



Pickering Forward: Official Plan Review

Community Vision and Priorities
Engagement Summary Report

November 2024



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Executive Summary

During engagement on the Community Vision and Priorities component of Pickering Forward, the City of Pickering's Official Plan Review, input was gathered from over 370 residents through two (2) public information centres and an online survey. Key themes that emerged included the need for more affordable and diverse housing options, improved infrastructure and transit, and enhancing environmental sustainability as well as protecting green spaces. Residents expressed a strong desire to maintain Pickering's unique character, as they value its small-town charm, sense of safety, abundance of waterfronts and green spaces, as well as its close proximity to the City of Toronto. There was also strong support for the continued economic growth, cultural vibrancy, and connectedness of Pickering. This input will guide the development of the updated Official Plan, ensuring it reflects the community's vision for Pickering's future.

This report was written by LURA Consulting, the independent community engagement team that was retained to deliver the community engagement. It summarizes the community's diverse input and offers recommendations and pathways for the City of Pickering's Official Plan to align with modern community goals.

Section 1: Project Overview

Project Description and Engagement Objectives

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

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

The purpose of the engagement activities was to:

- Provide an overview of the Pickering Forward process.
- Connect with residents in a meaningful way.
- Introduce, review, and discuss the Official Plan vision and priorities.
- Address questions from the public.
- Gather diverse thoughts, concerns, and ideas.

This engagement report summarizes input from the first phase of community conversation of the City's Official Plan Review, which focuses on the Community Vision and Priorities. Community input on the vision and priorities will inform the major themes in the Official Plan.

PICKERING FORWARD 
Planning tomorrow, together.



Figure 1 – Pickering Forward project logo.

Section 2: Engagement Process and Communication Methods



Figure 2 – Image of table activities during the in-person public information centre.

Engagement Methods

For the Community Vision and Priorities, the City of Pickering engaged with residents throughout September and October of 2024, hosting an in-person and online public information centre as well as hosting an online survey to gather input from the community. In total, 370 people participated during this round of engagement.

In-Person Public Information Centre

On September 24, 2024, from 6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m., members of the project team hosted an in-person public information centre at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex (1867 Valley Farm Road). Approximately 40 people attended the event. A brief presentation was given by City staff at the start of the event, defining the Official Plan, roles and responsibilities, as well as the purpose of the review. Following the presentation, attendees were given an opportunity to ask the project team questions of clarification. Afterward, small group discussions were conducted as attendees were split into different tables of about five to seven participants. The discussions were centred around the future of Pickering to 2051 and, in particular, the vision and priorities of the Official Plan.

A more detailed summary, including the raw comments received from the in-person Public Information Centre can be found in **Appendix A**.

Virtual Public Information Centre

On September 25, 2024, from 7:00p.m. to 9:0 p.m., members of the project team hosted a virtual Public Information Centre via Zoom. Approximately 24 people attended the online event. A brief presentation was given by City staff at the start of the meeting, defining the Official Plan, roles and responsibilities, as well as the purpose of the review. Following the presentation, attendees were given an opportunity to ask the project team questions of clarification.

Afterward, small group discussions were conducted as attendees were split into different breakout rooms. The discussions were centred around the future of Pickering to 2051 and, in particular, the vision and priorities of the Official Plan.

A more detailed summary, including the raw comments gathered from the virtual Public Information Centre can be found in **Appendix B**.

Online Survey

From September 9, 2024, to October 6, 2024, the City of Pickering hosted an online survey on Lets Talk Pickering. Survey questions included the future of Pickering to 2051 as well as seeking input on the vision and priorities. 306 people responded to the online survey, providing their comments, thoughts, and preferences to inform the Official Plan review. Survey respondents' demographic details can be found in the **Who Participated** section below.

A more detailed summary, including the results from the questions, will be included as an **Appendix C**.

Communication Methods

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

- Via email with interested parties, registered ratepayers' groups, Committee of Council liaisons, places of worship, and service clubs.
- Published multiple notices on social media, including paid pushes on Facebook.
- Issued a media release.
- Displayed digital message boards throughout the City.
- Posters were placed in all City library branches.
- Details were posted on the City's website banner and online public notices section.

Engagement and Reach

The following table showcases the reach of engagement throughout the engagement period.

Engagement Activity	Date	Location or Format	Approximate Attendance or Response Count
In-Person Public Information Centre	September 24, 2024 6pm-8pm	In-person at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex	40
Virtual Public Information Centre	September 25, 2024 7pm-9pm	Online via Zoom	24
Online Survey	September 9, 2024 to October 6, 2024	Online via EngagementHQ	306
TOTAL			370

Figure 3 – Table of engagement activities and their associated date, format, and attendance/response count.

Data Analysis Methodology

Input was gathered through the in-person and virtual PICs, as well as the online survey. Where responses were received to a quantitative question, results have been quantified. All qualitative responses received during this phase have undergone a thematic analysis. This involves summarizing and categorizing qualitative data so that important concepts with the data set are captured.

Section 3 – What We Heard

This section provides a high-level summary of the key themes heard throughout community and stakeholder engagement on the future of Pickering to 2051 and, in particular, the vision and priorities of the Official Plan.

General Sentiments

The following is a summary of the responses gathered from residents regarding what makes Pickering a great community and what is currently important to them.

What makes Pickering a great community?

- Pickering's feeling of safety.
- Its small-town charm and close-knit community feel.
- The mix of urban and rural elements.
- Its natural beauty, including the waterfront, parks, and green spaces.
- Its proximity to Toronto and the GTA due to public transportation.
- The abundance of hiking trails, the lakefront, and other outdoor spaces.
- Pickering's diverse local services, such as schools, parks, libraries, and recreational centres.
- Local businesses.
- The City's diversity and efforts for inclusion.
- The abundant opportunities for community engagement, local events, and cultural activities.

What is important to you?

- More affordable housing and job availability.
- Having accessible streets through active transportation infrastructure.
- Transparency and responsiveness from City officials.
- Maintaining Pickering's community character and quality of life.
- Better traffic management, safety improvements, and enforcement of rules such as parking regulations.
- To be included in City planning and decision-making.
- Preserving farmland and green spaces.
- More healthcare options.
- Having a complete community for residents to live, work, and play.
- Protecting the beautiful waterways in Pickering.

Pickering to 2051

Respondents were asked to imagine the type of city that they want Pickering to become in the next 25 years.

By 2051, Pickering will have...

The following list is a summary of the responses gathered from residents regarding what they feel Pickering will have in 2051.

- A vibrant downtown core with mixed-use developments.
- Pedestrian-friendly designs with wide sidewalks and outdoor seating areas.
- Art installations and events that celebrate local artists and promote engagement.
- Improved and expanded public transit options.
- Extensive and safe network of bike lanes.
- Sustainable infrastructure that supports eco-friendly living, such as green roofs, solar panels, and energy-efficient buildings.
- Effective stormwater management systems.
- Abundant and accessible healthcare services.
- Ample green spaces, parks, and trails.
- A revitalized waterfront that serves as a hub for recreation and relaxation.
- Affordable and diverse housing options.
- Resilient infrastructure.
- Diverse education options through colleges and universities.

“A community that supports people through all stages of their life, has valued employment and sufficient recreational opportunities, services, and business to support the population.”

“A buzzing downtown Pickering, sufficient infrastructure to support our growing population, a continually diverse population, and beautifully designed green spaces everywhere we turn.”

By 2051, Pickering will be known for...

The following list is a summary of the responses gathered from residents regarding what they feel Pickering will be known for in 2051.

- Its variety of natural spaces and modern structures.

- Sustainable farming and agricultural practices.
- Vibrant public squares, waterfronts, and gathering spaces.
- Its unique character and heritage preservation.
- Its beautiful green spaces and outdoor learning experiences.
- Being a smart and innovative city.
- Having a series of complete communities.
- Being a safe and family-friendly environment.
- Having a strong economy and diverse job opportunities.
- It's quality amenities and quality of life.
- Being a liveable, safe, and bike-friendly city.
- Great education, transit and culture.

“Fabulous trails and access to nature. Fantastic agricultural land and produce. A beautiful lakefront where people can enjoy the best of Pickering.”

“Great respectful neighbourhoods, great transportation connections and being a diverse community.”

Vision and Priorities

The current Official Plan **vision** describes what the City aspires to be:

“To build Pickering in a manner that meets the evolving needs of its people, that sustains healthy urban and rural settings, and that creates a unique community interconnected with all other places and people.”

This vision statement is based on five interrelated **priorities**, currently stated as follows:

- Evolving needs acknowledge that people change, communities change, and needs change.
- Healthy settings make it easier for people to meet their needs and fulfill their aspirations. Healthy settings need to be maintained so that the needs and aspirations of future generations can also be addressed.
- Urban and rural sustainability acknowledges that the City’s urban and rural areas must both be sustained and enhanced over the long term for the well-being of the community.
- Unique community recognizes the City’s distinctive landscape, history, location and settlement pattern as valuable assets. Properly nurtured, these assets can set Pickering apart from other municipalities.
- Global connectivity recognizes that Pickering is part of a larger evolving region (Durham), surrounded by a larger and evolving area (the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area), within a changing world. What happens within the City’s borders are significantly influenced by larger social, economic and environmental events.

The following is a summary of community responses regarding what parts of the current Official Plan vision and priorities are still relevant and what needs to be changed or added to.

What parts of the current Official Plan vision and priorities are still relevant?

When asked about what parts of the current Official Plan vision and priorities are still relevant, participants noted the following:

- Evolving needs
 - The priorities need to continue to evolve to stay current and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Healthy settings
 - Prioritizing healthy and inclusive communities through maintaining green spaces and conservation areas.
- Urban and rural sustainability
 - A balanced approach to urban growth is important amidst anticipated increased density and population growth.
- Unique community
 - Maintaining Pickering’s unique identity and character is necessary by respecting the City’s heritage.
- Global connectivity
 - Local connectivity should be prioritized over global connectivity, through improved regional transit systems.

What needs to be changed or added to the vision and priorities?

When asked about what parts of the current Official Plan vision and priorities need to be changed or added to, participants noted the following:

- Housing and Affordability
 - Emphasize more affordable housing options.
 - Consider co-operative housing models.
- Infrastructure and Services
 - Ensure that infrastructure such as roads, transit, and businesses grow steadily according to population growth.
 - Ensure adequate healthcare facilities are established to meet the needs of a growing population.
 - Address traffic congestion and safety concerns.
- Environmental Sustainability
 - Strengthen protection for green spaces and agricultural areas.
 - Promote environmental responsibility and sustainable development practices.
 - Integrate climate resilience strategies into planning policy.
 - Enhance flood management and disaster preparedness.
- Community Health and Wellbeing
 - Better define “healthy settings.”

“Incorporating strategies to address climate change and enhance resilience against extreme weather events would be beneficial. This could include sustainable building practices, green infrastructure, and renewable energy initiatives.”

- Support community engagement and inclusion.
- Address homelessness and provide resources for vulnerable populations.
- Focus on creating public spaces and events to foster community connections.
- Consider senior-friendly amenities and mental health programs.
- Economic Development
 - Support local businesses and create job opportunities within Pickering.
 - Encourage a mix of business types and promote vibrant commercial areas.
 - Build a strong city centre.
- Urban Density and Design
 - Limit high-rise developments to maintain the City's character.
 - Ensure green spaces are protected, and buffer zones exist between residential and commercial areas.
 - Consider mixed-use developments to promote a walkable and connected community.
- Local Connectivity
 - Expand cycling infrastructure, electric vehicle stations, and public transit.

“Incorporate a strong emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the vision and priorities. This would involve addressing systemic barriers to housing, employment, and services for marginalized communities, as well as ensuring diverse representation in decision-making.”

Additional Insights

Highlights of the findings from the online survey asking participants to provide input on select topics. Each multiple choice question includes a graph showing responses and themes emerging from ideas respondents provided under 'Other' in the list of survey answers. Open-ended questions are summarized thematically.

Transportation



Figure 4 – New commercial and townhouse development at the south-west corner of Altona Road and Pine Grove Avenue with natural heritage on the east side of Altona Road (looking south).

In 2051, how should people be able to travel within the City to work or school? Select all that apply.

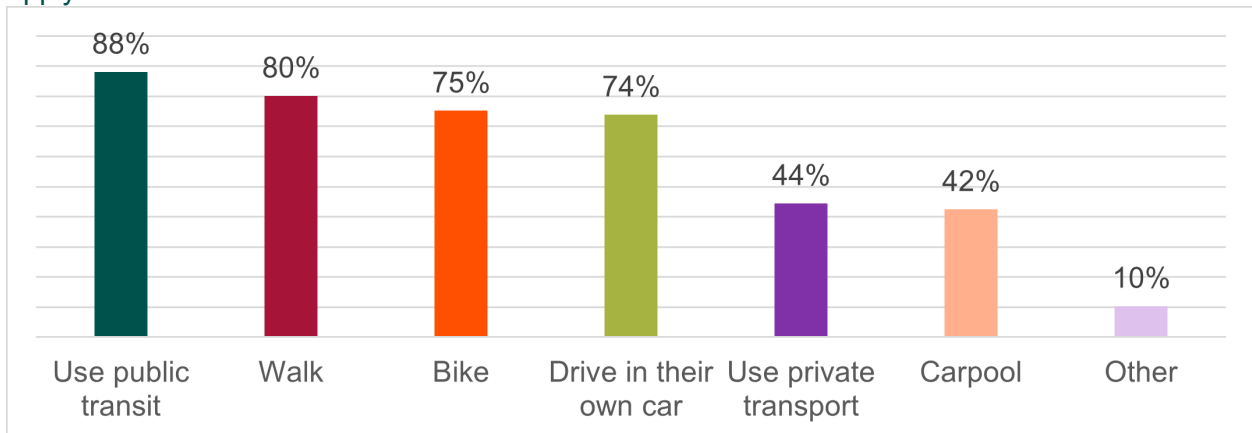


Figure 5 – Summary of responses to question two of the online survey.

n = 302

As shown in Figure 5, most respondents selected public transit (88%), walking (80%), biking (75%), and driving their own car (74%) as the modes of travel they believe people should be using in 2051, followed by private transport (i.e. taxi, rideshare services) (44%) and carpooling

(42%). Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (10%) are summarized below:

- **Diverse and Eco-Friendly Options**
 - Infrastructure should support a variety of transportation methods.
 - Future transportation needs to leverage technology for eco-friendly mobility.
- **Micromobility**
 - Shared micro-mobility options such as e-scooter programs should be well introduced by 2051.
 - Electric scooters, e-bikes, hoverboards, and mini-electric vehicles should be considered for everyday transportation, with dedicated lanes.
 - Personal electric devices such as segways need to be considered in transportation planning.
- **Accessibility**
 - Public transit needs to be frequent, accessible, and free by 2051.
 - Accessibility should to be prioritized, including considerations for wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices.
 - Connectivity between neighbourhoods should be enhanced though better access points to the 401 highway.

How can we design neighbourhoods to encourage active transportation?

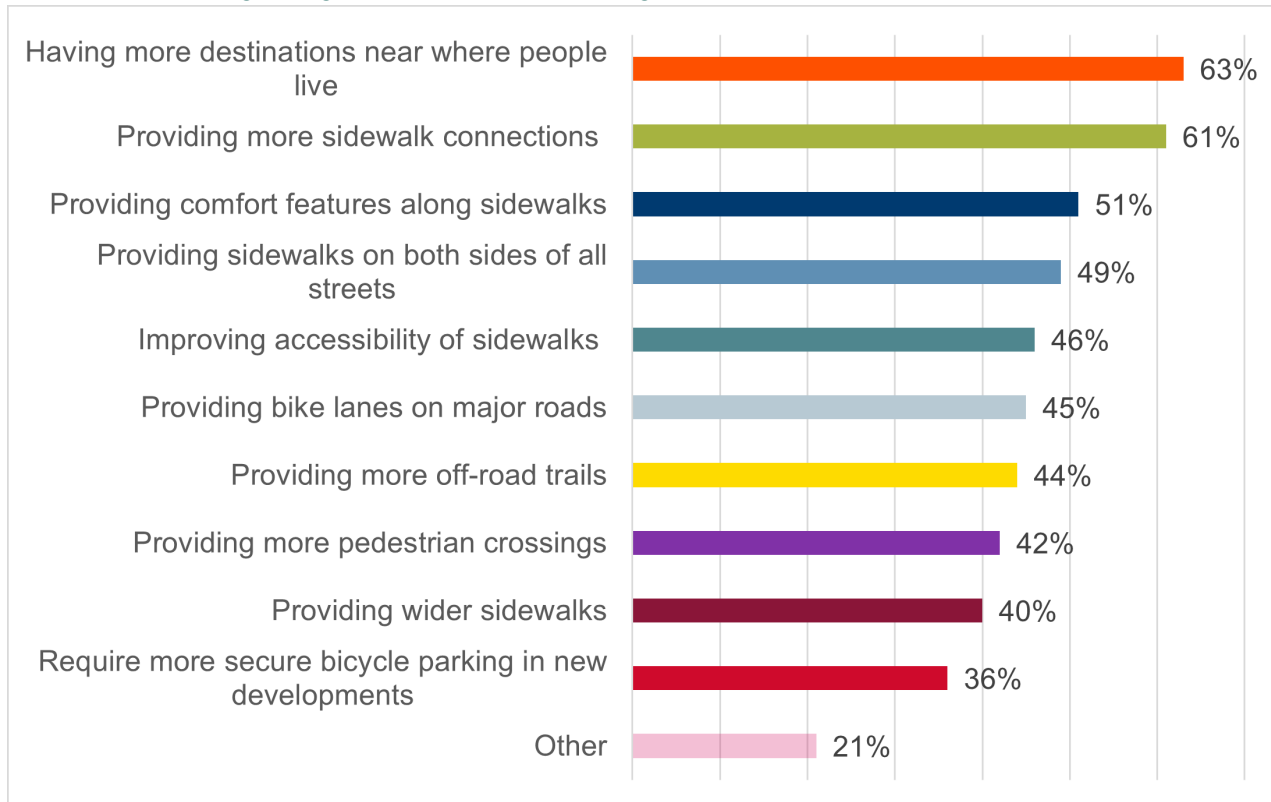


Figure 6 – Summary of responses to question three of the online survey.

n = 300

As shown in Figure 6, most respondents selected “Having more destinations near where people live” (63%) and “Providing more sidewalk connections” (61%) as a response to how to design neighbourhoods to encourage active transportation. Respondents also selected “Providing comfort features along sidewalks” (51%), “Providing sidewalks on both sides of all streets” (49%), “Improving accessibility of sidewalks” (46%), “Providing bike lanes on major roads” (45%), “Providing more off-road trails” (44%), “Providing more pedestrian crossings” (42%), “Providing wider sidewalks” (40%), and “Require more secure bicycle parking in new developments” (36%). Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (21%) are summarized below:

- **Maintenance and Enforcement**
 - Improved enforcement of traffic laws.
 - Maintain paths during the winter-time to promote year-round use.
- **Public Transportation**
 - Invest in more bus routes and bus stops and maintain bus shelters.
 - Enhance connectivity between different parts of the city, including north and south of major highways such as the 401.
 - Promote public transit use through community campaigns and incentives.
- **Connectivity**
 - Create a network of multi-use trails that connect key areas, like waterfront and parks.
 - Prioritize continuous sidewalks along major streets to improve walkability.
- **Safety**
 - Build wider vehicular lanes as well as sidewalks, particularly where intersections have been expanded.
 - Separate cycling paths from both cars and pedestrians.
 - Improve lighting for pathways and trails to ensure safety.

Community Elements



Figure 7 – Rick Johnson Memorial Park, Seaton.

What community elements and infrastructure help make Pickering a place that people want to live and visit?

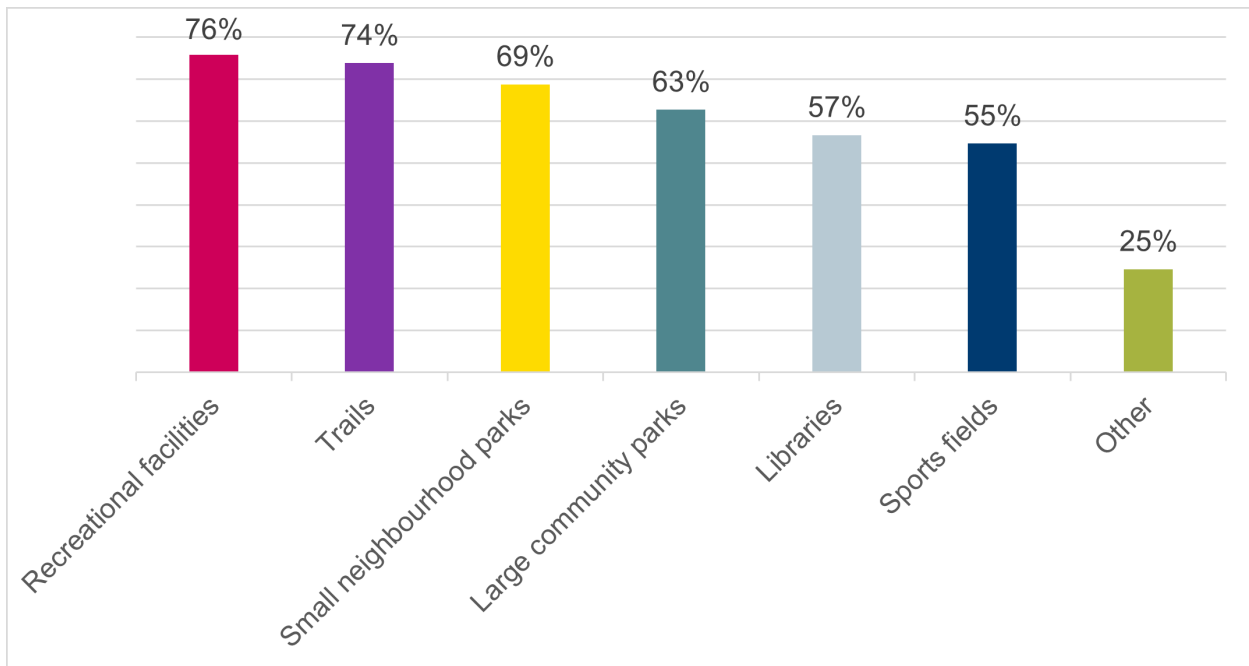


Figure 8 – Summary of responses to question four of the online survey.

n = 297

As shown in Figure 8, most respondents selected “Recreational facilities” (76%) and “Trails” (74%) as a response to what community elements and infrastructure help make Pickering a place that people want to live in and visit. Respondents also selected “Small neighbourhood parks” (69%), “Large community parks” (63%), “Libraries” (57%), and “Sports fields” (55%).

Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (25%) are summarized below:

- Infrastructure
 - Improve and maintain infrastructure, including roads, bridges, sidewalks, and public spaces.
- Amenities
 - Support the implementation of diverse activities catering to a wider range of residents, beyond young families and retirees.
 - Have abundant public amenities such as tennis and pickleball courts, seasonal outdoor pools, and off-leash trails.
 - Implement more arts and cultural spaces such as visual and performance centres, as well as public art installations.
 - Invest in public spaces with facilities such as outdoor exercise equipment, washrooms, shaded seating, playgrounds, skating rinks, and splash pads.
- Accessibility
 - Encourage walkable access to local businesses such as independent convenience stores, restaurants, cafes, and shops within communities.
 - Improve waterfront trails, access to beaches, green spaces, parks, and natural areas.
 - Have mixed-use developments that encourage walkable neighbourhoods.

What additional community elements and infrastructure would you like to see in the next 25 years?

When asked about additional community elements and infrastructure that respondents would like to see in Pickering in the next 25 years, respondents noted the following:

- Green and Recreational Spaces
 - Dog parks.
 - Splash pads.
 - Playgrounds.
 - Senior centres.
 - Parks for all ages.
 - Sports fields.
 - Libraries with youth hubs.
 - Pools.
 - Trails.
 - Better use of existing school facilities, such as gyms and libraries, for community activities.
 - Community gardens and kitchens.
 - Public meeting rooms and spaces.
- Housing
 - Ensure that affordable housing is available.
 - Preserve the character of historic hamlets.
- Public Transit

- Ensure better connections, lower fares, extended service hours.
- Implement dedicated bus lanes.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure.
- Expand transit options to include direct routes to key destinations.
- Healthcare and Accessibility
 - Build an additional hospital.
 - Have accessible healthcare facilities.

Environment



Figure 9 – Frenchman's Bay

How can the City protect the natural environment while Pickering continues to grow?

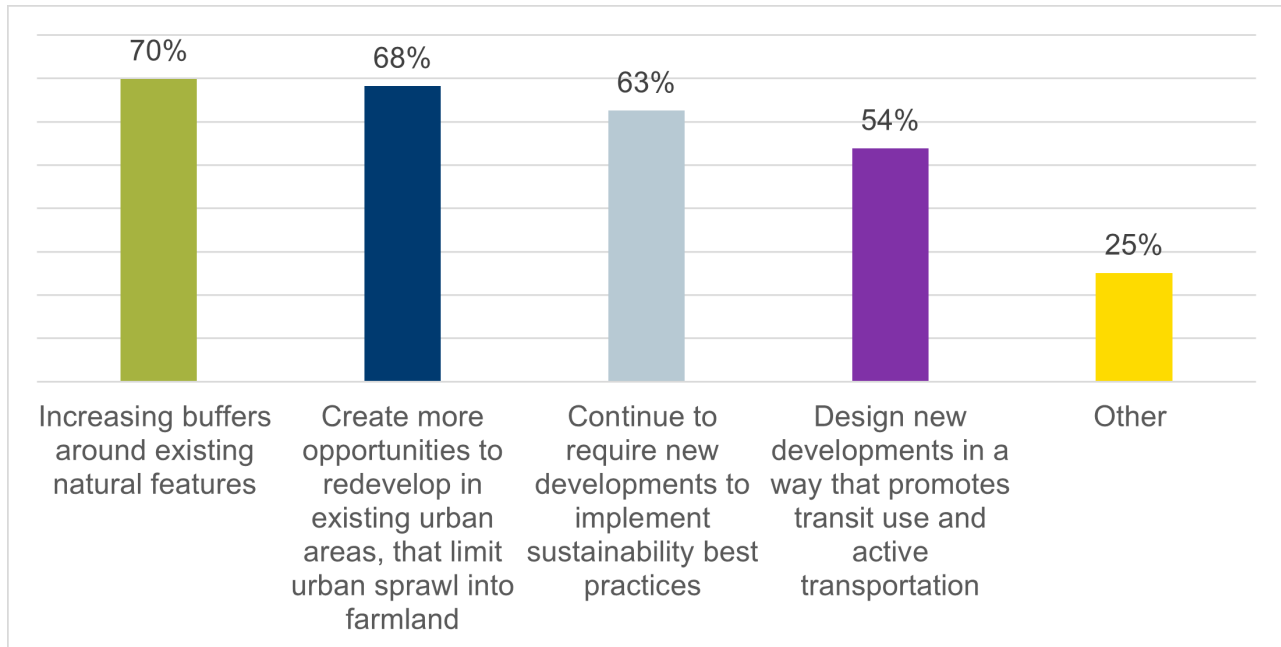


Figure 10 – Summary of responses to question six of the online survey.

n = 299

As shown in Figure 10, most respondents selected “Increasing buffers around existing natural features” (70%) and “Create more opportunities to redevelop in existing urban areas that limit urban sprawl into farmland” (68%) as a response to how the City can protect the natural environment while Pickering continues to grow. Respondents also selected “Continue to require new developments to implement sustainability best practices” (63%) and “Design new developments in a way that promotes transit use and active transportation” (54%). Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (25%) are summarized below:

- Green Spaces and Planting
 - Plant native species and maintain pollinator pathways.
 - Protect and expand green spaces, wildlife corridors, and natural linkage areas.
 - Enhance the appearance of public spaces by planting more gardens and trees.
- Development Regulations
 - Restrict development in sensitive areas, such as wetlands and the Greenbelt.
 - Require developers to incorporate green spaces and parks in their plans.
 - Encourage alternative energy sources and sustainable building designs, such as LEED certification.
- Community Education
 - Increase awareness of local flora and fauna through educational programs.
 - Promote local farmer’s markets and community gardening.
 - Provide stronger enforcement for littering and illegal dumping.
- Infrastructure
 - Improve waste management.
 - Implement consistent maintenance and expansion of current infrastructure.

- Expand public transit to reduce the use of cars.
- Plan for moderate growth.

Agriculture and Rural Areas



Figure 11 – Agriculture is a key part of Pickering’s rural area.

What can the City do to continue to support farming and the agricultural community?

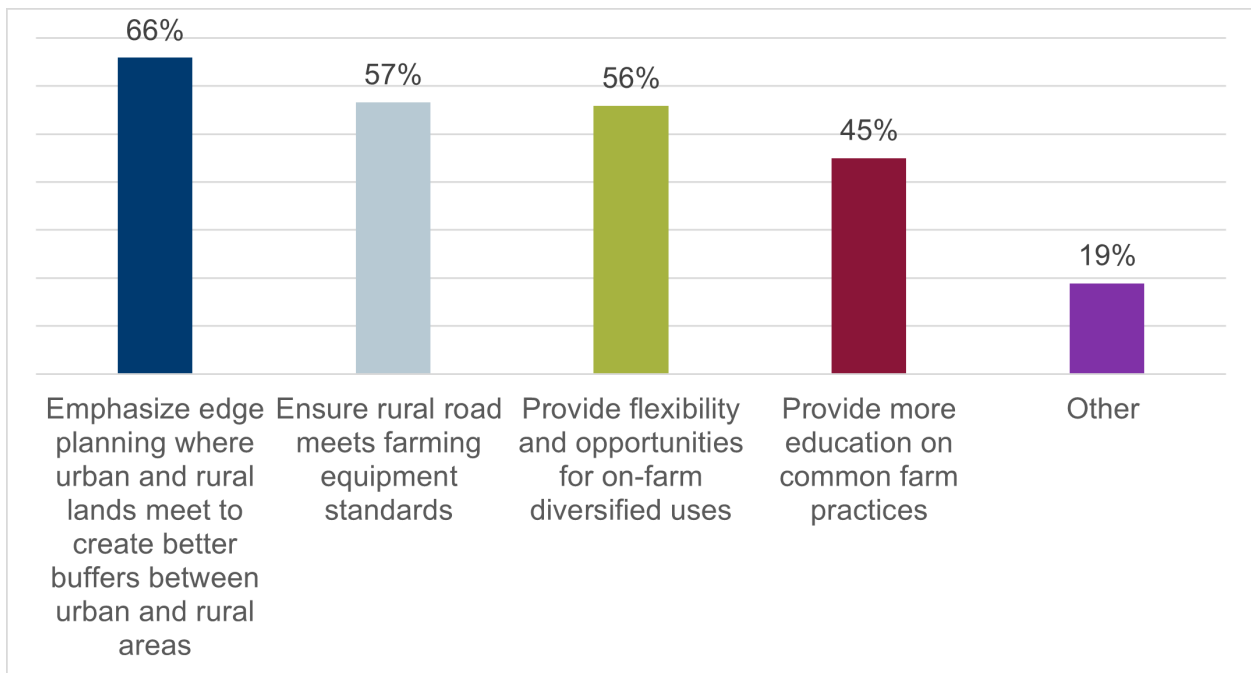


Figure 12 – Summary of responses to question seven of the online survey.

n = 276

As shown in Figure 12, most respondents selected “Emphasize edge planning where urban and rural lands meet to create better buffers between urban and rural areas” (66%) and “Ensure rural road meets farming equipment standards” (57%) as a response to what the City can do to continue to support farming and the agricultural community. Respondents also selected “Provide flexibility and opportunities for on-farm diversified uses” (56%) and “Provide more education on common farm practices” (45%). Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (19%) are summarized below:

- Land Protection and Zoning
 - Preserve farmland by prohibiting rezoning for residential or industrial development.
 - Reduce urban sprawl into rural areas.
 - Discourage development in northern Pickering and other sensitive areas.
 - Preserve the City’s green spaces and rural identity.
- Supporting Farmers
 - Encourage sustainable farming practices.
 - Reduce barriers for farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers through farmers’ markets.
 - Involve farmers in discussions to ensure their specific needs are addressed.
- Education
 - Create educational opportunities for urban residents to connect with farming and agriculture.
 - Increase opportunities for community gardens and small-scale farming practices.

What is needed to support the continued vitality of rural hamlets?

When asked about the support needed for the continued vitality of rural hamlets, respondents noted the following:

- Character and Environmental Preservation
 - Maintain the rural nature of Pickering.
 - Limit new developments and protect green spaces and farmlands.
 - Ensure that growth aligns with the needs and values of hamlet communities.
 - Respect the heritage and cultural assets that are unique to each hamlet.
- Infrastructure and Services
 - Provide services, such as fire stations, closer to hamlets to ensure safety.
 - Improve road infrastructure and public transit to ensure connectivity and accessibility to hamlets.
 - Enhance public spaces such as community centres, trails, and recreational areas.
- Local Economy
 - Encourage local businesses, agro-tourism, farmers’ markets, and small shops.
 - Promote small activations through community events to improve cultural tourism and attract visitors to the hamlets.

Population and Housing Profile



Figure 13 – Residential townhouse development in Pickering.

What types of housing will be needed in Pickering by 2051?

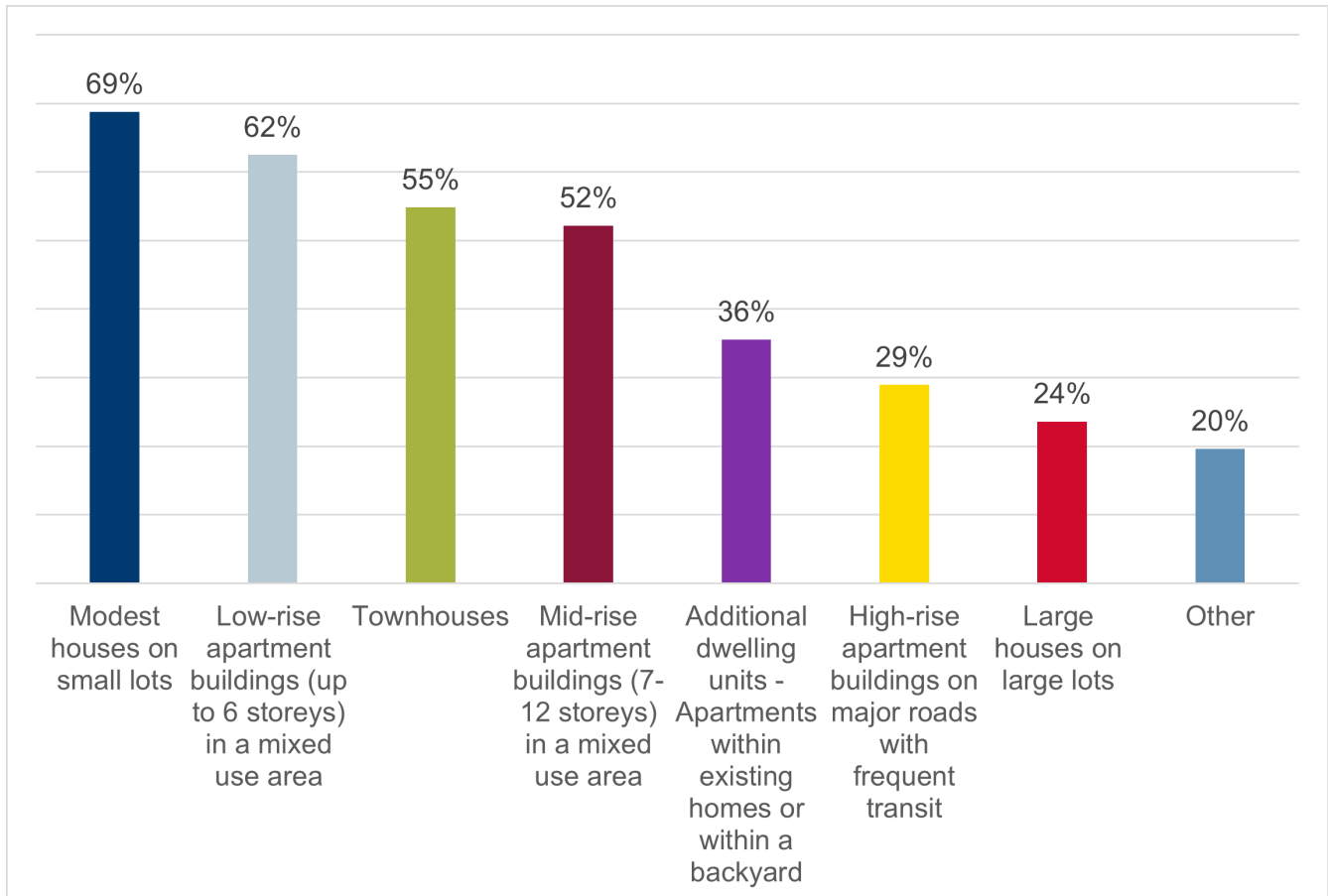


Figure 14 – Summary of responses to question nine of the online survey.

n = 301

As shown in Figure 14, most respondents selected “Modest houses on small lots” (69%) and “Low-rise apartment buildings” (62%) as a response to what types of housing will be needed in Pickering by 2051. Respondents also selected “Townhouses” (55%), “Mid-rise apartment buildings” (52%), “Additional dwelling units” (36%), “High-rise apartment buildings on major roads with frequent transit”(29%), and “Large houses on large lots” (24%). Additional comments received by respondents who selected “other” (20%) are summarized below:

- Low Density Housing
 - Build bungalows, townhomes, and modest detached homes.
 - Ensure that houses have backyards and greenspaces to accommodate seniors.
- Mixed-Use Developments
 - Build mixed-use developments, such as those that combine residential and retail/commercial uses, allowing workers to live and work within a walkable distance.
- Variety of Housing Types
 - Build various housing types to accommodate different preferences, needs, and income levels.
 - Build mid-rises, 4-plexes, and 6-plexes to bridge the gap between high-rise condos and single-family homes.
- Sustainable Development
 - Ensure that new developments include environmentally sustainable features such as green roofs and solar panels.

Who Participated

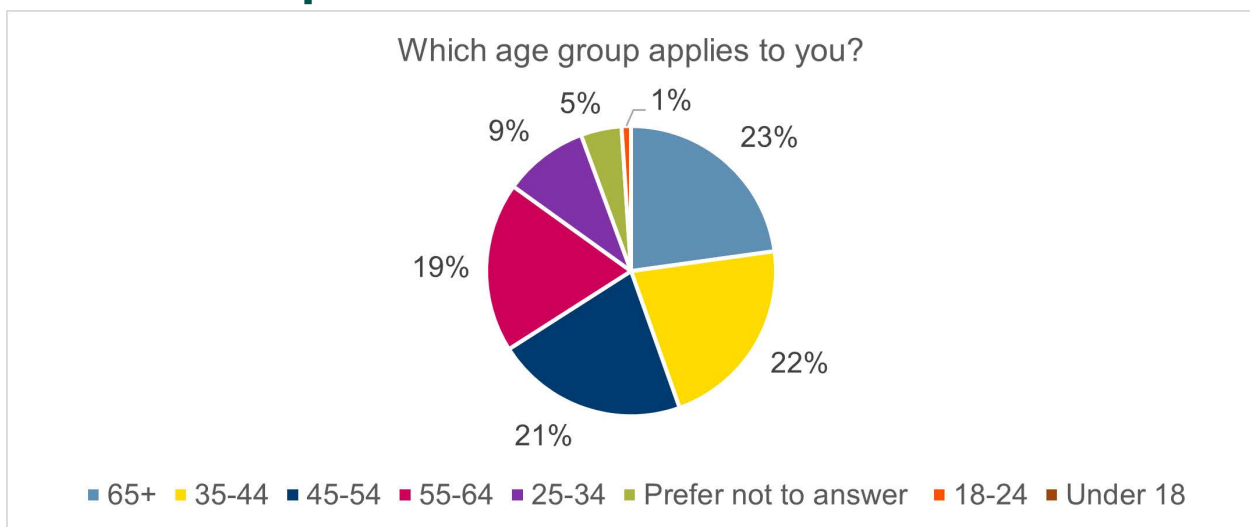


Figure 15 - Summary of participant ages.

n = 285

As shown in Figure 15, the majority of respondents to the online survey were between the ages of 35 and 65+, with:

- 23% being 65+.

- 22% between 35 and 44.
- 21% between 45 and 54.
- 19% between 55 and 64.

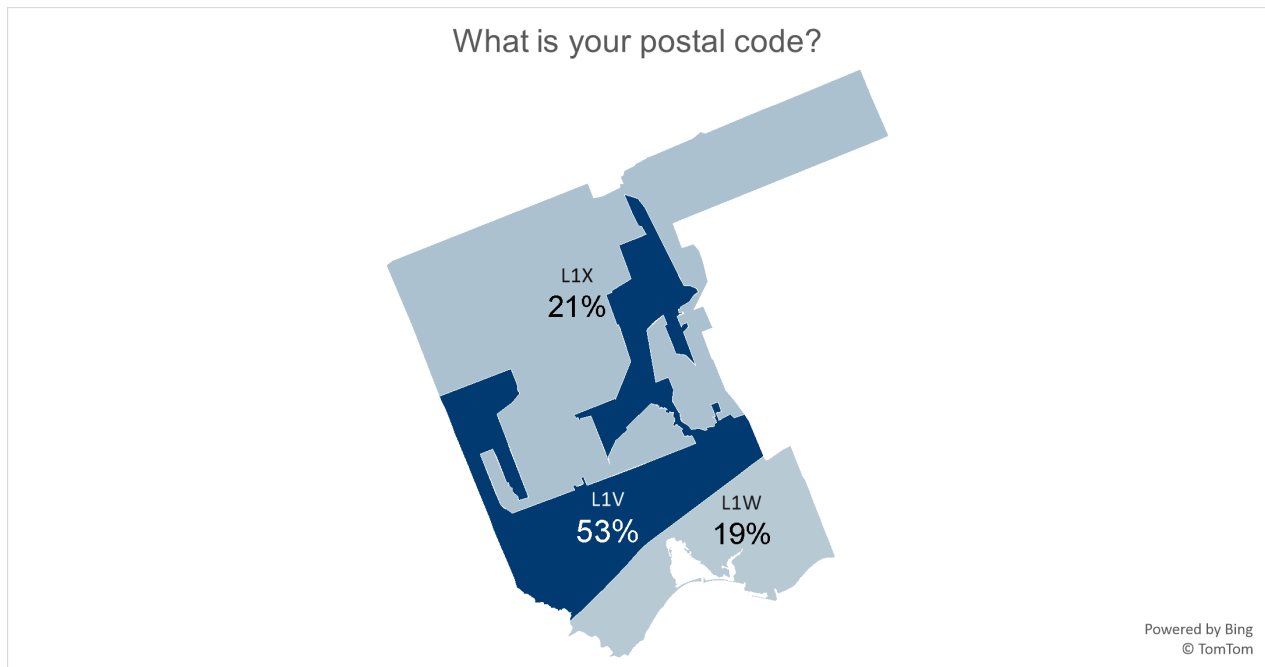


Figure 16 - Summary of participant postal codes.

n = 262

As shown in Figure 16, most respondents to the online survey live in the L1V, L1X, and L1W postal code areas. 53% live in the L1V postal code area, 21% live in the L1X postal code area, and 19% live in the L1W postal code area.

Section 4: Next Steps

Input from this round of engagement will be used to inform revisions to the Official Plan vision and priorities.

The next PIC will be in November 2024 to discuss the topic of Growth Management and Urban Structure. This will include 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 will also explore the changing nature of employment and how Pickering will plan to accommodate future jobs to maintain the vitality of the community.

The PICs will provide an opportunity for more detailed conversations on how legislative changes, Pickering initiatives, and best practices will impact each of the listed topics. Further details on timelines are included below in Figure 17.

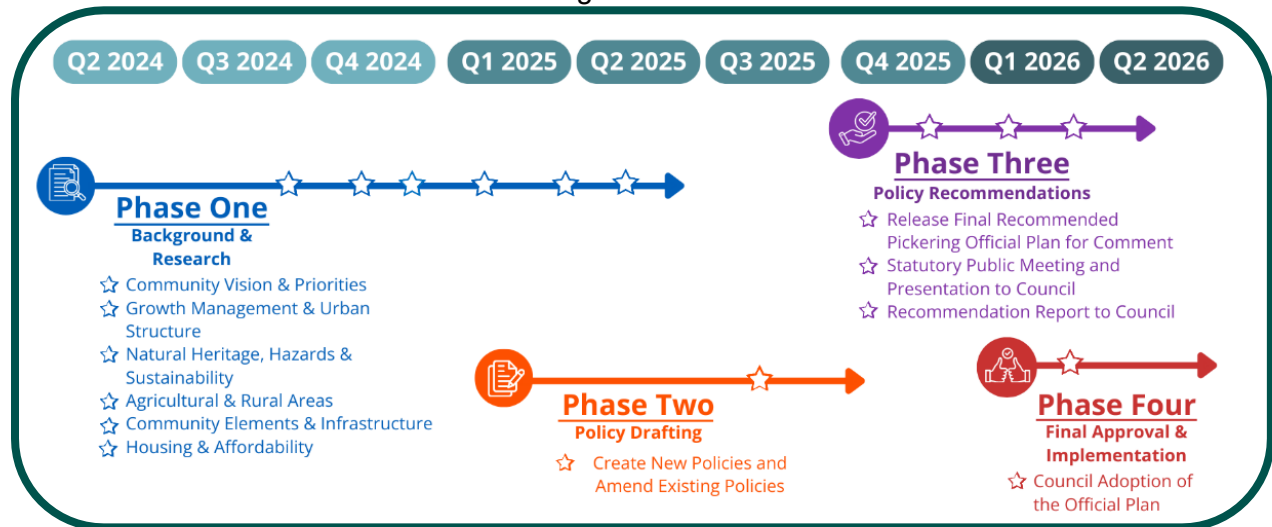


Figure 17 – Illustration of the Pickering Forward phases and breakdown.