

Appendix A: In-Person Public Information Centre

On March 19th, 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., project team members hosted an in-person Public Information Centre at the Life Church in Claremont (1790 Central Street). Thirty-three people attended the event. At the event's start, City staff delivered a presentation addressing Pickering's key agricultural and rural area elements, existing policies that protect and enhance agricultural resources, and potential impacts of urban growth on agricultural uses and rural settlements.

Questions and Answers

Participants were invited to ask questions of clarification. These are summarized below, with questions noted with a 'Q,' and answers noted with an 'A'.

- **Q.** How do the Durham and Pickering Official Plans relate, particularly in Northeast Pickering?
 - **A.** The City now has two overlapping plans – Pickering's Official Plan and Envision Durham (formerly Durham Region's Official Plan). Envision Durham designated Northeast Pickering as 2051 urban expansion area, requiring planning for future development. Pickering is now undertaking a secondary planning process to refine what that growth will look like.
- **Q.** Since the Pickering Official Plan will build on Envision Durham, does this allow reassessing how growth is accommodated while protecting key areas?
 - **A.** While Pickering must follow provincial requirements, including growth allocations, the City can evaluate how best to manage growth while preserving important areas.
- **Q.** Envision Durham was shaped by public consultation but ultimately approved by Regional Council. How does that affect Pickering's planning process, and where might conflicts arise between Envision Durham and Pickering's priorities?
 - **A.** The Province has the final authority. While Durham Region assigned growth projections to 2051, the City of Pickering is evaluating how best to allocate that growth locally. The Regional Official Plan takes precedence in case of conflict, but the City is working to align both plans while maintaining Pickering's unique character.
- **Q.** Northeast Pickering was previously under review for development but then stalled. Is the planning process being reopened through the Secondary Plan?
 - **A.** Yes, landowners in Northeast Pickering previously funded studies that identified growth potential, and the Region acknowledged room for development. However, the City of Pickering is now conducting its own analysis to determine the appropriate path forward.
- **Q.** Seaton was planned as a model community before 2000, but much land remains underdeveloped. Is there an opportunity to integrate agriculture into Seaton's development?

- **A.** The development of Seaton is ongoing and is following the plans previously approved. The incorporation of best practices, such as urban agriculture, could be considered as development continues.
- **Q.** Seaton's growth has been slower than expected. Will development shift to Northeast Pickering once Seaton reaches a certain density threshold, or will growth be directed there sooner?
 - **A.** Seaton's growth has been steady but slower than initially planned. Previously, the Regional Official Plan required 75% of Seaton's development to be completed before a new urban area could be developed. **[Correction] That requirement no longer exists in Envision Durham.** The City and Region are assessing the capacity of major infrastructure (like water and sewage treatment) before expanding into new areas.
- **Q.** How far in advance must infrastructure planning begin for Northeast Pickering?
 - **A.** The City cannot provide an exact timeline at this stage.
- **Q.** Who pays for infrastructure expansion, such as sewage treatment plants? Will it fall on taxpayers?
 - **A.** The Region collects development charges; if additional funds are needed, developers are responsible for covering the costs.

Table Activities

Small groups were formed to allow community members to discuss Pickering's agriculture and rural areas.

Rural Settlement

Discussions focused on the valued characteristics and elements of Pickering's hamlets today and ways to ensure that hamlets remain great places to live in the future. The images below were used to support the discussion questions:

1. Describe what makes Pickering's hamlets great places to live today.

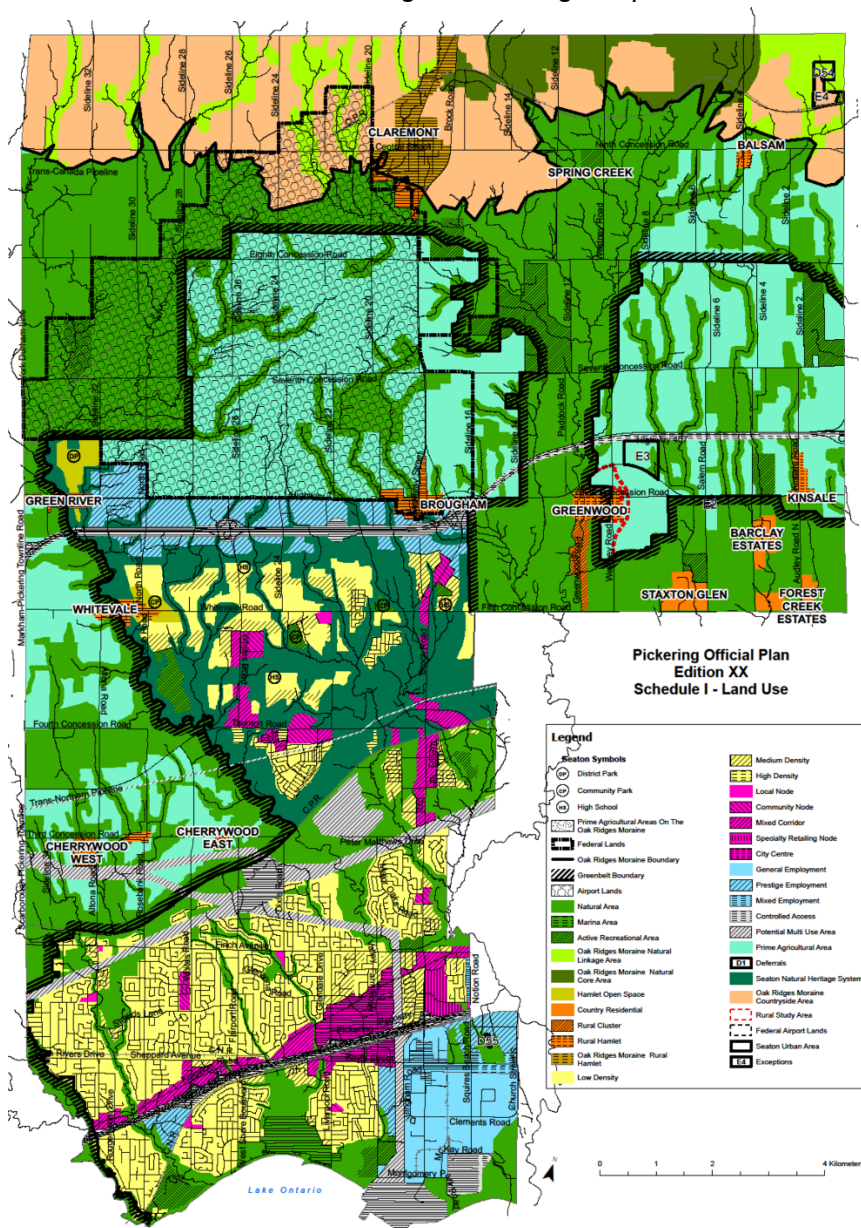


Figure 1 - Pickering Official Plan: Land Use map

2. As Pickering grows, how can we ensure that hamlets remain great places to live?

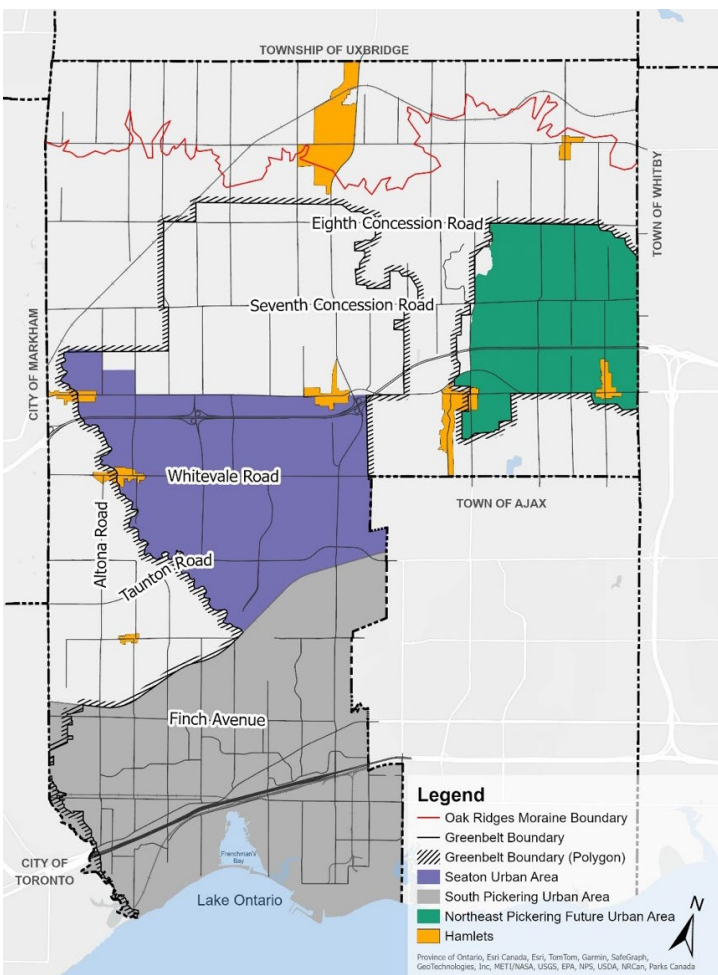


Figure 5 – Pickering Official Plan map outlining agriculture, rural, and hamlet boundaries



Figure 4 – Image of Whitevale Neighbourhood Park Sign

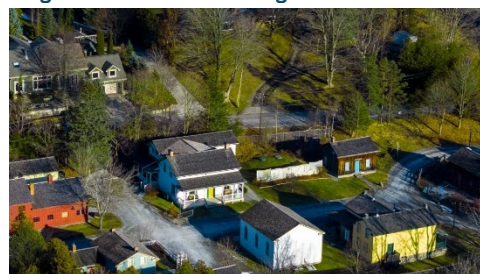


Figure 3 – Image of Greenwood



Figure 2 – Image of heritage home

Agriculture and On-Farm Diversified Uses

Discussions focused on the current strengths of Pickering's agricultural/farming community and different opportunities for growing and diversifying the sector. The images below were used to support the discussion questions:



Figure 6 – Images of different on-farm diversified uses.

1. How would you describe the agricultural/farming community in Pickering?
2. What opportunities exist to grow/diversify agriculture in Pickering?

Table Activity Raw Comments

The following are raw verbal and written comments captured by facilitators at each table.

Rural Settlement

1. Describe what makes Pickering's hamlets great places to live today.

- Sense of Community
 - Pickering hamlets have a small-town vibe, where people know their neighbors. It is great for raising kids and is so friendly.
 - I love coming to experience the church groups and the people in the hamlets. There is a different atmosphere and feeling in the hamlets. People are so friendly in the smaller hamlets. Preserving them is very important. 100 years from now this could be a downtown. I am worried that 5 of the 8 hamlets are bordering urban areas so I fear it will be swallowed.
 - I've lived here [Claremont] for 17 years. A wonderful community where neighbours do things together. I appreciate that connectivity. It is nice to commute through farmland. It is a great place to raise families with lots of room.
 - There is a lack of understanding between the City and how the Greenwood Community Hall is important for the locals. I do not want it to become a large development.
 - Greenwood has a community feel to it.
 - Whitevale has a charm to it. People wave to each other. It's a small community.
- Unique Features
 - Pickering's hamlets are designed well, making it a great place to live.
 - There is a story behind every piece of infrastructure in town. You don't just find that in other communities where the City makes all the decisions.
 - Brougham does not have charm or any businesses.
 - When I first moved to Greenwood, the planning department said there is nothing historical, but Greenwood does have significant features, such as the Diefenbaker house, and it does have a community of beavers. There are old mills, an animal corridor, and a school. It's "a coherent community".
 - Pickering hamlets have a lot of history and community centres/facilities.
 - Pickering hamlets have great heritage buildings and streets.
 - Pickering's hamlet building styles make it a great place.
- Conservation
 - The Greenwood hamlet is being threatened with urban development.
 - In the hamlets of Kinsale, Greenwood, and Brougham, there are concerns of urban development bordering.
 - The conservation of the cultural environment makes Pickering's hamlets a great place to live.
 - Urban separation buffers are good and appreciated.

2. As Pickering grows, how can we ensure hamlets remain great places to live?

- **Infrastructure**
 - The main concern is the incoming population using existing infrastructure (i.e., schools). Would like to see hamlets be self-sufficient so hamlet residents do not need to rely on infrastructure outside of the hamlet and prevent existing infrastructure from being over-strained (i.e. schools).
 - If we have transit, it will create more development.
 - We need to reduce urban food deserts.
 - Green access to Trans Canada Trail.
 - Not only do hamlets feel threatened by urban developments but things like public schools are coming to capacity as families move into surrounding neighbourhoods and need to access those existing schools, community centres, community halls. Existing systems are being overtaxed.
 - Parents in Claremont feel that schools are not being planned well in advance of growth and development happening near hamlets.
 - Can't get funding until all the schools in the radius are maxed out. This is a provincial government issue that limits the planning of municipalities.
 - Surrounding growth means increased capacity required for hamlet schools, community centres, etc., that have not been planned yet.
- **Character and Heritage Preservation**
 - Concerns with traffic going through hamlets, losing character, losing key community facilities.
 - Volunteer groups are the ones upkeeping the history and current community centres/halls/facility.
 - New buildings should be designed to fit the existing heritage.
 - We need to make Pickering more like France.
 - Meet community character – there shouldn't be a disconnect.
 - We need scaled and styled development.
 - We need to have protected heritage buildings and more parkland.
 - Start with policies to protect existing areas and have growth accommodate to these existing conditions.
 - Cannot preserve the essence of a hamlet if it is surrounded by development.
 - Want to keep the charm, the neighbourly and friendly connections, the heritage of the lands, and preserving the small town feel that is being threatened by urban growth.
 - Protect wildlife and creeks.
- **Buffers and Development Boundaries**
 - Participant would like to know all the tools to protect hamlets, heritage, and character from development and growth.
 - Would help having buffers before planning and maybe having heritage designation.

- Planners should be looking at physical buffers to increase space between urban developments pushing up against hamlets.
- Claremont hamlet feels well protected due to recent changes to airport lands.

Agriculture and On-Farm Diversified Uses

1. How would you describe the agricultural/farming community in Pickering?

- On-Farm Diversification
 - Lots of communities are encouraging new farmers to come in and diversify.
 - This is the best land in Ontario to build on and once developed on it is gone forever.
 - Use farm shares that deliver food.
 - Utilize small lots that can help diversify, for example micro-breweries.
 - Diverse farms could include herb farms.
- Farmer Support and Leases
 - Lease farms are struggling with short leases. Longer leases will encourage farmers to improve their farms.
 - As much farmland as possible should be preserved. Farmers should be reassured that they can farm for a long time. For example, Rouge Park is offering 40-year leases that the farmers are excited about.
- Traffic and Transit
 - Traffic is an issue.
 - Transit to the north of Pickering is non-existent, and because of that we need to have that local infrastructure like the community centre, etc. Due to sprawl the City's finances get spread out where they can't fix leaky roofs or upkeep the community centres/community halls.
 - Northeast Pickering is said to be good agricultural land but because of the traffic its useless.
- Northeast Pickering
 - Concerns about northeast Pickering becoming over developed.
 - Happy that the news about airport lands will hopefully preserve Claremont.
 - Once northeast Pickering becomes more urban, worried about through traffic.
 - As a taxpayer, I am concerned with funding...who will pay for new developments?
 - For Seaton, the policy of 75% of the area needing to be developed before a new urban area is started seems low and it should be closer to 90%.
 - Interest in the capital cost for water treatment and sewage treatment plant expansion, as well as the timing of services to northeast Pickering.
- Heritage and Character Preservation
 - Would like to see Pickering focus on preserving the good farmlands.
 - Preserving the character of these homegrown services and amenities is important.

- Between 1992 and 1996, Pickering was made up of 3 circles. The environment, the urban, and the rural and attempts to build compact communities were met with overwhelming support to protect agricultural lands.
- Why isn't this land connected to the Green Belt to protect agricultural lands?
- I think there is language in the official plan that development can't be considered until you know what will be built there and what it will cost.
- Hamlets and agricultural lands are threatened by traffic to Ajax.
- Planners should look at tools such as grants that look at historical significance, value, etc., is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Looks to value the heritage of the communities.

2. What opportunities exist to grow/diversify agriculture in Pickering?

- **Farming Support**
 - There should be more farming.
 - We do not want to lose land. In addition to owning land, we also lease land; we need a strong land base for farming.
 - We need trails that lead to farms because it leads to a healthy community.
 - Farmers do what they have to do, so we need farms.
 - Expressed the need for non-chemical farms as well as spraying on farm fields .
 - There should be more organic farming, such as Cuba.
 - Ensure conservation and preservation.
 - Farms could have secondary uses such as filming.
- **Funding and Incentives**
 - There is an opportunity for more federal and municipal funding.
 - More community incentives are needed to get people interested.
 - There should be a financial program.
- **Adequate Infrastructure**
 - We are creating more water run-off.
 - Allow for better transportation routes for farm equipment.
 - There is an opportunity to make roads safer for cyclists.
 - There should be more trails in natural areas.
 - There is an opportunity for natural areas rewilding.
 - Recognize the need for storm management policies.
 - There needs to be long-term drinking water security.
 - Interest in the MPP attending future events and responding to questions regarding provincial growth.

Display Panel Comments

The following written comments were posted on the display panels at the event.

Growth Management & Urban Structure

- Preserve the small-town feel of Claremont and Greenwood.
- Conserve rural character! No more “subdivision” communities.
- Strategic growth puts higher densities near transit and arterial roads.
- Plan for public amenities so that everyone in Pickering doesn't need to go to the waterfront to access them.
- Abandon single - land use designations. They make for bland communities.
- Provide bypass roads around hamlets. Claremont is getting a lot of traffic/speeders going through town on their commute. It is becoming dangerous.
- Protect the character of our rural landscapes, farmlands, and hamlets.

Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability

- Put Northeast Pickering lands in the Greenbelt.
- Protect wetlands, marshlands, rivers, and wildlife corridors.

Agriculture and Rural Areas

- Reopen Herongate Barn Theatre with a restaurant. We need a live theatre in Pickering.
- Don't drain my well in Greenwood.
- Support and build agri-tourism to celebrate small businesses and farms.
- We need to protect our A1 farmland and support young farmers.
- Conserve rural character (farmsteads, landscape, etc.).
- Protect farmland!

Community Elements and Infrastructure

- Better children's parks.
- Ensure that communities are walkable and enjoyable to live in.
- Prioritize evaluating heritage buildings and landscapes in rural areas, especially hamlets with a concentration of historic buildings. Rolling hills landscape and grid system are important.
- More community spaces. Opportunities for people to gather.
- Dog park.

Housing and Affordability

- Find creative ways to conserve character. Neighbourhood overlay doesn't work. (e.g., Bay Ridges, Claremont, Centre Street).
- Make more policies that recognize other ways of living (e.g., intergenerational living).
- Attracting younger families with affordability.
- More flexible policies to direct more grants to Kingston Road vs. cramming in Claremont.