

**What are environmentally sensitive areas?**

Environmentally sensitive areas are found across the City and include wetlands, woodlands, watercourses, valleylands, and other features. These areas play a critical role in maintaining healthy ecosystems that provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. Protecting these areas helps to:

- moderate hot summer temperatures through the shade provided by the urban forest;
- improve water quality by filtering out pollutants as water travels through the soil;
- protect against flooding by acting like sponges to absorb and retain rainfall;
- stabilize slopes by retaining plant cover; and
- improve air quality by filtering out small particles that can otherwise affect our health.

**How does the new Zoning By-law help to protect our environment?**

Pickering’s Official Plan recognizes the importance of the natural environment and aims to protect it by identifying a well-connected natural heritage system. The Official Plan directs development away from these areas.

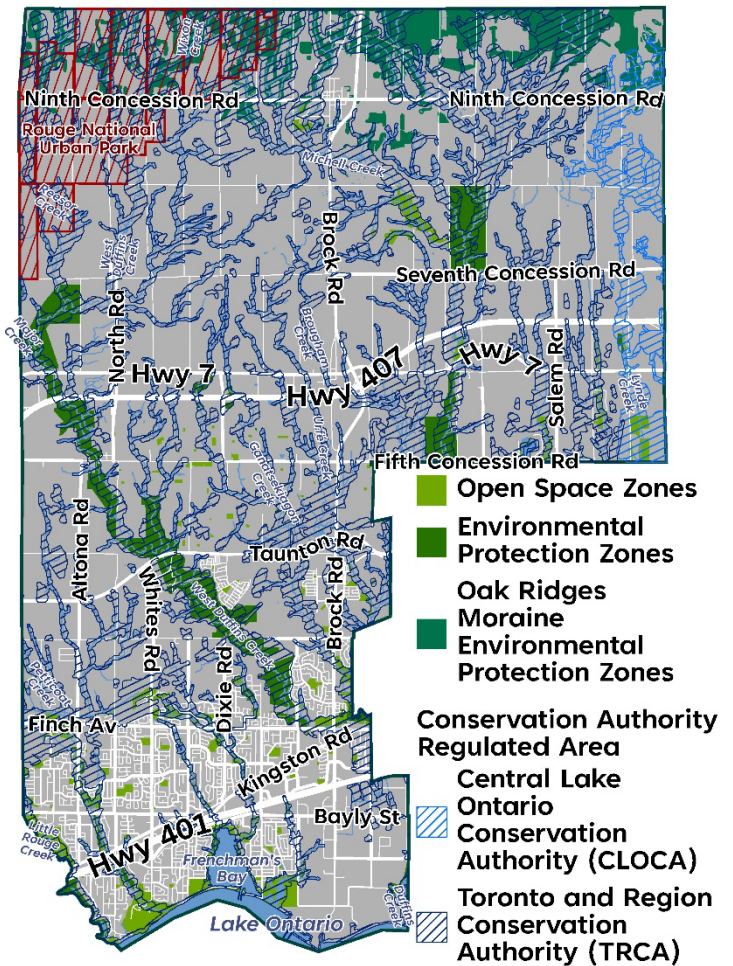
The new draft Zoning By-law helps to implement the Official Plan by zoning many of these natural features in Environmental Protection (EP) or Open Space (OS) zones. The purpose of the EP zone is to conserve natural areas and development is not permitted in this zone. The OS zones have more flexibility and may permit activities and structures related to farming, recreation, or stormwater management facilities.

The new draft Zoning By-law also has specific regulations for environmental lands within special areas such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Area, or areas of high aquifer vulnerability where extra provisions are needed to protect groundwater quality.

While many environmentally sensitive areas are zoned as Environmental Protection or Open Space, sensitive environmental features can exist anywhere. When a property undergoes development, the portion of the property with a natural feature like a watercourse will typically be rezoned to Environmental Protection through a development application process, ensuring the feature will be protected well into the future.

**Where are the Open Space and Environmental Protection zones applied in the City?**

The map below shows where Environmental Protection zones and Open Space zones are identified in the draft new Zoning By-law. However, note that sensitive environmental features can exist in any zone and will be protected by other tools, like the City’s Official Plan. When the City receives an application for development, environmental features will need to be properly mapped and zoned prior to development taking place.



**Related Studies**

[Discussion Paper 6: Open Space and Environmental Areas](#)

[Pickering Official Plan](#)

## What has changed in the new Zoning By-law?

The new draft Zoning By-law consolidates several existing zones that focus on conservation into one new environmental protection (EP) zone. Other open space zones that allow for more development activities have been reorganized into: Open Space (OS), Open Space – Waterfront (OS-W), Stormwater Management Facility (SWM) and Golf Course (GC) to reflect their primary use. The zoning provisions for the environmental protection areas in Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Area have not changed.

## How does the new Zoning By-law support the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Area?

The Oak Ridges Moraine is a significant landform stretching from Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment. The **Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan** was updated in 2017 by the Province to provide direction on protecting the ecological and hydrological functions of this area. The Oak Ridges Moraine zones (Section 12) and special provisions (Section 4.24) in the draft Zoning By-law help to implement this Provincial Plan. For example, there is a requirement that all buildings and structures be located at least 30 m from wetlands, watercourses, valleylands, significant woodlands, fish habitat and springs.

## How does the Zoning By-law consider the Rouge National Urban Park?

In addition to its rich biodiversity, including one of the region’s largest marshes, Rouge National Urban Park contains significant cultural and agricultural landscapes. The existing zoning within or adjacent to the park reflects these uses and has not been changed in the new draft Zoning By-law. These lands are also subject to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

## What are some other tools the City uses to protect environmentally sensitive areas?



### Tree Protection By-law

The City has designated certain areas as Tree Protection Areas. The damage or removal of healthy trees is not permitted within these areas without an approval. Tree Protection Areas are generally near watercourses and green spaces.



### Subdivision Approval

The City will require a plan of subdivision to be prepared when more than just a few lots are being proposed. As part of this, natural areas will be identified and protected from development impacts. This includes things like creating physical buffers, dedication of land to a public agency, or other requirements. It also ensures that construction practices do not damage environmentally sensitive areas.



### Site Plan Control

Site Plan Control helps to protect environmentally sensitive areas through the appropriate location of buildings, roads, parking areas, requiring landscaping treatments and tree retention, and ensuring appropriate drainage systems.

## For More Information



Visit the City’s project website at:  
<http://letstalkpickering.ca/zonereview>



To find out what your property is zoned in the new by-law, try the [interactive zoning tool](#)!



[zonereview@pickering.ca](mailto:zonereview@pickering.ca)