

Clause 7 in Report No. 16 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on October 15, 2015.

7

Greening Strategy - Environmental Protection and Preservation,
Partnership Acquisition, Dalton Property, Township of King

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendations contained in the report dated September 30, 2015 from the Commissioner of Environmental Services.

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Council authorize a contribution of fifty per cent of the total cost of acquisition, to a maximum of \$1,414,500, including all costs and disbursements, to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, towards purchasing 44.2 hectare Dalton property (legally described as part of lots 3 and 4, Concession 11, Township of King). Funding support is subject to the restrictive covenant condition outlined in this report.
2. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

2. Purpose

This report seeks Council authorization to contribute a maximum of \$1,414,500 or fifty per cent of the total acquisition costs (\$2,829,000), to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), to purchase 44.2 hectares of land for the Nashville Conservation Reserve, as shown in Attachment 1. This report also addresses a May 2015 Council direction to report back on a TRCA deputation regarding the Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan.

3. Background

The Greening Strategy is a key instrument for environmental stewardship and investment in green infrastructure

The Region continues to demonstrate environmental leadership through the implementation of the Greening Strategy and our investment in green infrastructure. \$1.7 million is allocated annually towards delivery of a number of Greening Strategy partnership programs (tree planting, environmental education, stewardship etc.) as well to protect strategic environmental lands.

Since 2001, the Greening Strategy has contributed to the protection of 1,197 hectares of environmental lands through donations, conservation easements and acquisition

Properties can be secured using a number of tools ranging from stewardship agreements, donation, conservation easements, to fee simple acquisition by the Region or a partner. The focus of the Greening Strategy Environmental Land Protection and Preservation program is primarily on support for partners who are active in protecting conservation lands.

A total of 1,197 hectares of environmental lands have been protected since adoption of the Strategy in 2001. Lands are protected based on Council endorsed criteria, with a priority on lands with opportunities to increase woodland cover consistent with Corporate Strategic Plan objectives and the Regional Official Plan 2010 woodland cover target of 25 per cent by 2031.

4. Analysis and Options

Property is part of the Regional Greenlands System in the Humber River watershed

The property is part of the Regional Greenlands System in the Township of King, within the Humber River watershed and is designated as Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt Plan. The Humber River is one of Ontario's most significant rivers, stretching over 100km from the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario. The property contains meadows, forests, the main Humber River and a riparian bluff. It offers 10 hectares of open areas for opportunities to increase woodland cover.

Acquisition of this property provides the opportunity to protect and restore natural heritage features and functions. The main values are:

- forest cover and ecological functions (relating to size, shape and connectivity)

Greening Strategy - Environmental Protection and Preservation, Partnership Acquisition, Dalton Property, Township of King

- wildlife habitat and opportunities to improve biodiversity
- potential reforestation of 10 hectares that will contribute to the York Region woodland cover target of 25 per cent
- future low impact public recreation (i.e. trails) and environmental education

Property is a key natural linkage for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Nashville Conservation Reserve

This property is a strategic connection for TRCA in assembling 820 hectares of public land for the Nashville Conservation Reserve as shown on *Attachment 2*. On May 14, 2015 TRCA made a deputation to Committee of the Whole on the Management Plan for the Reserve. Committee of the Whole received the deputation and referred the request for staff to report back.

The Management Plan supports goals and objectives of the Regional Official Plan, notably the Sustainable Natural Environment and Healthy Communities chapters. As articulated within Chapter 7 of the Management Plan (Implementation Schedule and Budget), continued protection of the Reserve helps deliver the vision, goals and objectives of a number of potential partners, not limited to York Region.

Any potential budget implications associated with TRCA implementing the Management Plan will be considered through the annual Conservation Authorities budget process.

Protection of these lands provides a connection for a future 25 km network of trails proposed in the Reserve

These lands will provide passive public use opportunities (i.e. nature appreciation). Future trails would contribute to a proposed network of 25 km of trails identified in the Management Plan. Funds for the Management Plan including capital improvements (e.g. trails, parking, signage fencing etc.), are being pursued by TRCA as part of a multi-year project subject to available funds. The management plan funding will be assessed against other priority projects as part of the annual Conservation Authority budget process.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority is an appropriate conservation land owner and manager for this property with experience and expertise in land acquisition and management

TRCA has a long and successful history of environmental protection through partnership land acquisition. Since the establishment of the Region's Environmental Land Protection and Preservation Program in 2001 TRCA has received \$4.4M in financial support to protect over 221 hectares of the Regional Greenlands System worth \$15.6M (at the time of purchase). Projects often

include funding support achieved through partnerships including the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation and private donations.

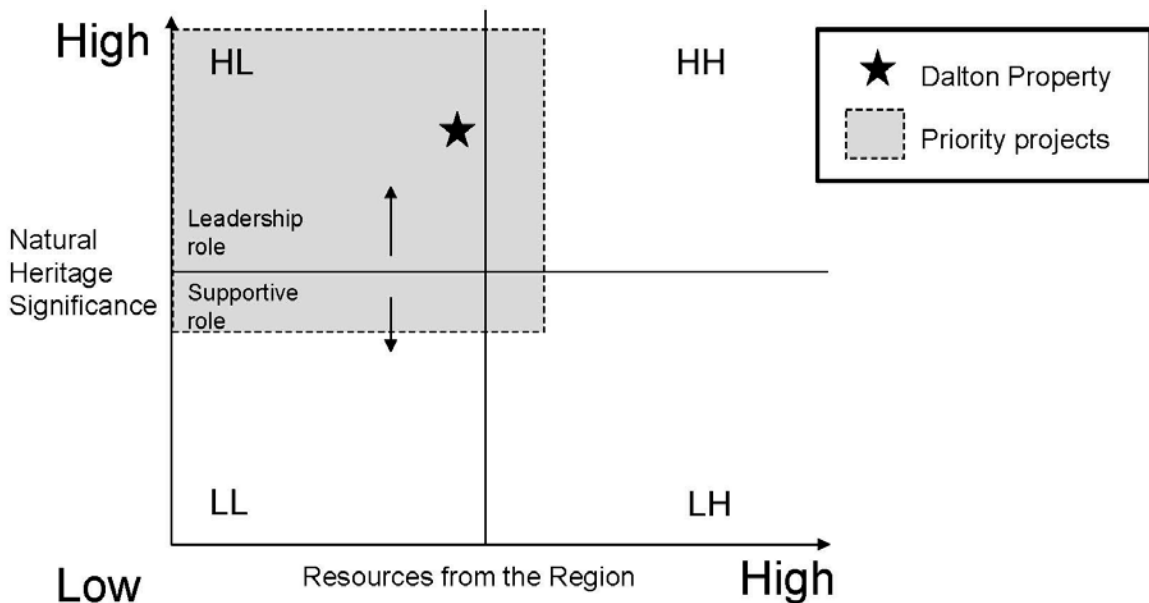
In the Greater Toronto Area TRCA owns over 17,000 hectares of lands and has staff and resources to manage environmental lands including natural habitat restoration projects. TRCA management of the property would be consistent with the Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan.

Property was evaluated against Council approved land securement criteria and is recommended for acquisition

Staff considered this property against the Council approved Regional Securement Criteria and deem it a high priority for acquisition. When evaluating a project, the natural heritage significance is related to the financial cost in a priority matrix. The Dalton property falls within the priority project area of the matrix as shown in Figure 1.

As requested by TRCA, staff recommend the purchase of this property be supported for up to 50 per cent of the combined purchase and associated purchase costs (\$1,414,500). This purchase would be subject to a restrictive covenant agreement between TRCA and the Region to secure first rights of refusal should land disposition be considered in the future.

Figure 1
Dalton Property Priority Matrix Results



Link to key Council-approved plans

Delivery of the Greening Strategy supports Regional Official Plan 2010 policies and 2015-2019 Strategic Plan objectives of preserving green spaces. The Greening Strategy supports the Regional Official Plan 2010 objective to protect and enhance the Greenlands System and work towards the 25 per cent woodland cover policy target. The Greening Strategy is recognized as an influential document for Vision 2051, and its delivery supports seven of the eight goal areas.

Supporting this property acquisition will protect greenspace and contribute to the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan performance measure - to increase the number of hectares of environmental lands secured through Regional Greening Strategy programs.

5. Financial Implications

Since 2001, a total of 50 properties (1,197 hectares) have been secured under the Greening Strategy through donation or purchase of land rights (ownership or conservation easement), with a total Regional investment of \$13.9M. The value of the properties secured exceeds \$89M.

Acquisition of this property represents good value with sufficient funds available in the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve

The purchase price for the 109.2 acres (44.2 hectare) property is \$2,760,000. Realty Services staff have reviewed the property appraisal and believe it to be fair. The cost per acre is \$25,270 (\$62,443 per hectare). This cost is comparable with other properties secured in previous years through the Greening Strategy and represents good value for money given current market conditions (Table 1).

Table 1
Purchase Costs* of Recently Secured Properties (2009 to Current)

Property (year acquired)	Purchase cost	Purchase cost per acre	York contribution per acre	York contribution
Dalton (2015 pending)	\$2,760,000	\$25,270	\$12,635	\$1,380,000
Drysdale (2013)	\$1,850,640	\$13,607	\$13,607	\$1,850,640
Salmon (2010)	\$1,385,000	\$20,367	\$11,000	\$ 752,390
Klees (2009)	\$1,360,000	\$34,000	\$11,750	\$ 470,000

* does not include all project costs, fees and land transfer costs

Greening Strategy - Environmental Protection and Preservation, Partnership Acquisition, Dalton Property, Township of King

This property acquisition is expected to close in 2015. The total acquisition cost of \$2,829,000 is outlined in Table 2, which includes both the purchase price of \$2,760,000 plus acquisition costs (i.e. land transfer costs) of \$69,000. On September 25, 2015, TRCA Board Members approved a fifty per cent contribution by TRCA which is outlined in Table 2.

TRCA has requested a \$1,414,500 contribution from the Region towards the total acquisition costs for the property. Fifty per cent of the purchase price (\$1,380,000) plus half of the acquisition costs (\$34,500). Sufficient York Region funds are available to support this acquisition.

Table 2
Proposed Acquisition Funding

Partner	Contribution	Status
York Region	\$1,414,500	Pending
TRCA	\$1,414,500	Confirmed
TOTAL	\$2,829,000	

The securement of this property helps to achieve the environmental goals of the Greening Strategy, including increasing woodland cover as well as contributing to the Nashville Conservation Reserve land assemblage. TRCA advances strategic partnership land acquisition priorities under their Greenlands Acquisitions Project (GAP).

TRCA Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan project funding will be considered as part of annual budget process

Under the Greening Strategy, strategic land acquisition opportunities are brought to Regional Council for their consideration. This land securement project and related funding is separate from the annual TRCA budget submission.

TRCA estimates \$3.6 Million is needed to implement the Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan between 2016 and 2021. The majority of these funds is proposed for trails (55 per cent), associated river crossings (20 per cent), and the remaining is for parking lots, signage and management activities. TRCA is advancing a multi-year project budget request to support implementation of the Management Plan as a whole. Support for this strategic land acquisition is not intended to presuppose the budget process, and the Management Plan implementation request will be further evaluated through the annual budget prioritization process.

Staff will continue to work with TRCA to protect present and future Regional interests

The Nashville Conservation Reserve is a significant landscape and resource within York Region. The Management Plan is the ideal tool to inform partners on how TRCA intends to manage the area for its long term environmental, cultural, recreational and agricultural values. Infrastructure is critical to servicing the Region's growing population.

Management Plans are not intended to replace or prejudice other legislation and due process, including the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. Advancement of the Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan by the TRCA will not prejudice legislation, including Environmental Assessment (EA) processes relating to future growth and infrastructure projects. Regional staff will continue to work with TRCA staff to ensure that management of the Reserve accommodates Regional interests.

6. Local Municipal Impact

Local municipalities are important partners in implementing the Greening Strategy, including environmental land securement. Township of King staff have been consulted as negotiations with the landowner progressed and support this acquisition. As Greenlands are protected and enhanced through securement initiatives, local municipalities benefit from the multiple enhancements to both their communities and the natural environment. Nashville Conservation Reserve is a significant assembly of environmentally significant land accessible to residents. Contributing to the purchase of the Dalton property will further protect and enhance the Regional Greenlands System and its ecological functions and services. Protection of these lands provides more green space and passive recreation opportunities for residents. The Nashville Conservation Reserve Management Plan is supported in principle by the Councils of King Township and the City of Vaughan.

7. Conclusion

Securement of this property provides many environmental and public benefits to the Region and its residents. Environmental land acquisition is integral to advancing the goals of the Greening Strategy. This property is considered to be a strategic acquisition given the opportunity to increase woodland cover and contribution to the Nashville Conservation Reserve land assemblage.

Greening Strategy - Environmental Protection and Preservation, Partnership Acquisition, Dalton Property, Township of King

It is recommended that the request for funding for the TRCA acquisition of the Dalton property be supported conditional upon TRCA agreement to enter into a restrictive covenant with the Region to ensure the use of the property meets the Region's needs as well as secures first rights of refusal should land disposition be considered in the future.

For more information on this report, please contact Laura McDowell, Director of Environmental Promotion and Protection at ext. 75077 or Ian Buchanan, Manager of Natural Heritage and Forestry at ext. 75204.

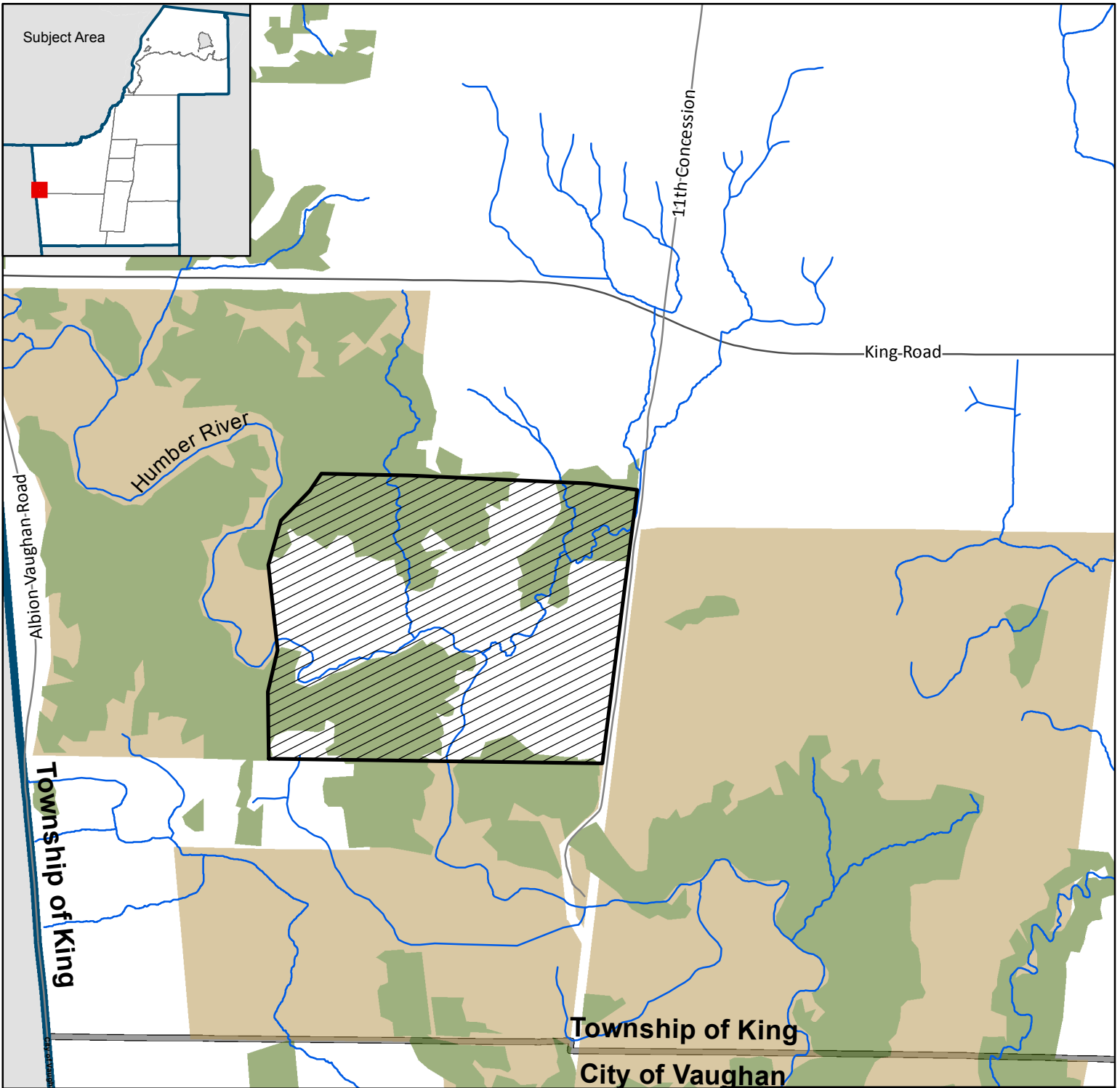
The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

September 30, 2015

Attachments (2)

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request



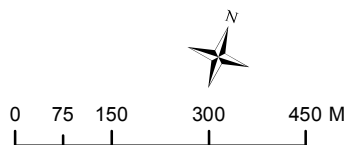
Proposed Acquisition - Dalton Property

Greening Strategy
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Produced by: Barbara Davies
 The Regional Municipality of York
 Environmental Promotion & Protection, Environmental Services
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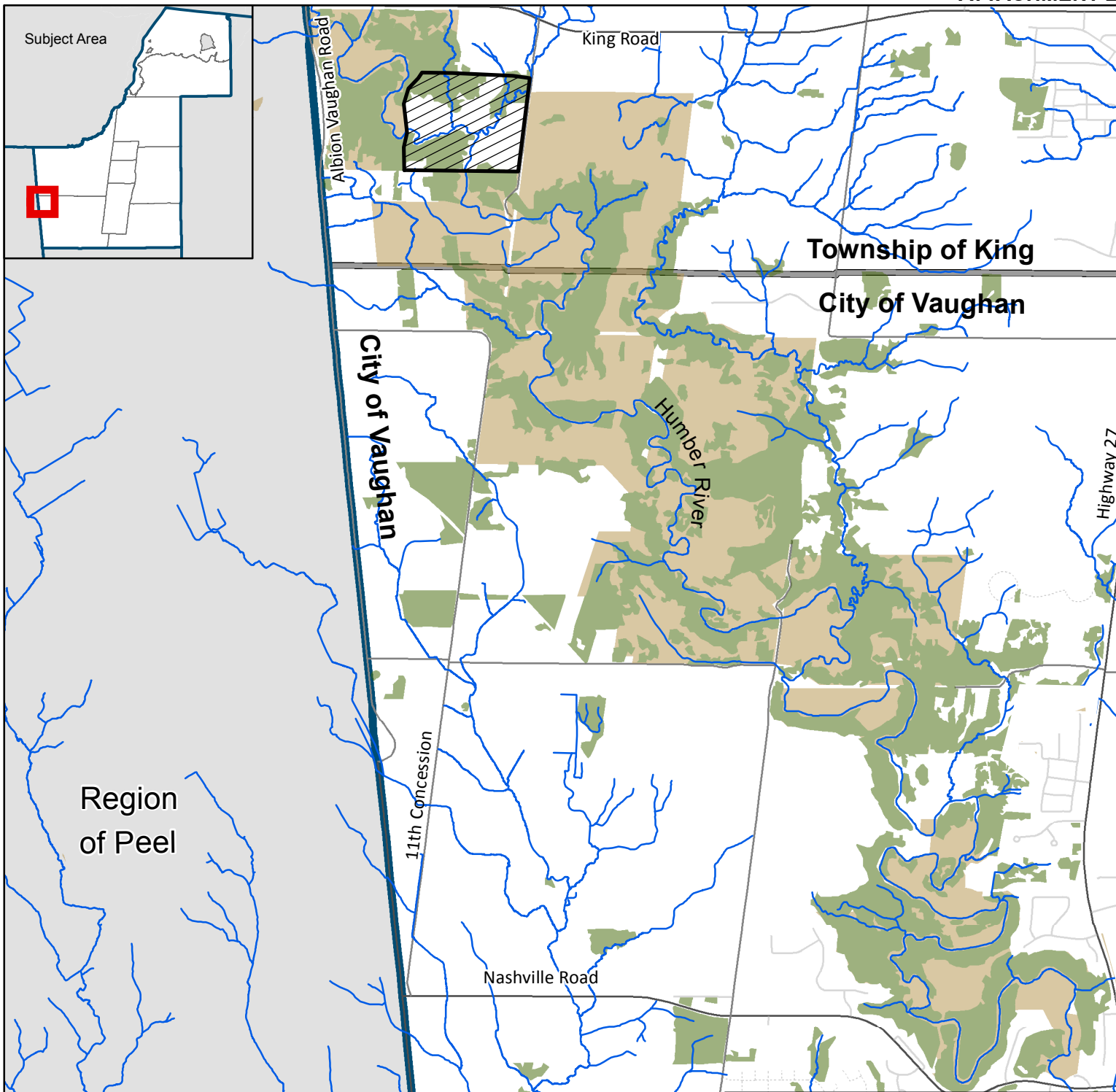
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Legend

-  Dalton Property
-  Nashville Conserv. Reserve
-  Forest
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Regional Boundary



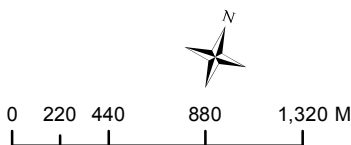
Nashville Conservation Reserve

Greening Strategy
 Environmental Land Protection & Preservation,
 Partnership Acquisition - Dalton Property, Township of King






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