

PICKERING FORWARD

Planning tomorrow, together.



Pickering Official Plan Review
Agriculture and Rural Areas Discussion Paper
March 2025

— City of —
PICKERING

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Land Acknowledgement

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



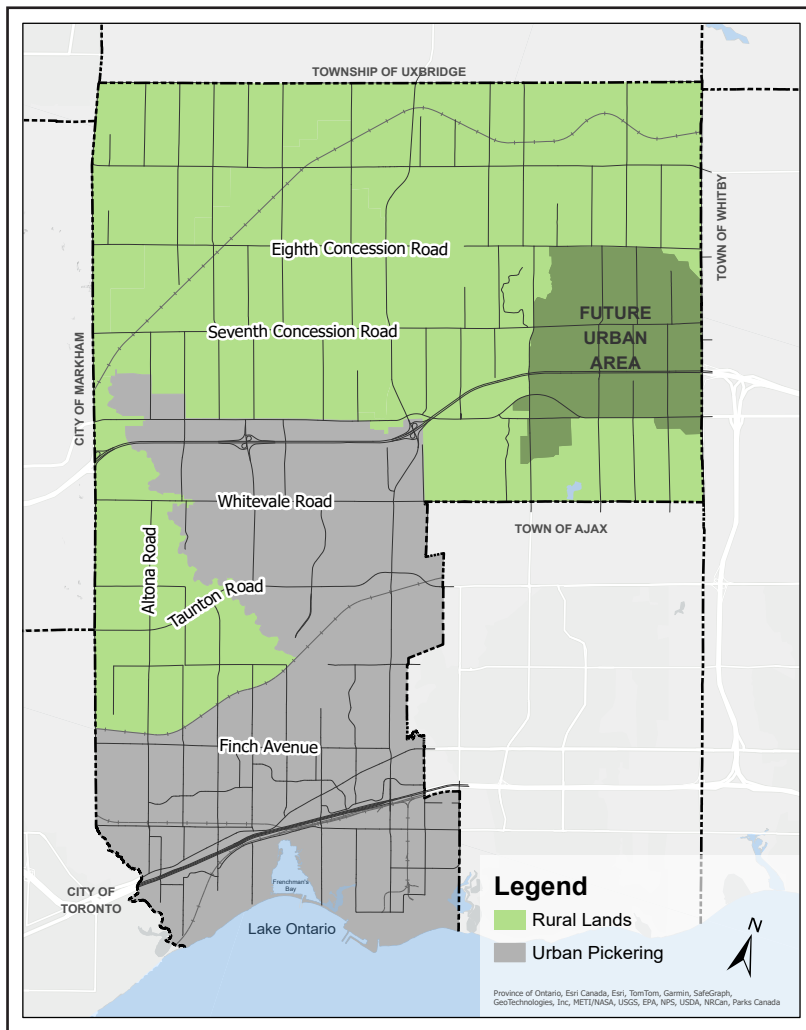
City of Pickering Indigenous Day 2022.

Introduction

The City of Pickering is currently reviewing its Official Plan. The outcome of the Official Plan Review, known as Pickering Forward, will result in a plan to guide growth and development in Pickering to 2051.

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.

The City of Pickering has an area of approximately 232 square kilometers, of which approximately 96.4 square kilometers (41.5%) is defined as urban areas, including the recently approved Northeast Pickering urban expansion area. This highlights that, while we plan for growth, more than half of Pickering will retain a rural landscape.



While the rural area represents more than half of the land area in Pickering, only approximately 4 percent of Pickering residents live in the rural area. This percentage will continue to decrease as Pickering grows. The rural area population is anticipated to increase by less than 200 residents as Pickering projects to add 150,000 new residents in total to the year 2051.

The low population in the rural areas is not a result of it being a less desirable location, but is a reflection of the amount of growth being directed to urban areas and ensuring the protection of agricultural and open space lands. The protection of agricultural lands will ensure current and future generations can benefit, economically and socially, from this finite resource. In addition to the protection of agricultural lands for farming there are also opportunities to increase the economic viability of these lands. This can be achieved by making it easier for farmers to diversify

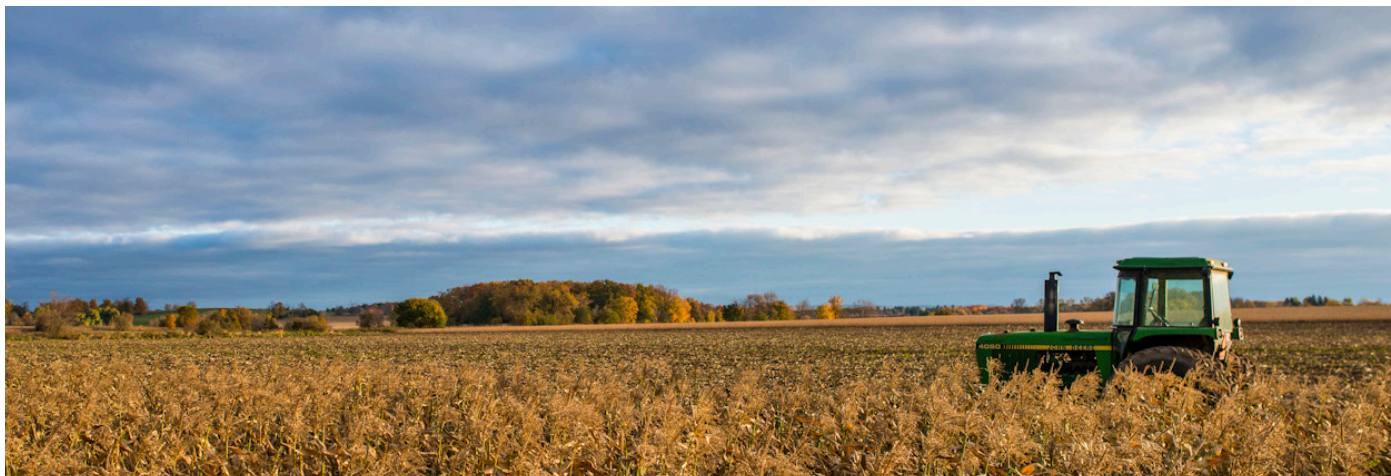
Figure 1: Urban and rural lands in Pickering



their operations through agricultural related and value-added businesses that support and are complimentary to agricultural uses.

In addition to protecting agricultural lands for the long term, the rural area is home to eight hamlets, which are some of Pickering's oldest settlements, and a number of residential clusters. The hamlets remain strong communities that contain some of Pickering's rich heritage resources. Ensuring these rural settlements are protected as Pickering grows, while providing for the ability to meet the evolving needs of residents, is a balance that Pickering must achieve.

The rural area includes a significant amount of natural heritage and open space. The third discussion paper focused on the natural heritage, hazards, and sustainability, for all of Pickering. The discussion paper and "What We Heard" report from that topic will be available on the Pickering Forward website (pickering.ca/pickeringforward). While this paper does not explore the natural heritage and open space system in detail like the third discussion paper, it recognizes the relationship and interface between agricultural activities and the natural heritage and open space system.



Jay Reeson's Farm (Source Rouge National Urban Park)

Purpose of this Discussion Paper

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

Response to the first discussion paper, "Community Vision and Priorities", revealed what residents felt made Pickering a great community and identified resident and stakeholder priorities. Residents identified that the urban and rural combination in Pickering is one of the elements that makes

Pickering a great city. Additional priorities identified by residents included preserving farmland and maintaining Pickering's character, including its heritage.

The second discussion paper, "Growth Management and Urban Structure", illustrated how much growth Pickering is anticipating and required to plan for. This included discussion of a new urban expansion area in Northeast Pickering, which is currently part of the rural area. As highlighted by the growth management discussion, Pickering is projected to see significant growth pressures to the year 2051, which will result in changes for the city, including our rural areas.

The third discussion paper, "Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability", noted that, amongst other things, protection of the natural environment is complementary to agricultural practices. Woodlots and hedgerows along the border of farm fields help reduce crop damage by acting as wind breaks. These natural features also provide habitat for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and moths. While environmental features must be protected in their natural state, having an environmental feature on or near a farm property does not limit agricultural uses from continuing on a farm.

The Agricultural and Rural Areas Discussion Paper is the fourth discussion paper of the City's Official Plan Review. This discussion paper has four intended outcomes:

- Identify the key elements that make up the agricultural and rural area in Pickering;
- Identify what land uses are permitted in agricultural areas;
- Identify existing policies that are in place to protect and enhance agricultural resources; and
- Identify potential impacts of anticipated urban growth on agricultural uses and rural settlement areas and identify possible mitigation measures.



Pickering Farmer's Market



Why is this Important to the Official Plan

The current Official Plan identifies a vision and includes priorities that emphasize the importance of maintaining healthy and sustainable urban and rural areas. The plan includes a vision for the rural area that encourages farms and farm related businesses, preserves agricultural capability for future generations, supports the cultural heritage and integrity of rural lifestyles, and minimizes the degree of conflict among a diversity of interrelated uses.

When this vision was established in 1997, it was informed by residents who highlighted the importance of diverse urban and rural communities that complemented each other to form a complete city. Since that vision was established, there have been significant Provincial policy changes and decisions that have or will impact the rural areas of Pickering. The Greenbelt Plan was approved, the Highway 407 extension was constructed through Durham, the Seaton Urban Area has begun development, Northeast Pickering has been approved as an urban expansion area, and very recently the Federal Government has indicated they intend to not construct a future airport and transfer a portion of those lands to support the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park.

In addition to the growth of Pickering and the changes identified above, the rural landscape is changing for other reasons. The character of the rural area is evolving and adapting to new farming technologies and facing new challenges such as an aging farm community and land demands for agriculture that are changing. While rural areas are changing and evolving it is important that we recognize the importance of these areas and identify what we need to protect. Beyond protection, we also need to identify elements that can be enhanced or supported through policy to meet the needs of current and future generations.



Rural settlement in Pickering

As Pickering plans for growth for the next 25 years, we need to identify what current policies have worked well since 1997 and identify where more work is needed. This will ensure we protect what is important in the rural area for current and future generations.

- 1. Has Pickering done a good job of supporting agriculture? (by providing opportunities for farmers, protecting natural areas, maintaining roads and infrastructure, etc.)**
- 2. How can Pickering continue to support farmers and agriculture production?**

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

The ideas presented in this report will be further discussed at a public information centre (PIC) to be held on **March 19, 2025 (in-person)**, and a virtual presentation on **March 20, 2025**. More details on the upcoming PIC, and the upcoming engagement activities, can be found on the project web page.

How to get involved

1. Participate in one of the public information centres on **March 19, 2025 (in-person)** or **March 20, 2025 (virtual)**
2. View the background information on our web page – Pickering.ca/PickeringForward
3. Complete the online survey – Pickering.ca/PickeringForward
4. Send your questions/comments to us – PickeringForward@Pickering.ca



1.0 Elements That Make Up Pickering's Rural Area

The main elements that make up rural areas in Pickering consist of:

- agricultural lands,
- rural settlements,
- the open space system, which includes natural heritage features,
- aggregates (i.e. quarries and pits), and
- major recreational uses (i.e. golf courses or ski hills).

Pickering has limited known aggregate resource areas and only a few existing major recreational uses. Although these uses contribute to the economy and vitality of the rural area, this paper will focus on the planning policy framework regarding our agricultural lands and rural settlements.

Before the paper looks at the policies in place, let's explore what agricultural lands, rural settlement areas, and the open space system consist of.

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural lands are where agricultural uses, commonly referred to as farming, predominate due to the quality of soil or the proximity to other agricultural uses. Agricultural uses include, growing of crops; raising of livestock; raising of other animals for fur or fibre; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to barns, manure storages, and processing facilities.



Rural Settlements

Rural settlement areas, identified as hamlets, rural clusters and country residential designations, are where rural housing, commercial, and employment uses are concentrated. Many of these areas, specifically hamlets, were typically settled decades or even centuries ago around a main crossroad, and centered around one economic activity such as mills.

In many cases the economic activities that led to the settlement of these hamlets no longer exist and the focus of hamlets today is centered primarily around residential communities. Although a number of hamlets and rural clusters no longer contain significant economic activities, the distinct character and community function of hamlets continues.

Open Space System

Many natural areas are found in Pickering's rural areas adjacent to agricultural lands and rural settlements. These areas are interconnected, and the character of rural settlements is embedded with these natural areas and the open space system. The third discussion paper focused on natural heritage, hazards and sustainability.



2.0 Policies In Place To Protect And Enhance Agricultural Resources

The Province recognizes the importance of the agricultural sector for Ontario’s economic prosperity and overall identity. There is a clear direction from the Province to support and protect the long-term viability of rural areas, local food production, and the agri-food network.

The Official Plan is required to conform with the Provincial Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, and all applicable Provincial Plans (i.e. Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan).

The Planning Act

The purpose of the *Planning Act* is to outline the planning process, integrate matters of provincial interest into municipal planning decisions, and encourage coordination among various interests.

In the process of carrying out their responsibilities under the *Planning Act*, municipalities shall have regard for matters of Provincial interest identified in the act. One of the provincial interests stated in the *Planning Act* is “the protection of the agricultural resources of the Province”, which includes prime agricultural lands.

Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

On August 20, 2024, the Province issued a decision approving a Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) that replaced the previous Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan). The new PPS came into effect on October 20, 2024. It maintains many of the goals of the previous Provincial Policy Statement, while introducing a few changes that must be implemented into Pickering’s Official Plan.

One of the main changes from the previous Provincial Policy Statement that was maintained in the PPS is the requirement for planning authorities to use an agricultural system approach, based on provincial guidance. An agricultural system is defined as a system comprised of a group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agri-food sector. It has two components:

- An agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas. It may also include rural lands that help to create a continuous productive land base for agriculture. These lands are the resource that provide the ability to produce food and agricultural products; and
- An agri-food network which includes farm operations, infrastructure like transportation networks to move agricultural goods, and primary food processors, farm markets and distributors.



An agricultural system is a culmination of all the elements needed, including land, livestock and crops, transportation, and processing, to support farms and food systems. These systems can be difficult to visualize at a city level as they typically extend beyond municipal borders.

Pickering's current agri-food network includes thousands of hectares of land designated for agricultural use and multiple food and beverage processing facilities. Food processing facilities are a growing sector in Pickering that supports the agricultural land base.

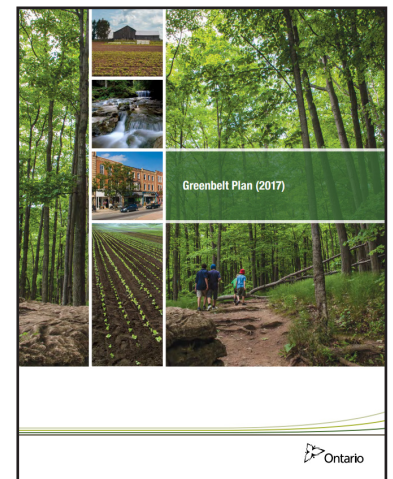
To ensure that agricultural lands are preserved and agricultural operations are protected the PPS directs non-agricultural uses away from agricultural areas. However, where that is not possible, the PPS requires an agricultural impact assessment, or equivalent analysis, to assess impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural lands and operations.

Furthermore, additional policies in the PPS make it easier to establish more housing options in rural areas and support local food production, including facilitating both near-urban and urban agriculture.

The PPS continues to require municipalities to designate prime agricultural lands, and maintains many of the previous policies that limit severances in rural areas. These topics are discussed in more detail in section 3.0.

The Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan, 2017, (Greenbelt) provides permanent protection to lands identified as "Protected Countryside" across the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area (GGH). It was originally implemented in 2005 to protect agricultural land, forests, wetlands, and other natural areas around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) from urban sprawl. The Greenbelt Plan includes and builds on the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Municipalities are required to implement the policy direction of the Greenbelt Plan through their Official Plans. Aside from the lands that have been identified for development in Pickering (i.e. Seaton, Northeast Pickering) and the federal airport lands, the majority of rural lands in Pickering are within the Greenbelt.



The Greenbelt recognizes that the GGH has some of Canada's most important and productive farmland, and that the agricultural production of the area cannot be duplicated elsewhere in the province.

The vision of the Plan is to protect against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and support agriculture as the predominant land use. The Plan also strives to provide a diverse

range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, and recreation.

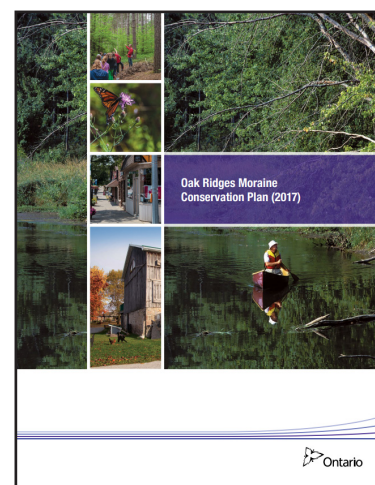
The Greenbelt Plan and the PPS recognize hamlets as the only formal rural settlement area. Residential clusters and country residential designations are not identified. The Plan also recognizes the limited growth potential of hamlets and indicates growth should only occur through infill and intensification. Expansion of hamlet boundaries into the protected countryside is not permitted.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan was issued under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. The purpose of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan is to provide land use and resource management planning direction to municipalities, landowners and other stakeholders on how to protect the Moraine’s ecological and hydrological features and functions.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Plan permits agricultural and normal farm practices in most land classifications, and recognizes the importance of protecting and promoting agricultural areas.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Plan provides an additional layer of protection to lands within it, and provides more specific direction than the PPS. The additional protection limits residential uses on the moraine, and supersedes the additional dwelling unit permissions identified in the PPS 2024.



Minister’s Zoning Orders and Federal Airport Lands

In the early 1970s, the federal government expropriated approximately 7,500 hectares of land in Pickering, Markham and Uxbridge to build a new airport for Toronto. In Pickering, these lands are located generally north of Highway 7, and west of Brock Road. In 1972 and 1974, the Province enacted Minister’s Zoning Orders within Pickering on lands to the east and south of the Federal lands. The Zoning Orders were passed to restrict land uses that may impede the development of a future airport. The Orders restrict land uses to specified agricultural uses, and buildings and structures accessory to that use, including single dwellings used in connection with the agricultural operation and home occupations. The underlying designation of the Federal lands remains prime agricultural and open space.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Federal Government has recently indicated they do not intend to pursue a future airport and to transfer a portion of the lands to support



the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP). Staff's understanding is there will be consultation regarding the use of the lands not conveyed to the RNUP. However, the details are not currently available and the impacts of this new announcement on these lands are currently unknown. Staff anticipate the Minister's Zoning Orders will remain in place surrounding the federal lands until more details are available on future land uses, and revocation of the Airport Zoning Regulations, among other matters.

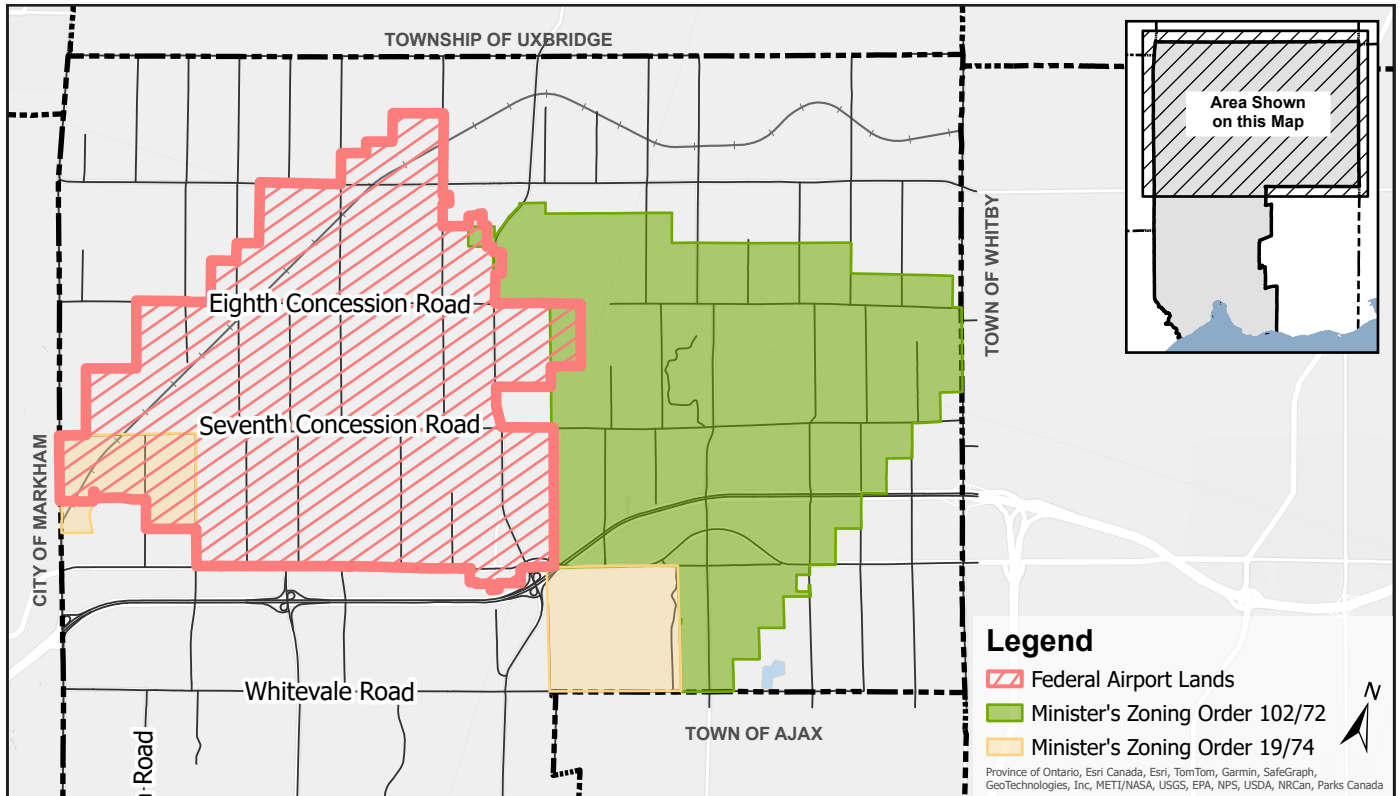


Figure 2: Federal airport lands and Minister's Zoning Orders

Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve

The Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP) is approximately 4,700 acres and located on the west side of Pickering, between Duffins Creek on the east and the RNUP on the west. The Central Pickering Development Plan, which guided the planning for Seaton and the DRAP, identified and established the initial planning policy framework of these lands. The plan envisioned this area primarily for agricultural purposes. These lands are also located within the Greenbelt.

The lands are designated mainly prime agricultural, and are recognized for supporting the ecological integrity of the adjacent RNUP. The lands are subject to the policies of the Greenbelt Plan, and have additional protection through the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023.

3.0 What Is Permitted In Prime Agricultural Areas?

Prime Agricultural Areas are areas that municipalities must protect for agriculture over the long-term. Prime agricultural lands are areas where specialty crops and lands identified as Class 1, 2 or 3 within the Canada Land Inventory, are found in large concentrations. Prime agricultural areas are recognized as a finite resource, where farming is the principal use.

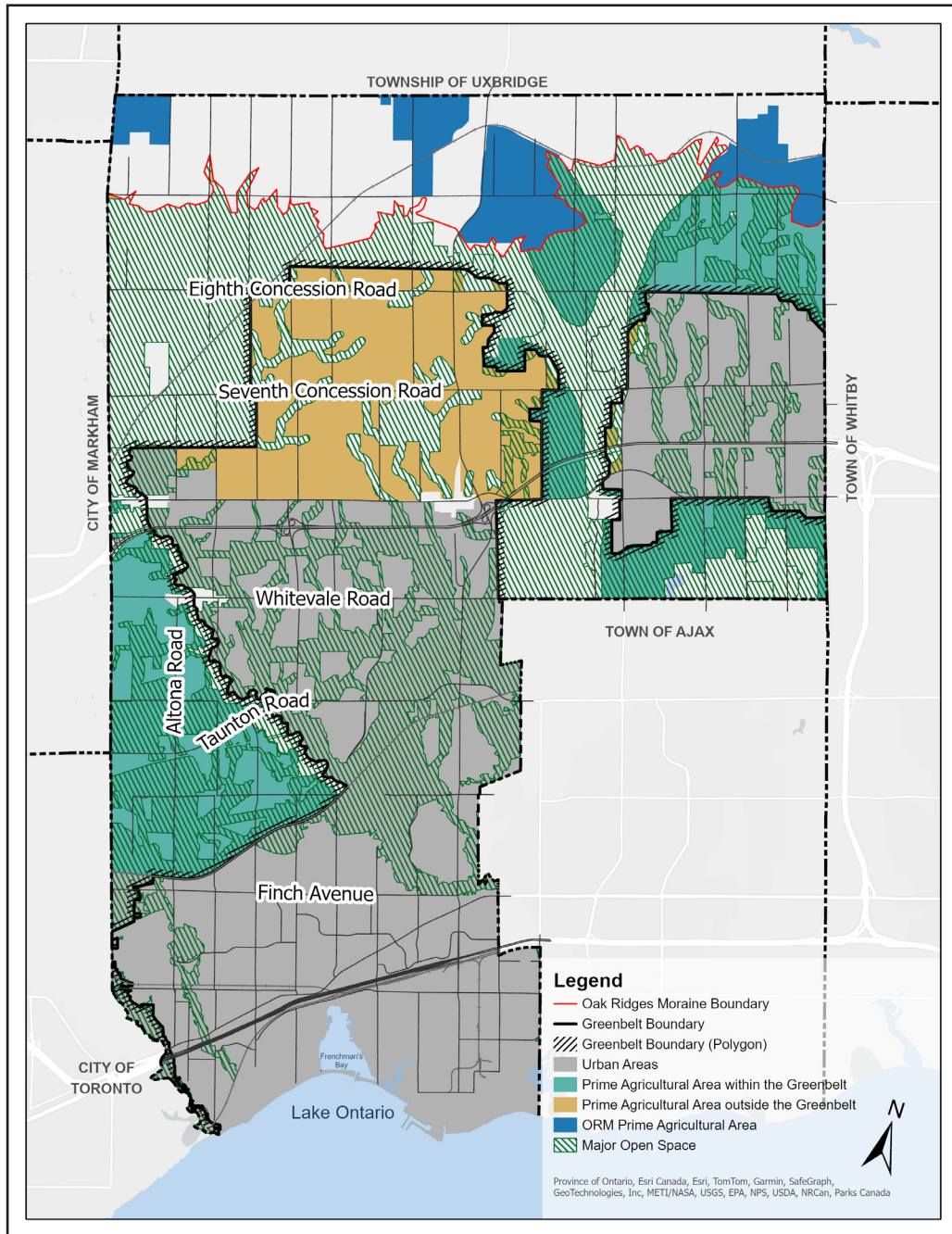


Figure 3: Prime agricultural areas within Pickering



Agricultural Uses

Agricultural uses are commonly referred to as farming. Farming can include but is not limited to crop cultivation, livestock, and forestry. These are uses that require high quality soils and large parcels of land. Farm related buildings are also permitted.

These areas are to be protected for the long term by prohibiting new uses that are not agricultural in nature. In addition to agricultural uses, a wide variety of agriculture-related/supportive uses and on-farm diversified uses are also permitted, subject to meeting criteria that are discussed further below.

The Pickering Official Plan currently supports the long-term protection of prime agricultural areas and permits farming as-of-right within this designation.



Examples of agricultural uses including crop cultivation and livestock

Housing in Prime Agricultural Areas

Where a residential dwelling is permitted on a lot in a prime agricultural area, the PPS now permits up to two additional dwelling units, provided that specified criteria are met. At least one of the additional dwelling units shall be located within or attached to the principal dwelling, and any additional dwelling unit must:

- comply with the minimum distance separation formulae (distance from neighbouring livestock buildings and manure storage);
- be compatible with, and not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations;
- have appropriate sewage and water services;
- address any public health and safety concerns;
- be limited in scale and be located within, attached, or in close proximity to the principal dwelling or farm building cluster; and
- minimize land taken out of agricultural production.

Additional dwelling units provide options for multi-generational farms and the ability to create additional housing options in the prime agricultural area.

The PPS has also changed the definition of a residence deemed surplus to an agricultural operation. Both of these changes should have a minor or insignificant impact on lot creation in prime agricultural areas in Pickering. The majority of Pickering’s prime agricultural lands are within the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine. The Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plans have specific policies regarding severances and additional dwelling units that would continue to provide direction in these specific areas.

Lot Creation in Prime Agricultural Areas

The majority of the policies that have been in place over the last few decades regarding lot creation in prime agricultural areas, have generally been maintained in the PPS. Lot creation through severances is generally discouraged and may only be permitted for specific situations including:

- agricultural uses where the lots are of an appropriate size;
- agricultural related uses provided the lot is limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use;
- surplus farm dwelling severances; and
- infrastructure where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements.

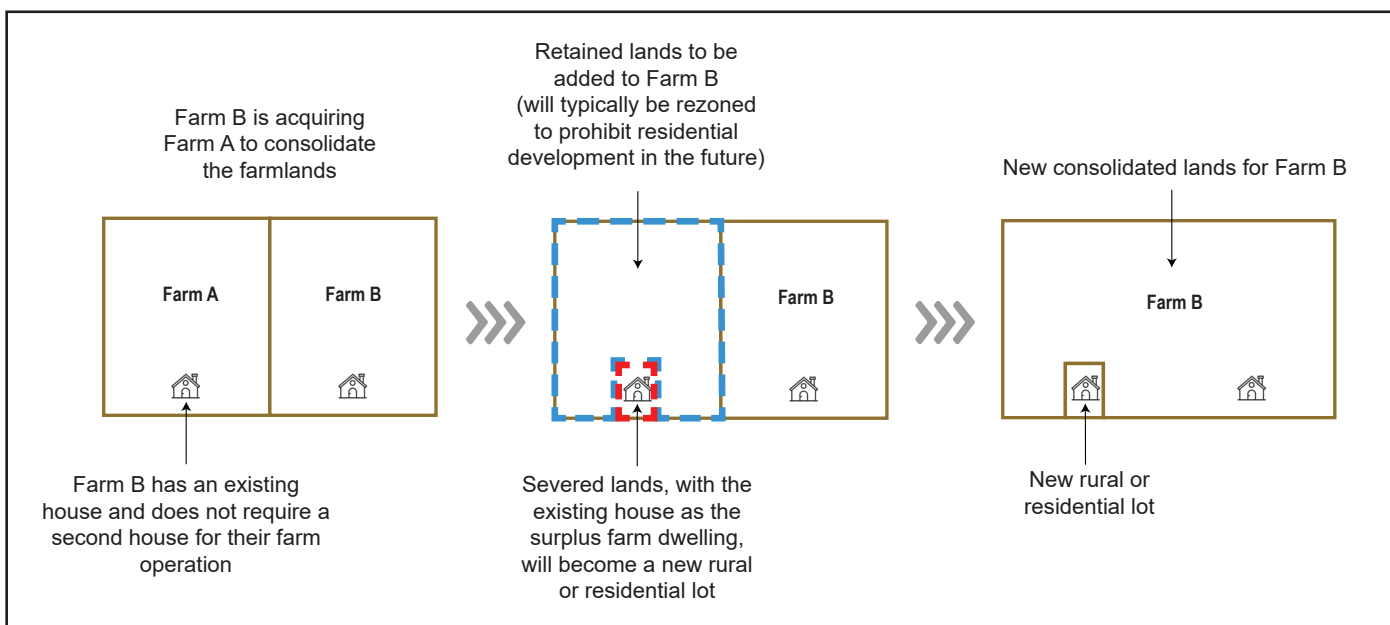


Figure 4: Surplus farm dwelling severance process



The PPS has amended the definition of residence surplus to an agricultural operation. The new definition would permit additional dwelling units to be included with the severed surplus residence property, subject to conditions. Staff believes the amended definition would not apply to lands within the Greenbelt or Oak Ridges Moraine. As highlighted above, there are additional criteria for severances for lands within these areas that are required to be met.

Creating a Complete Agricultural System in Prime Agricultural Areas

The agricultural uses highlighted in the previous section require a strong agricultural land base, comprised of high quality soils, as the primary resource. However, in order to create a complete agricultural system that will allow farming to grow, diversify, and create economic viability for the future, more than just the land base is required.

In addition to farming, the Province encourages opportunities for additional uses that directly support farming and that add value to farming operations to locate in prime agricultural areas. Permitting these uses, which can be identified as on-farm diversified uses or agricultural-related uses, help create a healthy and vibrant agricultural sector.

On-farm diversified uses and agricultural-related uses directly support farms and can strengthen the economic viability of farms. These additional uses help create a complete agricultural system approach that also supports and encourages the agri-food system.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) have published Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas . The Guidelines include criteria for on-farm diversified uses and agricultural-related uses that municipalities can use as a starting point for best practices to implement policies in their Official Plans.



Protected prime agricultural land within Rouge National Urban Park (Source: Rouge National Urban Park)

On-Farm Diversified Uses

The PPS defines on-farm diversified uses (OFDU) as:

“uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and are limited in area. On-farm diversified uses include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, uses that produce value-added agricultural products, and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems, and energy storage systems.”¹

Only farm properties that are actively being used for an agricultural use are permitted to operate an OFDU. OFDU's allow farmers to add secondary uses to the lands that generate revenue and are supplemental to the primary use of the property as a working farm.

The Pickering Official Plan currently permits OFDU's, and includes specific uses such as home occupations, agri-tourism, bed and breakfasts and farm tours. The existing policies do not provide direction in regard to what should be considered when establishing these uses.



Blueberry farm offering pick-your-own blueberries

¹ Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2016). [Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas](#)



OMAFRA's guidelines provide a number of criteria that must be met to qualify as an OFDU, including:

- Being located on an active farm;
- Being secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property;
- Limited in area; and
- Must be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations.

These are very broad criteria that municipalities must decide how to implement by using more detailed policy provisions. The following section addresses each criteria in more detail and explores what should be considered for on-farm diversified uses in Pickering.

Located on an active farm

OFDU's must be located on a farm property that is actively engaged in an agricultural use. The intent is not to permit these additional uses on rural residential properties.

One way to ensure that these uses are located on farms and meet this intent is to require a minimum size of farm, 50 acres for example, to be able to establish OFDU's.

3. *What on-farm diversified uses can support farmers while still ensuring that farming is the main use on the property?*

4. *Are there any uses that are not appropriate as on-farm diversified uses? Please Explain*



Corn maze within an active farm (Source: Pingle's Farm)

Being secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property

Provincial policy requires OFDU's to be secondary to the principal agricultural use. Secondary to an agricultural use refers to both scale of the activity and the timing of activities. Given that OFDU's must be compatible with surrounding agricultural operations, discussed further below, the regularity and timing of events must not interfere with agricultural uses on the farm or in the surrounding area.

On farm diversified uses should:

- Not displace agricultural land;
- Not require site grading and/or drainage unless it improves conditions for agricultural production;
- Meet compatibility requirements (e.g., do not require significant emergency, water and wastewater services; maintain reasonable noise and traffic levels in the area); and
- Ensure impacts to the site itself and surrounding agricultural operations are mitigated (e.g., compaction, drainage, trespassing).

Limited in area

The intent of limiting the area of the OFDU is to minimize land taken out of agricultural production, ensure agriculture remains the main land use, and limit off-site impacts of the use, such as traffic, to ensure compatibility with surrounding agricultural operations. Limited in scale can be difficult to determine as it will differ depending on the size of a farm parcel, i.e. 100 acres or 15 acres, and the intensity of the OFDU itself.

There are different approaches to limiting the area of OFDU's. The amount of overall property that can be used may be limited and there can be limits placed on the size of structures. OMAFRA's guidelines suggest using a maximum of 2% of a farm parcel to a maximum of 1 ha (10,000 m²). Additional limits on the size of buildings can assist in limiting OFDU's.

- 5. *What impacts may on-farm diversified uses have on the surrounding area that will need to be mitigated (traffic, noise, etc.)?***
- 6. *Should there be a minimum farm size to permit on-farm diversified uses to ensure they are occurring as a secondary use on a farm?***
- 7. *Should there be a maximum size permitted for on-farm diversified uses to ensure they operate as a secondary use on a farm (this could include a maximum area on the property or a maximum building size)?***



Must be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations

OFDU's must not hinder or negatively impact the agricultural use on the property or surrounding agricultural operations. What is defined as "surrounding" may differ based on the use and the farming activity of the surrounding agricultural operations. The intent is to ensure any OFDU meets the following criteria:

- Ensure surrounding agricultural operations are able to pursue their agricultural practices without impairment or inconvenience;
- Uses should be appropriate to available rural services;
- Maintain the agricultural/rural character of the area; and
- Meet all applicable provincial air emission, noise, water and wastewater standards and receive all relevant environmental approvals.

Many uses that could be identified as OFDU's can attract large numbers of people onto the farm for non-farm events or for recreational purposes. Large numbers can impact agricultural lands, resulting in soil compaction on the farm itself, generate excessive noise, excessive traffic, and create trespass issues that may be incompatible with surrounding agricultural operations. In addition, some uses may be better suited to settlement areas where municipal services are available.



Cows on a farm

Examples of on-farm diversified uses

The Province, through the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, provide examples of uses that can be considered as “on-farm diversified”, if the criteria set out above can be met. The examples include wineries/breweries, farm stands, agri-tourism and recreation (i.e. bed and breakfast, hay rides or corn mazes, horse trail rides), value added processing (i.e. creamery, meat preparation), restaurants, performing arts facilities, kennels and grooming, and home industries and/or businesses that can include sawmills, welding or wood crafting shops, manufacturing fabrication, and equipment repair.



On farm brewery

What would typically not be considered as on-farm diversified uses

The Province has also provided some guidance on what they consider to typically not meet the definition for on-farm diversified uses. The uses include:

- large-scale equipment or vehicle dealerships, hotels, landscape businesses, manufacturing plants, trucking yards,
- large-scale recurring events with permanent structures,
- institutional uses (e.g., churches, schools, nursing homes, cemeteries), and
- large-scale recreational facilities



Agricultural-Related Uses

Agricultural-related uses are farm-related commercial and industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, and benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations.

OMAFRA's Guidelines include criteria for agricultural-related uses, similar to OFDU's, that municipalities can use as a starting point for best practices to implement policies in their Official Plans. The criteria for agricultural-related uses include:

- Farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial use;
- Shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations;
- Directly related to farm operations in the area; and
- Provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.

A few of the criteria are similar to those for OFDU's. They seek to ensure there is no impact on surrounding agricultural operations and that the uses are compatible with and support farming. The main difference is that agricultural-related uses may be the primary use on the property and not secondary to the main use. Examples could include a grain drying operation, an abattoir, or a farm equipment repair shop. These uses are not farming themselves, but are required services for surrounding farms. Locating these uses in close proximity to the agricultural area supports the agricultural area by making it easier for farms to access the services they require for their operations.

The Pickering Official Plan does permit agricultural-related uses, but does not give direction to ensure the criteria outlined above can be met. This is an opportunity to identify what policies to include in the Official Plan to encourage and support agricultural-related uses.



Silos for grain storage

4.0 Agri-food Network

The agri-food network is another element in accomplishing a complete agricultural system. The agricultural land base is required for farming; the value added agricultural uses support agricultural production and viability; and the agri-food network adds additional elements such as transportation infrastructure, processing and delivering products to the end users.

The PPS and the Greenbelt Plan encourage municipalities to plan for the success of the agri-food sector by recognizing and supporting the agri-food network. The PPS identifies elements important to the viability of the agri-food sector, such as regional infrastructure and transportation networks, agricultural operations including on-farm buildings and primary processing, agricultural services, farm markets, and distributors.

8. What best practices from other municipalities can Pickering follow to better support agriculture?

The agri-food network is not Pickering specific. Often the agri-food network will extend beyond municipal or provincial borders. That is why it is imperative that municipalities provide opportunities to grow the agri-food network as it connects throughout regions, the province, and even the country. The City of Pickering Economic Development & Strategic Projects Department, also known as Invest Pickering, highlights Pickering’s current successes in the agri-food network with over 2,100 jobs and growing. Invest Pickering is working to provide opportunities to continue growth within the agri-food network. Official plan policies are one more way to support this growth.

Elements of the agri-food network are not limited to Prime Agricultural Areas. Transportation systems can extend into urban areas and processing can occur in urban areas. Also, urban agriculture can form part of the Agricultural System.

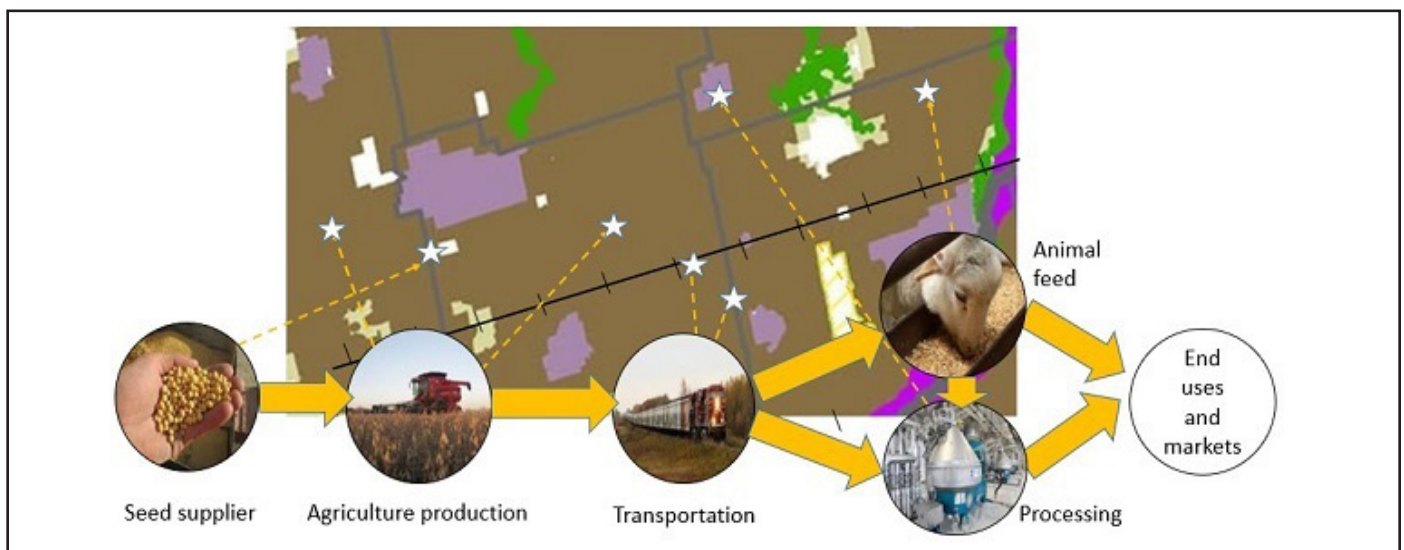


Figure 5: Agri-Food Network (Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness)



Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture, which is commonly referred to as ‘urban farming’ or ‘gardening’, is the activity of growing food in a city environment, and traditionally includes community and backyard vegetable gardens, roof and balcony gardening spaces, growing of fruit trees and shrubs, edible landscaping plants, and the raising of animals within a city.

Urban agriculture is one way to contribute to greater food security within Pickering. Food security is the ability to acquire or consume an adequate diet and sufficient quantity of food. Promoting urban agriculture can create additional opportunities for households to grow or access food locally.

The Pickering Official Plan does not currently contain specific policies on urban agriculture, although community gardens are permitted in all land use designations, except employment lands (industrial designations).

In 2023, the City of Pickering approved an Urban Agriculture Short-Term Action Plan to raise awareness and promote urban agriculture. More information on urban agriculture in Pickering can be found on our website at [Pickering.ca/UrbanAgriculture](https://pickering.ca/UrbanAgriculture).



George Ashe Library Seed Library

5.0 Urban and Rural Edge Interface

One issue that can arise when protecting and promoting agricultural lands and uses adjacent to fast growing urban areas is land use conflicts. The conflicts can result from the impacts of normal farm practices like noise, odours, and spraying, or from urban impacts such as traffic, light emissions, and trespassing. As Seaton and Northeast Pickering develop the potential of rural and urban conflicts may increase.

There are provincial guidelines, such as Minimum Distance Separation Standards (MDS) that help to mitigate potential odour issues when approving urban boundary expansions, or when a new agricultural structure, such as a livestock barn, is proposed to be constructed within a certain distance of a house(s) on an adjacent property. However, they may not eliminate conflicts and do not address all potential conflicts.

There are a number of ways to address the interface and the issues that can occur between rural and urban areas. It is important to educate new residents in urban areas, adjacent to agricultural lands, about normal farm practices, including spraying and slower moving farm vehicles.

Some municipalities implement edge management best practices to address the interface, such as using natural heritage features, increased buffers, locating linear parks along the edge, and placing employment or commercial uses, which are less sensitive to some of these conflicts, at the edge of urban areas. These can be used to create larger buffers, and a less sudden transition between the uses.

The Seaton urban area has taken advantage of some of these elements by the creation of larger buffers between residential uses and surrounding agricultural uses.

As Northeast Pickering is being planned, it will be important to consider how the community can be designed to limit these potential land use conflicts.

9. *How can Pickering reduce conflicts between urban and rural areas as Pickering continues to grow?*



6.0 Rural Settlement Areas

Rural settlement areas include hamlets (i.e. Claremont, Greenwood, Whitevale), rural clusters and country residential subdivisions. These areas are concentrations of primarily residential development within the rural area.

Hamlets are to be the predominant location for residential, commercial and employment development in the rural area, while also providing the ability to meet the social needs of the community in the surrounding area. Despite this, there is little opportunity to increase growth in hamlets. Since the Official Plan was approved, the Greenbelt Plan was approved by the Province. The Greenbelt Plan does not permit the expansion of hamlets, limiting the growth of hamlets to minor infill, provided additional lots can be serviced.

This is not the only significant change since Pickering's Official Plan was approved in 1997. There have been a significant number of decisions approved that have or will impact rural settlement areas. Some of these decisions, like the Greenbelt Plan approval, had immediate impacts on rural settlement areas, such as limiting hamlet expansions, while the impact of additional decisions may not have been felt yet, or what those impacts will be, may not fully be known. Below are some of the decisions that have been approved that will impact rural settlement areas.

- The approval of the Central Pickering Development Plan, known as Seaton, and the start of construction;
- The construction of the Highway 407 expansion through Pickering into the rest of Durham;
- Implementation and revisions of the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan;
- Approval of Northeast Pickering as a future urban expansion area;
- Provincial Announcement to widen Highway 7; and
- Expansion of the Claremont hamlet boundary and approval/construction of a new subdivision

While not all of these decisions impact each rural settlement, many of them do impact multiple settlements. To recognize that these decisions have or will impact our rural settlements, a full list of decisions can be found in Appendix 1.

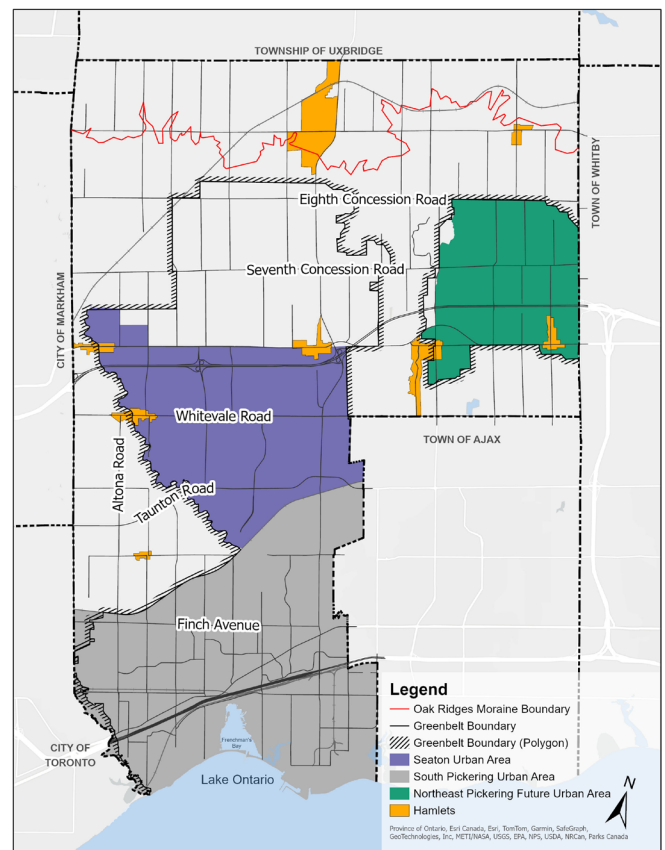


Figure 6: Urban areas and hamlets in Pickering

One area that stands out as a large impact to the rural settlements is how many hamlets are, or will be, adjacent to urban areas moving forward. Five of the eight hamlets in Pickering will now be within, partially within, or directly adjacent to urban areas (Seaton and future Northeast Pickering). Only Claremont, Cherrywood, and Balsam will not be within or adjacent to future urban development areas.

As this change occurs, it will be more important than ever to define the character of hamlets to ensure those elements are enhanced and celebrated.

The planning for Seaton included the development of official plan policies and land use designations to protect the character of the hamlets of Green River, Brougham, and Whitevale and their interface with the future urban community of Seaton. It will be important to also properly define the character of Greenwood and Kinsale to allow a proper transition from the new urban area to these existing hamlets. The Northeast Pickering Secondary Plan will provide the opportunity to evaluate the interface between the existing hamlets and the new urban area.

Policies can be included in both the Official Plan and secondary plan to identify the elements of Greenwood and Kinsale, i.e. character, connections to open space, etc., that should be protected, and identify how to integrate these areas with future urban growth.

The elements and qualities/character of each hamlet are unique, and may benefit from a specialized approach to adequately address each community. The current Official Plan includes policies permitting the use of Community Improvement Plans (CIP's) to address specific needs for hamlets. CIP's are one tool that can help provide grants to help maintain and attract investment to specific areas, such as heritage façade grants or signage grants for small businesses. The Official Plan Review provides the chance to identify what additional tools can be utilized to help address concerns in our hamlets.

10. All neighbourhoods in Pickering, including our hamlets, will experience change over time. In the midst of changes, what elements and characteristics of our hamlets are most important to maintain?

11. What are the biggest challenges for hamlets to continue to be vibrant communities as change occurs?



Conclusion

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

The discussion paper has identified what Pickering's rural area consists of and the Provincial policies that outline how agricultural lands are to be protected and enhanced for the long term. The paper has also highlighted that as Pickering plans for growth, mainly through new urban development, there will be changes to the urban-rural interface for a number of hamlets. The changes to the rural area of Pickering will create new challenges that Pickering must plan for.

As change occurs it is important that we protect the finite resource that is the prime agricultural area while also proactively supporting the changing needs of farming. We must also recognize the unique character of our rural residential settlements.

We have heard from residents that they want to ensure that Pickering maintains strong urban and rural communities. There is an opportunity to not only protect the rural area but also enhance it and grow the agricultural sector in Pickering.

Let's connect!

How to get involved

1. Participate in one of the public information centres on **March 19, 2025 (in-person)** or **March 20, 2025 (virtual)**
2. View the background information on our web page – Pickering.ca/PickeringForward
3. Complete the online survey – Pickering.ca/PickeringForward
4. Send your questions/comments to us – PickeringForward@Pickering.ca

Next Step

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

Prior to each Public Information Centres (PIC), the City will release a discussion paper to describe the topic and “set the table” for a conversation with the public. 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 (February 2025)
4. Agriculture and Rural Areas (March 2025)
5. Community Components/Elements (May 2025)
6. Housing and Affordability (June 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 I at the end of this discussion paper.

After each engagement session we will prepare a report that outlines the comments that have been received. 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 – Historic Decisions Impacting Pickering's Hamlets

Rural Settlement	Changes Implemented Since 1997 Official Plan was Approved	Additional Information
Hamlet of Whitevale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Central Pickering Development Plan Construction of Highway 407 expansion into Durham Construction of Seaton infrastructure and subdivisions Revocation of Central Pickering Development Plan 	
Hamlet of Green River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Central Pickering Development Plan Approval of Seaton Construction of Highway 407 expansion into Durham Revocation of Central Pickering Development Plan Provincial Announcement to widen Highway 7 The Government of Canada announcement regarding its holdings in northwest Pickering: that it plans to transfer high-conservation-value lands to Parks Canada to support the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park; and that a consultation will take place regarding the use of the remainder of the lands now that they will not be used for airport purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federal lands do not immediately abut Green River, but are in close proximity.
Hamlet of Brougham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Central Pickering Development Plan Approval of Seaton and construction of Seaton infrastructure and subdivisions Construction of Highway 407 expansion into Durham and realignment of Brock Road Revocation of Central Pickering Development Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New roads and gas main extension are anticipated. Impacts on the viability of existing businesses in the hamlet.

Rural Settlement	Changes Implemented Since 1997 Official Plan was Approved	Additional Information
Hamlet of Brougham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Announcement to widen Highway 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given historic buildings close to existing Highway limits, widening through Brougham is not anticipated.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government of Canada announcement regarding its holdings in northwest Pickering: that it plans to transfer high-conservation-value lands to Parks Canada to support the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park; and that a consultation will take place regarding the use of the remainder of the lands now that they will not be used for airport purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further details on which lands will go to Rouge National Urban Park and when a consultation may take place. Lands in the Hamlet of Brougham are owned by the Federal government.
Hamlet of Claremont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisions and implementation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small cluster of homes east of the Hamlet of Claremont was no longer recognized by that Provincial Plan after the City completed its Oak Ridges Moraine Conformity Exercise in 2008.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Greenbelt Plan 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of Hamlet Boundary and approval/construction of new subdivision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some subdivision and severance activity occurred within existing Hamlet boundary This development approval (Geranium Homes) was the result of an Ontario Land Tribunal decision based on 1990/1991 subdivision applications. The development of an additional 71 homes will significantly increase the number of residents in the hamlet.



Rural Settlement	Changes Implemented Since 1997 Official Plan was Approved	Additional Information
Hamlet of Balsam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Greenbelt Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion to hamlet boundaries permitted.
Hamlet of Cherrywood and Rural Clusters of Cherrywood West and Cherrywood East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Central Pickering Development Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These four policy instruments were to ensure agricultural uses predominate surrounding the rural settlements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enactment of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act establishing Agricultural Easements 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passing of Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) Amendment 154/03 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Greenbelt Plan 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revocation of Central Pickering Development Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intent of this suite of policy reversals was to enable urban development to occur around the rural settlements.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revocation of Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revocation of MZO 154/03 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment of Greenbelt Plan to delete Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reversal of these policy instruments was to prohibit urban development from occurring around the rural settlements, and that the lands remain for agricultural uses only. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reenactment of Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act 		
Hamlet of Greenwood and Greenwood Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of Highway 407 expansion into Durham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major development within Greenbelt lands or on adjacent Prime Agricultural Lands.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Greenbelt Plan 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Environmental Assessment for the north-south realignment of Westney Road by-pass was completed. 	

Rural Settlement	Changes Implemented Since 1997 Official Plan was Approved	Additional Information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of Northeast Pickering as a future Urban Area in the Durham Regional Official Plan, which is now an Official Plan of the City of Pickering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact on Greenwood requires careful consideration in light of potential urban development adjacent Greenwood; the urban development is subject to future land use planning, infrastructure, financial and other necessary arrangements between landowners, the City and Regional governments.
Hamlet of Kinsale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some new lots and houses have been constructed at the northwest limit of the hamlet Construction of Highway 407 expansion into Durham Approval of Northeast Pickering as a future Urban Area in the Durham Regional Official Plan, which is now an Official Plan of the City of Pickering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact on Kinsale requires careful consideration in light of potential urban development adjacent Kinsale; the urban development is subject to future land use planning, infrastructure, financial and other necessary arrangements between landowners, the City and Regional governments.
Hamlet of Altona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Altona was no longer recognized as a Hamlet after the City's conformity exercise in 2008.
Spring Creek Country Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation for this country residential development was approved in, or prior to, 1997. The subdivision and zoning were subsequently approved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This development is complete.
Staxton Glen Country Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation, subdivision and zoning for the original part of this country residential development was approved in the mid-1980's. The designation for second phase for the development was approved in 1997. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This development is completed.



Rural Settlement	Changes Implemented Since 1997 Official Plan was Approved	Additional Information
Barclay Estates Country Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation for this country residential development was approved in, or prior to, 1997. The subdivision and zoning were subsequently approved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This development is substantially completed.
Birchwood Estates Country Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation for this country residential development was approved in 1998. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No development has occurred on the lands to date. Owner is reconsidering development options.
Forest Creek Estates Country Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The designation for this country residential development was approved in, or prior to, 1997. The subdivision and zoning were subsequently approved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No development has occurred on the lands to date.

Appendix 2 – Engagement Topics

Community Vision and Priorities – Released September 2024

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

Growth Management and Urban Structure – Released November 2024

This includes a discussion of where and how Pickering will grow to 2051. This growth will occur within the City’s intensification areas (the City Centre and the Kingston Corridor / Brock Node), on currently undeveloped land, and also to a much smaller extent within existing neighbourhoods. This discussion also explores the changing nature of employment and how Pickering will plan to accommodate future jobs to maintain the vitality of the community.

Natural Heritage, Hazards, and Sustainability – Released January 2025

At the same time that we look at where the City will grow, we must also look at what the City must protect. It has always been important to ensure human safety, and avoid destruction to property from extreme weather events. Maintaining this priority is even more important in light of a changing climate. In conjunction with protecting the natural environment and avoiding natural hazards, it is also essential that new development outside of these areas is sustainable and contributes to making our City more resilient and livable.

Agriculture and Rural Areas

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 3 – Official Plan Review Timeline

