



Urban Reforestation in the City of Markham - 30 years later

Latonnell Conservation Symposium

November 4, 2025



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

1. Historical Context of Woodland Cover
2. Markham's 1992 Reforestation Goals
3. Our Reforestation Strategy
4. Future Opportunities and Challenges





MARKHAM CONTEXT

Greater Toronto Area



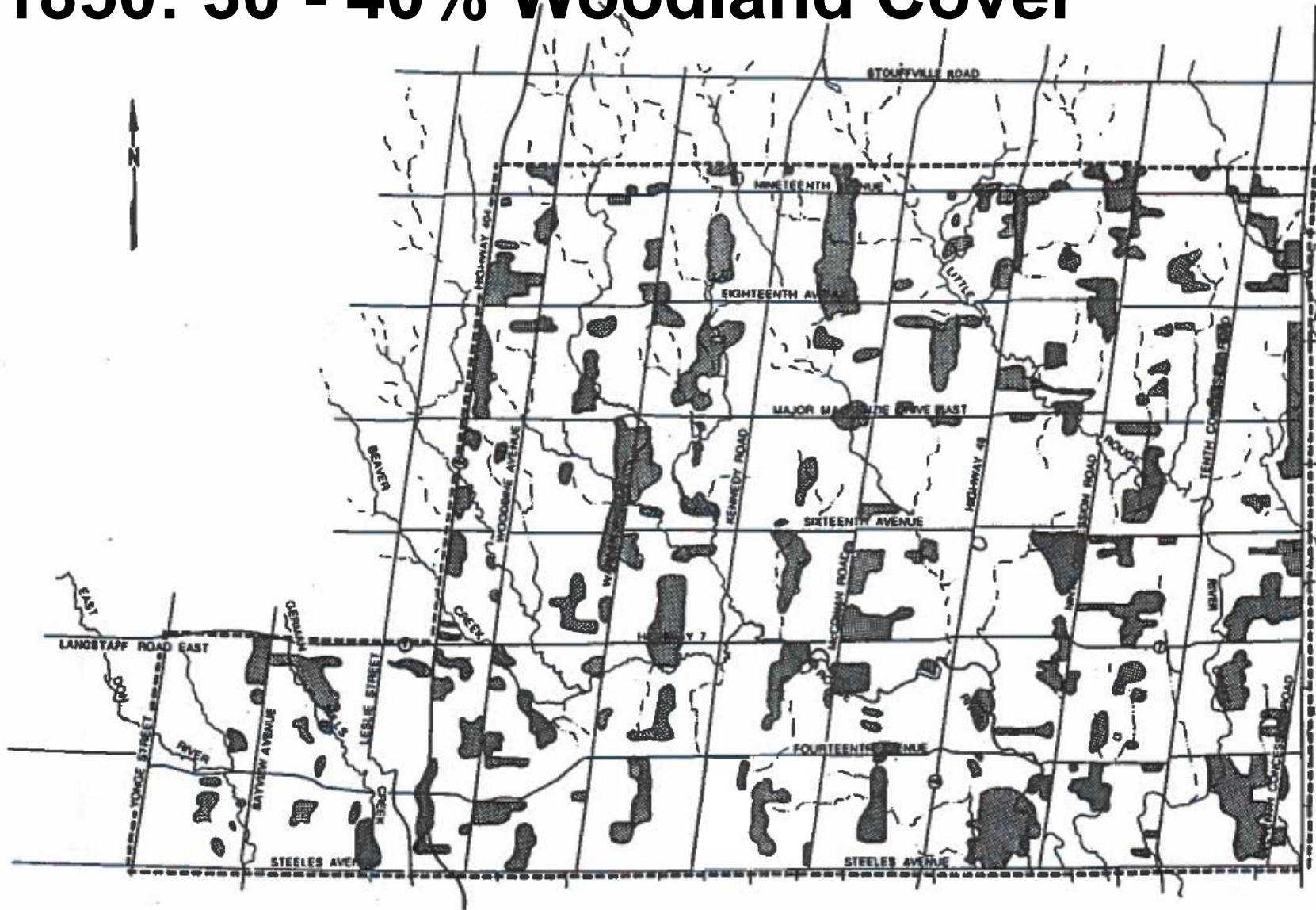
ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK



MILNE DAM CONSERVATION PARK



1850: 30 - 40% Woodland Cover



TOWN OF MARKHAM NATURAL FEATURES STUDY

FIGURE 3-9

WOODLOTS IN MARKHAM
1853-1854

LEGEND

 WOODLOTS

BAR SCALE



Gore & Storr's Limited
Consulting Engineers

SOURCE: McPHILLIPS, 1983-1984

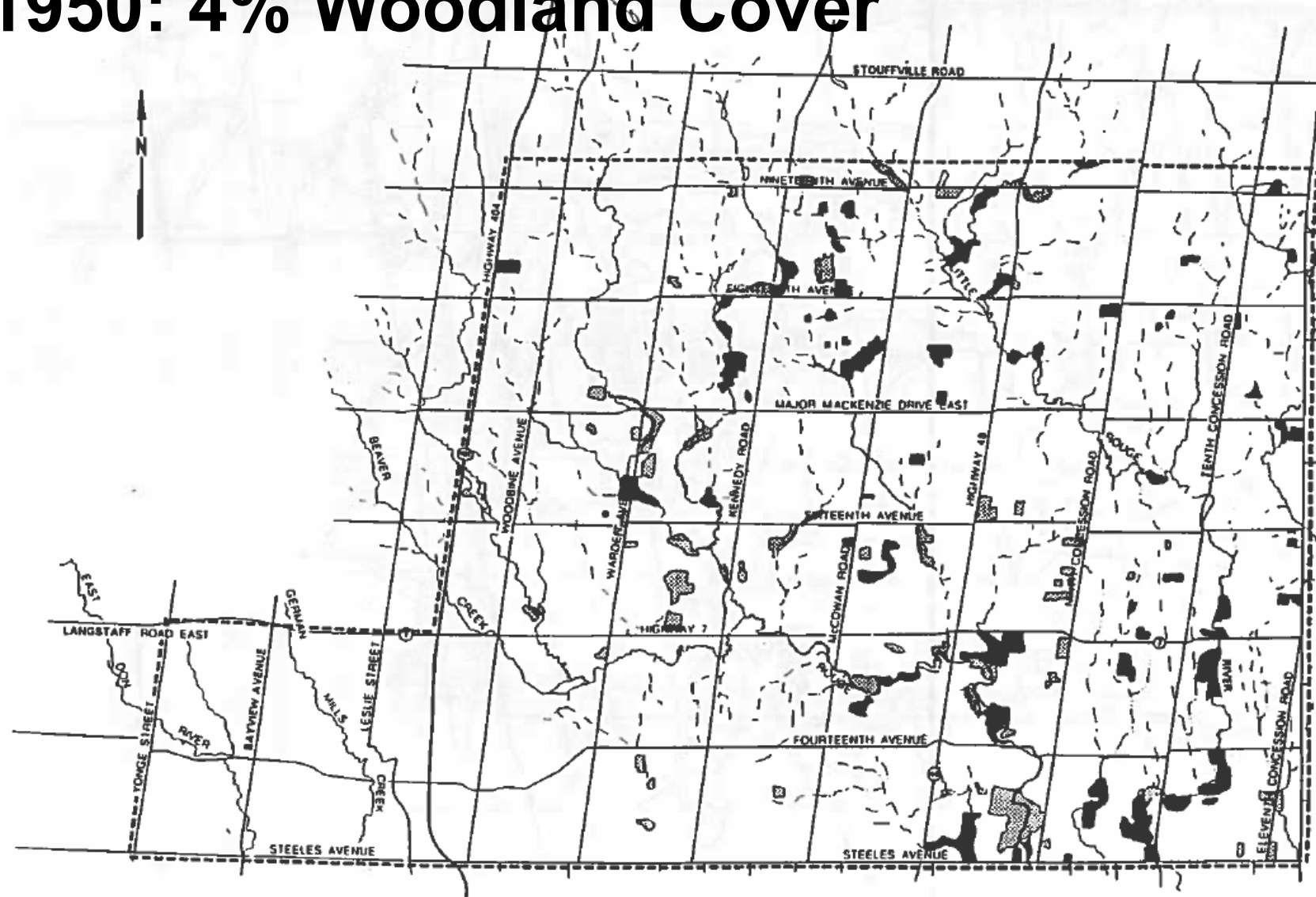
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MARKHAM



1950: 4% Woodland Cover





TOWN OF MARKHAM NATURAL FEATURES STUDY

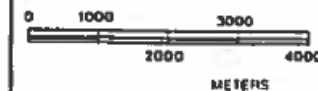
FIGURE 3-10

WOODLOTS IN MARKHAM 1956

LEGEND

-  WOODLOTS IN 1956
-  1956 WOODLOTS STILL INTACT IN 1991

BAR SCALE



Gore & Storrer Limited
Consulting Engineers

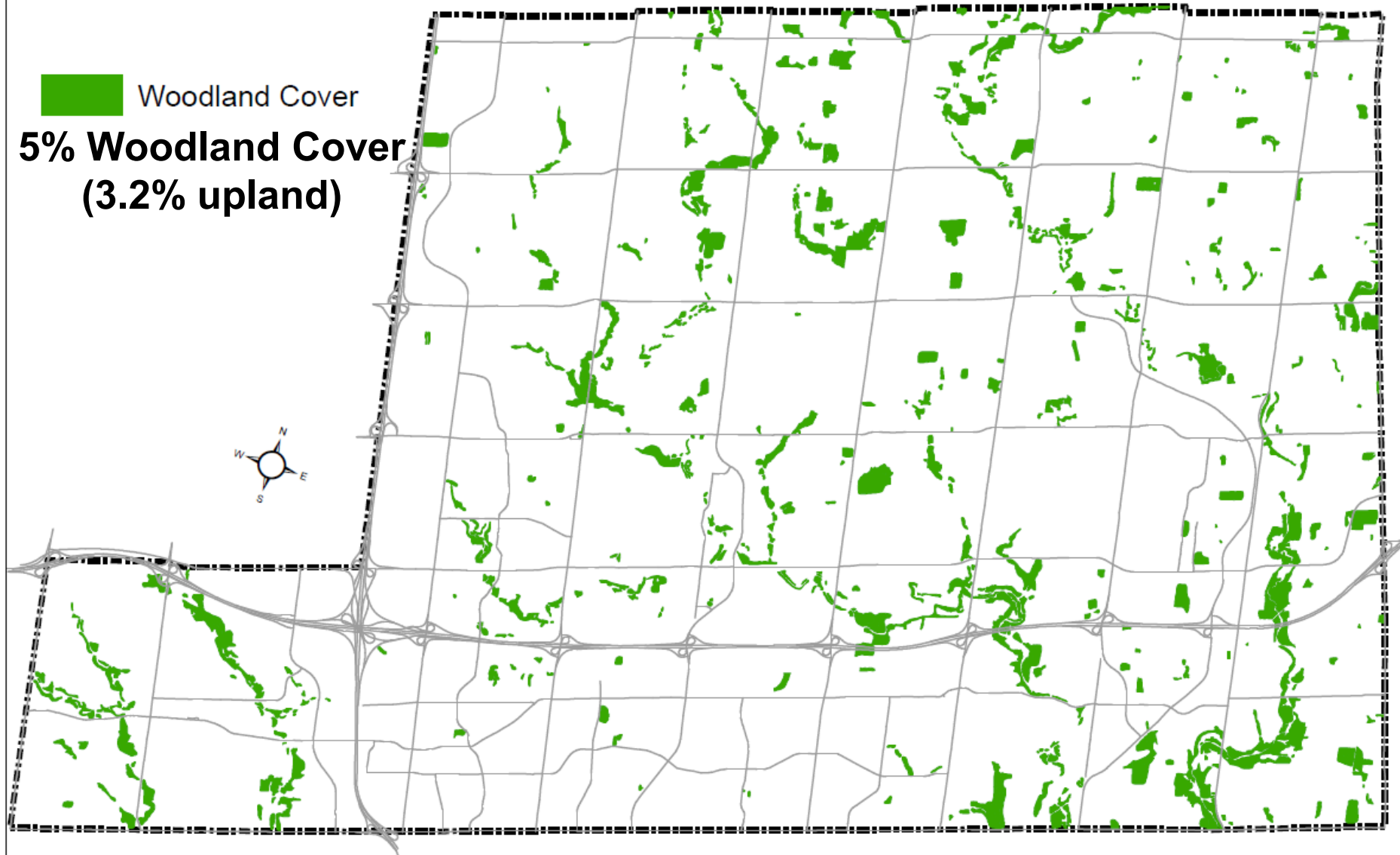
SOURCE: RICHARDSON AND BAWES 1968
AND 1990 AIR PHOTOS

DATE:

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1992 Woodland Cover, City of Markham





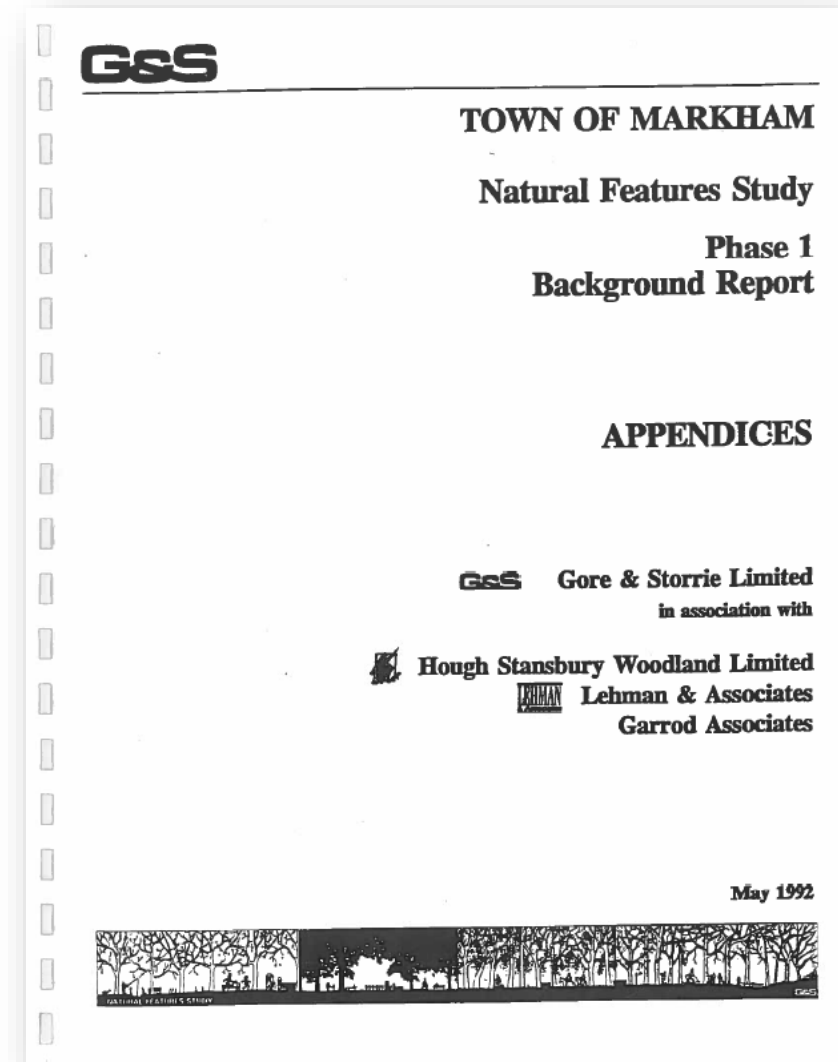
1990s – PLAN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

1992 Natural Features Study

First city-wide natural heritage inventory and comprehensive 'Plan for the Environment'

Goals and Objectives

1. Stop further losses of significant natural features and minimize other losses
2. Improve the remaining ecological resources
3. Create and improve linkages between natural areas
4. Create and restore larger contiguous areas of natural communities
5. Establish targets for natural heritage cover





1990s IN MARKHAM

Council hesitates on offer of 30,000 trees

ENZO DI MATTEO
Staff Reporter

A proposal to plant 30,000 trees on publicly owned Rouge River valleylands in south Unionville, is being called premature by town officials.

Organizers say the project proposed for 19 hectares (47 acres) of floodplain south of Hwy 7 between Main Street Unionville and the Kennedy Bypass, will be the largest forest in Markham if approved.

But Planning Commissioner Lorne McCool said he will recommend at Tuesday's council meeting, that the proposal be referred to consultants currently studying and reviewing how to best preserve the town's inventory of natural features.

Organizers are hoping to plant the trees in a one-day blitz using more than 1,000 volunteers May 5.

However, there is some suggestion among environmentalists and area ratepayers that the town is stalling the project while it awaits a formal application from a small group of developers proposing to use part of the lands for a golf course.

That proposal, which has been presented to Unionville ratepayers and town council at a private meeting, includes three 20-storey condominium highrises, six eight-storey low-rise buildings and a second golf course on Main Street Unionville just south of Hwy 7.

Stephen Marshall, chair of Save The Rouge Valley System Inc., said the development proposal being spearheaded by HK Michael Wong architects is "pie in the sky" since

some of the lands required for the project, including the proposed reforestation area, have already been designated for parkland uses by the province.

Marshall said the town is "waffling" on a tree planting proposal that will restore the natural vibrancy of an area of Markham that has long suffered deforestation, flood damage and urban encroachment.

He said political support for the proposal is shaky, given behind-the-scenes pressure for the Wong development.

But he stresses that in no way should publicly owned lands be given up for private purposes.

"The idea of a linear golf course is simply out of date," said Marshall, adding that a golf course proposal

being considered for Angus Glen near Cachet has already been flagged by a provincial environment committee for disapproval.

"The town is basically being afforded a \$250,000 gift in trees and labor," said Neville Cohen, president of the Unionville Ratepayers Association.

"It would be a serious loss to Markham if council decides not to take advantage of this opportunity."

Cohen, whose group has expressed

density, traf about the W town will have area should t one's use, or of golf enthus Said Cohe degradation

golf courses are constructed, we have serious concerns about what impact that would have on the river."

However, planning committee chair Frank Scarpitti said the most prudent course at this time would be for council to refer the proposal to consultants studying Markham's natural features.

Given that the Wong proposal is also located within the Markham Centre study area (formerly the South Central Unionville Study area)

And whether two studies supporting highrise development in the area, one of which is ongoing, will take precedence over the Markham Centre study, which has broadened its scope to lands west of Main Street Unionville designated for park uses by the province.

"It'll be a detailed process," said Scarpitti.

"The fact we can get 30,000 trees is fantastic, but more thinking has to go into where they're needed the

Tree planting draws fire

(From page 1)

ple out," Bell said.

The councillors are obviously coming from a completely different perspective on this matter, Creasey said. Organizers are trying to create an opportunity for human/nature interface, he explained.

"What we're trying to do is return some sort of (wildlife) habitat back to the urban environment," he said.

Cutting down the entire area and trimming trees on a continual basis may defeat the project's purpose. "If you don't leave spaces for the animals to hide in you're not going to attract wildlife," Creasey pointed out.

He also noted that many people have ventured into the areas where there has already been signs of animal life.

Town council has approved the committee's planting proposal for next year. However, organizers will be working closely with town staff, nearby residents and the Metro Toronto Regional Conservation Authority to develop a planting, implementation and maintenance plan.

10,000 Trees taking away open lands, charge councillors

ROGER BELGRAVE
Staff Reporter

Two of Markham's councillors are voicing grave concerns about the results of mass tree plantings in the town.

Regional councillors Carole Bell and Fred Cox are criticizing organizers of 10,000 Trees

problem as a clash between two different philosophies. There are those who see efforts to restore wildlife habitats as an attempt to deprive humans of something, he said.

Both councillors say they are in favor of the tree planting and reforestation concept. But the proliferation of trees in cer-

TABLE-1 General Reforestation Categories

PLANTATION	MANAGED SUCCESSION	NATURAL REGENERATION
<p>STAGE 1. Establishment.</p> <p>Typical Plant Species: Oak, Maple, Walnut, Pine, Spruce</p>	<p>STAGE 1. Establishment - pioneer and climax species mixed.</p> <p>Typical Plant Species: Poplar, Alder, Maple, Basswood, Hemlock</p>	<p>STAGE 1. Existing conditions.</p> <p>mown turf existing woodland</p>
<p>STAGE 2. Canopy closure and thinning.</p>	<p>STAGE 2. Canopy closure and thinning.</p>	<p>STAGE 2. Abandon mowing.</p>
<p>STAGE 3 onward Mature woodland development.</p>	<p>STAGE 3 onward Mature climax woodland development.</p> <p>understorey planting</p>	<p>STAGE 3. Regeneration.</p> <p>edge regeneration meadow, community development woodland regeneration</p>



1992 REFORESTATION TARGETS

Natural Heritage Inventory

Parameter	Existing (1992)
Natural Cover (%)	13.6 %
Upland Woodlot (%)	3.2 %
Number of Core Areas over 100 hectares	0
Number of Native Plants	387
Number of Birds	77

Plan for the Environment

figure 2.1

CORRIDORS

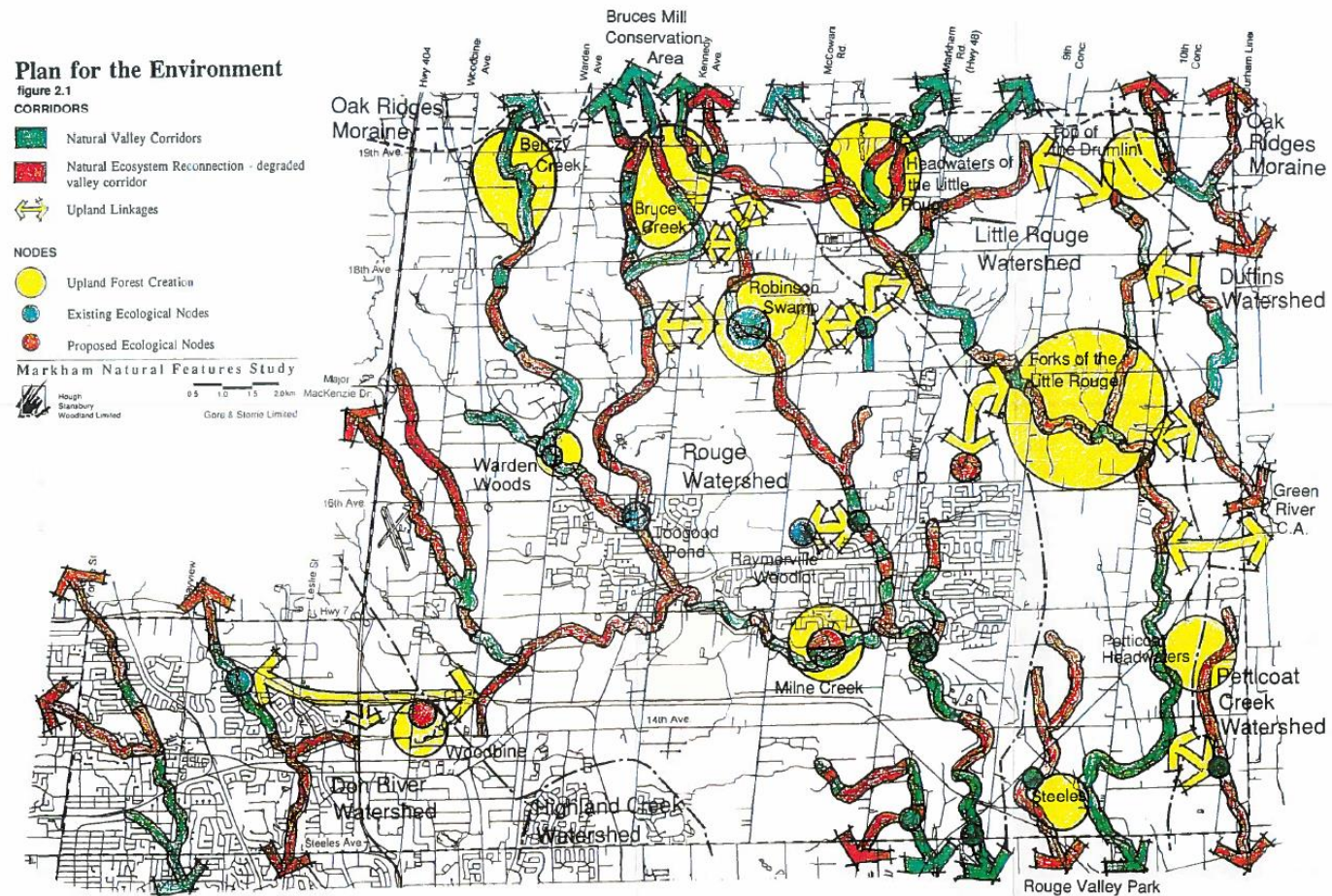
- Natural Valley Corridors
- Natural Ecosystem Reconnection - degraded valley corridor
- Upland Linkages

NODES

- Upland Forest Creation
- Existing Ecological Nodes
- Proposed Ecological Nodes

Markham Natural Features Study

Scale: 0 5 10 15 20km
 Hough, Stanbury, Woodland Limited
 Gore & Stone Limited

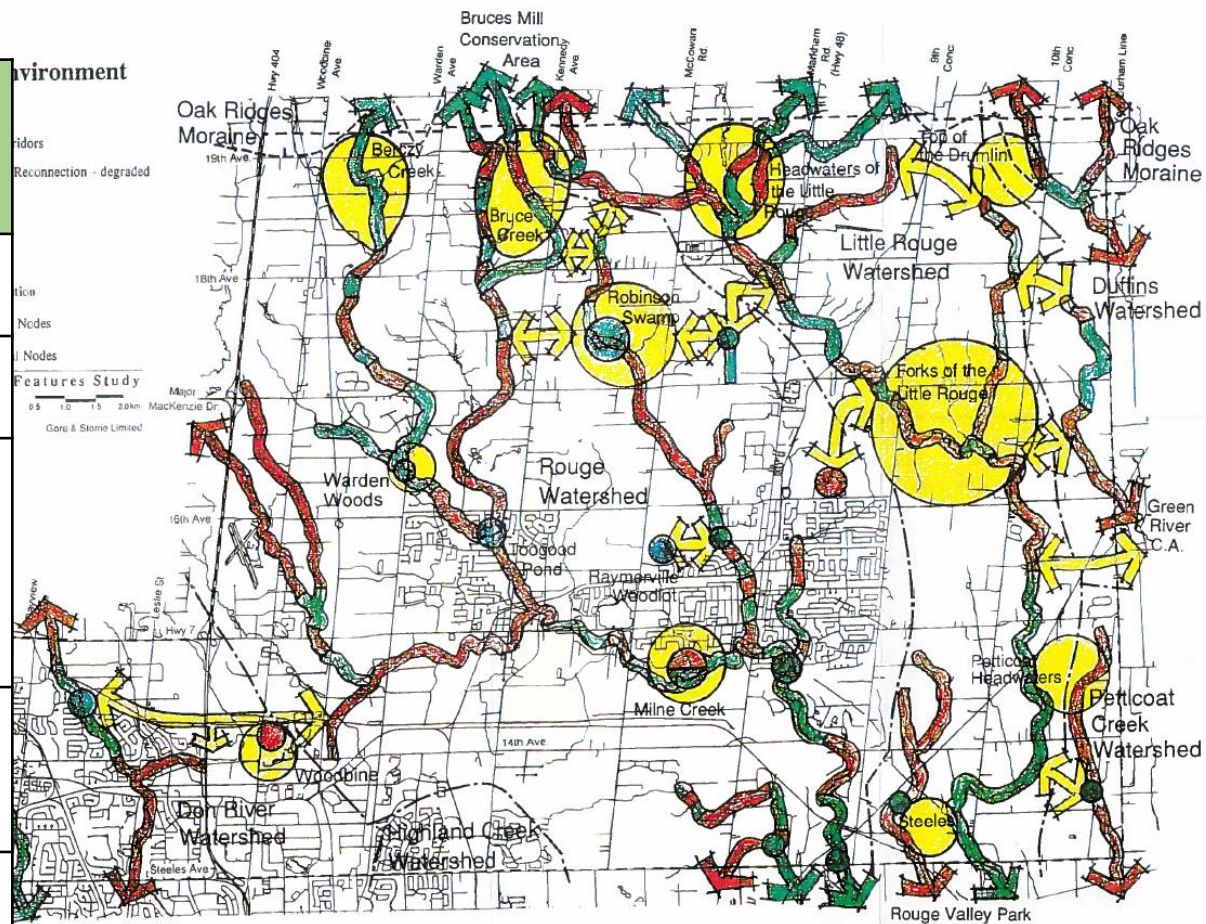




1992 REFORESTATION TARGETS

Natural Heritage Targets

Parameter	Existing (1992)	Long Term Goal
Natural Cover (%)	13.6 %	21.0 %
Upland Woodlot (%)	3.2 %	11.0 %
Number of Core Areas over 100 hectares	0	7
Number of Native Plants	387	500
Number of Birds	77	100

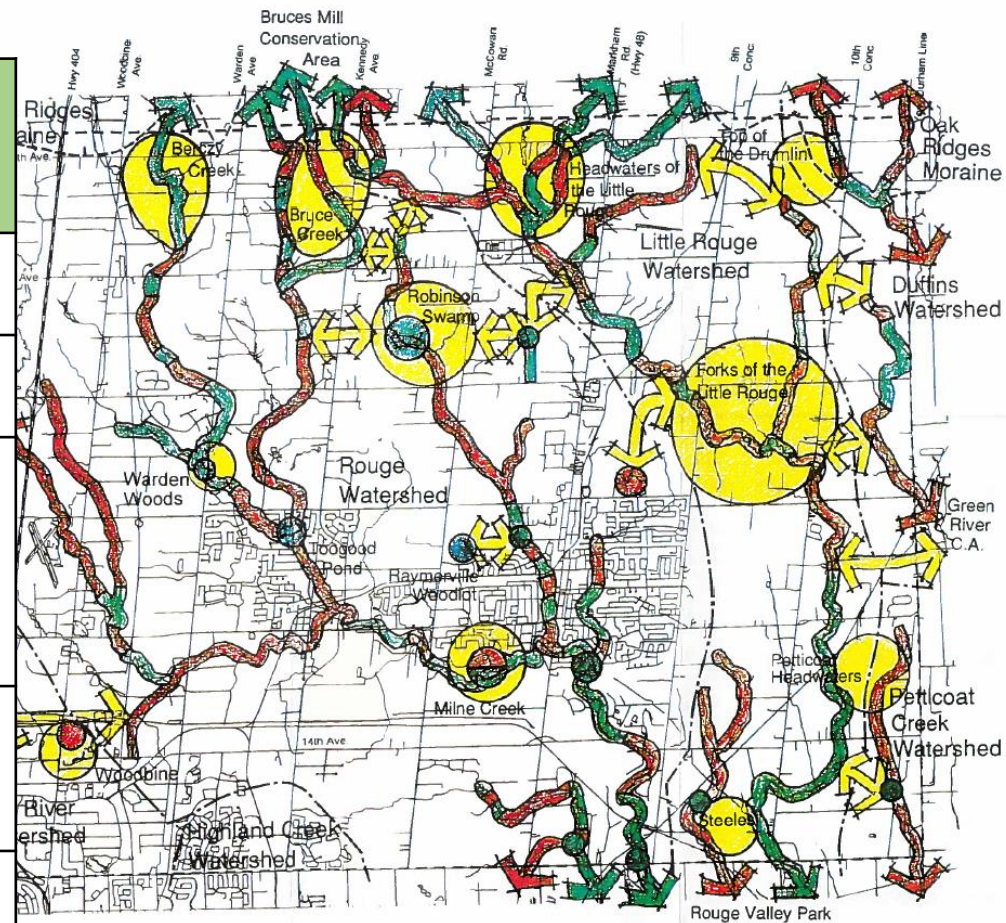




1992 REFORESTATION TARGETS

Natural Heritage Targets

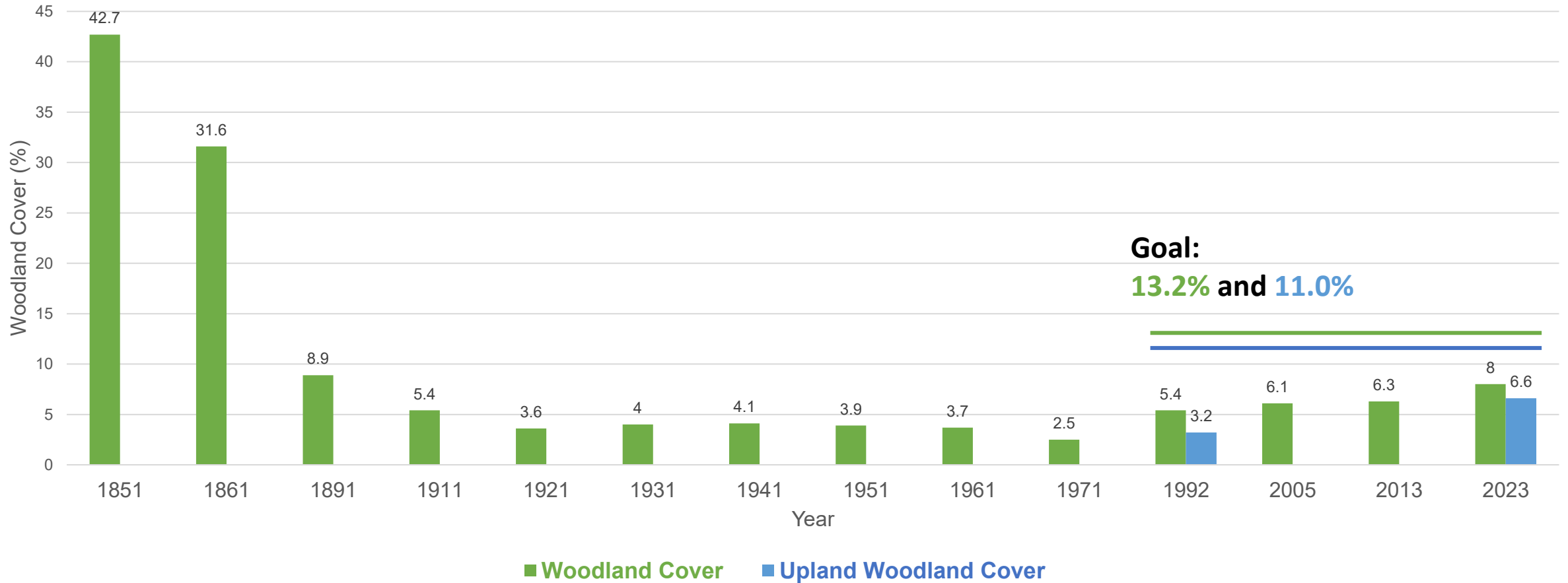
Parameter	Existing (1992)	Long Term Goal	Today (2024)
Natural Cover (%)	13.6 %	21.0 %	15.9%
Upland Woodlot (%)	3.2 %	11.0 %	6.6%
Number of Core Areas over 100 hectares	0	7	3 (Milne, BHMP, LRC 16 th to 407)
Number of Native Plants	387	500	326
Number of Birds	77	100	75





1992 Reforestation Goals

Historic Woodland Cover
City of Markham





MARKHAM'S REFORESTATION PROGRAM

1. Supporting local tree planting organizations
2. Tree planting by contractors
3. City-led community planting projects
4. Overall coordination and maintenance





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

Supporting local tree planting organizations





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

Supporting local tree planting organizations

Partner responsibilities

- Fundraising
- Volunteer recruitment
- Running the event
- Site preparation (some)
- Watering (some)

City responsibilities

- Identifying planting sites
- Mowing (some)
- Delivering mulch
- Providing partial funding
- Watering

Total stems to date: 500,000

Future planting projection: 20,000 - 25,000 per year





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

Tree planting projects by contractors





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

Tree planting projects by contractors

City responsibilities

- Identifying planting sites
- Preparing planting plans
- Procurement

Total stems to date: 50,000

Future planting projection: 10,000 per year





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

City-led community planting projects





MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

City-led community planting projects

City responsibilities

- Identifying planting sites
- Site preparation
- Delivering mulch
- Volunteer recruitment (focus on corporate groups)
- Running the event

Total stems to date: 50,000

Future planting projection: 3,000 – 5,000 per year



Arbres Canada
Tree Canada



MARKHAM REFORESTATION PROGRAM

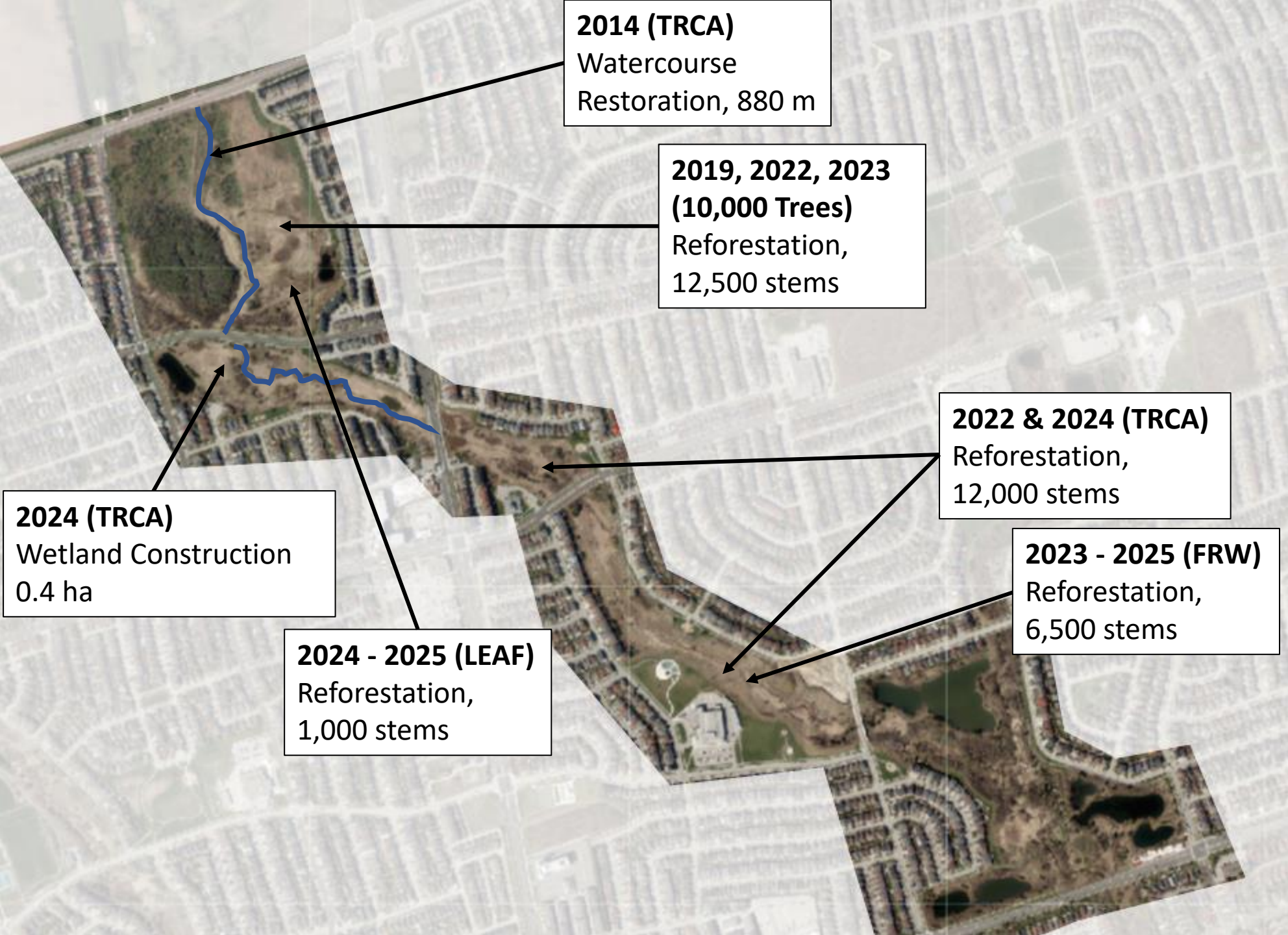
Overall Coordination, Monitoring and Maintenance

Ongoing actions:

- Watering throughout summer
- Mulching and weeding events
- Removing fencing and tree guards

Longer term planning:

- Identifying planting sites and assigning lead planting partner



2014 (TRCA)
Watercourse
Restoration, 880 m

**2019, 2022, 2023
(10,000 Trees)**
Reforestation,
12,500 stems

2022 & 2024 (TRCA)
Reforestation,
12,000 stems

2023 - 2025 (FRW)
Reforestation,
6,500 stems

2024 (TRCA)
Wetland Construction
0.4 ha

2024 - 2025 (LEAF)
Reforestation,
1,000 stems

ROBINSON CREEK



1990s (City) Reforestation with Scouts, Rotary & Milne Park Community Association
250 per year

2008, 2012, 2016 (City) Reforestation
2,500 stems

2024 - 2025 (City) Reforestation with Trees Canada
7,000 stems

1994-1995 (FRW) Reforestation
1600 stems

2014, 2015, 2020, 2021 (FRW) Reforestation
5,500 stems

2010s (TRCA) Wetland Construction
0.5 ha

2014 - 2016 (10K Trees) Reforestation
17,000 stems

2025 – 2026 (FRW w/ 2BT funding) Reforestation
12,000 stems

2026 - 2027(10K Trees) Reforestation
10,000 stems

2025 (TRCA) Wetland Construction
1.5 ha

2023 (City) First Mini-forest

MILNE DAM PARK



Arbres Canada
Tree Canada





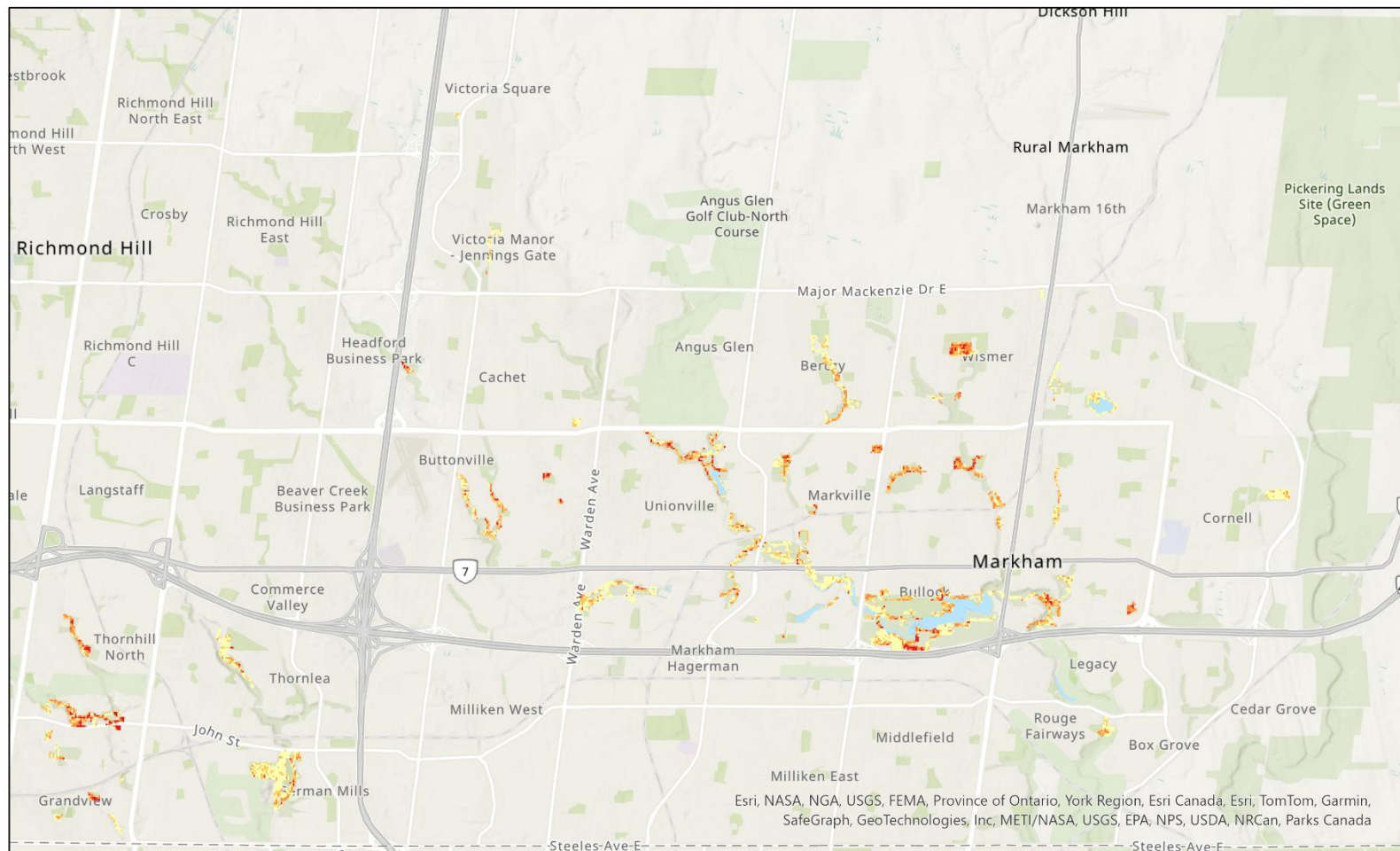
MARKHAM REFORESTATION STRATEGY

Invasive Species

Buckthorn

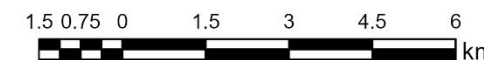
- Present in 55% of surveyed natural areas
- >50% buckthorn cover in 7% of natural areas
- Very limited management occurring

Buckthorn



Buckthorn

- None (0%)
- Rare (1-5%)
- Abundant (5-50%)
- Dominant (50%+)





Questions?



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