A Shared Vision for the Expanded

Rouge National Urban Park

September 2024
Revised January 2026

Waterfront Regeneration Trust

FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE National Urban Park

Executive Summary

Recommendations

1. Transfer all government-owned lands in the Pickering Federal Land holdings to Parks Canada for the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park to ensure their protection and management under Parks Canada's mandate. Any lands within the Park designated as urban settlement should remain under Park Canada's oversight and protection, and be managed through a community-driven land trust model.

2. Parks Canada to undertake a public process and Indigenous and First Nations consultations to refine the vision for the future of the Pickering Federal Lands within the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

3. Increase funding to Parks Canada to implement the expansion and manage the expanded RNUP.

Background

In 1972, the Canadian government expropriated 18,600 acres (7,527 hectares) of land in North Pickering for an international airport that was never built. Over the 50 years that the project has been on hold, the lands have not been used to their maximum economic potential, while surrounding communities and ecosystems face significant pressures for urbanization. This presents an extraordinary opportunity to integrate these lands into the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP), Canada's premier urban park. Currently, these lands contain a diverse mosaic of ecosystems, including the Duffins Creek watershed and some of Canada's best agricultural land.

Opportunity

If the threat of the airport on the Pickering Federal Lands is removed it opens a unique one time opportunity to leverage this vast area incorporating these lands into the expanded RNUP. This would allow for the creation of a world-class model of coexistence between nature, farming, and rural communities simultaneously addressing: environmental conservation, agricultural sustainability, and rural revitalization. Such integration could be one of the last large-scale land transfers in southern Ontario, bringing multiple benefits to the region while safeguarding the area's ecological and agricultural value.

The ecosystem services that nature provides are our 'natural capital'. Without their irreplaceable functions such as pollination, climate regulation, soil health, and water filtration, we will be jeopardising our future food security and there will be no negotiation in the world that will bring that back.

Vision

At the heart of this vision is the preservation of prime Class 1 farmland, which is among the most fertile in Canada, alongside natural ecosystems that support a rich variety of flora and fauna, protecting these resources while enhancing them through sustainable farming practices, agritourism, and community revitalization. This vision builds on the area's historical significance, including farming legacies and heritage structures, while looking toward future sustainability.

By bringing together these elements, the expanded park will serve as a demonstration of how environmental and agricultural goals can align for mutual benefit.

The expanded RNUP will serve one of Canada's most densely populated urban regions, providing essential green space for millions of residents. It would allow urban dwellers to engage with nature, learn about the region's natural and cultural heritage, and participate in outdoor recreation. Additionally, it will create opportunities for agritourism and agri-businesses, boosting local economies and providing sustainable livelihoods for farmers and entrepreneurs.

This expansion also strengthens the ecological connection between the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Ontario, two critical natural features in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. By maintaining an intact ecological corridor, wildlife will continue to move freely, ensuring the long-term health of ecosystems across the region.

Action

The primary goal is to transfer ownership of the Pickering Federal Lands from Transport Canada to Parks Canada. This transfer will secure the area's natural and agricultural heritage and foster community revitalization. By integrating the lands into RNUP, this initiative will also contribute to Canada's broader environmental goals, such as conserving 30% of the country's land and waters by 2030 as part of its Global Biodiversity commitments.

A Community-Driven Land Trust for the Pickering Federal Lands would ensure that publicly owned lands are held in perpetual public stewardship, managed for community benefit rather than private speculation. By empowering local residents, public partners, and civic organizations to guide development, the trust would restore Brougham in the Federal Lands, and Altona in the existing Rouge National Urban Park, as vibrant, mixed-use hamlets that embody social inclusion, ecological regeneration, and long-term public accountability.

In conclusion, this Shared Vision for the Expanded Rouge National Urban Park incorporating the Pickering Federal Lands into RNUP represents an unparalleled opportunity to address some of the region's most pressing environmental, agricultural, and community challenges. By demonstrating how nature, farming, and rural communities can thrive together, this expansion offers a forward-thinking solution for the 21st century.

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1. What Is There Today

1.1 Site Context

1.1.1 Project Context - *RNUP and Ontario Greenbelt*

The project envisions that the Pickering Federal Lands will become a strategic location between the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Ontario, serving as a critical ecological link between the Ontario Greenbelt and the wetland ecosystems along the lakeshore.

The site plays a pivotal role in connecting these diverse natural landscapes, facilitating the movement of wildlife and supporting the flow of ecological processes across the region.

This connection enhances the integrity of both upland and lowland habitats, promoting biodiversity and ensuring the sustainability of the surrounding environments. By bridging these key ecological areas, the Pickering Federal Lands contributes to the preservation of vital green spaces and the protection of the region's natural heritage, anchoring the area that supports the most productive economic region of the province and country, and supports the largest regional concentration of people.

LEGEND

- Oak Ridges Moraine
- Lake Ontario
- Ontario Greenbelt

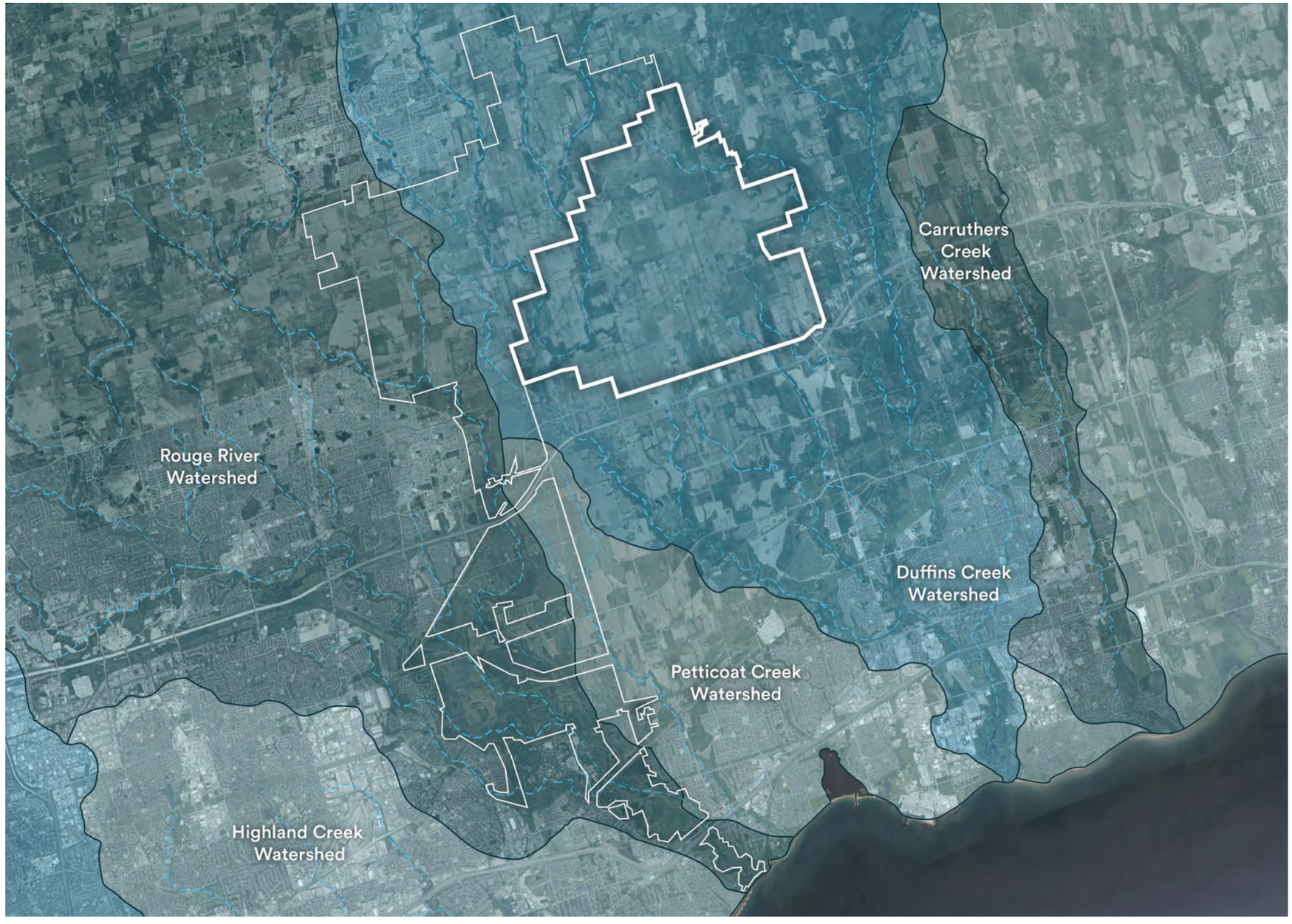
1.1.2 Pickering Federal Lands - *Duffins Creek Watershed*

The Pickering Federal Lands are envisioned to become an integral part of the Rouge National Urban Park, further enhancing its ecological and social significance. Situated within the Duffins Creek watershed, the site plays a critical role in maintaining the health and connectivity of this important water system. Ecologically, the location is vital as it supports diverse habitats and species, contributing to the overall biodiversity of the region.

From a social perspective, this integration will provide expanded opportunities for recreation, education, and community engagement, making the park a vital resource for surrounding communities in one of Canada's most densely populated urban areas, home to 6.7 million people and growing.

The strategic positioning of the site ensures it will serve as a crucial link between urban and natural environments, promoting both environmental stewardship and public access to green spaces.

Despite the expansion, bringing the park to a total of 114.1 square kilometres, Rouge National Urban Park will remain the 8th smallest of Canada's 49 national parks and reserves. Yet its significance, both ecologically and socially, far outweighs its size, especially given its location within the country's most urbanized region.



1.1.3 Site Boundary

The Pickering Federal Lands span approximately 8,765 acres, a vast area comparable in size to Toronto's city center. Historically, much of this land has been dedicated to farming, benefiting from its exceptional soil quality. The site boasts some of the best agricultural soil in Canada, classified as Class 1, which is ideal for growing a wide variety of crops.

This rich agricultural heritage highlights the importance of the land not only as a critical ecological asset but also as a valuable agricultural resource. The site's fertile soil and extensive acreage make it a unique and irreplaceable part of Canada's agricultural landscape, with significant potential for sustainable land use and conservation efforts.

Figure 1.1 Ottawa transferred 4,700 acres (1,902 hectares) of what was then called the Airport Lands to the RNUP in July 2015. In 2017, a further 5,200 acres (2,104 hectares) were transferred from the Airport Lands. The remaining 8,700 acres (3,520 hectares) are now called the Pickering Federal Lands.

Figure 1.2 Scale comparison to Downtown Toronto

1. What Is There Today

1.2 Site Assets

1.2.1 The legacy and the extraordinary opportunity

The Pickering Federal Lands, spanning 8,765 acres (3,548 hectares), offer a truly exceptional opportunity for sustainable development and conservation. Originally expropriated for an airport that was never built, these lands have remained in a remarkably pristine state for over half a century, thanks to dedicated community advocacy.

Now, they stand as a vital resource for the future, poised to become an integral part of the expanded Rouge National Urban Park. This unique area, located at the headwaters of Duffins Creek, is home to diverse ecosystems, rich biodiversity, and some of the most fertile farmland in Ontario.

The Vision for these lands is multifaceted: it seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment, support a wide range of agricultural activities, and foster a vibrant rural community. By doing so, it aims to showcase ecologically sustainable growth that ensures that both nature and people can thrive. Incorporating these lands into the Rouge National Urban Park will safeguard their ecological integrity while promoting sustainable agriculture. This includes opportunities for agri-tourism and agri-businesses, which will not only enhance food security but also contribute to the local economy.

The vision also emphasizes the restoration of the rural community, allowing it to benefit from and contribute to these resources. This vision builds upon a rich legacy of natural and built heritage, including historic farm uses, concession roads, watercourses, forests, windbreaks, and remnant structures. It embodies a forward-thinking approach that integrates new values and best practices, creating synergies that enhance both environmental and community well-being. In essence, this initiative represents a journey "back to the future," where past wisdom meets contemporary innovation. It is a chance to demonstrate how thoughtful stewardship can transform these lands into a beacon of sustainability and resilience for generations to come.

Image credit: William Lishman

1.2.2 Site Assets

Key Map

These photos highlight the diverse assets of the Pickering Federal Lands, a unique site where farmland, nature, and community coexist harmoniously. Here, fertile fields, vibrant natural landscapes, and a close-knit community come together to create a distinctive and strong character that defines the area's identity. The Vision explores how these elements interact to form a thriving, balanced environment in Pickering Federal Lands.

1. Heritage Barn

2. Atha Schoolhouse

3. Autumn On 8th Concession

4. Thistle Ha' Farm Harvest
Image credit: Thistle Ha' farm

5. Soybean Crop

6. Wheat Field

7. Duffins Forest Corridor

8. West Duffins Corridor

9. Ducks On Pond

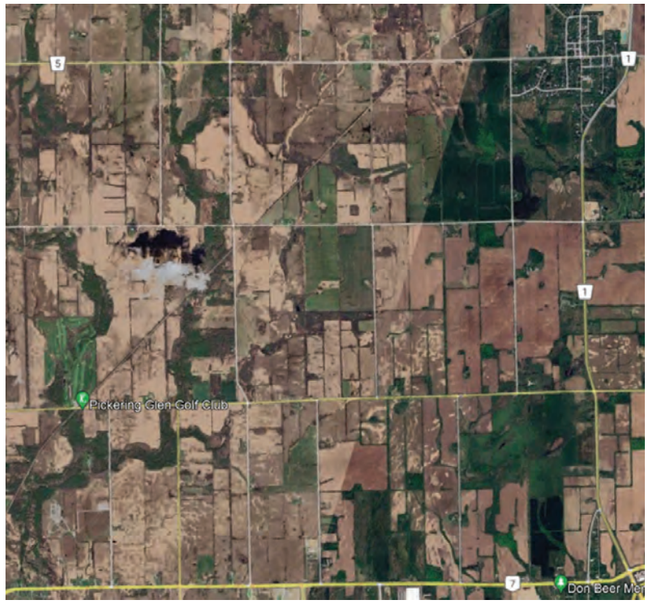
Image credit: Land Over Landings

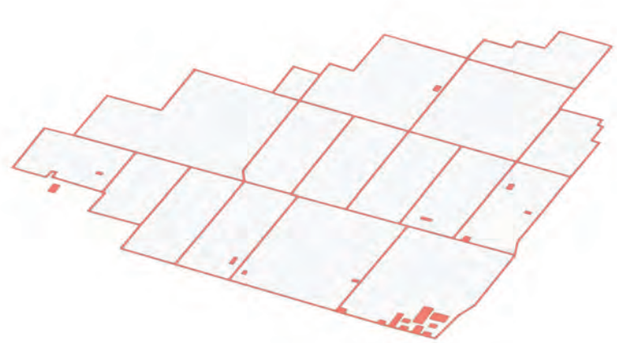
1.2.3 Co-existence of different layers on site

The Pickering Federal Lands are characterized by a combination of three distinct layers of assets that coexist within its boundaries: natural ecosystems, vast farmlands, and built structures within a concession grid. The site is home to significant natural assets, including forests and wetland ecosystems that provide critical habitats for wildlife and contribute to regional biodiversity.

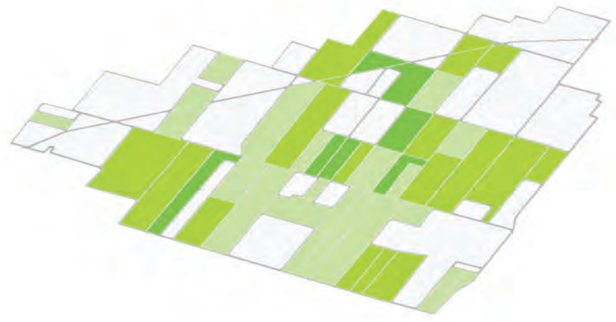
These natural areas are interwoven with expansive farmlands, on the site's fertile Class 1 soil. Additionally, the site features a network of built structures and a concession grid that reflects its rural development history, marking the landscape with roads, farmsteads, and other infrastructure.

Together, these three layers create a multifaceted landscape that holds ecological, agricultural, and historical value, offering a complex and rich context for future planning and conservation efforts.

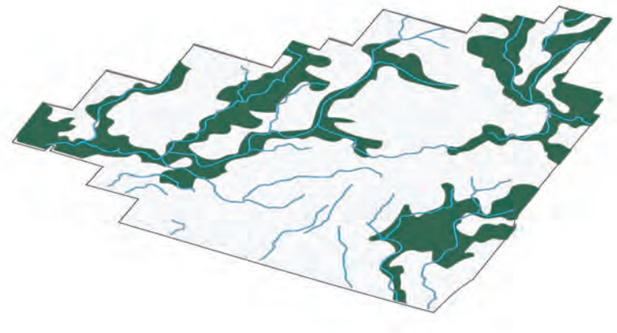




Built structures and concession grid



Farm fields



Nature

2. The History

2. The History

2.1 Timeline

2.1.1 From *Pre-contact* to the *Present*

12,000 BCE to Early 1800s

In the early 1500s, Indigenous peoples settled in large north Pickering villages, such as the Draper site, farming vast tracts of land. They relocated to the Stouffville area near the end of the century.

Early 1800s

Following the signing of treaties between Indigenous peoples and the British Crown, European settlers began to reestablish farms and communities in the area. The fertile lands and proximity to Lake Ontario made it an attractive location for agriculture.

Mid-1800s

Villages and hamlets began to emerge, including notable ones like Brougham and Claremont.

1869

Pickering Township: By this time, Pickering Township was well-established and included various services and amenities. According to records from the time, the township was described as a thriving, internationally famous agricultural community.

Late 1800s

The arrival of the railway in the late 19th century brought significant changes. It improved transportation, allowing farmers to transport their produce to larger markets more efficiently and leading to increased economic activity.

1975

Due to political and economic factors, plans for the airport are put on hold. The land remains under federal ownership and is managed initially by Public Works, later by Transport Canada.

1972

The Canadian federal government expropriates 18,600 acres (7,527 hectares) of land in Pickering, Markham, and Uxbridge townships, intending to build a new international airport to alleviate pressure on Toronto International Airport (now Toronto Pearson International). This decision sparks significant local opposition and protests.

1995- 2012

Emergence of Rouge National Park
The original Rouge Park was established in 1995 by the Province of Ontario in partnership with the cities of Toronto, Markham and Pickering and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. It comprised approximately 10,000 acres (4,000 hectares) of parkland in Toronto, Markham and Pickering. In 2011 Parks Canada conducted widespread community consultations to develop a Rouge National Urban Park concept.

2013

The federal government announces the creation of Canada's first national urban park and contributes more than a third of the Pickering Airport Lands.

2015

The Rouge National Urban Park Act is passed, officially establishing Rouge National Urban Park. A total of 4,700 acres (1,902 hectares) of the Airport Lands are transferred to Parks Canada for inclusion in the park.

2017

Following a second federal announcement, a further 5,200 acres (2,174 hectares) of the airport lands are transferred to the park while Ontario transfers over 5,634 acres (2,280 hectares).

Future

By incorporating into RNUP the remaining Pickering Federal Lands, protecting additional natural areas, enhancing and preserving the Class 1 farmland, and revitalizing community life, a mutually supportive ecosystem is formed within the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

2.1.2 Indigenous Presence

The headwaters of Duffins Creek, located in the eastern end of the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario, Canada, have a rich history of indigenous presence predating European contact. Archaeological evidence indicates that indigenous Peoples were active in this area during various prehistoric periods.

Paleo-Indian Period (10000-7000 BCE)

Projectile points of the "Hi-Lo" style have been discovered at four Late Paleo-Indian sites in the Duffins Creek watershed, indicating early human activity in the region.

Archaic Period (7000-1000 BCE)

Scattered remains of chert (flint) tools and flakes have been found at several inland sites dated to the Archaic period. These findings suggest that Indigenous Peoples were engaged in toolmaking and possibly hunting and gathering activities in the area.

Woodland Period (1000 BCE-1651 CE)

Several sites from the early and middle Woodland periods (1000 BCE-700 CE) exist along Duffins Creek. These sites appear to have been short-term campsites, although detailed excavations have not been conducted. During the Late Woodland period (700-1651 CE), the area saw the establishment of more permanent villages. Some Iroquoian villages featured longhouses and palisades and covered areas of 3-10 acres. The largest known site from this period in the Duffins Creek watershed is the Draper Site, which was excavated in the 1970s.

Iroquois Influence (Mid-17th Century)

In the mid-17th century, the Iroquois people displaced the Petun and the Wendat (Huron) Peoples from southern Ontario. The Iroquois Seneca established riverside villages in nearby areas, such as Ganatsekwyagon on the Rouge River and Teiaiagon on the Humber River. However, Duffins Creek was less attractive for settlement due to its poor navigability and the presence of a sand bar at its mouth.

Ojibwe Presence (Pre-European Contact to 19th Century)

At the time of the first European arrivals, at least one Ojibwe family resided at the east edge of the Duffins Creek marshes. This family continued to live in the area until the mid-19th century, indicating a sustained indigenous presence even as European settlement began. Overall, the headwaters of Duffins Creek have been a site of significant indigenous activity spanning thousands of years, with evidence of tool-making, temporary campsites, and more permanent settlements during various prehistoric periods.

Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle (2012)

Consisting of representatives from 10 First Nations with historic and cultural ties to the park area, the Advisory Circle collaborates with Parks Canada on conservation, visitor infrastructure, and amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park Act.

The park works closely with 10 First Nations, including 7 Williams Treaty Nations, the Six Nations of the Grand River, the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Huron-Wendat Nation. Through this partnership, First Nations engage in activities like field archaeology and developing Indigenous-led programming, offering the public insight into their history, culture, and traditions.

In support of the Government of Canada's priority of reconciliation, Parks Canada is committed to strengthening Indigenous connections to traditional, ancestral, and treaty lands, waters, and ice. National historic sites, parks, and marine conservation areas will serve as places to share Indigenous practices and stories, deepening Canadians' understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories.

Woodland pottery sherds - National Park Service

Engraving depicts an Ojibwe (Chippewa) camp on the bank of a river, circa 1800s - Hulton Archive

2.1.3 European from 1801 – *farming, the hamlets*

Settlement and Development

1801: The first European settlers arrived in what is now Pickering Township. These early settlers were primarily Loyalists fleeing the aftermath of the American Revolution.

1811: The government conducted official surveys, dividing the land into lots and concession roads, which structured the settlement process and facilitated agricultural development.

Infrastructure and Growth

1834: Pickering Township was officially established, marking a significant milestone in its development.

Roads and infrastructure improvements facilitated better transportation and communication within the township and with neighboring areas. Villages such as Brougham, Claremont, and Whitevale grew, becoming local hubs of economic and social activity.

Railway Expansion

Late 1800s: The arrival of the railway significantly impacted Pickering Township. It improved transportation, allowing farmers to transport their produce to larger markets more efficiently, boosting the local economy.
The railway also spurred population growth, as easier access attracted new settlers and businesses.

Transition and Modernization

The early 20th century saw continued growth and modernization in Pickering Township. Agricultural practices improved with new technologies and methods, increasing productivity.
The township remained primarily rural, with agriculture as the dominant economic activity, but there was a gradual shift towards more diversified economic activities.

Prelude to Major Changes

1930s-1940s: As urbanization increased in nearby Toronto, Pickering began to feel the pressures of potential suburban expansion. The rural character of the area persisted, but the seeds of future change were sown.

Throughout this period, the area transitioned from indigenous territories to a structured European settlement focused on agriculture and community development. The arrival of the railway and improvements in infrastructure facilitated growth and modernization, setting the stage for the significant changes of the mid-20th century and beyond.

Grand Trunk Railway station Pickering, Photo: Herington & Son, Trenton, ca. 1910

4 tank locomotive 1950-59 approaches Pickering Station from the north Forge Valley Railway

https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/agriculture/big/big_32_ploughing_contest02.aspx

2.1.4 Expropriation for an Airport and the Aftermath

Mid-20th Century Air Traffic Growth

In the 1960s and early 1970s, international airports were experiencing significant traffic growth. While Toronto International Airport had room for expansion, fierce local opposition gave the federal government a free hand to look for a new site.

A new airport at Mirabel, Quebec (Montreal-Mirabel International Airport) was already under construction. The federal government set out to provide the Toronto area with its own Mirabel.

Site Selection

After considering various locations, the government identified a large area in Pickering, Markham, and Uxbridge townships as the site for the new airport. The chosen site was predominantly rural, with fertile farmland and small communities.

The Expropriation Announcement

In March 1972, the federal government officially announced the expropriation of approximately 18,600 acres (7,527 hectares) of land for the new airport. This massive expropriation affected numerous farms, homes, and businesses.

Immediate Impact on Residents

The expropriation notice came as a shock to local residents, many of whom had lived and farmed on the land for generations. Property owners were informed that their land would be taken over by the government, leading to widespread uncertainty and anxiety.

Airport Opposition

Expropriation prompted the immediate formation of a formidable grassroots movement: People or Planes. POP organized high-profile protests that attracted nationwide media attention, mounted legal challenges, and won political backing at both the provincial and municipal levels.

Project Put on Hold

In September 1975, Ontario ended its agreement to fund the airport's services infrastructure. In response, the federal government put the Pickering Airport plans on indefinite hold. Despite the suspension, the expropriated land remained under federal ownership, managed by Public Works, and later by Transport Canada.

Long-Term Uncertainty

The status of the Pickering Airport Lands remained a contentious issue for decades. Land was leased back to farmers for agricultural use, but the government offered only the same short-term leases (1 year) that were available to small businesses and residential tenants. Throughout, the future remained uncertain, airport opponents remained vigilant, and the area fell into economic decline.

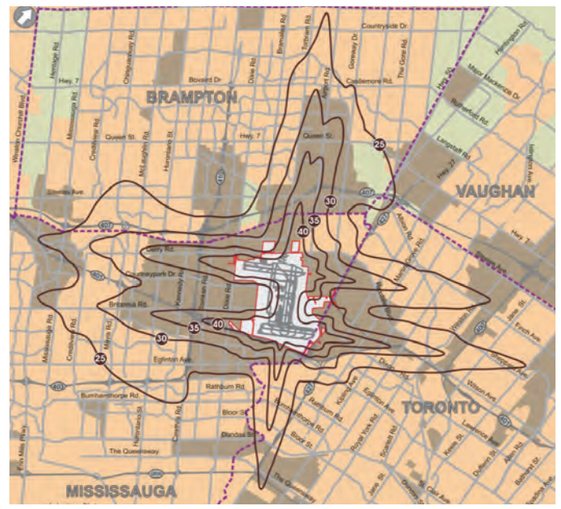
In 2004, a draft plan for a reliever airport was submitted to Transport Canada, triggering a needs assessment study. This new threat brought about the birth of Land Over Landings, activists who led the next round of protests but, this time, linked "no airport" to a call for the permanent protection of the Lands for agriculture. The needs analysis, released in 2011, could not pinpoint a date of need but recommended that the Lands still be held for an airport. In 2013, the federal government announced that construction would soon begin on a smaller airport than originally planned. Part of the excess land would be set aside for economic development and the rest would be given to Parks Canada, to establish the Rouge National Urban Park. No airport construction was undertaken. The economic development acreage was transferred to the park in 2017.

Current Status

In 2023, the federal government announced a study of future airport supply and demand in Southern Ontario and said it had no intention of proceeding with the building of an airport on the Pickering Federal Lands in the near term, and that the study's conclusions could even indicate that no airport will be needed in the long term.

Conclusion

The 1972 expropriation of land in north Pickering was a pivotal event in the region's history, marked by significant public opposition and controversy. The debate over the airport and proper land use highlights broader issues of urban planning, prime farmland protection, environmental conservation, and community resilience. This story is a testament to the power of grassroots organizing and the importance of local voices in shaping land use policies. The persistent and multifaceted opposition played a crucial role in delaying and ultimately reshaping the government's plans, highlighting the significance of community involvement in environmental and developmental decision-making.



2.1.5 The Road to a National Park

How it started

Despite the suspension of the Pickering Airport development, the community remained vigilant. They continued to monitor government actions and advocate for the return of the expropriated lands to local control.
Some portions of the land were leased back to farmers, allowing them to continue their agricultural activities, but the long-term status of the land remained unresolved.

1988: Save The Rouge Valley System, a dedicated environmental advocacy group, marshals tremendous public support to save the Rouge's flora and fauna from destructive plans that included dumps, subdivisions and highways. To protect the Valley system, they proposed the creation of a joint national/provincial park that included the Rouge Valley system from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine. They broadened support for its protection to include members of 46 local community associations representing 220,000 people.

1990: Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront led by Hon. David Crombie endorses the proposal advanced by many interest groups including Save the Rouge to protect the Rouge by establishing a park.

1990: Hon. Pauline Browes' Private Member's motion calling for a wilderness or heritage park to protect the Rouge River Valley System passes unanimously by every MP, from every party, from every province in the nation.

1995: Rouge Park Alliance is created to establish and manage the new Rouge Park. Hundreds of restoration and education and significant land acquisitions are achieved. The Alliance calls for the creation of the Park as a National Park.

21st Century Developments

2011: Government of Canada announces in the Throne Speech its intention to create the first National Urban Park.

2012: The Federal government announces the creation of Rouge National Urban Park and commits $144M over ten years.

2013: The federal government revived discussions about the Pickering Airport, sparking renewed debate and opposition. Plans included both the airport and potential urban development.

2015: The Rouge National Urban Park Act was passed, creating a new category of park, the National Urban Park and leading to the transfer of some of the Pickering Federal Lands.

2015: Transport Canada transfers (the first) 4,722 acres (19.1 km^2) of land to Parks Canada for Rouge National Urban Park.

2017: Ontario transfers over 5,634 acres (22.8 km^2) for the Park. Advocates (both agricultural and environmentalists) continue to call for the expansion of the RNUP to include the remaining Pickering Federal Lands.

Current Status

2023: Province removes protections from about 4,700 acres of farmland adjacent to the RNUP, known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, opening it to development and threatening viability and functionality of the Park's ecosystems and farmland. In response to widespread and fierce opposition, it later re-instates protections.

2.1.6 From *Protection* to Offering *a New Vision*

If the threat of the airport is removed, a unique opportunity opens up to expand the Rouge National Urban Park and demonstrate a stable and harmonious form of sustainable coexistence combining nature, farming and community.

By incorporating the Pickering Federal Lands, protecting additional natural areas, enhancing and preserving the Class 1 farmland, and revitalizing community life, a mutually supportive ecosystem begins to form within the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

This large green reserve will continue to contribute to carbon sequestration, flood protection, and climate-change mitigation. The expansion would connect to the existing Rouge National Urban Park, complementing existing trails and natural systems and supporting land conservation and outdoor experiences. It will inspire residents and visitors to explore the rural landscape and learn more about the region's natural and cultural heritage, support local agriculture and the farm economy on some of the richest irreplaceable farmland, including agri-tourism and agribusinesses, and restore and revitalize the local community within the park.

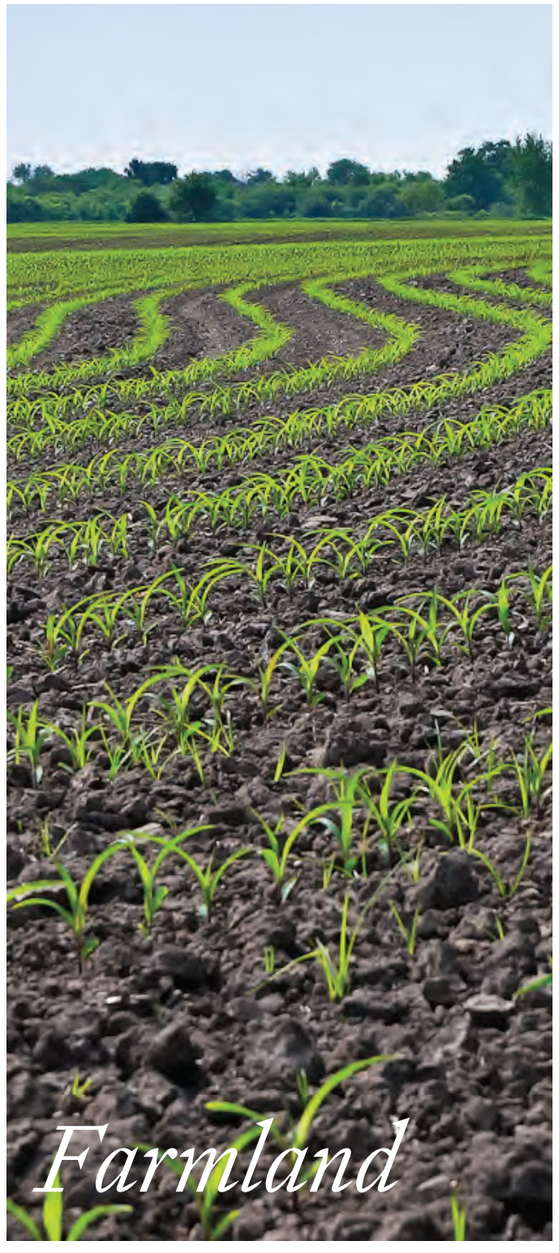


Image credit: Land Over Landings

3. The Three-Legged Stool

3. The Three-Legged Stool

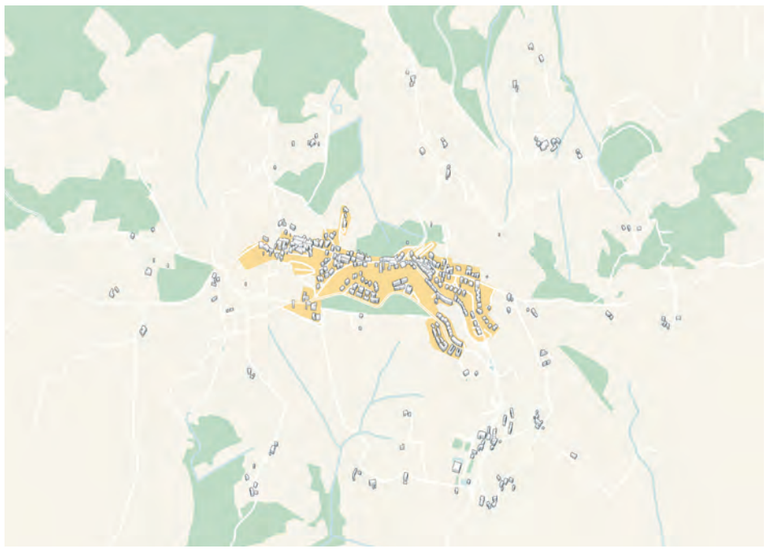
3.1 Precedents of Co-existence

3.1.1 Historic Precedents

There is a rich legacy of precedents that demonstrate the viability of a stable and harmonious relationship between an agriculturally oriented hamlet or village and its agricultural and natural hinterland.

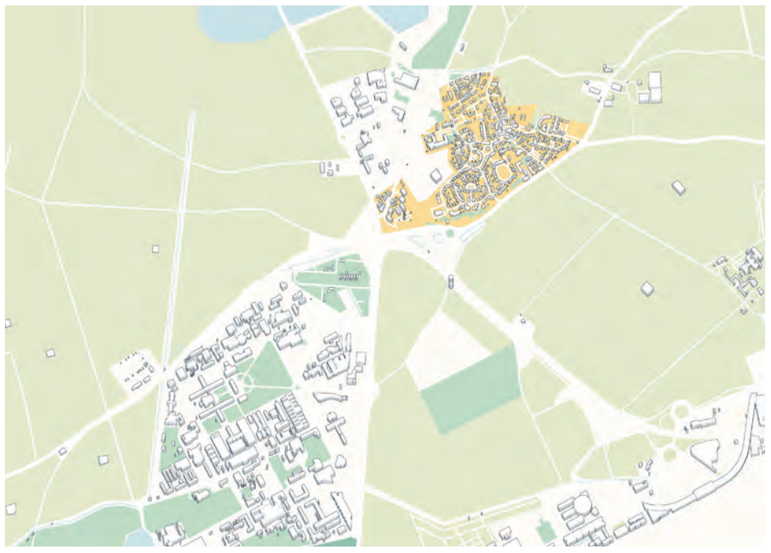
Panzano, Italy
Population: 1,200 people
Area: 74 acres

Image Credit: Vignaccia



Saclay, France
Population: 4,323 people
Area: 3,608 acres

Image Credit: Saclay.fr



Nieuwkoop, NL
Population: 28,628 people
Area: 19,397 acres

Image Credit: Maarten van de Biezen

3.1.2 Modern Precedents

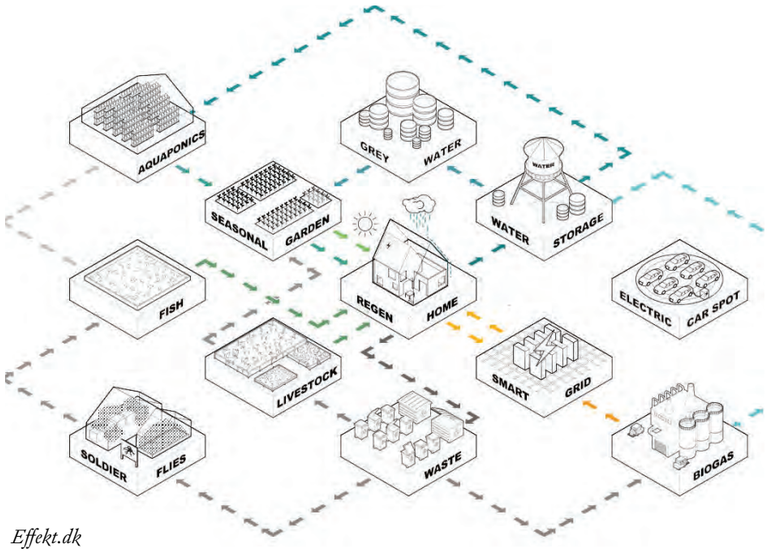
Vauban, District of Freiburg, Germany
Population: 5000 people
Area: 232 acres

Image Credit: Greenpeace media

A parish in Fingerplan of Copenhagen, Denmark
Typical Population: 2,500 people
Typical Area: 350 acres

Image Credit: Slagslunde-Ganløse IF

ReGen Village, Netherlands and Canada
Population: 75 people
Area: 4 acres

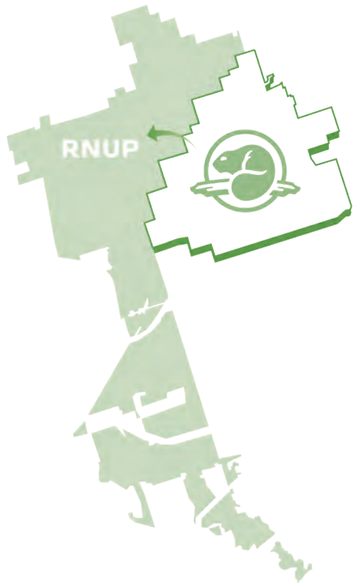


Effekt.dk

3. The Three-Legged Stool

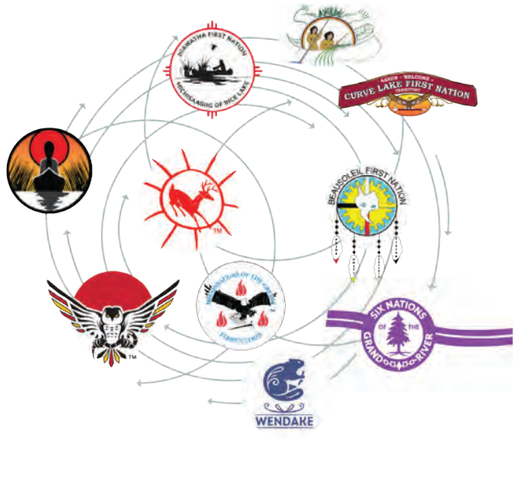
3.2 Principles

3.2.1 Ten Guiding Principles



1. Land Transfer

- All Pickering Federal Lands are transferred to the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) under Parks Canada's mandate and management.
- Parks Canada needs to be adequately resourced to effect and manage the expansion.



2. First Nation Inclusion

- Parks Canada has partnerships in place and an established framework in the RNUP that includes First Nations in its management, through the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle, comprised of representatives from 10 First Nations with an expressed interest, historic and cultural connection to the national urban park area.

3. Enhance the Rouge National Urban Park

- Contribute to the viability and functionality of the Rouge National Urban Park
- Protect additional natural systems and ecology including their strategic natural setting within the Duffins Creek watershed, its forested areas, streams, vegetation and topography.
- Promote the expanded Rouge National Urban Park as a place of natural refuge while also encouraging recreation and educating users of the mental and physical health benefits of spending time outdoors.
- Promote understanding of the common interest in natural and cultural stewardship, both historical and present.

4. Preserve Class 1 farmland

- Acknowledge the vital role of agriculture as a key part of the local economy.
- Enhance the unique contribution the lands can make to provide opportunities for intensive mixed farming for local food production and increased food security.
- Support a new generation of farmers seeking to engage in farming.

3.2.2 Ten Guiding Principles

5. Restore Community

- Accommodate and house the local community including those working in farming and related enterprises.
- Utilize existing brownfields including the opportunity for the revitalized hamlet of Brougham.
- Seek selective new opportunities to restore a community presence within the Park related to the farming activity and within controlled limits conditioned by the unique natural setting.
- Showcase solutions for rural revitalization applicable to other rural municipalities.

6. Co-existence of mutually supporting uses

- Preservation of the unique natural setting while providing a regional natural, agricultural and cultural resource and contributing to the local economy.
- Combine the three principal elements in the Park: nature, farming and community in mutually supportive relationships.
- Leverage the value of this combination striking the right balance so that each use is viable and the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

7. Foster inclusion

- Provide a welcoming and inclusive place where Canadians of all backgrounds can explore and connect with the natural world and each other.
- Provide visitor experiences and access to nature inspiring residents and visitors to explore the rural landscape and learn more about the region's natural heritage, including the Greenbelt.
- Enable a new population to engage in productive agriculture serving the region.

3.2.3 Ten Guiding Principles

8. Accessibility

- Enable visitors to explore the expanded Rouge National Urban Park in a variety of ways that promote responsible stewardship of the natural and cultural environment.
- Provide an example of sustainable mobility and access to and within the Park.
- Provide safe access, incorporate, formalize, and leverage existing trail linkages between public landholdings identified in the TRCA Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region including but not limited to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, the Greenbelt Route, the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and the Trans Canada Trail and local networks.

9. Quality of Place

- Enhance the experience of place.
- Provide welcoming places to gather, meet and share and appreciate the unique qualities of the Park while resting lightly on the land.
- Promote high standards of design excellence in the Park landscape interventions, and community structures and infrastructure.

10. A sustainabile model

- Advocate for adequate funding and resources to support Parks Canada's work to implement the expansion and the vision.
- Enhance the long-term resiliency of a dynamic and growing urban region.
- Preserve an enlarged green reserve within the larger urban area that contributes to carbon sequestration, flood protection and climate tempering.
- Employ best practices to promote climate readiness in all operations within the Park.
- Work with Parks Canada as they undertake a public process to refine the vision for the future of the Pickering Federal Lands within the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

3.2.4 Park Canada's Key Objectives of *National Urban Parks*

The Pickering Federal Lands together with the Greenbelt and the Rouge National Urban Park will strengthen and enhance the ecological connection between the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Ontario. This is the only intact, contiguous connection between the two in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The lands should be transferred to Parks Canada, consistent with three key objectives for its National Urban Parks program:

1. *Conserve nature*

The National Urban Parks program aims to protect and preserve urban natural areas, contributing to Canada's biodiversity conservation goals. These parks will help safeguard important ecosystems and wildlife habitats within urban environments.

2. *Connect people with nature*

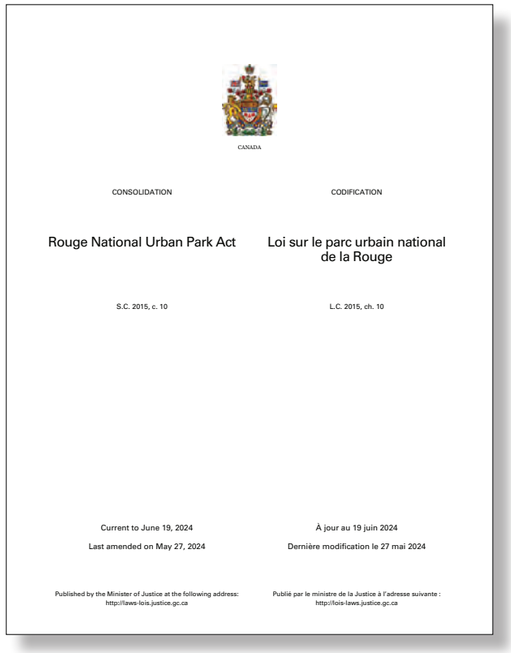
A major focus is improving access to nature and green spaces for urban residents. The parks will provide opportunities for city dwellers to experience and enjoy nature close to where they live, work, and play. This aims to enhance quality of life and create more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive communities.

3. *Advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*

The program emphasizes partnering with Indigenous communities and incorporating Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and perspectives. This includes honoring Indigenous stories and cultural connections to the land. The parks present an opportunity to foster renewed and respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples. By pursuing these objectives, Parks Canada aims to create a network of urban parks that conserve nature, provide urban residents with green spaces, and promote reconciliation - all while contributing to Canada's goal of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030.

The expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park into the Pickering Federal Lands is perfectly positioned to fulfill these objectives.

3.2.5 The Legislative Framework Established in the Four Pillars of the Rouge National Urban Park Act



CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

Rouge National Urban Park Act

Loi sur le parc urbain national de la Rouge

S.C. 2015, c. 10

L.C. 2015, ch. 10

Current to June 19, 2024

Last amended on May 27, 2024

À jour au 19 juin 2024

Dernière modification le 27 mai 2024

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Nature, Culture, Agriculture and Connecting People

The Act states the Park is *"established for the purposes of protecting and presenting, for current and future generations, the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and its diverse landscapes, promoting a vibrant farming community and encouraging Canadians to discover and connect with their national protected heritage areas."*

Photography from Parks Canada website, https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/on/rouge

3.3 Overarching Vision

3.3.1 The Three-Legged Stool Vision

Applying the concepts from Rouge National Urban Park to the Pickering Federal Lands as a potential extension would involve integrating nature, farming, and community (hamlets) in the following ways:

Nature:

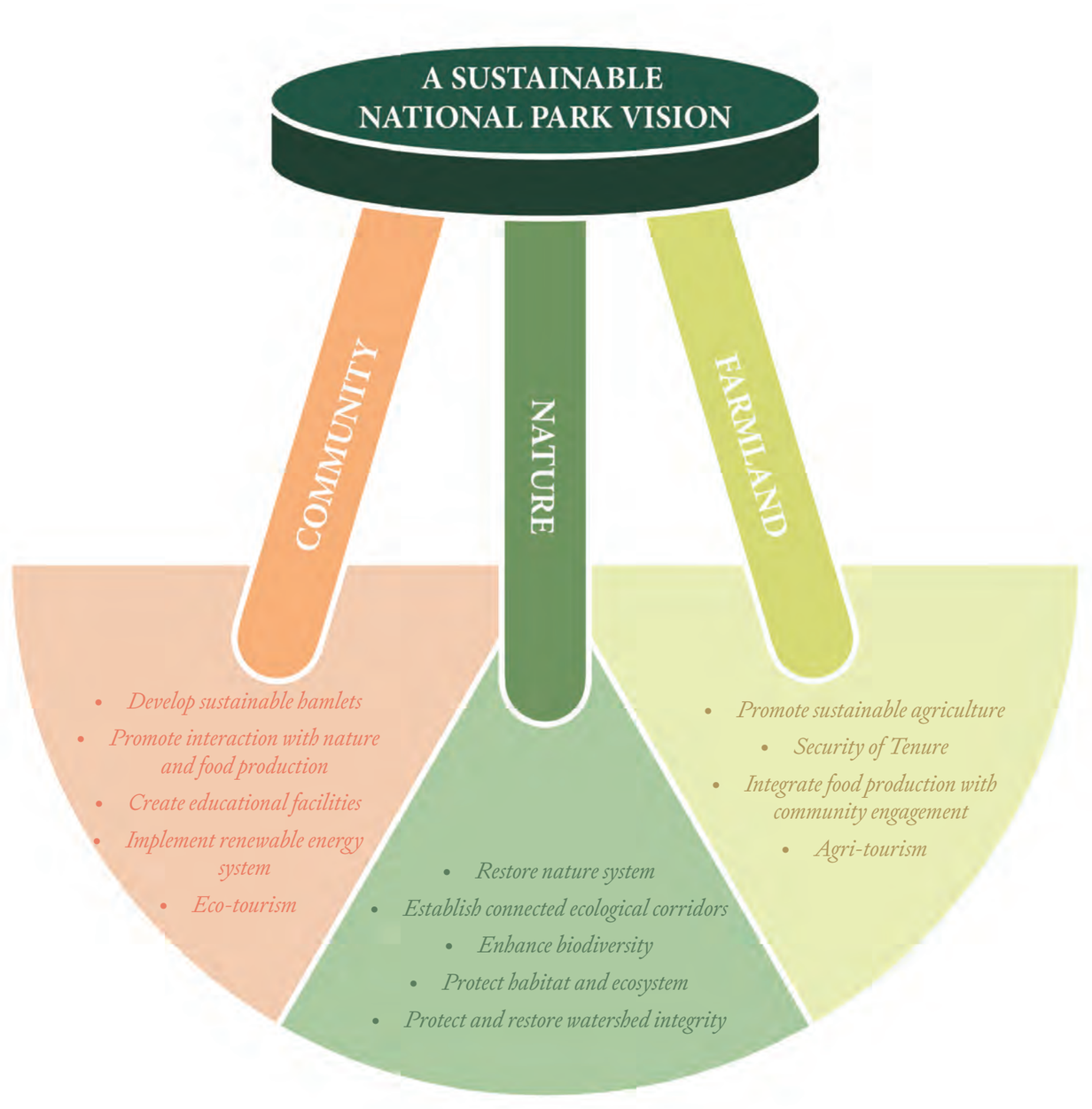
- Protect and enhance existing natural systems, including wetlands, forests, and wildlife corridors.
- Create ecological connectivity between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine, strengthening biodiversity and climate resilience.
- Implement restoration projects to improve habitats for species at risk and support overall ecosystem health.

Farmland:

- Maintain and promote sustainable agriculture on the high-quality farmland within the area.
- Offer long-term leases to farmers, providing stability and encouraging investment in sustainable practices.
- Integrate food production with community engagement through initiatives like community gardens and farmers' markets.
- Support innovative farming approaches, such as food forests and permaculture, as demonstrated by projects like the Hawley Hamlets Eco Village.

Community (Hamlets):

- Rebuild Brougham and Altona as sustainable hamlets that integrate with the natural and agricultural landscape.
- Design community spaces that encourage interaction with nature and local food production.
- Create educational facilities and programs that connect visitors with the park's ecological and agricultural features.
- Implement green building practices and renewable energy systems, such as solar panels, in any new structures.
- Create a model for rural revitalization that inspires rural communities across Ontario.



3.3.2 The Nature Vision

The Nature Vision encompasses a comprehensive strategy focused on restoring natural systems, connecting ecological corridors, enhancing biodiversity, and safeguarding habitats and ecosystems. This vision also integrates farmland and community spaces to ensure a harmonious and sustainable coexistence.

- *Restoration of Natural Systems:* Rejuvenate native flora and fauna to reestablish resilient, self-sustaining environments.
- *Ecological Corridors:* Enhance the corridors that are already present and create new pathways in order to facilitate wildlife movement and genetic exchange, critical for species survival and adaptation.
- *Biodiversity Enhancement:* Develop a mosaic of diverse habitats to support native species, through maintenance of the current habitats, creation of new habitats and management of invasive species, always with a focus on the life cycle requirements of key species.
- *Habitat and Ecosystem Protection:* Implement measures to control pollution, especially into waterways to preserve edge habitats. Practice sustainable land management to maintain functional ecosystems and watershed integrity.
- *Integration of Farmland:* Promote sustainable farming practices that enhance soil health and biodiversity, Design farmlands as buffer zones and transition areas supporting both wildlife and food production.
- *Community Spaces:* Develop recreational areas and educational facilities, and offer opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with and learn from the environment.

This holistic vision aims to create a thriving landscape that supports wildlife, promotes sustainable agriculture, and provides community amenities, fostering a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of nature, food systems, and human well-being.

3.3.3 The Farming Vision

The farming vision for Pickering Federal Lands is centered around promoting sustainable agriculture through innovative approaches that prioritize environmental stewardship and community engagement. This vision aims to create a vibrant agricultural landscape that not only produces healthy, local food but also strengthens community ties and contributes to overall food security.

Sustainable Agriculture Practices:

- Encourage regenerative farming techniques that enhance soil health, preserve water resources, and reduce chemical inputs, ensuring a productive and resilient agricultural ecosystem.

Innovative Approaches:

- Implement innovative practices such as cover cropping, rotational grazing, agroecology, and organic farming methods to maximize economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Explore agroforestry and permaculture practices to create diverse, multi-functional landscapes that benefit both farmers and the environment.

Integration of Food Production and Community Engagement:

- Foster partnerships between local farmers, community organizations, and residents to promote educational programs and workshops on sustainable farming practices and healthy eating.
- Create community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs that connect consumers directly with local producers, enhancing access to fresh, seasonal produce.

Contributions to Food Security:

- Establish a resilient local food system that reduces reliance on external food sources and enhances the availability of fresh produce for local residents.
- Encourage diverse crop production to provide a stable food supply and minimize risks associated with market fluctuations.

Long-Term Leases for Farmers:

- Offer secure, long-term leases to farmers to promote investment in land improvements, infrastructure, and sustainable practices, ensuring stability for both the agricultural community and the land.
- Support new and existing farmers with access to resources, training, and mentorship, fostering a thriving agricultural community.

This comprehensive farming vision for Pickering Federal Lands seeks to create a sustainable, innovative agricultural model that benefits both the environment and the community. By prioritizing food production, community engagement, and long-term stability, this vision aims to enhance food security and create a vibrant, resilient food system that serves current and future generations.

3.3.4 The Community Vision

The community vision is to develop two sustainable hamlets that seamlessly integrate with the natural environment and food production systems, creating a model of rural development that serves as a leading example in Canada. This vision focuses on fostering strong community ties, promoting environmental stewardship, and enhancing quality of life through thoughtful planning and innovative practices.

Development of Sustainable Hamlets:

- Design compact, eco-friendly residential areas for farmers, agricultural workers and others working for local businesses and services that minimize environmental footprints and preserve natural areas.
- Rebuild Brougham and Altona as sustainable hamlets that integrate with the natural and agricultural landscape.
- Utilize green building practices and materials to create energy-efficient homes and communal spaces that blend with the surroundings.

Promotion of Interaction with Nature and Food Production:

- Establish community gardens, orchards, and green spaces that encourage residents to engage with and appreciate nature and local food production.
- Support community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs and farmers' markets to strengthen connections between residents and local farmers.

Creation of Educational Facilities:

- Build educational centers focused on sustainability, agriculture, and environmental science, offering programs for all ages.
- Provide hands-on learning opportunities through workshops and internships, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and environmental awareness.

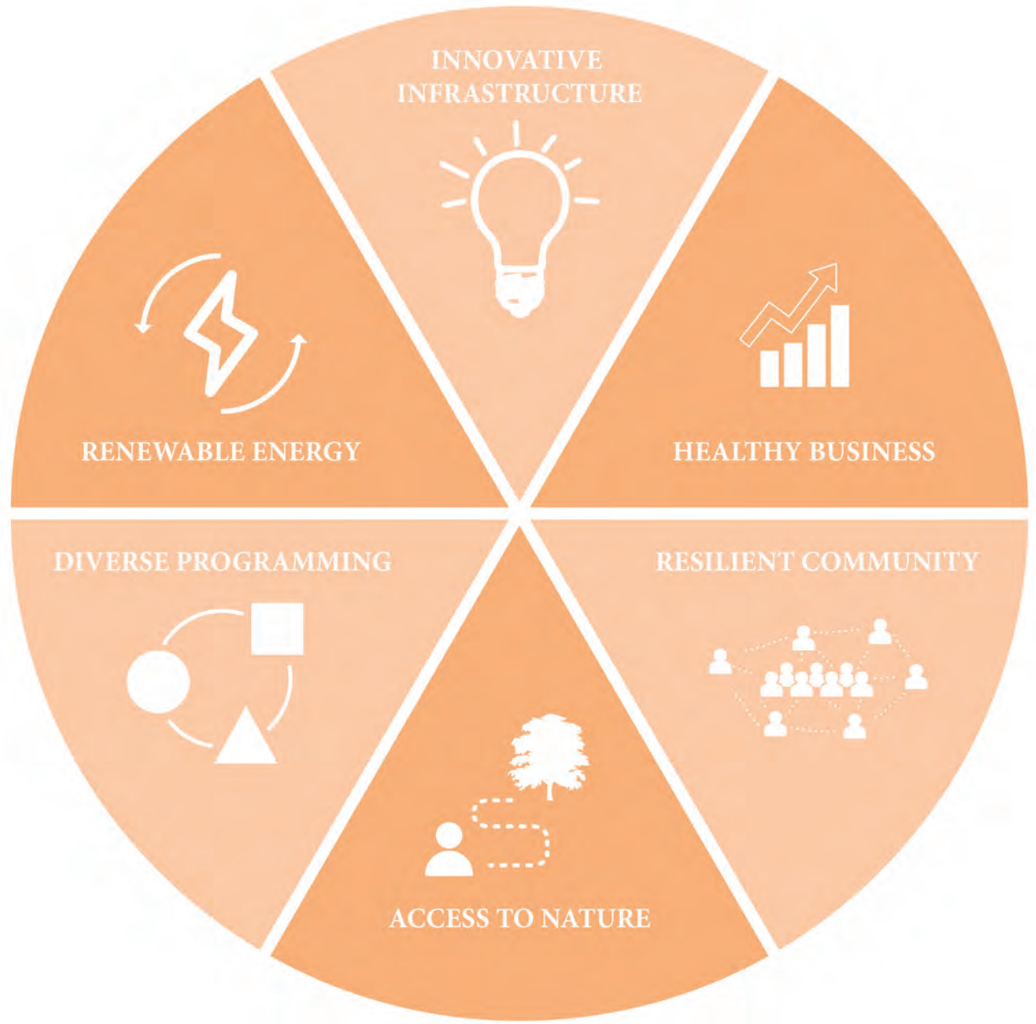
Implementation of Renewable Energy Systems:

- Invest in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind to power homes, businesses, and public facilities, reducing the community's carbon footprint.
- Promote energy independence and resilience through community-wide energy initiatives and infrastructure.

Leadership in Rural Development:

- Set a national example by demonstrating the viability and benefits of sustainable rural development practices.
- Share knowledge and best practices with other communities and policymakers to inspire broader adoption across Canada.

The community vision for Pickering Federal Lands aims to create a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient rural community that harmonizes with its natural surroundings. By prioritizing sustainable living, education, renewable energy, and strong local food systems, the hamlets aspire to be a beacon of innovative rural development in Canada, enhancing the well-being of its residents and setting a standard for future rural communities.



4. The Nature Vision

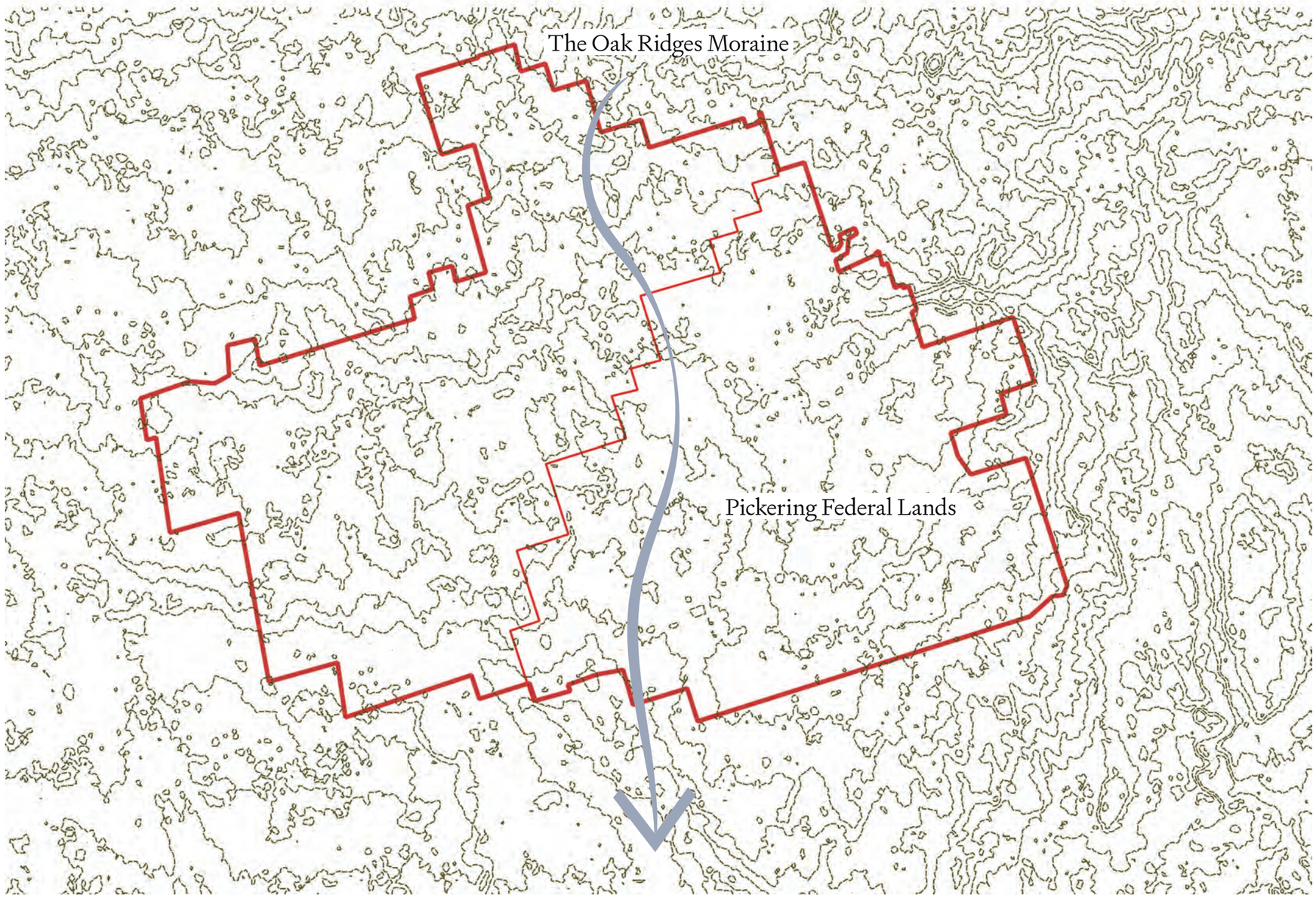
4. The Nature Vision

4.1 Nature Context

4.1.1 Topographic Map

The Oak Ridge Moraine, a prominent geological feature, runs through the region, creating a distinctive ridge that affects water drainage and soil composition.

Flat and gently sloping areas in Pickering Federal Lands are more conducive to agricultural and residential use. The topography also influences water flow, with the moraine acting as a critical water divide that directs groundwater and surface runoff towards Lake Ontario.



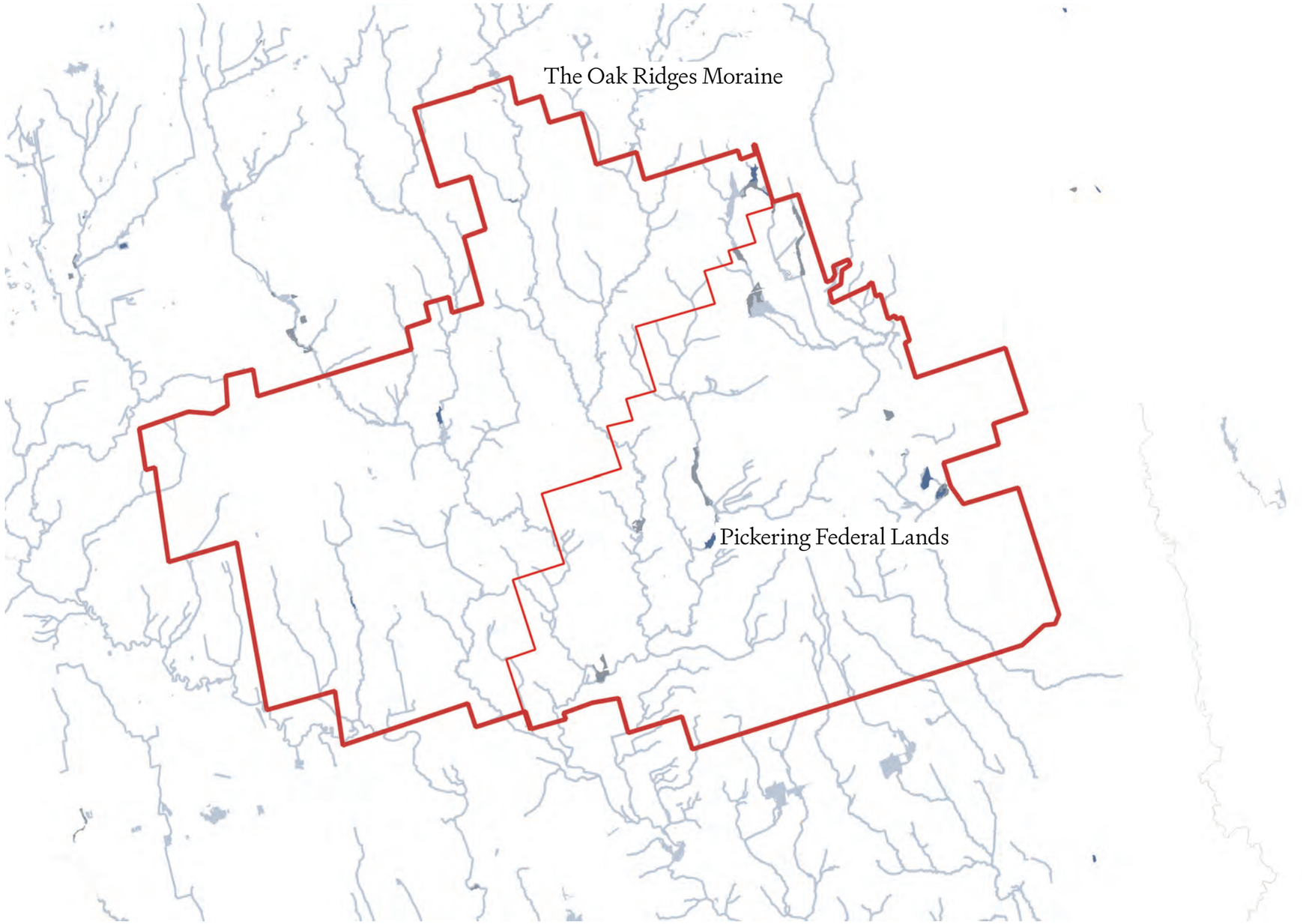
LEGEND

----- 10 mt contour

4.1.2 Hydrological map

In the region between the Oak Ridge Moraine and Lake Ontario, hydrology plays a significant role in shaping the landscape and influencing ecological processes. The Oak Ridge Moraine, a prominent geological feature, acts as a critical water divide. It consists of a series of ridges and valleys formed by glacial deposits, which direct the flow of groundwater and surface water. Water from this moraine typically flows southward toward Lake Ontario, impacting local streams, wetlands, and rivers.

By mapping these features, it becomes possible to analyze how water moves through the landscape, the distribution of water resources, and the potential impacts on surrounding ecosystems and human infrastructure.



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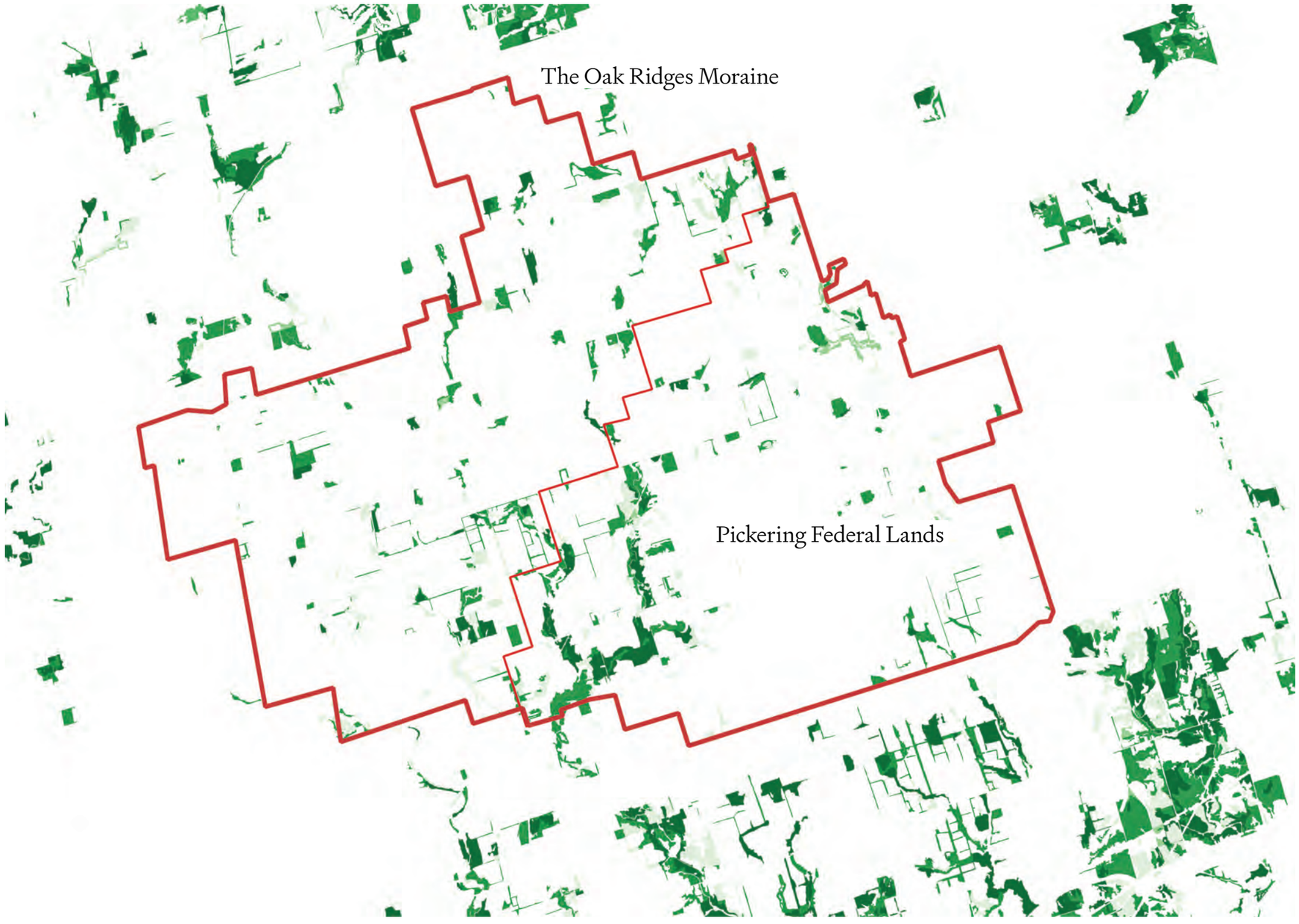
- Waterways
- Flood risk: light
- Flood risk: moderate
- Flood risk: high

Map source: TRCA

4.1.3 Forest inventory: canopy age

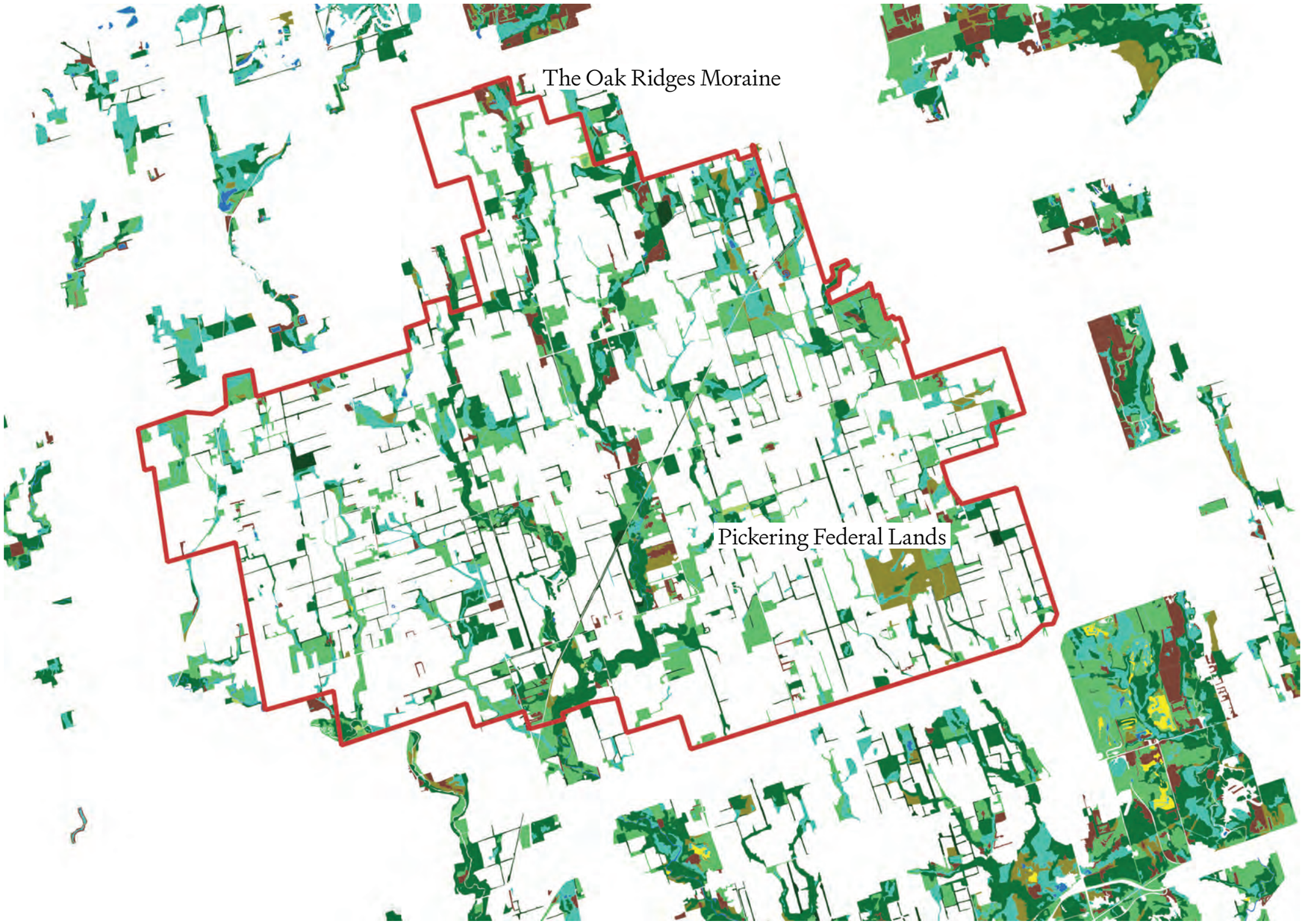
In a forest, different canopy ages play unique roles. Mature canopies provide essential habitat and support diverse wildlife, while mid-aged canopies offer transitional habitat with developing structures. Old-growth canopies, with their large trees and deep bark, create specialized habitats and contribute significantly to biodiversity and carbon sequestration. Pioneer trees, which colonize disturbed areas, stabilize soil and prepare the ground for more diverse plant communities. Young trees are crucial for future canopy development and support species adapted to early successional environments. Each age group contributes to the forest's overall health and ecological balance.



Map source: TRCA

4.1.4 Habitat inventory

Different habitats, such as forests, wetlands, grasslands, and oceans, each support a unique array of species, contributing to the overall biodiversity and stability of ecosystems. This diversity is essential for a balanced and self-sustaining environment, as different species play specific roles in nutrient cycling, pollination, pest control, and climate regulation. By identifying and understanding the diversity within these habitats, we can implement targeted conservation efforts to protect endangered species, restore degraded ecosystems, and manage natural resources more sustainably. Promoting habitat conservation, reducing pollution, and supporting sustainable land-use practices are crucial steps in maintaining biodiversity.



Map source: TRCA

4.1.5 Key endangered species

Little Brown Myotis *Myotis lucifugus*
Tri-coloured Bat *Perimyotis subflavus*
Northern Myotis *Myotis septentrionalis*

Threat: Loss of roosting sites
Action: Retain large old trees. Assess buildings for roosts before demolition. Ensure potential roost features in new built houses

Threat: Loss of navigational queues
Actions: Retain corridors in the wider environment. Especially along water ways Increase patchy / depleted corridors

Threat: Loss of prey
Actions: Reduce pesticide use

Yellow Banded Bumble bee *Bombus terricola*
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*

Threat: Pesticide use associated with agriculture
Action: Reduce pesticide use

Threat: Loss of nesting habitat
Action: Retain dead logs and decomposing material

Threat: Habitat loss within urban areas and areas of intensive agriculture
Action: Ensure abundance of native flowers simple petal structure

Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*
King Rail *Rallus elegans*
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Threat: Forest loss - habitat loss
Action: Retain forest, retain connection, increase where possible

Threat: Disturbance from urban and agriculture
Action: Increase buffer between habitats (forest / wetland etc) and buildings / agriculture

Redside Dace *Clinostomus elongatus*

Threat: Destruction and degradation of habiat - siltation, bank removal, water quality deterioration
Action: Maintain small pools and slow moving streams. Retain overhanging foliage and rock and gravel stream, bed, protect water quality.

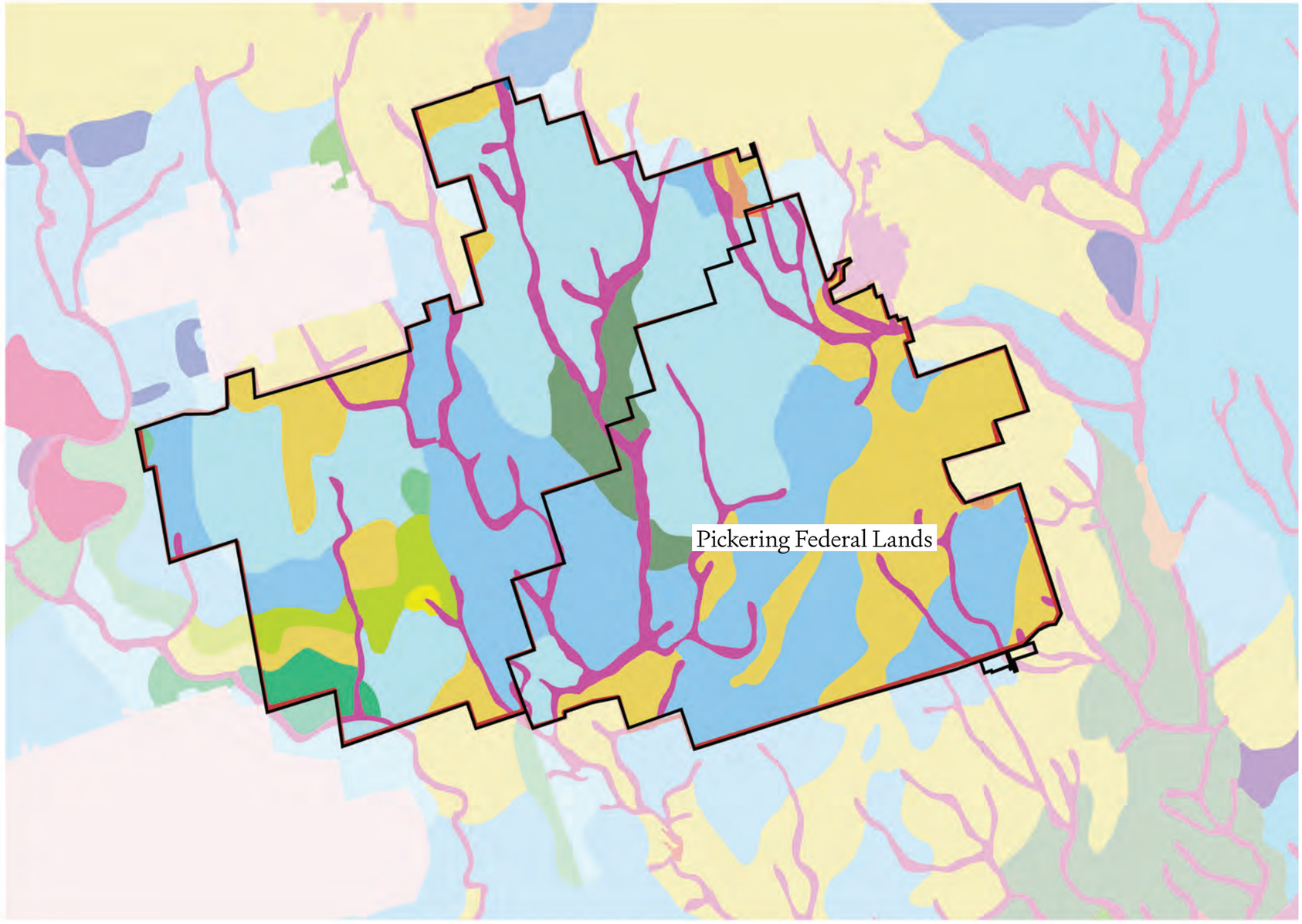
Blanding's Turtle *Emydoidea blandingii*

Threat: Habitat loss - encroachment of European reeds
Action: Maintain good habitats and remove European reed

Threat: Wetland pollution
Action: Reduce potentials for pollution

4.1.6 Soil types

Distinct soil types have varying textures and characteristics. Brighton sandy loam is a well-drained, sandy-textured soil known for its good agricultural potential, especially for crops like vegetables and grains. Milliken loam is a fertile, medium-textured soil that supports a wide range of agricultural activities, including crop and pasture production. Peel clay loam is heavier and rich in clay content, making it more suitable for crops that thrive in dense, moisture-retentive soils. Bottom land refers to the fertile, low-lying areas near rivers or streams, characterized by rich, alluvial soils that are highly productive but prone to flooding. Finally, Woburn loam is a well-balanced, versatile soil with a mix of sand, silt, and clay, ideal for various crops due to its good drainage and nutrient-holding capacity.



LEGEND

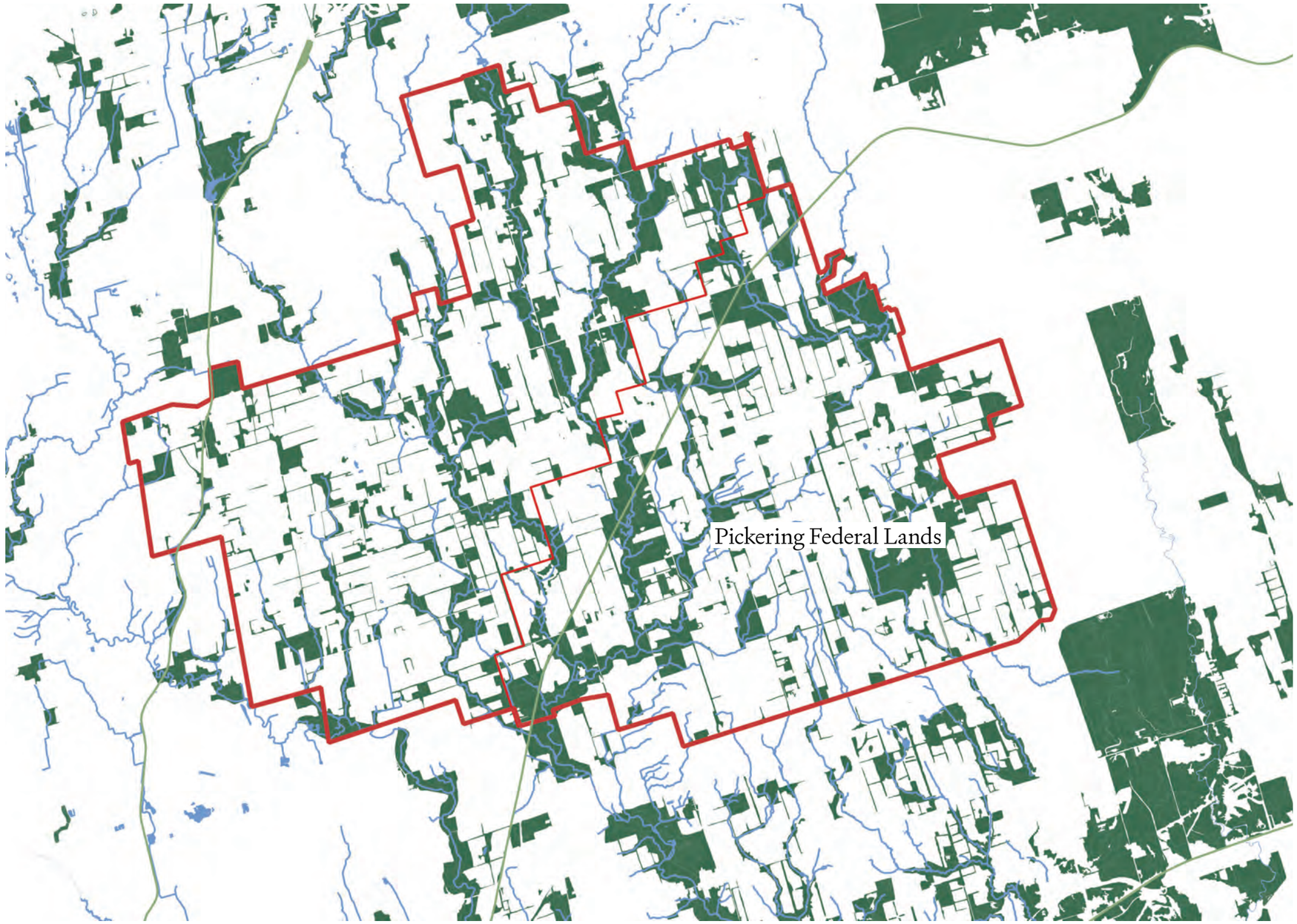
- Brighton Sandy Loam
- Milliken Loam
- Peel clay loam
- Bottom land
- Woburm loam

Map source: https://experience.arcgis.com/

4.1.7 Nature Structure

Natural elements like woodlands, creeks, biodiversity corridors, and diverse biotopes form the foundation for a resilient and sustainable framework. These elements serve as the backbone of ecological networks, anchoring the development process by enhancing environmental quality and connectivity.

Leveraging existing natural elements allows for the identification of opportunities where these assets can be expanded, connected, or integrated into a new future in the expanded Rouge National Urban Park. By starting with these natural assets as the foundation, the framework for future development is anchored in sustainability and resilience. This foundation supports not only ecological health but also social and economic vitality. It encourages the integration of green infrastructure, sustainable land use practices, and nature-based solutions that are vital for addressing contemporary environmental challenges.



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- Planting Corridor
- Water Corridor
- Railway Corridor

Map source: TRCA

4. The Nature Vision

4.2 Nature Strategy

4.2.1 Intervention at different scales

XL

Rouge National Urban Park

At a territorial scale, the nature intervention aims to reconnect the area with the broader Greenbelt and adjacent Rouge National Urban Park connecting to Lake Ontario. This involves creating new natural areas to enhance the existing ecological infrastructure, promote biodiversity, and provide new visitor experiences, thereby improving future residents' quality of life and preserving the region's natural heritage.

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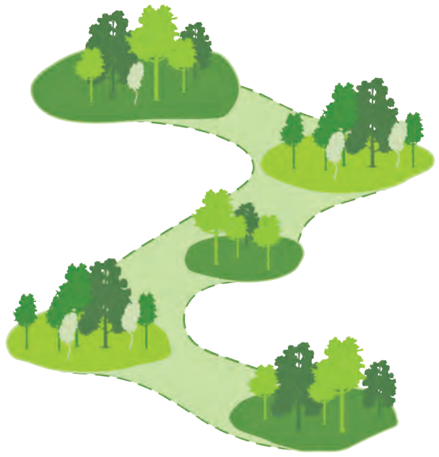


Biodiversity Corridor

By filling the gaps in existing nature stepping stones and introducing new biodiversity corridors, the project enhances the connectivity and ecological value of these areas. This not only strengthens the role of windbreaks as valuable natural habitats but also supports the movement of wildlife and the flow of genetic diversity, thereby increasing the overall health and resilience of the ecosystem.

M

Agroforestry

As a large-scale intervention, the introduction of agroforestry aims to create ecotones and buffer zones that enhance biodiversity and provide optimal conditions for agriculture. The resulting ecotones act as transition zones between different ecosystems, promoting ecological balance and resilience. Additionally, these buffer areas help mitigate environmental impacts, such as soil erosion and water runoff, while also improving crop yields and overall land productivity including maple syrup farming.

S

Tree-lined Fencerow Connections

A strategy focused on reconnecting the division lines across farmland aims to create a continuous ecological corridor by planting majestic trees of a variety of heights and species along fencerows. This approach strengthens biodiversity and enhances the movement of wildlife, allowing animals, birds, and insects to move freely across the landscape, finding food, shelter, and mates more easily. By linking isolated areas with trees, the strategy improves the resilience of the farmland ecosystem, contributing to healthier soil, natural pest control, and overall sustainability.

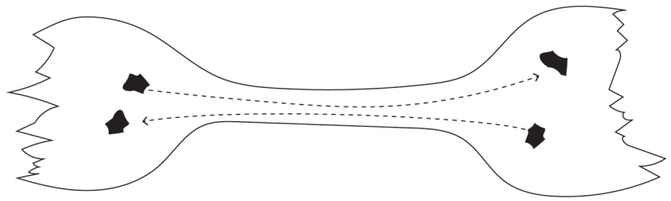
4.2.2 Biocorridor Principle

Wildlife need corridors or landscape linkages that allow them to move between habitats. Any comprehensive strategy for biodiversity requires maintaining habitat across a variety of spatial scales and improving landscape connectivity. Environmental corridors play a critical role in providing refugia and facilitating species adaptation to climate change. Farm corridors can allow the localized movement of wildlife. Agricultural lands also serve as essential buffers for nearby wildlife reserves or connecting corridors between reserves. The biocorridor will not take out large amounts of viable land from productive landscapes, rather we aim to make use of marginal lands by investing in soil and riparian health, pollinators, and migratory species.

Benefits of the biocorridor for farmlands:

- Wild margins provide food security for the whole system.
- Boosting wider insect and bird populations that offer natural pest control.
- Hedges planted around crops help to reduce the negative impacts of extreme temperatures and strong winds on the crop plants.
- **The ecosystem services that nature provides are our 'natural capital'. Without their irreplaceable functions such as pollination, climate regulation, soil health, and water filtration, we will be jeopardising our future food security and there will be no negotiation in the world that will bring that back.**
- Natural flood management, can mitigate impacts with regards to climate change - both flooding and aridity.

Corridor continuity and width are the two primary determinates of how well corridors function as a bio-diversity corridor. Corridors can perform five major functions (conduit, habitat, filter, source and sink). Within each uninterrupted section of the Green corridor, each of this three functions (conduit, habitat and source) should be achieved:

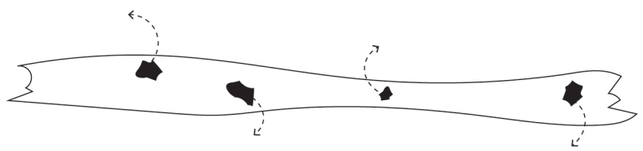


Conduit

Species can move through the corridor

Habitat

Areas where species can perform functions of life



Source

An area where local reproduction exceeds mortality, so species move out of that area

To achieve this, each uninterrupted section should contain a patch of sufficient size to accommodate at least invertebrates/ plants. Example ranges of minimum Patch Area:

Plants	5 to 250 ac
Invertebrates	50 sq ft to ≥ 2.5 ac
Reptiles, amphibians	3 to ≥35 ac
Grassland birds	12 to ≥135 ac
Waterfowl	≥12 ac
Forest birds	5 to ≥95 ac
Small mammals	2.5 to ≥ 25 ac
Large mammals	40 ac to ≥ 2 sq mi
Large predators	3.5 to ≥ 850 sq mi

4.2.3 From Lake Ontario to Oak Ridges Moraine

The Pickering Federal Lands have a strategically significant location between the Greenbelt and Lake Ontario, serving as a vital ecological corridor and watershed link.

Nature's remarkable presence exists on the site today. Without the expansion of the RNUP, the nature leg of the stool will be severely compromised as urbanization encroaches on this natural setting, diminishing its power.

A key objective of the project is to create a cohesive network by connecting all the natural assets both within and around the site, ensuring seamless integration.

This "big gesture" reinforces the area's role in maintaining biodiversity, facilitating wildlife movement, and supporting the health of surrounding ecosystems.

Additionally, it enhances water management by linking upland areas to the lake, ensuring the flow of clean water and preserving the region's environmental integrity.

4.2.4 Connect the Corridors

Through careful study and analysis of the site's natural context, we can identify key ecological corridors that follow the woodlands and forests. These corridors are essential for preserving biodiversity, as they provide pathways for wildlife movement and habitats where native plants can thrive. To enhance these connections, it is crucial to maintain a minimum corridor width that supports the free movement of species and ensures the health of ecosystems.

Additionally, any gaps or missing links within these corridors should be addressed to ensure continuous, unbroken ecological networks. By strengthening these connections, we not only improve wildlife mobility but also contribute to the overall resilience of the environment, creating a more robust and interconnected natural system.

Beyond the boundaries of the Pickering Federal Lands, this corridor network has the potential to connect and or expand into a much larger regional trail and open space system. To the north, ecological corridors and multi-use trails could link directly into the extensive trail networks of Uxbridge and the Oak Ridges Moraine, including Uxbridge Provincial Park and the surrounding conservation lands. These northward connections would tie the Rouge system into one of the most significant natural landscapes in the Greater Toronto Area, offering continuous routes for wildlife movement while also providing long-distance recreational opportunities for walking, cycling, and nature exploration.

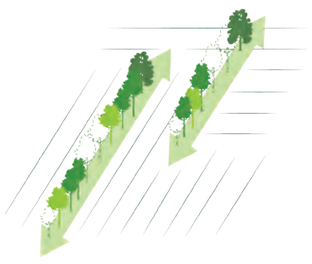
To the south, complementary connections could extend through Seaton toward the lower Rouge Valley and Lake Ontario. As Seaton continues to evolve, these trail linkages present an opportunity to weave new communities into the regional open space framework from the outset, ensuring that development reinforces rather than fragments ecological and recreational continuity. Together, the northern and southern connections would position the Pickering Federal Lands as a critical hinge within a regional network—linking moraine, valley, and waterfront—strengthening both ecological resilience and public access to nature at a metropolitan scale.

4.2.5 Nature Protection Strategy

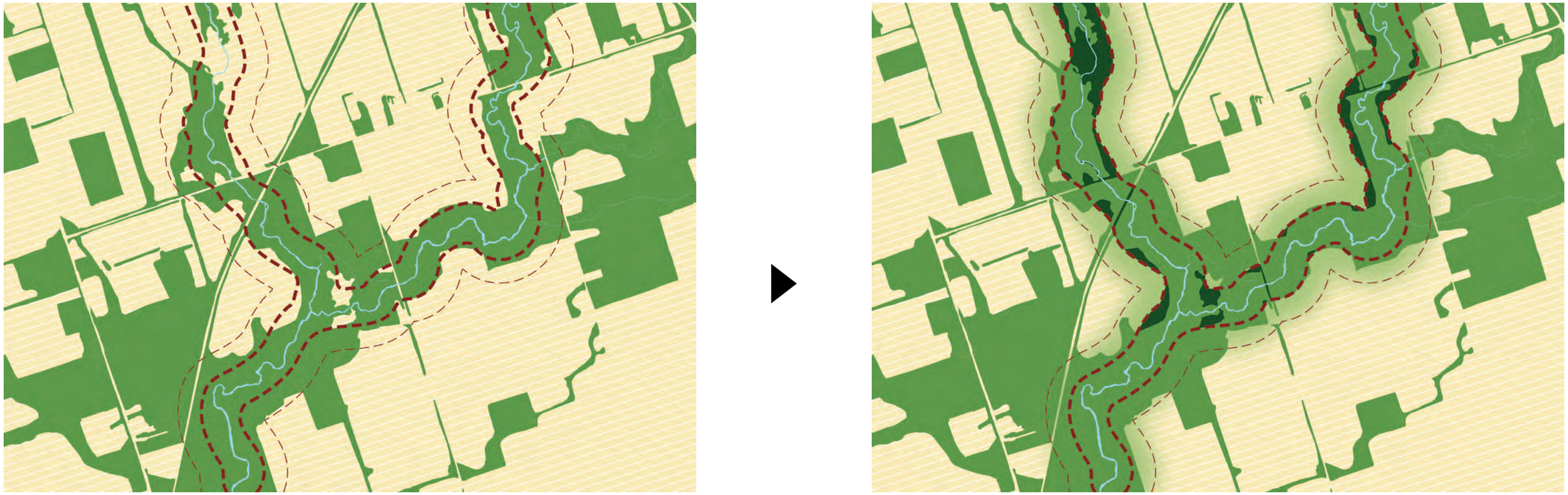
Biodiversity Corridor - 100m offset

Agroforestry - 200m offset

Existing Woodlands and Hedgerow Connection



4.2.6 Nature Vision Plan - Principle



Existing Nature Layer

Farming

Nature Preservation Area - 100m offset

Agroforestry Area - 200m offset

Existing Nature Layer

New Nature Ecosystem Services

Farming

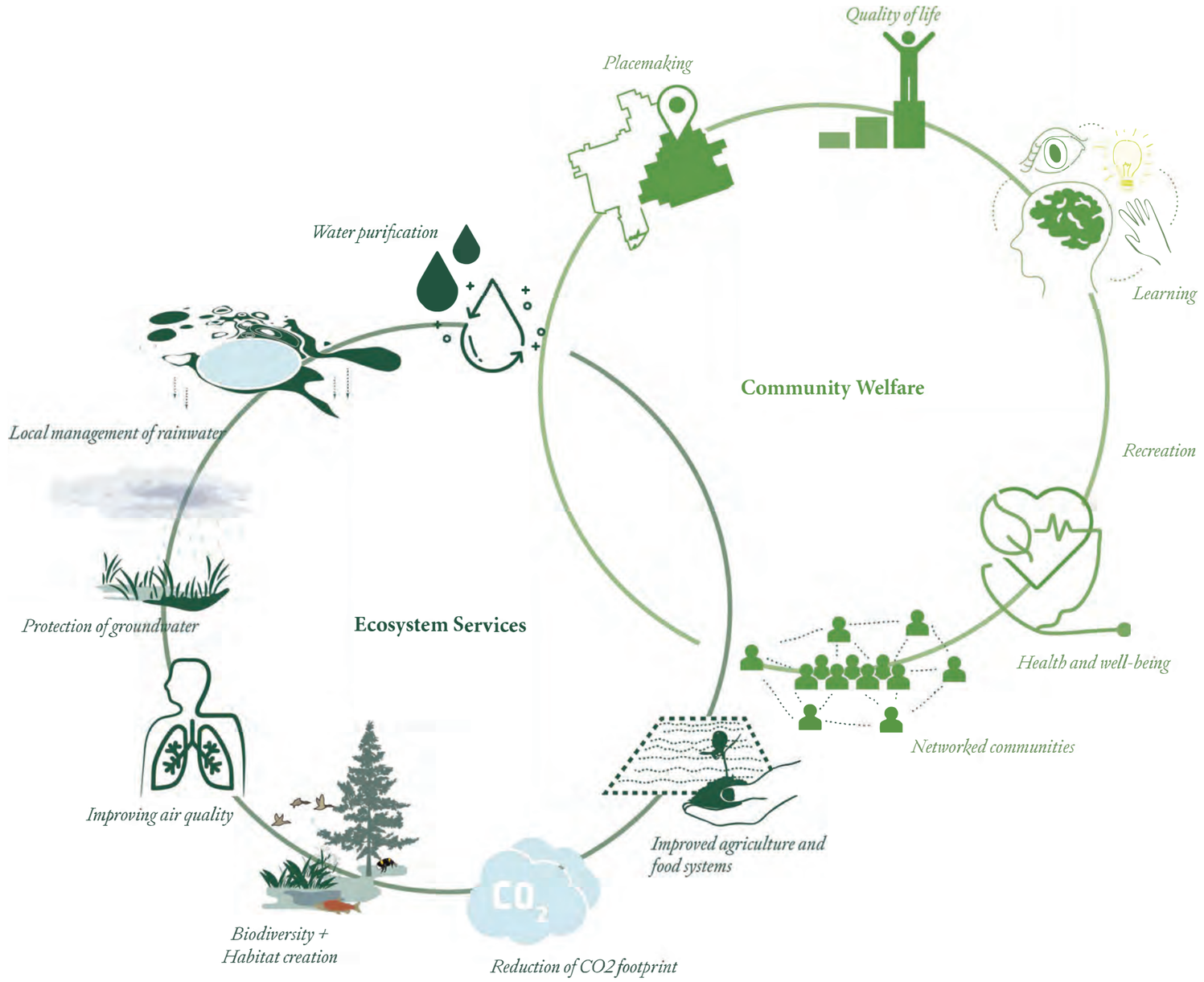
Nature Presevation Area - 100m offset

Agroforestry Area - 200m offset

4.2.7 Nature Values

In the future vision of the Pickering Federal Lands, ecosystem services will play a vital role in enhancing both agricultural and natural landscapes. By incorporating nature-based design practices, the park can enhance farmland and surrounding natural areas, to boost air quality, protect groundwater and local creeks and reduce carbon footprints and emissions associated with farming and future development. Techniques like agroforestry, rainwater harvesting, and wetland restoration will help manage rainwater, mitigating the impacts of cloudbursts and naturally filtering water before it enters the surrounding waterways. These practices will not only support biodiversity but also provide a resilient landscape that contributes to the long-term sustainability of the region.

Ecosystem services will also contribute directly to the well-being of existing and future communities by creating healthier natural environments that improve air quality, create green spaces for recreation, and promote mental and physical health. Social connections will be strengthened through community-based agricultural projects and shared natural and public spaces. Additionally, educational initiatives in sustainable agriculture, water management, and ecosystem preservation will promote lifelong learning. Overall, these efforts will enhance quality of life and contribute to placemaking, turning Pickering Federal Lands into a vibrant, sustainable community.



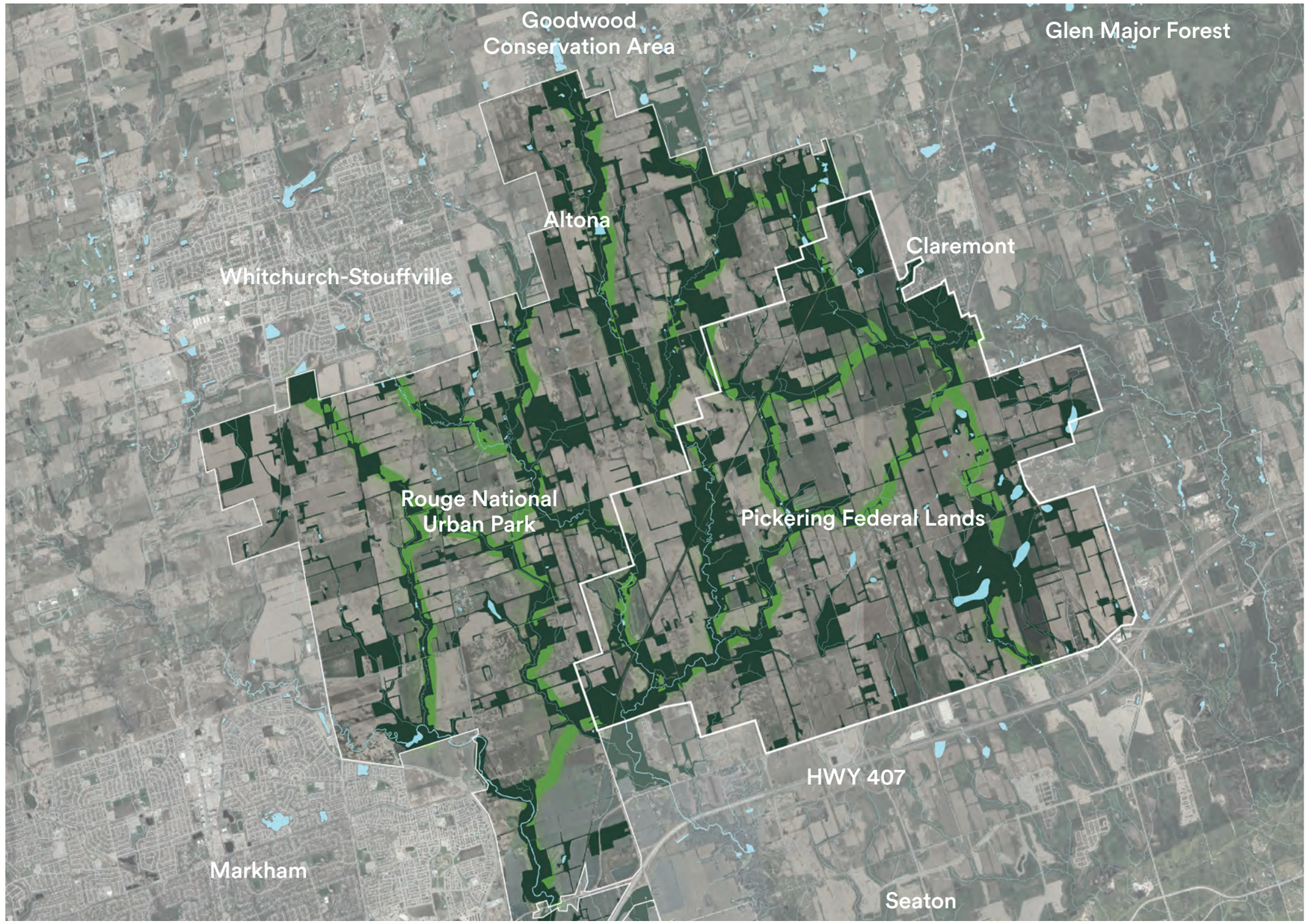
4.2.8 Nature Vision Plan

The combined nature vision plan for the Pickering Federal Lands joined to the Rouge National Urban Park focusses on four core principles: protect, connect, preserve, and restore. These guiding principles form the approach to safeguarding and enhancing the site's ecological health.

As illustrated on the map to the right, different zones are highlighted based on these priorities. In areas with existing natural features, such as riverbeds, wetlands, and forests, protection and preservation are crucial to ensure these vital ecosystems remain undisturbed and continue to thrive.

In the proposed nature corridor areas, new planting zones are planned to reinforce the continuity of the ecological network. These additions are essential for enabling the free movement of species and ensuring biodiversity. By restoring degraded habitats and enhancing existing ecosystems, the plan not only re-establishes natural connections but also improves the resilience of the corridor as a whole.

This integrated approach—protecting established ecosystems while actively restoring and connecting fragmented areas—creates a cohesive, sustainable environment that benefits both wildlife and the broader landscape.



LEGEND

- Existing nature to be protected
- Proposed nature corridor

5. The Farming Vision

5. The Farming Vision

5.1 Farming Situation

5.1.1 Introduction

The most productive soil in Canada is located primarily in southern Ontario, and the Pickering Federal Lands are primarily Class 1 soil.

- Protecting the agricultural soil of the Pickering Federal Lands protects the ecosystem services that enable healthy plant, animal, and human life.
- Productive agricultural land is finite. Once that land is used for other purposes, it cannot be brought back into production. Yet Ontario's farmland is decreasing at an unsustainable rate (319 acres/day) due to non-agricultural development.
- These Lands offer a unique opportunity to address major barriers that are preventing new farmers from pursuing agricultural careers and that are threatening the long-term sustainability of our agri-food sector. The Lands also open up opportunities to offer a range of farm sizes and the ability to grow a wide range of food crops.
- The Province's Housing Review Task Force has confirmed that there is enough land available to meet the Province's Housing Needs in already designated urban development areas, so there is no need to sacrifice this prime farmland to meet housing needs.
- This is an opportunity for the Federal Government to address a significant issue of farmland loss and the future viability of Canada's agri-food sector, instead of pitting housing and food production against one another.
- The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) stands ready to partner with the government should an alternative model be needed. This would have far-reaching impacts on land conservation efforts, as it would establish a model for land trusts that could create localized farmland preserves throughout Ontario.

Photography by Laura Parsons

5.1.2 Importance of Productive Agriculture

Unique Value of the Land:

Only 5% of the Canadian land mass is made up of prime farmland. Of that, only 0.5% of it is Class 1, the most productive land for food production. Importantly, 50% of Canada's Class 1 soil is concentrated in Southern Ontario, particularly around the GTA. The Pickering Federal Lands are primarily made up of this unique, valuable, and finite Class 1 farmland. Protecting these lands is critical for a national food security strategy, as well as maintaining local agri-food economies and communities.

"Soil delivers ecosystem services that enable all—plant, animal, human—life on Earth ... Soil is as critical as the air we breathe and the water we drink. Soil health is human health is One Health. Yet, soil is still at risk in Canada and around the world ... all levels of government—federal, provincial, territorial, municipal—should work together to plan agriculture into, and not out of, communities." (*Source: Critical ground: why soil is essential to Canada´s economic, environmental, human and social health, Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Government of Canada*.)

Acreage:

Durham Region has a total of 264,518 acres of farmland. The Pickering Federal Lands comprise 8,700 acres (3,520 hectares), representing over 3% of the total land base available for food production. Considering that the Region has already lost 19% of its farmland in the last 15 years, it is critical that we now protect every acre of farmland possible.

According to Statistics Canada's 2021 Agricultural Census, Ontario is losing farmland at a rate of 319 acres per day.

Land Tenure and Affordability:

In addition to farmland needing long-term protection, farmers require long-term access to affordable and high-quality farmland. Farmland access in the Region has been precarious for generations due to the expropriation of farmland in the 70s. The federal expropriation for an airport and the adjacent provincial expropriation for a new city called Cedarwood forced farmers to relocate mostly north and east, competing for area farmland. Land speculators have also purchased significant amounts of land that lead to year-to-year lease agreements. Evidence shows that rented land may not be managed with the same long-term perspective as land that is farmer-owned or in long-term and secure rental agreements. For farmers, short-term rental contracts conflict with the fact that the soil health and economic benefits of good farming practices are only realized in the long term.

Secure, long-term tenure of farmland provides opportunities for investment in farm buildings, tile drainage, and the diversification of food production, such as fruit trees that require several years of growth before any produce can be harvested.

Durham Region saw its highest increase in farmland prices during the past several years, most notably in 2021 when farmland in the Region rose 26.8% in a single year . These prices are unsustainable for the long-term viability of farm businesses since they tie up capital and prevent investment in other aspects of the farm business, such as machinery, and packaging and processing equipment. The diminishing supply of land compounded by the increasing farmland prices (and other farming-related costs) are deterring young people from getting into agriculture.

In fact, Farmers under the age of 35 are leaving farming at twice the rate of the general farm population despite the average age of farmers (56.7) in Ontario, and 40% of these farmers are set to retire within the next 10 years. If we want to entice more young people to become farmers and see them succeed, we will need to address challenges within the agriculture system, including land access, financial security, rural infrastructure, policy changes, and more.

Production:

Consider this: 7,000 acres of prime farmland in Durham Region can produce up to 700,000 bushels of wheat, which can be used to produce almost 30 million loaves of bread to feed our communities. While that's an example of one commodity, the Pickering Federal Lands are suitable for growing a wide range of crops. And while prime agricultural land is suitable for row crops such as corn, wheat and soybeans, the unique geography, availability of water, and proximity to urban markets makes these Lands exceptional for growing a wide range of food products, including oilseed and grain, vegetables, fruit, floriculture, and animal agriculture. As noted in the Land Tenure and Affordability section above, long-term tenure can lead to the diversification of our agri-food system, which is important for environmental and economic sustainability, as well as the health and well-being of community members.

Farm Sizes:

The average farm size in Ontario is close to 250 acres. Over the past 15 years, Ontario's farming communities have witnessed the trend towards fewer and larger farms. Smaller farms, however, typically equate to lower cost, so make it relatively easier for farmers to enter and exit the sector. For new farmers, the start-up costs for a small-plant or vegetable farm are much lower than those faced when entering livestock production. Larger farms sell homogeneous goods into commercial markets and benefit greatly from economies of scale. Therefore, an important strategy for the agricultural system would be to maintain a variety of large, medium, and small-scale farms to support cost-effective measures of producing food while creating affordable pathways for new and young farmers to enter the agricultural sector.

5.1.3 Importance of Productive Agriculture

Viability of the Agri-Food Sector:

These lands are adjacent to the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), two critical agricultural land bases that rely on the continuity of agriculture on the Pickering Federal Lands.

The viability of the agri-food sector relies on the broad agricultural system, comprising a contiguous land base for agriculture plus a network of infrastructure, services and assets for food production, processing and distribution. Contiguous agricultural land is necessary for safe use of farm equipment on the roads, efficiency of farm labour, improving land stewardship and monitoring practices, better management of water resources, supporting biodiversity and habitat connectivity, and improving overall farm business viability and rural economic vitality.

There is the risk that farmers in RNUP could become isolated in the long-term and surrounded by urban development. Land has already been urbanized along the entire western boundary of the park, requiring farms in RNUP to be buffered from conflicts associated with trespassing, vandalism, theft, etc. To retain thriving, vibrant farms in RNUP, it is important for them to be connected to a larger farming community as well as critical farm infrastructure and agricultural services. Longer-term leases will also increase the production and efficiency of farming in the park. Extending permanent protection to the Pickering Federal Lands would give more certainty to farmers within and outside the park, as well as to farmers in the broader Durham Agricultural System, and allow them to better plan for the future of their businesses and make substantial investments in land stewardship and farm infrastructure.

Current Urban Development:

The Province's Housing Review Task Force indicates sufficient land is already available within designated urban areas to meet housing needs, challenging the necessity to convert agricultural land for this purpose. While housing considerations for the farming community needs to be carefully integrated into the plan for the long-term viability of agricultural production on the Pickering Federal Lands, the alterative to develop all the lands pits basic necessities, being shelter, food and clean drinking water, against one another.

Pickering Land Management:

Farmers continue to struggle with the uncertainty inherent in short-term leases, even the 10-year leases introduced in 2018, and are therefore limited in how much investment they can justify in land stewardship and their businesses on the Pickering site. The agricultural lands are largely in corn, soybean and wheat production, and the costs of managing these lands have been an ongoing burden on Canadian taxpayers. Lack of expertise, combined with the absence of on-the-ground staff to work with farming tenants and conservationists has led to scattered and incomplete efforts to restore natural heritage and encourage innovation in agriculture. Parks Canada is actively planning for the management of Rouge National Urban Park lands, presenting opportunities to rebuild farm infrastructure and attract new investment in local food and farming in the park area.

Land trusts can have an important role in supporting the Government of Canada's goals for the Pickering site by working together to cost-effectively and permanently protect agricultural and conservation lands. For example, the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) is already active in the area and well suited to partner on land conservation on the Pickering site, given OFT's experience protecting agricultural and ecological lands. Drawing on expertise in building partnerships with local governments and conservation authorities, as well as working directly with communities and private landowners on land preservation and stewardship, OFT is uniquely positioned to collaborate with the Government of Canada in reviving conservation efforts on the Pickering site and supporting agricultural activities in the area.

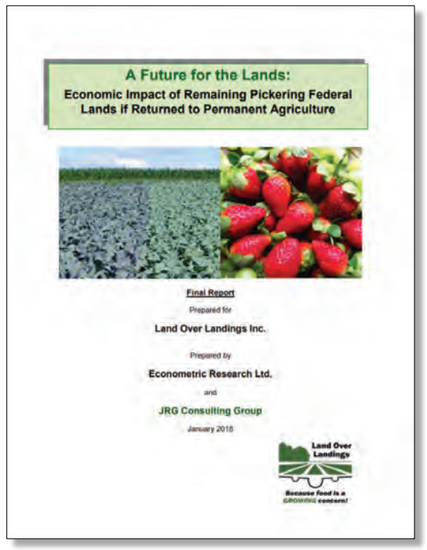
OFT is approved by Environment Canada as designated recipients of land donations and property rights through the Ecological Gifts Program and has a strong history of cooperation with private and government landowners. It is important to ensure that management responsibility is held with a body that has an explicit mandate to support agriculture and land conservation, has experience working with farmers and other landowners, and is buffered from any future shifts in political priorities. OFT is a willing partner to ensure the objectives of preserving these lands are met. This partnership could be a significant step forward in empowering local and regional land trusts to establish more farmland preserves throughout the province.

Pickering farmlands are so special because of warm microclimate on the southern slope of the Oak Ridges Moraine leading down to Lake Ontario, and with plentiful rainfall:

- Despite its immense size, Canada's arable land area is a very low 11% [for comparison, one-third of France or Germany is arable].
- Class 1 farmland is very rare, 0.5% of Canada's land area. More than half of our Class 1 soil is in Ontario.
- Ontario's Class 1 soil is especially important to Canada because of our climate. We are substantively warmer than the vast majority of the rest of the country's agricultural lands and we have typically reliable rainfall, enabling our farmers to grow crops that cannot be grown in other provinces. This makes our farmland that much more valuable and that much more productive – and rare.
- 18% of Ontario's Class 1 farmland had been destroyed by urban development as of 2014.
- The best way all levels of government can help Canada's financially stressed agricultural sector is to maximize farmers' access to their most profitable Class 1 soil.

Source: Dr Rene Van Acker, Dean, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph.

5.1.4 "A Future for the Lands" Report

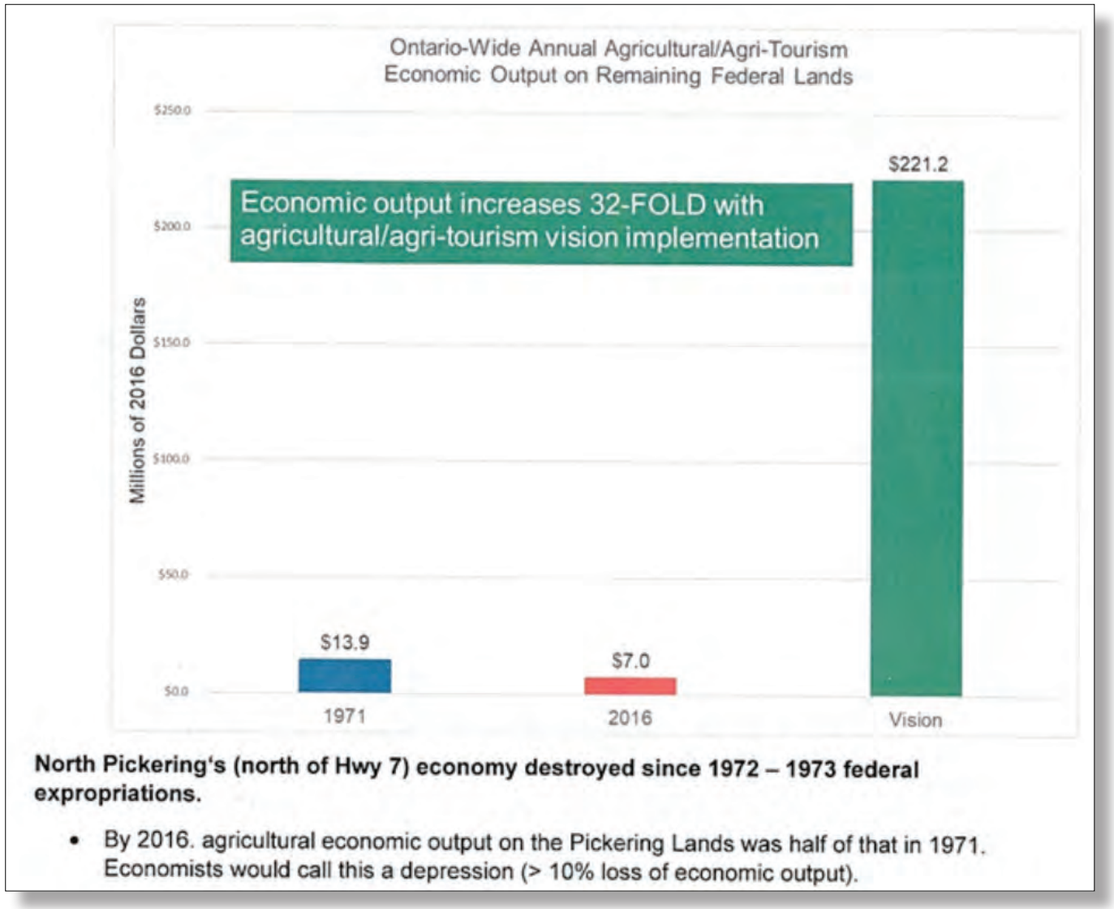


"A Future for the Lands: Economic Impact of Remaining Pickering Federal Lands if Returned to Permanent Agriculture," the result of a study conducted by Econometrics Research Ltd. and JRG Consulting Group, was commissioned by Land Over Landings and completed in 2018. This agricultural economics study focused on the potential of the remaining Federal Lands in Pickering if they were to be used for permanent agriculture rather than airport development.

It concluded that farming these Lands would be a viable and beneficial option.

Some of the key findings:

1. Economic potential: The study found significant economic potential, under a Public Custodian, in using the Pickering Federal Lands for agriculture and agri-tourism, especially if the threat of airport development was removed and farmers were granted long-term leases.
2. Agricultural output: The study calculated that more diverse, higher-value agricultural production (e.g., fruit, vegetables, livestock, poultry) could increase output to over $3,500 per acre, a significant increase from the current $563 per acre (mostly from feed corn, soy, and wheat).
3. Tourism potential: The report highlighted the potential for agri-tourism and general tourism to surpass the economic output of the farming sector.
4. Combined impact: The combined impacts of agriculture and tourism were projected to create $130 million in local expenditures and $221 million across the province, with 1,459 jobs locally and 2,051 jobs province-wide.
5. Research and innovation: The study proposed establishing an agricultural research/ innovation center and a farming incubation center, which could provide long-term benefits.
6. Overall economic growth: The report concluded that economic activity on the lands could increase more than 30-fold and employment almost 40-fold compared to current levels.



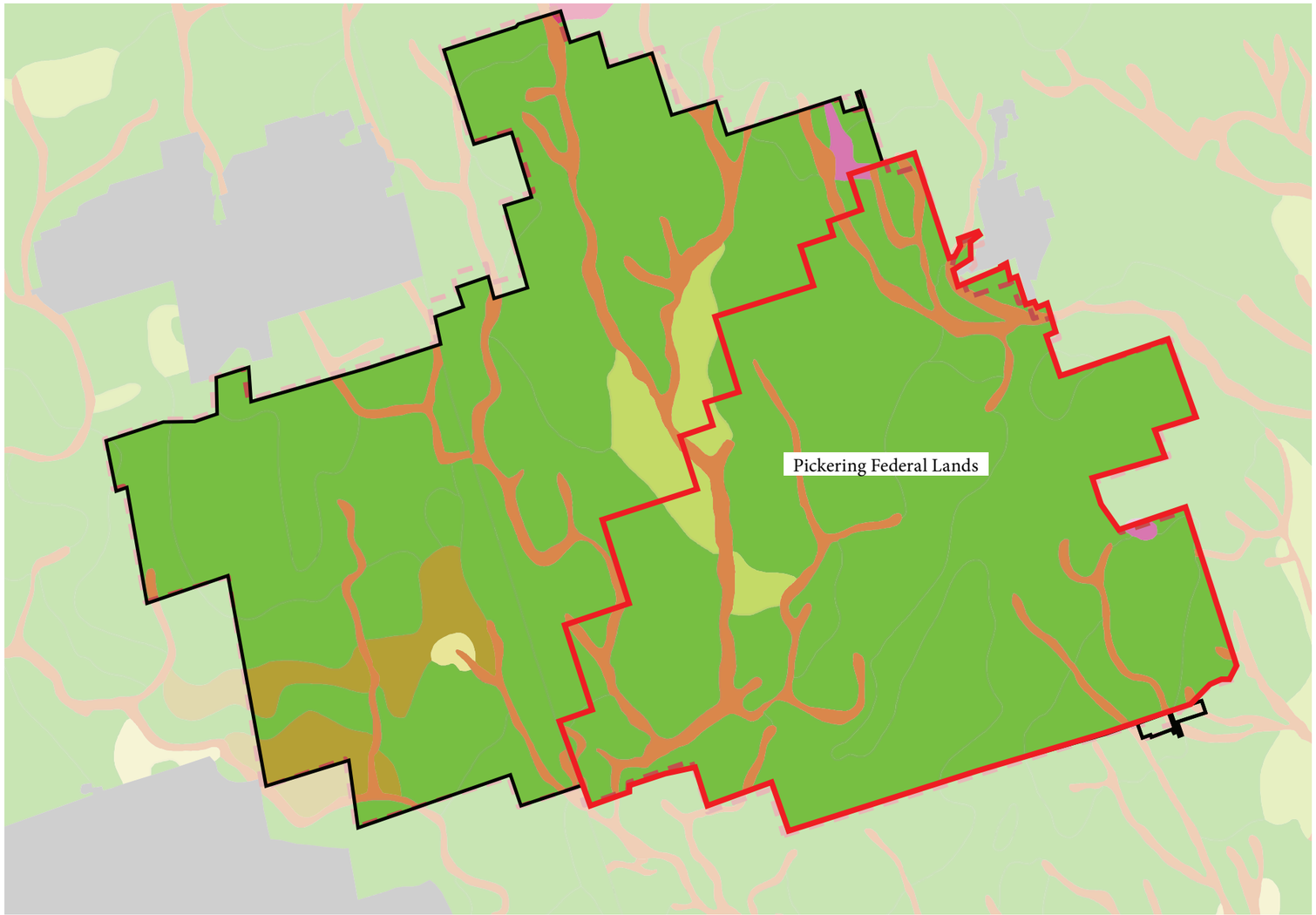
North Pickering's (north of Hwy 7) economy destroyed since 1972 – 1973 federal expropriations.

- By 2016. agricultural economic output on the Pickering Lands was half of that in 1971. Economists would call this a depression (> 10% loss of economic output).

5.1.5 CLI Soil Class Report

Canada Land Inventory (CLI) soil classification evaluates land based on its suitability for agriculture, forestry, and other uses, with mineral soils ranked from Class 1 to Class 7. Class 1 soils are the most fertile and versatile, with no significant limitations for crop production. They are deep, well-drained, and rich in nutrients, allowing for the growth of a wide variety of crops and supporting sustainable agriculture. They enhance water and nutrient management, which helps maintain high yields.

Class 1 soils dominate the Pickering Federal Lands and are sought after by farmers because they have the highest production capability and profitability. Holland Marsh is organic muck soil and Niagara area is sacred because of its numerous micro-climates that are suitable for very high value-added fruit and wine grape production.



Photography by Laura Parsons

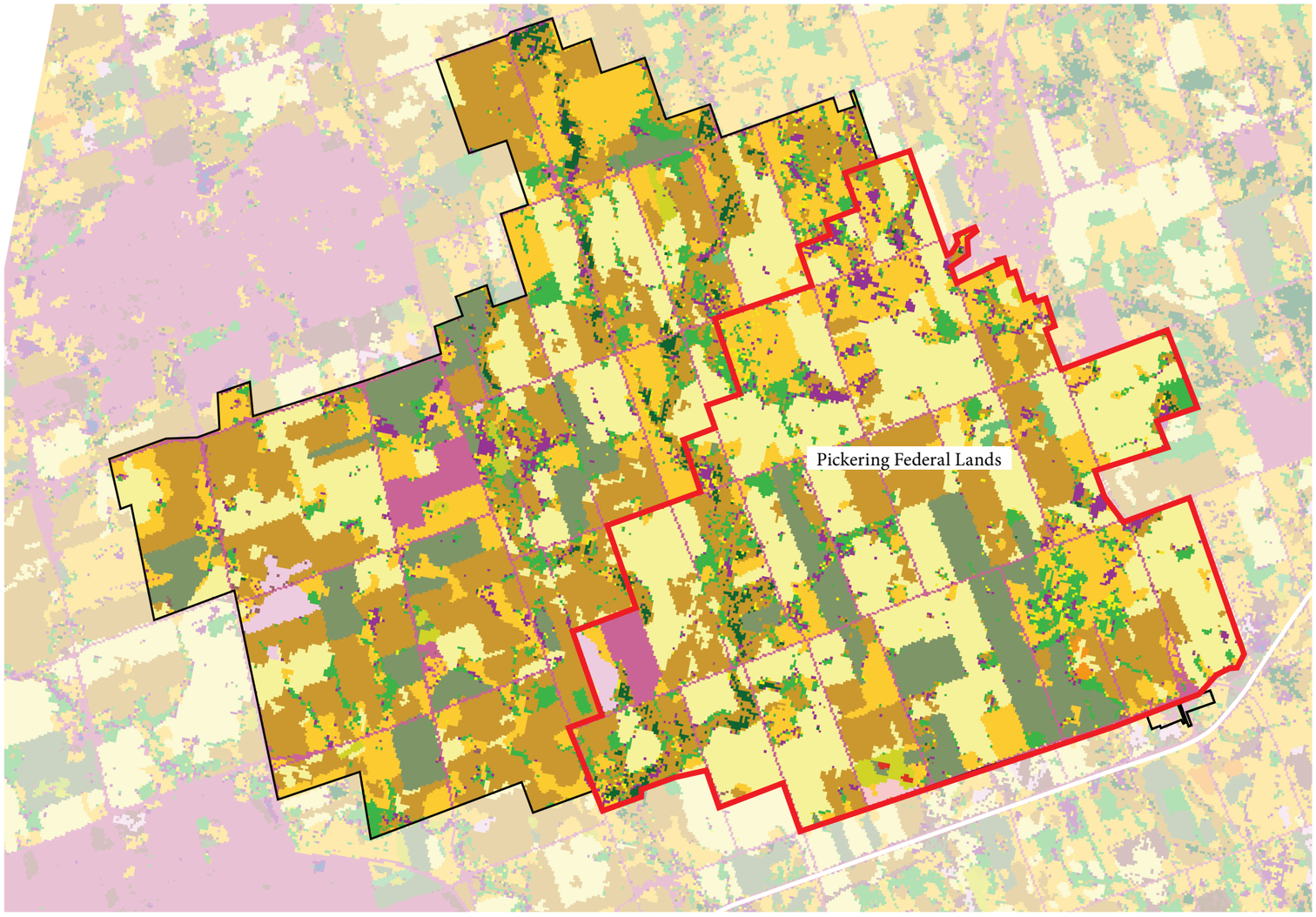
LEGEND

- Class 1
- Class 2
- Class 3
- Class 4
- Class 5
- Class 6
- Class 0
- Organics
- Pickering Federal Lands

5.1.6 Crop Inventory

Because of short-term agricultural leases, the crop inventory situation in the Pickering Federal Lands is primarily corn, soybeans, and wheat, which are well-suited to the region's climate and soil. There is limited production of other crops, although some farms cultivate hay for livestock fodder.

The production levels tend to focus on these major grains, with relatively lower diversity compared to more intensively managed or specialized agricultural regions. However, the vast potential of the area remains, as further development and sustainable practices could enhance the diversity and output of the lands.



https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/

LEGEND

- Urban Development
- Corn
- Soybean
- Spring Wheat
- Blueberry / Cranberry
- Pasture and Forages
- Nursery
- Pickering Federal Lands
- Other vegetables
- Broadleaf
- Coniferous
- Shrubland
- Grassland
- Wetland
- Fallow

5. The Farming Vision

5.2 Farming Strategy

5.2.1 Intensive Mixed Farming

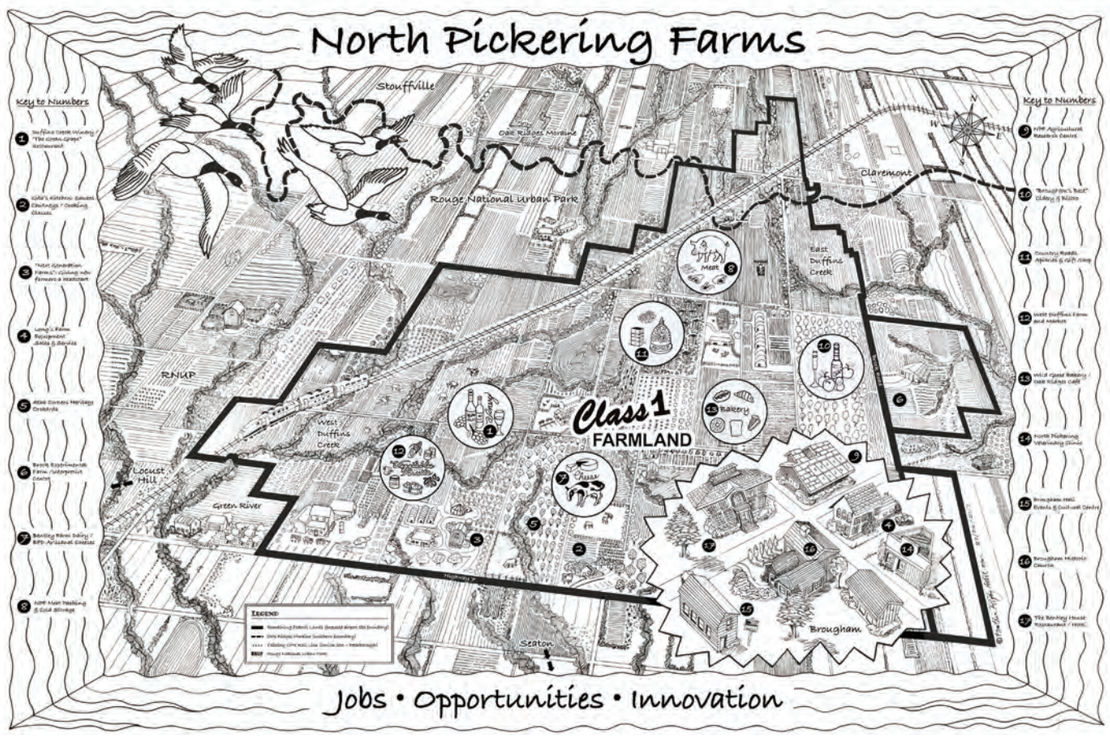


Image Credit : Heather Rigby for Land Over Landings, 2017

The advocacy group Land Over Landings has contributed to this vision for the Pickering Federal Lands.

1. Their key objective: to obtain the permanent protection of these prime agricultural lands as a secure source of food and fresh water for Canada's largest urban center.

2. North Pickering Farms Vision

In 2017, to help decision-makers visualize the possibilities here, Land Over Landings designed and produced a map that illustrates their "North Pickering Farms" vision. It proposes transforming the area into a food hub composed of small, medium, and large-sized farms dedicated to:

- Specialty crop and mixed livestock/crop farming
- Training new farmers
- Conducting agricultural research
- Implementing sustainable farming practices
- Becoming an agri-tourism destination
- Preserving green space and protecting water resources

3. Climate and Food Security Focus

The organization's mission emphasizes the Lands' increasing importance in a time of climate change and the growing threats to food security.

4. Economic and Environmental Benefits

The food hub could deliver significant economic and environmental benefits by supporting local food production, creating agricultural jobs and training opportunities, and contributing to climate-change mitigation through sustainable land use.

Table 4.1 A Potential Production Profile of the Subject Lands

Activity	Acreage	Revenues/Acre	Gross Output
	acres	*$/acre*	*$1,000*
Fresh market vegetables	1,400	$6,000	$8,400
Sweet corn	700	$1,500	$1,050
Organic vegetables	50	$25,000	$1,250
Apple Orchards	700	$8,000	$5,600
Strawberries	150	$15,000	$2,250
Raspberries	50	$10,000	$500
Beef Cattle	500	$500	$250
Hay	100	$350	$35
Dairy	350	$3,600	$1,260
Sheep	100	$2,040	$204
Layers (eggs)	60	$21,600	$1,296
Chicken (broilers)	40	$34,875	$1,395
Riding Stable[33]	100		
Corn	800	$815	$652
Soybeans	800	$561	$449
Wheat	800	$438	$350
Total	6,700	$3,514	$24,941

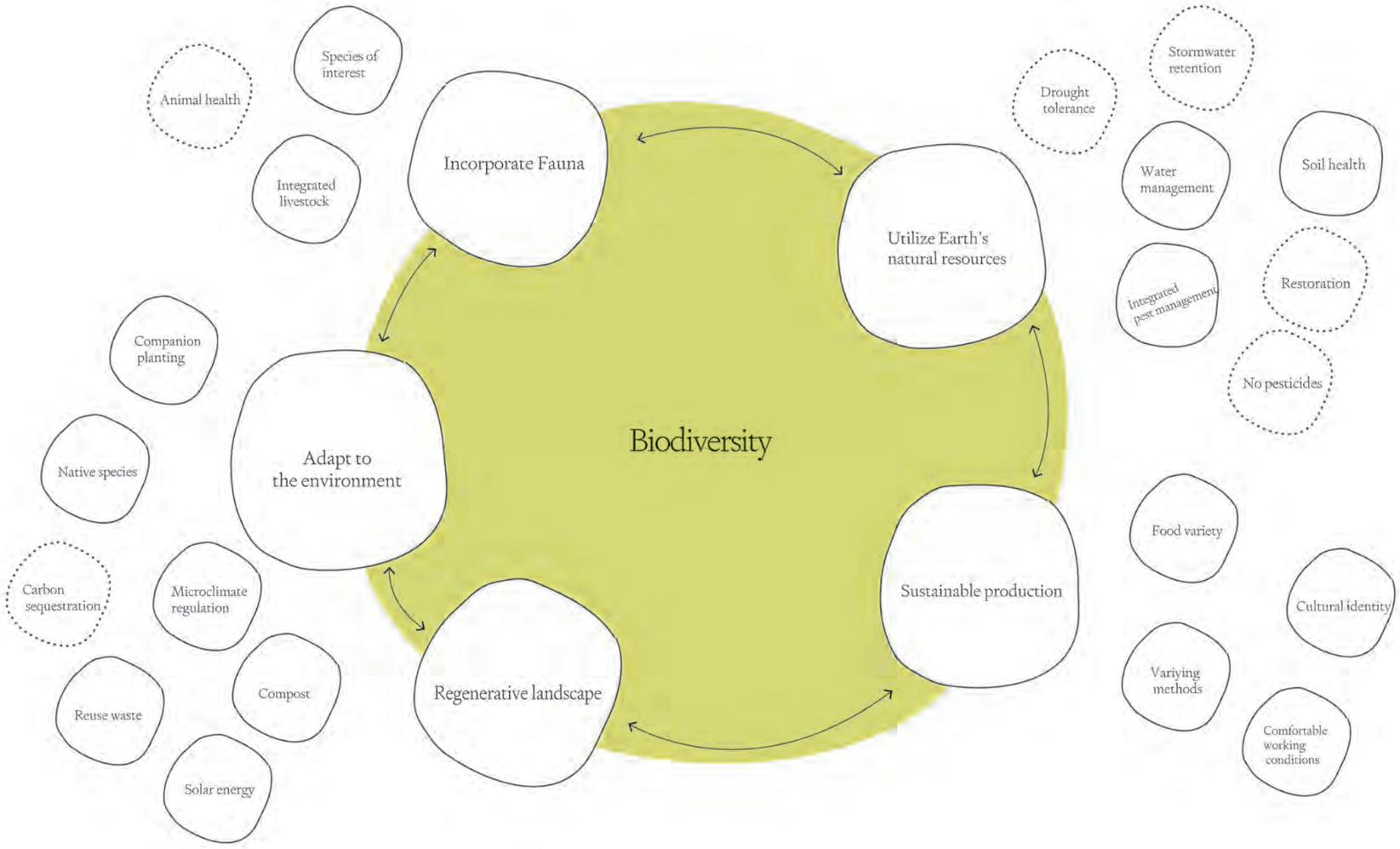
This chart demonstrates the stark contrast between current agricultural output on the Lands and what could be achieved if the agricultural activity were far more diverse.

Source: Econometrics Research/JRG Consulting: "A Future for the Lands"

5.2.2 The Future of Farming for Pickering

A sustainable approach seeks to balance food and energy production with biodiversity conservation by integrating extensive farming practices, agroforestry or permanent pasture on marginal farmlands, and biocorridors to the existing agricultural lands. Extensive farming, which is deeply rooted in Indigenous values emphasizes working with nature to regenerate soil health and sustainably use resources. This approach includes agroecology, permaculture, and regenerative farming, all aimed at restoring ecosystems and enhancing resilience against climate challenges.

Some examples of activites on the site can be foraging, farm to table restaurants, and community gardens to foster a deeper connection between agriculture and nature. In addition, developing a program that compensates farmers for retiring marginal lands to help restore wildlife habitats and forests can be established to honor the existing farmers and host new methods for biodiversity. The Pickering Federal Lands will serve as a hub of culture, farming, and land through educational and community programs.



Principles of extensive farming inspired by agroecology, permaculture, and regenerative agriculture.

5.2.3 Agroforestry

Agroforestry is the practice of integrating the growing of trees, fruits and nut crops and pasturing of livestock.

There are 4 major traits that distinguish agroforestry from farming and forestry practices. Collectively, they are called the "4I's":

Intentional — tree, crop and/or animal combinations are purposefully designed and managed as a whole unit, rather than as separate elements

Intensive — intensive management (for example annual cultivation, irrigation, fertilization) is required to maintain the productivity and protective benefits of agroforestry systems

Interactive — the physical and biological interactions between tree, crop and/or animal components are actively and sustainably managed

Integrated — tree, crop and/or animal components are managed as a single integrated unit

Benefits of agroforestry

- multiple harvestable components being produced at once
- increased carbon sequestration
- efficient land use
- reduced water pollution
- reduced wind and water erosion
- enhanced biodiversity

Agroforestry systems

- tree-based intercropping/alley cropping
- riparian buffers
- forest farming
- silvopasture
- biomass production systems
- windbreaks and shelterbelts

Agroforesty and Maple syrup production

Maple syrup is a significant industry in Ontario, with over 3,000 producers contributing to a market valued at over $26.5 million in 2019. Ontario's climate and soils support maple forests across a wide region, from the southwest to Lake Superior's north shore. Production methods vary, with large operations using advanced technologies like vacuum lines and reverse osmosis, while smaller producers often rely on traditional methods. The syrup season typically starts in January or February with equipment preparation and maintenance.

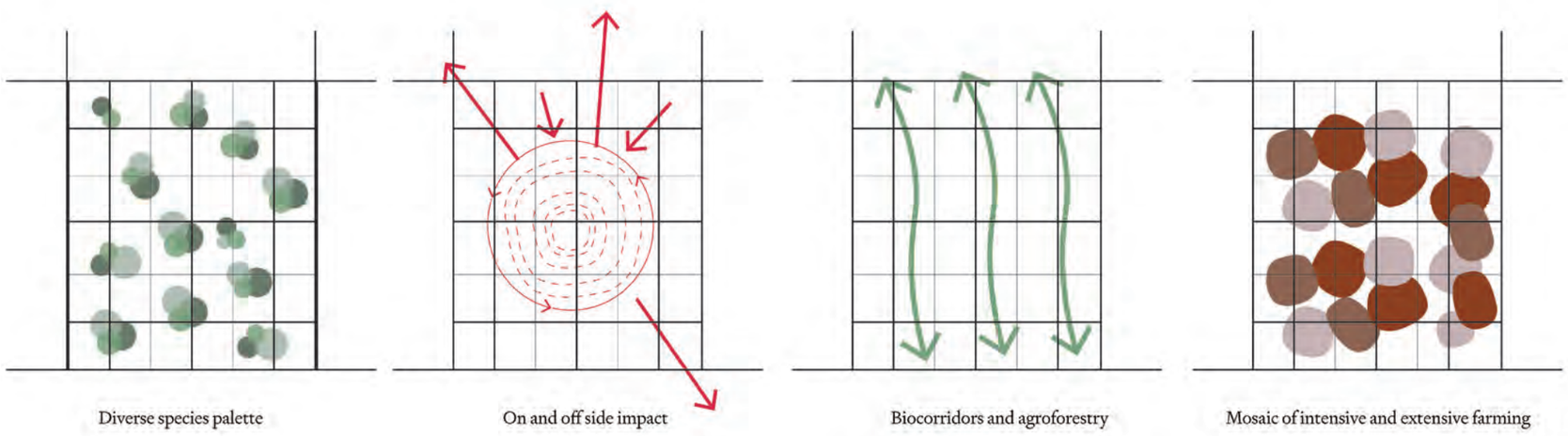
Image credit: Agroforestry Coalition

5.2.4 Agriculture and biodiversity

Food, farming, and nature are all interlinked

Healthy ecosystems are vital for food production and climate stability. Our goal is to create a framework that balances food production while addressing catastrophic biodiversity loss. With the right policies, collaboration, and incentives, agricultural lands can support both biodiversity and food security. Farmers can help by sustainably managing land, providing habitats, storing carbon, and more.

Although agriculture has been a driver in habitat destruction, there is now an opportunity for farmers to sustainably manage their farms and help reduce the decline of biodiversity. Biodiversity loss threatens planetary and human health, making the adoption of regenerative farming practices essential. These practices involve using methods that restore and heal the land to help combat climate change. Connecting sustainable farming with agroforestry and natural ecosystems strengthens climate mitigation and supports key species, creating a harmonious relationship in which farmers and nature thrive.



5.2.5 Community Gardens

Community gardens offer a multitude of benefits to urban dwellers. Most city dwellers are constrained in their ability to grow food, whether through lack of access (high-rise and other high-density dwelling configurations) or the lack of full sun in shady suburban developments, compounded by the lack of good soil, all of which was removed during development.

The Pickering Federal Lands offer a unique opportunity for urban dwellers to work together to produce food in the highest quality soil, both for themselves and others, to learn together, and to enjoy the experience of a rural environment rich in history and natural areas, all in a Park context.

An exemplar community garden is active on the Lands. Formed 5 years ago it has grown from modest origins to approx. 2 acres in size. Included are extensive garden areas, an expanding orchard, and perennial beds. There are 30 varieties of fruits grown, including tree fruits (apple, pear, Paw Paw, cherry, etc.), shrubs, vines, canes, and nut trees (Hazel, Pecan, etc.). There are 14 different herbs and over 40 types of vegetables, including varieties that are staples in the Caribbean, South Asia, East Asia, Central Africa, and South America ("World Foods"). The periphery of the garden is planted with Native shrubs and perennials, and there are pollinator areas within the garden.

The garden currently supplies two food banks weekly, one in Pickering and one in east Scarborough, providing them with top-quality, organic, fresh vegetables and herbs.

There are now three other gardens in various stages of implementation that have derived inspiration from this example.

The requirements for these gardens are simple; road access, a water source (well), and an electrical connection to power the well. But most importantly, Class 1 soil, undamaged by urban development and associated utilities. This prime prerequisite cannot be found inside urban boundaries.

The gardens can be operated independently or in cooperation with farming operations. There is a mutually beneficial synergy with farming operations that can provide materials (e.g., mulch, manure) and services (e.g., plowing, tilling).

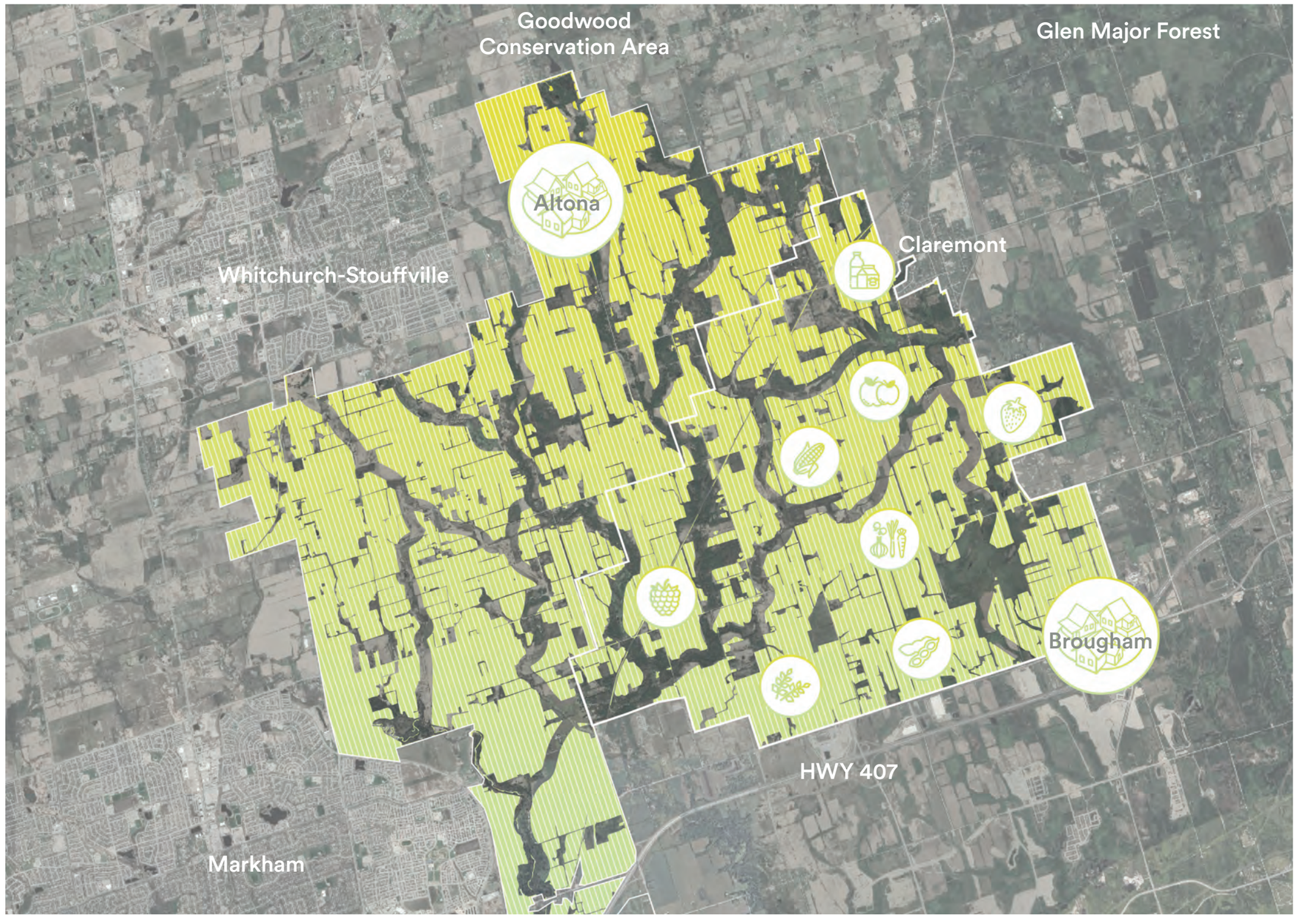
The potential for many such gardens on the Lands is enhanced first by the stability the Park management provides, allowing for long-term projects such as fruit and nut orchards, and second, by the proximity to urban areas, providing peripheral transit connections including future high-frequency rail connections to the major metropolis with a potential adjacent station.

The range of possibilities inherent in community gardens is profound. Different groups may choose to specialize or use different techniques to pursue different objectives. Each garden is a horticultural and social experiment. The technical skills and information base that can be provided by the Park's partners in educational and research institutions can be of great benefit to the gardeners, and the possibilities for practical application of ideas and concepts is a valuable opportunity for the educational community.

Image Credit: Land Over Landings

5.2.6 Farming Vision Plan

The Pickering Federal Lands have the potential to cultivate a wide variety of crops utilizing both intensive and extensive farming practices leading to an overall sustainable, biodiverse landscape that provides healthy food for the local community while hosting habitats for wildlife.



6. The Community Vision

6. The Community Vision

6.1 Restoring Brougham and Altona

6.1.1 Two Complementary Developments

1. Revitalized Brougham

Existing building / road
New construction
Community programs

Surface area: 100 ac

2. Revitalized Altona

Existing building / road
New construction
Community programs

Surface area: 100 ac

6.1.2 Goals for the Restored Hamlets

Key Characters

1. Affordable housing to meet local needs, including a mix of market and non-market homes to allow people of all income levels to live there.
2. A thriving local economy with diverse job opportunities, potentially including remote work options and small businesses that serve the community.
3. Access to essential services like schools, healthcare, shops, and public transportation to reduce car dependency.
4. Community empowerment, with residents actively involved in local decision-making and development plans.
5. Environmentally-friendly practices such as renewable energy use, sustainable agriculture, and protection of natural landscapes and biodiversity.
6. Development that simultaneously preserves rural character and draws on the unique natural settings
7. Strong social connections and community activities to maintain a high quality of life.
8. Resilience to climate change impacts through adaptive planning and infrastructure.
9. Digital connectivity to support modern livelihoods and access to information.
10. A focus on sustainable livelihoods that provide economic security while respecting environmental limits.
11. This vision aims to create a hamlet that is economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable for the long term.

Key Components

1. Local food production: The hamlet would feature extensive community gardens, food forests, and small-scale farms to provide a significant portion of residents' food needs. This could include shared central garden spaces and backyard gardens.
2. Renewable energy: Solar panels and other renewable energy sources would be integrated into buildings and community infrastructure to provide clean, local power.
3. Eco-friendly housing: Homes would be designed or retrofitted for energy efficiency, using sustainable materials and incorporating features like rainwater harvesting.
4. Community spaces: The hamlet would have shared spaces to foster social connections and collaboration among residents.
5. Circular economy: Systems for recycling, composting, and reducing waste would be implemented to minimize environmental impact.
6. Alternative transportation: Walking and cycling paths, along with shared electric vehicles, would reduce reliance on fossil fuel-powered transportation.
7. Diverse livelihoods: The hamlet would support a mix of agricultural, artisanal, and remote work opportunities to create a resilient local economy.
8. Natural resource management: Sustainable practices for managing water, soil, and local ecosystems would be prioritized.
9. Adaptive design: The hamlet's layout and infrastructure would be flexible to adapt to changing environmental and social needs over time.
10. Community governance: Residents would have a strong voice in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the hamlet's sustainability.

6. The Community Vision

6.2 Who Lives There

6.2.1 Resident Demographics

The proposed community within the Pickering Federal Lands, part of the larger Vision for the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park, is designed to harmoniously integrate nature, farming, and community living. This initiative focuses on transforming existing brownfields in and Altona and other selected sites into vibrant rural housing models that reflect the needs and aspirations of a diverse population. The community is anticipated to attract a number of residents who will engage in various rural activities, including farming, agricultural-related sectors, and businesses that support the local economy.

Resident Demographics

The community will host a wide range of residents, reflecting the rich cultural tapestry of Ontario. The housing is thoughtfully designed to accommodate individuals who work close to home, fostering a live-work environment that enhances quality of life. Typical residents might include:

New Canadian Farmers: Immigrants who are applying their agricultural skills in a supportive environment, enriching the community with diverse perspectives and practices.

Retirees: Individuals who have spent their careers in the area and in agriculture and wish to remain connected to the land and the community.

Children: Young residents of all ages, who will benefit from a nurturing environment that promotes learning and growth.

Temporary Agricultural Workers: Seasonal workers who play a crucial role in the agricultural sector, ensuring that the community remains vibrant and productive.

Local Employees: People working for organizations and businesses situated within or near the community, contributing to its economic vitality.

Established and New Farmers: Long-time and new farmers who work on the Pickering Federal Lands

Farm related entrepreneurs and employees: Individuals wzho have secured employment in farming or agriculturally related fields, eager to contribute to the local economy.

Family Members: Residents who may have jobs outside the community but choose to live here for its unique lifestyle and values.

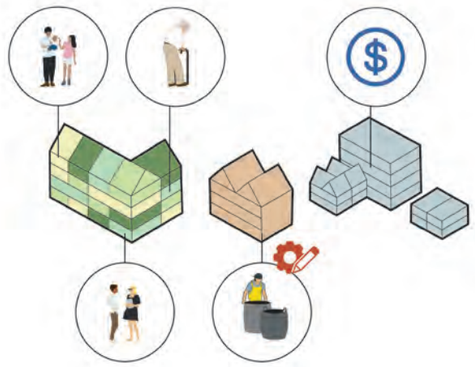
6.2.2 Proposed Core Principles

Community Vision

What unites these diverse residents is their shared commitment to living in a place that seamlessly combines nature, farming, and community. This vision aims to create a sustainable model for rural living that can be replicated in other areas, supporting broader rural revitalization efforts across Ontario. By fostering a strong sense of belonging and purpose, the community will serve as a beacon of hope and innovation for rural areas facing challenges.

Importantly, the land will remain publicly owned, ensuring long-term affordability and stability.

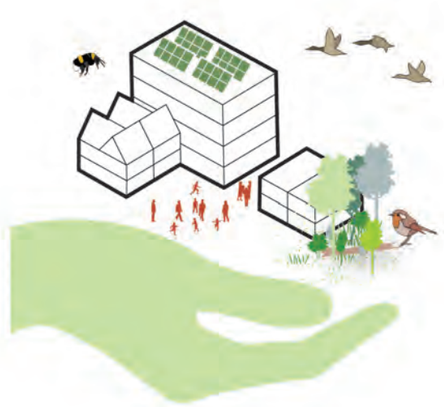
Rouge National Urban Park has capacity and experience running a large and dynamic asset and land management portfolio that includes agriculture, promoting a vibrant farming community as well as non-farming residents and small businesses, contributing to a lived-in landscape and sense of community.



Housing and Affordability

A key aspect of this community is its variety of housing types and sizes, designed to meet the diverse needs of its residents. This approach encourages intergenerational connections and promotes inclusivity. Housing options will include:

- Multi-Residential Units: Smaller units within multi-residential buildings for younger people and seniors, ensuring greater accessibility and affordability.
- Specialized Housing for Temporary Workers: Dedicated units for temporary agricultural workers, facilitating their integration into the community while respecting their unique needs.
- Affordable Housing Options: A mix of market rental and purchase opportunities, including cooperative housing, will be available to maintain affordability for younger people starting their careers and seniors living on fixed incomes.
- Family-sized Units: A mix of ground level and multi-residential units designed for growing families.



Environmental and Social Design

All homes will be designed with sustainability in mind, minimizing their environmental footprint and reducing operating costs. This commitment not only contributes to affordability but also aligns with the community's values of stewardship and sustainability. The layout of the community will encourage social interactions, featuring communal spaces for gatherings, workshops, and events. These spaces will provide opportunities for young farmers to connect with retired farmers, fostering mentorship and knowledge sharing, while also allowing neighbors to socialize and share experiences.

Aspirational and Practical Goals

The vision for this rural housing community is both aspirational and practical. It prioritizes the fundamental human principles of connection, support, and collaboration. By addressing the immediate needs of its residents and providing a sustainable living model, this initiative nurtures nature, farming, and community. Ultimately, it offers a viable blueprint for rural living that can inspire similar developments across Ontario and beyond, demonstrating that rural communities can thrive in harmony with their environment.

6. The Community Vision

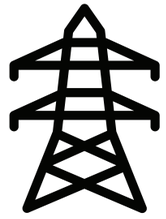
6.3 Sustainable Infrastructure

6.3.1 Infrastructure Principles

Mobility

Wastewater

Drinking Water



Electricity

Heating/Cooling

Revitalizing Brougham and Altona is an opportunity to reinvent agricultural communities for the digital age. Using tried and tested modern technologies we can take advantage of agricultural land uses adjacent to a compact urban form to achieve new benefits. Opportunities to build resilient and sustainable infrastructure could include re-imagined technologies applied in a controlled way and planned from the ground up. Both Brougham and Altona enable a natural economy of scale that would have otherwise been impractical for stand-alone buildings. Affordable opportunities to reuse wastes as inputs into agricultural processes combined with local and traditional expertise could be applied to Brougham and Altona. There are opportunities to scale up innovative technologies such as: wastewater nutrient recycling, high-efficiency irrigation systems, district energy using agricultural by-products as a fuel, and renewable energy. These and other technologies will be explored in the next phase where additional research and testing will be advanced.

6.3.2 Mobility

Agriculture naturally favours personal automobile usage; however, the vision must ensure that options for non-auto travel are available and streets are designed to promote safety for people in all life stages and at all abilities. Active mobility modes for short day-to-day trips within the core Hamlet areas should be prioritized.

Street design has a material influence on how people choose to move around. More compact widths for the main streets, for instance, will favour walking and cycling for day-to-day trips in good weather. Well-designed pedestrian-prioritized walking and cycling infrastructure should also be a priority.

Transit

- Transit should put in place support access to regional nodes such as Markham and Pickering GO stations and carpool lots. Seasonal shuttle services should be considered to support special events and agritourism.
- On demand services and carshare could support local travel for individuals who do not own or have access to a vehicle.
- Local pick-up locations for rideshare/taxi should be well-marked and centrally located.

Active Mode

- Urban form should be designed for universal accessibility and ensure users at all life stages and abilities are considered. Clear paths of travel with unambiguous rights of way should be provided.
- Efforts should focus on promoting pedestrian travel for short intra-Hamlet trips. Generous sidewalks (2.0m+) and pedestrian prioritized traffic calming measures should be considered for the core of the Hamlet.
- Cycling track should be incorporated into street design and maintained during winter.
- Locations of high use amenities should be co-located to bring people to a central location and promote non-auto travel.
- Parking should be right-sized and located at back to minimize car/pedestrian conflicts and protect the main street continuous façade. Entrances should be street-oriented rather than parking lot oriented. Bicycle parking should be prioritized at main entrances.
- Intersections and/or pedestrian crossings should be at regular intervals (~100m) in core Hamlet areas. Protected intersections should be considered for main streets.
- Streets should be designed so that 85% of drivers will not exceed 30km/h in core Hamlet areas.
- Connections to and staging areas for national, provincial and regional trail systems such as the Trans Canada Trail, Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, the Greenbelt Route and Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, as well as the province-wide cycle network, should be established. Links to these networks will give residents and visitors a scenic way to travel to and throughout the expanded Park.

Transportation / Goods Movement

- Loading and waste management should be at rear only.
- Infrastructure to support agribusiness should be sized to accommodate agricultural equipment

Examples for protected intersection designs.
https://altago.com/separated-bike-lanes/

6.3.3 Servicing

Municipal Services

- Ensure sustainable water and wastewater systems to enable long term viability.
- Explore water conservation, re-use, and nutrient recycling.

Drinking Water

- Ensure high-quality locally sourced sustainable drinking water system is provided to meet regulatory standards without requiring connections to major municipal network.
- Investigate rain collection for potable water.

Irrigation

- Explore advanced irrigation and water conservation systems to minimize impacts to groundwater, reduce long-term degradation and ensure watershed health.

Stormwater

- Plan for climate resiliency including designing stormwater systems to handle more frequent high intensity storms.
- Collect and distribute stormwater for agricultural irrigation and watershed vitality.

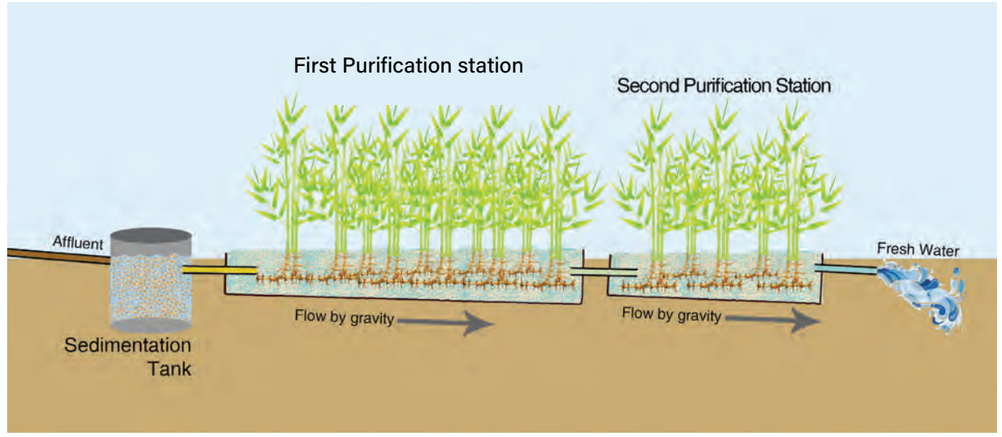
Wastewater

- Provide a centralized and appropriately scaled wastewater collection and treatment system. Minimize the environmental impact of wastewater by selecting technologies that produce a high-quality effluent.
- Explore opportunities to apply nature-based approaches to treating wastewater, such as constructed wetlands.
- Identify opportunities for greywater re-use for agriculture irrigation.

Municipal Solid Waste

- Explore municipal waste incineration as fuel for combined heat and power plant.
- Explore organics collection and yard waste program for small scale composting to support nutrient recycling to replenish Class 1 soils.

https://greentumble.com/



https://theotherdada.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/natural-wastewater-treatment/

6.3.4 Energy

Electricity

- Power should be locally generated, clean, sustainable and resilient.

Generation

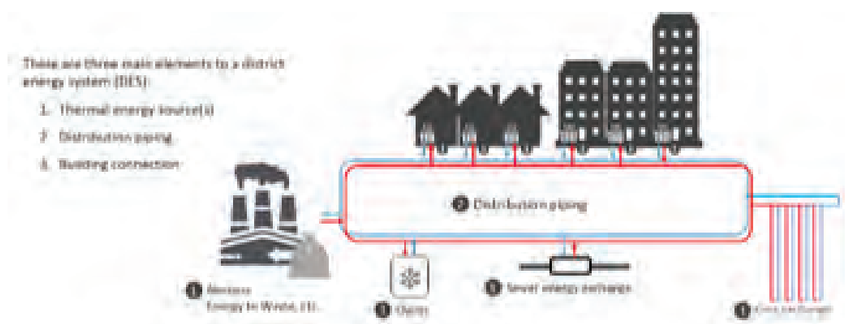
- Electricity is used to power our homes and businesses and, in Ontario, is generated primarily by hydroelectric dams and nuclear power plants making it low carbon by global standards.
- The continuing cost reductions and efficiency gains of renewable technologies create financially viable opportunities for "exploiting" renewables to capitalize on new technology for generating electricity. This can help residents and farmers supplement their income and facilitate a more resilient community.
- Connecting to the provincial grid should be a priority to take advantage of provincial clean energy procurement opportunities and sell surplus clean power to Ontarians.
- Community residents should be encouraged and incentivized to incorporate renewal technologies to reduce dependence on and contribute to the power grid.
- Explore battery storage opportunities to provide resiliency.

6.3.5 Energy

Heating and Cooling

Heating and cooling should be clean, sustainable and resilient.

- Heating in Ontario is typically from natural gas or propane and is either piped via a natural gas network operated by a private utility or shipped and stored onsite in a tank. Assuming a low GHG strategy is preferred, there are many opportunities to reduce or eliminate fossil fuels. Because of dramatic reductions in the costs of renewable power, there is an opportunity to design and build fossil free heating and cooling systems that are cheaper than traditional systems.
- Identify opportunities to explore heat pump technologies using ground, sewage and air sources. This could include individual stand-alone systems for each building or a district utility company supplying the Hamlet using a distribution pipe network.



6. The Community Vision

6.4 Community Services

6.4.1 Small Town Community Hubs

The Concept

- A community hub is a facility where a combination of public, private and non-profit services are provided in the same location. This can include:

  Schools, libraries, recreation centres, daycares, arts and culture facilities, retail, restaurants and cafes, parks, business incubators, meeting spaces, and various types of housing.
- The aim is to co-locate complementary services to enhance the quality and efficiency of services for both the organizations operating them and for the users who can have multiple needs met in the same place.
- The formation of community hubs can be driven by public policymakers, businesses and community members.
- Community hubs support the development of a compact, mixed use 'town centre' that has a full range of retail, commercial and community services for residents within close proximity.
- To date, there are over 60 community hubs in Ontario, in large, mid-sized and small communities across the province.

Characters

- Hubs are often situated in small buildings or heritage structures that have been adapted from other uses, and begin as community based 'do it yourself' initiatives.
- Buildings are typically one or two stories and do not include housing on site.
- Spaces are flexible so that a wide variety of community-based organizations and service providers can use the facility to meet their varied needs.
- Sites often include surface parking so that community members in more spread out areas can access the hub by car. By offering other transportation alternatives, surface parking can be significantly reduced.
- Particularly in the arts and culture sector, hubs are initiated by community members, non-profits and small businesses (such as cafes) looking to create a space that meets community needs and have a sustainable business model by mixing various uses together.

Principles

- Hubs often co-locate services related to: education; childcare; health; arts and culture; parks, sports and recreation; business incubators; retail; restaurants.
- Community hubs follow two typical design approaches: 1) organizations control their own spaces to provide services which are co-located in the same building; 2) shared spaces that are used by multiple organizations to deliver programming throughout the day.
- Collaborative partnerships are critical to the formation and effective funding and operation of community hubs that include multiple organizations from various sectors.
- Hubs develop and benefit from both policy encouraging co-location of uses and grassroots energy and innovation from local residents, businesses and non-profits to identify facilities that meet the local needs.
- Effective community engagement is key to successful hub projects.
- Community hubs require capital, facility operations and program funding. This funding often comes from a mix of government, private and community sources, which can create diversified revenues but poses challenges of coordination.
- Co-locate some type of housing (rental apartments, hotel rooms, retirement living, etc.) above community hubs in a small mid-rise form that is consistent with the hamlet density, where the design and business model permits.
- In Brougham, there are a variety of historic buildings that could be adaptively reused as community hubs. A key will be to infill the large open space gaps around the existing buildings in order to create a walkable 'town centre' where local community and commercial services can thrive.

6.4.2 Ontario Community Hub Example

Langs was established in 1978 to bring health and social services together in a single venue in Cambridge, Ontario. In the 2010s, the model evolved towards the creation of the Community HUB, a two story venue that co-locates over 25 community partners and services in the same building. This includes a medical office with examination rooms, mental health counselling services, a gymnasium, walking track, community kitchen and shared meeting spaces.

The Lang's Community HUB aims to maximize the usage of their physical space and leverages long-term partnerships to improving access to services and create community. Benefits of the HUB model include clients that have greater awareness of available service and a stronger sense of belonging. Service providers note greater efficiency, effectiveness and reach by locating in the hub, as well as improved outcomes for clients.

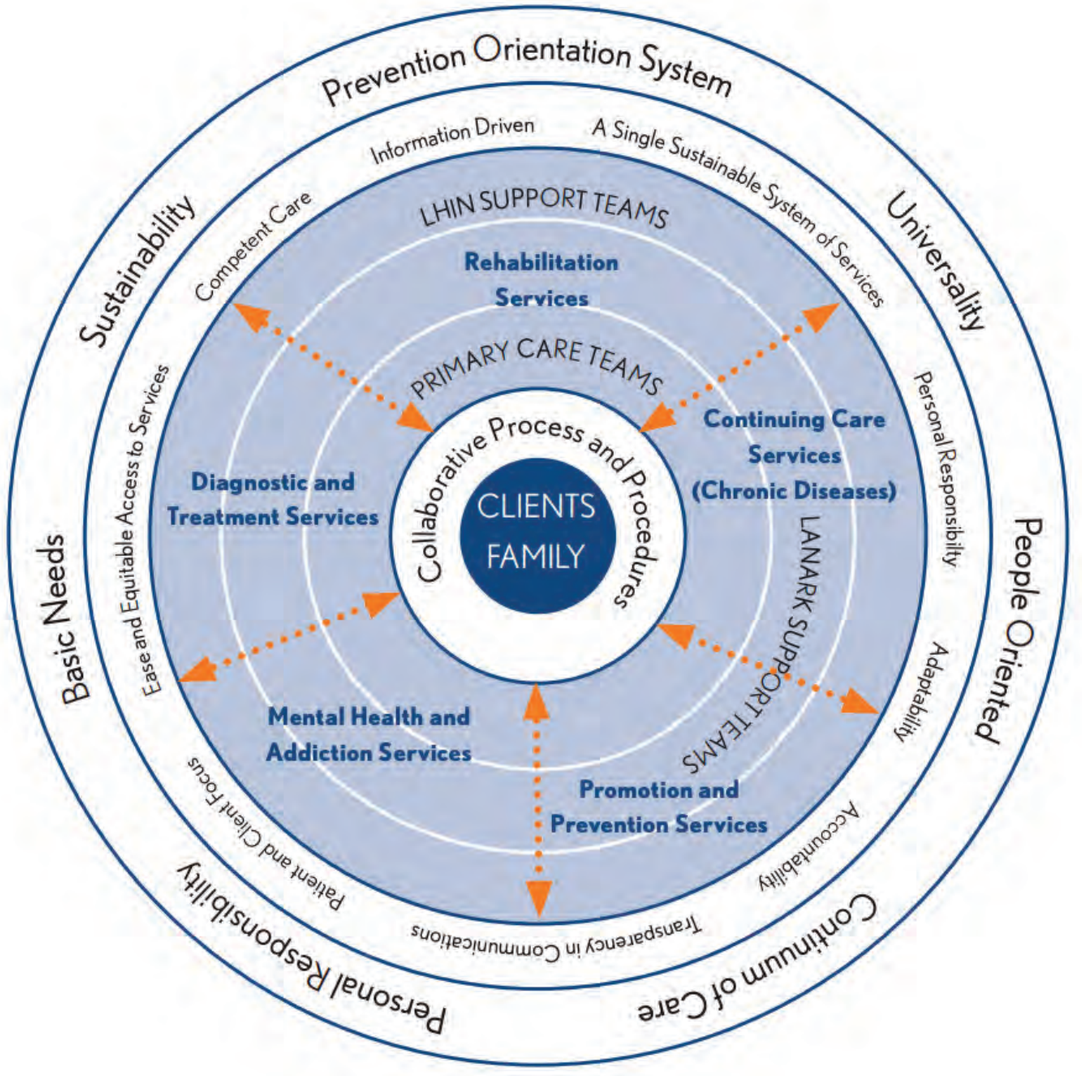
Langs Community HUB, Cambridge, Ontario

Source: Langs, https://www.langs.org/the-hub/langs-community-hubs

6.4.3 Integrated Community Health Hub

- Co-locate multiple health and related services in an integrated hub. Create the condition so that every person in the hamlet has access to a family doctor along with integrated care. Complementary services include:
- Family doctor's office.
- Accompanying health services: outpatient clinic, chronic disease management, mental health services.
- Neighbourhood pharmacy.
- Shared health hub and community meeting room.
- Optional on site: mid-rise seniors housing/assisted living centre.
- According to the Ontario Hospital Association, a catchment area of 10,000-40,000 is optimal for effective rural health hubs in Southern Ontario.

Healthy Village Model



Source: Ontario Hospital Association - https://www.oha.com/Documents/Local%20Health%20Hubs%20for%20Rural%20and%20Northern%20Communities.pdf

6.4.4 Arts, Entertainment and Cafe Hub

- Create an arts and culture venue at the heart of the hamlet that fosters community and supports economic viability for the venue.
- Hub could include a mix of a coffee shop/ restaurant, local small format grocery store, and a flexible space that can be adapted for small concerts, movie screenings, games/quiz nights and meetings.
- The hub could evolve as a DIY initiative that is directed through the formation of a non-profit and volunteer participation, or through a local small business entrepreneur taking the lead.

6.4.5 Learning and Recreation Hub

Create a Learning and Recreation hub at the centre of the hamlet that enables life-long learning and care, and fosters a space of community connections.

- Co-locate a library, daycare and space for a local school.
- Increase financial viability of community services by co-locating them in the same facility.
    1. Examine opportunities for shared service models that reduces overall cost.
    2. Co-locate housing above or in close proximity on the site to create a nearby user base for the public services and co-fund the necessary utilities.
- Based on the way that public schools and social infrastructure is funded in Ontario, it is typically built after rather than in advance of housing development. A key will be to create flexible spaces that can be expanded and adapted as the population grows and funding becomes available.
    1. Create flexible spaces that can evolve as the demand changes.
    2. Explore modular construction opportunities that can be expanded and adapted as resources and demand are available over time.

Modular school building in the United Kingdom, constructed in 12 weeks

6. The Community Vision

6.5 Preliminary Economic Considerations

6.5.1 Local Business

This vision aims to create a sustainable model for rural living that can be replicated in other areas, supporting broader rural revitalization efforts across Ontario. By fostering a strong sense of belonging and purpose, coupled with economic viability, the community will serve as a beacon of hope and innovation for rural areas facing challenges. The best insulator from the volatility of the global economy are local places where economic and social resilience is 'built in' to all aspects of settlement.

A rural hamlet serves as a model for how communities can thrive in the modern world. By prioritizing connections between economic opportunities, social needs, and environmental stewardship, a small place can create a high quality of life for its residents, access to economic opportunity, while maintaining a deep connection to the land and its natural assets. The Pickering Federal Lands present an opportunity to model sustainable development at a community scale, providing diverse economic opportunities using existing assets and building on traditional uses. The assets of the area, coupled with appropriate services and technology, mean that livelihoods can be localized, eliminating for many long commutes that consume time, money and energy.

Any vibrant local economy thrives on diversity, offering job opportunities that cater to various skills and interests. Residents might engage in agricultural ventures, such as organic farming or specialty crop production, while others might start small businesses like artisanal bakeries or craft shops. Remote work opportunities can be enhanced through co-working spaces equipped with high-speed internet, allowing residents to work for companies located in other locations across the GTHA and globally. Intensifying the potential for local business development also provides opportunities for younger people raised in the area to stay, and younger people raised elsewhere to be attracted to come.

In communities of every size, commercial and social activities have traditionally come together at farmers markets, auction barns, along main streets, and downtowns. The concept of a 'main street' exists at every settlement scale – as small as a four-corner intersection with community anchors, to a longer block formation that accommodates several use types, especially local, independent businesses.

Cultivating a local economy will be enabled by:

- Opportunities for small scale agricultural businesses such as market gardening, farm-stands, and higher value production including artisanal bakeries and other small batch food processing;
- Community kitchens available for rent for commercial and civic use;
- Infrastructure investment to support areas for main street retail;
- Business supports (e.g. Community Futures support) to entrepreneurs and small business operators;
- Integrated planning that supports co-locating economic, cultural and recreational assets in centralized locations;
- Investment in main street infrastructures that include human-scale streets and sidewalks, town squares and gathering spaces suitable for pop-ups and seasonal vending, public spaces, and potentially subsidized retail spaces for local vendors and makers.

The provision of 'swing spaces' along main streets that can provide temporary spaces can also help incubate new ventures to be piloted as possible models for other micro-developments, leveraging partnerships with institutions like Ontario Tech University and Durham College.

Businesses will have a primary local consumer market, but proximity to the much larger market of the Durham region will ensure opportunities for potential scaling of products and services, as well as across the GTHA. Because of their adjacencies, the Pickering Federal Lands have the potential to establish a niche position in the agri-food supply chain, and offer opportunities for high quality living and working in a non-urban, but well-connected community.

Additionally, connecting to the regional economy will be important to community resilience. That should include working with other local economy networks, and exploring the potential to leverage local procurement agreements with larger employers (e.g. regional health centre, other regional employers) across the region.

Dynamic business agglomerations in smaller agricultural centres are also very appealing to weekend visits from residents of nearby cities. The Niagara Region and Prince Edward County are both examples of the potential of a local economy to produce products – and experiences – that appeal to a daily visitor.

Another important attribute of healthy local economies are place-making investments and programming that concentrates people and their economic activity, re-circulating money spent within the local economy. Along with community-supported agriculture programs, co-op businesses have a long rural history and will be an important business-type to encourage. Other forms of land tenure such as community land trusts can support entrepreneurial businesses.

6.5.2 Economic Opportunities

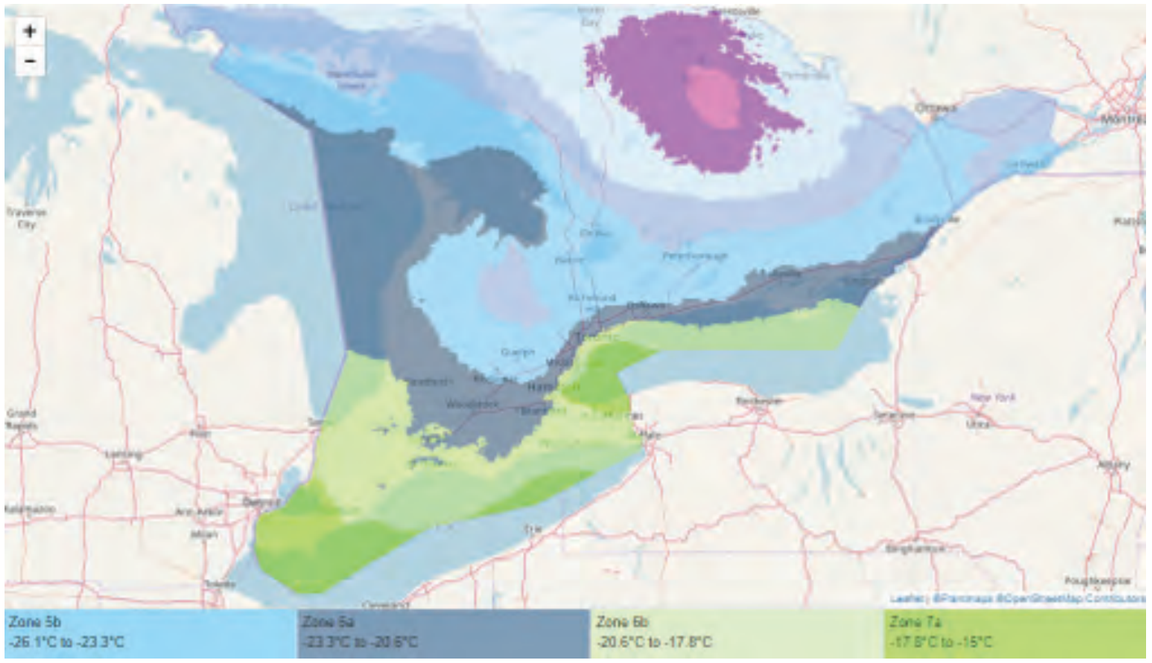
Agricultural

Other Opportunities

The Expanded Rouge National Urban Park offers a unique opportunity to optimize an extraordinary landscape and grow it into a creative and productive agricultural hub. Not only is this some of the best farmland in Canada, it is also adjacent to one of the great centres of innovation in North America. Together these two attributes could advantage the region by diversifying our economy and contribute to the continued prosperity of Ontarians.

The expanded park brings an unparalleled opportunity to preserve agricultural land in a changing climate that could drastically alter the kinds of food that can be grown. It offers a chance to build a living laboratory to study adaptation and help us navigate uncertainty. We need to think about what and how to grow in the future and what failsafes we need to design to manage an increasingly severe climate.

6.5.3 Economic Opportunities



Today's Plant Hardiness Zones of Southern Ontario

Beyond Cash Crops

A changing climate will impact the growing season and will alter over time. Today the lands are in Zone 6a. In time, this could change to 7a (Toronto Islands / St. Catharines) or higher, resembling today's Victoria, BC (Zone 9b). This allows higher value crops to grow, similar to Niagara:

- Vineyards
- Fruit
- Cannabis

As climate change dramatically raises global average temperatures and creates increasing pressure by causing desertification, droughts etc., places like Ontario will need to increase productivity and diversify to meet local and global demand.

Digital Agribusiness Accelerator

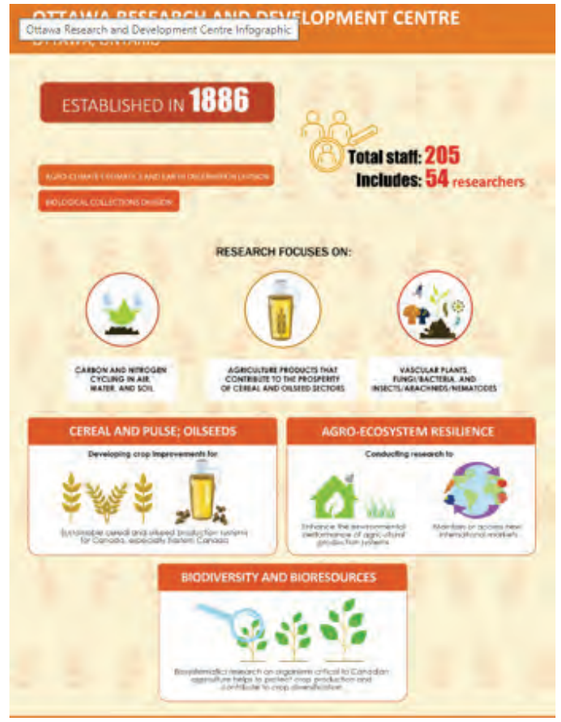
As the world gets drier, hotter, and suffers more extreme storms, research and development in the food sector will require significant investments to keep up with this change and ensure our food supply can adapt.

Partnerships with government, post-secondary institutions and the private sector will help us rise to this challenge. The federal government, building on its tradition of investing in agricultural research and development, has the opportunity to use a portion of the lands to create a new centre of excellence similar to the Experimental Farm in Ottawa, focusing on agricultural innovation in the digital age.

The Expanded Rouge National Urban Park could be the home of a new Agribusiness Accelerator – a centre of excellence to incubate food sector start-ups, grow companies, and bring together partners to invest in research and development.

Partnerships could include:

- post-Secondary (Guelph, UofT, Trent)
- Federal and Provincial governments
- International not-for-profits and UN organizations
- Venture capital
- Agribusiness



6.5.4 Economic Opportunities

Agritourism

Agritourism is a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining or educating the visitors while generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner.

In 2022 Canada landed on the international food scene after being listed in the worldwide iconic Michelin Guide. First published in 1900 by brothers and car tire manufacturers Edouard and Andre Michelin as 'Le Guide Michelin', the Guide became the most prestigious rating system for restaurants around the globe.

Recent trends in destination dining include celebrity chef farm/restaurants, farm stays and winery tours. Agritourism business is a growth industry.

Bill 186, Growing Agritourism Act, recently passed its 2nd reading. The Act offers greater protections for businesses to manage the inherent risks unique to the industry.

Trail and Cycle Tourism

The Rouge National Urban Park is an exciting destination and experience for the growing cycle and trail tourism sector. Connected to major trail systems like the Trans Canada Trail, the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, the Greenbelt Route, and Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, an expanded Park will significantly contribute to the economic and environmental health of the region. In 2024, the Trans Canada Trail published a study describing the benefits associated with Trails. In Ontario, trail tourism delivered $9.8M to the economy. According to the 2021 Statistics Canada's National Travel Survey, cycle tourism accounted for $537M in Ontario.

Other examples of agritourism:

U-Picks

U-pick farms give customers a hands-on farm experience by inviting them to come pick products from the field to purchase and take home. Common types of products offered at u-pick farms include fruits, vegetables, pumpkins, flowers, and Christmas trees.

On-Farm Markets

On-farm markets give customers the opportunity to come purchase produce and/or products on the farm property. Common types of farm markets include farm stands (outdoor booth on the farm) and farm stores (enclosed store on the farm).

Pumpkin Patches

Farms that grow and sell pumpkins. On-farm pumpkin patches often sell their pumpkins as a u-pick and/or through an on-farm market sometimes with seasonal Fall Agricultural Fair

Corn Mazes

A maze cut out in a cornfield that customers can navigate through.

Vineyards and Wineries

Farms and businesses engaged in growing grapes for wine and/or wine making. Many wineries provide on-farm entertainment including, but not limited to, wine-tastings, wine-trails, music, and on-farm dinners.

Floriculture Farms

A flower farm that invites visitors to come see or experience the flower crop in the field. Floriculture farms may host events and workshops, provide a flower u-pick and offer photography opportunities.

Demonstration Farms

A working farm that invites visitors on their property to see or experience the farm. Examples of demonstration farms include but are not limited to dairies, conservation farms, and cattle ranches.

Christmas Tree Farms

A farm that invites customers to pick or buy Christmas trees on their farm.

Farm Stays

Farm stays invite visitors to stay on a farm property.

Farm Tours

A farm that engages with visitors by giving them a tour of their farm.

Farm Camps

An educational opportunity for kids to come experience a farm and engage in agriculture practices.

Farm-to-Table Dining

On-farm dining experience, often including a specialty chef, farm fresh food, and entertainment.

Equine Agritourism

Opportunities for visitors to come interact with horses on the farm. Types of equine agritourism can include trail riding, horseback riding lessons, dude ranches, horse camps, boarding facilities, and equine therapy farms.

Fee and Lease Pond Fishing

Landowners opening up their pond to visitors for fishing.

Hunting Leases

Landowners inviting visitors on their land to hunt usually for a fee.

Chef Matty Matheson on Blue Goose Farm near Fort Erie

6.5.5 Potential Economic Opportunities

Other land-intensive uses that could compliment the agricultural uses and provide more diversity of employment should be considered.

Preliminary list of potential uses include:

1. Ethanol production – sustainable biofuel with high growth potential currently made from corn and wheat.
2. Renewable power generation - exploit renewable technology to supplement Ontario's power needs. This could also be decentralized across many farms as supplemental income stream for agricultural producers. Combined heat and power plant – industrial scale electrical generation using agricultural waste or forestry byproduct as a fuel source.
3. Visitor experiences – cross country skiing, horse riding etc.
4. Film studio back lot – outdoor set construction and filming.
5. Industrial Food Processing.

Gumnuts Farm and horseriding resort

Yellowstone behind the scenes
https://tasteofcountry.com/yellowstone-behind-the-scenes-season-4-episode-3/

6. The Community Vision

6.6 A Revitalized Brougham and Altona

6.6.1 The Hamlet of Brougham

The story of the Hamlet of Brougham is a remarkable one, with a uniquely Upper Canadian flavour. The first settlers, the Matthews family, were United Empire Loyalists who had arrived in 1799 from the newly minted United States of America. For their loyalty to the British Crown they were granted land at the intersection of Brock Road – which followed an Indigenous trail on the high ground between the branches of Duffins Creek – and the Sixth Concession, the geographic centre of Pickering Township.

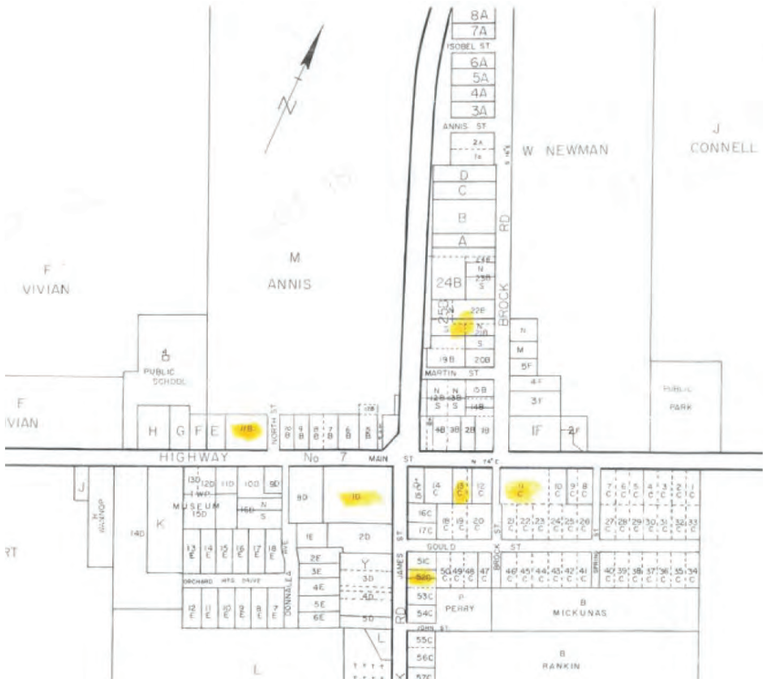
The family proved their loyalty again when all the Matthews menfolk fought for Britain in the War of 1812-14. But their growing pioneer community soon became a hotbed of dissent against the powerful Tories who controlled government in the young colony. Peter Matthews would go down in history for having been hanged for his role in the ill-fated Rebellion of 1837, the so-called Farmers Revolt.

In the mid-19th century, Brougham flourished as the heart of a booming agrarian economy and many of its finest buildings, now on federal heritage registries, were built then. The most prominent of these in Brougham is the magnificent Bentley House. One of the most important was the Brougham Hall, paid for and built in 1854 by the community on donated land, and transferred to the Township the following year. It hosted social gatherings, religious services, and township council meetings for the next century.

In 1876, Brougham boasted scores of businesses, including (but not limited to) three hotels, three general stores, two carriage factories, two blacksmiths, two coopers, a butcher, a medicine factory, two tailors, and three boot-and-shoe shops, plus an Agricultural Hall, two churches, a temperance hall, a school, a post office, two medical doctors, and one veterinary surgeon.

Over time, the livery and carriage factory would be exchanged for garages and mechanics. There would be a fire hall, a library, social clubs, restaurants, mission bands, a boatworks, sporting teams and playing fields, winter carnivals, a county fair, and a living history museum of buildings and artifacts all donated by local residents. Life went on in this best of all possible worlds until one black day – March 2, 1972.

The announcement of the airport came as the proverbial bolt



Brougham School c. 1890.
Now part of Pickering Township Museum, Brougham, Ontario.

6.6.2 The Hamlet of Brougham

out of the blue. Included, at the extreme southeast corner of the 18,600 acres to be expropriated by the Federal Government, was Brougham. Within a day, citizens coalesced into a formidable protest movement. They called themselves People or Planes.

The airport plan was shelved three-and-a-half years later, but not cancelled. The following decades were characterized by demolition, depression, depopulation, and decay. The entire museum village was moved to another location. The bustling hamlet became akin to a ghost town with the number of houses reduced to a few dozen, and commercial enterprises almost non-existent. The Bentley House has been vacant and boarded up for many years, and the Brougham Hall – the pride of the township – was closed at the beginning of COVID and never re-opened.

Fifty-two years after the announcement, the opportunity remains to take up the torch lit by Mrs Roy Miller in the final lines of her poem, 'In the Shadow of an Airport,' which concludes Robert Miller's book, The Ontario Village of Brougham: Past! Present! Future?, published in 1973:

There's still time, to take heed, all who wield power,
Lest a rash act bring loss, devastation and tears;
Save me and mine, for God's sake, I adjure with all reverence,
Lest "too late" should ring down through long vistas of years.

6.6.3 The Hamlet of Altona

The story of the Hamlet of Altona is inseparable from the early Mennonite settlement of Pickering Township and from a tradition of self-sufficiency, cooperation, and stewardship grounded in the land. Established in the early nineteenth century by Swiss-German Mennonite families migrating north from Pennsylvania, Altona emerged as one of the earliest rural centres in the region, anchored by farming, milling, and faith.

Among the first permanent structures were the flour and saw mills constructed in 1850 by Abraham Reesor, son of Peter Reesor and nephew of Abraham Stouffer. Located on Lot 30, Concession 9, just south of today's Pickering–Uxbridge boundary, these mills became the economic and social nucleus of the emerging hamlet. In the same year, a general store and an inn were established, completing the essential elements of a functioning rural community.

Altona's Mennonite Meeting House, built in 1852 using bricks fired locally at the Cherrywood brickyard, remains one of the most significant cultural and architectural markers of the settlement. The surrounding cemetery—where the earliest grave dates from 1835—contains the remains of several founding families, including Abraham Stouffer and his wife Elizabeth Reesor Stouffer, linking Altona directly to the broader network of early Mennonite settlements that shaped much of south-central Ontario.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Altona had all the hallmarks of a mature rural hamlet. A schoolhouse stood by 1834; by 1856 the population numbered over 250, and despite limited formal education, the community supported regular commerce, religious life, and agricultural exchange. Stagecoach service connected Altona to Stouffville and Toronto, reinforcing its role as a modest but vital local hub. Like many rural settlements, its population peaked around the turn of the twentieth century before gradually declining, though its institutions and built form remained largely intact well into the modern era.

Unlike Brougham, whose nineteenth-century growth was tied to township governance and a broader commercial mix, Altona's identity remained more closely aligned with farming, mutual aid, and religious life. Its form was compact; its buildings modest and purposeful. The pattern of fields, farmsteads, and clustered

Reesor Mills from the Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Ontario (Toronto: Beers, 1877).

**https://bikingthegta.com/2022/12/03/altona-ghost-towns-of-the-gta/*

6.6.4 The Hamlet of Altona

structures reflected a careful balance between productivity and community—an equilibrium that persisted for over a century.

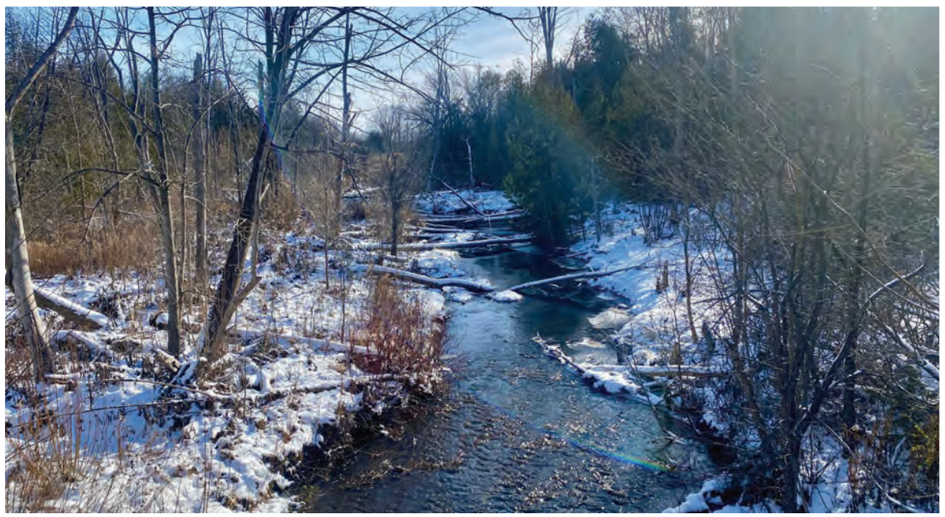
This continuity was abruptly disrupted in the early 1970s with the federal government's announcement of a new international airport on the Pickering lands. Altona, like several nearby settlements, was included within the area slated for expropriation. Residents were displaced, properties acquired, and buildings boarded or left vacant. Although the airport was repeatedly deferred and never built, the damage to the hamlet's social fabric proved irreversible. Over time, Altona became a place physically present but functionally erased—a settlement suspended in uncertainty for decades.

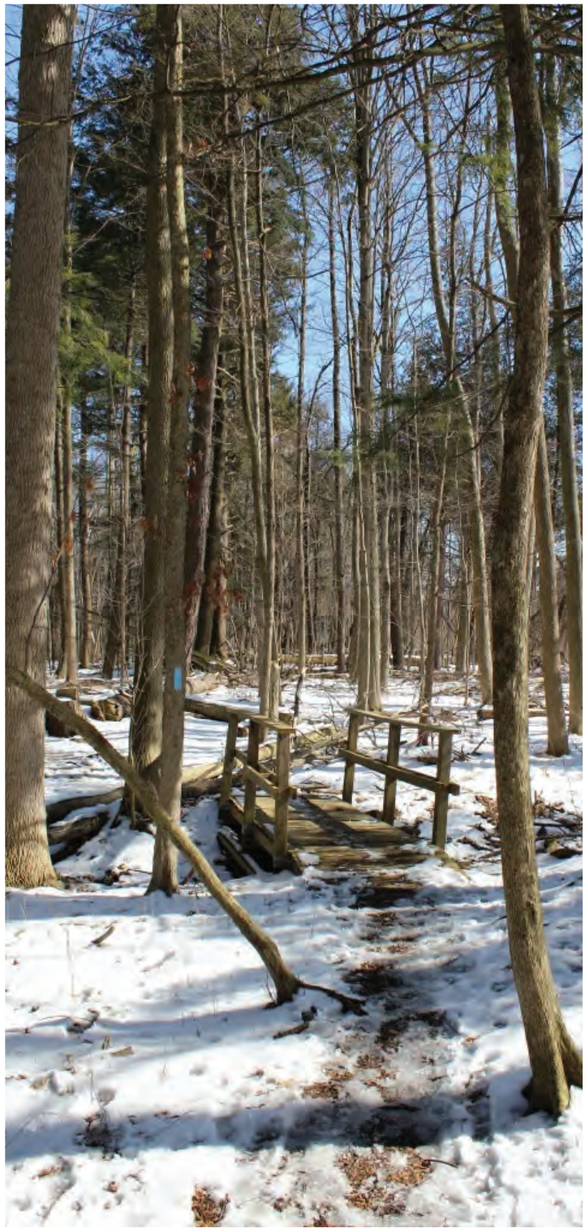
Today, only fragments of the original hamlet remain occupied. Several historic buildings, including the Mennonite Meeting House and a small number of nineteenth-century homes, survive as reminders of a deeply rooted rural culture. Ironically, current airport plans envision aircraft descending directly over the former hamlet at low elevation, reinforcing the sense that Altona has been treated not as a place with history and meaning, but as residual space awaiting a decision made elsewhere.

And yet, as with Brougham, the story of Altona is not solely one of loss. Its location—approximately two kilometres from the Stouffville–Whitchurch urban edge—places it in a strategic position as a threshold between town and countryside. The surrounding agricultural lands remain active, and the historic settlement pattern provides a tangible framework for renewal rather than invention.

Within the context of an expanded Rouge National Urban Park, Altona offers a rare opportunity: to repair a disrupted place by re-establishing a compact, working hamlet at the park's edge rather than extending sprawl into sensitive landscapes. Its proximity to an existing town allows access to services and transit, while its agricultural context supports integrated farming, agri-forestry, and food-based enterprise. Properly conceived, Altona could once again function as a rural gateway and gathering place—a contemporary expression of the same balance between land, livelihood, and community that first gave the hamlet life.

As at Brougham, the essential ingredients remain: historic continuity, a legible settlement structure, and a landscape capable of sustaining both nature and human presence. Read together, Brougham and Altona suggest a larger opportunity—two small but resonant settlements that could once again give shape to the park's edges. Properly renewed, they have the potential to serve as western and eastern gateways to the expanded Rouge National Urban Park: places of arrival and orientation, anchoring access to the landscape while concentrating activity where it can be supported, rather than diffused across sensitive lands.





6.6.5 Learning from Brougham and Altona

The vison for the hamlets emerges from the lessons of both Brougham and Altona, each shaped by different histories but sharing common themes of emergence, disruption, and resilience.

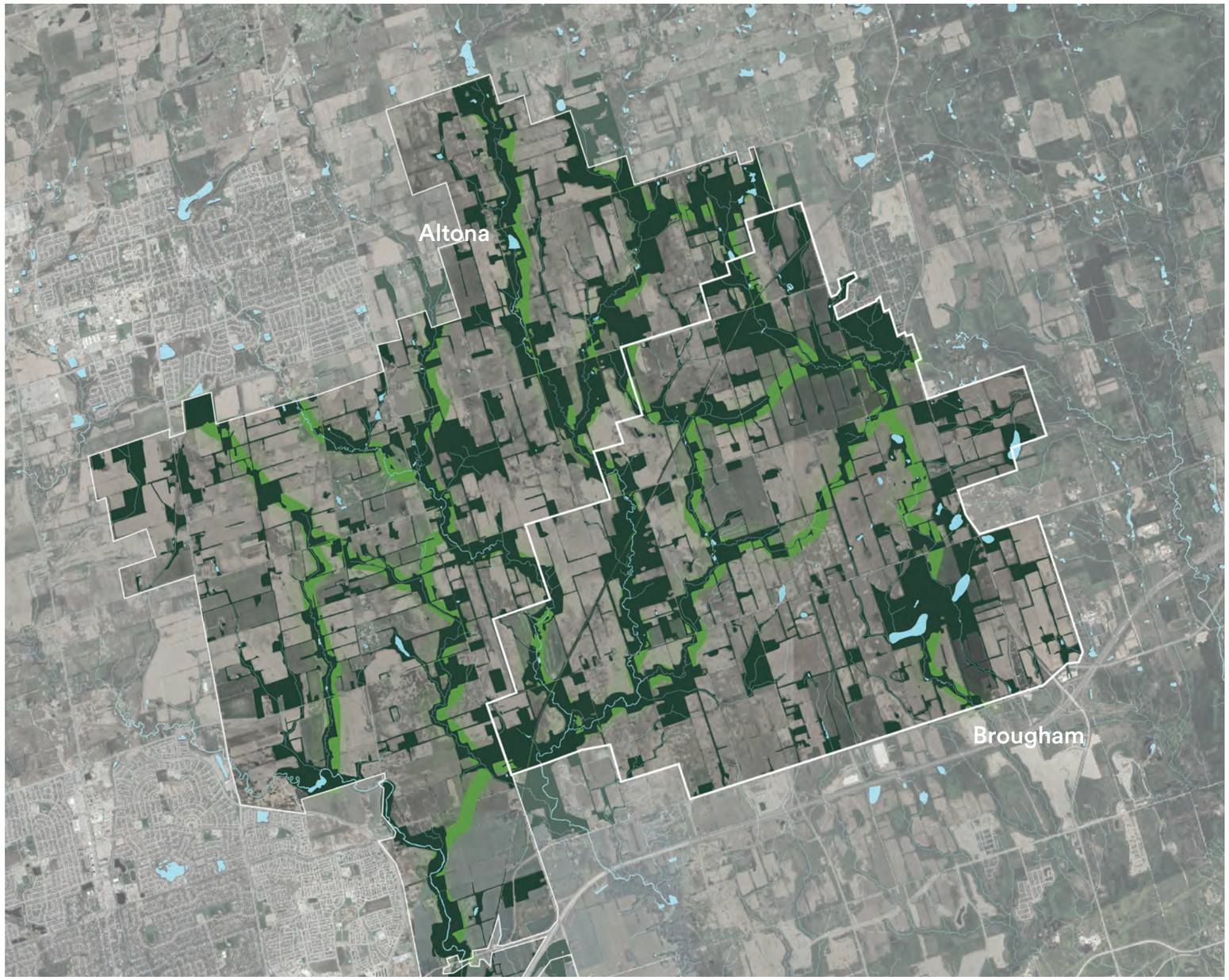
Brougham began as a pioneering settlement serving the surrounding agricultural landscape, where employment, skills, and social life were closely intertwined. Altona followed a similar trajectory, functioning as a service village at the edge of farmland and benefitting from its proximity to regional transportation routes and nearby communities.

In both places, the 20th century brought profound change. Patterns of daily life shifted with the arrival of automobiles and regional infrastructure. In Brougham, the 1972 expropriation for a proposed airport triggered a dramatic rupture—homes, businesses, and population were lost, leaving only fragments of the original village fabric. In Altona, gradual decline and decentralization weakened the connection between the historic core and the working landscape it once supported.

What remains in both communities—historic buildings, street patterns, mature trees, and open spaces—serves as a physical reminder of their origins and of the costs of disinvestment and uncertainty. At the same time, these remnants provide valuable cues for renewal: compact form, walkability, close relationship to agricultural lands, and a civic heart scaled to daily life.

In the 21st century, new development must be informed by these lessons. History alone is not enough; it must be paired with a forward-looking structure that balances conservation, new economic activity, and community life. Together, Brougham and Altona offer complementary models for revitalization—small, distinct settlements that can once again anchor rural landscapes, support farming and stewardship, and foster social connection.

Positioned at opposite ends of the site, Brougham and Altona have the potential to become the western and eastern gateways to the expanded Rouge National Urban Park, framing access to the landscape while demonstrating how historic hamlets can evolve into resilient, living communities for the future.



6.6.6 Revitalization Strategy

Infill architecture, Kiln Place Peter Barber Architects

Infill Development

Densify along existing infrastructure

Using Existing Infrastructure

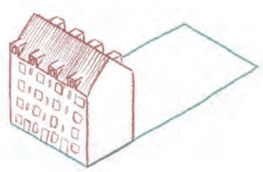
Character-filled buildngs with stoops and pitched roofs

Linking Local Identity

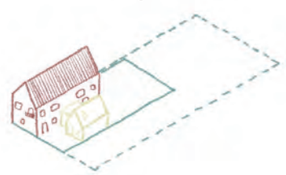
6.6.7 Dwelling typologies: initial sketches

Drawing inspiration from the existing structures on Pickering land, the initial sketches for dwelling typologies are shaped by several key principles: diversity in built form, mixed-use development, and a range of densities. These dwellings accommodate a variety of activities and living arrangements, reflecting the productive nature of the surrounding farmland on a smaller scale. The design includes public ground floors that foster active public spaces and communal interactions, while the living arrangements are tailored to support a diverse range of users, creating a dynamic and inclusive environment.

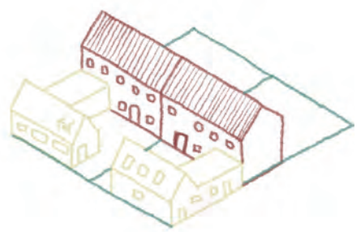
Agri-labs with pop-up dwelling units



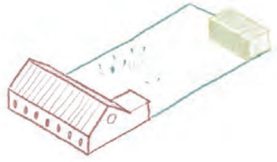
Terraced apartment



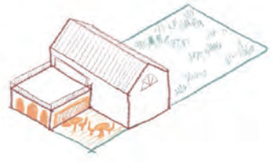
Seasonal cottage



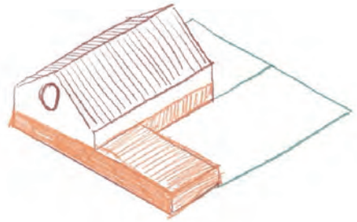
Farm House



Senior co-housing

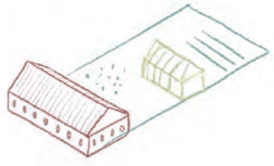


Elementary school / Youth club



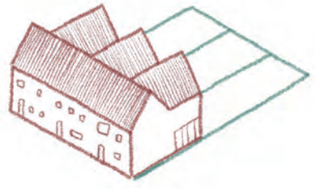
Market with upper office

Corner terrace with commercial ground floor

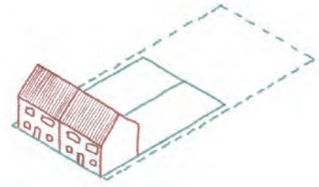


Office / Workshop

Live/Work barn



Duplex / Row house



Single family homes

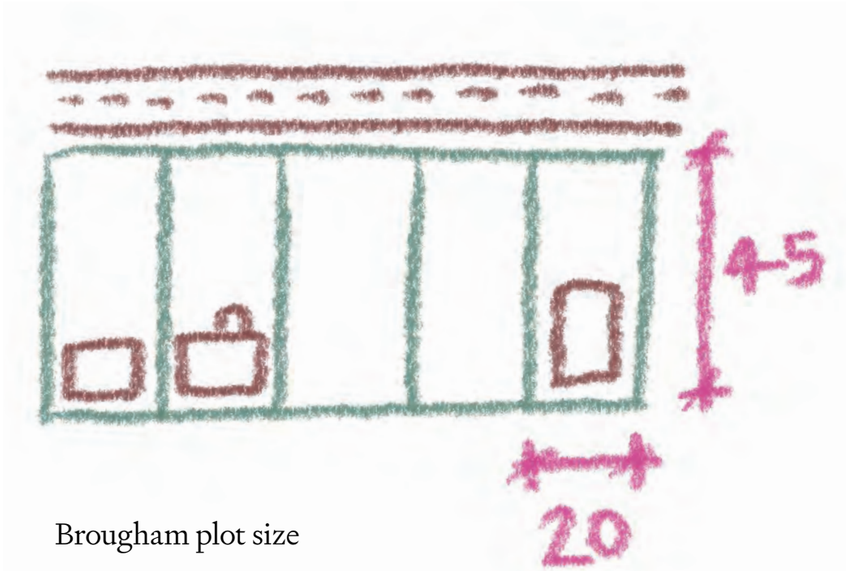
Commercial

Residential

Mixed tenure

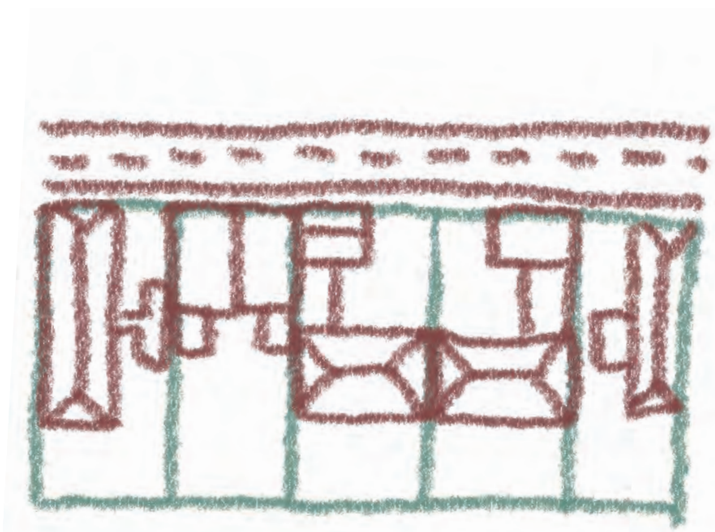
6.6.8 Urban fabric: initial sketches

Starting with the 20 × 45 metre Brougham plot size as a foundational unit, the newly conceived urban grid is designed to accommodate three distinct density levels: low, medium, and high. Each density configuration offers a unique approach to land use, resulting in varying levels of soil occupancy. These diverse spatial arrangements are critical in shaping the urban form, creating a rich, multifaceted environment that will serve as a blueprint for future development. By integrating different densities, the design fosters a dynamic urban fabric that balances growth with diversity, ensuring flexibility and sustainability.

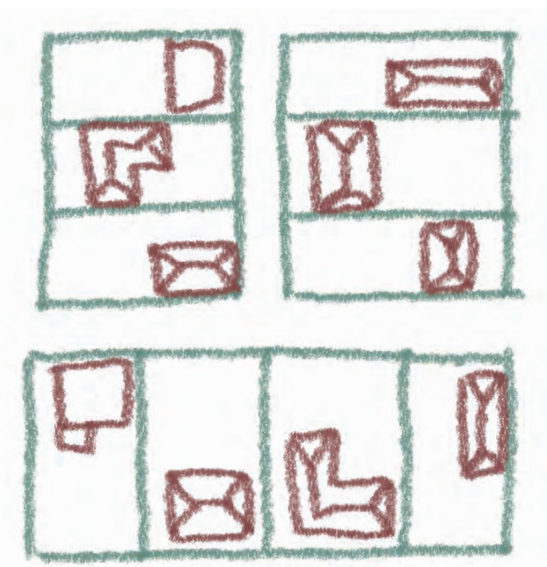


Brougham plot size

High density



Medium density



Low density

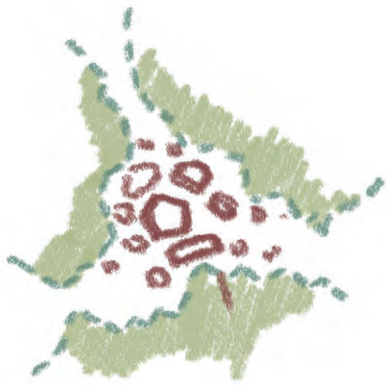
6.6.9 Sub-Urban to Sustainable Rural

In the context of Toronto, sprawling development around urban centers has been driven by a desire for space and nature: the Canadian Dream reliant on the private car and suburban development. However, over time, this sprawl has led to low-density housing and a disconnect between urban and rural life. Insufficient infrastructure, uncoordinated planning and a lack of alternative development models has framed rural life as an undesireable relic of the past.

Rural densification offers a solution to these challenges. Rather than simply expanding suburban areas, there is an opportunity to create a "super-rural" condition—a hybrid that combines the best elements of rural and urban living. This model would involve reimagining rural areas not just as locations for housing but as vibrant, self-sustaining communities. It supports mixed housing, walkable public space, accessible public transport, agricultural employment, remote working opportunities... the list goes on. As a model for more sustainable rural development, Pickering could provide its inhabitants an urban lifestyle in a rural setting: repairing our connection to the land.

Illustrative vision diagram

6.6.10 Principles for rural density

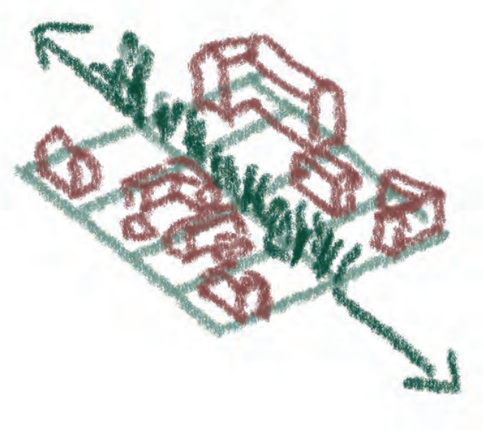


Natural limit
Nature is the structural element to achieve a compact footprint

A rural heart
Plan for a gradient of densities, with a dense rural core and diverse building typologies.

An active high street
Organize commercial and civic activity uses along a walkable central spine

Edges and Wedges
Let nature in, a “maximize nature” interface

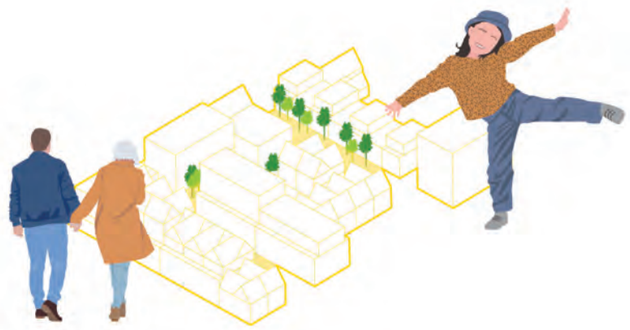


Connected nature
Establish biodiversity strips and connections in all the development densities.

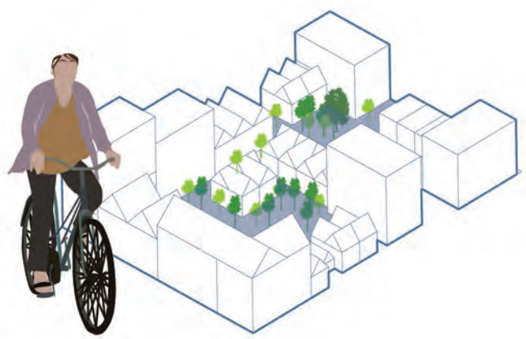
Existing Infrastructure
Using what’s already there as the germ for development

6.6.11 Diverse Development for Diverse User Group

Mixed density courtyard - Low

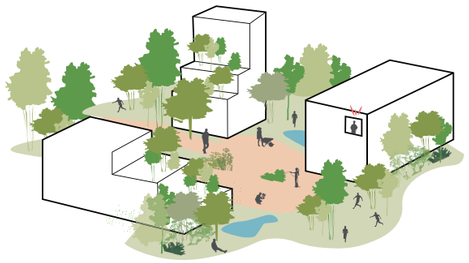


Mixed density courtyard - Medium

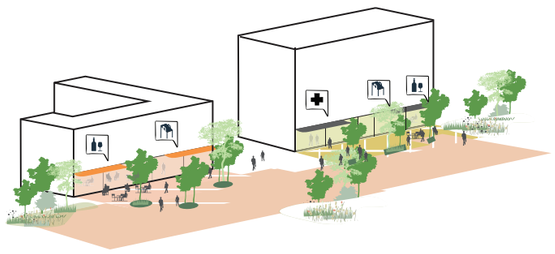


Mixed density courtyard - High

6.6.12 A Market Focus

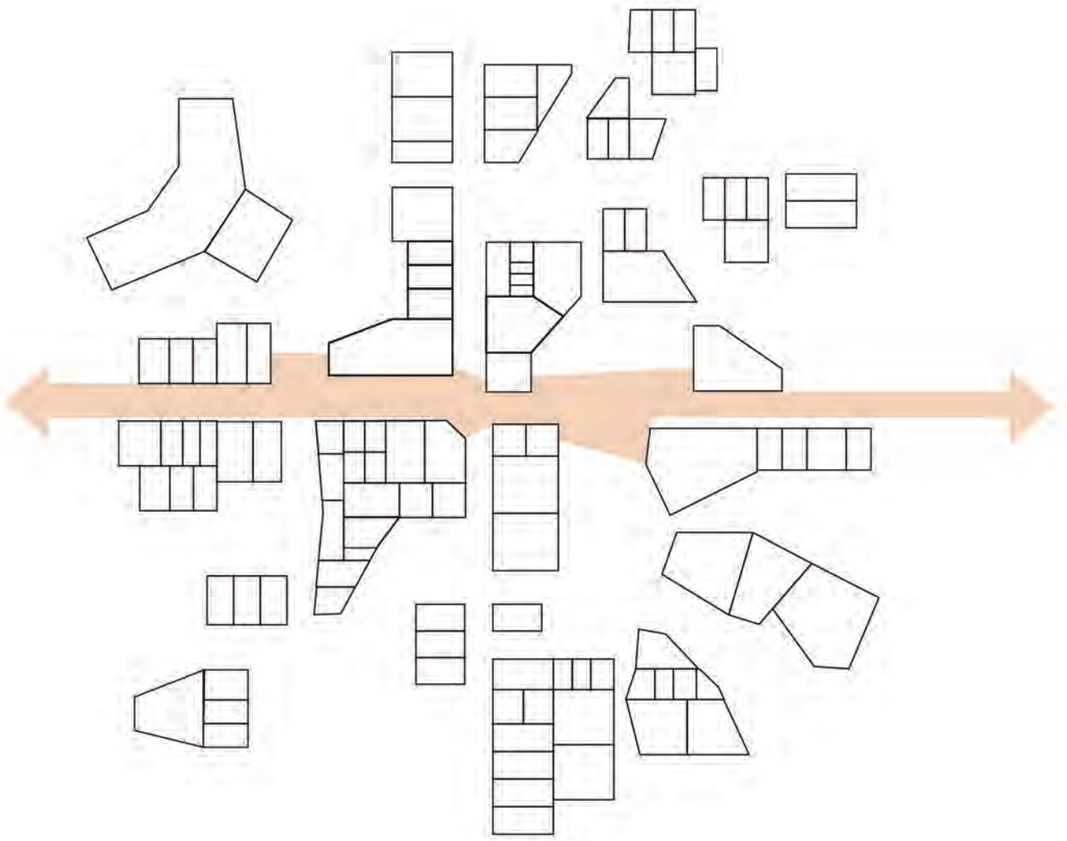


A rural heart

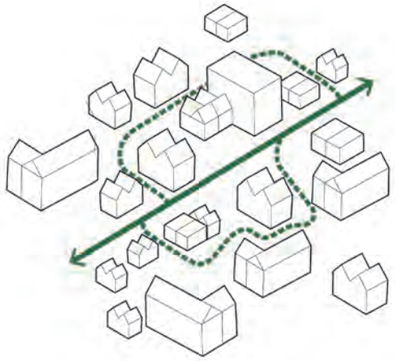


Public ground floor

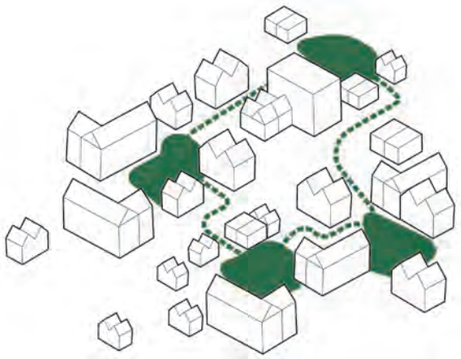
A walkable spine



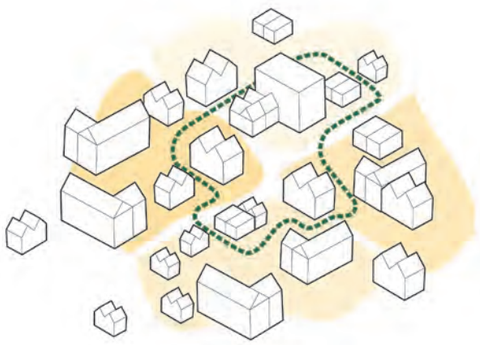
6.6.13 Connected Public Space



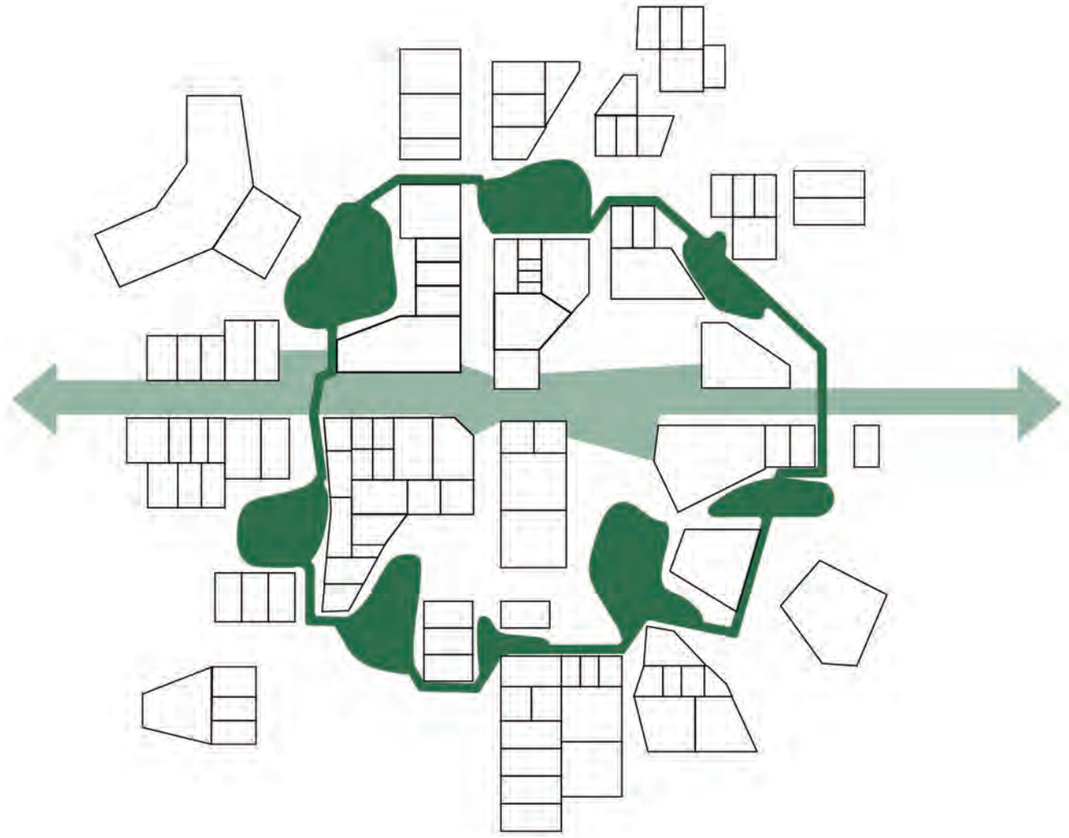
Connection to market street



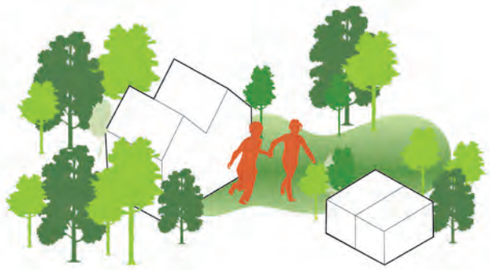
Connecting public spaces



Connecting neighborhoods



6.6.14 The Green Fingers of Nature and Farmland

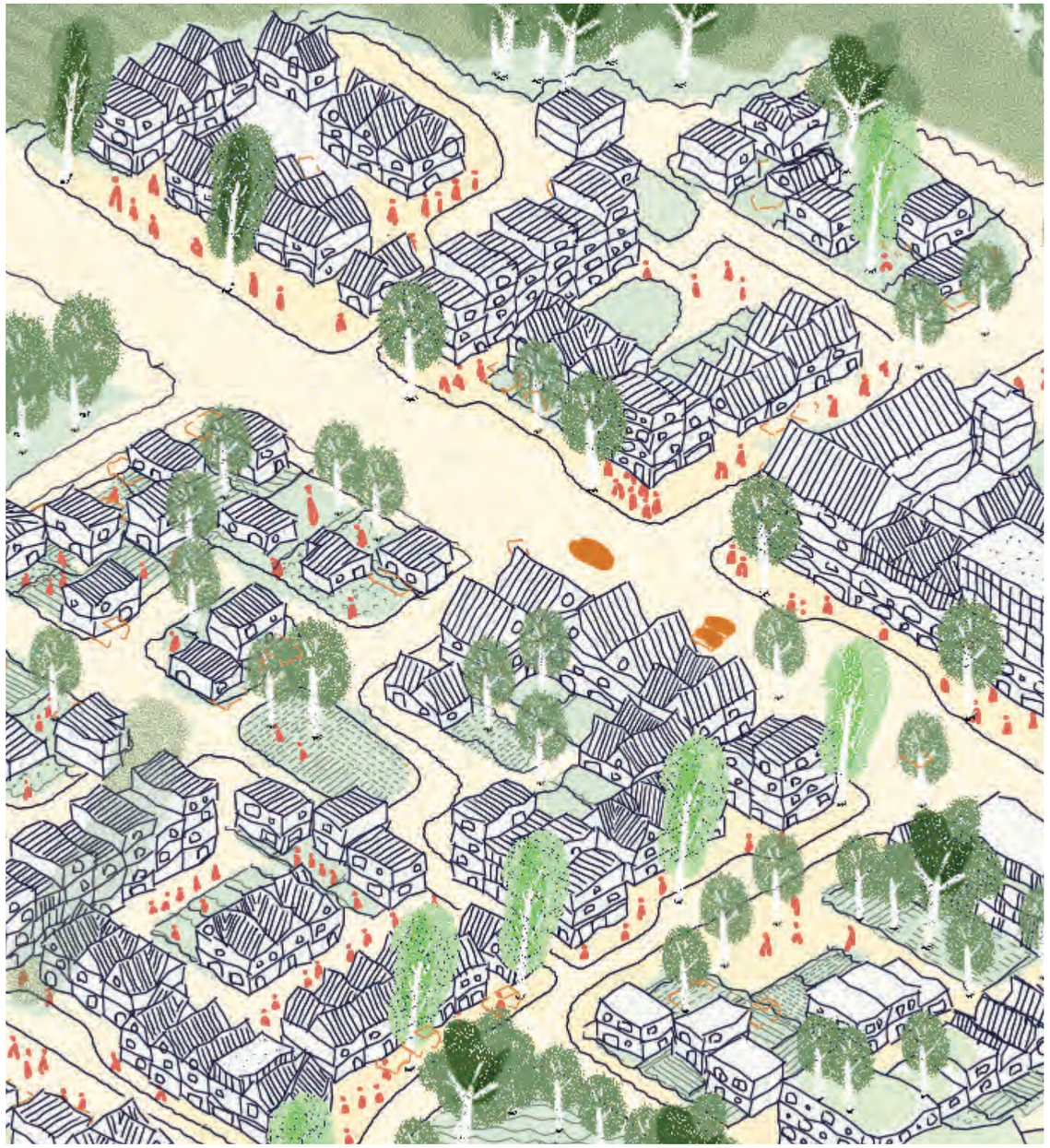


Nature at the doorstep: Integrate existing natural features

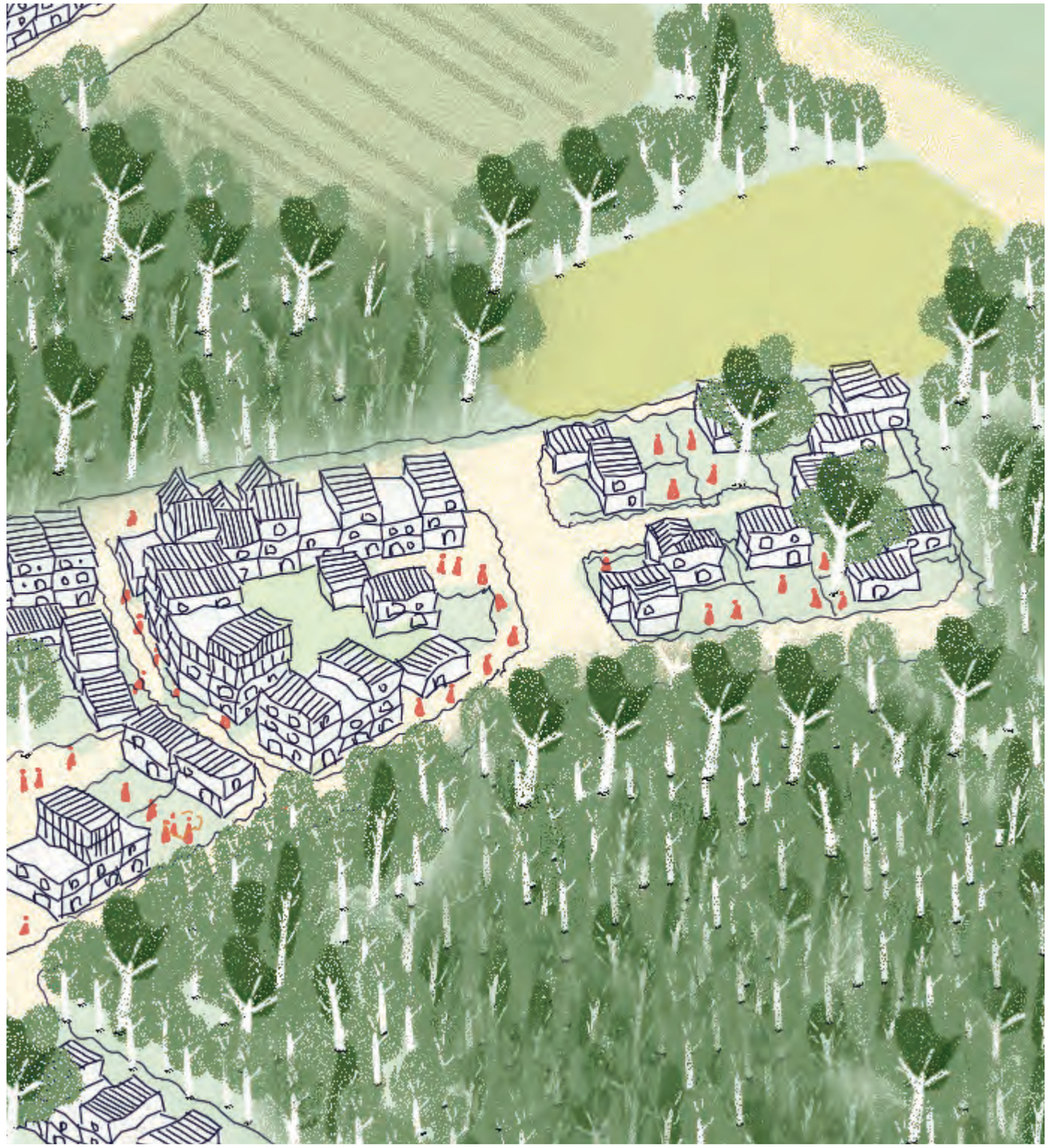
Space for sport and play

Diverse array of planting

6.6.15 Snapshots of Hamlet Life



Snapshot of Hamlet Life in Brougham



Snapshot of Hamlet Life in Altona

6.7.1 Community-Driven Land Trusts: A Framework for Stewardship and Renewal

A New Model for Publicly Owned Lands

Community-Driven Land Trusts (CLTs) are emerging across Canada as transformative mechanisms for managing land in the public interest ensuring that social, economic, and environmental benefits are shared and sustained over generations. Rooted in the cooperative and civic traditions of stewardship, CLTs allow communities to hold land collectively and direct its use toward long-term public good rather than short-term private gain.

In the context of the Pickering Federal Lands, the concept offers a compelling path forward for publicly owned restored hamlets Brougham and Altona, located outside the agriculture and the natural areas of the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

These lands, the agricultural and natural areas, the revitalized hamlets of Brougham and Altona, can become living laboratories for inclusive rural renewal. They would eventually represent up to 100 acres for each of the hamlets, approximately 1% of the total Pickering Federal Lands transfer. A Community Land Trust would provide the governance structure and financial framework to ensure these lands remain publicly accountable, ecologically regenerative, and socially vibrant.

Principles and Precedents

At the core of a CLT is the separation of land ownership from building ownership. The trust retains the land in perpetuity, ensuring it can never be sold for speculation, while homes, businesses, or community facilities on that land are leased or owned under conditions that protect affordability, environmental quality, and public access. Governance is typically tripartite - residents, public representatives, and civic or non-profit organizations - ensuring accountability and balance among interests with a non-political board.

Across Canada, CLTs have demonstrated their versatility. The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust in Toronto has stabilized affordable housing and preserved small businesses in a rapidly gentrifying district. The Winnipeg Land Trust leveraged municipal lands and social finance to create permanently affordable homes. On Salt Spring Island and in rural British Columbia, community land trusts have enabled local residents to secure housing and workspace in the face of rising land costs. In Atlantic Canada, the Cape Breton Land Trust and the Gros Morne Cooperating Association have linked conservation, cultural heritage, and economic diversification.

In terms of Parks Canada's capacity and interest, Parks Canada is already involved in the municipal government in 7 locations. A prime example is Jasper, where there is still a local government that collects taxes. Jasper produces a town site plan consistent with the National Parks Act, and Parks Canada signs off on land-use by-laws and development.

These examples reveal a consistent pattern: success arises from community engagement, supportive public policy, and durable governance structures. They demonstrate that publicly owned lands can be protected and made productive, not through privatization, but through shared stewardship.

Application to the Pickering Federal Lands

A Community Land Trust (CLT) would provide institutional backbone for these two rural hamlets. The trust would serve as a steward and development partner overseeing their revitalization. Parks Canada would hold title to the land and lease it to the Community Land Trust for uses that advance the community vision from affordable and moderate-income housing to small enterprises, civic spaces, renewable energy projects, and cultural amenities.

By keeping the land in public hands and enabling diverse forms of occupancy, the CLT would support the two mixed-use, multi-generational rural communities that remain resilient over time. It would also function as a bridge between the Rouge National Urban Park, the agricultural lands, and the two settlement areas, ensuring ecological continuity and social integration. In addition, there are farm families and temporary farm workers living in rehabilitated and/or rebuilt farmhouses and adjunct buildings on former farmsteads dotted across the Lands. The arrangements for these individual homesteads within the expanded Rouge National Park would be under the purview of Parks Canada.

Proposed Governance Model

The Rouge National Park Community Land Trust (RNPCLT) would adopt a tripartite board structure to balance democratic participation, professional expertise, and policy alignment. It should be politically agnostic incorporating true trustees (not political appointees), and able to stand 25 years from now, despite government changes or changes to the leadership of Parks Canada.

It would include:

- Resident representatives from the two hamlets and surrounding communities would articulate local priorities and ensure that decisions remain people-centred.
- Public partners, including, Parks Canada, and Indigenous representatives, would provide continuity, strategic direction, and integration with planning and conservation frameworks.
- Civic and non-profit members drawn from housing, heritage, environmental, agricultural and social enterprise sectors would contribute specialized knowledge and innovation capacity.

This structure has proven effective elsewhere in Canada, combining grassroots legitimacy with institutional stability. Transparent governance, community assemblies, and open reporting would reinforce accountability and public trust.

Mandate and Core Functions

The RNPCLT mandate would extend across five complementary functions:

1. Land Stewardship: Holding and managing land in perpetuity to preserve its public value and ecological integrity.
2. Housing and Settlement: Leasing sites for housing that remains affordable, diverse, and compatible with rural character including homes for low and middle-income families involved in agriculture.
3. Heritage and Culture: Restoring and repurposing historic buildings, fostering arts and cultural activities that reflect the area's identity.

6.7.2 Community-Driven Land Trusts: A Framework for Stewardship and Renewal

4. Local Economy: Supporting small businesses, mixed farming, social enterprises, and agri-tourism and agri-business initiatives that align with sustainability goals.
5. Education and Research: Partnering with universities, colleges, and Indigenous knowledge holders to explore new models of regenerative rural design and land stewardship.
6. Food Security: Support farmers involved in new crop management techniques enhancing food security and helping to demonstrate Canada's potential to be a food superpower.

Financing and Implementation

Establishing the PCLT would require a blend of policy support, capital investment, and community mobilization. The foundation could be a federal transfer of publicly owned lands by Transport Canada to Parks Canada who would retain title, establishing the basis for a lease to the Community Land Trust. Subsequent capitalization might come from a combination of:

- Municipal contributions in kind (planning support, servicing, or land);
- Philanthropic and social-finance partners, such as Family Foundations and the Community Housing Transformation Centre;
- Lease revenues and reinvested surpluses, ensuring financial self-sufficiency over time;
- Partnerships with credit unions and impact investors interested in community-based real estate and green infrastructure.

Rather than a one-time sell off to developers, the Community-Driven Land Trust would ensure an ongoing annual return to government with perpetual benefits that limit future liabilities.

The Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada offer proven templates for legal incorporation, governance training, and funding mechanisms.

Relationship to Rouge National Urban Park and Agricultural Lands

The RNPCLT would complement the management of the expanded Rouge National Urban Park by serving as the human settlement and cultural counterpart to its farmlands and natural landscape. Through memoranda of understanding with Parks Canada, it could coordinate ecological restoration, trail networks, and visitor experiences that connect park users with nearby hamlets. Similarly, partnerships with the agricultural community possibly through a separate Farmland Trust would ensure a continuous mosaic of stewardship across nature, farming, and settlement.

Toward a Living Legacy

Adopting a Community-Driven Land Trust framework would transform the legacy of expropriated airport lands into a story of shared renewal and reconciliation aligning with Indigenous values of collective responsibility, ecological care, and intergenerational equity. It would demonstrate how Canada's publicly owned lands can anchor new models of rural living that are compact, connected, and climate conscious.

The Rouge National Urban Park Community Land Trust would thus serve not only as a local governance mechanism but also as a national precedent showing how communities can reclaim public land for the common good, ensuring that the stewardship of these lands reflects the aspirations and creativity of the people who inhabit them.

7. Demonstration Plan

7. Demonstration Plan

7.1 A New Paradigm for Co-existence

7.1.1 RNUP Trails - *Existing Network*

Connecting Rouge National Urban Park with the Pickering Federal Lands offers an opportunity to strengthen the regional trail system and link it to the Trans Canada Trail, Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, Greenbelt Route, Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, and Uxbridge networks.

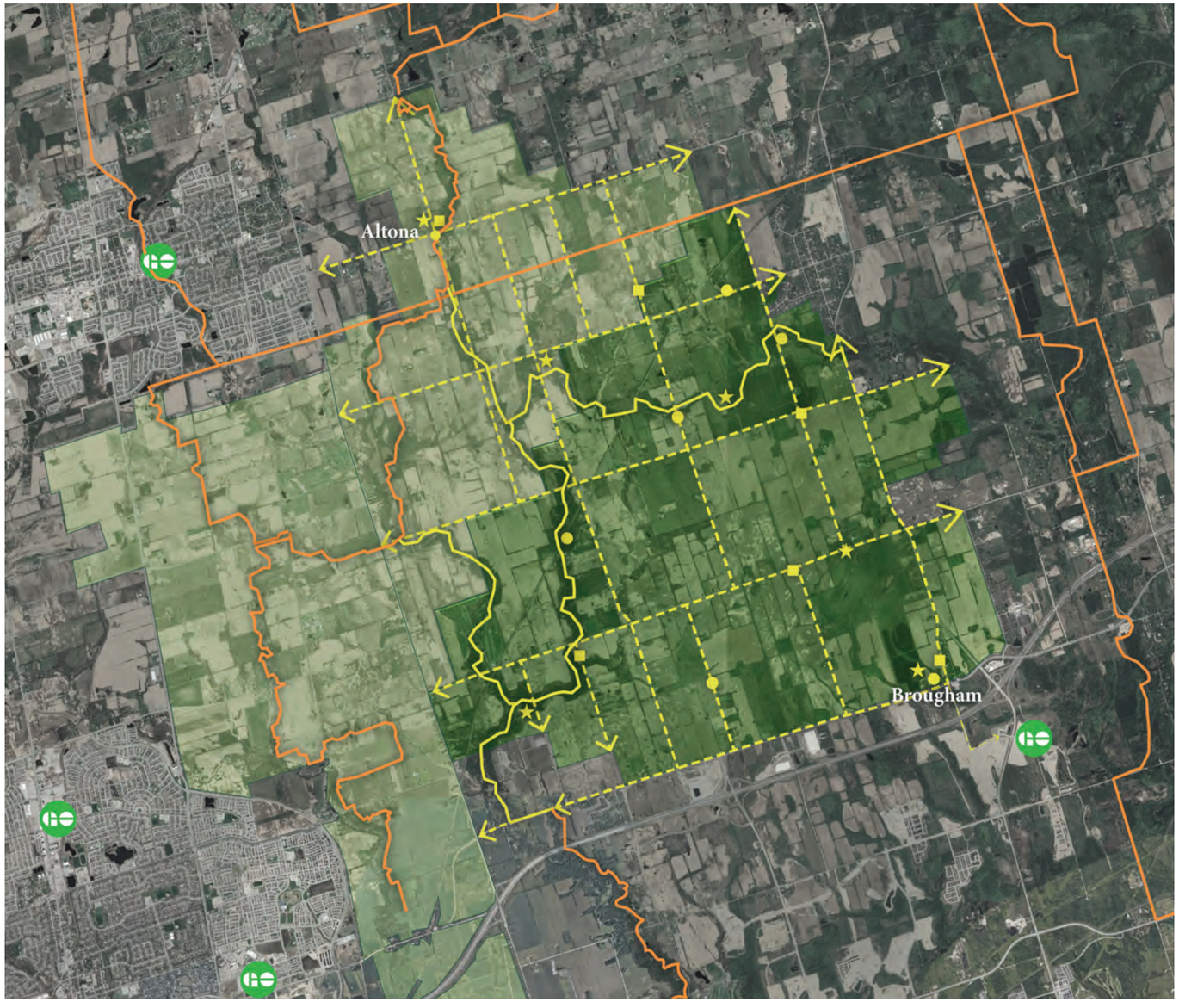
The Northeast Trail showcases the diversity and richness of trails within the park. Connecting This trail the Black Walnut Day Use Area to Glasgow Trailhead, it traverses diverse landscapes including wetlands, forests, meadow and agricultural fields. It features a total of seven boardwalks, including a pergola seating area overlooking a marsh. The boardwalks are made of a fiberglass substructure that will last hundreds of years, and are one of Rouge National Urban Park's newest green initiatives. The northern end of this trail is located in the headwaters of West Duffins Creek, which is fed by groundwater from the Oak Ridges Moraine. This trail connects to the Goodwood Resource Management Tract (managed by the TRCA) and the Oak Ridges Trail to the north.

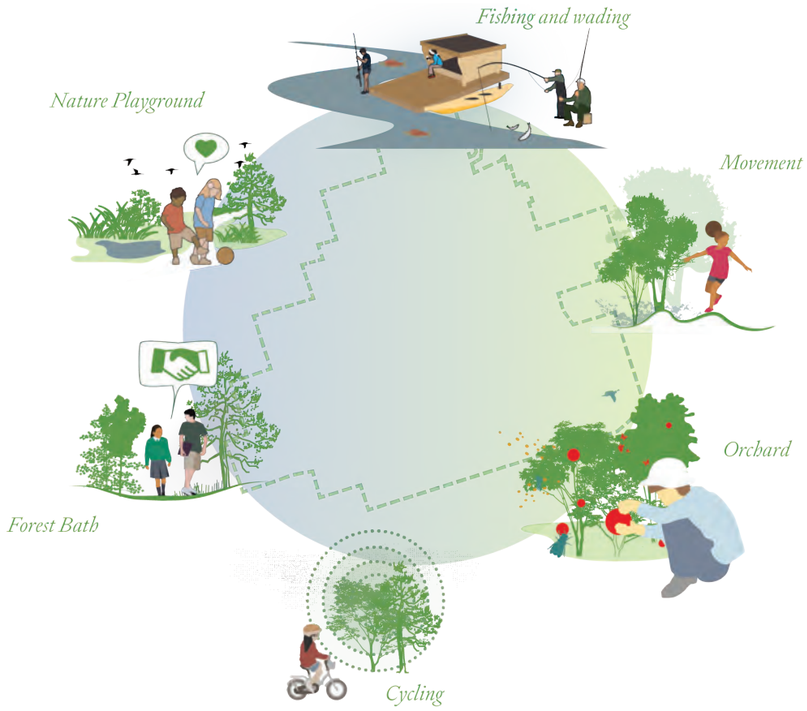
Trail Features

- *Fiberglass boardwalks* – The first of its kind for Parks Canada, these unique boardwalks are one of Rouge National Urban Park's many green initiatives.
- *Marsh and agricultural viewscapes* – Take in the views of the restoration planting filled with flowers that bloom brilliant purple and gold in the Fall.
- *Pergola sitting area* – Take a break, enjoy the views and fresh air in the sitting area on the boardwalk near Black Walnut Day Use Area.
- *Forest landscapes* – Enjoy the variety of tree species found in different forests along the trail, including black walnut, pine, cedar, and sugar maple.
- *Oak Ridges Moraine* – Experience the rolling terrain of the Oak Ridges Moraine, an important geological landform in southern Ontario.
- *Coyote Loop* – Hike the Coyote Loop, a 650 m trail that has views of a pond and aquatic wildlife, a staircase, and forest viewscapes.

**Photography from Parks Canada website, https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/on/rouge*

7.1.2 Proposed New Trails and Attractions





Go Stop

Existing Trails

Proposed new nature trail

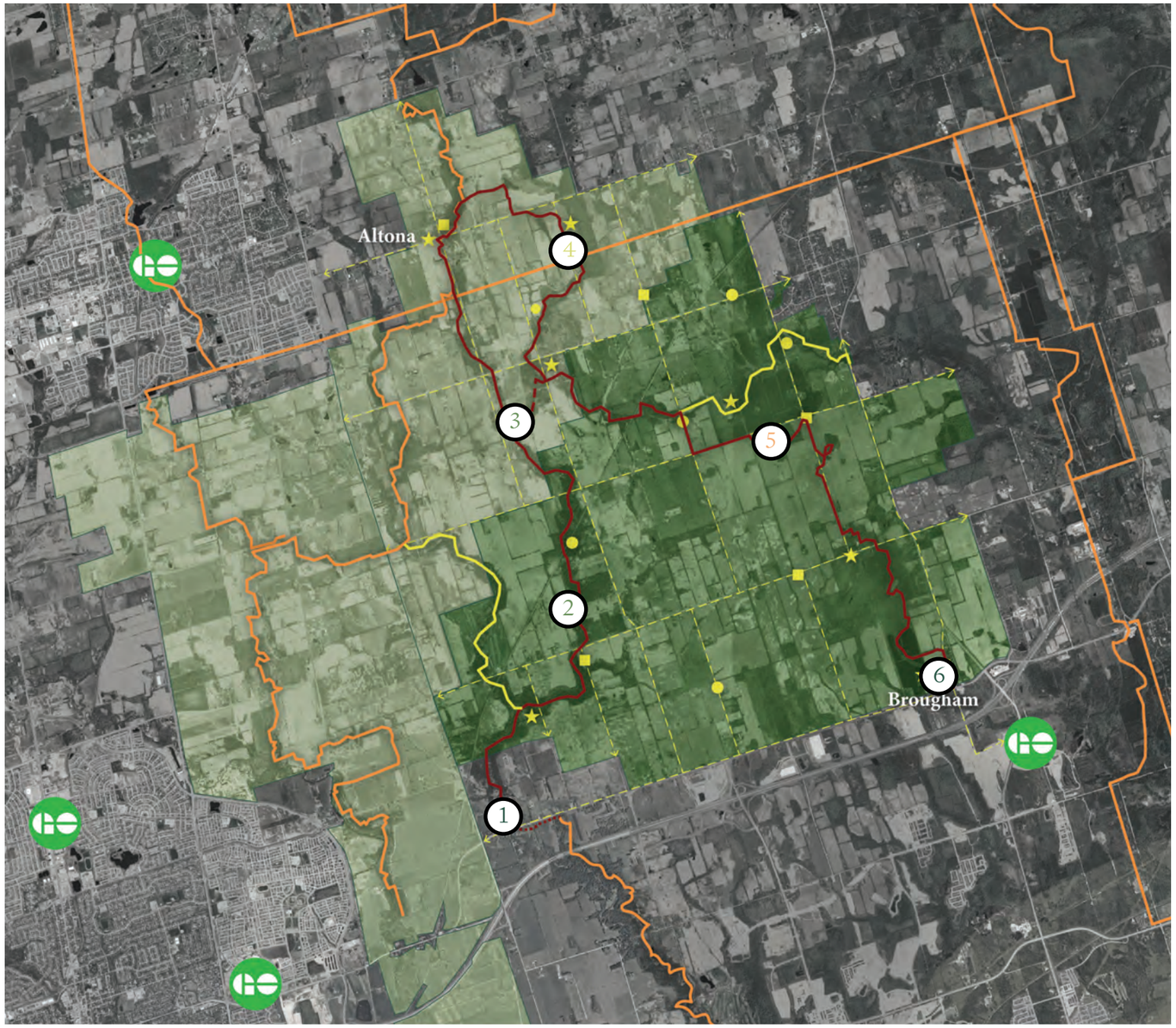
Possible bike path on concession roads

Farming programs

Garden programs

Nature Attraction

7.1.3 A Day in the Pickering Federal Lands



1 Arrival

- Take public transportation to Rouge National Park, arriving at Pickering Federal Lands.
- Pick-up a trail map at the information center and get an overview of today's walking route

2 Forest Bath

- Take a guided walk through the serene forest landscape.
- Pause near ancient trees, listening to the sounds of the forest.

3 Bird watching

- Continue walking along trails to reach a premium bird-watching spot by Duffin Creek.
- Spot local bird species such as herons, woodpeckers, and migrating waterfowl.
- Take photographs and learn about the native bird habitats from a local tour-guide

4 Farming

- Join an afternoon workshop on agro-forestry a
- Learn about sustainable farming practices, tree planting, and soil regeneration.
- Participate in hands-on activities, such as tree planting and tending to crops.

5 Community Garden

- Head to the local community garden in the late afternoon.
- Pick a selection of locally grown, organic vegetables and herbs.
- Sit down for a farm-to-table communal dinner & enjoy dishes cooked by local chefs, made from the day's harvest and other local ingredients.
- Share stories and connect with other visitors and community members.

6 Hamlet stay

- After dinner, check into an eco-hotel nestled in the hamlet of Pickering Federal Lands.
- Relax in a cozy room and unwind with the peaceful sounds of nature before falling asleep.

7. Demonstration Plan

7.2 Putting It Together

7.2.1 Overlap the Three Legs

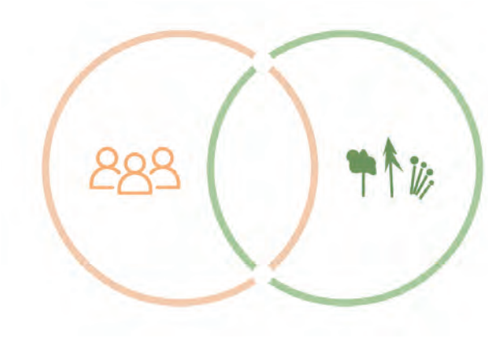
The power of the Vision is most evident in the intersection of the three legs of the stool.

By applying these principles, the extension of Rouge National Urban Park to include the Pickering Federal Lands could create a model for sustainable coexistence of nature, agriculture, and human communities. This approach will preserve valuable ecological and agricultural resources while providing unique opportunities for education, recreation, and community development.

Integration strategies:

- *Design a visitor center that serves as a hub for education, community engagement, and sustainable tourism.*
- *Create multi-use trail networks that connect natural areas, farms, and hamlets, promoting active transportation and recreation.*
- *Develop programs that involve local communities in conservation efforts and sustainable farming practices.*
- *Implement a comprehensive land management plan that mutually supports ecological protection, agricultural production, and community needs.*

7.2.2 Interfaces



Community - Nature

Goal

1. New habitat creation
2. Protecting nature
3. Protecting people
4. Amenity spaces
5. Promoting Stewardship

Strategy

Tree lane with native species
Blue-Green infrastructure
Biodiversity stepping stone
High Canopy cover ratio

Nature - Agriculture

Goal

1. Maintenance
2. Biological pest control
3. Habitat edges
4. Soil health
5. Water management

Strategy

Wildflower edges
Beetle bank
Agroforestry
Contour plowing

Agriculture - Community

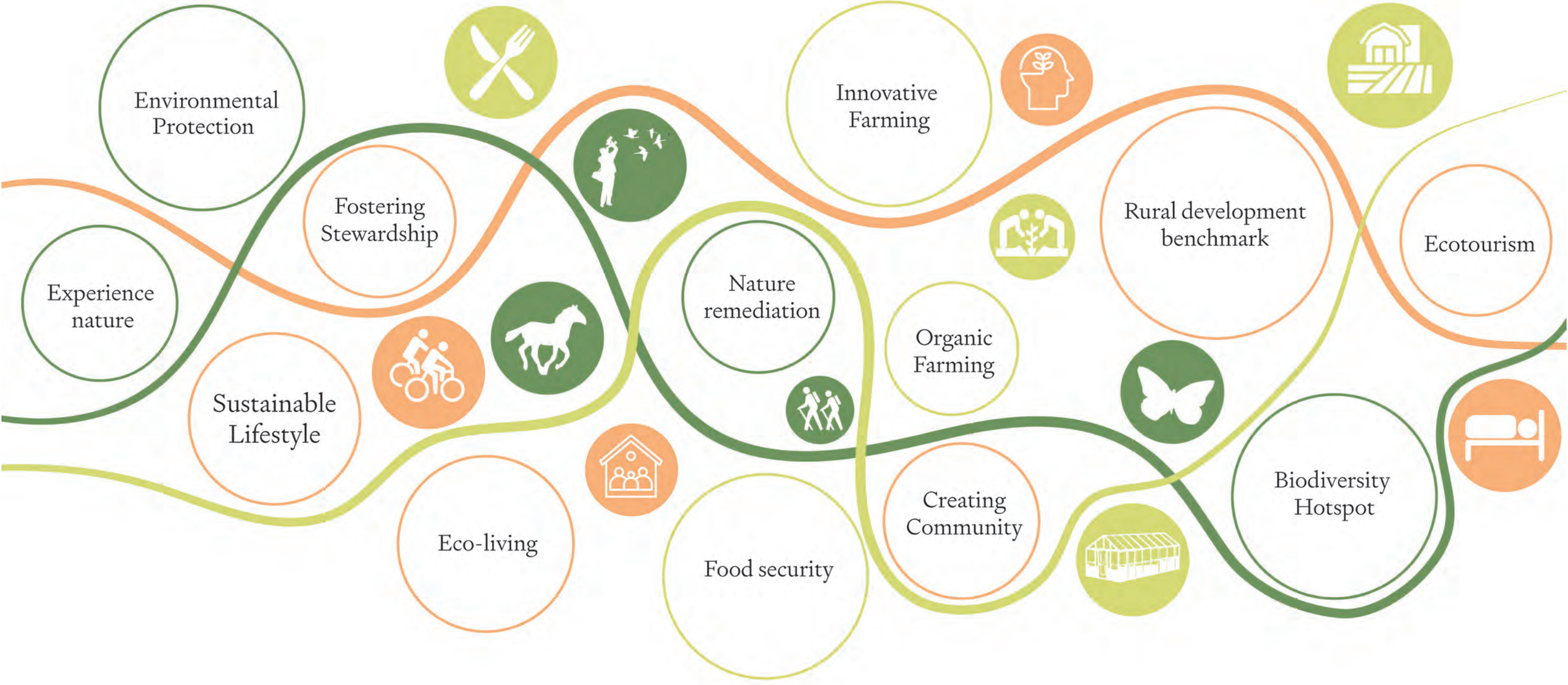
Goal

1. Food security
2. Aesthetics
3. Small scale food production
4. Identity and community
5. Experience value

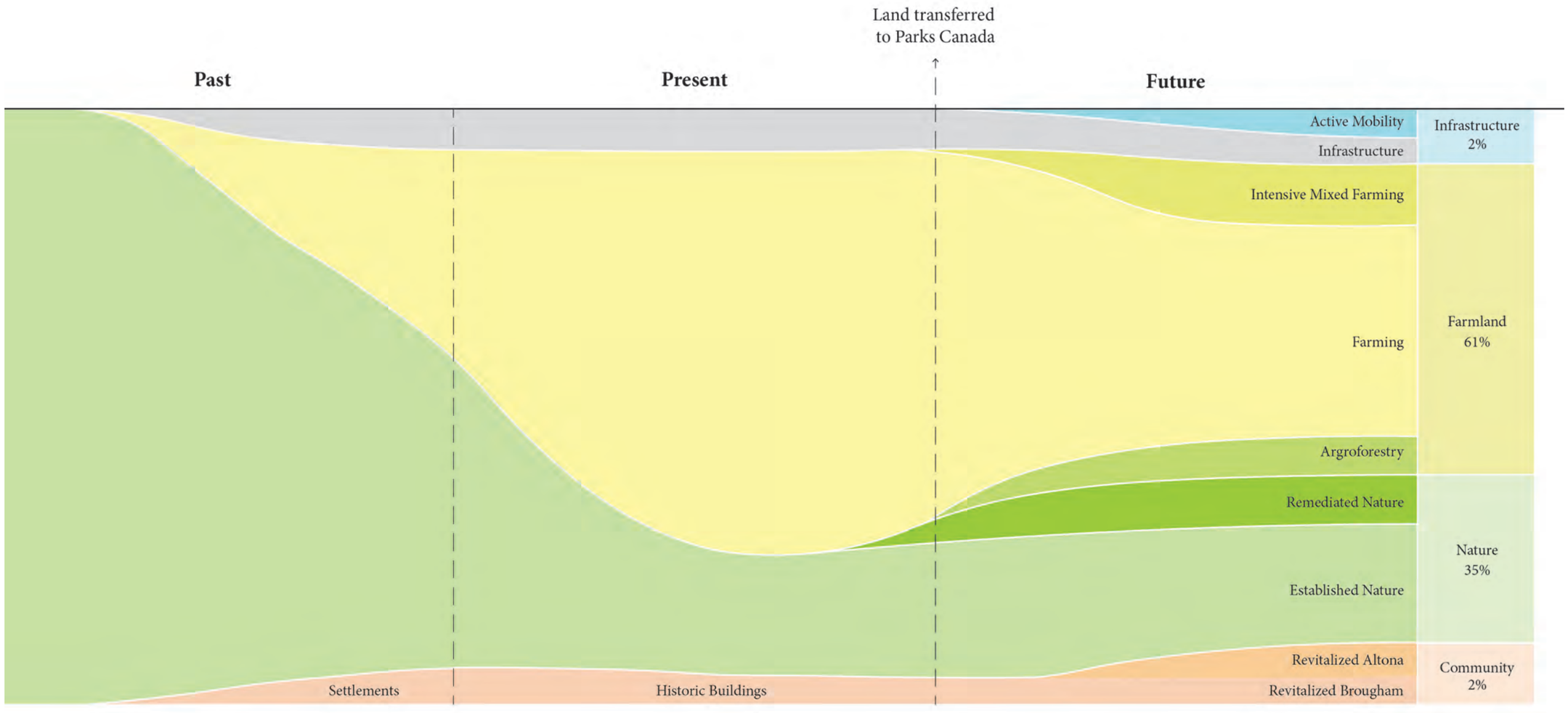
Strategy

Foraging routes
Farm to table restaurants
Community gardens
Market

7.2.3 Integration Strategies

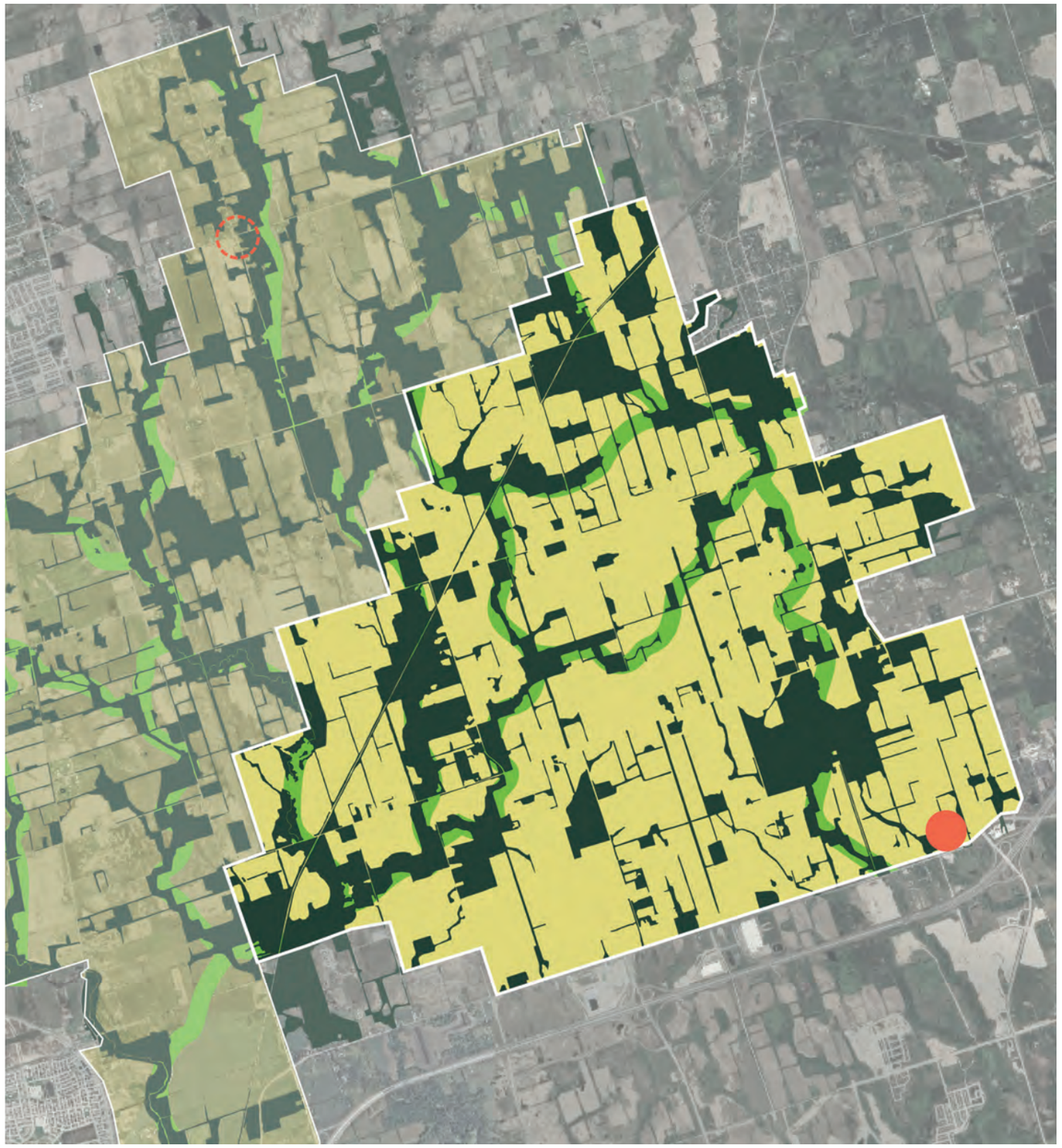


7.2.4 A Sustainable Vision For Pickering Federal Lands



From mono-culture to diverse and sustainable development

7.2.5 Statistics



Current Situation		
Remaining Airport Site:	8700 acres	100%
Existing farmland:	ca. 6090 acres	70%
Existing nature area:	ca. 2610 acres	30%
Existing infrastructure:	ca. 100 acres	1%

New Vision Plan		
Site Area:	8700 acres	100%
Revitalized Brougham:	ca. 100 acres	1%
Revitalized Altona (in existing RNUP):	ca. 100 acres	n/a
Retained Nature Area:	ca. 2610 acres	30%
Proposed Extended Nature Area:	ca. 500 acres	5%
Optimized Farmland:	ca. 5394 acres	62%
Optimized Infrastructure:	TBD	TBD

8. The Path Forward

8.2.1 First Steps...

There is a strong rationale and broad support for the transfer of the lands from Transport Canada to Parks Canada for inclusion in the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) under Parks Canada's mandate and management.

- The agricultural community has been a vital force for moving environmental integrity forward in RNUP.
- Expanding RNUP will improve the overall ecological resilience of RNUP.
- Adding more habitat for species, including habitat coinciding with agriculture improves environmental integrity
- Settlement in RNUP has been successful and its incorporation in the expansion will enhance the RNUP
- There are many benefits of the RNUP to the surrounding area in a climate changed world. RNUP provides flood resilience and cooling extending beyond the borders of RNUP. The Rouge and the surrounding wetlands absorb and slow-release water in times of flooding.
- All of these climate benefits of RNUP to the local communities surrounding the park will be enhanced through the expansion.
- The greater park ecosystem is part of the mandate for RNUP and Parks Canada. When development was proposed for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), Parks Canada and the RNUP spoke out on the Greater Park Ecosystem and the increased threat to the health of the park.

Once the transfer is accomplished there are important issues to be addressed after rounds of consultation with stakeholders and Parks Canada. Parks Canada will need to address: broadening outreach, the financial model, implementation mechanisms (e.g. project oversight and delivery), the breakdown from the broad Vision Framework, the regulatory framework and approvals, phasing and district plans to coordinate partners who will be engaged at different points in time towards realizing the vision.

9. Recommendations

9. Recommendations

1. Transfer all government-owned lands in the Pickering Federal Land holdings to Parks Canada for the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park to ensure their protection and management under Parks Canada's mandate. Any lands within the Park designated as urban settlement should remain under Park Canada's oversight and protection, and be managed through a community driven land trust model.

2. Parks Canada to undertake a public process to refine the vision for the future of the Pickering Federal Lands within the expanded Rouge National Urban Park.

3. Increase funding to Parks Canada to implement the expansion and manage the expanded RNUP.

10. Acknowledgements

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust and the Friends of the Rouge National Urban Park have been working with a broad array of partners including Lands over Landings and the Ontario Farmland Trust to develop a cohesive consensus Vision for the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park incorporating the Pickering Federal Lands.

The Vision draws on conversations and ideas from multiple stakeholders and advocates. It aims to stimulate discussion on addressing the loss of Class 1 agricultural land critical for food security, the destruction of natural ecosystems, and the weakening of rural communities.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust and Friends of the Rouge National Urban Park wish to acknowledge and thank the following:

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Ontario Farmland Trust

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A Shared Vision for the Expanded

Rouge National Urban Park

Waterfront Regeneration Trust

FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE National Urban Park