



**HUMBER  
ARBORETUM**  
+ CENTRE FOR URBAN ECOLOGY

# STRATEGIC PLAN



**2019-2024**



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Humber Arboretum is located within the traditional and treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Known as Adoobiigok—the “Place of the Black Alders” in Michi Saagiig language—the region is uniquely situated along the Humber River Watershed, which historically provided an integral connection for Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples between the Ontario Lakeshore and the Lake Simcoe/Georgian Bay regions. Now home to people of numerous nations, Adoobiigok continues to provide a vital source of interconnection for all.





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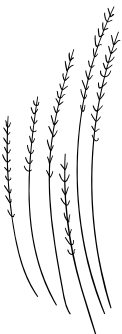
# MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND DIRECTOR

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Over 40 years ago, Humber College, the City of Toronto, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority came together to create an innovative organization that combined natural areas and a public garden with learning opportunities for post-secondary students and the community. In the fall of 2018, the Humber Arboretum and Centre for Urban Ecology once again drew on the expertise of its founding partners to launch an ambitious strategic planning process. Reflecting the unique collaboration at the heart of the Arboretum, the Management Committee and Director identified that a top priority in creating the Strategic Plan would be to engage all facets of the Humber Arboretum community.

The Humber Arboretum developed an Environmental Scan and retained Queen's Executive Decision Centre's services to ensure an inclusive community engagement process based on proven leading practices and evidence-based assessment. Over 270 participants were engaged in the process. An online survey received over 170 responses and in-person and online focus groups gathered input from another 60 stakeholders. These stakeholders comprised staff from all three of the Arboretum's founding partners, Humber College students and alumni, and community members. In addition, fourteen in-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with leaders from all three of the Humber Arboretum's founding partners as well as from local community organizations and an international industry association.

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee—which included leaders and experts from all three of the Humber Arboretum's founding partners along with Humber College faculty and student representatives—reviewed the





feedback from the engagement process and Environmental Scan to define priority areas. Inter-institutional working groups were then formed. These groups conducted in-depth analyses of identified priority areas and provided related strategic recommendations for review by the broader Steering Committee. This work enabled the Steering Committee to identify the strategic priorities and initiatives that will help the Humber Arboretum chart a powerful, adaptable course to the future.

We thank the many individuals who contributed their time and energy to the development of this Plan and invite everyone to join us in bringing this vision to life. Whether you are a new student, a long-time member of the local community, or a representative of one of the Arboretum's partners, we encourage you to seek out your own place within these pages and identify opportunities where we can work together to develop world-ready citizens, bolster community health and well-being, and create a more sustainable planet. Please join us in turning these words into reality.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

**Gina Antonacci**, Associate Vice President,  
Academic, Humber College

**Alexandra Link**, Director, Humber  
Arboretum and Centre for Urban Ecology

**Darryl Gray**, Director of Education and  
Training, Toronto and Region Conservation  
Authority (TRCA)

**Richard Ubbens**, Director of Parks, City of  
Toronto





# BACKGROUND

The current combination of local and global political uncertainty, social and economic inequality, the growing ramifications of the climate emergency, and a worldwide crisis of biodiversity loss creates the sense that this is a critical point in human history, heading towards an undecided future. While all of these factors pose direct risks to the Humber Arboretum, they—along with forward-thinking changes already underway at Humber College, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and City of Toronto—also provide the opportunity for this uniquely positioned organization to take on a strong leadership role in the local community and beyond to create a sustainable future.

From the very beginning, the goal of enhancing the education of Humber College students through hands-on experiential learning was central to the Humber Arboretum. In fact, it was Humber College horticultural students themselves who first proposed the idea of using the land beside the College campus as a place to improve their practical skills. As Humber College has continued to develop and innovate, the Humber Arboretum has evolved alongside it, now supporting experiential learning for students in diverse fields such as Early Childhood Education, Culinary Studies, and Civil Engineering.

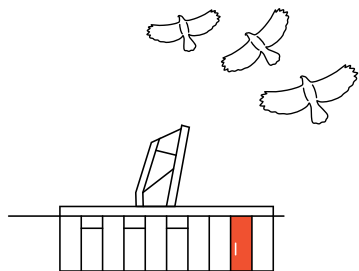
Looking to the future, the Humber Arboretum has the opportunity to align even further with the values and pillars of higher education identified in Humber College's 2018-23 Strategic Plan. This includes the College's commitment to the Okanagan Charter which calls upon post-secondary institutions to "embed health into all aspects of campus culture and to lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally." Situated in the Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellness at Humber College, the Humber Arboretum is in a unique position to provide



innovative nature-based experiential learning opportunities and better its community's socio-ecological determinants of health.

While *Health & Wellbeing* is one value identified in Humber College's strategic plan, *Sustainability* is another. Pressure on our natural systems will continue to intensify as climate instability and habitat loss and fragmentation increase the risk of extreme weather events, an altered growing season, shifts in species range—including increased threats from invasive species—and declines in wildlife populations. Working with the other two founding partners of the Arboretum—the City of Toronto, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority—the Humber Arboretum has the opportunity to take bold action to help preserve and protect our natural world. This includes continued restoration efforts of the West Humber ravine system and the Humber Arboretum's City-designated Environmentally Significant Area, and exciting new initiatives like the Humber Pond Revitalization Project.

While working to fulfill all of these important roles, the Humber Arboretum will have to contend with uncertain funding support under changing governments, staffing levels that are significantly lower than that of similar public gardens, and a need to capitalize on emerging opportunities. However, as a tri-partnership and college-connected public garden, the Humber Arboretum is in a unique and strong position to impact the health and development of students, of the broader community, and of local ecosystems by creating a bold and adaptable plan for the future.





# DEFINITIONS

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Throughout this document, the following definitions apply:

- **Arboretum:** a place where trees and/or shrubs are cultivated for the purposes of research, conservation, and learning.
- **Climate Emergency:** the state in which rapid, sweeping, systemic changes are required to restore a safe climate for human survival. The term recognizes that human-caused climate change has already caused severe ecological damage and calls for swift action to minimize the harm to existing and future communities.
- **Community:** an interacting population of various kinds of living beings (including people, plants, and animals) in a common location.
- **Ecosystem:** a community, its physical environment, and their interconnected interactions.
- **Experiential Learning:** learning that immerses the individual in a personally-relevant experience while also providing theory and the opportunity for reflection. Ideally, experiential learning encourages self-discovery and self-directed learning, connects emotionally with the learner, and contributes to the understanding of a larger idea or system.
- **Humber College's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs):** a set of attributes – knowledge, skills, competencies and values – that Humber College aims to have all students possess upon graduation. ILOs support graduates to be competitive and resourceful and to inspire change in their workplaces and communities.





- **Invasive Species:** an organism introduced from outside the local area that spreads quickly and is known or believed to cause harm to local species by either out-competing them for limited resources or altering the ecosystem itself.
- **Leading Practice:** a technique, method, process, or activity that experts currently believe is more effective than other available options at achieving desired outcomes. Leading practices are always open to further development and refinement or outright change, and their use encourages ongoing research, testing, and innovation.
- **Public Garden:** an institution that maintains collections of plants for the purposes of conservation, research, and public education and enjoyment. Public gardens are staffed by professionals trained in their given areas of expertise and maintain active plant records systems – for this reason, public gardens are sometimes referred to as “living museums.”
- **Socio-Ecological Determinants of Health:** a combination of interconnected social, societal, physical, and environmental factors that impact the health of an individual, and in turn influence that individual’s impact on the communities around them. Examples of socio-ecological determinants of health include childhood experiences, people’s relationship with the land, income and social status, education and literacy, social supports and coping skills, access to health services, and the health of the land and natural ecosystems.
- **“World-Ready” Citizen:** a world-ready citizen is someone who has the mindsets, knowledge, and skills to support their success and well-being and the health of our planet.



# VISION

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Humber Arboretum is a thriving natural ecosystem and outdoor learning space that advances the highest potential and well-being of the community through strengthening our relationships with nature and with each other.

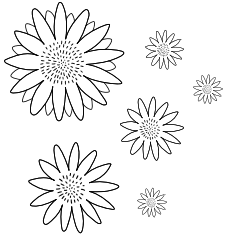


# MISSION

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Together we:

- Protect and care for our natural world in ways that continually model leading practices and motivate others to emulate and further develop these practices
- Facilitate nature-based experiences and nurture environments that foster learning, spark innovation, and inspire action
- Connect people with nature to benefit the health of both and uplift the well-being of communities



# VALUES

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## **Leadership**

We lead by example, modeling effective and innovative practices and inspiring others to take action to improve the health and well-being of people and our planet.

## **Courage**

We are determined in achieving our goals, tenacious when faced with challenge, and resolute in protecting what matters most.

## **Respect**

We make the effort to see and appreciate all unique gifts. We recognize that we are at our most powerful when we unite our gifts and work together.

## **Learning**

We are open and curious. We nurture inspiration, innovation, and potential.

## **Reciprocity**

We understand that we are in relationship with the land and with everyone and everything. We aim to have a healthy balance between giving and receiving, and understand the meaningful impact we can have.

## **Well-being**

We honour the power of nature to foster happiness, peace, and good health.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

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This partnership leverages the strengths of Humber College, the City of Toronto, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to enhance the Humber Arboretum and Humber College’s physical and learning environment to achieve the following priorities and initiatives:

## 1. World-Ready Citizens

*Through our **leadership in nature-based experiential learning**, we develop global citizens with the mindsets, knowledge, and skills to support their success and well-being and the health of our planet.*

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

1. Work with interdisciplinary teams to develop academic programs and courses at Humber College that connect with the Humber Arboretum
2. Create a Master Plan that connects with Humber College’s campus land-use planning process for academic and non-academic purposes
3. Expand the value and availability of meaningful experiential learning opportunities connected with the Humber Arboretum

## 2. Healthy Communities

Through our **strong partnerships and contributions to bettering the socio-ecological determinants of health**, we advance community health and well-being.

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

1. Partner in local and global movements to inspire a love of nature for the well-being of people and the planet
2. Support Humber College in its implementation of the Okanagan Charter through promotion of human and environmental well-being, both locally and globally
3. Enable safer, more accessible and more user-friendly navigation to, and throughout, our natural spaces for our community members by creating a wayfinding and signage plan that harmonizes with Humber College's Campus Plan and the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Signage Strategy
4. Increase participation in Humber Arboretum programs for our local schools and neighbouring communities through the implementation of strategies and partnerships

## 3. Thriving Nature

Through our **integration of protection, care, and community engagement**, we bolster the health of our ecosystems and natural inhabitants.

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

1. Demonstrate national leadership in sustainability by becoming the first College or University campus in Canada to be an Arboretum and Public Garden
2. Leverage the tripartite partnership between the City of Toronto, Humber College, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to enhance eco-system management within the Humber Arboretum
3. Create opportunities for our local community and Humber College students to be involved in the stewardship of natural systems
4. Enhance the natural functions of the Humber Pond and associated wetland while also creating living laboratory spaces, an outdoor classroom, social gathering spaces, and wildlife habitats

# APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MATRIX

The following matrix demonstrates how the Humber Arboretum’s three Strategic Plan priorities align with and support specific strategic priorities of its three founding partners – Humber College, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry, and Recreation division.

Humber Arboretum Strategic Plan (2019-24)	Humber College’s Strategic Plan (2018-23)	TRCA’s Building the Living City Strategic Plan (2013-22)	City of Toronto’s Ravine Strategy
<p><b>1. World-Ready Citizens</b> Through our <b>leadership in nature-based experiential learning</b>, we develop global citizens with the mindsets, knowledge, and skills to support their success and well-being and the health of our planet.</p>	<p><b>1. Career-Ready Citizens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Transform education by creating opportunities for all students to participate in meaningful experiential learning, with a focus on work-integrated learning and applied research.</li> <li>– Establish strong, sustainable collaborations with industry, community, international and alumni partners that create unique learning experiences for our students and reciprocal benefits for our partners.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Healthy and Inclusive Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Optimize student success by embedding health and well-being into all aspects of campus culture.</li> <li>– Provide national leadership in developing sustainable campuses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5. Foster Sustainable Citizenship</b> To foster engagement of community members, TRCA needs to build civic capacity by providing the tools and opportunities needed for community members to transition from participants into advocates and leaders. TRCA can also facilitate a two-way dialogue with community members to ensure that local knowledge, ideas and concerns are integrated into decision-making by governments and agencies.</p> <p><b>10. Accelerate innovation</b> To address the urgent and complex growth and sustainability challenges of the region, TRCA must accelerate the pace of innovation. TRCA must purposefully create the conditions for innovation and continuous improvement and share these innovations with its member municipalities throughout the region to advance shared objectives in sustainability.</p>	<p><b>1. Connect</b> Toronto’s ravines provide great opportunities for people to connect with nature and the city’s rich history. We must ensure that people understand and appreciate the value of our ravine system and have physical opportunities to connect with these spaces in a safe and sustainable manner.</p>

Humber Arboretum Strategic Plan (2019-24)	Humber College's Strategic Plan (2018-23)	TRCA's Building the Living City Strategic Plan (2013-22)	City of Toronto's Ravine Strategy
<p><b>2. Healthy Communities</b> Through our <b>strong partnerships and contributions to bettering the socio-ecological determinants of health</b>, we advance community health and well-being.</p>	<p><b>3. Healthy and Inclusive Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Optimize student success by embedding health and well-being into all aspects of campus culture.</li> <li>- Provide national leadership in developing sustainable campuses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Create complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment</b></p> <p>Complete communities support the well-being of each resident by providing a full range of housing, transportation, community infrastructure and open space opportunities.</p>	<p><b>4. Partner</b></p> <p>Many individuals and organizations are interested in becoming more involved in the care and enhancement of Toronto's ravines. The City must work in partnership with the community, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)... and other stakeholders to create more opportunities for individuals and organizations to contribute to these spaces in meaningful and sustainable ways.</p>
<p><b>3. Thriving Nature</b> Through our <b>integration of protection, care, and community engagement</b>, we bolster the health of our ecosystems and natural inhabitants.</p>	<p><b>1. Career-Ready Citizens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transform education by creating opportunities for all students to participate in meaningful experiential learning, with a focus on work-integrated learning and applied research.</li> <li>- Establish strong, sustainable collaborations with industry, community, international and alumni partners that create unique learning experiences for our students and reciprocal benefits for our partners.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Healthy and Inclusive Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Optimize student success by embedding health and well-being into all aspects of campus culture.</li> <li>- Provide national leadership in developing sustainable campuses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Manage our regional water resources for current and future generations</b></p> <p>Clean water is a precious and limited resource that needs to be valued and protected. Flooding, urban development and unsustainable agricultural and industrial practices continue to negatively impact rivers, streams and Lake Ontario. To safeguard drinking water supply, the health of aquatic ecosystems, and to protect communities from flooding, TRCA must continue working with its municipal partners to prioritize the protection, restoration, and safe management of water resources.</p>	<p><b>1. Protect</b></p> <p>Ravines are fundamentally natural spaces. Ecological function and resilience is the foundation for long-term sustainability of the ravines and watersheds. We are all guardians of these spaces and must treat them with care and respect. All actions related to ravines should be guided by the overarching goal of protecting these spaces by maintaining and improving their ecological health.</p>

The Humber Arboretum is made possible through the support and collaboration of our three founding partners — Humber College, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and the City of Toronto.



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