

## Appendix B: Virtual Public Information Centre

On March 20, 2025, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., project team members hosted a virtual public information centre. Seventeen (17) people attended the online event. City staff delivered a presentation regarding 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

Following the presentation, 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 much of Ontario's agricultural GDP (Gross Domestic Product) comes from Pickering?
  - **A.** Exact figures are unavailable, but Pickering has significant farmland, mainly cash crop operations. Many farms are leased on federally owned land, limiting long-term investment in infrastructure.
- **Q.** What agricultural sectors exist in Pickering specifically (not Durham Region)?
  - **A.** Pickering has seed production, and cash crop farming. There is also a growing agri-business sector.
- **Q.** What is the City doing to connect farmers with local businesses to promote local agriculture?
  - **A.** Unfortunately, Pickering does not have a local agricultural advisory committee. There is an opportunity to create stronger connections between farmers and local businesses to support economic development.
- **Q.** What are the names of the eight hamlets in Pickering?
  - **A.** The City can provide a map with the official names upon request. They include Claremont, Greenwood, Green River, Whitevale, Cherrywood, Brougham, Kinsale, and Balsam.
- **Q.** Are most rural areas used for animal farming, fruit and vegetable production, or animal farming?
  - **A.** The Official Plan permits all types of farming, ensuring policies support agricultural changes over time.
- **Q.** Could Pickering introduce new types of agriculture to support food processing businesses?
  - **A.** Integrating agricultural production with local food processing could strengthen economic security.
- **Q.** What is the status of federal airport lands? Could they be available for purchase?
  - **A.** As indicated in the presentation, the Federal government has expressed their intent to not develop an airport on the lands in north Pickering. The Federal government has indicated that they will hold public consultations on the future use of these lands. There is no need for development on these lands before

2051. If private investment were allowed, it would continue to be agriculture or agriculture-related for the foreseeable future.

- **Q.** Will the Official Plan shift farms toward business uses (e.g., bed and breakfasts instead of cattle farms)?
  - **A.** The Official Plan is meant to generate opportunities rather than impose strict rules. It aims to define appropriate on-farm diversified uses, such as whether a spa could be allowed on a farm.
- **Q.** What is the current population of Pickering's rural area, and what is it expected to be in 10, 20, or 30 years?
  - **A.** The Envision Durham Official Plan estimates Pickering's rural population at 4,600 people. By 2051, it is expected to increase to 4,770.
- **Q.** What happens to aquifers in North Pickering? There have been water quality issues in Lakeridge and Hilltop farms due to sewage spreading. How might development impact wells?
  - **A.** The City follows Ministry guidelines but is not directly responsible for water management. While farmers generally act as good stewards, some practices can have environmental impacts. Advanced watershed planning is in place for Seaton, and property-level studies are required for new developments.
- **Q.** How does the City ensure water safety?
  - **A.** Strict regulations protect municipal wells, but private wells do not have the same protection.
- **Q.** Drainage is crucial for crop yield. What is the City doing to help farmers manage drainage?
  - **A.** Drainage is considered a private responsibility.
- **Q.** How does Pickering's Official Plan align with other City initiatives, like the Community Visitor Plan (which includes agritourism)?
  - **A.** The Official Plan reflects the same City values and initiatives but is implemented differently.
- **Q.** Is Pickering researching best practices from other Ontario municipalities or international examples, such as Europe?
  - **A.** The City is looking at relevant case studies and is open to public suggestions.
- **Q.** Will rural roads be upgraded (e.g., gravel to pavement, road widening, etc.)?
  - **A.** Yes, improvements will be made over time. Future planning includes better road networks to accommodate vehicle traffic and farm equipment. Residents are encouraged to provide input if there are specific roads of concern.
- **Q.** Will local farmers be consulted on maintaining the rural character while meeting community needs?
  - **A.** Pickering does not have an agricultural advisory committee, but the City encourages engagement with the farming community to ensure that agricultural perspectives are included in planning.
- **Q.** What is the City doing to promote Pickering-based farmers at local markets?

- **A.** While it may be ideal for the Market to be exclusively comprised of vendors from Pickering, local vendors may also choose to attend other area markets. As a result, the Pickering Farmer's Market is open to farmers across Durham Region.
- **Q.** What policies ensure wetlands and stormwater ponds protect new developments from flooding?
  - **A.** Most future development will occur in Seaton and Northeast Pickering, with all plans required to align with sub-watershed policies. The City is working with conservation authorities to evaluate land before development proceeds.

To conclude the meeting, the project team provided participants with the next steps and future engagement opportunities, noting that the next PIC will be held in May 2025 to discuss *Community Elements and Infrastructure*.