



Pickering Forward: Official Plan Review

Housing and Affordability
Engagement Summary Report

July 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii
Section 1: Project Overview	1
Section 2: Engagement Process and Communication Methods	2
Section 3: What We Heard	4
Section 4: Next Steps.....	16
Appendix A: In-Person Public Information Centre	
Appendix B: Virtual Public Information Centre	
Appendix C: Online Survey	

Executive Summary

During engagement on the Housing and Affordability component of Pickering Forward, the City of Pickering's Official Plan Review, input was gathered from 299 residents through two Public Information Centres and an online survey. Key emerging themes highlighted the need to improve housing costs, options, and access. Priorities included diverse, accessible, and community-oriented housing, and concerns about the negative impacts of growth and changes to existing neighbourhoods.

The community emphasized the importance of a more affordable Pickering with a variety of housing options for the changing populations' evolving needs. Concerns about high-rise buildings exacerbating traffic and creating unwelcoming environments were raised, alongside a need for more mid- and low-rise buildings incorporating communal spaces. An emphasis was also placed on the importance of flexible, integrated, and aesthetically pleasing housing that supports multigenerational living and is sensitive to local character. This input will guide the development of the updated Official Plan, ensuring it reflects the community's vision regarding Pickering's growth.

This report was written by LURA Consulting, the independent community engagement team retained to deliver community engagement. It summarizes and reflects the community's diverse inputs for the City of Pickering's Official Plan.

Section 1: Project Overview

Project Description and Engagement Objectives

The City of Pickering is updating its Official Plan, the City's long-range, comprehensive planning document that guides land use decision-making. An Official Plan addresses issues such as:

- Where to locate new housing, industry, offices, and shops.
- What services will be needed, such as roads, water mains, sewers, parks and schools.
- How to protect what is important, such as the natural environment and cultural heritage.
- When, where, and in what order the community will grow.
- Where and how the City will invest in community improvement initiatives.

This engagement report summarizes input from the sixth community conversation related to housing and affordability, which will inform the City's Official Plan Review.



Figure 1 – Pickering Forward project logo.

Section 2: Engagement Process and Communication Methods

Engagement Methods



Figure 2 – Image of participants engaging in discussion at the in-person Public Information Centre.

In June 2025, the City of Pickering hosted an in-person Public Information Centre (PIC), a virtual PIC, and an online survey to gather community input about Housing and Affordability. Two hundred and ninety-nine (299) people participated in these events.

In-Person Public Information Centre

On June 24th, 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., an in-person PIC was held at the Devi Mandir (2590 Brock Road). Twenty-three (23) people attended the event. City staff delivered a brief overview of Pickering's housing profile, including current policies, types, affordability, and current demographic trends. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period and group table discussions. Display panels presented project information and feedback questions for participants.

Appendix A includes a detailed summary of the in-person PIC.

Virtual Public Information Centre

The project team hosted a virtual PIC on June 25th, 2025, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Twenty (20) people attended the online event. City staff presented the same content as the in-person PIC. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period. An interactive feedback tool was used to gather feedback from participants following the question-and-answer period.

Appendix B includes a detailed summary of the virtual PIC.

Online Survey

From June 13th, 2025, to July 7th, 2025, an online survey was available on Let's Talk Pickering. The survey questions sought input from the community on the importance of housing access,

housing types needed, the number of permitted dwellings on a property, and housing costs. It also explored definitions of affordable housing, options for financial incentives, and suggestions for supporting unhoused populations. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) people responded to the survey. The demographics of the survey participants are provided in the **Who Participated** section below.

Appendix C includes a detailed summary of the survey responses.

Communication Methods

The City of Pickering used various methods to advertise the Official Plan review and engagement opportunities. Information was shared through the following channels:

- Via email with interested parties, registered ratepayers' groups, and Committee of Council liaisons.
- Published multiple notices on social media, including paid pushes on Facebook.
- Displayed on digital message boards throughout the City.
- Posters were placed in all City library branches.
- Details were posted on the City's website and online public notices section.
- A flyer advertising the two public information centres was included in the final tax bill mailout at the end of May.

Engagement and Reach

Table 1 below shows the reach of engagement throughout the engagement period.

Table 1: Summary of engagement activities.

Engagement Activity	Date	Location or Format	Attendance or Response Count
In-Person Public Information Centre	June 24 th , 2025 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	In-person at the Devi Mandir	23
Virtual Public Information Centre	June 25 th , 2025, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Online via Teams Webinar	20
Online Survey	June 13 th , 2025 – July 7 th , 2025	Online via Let's Talk Pickering	256
TOTAL			299

Data Analysis Methodology

Input was gathered through in-person and virtual PICs, and an online survey. Where responses were received to a quantitative question, results have been quantified. All qualitative responses are analyzed thematically. This involves summarizing and categorizing qualitative data to capture important concepts within the data set.

Section 3: What We Heard

This section summarizes the key themes heard on Housing and Affordability.

In-Person Public Information Centre



Figure 3 - Image of participants engaging in discussion at the in-person Public Information Centre.

Below are highlights of the in-person PIC findings. Discussions are captured thematically by question.

Participants were asked what their biggest challenges/concerns with housing and affordability in Pickering are today.

The following options were provided as discussion prompts:

- A. High cost of home ownership.
- B. High cost of renting.
- C. Lack of affordable housing options that meet my/community needs.
- D. Limited rental availability.
- E. Limited access to transportation options near affordable housing.
- F. There is no problem with housing in Pickering.

Residents expressed concern with the rising unaffordability of housing in Pickering, highlighting the growing gap between stagnant incomes and increasing home prices, rent, and living costs. Many shared that they would not be able to afford their current homes if they bought today. They stressed the lack of suitable housing for both young families and seniors, pointing to the disappearance of affordable bungalows and the dominance of either luxury detached homes or dense high-rises, with few mid-rise or mixed-use options in between. Residents called for more diverse, accessible, and community-oriented housing - such as mid-rise buildings, purpose-built rentals, shared housing, and price-capped entry-level homes. They suggested pairing that with accessible transit, jobs, green space, and amenities. Several voiced frustrations at developers prioritizing profits over livability. Many emphasized the need for government regulation on resale prices, more rental units, and better planning to ensure new developments are livable, walkable, and meet the population's evolving needs.



Participants were asked how their housing needs might change over the next 10-20 years.

Participants anticipate that accessibility will become a growing concern as they age, with some already facing challenges in finding accessible housing in areas like Seaton. Many participants are thinking about downsizing or retirement but noted that affordable and appropriate housing in Pickering is lacking. There's a strong emphasis placed on ensuring that new developments include access to adequate transit, services, and amenities. Low- to mid-rise buildings and multiplexes were noted as potential solutions for increasing density without significantly impacting existing communities. However, residents also raised concerns about shadowing, busy streets, parking, traffic and emergency access in new developments.

Participants were asked to imagine that their current home no longer fit their situation and what their plan would be if they had to look for a new home in Pickering.

The following example scenarios were provided:

- A. Imagine you have mobility/accessibility challenges and need a barrier-free home.
- B. Imagine you need a shared space for your multi-generational family.
- C. Imagine you are on a fixed income and need to lower your housing costs.

Residents noted that they would try to stay in Pickering in the event of an unforeseen circumstance, but acknowledge the likelihood of facing barriers like affordability, lack of accessible options, and limited support services. Some would renovate their existing homes, add basement units for families, or downsize to a condo or apartment - though rising costs and infrastructure gaps make this challenging. Others would consider renting, relocating within the GTA, or moving further out to afford housing. Key needs include proximity to transit, healthcare, and services, and purpose-built, multigenerational, and affordable housing options. Many expressed uncertainties about where to get help and emphasized the need for government support and policy changes to expand realistic and affordable choices.

Participants were asked what housing options the City should encourage/allow in more areas.

The following options were provided:

- A. Multiplex.
- B. Secondary/Basement suite.
- C. Garden/Backyard cottage/Laneway suite.
- D. Mid-rise apartment buildings.
- E. Low-rise apartment buildings.
- F. Community housing.
- G. Supportive/Transitional housing.
- H. Long term care.



Figure 4 - Image of participants engaging in the in-person small table activity.

Residents highlighted a desire for diverse housing options that cater to different populations and life stages, with a preference for spreading these options throughout the city to avoid concentrated high-density areas. There is a call for more multiplexes and low-rise buildings that blend into the community and offer affordability, especially for seniors and families. Concerns about high-rise buildings exacerbating traffic and creating unwelcoming environments were raised, alongside a need for more mid- and low-rise buildings incorporating communal spaces. An emphasis was also placed on the importance of flexible, integrated, and aesthetically pleasing housing that supports multigenerational living and is sensitive to local character.

Participants were asked what the City should do to speed up the creation of new housing.

To accelerate housing creation, residents suggested a mix of short- and long-term actions. They suggested offering temporary incentives to builders, making it easier to build legal basement units, and providing City financing for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). There was strong support for improving permitting and inspection timelines by hiring more staff and streamlining internal processes, but not at the cost of cutting corners. Many emphasized the need for development to be properly phased and supported by infrastructure and amenities, especially in underdeveloped areas. Residents also called for increased rental housing, better walkability and transit access. Above all, they emphasized the importance of community input, responsible planning, and aligning growth with services to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods.

Online Survey

Below are highlights of the online survey findings. Each multiple-choice question includes a graph showing responses and themes emerging from ideas participants provided under 'Other' in the list of survey answers. Open-ended questions are summarized thematically.

Participants were asked if they believe that access to housing is a fundamental right for everyone in Pickering.

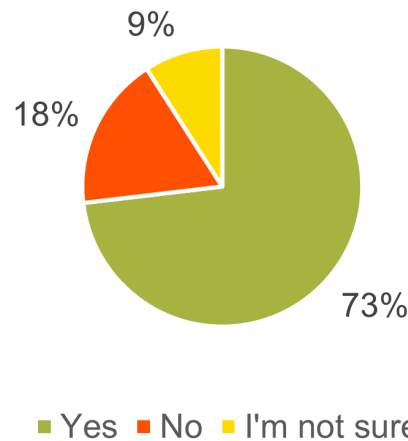


Figure 5 - Summary of participants' sentiments about housing as a fundamental right for everyone.

N - 253

Figure 5 shows that most participants selected “Yes” (73%), followed by “No” (18%), and “I’m not sure” (9%).

Participants were asked what type of homes are needed in Pickering.

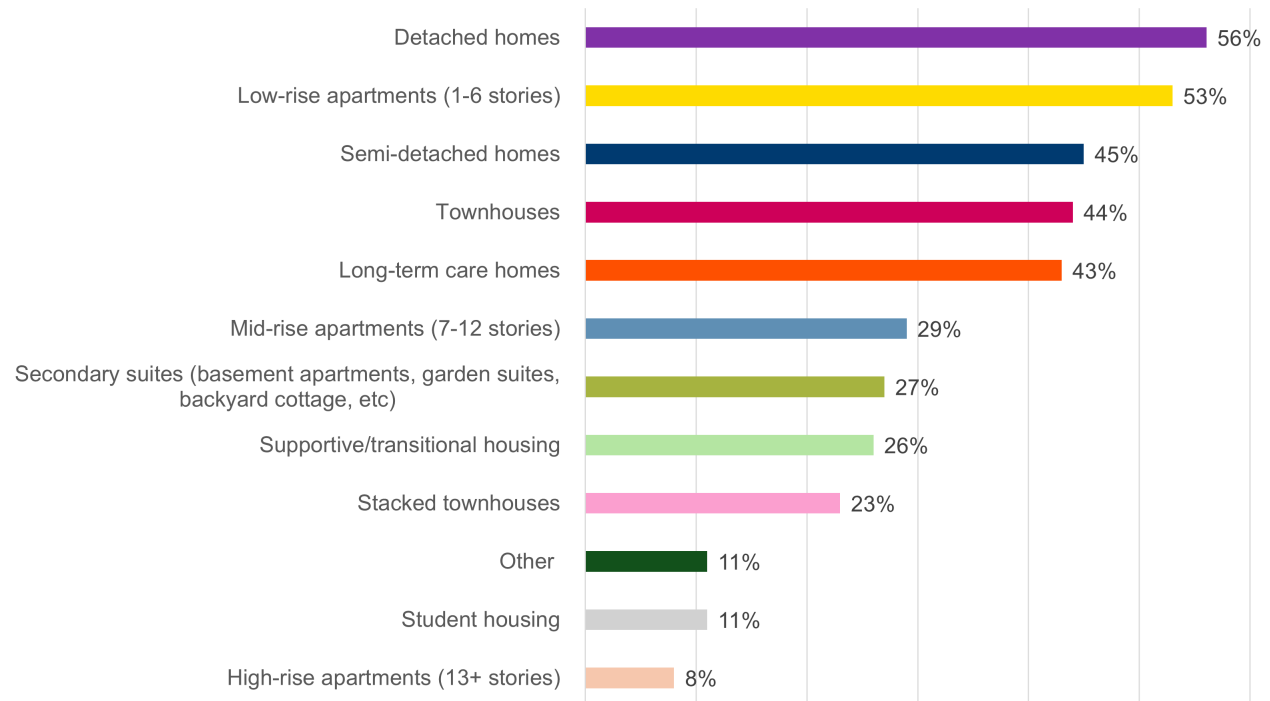


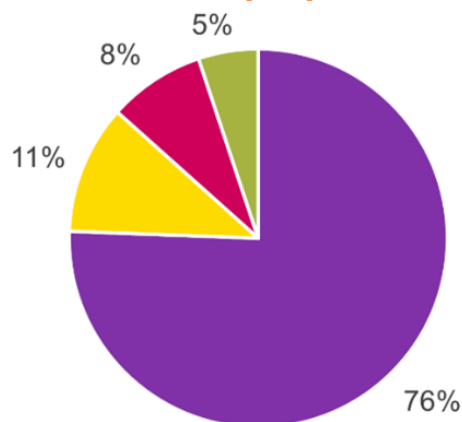
Figure 6 – Summary of what type of homes participants feel are needed in Pickering.

N - 249

Figure 6 shows that most participants selected “Detached home” (56%), followed by “Low-rise apartments” (53%). Participants who selected “Other” (11%) provided feedback, that is summarized below:

- **Housing for Seniors**
 - One-level bungalows (detached or in group settings).
 - Condos for downsizing seniors (1,200–1,800 sq. ft.).
 - Gated communities or transitional senior living facilities.
 - 55+ affordable rental housing.
- **Units for Living not Investing**
 - More 2- and 3-bedroom condo units with larger square footage.
 - Limit the number of small units that are typically built for investors.
 - Prioritize family housing over investor-driven development.
- **Affordability & Accessibility**
 - Affordable housing (both ownership and rental).
 - Physically accessible housing for seniors and people with mobility issues.
 - Rent-to-own homes.
 - Safe low-income housing and shelters.
- **Alternative & Diverse Housing Types**
 - Prefabricated homes and rural tiny home communities
 - Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes
 - Small-lot homes
 - Iconic/heritage-style homes (e.g., Nautical Village).
 - Capped-price homes (e.g., homes with a max sale price).

Participants were asked if Pickering should increase the number of permitted dwellings on residential properties.



- No, leave it at the Provincially-required three dwellings per property
- Yes, we need more housing options. Permit four or more dwellings per property
- Yes, permit up to four dwellings per property
- Other

Figure 7 - Summary of participant sentiments on increasing the number of permitted dwellings on properties. N - 254

Figure 7 shows that most participants selected “No, leave it at the Provincially-required three dwellings per property” (76%), followed by “Yes, we need more housing options. Permit four or more dwellings per property” (11%), and “Yes, permit up to four dwellings per property” (8%). Participants who selected “Other” (5%) provided feedback, that is summarized below:

- **Infrastructure Impacts**
 - Traffic congestion needs to be considered and accommodated.
 - Without proper transit access and infrastructure, more units could burden communities.
- **Implementation Suggestions**
 - Implement tiered property taxes for higher-density homes.
 - Ensure clearer regulations - including definitions of where multiple dwellings are permitted.
 - On-site parking and bin storage need to be adequately managed.

Participants were asked what the City should do to make the cost of housing in Pickering more attainable for our current and future residents.

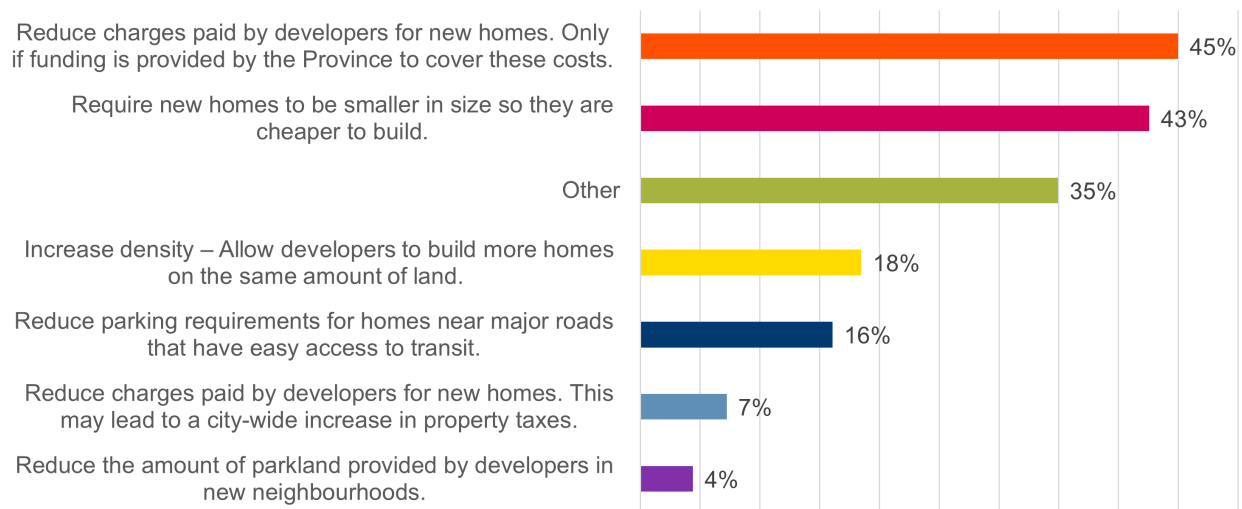


Figure 8 - Summary of participant sentiments to make the cost of housing more attainable for residents. N - 249.

Figure 8 shows that most participants selected “Reduce charges paid by developers for new homes, Only if funding is provided by the Province to cover these costs” (45%), followed by “Require new homes to be smaller in size so they are cheaper to build” (43%). Participants who selected “Other” (35%) provided feedback, which is summarized below:

- **Reduce Property Taxes**
 - Implement tax freezes or caps, especially for seniors and long-time homeowners.
 - Reform property taxes to reflect household income or tenure.
- **Limit Overdevelopment**
 - Reduce construction of luxury high-rises and condos.
 - Build low-rise homes, modest family dwellings, to preserve the community character.

- **Regulate Developers**
 - Ensure that developers are prioritizing community needs over profit.
 - Stop letting investors or foreign buyers inflate the market.
 - Do not cut developer fees unless it leads directly to affordability.
- **Alternative Housing Models/Processes**
 - Support 'Missing Middle' housing, co-ops, modular homes, and mixed-use buildings.
 - Streamline City processes and reduce red tape in approvals.
 - Retrofit older buildings over demolition and rebuilds.

Participants were asked how the City can assist in speeding up the creation of new housing.

- **Streamline Approvals**
 - Simplify and shorten the permit and approval process to reduce delays.
 - Create faster, standardized, and parallel processing for permit applications.
 - Fast-track qualified developers who meet clear, pre-set criteria.
- **Planning and Infrastructure**
 - Avoid overloading areas already stretched in capacity.
 - Ensure environmental and community impact assessments are not rushed or skipped.
- **Regulate Developers**
 - Penalize developers for project delays; revoke rights if timelines aren't met.
 - Limit repeated rezoning requests and speculative landholding.
 - Partner with developers focused on providing affordable and accessible builds.
- **Affordability and Accessibility**
 - Prioritize family-sized homes over luxury smaller condos.
 - Include rent-to-own, co-ops, rent-geared-to-income, and deeply affordable units.
 - Offer incentives to homeowners and buyers—not just developers.

Participants were asked in what situation it would be appropriate to increase the number of homes that can be built in an area.

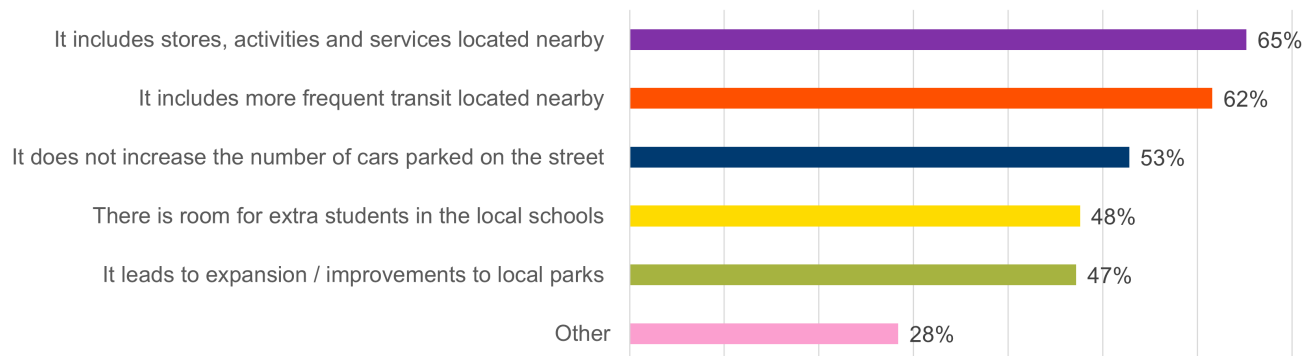


Figure 9 - Summary of participant sentiments on the appropriate conditions for building more homes.

N - 250

Figure 9 shows that most participants selected “It includes stores, activities and services” (65%), followed by “It includes more frequent transit located nearby” (62%). Participants who selected “Other” (28%) provided feedback, that is summarized below:

- **Infrastructure**
 - Roads must be expanded and highway access improved (e.g., more exits, wider lanes).
 - Water, sewage, electrical grid, and other utilities need to be upgraded before new homes are built.
 - Emergency services (police, fire, hospitals) must be expanded in line with population growth.
- **Transit and Mobility**
 - Improve public transit, including local shuttle buses and GO station connections.
 - Prioritize walkable and bikeable communities.
 - Ensure traffic flow is smooth, by reworking roads and lights.
- **Affordability and Accessibility**
 - Build truly affordable and livable homes, not luxury condos or oversized houses.
 - Housing should support diverse needs, including families, seniors, and low-income residents.
- **Community Livability**
 - Increase density only if services (e.g. schools, parks, and recreation) expand.
 - Avoid noise, light pollution, and overcrowding that reduce quality of life.
 - Bylaw enforcement must be proactive in maintaining cleanliness and order.
 - Respect existing residents’ concerns and ensure changes are gradual.

Participants were asked if, in addition to working with other levels of government to secure funding, Pickering should provide financial incentives for those who build affordable housing.

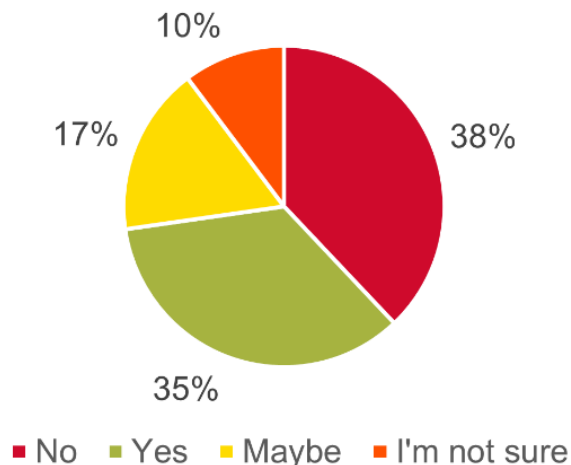


Figure 10 - Summary of participant sentiments on the City providing incentives for affordable housing.

N - 253

Figure 10 shows that most participants selected “No” (38%), followed by “Yes” (35%), and “Maybe” (17%).

Participants were asked if, in addition to city-wide targets for affordable housing, Pickering should set higher targets for affordable housing within key transit corridors.

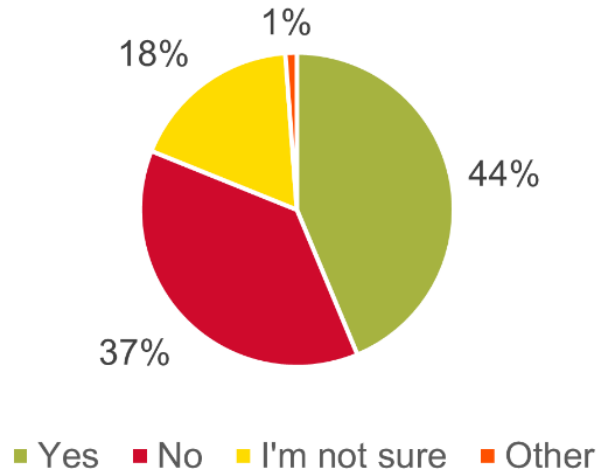


Figure 11 - Summary of participant sentiments on the City setting higher targets for affordable housing in key transit corridors.
N - 254

Figure 11 shows that most participants selected “Yes” (44%), followed by “No” (37%) and “I’m not sure” (18%).

Participants who selected “Yes” (44%) provided the following explanation for their choice:

- **Infrastructure First**
 - Roads, highway exits, and traffic flow must be improved (e.g., more 401 access, wider roads).
 - Sewers, water pressure, electricity, and other utilities must be upgraded.
 - Public services like fire, police, and hospitals must be expanded.
- **Transit Improvements**
 - Improve walkability and bike-ability in neighbourhoods.
 - Increase public transit options to reduce car dependency.
 - Add shuttle buses from North Pickering to GO Station.
- **Affordable and Diverse Housing**
 - Prioritize rental units and low/mid-density forms.
 - Increase the number of affordable homes with decent sizes and layouts.
- **Complete Communities**
 - New development should come with amenities.
 - Include youth programs and public recreation venues.
 - Support walkable, “live-ride-walk” communities.

Participants who selected “No” (37%) provided the following explanation for their choice:

- **Traffic, Congestion, and Loss of Quality of Life**
 - Too much density will worsen congestion and first responder delays.
 - Local streets cannot handle the added volume.
 - Increases crime, noise, pollution, and crowding.

Participants who selected “I’m not sure” (18%) provided the following explanation for their choice:

- **Infrastructure Capacity**
 - Only if the infrastructure (roads, schools, utilities) is ready first.
 - Only if upgrades like highway interchanges and traffic lights are added.
 - Emphasizes building “north,” where there’s space.
- **Affordability**
 - Condos should not be prioritized—build townhomes, mid-rise, or family homes.
 - Rental and affordable units must be included.
- **Regulation and Enforcement**
 - Bylaw enforcement needed to manage new tenants (e.g., garbage, noise).
 - Ensure new density doesn’t erode property maintenance.
- **Resident Input**
 - Only acceptable with public transparency and engagement.
 - Concerns about taxes increasing without visible improvements.

Participants were asked what types of housing they would be willing to support through a small increase to their property tax (i.e. by \$100/year).

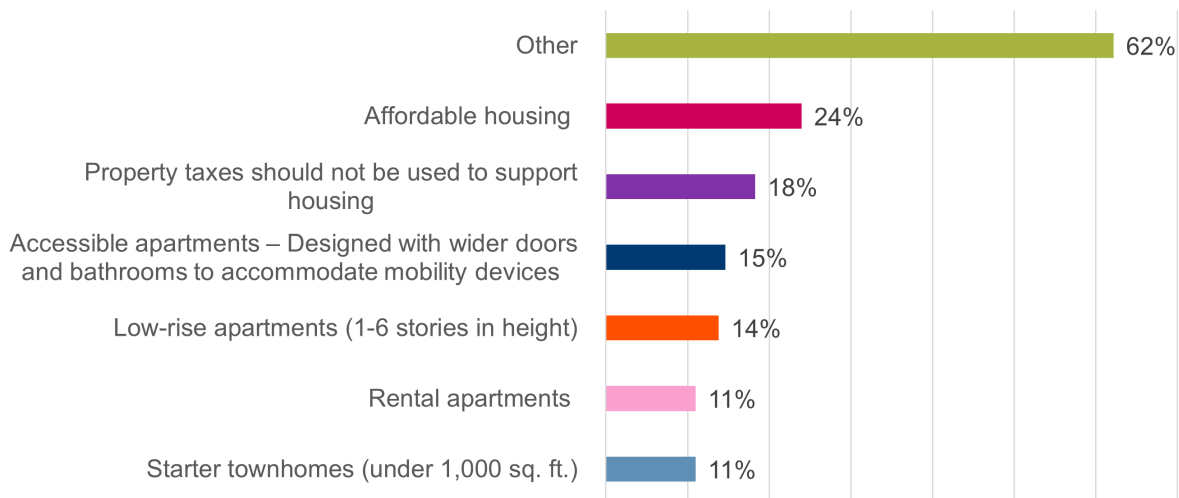


Figure 12 - Summary of participant sentiment regarding what incentives they would be willing for their property tax bills in increase for.
N - 246

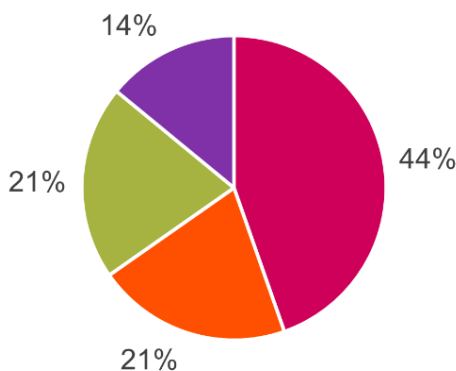
Figure 12 shows that participants selected “Affordable housing” (24%), followed by “Property taxes should not be used to support housing” (18%), and “Accessible apartments” (15%). Most participants selected “Other” (62%), providing feedback that is summarized below:

- **Opposition to Funding Housing Through Local Taxes**
 - Property taxes in Pickering and Durham Region are already high.
 - Recent tax increases have significantly impacted affordability.
 - Respondents did not believe it was the responsibility of existing homeowners to fund new or affordable housing. Several suggested that developers or higher levels of government should bear the cost instead.

Participants were asked what Pickering can do to prevent homelessness and support the unhoused population.

- **Affordable and Supportive Housing**
 - Build more affordable housing, shelters, tiny homes, and transitional housing.
 - Encourage cooperative housing, rooming houses, and city-managed housing.
 - Repurpose unused land, commercial spaces, or units for housing purposes.
 - Require affordability in new developments and regulate short-term rentals.
- **Mental Health and Social Services**
 - Expand access to counselling, mental health treatment, and addiction support.
 - Integrate wraparound services with housing, including 24/7 staffed facilities.
 - Offer programs focused on vulnerable populations (e.g., youth, LGBTQ2S+).
- **Employment, Education and Financial Support**
 - Create City-run job programs and training opportunities for the unhoused.
 - Promote partnerships with businesses for job placement.
 - Improve financial literacy education and provide income supports.
- **Government Roles and Policy**
 - Collaborate with governments on housing and support funding.
 - Advocate for rent control and developer mandates.

Participants were asked if Pickering should continue to define affordable housing based on income and residents ability to pay for housing or adopt the Province's definition that can be based on income or market rates of housing.



- Income based (ensure that housing costs do not exceed a certain percentage of household income)
- Market based (a set amount below average market rate)
- The lower of the income based and market based rates
- Other

Figure 13 - Summary of participant sentiments on the definition of affordable housing.

N - 242

Figure 13 shows that most participants selected “Income-based” (44%), followed by “Market-based” (21%), and “The lower of the income-based and market-based rate” (21%). Participants who selected “Other” (14%) provided feedback, that is summarized below:

- **Support for Income-Based**
 - Affordability should be based on ability to pay, not just market rates.
 - Definitions should reflect city-specific cost of living and housing prices.
 - The 30% of gross income standard is reasonable; market rates are unaffordable.
- **Support for Market-Based**
 - Support for market-based definitions with less government involvement.
 - Government subsidies and regulations are seen as adding to economic issues.

Who Participated

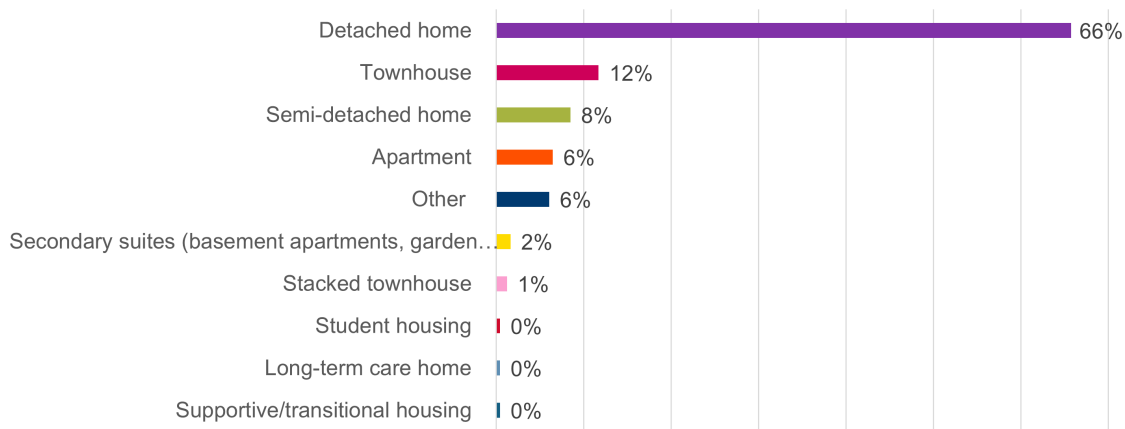
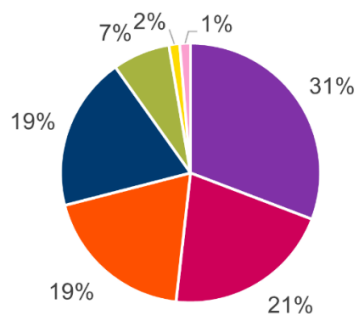


Figure 14 - Summary of participant home types.

N - 248

Figure 14 shows that most participants live in “Detached homes” (66%), followed by “Townhouses” (12%), and “Semi-detached homes” (8%).



■ 65+ ■ 35 to 44 ■ 55 to 64 ■ 45 to 54 ■ Prefer not to answer ■ 18 to 24 ■ 25 to 34 ■ Under 18

Figure 15 - Summary of participant ages.

N - 224

Figure 15 shows most survey participants were between the ages of 35 and 65+ with:

- 31% being 65+.
- 19% between 55 and 64.
- 19% between 45 and 54.
- 21% between 35 and 44.
- 1% between 25 and 34.
- 2% between 18 and 24.
- 7% prefer not to answer.

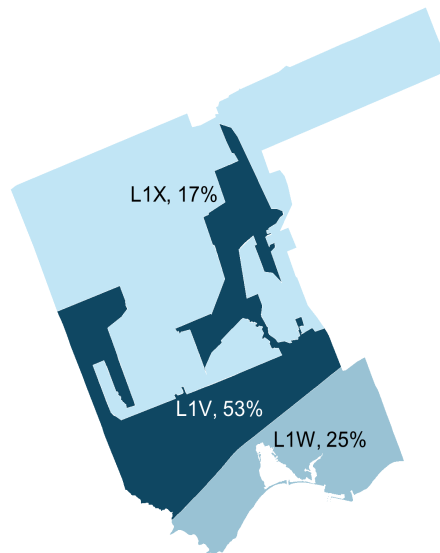


Figure 16 - Summary of participant postal codes.

N - 213

Figure 16 shows the location of the survey participants. 53% live in the L1V postal code area, 25% live in the L1W postal code area, and 17% live in the L1X postal code area. The remaining 5% were participants from other postal code areas.

Section 4: Next Steps

Input from this engagement will inform the Official Plan about Housing and Affordability.

This is the sixth and final discussion paper in the background phase of Pickering Forward. The PICs provided an opportunity for more detailed conversations on how legislative changes, Pickering initiatives, and best practices will impact each listed topic. The next PIC will be held after the Draft Official Plan has been released in 2026. While no additional PIC's are planned in the coming months, anyone with questions or additional comments are encouraged to contact the Pickering Forward Project Team at PickeringForward@Pickering.ca

Further details on the Pickering Forward timelines are included below in Figure 17.

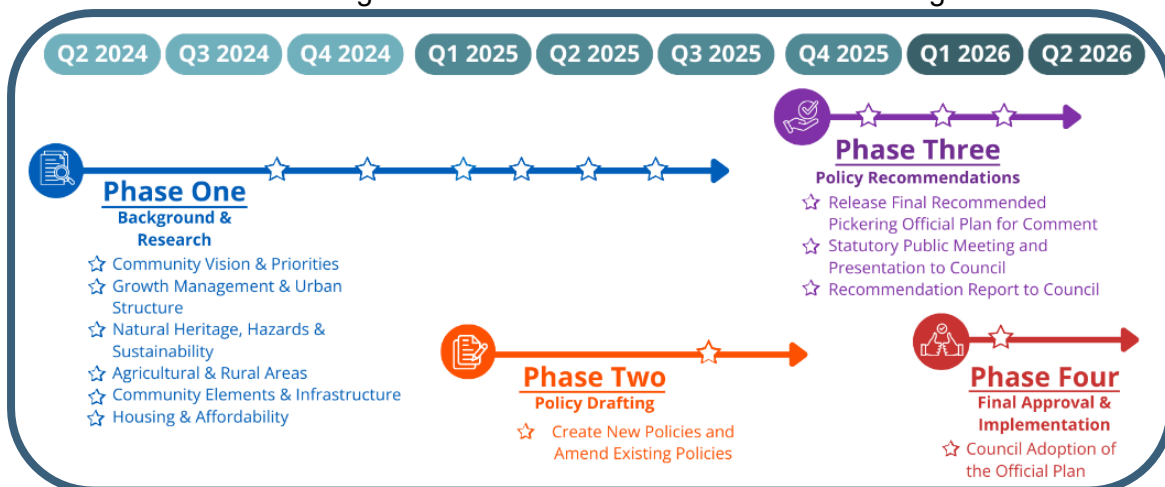


Figure 17 - Illustration of the Pickering Forward phases and breakdown.