

## Ravine Strategy 2026 Implementation Update

**Date:** February 10, 2026

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry and General Manager, Parks and Recreation

**Wards:** All

### SUMMARY

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Toronto's ravines are one of the city's most important natural assets. They provide \$822 million annually in ecological and recreational services, support biodiversity, house critical grey and green infrastructure, and offer essential spaces for recreation and well-being. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents to the 2015 Ravine Strategy survey agreed that ravines are vital to their quality of life.

City Council adopted the Ravine Strategy (the "Strategy") in 2017 ([2017.EX27.8](#)) as a coordinated, long-term approach to protect, manage, and celebrate Toronto's ravine system. Since the 2020 Ravine Strategy Implementation report ([2020.EX12.1](#)), the City, working with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and numerous partners, has significantly advanced restoration, community engagement, and capital investment.

An initial update on the implementation of the Ravine Strategy was provided in 2022. As per Council direction, this report provides a second update on implementation of the Ravine Strategy and outlines:

- Progress on key actions and guiding principles, including expanded community-led engagement and stewardship
- Advancement of the Loop Trail and the Ravine Campaign
- Capital investments supported by intergovernmental funding and coordinated planning, and,
- International recognition of Toronto's leadership in nature-based solutions

Key achievements since 2020 include:

- 3,760 ha of land restored, including management of invasive species
- 521 tonnes of garbage and metal removed from 681 ha of ravine land
- 181 students engaged through employment and training programs
- 265 Ravine Days outdoor and virtual events delivered
- Over 20,000 participants engaged in City and partner events

- 16 capital projects delivered (such as wetland restoration, multi-use trail upgrades, wayfinding), totalling \$12.3 million (\$10 million in federal and provincial grants and \$2.3 million from the City)
- Capital constraints in Priority Investment Areas reduced from \$104.9 million to \$50.2 million (2026), through increased intergovernmental and City investment

These accomplishments reflect the Strategy's approach: coordinated action, strong partnerships, and shared stewardship across divisions, communities, and organizations.

Looking ahead, the City will continue to protect, maintain, and enhance Toronto's ravine system so residents and visitors can connect with these vital natural spaces. Achieving this vision requires the ongoing leadership and support of multiple City Divisions and sustained collaboration with TRCA, Indigenous partners, external organizations, and engaged residents.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry (ECF) and General Manager, Parks and Recreation (PR) recommend that:

1. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry to negotiate and execute an agreement with Park People on behalf of the City to implement the InTO the Ravines Program for a term expiring on December 31, 2026, renewable at the Executive Director's sole option (and subject to annual budget approval) for up to two additional terms of one year each, expiring on December 31, 2028, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Executive Director and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to accept third-party funds and donations raised through the Loop Trail fundraising campaign, and to contribute the accepted funds and donations to the Loop Trail Budget and Plan for the purpose of capital improvements to advance the Loop Trail project.
3. City Council authorize the permanent implementation of the Community-led Restoration Program by Environment, Climate and Forestry Division substantially as outlined in section two of this report (February 10, 2026) from the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry and the General Manager, Parks and Recreation.
4. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry, or their designate, during the life of the Community-led Restoration Program authorized in Part 3, to execute and enter into agreements with organizations who have applied and been accepted to participate in the Community-led Restoration Program outlined in this report (February 10, 2026) from the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry and General Manager, Parks and Recreation, each with terms and conditions acceptable to

the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry and each in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor.

5. City Council authorize the City's participation in Cities With Nature, an initiative that recognizes and enhances the value of nature in and around cities across the world, including the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry submission of an application for the City to participate.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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In 2025, Urban Forestry (UF) transitioned from the Parks and Recreation Division (PR) to the Environment, Climate and Forestry (ECF) Division. In 2026 all budgets assigned to UF will be fully integrated with ECF. Trail-related capital work, including wayfinding and state-of-good-repair for multi-use trails, remains with PR.

The 2026 Operating Budget and 2026–2035 Capital Budget and Plan include \$83.3 million for Ravine Strategy implementation:

- \$2.9M in ECF's 2026 Operating Budget
- \$0.7M in PR's 2026 Operating Budget
- \$5.0M in ECF's 2026-2035 Capital Budget and Plan (Ravine Strategy initiatives)
- \$74.7M in PR's 2026–2035 Capital Budget and Plan across 49 projects, including \$14.8M remaining in federal grants

The total \$3.6M 2026 Operating Budget supports:

- \$0.7M for litter picking
- \$2.1M for invasive species management, including in Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs)
- \$0.3M for student internships, InTO the Ravines, and Indigenous engagement
- \$0.5M to support additional volunteer engagement and stewardship through the Community-led Restoration Program as directed by City Council through the 2025 Budget ([2025.BU8.1](#))

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

## **RECONCILIATION AND EQUITY IMPACT**

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The City of Toronto values social equity and inclusion and aims to improve the quality of life for residents through the provision of a ravine system that is welcoming and accessible.

Even a modest increase in access to good quality greenspace has been proven to improve the health of residents. Evidence suggests that the health benefits of greenspace in areas near vulnerable populations, including those living on low incomes, racialized and Indigenous groups and seniors, are more pronounced.

The City of Toronto is committed to reducing barriers and ensuring equitable, safe access to ravines for all Toronto residents, through City-led engagement programs and partnerships, such as InTO the Ravines and the Ravine Strategy's Priority Investment Areas. The City is also committed to incorporating both western and Indigenous knowledge in protecting and reimagining our ravines and will continue to identify opportunities to create authentic and ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities.

The City of Toronto funds three key community-focused programs through the Ravine Strategy that are open to all Toronto residents, with additional outreach directed toward Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) and equity-deserving groups to reduce barriers to participation. All three initiatives include Indigenous knowledge-sharing or training within their programming. Participants in the InTO the Ravines program are required to organize one to two community events, many of which seek to incorporate Indigenous knowledge keepers as part of what they share with their community.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on February 11, 2025, City Council as a part of Item 2025.MPB27.1 entitled "2025 Operating and Capital Budget" adopted an increase in the 2025 PR Operating Budget to allow for the hiring of two new permanent staff positions to support volunteer engagement and stewardship programs that focus on restoration and invasive species management in Toronto's ravines.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.MPB27.1>

At its meeting on June 15 and 16, 2022, City Council as part of Item 2022.IE30.9 entitled "Ravine Strategy Implementation Update" adopted the Ravine Strategy Implementation Update.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.IE30.9>

At its meeting on May 25, 2021, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee as a part of Item 2021.IE22.4 entitled "Increasing Engagement in Ravines through Partnerships" directed staff to develop an unsupervised volunteer framework and launch the Toronto Nature Stewards pilot program.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.IE22.4>

At its meeting on January 29, 2020, City Council as a part of Item 2020.EX12.1 entitled "Ravine Strategy Implementation" adopted the key next steps to implement the Ravine Strategy over the next ten years and directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, the General Manager, Toronto Water and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to report back every three years on the advancement of the Ravine Strategy's actions.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EX12.1>

At its meeting on October 2, 3, and 4, 2017, City Council as a part of Item 2017.EX27.8 entitled "Toronto Ravine Strategy" adopted the Draft Toronto Ravine Strategy. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaltmHistory.do?item=2017.EX27.8>

## COMMENTS

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### 1. Background

Toronto's ravine system stretches more than 300 kilometres and covers 11,000 hectares, representing 17 percent of the city's land area. More than half is publicly owned parkland, with the remainder held by public institutions and private property owners, including about 30,000 private addresses. The ravines provide an estimated \$822 million each year in ecological and recreational benefits, including nature-based recreation and improved public health.

Ravines are among Toronto's most important natural landscapes. They contain forests, wetlands, and floodplains, including 87 percent of the city's Environmentally Significant Areas. They provide habitat for many species, including those that depend on global bird migration routes.

The ravines also form a core part of the city's natural infrastructure. They filter and convey stormwater, contain a large portion of Toronto's tree canopy, and house essential grey infrastructure such as utilities, buried sewers, trails, roads, and transit corridors.

Ravines provide important access to nature for residents. About 30 percent of Torontonians live within 500 metres of a ravine and some areas near ravines will see considerable population growth in the coming years. These spaces offer vital recreation opportunities and support physical and mental well-being.

Climate change and the growth of the city continue to put pressures on Toronto's ravines and natural environment, as detailed in Toronto's Climate Risks: Understanding Vulnerability Today, Preparing for Tomorrow (Summary Report) ([2025.EX28.5](#)). Increasing volume of stormwater runoff from urban development, combined with anticipated increasing severity and frequency of storms associated with climate change could result in flooding, damage and accelerated erosion that can have dramatic consequences for ravines and the grey infrastructure in ravines. In July 2024, Toronto experienced an intense storm that exceeded a 100-year storm in parts of the city, causing extensive flooding and erosion damage across the city and resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in damage, such as the failure of the embankment that separated Mud Creek from the wetlands in Don Valley Brick Works (DVBW) Park. The failure resulted in significant erosion and permanent damage to the water inlet and associated cascade feature that fed the biodiverse wetlands in the park. Work is currently underway for a permanent and resilient design solution here.

Warmer temperatures associated with climate change have implications for both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in the ravines. Invasive species continue to pose a serious

threat to the ecological health of Toronto's ravines and are a concern for residents and community groups active in ravines. The key invasive species of concern threatening Toronto - common buckthorn, dog-strangling vine, garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, and phragmites among plants; emerald ash borer; and pathogens of concern such as oak wilt - are increasingly able to thrive and outcompete native plants as a warming climate lengthens the growing season and warmer winters reduce typical die-off mortality. As well, ongoing disturbance by human activity create conditions for these invasive plants to thrive and spread.

Toronto's ravine system is supported through a coordinated approach to environmental stewardship, public access, and infrastructure protection. Environment, Climate and Forestry leads ecological management, community engagement and volunteer stewardship in natural areas, from tree planting, invasive species management and restoration, to monitoring and tree by-law oversight. Parks and Recreation enhances the public's connection to nature by investing capital in trails and wayfinding. Toronto Water protects all its essential water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in ravines using various tools including through stormwater management, erosion control, installation of protection measures and stream restoration that improves habitat and water quality. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority, which owns much of the ravine land, is a key partner in monitoring natural systems, managing erosion risks, and advancing watershed-based management across the region.

City Council adopted the Toronto Ravine Strategy in 2017 to guide long-term management of the ravine system. Through a series of 20 actions under five guiding principles: Protect, Invest, Connect, Partner, and Celebrate, the Strategy ensures the protection of these irreplaceable lands is balanced with their use and enjoyment, so that they continue to bring nature to people and flourish for the next 100 years and beyond.

In January 2020, City Council adopted the key next steps to implement the Ravine Strategy over the next ten years through the "Ravine Strategy Implementation" report and directed staff to report every three years on the advancement of the Strategy's actions. The 2020 report:

- Recommended immediate investments to address urgent needs in invasive species and litter;
- Identified the first ten Priority Investment Areas (PIAs) based on a Council-adopted framework that considered planned capital work, existing ecological value, adjacent population growth, and social factors such as proximity to Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and little access to other greenspace;
- Provided a preliminary assessment of \$104.9 million for capital investment need for the ten PIAs;
- Outlined work to coordinate and integrate planning and design of capital projects; and
- Recommended launching a Ravine Campaign including two initial projects:
  - The Trail Loop project with Evergreen
  - InTO the Ravines with Park People

In 2022, City Council received the first of the three-year update reports on deliverables of capital work including trail improvements and planning for the Loop Trail; operational work including litter control and invasive species management; partnership and

engagement work including advancing reconciliation through access to land and programming for Indigenous communities; and development of a Ravine Campaign and Leadership Table.

Since 2020, the Strategy has achieved:

- 3,760 hectares of land restored, including management of invasive species
- 521 tonnes of garbage and metal removed
- 181 students engaged in employment, training, and mentorship programs
- 265 Ravine Days events delivered
- More than 20,000 participants in City and partner events and programs
- Sixteen projects delivered, such as restored wetlands, new and upgraded multi-use trails, and wayfinding signage, in ravines across the City totaling \$12.3 million, funded through \$10 million in federal and provincial grants and \$2.3 million from the City
- Reduction of Priority Investment Area capital needs from \$104.9 million to \$50.2 million in 2026 through increased investment through federal, provincial and City funding

The City and its partners continue to make advancements toward the Strategy's actions and vision of a ravine system that is a natural, connected sanctuary essential for the health and well-being of the city, where use and enjoyment support protection, education and stewardship (see Attachment 1, Ravine Strategy Actions: Timeframe and Status.). Through the Strategy, the City has invited a broad spirit of partnership with community champions, not-for-profit and charitable organizations, Indigenous communities, the provincial and federal governments, philanthropists, and residents. This has expanded and accelerated the City's work to implement the Strategy, resulting in significant achievements. While each achievement to-date moves closer to the vision of the Ravine Strategy, the key to overall success is the approach to leveraging partnerships, shared interests, and compounding efforts for greater impacts.

This report details the ongoing advancement of the Strategy with a focus on these compounded impacts including steps to improve the ecological health of the ravines, new avenues of engaging communities in these spaces, partnerships to address capital investment needs in ravines, and opportunities to ensure the use of best and next practices in Toronto's natural areas and ravines.

## **2. Improving Ecological Health in Ravines**

Since 2020, the City has enhanced restoration and invasive species management by staff, contractors, student interns and volunteers through additional annual investments in the PR Operating Budget (part of the 2026 ECF Operating Budget as of 2026). In 2025, this resulted in approximately 960 hectares of land being managed for invasive species, which represents a significant increase since 2020 when new and enhanced funding was phased in as part of implementation of the Ravine Strategy: a 300 per cent increase in land managed by staff and 1,000 per cent increase by contractors, as well as the addition of new opportunities through student internships and community-led restoration, to build upon the impacts of City-led volunteer tree planting and stewardship such as the Community Stewardship Program.

Each type of stewardship intervention, from pulling smaller invasive plants by hand and litter picking, to removing larger invasive trees to planting native trees, shrubs and other plants, complements and supports the efforts of others to improve the overall ecological health of the ravines. In addition to volunteer stewardship, staff and contractors undertake specialized work requiring advanced training, equipment, and, where necessary, the use of regulated pesticides. The work of the City's highly trained staff is focussed on the most sensitive natural areas, such as the Environmentally Significant Areas, using best management practices. The City's contractors support complex large-scale projects, such as in areas that are challenging to access, or to remove large invasive trees.

Volunteer opportunities and youth employment programs in the ravines brings stewardship to more areas while also providing opportunities to connect people with nature in their neighbourhoods and to learn about and become advocates for these vital greenspaces, such as through City-led engagement and stewardship programs, the Ravine Youth Team managed collaboratively by the City and TRCA, and Community-led Restoration.

The City has several volunteer events and activities led by staff that support the Ravine Strategy. These include tree planting and ecological stewardship, including Tree Planting and Stewardship Events, the Community Stewardship Program, Tree Planting Captains, and the Natural Environment Trails Program. These programs engage volunteers in planting native trees and shrubs, caring for natural areas through invasive species removal and site monitoring, and supporting the maintenance of trails and other natural features, with the goal to have 50 per cent of events in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, Emerging Neighbourhoods, and low Tree Equity Score neighbourhoods. In 2025, 56 per cent of these events were held in these target neighbourhoods. Together, these City-led programs provide structured, ongoing opportunities for residents to contribute to the health and resilience of Toronto's ravines and natural areas.

The Ravine Youth Team is a City–TRCA partnership directed by City Council to support ravine restoration while creating employment pathways for youth in the environmental sector. Through paid, hands-on work across Toronto's ravine system, participants gain experience in restoration, stewardship, and community outreach. Since its launch in 2020, 51 youth have participated in the program, with alumni pursuing further education and employment in conservation-related fields, including 18 participants who have successfully secured various positions in resource management, planting, and environmental education within the environmental sector, including with the City and TRCA.

Every year, ECF engages close to 10,000 participants in over City-led 300 events for planting, stewardship, education and outreach. In 2025, these included more than 4,400 volunteers at close to 200 events hosted through City-led programs to help restore Toronto's ravines and natural areas, plant approximately 15,000 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, and steward five hectares of natural parkland. More information on

these programs and their impact can be found in Attachment 2 "Natural Environment and Community Programs Annual Report 2025" .

### **Community-led Restoration**

The Community-led Restoration Program, piloted with Toronto Nature Stewards (TNS) beginning in 2021, brings additional opportunities for local activation to the successful City-led programs. TNS is hosted by the Institute of Forestry & Conservation in the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design at the University of Toronto. TNS recruited and trained over 2,000 volunteers in 2025 to steward 47 sites that they identified and applied for (52 planned for 2026) covering over 120 hectares of natural area parkland across the city, including monitoring and managing more than 35 invasive plant species. Additionally, TNS activates volunteer stewardship and ecological education and monitoring in TRCA-managed sites and on private property. For more information on TNS and their activities, see Attachment 3 "Toronto Nature Stewards Stewardship Impact (2021-2025)".

For Community-led Restoration, the City ensures that proposed stewardship sites and activities are appropriate for volunteers, such as hand-pulling or clipping smaller invasive plants, and do not conflict with other work across City divisions or TRCA.

The Community-led Restoration Program received additional resources via [MPB27.1](#) (Recommendation 4) starting in 2025 to pilot the planning and implementation of more on-site support by staff on sites being stewarded by volunteers. This pilot aims to supplement the ongoing efforts of volunteers with activities that are implemented by well-trained staff and contractors or not appropriate for volunteers, such as the removal of larger invasive trees that requires the use of mechanized equipment like chainsaws and woodchippers. In 2025 and 2026, staff and TNS volunteers are working together at three sites that have been stewarded by TNS volunteers over the last 5 years. Staff are removing larger trees, managing woody material removed by TNS volunteers, and applying pesticides for targeted species (phragmites and Japanese knotweed) that are not easily controlled through other techniques. The activities and expansion of this on-site staff support will continue to evolve in close collaboration with TNS volunteers.

With the success of the pilot with Toronto Nature Stewards since 2021, the City has developed a framework for Community-Led Restoration to allow for future expansion of the program to allow other groups to participate. 'Project Buckthorn', a joint project between Urban Forestry, the national charity Don't Mess with the Don and Toronto Nature Stewards, is bringing similar efforts to areas within Sunnybrook Park (Ward 15), where volunteers pull or cut young common buckthorn seedlings and Urban Forestry supports the project by disposing of (chipping) the removed materials to manage the amount of dead wood left on site.

Urban Forestry continues to explore opportunities to expand City-led stewardship and community-led restoration through working with groups like Toronto Nature Stewards and Don't Mess with the Don, as well as through new collaborations. Volunteers bring additional efforts, enthusiasm and activation to the ravines and staff bring specialized knowledge, techniques and equipment.

By expanding opportunities for volunteer stewardship through City- and community-led programs and layering and coordinating these activities with those of staff and contractors, benefits are compounded. This layered approach amplifies ecological outcomes and ensures that each group contributes in ways that align with their expertise and responsibilities.

This report recommends that City Council authorize the permanent implementation of the Community-led Restoration Program and allow ECF to execute and enter into agreements with organizations who have applied and been accepted to participate in the program.

## **Environmentally Significant Areas**

The 89 Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) found across the city are the ecological gems of Toronto's ravines and waterfront, identified through scientific study and outlined on Map 12A of the Official Plan. They contain rare or vulnerable species, encompass large undisturbed naturalized areas, have unique landforms, or provide significant ecological functions. They also tend to have a higher composition of native plants and lower invasive species presence than other natural areas in the city. The Official Plan prohibits development within ESAs and other areas across the City's Natural Heritage System that contain these characteristics (except for certain compatible uses).

Sixty-seven of Toronto's ESAs are under City management. The remaining 22 are managed by TRCA, Toronto Zoo or are on privately-owned land. Sixty-three of these are being actively managed by City staff, and 22 have documented plans for monitoring and maintenance. This specialized work includes invasive species removal using a variety of specialized techniques and tools, site preparation (where needed) to improve the success of planting efforts, planting with native trees, shrubs and plants grown from genetically diverse and appropriately sourced seed, management of informal trails, coordination of work across Divisions and with other partners, and a robust monitoring program.

As part of implementation of the Ravine Strategy (Action 1), staff have developed a City-wide ESA Management Plan and Framework to ensure all ESAs under City jurisdiction have a consistent management approach. The Management Plan, developed through input from the community and across City divisions, as well as from Treaty Holder Nations and the Urban Indigenous community, establishes a core value and guiding principles and identifies compatible activities in ESAs. The Framework provides a consistent approach and tool for the development of ESA-specific plans that respects the unique conditions and needs of each ESA and incorporates further engagement with Indigenous treaty and rights holders and the public as those plans are developed.

The Management Plan and Framework will more consistently guide management activities and communications on ESA management; improve project coordination and planning opportunities with other projects and divisions impacting ESAs; and put more focus on Indigenous values and engagement for ESA-related management and project planning. The framework has been piloted for two ESAs, Taylor Massey Creek and

Wilket Creek Forest, which now each have a new management plan to guide staff coordination of projects and implementation of management activities. Staff will continue to develop site-specific plans for ESAs using this Framework which will be informed by a site prioritization tool based on ecological and social equity factors as well as coordination of work across Divisions.

### **3. Engaging residents in ravines**

Long-term protection of Toronto's ravines relies on strong public engagement, accessible learning opportunities, and meaningful involvement of diverse communities in ecological activities. Access to parks, greenspaces, and nature is closely linked to mental and physical health, and the 2020 Ravine Strategy Implementation Report highlighted that these benefits are not experienced equally across the city. In response, the City launched new engagement programs whose successes continue to grow, with a focus on Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and equity-deserving communities

Beyond stewardship and tree planting programs, the City delivers and funds programs that connect residents to nature and strengthen ecological literacy. City-run Forestry talks, tours, and webinars offer free public education on Toronto's urban forest and ravines, often delivered in collaboration with the Toronto Public Library. These events provide accessible education on topics such as tree care, biodiversity, and the role of ravines in climate resilience. The Young Ravine Leaders program, delivered by a local non-profit organization Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) with City support, provides youth from equity-deserving communities with hands-on learning about ravine ecology, restoration techniques, and environmental career pathways.

#### **InTO the Ravines**

Launched in 2020 in collaboration with Park People, InTO the Ravines encourages community-led activities that introduce residents to ravines and deepen understanding of these natural spaces. The program promotes celebration, connection, and stewardship through four core components:

- Training and supporting Ravine Champions, including mentorship and resources that reduce barriers to accessing the ravines
- Providing microgrants that enable grassroots groups to host cultural celebrations, environmental education, and wellness activities in ravines
- Supporting community events and programs including walks, workshops, and stewardship activities that attract local residents, often first-time ravine visitors
- Sharing opportunities and impacts through newsletters, blogs, and social media to raise awareness of Toronto's ravines, celebrate community leadership, and help promote Ravine Days.

The City has invested \$0.545 million over five years, an amount matched and exceeded by Park People fundraising, resulting in a total investment of \$1.09 million. Many program participants have gone on to grow their community impact by accessing other Park People programs and resources.

InTO the Ravines is an incredibly impactful program that has supported hundreds of Torontonians to become community leaders, opening Toronto's ravines to more residents, especially those who face barriers to access (see Attachment 4 "InTO the Ravines: Celebrating Five Years of Impact" for more details). Across the program, in 2025, InTO the Ravines has supported over 50 events and engaged over 1,200 participants. Events have often been hosted by grassroots and culturally diverse groups, with activities reflecting different cultural traditions such as Bengali henna and meditation, Yoruba Indigenous drumming, and sacred fire ceremonies. Over the last three years, about one quarter of participants were first-time ravine visitors, and more than 75 per cent said they were more likely to bring family and friends to a ravine after attending an event.

Renewing the City's agreement with Park People for an additional three-year period will support continued progress toward the Ravine Strategy's goals of expanding sustainable partnerships and celebrating ravines as valued public spaces.

#### 4. Capital Investment in Ravines

The 2020 Ravine Strategy Implementation Report identified an estimated investment need of \$104.9 million for the first ten Priority Investment Areas (PIAs). Since then, sixteen projects have been completed to improve the resilience, access and ecological health of the PIAs. Completed work includes wetland restoration, new and upgraded multi-use trails, and the initial roll out of wayfinding signage. Through annual budget submissions, cross-divisional coordination, and the pursuit of external funding, the outstanding capital need for Priority Investment Areas has been reduced to \$50.2 million in the 2026-2035 Capital Budget and Plan.

For the next decade, Parks and Recreation and the Environment, Climate and Forestry Division have allocated \$79.7 million toward Ravine Strategy capital projects, as shown in Table 1. Council directed staff to continue seeking provincial and federal funding, recognizing that multi-government support is essential to achieve climate resilience, protect biodiversity, strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities, and improve public access to nature. Intergovernmental partnership, collaboration and funding continue to have a critical role in supporting the Ravine Strategy, with provincial and federal funding programs, such as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) and Natural Infrastructure Fund, augmenting the City's investment in the ravine system.

Table 1: Ravine Strategy in the 2026 10-Year Capital Budget & Plan for PR and ECF Cash Flow Summary in Millions (\$)

Timing	Total Cash Flow - Expenditure		Funding Source (Revenue)	
	2026-2035 PR Capital Budget and Plan	2026-2035 ECF Capital Budget and Plan	Federal grants	City (PR and ECF)
2026-2030	\$60.0	\$2.5	\$14.8	\$47.7

Timing	Total Cash Flow - Expenditure		Funding Source (Revenue)	
	2026-2035 PR Capital Budget and Plan	2026-2035 ECF Capital Budget and Plan	Federal grants	City (PR and ECF)
2031-2035	\$14.7	\$2.5	\$0	\$17.2
Total	\$74.7	\$5.0	\$14.8	\$64.9

\*Ravine Strategy tracking began in 2020, following City Council’s approval of the Ravine Strategy Implementation report 2020.EX12.1 - Ravine Strategy Implementation

Staff continue to build on capital planning and partnership opportunities by improving cross-divisional mapping, coordination, and project design. The 2014 Coordinated Watercourse Management Plan ([2017.PW21.6](#)) recommended bundling capital works to maximize benefits, reduce ecological impacts, and advance multiple priorities at once. Bundling allows the City to leverage investments, minimize construction disturbance, coordinate restoration activities, and accelerate lower priority work where it aligns with the needs of multiple divisions.

To advance this integrated approach, the City is moving from sequential project scheduling to shared planning and joint design across divisions. Toronto Water, Environment, Climate and Forestry, Transportation Services, and Parks and Recreation are collaborating on two upcoming Geomorphic Systems Master Plans for parts of the West Don River and Upper Black Creek. These studies will identify potential impacts on trails and opportunities to align work across divisions. A similar approach is being taken for the next phase of planning and design for the Vale of Avoca ravine. This integrated planning model will improve coordination, identify shared needs earlier, and reduce overall study timelines.

**5. Loop Trail and Ravine Campaign**

The Loop Trail initiative, a partnership between the City of Toronto, Evergreen, the Toronto Foundation, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, continues to progress toward creating a continuous 72-kilometre trail network. The Loop Trail will link the Don Valley and Humber Valley systems, the Finch Hydro Corridor, and the Lake Ontario waterfront, forming a unified recreational corridor across the city.

The initiative leverages municipal, regional, and philanthropic funding to fill gaps in the trail network, enhance the trail user experience through new amenities, and support community activation of ravines through children’s programming, cultural events, and nature-based activities.

City divisions and partner organizations continue to invest in the areas that form the Loop Trail by advancing wayfinding, restoring natural habitats, and engaging donors. In the 2026-2035 PR Capital Budget and Plan, the City has allocated \$12.53 million in State of Good Repair funding for existing trails and access points that form part of the

Loop, as well as \$18.05 million for new connections that advance the Loop Trail vision and help leverage philanthropic support.

Staff are working closely with Evergreen and other stakeholders to coordinate investments and community-benefit initiatives in parklands along the Loop Trail. This work includes planning strategically located hubs to improve visitor experience and address trail gaps. As the fiduciary partner, the Toronto Foundation will administer financial contributions and hold funds in trust for near-term improvements and long-term stewardship.

This report recommends that City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to accept donations directed to the Loop Trail Fundraising Campaign. These contributions will support future capital improvements along the route. Under the City's Donations for Community Benefits Policy, Council approval is required for any donation above \$50,000. Fundraising targets are being developed in partnership with Evergreen and based on priority capital projects for addressing gaps within the Loop Trail system. All donor and sponsor recognition will be done in accordance with the City's sponsorship and donation policies. Providing delegated authority for Loop Trail related donations will allow the City to respond quickly to fundraising opportunities and better leverage external funding for priority sub-projects.

## **6. International recognition of Toronto's work on biodiversity and nature**

Toronto is widely recognized as a leader in ecological restoration, urban forest management, and ravine stewardship. In September 2023, Toronto was selected as one of eleven global Role Model Cities for Generation Restoration, a project under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration from 2021 to 2030.

Generation Restoration highlighted how cities contribute to nature-based solutions for biodiversity and climate challenges, showcased successful restoration initiatives, and supported knowledge exchange among participating cities.

With the project concluding at the end of 2025, there is significant value in maintaining these international connections. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has identified Cities with Nature as a platform for ongoing collaboration. By joining Cities with Nature, Toronto will be able to continue working with cities around the world that share a commitment to sustainable urban development. Participation will also help identify and communicate the contributions of subnational governments, including Toronto, to global biodiversity goals and nature-positive growth.

## **7. Conclusion**

This report outlines the significant progress made since January 2020 to implement the Ravine Strategy through strategic partnerships and targeted investments that protect, maintain, and enhance Toronto's ravine system while supporting public use as the city grows. Implementation of the Strategy remains a priority for Environment, Climate and Forestry and Parks and Recreation, working with partner divisions and the Toronto and

Region Conservation Authority. These partners are committed to ongoing delivery of the Strategy's actions over the next two decades. Environment, Climate and Forestry and Parks and Recreation will continue to report to City Council every three years on progress toward the Strategy's goals, actions, and guiding principles.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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James Nowlan  
Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry

Terry Ricketts  
General Manager, Parks and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Ravine Strategy Actions Status 2026  
Attachment 2 - Natural Environment and Community Programs Annual Report 2025  
Attachment 3 - Toronto Nature Stewards Stewardship Impact (2021-2025)  
Attachment 4 - InTO the Ravines: Celebrating Five Years of Impact