

2023 Sustainable Pickering Year-in-Review



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Message from the CAO



I am pleased to present the City's key sustainability highlights and accomplishments from 2023, marking another successful year in our journey towards a more sustainable future.

The City's dedication to driving our corporate priorities forward and supporting an environmentally innovative community is reflected through several impactful initiatives that were undertaken by both staff, and through rich and meaningful partnerships with the community.

These include the Community Climate Adaptation Project, Urban Agriculture Project, waterfront restoration, and naturalization projects.

Our commitment to sustainability was further highlighted when the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) recognized Pickering as one of the world's Smart 21 Communities of 2023. This annual awards program recognizes the world's leading municipalities that are successfully leveraging the power of technology to develop inclusive and prosperous communities.

Our adoption of the City's new Integrated Sustainable Design Standards, in particular, exemplifies our innovative approach to sustainability.

We recognize the importance of the natural environment as an integral part of any complete, world class City, and I encourage you to learn more about how we lead and advocate for environmental stewardship, innovation, and resiliency.

Marisa Carpino
Chief Administrative Officer



Enhancing the Natural Environment

Enhancing Parks and Boulevards

As part of the City's annual tree planting program, over 400 large caliper trees were planted across City boulevards and parks including: Claremont Memorial Park, Erin Gate Park, David Farr Park, Kitley Ravine, and Parkham Parkette. These efforts were completed to help increase tree canopy and shade opportunities around play-units and walkways.



Tree and shrub planting at Valley Farm Ravine

Valley Farm Ravine Project

To enhance the urban tree canopy within the City, staff worked with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to complete a desktop analysis of potential tree planting locations. Valley Farm Ravine was identified as an excellent location to fill existing tree canopy gaps. The project included the planting of 265 stems, 90 trees and 175 shrubs to help enhance the natural area.

Enhancing the Natural Environment

Waterfront Trail Restoration & Construction of Rotary Frenchman's Bay West Park

The City commenced reconstruction along the Waterfront Trail, from Bruce Handscomb Park to Elvira Court. The TRCA has designed the project, which will include restoration plantings along the shoreline of Frenchman's Bay. These plantings will help restore the trees that were lost during the severe windstorm of 2022. The City also completed the final construction phase of the Rotary Frenchman's Bay West Park Master Plan. This included shoreline habitat creation, installation of bat boxes, dune creation/restoration, and the decommissioning and replanting of some former parking areas.



Fishing node at Rotary Frenchman's Bay West Park

Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Pollinators, such as butterflies, birds, and bees, play a vital role in maintaining a healthy environment and sustainable food system. As part of the Mayors' Monarch Pledge – Leadership Circle, the City committed to completing 9 actions to support pollinator populations. This included planting native species, removing invasive species, supporting native seed giveaways, connecting with garden groups, and delivering educational campaigns to increase pollinator awareness throughout the community.

Thank you to the community garden volunteers, Dunbarton High School students and the Toronto Conservation Youth Corp who helped plant and maintain pollinator gardens across the City.



Dunbarton High School students planting native plants at Ernie L. Stroud Park

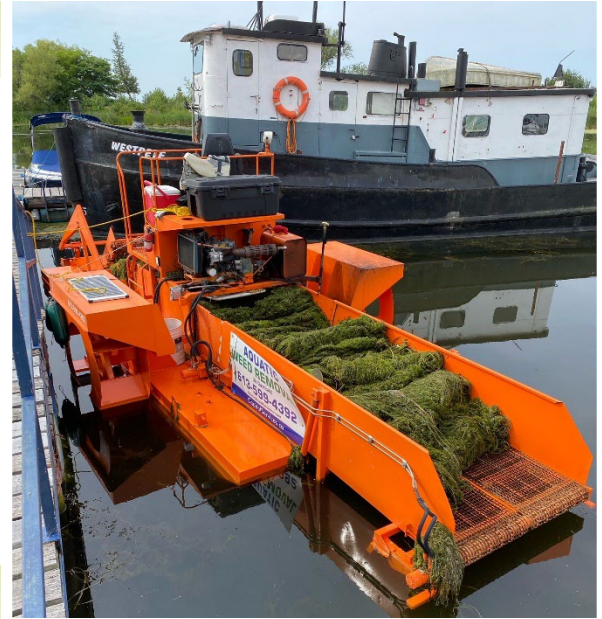
"I am incredibly proud of the actions Pickering and its partners have taken through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to help protect pollinators. By continuing to collaborate and take action, we can make a meaningful difference in our community."

- Mayor Kevin Ashe

Enhancing the Natural Environment

Weed-cutting Pilot Project

The City's Eurasian water-milfoil weed harvesting project resulted in approximately 5 acres of weed being cut, gathered, dried, and disposed of. Pickering Harbour Company also harvested 5 acres of Eurasian water-milfoil. The purpose of these projects was to create weed free areas for recreation. The higher water levels in 2023 helped maintain the cut areas longer than when Frenchman's Bay experienced low water levels in 2022.



Milfoil weed harvesting in Frenchman's Bay

Phragmites Pilot Project

The City worked with TRCA on a Phragmites Pilot Project, which aimed to control this invasive plant in the Hydro Marsh around Frenchman's Bay. The ditches along Brockridge Park, Sandy Beach Road, and Sunbird Trail were also treated. The Hydro Marsh, east of Frenchman's Bay, is owned and managed by Ontario Power Generation, who is also completing their own phragmites control in the marsh.



Douglas Park Planting

The Fairport Beach Neighbourhood Association and the Pickering West Shore Community Association, in partnership with the City, hosted a tree/shrub planting at Douglas Park. The event included the planting of 140 native trees and shrubs by 50 youth volunteers from across the community.



Tree and shrub planting at Douglas Park

Enhancing the Natural Environment

Bring Back the Salmon

The City, in partnership with the Pickering Public Library, and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, supported a salmon hatchery at the Pickering Public Library. Library patrons observed and learned about the Atlantic Salmon's lifecycle and the importance of biodiversity. The hatchery resulted in the release of 196 Atlantic Salmon into Duffins Creek. To date, the program has helped release almost 800 Atlantic Salmon into Duffins Creek.



Students releasing salmon into Duffins Creek

Backyard Tree Planting Program

In partnership with Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) and the Region of Durham, the City completed its third year of the Backyard Tree Planting Program. This program provides residents the opportunity to add native trees or shrubs to their property at a discounted rate. The program includes on-site consultation, free delivery and tree planting, as well as follow-up tree assessments. In year three of the program, 29 trees and 32 shrubs were planted on Pickering residents' properties. Some benefits from these plantings include enhancement of the urban forest, increased property value and aesthetics, energy savings, comfort from shade, carbon sequestration, reduced urban heat island effect, and habitat improvement.



LEAF staff planting a tree in a resident's backyard

"I am very pleased with the tree planting program that LEAF provided. My trees were planted professionally and look healthy. I look forward to watching them grow and to see the changes they will go through as the seasons change.

Thank you, LEAF!"

- Pickering resident and LEAF participant



Engaging with the Community

Plant Party Workshop

To help kick-off the March Break, children from ages 6 – 12 were invited to the Pickering Central Library for two Plant Party workshops. 137 attendees were able to learn about seeds and how they grow from Pickering Parks Operations staff. The successful event ended with each participant taking home a starter seed kit to plant in their own backyard.



Plant Party workshops at the Pickering Central Library

Engaging with the Community

Partnership with Elexicon Energy

Elexicon’s Corporate Giving Program funds projects that help empower communities. As part of Phase 1 of the City’s Community Climate Adaptation Project (CCAP), the City identified that community-based preparedness was particularly important for protecting health during emergencies. As a result, the City partnered with Elexicon Energy to purchase 100 Emergency Preparedness kits that could assist residents in the event of a power outage or emergency. Participants that engaged in the survey for the CCAP were entered into a draw to win a free bag.



Emergency Preparedness kits sponsored by Elexicon Energy



Volunteers planting trees in Duffin Heights for Take Pride in Pickering event

Take Pride in Pickering

As part of Take Pride in Pickering Day, the City hosted a community clean-up and tree planting event in the spring. Over 200 volunteers joined the two-hour event to pick up litter and plant 150 trees and shrubs in Duffin Heights.

Take Pride in Pickering initiatives were undertaken by Environmental Stewardship Pickering (ESP), which is a partnership with the City, Ontario Power Generation, and TRCA.

“These community planting events highlight that the environmental awareness of the Pickering community continues to strengthen, and that there is a continued call for community-based opportunities for environmental action.”

- David-Angelo Williams, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority & Environmental Stewardship Pickering

Engaging with the Community

Earth Month

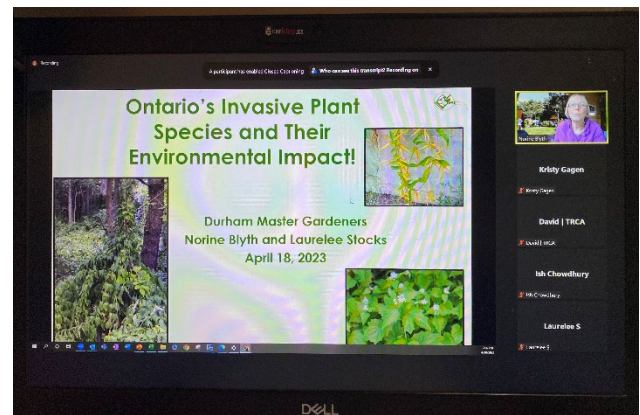
In celebration of Pickering's Earth Month, the City offered free educational workshops and webinars with expert guest speakers. Over 130 individuals participated in these events to learn about a variety of topics, including Making a Birdhouse, Invasive Species and their Environmental Impact, as well as Gardening for a Changing Climate.



Earth Month workshop

Bike Month

In partnership with Smart Commute Durham, the City celebrated Bike Month from June 1 – 30. Bike Month brings together families, employers, commuters, and community organizations to promote cycling events across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. The local events included: bike month pledge and bingo, as well as a cycling challenge and scavenger hunt. The City also invited Durham Region Cycling Coalition to the Pickering Farmers' Market to share information and tips for safe cycling in the community.



Earth Month webinar

Pickering Prom Boutique

To support high school students with formal clothing for their prom and graduation, the City, in partnership with the Pickering Public Library, hosted its first-ever Prom Boutique. The event encouraged residents to donate their gently used dresses, suits, and formal wear at the Pickering Public Library, so that students could shop for free. Thanks to the community's generosity, the two-day event supported 175 students to dress for their upcoming special events.



Getting ready to help students shop at the Prom Boutique

Engaging with the Community

Pickering named Smart21 Community of 2023

The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) has recognized Pickering as one of the world's Smart21 Communities of 2023. The ICF's program recognizes leading municipalities that are successful in leveraging the power of technology to develop inclusive and prosperous communities. Notable smart initiatives in Pickering include: increasing all-fibre broadband in remote areas, enhancing library programs and services, implementation of the Integrated Sustainable Design Standards, and many others initiatives.



Pickering City Hall



Volunteer doing a litter cleanup

Park Stewardship Program

The Park Stewardship Program encourages businesses and community groups to keep their local parks clean. As of 2023, there are 19 groups, that have become Park Stewards by making a commitment to do litter cleanups and promote a positive image in their neighbourhood park.



Birdwatching event at Alex Robertson Park

Birds in Pickering Campaign

The City of Pickering, in partnership with the Pickering Naturalists Club and TRCA, hosted an educational bird webinar that was attended by 36 residents. The group also hosted a Birdwatching for Beginners event for 30 participants at Alex Robertson Park to educate residents on the variety of birds that inhabit the area.

Engaging with the Community

Community Litter Cleanups

The City regularly supports community groups, individuals, schools, businesses, and places of worship, who wish to help keep the community clean. Pickering provides bags, gloves, and disposals of the collected materials. Volunteers participate in litter clean up initiatives through Pickering's 20-Minute Makeover, Pitch in Parties, Plastics & Litter Challenge, and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. This year, 47 community cleanups took place throughout the city, representing over 2,000 participants.



20-Minute Makeover Litter Cleanup event

Civic Awards

The Civic Awards recognizes members of the Pickering community that have made a significant contribution to the city.

Mattamy Homes was awarded the Sustainability Award for their Bloom in Seaton Project. This is an innovative, sustainable community of 50 townhouse units and 24 stacked back-to-back units in the Seaton area, featuring advanced sustainable technology, natural amenities, and energy-efficient home designs. The Environment Award was provided to Craig Bamford for his role in advocating for responsible urban design and city planning on behalf of Pickering residents.



Mattamy Homes presented the Sustainability Award



Craig Bamford presented the Environment Award

Engaging with the Community

Winter Wonderland

The City, in partnership with Ontario Power Generation, North American Young Generation in Nuclear, TRCA, and PineRidge Arts Council, hosted a free family workshop event to kick-off the winter. At this event, 50 attendees had the opportunity to paint a wooden ornament, make a wreath, explore wildlife up-close, and more.



Wreath making at the Winter Wonderland Workshop

Environmental Schools Grant

The Environmental Schools Grant supports Pickering school-based activities and programs that benefit the community and contribute to a healthy environment. By accessing the grant, seven schools in Pickering were able to undertake exciting projects, such as: creating pollinator gardens with native plantings, installing outdoor community garden beds to grow flowers and fresh food, installing bird feeders, improving outdoor learning programs, and purchasing materials such as a hydroponic growing tower and vermicomposter to enhance their garden projects.



Tree Planting at St. Monica Catholic school

“Thank you, City of Pickering, for supporting our local environment, our eco initiatives and the students at our school!”

- St. Monica Catholic School



Reducing Waste



Compost Giveaway

Battery Recycling Program

The Battery Recycling program allows residents to drop-off batteries to the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, Pickering Central Library, Pickering Museum Village, George Ashe and East Shore community centres. In 2023, 299 kilograms of batteries were recycled responsibly.

Compost Giveaway and Recycling Bin Exchange

The City hosted a compost and recycling bin exchange, in partnership with the Region of Durham. At this popular curbside event, over 1,325 residents picked up free compost for their gardens and were able to purchase or swap out their old bins for new ones.

Dog Waste

The Dog Waste Diversion Program is available in 18 parks across Pickering. In 2023, approximately 6.5 tonnes of dog waste was collected and delivered to a facility that converted it into electricity.



Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture Project

The City has long recognized the importance of implementing and investing in urban agriculture initiatives to address food supply, food security, and to encourage sustainable urban development. These activities can help reduce grocery bills, carbon emissions, and provide opportunities to support social, physical, and mental wellbeing.

In February 2023, Pickering Council requested staff to explore ways to enhance urban agricultural initiatives. Through Let's Talk Pickering, an online survey was conducted to better understand the needs of the community, and 530 respondents shared their insight. The City also engaged with schools, places of worship, and members of the development community to explore incorporating urban agriculture features into their lands.

Working with community partners is a great way to move forward. 'We Grow Food' for example, worked with residents of a Durham Community Housing site in 2023 to construct raised garden plots using funds from the City's Community Grant program. Also, the City's Environmental School Grant Program was used by local area schools to build raised garden beds and purchase indoor vegetable growing towers. Looking ahead, the City will continue developing opportunities that promote urban agriculture through a variety of means, including workshops, stakeholder outreach, and working with others, such as the building community to integrate these features into new developments.

Urban Agriculture

Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market

The City hosted another successful year at the Farmers' Market to help residents connect with local farmers, bakers, artisans, and small local businesses. Residents also enjoyed themed events, such as 55+ Day, Environment Day, Pickering Blooms Day, and more. The in-person market ran for 17 weeks, with approximately 2,500 visitors, supporting upwards of 25 vendors. Thanks to community support, the market won Diamond Winner - #1 Farm Market for Pickering/Ajax Durham Region Readers' Choice Awards. This is the 5th consecutive year that the City has been recognized in the Readers' Choice Awards 'Best Farm Market' category.



Farmers' Market vendor

Community Vegetable Gardens in Pickering

The City of Pickering's Community Garden Policy recognizes these areas for their benefits to health, social ties, environmental education, and food security. This policy oversees municipal community gardens, ensuring equal access for residents to grow produce in collaborative, engaging, and healthy environments. Currently, Pickering operates two such gardens: one at Valley Plentiful Community Garden (VPCG) in Diana Princess of Wales Park, and another at the George Ashe Library & Community Centre, part of the '55+ Plot to Plate' program. Both sites also feature donation plots that support the local food bank.



Valley Plentiful Community Garden

In 2023, the City began planning for an enhancement to the VPCG site, to add accessible parking and raised beds. Pending approval, this project aims to be completed in the fall 2024.

The Pickering Public Library also initiated its first Seed Library program. The Seed Library encourages healthy food and sustainable practices, while protecting the biodiversity of plants and food crops. Through this initiative, the library will be offering free programs in 2024 about food literacy, seeds, and gardening. This project will be completed in three phases. Phase 1 is complete and Phase 2 and 3 will be completed by the end of 2024.



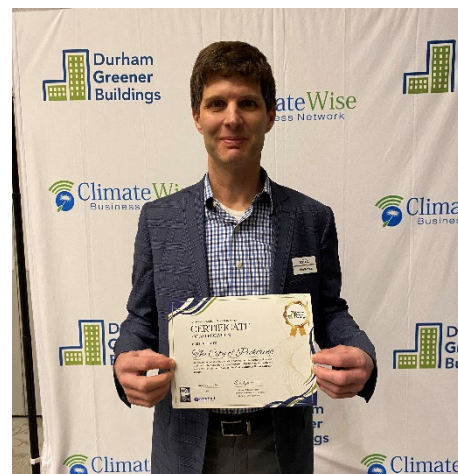
Becoming more Energy Efficient

Community Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

To support and encourage the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), the City completed the installation of six EV charging ports at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. This includes a 60 kW Level 3/DCFC charger, a first for Durham Region municipalities. The City also installed six Level 2 EV charging ports at the Pickering Operations Centre. The project was partially funded through Natural Resources Canada's Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program, which provided funding to Elexicon Group Inc. to help support the installation of EV chargers across Ontario.

Energy Retrofits

The City successfully completed a comprehensive boiler retrofit project at the Pickering Civic Complex, encompassing City Hall and the Central Library. The initiative involved replacing end-of-life natural draft units with high-efficiency modulating condensing boilers, achieving a 20% increase in efficiency. This retrofit has resulted in a significant annual reduction of 52 tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the ongoing improvements to the system in the current year, new design envelope heating circulators are being introduced. These enhancements are expected to optimize heat generation, delivery, and system controls, resulting in further energy savings. The City was recognized by Windfall Ecology Centre for its implementation of this project.



City recognized by Windfall Ecology Centre



Looking Towards the Future

Community Climate Adaptation Project

The Community Climate Adaptation Project is one of Pickering's many initiatives, that supports its journey to advance sustainability. Building upon existing work, the results of this project aim to assist the City to further improve climate resiliency by verifying and addressing the impacts of climate change, such as from extreme weather-related events. The project will engage the broader community, including residents, organizations, community groups, businesses, institutions, places of worship, and vulnerable populations. This project aims to be completed in 2024.



Promoting the Community Climate Adaptation Project

Looking Towards the Future

Integrated Sustainable Design Standards

The Integrated Sustainable Design Standards (ISDS) came into effect in January 2023 and established a new set of standards that allows the City to review development through a sustainability lens, based on modern, green technology criteria and best practices.

In November 2023, Council passed By-law No. 8054/23 to adopt Amendment 50 the Pickering Official Plan. This by-law recognizes and reinforces the ISDS with policies in the Pickering Official Plan.

The ISDS is mandatory for all new *Planning Act* applications, and it includes both mandatory (Tier 1) and voluntary (Tier 2) standards.

Notable development applications include high-rise residential buildings in the City Centre area and along Kingston Road, that are all proposing green roof design, and where feasible, community gardens into the landscape and building podiums. Various developers of mid to high-rise residential developments committed to pursuing several sustainable design elements, including timber construction, greenroofs, Passive House Certification, and Zero On-Site Carbon.



Vegetable gardens and greenhouse at Daniels FirstHome™ Pickering



Greenroof at Chestnut Hill Developments – Universal City Phase 1

Corporate Strategic Plan

The City has developed its first Corporate Strategic Plan, which identifies a vision, goals, and key actions to be achieved over this term of Council and beyond. The strategic plan focusses on six key priorities and include actions to:

1. Champion Economic Leadership & Innovation
2. Advocate for an Inclusive, Welcoming, Safe & Healthy Community
3. Advance Innovation & Responsible Planning to Support a Connected, Well-serviced Community
4. Lead & Advocate for Environmental Stewardship, Innovation and Resiliency
5. Strengthen Existing & Build New Partnerships
6. Foster an Engaged & Informed Community



City of Pickering Corporate Strategic Plan

In 2024, the City of Pickering will continue its longstanding commitment to create a more sustainable community. Join us on the journey to become one of the most sustainable cities in Canada. There are many fun and inspiring ways to make Pickering a better place socially, environmentally, and economically.

To learn how you can get involved, visit: pickering.ca/sustainable.

We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. Please contact the City's Sustainability staff at sustainability@pickering.ca

Alternate formats available upon request at 905.683.7575 or customercare@pickering.ca