

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

# GREENING STRATEGY

INSPIRING ACTION



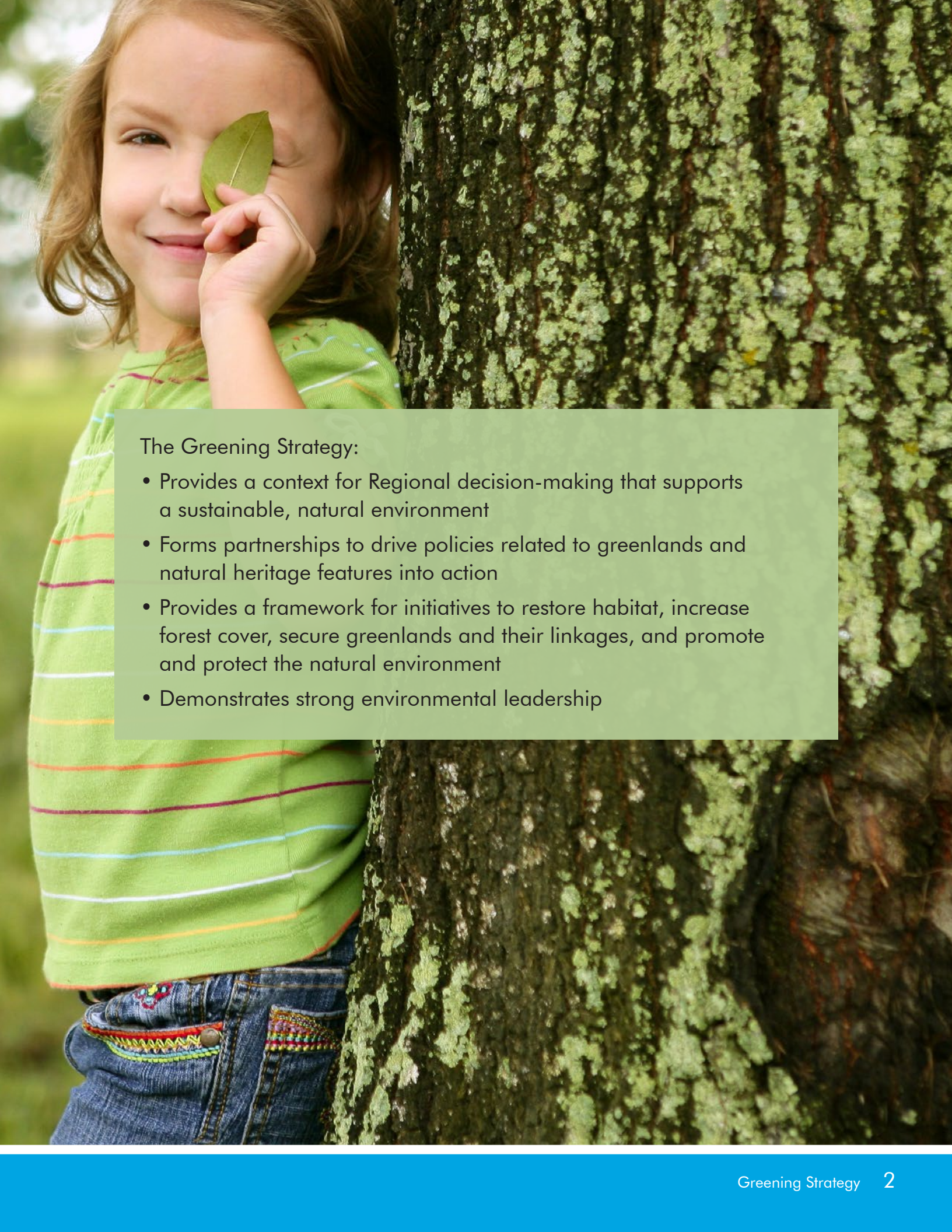




Developing policy and inspiring action. It is our blueprint for on-the-ground action. York Region Greening Strategy creates and maintains healthy natural environments that foster healthy, sustainable communities for current and future generations.

**After more than 10 years of success, the Region's Greening Strategy is adapting to meet the changing needs of the diverse communities and environmental challenges. Clear direction from the York Region Official Plan (2009) and the Sustainability Strategy identify the need to review and refine the Greening Strategy.**





### The Greening Strategy:

- Provides a context for Regional decision-making that supports a sustainable, natural environment
- Forms partnerships to drive policies related to greenlands and natural heritage features into action
- Provides a framework for initiatives to restore habitat, increase forest cover, secure greenlands and their linkages, and promote and protect the natural environment
- Demonstrates strong environmental leadership



# ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 2001 the Greening Strategy has delivered actions that have both protected and restored our natural environment.

Together with our partners we have achieved great things:

- Planted close to one-million trees and shrubs
- Secured more than 1,000 hectares of environmental lands
- Formed 50 strategic partnerships, which enable leveraging of significant action and results
- \$11.2 million Regional investment in conservation land securement with a combined worth of more than \$56 million in environmental lands secured
- Received numerous awards: the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators Environmental Award in 2009 for environmental innovation, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification for the York Regional Forest for sustainable management
- Developed best management practices and guidelines for Salt Management Guidelines, Streetscaping Policy and Pesticide Reduction Guidelines, Forest Conservation Bylaw
- Maintained the Region's forest cover at 22.5 per cent through reforestation and Forest Conservation Bylaw protection.
- Positively impact more than 23,000 residents through outreach programs and events

To celebrate our success, residents and partners were engaged to highlight these achievements and obtain feedback on progress to date and direction for the future. The message was clear. York Region should continue with the Greening Strategy programs and investigate new opportunities to engage more people, respond to the changing demographic of the Region and meet the current environmental challenges.

**~1,000,000**

trees and shrubs planted

**1,000+ HA**

of environmental lands secured

**FOREST STEWARDSHIP  
COUNCIL**

first public forest to receive Forest  
Stewardship Council certification (2000)





"This is the best program!  
I have already recommended it  
to many of my friends who have  
taken advantage of it."  
Irina, resident of Richmond Hill,  
the LEAF program participant

"It was very good. The kids loved it."  
"One of the best Regional programs."  
"It was excellent. Thank you."  
Forest Festival participants

"...proud to be a partner in  
York Region's Greening Strategy.  
Together we have helped protect  
more than 220 hectares of  
significant woodland habitat."  
Mark Stabb,  
Nature Conservancy of Canada

"...proud to partner with  
York Region over the past  
10 years in the delivery of the  
York Natural Planting Partnership  
(YNPP). Through this program, we've  
been able to encourage private property  
owners to increase the amount of trees and  
native plants on their properties, having  
a tremendous positive impact on the  
environmental health of the Lake  
Simcoe watershed."  
Mayor Virginia Hackson,  
LSRCA Chair



# GREENING STRATEGY

## ACTION AREAS: PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

### ENVIRONMENTAL LAND SECUREMENT

A healthy and connected system of features and linkages is essential to preserve the Region's natural heritage and biodiversity.

Through continued partnerships and investments, the Greening Strategy hopes to protect key lands while focusing on connections and enhancement of the York Region's Greenland System.

**Goal:** Protect core natural areas and restore linkages

**Example:** Since 2001 more than 1,000 hectares on 44 properties have been protected through land donation, easement and acquisition.

#### PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

1. Natural Environment Land Securement
2. Natural Heritage Trail linkages **\*NEW\***
3. Agricultural Land natural feature protection **\*NEW\***

### ENHANCEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Healthy and sustainable natural environments support healthy and sustainable communities. Enhancement and rehabilitation techniques are utilized for all components of the natural environment, including forests, meadows, prairies, wetlands and streams.

**Goal:** Enhance and rehabilitate the natural environment on both public and private lands.

**Example:** The York Natural Planting Partnership (YNPP) program offers subsidized tree planting and support services for large scale restoration projects on private lands. Through our Conservation Authority delivery partnership, this program plants an average of 40,000 trees and shrubs each year.

#### PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

1. Private land tree planting
2. Species at Risk **\*NEW\***
3. Public land naturalization
4. Naturalization of Regional properties



#### BENEFITS FROM TREES:

##### REDUCTION IN ENERGY COSTS

Urban Forest Studies undertaken by York Region in partnership with local municipalities (Town of Richmond Hill, City of Vaughan and City of Markham) concluded that cumulative reduction in energy costs from the existing canopy cover is more than \$5 million.



These Action Areas have been refined from the original Strategy and provide a clear understanding of the direction for the Greening Strategy.

### LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE

York Region continues to demonstrate leadership in the protection and promotion of the natural environment through its policies, programs and use of cutting-edge technologies. Through inclusive forums and technical working groups, the Greening Strategy provides opportunities for York Region, its partners and neighbouring Regions to share successes and challenges and learn from one another.

**Goal:** Seek and transfer knowledge and demonstrate leadership and innovation in the protection and promotion of the natural environment.

**Example:** In partnership with local municipalities York Region has applied the Urban Forest Study developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to measure and understand the benefits of York Region's urban forest. This information is being used to target efforts in enhancement and rehabilitation.

#### PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

1. Technology/Innovation
2. Sharing and dissemination of technical knowledge
3. Sustainable communities
4. Funding opportunities

### STEWARDSHIP AND EDUCATION

Community awareness is vital to the protection of a healthy natural environment for future generations. Regional programs and initiatives under the Greening Strategy use a variety of methods to engage York Region residents.

**Goal:** Educate residents about the value of green infrastructure, provide opportunities to discover connections with nature and inspire action.

**Example:** Nature's Classroom is a long-standing program offering outdoor education to community groups in the York Regional Forest.

#### PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

1. Education programming
2. Outreach events
3. Public engagement through marketing





# DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND TOOLS

Fundamental to the success of the Greening Strategy are the techniques that have been effectively used to maximize results.

## **PARTNERSHIPS, AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS**

Many stakeholders in York Region are engaged in practices working towards a sustainable natural environment. The Greening Strategy co-ordinates with like-minded organizations to achieve a high level of performance from experienced delivery partners.

## **RESOURCE AND FINANCIAL LEVERAGING**

By partnering with other like-minded organizations, York Region is able to leverage additional funds towards the Greening Strategy. Investment through agreements and partnerships for the delivery of programs and activities has experienced as much as five times the original York Region financial investment.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

With community involvement in many aspects of the Greening Strategy, greater understanding and support for the natural environment is achieved. Engagement of York Region residents through multi-media increases participation in programs and creates an overall awareness of the natural environment.

## **INCENTIVES**

Incentives can be financial or service-oriented and may be linked to partners or existing senior government programs. In many cases, the Greening Strategy uses existing programs such as *Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts* program for securement of lands. Incentives increase uptake of programs and improves continuous program participation.

## **POLICY AND LEGISLATION**

The Greening Strategy continues to be involved in the development of natural environment policy and legislation. To ensure protection of the efforts of the Greening Strategy into the future, all programs are reviewed for consistency and designed to support current legislation and policies, such as the Forest Conservation Bylaw and York Region's Official Plan.





# BENEFITS

The Greening Strategy protects, restores and creates green infrastructure which contributes to sustainable healthy communities.

Green infrastructure is defined as:

“Natural vegetative systems and green technologies that collectively provide society with a multitude of environmental, social and economic benefits.”

- *Green Infrastructure Coalition of Ontario (2012)*

Green infrastructure takes many forms, including forests, natural valleys, parks, gardens, landscaped areas, wetlands and storm water ponds.

The diagram below identifies the benefits of the Greening Strategy associated with each of our Action Areas, which are achievable and measurable, and contribute to successes (environmental, social and economic).





# ACTION AREA IMPLEMENTATION

Designed through public consultation to provide a critical path, highlighting the primary activities and targets.

## ENVIRONMENTAL LAND SECUREMENT

	2013	2014	2015	2016
ENVIRONMENTAL LAND SECUREMENT				
Natural Environment Land Securement	Develop and seek approval of new and existing programs under new three-year agreement with Nature Conservancy of Canada and Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust			
	Scope and evaluate new partnerships		Evaluate new and existing agreements and refine for 2016	
	Review securement strategy and criteria for consistency with current policy and legislation and revise accordingly			
	Target: Pursue a minimum of four secured sites or 60 hectares annually			
Natural Heritage Trail Linkages (NEW)	Participate in Strategic Planning exercise with York Region Long Range Planning			
	Review securement strategy and criteria for compatibility and revise accordingly			
	Scope opportunities and investigate delivery options including new partnership(s) e.g. Oak Ridges Trail Association, Lake Trail Initiatives, Pedestrian and Cycling Program		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
		Implement one pilot project to support Regional natural trail linkages and Active Transportation	Evaluate and implement one pilot project	
Agricultural land natural feature protection (NEW)	Review securement strategy and criteria for compatibility and revise accordingly			
	Scope opportunities and investigate delivery options including new partnership(s) e.g. Ontario Farmland Trust		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
	Co-host an Ontario Farmland Trust opportunities forum	Implement one pilot project with Ontario Farmland Trust	Evaluate pilot project and proceed accordingly	
TARGET: PURSUE A MINIMUM OF SIX SITES OR 65 HECTARES SECURED ANNUALLY				



## LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE

	2013	2014	2015	2016
LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE				
Technology/Innovation		Work with local municipalities to develop urban forest management plans with local urban forest canopy targets		
	Continue to partner with local municipalities to complete urban forest studies			Report to council on Urban Forest Studies findings
	Update Forest cover mapping to review the Regional Official Plan and Forest Cover target of 25%			
Sharing and Transfer of Technical Knowledge	Municipal and agency Land Securement forums - facilitate two annually			
	Continue Environmental Advisory Committee forums - co-ordinate two annually in partnership with municipal EACs			
	Deliver conference presentations - submit two annually			
Sustainable Communities	Develop internal partnership with Health Protection and Healthy Living to maximize synergies and messaging			
	Develop focused input to strategic corporate initiatives regarding climate change			
Investigate Funding Opportunities	Investigate funding opportunities in all program areas to leverage funds and realize efficiencies			
TARGETS:				
• CO-ORDINATE FOUR INFORMATION SHARING FORUMS ANNUALLY				
• PRESENT AT TWO CONFERENCES ANNUALLY				
• SUBMIT THREE FUNDING APPLICATIONS ANNUALLY TO LEVERAGE FUNDING				



### BENEFITS FROM TREES:

#### **TWO MINUTES**

Contact with nature has a positive effect on human health. Two minutes provides stress relief, two hours improves memory performance and attention span, and two days increase the levels of cancer fighting white blood cells by 50 per cent.  
- David Suzuki Foundation



# ACTION AREA IMPLEMENTATION

## ENHANCEMENT AND REHABILITATION

	2013	2014	2015	2016
ENHANCEMENT AND REHABILITATION				
Private Land Tree Planting	Continue existing York Natural Planting Partnership (YNPP) a subsidized reforestation program under three-year agreement with two Conservation Authorities			
	Evaluate and refine YNPP annual targets		Evaluate YNPP agreements and refine for 2016	
	Continue existing Backyard Tree Planting program under new three-year agreement with Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF)			
			Evaluate Backyard Tree Planting agreement and refine for 2016	
		Investigate new planting opportunities with Conservation Authorities and other delivery partners		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate (2016-2017)
	Agricultural land natural feature protection - scope opportunities and investigate delivery options including new partnership(s) e.g. Alternate Land Use Services (ALUS) partnerships		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
	Target: 50,000 trees and shrubs planted annually			
Species at Risk (NEW)		Investigate opportunities to protect species and habitats at risk including partnership(s)	Implement opportunities and evaluate (2016-2017)	
Public Land Naturalization	Continue with community and local municipal naturalization program			
	Scope urban naturalization opportunities with local municipalities		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
	Evaluate Regional role in school yard naturalization including pilot project		Support/implement as recommended	
	Target: 7,000 trees and shrubs planted annually			
Naturalization of Regional Properties	Continue existing Adopt a Stream Crossing program (tree planting along watercourses with local schools)			
		Adopt a stream crossing program - evaluate program and scope partnership opportunities	Implement recommendations from evaluation (previous program targets or higher)	
	Continue prairie planting pilot project and existing York Region property naturalization implementation			
	Continue existing York Regional Forest reforestation and prairie habitat planting projects			
	Target: 15,000 trees and shrubs planted annually			
TARGET: A MINIMUM OF 70,000 TREES AND SHRUBS PLANTED ANNUALLY				



## STEWARDSHIP AND EDUCATION

	2013	2014	2015	2016
STEWARDSHIP AND EDUCATION				
Educational Programming	Continue existing Nature’s Classroom environmental education program (target 45 community groups)			
		Nature’s classroom - evaluate program and scope delivery options	Continue program as recommended	
	Continue existing Envirothon education program competition			
			Evaluate Envirothon program delivery and support	
	Develop Regional Envirothon Committee	Co-ordinate Regional Envirothon Committee		
	Scope education partnership with school boards and/or other organizations		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
	Support educational programming which highlight the ecological value of agricultural land - scope opportunities including new delivery partnership		Implement partnership(s) and evaluate	
Outreach events	Deliver 12 York Region Forest events annually			
		Evaluate forest event delivery efficiencies, maximum capacity and partnership opportunities	Continue program as recommended	
	Partner-led event participation in a minimum 10 events attended targeting 250 participants			
	Continue to co-ordinate volunteer planting events			
Public Engagement and Marketing		Scope methods for multicultural community engagement	Implement multicultural engagement recommendations	
	Investigate social media opportunities	Implement social media recommendations		
	Target: Media outreach to 40,000 people annually			
TARGETS:				
• ANNUALLY CO-ORDINATE 60, SUPPORT 25 AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN 15 PARTNER-LED EVENTS				
• TARGET OUTREACH TO 50,000 PEOPLE ANNUALLY THROUGH PROGRAMS AND COMMUNICATIONS				

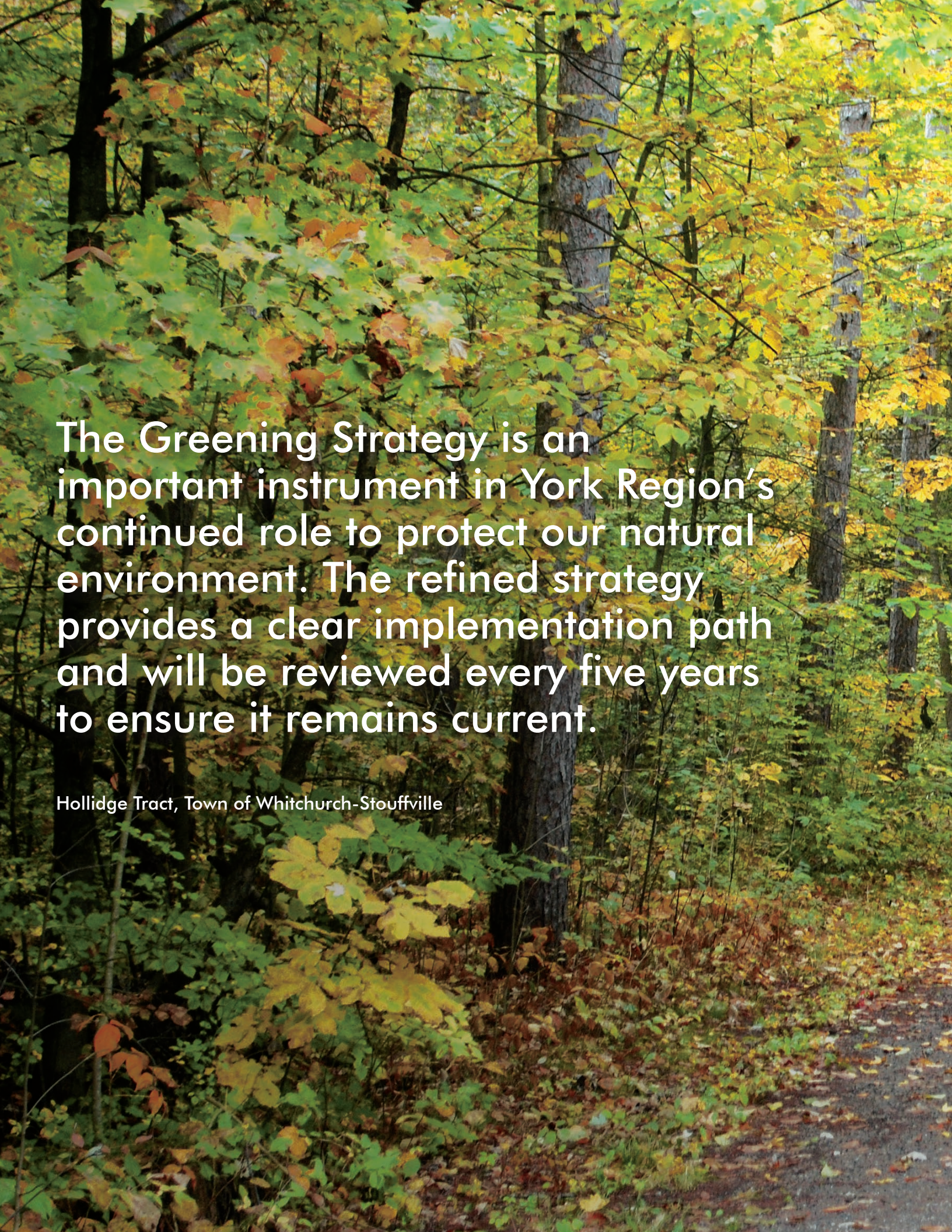


### BENEFITS FROM TREES:

#### **INCREASE IN TREE CANOPY, DECREASE IN CRIME**

A study in the Baltimore area found that a 10 per cent increase in tree canopy was associated with a 12 per cent decrease in crime.  
- University of Vermont



A photograph of a forest path in autumn. The path is a narrow, dark, paved or dirt trail that curves through a dense forest. The trees are mostly deciduous, with their leaves in various stages of autumn color, ranging from bright yellow to deep orange and some hints of red. The ground is covered with fallen leaves. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a shaded forest interior. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

The Greening Strategy is an important instrument in York Region's continued role to protect our natural environment. The refined strategy provides a clear implementation path and will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains current.

Hollidge Tract, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville





Pets Must Be  
in Control Or  
On A Leash  
When in This  
Forest  
Owners Must  
Shower & Scrape





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