatch work orders in real-time. Requests are divided into urgent and non-urgent queues, allowing staff to efficiently address priority cases while simultaneously closing outstanding work orders based on location proximity. This has doubled the team's capacity to respond to requests using the same level of resources, significantly reducing wait times for residents.





Forestry Operations grants

GROWING CANADA'S COMMUNITY CANOPIES INITIATIVE GRANT

The City has been approved \$1.97 million in funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Growing Canada's Community Canopies Initiative. This funding will support the planting and maintenance of more than 5,300 new trees and 4,400 shrubs over the next two years, with a focus on enhancing biodiversity, climate resilience and public engagement. Key planting locations include select City-owned boulevards and parks, as well as North Maple Regional Park (NMRP), which will receive significant ecological upgrades.

The initiative supports Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan and includes planting a wide range of tree species, implementing maintenance programs, monitoring progress and engaging the community through planting events. Emphasis will be placed on native and climate-resilient trees, specifically large, shade-producing species that mitigate the urban heat island effect. The project aims to reduce the prevalence of overrepresented species, promoting a healthier and more diverse urban forest.

Environmental benefits include stormwater runoff reduction, carbon sequestration, improved air quality and temperature moderation. The increased biodiversity also strengthens ecosystem services, pollinator habitats and forest resilience, while reducing susceptibility to pests and invasive species. These ecological gains support climate adaptation and long-term urban sustainability.

Socioeconomically, the project is expected to increase tree canopy in low tree equity scoring areas, enhance public spaces, foster community engagement, and improve residents' physical and mental health. North Maple Regional Park will offer a nature-based recreation experience. This aligns with the Growing Canada's Community Canopies' broader goal of planting 1.2 million trees nationwide through a \$291 million initiative funded by Canada's 2 Billion Trees program.



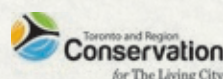
**TD Friends of the
Environment Foundation**

TD FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION GRANT

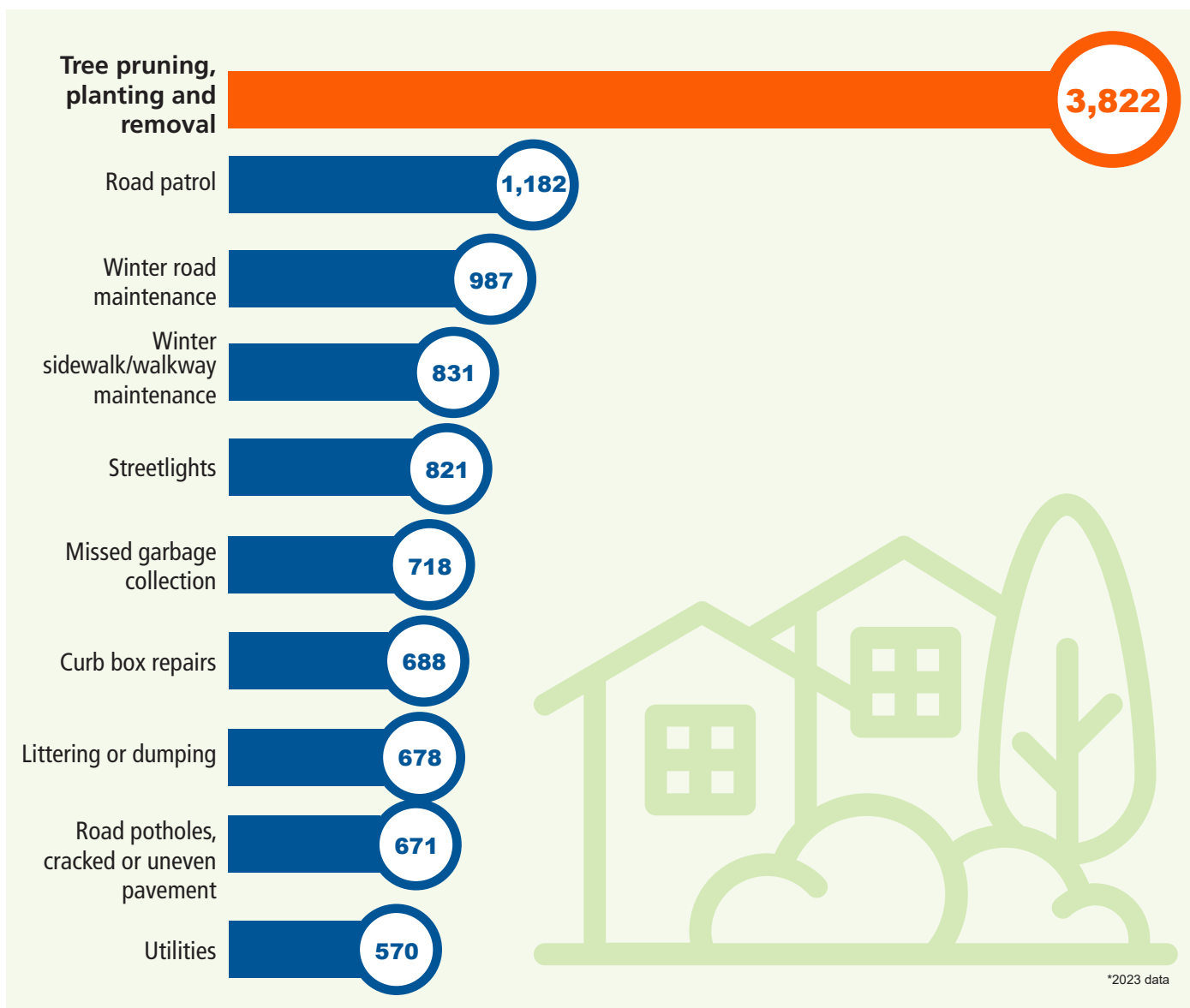
In 2024, the City received a grant of \$5,000 from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. With this grant, 150 trees were planted at Chancellor District Park (430 Chancellor Dr.) to celebrate National Forest Week in September 2024. Mayor Steven Del Duca, Members of Council, City staff, 50 volunteers and representatives from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation participated in the event.


TREE CANADA GRANT

In 2024, the City received a grant of \$10,000 from Tree Canada. With this grant, 200 trees were planted at NMRP during a community tree planting event in October 2024. Mayor Steven Del Duca, Members of Council, City staff, 30 volunteers and representatives from Tree Canada participated in the event.



Summary of the top 10 Public Works service requests





GOAL 1: Prioritize good program governance

DID YOU KNOW?

By joining the [Greening the Landscape Research Consortium](#), the City gains access to cutting-edge research that helps improve tree survival and growth in challenging urban environments.



- supported data-driven decision-making to enhance sustainability and urban forest resilience.
- reinforced Vaughan's leadership in innovative and evidence-based urban forestry management.

ACTION 1.2 Research partnerships and collaborations

To achieve Action 1.2 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, the Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations (PFHO) department:

- strengthened research partnerships with organizations such as Vineland Research and Innovation Centre to advance urban forestry practices.
- collaborated on projects covering pest management, tree health monitoring and innovative planting methods.
- continues to ensure urban forest strategies are grounded in the latest scientific research and best practices.

ACTION 1.5 Establish an interdepartmental working group on urban forestry

To achieve Action 1.5 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- established an interdepartmental working group to co-ordinate Urban Forest Management Plan implementation.
- has bi-annual meetings in place to foster cross-departmental communication,





knowledge sharing and collaborative problem-solving.

- improved co-ordination to enhance efficiency in permitting, tree planting and public responsiveness.
- integrated urban forestry into the planning phase of all capital projects and policies across the City.
- continues to support sustainable development by aligning resources and environmental goals across City departments.

ACTION 2.1 (B) Expand arboricultural capacities

To achieve Action 2.1(B) of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- expanded arboricultural capacity within the department by hiring staff and providing specialized training to enable faster response to service requests and improve resident satisfaction.
- enhanced support for proactive tree care, improving tree health, longevity and public safety.
- improved in-house integration with capital projects and enabled data-driven urban forest planning.
- continues to work with skilled arborists.



ACTION 2.2 Examine current funding levels

To achieve Action 2.2 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- reviewed budget gaps that impact maintenance, growth and the long-term sustainability of the plan.
- continues funding and resource allocation, along with a review of future budget needs, to ensure ongoing progress and effective delivery, and to reinforce the City's commitment to a healthy, sustainable urban forest.



ACTION 2.3 Explore external funding opportunities

To achieve Action 2.3 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- expanded external funding capacity without increasing the municipal tax burden.
- enabled faster project delivery, community engagement and innovation in urban forestry practices.
- strengthened financial resilience and reduced reliance on internal funding.
- supported equitable service delivery through targeted projects in under-served areas.
- continues to collaborate with the Economic Development department to explore grants and donation opportunities.

ACTION 2.4 Establish a Canopy Reserve Fund

To achieve Action 2.4 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- established a Tree Planting Reserve to reinvest tree replacement fees into Vaughan's urban forest canopy.
- enabled faster project delivery and strategic prioritization, especially in low-canopy or high-need areas.
- supported long-term canopy expansion, establishment and capital budget sustainability.

- enhanced environmental outcomes, including improved air quality, biodiversity and stormwater management.
- continues to provide stable, dedicated funding for tree planting, site preparation and restoration projects.

ACTION 4.1 Prepare a formalized planting strategy for low tree equity areas

Tree equity scoring results in lower values in areas with higher surface temperatures and low canopy cover relative to under-served and vulnerable populations. To achieve Action 4.1 in the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

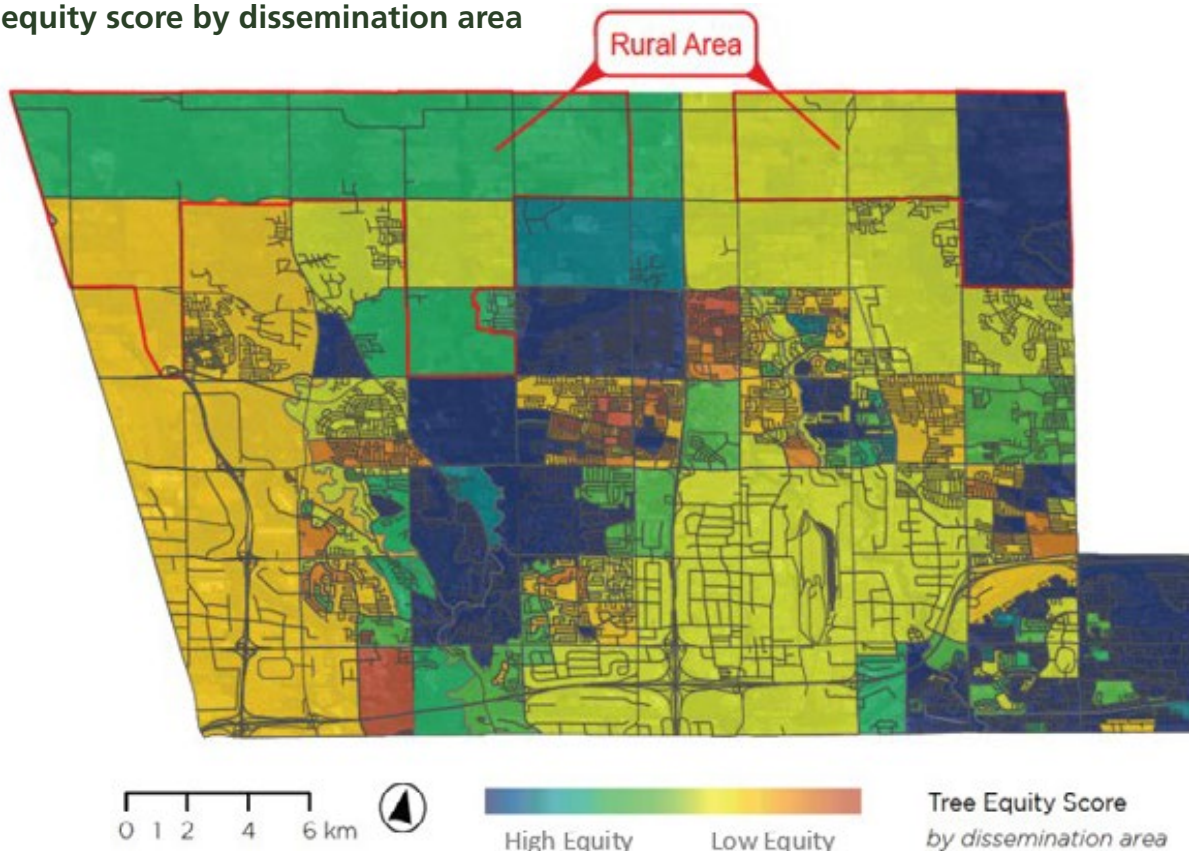
- continues to implement a data-driven planting strategy, developed to increase tree canopy cover specifically in low tree equity areas. This helps to support the City's sustainability targets, improve public health and enhance climate resilience.

ACTION 4.4 Pilot food forests

To achieve Action 4.4 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- piloted a food forest with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and community volunteers, establishing edible, ecosystem-based plantings at Marita Payne Park (2 Glen Shields Ave.).
- enhanced biodiversity, soil health and pollinator support through diverse, layered vegetation.
- contributed to food security and urban forest restoration by mimicking natural forest systems.
- supported reforestation efforts with resilient, low-maintenance and ecologically beneficial green spaces.
- continues to engage residents in planting and care, fostering community involvement and environmental education.

Tree equity score by dissemination area



GOAL 1 SPOTLIGHT:

Research partnerships and collaborations

The City is taking bold steps to strengthen its urban forest by working closely with research institutions such as the [Vineland Research and Innovation Centre](#). This partnership has placed Vaughan at the forefront of urban forestry innovation, ensuring that local tree care and planting practices are rooted in the latest scientific advancements. The collaborations focus on essential areas like pest control, tree health monitoring and advanced planting methods – all aimed at creating a healthier, more resilient urban canopy for the future.

A key initiative underway is a comprehensive study on revitalizing soil health, led by Vineland Research and Innovation Centre in partnership with municipalities across Ontario. This project evaluates soil amendments and biostimulants – natural substances that enhance plant growth – to restore degraded soils and support strong tree establishment. With findings such as the importance of site-specific soil testing and the use of tailored soil treatments, the study empowers municipalities to grow a wider diversity of trees, even in tough urban settings like roadsides and newly developed parks.

In addition to soil health, Vaughan is actively involved in a second phase of research focused on planting trees in hardscape areas such as sidewalks, medians and parking lots. Alongside cities like Toronto and London, Vaughan is helping to test cutting-edge technologies and strategies for planting in these difficult spaces. The study also explores how to manage woodlot invasives like oak wilt, leverage digital tools to track canopy progress, and assess the long-term cost and environmental benefits of planting smaller, more adaptable trees.





For Vaughan residents, these research initiatives translate into real-world benefits. Healthier soils and smarter planting practices mean more robust and diverse trees throughout the city – from downtown streetscapes to natural woodlots. Improved tree survival rates and reduced maintenance needs also ensure better use of taxpayer dollars. Most importantly, these efforts enhance the city’s green spaces, making neighborhoods more attractive, climate-resilient and enjoyable for everyone.

At the heart of these projects is a uniquely Canadian collaboration with Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, whose mission is to make horticulture more sustainable and economically viable. Through this partnership, Vaughan is not only improving local service delivery and environmental outcomes, but also contributing to a national effort to advance green innovation across Canada.





GOAL 2: Maintain a healthy and safe urban forest

DID YOU KNOW?

Trees can intercept rainfall, reducing stormwater runoff and preventing flooding. Vaughan's tree canopy helps sequester 14,200 tons of carbon annually. Tree pruning requests make up an average of 38 per cent of Forestry Operations service requests annually in Vaughan.



ACTION 6.1 Shift to seven-year pruning cycle for urban street trees

To achieve Action 6.1 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- implemented a proactive seven-year pruning cycle for urban street trees to improve long-term tree health, aligning with industry best practices, extending tree life and maximizing return on public investment.
- reduced emergency response costs by minimizing storm-related tree damage, supporting a healthier, more resilient urban forest through consistent maintenance.
- enhanced service efficiency and sustainability in urban forestry operations.



ACTION 8.2 Increase diversity within the City's street tree population

To achieve Action 8.2 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- continues to enhance resilience to pests, diseases and climate impacts by reducing reliance on a few tree types and adopting species and genera planting limits to diversify the City's street tree population.
- continues supports biodiversity, wildlife habitat and ecological functions within the urban environment.
- continues to improve air and water quality, stormwater management and urban cooling through varied tree characteristics.
- continues to contribute to more attractive, culturally inclusive and environmentally stable neighborhoods.

BENEFITS OF INCREASED URBAN FORESTRY DIVERSITY



Enhanced resilience

Greater ability to withstand pests, diseases and extreme weather



Increased aesthetic value

More visually appealing and diverse landscapes



Improved ecosystem services

Better air quality, stormwater management and wildlife habitat



Greater genetic diversity

Wider range of species adapted to local conditions

GOAL 2 SPOTLIGHT:

New tree pruning schedule enhances urban forest health and safety

In 2021, the City adopted a proactive seven-year pruning cycle for its urban street trees, aligning with best practices used by other forward-thinking municipalities. This structured approach replaces reactive maintenance with scheduled care, supporting the health and longevity of trees across Vaughan. With tree pruning making up 38 per cent of forestry service requests, this transition enables the City to address a major operational need more efficiently while maximizing the benefits of its urban forest investment.

To support this shift, a phased budget approach has been introduced, ensuring the gradual scaling of resources required for full implementation. The program is on track to be fully implemented by 2026, reinforcing the City's commitment to long-term sustainability and effective urban forest management.

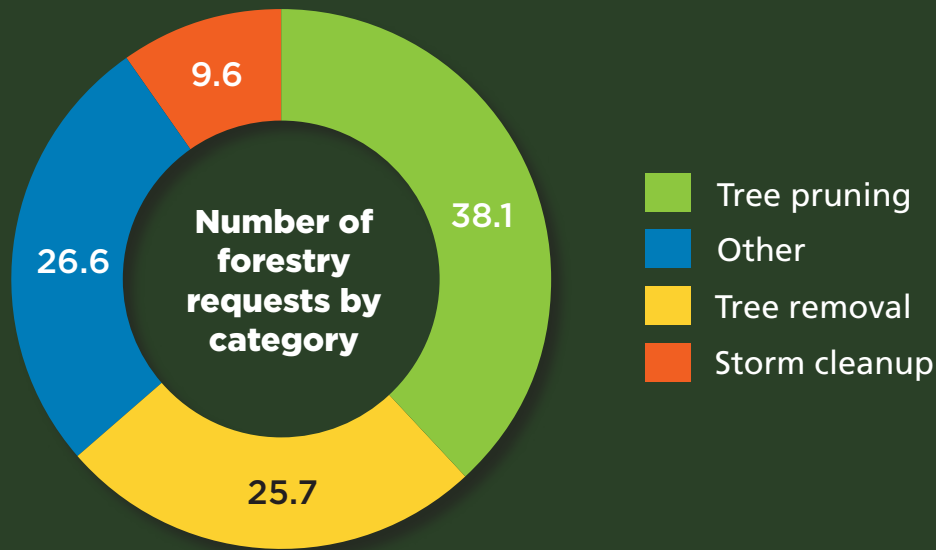
The new pruning cycle offers a range of environmental and community benefits. Regular pruning removes dead or weak branches before they cause harm, improving tree health and stability. It also enhances public safety by reducing the risk of falling limbs during storms or high winds. By proactively managing tree structure and growth, the City ensures better



Before pruning



After pruning



sunlight penetration and airflow, promoting stronger, more vibrant canopies that can withstand disease and pests more effectively.

From an operational perspective, this shift to proactive maintenance is expected to reduce long-term costs and emergency response efforts. Fewer unplanned cleanups after weather events, less damage to public infrastructure, and more predictable maintenance schedules all contribute to greater efficiency and better use of public funds. Regular upkeep also prevents interference with roads, sidewalks, signs and power lines—improving visibility, accessibility and overall municipal infrastructure management.

For Vaughan residents, this means safer neighbourhoods, healthier trees and more attractive streetscapes. Well-maintained trees contribute to curb appeal, may increase property values and help foster a sense of pride in the community. With fewer emergency incidents and improved responsiveness, residents can expect a higher level of satisfaction with urban forestry services. By extending the life of street trees and reducing unnecessary removals, this new approach is not just a cost-saving measure — it's a long-term investment in Vaughan's environmental resilience and urban livability.



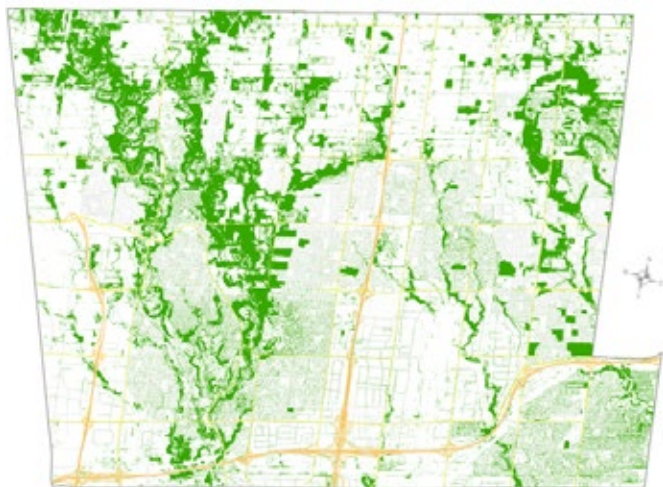
GOAL 3: Expand the urban forest

DID YOU KNOW?

Trees can improve mental health by improving air quality and providing green spaces for relaxation and recreation. Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan promotes the planting of diverse tree species to enhance resilience against pests and diseases.



Tree coverage in Vaughan



Tree canopy and woodland cover

ACTION 9.1 AND 9.2 Integrate canopy and urban forest goals into City frameworks

To achieve Action 9.1 and 9.2 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- continues to align and support broader strategic growth and land-use designations, including employment areas and secondary plans.
- continues cross-collaboration between internal departments to ensure that the City's canopy cover targets, as recommended in the plan, are achieved through necessary updates to policy planning framework.
- continues to add to tree and woodland cover targets and developing tree canopy sub-targets based on urban and climate factors, to enhance carbon sequestration.
- supported enforcement of the City's Tree Protection By-law to manage, protect and enhance the urban forest and tree canopy.
- requires new or redeveloped buildings to include landscaping with vegetation that, where feasible, contributes to the City's tree canopy goals.

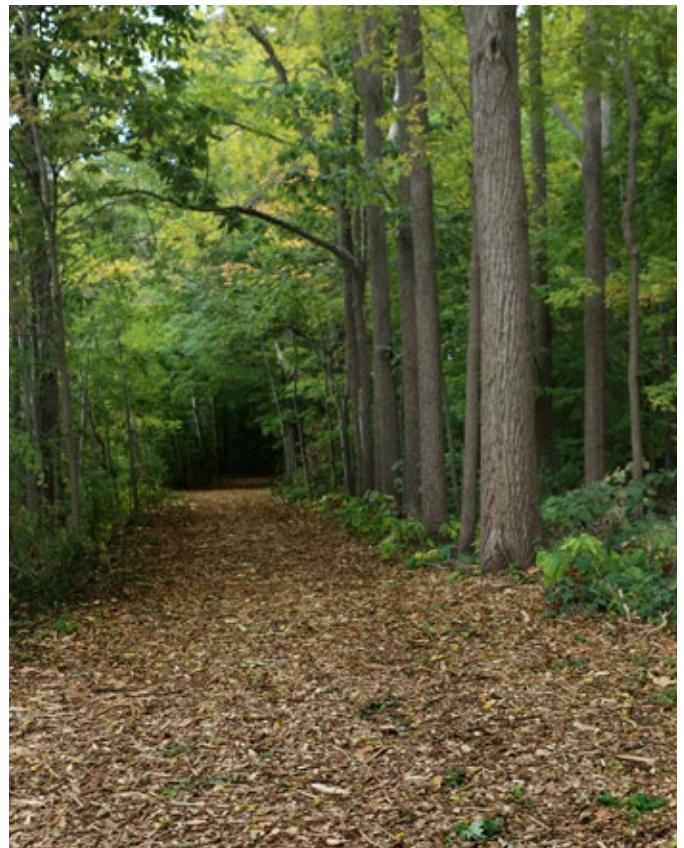
i-TREE ECOSYSTEM SERVICE ESTIMATES (i.e. all trees in the City)

Ecosystem service	Service estimates	Dollar value (\$)
CARBON (C) AND STORMWATER		
C sequestered annually in trees (t)	14,200	2,682,000
C stored in trees (t)	542,000	102,291,000
Avoided runoff (L)	1,221,268,000	2,839,000
AIR QUALITY		
CO removed annually (t)	5.4	8,000
NO ₂ removed annually (t)	19.7	14,500
O ₃ removed annually (t)	194.6	960,000
PM10 (t)	/	/
PM2.5 (t)	13	2,230,000
SO ₂ removed annually (t)	2	/
Total air pollution removed (t/year)	234.7	3,215,000
Total annual service value		\$6,428,000
Total stored carbon value		\$102,291,100



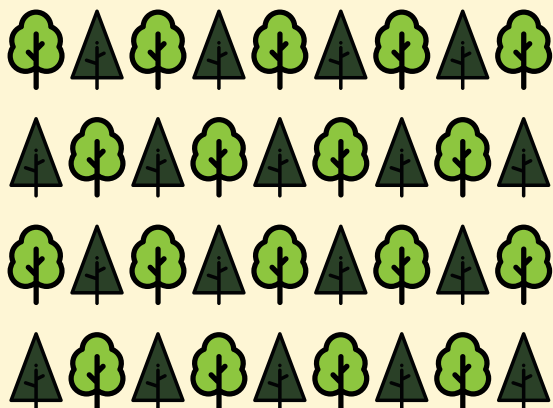
What is a tree 'canopy'?

A tree's canopy refers to the leafed area sitting atop the trunk. Canopy area is often used area covered by a trees canopy as viewed from above, and is a common metric used in strategic initiatives such as this, as it is a relatively accessible indicator which generally corresponds to the scale, standards and level of resources available to a management program.

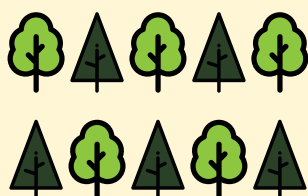


2025 SPECIES DIVERSITY IN TREE PLANTING

70 Different species



**No more than
10% of one species**



ACTION 10.4 AND 10.6 **Strategic partnerships** **to enhance private property** **tree planting**

To achieve Action 10.4 and 10.6 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- partnered with LEAF to launch a subsidized Backyard Tree Planting program, which launched in spring 2025. Through the program, the City has a target of planting 40 to 60 trees on private property by the end of 2025. The City contributed \$15,000, which covers 40 per cent of the total program cost.
- advanced the plan by increasing canopy cover on private property. The City also collaborated with York Region to ensure its environmental sustainability objectives were met.
- laid the groundwork for long-term private property greening and regional environmental stewardship.
- continues to enhance community engagement through education, volunteer training and local events.
- continues to expand the City's influence on urban forest growth beyond public spaces through strategic partnerships.

ACTION 9.7 Review the **City's current planting list**

To achieve Action 9.7 in the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- regularly reviews and updates the approved planting list to enhance species diversity and resilience.
- continues to ensure climate adaptation and pest resistance by selecting diverse, drought-tolerant and non-invasive species.
- continues to improve biodiversity and wildlife habitat through updated, native and non-native, non-invasive tree selections.
- saves money over time by needing less maintenance, fewer replacements and less tree removal.





ACTION 10.5(A) Increase annual tree planting rates

To achieve Action 10.5(A) of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- increased tree planting to 1,400 net new trees annually, which will increase the city-wide canopy goal to 25 per cent by 2051.
- accelerated canopy expansion, offset tree losses and enhanced air quality and climate resilience.
- continues to support stormwater management and strengthened biodiversity with diverse species.
- continues to promote community well-being, tree equity and neighborhood appeal.
- continues to facilitate long-term urban forest goals and climate change mitigation efforts.



GOAL 3 SPOTLIGHT:

Partnering with LEAF to grow a greener community

The City took a major step toward strengthening its urban forest by partnering with LEAF, a respected non-profit dedicated to helping residents plant trees on their own properties. As part of a region-wide initiative across all nine York Region municipalities, this collaboration is designed to make tree planting more accessible and affordable for homeowners. By focusing on private property, this effort complements Vaughan's broader tree canopy goals and supports its Urban Forest Management Plan.

The **Backyard Tree Planting program** has been active in Vaughan for several years; however, with the City now serving as an official partner, the program benefits from a more effective delivery model and a strengthened funding framework.

Launched in spring 2025, the program empowers Vaughan residents to contribute directly to enhancing the local environment. Homeowners can choose between a full-service or do-it-yourself option—both offering expert guidance, affordable pricing and aftercare support.

With a goal of planting 40 to 60 trees on private property by the end of the fall 2025 season, the initiative not only increases





urban greenery but also fosters community pride and environmental stewardship.

The City committed \$15,000 toward the program – about 40 per cent of the total cost – to help offset the subsidized tree prices, which range from \$110 to \$230 depending on the species. LEAF will oversee the program’s implementation, from coordinating plantings and selecting suitable trees to developing educational materials and monitoring success. By offering hands-on learning opportunities like guided tree tours, volunteer training and interactive care sheets, LEAF brings value beyond planting – fostering a culture of stewardship and sustainability.

This partnership enhances service delivery by extending Vaughan’s reach into private spaces where municipal planting is limited, making it a strategic and cost-effective way to grow the city’s canopy. It also aligns Vaughan’s local efforts with broader York Region environmental goals, helping to protect green spaces, reduce climate impacts and promote long-term ecological health. The educational and outreach components ensure that residents are not just passive recipients but active participants in creating a greener Vaughan.

Ultimately, this initiative supports a healthier environment, stronger neighborhoods and a more resilient community. By working with trusted partners like LEAF and engaging residents in meaningful, accessible ways, Vaughan is cultivating a shared responsibility for the urban forest. The result is a city that’s not only greener, but more connected, informed and prepared for the future.

GOAL 4: Protect trees and woodlands for future generations

DID YOU KNOW?

Protecting mature trees is just as important as planting new ones—they provide the greatest environmental benefits, including cleaner air, cooler temperatures, and vital habitats for wildlife.



ACTION 12.1 Update Tree Protection Protocol

To achieve Action 12.1 in the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- reviewed and updated the Tree Protection Protocol to address capital projects that can't meet urban forest requirements.
- supports improved tree outcomes when standard protocol specifications aren't feasible.
- continues to strengthen interdepartmental co-ordination and oversight of development that may impact trees, while also improving tree preservation across urban development and infrastructure projects.
- continues to ensure flexibility for water, wastewater, stormwater and road projects, while still protecting trees.



ACTION 12.5 Review and update the Tree Protection By-law

To achieve Action 12.5 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- revised the Tree Protection By-law to enhance tree protection in the city and support urban canopy growth. These revisions include:
 - ▶ language refinements that enhance clarity, consistency and ease of interpretation.
 - ▶ alignment with the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, maintaining forestry objectives amid legislative changes.
 - ▶ adding an Administrative Penalty System for streamlined, court-free enforcement.
 - ▶ increases in maximum fines that align with the *Municipal Act, 2001* and informed by practices in other Ontario municipalities.





ACTION 12.8(D) Establish standards for legacy issues of encroachment

To achieve Action 12.8(D) of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- developed clear standards to manage tree encroachment from private to public property during the development assumption process.
- established clear standards and procedures to manage legacy encroachment issues, which will support city-building efforts by promoting consistent decision-making, protecting public assets and ensuring equitable use of shared spaces.
- continues to resolve longstanding challenges and support sustainable urban growth in alignment with the City's long-term planning goals.
- continues to promote fairness, transparency and community co-operation in managing legacy tree issues.

KEY CHANGES: PENALTIES

	Administrative penalties New: \$500 to \$2,700
	NEW minimum fines Previously: \$250
	NEW maximum fines Previously: \$10,000
	Special fines Previously: \$25,000



ACTION 12.9 Update tree-related language in Subdivision and Site Plan agreements

To achieve Action 12.9 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- continues to specify developer responsibilities, including tree protection, species selection and public education on encroachment.
- continues to improve tree survival by reducing legal ambiguity and streamlining inspections and approvals.
- continues to support canopy growth, climate resilience and biodiversity through enforceable development standards.
- promotes sustainable growth while improving coordination, reducing risk and increasing public trust in urban forest planning.



ACTION 12.10 Undertake annual reviews and updates of regulatory materials

To achieve Action 12.10 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- conducted annual reviews of key urban forestry regulations to ensure legal alignment and policy effectiveness.
- included Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations staff as key stakeholders to strengthen co-ordination and responsiveness across departments.
- updated support compliance with evolving provincial and federal laws, minimizing legal risk.
- enabled timely adaptation to emerging challenges like invasive species, climate impacts and tree equity.
- continues to build public trust, improves governance and enhances eligibility for external funding and partnerships.

GOAL 4 SPOTLIGHT:

Strengthening tree protection in Vaughan

In 2025, the City took a major step toward enhancing the protection of its urban forest by replacing former Tree Protection By-law (052-2018) with the new **Tree Protection By-law (177-2025)**. The new by-law is aligned with the City's **Tree Protection Protocol** and is designed to strengthen oversight, improve clarity and ensure consistency with how trees are preserved on both public and private property. With updated definitions, stricter enforcement measures and improved tree appraisal methods, the revised by-law reinforces Vaughan's commitment to sustainability and responsible urban development.

One of the most important changes is the introduction of clearer definitions for key terms such as boundary trees, arborist qualifications and natural heritage features. This helps residents, developers and City staff better understand their responsibilities when it comes to protecting trees. The updated by-law also strengthens enforcement by increasing maximum penalties for infractions and allowing City staff to verify suspected unauthorized removals, which helps deter non-compliance and reinforces a culture of accountability.

Another key feature of the updated by-law is the proposed implementation of an Administrative Penalty System. This new tool helps the City enforce the by-law more efficiently by streamlining penalties for violations and aligning with best practices used in other municipalities. This system not only

KEY CHANGES: OVERVIEW



Enhanced technical requirements



Contributing Teams
Aligned with new organizational structure



Strategic alignment
Includes Urban Forest Management Plan objectives



Regulatory compliance
Aligned with emerging legislation



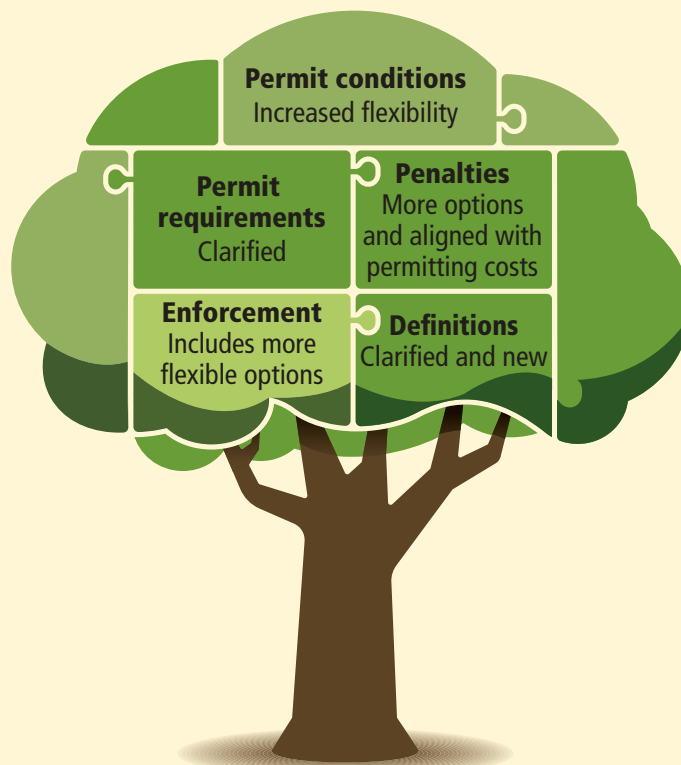
Roles and responsibilities
Enhanced customer service outcomes

improves service delivery but also supports a fair and transparent approach to compliance and enforcement.

The Tree Protection Protocol was also revised to reflect the changing development landscape, particularly in response to *Ontario's More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*. As Vaughan gains more responsibility in land-use planning, the updated protocol ensures forestry matters are thoroughly reviewed during the development process. These improvements allow the City to maintain tree protection standards while keeping pace with growth and housing needs.

Together, these updates enhance Vaughan's ability to protect its urban forest and respond proactively to emerging challenges. By improving coordination, providing better technical guidance and reinforcing enforcement, the City is ensuring that its trees – on both public and private property – are preserved for future generations. This work supports the goals of Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan and reflects a city that values progress and sustainability.

KEY CHANGES: OVERVIEW





GOAL 5: Partnership in urban forest stewardship

DID YOU KNOW?

Cities with strong community involvement in urban forestry see higher tree survival rates, increased canopy cover and greater public awareness about the value of trees in everyday life.



GREEN GUARDIANS



Engage

- strengthen community connections
- empower local leaders and volunteers



Educate

- promote sustainable practices



Expand

- expand outreach to drive program growth
- increase inclusivity and resilience

ACTION 13.4 Support the Green Guardians program

To achieve Action 13.4 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- expanded the Green Guardians program to enhance community engagement in environmental stewardship.
- strengthened community ownership of the urban forest and sustainability efforts.
- improved resource allocation to grow program reach and environmental impact.
- continues to support activities including tree planting, maintenance and educational workshops.
- continues to increase volunteer participation, which has received positive community feedback.





ACTION 14.4 Expand educational resources on pests, diseases and invasive species

To achieve Action 14.4 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- developed brochures, online tools and to educate residents on pests, diseases and invasive species.
- empowered residents to report issues and avoid harmful management practices.
- strengthened community involvement in monitoring and control efforts.
- continues to enhance the City's capacity to proactively manage and mitigate ecological threats.
- continues to work to increase public awareness of threats to Vaughan's urban forest and best practices for prevention.

ACTION 14.7 Develop partnerships to build outreach capacity

To achieve Action 14.7 of the Urban Forest Management Plan, PFHO:

- partnered with organizations like LEAF to expand community outreach and educational programming.
- delivered tree planting events, workshops and engagement projects to promote urban forestry.
- leveraged partner expertise and resources to increase program reach and impact.
- strengthened ties with community stakeholders to support long-term urban forest management.
- continues to enhance service delivery through collaborative, community-based initiatives.



GOAL 5 SPOTLIGHT:

Green Guardians program – growing a greener future together

The City continues to strengthen its Green Guardians program – an initiative that brings the community together to plant trees, care for green spaces and build environmental awareness. As a key part of Vaughan’s Urban Forest Management Plan and [Green Directions Vaughan](#) strategy, the program plays a vital role in shaping a healthy, sustainable and climate-resilient city. With more volunteers, greater participation and expanding partnerships, Green Guardians is becoming a cornerstone of Vaughan’s environmental leadership.

At the heart of the program is a focus on community engagement. Residents are invited to participate in tree planting events, take part in public celebrations and lead local greening projects. These opportunities not only help improve the city’s urban forest but foster civic pride and sense of ownership over local green spaces. Through programs like Vaughan Green Helpers, volunteers actively support conservation efforts in parks such as NMRP, and city-wide events like National Forest Week.

Education is another essential pillar of the Green Guardians program. Through workshops, school partnerships and hands-on learning, residents of all ages are gaining a better understanding of the environmental benefits of trees—like cooling urban temperatures, reducing stormwater runoff and supporting biodiversity. By showcasing how tree planting helps build net-zero communities, the program inspires action and demonstrates how simple steps can contribute to big-picture climate goals.

The City is also expanding the program’s reach through strategic partnerships and innovation. Collaborating with schools, cultural





organizations and environmental groups, Vaughan is making the Green Guardians program more inclusive and accessible. Plans to introduce fruit- and herb-bearing trees highlight a creative approach to enhancing food access and ecological sustainability. Increased outreach, corporate partnerships and promotional efforts are helping to attract new supporters and build long-term momentum.

Through the Green Guardians program, Vaughan is planting more than just trees – it's planting the seeds of a greener, more connected future. By engaging the community, promoting environmental education and expanding through meaningful partnerships, the City is creating lasting impact for generations to come. To learn more or get involved, visit vaughan.ca/GreenGuardians.

With the support of dedicated community volunteers, the Forestry Operations team hosted five community tree planting events throughout 2025, planting over one hundred trees at each location. The City planted trees at Concord/Thornhill Regional Park (299 Racco Pkwy.) in celebration of Arbor Week and at Cannes Park (100 Cannes Ave.) in recognition of Pollinator Week.

As part of the 2025 National Public Works Week celebrations, staff distributed educational materials and tree seedlings to residents who attended the event at the Joint Operations Centre (2800 Rutherford Rd.).

The study also explores how to manage woodlot invasives like oak wilt, leverage digital tools to track canopy progress, and assess the long-term cost and environmental benefits of planting smaller, more adaptable trees.

2026 Urban Forest Management Plan action items

Vaughan will continue to progress the Urban Forest Management Plan – here's how:

1. **ACTION 1.3 Staff professional development**

- continue prioritizing staff development and participation in industry organizations
- enhance program reputation, support best practices and foster professional networks
- develop a tracking system to ensure knowledge is shared and applied internally



2. **ACTION 2.1(A) Student internships**

- utilize students and interns for project-driven and temporary capacity-building
- build workforce capacity and nurture the next generation of urban forestry professionals
- establish formal partnerships with local colleges and universities
- define strategic projects annually for student involvement

3. **ACTION 2.1(C) Woodland management capacity**

- establish formal woodland management capacity within the PFHO department
- enable implementation of the Woodland Management Strategy and support woodland stewardship
- create dedicated Woodland Management oversight
- secure initial funding and provide role-specific training

4. **ACTION 3.5(A) Street tree inventory**

- update the street tree inventory on a seven-year cycle
- regular updates to tree inventory information are essential for asset management and life cycle analysis, including the development of a proactive maintenance plan
- align inventory updates with the grid pruning program
- implement a digital platform for tracking and analysis

5. **ACTION 5.2 Tree removals and replacements**

- track tree removals and replacements permitted under Tree Protection By-law or *Planning Act*
- inform progress on canopy targets and by-law effectiveness
- build a centralized tracking database for removals and replanting
- analyze data trends to inform policy adjustments

6. **ACTION 8.1 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy**

- formalize the City's approach to pest management through an IPM policy
- support long-term pest control with measurable and consistent methods
- develop and adopt an IPM policy including metrics and procedures
- train all relevant staff and contractors in IPM implementation

7. **ACTION 10.1(A) Private woodland stewardship**

- encourage landowners with significant woodland to engage in sustainable practices via Managed Forest Tax Incentive
- support rural afforestation and encourage voluntary stewardship
- launch an outreach campaign to inform landowners of Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program Managed Forest Tax Incentive benefits
- offer workshops or consultations to support applications



8. **ACTION 11.1 WOODLOT MANAGEMENT PLANS**

- prepare management plans for 26 woodlots not yet covered
- ensure each woodlot is managed according to its unique ecological needs
- develop and implement a phased work plan based on woodlot priorities

9. **ACTION 12.3 LEAF partnership**

- further explore partnership with LEAF to improve tree replacement outcomes on private property
- enhance quality and training standards for private property planting efforts
- initiate conversations with LEAF to align goals and define roles
- pilot a joint initiative to evaluate impact and scalability

10. **ACTION 12.8(E) Boulevard encroachment education**

- notify property owners of unauthorized boulevard encroachments with an educational approach
- prevent escalation of unauthorized changes through public education
- develop brochures and online materials clarifying boulevard rules
- focus on non-compliance education via informative notices

11. **ACTION 14.1 Webpage development**

- maintain the PFHO department's webpage as a central resource hub
- provide a single access point for public education, updates and department processes
- conduct a content audit and redesign the page for clarity and accessibility
- assign maintenance responsibilities and gather user feedback regularly

