City of Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill, ON

Mayor David West

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 2022

Communications and Convening

- 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.

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

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- 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

- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- 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.
- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.
- Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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.).

2027

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.)

2027

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.

6.2

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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, Private property (Backyards, Front Yards, School yards)

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 workshops, webinars and working groups have helped tremendously to see what other municipalities are doing and how this can be applied to Richmond Hill. More resources to connect and spend time with Collective Garden members to get to know their insights, plans and progress would be beneficial to help strengthen the community garden program. More opportunity to build up face-to-face correspondence after the pandemic years to strengthen relationships between City staff and collective/allotment gardeners.

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 group will met in November 2022 after a hiatus during the pandemic years. The group will continue to be active into 2023 and will return to its twice-a-year meeting schedule. The mandate of this group remains 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 2022 complimenting and enhancing the Mayors Monarch Pledge initiatives due to similar program interests to promote healthy, 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.

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Selected Action Items

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.

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?

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

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

Richmond Hill in partnership with TRCA held 6 online workshops – those of which focused on pollinators took place on: March 28, 2022 “Beautiful Native Plants: Less Work, Less Water”, April 9, 2022: “Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden” (alongside the Richmond Hill Public Library), May 9, 2022 “Gardening in a Changing Climate”. The Richmond Hill Sustainability department ran several events that promoted mindful gardening practices related to pollinators. A Speaker series for 2022 Earth Day named “Spring Greening" consisted of two presentations: The May 3, 2022 session featured Lorraine Johnston on May 3, whose presentation focused on home gardening with native and edible plants, which included information about pollinators. The April 27, 2022 session featured Sean Smith who spoke about the importance of healthy soil for developing backyard biodiversity, including pollinator species and habitat. Other "Greening the Hill" presentations (which include information about pollinators, native species, etc.) were given to community groups such as PROBUS, Rotary Club, and MP Jowhari’s Environment Council. These engaged about 100 people, collectively. The webinars engaged residents on 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.

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.

Including wildflower/no mow/meadow areas continue to be considered in revitalization projects of Parks in the City of Richmond Hill. As per the Environment Strategy Update, Richmond Hill included an updated “Sustainability Metrics Program Guidebook 2022” that includes a section focused on pollinators. This will help guide upcoming maintenance revisions as well as decisions made for future and current parks.

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

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (1).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (2).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (3).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (4).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (5).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (6).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (7).JPG

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

2022_HealthyYards_MayorPledgePhoto (8).JPG

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

1387 native trees and shrubs, 3680 native wildflowers

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

1000

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

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Volunteers

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

1000

What species were collected or propagated?

Swamp Milkweed and 5 other pollinator-friendly native perennials

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

volunteers

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. The library was active in 2022. 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.

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

Community garden groups

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

50

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 2021 in partnership with David Suzuki Foundation as part of the Butterflyway Project. It is located in a public space to be enjoyed by the whole community. In 2022, gardens such as Mill Pond Park continues to be maintained with 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 have continued to provide pollinator

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habitat and increase the native species present in the gardens around the public parking lot for Mill Pond Park. In a meeting with the principal gardener this past fall 2022, they mentioned that at least three different bee species were observed, as well as novel caterpillar, insect and butterfly species. The gardener remains inspired to continue learning about how to plant and maintain native plants and is hopeful to learn even more about how to improve the environment for insects. They are also hopeful to engage more people from the community in 2023 and beyond, as the pandemic dampened the ability to host many people within the smaller space. The Harmony Garden is a pollinator garden offered through the City's Community Garden Program.

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).

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. The signs from 2021 are being maintained in 2022.

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.

As per the Environment Strategy Update, Richmond Hill included an updated "Sustainability Metrics Program Guidebook 2022" that includes a section focused on pollinators. This will help engage developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders involved in planning to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat. The city will work with developers, planners, landscape architects and others on a case-by-case basis and will present the "Sustainability Metrics Program Guidebook 2022" where applicable.

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.)

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

2022_GreeningtheHillPost_Trees_RichmondHill_Twitter.JPG

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

2022_YorkRegion_RichmondHill_Twitter.JPG

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

2022_Webinar_TwitterPost_Gardening_RichmondHill.JPG

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

Communication outreach initiatives were less limited in 2022 as the COVID pandemic restrictions eased. As such, the City was able to once again promote many programs and events as before. Some modifications remained, such as for the larger-scale Healthy Yards Program which involved 700+ participants. 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. Sun-tolerant and shade-tolerant butterfly plant kits were partly subsidized and sold at a reduced cost to encourage residents to plant these species in their gardens. The kits included several different Milkweed species in addition to other native and pollinator friendly wildflowers. For some residents this may have been the first time they considered planting these varieties in their garden, since many are used to the ornamental or limited native plant selection offered in many nurseries or big-box stores such as Walmart or Home Depot garden centers. In this way, the Healthy Yards program brought awareness to gardening with native species and what this means for the biodiversity of our urban areas. The hope is that these native plants prosper and spread in gardens for years to come - much to the residents' and pollinators' delight. The Healthy Yards event was completed through an online sale with a drive thru pick up event to minimize in-person exposure. The drive-thru style was maintained due to varying level of comfort regarding COVID. The best-case scenario for everyone was to continue minimizing exposure by keeping most people in their cars during pick-up. A link to the program webpage can be found here: www.RichmondHill.ca/HealthyYards. Social media posts advertising the Healthy Yards 2022 sale and pick up event can be found here: 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, stewardship events, Pollinator Week and webinar announcement posts. The social media strategy has been revitalized to include more content on pollinators, with new posts scheduled for 2023. Since 2018 Richmond Hill has received its Bee City designation, which was renewed in 2022. Similar to Mayor's' Monarch Pledge, this program continues to promote a healthy, sustainable habitat for pollinators which will also benefit the Monarch Butterfly. Several 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

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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 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.

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

2022_Blooms_RichmondHillStaff.jpg

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

2022_Blooms_Event_RichmondHill_Twitter.JPG

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

2022_RichmondHillBlooms_Twitter_Promo.JPG

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

Natural Environment and Sustainability (Richmond Hill), 110 people attended the Richmond Hill Blooms event in 2022. Horticultural society, community gardeners and enthusiasts joined.

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

The Richmond Hill Blooms programs ran in 2022 and involved an online nomination process and a gala event on September 15th, 2022. This popular program is designed to encourage residents to play a role in beautifying the community by creating attractive, colourful and well-maintained front gardens and recognizing them. The event offered an engaging free workshop free gardening workshop with award-winning horticulturalist Frankie Flowers who was available for Q&As after his presentation. Displays from the Natural Environment and Sustainability sections were also present before and after the event. Native wildflower seeds and other gardening and environmental-related freebies were distributed at this time, as well as information about the community gardening programs and other ways to get involved. Other horticultural groups were invited to set up booths as to promote themselves as well. Close to 110 people attended the Richmond Hill Blooms event in 2022. This was a wonderful event for people with an interest in gardening to come together and talk about the past gardening season as well as look forward to the

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next. Other events where native seed packets were handed out in 2022 included: Healthy Yards Event, Ward 3 Family BBQ, Ward 6 Summerfest and through the Sustainability departments Culture Hub programs. The Richmond Hill Sustainability department ran several events that promoted mindful gardening practices related to pollinators. 2022 Earth Day “Spring Greening" Speaker Series consisted of two presentations: The May 3, 2022 session featured Lorraine Johnston on May 3, whose presentation focused on home gardening with native and edible plants, which included information about pollinators. The April 27, 2022 session featured Sean Smith who spoke about the importance of healthy soil for developing backyard biodiversity, including pollinator species and habitat. The entire speaker series engaged about 300 people. Other "Greening the Hill" presentations (which include information about pollinators, native species, etc.) were given to community groups such as PROBUS, Rotary Club, and MP Jowhari’s Environment Council. These engaged about 100 people, collectively. Through the City's Sustainability Culture Hub, eight social media posts were posted that directly promoted pollinator health and awareness: World Bee Day, Pollinator Week, and World Food Day were special occasions where we highlighted the benefits of pollinators. Some of these benefits described include improving our food systems, supporting biodiversity, and making ecosystems more resilient. These were also described in association with the City’s various plans and programs to support pollinators, such as the Environment Strategy Update, the Healthy Yards program, community gardens program, and how rain gardens can be planted with pollinator plants.

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.

15

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. In 2022, Richmond Hill and volunteers removed 70 bags of invasive species at Lake Wilcox Park (4 separate events at different sites), Timber Mills Park, and Rumble Pond. Many of these areas have been flagged for planting events to help combat the spread of the invasive plants. Species removed included Canada thistle, Vetch, Common Buckthorn, Colt’s foot. Removal of these species allowed the native planted tree and shrubs to prosper and avoid being chocked out by the invasive species. This also will open up the area for more pollinator-friendly plants.

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.

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

City groups include: 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.

Incomplete

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.

N/A

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

This is an ongoing action item that continues to be important in 2022 and onwards. 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.

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?

Parks operations at Richmond Hill

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.

N/A

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

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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. Richmond Hill continues to celebrate and champion the achievement of updating the City Grass & Weed By-Law and hopes to lead by example for other municipalities. In 2022, the same areas were taken care of using the new mowing requirements.

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

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

Richmond Hill Natural Environment and Sustainability, Parks Operations

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

Ongoing

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.

N/A

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

Richmond Hill has integrated monarch butterfly conservation into city plans as demonstrated by Richmond Hill's Environment Strategy which recommends a Naturalization Strategy to prioritize areas of publicly owned land for naturalization and locate potential private lands for naturalization efforts. In late 2022, a benchmarking exercise was started to gather research on Pollinator and Monarch programming in other municipalities. This will help direct the development and implementation of novel programs in Richmond Hill. The benchmarking project will continue into 2023.

Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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

Parks Operations

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

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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.

N/A

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

Richmond Hill has a light pollution by-law No. 63-95. The intensity of lighting can be adjusted remotely by location. As such, it can be reduced at times of day or for certain areas such as those in proximity to wildlife habitat. This by-law can reduce the effects of light pollution on wildlife in the City of Richmond Hill.

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