

Westfield Estates Land Use Study

Phase 1 What We Heard Report

October 2024



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INTRODUCTION

1 | Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The Town is undertaking a Land Use Study to develop a vision and land use plan for the Westfield Estates Neighbourhood. The Study aims to support the Town in planning and evaluating potential future redevelopment applications within the neighbourhood, while ensuring the adequate provision of infrastructure, community services, facilities and parks for existing and potential future residents.

Prior to this engagement session, a Background Report was drafted. The findings of this report informed key information and study considerations presented during this Public Open House. Key findings from the Background Report include:

- Existing policy supports gentle intensification in this neighborhood and the development of more complete communities
- Potential future redevelopment must be located strategically, be compatible with existing character, and be adequately serviced by parks, mobility infrastructure, community facilities, and water and wastewater infrastructure
- There is a severe lack of park space in this area, and a need to protect tree canopy, swales, and ecologically sensitive areas
- The Official Plan permits a wide range of low-rise building types that have potential to increase housing while maintaining the neighbourhood's rural character

This report summarizes feedback received in Phase 2 of engagement on the project, which included a Public Open House and comments received by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. Feedback received during this phase will be used to inform the development of draft land use concepts, which will be prepared and shared during Phases 3 and 4 of the project.

Study Area

Westfield Estates, located on the eastern edge of the Community of Stouffville, is characterized by large lots accommodating single-detached dwellings, expansive lawns, and significant yard setbacks. The neighbourhood contains a range of natural features, mature trees, ponds and a unique street and block pattern including a rural street cross-section, characteristic of an estate-style subdivision (see Figure 1).

The neighbourhood is currently experiencing considerable redevelopment pressures, highlighted by recent planning approvals for infill and intensification along Main Street and Cam Fella Boulevard. Notably, a significant development involving 141 units – comprising 117 townhouse units and 24 smaller-lot single-detached homes – was approved by Council in May 2024. This transition towards density and varied built forms marks a significant shift from the existing large-lot single-family character of the neighbourhood.

To address these changes, a comprehensive land use plan is essential to guide the location, design, and integration of potential future redevelopment applications, while ensuring access to parks, mobility options, and other services.



Location Map

Study Area: Westfield Estates Neighbourhood

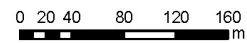
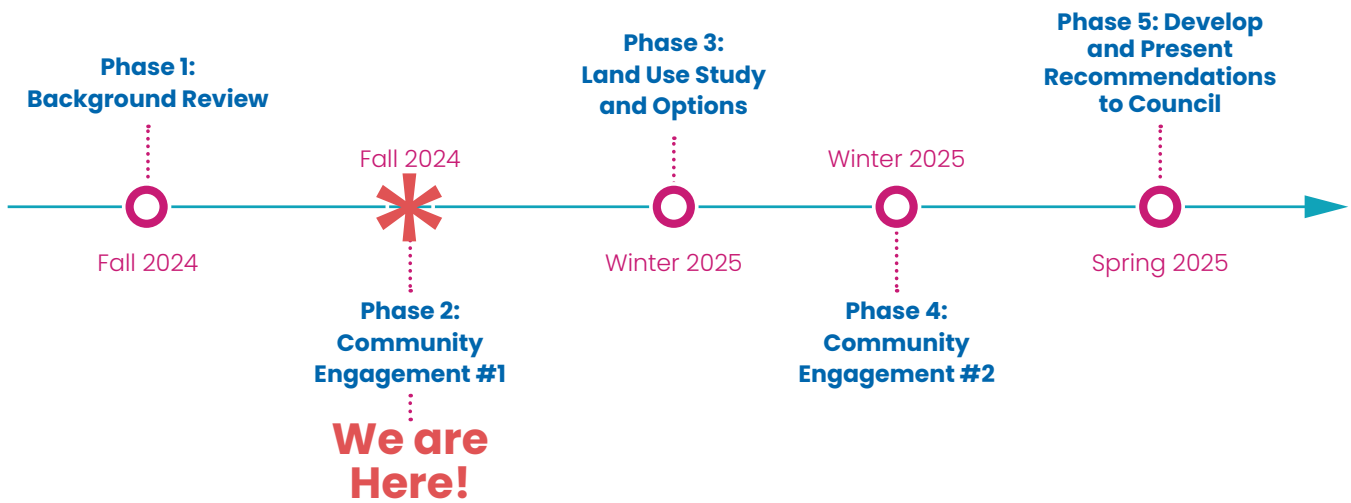


Figure 1 Study Area

1.2 Timeline

The Westfield Estates Land Use Study is taking place from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. Throughout multiple phases of engagement, the public will have numerous opportunities to share their feedback and shape the study.



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2 | Engagement Strategy

2.1 Outreach and Communications

A range of outreach and communications tactics were implemented to notify residents and the public about the Public Open House and opportunities to participate in engagement on the study.



Project Webpage

Information about the Land Use Study was provided on the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville’s engagement website at <https://www.townofws.ca/westfield>.



Resident Mailout

In September 2024, a Public Open House Notice was mailed to residents within the Westfield Estates Land Use Study Area and within 120 metres of the study area.



Town-wide Communications

Information about the Public Open House was shared through the Town’s magazine, On the Road, and on the Town’s social media platforms.



Project E-mail

The public was invited to share additional feedback and comments with the project team by e-mail to westfield@townofws.ca. Comments received by October 11, 2024 were considered in this report; however, the Town will continue to receive comments after this date and will ensure the feedback is considered in future reports.

2.2 Public Open House Format

The Town held a Public Open House on October 2, 2024 from 6–8pm at Town Hall (111 Sandiford Drive, Stouffville). The purpose of the Public Open House was to introduce the Land Use Study, answer questions, and gather feedback from the public to inform the development of draft land use concepts.

Over 80 members of the public attended the Public Open House and shared their feedback at six stations with information panels where attendees could identify preferred directions or provide verbal and/or written feedback.



ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

3 | Engagement Findings

To support the development of the Westfield Estates Land Use Study, the project team received feedback from the public through three tactics:

- Written feedback or supporting options with stickies on informational panels at the Public Open House;
- Verbal feedback with the project team at the Public Open House; and
- Written comments to the project team.

This section of the report highlights five key takeaways across these three tactics, and the following sections detail feedback heard through each tactic individually. Images of the boards with documented feedback are included in Appendix A.



3.1 Key Takeaways

- 1. Diverging Perspectives on the Future of Westfield:** Engagement with the public revealed a divide regarding the future of Westfield. While some community members expressed a strong desire to maintain the current state of the neighbourhood, others expressed that they are open to change, advocating for redevelopment and increased density in favour of increased housing supply.
- 2. Infrastructure Maintenance:** The public emphasized the need for ongoing maintenance and investment in existing infrastructure before considering new development. There are significant concerns about the current state of the swale drainage systems, with frequent potential for flooding during significant rainfall events. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of improvements to servicing to reduce existing residents' reliance on private septic systems.
- 3. Tree Preservation:** Participants value the mature trees in the neighbourhood for their environmental, aesthetic, and historical significance. They advocate for policies and regulations to ensure the preservation of mature trees during development projects, and the designation of certain areas as parkland to protect them from future development.
- 4. Enhanced Connectivity:** There is a desire to see improved road and active mobility pathways to create more accessible connections throughout the neighbourhood. Feedback provided during the Public Open House highlighted a need for safer crosswalks across arterial roads, well-designed trails, increased road connections to accommodate traffic, and seamless transit options. Participants envision a network of walking paths and transit connections that facilitate easy access to downtown, promoting an active lifestyle.
- 5. Preservation of Neighbourhood Character:** Some Public Open House attendees expressed concern that future development could disrupt the current neighbourhood character of large single-family homes, greenery and canopy cover, and overall experience that they believe make the Westfield Estates neighbourhood unique. While some participants acknowledge the inevitability of possible development, they advocate for approaches that maintain the neighborhood's unique identity, with requests to preserve and minimize disruption to existing character and greenery.

3.2 Public Open House

The sections below summarize each of the five engagement stations at the Public Open House, where participants were invited to share their feedback on the following categories:

- Urban form and development
- Transportation and mobility
- Parks and natural areas
- Community and commercial context
- Vision and values

Additionally, a mapping activity (“exploring options”) provided participants with an opportunity to identify specific locations in the study area and surrounding neighbourhood where the components listed above might be preferred.

3.2.1 Urban Form and Development

At this station, attendees were asked, if increased density and redevelopment was contemplated, which approach to built form would fit best with the existing character of the neighbourhood. There were two activities. In the first, participants provided feedback on whether they preferred a more spread out, lower, detached approach versus a more compact, taller built form. In the second activity, participants shared what building type, ranging from single detached to six-storey apartments fit best with their vision for the neighbourhood.

Location-Specific Feedback

Some participants were in support of more compact housing including stacked and back-to-back townhouses, but only along arteries such as Tenth Line or adjacent to large open spaces. Participants also noted the importance of transitioning to the existing built form. Participants were also encouraged to share their location-specific suggestions at the mapping activity.

Ground-Oriented Building Forms

There was a diversity of opinions on what building forms were most appropriate for this neighbourhood, with some participants considering where they would like to live and others considering what might be achievable for new residents. While there were some participants who selected taller, more compact building forms, there was a higher percentage of support for more ground-oriented typologies including single detached, semi-detached, and townhomes. Participants cited providing backyards, matching existing heights, and accessibility, especially for seniors. Bungalows were also suggested as an option based on the importance of accessibility.

The comments were distributed as follows:

- Single detached houses: 5
- Semi-detached houses: 7
- Townhomes/rowhomes: 4
- Stacked townhouses: 4
- Back-to-back townhouses: 2
- Back-to-back stacked townhouses: 5
- Fourplex: 1
- Low-rise apartment: 1
- Mid-rise apartment: 0

Participants also suggested adding bungalows, additional dwelling units, and maintaining Westfield Estates as it is (which received 7 votes).

Importance of Greenspace and Trees

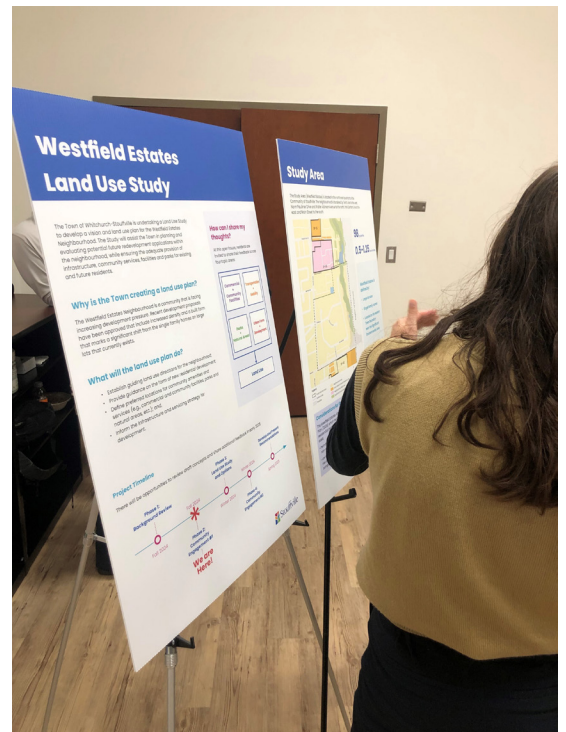
For some participants, the main priority was to preserve greenspace, trees, and the overall rural character of the area. They prioritized larger setbacks, protection of trees, and buildings that could fit within existing building footprints. There was also feedback that multi-car parking should be considered to limit the number of driveways, preserving rural character and greenspace.

Gentle Intensification

Some participants were interested in other forms of more modest intensification such as accessory dwelling units to provide additional housing either within the existing dwelling or an accessory structure, as opposed to larger redevelopments.

Dissatisfaction with More Dense Forms

While the intent of this station was to gather feedback on potential types of built form, some participants did not support any change or increased density regardless of its form. While acknowledging that this activity was more focused on form than style, some participants did not feel the more modern examples shown fit the existing character of the neighbourhood.



3.2.2 Transportation and Mobility

Participants shared feedback on improvements to transportation and mobility in the study area, which included considerations for both pedestrian and vehicular mobility. Additionally, participants connected concepts around mobility to environmental impacts and landscape character.

Pedestrian Safety

Participants expressed concerns about children crossing Tenth Line on their way to school and encountering high-speed traffic at North Street and Aintree Drive. They indicated that placing a crosswalk at this intersection would improve pedestrian safety.

Vehicular Circulation

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Tenth Line alignment and Main Street intersection. They consider the existing Tenth Line alignment at Main Street to be inefficient, leading to traffic jams during rush hour.

Stormwater Drainage Infrastructure Maintenance

Participants voiced their concern about recurring swale flooding and the expenses they incur by needing to pump stormwater after significant rainfall events. They suggested that there may be an opportunity to implement maintenance or other stormwater management techniques by the Town to minimize the risk of flooding in the future.

Protection of the Natural Landscape

Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the neighbourhood's natural landscape character, including the number of trees, open space, wetlands/watercourses and swales, even while changes to the transportation and mobility network take place.

3.2.3 Parks and Natural Areas

Throughout the Public Open House, participants shared feedback on parks and natural areas at the dedicated station, as well as at other stations, and often made connections between the natural and built environments. When asked about the addition of potential new parks and the protection of natural areas, participants highlighted the following considerations.

Preservation of Mature Trees

Participants emphasized the importance of preserving existing trees and green spaces, and requested that the Town refrain from the removal of mature trees and prioritize replanting if tree removal is necessary. In general, participants expressed a desire to maintain the natural landscape.

New Parks and Trails

There were several suggestions for the creation of a central green space within Westfield Estates. Participants highlighted the need for improved access to parks and natural areas, including space for children and dog walking, and connecting trails for facilitating movement between existing parks.

Environmental Protection

Participants shared a desire to protect wetland areas and maintain environmental integrity, with suggestions to designate certain areas as parkland to prevent development and ensure proper maintenance of swales and natural features.

Maintain Current Neighbourhood Character

Some participants expressed a preference to maintain the current state of the neighbourhood, advocating for Westfield Estates to remain untouched as a natural area. Participants emphasized that any new parks should not disrupt existing homes and expressed concerns about whether trails would be placed on or near private lots.

3.2.4 Community and Commercial Facilities Context

Participants provided some comments on the community and commercial facilities context informational panels, though this station did not receive significant feedback. Comments were received about preferred locations for community facilities and commercial facilities, parking as a challenge, and the types of commercial and retail uses that they would appreciate having closer to home.

Location-Specific Feedback

Participants identified that community and commercial facilities may be preferred along Tenth Line and closer to the Old Elm GO Station.

Parking

Parking was described as an anticipated challenge with increased community and commercial development in the area, particularly for those with children or who are using mobility devices.

Preferred Commercial Amenities

Participants described the types of amenities that they would like to see closer to home, including medical facilities, grocery stores, restaurants and bars.

3.2.5 Vision and Values

This station invited participants to imagine “What could Westfield be?” by identifying the values that they would prefer to see prioritized in the Westfield Estates Land Use Study. Participants were provided with three stickers and invited to identify their three preferred values of the seven values provided or identify a new value for consideration.

The following list tallies the stickers for each of the values:

- Green – 13
- Other: Leave the neighbourhood as is – 8 participants placed a sticker or wrote on a sticky note indicating this theme.
- Connected – 7
- Resilient – 7
- Inclusive – 7
- Complete – 3
- Safe – 3
- Healthy – 1

Additional comments on this station mentioned the importance of protecting mature trees, ensuring design matches the current aesthetic of the community (not too modern or intrusive), and that Westfield already has the values described – alluding to the desire to maintain the neighbourhood as it is.

3.2.6 Mapping Activity: Exploring Options

Participant input shared on the maps of the Westfield Estates study area and surrounding neighbourhood provided location-specific feedback on the following four topic areas.

Environmental Impacts: Participants expressed concern about the impact of redevelopment on local ecosystems, mentioning the preservation of mature trees, the presence of endangered species, and the management of invasive species.

Density and Development: Participants identified a preference for higher density along the Tenth Line and Main Street perimeter, and mid and low-density options in the centre of the study area. Some participants expressed a preference to maintain the current estate lots and suggested designating Westfield as a "Heritage Estate" to prevent redevelopment.

Infrastructure and Servicing: Participants emphasized the necessity for infrastructure improvements including proper stormwater management systems, the installation of controlled crosswalks, and better street lighting. Concerns about flooding, standing water, and safe pedestrian crossings for children at intersections were highlighted.

Green Amenities: There were suggestions for a central park space and trails that connect housing to existing parkettes and trail networks, indicating a desire for more green space and green amenities accessible within the neighbourhood.

3.3 Email Communications

As of October 11, 2024, 25 comments have been submitted to the project team through the dedicated project email address: westfield@townofws.ca. Comments submitted after this date will still be received and considered in future reports.

While feedback received at the Public Open House, through the interactive panels, map activity, and conversations with the project team, included strong opposition to any change or potential development in Westfield Estates; comments submitted via email were frequently in support of potential future redevelopment.

This section summarizes the key comments received by the project team.

In Favor of Intensification

Participants who indicated they are generally in favour of the potential for development highlighted the following key considerations:

Intention to Sell: Multiple participants express support for the potential for redevelopment, suggesting that it may enhance their property values. Several participants indicated personal motivations to support redevelopment, such as plans to sell their properties or concerns that opposition to the Land Use Study may impede or slow down the sale of their property.

Perceived Inevitability: Participants note that the neighborhood has already evolved significantly, with approved developments like the Cam Fella Village townhouses, and that the neighbourhood will inevitably change and are no longer interested in remaining long-term residents.

Benefit for the Future: Participants described the benefits involved in the potential redevelopment of lots within Westfield Estates, including an opportunity to reduce reliance on septic systems and increasing housing supply in alignment with Provincial housing targets.

Community Representation: Some participants indicated that the Westfield Estates Ratepayers' Association does not represent their views, requesting that the views of those in support of development are considered in addition to those represented by the Ratepayers' Association.

Infrastructure Challenges: Participants expressed concerns about the capacity of existing septic systems, and suggest that the development potential could expedite the installation of municipal sewage services.

Against Intensification

Participants who submitted comments to the project team and indicated they are against the potential for development highlighted the following key considerations:

Preservation of Existing Community: Participants value the unique character of Westfield Estates as a rare estate-housing option near downtown, expressing concern that any further development may disrupt the lifestyle that they envisioned when they purchased their homes. Participants expressed frustration that the Westfield Estates community is being identified for redevelopment, instead of prioritizing development on vacant land / greenfields in Town. As a result, some residents also expressed frustration that the Public Open House did not prioritize receiving feedback on options for "no development."

Alternative Forms of Intensification: Some participants suggest that only forms of incremental gentle density or intensification that do not require land consolidation should be permitted. This includes additional residential units and garden suites, which could increase density while maintaining the existing housing stock.

Perception That Housing Targets Have Been Met: Participants stated that it was their understanding that the Town has already met Provincial housing supply requirements. As such, there is the perception that further intensification should not be accommodated in this neighbourhood.

Concern About Transparency: Participants expressed concerns that the focus of the Land Use Study favours development at the expense of existing estate lots, highlighting fears of further re-zoning and intensification against some participants' wishes. While this study would not require anyone to sell their properties, some residents feel they would be pushed out of the neighbourhood. The timing and intentions of the Land Use Study were questioned, emphasizing the need for clear and transparent dialogue.

LOOKING AHEAD

4 | Looking Ahead

4.1 Conclusion

The Westfield Estates Land Use Study presents an opportunity for the public to help shape the future of their community by guiding expectations for future land uses, built forms, parks, and infrastructure services. Ultimately, the Westfield Estates Land Use Plan will set the neighbourhood's vision to assist staff in making recommendations that will help Town Council make decisions about potential future redevelopment applications to ensure growth occurs in a strategic and coordinated manner.

Conversations with Public Open House participants, who were primarily residents of Westfield Estates, have highlighted some priorities and key issues surrounding components of the Land Use Study, including the preference for ground-oriented and accessible building forms, blending with existing neighbourhood character, protection of mature trees and existing swales, installation of a sewer system to reduce reliance on septic tanks, new trails and parks that support an active lifestyle, and more. This feedback will be used to support the development of draft land use options, which will be presented in the next phase of the project.

Across all engagement activities, there was a wide range of sentiments towards additional development in Westfield Estates, with some participants not supporting any form of change, and others suggesting this neighbourhood could support more housing and is already in the process of changing. Accommodating a wide range of views and fostering transparent communication between the Town, residents, and developers, will be essential for developing a cohesive vision for Westfield Estates' future that respects the varied concerns and aspirations of all members of the public.

4.2 Next Steps

The next phase of this project will involve the development of three land use options. These options will be informed by the Background Report and this initial visioning engagement. The options will also be informed by various Town Departments and high-level servicing and transportation analysis undertaken by the Town.

In the new year, there will be a second community engagement session where land use options will be shared for feedback to inform the development of a preferred land use plan and final recommendations, for consideration by Council.

Urban Form + Development Station

Share Your Feedback:

The following images show different examples of building forms that could house more people. Each one has a different character and offers different advantages. Place a dot below the housing forms you think could fit best in this neighbourhood.

WHERE ARE THE SFH.
IN THE MIDDLE

MORE CHARACTER.

MORE TRANSFORMABLE DESIGN

Direct Contradiction to green space
NONE OF THESE!

WE LIKE IT GOOD! DEVELOPMENT

ALONG → ARTERIES 10TH

WHERE IS A BUNGALOW?

BUNGALOWS

ADU'S

What should we keep in mind when considering these building forms?

LEAVE WESTFIELD AS IT IS!
PUT STICKY → HERE



<p>Single Detached</p>  	<p>Semi-Detached Houses</p>  	<p>Townhouses/Rowhomes</p>  
<p>Stacked Townhouse</p>  	<p>Back-to-Back Townhouses</p>  	<p>Back-to-Back Stacked Townhouses</p>  
<p>Fourplex</p>  	<p>Low-Rise Apartment Buildings</p>  	<p>Six-Storey Apartment Bldg</p>  

Transportation + Mobility Station

Transportation + Mobility

Road and Transit Network

The current road network experiences minimal vehicular traffic. Through the Land Use Study, we are evaluating how to ensure the Westfield Estates is accessible by transit and personal vehicles if the neighbourhood were to redevelop.

New roads and mobility connections are being explored to improve safe and efficient travel options for all residents.



Share Your Feedback:

What opportunities do you envision to improve mobility and access to Westfield Estates for all residents?

What challenges and constraints do you anticipate experiencing related to mobility?

How can we balance increased mobility while protecting natural areas?

Too many
People
Too many
Cars. Not
safe

STOP
INTENCIFYING
DEVELOPMENT

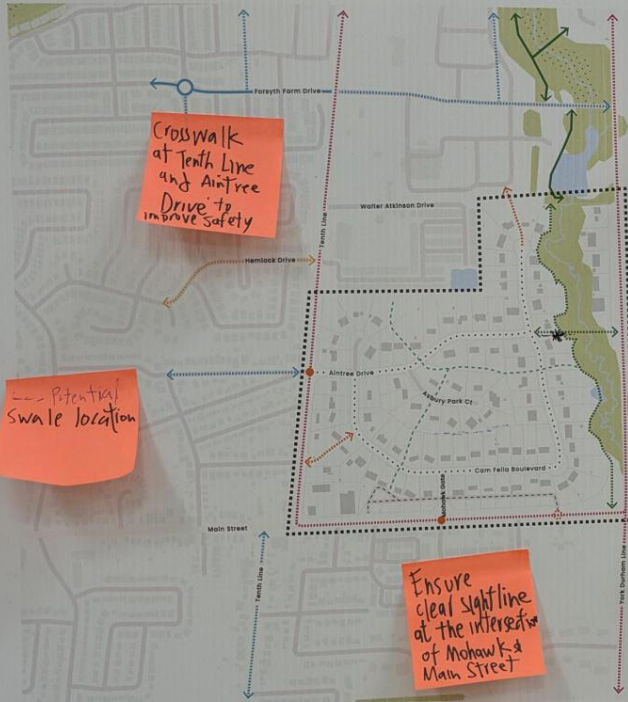


Transportation + Mobility Station

Transportation

Active Mobility Network Opportunities

Roads within Westfield Estates are typically 10 metres wide without any sidewalks or boulevards. Through the Land Use Study, we are exploring the opportunity to plan for more sidewalks and paths to make it easier, safer, and more enjoyable to get around outside a car.



Fix circulation on broken Tenth Line and Main St.

Heavy traffic on Mohawk Gate

* Existing Swale

We've identified some key considerations to help improve the way residents move around:

- Extending the planned multi-use trail along the Significant Environmental Area south towards Main St, connecting to the future in-boulevard cycling pathway.
- Thinking about how current drainage swales could be the structure for open space or greenways that include paths for walking and cycling.

Crosswalk at Tenth Line and Aintree Drive to improve safety

Potential Swale location

Traffic Calming on Cam Fella to provide more safety

Improve swale drainage to prevent flooding

Ensure clear sightline at the intersection of Mohawk & Main Street

Share Your Feedback:

What types of places would you like to be able to access without a vehicle (e.g., shops and restaurants, parks and trails, etc.)?

What would make active mobility feel easier, safer or more enjoyable?

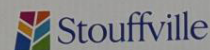
More roads to move traffic. Currently the area is a problem. There will need more access to move traffic.

Buses to the Train Station

Keep swales maintained asap

Protect the swale.

LEAVE HOUSING DENSITY "AS IS". THERE WOULD BE FEWER CARS ON THE WESTFIELD ROADS.



Parks + Natural Areas Station

Parks + Natural Areas

Parks and Natural Area Considerations

How park space is located, sized, and achieved will depend on many factors including what activities it will support, how many people it would serve, and whether it is intended to protect natural areas. This Land Use Study will explore these opportunities.



Share Your Feedback:

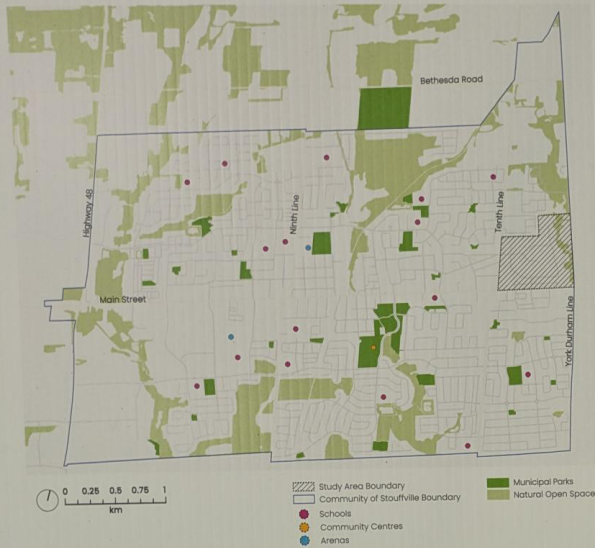
How can parks be located to protect natural areas?

How could a larger park be achieved, and what kind of activities should it support?

- No trail along Env. Area (river, etc)
- Do not remove trees
- Save the trees already LOTS of green space
- ADD A PARKETTE
- CONNECTING TRAIL TO NORTH
- meander butt instead no pond
- Offer existing home owners native trees replant on property or removing from Ca Pella
- consider existing uninhabited parcels for parkland
- Beller Street lighting (not fully operational)
- neighbourhood park in subdivision (accessible within neighbourhood)
- Make the wetland on the east side partland and protected
- Preserve some of the trees
- Kids need to play greenspace please!
- Maintain Swales & trees.
- LEAVE IS 'AS IS'
- POT A PARK WHERE THE TOWNHOUSES ARE BEING BUILT.
- Put a Park/natural area where no one lives.
- Make a Park somewhere else Not by kicking ppl out of their home
- Move greenspace less development
- Simple up, heavy & regular maintenance

Commercial + Community Facilities Station

Facilities may be required should the Westfield Estates and surrounding areas grow.



Share Your Feedback:

What excites you most about the opportunity to have more mixed use areas (commercial and community facilities) closer to home?

only along tenth line
 Only up by Bethesda Development

What challenges do you anticipate related to mixed use areas (commercial and community facilities)?

parking + lanes
 Parking on street with kids/walkers

What types of commercial and community facilities are missing from the area? Which would you like to see added?

medical facilities, clinics
 essential services e.g. groceries
 Restaurants + Bars + fast-food
 Restaurants + bars



Vision + Values Station

What could Westfield be?

Share your vision for the future of Westfield

Help us to identify the key values that will help guide the land use plan.

Which of the following values would you prefer to see prioritized in Westfield Estates? Place a dot on your three top values.

Green
Parks, trails, and natural areas are integrated within the neighbourhood

Complete
Shops and services are within walking distance of residents

Connected
Cycling, walking, driving and other modes of transportation are easily accessible

Safe
The neighbourhood feels safe for all residents

Resilient
The neighbourhood is protected from and able to adapt to stressors like the impacts of a changing climate

Inclusive
The neighbourhood feels welcoming and supports a sense of belonging for residents from diverse backgrounds

Healthy
The neighbourhood supports residents' well-being, including their physical and mental health

Other
Please share your additional values here

SUSTAINABILITY
MAINTAINING THE MATURE TREES

UNCHANGED
Street lighting

new homes fit the overall look of the area - less modern + intrusive - not over-looking yards

Leave it the way it is. It's beautiful

Additional comments may be submitted to www.townofws.ca/westfield and sign up for our newsletter to receive Study updates.



