



# Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville **Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update & Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines**

## Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report



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## Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update & Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines

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## Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville acknowledges this land is the treaty territory of the Williams Nations. It is also the traditional territory of other Anishinaabeg peoples, the Wendat, and the Haudenosaunee. We also recognize the contributions of all Indigenous peoples to this place and commit to a continued dialogue and greater respect for the land we have come to share. This recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.

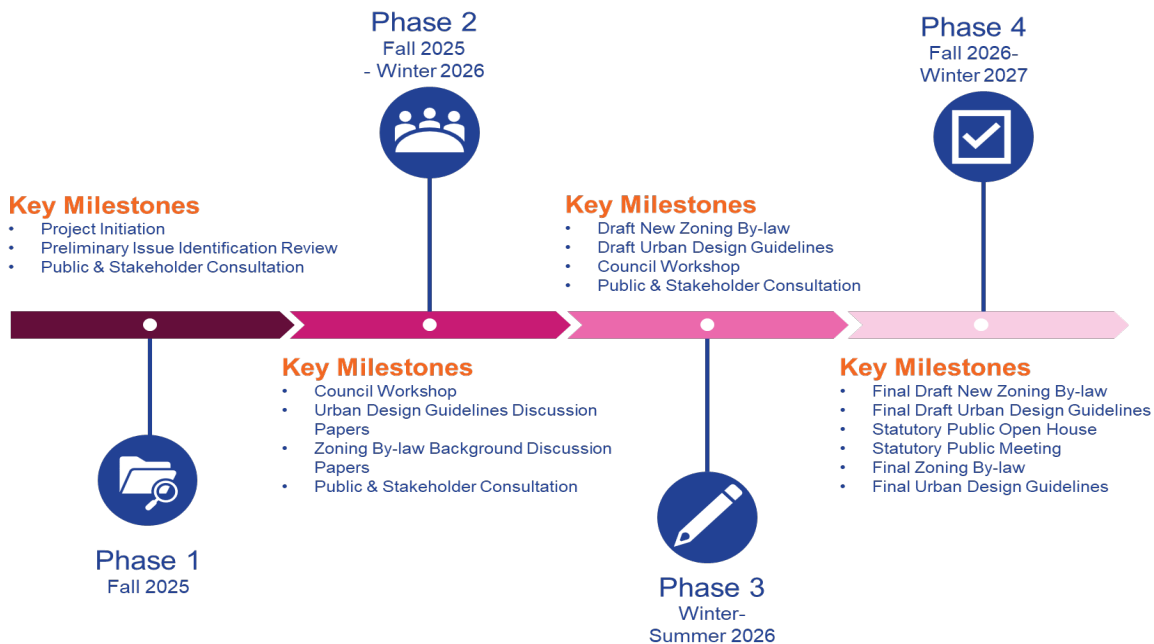
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Overview

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is currently updating its Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines (**Figure 1**). The current by-law from 2010 will be modernized as required by the *Planning Act*, with updates needed within three years of the new Official Plan. The new guidelines will help shape intensification, development, and public realm improvements.

This Engagement Summary Report provides an overview of the engagement activities completed in Phase 1 of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville’s comprehensive Zoning By-law Review and Urban Design Guidelines (“the Project”). The Project consists of two main components:

1. The Comprehensive Zoning By-law, which will implement the Town’s new Official Plan and establish detailed, legally enforceable regulations for development.
2. The Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines, which will complement the Zoning By-law and provide direction on the form and character of the built environment.



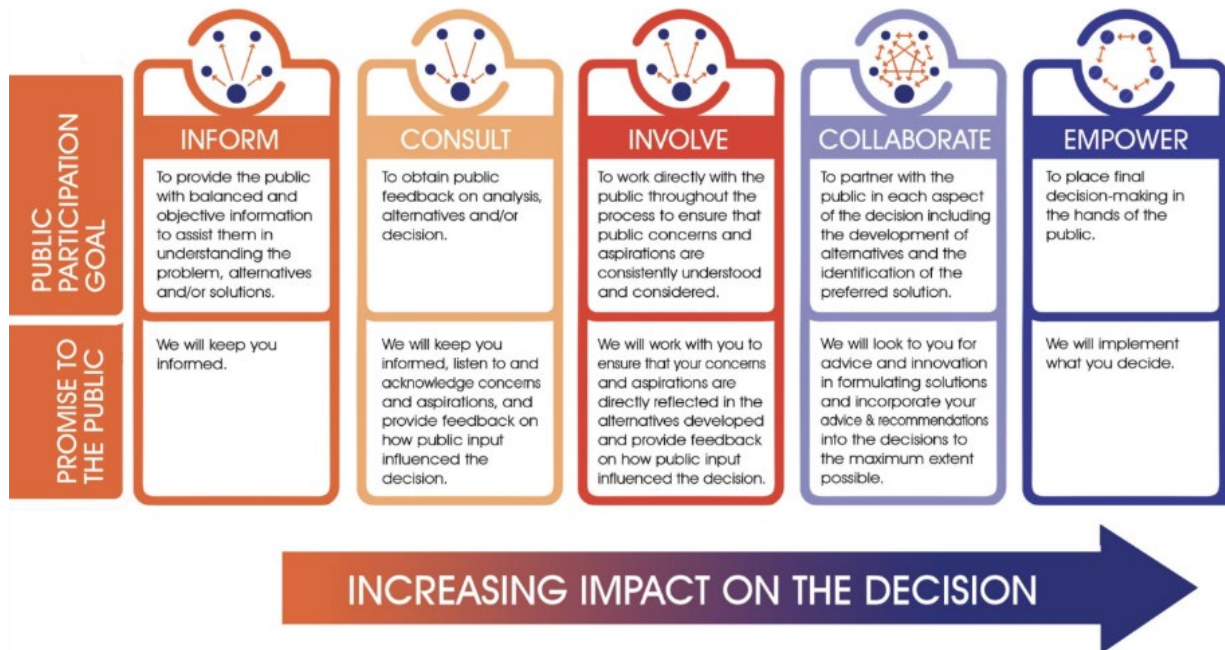
**Figure 1: Project Timeline**

Upon completion of this Project, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville will have an updated Comprehensive Zoning By-law and a coordinated set of Urban Design Guidelines that are forward-looking, user-friendly, and tailored to the local context. Together, these documents will ensure that future growth and development are implemented in a manner that is consistent with the Official Plan and reflective of the community’s distinct characteristics, needs, and aspirations.

Concurrently, the Town is also completing two special studies for this project, with support from the federal government’s Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) program. Additional information on HAF Initiative 1: Medium/ High-Density Parking Study and HAF Initiative 2: Expanding Missing Middle Housing, including the purpose, timeline, and engagement activities is provided in [Section 3](#).

## 1.2 Approach to Engagement

The Project Team applies the principles of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) to support a process that is inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the community. By adhering to these principles, we commit to meaningful engagement throughout the planning process, which will be fundamental to shaping an equitable and forward-thinking Zoning By-law, Urban Design Guidelines, and HAF Initiatives. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is shown in [Figure 2](#) and has been applied to understand the impact and role of Council, the public, Indigenous communities, and other community groups in the Town.



**Figure 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Consultation**

The engagement process for the Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines is built around four overarching engagement goals:

- Create opportunities for respectful, informed and productive engagement with the public and key stakeholders throughout the process;
- Consult with landowners, business owners, service providers / community organizations, Indigenous Communities, homebuilders/developers and residents of all ages;
- Establish realistic expectations on how input will be considered, and to be transparent about this process when reporting back to the community; and,
- Achieve broad-based community support for the Zoning By-law, Urban Design Guidelines, and HAF Initiative Studies.

These goals have informed the development of the project's engagement plan, shaped the selection of engagement tactics, and will serve as a foundation for ongoing engagement activities.

## 1.3 Engagement with Indigenous Communities

Indigenous Consultation is an essential component of the engagement process. Accordingly, a Notice of Project Initiation and Invitation for Engagement was sent directly to local Indigenous Communities. This letter was intended to provide early project information, confirm the preferred methods of communication and engagement, and support meaningful participation that respects Indigenous rights. The Town is committed to ongoing Indigenous consultation and engagement throughout the Project.

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## 2. Phase 1 Engagement

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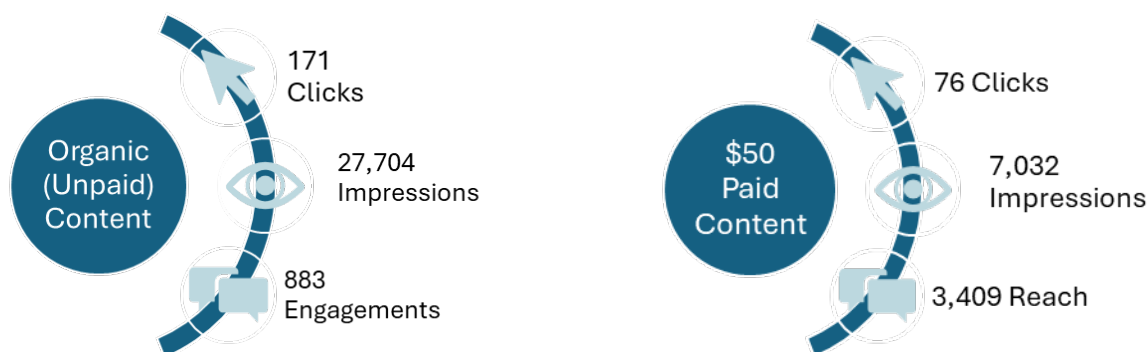
### 2.1 Engagement Activities

In Phase 1 – Project Start-Up, a range of engagement activities were undertaken to introduce the project, raise awareness, and gather early input to inform the study. These activities focused on establishing clear communication channels, engaging key stakeholders and agencies, and providing opportunities for the community to learn about the project and share feedback. This phase included several engagement activities, such as the project website launch, Indigenous Community outreach, a community survey, a Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, and Stakeholder Working Group Meeting.

The engagement completed in this phase will inform the background review and analysis completed in Phase 2 and eventually the development of the Draft Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines in Phase 3.

#### 2.1.1 Media and Social Media

The Town promoted the project across its social media platforms on Facebook and Instagram, as well as the Town’s podcast ‘Talk of the Town’, to increase public awareness and encourage participation, using a combination of organic social media posts and paid content. The social media efforts garnered over 30,000 impressions (**Figure 3**). Social media will continue to be used to share project updates and engagement opportunities.



**Figure 3: Paid and Unpaid Social Media Engagement**

#### 2.1.2 Project Page

The Town launched a dedicated project page, “ReZone + ReDesign: Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guideline Update”, on the Come Together Whitchurch Stouffville website. The project page provides information about the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review and Urban Design Guidelines, as well as the two HAF Initiatives which are being completed concurrently. The dedicated project page also

outlines how members of the community can be involved by highlighting engagement activities and opportunities to provide feedback. The project website also encourages residents to subscribe to the project for direct updates, provides key project dates, and includes a document library where engagement materials are saved and where future reports and project materials will be made available. The Town will continue to maintain and update the project page to provide current information on the project status, key milestones, and materials.



**Figure 4: Excerpt of Project Page on Come Together Whitchurch Stouffville**

### 2.1.3 Community Survey

From November 8, 2025, to December 22, 2025, a community survey was available to the public on the Town's website. The community survey provided an opportunity for interested parties to share feedback on the existing Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines, community priorities, as well as key issues and concerns that should be addressed through the project.

The community survey was posted on the dedicated project page on Come Together Whitchurch Stouffville, and to encourage participation, the Town shared the community survey on social media platforms, emailed it to the subscribed interested parties, and promoted it through advertisement postcards handed out at the Planning Services counter and other Town facilities. In addition, the Town promoted the survey in-person through three mobile signs located at 9<sup>th</sup> and Bloomington, Hoover and 10<sup>th</sup>, and Main Street and Baker Hill, and two A-Frame signs located at Town Hall and the Leisure Centre from November 13<sup>th</sup> to December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

The community survey received a total of 131 responses. Key highlights include:

### Question 7

Participants were asked to identify the design attributes that are most important in helping new development or redevelopment feel well-designed and compatible with the Town. Respondents selected up to three priorities, with landscaping, building height, and appropriate lot sizes emerging as the most important considerations. The priorities were ranked as follows:

1. Building height and scale that are compatible with neighbouring properties – 86 votes
2. Landscaped areas, trees, and greenspace – 85 votes
3. Appropriate lot sizes and setbacks between houses – 76 votes
4. Connectivity to existing road networks and community facilities (i.e., schools, community centres, parks, etc.) – 60 votes
5. High-quality building design and construction materials – 53 votes
6. Transitions and buffers between different uses (i.e., between neighbourhood and commercial uses) – 43 votes
7. Sustainability features and green building design considerations (i.e., sustainable materials, renewable energy sources, green roofs, etc.) – 43 votes
8. Other (please specify) – 17 votes
9. Not sure – 1 vote

### Question 8

When asked how the Town's new Zoning By-law and Design Guidelines should support expanding options and supply, the top three selections were:

1. Ensuring new development fits the character of existing areas – 98 votes
2. Encouraging “missing middle” housing (i.e., duplexes, triplexes, multiplexes, low-rise apartments, stacked townhouses) – 71 votes
3. Allowing additional residential units (i.e., basement suites, garden/laneway suites) – 63 votes

### Question 9

When asked what types of housing you would like to see more of in the Town, there was broad support for a range of housing options. The preferred housing typologies were as follows:

1. Missing Middle Types (Duplex/Triplex/Multiplexes/Low-rise Apartment/Stacked Townhouses) – 66 votes
2. Single detached dwellings (Under 1200 square feet) – 64 votes
3. Detached Accessory Residential Dwellings (i.e., tiny homes, garden suite, laneway home) – 59 votes
4. Townhouses/Semi Detached – 50 votes
5. Single detached dwellings (Over 1200 square feet) – 44 votes
6. Multi-storey – 22 votes
7. Other (please specify) – 13 votes
8. Not sure – 6 votes

Those who specified “Other” expressed interest in a range of housing options including bungalows, smaller detached homes on smaller lots, houses on larger lots with more green space, affordable apartments on top of commercial uses, and purpose-built rental buildings.

The survey results and key themes are further elaborated on in [Section 2.2](#), and the Project Team will use the results to better understand community needs and develop the Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines.

## 2.1.4 Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is comprised of Town Staff and agency staff who provide technical insight and local context to shape the project. The first TAC Meeting was held in December 2025 to provide an update on work completed to date, share key insights, and outline next steps in the project process. The meeting also included a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the Town’s current Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines, as well as key priorities for the updated documents. MURAL, a digital whiteboard collaboration tool, allowed the group to answer eight discussion questions, placing their feedback using sticky notes.

The TAC will continue to meet at key project milestones to gather input on key issues and considerations for the project.

Feedback from the TAC meeting has been summarized in [Section 2.2](#) of this Report.

## 2.1.5 Stakeholder Working Group

The Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) is comprised of members of the development community, BILD representatives, York Region, Housing York, York Region Federation of Agriculture, Stouffville Chamber of Commerce, and the Town’s Economic Development Team who will contribute important insights and feedback to inform the project. The first SWG Meeting was held in December 2025 to provide a project update, share key insights, and outline next steps. Members participated in a facilitated discussion on the current Zoning By-laws strengths and weaknesses, and how the new documents can be improved. Like the TAC meeting, MURAL, a digital whiteboard collaboration tool, allowed the group to answer discussion questions. The comments from the SWG meeting have been summarized in [Section 2.2](#) of this Report.



Figure 5: Excerpt of TAC and SWG MURALS

## 2.2 Key Messages Heard

The following section summarizes the comments and feedback received from the Phase 1 engagement program, with feedback organized by thematic areas.

### 2.2.1 Built Form and Design Flexibility

Participants expressed a clear interest in ensuring that future development in Whitchurch-Stouffville reflects a thoughtful balance between consistency and flexibility in built form. While many residents value the Town's traditional character, they also recognize the need for a range of housing types and design approaches that can respond to evolving community needs. Respondents noted that built form should be context-sensitive, respecting the scale and character of established neighbourhoods, while still allowing for innovation, architectural variety, and a greater diversity of housing options. This includes general support and interest in exploring opportunities for gentle density, such as multiplexes, accessory residential units (ARUs), and low-rise mixed-use buildings, throughout the Town. Many respondents also emphasized the importance of flexibility with regards to the range of permitted uses in a zone, the opportunity to co-locate similar or compatible uses, and the possibility to have temporary, pilot project, or seasonal uses.

Simultaneously, participants emphasized that design flexibility must not come at the expense of design quality or compatibility. Several respondents expressed concerns about new developments that appear generic and predictable, overly modern, or out of scale with the surrounding neighbourhood context. Many participants want to see Urban Design Guidelines that promote high-quality materials, human-scaled streetscapes, and development that contributes positively to neighbourhood identity. Further, many respondents stressed the importance of integrating landscaping, tree canopy planning, and accessible design features into new projects to ensure that the built form supports both aesthetic and functional goals. There was also a frequent request to clarify height and podium relationships, tower separation, and setback standards for new development.

This feedback reflects interest in enabling a wider range of housing and built form options while maintaining strong standards for compatibility, character, and community fit. Respondents want a Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines that encourage creativity and adaptability while ensuring new development enhances the Town's visual appeal, supports livability, and aligns with long-term planning objectives. The opportunity to have performance-based standards, pre-approved typologies, and future proofing building for adaptive reuse were also identified as ways to improve flexibility.

### 2.2.2 Growth Management

Several respondents shared feedback about the pace and scale of recent development, noting the importance of aligning growth with available infrastructure and community services. Traffic conditions, parking availability, and access to amenities such as parks, schools, and community facilities were commonly referenced as areas that should be carefully considered as the Town continues to grow. Respondents also expressed concerns about insufficient parking in new subdivisions, the need for driveway expansions, and better integration of mobility and transit with urban design. Overall, feedback

highlighted the need to ensure that intensification is supported by appropriate servicing and infrastructure capacity.

While many participants recognized the need for additional housing and a broader mix of building types, feedback noted that growth should be introduced in a thoughtful and context-sensitive manner. Higher-density development was most often supported when located in appropriate areas, such as Major Transit Station Areas or surrounding Main Street, and designed to reflect the Town's character. Respondents encouraged the Town to consider the cumulative impacts of development and to coordinate growth with timely investments in transportation, utilities, and public services.

### 2.2.3 Clarity and Consistency

Many respondents shared feedback about the clarity and usability of the current Zoning By-law and development review process. Several participants noted that some sections of the Zoning By-law can be difficult to navigate, particularly where language is complex or provisions are outdated, which can make it challenging for residents to understand how the regulations apply to their property.

Participants also highlighted the importance of consistency and transparency in how zoning requirements are applied. Some respondents expressed uncertainty about how decisions are made or how variances are evaluated, while others raised questions about enforcement and how compliance is monitored over time. The need for clarity was expressed amongst both residents and business owners. In particular, many people felt that downtown Main Street has ongoing zoning challenges and there is an opportunity to streamline or reduce barriers for small businesses so they can navigate the approval process more efficiently. Similarly, the historic downtown area was identified as a geographic region where there is some confusion on zoning and how the downtown revitalization project will impact businesses.

Overall, feedback emphasized the value of a clear, predictable, and accessible zoning framework. Respondents encouraged the Town to modernize the zoning by-law, simplify its structure, and improve access to information to help residents better understand the planning process. There was also interest in more resources on how to navigate the Zoning By-law, planning approvals process, and online resources related to planning.

### 2.2.4 Green Space, Natural Areas, and Rural Lands

Community members consistently identified the Town's natural environment as one of its most valued assets. Green spaces, forests, trails, farmland, and the surrounding Oak Ridges Moraine were described as essential to the community's identity and overall quality of life. Many respondents noted that they chose to live in the Town specifically because of its proximity to nature and the sense of openness that distinguishes it from more urbanized areas.

Participants expressed strong support for protecting environmentally sensitive areas, maintaining the integrity of the Greenbelt, and safeguarding rural landscapes and agricultural lands from encroaching development. Similarly, respondents emphasized the importance of the Zoning By-law in supporting agriculture uses, specific recommendations include updating agricultural policies to be consistent with

the PPS 2024 and new Official Plan, addressing farm worker housing, more permissive provisions for on-farm diversified uses, and coordination between on-farm diversified use provisions and agri-tourism provisions. The desire to enable urban agriculture such as community gardens and indoor vertical farming was also highlighted as an opportunity. Lastly, there was interest in ensuring that new development meaningfully incorporates trees, landscaping, and natural features, supported by consistent implementation and enforcement of softscaping and hardscaping standards.

This feedback reflects a clear expectation that environmental protection, green space, and landscaping should be key priorities in the Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines, with an emphasis on conservation, expanded access to natural areas, enhanced trail networks, and development that respects the Town's rural character.

## 2.2.5 Additional Ideas

The Community Survey and feedback received to date cover a broad range of planning topics. Beyond those recognized in the Key Messages Heard in [Section 2.2](#), the following are additional ideas that were provided to the Project Team:

- Protecting parkland and ensuring no-net-loss of usable greenspace;
- Integrating climate resilience and sustainability metrics across guidelines;
- Building additional sidewalks throughout the Town, particularly along Main Street, to improve pedestrian safety;
- Carefully selecting tree and plant species to ensure they do not conflict with residential properties due to height and size;
- Pre-zoning land to streamline development of missing middle housing typologies;
- Improving rear property access and laneway conditions;
- Streamlining urban design guidelines to encourage housing;
- Enabling more and/or larger parking spaces for larger household sizes and big cars to avoid blocking the sidewalk, bike lanes, and roadways;
- Locating more public garbage and recycling bins in public spaces;
- Improving snow removal services since denser housing provides less landscaped open space or functional areas to move snow;
- Strengthening Main Street vitality, active ground floor uses, and walkable streets;
- Improving mapping of hazard lands and green corridor connectivity; and,
- Considering regional concerns such as protecting rights-of-way, public use facilities, setbacks, wellhead protection, and highly vulnerable aquifers.

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## 3. Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives Engagement

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### 3.1 Purpose

The Town is also conducting two special studies with dedicated program funding from the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) program. The HAF is a federal program intended to support the increase of housing across Canada as it allocates funding to assist municipalities in reducing barriers and expediting approval processes to facilitate more housing development and accelerate project timelines.

#### HAF Initiative 1: Medium/High-Density Parking Study

This study will review and update parking requirements for medium and high-density developments within the Town's Strategic Growth Areas. It focuses on opportunities to reduce minimum parking requirements, especially near Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), to better support sustainable growth and transit-oriented development.

#### HAF Initiative 2: Expanding Missing Middle Housing

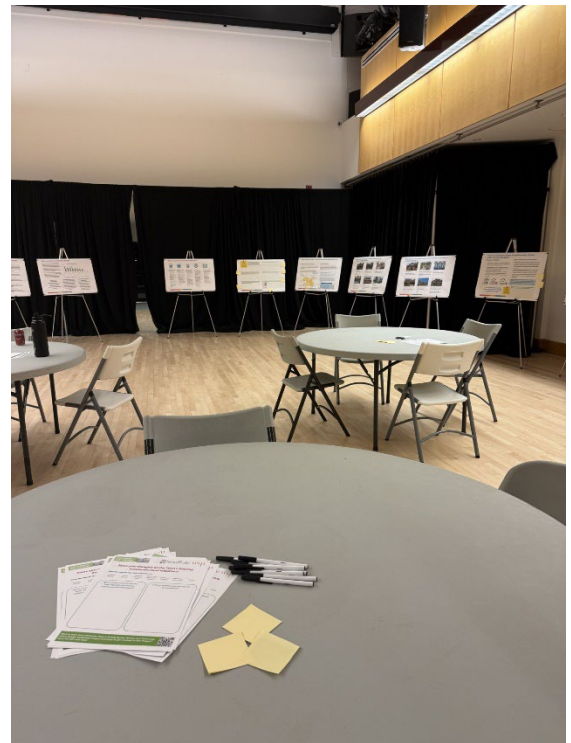
This study examines where it is most appropriate to allow up to four residential units per property. The initiative evaluates where additional housing typologies, such as townhouses and multiplexes, can be integrated into existing neighborhoods. The goal is to support a range of housing, encourage gentle increases in density, address housing supply gaps, and promote walkability to local amenities and transit. As part of this project, urban design guidelines will also be developed to ensure development is well integrated within the community.

These initiatives are designed to provide valuable input to the Zoning By-law Review, helping to shape policies that reflect the Town's vision for growth, housing choice, and community character. Public engagement for the HAF Initiatives is intended to raise awareness of the project and gather community input to inform the development of the final Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment. Input gathered from the Public Open House in Phase 1 and Statutory Public Meeting in Phase 2 will be used to refine and evaluate policy options and provisions based on community priorities, concerns, and desired outcomes.

### 3.2 Public Open House

On Tuesday, December 2, 2025, a Drop-In Open House was held at Nineteen on the Park for community members to learn more about the Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives. The informal session allowed members of the public to attend and participate at their own convenience. The event focused on the two HAF Initiatives, with over 20 display boards arranged throughout the room to provide project information, outline key ideas, and solicit feedback. Comment cards were also available for participants to share written feedback on the topics that most interest them, identify project priorities, and suggest additional considerations.

Members of the Project Team, including Town Staff and the WSP Consultant Team, were available to answer questions, discuss the initiatives, and receive feedback on the project. The event took place from 6:00 to 8:00 PM and was attended by over 20 community members, including Members of Council. The Town promoted the event through a range of mediums including the project website, social media, emails to interested parties, road side signs, A-frame signs in Town facilities, and advertisement post cards handed out at Town facilities.



**Figure 6: HAF Initiative 1 & 2 Public Open House.**



**Figure 7: Community Members speaking with the Project Team at the Public Open House.**

### 3.3 Key Messages Heard

The following section summarizes the comments and feedback received from the Public Open House, with feedback organized by thematic areas.

#### 3.3.1 Need for Transit Options



Reduced parking requirements for medium and high-density developments were identified as a key method to support housing availability and affordability. A consistent message from respondents was the need for improved and expanded transit options within the Town. Participants reiterated that the Town is predominantly auto-oriented and car-dependent, which reinforces higher parking demands. There is strong support for improving the walkability of communities by introducing more commercial uses in proximity to residential areas, and by locating more housing in Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs).

Many respondents expressed that existing public transit service is limited and that more frequent, reliable, and accessible transit is needed to reduce car dependence. Community members also highlighted how enhanced pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, on street electrical vehicle charging, bike share, and car share programs can support more transit options and make lower residential parking minimums more feasible.

#### 3.3.2 Built Form and Neighbourhood Character



There was generally strong support for three- and four-storey buildings in existing residential neighbourhoods. Participants had different criteria for missing middle typologies such as being well-designed, respecting the existing character, and not requiring increased lot coverage. Generally, respondents emphasized that compatibility is driven by both built form and design quality as by height. A few respondents emphasized the importance of sensitive height transitions and setbacks between new development/ redevelopment and adjacent properties, suggesting that transitions should generally be limited to a one-storey difference. Meanwhile, others commented that development should be mindful of dramatic changes in height and massing between neighbouring buildings. One respondent felt that if a building cannot be designed to fit within the context of the existing street, then it may not be appropriate for that location.

At the same time, there was support for a broader range of gentle density housing forms, including low-rise apartment buildings and stacked townhouses. Participants also noted that incentives could help encourage residents to build or retrofit multi-unit housing, provided these forms are thoughtfully designed and well-integrated into the existing neighbourhoods.

### 3.3.3 On-Street Parking



Many respondents emphasized the need for on-street parking to complement any future reductions in parking requirements. Participants noted that the Town does not permit on-street parking, which places greater reliance on private parking spaces such as driveways and garages. There is some concern that if parking minimums are reduced without on-street parking, there will be challenges in areas with higher-density housing. One participant suggested that on-street parking could be managed through a permit-based system. It was also noted that many residents use garage spaces for storage rather than parking, and that people still require practical places to park. While some participants were supportive of reduced parking minimums, others felt that there should be more parking on residential properties in order to accommodate multi-generational living and larger household sizes.

### 3.3.4 Clarity and Consistency in Definitions



Participants noted the need for clearer and more precise definitions in the Zoning By-law, particularly with respect to building heights and forms. Respondents noted that there could be stronger definitions around what constitutes a three- or four-storey building, and more descriptive definitions for different townhouse typologies. There was also a high-level comment that the existing glossary requires modernization and would benefit from a review to improve clarity and ensure consistent application.

## 4. Next Steps

The following section outlines the next steps in the project, including how Phase 1 engagement activities will inform technical work, and future opportunities for engagement. We encourage you to stay connected and involved by subscribing to project updates on the Come Together Whitchurch Stouffville project page. The project page will be used to provide updates, share resources, and promote upcoming engagement opportunities.

### 4.1 Zoning By-law Review and Urban Design Guidelines

Phase 1 focused on gathering public input regarding the existing Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines, community priorities, and hopes for the updated documents. Building on what was heard, the Project Team is preparing a series of Background Discussion Papers focused on key policy areas and themes. These papers will analyze existing conditions, the policy context, and best practices to identify opportunities and help shape future zoning directions. The discussion papers will be released to the public in Winter 2026 (Q1 2026).

Phase 2 will focus on continued public and stakeholder engagement, including a second Community Survey and Public Open House. Feedback collected during this phase will be used to test ideas, confirm priorities, and refine directions identified in the background studies before drafting begins. Engagement during Phase 2 will ensure that critical issues and community perspectives directly inform the structure and content of the new Comprehensive Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines.

### 4.2 Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives

With Phase 1 HAF Initiative engagement activities now complete, the Project Team will proceed to finalize the HAF Initiative 1 and 2 Reports for public release, before advancing to Phase 2. Input received from the Phase 1 Public Open House will be carefully reviewed and incorporated into the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments, ensuring that community input is reflected. A Statutory Public Meeting will be held to provide the public with an opportunity to share feedback or ask questions, prior to preparation of the Final Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment.

