Appendix A: In-Person Public Information Centre

On February 6, 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., project team members hosted an in-person Public Information Centre at the George Ashe Library and Community Centre. Approximately thirty people attended the event. At the event's start, City staff delivered a presentation discussing Pickering's natural heritage features, hazards and sustainability efforts, including what features are valuable and worth preserving, the process of natural heritage planning in Ontario, related provincial plans, legislation, and official plans. Additionally, the presentation spoke about the revised role of conservation authorities and provided an update on the federal airport lands.

Question and Answer

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**. The transport minister mentioned that most federal airport lands will be transferred to Rouge Park. Is this confirmed?
    - **A**. We have no further knowledge yet of how much of the federal airport lands will be transferred to the Rouge Park.
- **Q**. Regarding the 120m buffer mentioned in the presentation, what is the buffer requirement for natural heritage features outside the Greenbelt – 120m or 30m?
    - **A**. The minimum area of influence surrounding natural heritage features, to trigger an environmental impact study, is 120m. In terms of buffer requirements, also referred to as minimum vegetation protections zones, those are contained in Chapter 16 of the Official Plan, and vary from the type of natural feature.
- **Q**. How does climate change affect this section of the Official Plan? Given stormwater concerns are worsening floods, how is this being addressed?
    - **A**. Climate change is integrated across multiple topics in the Official Plan.
- **Q**. In Pickering, forests have been cleared, leading to increased flooding. What policies address flooding? Also, in heritage areas subdivided in the '80s, new construction is increasing - how is this being managed?
    - **A**. All new development is required to evaluate the natural features and stormwater within and surrounding their property. The Official Plan permits future development in greenfield areas while ensuring effective policies are in place to protect new and existing neighbourhoods from climate change impacts. Tonight's discussion will explore solutions for both.
- **Q**. What role do conservation authorities play in the Official Plan? Will their input be transparent? How will their recommendations be incorporated?
    - **A**. Conservation authorities can provide expertise and comment on source water protection, watercourses, wetlands, erosion hazards, Lake Ontario, and watersheds. Conservation authority's mandate or scope has been reduced to focus on watershed-based resource management. Therefore, the input of Conservation Authorities is now limited in some areas. The City is investigating opportunities to supplement the environmental expertise that would have previously been provided by Conservation Authorities.

Table Activities

Small groups were formed to undertake a hands-on exercise to allow community members to discuss natural heritage, natural hazards, and sustainability.

Sustainability

Discussions focused on examples, best practices, and ways to promote sustainability in existing and new neighbourhoods. The below images were used to support the discussion questions.

1. *What are good examples of a sustainable community? Why?*

Figure 1 - Images of different types of communities.

2. *What can Pickering do to increase sustainable development in NEW neighbourhoods?*
3. *How can Pickering promote sustainability in EXISTING neighbourhoods?*
4. *How do complete streets and pedestrian connectivity contribute to a sustainable neighbourhood?*

Figure 2 - Images of complete streets and pedestrian connectivity.

5. *Thinking beyond your own experience, how can Pickering design its neighbourhoods to be sustainable for everyone of all ages, abilities, incomes and cultural backgrounds?*

Natural Heritage and Hazards

Natural heritage and hazards engaged in conversations focused on identifying natural environmental features that are well protected or most at risk of being impacted by development, as well as areas of concern for flooding, erosion, and how to reduce risk and create stronger natural systems.

The following large map and images, showing natural features, supported discussions:

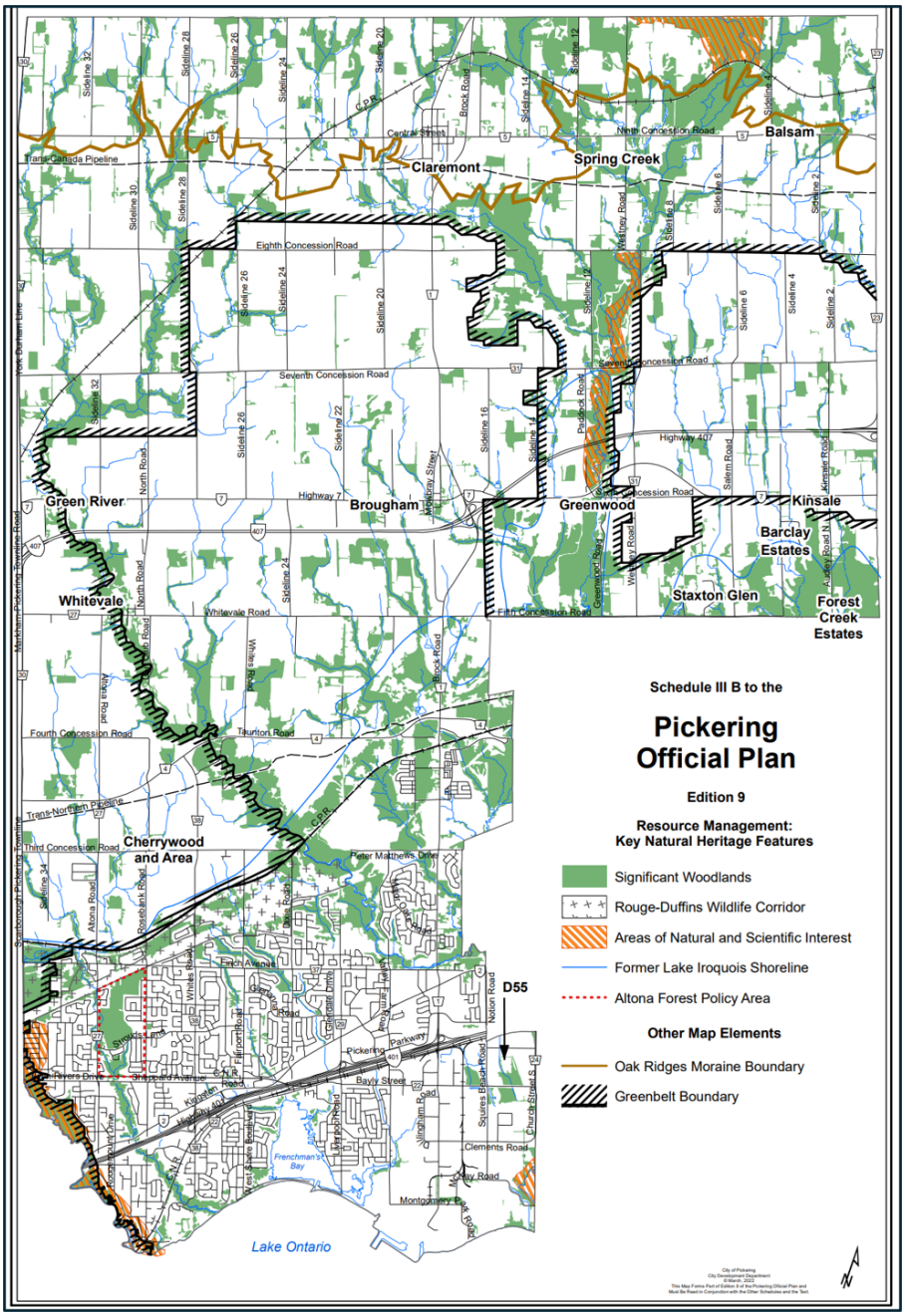

Figure 3 - Pickering Official Plan: Key Natural Heritage Features map

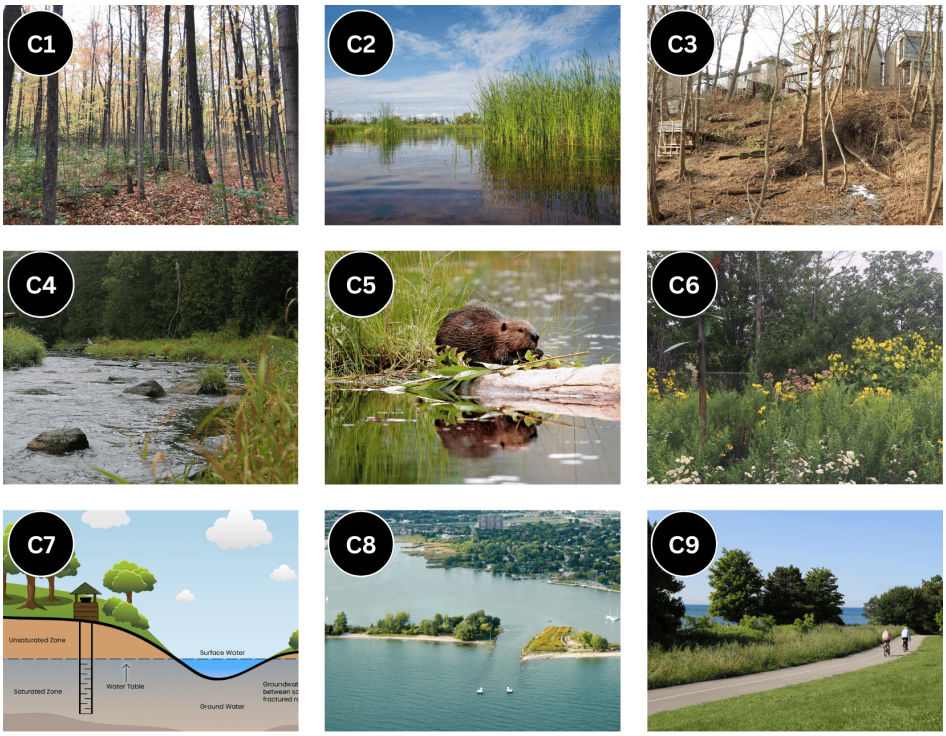

Figure 4 - Images of different natural heritage features.

Participants identified the following using dots:

- *Green - What natural environmental features are being well protected in Pickering?*
- *Red - What natural environmental features are most at risk of being impacted by development in Pickering?*
- *Blue - Where are flooding and erosion concerns?*

Participants were asked to identify and explain suggestions regarding *what the City should do to reduce the risk of flooding in Pickering*. The following example options were provided:

- Limiting the amount of hard surfaces (i.e. driveways) on all residential lots to allow more rainwater to absorb into the ground.
- Reducing road widths to include bioswales (green areas that manage water) in the boulevards.
- Building larger stormwater systems to handle more frequent and intense storms.
- Seeking funding to upgrade existing storm sewer pipes in older neighbourhoods that may be more prone to flooding.

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

Do you support removing small, isolated natural features if it means planting more and creating stronger natural systems nearby? Why or why not?

Table Activity Raw Comments

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

Sustainability

1. **What are good examples of sustainable communities? Why?**
    - General Suggestions
        - Sustainability means a combination of both residential and nature and addressing environmental challenges such as flooding.
        - A sustainable community maintains community character.
        - Sustainability is more than design. It includes more than the details of the urban form. It includes proximity to rural areas, protection of natural areas, and local food production (potential in Pickering is unlimited because we have the lands). We can create more opportunities for agri-tourism, similar to Prince Edward County.
        - Walkable transportation (not cars) is important.
        - Innovative designs are missing – they all look like traditional built-outs.
        - The design of new communities lacks creativity and "elegance". Reference to a project where wetlands were rebuilt with a community facility abutting is a good example of sustainable design. Instead of linear lines and flattening the lands, design "organically" by planning and designing with the natural curve of the landscape.
        - Building on the headwaters of Carruthers Creek in Northeast Pickering is not sustainable. We need to plan forward as we see more extreme weather events in the next 20 years – forecasting potential hazards and environmental issues, building contingencies and having mitigation measures in place – that is sustainable design.
        - Identifying, protecting, and creating better access to wildlife corridors form part of making communities more sustainable.
        - Seaton is a bad example of sustainable design, where streets are too narrow and overcrowded, driveways are too short, and the design is not sustainable.
        - Big cities can grow, but smaller cities trying to grow by 50% is hard. Population increase needs to have job increases too.
        - Community needs to be met.
        - Transit is underused. Not taking people where they want to go. Transit needs to be practical and accessible for more people to use it.
        - Need to consider beyond visual.
        - Mid-density, mixed-use, walkable parks, a mix of housing types.
    - Image Representations
        - None of the photos represent sustainable communities. What is needed is larger and interconnected green spaces, innovative stormwater techniques, and outflows; design your communities with the natural environment, hydrology, and water quality and management in mind.

- Combining all the image examples will be reflective of a complete community. Instead of the extreme, sprawled subdivisions and a sea of 50-storey towers, a complete community take advantage of the full range of housing types through a mix of low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise with retail and other amenities on the ground floor.
- Image B7 contains mixed development, an element of a sustainable community.
- Image B5: although we do not want towers everywhere, towers with mixed-use at grade contribute to a sustainable community and provide more housing diversity and choices in the city.
- Images B7 & B4: Combining them provides a good example of sustainable communities, such as if a green space with a stream can be included/added.
- B1 – mix – businesses available.
- B4 – medium density – make it affordable.
- B5 – don't like. Is this affordable?
- B8 – like that, there is a mix including greenery like trees in the image.
- B5 – make sure the high rise doesn't impact nature.
- B5 – higher rise depends on where they are putting them, not solid blocks of these, need mixed housing.
- B1 – we don't drive a lot, so many things close by.
- Like B3 – walkable area with trees.
- B3 – welcoming neighbourhood.
- B1 – mixed-use services, grab something and go home.
- Not B8 – no transportation, in the middle of nowhere.
- B4 – can have more people live there.
- B6 – some private backyards.
- B1 – different transportation options don't have to drive all the time.
- B3 – like, but more trees needed would like more urban forest.
- B8 – density, so more people.
- B7 – like it! But there is a lot of work.

- <u>Examples from Other Cities</u>
  - Investigate environmental approaches in other cities, both in Canada and around the world.
  - Paris is dense but does not have a lot of high buildings.
  - Geneva – old and new mountains, transportation, balanced. A lot of people.
  - Toronto is not balanced and can't keep up with growth.
  - Big cities have challenges maintaining infrastructure. Smaller is more sustainable.
  - The Amberley neighbourhood is a good example of a sustainable community because it contains homes, shops, parks, churches, trees and sidewalks.

2. What can Pickering do to increase sustainable development in NEW neighbourhoods?

- Design with nature and clusters of forests.

- Keep buffer requirements for natural features.
- Encourage businesses to build sustainably. If there is a large flat roof, promote the idea of using that roof for solar panels and/or pollinator gardens. Instead of large, flat lawns, encourage owners to plant native trees and other species. Include pollinator gardens. Consider a wildlife corridor through an industrial zone. Encourage the reduction of light and noise pollution.
- Many people would like to do their part to be green but don't know how to make that happen. The City of Pickering could run education sessions on how to make homes and properties greener and increase diversity. The education programs could provide information on species native to the Pickering area. Also, information could be provided on the removal of invasive species.
- Greenery.
- Liberty Village = No.
- Scale to fit within the neighbourhood.
- Preserve wildlife corridors.
- Smaller communities within the city.
- More pollinator gardens – The City needs to support awards to encourage them.
- Leave room to grow in the future.
- Need more retail. In Seaton, lots of houses but no main street, there are plazas.
- We are close to transportation, so something like that would be great. Make sure there is recreation, schools, and stores.
- New development and retrofits should be mandatory for CSA bird-friendly building design. Standards CSA A460:19.
- It's not part of the Ontario Building Code (OBC), so developers don't want to spend the funds. Pickering has said in the past that it can only be recommended.
- Don't sprawl; you can't develop Northeast Pickering lands; it will wipe out the water there.
- Seaton has been a disaster; there is not enough balance. There is no transportation, stores, or schools.
- Missing mid-rise should be the focus.
- People will use neighbourhoods along the highways. Mid-rises create smaller communities with things accessible. Density is a concern.
- Create stacked housing, little shops, mixed-use.
- Housing that suits different cultures, more green spaces, the opportunity to be outside, grow food, have homes, be bird-friendly, and access to transit right from the start.
- Develop low-rise, schools and shopping.
- Plan for churches in new neighbourhoods. There are none in Seaton.

3. How can Pickering promote sustainability in EXISTING neighbourhoods?

- The City of Pickering needs a Natural Areas Management Strategy.
- Do not build in Northeast Pickering – Carruthers Creek Headwaters.
- Hydrology must match pre-conditions after development, both quality and quantity.

- Protect birds. Enforce CSA bird-friendly building design for all developments.
- Northeast Pickering lands should be included in the Greenbelt.
- Protect the Carruthers Creek Watershed.
- No more urban sprawl.
- Consider migration routes.
- In green areas, grow mature trees.
- Maintain and expand wildlife corridors.
- Look at the entire map of Pickering and identify waterways and natural corridors. These should be enhanced and widened along the entire route through Pickering. Sections may be entirely covered in forest, while some may have footpaths and hiking trails. This may require underpasses or wildlife overpasses with roads and highways. The more natural corridors and waterways available, the less conflicts between wildlife and citizens.
- Look at the entire map of Pickering, block by block and section by section, to determine how each block may be greener and more sustainable.
- Consult with the Canadian Wildlife Service about migration routes. For example, monarch butterflies fly through Pickering on their way to Mexico. However, they currently have to navigate major roads, highways and buildings. Many birds migrate through Pickering but now face increased difficulty with more tall buildings, particularly those closer to the waterfront. Consult with Birds Canada and FLAP Canada to prevent bird collisions. Preserve a flyway for birds migrating north and south. This may be done in partnership with Toronto and other Durham Region municipalities.
- Tree cover makes a huge difference.
- Include more trees.
- Look at what is there – then identify gaps and add to those.
- Sidewalks that interconnect between neighbourhoods.
- Rest stops along arteries.

4. **How do complete streets and pedestrian connectivity contribute to a sustainable neighbourhood?**
   - Urban design needs to be more friendly towards walking and biking. Biking connections to the natural environment, e.g., the Ontario waterfront, would create opportunities for young people to better connect to the natural environment and create opportunities for discovery paths.
   - Designing our city to become less car-dependent, prioritizing public transit, and a societal shift are needed.
   - Safer and more accessible sidewalks need to be added to existing neighbourhoods – referring to the lack of sidewalks along certain sections of Kingston Road.
   - High rise all along Highway 2 is not sustainable. A sustainable community represents a "reasonable scale" of development, referring to Markham downtown, where new buildings in the downtown are to scale with their surroundings, and to apartments averaging 8-storeys in height along Sheppard Avenue, with terraces and proper

setbacks, between Younge and Lesley Streets. Expressed concern about the impact of the approval of OPA 38 by OLT, which removed a policy setting a maximum density of 55 units per ha on an area of land north of Kingston, South of Sheppard and east of Whites Road, on the character of an established neighbourhood.

- Sustainable development in existing neighbourhoods includes the provision of bike lanes and trails, sidewalks, and connections to local and regional transit.
- Bus services need to be provided earlier in new neighbourhoods.
- Like the bike lanes, but the highest use is seasonal.
- A1 – support this – an opportunity for all ages and abilities.

5. **Thinking beyond your own experience, how can Pickering design its neighbourhoods to be sustainable for everyone of all ages, abilities, incomes and cultural backgrounds?**
   - Reduce the use of concrete wherever possible. Increase green spaces and gardens in industrial zones, possibly with pagodas and benches. Along with the diversity benefits, this would improve workers' mental health.
   - Encourage homeowners to reduce the use of concrete. The trend has been to replace lawns with wide driveways and very little greenery. Reversing this trend would allow Pickering to do its part in reducing carbon and global temperatures. Encourage the reduction of light and noise pollution.
   - Establish natural corridors in their neighbourhoods. With more natural corridors, there will likely be less conflict between wildlife and citizens since wildlife will stay within the corridors instead of venturing into structured areas. Instead, citizens will likely see more varieties of birds and flowers than currently.
   - Students could be encouraged to provide their ideas on improving the city's environmental sustainability and diversity. Encourage schools to plant native species and have pollinator gardens on the property. Students could maintain the plants and trees and track the diversity of species.
   - Celebrate Earth Day and several days throughout the year. Events could be held to remove invasive species, such as phragmites, which have clogged up roadside wetlands and crowded out native species. Have events to recognize the species of plants and animals, including insects, and present and add them to national databases, e.g., iNaturalist—co-sponsor events with organizations such as the Canadian Wildlife Federation or the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Encourage participation in local naturalist organizations. Encourage bird watching and hiking through our local trails.
   - Work with Durham Region and the Province of Ontario to determine recyclable and sustainable materials.
   - Seek industries focused on environmentally sustainable products or products to improve the environment.
   - In the longer term, work with universities and colleges to tackle some of the more intractable problems, such as transportation and vehicle efficiency. Educational institutions would be valuable partners in analyzing the impact of Pickering's efforts. For

instance, they would be able to help analyze soil samples, water and air quality, and species diversity.

- Walkable, assisted devices, so less reliance on cars.
- Walkways.
- Access ramps.
- Make the streets narrower, so it is easier and safer to walk.
- Parks and trees and recreation (community centres).
- If you don't have to use a car, then roadways must be shared.
- More retirement homes.

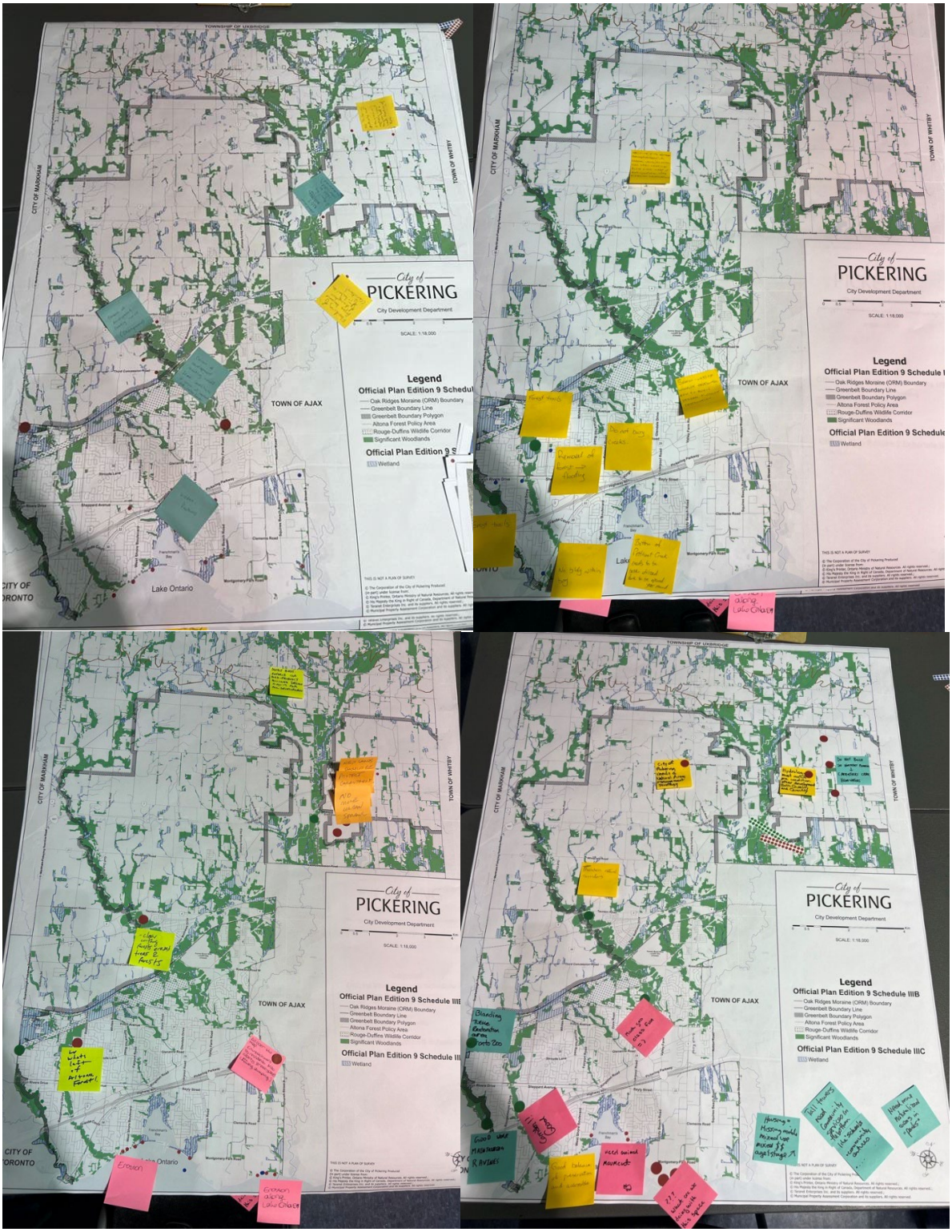

Figure 5 – Images of the Key Natural Heritage Features map with participant comments.

What natural environmental features are being well protected in Pickering?

Figure 6 - Images participants selected as environmental features being well protected.

- Forest trails.
- Blanding turtle restoration area Toronto Zoo.
- Corridors are good.
- Good work maintaining ravines.
- There is a good balance of preservation and accessibility near the waterfront.
- Petticoat Creek.
- Excellent job at making the shoreline accessible and a place to hang out (art, benches) whilst also maintaining the area's natural heritage.
- Toronto adopted a Natural Heritage Strategy and Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) and added it to their Official Plan. Some data identifies where the best areas are to plant trees and where to farm Atlantic salmon. There is a value in having objective/imperial data.

What natural environmental features are most at risk of being impacted by development in Pickering?

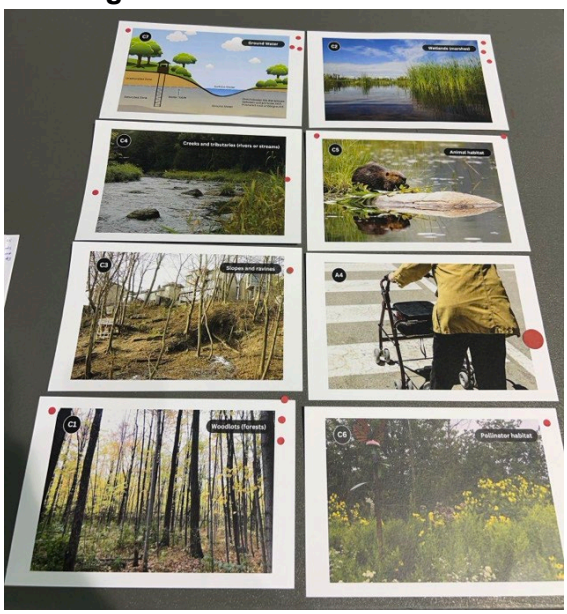

Figure 7 - Images participants selected as environmental features most at risk of being impacted by development.

- Seaton, lots of woodlot destruction.

- Northeast Pickering development will negatively impact the Greenbelt and create flooding in Ajax.
- Aquifers could be contaminated by development.
- Do not bury creeks.
- Removal of forests – flooding.
- The bottom of Petticoat Creek needs to be better utilized. Park to be opened year-round.
- Altona Forest.
- Features are at risk all over the map. Residents are encroaching into nearby green spaces (dumping, etc.).
- Having greenspace and parks by high schools will help children connect with nature.
- Need more animal movement.
- What is being done at the lakefront?
- Need more naturalized areas in parks.
- We can use the entire lakefront area for water trails. Instead, we waste natural areas because the park is closed. Parks need to be open all year. It's a beautiful natural area.
- Concern for natural heritage in Greenwood due to development.
- To choose between one or the other (marsh vs. Woodlands) was not desirable.
- Frenchman's Bay is quite dirty – Lake Ontario shorelines.
- Not enough natural heritage is mapped; woodlands are missing from the map.
- Tributaries Pine Creek and Petticoat Creek pick up salt and runoff water (fertilizer) into the water.
- Highlight streams/rivers for protection and promote public enjoyment– natural heritage being hidden by commercialization.
- Want enhancement of nature (birds, fish, animals) wildlife.
- Concern for homes flooding due to the development of land.
- Concerns about well water in Northeast Pickering.
- Runoff can contaminate residential wells.
- Northeast Pickering should all be in the Greenbelt.
- No clear-cutting. Protect as many trees as possible.
- Dislike the taken away portion of Altona Forest.
- Should have more protection.
- Protect all nature over more developments (i.e., birds, animals, and wildlife).
- Encroachment into natural features by development.
- Better planned development to prevent urban sprawl (North East Pickering).
- Dislike moving trees since they prevent flooding.
- Biodiversity in varying areas rather than condensing everything in one spot.
- Too much fragmentation of natural spaces.
- Be situationally specific when moving natural features in the ecosystem.
- Construction for the new heritage center was saddening as I watched the trees being cleared-cut.

- Who is doing these assessments for lands before tearing down natural features (prefer those who protect more than choose to remove) - accurate studies of the land.
- Determine the worth of destroying natural features for development.
- Front lawns are disappearing due to the need for parking spaces.
- Concerns for water runoff and too many hard surfaces.
- Permeable paving is desired.
- The shoreline management plan for Frenchman's Bay needs to be revisited.

Where are flooding and erosion concerns?

- Seasonal and recent construction of buildings has increased the risk of erosion.
- Flooding in Ajax became a disruption of tributaries (Carruthers).
- Concern of development creating runoff from landfill sites at the corner of Rossland and Valley Farm.
- Concern of development creating runoff (Cherrywood).
- The lakefront.
- Erosion along Lake Ontario.

What should Pickering do to reduce the risk of flooding? Use a dot sticker or sticky note to tell us your feedback.

- Reduce hard surfaces on properties. Avoid excessive paving (both front and back).
- Protecting the trees.
- Limiting the area of a subwatershed or watershed that is developed. In Pickering, there is an opportunity to have large watersheds. It can be an expensive problem and difficult to maintain when it's huge. (E.g. Frenchman's Bay).
- Anything in the Frenchman's Bay area should have increased environmental protection for the future. It can easily be flooded. Homes shouldn't be built that close to the shoreline. Someone owned the Bay back in the 80s, and that's why.
- Build transit-supportive density – more buildings along major corridors for an even density distribution.
- Limiting % of the area of watersheds and sub-watersheds that are developed.
- To maintain uses, ameliorate flood risks, and keep it agricultural with restoration.
- Survey the local ravines for hazards (not natural) -> keep it clean.
- Encourage homeowners to reduce the use of concrete. The trend has been to replace lawns with wide driveways and very little greenery. Reversing this trend would allow Pickering to do its part in reducing carbon and global temperatures. Encourage the reduction of light and noise pollution.
- Increase green spaces and gardens in industrial zones, possibly with pagodas and benches. Along with the diversity benefits, this would improve workers' mental health. With more appealing green spaces around workplaces, employees would be more productive and inclined to remain there. On warmer days, meetings and social events could be held outdoors, improving employee retention and commitment.
- Encourage mid-rise at corridors instead of contrasts between high and low rise.
- Need for better water management to prevent erosion along the bluffs.Concerns about erosion along Frenchman's Bay– more protection required.

- Even in the heart of the city, seek to reduce pavement, include more parkettes and plant more native trees and vegetation.

Do you support removing small, isolated natural features if it means planting more and creating stronger natural systems nearby? Why or why not?

- Slippery slope, last resort only.
- Can be good, only when features are understood.
- Take in the context, ensure like-for-like.
- You don't know what resources you have, so sometimes the isolated features are really functional. You need to understand what you have before taking things out.
- The City of Pickering needs a natural area management study to make good decisions with good effects and multiple benefits. (Ohio is a bad example of how they do wetland compensation).
- Why can't developers/builders improve the natural area where they buy land and add double the trees elsewhere (relocate and enhance)?
- Relocation should be the last resort. Developers should not rely on it in their back pocket.
- Ecosystem compensation.
- A hard “no” on clear-cutting.
- Trying to work with nature in development is the best outcome.
- There may be drawbacks to removing one feature (e.g., creating flooding for existing neighbourhoods) if it is not done right.
- It also depends on who is making the decisions on where to plant new trees.
- Relocation is not always the best solution.

Display Panel Raw Comments

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

Natural Heritage, Hazards & Sustainability

- Consider migration routes.
- In green areas, grow “native trees”… get rid of those that are weed-like (i.e. purple loosestrife, nightshade).
- Survey the local ravines for non-natural hazards. Keep it clean.
- Design with nature and avoid clear cutting forests.
- Keep 120m buffer requirement for natural features.
- Maintain and expand wildlife corridors.

Growth Management & Urban Structure

- With climate change, how are we dealing with stormwater runoff?
- More stormsewer grates are needed along roadways to take overflow rathe than flooding streets.
- City Centre – Don’t go all out with 30+ storey high-rise condos. Put in a mix of building heights… 12-25 storey buildings.
- More mid-rises close to existing amenities.