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 2024

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 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.
- 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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- 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

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

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.).

4983

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.)

1735

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

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below (e.g., 3). Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

33.2

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 and Green Spaces: Bayview Hill, Patterson Parkette, Stavert Park, Minthorn Park, Dorothy Price Park. Community Gardens: Harmony Habitat Garden, Forster Collective Garden, Kids Right to Know Community Garden (with pollinator patches). Rain Gardens and Restoration Projects: Through capital and infrastructure revitalization projects, parks are incorporating rain gardens with pollinator-friendly species to create sustainable habitats. Other Public Spaces: Meadow creation at David Dunlop Observatory (DDO) as part of a five-year restoration plan.

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

The city uses a Tree Planting Prioritization Tool, which considers metrics related to vulnerable populations. This allows targeted outreach and subsidized native plants and trees for marginalized communities. Programs like Healthy Yards, which distributes trees, shrubs, and pollinator-friendly plant kits, are marketed specifically in these areas. Educational initiatives such as workshops and webinars are designed to be accessible, and efforts are made to reach these communities through local partnerships with community gardens, libraries, and cultural groups.

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

Richmond Hill’s commitment to the Mayors' Monarch Pledge stems from a strong community desire to protect pollinators, which play a critical role in food production and ecosystem health. As reflected in a 2023 community consultation survey where 89% of residents emphasized the importance of protecting the natural environment. The Mayors' Monarch Pledge aligns perfectly with the city’s goals to enhance biodiversity, create pollinator habitats, and restore green spaces. Through our Environmental Strategy and partnerships with Bee City Canada, Richmond Hill’s Garden and Horticultural Society and some community garden groups, we aim to create pollinator-friendly habitats, restore Monarch butterfly habitats, and educate residents on the importance of pollinators. Annual events, native plant programs, and expanded “no mow” zones reflect our dedication to supporting a sustainable, biodiverse urban environment that benefits both wildlife and residents.

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?

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Helpful Resources: Workshops and Webinars have been invaluable for sharing knowledge and best practices with other municipalities and experts, enabling Richmond Hill to adopt successful pollinator-friendly strategies. Also, partnerships and collaborations with local organizations like the Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society, Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners, and TRCA have significantly supported outreach, educational programs, and plant sales. Desired Resources: Additional financial resources to expand programs, particularly in marginalized communities, ensuring broader accessibility and participation in conservation initiatives. This could lead to enhanced community engagement including more opportunities for in-person interactions such as workshops and gatherings. Expanded educational materials including workshop kids and educational signage would be helpful.

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

Richmond Hill has demonstrated strong community engagement in its conservation efforts, with 87 community stewardship events and 42 volunteer events involving a total of 1,735 volunteers who contributed over 3,800 hours. This significant level of participation underscores the community's dedication to environmental conservation, which indirectly supports monarch butterfly conservation through activities like habitat restoration and native planting. The city has also made substantial progress in habitat restoration and enhancement. Over the past year, Richmond Hill has restored 13.151 kilometers of streams and rehabilitated 36,463.3 square meters of natural areas. These efforts are crucial for creating and maintaining suitable habitats that benefit monarchs and other pollinators, helping to sustain local biodiversity. Through the Healthy Yards Program, Richmond Hill distributed 1,188 native trees and shrubs, 3,532 native perennials, and 300 rain barrels, engaging 650 households in pollinator-friendly practices. These distributions help increase the presence of native plants that are essential for monarch habitats while encouraging sustainable gardening among residents. Richmond Hill’s long-term restoration efforts further support monarch conservation, with 2,000 trees and shrubs planted in projects that enhance local green spaces. These ongoing initiatives not only foster habitats for monarchs but also contribute to the city’s ecological diversity and resilience. Educational outreach remains a key component of Richmond Hill's strategy. The city held 11 workshops and webinars with nearly 500 participants and organized 54 outreach events, sharing valuable information about pollinator-friendly practices. These educational initiatives aim to raise awareness and encourage residents to actively support monarch conservation and pollinator-friendly practices in their own communities.

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):

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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?

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).

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

What species were collected or propagated?

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

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

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.

In 2024, Richmond Hill actively collaborated with various city departments and community organizations to enhance mowing and planting programs, aiming to support monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Key departments involved included Public Works Operations (Urban Forestry, Natural Environment, and Horticulture Section), Parks Design, and Parks and Natural Heritage Planning. These teams assessed current practices and identified opportunities to expand pollinator-friendly habitats across the city.

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

A significant outcome of this collaboration was the expansion of natural, unmown meadow areas in several parks. For instance, a pilot project at Patterson Parkette established a native garden featuring perennials and milkweed species, creating a low-maintenance, pollinator-friendly landscape. This initiative aligns with Richmond Hill's Grass and Weeds By-law No. 31-19, adopted on March 25, 2019, which exempts environmentally sensitive areas and natural heritage lands, including meadows, from mowing requirements.

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Richmond Hill. Additionally, the city's updated Sustainability Metrics Program Guidebook, developed as part of the Environmental Strategy Update, provides guidance on incorporating pollinator-friendly practices in park and green space designs. This guidebook includes specific sections on pollinator conservation, directing staff to plant native milkweed and nectar-bearing plants. These standards are applied in the design and maintenance of new and existing park areas, ensuring ongoing support for monarch habitats. Richmond Hill also partnered with community organizations such as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), LEAF, and Ontario Streams through the Community Stewardship Program. Volunteers from these organizations participated in events focused on planting milkweed and removing invasive species, further enhancing green spaces designated for pollinator support. This collaborative approach has reduced mowing in specific areas to allow natural vegetation to flourish and increased the planting of native vegetation in city parks.

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.

Richmond Hill actively collaborates with developers, planners, landscape architects, and community leaders to integrate monarch habitat conservation into planning and development processes. The city’s Sustainability Metrics Program provides a robust framework for these efforts, emphasizing the inclusion of native vegetation and ecological connectivity in urban development. This ensures that monarch-friendly habitats are thoughtfully incorporated into both new projects and existing spaces. To engage developers and planners, Richmond Hill mandates the integration of sustainability metrics, such as Supporting Pollinators (NE-6), into project proposals. This metric specifically encourages the planting of native milkweed and nectar-producing plants to support monarchs and other pollinators. Developers who exceed these requirements by including additional pollinator-friendly species receive sustainability points, creating a clear incentive to prioritize biodiversity in their designs. Planners are similarly guided to incorporate ecological considerations into development projects, ensuring that the city’s commitment to sustainability is upheld. Landscape architects play a critical role in these efforts, working alongside city staff to design green spaces that align with Richmond Hill’s ecological goals. These designs often include strategic placements of native milkweed and wildflowers to create habitats for monarch butterflies. By adhering to city-approved species lists and leveraging best practices in sustainable landscaping, these professionals contribute to the creation of low-maintenance, pollinator-friendly urban greenery. Richmond Hill also partners with community leaders and conservation groups such as LEAF and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to promote ecological stewardship. These collaborations extend beyond planning processes, offering workshops and educational resources that empower community members to contribute to monarch conservation. This approach bridges large-scale planning goals with grassroots efforts, ensuring that monarch habitat creation is a shared responsibility. The city’s focus on monarch conservation has yielded tangible opportunities for habitat creation. New residential and commercial developments now incorporate pollinator-friendly corridors that reconnect fragmented habitats, enabling monarchs to thrive in urban areas. Additionally, public parks and open spaces are designed with native plant species to expand natural habitats for pollinators. In

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2023-2024, Richmond Hill reaffirmed its commitment to sustainability by applying the updated Sustainability Metrics Program Guidebook to new development projects. By integrating native species requirements into landscaping plans and incentivizing pollinator-friendly practices, the city has significantly increased the availability of viable monarch habitats. These efforts underscore Richmond Hill's dedication to aligning urban development with ecological preservation, ensuring that monarch conservation remains a priority in planning processes.

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?

Hill Potter's Guild (Burr House Community Garden), Forster Collective Group (Forster Collective Garden), Richmond Hill Garden and Horticultural Society (Gladys McLatchy Memorial Garden, Heritage Herb Garden, Hill Hospice Garden, Millennium Garden), Harmony Habitat Garden, Kids Right to Know (Kids Right to Know Community Garden)

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

50

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Greater than 50 units were planted but hard to quanitify.

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?

City teams: Public Works Operations (Urban Forestry, Natural Environment and Horticulture), Parks Design, Parks and Natural Heritage Planning, Sustainability

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.

On July 6th, 2022 Richmond Hill updated our Environment Strategy to reflect the community's passion to protect, enhance, and restore its natural environment. The strategy defined 10 themes to guide the city's effort, one of which specifically concerns local food

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and pollinators. Our continued expansion of the Community Garden, Healthy Yards, and Richmond Hill Blooms programs is directly informed by the goals and guidelines put forth by the Environment Strategy. The full text of the updated Environment Strategy can be viewed through the link below: www.RichmondHill.ca/Environment-Strategy-Update

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?

City teams: By-law and Licensing Enforcement, Energy and Waste

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.

Richmond Hill enacted the Light Pollution By-law (No. 63-95) in March 1995. The most recent update was made on October 12, 2021, refining the standards to reduce light pollution effectively. The by-law establishes restrictions on outdoor lighting installations, illumination levels, shielding requirements, and hours of operation to benefit urban wildlife. The full text of the light pollution by-law can be viewed through the link below: https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/Community-Standards-By-laws/1050---Protection---Light-Pollution.pdf

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

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

City Teams: Public Works Operations (Urban Forestry, Natural Environment and Horticulture), Parks Design, Parks and Natural Heritage Planning, Sustainability

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

Complete

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below.

September 9th, 2023 saw Richmond Hill approve the latest amendment to the Official Plan (Policy 3.2.1.2.29) regarding land use within the city. The plan details the city's continued commitment to increasing the percent of native plants, shrubs and trees used in the city landscaping and encouraging the use of milkweed where appropriate. The full text of the Official Plan can be viewed through the link below: www.RichmondHill.ca/Official-Plan

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

The City continues to encourage the inclusion of native plants, trees and shrubs through landscape ordinances.

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?

Public Works Operations Division (Parks Services and Infrastructure Section; Urban Forestry, Natural Environment & Horticulture Section), Parks Design, Parks and Natural Heritage Planning, By-law and Enforcement

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.

On March 25th, 2019, the City updated the Grass and Weeds By-Law (No. 31-19). Included in this revision was an exemption of the by-law for environmental sensitive areas and natural heritage lands, including floodplains, meadows, and boulevard ditches. The by-law also does not require the mowing of wildflowers on private property that are contained within clearly defined gardens. The full text of the Grass and Weeds By-Law can be view through the link below: www.RichmondHill.ca/Grass-and-Weeds

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

The City also integrates reduced mowing practices through increasing areas of naturalization and patches of pollinator habitat through park revitalization projects and development of new parks.

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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?

Public Works Operations Division (Parks Services and Infrastructure Section; Urban Forestry, Natural Environment & Horticulture Section), Parks Design, Parks and Natural Heritage Planning, By-law and Enforcement

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.

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

The City also integrates reduced mowing practices through increasing areas of naturalization and patches of pollinator habitat through park revitalization projects and development of new parks. The City continues to create meadow habitat in certain parks including David Dunlap Observatory Park and Briar Nine Park by modifying mowing and park maintenance practices to encourage the growth of meadow plant species that support a variety of pollinator species and wildlife. This is ongoing.

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).

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

Bird Friendly City Certificate.jpg

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

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Bird Friendly (3).JPG

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

Bird Friendly (5).JPG

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

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA): Supported habitat restoration projects and public education initiatives.; Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF): Assisted in tree planting efforts and community engagement focused on native species.; Ontario Streams: Collaborated on stream rehabilitation and invasive species management to preserve local wildlife habitats.; Bee City Canada: Partnered to provide pollinator-friendly practices and maintain Richmond Hill's Bee City designation.; Nature Canada and Bird Friendly Richmond Hill: Worked with the city to uphold Richmond Hill's "Bird Friendly City" recognition, guiding bird-safe practices.

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill continued to maintain its recognition as a wildlife-friendly city through various wildlife and habitat conservation efforts, enhancing biodiversity and supporting native species. The city partnered with key community organizations, including the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), Ontario Streams, and the Canadian Wildlife Federation, to expand and improve local conservation initiatives. These partnerships have been instrumental in executing Richmond Hill's wildlife-friendly programs, offering residents opportunities to engage directly in conservation activities such as habitat restoration, native plant installations, and educational events. Richmond Hill's involvement in the "Bird Friendly City" certification program, launched by Nature Canada, exemplifies its commitment to protecting avian populations and fostering a supportive ecosystem for all wildlife. This certification recognizes the city's ongoing conservation efforts, including implementing bird-safe building standards, reducing light pollution, and controlling threats from domestic animals. Additionally, Richmond Hill introduced a community vote to select an official bird symbol for the city, ultimately choosing the Great Blue Heron, a reflection of both community pride and cultural diversity. To support pollinators, Richmond Hill has upheld its Bee City certification, granted by Bee City Canada, which acknowledges the city's initiatives to create pollinator habitats and educate residents on their importance. Richmond Hill's Healthy Yards Program, in partnership with York Region, has continued to encourage residents to plant native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, benefiting pollinators and other wildlife. This program allows residents to purchase native plant kits, backyard composters, and rain barrels at subsidized costs, with information available at Richmond Hill Healthy Yards. These programs, combined with Richmond Hill's broader urban forest management and habitat restoration projects, illustrate the city's dedication to wildlife conservation. More details about Richmond Hill's environmental initiatives can be accessed at Richmond Hill Environment and Sustainability. More information on these certifications and the programs that earned them can be found through the links below: www.BeeCityCanada.org/city/richmond-hill/ www.NatureCanada.ca/Bird-Friendly-City

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www.RichmondHill.ca/CommunityGardens www.RichmondHill.ca/HealthyYards www.RichmondHill.ca/Richmond-Hill-Blooms

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

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

KRTK-pollinators (1).jpg

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

Harmony Habitat Garden-pollinators (1).jpg

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill actively engaged with community garden groups to encourage the planting of native milkweeds and other nectar-producing plants, crucial for supporting local pollinators such as monarch butterflies. The city worked closely with community garden organizations, including the Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society, Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners, and local community gardens like Harmony Habitat Garden, Forster Collective Garden, and Kids Right to Know Community Garden. The City supports community gardens by providing the space, water access and wood chips/mulch to the community gardens. Leftover wildflower kits from the Healthy Yards program, which included various milkweed species and nectar-bearing wildflowers are typically donated to community gardens to plant in their gardens. Throughout the year, Richmond Hill collaborated with these groups to provide resources, guidance, and educational workshops on the importance of planting native species. Notably, several workshops and webinars, such as “Maximize Your Healthy Yard” and “Ask a Garden Expert,” highlighted the benefits of native plants and offered practical advice on incorporating milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants into community gardens.

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.

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

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• Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society • Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners • Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) • York Region Environmental Alliance • Toronto Region Conservation Authority • Kids Right to Know • Harmony Habitat Garden • Forster Collective Garden

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

Richmond Hill has made substantial strides in engaging with community organizations, gardening leaders, and residents to support monarch butterfly conservation. One of the key initiatives in 2024 was the expansion of the Richmond Hill Blooms program, which introduced Pollinator Garden Badges. These custom-designed stickers were offered to residents who incorporated essential pollinator-friendly elements into their front gardens, such as native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, nectar sources, and natural nesting spaces like bee hotels or fallen logs. Gardens that received the badge also avoid the use of insecticides or synthetic fertilizers, promoting a safer, healthier environment for pollinators, including monarch butterflies. In addition to the Pollinator Garden Badges, Richmond Hill organized the Richmond Hill Blooms Garden Social & Sustainability Event on September 7, 2024, which served as an excellent platform for engaging the community in monarch butterfly and pollinator conservation efforts. At this event, residents interacted with local gardening experts, sustainability-focused exhibitors, and City representatives, learning about the city’s environmental initiatives. The event featured a variety of activities such as environmental games, giveaways of free wildflower seedlings and birdseed, and opportunities to purchase backyard composters. By directly encouraging residents to adopt sustainable gardening practices, the event played a key role in fostering a more pollinator-friendly environment across the city. Through the Front Garden Recognition Program, Richmond Hill has been able to further promote pollinator-friendly gardening. Residents have been encouraged to nominate their own or their neighbors' gardens for recognition. This initiative helps raise awareness about the importance of pollinator habitats and the simple actions residents can take to create these spaces in their gardens. The integration of educational resources at events like the Garden Social also ensures that the community remains informed about best practices for monarch butterfly conservation. The city's collaboration with gardening organizations such as the Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society, Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners, and TRCA has also been crucial. Workshops and webinars, like the "Planning Your Pollinator Garden" session held in June 2023, provided valuable knowledge about creating and maintaining pollinator habitats. These events offered practical advice on the importance of native wildflowers, including milkweed species, which are vital for monarchs throughout their lifecycle. Through these diverse initiatives, Richmond Hill has effectively engaged its community in supporting monarch butterfly conservation. By offering resources, recognition programs, and hands-on learning opportunities, the city continues to foster an inclusive and sustainable approach to environmental stewardship that benefits pollinators and enhances biodiversity. More information on this program can be found at www.RichmondHill.ca/RHBlooms

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

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill treated approximately 14 acres of land to remove invasive plant species through its Community Stewardship Program and other restoration initiatives. This effort was part of the city's broader goal of restoring native habitats to support pollinators, including monarch butterflies.

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's invasive species removal program has been continuously revised and expanded to align with best practices for habitat restoration. In 2024, the program included the removal of invasive plants such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, and phragmites from various city-managed natural areas. Key updates to the program included targeted removal plans that focus on areas identified as high-priority for monarch butterfly and pollinator habitat restoration. The program also integrated habitat enhancement measures such as the planting of native wildflowers and milkweed following invasive species removal. Practices and Techniques Used: The program employed a combination of manual, mechanical, and chemical removal methods to address invasive plant species effectively while minimizing disturbance to the native ecosystem. Techniques included: 1. Manual Removal: Volunteers and city staff removed invasive plants by hand to ensure the complete extraction of roots, especially for species like garlic mustard and buckthorn. 2. Mechanical Removal: For larger infestations, mechanical tools such as weed wrenches and brush cutters were used to clear dense invasive growth efficiently. 3. Selective Herbicide Application: In areas where manual or mechanical methods were insufficient, selective herbicides were applied to invasive species to prevent regrowth while protecting native plants. 4. Mulching and Soil Stabilization: Following invasive species removal, mulching was used to suppress regrowth and stabilize the soil, reducing the risk of erosion and providing better conditions for native plants to thrive. 5. Native Plant Restoration: Areas treated for invasive species were immediately restored with native plants, including milkweed and nectar-producing wildflowers. This practice not only prevents invasive plants from returning but also enhances habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Community Involvement: The invasive species removal program heavily relied on the participation of volunteers through community events and partnerships with organizations such as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), and Ontario Streams. In 2024, 87 stewardship events and 42 volunteer events were held, engaging 1,735 volunteers and contributing 3,845 volunteer hours to invasive species removal and habitat restoration efforts. Richmond Hill's invasive species removal program continues to serve as a critical component of its broader environmental stewardship initiatives, ensuring the re-establishment of native habitats and supporting the long-term survival of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

Harmony Habitat Garden Signage (1).jpg

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

Harmony Habitat Garden Signage (2).jpg

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

KRTK-pollinator signage.jpg

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

Winter Pollinator Habitat Sign.jpg

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

6

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

• 1 sign at Harmony Habitat Garden • 1 sign at Millennium Garden • 1 sign at Kids Right to Know Community Garden • 1 sign at Minthorne Park • 2 signs at Oak Ridges Branch of Richmond Hill Public Library Richmond Hill has maintained the informational signs displayed at the Harmony Habitat and Millennium pollinator gardens. These signs let visitors know that these gardens were created specifically to provide necessary habitat to butterfly and bee species. They also bear the logos of Bee City Canada and the Mayor's Monarch Pledge to denote the city's certification by these organizations. The newly established Kids Right to Know Community Garden has also installed a new informational sign. This sign details the importance of pollinators to the development of local, sustainable agriculture. The city has also developed additional temporary signage for Minthorne Park and the garden surrounding the Oak Ridges Branch of the public library. These signs will be installed each winter and removed in the spring. They explain to residents that the dead plant material within the gardens has been left to provide winter pollinator habitat for insects, and provides a link to RichmondHill.ca/Pollinators for those seeking more information. All of these signs were designed in house by City employees.

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.

DSC_0394.JPG

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

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DSC_0396.JPG

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

RHB-Plant Giveaway (8).JPG

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill's Healthy Yards Program distributed a total of 4,720 plants to residents, which included 1,188 native trees and shrubs and 3,532 native perennials. There were 200 free seedlings distributed through the Richmond Hill Blooms program at the Richmond Hill Blooms Garden Social and Sustainability Event.

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

800

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill’s annual Healthy Yards plant sale continued to support residents in creating native pollinator habitats on their properties. In partnership with York Region, the city offered native trees, shrubs, and wildflower species at subsidized costs. Wildflowers were sold in bundled kits of sun-tolerant and shade-tolerant species, catering to residents with diverse garden conditions. Each kit included a variety of milkweed and other nectar-bearing plants designed to attract butterflies, insects, and birds, promoting a healthier ecosystem. The Healthy Yards program remains popular with residents, enabling the city to encourage the naturalization of private properties within its limits.

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.)

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

FaceBook Ad 1080x1080px-Healthy Yards.pdf

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

RH-Blooms-2024-Twitter-[W135]1200x628-Councillors.jpg

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

In 2024, Richmond Hill continued its public communication efforts to encourage residents to establish monarch gardens and support pollinator conservation. The city's official website remains a central hub for information, offering guidance on creating pollinator-friendly habitats and highlighting ongoing initiatives, including Richmond Hill's designation as a Bee City since 2018. Through this online platform, residents can access resources on native plants, pollinator garden designs, and actions they can take to support local pollinator populations (richmondhill.ca). Richmond Hill also utilizes social media to engage the community in pollinator conservation efforts. Posts promote environmental stewardship events, share educational webinars, and provide information during Pollinator Week. This approach helps broaden community awareness and participation, encouraging residents to become active stewards of pollinator habitats in their own spaces. The city has hosted various community events and workshops throughout the year to directly engage residents. Notable events include the RH Blooms Garden Social & Sustainability Event on September 7, which featured local gardening experts and provided information on creating pollinator-friendly gardens; the Ward 2 ECO Family Fest on October 5, which focused on environmental education; and the Road Watch Community & Family Fair on October 26, which included segments on pollinator conservation and the importance of creating supportive habitats for monarchs. These events attracted residents of all ages, strengthening community commitment to environmental conservation. In addition, Richmond Hill has set up informational displays in community centers and libraries across the city. These exhibits provide residents with insights into creating pollinator-friendly and bird-friendly environments, emphasizing actions like planting native species, reducing light pollution, and minimizing disruptions to natural habitats. The displays are designed to raise awareness and inspire residents to take simple, impactful steps to protect pollinators. The annual Healthy Yards program also plays a vital role in pollinator conservation by supporting residents who wish to plant native species. In 2024, the program offered a range of native trees, shrubs, and perennial flowers at reduced costs. These plants, which are selected to attract and support local pollinators, have been distributed widely across the community to help create more biodiverse and sustainable urban landscapes (richmondhill.ca). Furthermore, the Richmond Hill Blooms initiative, in partnership with the Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society, hosted several gardening presentations throughout the year. The "Seed Starting 101" webinar on March 21 and the in-person kickoff workshop and plant sale on May 15 were especially popular, offering residents practical knowledge and resources for cultivating pollinator-friendly gardens in their own yards (richmondhillgardensociety.org). Through these comprehensive and varied communication strategies, Richmond Hill is actively encouraging residents to contribute to monarch butterfly conservation. By promoting awareness, offering resources, and providing direct support, the city continues to foster a community-wide commitment to protecting and enhancing pollinator habitats across Richmond Hill.

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