

PICKERING FORWARD



Planning tomorrow, together.



Pickering Official Plan Review

Community Vision and Priorities Discussion Paper

September 2024

— 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

If you were to imagine Pickering being transformed into the ideal city, what would it look like? How would an ideal Pickering reimagine where we live, work, and shop, how we travel, and how we interact with our neighbours?

A city comprises many different parts that come together to create the spaces where we live, work, shop, and connect. Each of those parts is planned to function in a particular way. The City's Official Plan guides how all those parts come together to create a complete community.

The City of Pickering is a diverse community, of over 100,000 residents, that is made up of urban areas, natural heritage areas (forests, creeks, etc.), farmland, and eight rural hamlets.

Pickering is not standing still. Every day, more people come to Pickering for work, to raise a family, to enjoy our recreation facilities and natural amenities, to go to school, and to do their shopping. When managed well, this growth adds to the dynamism and diversity of our thriving community. The Official Plan Review is an opportunity for the community to influence the direction our City will take into the future. The decisions made now will have a lasting impact on how Pickering will grow in the coming years.

The Official Plan Review will provide six main engagement topics for the community to explore and provide their input:

- Community Vision and Priorities
- Growth Management and Urban Structure
- Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability
- Agriculture and Rural Areas
- Community Elements and Infrastructure
- Housing and Affordability

Further details on each of the engagement topics is provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this paper.



Community Event in Esplanade Park, Pickering



Purpose of this Discussion Paper

The Community Vision & Priorities Discussion Paper is the first, major community engagement exercise of the City's Official Plan Review (known as "Pickering Forward"). Community feedback on the vision and priorities will inform the upcoming engagement exercises on major themes within the Official Plan. As a result, this current discussion paper has two intended outcomes:

- Provide an overview of the Official Plan Review; and
- Spark discussion about the community priorities and vision that will inform the Official Plan Review.

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.

1. *What makes Pickering a great community?*

The ideas presented in this paper will be further discussed at public information centres (PICs) to be held on **September 24, 2024 (in-person)**, and **September 25, 2024 (virtual)**. More details on the upcoming PICs, and the upcoming engagement activities, can be found on the project web page: www.Pickering.ca/PickeringForward.

How to get involved

1. Participate in one of the public information centres on **September 24, 2024 (in-person)** or **September 25, 2024 (virtual)**
2. View the background information on our web page – Pickering.ca/PickeringForward
3. Complete the online survey – Pickering.ca/Vision
4. Send your questions/comments to us – PickeringForward@Pickering.ca

1.0 The Pickering Official Plan Review

The Official Plan is the City's long range, comprehensive planning document, that guides land use decision-making in the City. It represents Council's vision, guided by community involvement, for growth and change within the City. It sets a policy framework for the physical, environmental, and economic development of the City, while ensuring that growth occurs responsibly, and resources are used efficiently and sustainably. An Official Plan deals with issues such as:

- Where new housing, industry, offices and shops will be located.
- What services will be needed, such as roads, watermains, 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 the City will invest in community initiatives, such as new recreation facilities, services, roads, or other infrastructure.

In this way, the role of the Official Plan is to:

1. Protect what has lasting value for the entire community (such as environmentally sensitive areas and cultural heritage resources);
2. Direct where, and how, new development should occur, so that it is in appropriate locations that complements the community; and
3. Improve the community's experience of the City through appropriate design and amenities.

Figure 1 helps illustrate the role that the Official Plan plays in reflecting provincial and regional policies as it creates the framework for city-specific regulations and standards.



Figure 1: Planning policy framework in Ontario



Why is the Official Plan being updated?

In Ontario, the *Planning Act*, requires that municipal Official Plans be reviewed every five years (or ten years after the approval of a new Official Plan) to ensure that they:

- Conform to provincial plans
- Have regard for matters of provincial interest
- Are consistent with provincial planning statements

Additionally, there has been significant growth within Pickering since the Official Plan was first approved in 1997. A comprehensive Official Plan Review will allow greater opportunity to engage the community and stakeholders on important topics and to ensure the Plan's vision and goals are still meeting the needs of current and future residents.

Direction from the Province of Ontario

The last few years have seen rapid changes in Provincial planning legislation. The Pickering Official Plan needs to be updated to reflect those changes which include:

- Changes to the development approval process such as eliminating certain appeal rights and exempting small projects (10 units or less) from site plan approval.
- Reducing the amount of parkland that developers must provide by more than half.
- Proposing to remove Planning responsibilities from upper-tier municipalities such as Durham Region.

Some Provincial changes have already been incorporated into the Official Plan, such as, permission for two additional dwelling units (ADUs) on most residential properties. ADUs could provide housing for either younger or older family members or be used to generate rental income to help cover the increasing costs of home ownership.



Figure 2: Illustration shows possible locations for one or two ADUs on a property (yellow and blue).

The Province has recently introduced further changes to what can be built in Employment Areas (such as industrial parks), which is to be in effect in the fall of 2024. The changes also permit traditional employment uses, such as warehousing or light manufacturing, in commercial and mixed use areas, where stores and services typically locate. As Provincial legislation and policy continues to change, the City's Official Plan will need to be amended to reflect these new realities.

Direction from the Region of Durham

In May 2023, the Region of Durham completed its review of the Durham Regional Official Plan (known as Envision Durham). Within Envision Durham, Pickering is expected to grow from 125,830 people (in 2026) to 256,370 (by 2051).

One of the most significant changes made by Envision Durham was identifying Northeast Pickering as a "2051 Urban Expansion Area" (see Figure 3). Envision Durham was approved by the Province on September 3, 2024. However, the Province did not make a decision on approving Northeast Pickering as a future growth area at that time. The future decision from the Province on whether to include Northeast Pickering as a future growth area will have a significant impact on where we plan for growth in Pickering.

Timeline for the Official Plan Review

Beginning in May 2024, the Official Plan Review is targeted to be completed in Spring of 2026. The project includes community engagement to receive input on each of the Official Plan Review topics. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the Official Plan Review project timelines.

Amendments to the Official Plan

Since the Official Plan was first approved in 1997 over 50 amendments have been sought from both the public and by the City itself. The most common amendments are by private property owners seeking to change the development rights to their properties. In addition, amendments have also been sought for the following:

- Plan new growth areas (i.e. Seaton, City Centre, Kingston Road Corridor);
- Conform with changes in Provincial policy and legislation;
- Add policies in support of sustainable development;
- Update policies to strengthen protection for natural heritage and hydrologic features; and
- Strengthen policies respecting neighbourhood character.

The current Official Plan Review will not only ensure that it is up-to-date with the Planning framework in Ontario, but will also result in a policy document that reflects best practices and new realities.



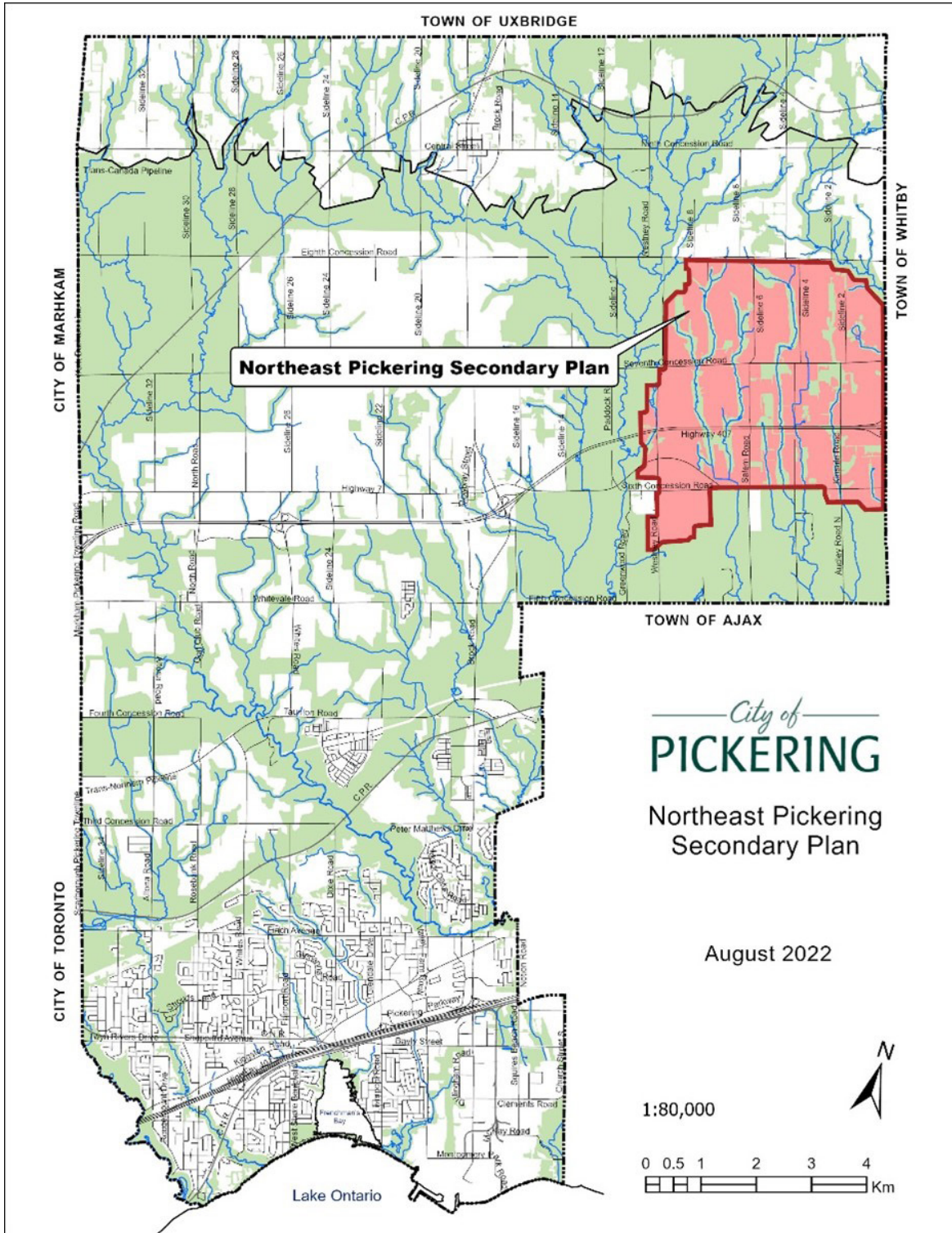


Figure 3: Map of Northeast Pickering

2.0 History and Background

Change is a natural and normal part of all our lives. Before making decisions on the City’s future, it is helpful to consider what has influenced change in recent times.

Changing Technology

Some changes are the result of broad shifts in technology and culture that are felt provincially, nationally or even globally. For example, think of how technology has changed since 1997, and how those changes have impacted how we live our daily lives.

In 1997:

- The domain “Google.com” was registered.
- “Online shopping” meant purchasing used items on eBay.
- Online education did not exist.
- Every home had a landline.
- If you didn’t want to miss an episode of “Friends”, you needed to be home to watch it or know how to program your VCR.
- The majority of people who worked from home were self-employed.

Consider how changes in technology have impacted our patterns and routines. Then consider how those changes have impacted our neighbourhoods and our City.

Take a moment to consider...

- How has virtual work impacted where people choose to live?
- What has online shopping meant for local retailers?
- How has technology influenced how kids spend most of their time today?

Mobility Choices

Over the last several years, the cost of living has increased significantly. Demand for housing in the Greater Toronto Area, and in Pickering specifically, has made it increasingly difficult to find affordable places to live. The high cost of living is not only tied to the cost of housing but also to the cost of transportation.

Like everything else, the cost of owning and operating a personal vehicle is continuing to rise. After housing costs, transportation is one of the highest household costs. At present, Pickering is designed with the expectation that most people will travel by personal vehicle for work, school, and



shopping. Unfortunately, not everyone is able to own and operate a personal vehicle – whether because of their age, ability, or income.

A diverse city provides transportation options for people who want to use a personal vehicle and those that don't (or can't). Some of those options may include increasing transit services to existing areas, as well as designing new and redeveloping areas of the City to better accommodate active transportation (walking, cycling, skateboarding, mobility scooters, etc.).

2. *In 2051, how should people be able to travel within the City to work or school?*
3. *How can we design neighbourhoods to encourage active transportation?*



Changing City

As technology and the economy changes, so does the way we interact with our environment. Some parts of the City are adaptable to these changes while some parts of our City are being reimaged as we move forward.

The Shops at Pickering City Centre (formerly known as the Pickering Town Centre) is one example of how our City is being reimaged. The needs of consumers and retailers have changed over time. The loss of one of the anchor tenants (Sears), led to an entire wing of the mall being demolished. Plans are now underway to build high-rise, residential mixed-use buildings on the east side of the existing mall.

Another example of how retail is changing within the City is the closure and sale of the former Pickering Flea Market to Amazon. After operating in Pickering for 47 years, the Flea Market closed in Pickering in 2020 and relocated to Oshawa in 2021. Amazon has previously announced that they will repurpose the site as a delivery facility. However, no timeframe has been given for the completion of this project.

Take a moment to consider...

- What parts of our City still look the same as they did in 1997?
- What parts of our City look different than they did in 1997?

The Pickering waterfront is an area that has seen significant improvements over the years. Following the creation of the Waterfront Task Force in 1997, the City has made major investments to support the public's access to this great resource. These include:

- The construction of the Petticoat Creek Bridge;
- The creation of a municipal park at the bottom of Front Road;
- The construction of Millenium Square;
- The expansion/improvement of the waterfront trail;
- Improvements to Frenchman's Bay harbour entrance; and
- Improvements to Liverpool Road through the Nautical Village.



Aerial view of the waterfront, Pickering

4. ***What community elements and infrastructure help make Pickering a place that people want to live and visit?***
5. ***What additional community elements and infrastructure would you like to see in the next 25 years?***



Not all change is growth and expansion. This was made evident in the closure of two catholic elementary schools (St. Marguerite Bourgeoys CS and St. Anthony Daniel CS) and the merging of two others (Holy Redeemer CS and Our Lady of the Bay CS became Father Fenelon CS in 2015). Changing demographics, approaches to Provincial education funding, and community preferences all contributed to four catholic elementary schools being reduced to one. The City is continuing to work with school boards on changes that impact our City, such as Provincial funding for new schools, that Pickering does not directly control.

During the same period, two new public elementary schools were built in southwest Pickering (Westcreek PS and Altona Forrest PS), and an existing school was rebuilt at a larger size, (Elizabeth B. Phin PS), while Woodlands Centennial PS was repurposed as the south campus for Dunbarton High School.



New developments within the Duffin Heights neighbourhood, Pickering

Take a moment to consider...

- How has your neighbourhood changed over the years?
- How well does your neighbourhood meet the needs of people at all stages of their life?

Change is constant and the City has seen a lot of changes since 1997. These changes reflect the demands of a growing population, changing preferences and market forces, and the City's continuing efforts to improve its services. Below is a list of other changes that have occurred in Pickering since 1997.

Changes to the Built Environment

- The Seaton neighbourhood began construction in 2017.
- Pickering's tallest building in 1997 was the Radom Street apartment building (18 storeys). Now the tallest building is at Universal City (31 storeys) with even taller buildings yet to come

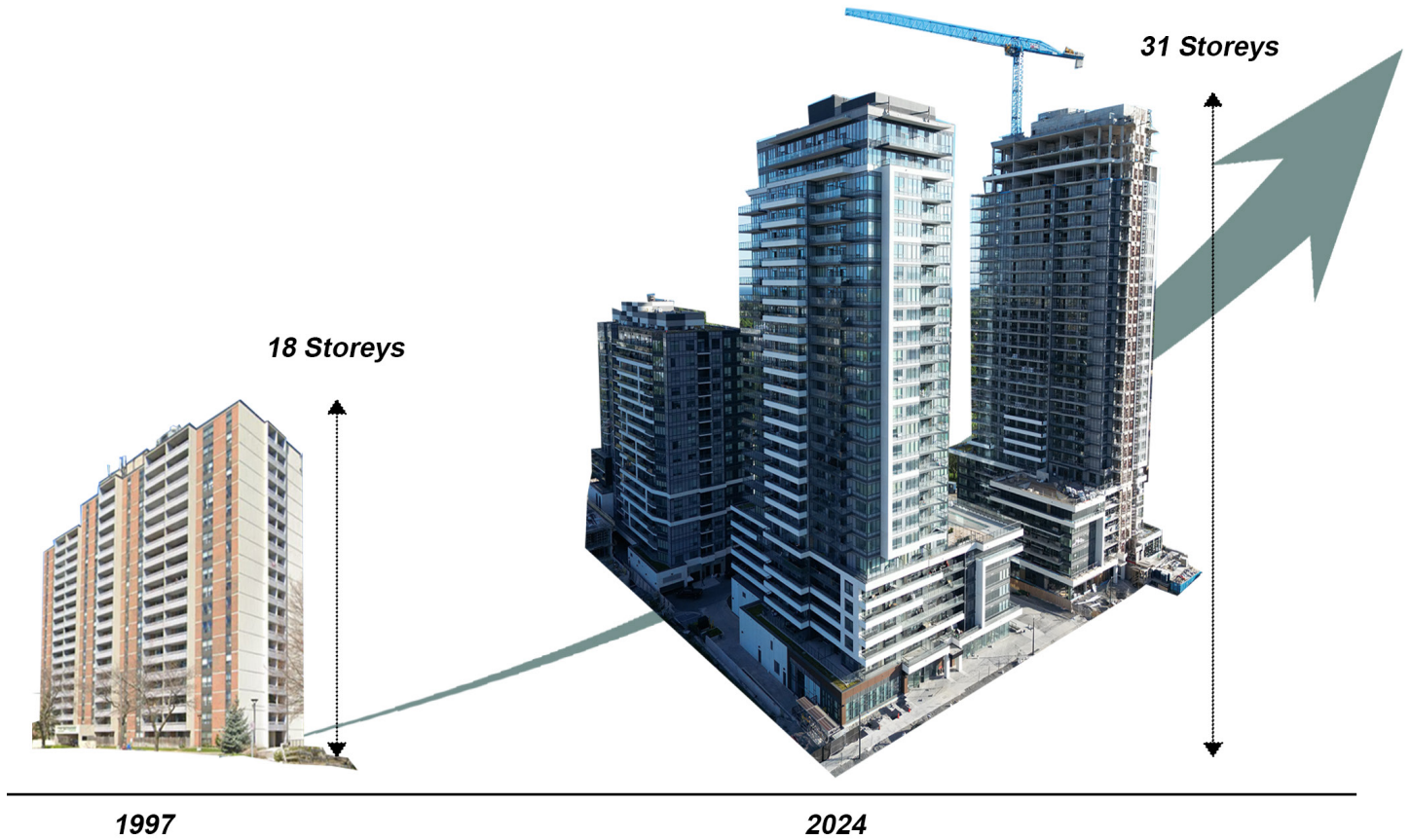


Figure 4: Height comparison between Radom Street apartments and Universal City, Pickering





GO Transit bridge over Highway 401, Pickering

Changes to City Infrastructure

- Construction of the GO Transit bridge over Highway 401 (The world's longest, enclosed, pedestrian bridge).
- Construction of the George Ashe Library and Community Centre.
- Major renovations were made to Chestnut Hill District Recreation Complex.
 - Doubles squash courts and fitness expansion in 2009
 - Delaney Arena in 2015
 - Main lobby and change rooms in 2021
- Construction of the new Fire Hall at Brock Road and Zents Drive.
- Conversion of almost all streetlights in the City to LEDs.
- Construction of 82 kilometers of new roads and 83 kilometers of sidewalks.

Changes to Services and Amenities

- Integrated waste management began with Pickering being the first in Durham Region to collect green bin waste.
- Pickering Transit became Durham Region Transit.

As Pickering continues to grow so does the need for the infrastructure and amenities that will serve its growing population.

Changing Climate and Natural Environment

As the built environment changes, and Pickering continues to grow, it is essential to recognize how development may impact the natural environment, and identify ways to provide adequate protection. Also, it is important to understand how extreme weather events can impact human health and property and identify ways to mitigate impacts and create a more resilient city. The City has implemented a number of changes since 1997, to create a more sustainable city and requires development to include sustainable best practices. Some of the initiatives include implementing:

- Integrated Sustainable Development Guidelines in 2007, with an update in 2023.
- Measuring Sustainable Reports, that collect and tracks data on the sustainability progress of the City.
- A Corporate Energy Management Plan.

6. *What can the City do to continue to promote sustainability?*

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

Changing Agriculture and Rural Areas

Change can also be seen in various business sectors, such as farming. Over the years, more and more family farms have been amalgamated into larger farm operations. Changes in technology means that farmers are able to produce more from the same plot of land with the use of modern equipment, seeds and fertilizers and with less reliance on human labour.

At the same time, advancements in technology and transportation means that Canadian farmers compete in a global market with countries that may operate at lower costs. This has encouraged some farmers to diversify their operations to include on-farm diversified services and agri-tourism (i.e. wedding venues) to supplement their farm revenue.

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

9. *What is needed to support the continued vitality of rural hamlets (i.e. Greenwood, Claremont)?*



Pickering's Changing Population and Housing Profile

Like the rest of Ontario, Pickering's population is growing older. Approximately 29 per cent of Pickering residents are currently age 55 and older¹. Across Durham Region, that age group is expected to rise to 34 per cent by 2031². As the City's population continues to age there will be a greater need for housing and services that reflect the distinct needs of this demographic.

Pickering continues to experience a high rate of home ownership. 85% of residents own their own homes while 15% are renters³. The limited rental supply is in high demand, in particular by young adults (those between the ages of 20-29) who make up 13% of Pickering's population⁴. Increasingly, the high cost of housing is putting home ownership out of reach for many, driving even more demand for rental housing.

As a result of high housing costs, more young adults are continuing to live at home longer. Multi-generational living is becoming more common in all neighbourhoods.

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

What will Pickering look like in 2051?

A lot will change between now and 2051. As mentioned, Pickering is projected to more than double its population in that time. Taking into account all the changes that Pickering has experienced over the past 25 years, and considering the current realities of life in the City, help us imagine the type of city that we want Pickering to become in the next 25 years.

11. By 2051, Pickering will have...

12. By 2051, Pickering will be known for...

Planning for the future also means considering the needs of those who are not yet here. This includes:

- New and existing business owners whose needs will change over time;
- New residents who will move to Pickering;
- Existing residents whose daily patterns and housing needs will change as they age; and
- Opportunities for the children currently living in Pickering to find jobs and homes in this community.

1 Statistics Canada, Census 2021, Pickering Community Profile.

2 Age Friendly Durham.

3 Statistics Canada, 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

4 Statistics Canada, Census 2021, Pickering Community Profile.

The City is the home and workplace for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. A complete city is designed to meet both the current and future needs of all its inhabitants. These needs can often be complementary rather than in competition with one another. For example, designing the City to be walkable for a 75 year old also makes it walkable for a 5 year old. In the same way, accommodating the accessible needs of those using a wheelchair also accommodates the accessible needs of a parent pushing a stroller with one or more children.

Take a moment to consider...

- Who is currently limited from fully participating in the City?
- What changes need to be made to better accommodate everyone?



City Centre Concept - Walk Along The Esplanade Park Rendering, Source: HPA, March 27, 2023



3.0 Community Vision and Priorities

As the City’s long range, comprehensive planning document, the Official Plan guides the City’s growth. Refining a vision for that growth will better ensure that the policies in the Official Plan help the City achieve its intended outcomes.

The policies in the Official Plan will be framed using the following framework:



The Official Plan vision will describe what the City aspires to be by 2051. The vision will describe how the City will make us feel and what it will look like.

The goals will describe specific targets or objectives the City will attempt to achieve in pursuit of the vision.

The bulk of the Official Plan will be policies that provide clear direction on what is needed for the City to realize its goals.

Current Official Plan Vision and Priorities

To determine a new vision for the Official Plan, it is useful to look at the City’s existing vision. The Official Plan’s current vision statement was created in 1994 as part of the City’s community engagement for what became the 1997 Official Plan.

“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 was based on five interrelated themes/priorities:

- Evolving needs
- Healthy settings
- Urban and rural sustainability
- Unique community
- Global connectivity

The priorities are unique aspirations for the City that are collectively reflected in the vision statement. The priorities are not intended to be ranked as each one describes a different but important value or expectation for the community.

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.

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

14. What needs to be added to the Official Plan vision and priorities?

Conclusion

Change is an inevitable part of our lives and of the life of our City. Embracing change will empower us to create the framework that will shape the future of our City. As we think about how Pickering has changed since 1997, and imagine what Pickering might look like by 2051, now is the opportunity to reimagine the vision to guide the City's growth.

As we experienced unanticipated changes over the last 25 years, the next 25 years will likely include innovations and changes that we cannot predict at this time. Between now and 2051, there will be opportunities to revisit and modify the Official Plan, as needed, to ensure that the Official Plan continues to meet the City's changing needs. In the meantime, we will draft an Official Plan that will set us on course for a future that benefits everyone.



Next Steps

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

Prior to each PIC, the City will release a discussion paper describing the topic and “set the table” for a conversation with the public. The questions in each discussion paper are intended to inform the conversations on each topic.

The PICs will be 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 Elements and Infrastructure (April 2025)
6. Housing and Affordability (May 2025)

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 the six main themes are included in Appendix 1 at the end of this discussion paper.

After each engagement session we will prepare a report that outlines key themes from the discussions. Those engagement reports, together with background research, will inform the draft policies that are brought forward in the proposed Official Plan.

Interested community members and stakeholders are encouraged to add their names to the contact list for the Official Plan Review by connecting with staff through the Pickering Forward web page and the e-mail listed below.

Connect with Us! We want to hear from you!

Pickering Forward Web Page: Pickering.ca/PickeringForward

Pickering Forward E-mail: PickeringForward@Pickering.ca

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Engagement Topics

Community Vision and Priorities

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

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.

Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability

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

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

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

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 2 - Official Plan Review Timeline

