City of Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill, ON

Mayor David Barrow

Pledge Summary

The City of Richmond Hill is a city located in southern Ontario. With a population of approximately 200,000, Richmond Hill is a lower tier municipality in York Region with portions of the City falling within Ontario's Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine. The City has committed to foster natural and built communities that support pollinators through the Environment Strategy and partnerships with non-profit organizations and designations.

Action Items Committed for 2021

Communications and Convening

- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.
- Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)
- Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.
- Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.
- Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.
- Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.
- Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.
- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.
- Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by

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engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).
- Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program).
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

Systems Change

- Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.
- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.
- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor David West	2026	1/28/2026	
Mayor David West	2025	3/11/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor David West	2024	2/6/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor David West	2023	1/24/2023	Leadership Circle
Mayor David West	2022	11/2/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor David Barrow	2021	3/24/2021	Leadership Circle

Action Items

In total, how many individuals have been reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan-Dec)? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field below (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.).

463

Of the total number of individuals engaged, how many youth (0-18) were reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan. - Dec.)? If none, please write 0." (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.)

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463 adults

In total, how many acres of monarch habitat have been created in your city in the last 12 months? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 3). Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

11.37

Where was the habitat created this year? Example locations may include residences, schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, shared public spaces, and more.

Parks, community gardens, private property (backyards, front yards, school yards), beside parking lots

How are you leveraging the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program to engage marginalized communities, such as low-income communities or communities of color?

The City currently uses a Tree Planting Prioritization Tool which uses metrics such as percent vulnerable populations. This tool is used to aid in marketing for programs such as the Healthy Yards program which offers native trees, shrubs and wildflowers at a subsidized cost.

What was your community’s motivation for taking and continuing to work on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge?

The residents of Richmond Hill have and still continue to list environmental programming including pollinator initiatives as a top priority. The Mayors’ Monarch Pledge compliments and enhances a lot of the City’s programs.

What resources have been most helpful to you thus far and what new resources would you like to see to help meet your goals? What resources would be useful to help expand equitable engagement in community processes and access to high-quality, usable nature?

Attending webinars and municipal working groups have helped tremendously to see what other municipalities are doing and how this can be applied to Richmond Hill.

What else should we know about your monarch butterfly conservation efforts over the last year?

Richmond Hill hosts a Pollinator Working Group which contains representatives across the City from different divisions including Natural Environment, Sustainability, and Parks Operations. The mandate of this group is to come together twice per year to review ongoing pollinator-related activities and establish a work plan to implement innovative projects that aim to increase and improve pollinator habitats within Richmond Hill. The City’s Bee City designation was renewed in 2021 complimenting and enhancing the Mayors Monarch Pledge initiatives due to similar program interests to promote healthy,

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sustainable habitats and communities for pollinators. The City aims to create additional partnerships with groups and agencies interested in similar goals to enrich and add to future butterfly conservation efforts.

Selected Action Items

Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.

Date of Proclamation:

Title of Proclamation (i.e. – Monarch Day or Pollinator Week):

Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.

How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and their monarch butterfly conservation efforts.

Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and associated opportunities to create monarch habitat.

Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.

Please describe the process to create the strategy , the strategy goals and content, and/or results of implementation. Please also identify who was engaged in this process, what partnerships were established, and how you engaged these groups. Provide a link, if possible.

Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?

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How many individuals were engaged in this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 50).

Please describe the community art project that was implemented in your community and how it contributed to cultural awareness and recognition (e.g., number of art installations, type of art).

Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? If you are involved with another National Wildlife Federation program, please mention that below. (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

How many schools, community groups, leaders, or centers were engaged in this effort? How many of these collaborations and partnerships are "new"? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

Please list the names of the schools you are working with.

What resources, if any, are you providing to educators?

How many students and educators would you estimate are being reached? Please limit your answer to only number of adults and youths engaged in the answer field (e.g., 200 students and 20 educators).

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

How many acres of monarch and pollinator habitat have been planted through this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 0.5 acres). For reference, 1 acre = 43,560 square feet and is about the size of a football field without the end zones. Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

What is the maintenance schedule to ensure planted habitat is maintained?

Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program).

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What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

How many people attended your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

0

What species were collected or propagated?

Common Milkweed, Black-Eyed Susan, Dense Blazing Star, Hairy Beard-Tongue, Sky Blue Aster, Swamp Milkweed, Sweet Ox-Eye

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?

Richmond Hill Public Library

Please describe the milkweed seed collection and propagation effort that you hosted.

Richmond Hill has implemented a seed library program, containing milkweed seeds, where residents are able to collect and donate seeds to the library. Residents are also encouraged to “check out” seeds and incorporate them where desired. The City also gives away seed packages at various events. Each seed packages contains a custom made seed mix including Swamp Milkweed and 5 other pollinator-friendly native perennials.

Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

Bee City.jpg

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

David Suzuki Foundation, Ward 4 councillor, Harmony Garden community group

How many plants were planted? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

0

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Please describe your effort in completing this action.

There are a variety of pollinator gardens throughout the City of Richmond Hill. One garden is located in Mill Pond Park where a canoe was installed in partnership with David Suzuki Foundation as part of the Butterflyway Project. Located in a public space to be enjoyed by the whole community, the canoe contains a variety of native species including wild bergamot, black eyed susan, butterfly milkweed, prairie smoke, hoary vervain, dense blazing star, lance-leaved coreopsis, and hairy beardtongue. These species will continue to provide pollinator habitat and increase the native species present in the gardens around the public parking lot for Mill Pond Park. Harmony Garden is another pollinator garden offered through the City's Community Garden Program.

Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

What is the total acreage of land treated to remove invasive plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

11.47 acres

Please describe the extent of revisions or maintenance to invasive species removal programs, as well as the practices or techniques used to remove the invasive plants.

Richmond Hill coordinates a Community Stewardship Program with a goal of increasing the greenway system within Richmond Hill by expanding habitats on public lands. This program has partnered with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority's Community Engagement & Education group and the Conservation Youth Corps group to achieve these goals. In 2021, Richmond Hill, in coordination with its partners, removed 99 bags of invasive species at Humber Gateway, Oak Ridges Community Centre, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, and Lake Wilcox Park. Many of these areas have been flagged for planting events to help combat the spread of the invasive plants. Most removal has been through hand pulling efforts. Herbicide treatments were applied following common buckthorn removal.

Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)

Please describe the methods of public communication below (e.g., printed materials, social media, print media).

Communication outreach initiatives continued at a limited capacity in 2021 due to COVID-19. As part of Richmond Hill's annual Healthy Yards Program, residents were encouraged to plant native pollinator gardens at their homes or in their neighbourhoods. This was completed through an online sale with a drive thru pick up event to minimize exposure. Residents were provided the opportunity to join Richmond Hill's Butterflyway with the

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purchase of a pollinator friendly sun kit. A link to the program webpage can be found here: www.RichmondHill.ca/HealthyYards. In addition to the website (www.RichmondHill.ca/Pollinators), Richmond Hill uses social media to educate residents on the importance of pollinators through Earth Day, Pollinator Week and webinar announcement posts. Since 2018 Richmond Hill has received its Bee City designation. Similar to Mayor's' Monarch Pledge, this program continues to promote a healthy, sustainable habitat for pollinators which will also benefit the Monarch Butterfly. Ten education and outreach events were provided with partnerships with the City of Richmond Hill to highlight environmental initiatives and educate residents on a variety of Environment topics including the importance of native plants and species highlights. Education regarding sustainable gardening with native flowers and promoting pollinator habitat was a topic of concentration this year. Specific webinars concentrated on garden design with pollinator friendly native plants as well as sustainable ways to set up and manage a yard to support pollinator habitat. Recommended native species included milkweed and other pollinator attracting species which are important to maintain a healthy garden.

Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.

How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.

City groups involved: Public Works Operations (Parks Operations), Parks Design, Parks and Natural Heritage Planning

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and revisions/maintenance implemented for mowing or planting programs.

The Parks department has agreed to continue to change the mowing requirements within Leno Park to allow for further naturalization. In 2017 restoration of open areas and areas surrounding the soccer fields took place. Restoration continued and was completed in 2018 within the area behind the baseball diamonds. To increase the success of the naturalization process, these areas have been removed from Richmond Hill's public park manicured mowing areas. The Parks department continues to explore opportunities to change mowing requirements for parks and open spaces. In addition, larger capital projects involving parks redevelopment and upgrades consider "no mow" zones that are left for naturalization. These "no mow" areas are typically seeded with a wildflower seed mix which is left to propagate and grow.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

How many garden signs are being displayed and where are they located? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

2

Please describe the educational information on the sign(s), and provide any links to externally purchased sign(s).

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There are a couple of pollinator centred gardens within the City of Richmond Hill. Most notable gardens include Harmony Garden managed by a local community group which is located behind the Mill Pond Gallery and the canoe pollinator garden as part of the Millennium Garden which is managed by the Richmond Hill Garden and Horticultural Society. Signs were created in house and identified the garden as pollinator habitat.

Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.

Please describe the groups you engaged with and how you engaged with these groups below.

Richmond Hill in partnership with TRCA held 4 workshops, one on April 6, 2021 called “Beautiful Native Plants: Less Work, Less Water”, one on May 11, 2021 called “Kick Start Your Lawn and Garden”, one on August 19, 2021 called “From Milkweed to Monarch” and one on September 28, 2021 called “Saving Seeds: From Gathering to Sharing”. The webinars taught residents how to create a beautiful sanctuary using native plants for local birds, bees and butterflies of special concern, like the Monarch butterfly. The webinars focused on increasing education regarding the importance of planting native wildflowers like Common Milkweed, how to start up gardens and yards sustainably to support pollinator habitat, the lifecycle of monarchs and finally how to save seeds to share and propagate pollinator habitat. https://twitter.com/myRichmondHill/status/1377697325431263232?s=20 https://twitter.com/myRichmondHill/status/1441768209091334144?s=20

Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.

How many plants were sold and/or given away at your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

1215 native trees and shrubs, 3520 native wildflowers

How many people attended your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

639

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?

Due to COVID-19, the plant sale did not have an in person event which would normally have garden and environmental experts present. Instead, we did a drive-thru pick up for pre-ordered purchases.

Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

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City groups involved: Public Works Operations (Parks Operations), Parks Design, Parks and Heritage Planning

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

Complete

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

March 25, 2019, https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/our-services/Grass-and-Weed-Bylaw.aspx

If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

Richmond Hill has successfully changed the mowing requirements within Leno Park and Hillcrest Heights Park to allow for further naturalization. The Parks department has agreed with the requirements by removing areas of the park from their manicured mowing list. In 2019, the City updated the Grass and Weed By-Law to include an exemption of the by-law for environmental and natural heritage lands as well as natural growth areas and wildflower gardens in the municipal boulevards and on other types of properties.

Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

City groups involved: Parks Design, Parks and Heritage Planning

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

In progress

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

Not complete

If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

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This is an ongoing action item. Our team continuously looks for opportunities for including milkweed and nectar plants for any City planning projects which include green space. Staff have been directed to consider the use of milkweed within community planting events and within planting plans. Staff have also been recommended to include 3 plant species that bloom in the spring, 3 that bloom in the summer, and 3 species that bloom in the fall, as well as to use a 50:50 grass to flower ratio. Incorporation of these recommendations can be seen in King's College Park, where the park had an environmental theme focusing on tree seeds. Staff included a variety of species to showcase the unique seeds and seedpods of native plants. A native seed mix was included to increase pollinator habitat. Several other planting plans have also undergone recommendations to increase tree species diversity and to include pollinator friendly seed mixes.

Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

environment_strategy.pdf

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

N/A

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

Complete

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

April 28, 2014

Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

OMB-partially-approved-Official-Plan-Part-I.pdf

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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urban-forest-management-plan.pdf

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

City groups involved: Parks and Heritage Planning, Sustainability, Natural Environment (Parks Operations)

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

Complete

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

There are two policies in place to increase greenspaces and native plants within the City. 1) Urban Forest Management Plan - April 2020 (https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/urban-forest-management-plan.aspx) and 2) City's Official Plan - July 2010 but currently undergoing an update (https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/find-or-learn-about/Official-Plan.aspx ; https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/rh-official-plan-proposed-complete.pdf)

If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

The City is currently undergoing an update for the Official Plan. 1) Urban Forest Management Plan - this can be seen through Goal 2 of the plan, specifically in Actions 1 and 2. 2) Official Plan - this can be seen under Section 3.2.3 Sustainable Design.

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