









Greening Our Communities

How we design and manage our built environment, including green infrastructure, is important to sustainable healthy communities.

Green infrastructure takes many forms including: natural environment lands and features, street trees, agricultural lands, green roofs and green walls, parks, gardens and stormwater ponds.

These features provide health, environmental, social, and economic benefits to communities. For example, studies have shown that forests improve air quality, provide natural shade, reduce urban heat island effects, mitigate climate change, reduce energy consumption, reduce flood risks, improve water quality and water quantity and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.

Did you know?

-  York Region Forestry manages 21 forest tracts that includes 2,300 hectares and maintains 35,000 street trees.
-  York Region's Greening Strategy plants over 70,000 trees and shrubs annually.
-  Urban forests in southern York Region remove 830 tonnes of air pollution annually (Urban Forest Studies).
-  Trees reduce the demand for heating and cooling by shading and cooling homes during summer months and providing protection from cold winds in the winter.
-  Forests provide the opportunity for increased physical activity from walking, hiking, skiing and snowshoeing, which can decrease risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity.
-  Contact with nature has a positive effect on human health. It can provide stress relief and improve mental well-being, memory performance and attention span.

Building Healthy Communities



You can make a difference when you . . .

- Reduce the demand for heating and cooling your home by incorporating shade trees, green roofs or other green infrastructure as part of your home energy management plan.
- Get to know your green spaces – check out local parks, forests and trails.
- Participate in community tree planting events, hikes and festivals.
- Be active and take a walk in your local forest.
- Plant native trees and plants on your property – visit www.yourleaf.org to learn about a subsidized backyard tree planting program.

Municipalities show leadership when they . . .

- Make green infrastructure an integral part of climate change adaptation planning.
- Incorporate greening policies in municipal plans such as green roofs and community gardens.
- Implement and support natural heritage studies and urban forest management plans.
- Provide opportunities for local residents to be active in parks and forests.
- Support local organizations in community greening initiatives.

**Be an active partner where you live, learn, work and play.
Participate in building healthy communities!**

For more information, refer to other fact sheets in this series or contact
York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933.
www.york.ca

