

# PICKERING FORWARD

Planning tomorrow, together.



**Pickering Official Plan Review**  
**Housing and Affordability Discussion Paper**  
June 2025

— City of —  
**PICKERING**

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# Land Acknowledgement

The City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations. This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.



City of Pickering Indigenous Day 2022.



# Introduction

The City of Pickering is currently reviewing its Official Plan. The outcome of the Official Plan Review, known as Pickering Forward, will result in a plan to guide growth and development in Pickering to 2051. As highlighted in the Growth Management Discussion Paper, by 2051, Pickering's population is forecast to reach 256,400 residents. In order to accommodate that population growth a broad range of new housing options will need to be constructed.

Housing is something we all need, no matter what income, age, family size, or health status. For those who have stable housing, it may be easy to take housing for granted. However, in recent years it has become much harder to find housing, and more specifically, housing that meets everyone's needs, and at a price they can afford. What if we thought of housing as more than physical shelter?

Housing has been identified as a key social determinant of health. Stable, affordable housing provides a foundation for individuals and families to access employment opportunities, educational resources, and social networks that contribute to overall well-being.

In 2019, the Federal Government passed the *National Housing Strategy Act*, setting out Canada's housing policy, which "recognize(s) that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right."<sup>1</sup> The strategy further recognizes that all people have the "right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" and that all levels of government must implement reasonable policies and programs which will ensure that everyone has access to adequate housing.

In Ontario, the Provincial Government has enacted several pieces of legislation aimed at tackling the housing supply crisis and getting 1.5 million homes built over 10 years. This includes setting housing targets for the province's 50 largest municipalities, and assigning 13,000 new homes to be built in Pickering by 2031.



New housing developments in the Duffin Heights Neighbourhood

<sup>1</sup> Canada's National Housing Strategy, Government of Canada, <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/housing-logement/ptch-csd/human-rights-appro-droits-personne-eng.html>





Townhouse developments under construction in Pickering

In January 2022, Pickering Council took steps to address housing needs in Pickering by approving the Pickering Housing Strategy & Action Plan, 2021-2031. The Action Plan identifies a number of gaps in Pickering's current housing supply and provides direct actions to address the gaps. The Official Plan Review is another opportunity to review housing policies and ensure that Pickering is removing barriers to building needed housing for current and future residents.

Despite the national housing strategy and recommitment by all levels of government to address housing needs, housing remains unaffordable or unattainable for many people.

***1. Do you believe that access to housing is a fundamental right for everyone in Pickering?***

## **Purpose of this Discussion Paper**

The discussion papers developed through Pickering Forward are meant to get residents and stakeholders thinking about potential solutions for solving challenges and mapping a course for the City's future. The discussion papers set the stage for subsequent policy direction. While there are six discussion papers, the themes within each paper often connect with concepts or ideas discussed in another paper.

Response to the first discussion paper, "Community Vision and Priorities", revealed public opinions of what makes Pickering a great community today, and identified resident and stakeholder priorities as Pickering grows. The public identified that affordable and diverse housing options were important to them, and a goal they wanted Pickering to achieve by 2051.



This discussion paper provides an opportunity for discussion on key housing issues that should be considered in Pickering's Official Plan Review and the creation of new or revised land use policies. It must be noted that while Pickering has an opportunity to establish housing policy that can encourage all forms of housing, the delivery of housing is only partially the responsibility of the city. The delivery of housing relies on many different stakeholders coming together to play specific roles. This includes:

- Roles for all levels of government, to set housing policy, identify current and future needs, and develop comprehensive plans to guide the growth and development in a sustainable way,
- Roles for governments to fund non-market housing, such as emergency and transitional housing,
- Roles for the development community, in building a variety of housing options and complete communities, and
- Roles for governments, developers, and not-for-profits to help build affordable housing.

This paper will focus on what role Pickering can play in ensuring that a comprehensive and up to date policy framework is in place to remove barriers and facilitate housing options to meet current and future housing needs.

To understand the housing needs of all residents, we must identify the different types of housing that exist. The housing continuum, as expressed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ("CMHC"), reflects the range of housing types available in a community – from emergency shelters on one end, all the way to homeownership on the other end. In between, there are a variety of housing options and types, each critically important for different people at different times. While the housing continuum appears linear, people may move between housing types at any time of their life. The different housing options, and who plays a role in building or maintaining each type, will be explored throughout this paper.



Figure 1: The Housing Continuum. Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)





This Housing and Affordability Discussion Paper has the following intended outcomes:

- Identify relevant Federal, Provincial and Regional housing policies that impact housing in Pickering;
- Identify Pickering's current housing supply and recent housing trends;
- Identify housing policy options that can promote housing choices in Pickering; and,
- Discuss the challenges with defining affordable housing and describe what options are available to Pickering to require or incentivize it as part of developments.

## Why is this Important to the Official Plan?

The Official Plan is Pickering's primary land use planning document. It establishes a comprehensive land use policy framework to guide growth and development within the City, including policies that address housing. The policies allow housing to be built, i.e. lands are designated to permit residential development, to meet projected needs

Creating a supportive policy environment is key to the success of achieving housing options for all of Pickering's current and future residents. The Official Plan should be informed by current and projected housing needs and include policies that offer flexibility to respond to changing housing needs.

Discussion questions have been included throughout this paper. They are designed to help the reader develop suggestions and comments that can then be shared with the project team.

The ideas presented in this report will be further discussed at a public information centre (PIC) to be held on **June 24, 2025 (in-person)**, and a virtual presentation on **June 25, 2025**. More details on the upcoming PIC, and the upcoming engagement activities, can be found on the project web page: [www.pickering.ca/PickeringForward](http://www.pickering.ca/PickeringForward).

### How to get involved

1. Participate in one of the public information centres on **June 24, 2025 (in-person)** or **June 25, 2025 (virtual)**
2. View the background information on our web page – [Pickering.ca/PickeringForward](http://Pickering.ca/PickeringForward)
3. Complete the online survey – [Pickering.ca/PickeringForward](http://Pickering.ca/PickeringForward)
4. Send your questions/comments to us – [PickeringForward@Pickering.ca](mailto:PickeringForward@Pickering.ca)

# 1.0 Policies and Priorities that have Shaped Housing

It is important to note that housing supply and affordability is not a Pickering, or Greater Toronto Area, or even Ontario issue. It is a national problem that most municipalities are facing. To understand the intricacies of the current national housing crisis, it is helpful to understand a few of the major shifts in policy and responsibilities related to housing in the last half century.

In Canada's past, there have been times where population growth outpaced the supply of housing, including the post-World War II era with the return of war veterans, and the coming of age of the baby boomers. As people struggled with housing shortages after the war, the Federal government introduced a series of housing programs and regulatory changes that incentivized affordable housing developments.

During the mid-1960s, the federal government recognized access to decent housing as a fundamental right for all Canadians. By the 1970s, the country saw its height of government investments in housing. In Ontario, the federal and provincial governments introduced subsidized housing for low-income households, financial assistance for renters and cash grants for homebuyers, and adopted rent control policies and amendments to the *Landlord and Tenant Act*.

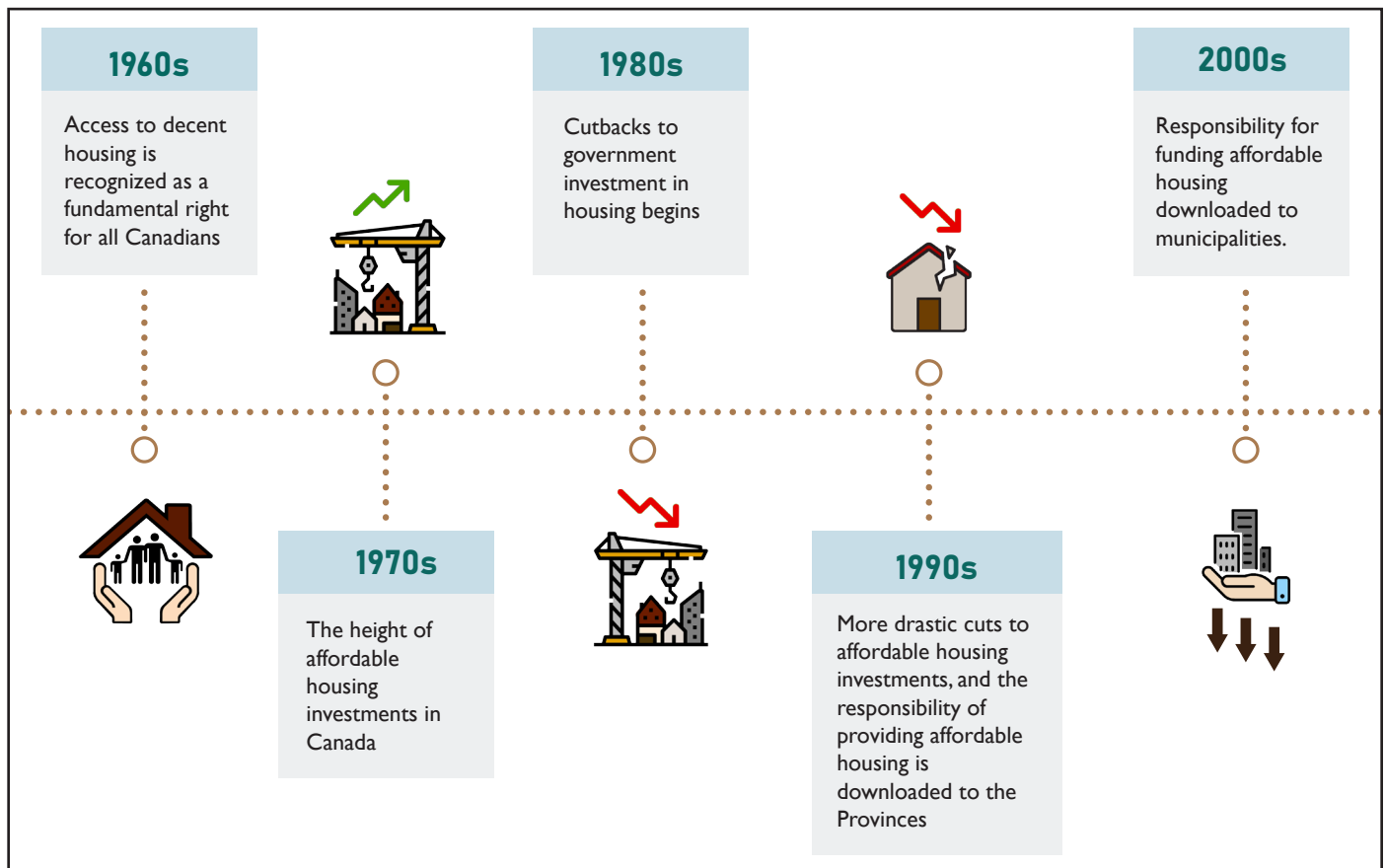


Figure 2: A timeline of affordable housing investments in Canada



During the 1980s, the federal government began cutting back funding towards housing. However, by this time the Government of Ontario had begun playing the leading role in managing and funding social housing in the province. During this time, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) shifted their role from home builders, as seen throughout the 1950s-1970s, to mortgage insurers.

During the 1990s, the federal government continued cuts to housing programs, effectively ending development funding for co-operative housing and affordable housing. In the late 1990s, the responsibility of administering and funding social housing was downloaded to the provinces. At the same time, the Province also began relaxing rent controls on vacant units through the Tenant Protection Act in the late 1990s.

In 2000, the Province downloaded the responsibility of administering and funding social housing to municipalities, such as the Region of Durham, to act as municipal service managers. Currently, municipal service managers are responsible for introducing and funding housing programs, such as rent supplements, housing allowances, and funding for new developments and capital repairs.

In 2017, the federal government launched a National Housing Strategy (NHS) which adopted a human rights-based approach to housing, committing over \$115 billion to the strategy over 10 years. As a part of the NHS, CMHC also identified ten best practices to help boost housing supply and affordability.

The major policy and responsibility shifts identified above created an opportunity for the private market to build more housing units, as investments, creating the secondary rental market. The secondary rental market represents self-contained units, which were not purposely built for the rental market, i.e. condominiums, but are currently being rented out.

This has led to housing being viewed as an investment or commodity and has increased land prices and housing speculation, especially in larger markets like the Greater Toronto Area.

While the intent of this paper is not to get into land economics or dictate how individuals should view housing, it should be noted that part of the difficulty with solving the current housing crisis is simply that not everyone views housing in the same light.



Residential neighbourhood in Pickering



## 2.0 Who is Involved in Housing?

To better understand what goes into the construction or delivery of housing we need to understand who is involved in creating housing and who plays what role. The main parties involved in the creation of housing include governments, the private sector (including developers), and not-for-profits. It is critical to understand they all have a vital role to play in the delivery of housing and the communities we live in. While all have a vital role, they also play slightly different roles in ensuring all housing needs are met. As shown below, there is some overlap, but generally the types of housing constructed by each party is associated with specific housing needs.

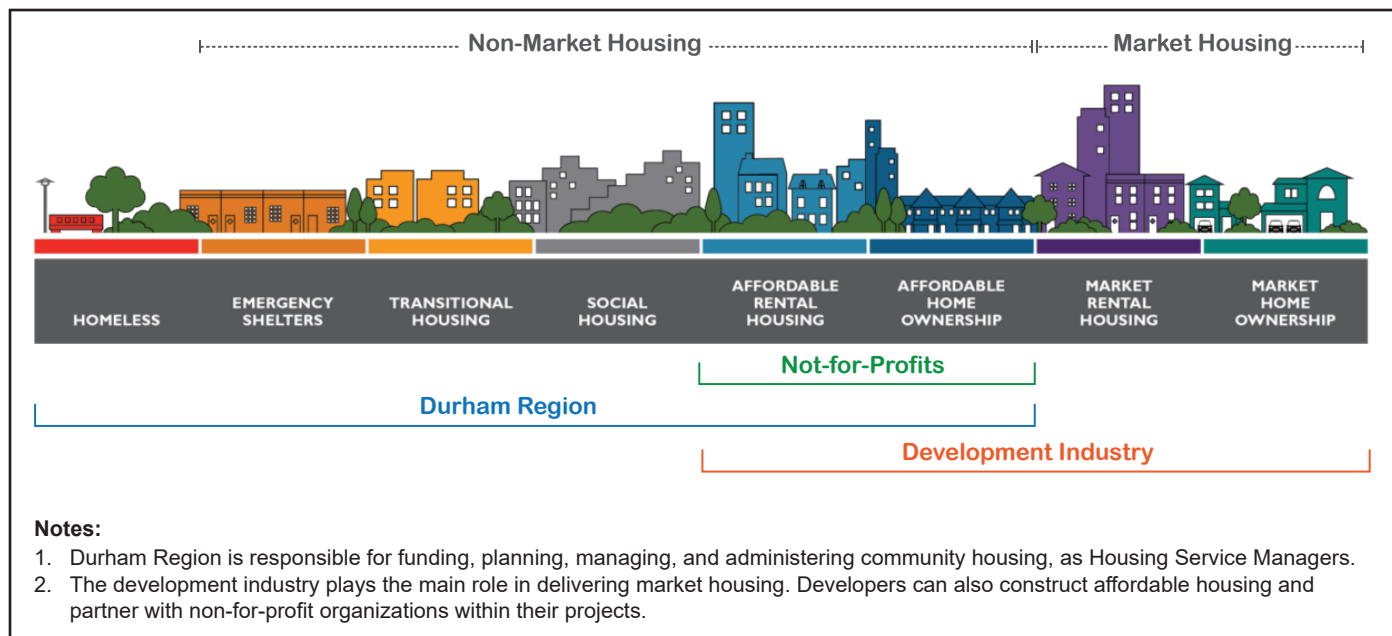


Figure 3: Roles of various sectors in the Housing Continuum

### Government Roles

The role of the governments is to set the legislative and regulatory frameworks to allow for the construction of housing. This includes: setting national and provincial priorities and funding programs; and requiring Official Plans to identify growth areas, designate land for residential uses, set minimum density targets, set affordable housing targets, and regularly review current and future housing needs.

The role of governments is also to provide emergency, transitional, and community housing options. As highlighted in the Figure above, the Region of Durham is the service manager that provides that role in Pickering.

The role of governments also includes ensuring there is housing related infrastructure in place, such as parks, roads, schools, and that those services are implemented in a structured and sustainable way. This role essentially puts the framework in place to allow housing to be built and ensure the end user of the housing has the supporting services they need to create complete communities.



It is important that while policy has purpose in regulating housing, the goal should be to ensure that housing forms a part of a complete community and its primary purpose is meant to be supportive in the delivery of housing.

## ***2. How can the City assist in speeding up the creation of new housing?***

### **Private Sector or Developer Role**

The private sector plays an important role in the construction of housing units. The private sector acquires land, submits development plans for municipal approval, seeks financing for their projects, and physically constructs housing units.

### **Not-for-Profit Role**

Not-for-profits play a unique role in addressing affordable housing for low and moderate households. They can have many roles from developing housing units, maintaining housing units, lobbying government's for policy change, to providing financial assistance and other resources to families in need of secure housing. The role they play may depend on the not-for-profit and their specific mandate. However, they all aim to achieve more affordable housing units.

### **Market Considerations**

In addition to the roles above, it is important to recognize the impact that market conditions can have on housing. Market conditions can contribute significantly, both positively or negatively, to the delivery of housing. The cost of building materials, lending rates, availability of labour, land values, etc., all play a significant role in project viability and the ability to get housing built in a timely manner.



Universal City development under construction



## 3.0 Defining “Affordable” Housing

Housing affordability is an important factor in the well-being of all residents and an adequate supply of affordable housing contributes to the creation of complete communities. Most can agree that we need affordable housing, but what does affordable really mean? How do we define a term that doesn't have a uniform definition and can be defined multiple ways?

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) uses an income-based definition to define affordable. Housing is defined as affordable if the cost of housing is less than 30% of gross (before-tax) household income. This cost of housing refers to the amount of rent or mortgage and property taxes. Income-based definitions can also include other expenses related to housing including heating, electricity, etc. The current Pickering Official Plan defines affordable housing the same way CMHC does.

By taking an income-based approach and setting a cap, it attempts to ensure that a household will have sufficient remaining income to cover other costs of living, such as food or transportation.

While Pickering currently uses an income-based approach to define affordable, it is not the only approach to defining affordability. There is also a market cost-based definition. This is where affordability is defined by the housing cost being at or below the average market rate for housing in the local area. This can include both rental and ownership.

The Province of Ontario has taken a hybrid approach to defining affordability. The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) defines affordable as:

a) in the case of ownership housing, the least expensive of:

- Housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
- Housing for which the purchase price is at least 10 percent below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the regional market area;

b) in the case of rental housing, the least expensive of:

- A unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
- A unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.

The affordable price for low and moderate households in Pickering are defined in the Affordable Residential Units Bulletin, in Appendix 1.

In addition to CMHC and the Province defining affordable differently, a quick scan of municipalities shows that they can also define “affordability” differently. Some are using the income-based definition, others the market-based, or hybrid of both approaches.





Not having a consistent definition of what is affordable, at federal, provincial, and municipal levels makes the conversation about affordable housing even more complex. This can create a barrier to those who want to develop affordable housing.

**3. *Should Pickering continue to define affordable housing based on income and resident's ability to pay for housing or adopt the Province's definition that can be based on income or market rates?***



A range of density and housing form in Pickering

## 4.0 Current Policy and Regulatory Context of Housing

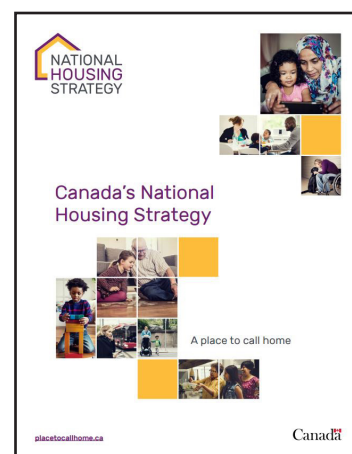
In the current housing crisis, housing is a priority for all levels of government. The development of housing, whether market or non-market housing, will be influenced by a range of federal, provincial, regional, and local policies and programs.

The Pickering Official Plan is required to conform to the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Provincial Planning Statement, and all applicable Provincial plans. This section will provide a summary of what roles federal, provincial, regional, and local governments play in housing, as well as how these policies influence the delivery of market and non-market housing.

### Federal Role in Housing

The Federal Government provides housing policy and funding. It can leverage its fiscal capacity, through the Ministry of Finance and CMHC, to invest in community housing, promote the expansion of more affordable housing options, and help fund programs to help end homelessness.

As previously mentioned, the federal government released the National Housing Strategy (NHS) in 2017. The NHS includes several programs and funding opportunities for housing initiatives, including housing partnerships, assisting Canada's northern and indigenous communities, seed funding programs (such as the Housing Accelerator Fund Grant Program), various loan insurance programs, and other investments in affordable housing.



### Provincial Role in Housing

The Ontario Government sets the legislative and regulatory environment for the creation of housing across the housing continuum in the province, from homelessness and supportive housing to community and market housing. The Provincial government introduced various changes to legislation in recent years as it relates to the delivery of housing. Notable changes introduced to the *Planning Act*, *Development Charges Act* and the Provincial Planning Statement are highlighted below.

The Province also provides funding to service managers, such as Durham Region, for the construction and maintenance of community housing. Additionally, the Province is responsible for administering the *Residential Tenancies Act*, which sets out regulations tenants and landlords must abide by, including eviction rules, rent control and tenancy agreements.

### *Planning Act*

Among other matters, the purpose of the *Planning Act* is to outline the planning process, and identify matters of Provincial Interest.





In the process of carrying out their responsibilities under the *Planning Act*, municipalities shall have regard for matters of Provincial interest identified in the act. One of the provincial interests stated in the *Planning Act* is “the adequate provision of a full range of housing, including affordable housing”.

In recent years, the Province introduced various pieces of legislation that amended the *Planning Act* to reduce costs related to the supply of housing and speed up municipal approvals to increase housing supply. Notable changes to the *Planning Act* include the following:

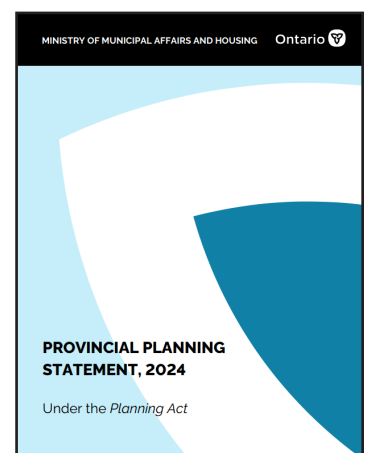
- Reduced approvals time-frames on various development applications;
- Removal of third-party appeals for various development applications;
- Removal of upper-tier planning responsibilities, including the Region of Durham.
- Encourage gentle density by permitting as of right 3 dwelling units on most residential properties.
- Limit a municipality’s power to regulate exterior design through the site plan control process;
- Reduced the amount of parkland or payment-in-lieu of parkland municipalities can receive through the development approval process;
- Eliminated parking requirements within protected major transit station areas (PMTSA), such as Pickering’s PMTSA around the GO Station; and
- Made pre-consultations for various development applications optional.

In addition, the *Planning Act* also contains a number of tools that municipalities can use to incentivize affordable housing, which will be further discussed in Section 7.0.

## Provincial Planning Statement

On October 20, 2024, a new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) came into effect. The PPS includes a vision with an emphasis on “the building of more homes for all Ontarians.” The vision also restates the Province’s target of getting 1.5-million homes built by 2031. Pickering’s portion of that target is 13,000 new homes. With the emphasis on housing in mind, the PPS includes the following policies and requirements that municipalities must have regard for when updating or creating new Official Plans:

- Sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years but not more than 30 years;
- Establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households;
- Facilitate the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional





- sites for residential development, specifically underutilized shopping malls and plazas; and
- Focus on growth and development in strategic growth areas, which includes the City Centre and Kingston Road Corridor in Pickering.

## ***Development Charges Act***

The *Development Charges Act* allows municipalities to collect development charges (DC) when building permits are approved to fund increased capital costs due to additional service needs from new developments. In 2022, the Province introduced several changes and exemptions to the Development Charge Act, through Bill 23, to reduce the costs of construction in the hopes of incentivizing more housing supply. While certain amendments were later reversed, some notable changes that remain in force include the following:

- DC exemptions for affordable housing (using the Province's definition in section 3.0), non-profit housing developments, and inclusionary zoning units;
- DC exemptions for second and third units built within existing homes or on the same property; and
- Phased reduction in DC's to rental housing based on the number of bedrooms (25% reduction for three-bedroom units, 20% for two-bedroom units, and 15% for all other units).

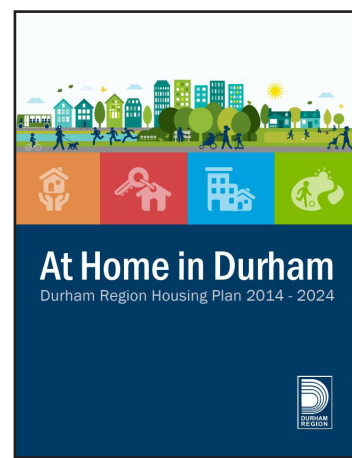
## **Region of Durham's Role in Housing**

As mentioned previously, the Region of Durham is one of 47 service managers across Ontario. The Region is the main source of providing non-market housing throughout Durham. They are responsible for funding, planning, managing, and administering emergency, transitional, and community housing. This includes developing affordable housing, delivering homelessness prevention programs, and providing housing allowances and rent supplements.

## **At Home in Durham, Durham Region Housing Plan**

At Home in Durham is the Region's housing plan that aims to improve affordability and access to housing, encourage diversity in housing options, and end homelessness. The Region is currently reviewing their housing plan. In February 2025, Regional Staff provided an update that identified their role as a service manager and the challenges they are facing due to the increase in demand for affordable housing options. The presentation also identified the following housing needs for the Region as a whole, including Pickering:

- Non-market housing for those in greatest need, shelter beds, and transitional housing and supportive housing;
- Purpose-built rental housing supply that is affordable, adequate, and suitable for renter households in Durham;



- A range of housing options for a range of household compositions and ages, including immigrant households and large family households; and
- Increase awareness of housing supports and programs available in the Durham Region.

In 2021, there were 675 community housing units located in Pickering. The number of community housing units have remained consistent in Pickering over the last decade despite an increase in demand. There are 499 residents with Pickering addresses on the DASH waiting list. Pickering residents on the DASH waitlist represent 6% of all residents in Durham Region on the waitlist. For more information on At Home Durham, please visit the [Region's website](#).

## Durham Emergency Housing and Homelessness Resources

The Region of Durham also provides homelessness and emergency housing resources to those in need throughout the Region. This includes Durham Region Street Outreach and maintaining a By-Name List of people known to be experiencing homelessness. It allows communities to understand people's unique needs in order to match them to appropriate housing resources.

In Pickering, temporary and emergency relief resources for individuals experiencing homelessness include:

- Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS): 25 winter warming beds.
- CDCD Ajax: Provides services to Pickering.
- DARS Farm House: 7 Transitional Beds.
- DARS Lunch: Served on Wednesdays.

For more information on homelessness and emergency housing resources available in the Region of Durham, please visit the [Region's website](#).

### ***4. What can Pickering do to prevent homelessness and support the unhoused population in the City?***

## Region of Durham Official Plan

The Region's new Official Plan, Envision Durham, was adopted by Regional Council on May 17, 2023, and approved by the Province, in part, on September 3, 2024. Approval of all remaining parts was granted on December 13, 2024.

On November 5, 2024, the province announced that on January 1, 2025, the Regional Municipality of Durham would be deemed an upper-tier municipality without planning responsibilities. All the Region's land use planning functions and responsibilities have been downloaded to the local municipalities. This includes making the recently approved Envision Durham, a local Official Plan for all lower tier municipalities in the Region, including Pickering.

## City of Pickering

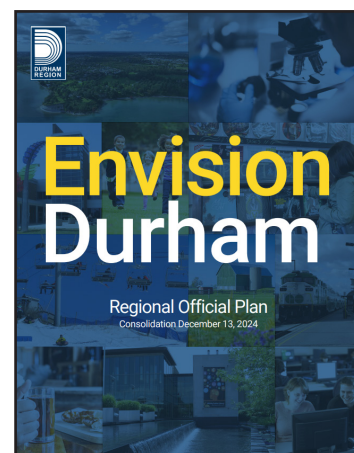
As a result of the Region losing their planning responsibilities, Envision Durham now exists alongside Pickering's Official Plan, meaning Pickering currently has two Official Plans.

Through Pickering Forward, the two plans will be reviewed and combined into a new single Official Plan to guide policy in Pickering.

## Envision Durham

Envision Durham provides direction on how growth is anticipated to occur at a regional level to 2051. To accommodate the housing needs of a growing population, Envision Durham includes a full range of housing policies. These policies support a diverse mix of housing to meet the needs of people and households of all ages, abilities, and income levels. These policies aim to support and encourage both market and non-market housing, some of which include:

- Encouraging various housing forms such as microhomes, additional residential units, adaptive reuse of former industrial and commercial buildings, as well as creating residential units above commercial uses;
- Prioritizing transit-supportive development, including potential air rights development, in proximity to transit;
- Encourage new affordable rental and ownership housing options, such as shared living arrangements, such as co-ownership housing;
- Contains a target of 25% of all new residential units produced throughout the region to be affordable to low and moderate income households, and 35% in Strategic Growth Areas; encourage reduced parking standards to support the delivery of affordable housing, including purpose-built rental housing;
- Support inclusionary zoning policies within Protected Major Transit Station Areas; and
- Support aging in place by encouraging affordable housing units for older adults.



**5. In addition to city-wide targets for affordable housing, should Pickering set higher targets for affordable housing within key transit corridors such as the City Centre or Kingston Road Corridor?**



## Pickering Official Plan

The Pickering Official Plan (“POP”) sets out the land use policy framework for long term growth and development, including housing policies and targets. The POP provides detailed policies for residential development including: required minimum and maximum densities; permitted land uses; affordable housing targets; and policy objectives regarding desired built form and design. These policies are then implemented through zoning by-laws and urban design guidelines.

Chapter 6 of the POP contains strategic policies that promote the opportunities for a wide range of housing forms, location, size, and tenure across the City to meet the existing and future needs of Pickering’s residents. Specifically, it outlines policies pertaining to the housing mix and supply; affordable and special needs housing; infill, intensification and redevelopment; and housing targets and monitoring policies.

## Pickering Housing Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2031

The purpose of the Pickering Housing Strategy is to identify housing priorities and facilitate opportunities to develop a diverse range of housing, including affordable housing, age-friendly housing and accessible housing, in Pickering from 2021 – 2031.

Supportive of that, the Housing Strategy Action Plan provides a number of initiatives that Pickering will undertake to address the housing needs of residents and provides a mechanism to monitor progress, as the City implements the plan.

Through the background work of the strategy staff heard from residents and stakeholders that there is an overall need for more housing options for low and moderate income earners, more affordable rental and ownership housing in a range of unit sizes, and accessible units.

The Official Plan Review provides an opportunity to build upon the Housing Strategy and Action Plan to address a number of the gaps identified through that study.

A number of the action items identify Official Plan policy initiatives that will be reviewed through Pickering Forward. They include:

- Add a definition of “housing options” to the City’s Official Plan;
- Add a definition of “affordable housing” to the City’s Official Plan;
- Add new official plan policy to protect existing rental housing stock from conversion into condominium ownership;
- Add new official plan policy which prohibits the demolition of existing rental housing units; and
- Ensure there are no policy barriers to shared living (co-housing, co-living) arrangements in appropriate areas as-of-right.

The Strategy also includes a number of additional action items not directly related to Official Plan policies. These include working with non-profit and other levels of government to help facilitate additional affordable housing developments in the city.



## 5.0 Housing Options

One of the key outcomes from the Pickering Housing Strategy & Action Plan, 2021-2031, is to ensure there are adequate housing options for all current and future residents' needs. The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) defines housing options as:

“a range of housing types such as, but not limited to single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouses, townhouses, stacked townhouses, multiplexes, additional residential units, tiny homes, laneway housing, garden suites, rooming houses and multi-residential buildings, including low- and mid-rise apartments. The term can also refer to a variety of housing arrangements and forms such as, but not limited to, life lease housing, co-ownership housing, co-operative housing, community land trusts, land lease community homes, affordable housing, additional needs housing, multi-generational housing, student housing, farm worker housing, culturally appropriate housing, supportive, community and transitional housing and housing related to employment, educational, or institutional uses, such as long-term care homes.”

This is an all-encompassing definition of different housing types and tenures that aims to ensure all needs can be met within a municipality.

### 6. *What type of housing are most needed in Pickering?*



Various types of housing in Pickering



## 6.0 Pickering's Housing Profile

To understand if Pickering is meeting the housing needs of all residents, we need to identify:

- The current housing stock and demographic and housing trends,
- Where the current gaps or lack of housing options are, and
- Where potential future gaps could be created, based on demographic and housing trends, if not proactively addressed.

Through the study that informed the Housing Strategy and Action Plan, gaps were identified in Pickering's current housing options. The gaps identified include the following:

- Lack of housing options that are affordable to households with low and moderate incomes.
- Insufficient supply of primary rental units in Pickering.
- Insufficient supply of ownership housing options that are affordable to households with moderate incomes and that are appropriate for larger households, and
- Insufficient supply of housing for seniors wishing to downsize and remain in Pickering.

Building on the gaps that were identified through the Housing Strategy, Pickering used Statistics Canada data to create an updated housing profile in 2022.

As highlighted at the beginning of this paper, Pickering is projected to grow to 256,400 residents by 2051. To accommodate that growth there will be a significant number of new housing units required. Below are some of the key current housing statistics and housing trends that must be considered and addressed as the city grows.

### Housing Stock

In 2021, Pickering had 33,425 dwellings. Based on the growth Pickering is projected to experience, an additional 55,000 dwellings will be required in the next 30 years, reaching 88,590 dwellings by 2051.

77.5% of dwellings in Pickering were built prior to 2000, while 22.5% of dwellings have been built since 2001. Compared to other municipalities, Pickering has a larger share of housing built before the year 2000. The larger proportion of dwellings built prior to 2000 is reflected in the types of dwellings that make up Pickering's housing stock.

Single detached homes accounted for 60% of constructed dwellings, followed by apartments accounting for 18%, townhouses 14%, and semi-detached 8%. Figure 5 below displays the total number of dwellings by type and the percentage of dwelling type constructed between 2016 and 2021.

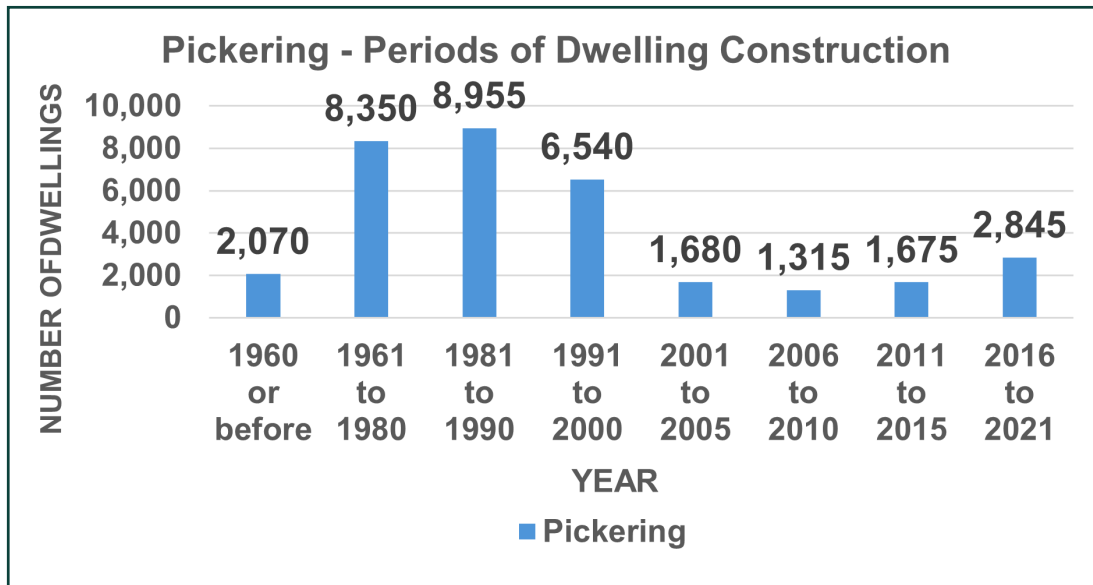


Figure 4: Periods of Dwelling Construction within Pickering. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

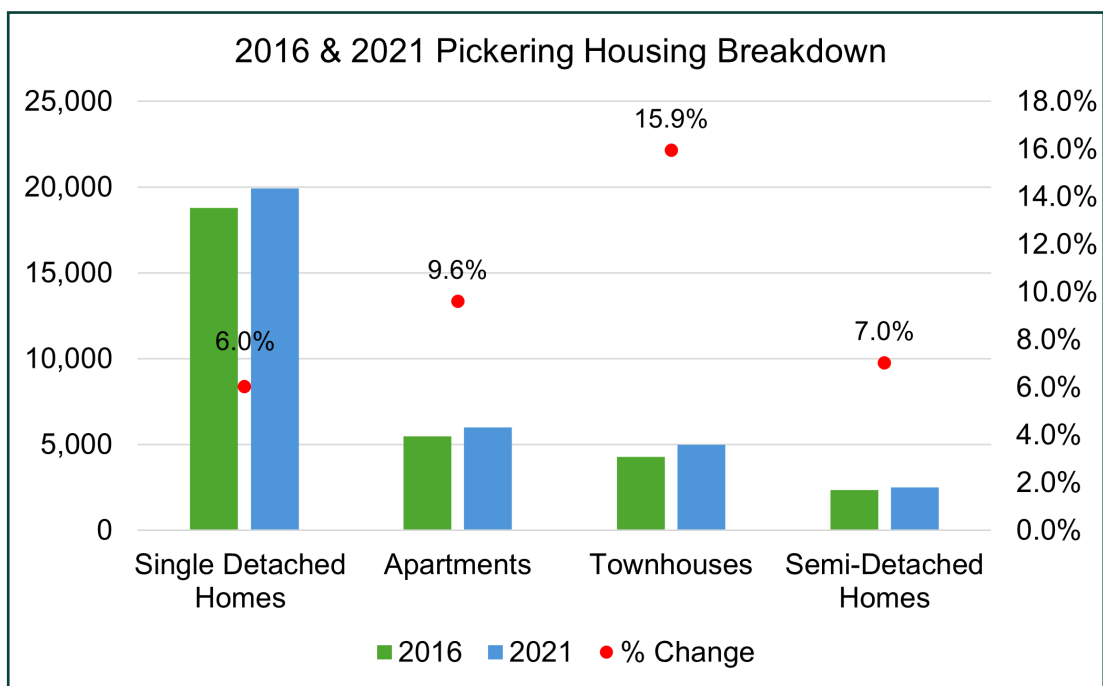


Figure 5: Pickering Housing Breakdown. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

## 7. What type of home do you live in today?



## Housing Tenure

Another element in housing is the tenure of housing options. This indicates how many residents own or rent their homes. Pickering experiences a very strong percentage of households that own their homes at 85.2%, compared to 14.8% that rent. However, if we look at the last 15 years the number of households that rent is slowly increasing, up from 10.9% in 2006 to 14.8% in 2021.

The rental market plays an important role in meeting the housing needs of residents. The rental market can offer benefits such as flexibility in dwelling types, location, fewer maintenance costs, and relief from a large up-front cost of a down payment required for home ownership.

The private rental market consists of the primary rental market (often referred to as purpose-built rental buildings) and the secondary rental market. The secondary rental market represents self-contained units, which were not purposely built for the rental market, but are currently being rented out. This includes basement suites and backyard cottages that are constructed by homeowners.

Pickering has a low number of primary rental buildings overall. In 2024, a 227-unit rental apartment building opened with a mix of unit sizes from one bedroom to three bedrooms. Prior to this development, no new primary rental units had been constructed since 2007. The addition of those units increased Pickering's total primary housing units to 580 units. This represents just over 1% of Pickering's housing units.

According to CMHC, a vacancy rate of 3.0% is identified as a healthy vacancy rate, representing a balance between rental housing supply and demand.

CMHC reports the consolidated vacancy rate for Pickering, Ajax, and Uxbridge. In 2022, the total apartment vacancy (including all bedroom types) was 0.5%. Trends show a consistent decrease in vacancy rates since 2016. Pickering's overall vacancy rate can be better captured by looking at the vacancy rate of three-bedroom apartments, as they account for 97% of Pickering primary rental units. As of 2022, the average vacancy rate of three-bedroom apartments was 0.3%.

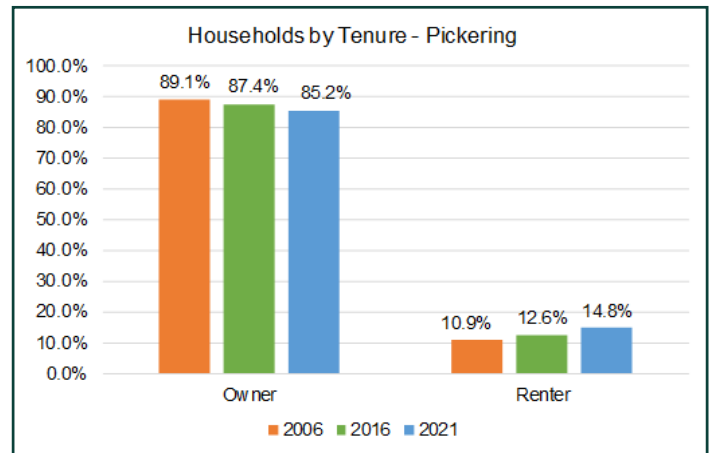


Figure 6: Pickering Houlsholds by Tenure. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

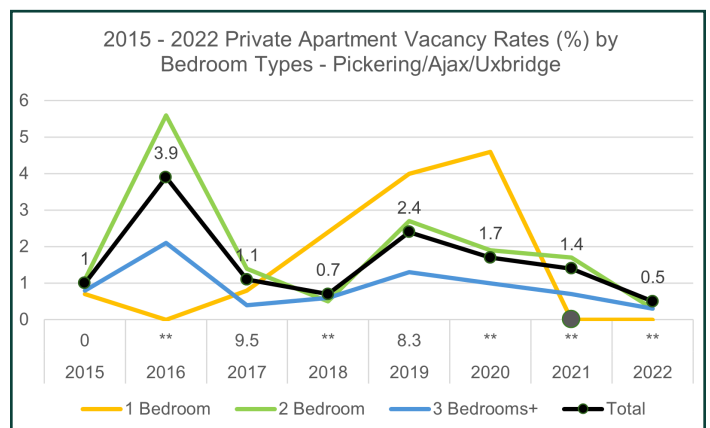


Figure 7: Pickering/Ajax/Uxbridge Vacancy Rates from 2015-2022. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.



# Demographic Trends and Housing Demand

In addition to understanding Pickering's current housing stock, it is equally important to look ahead and understand how Pickering's population is growing and changing, to inform future housing needs.

Based on census data, Pickering has seen the highest growth in young adults (19.9%) and seniors age groups (17.2%) between 2016-2021. Additionally, net migration data show the highest concentration of newcomers across three age groups between 2016-2021: under 19, young adults aged 20-34, and people between 35-44. This indicates that young families and seniors are the fastest growing cohorts in Pickering, and will have the largest impact on housing needs.

In addition to the age of residents, it is important to look at the size of households to understand how that can impact the needs on housing options.

In Pickering, households of four people or more remain the majority of households. However, a breakdown of household sizes indicates that one-person households had the largest increase (11.4%) between 2016-2021. Furthermore, Pickering also saw a steady increase in multigenerational households in the past decade.

**8. What should the City do to make the cost of housing in Pickering more attainable for our current and future residents?**

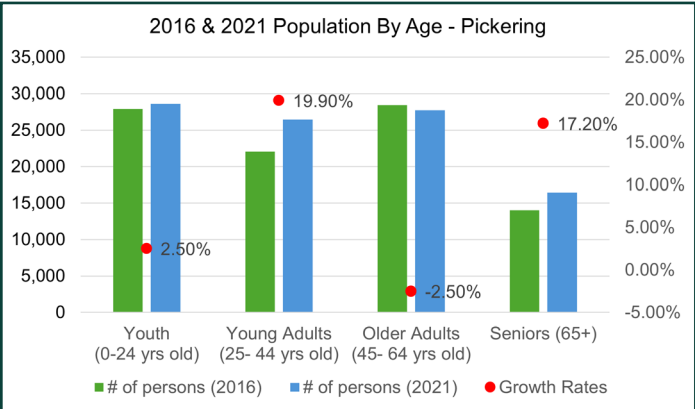


Figure 8: Population by Age 2016-2021. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

Household Size	Pickering			
	2011	2016	2021	% Change in Household Size 16'-21'
1 person	4,510	5,155	5,740	11.4%
2 persons	8,240	8,970	9,715	8.3%
3 persons	5,845	6,085	6,445	5.9%
4+ persons	6,615	10,710	11,525	7.6%

Figure 9: Pickering and Durham 2011–2021 Household Size Trends. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

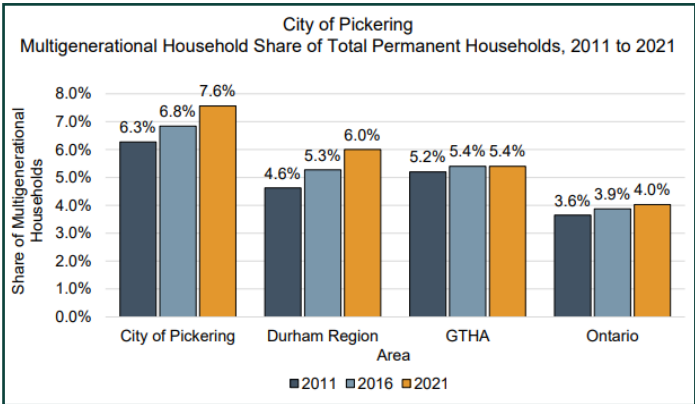


Figure 10: Multigenerational Household Share of Total Permanent Households, 2011-2021. Source: Pickering Growth Management Strategy, Watson & Associates Economists Inc.



## Housing Trends

Data from Pickering building permits, as well as site plan and subdivision applications, provide additional insight into the current and future supply of housing. The data identifies a shift towards townhouse construction and away from single detached dwellings in recent years. Since 2017, townhouses have accounted for approximately 50% of building permits issued. In 2018, apartments accounted for 19.7% of all approved permits, and in 2021, 22.4% of permits.

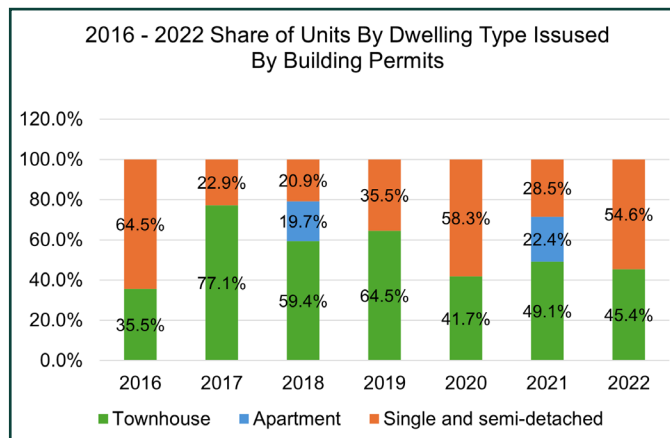


Figure 11: 2016-2022 Share of Units by Dwelling Type Issued By Building Permit. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

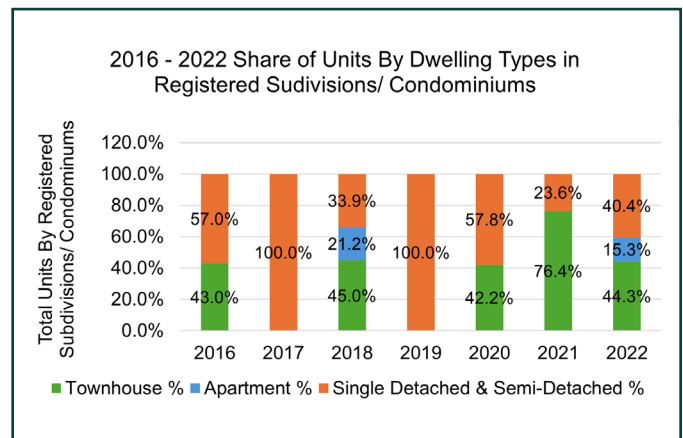


Figure 12: 2016-2022 Share of Units by Dwelling Type in Registered Subdivisions/Condominiums. Source: Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

These are a few key highlights of Pickering's overall housing profile that illustrate current housing options and trends that must be considered as the City continues to grow. Due to the amount of data that makes up Pickering's housing profile, only a select few statistics and trends have been identified in this paper. To learn more and review Pickering's complete housing profile please visit the [City's website](#).

The Official Plan Review will evaluate the key trends of Pickering's housing profile, the action items in the Pickering Housing Strategy & Action Plan, and comments received through Pickering Forward to set proposed policy goals and targets to provide a full range of housing options. This can include the form, tenure, and affordability of housing in Pickering.

## 7.0 What can Pickering do in our Official Plan?

As a lower-tier municipality, Pickering does not build nor administer housing programs directly. However, it can create policies that remove barriers and support the construction and maintenance of housing by upper levels of government, not-for profits, and the private development community. The City also has the ability to provide financial incentives or implement regulatory changes to assist in building more housing options, specifically affordable housing. However, unlike other levels of government, municipalities have a much smaller revenue source (primarily property taxes) from which to offer financial incentives.

Below are a number of regulatory and incentive-based initiatives or tools Pickering can consider to address housing gaps to spur more affordable housing development through enabling or stronger policies in the Pickering Official Plan.

### Regulatory Tools

#### Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning is a land-use planning tool that may be used by municipalities to require that a set number of units within a new development be provided as affordable housing.

Provincial legislation limits the use of inclusionary zoning by municipalities to protected major transit station areas (PMTSA) or where a development permit system/community planning permit system is in place. A maximum of 5% of units within the PMTSA can be required to be affordable for a maximum of 25 years. Pickering has one PMTSA, located around the Pickering GO Station.

Prior to implementing inclusionary zoning policies, a housing assessment report is required to review existing housing and demographic trends in the community and provide an analysis of potential impacts on the housing market and on the financial viability of development or redevelopment. This is to ensure that this requirement would not make developments financially unfeasible, resulting then in no housing being built at all.

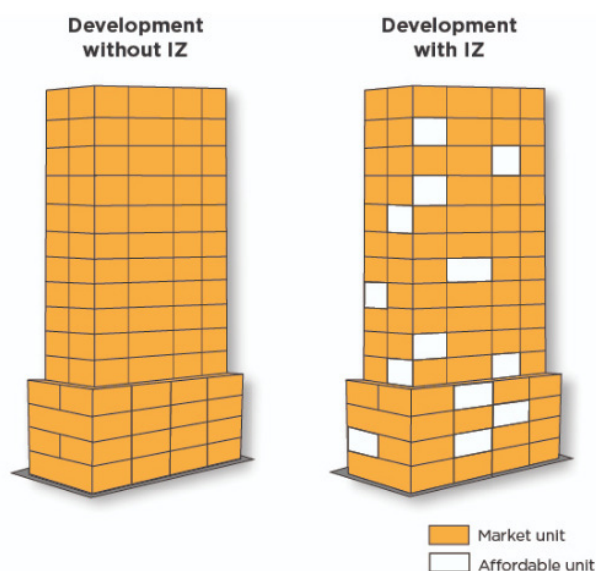


Figure 13: An example of Inclusionary Zoning. Source: Better Cities





## Community Planning Permit System

A Community Planning Permit System (CPPS), previously known as the Development Permits System, combines zoning, site plan and minor variance processes into one application, resulting in shorter approval timelines than typical applications.

The CPPS by-law can also permit other land uses or additional height and density subject to specific conditions. For example, Guelph's CPPS By-law permits additional height or density by a variation to the By-law, provided that the proposal provides additional facilities, services and matters identified by the City, such as purpose-built rentals, additional affordable units, etc.

## Permit More Gentle Density within Existing Neighbourhoods

Gentle density, often referred to as the “missing middle housing”, is a way to increase density without a major alteration to the character of established neighbourhoods. This form of housing could include secondary suites, garden suites, laneway suites, coach houses, multiplexes, and many more. In Pickering, many of these housing types are currently referred to as additional dwelling units ([pickering.ca/ADU](http://pickering.ca/ADU)).

Missing middle housing can be an easy and fast way to provide more housing supply in existing neighbourhoods. New units can help offset the cost of home ownership, or provide additional housing options for individuals and families in existing neighbourhoods.



Figure 14: Missing middle housing types. Source: Opticos Design.

Pickering has implemented some forms of gentle density recently. To conform with Provincial changes in legislation, in September 2023, Council approved new regulations to permit up to 3 units on most residential lots across the city.

Building on Provincial minimums, many municipalities, the same size as Pickering, have adopted, or are exploring, permitting more than 3 units on a residential lot. For example, Ajax and Whitby are looking to permit up to 4 units on a residential lot town-wide.

Toronto has also been leading gentle density initiatives in the GTA. Additional housing options within Toronto's low rise neighbourhoods include garden suites, laneway suites, and multiplexes containing up to 4 units. Toronto is currently considering to increase the number of units permitted within multiplexes to 6 units. These permissions are currently offered in north Scarborough and the possibility of expanding these permissions City-wide is being examined.

**9. Most residential properties in Ontario are permitted to have up to three dwelling units (i.e. a house with two apartments). Should Pickering increase the number of permitted dwellings on residential properties?**

**10. Under what circumstances would it be appropriate to increase the number of homes built in existing neighbourhoods?**

## Incentive-based Initiatives

### Community Improvement Plans

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) identifies goals or objectives for a specifically defined area, such as how to reduce barriers to developing affordable housing units, and provides financial tools to achieve these goals.

A CIP could be used to stimulate private investment in affordable or purpose-built rental housing through constructing new units and rehabilitation of existing properties and buildings.

One example where a CIP has been completed for affordable housing, is in the City of London. Some of their programs include loans to off-set the up-front costs associated with the development of new affordable housing units.

**11. In addition to working with other levels of government to secure funding, should Pickering provide financial incentives for those who build affordable housing?**

### Community Benefits Charges

The *Planning Act* allows municipalities to implement a financial tool called a Community Benefits Charge (CBC). A CBC is a financial contribution that is required to be paid, when land is developed, to contribute to the capital costs of facilities, services and other matters incurred from development or redevelopment, and population growth. Costs can be recovered for certain services not covered by *Development Charges Act*, or that are in excess of parkland requirements under the *Planning Act*.



While the City can use CBC's to collect funds through development or redevelopment of land, exemptions can be provided for certain housing types. Exemptions can provide an incentive or make it more feasible to develop certain types of housing. Pickering currently exempts long term care homes, retirement homes, not-for-profit projects, and co-operative housing. The City is currently looking at expanding exemptions to include affordable, attainable, and inclusionary zoning units in addition to those already exempt.

## **Additional Opportunities to Facilitate Housing in Pickering**

### **Zoning By-law**

The Zoning By-law (ZBL) is the fundamental tool that the City uses to implement all land uses, including housing. Directed by the Official Plan, the ZBL lists the permitted uses that can be built on all properties across the City. It also regulates the size, height, and location, of all buildings on a property. As the ZBL is the implementing tool for the Official Plan, it is essential that it is kept current to reflect the City's current goals and policies. Keeping the ZBL up to date can reduce the need for private applications and allow development to proceed quicker.

The City recently combined its six main zoning by-laws into a single by-law. One of the effects of this consolidation was to collapse many of the residential zones into a fewer categories. Following the completion of the Official Plan Review, staff will initiate another review of its zoning by-law to bring all zone categories into conformity with the new official plan land use designations.

### **Streamlining Pickering's Development Approval Process**

The development community has identified that the development application approval process can significantly impact the timelines and cost to deliver housing. To proactively address this, Pickering completed a review of the current development approval process to identify inefficiencies. In February 2025, Council approved a work plan to implement the results of the streamlining review. When complete, the changes will help reduce the time and cost associated with housing approvals.



# Conclusion

This is the last of six discussion papers, which follow the focus areas of the City's Official Plan Review. Public input, together with ongoing policy analysis, will be integrated into the drafting of a new Official Plan and map schedules.

Housing and affordability have reached a crisis level in many communities across Canada. Prior to the 2025 Federal election, housing and the high cost of living were identified as some of the most important issues, especially for individuals between 18 and 44 years of age. To address the crisis, all levels of governments involved in the regulation and construction of housing have a significant role to play.

The discussion paper has identified the roles of governments, the private sector, and not-for-profits in providing a range of housing options across the housing continuum. In addition, some of Pickering's key housing and demographic trends have been provided to identify current and projected housing needs as the City grows. Finally, this paper has reviewed options that Pickering can explore through the Official Plan and through other regulatory or financial tools.

The policies of Pickering's new Official Plan will emphasize local housing opportunities and needs, while aligning with the Federal and Provincial mandates, to get more housing built. The Official Plan Review can build upon the work and address the gaps identified through the Pickering Housing Strategy and Action Plan, by removing barriers and encouraging all forms of housing.

We have heard from residents that, through the Official Plan, the City should plan for adequate affordable housing options for all Pickering residents now and in the future. To help achieve this the City's housing policies will need to be flexible and permissive to promote housing and affordability for all residents.

It is critical to note that this discussion paper only briefly addresses a few of the areas from what is a very complex topic. This is not meant to be a definitive paper on housing and options to address the current national crisis. It is meant to provide initial insight and a Pickering specific lens to housing and affordability. This discussion paper is the start of a conversation on housing in Pickering and the role of the Official Plan in addressing this topic.

As Pickering grows to 256,400 residents by 2051, providing appropriate housing within complete communities will be one of the City's most important objectives. The Official Plan will guide that future growth and shape our evolving community so we don't just create housing but instead create homes.



# Next Steps

The Official Plan Review is partly about sharing information with the public (education) but mostly, it is about receiving information from the public (community engagement). To assist with this process, the City hosted six public information centres (PICs) from fall 2024 to summer 2025.

Prior to each Public Information Centre (PIC), the City released a discussion paper to describe the topic and “set the table” for a conversation with the public.

The PICs were based on the following themes and general schedule:

1. Community Vision and Priorities (September 2024)
2. Growth Management and Urban Structure (November 2024)
3. Natural Heritage, Hazards and Sustainability (January 2025)
4. Agriculture and Rural Areas (March 2025)
5. Community Components/Elements (May 2025)
6. Housing and Affordability (June 2025)

The PICs provided an opportunity for more detailed conversations on how legislative changes, Pickering initiatives, and best practices would impact each of the listed topics.

This is the sixth and final discussion paper in the background phase of Pickering Forward. Through the first five PIC's, over 1,000 residents and stakeholders engaged with Pickering Forward by participating in live and virtual events and completing online surveys. All the feedback received to date, and through upcoming PIC 6, will inform the direction and policies of a new draft Official Plan document.

There will be additional opportunities to provide comments on the draft Official Plan document, when it has been prepared. In addition to future engagement opportunities, comments continue to be welcome at any time throughout the project.

## Let's Connect!

### How to get involved

1. Participate in one of the public information centres on **June 24, 2025 (in-person)** or **June 25, 2025 (virtual)**
2. View the background information on our web page – [Pickering.ca/PickeringForward](https://Pickering.ca/PickeringForward)
3. Complete the online survey – [Pickering.ca/PickeringForward](https://Pickering.ca/PickeringForward)
4. Send your questions/comments to us – [PickeringForward@Pickering.ca](mailto:PickeringForward@Pickering.ca)

# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – Affordable Residential Units Bulletin for Pickering

### The Affordable Residential Units for the Purposes of the *Development Charges Act, 1997* Bulletin

Note: The bulletin is **effective June 1, 2024** and will be updated/revised June 1, 2025)

The bulletin sets out the market-based (that is, average purchase prices and market rents) and income-based thresholds that are to be used to determine the eligibility of a residential unit for an exemption from development charges and exclusions from the maximum community benefits charge and parkland dedication requirements.

Applicable units must be subject to agreements that provide for them to remain affordable residential units for 25 years. Units must also be sold or rented on an arm's length basis.

For ownership housing, a unit would be considered affordable when the purchase price is at or below the lesser of:

- Income-based purchase price: A purchase price that would result in annual accommodation costs equal to 30% of a household's gross annual income for a household at the 60th percentile of the income distribution for all households in the local municipality; and
- Market-based purchase price: 90% of the average purchase price of a unit of the same unit type in the local municipality.

For rental housing, a unit would be considered affordable when the rent is at or below the lesser of:

- Income-based rent: Rent that is equal to 30% of gross annual household income for a household at the 60th percentile of the income distribution for renter households in the local municipality; and
- Market-based rent: Average market rent of a unit of the same unit type in the local municipality.

### Bulletin for Pickering:

Affordable Purchase Price: Detached Home, Semi-detached Home, Townhouse, Condo apartment	\$499,400
Affordable Monthly Rent: Bachelor apartment	\$1036
Affordable Monthly Rent: One Bedroom apartment	\$1396
Affordable Monthly Rent: Two Bedroom apartment	\$1640





## **Appendix 2 – Engagement Topics**

### **Community Vision and Priorities – September 2024**

A review and refresh of the current Official Plan vision. A facilitated discussion of local priorities related to the Official Plan Review topics.

### **Growth Management and Urban Structure – November 2024**

This includes a discussion of where and how Pickering will grow to 2051. This growth will occur within the City's intensification areas (the City Centre and the Kingston Corridor / Brock Node), on currently undeveloped land, and also to a much smaller extent within existing neighbourhoods.

This discussion also explores the changing nature of employment and how Pickering will plan to accommodate future jobs to maintain the vitality of the community.

### **Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability – February 2025**

At the same time that we look at where the City will grow, we must also look at what the City must protect. It has always been important to ensure human safety, and avoid destruction to property from extreme weather events. Maintaining this priority is even more important in light of a changing climate.

In conjunction with protecting the natural environment and avoiding natural hazards, it is also essential that new development outside of these areas is sustainable and contributes to making our City more resilient and livable.

### **Agriculture and Rural Areas – March 2025**

The majority of growth in Pickering is directed to occur within the City's urban residential areas and mixed-use areas. Outside of this is the City's rural areas, which include hamlets and the open space system. These areas, which include farmland and hamlets, contribute a number of vital functions, such as producing food and other crops, providing jobs, housing the rural community, and being the location for many of the City's natural heritage features. Rural areas have unique needs that deserve distinct recognition.

### **Community Elements and Infrastructure – May 2025**

A successful community contains a variety of services and amenities that contribute to the quality of life, such as parks and community facilities.

Successful communities are inviting and contribute to a "sense of place" that helps people connect to one another and have a shared sense of identity. One way this can be reflected is through the preservation of our cultural heritage.

In order to function well, a successful community includes a combination of all of the elements that are often taken for granted, including safe transportation connections such as roads, sidewalks, and trails.

## **Housing and Affordability – June 2025**

The topic on everyone's minds these days is housing affordability. Whether you are trying to purchase your first home, looking to downsize to a neighbourhood that is more walkable, or you are searching for an apartment, everyone needs a safe and comfortable place to live. That does not mean that future development will/should look the same as it has in the past.

Challenges, like affordability, require a variety of solutions. One area that will be further explored is expanding housing options to serve people at all income levels and at all walks of life.



## Appendix 3 – Official Plan Review Timeline

