

2021 – 2024

Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives

Impact Report

Table of Contents

2021 – 2024 Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives Impact Report – Page 1

Table of Contents – Page 2

Working Together for a Healthier City – Page 4

All about Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives – Page 5

Program Impact – Page 6

Funds in Action – Page 9

Supporting Indigenous Ways of Knowing - Page 12

Grantee Spotlights – Page 14

Tree Equity Across the City – Page 16

Your Feedback – Page 18

Our Team – Page 19

Land Acknowledgement for Toronto

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Working Together for a Healthier City

A healthy urban forest benefits all who live, work, and play in Toronto. Trees have been proven to boost mental health, improve air quality, cool urban centres, and contribute numerous ecological services.

The most recent 2018 Tree Canopy Study completed for the City of Toronto identified that canopy cover increased from 26.6-28 per cent to 28-31 per cent, which is positive news, especially when faced with climate challenges and impacts from invasive species. However, that same report also identified that impermeable land cover also increased across the city, having implications on stormwater management, biodiversity, heat island impacts and the amount of potential planting space available for new trees.

This report is a testament to the accomplishments that can be made to increase tree planting efforts when working together to support a common interest. The Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives program has been supporting tree planting and stewardship initiatives on private land since 2017. Under this program over \$22.8 million has been invested, leveraging private and public funding into planting an incredible 118,440 trees and shrubs.

Together, great advancements have been made towards reaching the City of Toronto's tree canopy target of 40 per cent by 2050. The City has successfully been recognized internationally for 5 years running as a Tree City of the World by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. All of this was made possible with the support of City Council, valuable public and private partnerships that have developed, and incredible community champions that have stepped up and supported greening their neighbourhoods.

All about Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives

The Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives Program was established in 2017 within the former Parks, Forestry and Recreation division (now Parks and Recreation). As of 2025, this program is under the Environment, Climate and Forestry division.

The primary role of this unit is to develop supports for tree planting and stewardship efforts on private land, recognizing that with 55 per cent of the city's land area being privately owned, private lands hold great potential for urban tree canopy growth.

Through the different grant opportunities, events and incentives offered, the program has established valuable partnerships with residents and landowners to help improve the health and resilience of the urban forest; leveraging the power of backyards, schoolyards, institutions, and commercial properties to grow the urban forest.

- Grants
 - Community Planting and Stewardship Grant
 - Greening Partnership Grant
- Incentives
 - Neighbourhood Planting program
 - Backyard Tree Planting Program (LEAF)
 - Community Canopy (Arbor Day)
 - Toronto Tree Cover Project (TRCA)
- Outreach and Engagement
 - Social Media
 - Informative Sessions
 - Pop Up Events

Program Impact

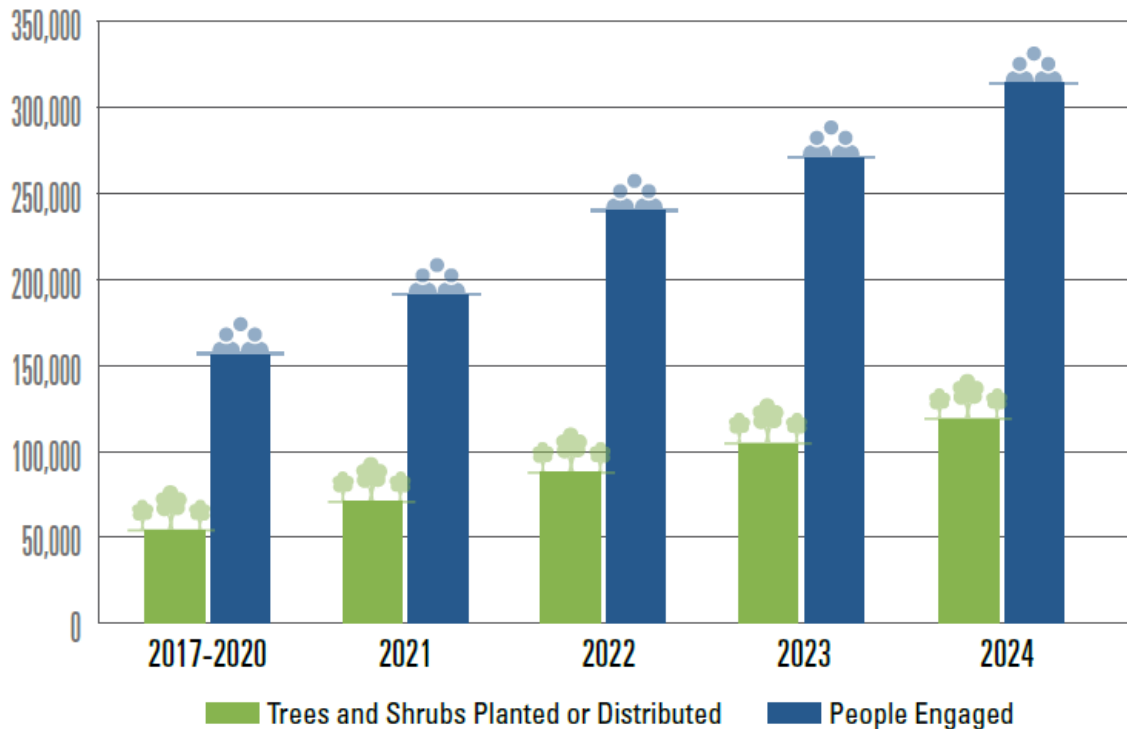
This table shows the total number of trees and shrubs planted and distributed and the number of people engaged for each of the Grants and Incentive programs. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.

Program	Trees and Shrubs Planted or Distributed	People Engaged
Backyard Tree Planting Program	3,628	1,068
Community Planting and Stewardship Grant	34,686	38,405
Greening Partnership Grant	7,671	81,296
Tree Giveaways	18,596	21,302
Direct Outreach and Engagement	N/A	15,752
Total	64,581	157,823

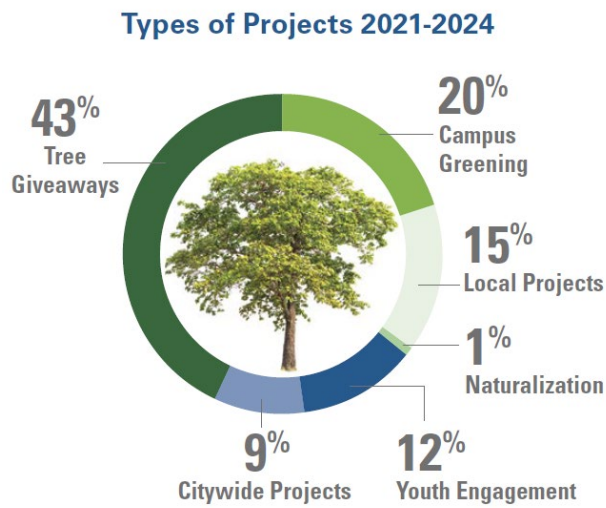
There were 33 Groups Funded, 94 Projects Funded, and 1,333 Events Supported between 2021 and 2024.

This graph shows the cumulative impact of program deliverables each year. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.

Program Deliverables

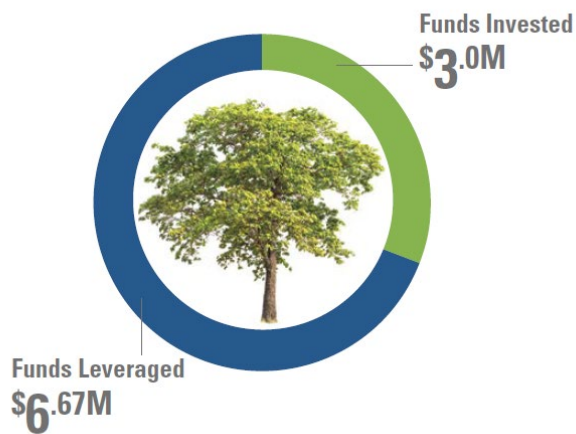


This chart shows the types of projects supported between 2021 and 2024. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.



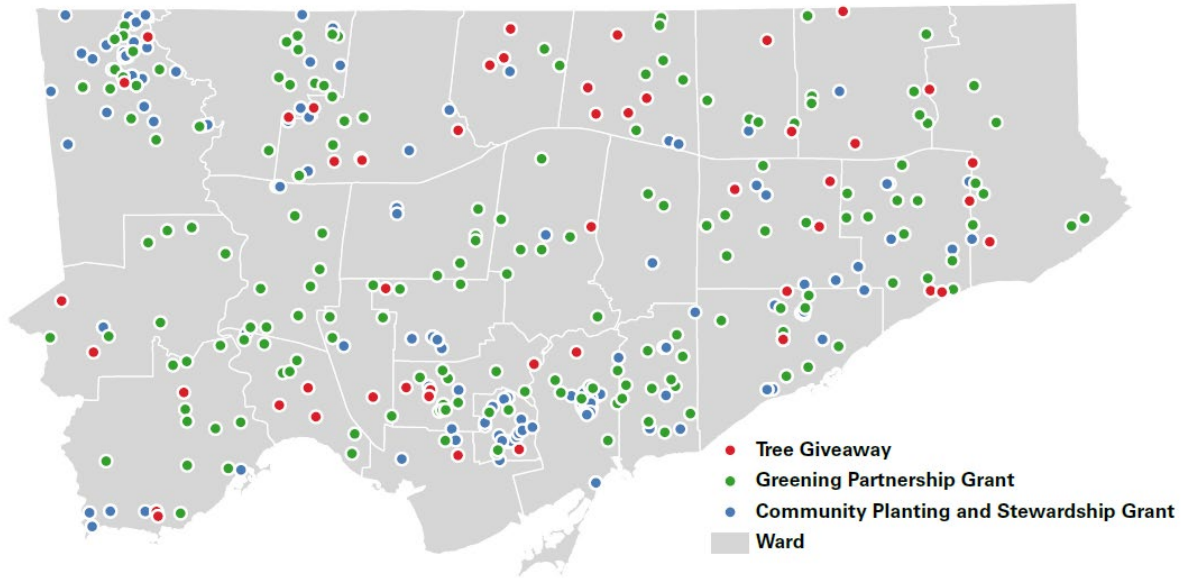
This chart shows the amount of funds invested and leveraged between 2021 and 2024. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.

Funds Invested and Leveraged 2021-2024







This map shows the grant projects and giveaway locations between 2021 and 2024. The map depicts the City of Toronto broken up by city ward, with dots depicting each grant project or tree giveaway location. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.

Grant Projects and Tree Giveaway Location (2021 – 2024)



This table shows online engagement numbers for a variety of social media platforms. If you require more information and/or clarification, please call Nathan Hobbs at 416-392-7513.

Online Engagement

			
Facebook (2022 - 2024)	Instagram (2024)	LinkedIn (2024)	X/Twitter (2022 - 2023)
90 Posts	7 Posts	9 Posts	57 Posts
2,873 Engagements	455 Engagements	281 Engagements	764 Engagements
446 Shares	41 Shares	108 Shares	293 Shares

Funds in Action

Urban Forestry currently offers two funding streams for a variety of community partners to access: the Community Planting and Stewardship Grant, and the Greening Partnership Grant. Through these opportunities the City has been able to fund a wide range of community-led projects that have contributed to the growth of the urban forest through tree planting, education, and stewardship on private land. These grants have supported a variety of partners and projects that have taken great strides to achieve social and economic goals which advance the City of Toronto's strategic priorities to invest in people and neighbourhoods while tackling climate change.

Growing the Community Canopy

The City of Toronto has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation to provide Toronto residents with the Community Canopy Program. The Community Canopy Program allows Toronto residents to reserve free trees and shrubs for their residential property through Arbor Day's interactive online mapping tool. This innovative tool helps residents to select the right tree for the right space and demonstrates how the ideal planting location can maximize the air, water, energy, and carbon benefits of their new tree. Between 2021 and 2024, the Community Canopy Program has helped Toronto residents to plant 6,500 free native trees and shrubs around their homes.

Adding Green Space to Community Housing Properties

A unique and highly successful partnership between Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and the City of Toronto is approaching its eighth year of enhancing green space on community housing properties. LEAF has taken a personal approach with this program by actively engaging one-on-one with TCHC tenants and staff throughout every step of the process, from selecting the right planting locations and best species, to continued stewardship of the new plantings. Between 2021 and 2024, this program has made it possible to plant over 1,400 trees and shrubs across community housing locations while empowering tenants to take ownership over their green spaces.

The Future Leaders of Forestry

Striving for a greener and more inclusive future, LEAF's Young Urban Forest Leaders (YUFL) program prepares youth to become the next generation of leaders and decision-makers in urban forestry. This program provides youth with the opportunity to gain practical experience in the fields of arboriculture and urban forestry. YUFL prioritizes historically unrepresented groups in the forestry sector including women, non-binary people, BIPOC, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ persons, and racialized individuals. Program participants gain mentorship, training, and hands-on skills through local community tree planting and stewardship events.

Sowing the Seeds of Knowledge

Green Thumbs Growing Kids' Urban Trees from Seed program provides a unique, interactive educational experience for elementary school students in Toronto's downtown core. Educational workshops held in modular nurseries on school grounds teach students how to collect, plant, grow and care for native trees from seed. Incorporating Indigenous ways of learning throughout their programming, this hands-on learning opportunity allows children to connect with nature and learn about the importance of biodiversity in the urban forest. Seedlings grown in this program are ultimately distributed to community members to be planted on private property or are incorporated into the TDSB's plantings on school grounds.

Students Lead the Way in Campus Greening

Regenesys, York's Campus Forestry Student Planting Initiative, empowers students to participate in student-led environmental stewardship initiatives on campus. Students are engaged in the planting and stewardship of trees and shrubs across campus and student housing locations. Through these sustainability initiatives, students learn about the importance of the urban forest and develop a sense of community through environmental action.

Engaging Community Through Private Land Planting

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is increasing canopy cover across the city of Toronto through tree planting initiatives on private residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional lands. Having successfully run the Toronto Tree Cover Project since 2019, TRCA is leveraging existing connections by engaging landowners and communities in additional planting initiatives throughout the city. Implementing planting projects on privately-owned lands, engaging the community through volunteer tree planting opportunities, leading the Ravine Shrub Program and the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP) Program are just a few of the ways in which TRCA is working towards the City's goal of 40 per cent canopy cover. With support from the Community Planting and Stewardship Grant, TRCA has planted over 9,400 native trees and shrubs across Toronto between 2021 and 2024.

Transforming an Urban Park

Historically home to a military base, Downsview Park has been undergoing a transformation for the past 25 years into an urban park with accessible access to green space. With support from a 2023 Greening Partnership Grant, Downsview Park exceeded their initial planting goal and planted 50 large caliper trees within high use areas of the park such as the main Circuit Path. These new trees will help combat local heat island effects by increasing the amount of shade coverage available to park users while contributing to Toronto's urban forest.

Planting by Students, for Students

Centennial College demonstrates their commitment to prioritizing sustainability by undertaking various greening projects. With support from the Greening Partnership Grant, Centennial has added over 1,200 native trees and shrubs to the Progress and Downsview campuses since 2022. Whether the goal is expanding existing greenspaces adjacent to ravines, transforming underutilized areas into green gathering spaces, or hosting planting events and incorporating educational signage, Centennial is dedicated to educating and engaging students and staff.

Promoting Health and Healing Through Nature

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre has taken a holistic approach to health that extends outside the walls of the hospital by fostering healthy green spaces across their campuses. With support from a 2022 Greening Partnership Grant, Sunnybrook made a meaningful contribution to the urban forest and the community by planting 500 new trees and shrubs, caring for 1,100 existing trees and shrubs, and fostering education, engagement, and healing. Sunnybrook has incorporated thoughtful ways to engage patients, staff, and visitors by installing educational signage and creating a new interactive campus discovery map featuring wellness and greenspaces, gardens, bee hives, composting areas, bike parking, and more.

It Takes a Village to Create Accessible Green Spaces

Variety Village is a charity dedicated to providing inclusion, empowerment, and opportunities for children with disabilities. In 2023, Variety Village was awarded funding through the Community Planting and Stewardship Grant to carry out Project Green Spaces. With the main goal of providing equitable and accessible greenspaces for persons with disabilities, Variety Village planted 75 trees and shrubs in underutilized areas on their property by engaging the local community in multiple planting events. Building on the success of their 2023 grant, Variety Village was awarded another grant in 2024 to support planting more trees and shrubs in other underutilized areas, hosting more community events, and establishing a volunteer garden steward club to care for these accessible greenspaces.

Supporting Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Through the Urban Forestry grant streams, the City of Toronto is proud to support community organizations and partners that showcase Indigenous knowledge, design, and ways of knowing through their work and engagement.

Celebrating Traditional Foodways

In 2021, George Brown College received funding from the Greening Partnership Grant for the Greening Through Food and Education project at the St. James Campus. This project increased greenspace in the downtown core by planting native trees and shrubs in two student gathering areas on campus, with species selection centered around Indigenous teachings and traditional foodways. Ongoing stewardship and maintenance of these plants have been incorporated into students' curriculums on sustainability, food systems, equity, and Indigenous food traditions.

Investing in Indigenous Youth

The University of Toronto Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design has received funding through the Greening Partnership Grant in support of the Nikibii Dawadinna Giigwag Indigenous Youth Program. The Nikibii Dawadinna Giigwag (Anishinaabemowin for "Flooded Valley Healing") Indigenous Youth Program has the goal of providing employment, mentorship, and a pathway to postsecondary education for Indigenous youth. With guidance from Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and mentors, youth gain knowledge and experience in the fields of landscape architecture and ecological conservation. Prioritizing culture and spirituality, the Nikibii Dawadinna Giigwag program employs 10 Indigenous youth each summer with the opportunity to engage in the design and realization of Indigenous place-keeping projects.

Indigenous Placemaking in Action

The University of Toronto is taking meaningful action towards reconciliation and rehabilitating relationships with Indigenous communities through the creation of the Indigenous House and Gathering Circle on the Scarborough Campus. The Gathering Circle will provide a landscape for Indigenous teaching, gathering, ceremony, performance, and research to take place. University of Toronto Scarborough Campus has consulted with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous plant specialists on the plant species and materials used for the Gathering Circle and has sourced these materials from Indigenous suppliers whenever possible. A 2023 Greening Partnership Grant supported this project with the planting of 276 trees and shrubs throughout the Gathering Circle.

Naturalizing Seneca's Campus with Two-Eyed Seeing

The City of Toronto began supporting the Seneca Naturalization Project through the Greening Partnership Grant in 2020. In 2021 and 2022, Seneca received additional funding through this grant stream to plant over 1,400 new trees and shrubs and provide maintenance to over 3,600 existing trees and shrubs across their Newnham and York campuses. Working closely with the First Peoples@Seneca

team throughout the project ensured that Indigenous teachings and values were incorporated throughout these naturalization efforts, including integrating Indigenous murals and artwork into the project. Through a Work- Integrated Learning opportunity, students in environmental programs were able to make hands-on contributions to this project as part of their curriculum, allowing them the opportunity to develop skills that will benefit them as they embark on their careers.

Grantee Spotlights

Cultivating Canopy Growth and the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) continues to recognize the importance of trees for climate resilience while fostering the next generation of environmentalists. In response to their 2023 Climate Action Report, TDSB has committed to increase tree planting on their schoolyards. The TDSB aims to provide an equitable, accessible, and inclusive education experience for all students, and that extends beyond the classroom. With support from the Greening Partnership Grant, the TDSB is expanding their reach to plant trees at more schools, ensuring that all students have access to the many benefits trees have to offer.

Never one to pass up on a learning opportunity, TDSB also provides engaging, curriculum-linked workshops that educate staff and students on the benefit of trees, how to care for them, and why trees matter in a changing climate. Students can develop real skills in urban forestry by learning to use urban forestry tools, map trees in ArcGIS, and measure social and economic benefits of trees in their neighbourhoods. Incorporating environmental education in young students' curriculums allows them to develop an appreciation for environmental conservation and understand the challenges that go along with it. By linking tree planting and education, TDSB is fostering an environment for students and the urban canopy to grow together.

Celebrating the Urban Forest

Long Branch Neighbourhood Association (LBNA) made extraordinary contributions to the expansion and stewardship of the urban forest in their community. With support from the Community Planting and Stewardship Grant and the Neighbourhood Planting Program, LBNA has distributed over 5,100 free trees and shrubs to residents through tree giveaways between 2021 and 2024. To ensure these plants are given the best start in life, LBNA trains volunteers on correct pruning practices and connects these volunteers with tree recipients to provide structural pruning and maintenance to the newly planted trees. Through a variety of community engagement events, including guided tree tours, tree care workshops, and an annual Tree Fest celebration, LBNA is growing an appreciation for the urban forest within their community.

Community Tree Champions

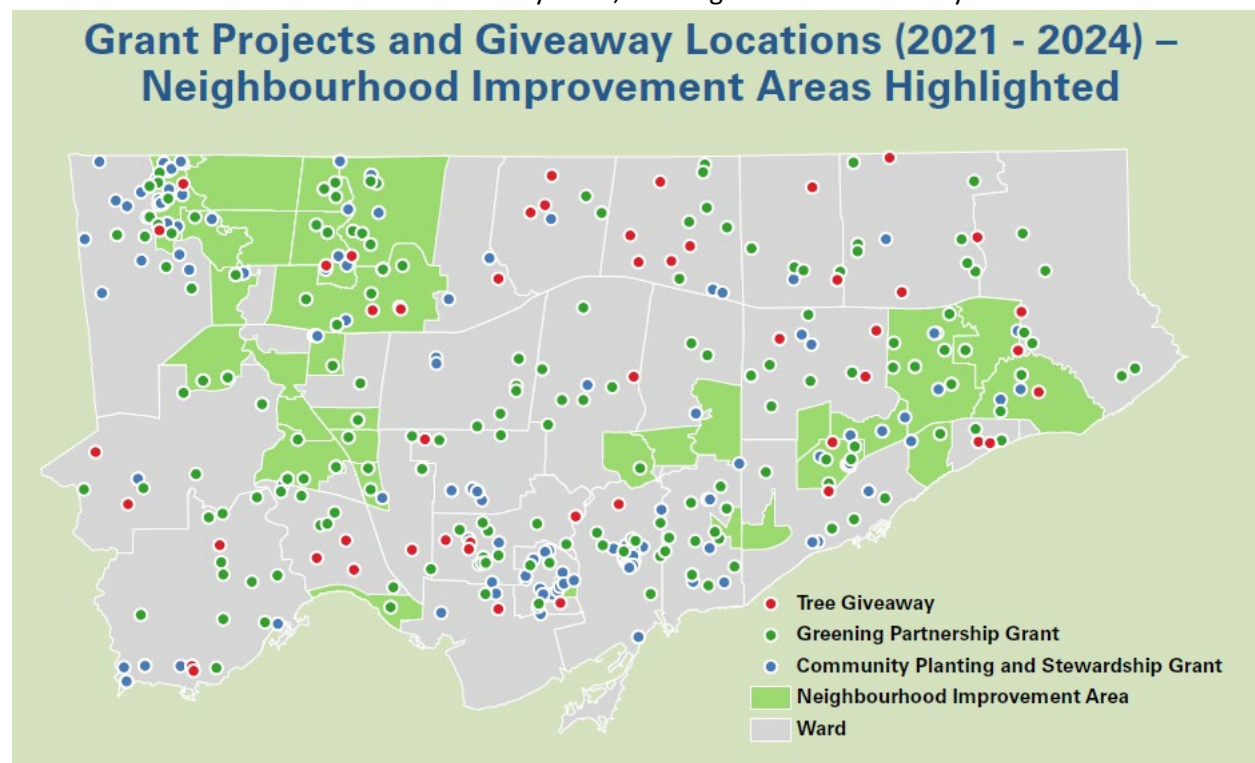
Cliffcrest Butterflyway is advocating for the protection and enhancement of pollinator habitat throughout Toronto by rallying the community to take meaningful action. Cliffcrest Butterflyway shares their passion for pollinators and native plant species by spreading awareness on environmental issues. They provide educational workshops and resources on the benefits of native species, and partner with other passionate community organizations such as Variety Village to work towards a mutual goal. These efforts demonstrate that everyone can help make small but meaningful changes that provide collective benefits across the city. Since 2021, Cliffcrest Butterflyway has connected Toronto residents with over 5,500 native trees and shrubs to plant on residential properties through the Neighbourhood Planting Program.

Tree Equity Across the City

Equity is an integral part of the Grants and Incentives program. Equitable distribution of trees and shrubs across the city is vital to fostering a healthy, sustainable, and inclusive urban environment. Prioritizing a tree equity approach ensures that all Torontonians, including equity-deserving groups, enjoy the environmental, health, and economic benefits of a resilient urban forest.

Many projects funded help remove barriers and improve access to trees across Toronto. Grant applicants are asked to provide an equity impact statement and details on how their project serves equity-seeking communities. These are key assessment criteria in the grant review process.

Staff utilize the City's designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) and Tree Canopy Study data to identify areas with the greatest need. Free tree and shrub giveaway locations that serve NIAs or low canopy neighbourhoods are prioritized. Registration for Community Canopy opens one week early for residents within these neighbourhoods to increase access. These efforts ensure that historically underserved areas receive the attention they need, creating a more resilient city for all.



Tree Equity Score Analyzer

The Toronto Tree Equity Score Analyzer (TESA) is a free online tool developed for the City of Toronto in partnership with American Forests, Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), and local stakeholders. A tree equity score, expressed as a number from 0 to 100, is calculated using canopy cover, surface temperature, health index, and Statistics Canada Census data to identify areas where trees will provide the most significant benefits. The interactive tool allows users to “build” tree planting scenarios in their communities to forecast tree impacts and benefits.

Since becoming available in 2024, staff have used the TESA tool to inform planning and community engagement efforts. Grant applicants can learn how to utilize the tool by attending a free grant information session. Staff offer one-on-one consultation opportunities to help applicants use the TESA tool effectively to assist with project planning and implementation.

Your Feedback

Working with partners across the city provides an incredible look into the effort of growing the urban canopy and improving equitable access to environmental education and green spaces. To reduce hurdles these projects/programs face, City staff strive to ensure that they are provided with exceptional customer service to encourage and promote stronger and more meaningful partnerships. Each year between 2021 and 2024, feedback was collected. Below are a few sample responses.

“What really impressed me was the review of our application prior to submission, where I learned more about how best to apply, where I was putting incorrect information or not providing enough. The process was great.”

“The grant team has provided exceptional service and go above and beyond to support us with questions/issues we have had. Thanks to your entire incredible team who has been amazing!”

“The customer service experience has been among the best I have received in dealing with funders from all levels of government.”

“This team continuously provides professional, prompt, courteous support. It’s such a pleasure dealing with them.”

“This is a very intuitive grant application and reporting system, and the staff are lovely to work with and very helpful.”

Our Team

- Jennifer Gibb – Supervisor, Strategic Tree Planting Projects
- Nathan Hobbs – Natural Environment Specialist
- Jessica Corrigan – Natural Environment Specialist
- Daniel Boven – Manager, Urban Forest Renewal
- Kim Statham – Director, Urban Forestry
- James Nowlan – Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry Division

Grant Review Panel

The Grant review panel is comprised of City staff and external experts independent of the City who represent a cross section of the environmental, NGO, and not-for-profit communities. These participants evaluate all grant applications and provide advice and recommendations to City staff on funding decisions. Staff are forever indebted to the incredible knowledge, support, and resources these individuals have shared to ensure that the program process remains fair, equitable, and transparent. Staff wish to recognize and thank those who supported us through the 2021- 2024 granting cycles.

Acknowledgements

Staff wish to acknowledge City Council, senior management and all grantees, partners, and supporters who have helped grow this program to reach new communities.

Staff also wish to thank the many City employees who work tirelessly to support the granting program from program development to outreach, application review, and funding awards.

Most importantly, staff wish to recognize and thank the residents of Toronto who are contributing to the growth of the urban forest in their very own backyards.

All photos by Matt Forsythe unless otherwise noted.

“With over half of the city’s land base being private property, increasing canopy cover cannot be done on public lands alone.” – 2017 Tree Planting Strategy

Contact Us

Urban Forestry Grants and Incentives Team
Environment, Climate and Forestry
toronto.ca/treegrants
forestrygrants@toronto.ca

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TorontoPFR>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NatureInTheCityTO/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/torontopfr/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/city-of-toronto-parks-forestry-and-recreation>