



Project Overview

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to develop a strategy with implementation tools to guide City programs and activities for the protection, enhancement, restoration and expansion of natural areas and the urban forest across Mississauga.

STRATEGY CONTEXT

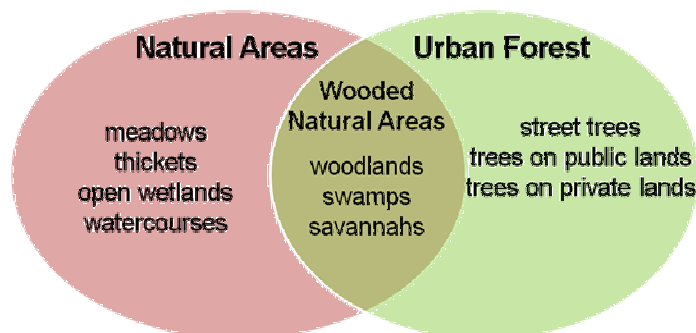
The City of Mississauga has a long history of natural heritage protection that has evolved with changing attitudes to the environment and the growing recognition of the importance of preserving our natural heritage.

The Natural Areas System (which includes Natural Areas, Linkages, Special Management Areas and Residential Woodlands) covers 9.5% of the city (more than 2700 hectares or 6700 acres). The City has been conducting regular assessments of its natural areas since 1996. Key trends identified over this period include:

- losses of natural area (particularly upland wooded areas) but overall gains in the system (largely as a result of municipal acquisitions and boundary revisions to natural areas),
- an increase in the number of naturalization projects undertaken by the City,
- declines in the overall quality of remaining natural areas, largely related to impacts associated with urbanization, and
- maintenance and enhancement of north-south connectivity (primarily along the river and creek corridors), but east-west ecological connectivity continues to be limited.

The City of Mississauga has recently partnered with Toronto Region Conservation Authority, Credit River Conservation, Peel Region, the City of Brampton and the Town of Caledon to develop an Urban Forest Strategy for the Region and an Urban Forest Study for Mississauga. These studies report that the city contains about 2.1 million trees that provide about 15% canopy cover (including treed natural areas). This canopy cover:

- is not distributed uniformly as there tends to be more large trees in older neighbourhoods,
- includes more than 230 species of trees, but is dominated by maple and ash species
- includes mostly trees that are in good health and of small diameter





PHASE 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

VALUING NATURAL AREAS AND THE URBAN FOREST IN MISSISSAUGA

STRUCTURAL OR REPLACEMENT VALUE OF ALL TREES IN THE CITY: Estimated at \$1.4 Billion

<p>ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change mitigation • Air quality improvements (\$4.8 million/year) • Reductions in local temperatures on hot days and related heat island effects • Moderation of storm water flows • Provision of habitat for plants and wildlife 	<p>ECONOMIC BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased property values • Enhancement of commercial areas • Reduced heating and cooling costs • Supportive of tourism • Reduced demand on engineered storm water management
<p>COMMUNITY BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better quality of life • Supportive of active living • Supportive of community building • Supportive of education and recreation 	<p>PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH VALUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection from ultraviolet radiation • Stress reduction • Improved focus and mental responsiveness • Supports physical activities outdoors

PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Mississauga has recently finalized a number of higher level planning documents that provide both support and guidance for this Strategy.

- The City's **2009 Strategic Plan** provides overall vision and direction for the City, and also identifies specific actions to help implement this Plan. The Plan has five strategic pillars, the most relevant to this project being the living green pillar which speaks to conserving, enhancing and connecting the natural environment.
- The City's **2011 Official Plan** includes a comprehensive policy framework for its Green System, which includes natural areas and the urban forest. A review that considers these policies in the context of current provincial policies, regional policies, conservation authority initiatives, and progressive examples from elsewhere is part of this Strategy.
- The **2009 Future Directions Master Plan for Parks and Natural Area** highlights the importance of parks and natural areas in an urban setting. In addition to a specific recommendation to undertake this study, this Plan identifies natural areas as a high priority for municipal purchase, and recommends improving the Natural Areas System through strategic naturalization and sustainable management practices. It also emphasizes the importance of outreach, engagement and building partnerships.
- The **2012 Living Green Master Plan** identifies 49 actions in three categories: "to set an example", "to encourage others", "to compel others". Key actions directly related to this Plan include developing targets for natural areas and the urban forest, developing an invasive species and restoration strategy, a number of outreach and stewardship tools, and considering the appropriateness of some kind of City by-law for its valleylands.

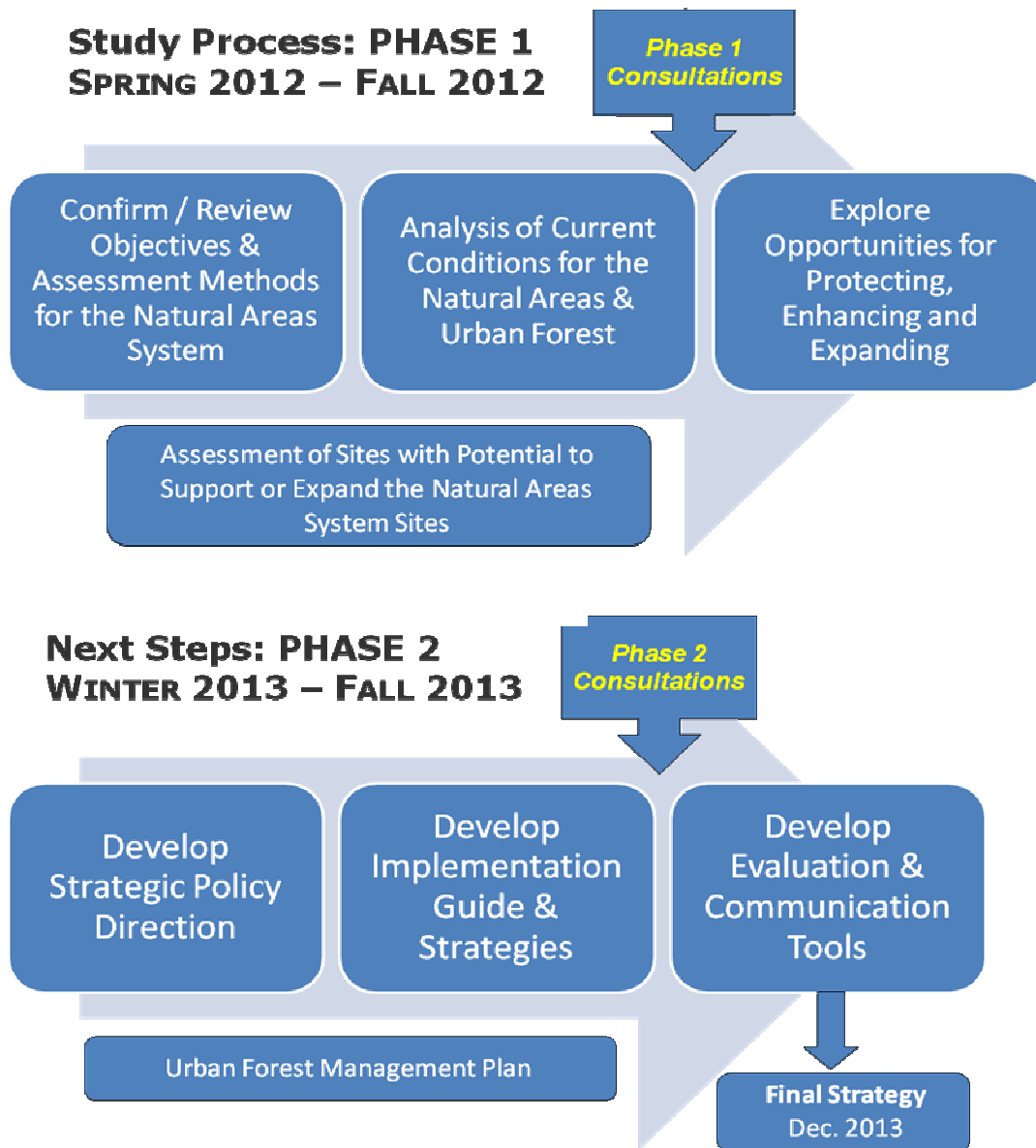
The **Credit River Parks Strategy**, which is underway, seeks opportunities for the land in order to develop a strategy that will align current City initiatives with the preservation and enhancement of the Credit River parklands.





Strategy Process and Timelines

The Natural Heritage & Urban Forest Strategy (NH&UFS) study was initiated in April 2012 and is expected to be completed by December 2013. Input from stakeholders and the public is being sought now and will be sought again after the Draft Strategy is developed.





Challenges and Opportunities

Sustaining natural areas and the urban forest in an urban landscape presents many challenges.

CHALLENGES

- Competition with intensification and infill
- Stressors related to climate change
- Vulnerability to pest and disease infestations
- Increasing recreational demands and pressures
- Need for increased funding for the maintenance, restoration and care of city-owned natural assets and green infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES

- Better protection, enhancement and expansion through the planning process
- Strategic enhancement and expansion of natural areas and the urban forest to improve their resilience to stressors (e.g., climate change, pests)
- Use of new technologies to “green” hardscapes (e.g., green roofs)
- Creative management of parks and natural areas to balance access with protection
- Making the maintenance and care of City-owned natural assets and green infrastructure a budgetary priority
- Pursuing outreach, stewardship and partnerships

This Strategy seeks to identify a combination of strategic planning initiatives, management approaches, and targeted programs and initiatives to help address many of these challenges.

How can you provide input?

1. Complete the Comment Form available online at the project website at: www.mississauga.ca/naturalheritage
2. Attend one of our project **Open Houses on December 6, 2012** at the Living Arts Centre (4141 Living Arts Drive, 2nd Floor, Bank of Montreal Room) from 2:00 to 4:00 pm (presentation at 3:00 pm) or 6:30 to 8:30 pm (presentation at 7:30 pm)
3. Email natural.heritage@mississauga.ca to be added to our project mailing list, and check our project website for updates, so that you can review and comment on the Draft Strategy when it is released in Spring of 2013.

For more information

Current information on the study is posted at www.mississauga.ca/naturalheritage.

For more information write to natural.heritage@mississauga.ca or phone (905) 615.3200 x 4345.