

An aerial photograph of an urban area, likely a city or town, with a white outline highlighting a specific region. The background is a dark green gradient.

A Shared Vision for the Expanded
Rouge National Urban Park

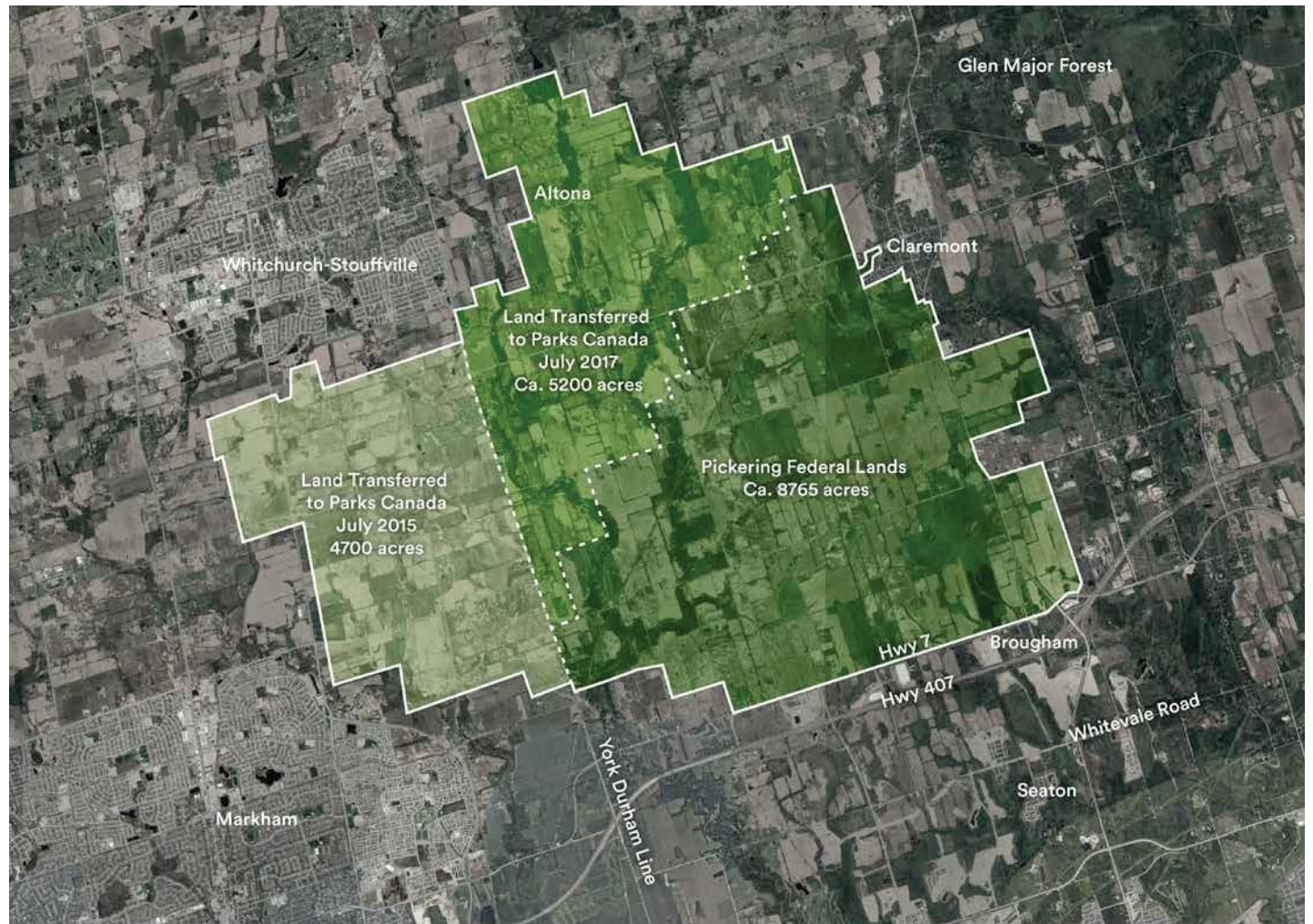
September 2024
Revised January 2026



Waterfront
Regeneration
Trust

FRIENDS OF
THE ROUGE
National Urban Park

Site Boundary



Site Assets



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



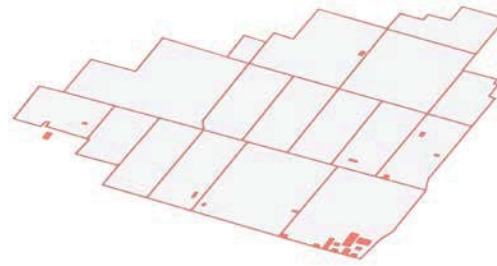
8. West Duffins Corridor



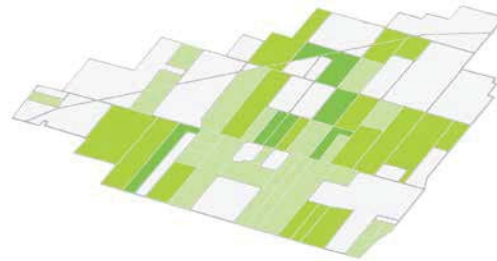
9. Ducks On Pond

Image credit: Land Over Landings

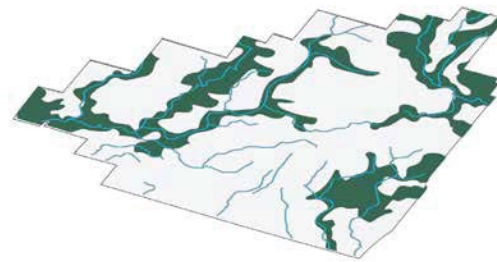
Co-existence of Different Layers



*Built structures and
concession grid*



Farm fields



Nature

From *Protection* to Offering a *New Vision*



Historic Precedents

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



Image Credit: Vignaccia

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

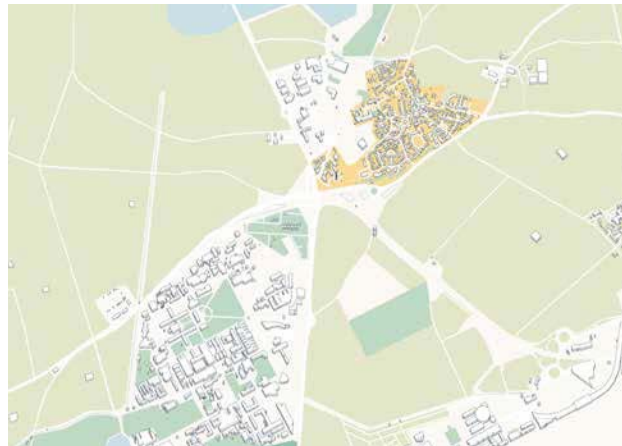
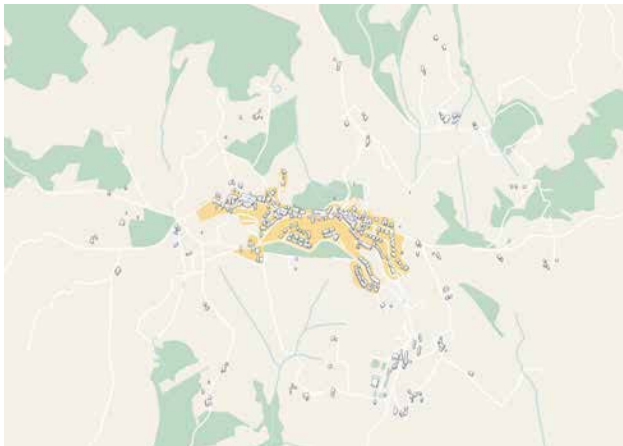


Image Credit: Saclay.fr

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



Image Credit: Maarten van de Biezen



Modern Precedents

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



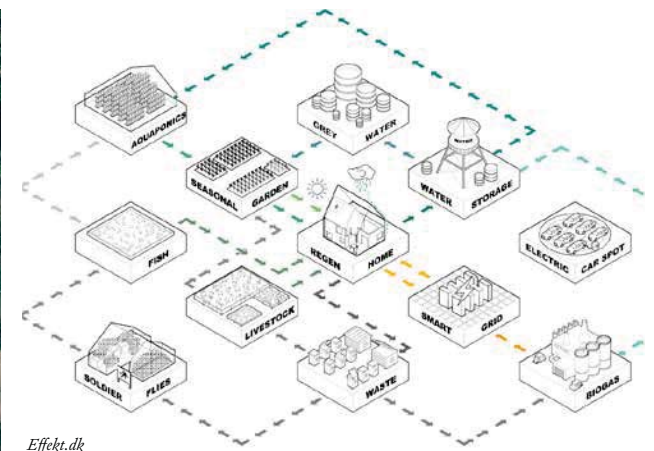
Image Credit: Greenpeace media

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



Image Credit: Slagshunde-Ganløse IF

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



Effekt.dk

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.

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.

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

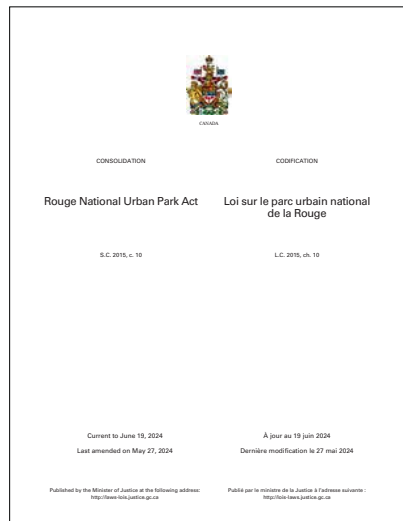
- Enhance the experience of place.
- Provide welcoming places to gather, meet and share and appreciate the unique qualities of the Park while resting lightly on the land.
- Promote high standards of design excellence in the Park landscape interventions, and community structures and infrastructure.



10. A sustainable 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.

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



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>

The Legislative Framework as established in the Four Pillars of the Rouge National Urban Park



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.

The Three-Legged Stool Vision

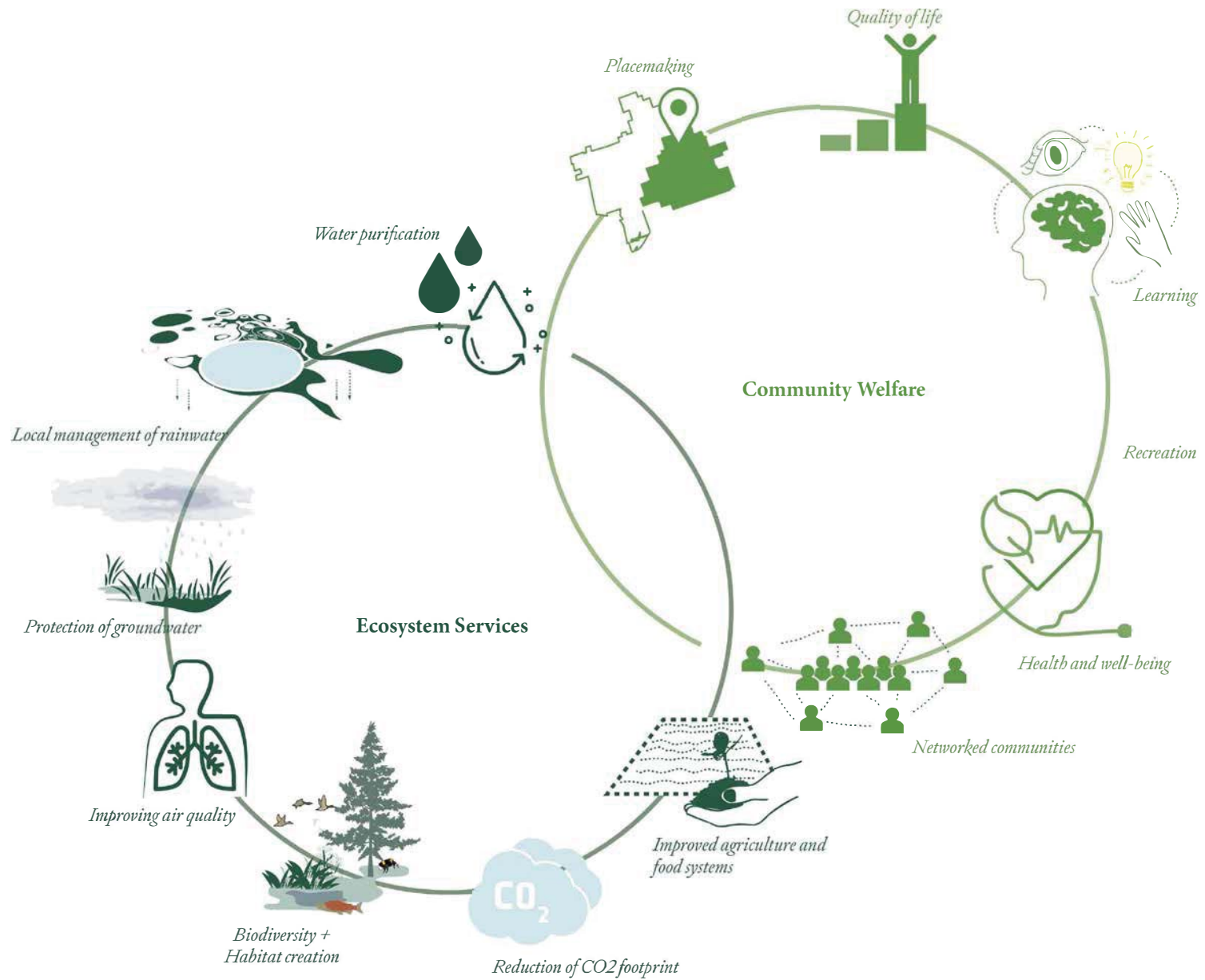


- Develop sustainable hamlets
- Promote interaction with nature and food production
- Create educational facilities
- Implement renewable energy system

- Restore nature system
- Establish connected ecological corridors
 - Enhance biodiversity
 - Protect habitat and ecosystem
- Protect and restore watershed integrity

- Promote sustainable agriculture
 - Security of Tenure
 - Integrate food production with community engagement
 - Agri-tourism

Nature Values



From Lake Ontario to Oak Ridges Moraine



Intervention at Different Scales

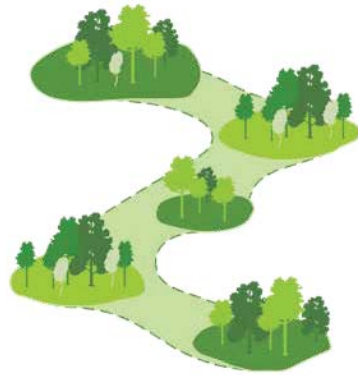
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Rouge National Urban Park

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.

L



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.

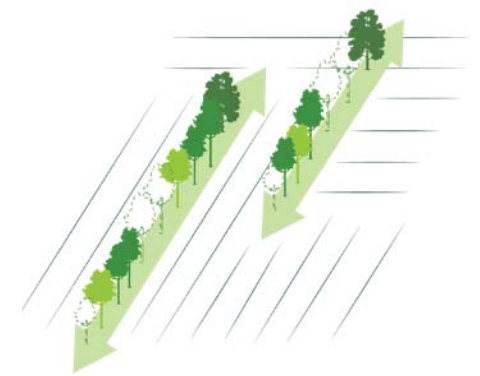
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Agroforestry

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.

Farming Opportunity Scenarios

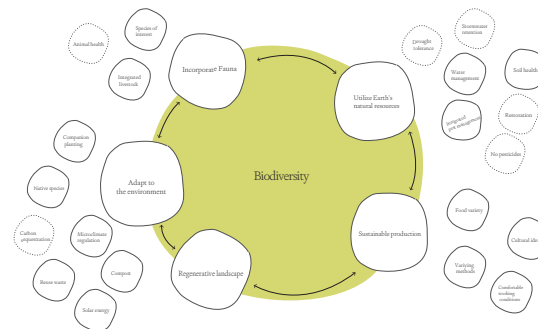


Land Over Landings: Advocating for Agricultural Use of Pickering Federal Lands



The advocacy group Land Over Landings promotes using the Pickering airport lands for agriculture and food security instead of airport development. Their vision includes preserving the lands for food and water resources, creating a “North Pickering Farms” hub with small farms for training, research, and sustainable practices, and highlighting the economic and environmental benefits of local food production, job creation, green space preservation, and climate change mitigation.

A Hub for Sustainable Agriculture



A sustainable approach integrates extensive farming practices like agroecology, permaculture, and agroforestry with biocorridors, focusing on regenerating soil health, conserving biodiversity, and enhancing climate resilience. Through activities such as foraging, farm-to-table dining, and community gardens, along with programs that compensate farmers for retiring marginal lands, Pickering Federal Lands can become a hub for education, culture, and sustainable agriculture.

Overcoming Barriers and Supporting Future Farmers



The Common Ground Garden in Pickering, Ontario, was established to overcome financial barriers to farming, offering a 2-acre “World Food Farm” that grows over 50 crops from around the globe while promoting cultural exchange and supporting a local food bank. By providing incubator farms and opportunities for farmers to learn new techniques, it aims to address challenges like urban sprawl and farmland costs, while offering young farmers a chance to inherit land as many of Canada’s farm operators approach retirement.

Sub-Urban to Sustainable Rural



Illustrative vision diagram

Residents Demographics



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



Established and New Farmers: Long-time and new farmers who have been working on the Pickering Federal Land



Infrastructure Principles



Mobility

Rethink agricultural communities



Wastewater

Waste reuse opportunities



Drinking Water

Innovative tech scaling



Electricity

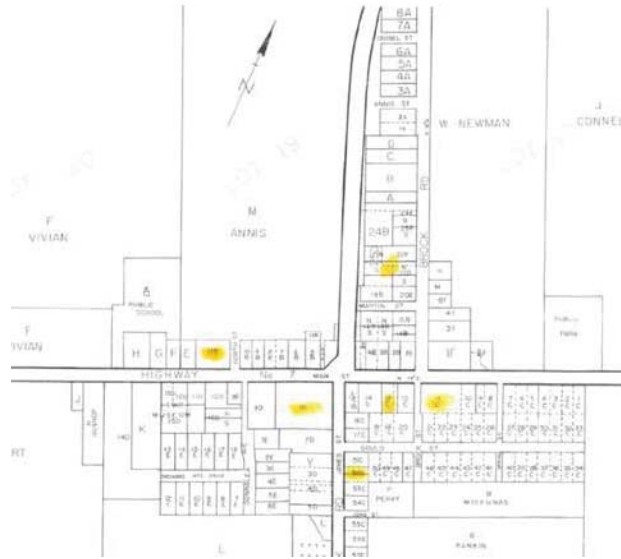
Resilient infrastructure planning



Heating/Cooling

Modern technology integration

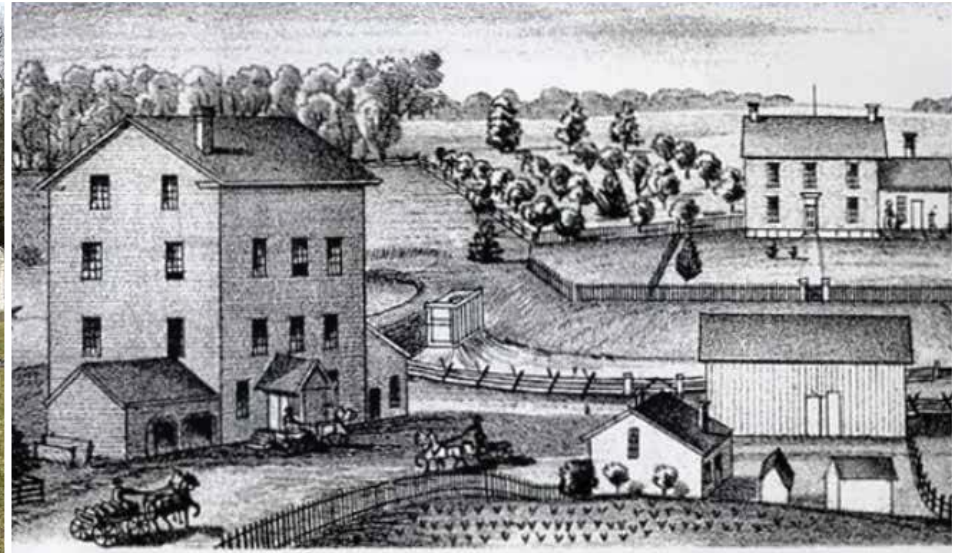
The Hamlet of Brougham



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



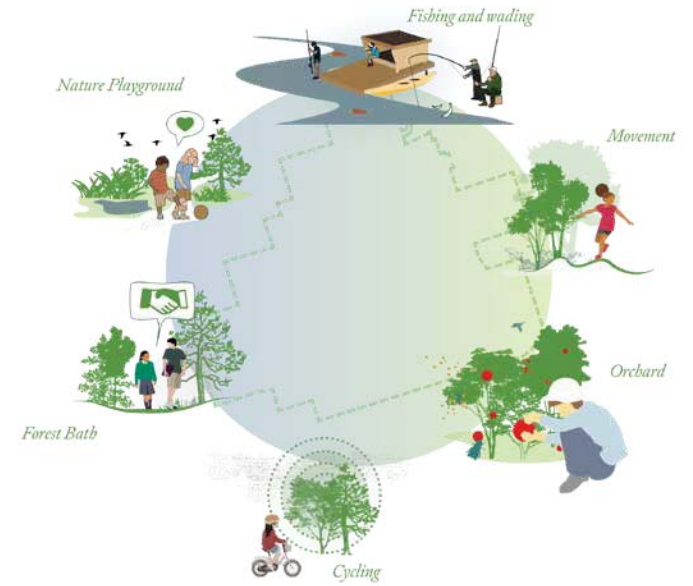
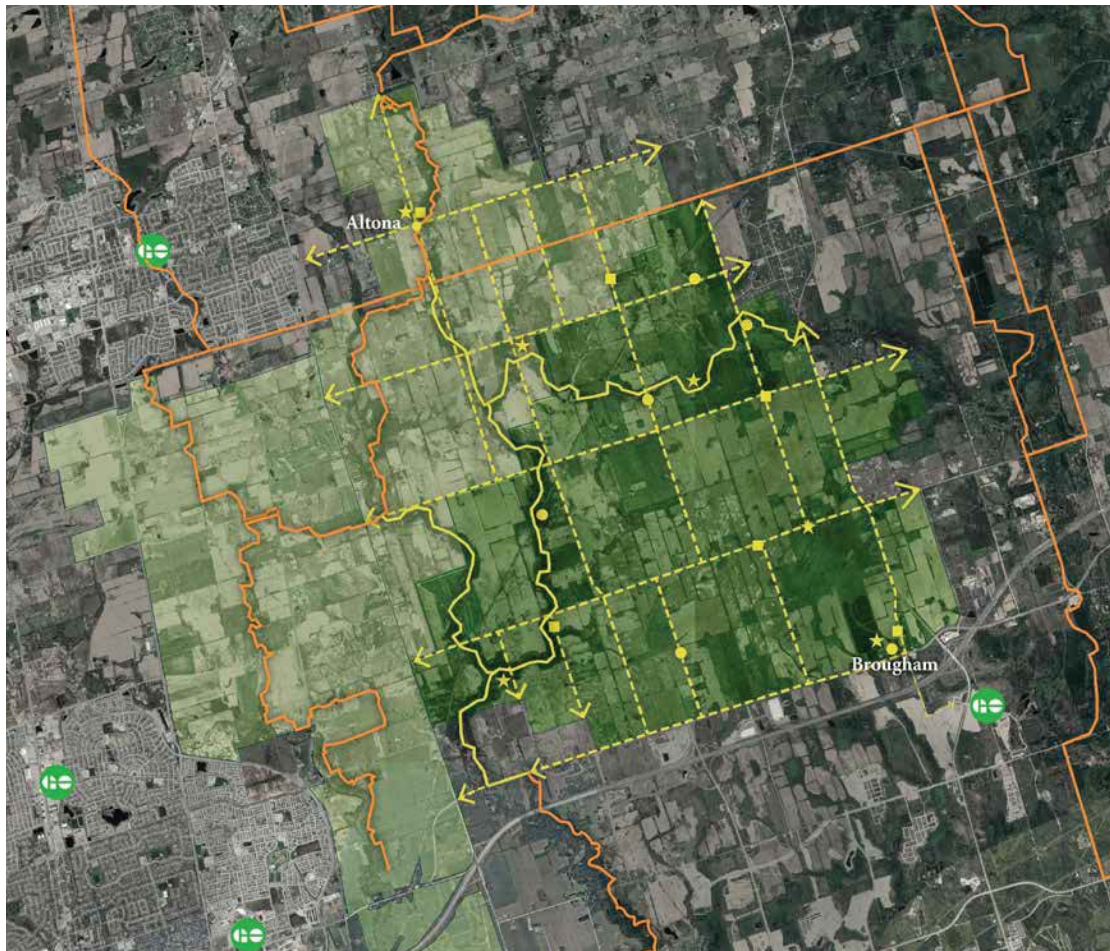
The Hamlet of Altona



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

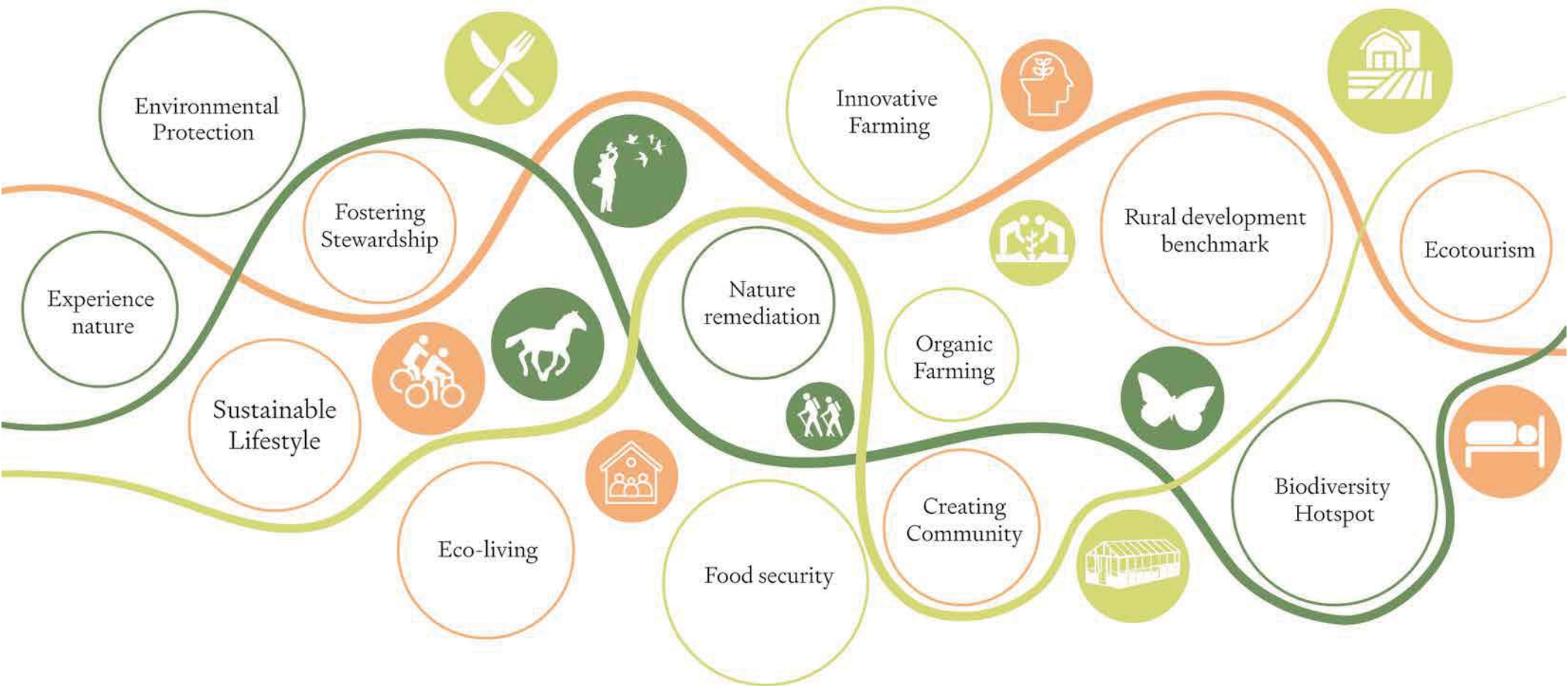


Proposed New Trails and Attractions

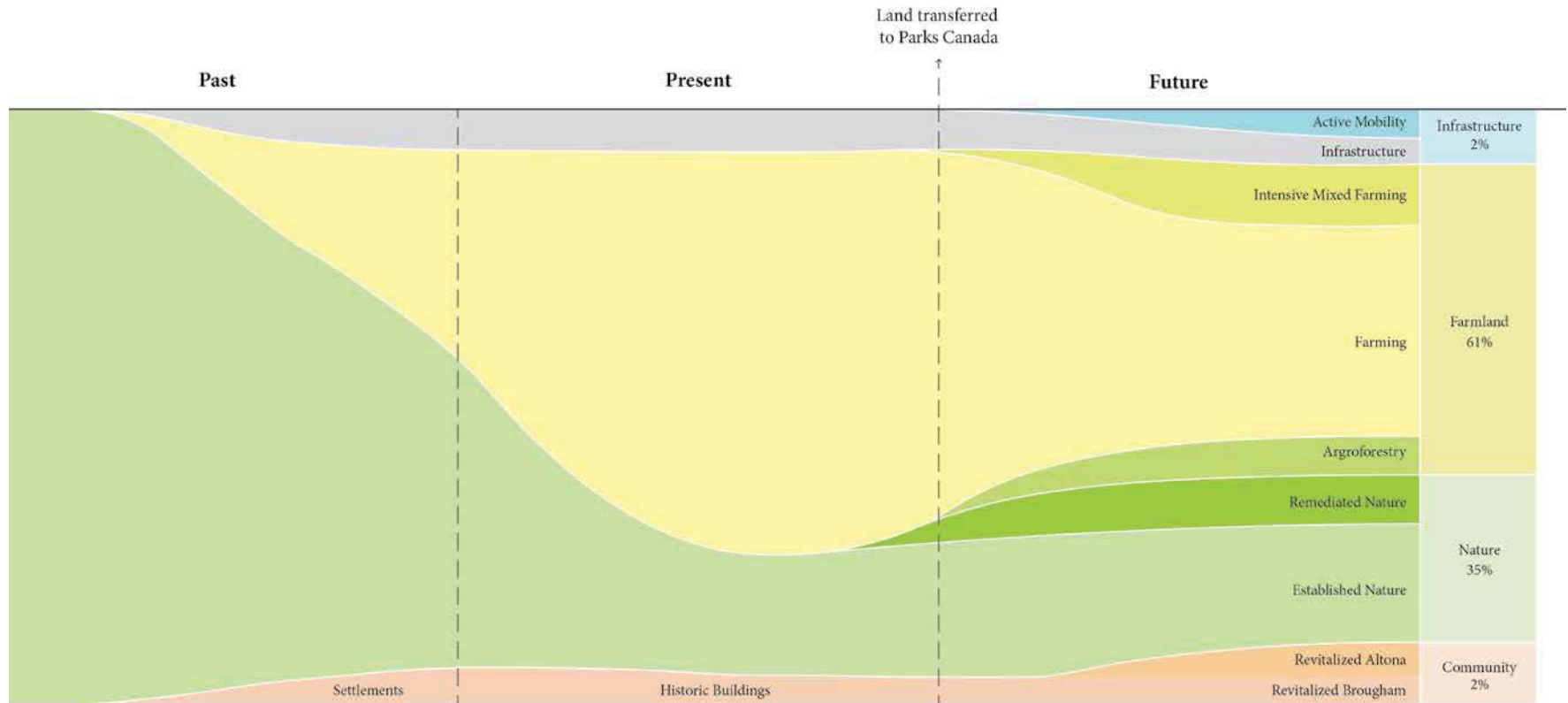


-  Go Stop
-  Existing Trails
-  Proposed new nature trail
-  Possible bike path on concession roads
-  Farming programs
-  Garden programs
-  Nature Attraction

Integration Strategies



Statistics



From mono-culture to diverse and sustainable development

Recommendations

1. Transfer all government-owned lands in the Pickering Federal Land holdings to Parks Canada to expand Rouge National Urban Park, ensuring their protection and management under Parks Canada's mandate. Lands within the Park designated as urban settlement should remain under Parks 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.