



Sustainable Pickering Year-in-Review 2024

Sustainable
PICKERING



City of
PICKERING

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Message from the Mayor



This year, we celebrate a remarkable milestone as Pickering marks 25 years as a city. From the moment we stepped into the new millennium, we embraced a future built on bold vision, smart planning, and a strong commitment to progress. That same determination continues to guide us as we move forward, shaping a greener, more resilient Pickering.

Sustainability is the foundation upon which we build our future. As one of Canada's fastest-growing cities, we are intentional in balancing growth with environmental responsibility, ensuring Pickering remains a place where innovation, opportunity, and community well-being go hand in hand. For two consecutive years, The Globe and Mail has named Pickering one of Canada's most liveable cities, underscoring our burgeoning reputation as a place where people want to live, work, and thrive.

The 2024 Sustainable Pickering Year-in-Review is more than a record of our progress. It is a blueprint for the future, showcasing our achievements in sustainability, innovation, and community-building while reinforcing the choices we must continue to make. Through thoughtful planning and responsible development, we are protecting our natural spaces, strengthening our economic foundation, and fostering a connected, engaged community.

I hope you enjoy this year's report and take the opportunity to learn more about the exciting programs and initiatives that make Pickering truly special. From the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, to the revitalized Waterfront Trail, to Take Pride in Pickering Day, these initiatives reflect our commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement.

Our journey is one of ambition, action, and collective success. As we look ahead, we do so with confidence, knowing Pickering is leading the way in sustainability and building a powerful legacy for the next 25 years and beyond.

Kevin Ashe
Mayor, City of Pickering

Message from the CAO



As the City of Pickering continues to advance its sustainability journey, I am proud to share our 2024 Sustainable Year in Review Report – an inspiring reflection of our collective progress toward a more livable, inclusive, and resilient city.

This past year was a remarkable one – marked by innovation, collaboration, and meaningful progress. Our Integrated Sustainable Design Standards remained a cornerstone of our planning and development review process, embedding forward-thinking technologies and practices that align with our vision for a more sustainable future. We were proud to see these efforts recognized externally, as the City of Pickering received a certificate of recognition from the Sustainable Housing Foundation for our leadership in advancing sustainable community design through the ISDS.

In collaboration with our community partners, we expanded tree planting efforts, supported local food resilience through vibrant farmers' markets and community gardens, and introduced new initiatives such as the Seed Library.

As well, over 2,600 volunteers participated in community clean-ups, and we saw strong engagement in our environmental webinars, reinforcing the importance of civic engagement in building a sustainable Pickering for generations to come.

These actions demonstrate how thoughtful design and grassroots engagement can work in harmony to strengthen ecosystems and enrich community life.

As outlined in our Corporate Strategic Plan, sustainability is not a single initiative, but a guiding principle that shapes every decision we make. We remain focused on building a sustainable, connected, and caring community through continuous innovation, responsible growth, and meaningful collaboration.

I invite you to explore this report in full to learn more about the important work underway – and how you, too, are part of Pickering's leadership in sustainability.

I extend my sincere thanks to Council for its continued support, to City staff, and Pickering's dedicated volunteers, partners, and community members who are helping to turn our shared vision into reality.

Marisa Carpino
Chief Administrative Officer, City of Pickering



Enhancing the Natural Environment

In 2024, Pickering expanded tree planting, pollinator habitats, and invasive species control to support biodiversity, shade opportunities, and healthier ecosystems in parks and natural spaces.



Valley Farm Ravine Project

To support urban tree canopy growth, the City collaborated with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to identify new planting opportunities through a desktop analysis. Valley Farm Ravine emerged as a priority site due to its existing canopy gaps. As part of the restoration effort, 100 bare root trees and 200 bare root shrubs were planted to strengthen and enhance the surrounding natural area.



Enhancing Parks and Boulevards

As part of the City's annual tree planting program, over 350 large caliper trees were planted across City boulevards and parks including: Douglas Park, Mitchell Park, Village East Park, Rick Johnson Memorial Park, Canadian Green, and Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. These efforts were completed to help increase tree canopy and shade opportunities around play-units and walkways.



Recreation & Parks Ten Year Plan

The 2024 - 2034 Recreation & Parks Ten Year Plan is a long-range planning study for the City of Pickering's recreation, parks, arts & culture facilities, programs, and services. The new Plan provides direction and guidance on how best to manage current needs and identifies service improvements and future infrastructure needs to support Pickering's growing community.



Backyard Tree Planting Program

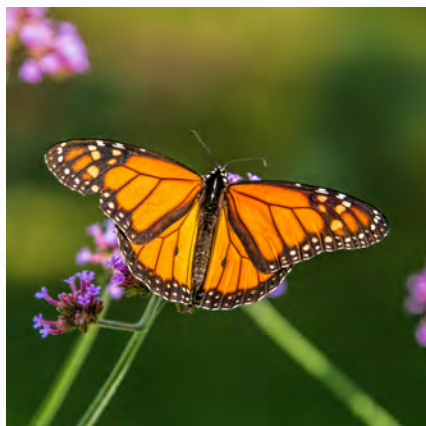
In partnership with Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), neighbouring municipalities, and the Region of Durham, the City completed its fourth year of the Backyard Tree Planting program. This program provides residents the opportunity to add native trees or shrubs to their property at a discounted rate. The program includes on-site consultation, free delivery and tree planting, as well as follow-up tree assessments. Some benefits from tree planting include urban heat island mitigation, improved air quality, carbon sequestration, stormwater infiltration, habitat creation for enhanced biodiversity, and improved aesthetics and noise reduction in neighbourhoods.



Bring Back the Salmon

The City, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the Pickering Public Library, supported a salmon hatchery at the Central Library. Patrons observed and learned about the Atlantic Salmon's lifecycle and the importance of biodiversity. The hatchery resulted in the release of 200 Atlantic Salmon into Duffins Creek. To date, the program has helped release almost 1,000 Atlantic Salmon into Duffins Creek.





Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Pollinators like butterflies, birds, and bees are essential to a healthy environment and sustainable food systems. In 2024, as a Leadership Circle member of the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, the City reaffirmed its commitment to protecting pollinator species by completing 12 targeted actions. These included for example, planting native plants, removing invasive species, distributing native seeds, engaging local garden groups, and running public education campaigns to raise awareness.

The City extends its thanks and appreciation to community garden volunteers, Dunbarton High School students, and the Toronto Conservation Youth Corps for their support in planting and maintaining pollinator gardens across Pickering.

Invasive Species Management

The City advanced its invasive species control efforts in 2024, focusing on phragmites. Targeted spot treatments were conducted along Sandy Beach Road, Montgomery Road, and Brock Ridge Park, with TRCA leading treatment at the park for a second year. Staff treated areas using native seed blends and completed a full inventory of phragmites in City parks. Future control efforts will focus on stormwater management ponds.



Take Pride in Pickering

As part of the City's Take Pride in Pickering Day initiative, community cleanups and tree planting events were held in both the spring and fall. In the spring, over 120 volunteers participated in a two-hour event at Alex Robertson Park, where they collected litter and planted 400 trees. In the fall, the City partnered with Ontario Power Generation (OPG), 10,000 Trees, and the TRCA to host an additional planting event, at which 100 volunteers did a community cleanup and planted 100 trees and 200 aquatic plants.

These events were delivered through Environmental Stewardship Pickering - a collaborative initiative between the City of Pickering, OPG, and TRCA.

Reopening of Revitalized Waterfront Trail

In 2024, the City of Pickering reopened the revitalized Waterfront Trail at Bruce Handscomb Memorial Park, in partnership with TRCA and Trans Canada Trail (TCT). The \$765,000 project addressed long-standing safety and erosion concerns with a new accessible asphalt path, upgraded lighting, erosion controls, and native plantings. Supported by grants from TCT and TRCA, the improved trail enhances safety, accessibility, and connection to the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.

“With the generous support of the Trans Canada Trail and in collaboration with our valued partner, the City of Pickering, the trail at Bruce Handscomb Memorial Park has undergone significant upgrades to improve safety and accessibility, including essential erosion mitigation and habitat restoration measures.”

John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer, TRCA



Fostering Community Engagement

In 2024, hands-on programs, workshops, and civic events connected residents to local sustainability efforts and encouraged broad community participation.



Winter Wonderland

The City, in partnership with OPG, TRCA, and PineRidge Arts Council, hosted a free family workshop event to kick-off the winter. At this event, 50 attendees had the opportunity to paint a wooden ornament, make a wreath from natural materials, explore wildlife up-close, and more.



Everything Maple Syrup

The Everything Maple Syrup event was a hands-on educational program hosted by the City, TRCA, and the Pickering Public Library. Designed for children aged 6 to 12, the March Break event aimed to teach participants about the origins of maple syrup and the environmental significance of maple trees.



Earth Month

In celebration of Earth Month, the City of Pickering hosted a series of free educational webinars and workshops featuring expert guest speakers. Over 275 participants took part in sessions covering a range of sustainability and nature-focused topics, including rain gardens, seed saving, container vegetable gardening, and the birds of Pickering.



Pickering Prom Boutique

To support high school students with formal clothing for their prom and graduation, Pickering Public Library, hosted a Prom Boutique. The event encouraged residents to donate their gently used dresses, suits, and formal wear at the library, so that students could shop for free. Thanks to the community's generosity, the two-day event supported students to find a special outfit for their upcoming important day.



Community Litter Cleanups

The City of Pickering continues to support residents, schools, businesses, places of worship, and community groups in their efforts to help reduce litter and keep the community clean. The City provides cleanup supplies, including gloves and bags, and coordinates the disposal of collected waste. In 2024, over 2,665 volunteers participated in 50 community cleanups across the city through initiatives such as Pickering's 20-Minute Makeover, the Plastics & Litter Challenge, and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter.

"I have a lifelong commitment to cleaning up in the neighbourhood I live and want to encourage other residents and groups to do the same. Littering causes such destruction to the environment and there is no reason for it. We should all have respect for the land and our neighbours."

Madelyn Graetz
Litter Free Communities
Pickering is no place for littering!



Recycled Craft Fun

The City in partnership with the Pickering Public Library hosted the Recycled Craft Fun workshop at the George Ashe Library, engaging 43 children aged 6 to 10. Participants repurposed everyday recyclable materials like cardboard and plastic containers into creative crafts, learning about sustainability while having fun. The event inspired creativity and raised awareness about the importance of reusing materials.



Birds in Pickering

The City in partnership with TRCA and the Pickering Public Library hosted a Birds in Pickering workshop at the George Ashe Library, engaging 27 children aged 6 to 12. Participants designed and painted birdhouses while learning about local wildlife. The session also included a community cleanup activity, encouraging young residents to help care for local habitats.



Park Stewardship Program

The Park Stewardship program encourages businesses and community groups to help keep their local parks clean. As of 2024, 21 groups have become Park Stewards by committing to regular litter cleanups and promoting a positive image in their neighbourhood parks.



Civic Awards

The Civic Awards program recognize members of the Pickering community who have made significant contributions to the city.

The Environment Award was presented to We Grow Food for their leadership in advancing urban agriculture and building resilient local food systems. We Grow Food empowers residents through the creation of community gardens and educational programs.

Daniels Corporation was awarded the Sustainability Award for their Daniels FirstHome™ Pickering project, a compact, transit-oriented community featuring high-performance building materials, sustainable stormwater management, active transportation infrastructure, and community gardens to support food security and environmental stewardship.

Environmental Schools Grants

Established in 2019, the City of Pickering's Environmental Schools Grant provides funding to enhance student-led environmental projects. In 2024, the grant enabled nine local schools to undertake various initiatives.

Key projects included: creating butterfly garden boxes with native plants, installing community garden beds to grow flowers and food, and planting trees to provide shade. Schools also built outdoor learning environments using materials such as solar panels, wood, and garden beds. Students participated in seed-growing workshops with We Grow Food. Eco Ambassadors delivered interactive workshops on climate change, and additional materials were used to expand vegetable gardens and support outdoor learning.

"Having our students actively involved with the design and planting of the Butterfly Gardens provided real-life experiential learning about the importance of conservation and the value of every creature in the ecosystem around us. Our students absolutely loved this activity and we thank the City of Pickering for allowing us to make this happen!"

Elizabeth B. Phin Public School



Reducing Waste

In 2024, Pickering helped residents reduce waste through practical programs like battery recycling, compost giveaways, and textile diversion.



Battery Recycling Program

In 2024, the Battery Recycling program continued to offer residents convenient drop-off locations at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, East Shore Community Centre, George Ashe Library, and the Pickering Central Library. Through these efforts, 412 kilograms of batteries were collected and recycled responsibly.



Compost Giveaway and Bin Exchange

In 2024, the City partnered with the Region of Durham to host a well-attended compost and recycling bin exchange event. More than 640 participants took part, to swap out old bins, and pick up free compost for their gardens.

Textile Waste Diversion

The City of Pickering partnered with Diabetes Canada to implement a Textile Diversion Program in late 2023, reducing household waste. In the first year of the program, the community diverted over 8,600 kilograms of textiles. Bins are located at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex (arena entrance), Dunmoore Park, and Esplanade South (municipal parking lot).



Growing Urban Agriculture

In 2024, the City continued its commitment to urban agriculture by advancing its Action Plan and expanding opportunities for local food growing. Through new tools, partnerships, and community programs, Pickering is supporting a more resilient and locally connected community.



Pickering 55+ Plot to Plate Program

The 55+ Plot to Plate program supports healthy aging by helping seniors grow vegetables in raised garden plots and prepare nutritious meals. Hosted at the George Ashe Library & Community Centre, it promotes wellness, food literacy, and community connection.



Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market

The City of Pickering hosted another successful season of the Farmers' Market, helping residents connect with local farmers, bakers, artisans, and small businesses. Running for 17 weeks, the market welcomed approximately 2,400 visitors and supported 29 vendors. Residents also enjoyed weekly entertainment from local artists.

Thanks to strong community support, the Farmers Market earned 1st Place – Diamond Winner in the Ajax Pickering Readers' Choice Awards for the sixth consecutive year, highlighting its continued impact and popularity in the community.



Pickering Public Library - Seed Library

In February 2024, the Pickering Public Library launched a Seed Library at the George Ashe Branch, supported by the TD Friends of the Environment grant. The program encourages residents to borrow, grow, and return seeds, promoting local gardening, food security, and environmental stewardship. Community donations help replenish the seed supply each season, while volunteers assist with sorting and labelling. The Seed Library supports biodiversity, gardening, and food literacy in Pickering.



Pickering Museum Village - Gather & Grow Initiative

In 2024, Pickering Museum Village launched Gather & Grow, a travelling exhibit that explores the cultural, historical, and sustainable aspects of food. Featuring community-contributed stories and recipes, the exhibit highlights food's role in connecting people across generations and cultures. With stops at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex and Pickering Public Library, Gather & Grow celebrated local traditions, sustainable practices, and shared culinary heritage.



Valley Farm Community Garden Expansion

In 2024, the Valley Plentiful Community Garden received a major expansion to support urban agriculture and improve access for program participants, including the local food bank volunteers for weekly donation pickups. Located at Diana, Princess of Wales Park, the upgrades included a 13-car parking lot with accessible spaces, 3 raised garden beds, bike racks, and landscaping. The project enhances food security and affordability, and community connection in Pickering.

“Valley Plentiful Community Garden is pleased to support the local food bank. Our four food bank plots gave St. Paul's on the Hill Food Bank about 40 to 80 pounds of food twice a week for most of July to mid-September. We would like to thank the City of Pickering for the installation of the new parking lot next to the north gardens, three raised garden beds, bike racks, and for providing wood chips for our walkways.”

Bob Bracht

Chair of the Valley Plentiful Garden Committee



Becoming More Energy Efficient

In 2024, municipal retrofits reduced emissions, while energy workshops helped residents learn more about energy efficiency and how to reduce their own costs.



Energy Workshops

In 2024, the City hosted a series of free workshops to educate residents and staff on a variety of energy-efficient home upgrades. Over 100 participants learned about incentive programs from Durham Greener Homes, Enbridge, Save on Energy, and others. To support continued action, the City maintains a list of residential and commercial incentives at pickering.ca/energysavings, helping the community take advantage of available financial support when doing improvements.



Energy Retrofits

The City has been increasing its energy efficiency efforts across its facilities. Highlights in 2024 included:

- Replacing the Fire Station 5 boiler, resulting in decreased natural gas usage.
- Awarding the construction for the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex and Civic Complex variable speed heating circulators.
- Completing the design for the George Ashe Library and Community Centre energy recovery ventilator and hybrid heat pump units.
- Completing the design for the East Shore Community Centre air conditioning and heating unit replacements, including a new hybrid heat pump.



Looking Towards the Future

Pickering advances sustainability in planning and development by implementing sustainable design standards, updating by-laws to clarify definitions and reduce barriers, and launching a new Green Builder Award in 2024.



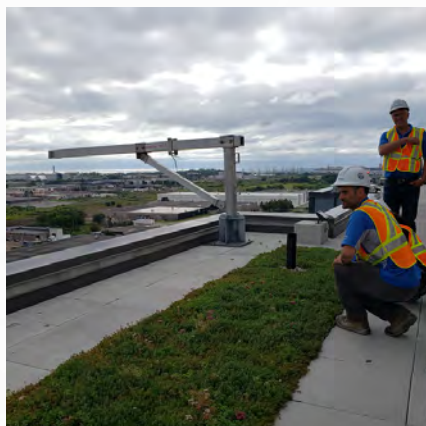
Modernizing Sustainability Tools to Support Sustainability

In 2024, the City strengthened its planning framework to align with the ISDS. Through Official Plan Amendment 23-005/P, Council required all new development to meet ISDS criteria. Updates to the draft Zoning By-law introduced definitions for green roofs, solar structures, and bike parking, and removed height barriers for green roof parapets, supporting more efficient, climate-resilient development.



Continued Rollout of the Integrated Sustainable Design Standards

Adopted by Council in 2022, the Integrated Sustainable Design Standards (ISDS) replaced the 2007 Sustainable Design Guidelines. Since then it has provided a framework to embed best practices into development projects, subject to Provincial legislative requirements, as may be amended from time-to-time. The ISDS is grounded in seven core principles including education, energy & resilience, neighbourhood, land & nature, transportation, waste management, and water. This approach helps the City to encourage innovative sustainable design, technology, and construction practices in the community.



Using the ISDS to Help with Green Building Certifications

The ISDS checklist helps new developments in Pickering meet major green building certifications across Canada by promoting energy efficiency, water conservation, and resilient design early in the planning process. This streamlines certification for projects such as an office building and warehouse along Bayly Street pursuing Building Owners and Managers Association Building Environmental Standards (BOMA BEST) certification through energy-efficient design and renewable systems. Similarly, Mattamy's Seaton Whitevale development is targeting Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) Net Zero Ready certification by incorporating heat pumps, energy recovery ventilators, and solar-ready wiring.

ISDS supporting certifications such as:

- BOMA BEST
- Canada Green Building Council Zero Carbon Certification (CaGBC Zero)
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Canada (LEED Canada)
- EnerGuide Rating System by Natural Resources Canada
- CBHA Net Zero Home Labelling Program
- Home Energy Rating System (HERS) and HERS H2O



Green Builder Award Category

Introduced in 2024, as part of the Civic Awards program, the Green Builder Award celebrates development projects that show outstanding commitment to sustainable design, energy efficiency, and environmental innovation. The award will help highlight those who lead by example, helping to advance green building practices and align new development with the City's sustainability objectives.



2024 Tree Protection By-law Update

In 2024, the City adopted Tree Protection By-law No. 8073/24 to better preserve Pickering's urban tree canopy and protect environmentally sensitive areas. The updated by-law includes improved definitions, revised permit processes, and updated fees and fines, making it easier to enforce. It prohibits the injury, destruction, or removal of trees 2.5 centimetres or more in diameter within designated Tree Protection Areas without a permit.



Ontario Stakeholder Council Durham Event

In 2024, the Ontario Stakeholder Council hosted a regional event in Pickering focused on retrofitting existing buildings for climate resiliency. With over 80 attendees, the session featured insights from Sustainable Buildings Canada, the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction, and the Independent Electricity System Operator on energy-efficient upgrades and resilient design strategies. Breakout discussions explored municipal tools like Community Improvement Plans and engaging stakeholders in established subdivisions to support retrofits.

"Recognized by the Globe and Mail as one of the 'Most Livable Cities in Canada,' Pickering is developing a strong reputation as a preferred destination for both new residents and businesses alike."

Mayor Kevin Ashe



In 2025, the City of Pickering will continue its longstanding commitment to create a more sustainable community. Join us on the journey to become one of the most sustainable cities in Canada. There are many fun and inspiring ways to make Pickering a better place socially, environmentally, and economically.

To learn how you can get involved, visit: pickering.ca/sustainable.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact the City's Sustainability staff at sustainability@pickering.ca

Alternate formats available upon request at 905.683.7575 customer@pickering.ca