



Council Strategic Priorities 2020 - 2022

Interim Report





The City of Richmond Hill is pleased to present the 2020-2022 Council Strategic Priorities Interim Report.

In November 2020, we worked with input from the community to develop Strategic Priorities that would set Richmond Hill on a solid path to recovery through the pandemic. From successfully advocating for the funding required to bring the much-anticipated Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) by 2030/2031, to reducing property tax increases and continually striving for ways to lower spending, we have accomplished many important initiatives by focusing on our four Strategic Priorities.

As we continue to rise to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain committed to providing exceptional public service to the residents of Richmond Hill. The recent announcement of the 400 new jobs to be created by the new Amazon Canada Delivery Station, along with their commitment to transition their fleet to fully electric by 2030, is just the latest example of how Richmond Hill remains a world-class municipality.

Whether striving for a greener future, or building a community that makes everyone feel at home, we are able to accomplish more by working together. This interim report highlights what we've achieved by working with the community.



Balancing Growth and Green

Recognizing the critical balance between economic development and environmental protection, Richmond Hill is committed to the stewardship of green spaces such as wetlands, parks and trails and longer-term sustainability planning and climate action initiatives, alongside decisions that promote responsible economic intensification and prosperity.

Sustainable Design at the Oak Ridges Library

In early 2021, [Richmond Hill](#) earned a [Silver LEED®](#) (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for Richmond Hill Public Library's Oak Ridges branch. This designation recognizes the building's sustainable design features and reduction in energy consumption.



Silver LEED® certification for Richmond Hill Public Library's new Oak Ridges branch demonstrates how functional, state-of-the-art design can be sustainable

- The City removed over 65,000 Lymantria Dispar Dispar (LDD) moth egg masses on 81 streets. An additional 94 trees have been treated to help control the spread of this invasive species, minimizing the impact on our urban trees.
- Through the Community Stewardship Program, the City continued its valuable partnerships with: Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), Ontario Streams, and the TRCA.



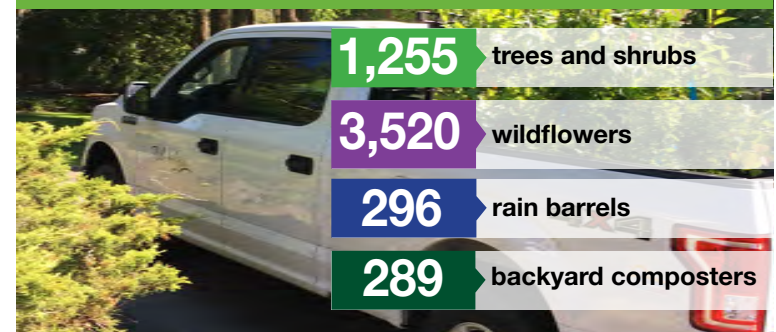
- From December 2020 through September 2021, the organizations combined to plant approximately 6,600 trees across Richmond Hill supported by \$100,500 in funding from York Region through the Greening Action Partnership Fund and Urban Tree Planting to Mitigate Extreme Heat.

Urban Forest Management Plan Initiatives

Our [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) provides a comprehensive approach for managing our urban forest. Recent successes include:

- More than 639 residents purchased 1,255 trees and shrubs, 3,520 wildflowers, 296 rain barrels, and 289 backyard composters as part of the 2021 Healthy Yards program.
- To protect significant and historical trees, the City modified and ensured appropriate setbacks to: 70 Site Alteration Permit Grading Plans, 16 Zoning By-law Amendments and 30 Minor Variance requests.

More than **620** residents purchased





Richmond Hill's ambitious Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) aims to build resiliency and reach net zero emissions by 2050

Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

- In mid-2021, Council unanimously approved its first [Community Energy and Emissions Plan](#) (CEEP), which illustrates Richmond Hill's path to a low carbon future. The plan:
 - outlines actions and opportunities for Richmond Hill to improve climate resiliency,
 - identifies actions to reduce Richmond Hill's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with a net-zero target by 2050, and
 - recognizes ways to conserve energy and explore related economic opportunities.
- [Council adopted the Climate Change Conversation Toolkit](#): A Guide to Talking to People in Your Life about Climate Change. Co-developed with members of the community, the Toolkit provides information and tips for local climate action that aligns with City priorities.
- In February 2021, Richmond Hill released its [Environmental Scorecard](#), providing a snapshot of the City's environmental progress and achievements. For example:
 - achieving one of the highest waste diversion rates in Canada,
 - completion of the Richmond Hill portion of the Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail which benefited from over \$600,000 in provincial funding, and
 - increasing the number of community gardens by over 119% since 2015.
- Conversion of over 13,000 outdated streetlights, park and parking lot lights to state-of-the-art LED lighting. These retrofits save the City over 1 million kWh/year, or 1 gigawatt of electricity, reducing energy consumption by over 60%.

Partnering and Engaging with our Community

- In January, employees participated in a 'takeover' of the Bayview Secondary School (BSS) Eco-Team's Instagram account, sharing information about the City's environmental programs and career paths.
- We also contributed to Our Lady Queen of the World High School geography project where staff provided students with local municipal input and feedback as they tackle real-world sustainability issues.
- We continued our partnership with Youth Challenge International (YCI) "Innovate MY Future Program," which recruits and trains GTHA youth to create and implement local climate projects.





Recognizing Richmond Hill

- Award of Distinction from the [2020 So\(cial\) Good Design Awards](#), presented by the Association of Registered Graphic Designers for the Resilient Richmond Hill video, for the use of innovative perspectives to help invite meaningful action and social change.
- Best Web GIS Award by BeSpatial/URISA Ontario, the premier geospatial and information non-profit organization in Ontario, for the [Resilient Richmond Hill Story Map](#).
- In March, Richmond Hill was one of 15 cities in Canada to receive the “Tree City of the World” global designation for our commitment to growing and maintaining our urban forest of 2.6 million trees and shrubs.

Welcoming New Opportunity

Targeted to open in 2023, Richmond Hill recently announced the development of a new 20,800 square-metre [Amazon Canada Delivery Station](#). This facility is expected to bring 400 new jobs to the City, including over 200 full-time positions, with a commitment by Amazon to transition to a fully electric fleet by 2030.



Richmond Hill
will welcome
400
new jobs
along with
Amazon
Canada in
2023

The City continues work to reduce single-use items to help make municipal establishments and the neighbourhood more environmentally friendly.

Planning for a Green Future

- **Official Plan Update**
 - Over 580 survey respondents, 263 attendees to 7 workshops and over 300 individuals participated at two Open House events for the [Official Plan Update](#).
- **Creation of a new Comprehensive Zoning By-law**
 - We have received over 100 comments and 104 requests for notifications, had approximately 2248 survey respondents and engaged 74 stakeholders via the [Zone Richmond Hill](#) webpage.
- **Reviewing Richmond Hill's Parks and Recreation**
 - The updated [Parks, Recreation and Culture Plans](#) will outline strategies and actions to support residents' evolving needs. In July, 1160 residents were engaged through a survey that will help shape the future of these services.



Official
Plan
Update

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Fiscal Responsibility

As COVID-19 continues to impact those who live and work in Richmond Hill and beyond, Council maintained a focus on fiscal responsibility to help the city emerge from the pandemic in a strong financial position while also supporting residents and businesses.

Controlling Costs during COVID-19

- Due to COVID-19 closures, the City was able to generate a net savings of over \$1.75 million as of April 2021. These savings are a direct result of:
 - electricity consumption decreasing by 30.5%,
 - installation of state-of-the-art equipment to reduce energy usage, and
 - replacing outdated lighting infrastructure.

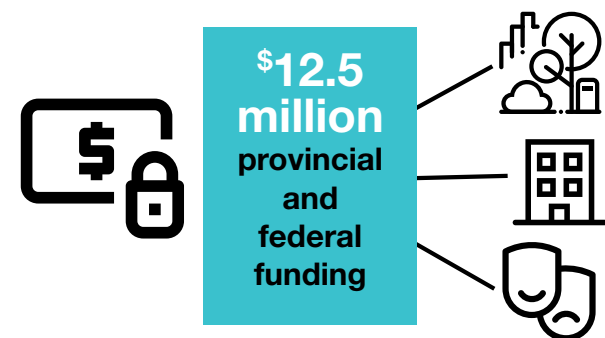


Asset Management Planning

- Approved by Council in June, the [Asset Management Plan](#) (AMP) will maximize the value of the City's Core assets over time through evidence-based capital planning (grounded in optimal investment strategies, service and risk considerations) to help prioritize and manage the repair of more than 300,000 infrastructure assets (such as roads, watermain, community centres, etc.) that deliver critical services to the community.

Grants

- Securing over \$12.5 million in provincial and federal funding to offset the operational impact of COVID-19 and provide critical infrastructure projects to the residents of Richmond Hill. For example:
 - \$700,000 through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) to fund the Humber Flats Mallard Marsh and Phillips Park Revitalization projects, providing enhanced access to park trails, upgraded playground equipment and park furniture.



0%
tax
increase
in
2021

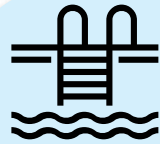


Improving the Efficiency of our Operations

- Staff have conducted over 25 continuous improvement projects which streamlined while enhancing efficiency, resulting in an estimated \$30,000 savings and reduced customer wait time by an average of 50%. Some examples include:
 - The swimming pool permit process, which saves customers up to 32 days for 60% of the applications, resulting in an estimated savings of \$500 per application,
 - An optimization review of the Theatre and Recreation and Culture Division, resulting in approximately \$260,000 worth of savings in the 2022 Operating Budget and \$57,000 in new revenue.



\$30,000 savings
50% reduced wait time



\$500 savings per application



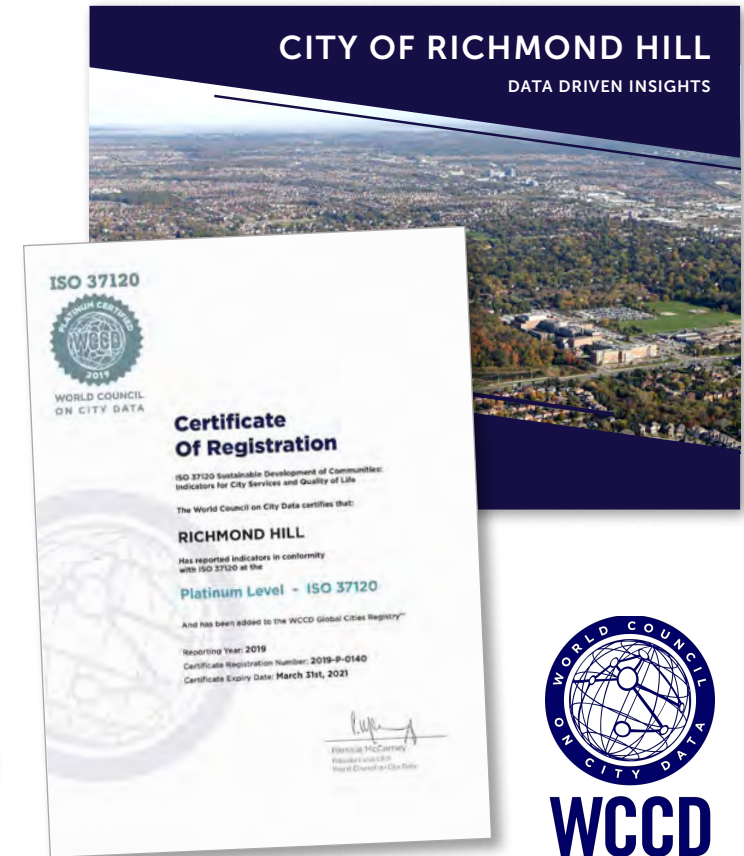
\$260,000 savings in 2022 Operating Budget
\$57,000 in new revenue

Richmond Hill received a **platinum certification**

for the second consecutive year from the World Council on City Data

Leading the way for evidence-based decision-making

- In June 2021, the City earned the highest level of ISO 37120 Certification from the [World Council on City Data \(WCCD\)](#) for the second year in a row as part of the “Data for Canadian Cities Pilot Project.” This platinum certification demonstrates the City’s commitment to making decisions grounded in data and evidence.



Work continues on the Revenue Generation and Brand Partnerships Initiatives and the Investment Attraction Strategy.



Strong Sense of Belonging

Prioritizing a desire for everyone to feel welcome in Richmond Hill, with a commitment to placemaking, is integral for those who call Richmond Hill home. Numerous initiatives have been undertaken to bolster a strong sense of belonging.

A Community for Everyone

The City has undertaken an [Age-Friendly Community initiative](#) to ensure Richmond Hill is an inclusive community for all ages. Stakeholder engagement began with a survey in mid-June, garnering over 800 responses which will contribute to the City's needs assessment. Additionally, there have been 8 focus groups held with more than 50 participants between July and September to speak directly with Richmond Hill's 55+ demographic.

[Richmond Hill Public Library](#) has worked to change subject headings to reflect current practices, resulting in the update of over 350 Indigenous subject headings, affecting over 2000 materials, including changing the word "Indian" to "Indigenous," "Eskimos" to "Inuit," and revising names of First Nations groups to eliminate all reference to colonial labelling.

Age-Friendly Community



The City introduced a monthly e-newsletter, [My Richmond Hill](#), to share the latest news on City services, innovations and accomplishments. The e-newsletter has over 800 subscribers.

We have also introduced a print newsletter that is mailed to all Richmond Hill households twice a year to keep residents informed and engaged.



Public engagement for the Age-Friendly Community initiative included over **800** survey responses and more than **50** participants in focus groups



Richmond Hill Centre is projected to accommodate
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Helping Businesses Bounce Back

- Council approved the establishment of a [Recover Richmond Hill](#) task force early in the pandemic to develop active support to local businesses. Since December 2020, Richmond Hill has successfully delivered several business support programs, encouraging residents to shop local. As well, the City:
 - helped local restaurants by extending the outdoor patio by-law until January 2022, and authorized 27 new patios since July 2020
 - conducted a webinar Series to support businesses impacted by COVID-19
 - established an online Resource Hub for support programs which has received 1749 unique site visits since December 2020
 - 252 people have attended the Recover Richmond Hill series and 638 people attended other general webinars
 - administered \$95,000 in business recovery grants to date which has benefited 19 small businesses in Richmond Hill
 - launched Richmond Hill's "Shop Here" program which resulted in 146 businesses receiving support
 - conducted the "#ShopRichmondHill" (Shop Local) contest in March of this year, partnering with the Richmond Hill BIA and the Richmond Hill Board of Trade. The contest received 138 submissions from web and social media channels, resulting in 11 winners and had a total social media reach of 79,580.
- In 2020, four Community Improvement Plan Grant applications were approved for façade improvements and building renovations to revitalize the Downtown Village. The total value of the projects was \$1.2 million, of which \$229,000 was jointly funded by the City and Province.



Richmond Hill Centre

With a goal of being a place for residents to work, live and enjoy, the area at Yonge Street and Highway 7 will be a connectivity hub that will intertwine Richmond Hill with the other urban areas across the GTA. [Richmond Hill Centre](#) is projected to accommodate 16,500 new jobs and 28,000 new residents. Since March 2021, significant work has taken place. For example, the City hosted a third Public Open House virtually on May 26, attracting over 140 attendees. The valuable feedback provided by the public will help inform a series of zoning exercises, site plans and plan of subdivisions.



Richmond Hill continues work on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative, as well as the Official Plan Update, to greater enhance our strong sense of belonging.



Getting Around the City

As Richmond Hill grows and develops, ease of movement around the city will be critical.

Yonge North Subway Extension: Part of the Largest Transit Expansion in Canadian History

In May 2021 the federal government [committed \\$2.4 billion](#) to fund the [Yonge North Subway Extension \(YNSE\)](#) subway. This is in addition to the nearly \$17 billion already invested by the province. As a result, Council has prioritized promoting multiple transportation interconnections and advocating for the YNSE. The extension of the subway will reduce travel times between Yonge Street and Langstaff Road to downtown Toronto by as much as 22 minutes.

Yonge BRT in Richmond Hill Began Service in December 2020

The [Yonge Street Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\)](#) connects with the YNSE to create a harmonized commuter experience. To date, we have improved the pedestrian experience by upgrading sidewalks and streetlights, implemented bike lines, and added dedicated Viva bus lanes on Yonge Street. Other enhancements to better the overall commuter experience are scheduled to be complete by the end of 2021.

The federal
and provincial
governments
committed
more than
**\$19
billion**
to the
Yonge North
Subway
Extension





New Bloomington GO Station

In June, the City officially welcomed its newest GO Transit Station, [Bloomington GO](#), located at Highway 404 and Bloomington Road. Owned and operated by Metrolinx, this station extends the Richmond Hill line and provides more local and intercity transit options, bettering the connectivity to York Region. Bloomington GO Station includes:

- heated platform shelters and a platform snowmelt system
- a three-level parking structure and a passenger drop-off and pick-up area
- a bike lane and bike shelters with direct access to the platform.



Wayfinding in the Downtown Village

The Downtown Village is enjoyed by residents across Richmond Hill. To ensure that those who wish to visit have the most seamless experience possible, new wayfinding signage is being installed in the historic village district. Not only will this initiative help identify places of interest and ease navigation, it will encourage people to visit the downtown core, supporting revitalization and small business growth.



Work continues on the City's Official Plan Update and Transportation Master Plan with community consultations currently in progress.



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