Strategic Framework

Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan
Report & Woodland Management Strategy

June 2023

VAUGHAN

Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is currently home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.

Introduction

The City of Vaughan is developing an Urban Forest Management Plan and Woodland Management Strategy to guide the future management of these important natural assets. This document describes the strategic framework for both the Urban Forest Management Plan and Woodland Management Strategy. The strategic framework includes the draft vision, goals and strategies proposed for each document.

Vaughan needs trees. They beautify the city and enhance quality of life for the community, providing pleasant outdoor spaces and connections to nature. Trees provide oxygen, improve mental and physical health, and provide vital habitat for insects, birds and other animals.

Urban forests are also essential components for adapting cities to the challenges of the future climate. They help cool the air, mitigate the urban heat island effect, capture rainwater, and stabilize soils, making our communities more resilient and sustainable. However, trees in cities face challenges such as limited space to grow, conflicts with infrastructure and development, and climate change impacts, all of which can lead to the loss of trees and the benefits that canopy provides.

Vaughan, as a vibrant and growing city in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), also faces challenges in determining how to balance needs for growth and affordable housing, with the need to provide and maintain adequate trees and greenspace to support a growing population and native biodiversity. The Plan will address these challenges, and focus on how to best grow, protect, and manage Vaughan's urban forest to maximize the benefits it provides to our communities.

Many cities in Canada and around the world are developing urban forest management plans to improve the management of these critical community assets. In 2022, the York Regional Official Plan included direction for local municipalities to develop Urban Forest Management Plans.

What is the Urban Forest Management Plan?

Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan will provide a 20-year framework for managing trees throughout the city. The scope of the Plan includes every tree in the city, including those on privately managed lands, the City's inventory of more than 130,000 intensively managed street trees, and countless more trees located in parks and woodlands.

The Plan establishes the long-term vision for urban forest management in the City of Vaughan, as well as the goals, strategies, and supporting actions to achieve it.

What is the Woodland Management Strategy?

Vaughan's Woodland Management Strategy is a subsidiary to the Urban Forest Management Plan. The Woodland Management Strategy scope is focused on City-owned woodlands and will provide specific guidance for forest management.
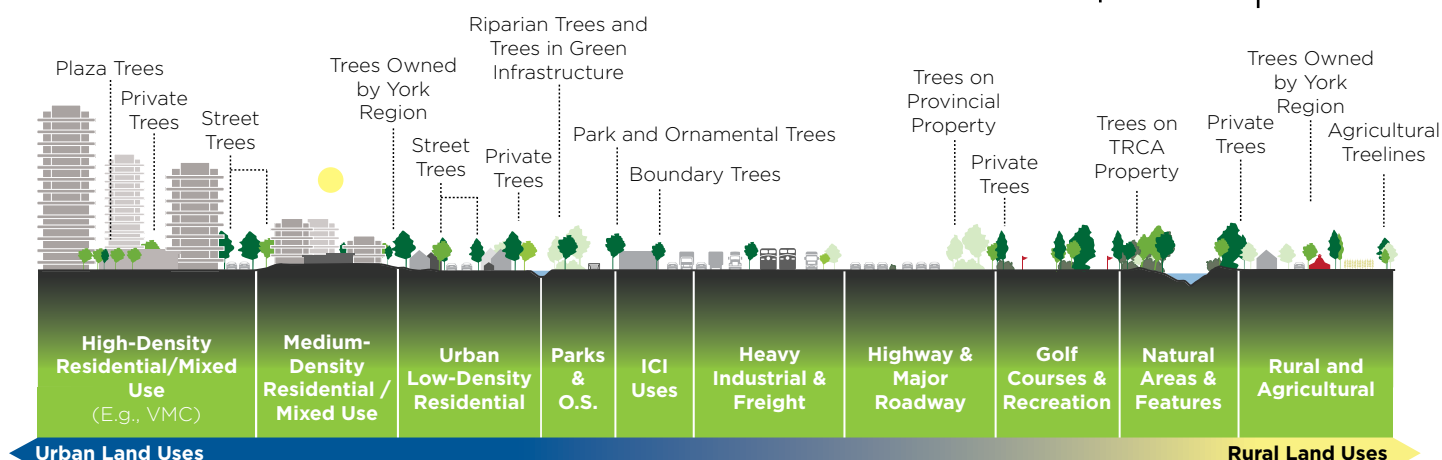
The City of Vaughan invites you to provide your feedback on the strategic framework for the Urban Forest Management Plan! Your input will help refine draft goals and strategies as we draft the Urban Forest Management Plan and Woodland Management Strategy.

Scan this QR code or **visit the survey** to provide your feedback on the UFMP strategic framework.

URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Plaza Trees

Private Trees

Street Trees

Trees Owned by York Region

Riparian Trees and Trees in Green Infrastructure

Street Trees

Private Trees

Park and Ornamental Trees

Boundary Trees

Trees on Provincial Property

Private Trees

Trees on TRCA Property

Trees Owned by York Region

Private Trees

Agricultural Treelines

High-Density Residential/Mixed Use (E.g., VMC)	Medium-Density Residential / Mixed Use	Urban Low-Density Residential	Parks & O.S.	ICI Uses	Heavy Industrial & Freight	Highway & Major Roadway	Golf Courses & Recreation	Natural Areas & Features	Rural and Agricultural

Urban Land Uses → ← **Rural Land Uses**

The Process so Far

This project was initiated in 2022 and is expected to be completed at the end of 2023.

The first step in the process involved a review of policies and procedures, and analysis of the state of the urban forest, culminating in the State of the Urban Forest Report [link].
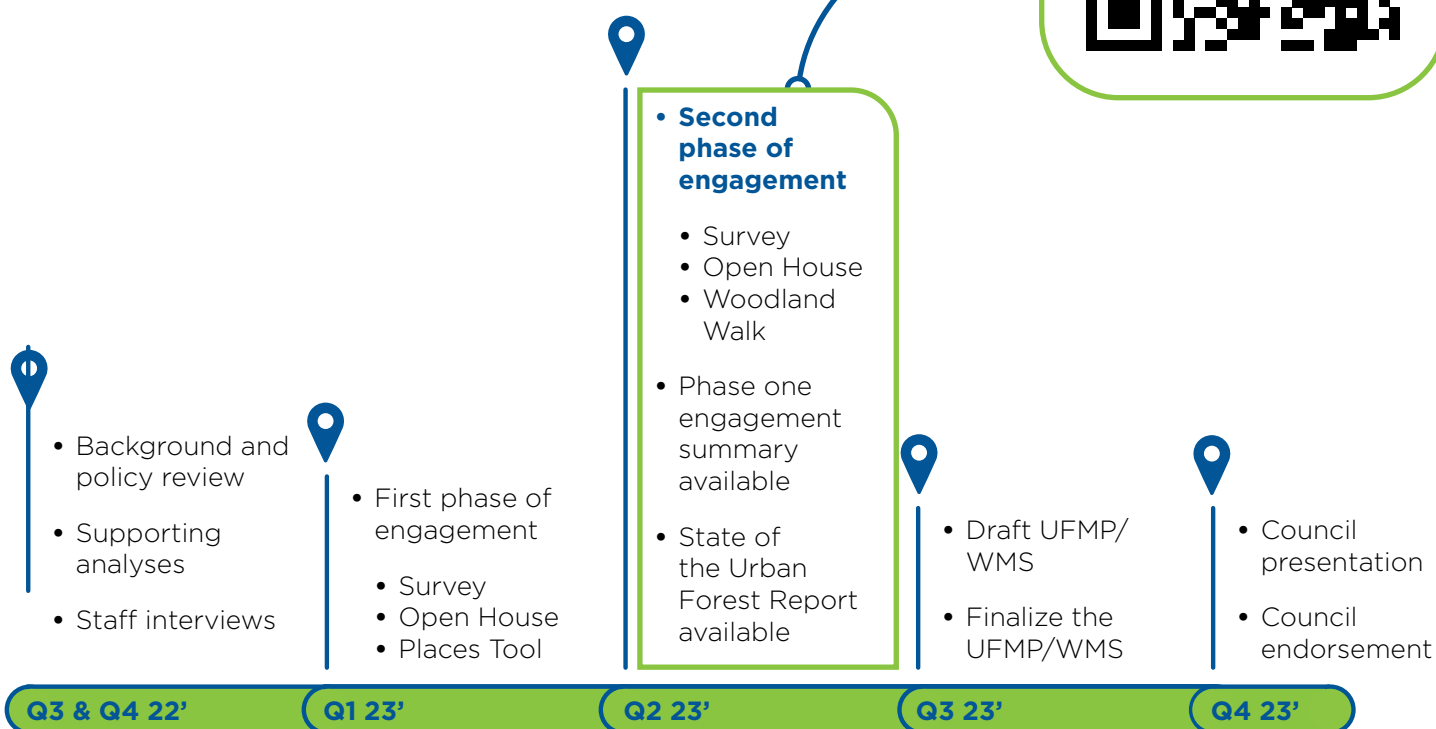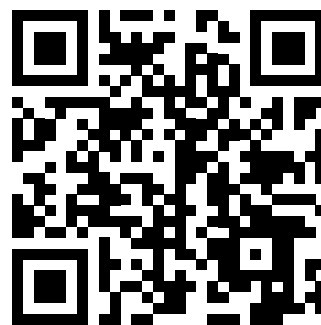
In March of 2023, the first round of public engagement was launched to solicit input on people's values and priorities for urban forest management. The findings are summarized in the Phase 1 Engagement Summary [Link].

The information obtained during these first two steps has informed the development of this draft strategic framework.

Next Steps

Upon completion of the second phase of engagement the project team will draft the Urban Forest Management Plan and Woodland Management Strategy considering community feedback on the strategic framework. The final documents will be made public and presented to Council in late 2023.

Visit **haveyoursay.vaughan.ca/urbanforest** to see what UFMP/WMS engagement offerings are available for the second phase of engagement!

- Background and policy review
- Supporting analyses
- Staff interviews

- First phase of engagement
  - Survey
  - Open House
  - Places Tool

- **Second phase of engagement**
  - Survey
  - Open House
  - Woodland Walk
- Phase one engagement summary available
- State of the Urban Forest Report available

- Draft UFMP/WMS
- Finalize the UFMP/WMS

- Council presentation
- Council endorsement

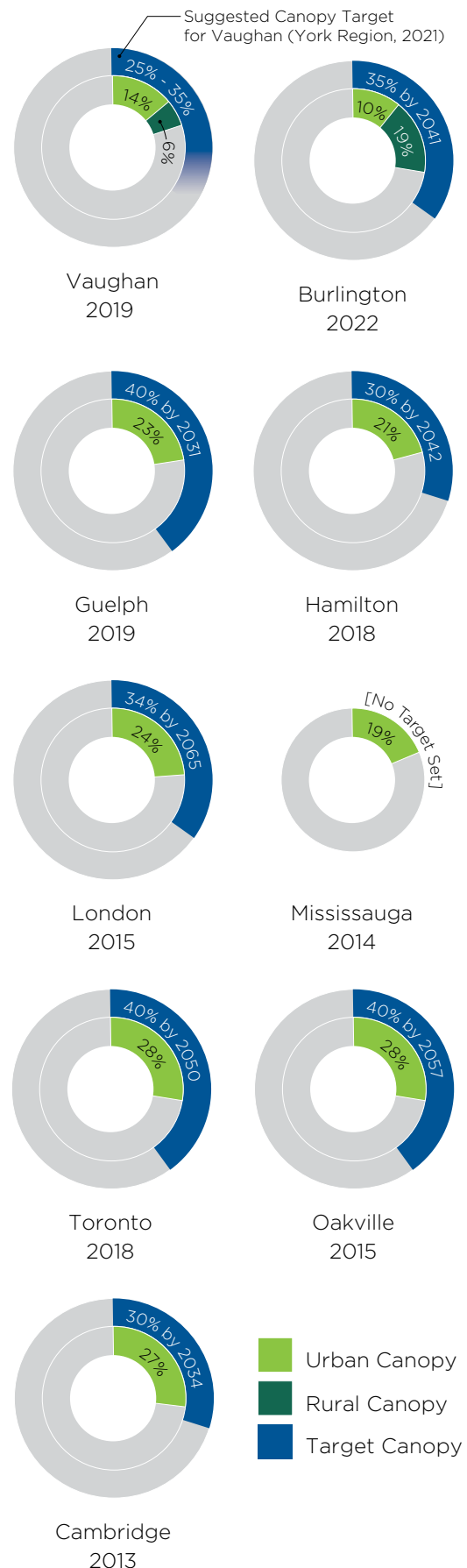| Q3 & Q4 22'	Q1 23'	Q2 23'	Q3 23'	Q4 23'

What we Found

Vaughan published its first State of the Urban Forest Report in June of 2023. The report includes analysis and benchmarking of Vaughan's urban forest program that will be used to develop the Urban Forest Management Plan and Woodland Management Strategy.
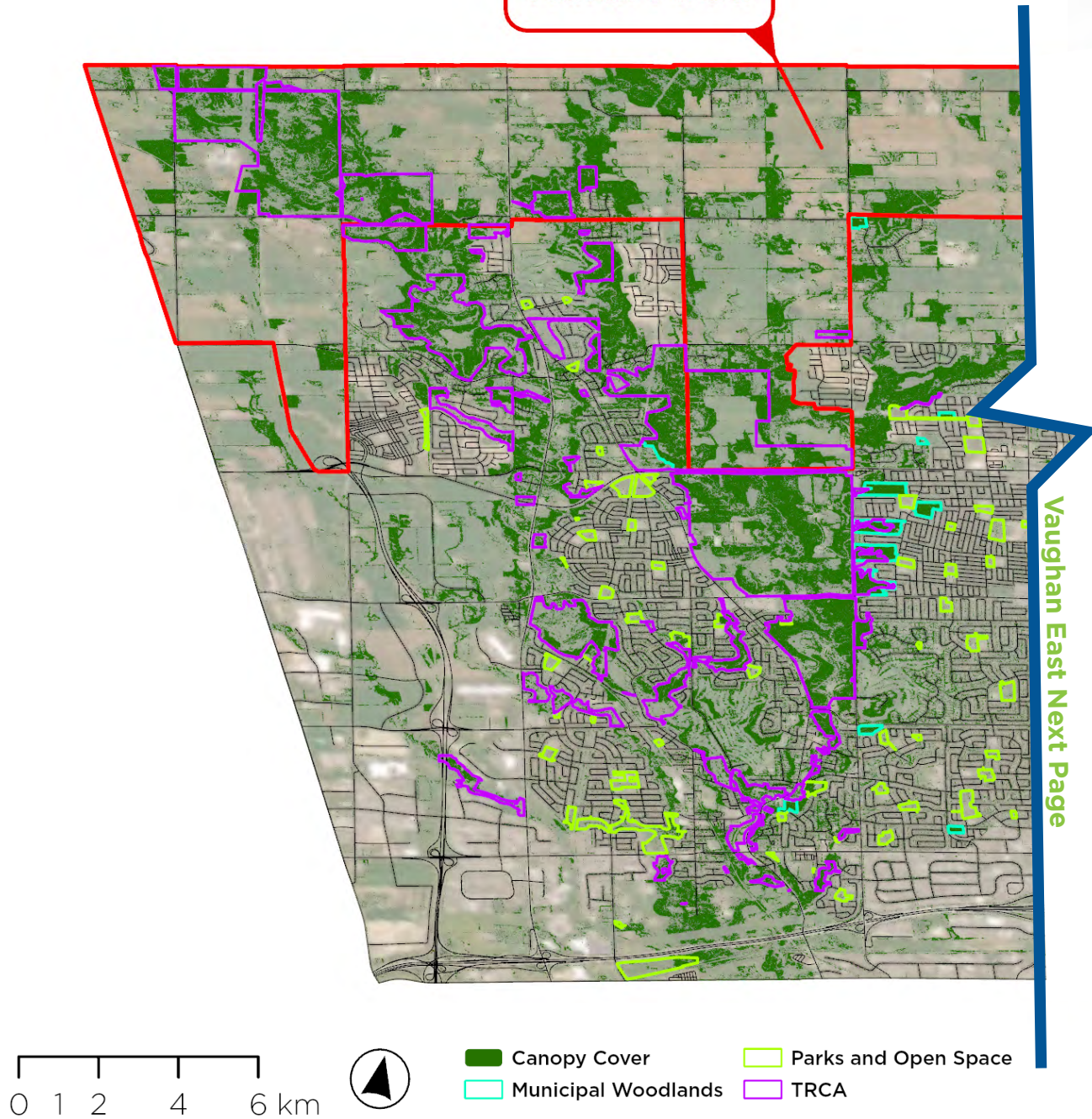
Canopy Findings:

- Vaughan's Canopy cover was 20% as of 2018, similar to Hamilton and Mississauga.

- The City of Vaughan has not yet adopted a canopy target but the Region of York has recommended the City adopt a target between 25% and 35%. Peer cities nearby have targets ranging from 30% to 40%.

- More than 60% of Vaughan's canopy is contained in woodlands and natural areas (Next Page).

- Approximately 60% of the canopy is on lands not owned or managed by the City or TRCA.

Inventory Findings:

- One in four street trees belong to the maple genus.

- Street tree density ranges from less than four trees per kilometre of road to more than 200 per kilometre of road.

- Tree conditions are largely unknown, and Vaughan's street tree inventory is out of date.

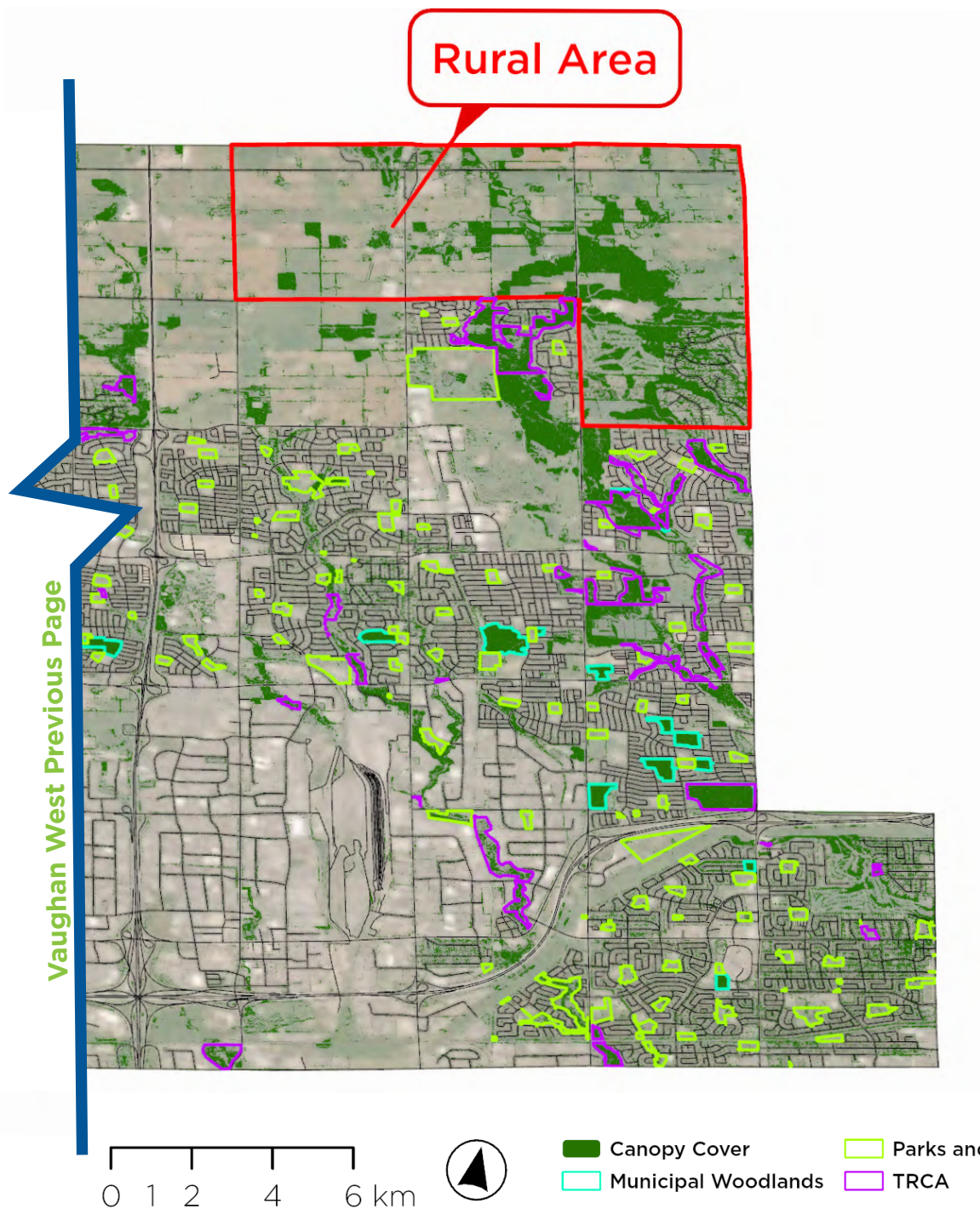- Vaughan has no woodland inventory. The TRCA and Region of York have inventory for the woodlands they manage.

Suggested Canopy Target for Vaughan (York Region, 2021)

25% - 35%
14%
6%

Vaughan
2019

35% by 2041
10%
19%

Burlington
2022

40% by 2031
23%

Guelph
2019

30% by 2042
21%

Hamilton
2018

34% by 2065
24%

London
2015

[No Target Set]
19%

Mississauga
2014

40% by 2050
28%

Toronto
2018

40% by 2057
28%

Oakville
2015

30% by 2034
27%

Cambridge
2013

- Urban Canopy
- Rural Canopy
- Target Canopy

Rural Area

Vaughan East Next Page

Scale: 0 1 2 4 6 km

Legend:
- Canopy Cover
- Municipal Woodlands
- Parks and Open Space
- TRCA

Program Observations:

- Staff includes three forestry coordinators, two forestry inspectors, six arborists, and 2,500 contract crew hours.

- $1.7 million dollar program budget in 2022.

- Maintenance program is reactive (request driven) given levels of resourcing.

- No formal woodland management program.

Rural Area

0 1 2 4 6 km

Canopy Cover
Municipal Woodlands
Parks and Open Space
TRCA

Key Challenges:

- Pressures associated with intensification and increasingly urban environments.

- Climate change and extreme weather.

- Program resourcing.

- Encroachment and enforcement issues.

- Data and monitoring to support management.
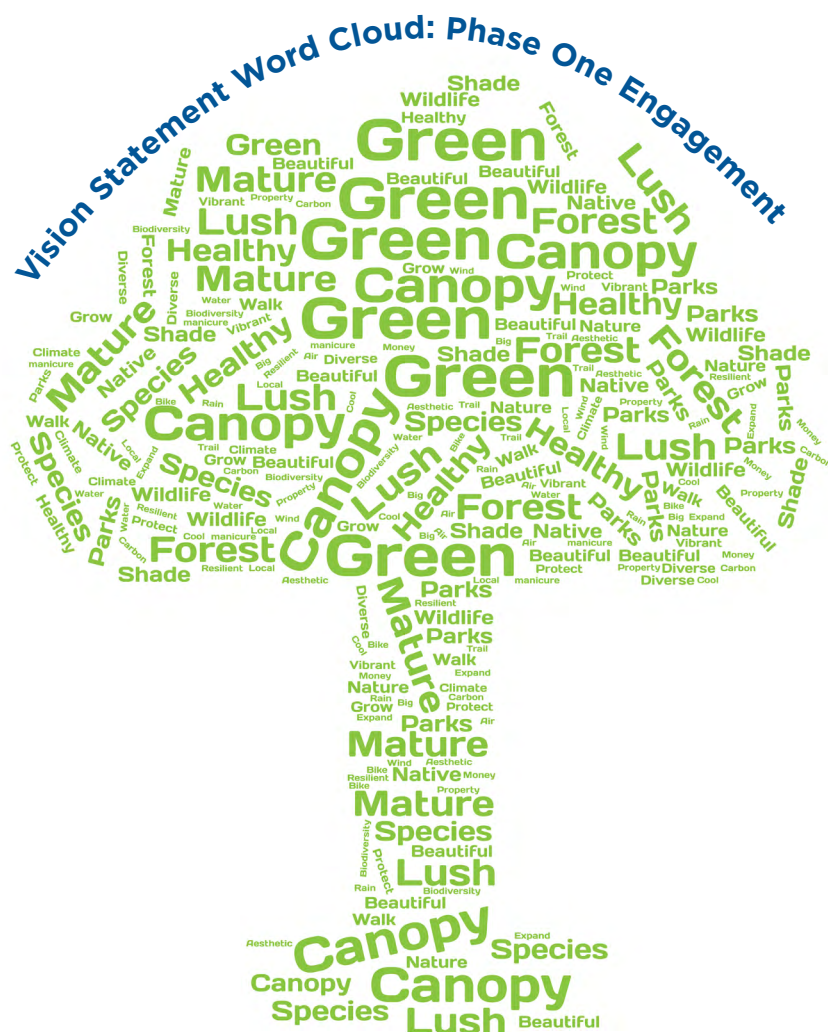
- Pests, disease, and invasives.

What we Heard

In the first phase of engagement in March/April 2023, the City drew on the expertise, advice and views of a wide range of individuals, including subject matter experts, targeted stakeholders, and staff.

Date/Range	Opportunity	# of Participants
March-April 2023	Survey	493 participants
March-April 2023	Mapping tool: Map Vaughan's trees	49 participants
March-April 2023	Art contest	49 submissions
March 25, 2023	Earth hour event	±350 attendees
April 3, 2023	Virtual open house	7 participants
April 25, 2023	Stakeholder workshop	10 stakeholder organizations

Key Findings

- A significant proportion of people who responded to the survey were not aware of the urban forest management services the City provides.

- There is community interest in urban forest stewardship initiatives.

- Vaughan has good opportunities to partner with organizations such as York Region, the TRCA, and LEAF to build capacity, improve data, and support stewardship programming.

- Participants want more and larger street trees.

- Participants appreciate the urban forest for the role it plays in sustaining urban habitat and biodiversity, as well as mitigating the urban heat island effect and adapting to climate change.

- Participants expressed interest in the City improving its tree protection, planting, and replacement standards, regulations, and enforcement.

Vision Statement Word Cloud: Phase One Engagement

What we Plan to Do

Proposed Vision Statement

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

Urban Forest Management Plan Strategic Framework

The strategic framework for the Urban Forest Management Plan consists of five high-level goals and 13 supporting strategies. Specific actions will be developed under each strategy in the full Urban Forest Management Plan.

Vision Statement

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

Goal 1. To align urban forest planning and management with best practices.

Strategy 1. Improve urban forest governance and interdepartmental collaboration.

Strategy 2. Establish a sustainable urban forestry program aligned with best practices.

Strategy 3. Continue to improve natural asset inventory and integration into the City's asset management frameworks.

Goal 2. To maintain a healthy and safe urban forest.

Strategy 4. Transition from reactive to more proactive urban forest maintenance.

Strategy 5. Develop tree risk management policy and operational procedures.

Strategy 6. Minimize the risk of pest, disease and invasive species impacts to the urban forest.

Strategy 7. Develop monitoring and reporting standards to track progress and inform adaptive management.

Goal 3. To expand the urban forest canopy and associated benefits.

Strategy 8. Ensure urban design and development processes are delivering quality urban planting sites.

Strategy 9. Increase tree planting rates to compensate for loss and achieve the canopy cover target.

Strategy 10. Restore and expand woodlands to enhance biodiversity and connectivity.

Goal 4. To protect trees and woodlands for future generations.

Strategy 11. Review bylaws, policies, and procedures to improve tree protection outcomes on both public and private land.

Goal 5. To increase community stewardship.

Strategy 12. Strengthen partnerships to expand urban forest management capacity.

Strategy 13. Educate the community to improve awareness of urban forest benefits and proper care.

The following is an example of the types of actions, performance indicators, and targets that might be developed in the Urban Forest Management Plan:

EXAMPLE

Goal 3. To expand the urban forest canopy and associated benefits.

Strategy 10. Restore and expand woodlands to enhance biodiversity and connectivity.

Possible Performance Indicator: Woodland Cover %

Baseline Measure: 12% (2018)

Possible Target: 14% to 17%, in alignment with the Region of York's suggested target

Possible Direction for Actions:

- Strategic initiatives to guide future woodland restoration and acquisition.
- Operational standards for trail development, decommissioning and maintenance.
- Strategies for climate adaptation in woodland management.
- Forest restoration and monitoring.

The Woodland Management Strategy Framework

Vaughan's Woodland Management Strategy will share the vision statement and similar goals to those set out through the Urban Forest Management Plan. However, the Woodland Management Strategy has a narrowed focus on the City's woodland management program. The document will establish short- and long-term objectives for woodland management. The Woodland Management Strategy will be developed in three sections:

Section One, **Strategic Woodland Management Goals**: will provide direction on how the City's woodland management program should be established, built and developed over the next 20 years. This section will be built around the same five goals as are employed in the Urban Forest Management Plan. This ensures high-level strategic alignment between the two documents.

Section Two, Forest Management Objectives, will establish the objectives for urban forest management within Vaughan's woodlands. These management objectives will be applied to future Forest Management Plans developed for City woodlands.

Vaughan's woodlands are primarily managed for the following two values:

1. **Biodiversity conservation and habitat.**
2. **Safe and enjoyable human use.**

Forest management objectives will guide short and long-term management and are likely to include considerations such as species at risk, proving a diversity of habitats, invasive species and tree condition. These objectives will also be used to assess current woodland condition, and could be used in establishing levels of service as part of the City's asset management planning.

Section Three, **Standards and Guidelines**, will outline the monitoring and reporting requirements, standards and guidelines to support forest management the City, and may include:

- Woodland health reporting
- Forest management plans
- Renewal, tending and protection
- Inventory standards
- Risk inspection and mitigation
- Encroachment issues, and
- Wayfinding and trail standards.

Vision Statement

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

Section 1: Strategic Woodland Management Goals

Goal 1. To align woodland management with best practices.	Goal 2. To maintain healthy and safe woodland ecosystems.	Goal 3. To expand and restore Vaughan's woodlands and their associated benefits.	Goal 4. To protect woodlands for future generations.	Goal 5. To increase community stewardship.

Section 2: Forest Management Values

Value 1. Biodiversity Conservation and Habitat	Value 2. Safe and Enjoyable Human Use or Utility
Possible focus: endangered species habitat, significant wildlife habitat, and tree condition.	Possible focus: dumping, unauthorized trails, stormwater asset condition, trails condition, and dead or dying trees near trails or along interface settings.

Long- and short-term Management Objectives and Forest Management Plan

Section 3: Program Standards and Guidelines

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