Above all, we are dedicated to safeguarding, promoting and enhancing human health and well-being by ensuring the integrity of the ecological services our environment provides. We will undertake this work in a cooperative, open, accountable manner, crafting practical and innovative solutions with the guidance and support of our partners, the community and the residents of the Toronto region. The following basic principles provide the ethical foundation for the strategic directions, objectives and actions designed to build The Living City. This is what we believe.

**People are part of nature. Looking after one entails taking care of the other.**

People and nature are part of a single, dynamic and complex ecosystem. The state of health and well-being of the population impacts the health of natural systems, just as the state of our natural environment affects the health of people.

**Natural systems provide fundamental and irreplaceable benefits that are vital to our health and well-being.**

Natural systems provide services that are economically and ecologically impossible to duplicate. These include: capturing, storing and cleaning the water we drink; producing oxygen and cleansing pollutants from the air; regulating climate; reducing flooding from storms; providing healthy recreation opportunities; and offering natural aesthetics that nourish the spirit. Communities are sustained by the successful integration of natural systems with human activities. In the context of an urbanizing region we have a responsibility to create green infrastructure that supports natural systems.

**“Systems thinking” leads to the most effective solutions.**

The challenges that we face in promoting sustainability and building The Living City are complicated and interrelated. Therefore, solutions must reflect the complex and interconnected social, economic and ecological systems that make up The Living City region. TRCA will apply “systems thinking” in developing integrative and adaptive solutions to these challenges.

**All residents deserve opportunities to help shape the future of their community.**

TRCA will empower and mobilize a diverse range of stakeholders in community decision making processes and collaborative city building. We will promote engagement and strive to ensure that The Living City truly reflects the needs and contributions of all its citizens.

This Plan, must be securely anchored in TRCA’s organizational ethos and guiding philosophy to ensure its integrity and feasibility. The mission of TRCA is:

To work with our partners to ensure that The Living City is built upon a natural foundation of healthy rivers and shorelines, greenspace and biodiversity, and sustainable communities.
Building on the success of the watershed approach

For almost 60 years, TRCA has managed its mandate on a watershed-by-watershed basis. From flood management, to safeguarding water quality, to protecting aquatic communities, this made practical, organizational and ecological sense. Managing on a watershed basis helps ensure the ecological integrity of the fresh water processing system, while focusing environmental protection and restoration measures on a local level. Through the watershed-based approach, residents can build deeper understanding of their impact on their local environment. And when communities are effectively mobilized, they can exert measurable positive impacts on watershed health.

However, many of the environmental, social and economic challenges we must address in building The Living City transcend the watershed model. The watershed management approach has taught us that we must confront sustainability challenges at the scale on which they occur. While we cannot allow political boundaries to limit our actions, neither can we confine programs that promote renewable energy or mass transit or public education to the boundaries of a particular watershed.

The sustainability challenges of the future will require us to tackle problems at the appropriate scale whether by neighbourhood or community, local or regional ecosystem, across the Toronto region or the Golden Horseshoe, individual watershed or across the entire Great Lakes basin. By choosing the scale properly and thoughtfully, we will dramatically increase our chances of success.

Our past success with the watershed approach has also taught us that management at the scale of the problem requires partnership. Because sustainability challenges are rarely confined to the jurisdictional boundaries of a single agency or government, tackling them requires connecting with stakeholders across bureaucratic boundaries – geographic and otherwise. TRCA has a proud tradition of making connections between governments at all levels, community groups, and the private sector, which it will carry forward in the implementation of this Strategic Plan.