

Town of Whitby Community Strategic Plan

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

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1. PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

1.1 COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES – DECEMBER 2022

Phase 1 commenced with individual meetings with members of Council convened by the Mayor. The focus of these individual sessions was to allow each member of Council to identify the critical priorities that were top of mind for them. A Special Meeting of Council was held in early December to begin work to collectively develop a draft Vision, Pillars, and specific strategic priorities – areas of focus and direction for Council decision-making over the next four years and beyond.

1.2 STAFF & COMMUNITY INPUT – PHASE 1 SURVEY

Engagement with Town staff, residents, community members, businesses, and partners was recognized as a key foundation for building a successful Community Strategic Plan, particularly one reflecting community priorities. A survey was developed and launched on the Connect Whitby platform. All community members and Town staff were invited to participate. The Phase 1 survey was designed to allow participants to share some basic demographic information and to offer input on the Vision, Pillars and priorities for action.

The survey was open from February 21 to March 12, 2023, and 2,195 submissions were received. **This was the second-highest level of community engagement experienced to date by the Town.**

The following infographic snapshot provides a high-level overview of the responses received to the Phase 1 survey:

WHITBY Community Strategic Plan

From February 21 to March 12, **6,600+** people learned about or shared feedback to inform the Community Strategic Plan.

What We Heard:



Participation

Nearly **2,200+** survey completions

6,600+ visitors to the Connect Whitby project page

94% of survey participants live in Whitby (20% of those also work in Whitby)

Strategic Pillars

Percentage of participants who either **strongly agree** or **agree** that the following four pillars reflect the priorities of the community:

PILLAR 1:

Whitby's Neighbourhoods – Healthy and Inclusive



(80%)

PILLAR 2:

Whitby's Natural and Built Environment – Connected and Resilient



(76%)

PILLAR 3:

Whitby's Economy – Innovative and Competitive



(59%)

PILLAR 4:

Whitby's Government – Responsive and Responsible



(65%)

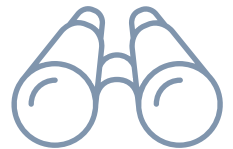
Community Vision

Attributes that make Whitby unique:

- Green spaces, parks, and trails
- Location
- Waterfront
- Sense of Community
- Sports Facilities and Fields

Whitby should **aspire** to be:

- Safe
- Green
- Affordable
- Healthy
- Thriving



Top 3 Action Items

PILLAR 1:

1. Secure property for a new hospital
2. Increase access to family physicians
3. Enhance crime prevention

PILLAR 3:

1. Improve waterfront
2. Attract new businesses
3. Advance the Economic Development Strategy

PILLAR 2:

1. Maintain/enhance parks, trails, and green spaces
2. Enhance the Waterfront Trail
3. Plant and maintain trees

PILLAR 4:

1. Transparent/timely reporting to the community
2. Long-term financial planning
3. Update Whitby Official Plan

Examining the response and the level of interest at the community level in the survey (and also among Town staff), more than 6,600 individuals learned about or shared feedback to inform the Community Strategic Plan.

Looking at the results obtained from the Phase 1 survey, participants were invited to provide some demographic information, help inform the creation of a Vision statement, validate the proposed Strategic Pillars, and prioritize a list of action items under each Pillar. A more granular level of detail summarizing the survey results appears below:

1.3 Phase 1 Survey Results

The following provides a high-level summary of the survey results:

Demographics

- 94% of respondents live in Whitby
- 40% have lived in Whitby for more than 20 years
- 79% of respondents are between the ages of 25-64

Community Vision

Respondents were asked to select three attributes that **make Whitby unique**. The top 5 responses and the associated percentages of individuals who chose them are:

- Green spaces, parks, and trails (62%)
- Location (53%)
- Waterfront (48%)
- Sense of Community (33%)
- Sports Facilities and Fields (25%)

When asked to select three descriptors that they want Whitby to **aspire to be**, the top 5 responses and the associated percentages of individuals who chose them are:

- Safe (55%)
- Green (33%)
- Affordable (28%)
- Healthy (20%)
- Thriving (18%)

Pillars:

The following are the percentages of individuals who either Strongly Agree or Agree that the following four Pillars reflect the priorities of the community:

- Pillar 1: Whitby's Neighbourhoods – Healthy and Inclusive (80%)
- Pillar 2: Whitby's Natural and Built Environment – Connected and Resilient (76%)
- Pillar 3: Whitby's Economy – Innovative and Competitive (59%)
- Pillar 4: Whitby's Government – Responsive and Responsible (65%)

Action Items

The following are the top five responses and the associated percentage of individuals who selected these as one of their top five action items under each pillar:

Pillar 1: Whitby's Neighbourhoods – Healthy and Inclusive

- Secure property for a new hospital (57%)
- Work with partners to increase access to family physicians (49%)
- Work with police to enhance targeted crime prevention measures (38%)
- Support the needs of the seniors population (35%)
- Support the needs of the youth population (33%)

Pillar 2: Whitby's Natural and Built Environment – Connected and Resilient

- Maintain and enhance existing parks, trails, and green spaces (60%)
- Enhance the Waterfront Trail (45%)
- Plant more trees and maintain existing tree cover (43%)
- Build Whitby Sports Complex (31%)
- Invest in structural upgrades at the Waterfront and Marina (29%)

Pillar 3: Whitby's Economy – Innovative and Competitive

- Improve public enjoyment of the waterfront by enhancing offerings, opportunities, and experiences (67%)
- Identify opportunities to attract new businesses that will expand the commercial and industrial tax base (49%)
- Advance the Economic Development Strategy (46%)
- Engage the agriculture sector to identify programming needs to support agricultural business (37%)
- Designate Whitby as a centre for government technology (29%)

Pillar 4: Whitby's Government – Responsive and Responsible

- Commit to transparent and timely reporting to the community (46%)
- Complete long-term financial planning to ensure financial sustainability and stewardship (43%)
- Update Whitby Official Plan to strategically and responsibly plan for the future growth of the community (43%)
- Collaborate with non-profit organizations to effectively address community needs (41.2%)
- Implement new technologies and systems to increase efficiencies resulting in a more effective government operation (36%)

2. PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

2.1 PHASE 2 APPROACH

Several approaches were used to engage Whitby's business community members, partners, Town of Whitby staff, and the public. These included face-to-face and online listening sessions. In addition, a second Community Survey (Phase 2) was uploaded to Connect Whitby, inviting participants to validate the objectives and actions and offer additional advice and guidance regarding reporting on results.

The following infographic snapshot provides a high-level overview of the responses received to the Phase 2 survey:

WHITBY Community Strategic Plan

Phase 2 Engagement Results

From April 27 to May 19, an additional **1,900+** people learned about or shared feedback to inform the Community Strategic Plan.

What We Heard:

Participation

Nearly **850** survey completions

1,900+ visitors to the Connect Whitby project page

75+ virtual and in-person engagement session participants

9 one-on-one Council interviews



Demographics

91% live in Whitby
(20% live and work in Whitby)

64% have lived in Whitby for **10+ years**



Community Vision

86%

Strongly or somewhat agree that the Community Vision reflects what Whitby should **aspire to**.


Naturally beautiful green spaces, a vibrant waterfront, thriving downtowns, and a safe community – the heart of Durham Region, a destination to explore.




Objectives

The average percentage of participants who either **strongly** or **somewhat agree** that the objectives under each of the following pillars reflect the priorities of the community:


STRATEGIC PILLAR 1:
Whitby's Neighbourhoods –
Healthy and Inclusive

(82%) 


STRATEGIC PILLAR 2:
Whitby's Natural and
Built Environment –
Connected and Resilient

(86%) 

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3:
Whitby's Economy –
Innovative and Competitive

(87%) 

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4:
Whitby's Government –
Responsive and Responsible

(88%) 

2.2 LIVE ENGAGEMENT SESSION FEEDBACK - OVERVIEW

During Phase 2, in-person and online digital sessions were convened between May 3 – May 9, 2023. In total, 76 participants joined one of the five (5) in-person sessions held in various locations across the municipality at varying times of the day and week, or one of the three (3) virtual sessions.

2.3 SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL SESSIONS – PHASE 2

The following table provides an overview of the input from the business community, partners, Town of Whitby staff, community members, and Council. The information has been structured to align with the format of the Draft Strategic Plan.

The Vision:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong support for the reference to Destination, waterfront, 'heart of Durham' • include a reference to the fact that people can live and work here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize that Whitby is the first settlement area in Durham Region • history and heritage here • ignores Whitby's cultural heritage • support for Whitby as a Destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reads like a tourism vision • needs to be directed to residents and community members who call Whitby home • use more action words • consider reordering the wording "Whitby is a great place to live" and describe the attributes. • strong support for green space, waterfront • access is not here • suggest supportive rather than safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too tourist focused • add inclusivity, affordability, lively, active • aspiration is lacking • direct the vision to both residents and tourists • include the fact that Whitby is a great place to live and raise a family • affordable is missing • restructure the Vision... 'a community that promotes...' • include a reference to residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for the new Vision: Whitby - naturally beautiful green spaces, a vibrant waterfront, thriving downtowns, and a safe community. The heart of Durham Region, an exceptional place to live, work and explore. • is there an opportunity to reference Whitby's charm, sense of belonging • words like 'thriving' could be open to interpretation. Can we be more specific?

Pillar 1: Neighbourhoods:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add homeless-ness • event permitting requires streamlining • major issue with garbage in downtown core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address homeless-ness • address victimization • safety is decreasing • align this work with Region's Community Safety & Well-being Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address emerging social needs and issues (food security, accessible housing) • strong support for the hospital reference and physician access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring residents to the downtown core to live (revive downtown) • covered outdoor rinks • multi-use courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical issue for some is community safety – if people don't feel safe, none of this will move forward • a lot of very diverse actions in this Pillar, from road safety to crime prevention to health and wellness • many references to health throughout the Plan, but we refer to healthy communities here • some actions are beyond our control – how to address these • other actions will come at a cost to taxpayers (i.e. hospital) • traffic calming and road safety identified as an immediate priority

Pillar 2: Natural & Built Environment:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limit traffic • promote better traffic flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transit improvements • increase greenspace • enhance existing natural assets (100-year-old trees) • think about environmental connectivity • community gardens and the connection to food security • demonstrate leadership in energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the use of parks from a cultural and diversity perspective • cemeteries are part of a complete community • consider how the Town could work more closely in partnership with cemeteries • cemeteries are part of the fabric of a community; is there an opportunity to increase their uses here • have we captured the infrastructure needed to support our neighbourhoods and the actions identified here? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring e-scooters or e-bikes to the downtowns or GO station • fewer band-aid solutions for facility upgrades • revitalize Heydenshore Pavilion as a focus and point of use • revitalize Town assets on Charles/Front Streets into a new vision • repurpose existing facilities like Luther Vipond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no specific input on this Pillar

Pillar 3: Economy:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address industrial at the waterfront • focus on waterfront to support tourism • marketing of downtown • Royal Hotel • explore satellite offices • explore CIDA outside of downtown • hold events of interest to the innovation community • grant workshops • connect to home-based business • look at the integrated approach others are taking (Prince Edward County, Blue Mountain) to create destinations • draw connections to hotel/convention centre • develop the waterfront – critical • increase meeting space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capture and retain young people -Talent Retention • more culture in the downtown core (music, performing arts) • ‘Downtown’ is missing from the Pillar; Brooklin is ‘uptown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a different term than ‘designate Whitby as a centre for government technology’ – not clear what this means • different terms are needed as this suggests there is a designation process • look at the land use planning process – can it be streamlined in a way that attracts and retains business and allows for higher densities • promote the Green Economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add ‘job creation’ • add an Open Data initiative to support ‘centre for government technology’ • create a tracking sheet for businesses looking to tap into post-secondary talent • explain ‘designate as a centre of excellence’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitby focuses on small businesses and doesn’t focus as much on larger businesses • good reference to the Economic Development Strategy and key sectors identified therein • economic development is a priority – need to ‘get the flywheel turning’ • look at partnering with others to achieve results • real focus needs to be on the waterfront. Some see the waterfront as a pillar of the economy. Others see the waterfront as a place for residents to enjoy.

Pillar 4: Government:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of partnerships • government must be innovative to support innovative communities • champion investment and spotlight success • more testing and learning • take risks in a meaningful way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand services at Town Hall beyond 4:30 • support front-line staff to adapt to new technology • support staff to deal with difficult situations and criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more focus on the engagement piece • identify post-secondary institutions that exist in Durham and strengthen partnerships with academia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to engage staff and community as you are doing • market analysis of current and future residents – Who are they? Who lives here? What are their service expectations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a better word than 'Responsible' would be 'Accountable'

Reporting:

Business	Partners	Public	Town Staff	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide options for different community members • dynamic real-time data to report on results as achieved • turn citizens into local ambassadors • report on website • annual report • use events to spread the word (Mayor's Luncheon) and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use existing platforms for communication (The Whitby Perspective) • report at the action level • use Town Halls to report on progress • celebrate success through social media • examine the Region of Durham's dashboard that provides for reporting on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must be user and reader-friendly • consider linkages to more detailed reporting for those who are interested • dashboard on the website • keep it simple and straightforward • use infographics • community members do not need granular detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed information provided by staff concerning 'what done looks like.': annual reporting; progress at the Pillar level; progress at the action level; list of all actions taken; point-in-time updates; posted to the Town of Whitby website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to be sure that we are identifying reasonable and realistic timelines for achieving results and delivering on our promises. • metrics or benchmarks need to focus on meaningful results that are outcome driven • some support annual reporting; others support

partners (Chamber)	big goals with KPIs under each goal and action updates	<p>about action items; others feel they want action-specific progress information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide progress on the big items (hospital) • annual reporting should focus on what has been done under each Pillar with specific information about the objective being addressed • use news articles to highlight progress • use existing platforms • consider smaller updates throughout the year 		<p>bi-annual reporting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend reporting as key achievements are realized. • all recognize the cost and resources involved. • in general, report at various levels: Pillar, Objective, and Action. • noted by several that progress reporting at the action level will be of direct interest to community members as this aligns directly with the input received during both surveys. • some support a dashboard; others are cautious, given the resources (human and fiscal) that are required to establish, input and maintain a dashboard. Others are of the view that a dashboard is the way to go.
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3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

In keeping with the input and recommendations received from the business community, partners, Town staff, Council, and community members, the following changes are recommended to the Draft Strategic Plan:

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
Vision	<p>Revise the Vision Statement to focus on Whitby as a great place to live, work, and visit. Include more action-oriented words.</p> <p>[Recommendations from the business community, partners, community members, and Town staff.]</p>	<p><i>“Whitby – naturally beautiful green spaces, a vibrant waterfront, thriving downtowns, and a safe community. The heart of Durham Region, an exceptional place to live, work, and explore”</i></p>
<p>Pillar 1 (Neighbourhoods)</p> <p>Areas of Focus: Revise as follows to include a general reference to accessibility:</p> <p>Community health, wellness and well-being, community safety, crime prevention, accessible and affordable housing, more housing choices, accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p> <p>[Recommendation from staff, community]</p>	<p><u>Objective 1.1</u></p> <p>To increase prominence of “safety” in this objective, revise to:</p> <p>Improve community safety, health, and well-being.</p> <p>–clarify that we are referring to a paramedic station here.</p> <p>-Remove former bullets 5 and 6 and replace with a reference to partnering with the Region to implement the Community Safety & Well-being Plan being advanced by the Region.</p> <p>–include a reference to identify opportunities to reduce traffic congestion.</p>	<p>Action revisions:</p> <p>Advocate for new Emergency Medical Services facility (paramedic station) in Whitby</p> <p>Identify opportunities to improve road safety by developing and implementing a traffic calming and safety policy and identify opportunities to reduce traffic congestion</p> <p>Partner with Durham Region to implement the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan, which addresses criminal involvement, experiences</p>

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
	[Recommendation from the business community and community members]	of racism, homelessness and basic needs, mental health, social isolation, substance use, and victimization
	<u>Objective 1.2</u> Increase opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the community Delete former Bullet 1 – this is now covered in the reference to integrated services for people experiencing homelessness.	
	<u>Objective 1.3</u> New objective to reference accessibility and inclusivity. Revise to: Provide accessible and inclusive municipal services and programming [Recommendations from community members and Town staff.] -address homelessness systemically in partnership with others. Remove the reference to the Unhoused Peoples Action Plan.	Action revision: Work with partners to support and connect individuals experiencing homelessness with shelter and support services
Pillar 2 (Natural & Built Environment)	<u>Objective 2.2</u> Enhance community connectivity and beautification	Action revisions: Maintain and enhance parks, trails, tree canopy

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
	<p>-Include a reference to underutilized open space areas</p> <p>[Recommendation from the community.]</p> <p>-Include a reference to review and enhance service standards.</p> <p>[Raised by the business community and community members about the issue of garbage in the downtown core.]</p> <p>-Broaden the reference to infrastructure to include traffic management.</p> <p>[Recommendation from the business community.]</p>	<p>and green spaces to connect existing and currently underutilized open space areas</p> <p>Review and enhance service standards that promote community beautification and maintenance</p>
	<p><u>Objective 2.3</u></p> <p>Invest in infrastructure and assets</p> <p>-include a reference to recreational facility enhancement (i.e. repurposing of facilities like Luther Vipond.)</p> <p>[Recommendation from staff]</p> <p>-focus on the construction of the Whitby Sports Complex</p>	<p>Action revisions:</p> <p>Construct Whitby Sports Complex</p> <p>Implement enhanced street design to improve walkability</p> <p>Implement recreational infrastructure enhancements as identified in the Sports Facility Strategy and Parks and Recreation Master Plan</p>

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
	-focus on implementing enhanced street design to improve walkability	
Pillar 3 – Economy	<p><u>Objective 3.1</u></p> <p>Reword to focus on accelerating progress, creating jobs and driving local economic growth. [Recommendation from the business sector]: Accelerate progress, create jobs, and drive local economic growth</p> <p>-Include the specific sectors that are identified in the Economic Development Strategy (information and communications technology, professional and technical services, advanced manufacturing, and downtowns and lifestyle) [Recommendation from Core Team as a point of clarification]</p> <p>-Include a reference to the waterfront from the economic growth and tourism lens. [Recommendation from community members and the business community]</p> <p>-Include a reference to the Green Economy. [Recommendation from the community]</p>	<p>Action revisions:</p> <p>Continue to implement the Economic Development Strategy that focuses on the following sectors: information and communications technology, professional and technical services, advanced manufacturing, and downtowns and lifestyle</p> <p>Implement actions to enhance Whitby’s tourism sector, including a focus on the waterfront</p> <p>Support green economy, agriculture, and agri-business</p>

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
	<p><u>Objective 3.2</u></p> <p>Attract and retain businesses and industry</p> <p>-Include a reference to collaborative workspaces. [Recommendation from the business community]</p> <p>-Indicate reference to a hotel and convention centre. [Recommendation from the business community]</p> <p>-Include a new bullet to address the need to examine municipal processes to support economic development and employment growth. [Recommendation from community members.]</p>	<p>Action revisions:</p> <p>Attract investment for a hotel and convention centre</p> <p>Develop tools to support collaborative workspaces and home-based businesses</p> <p>Implement and streamline municipal tools and processes to attract high-value, employment-generating businesses</p>
	<p><u>Objective 3.3</u></p> <p>Promote innovation and build competitive advantage</p> <p>-indicate this is about developing and implementing the Intelligent City Strategy and Action Plan. Include wording to explain the focus of this Strategy and associated Action Plan.</p> <p>-remove reference to Whitby as a centre for government technology.</p>	<p>Action revision:</p> <p>Develop and implement Intelligent City Strategy and Action Plan that leverages collaboration and technology to support innovative solutions</p>

Reference – Draft Strategic Plan	Rationale	Recommended Action
	[Recommendation from the community]	
Pillar 4 – Government	<u>Objective 4.2</u> Be the organization that people want to join and build their future. -Reword to remove the reference to ‘the brightest’ as it implies a highest level of education which is not required for excellence in every position [Recommendation from TOW staff.]	Action revision: Implement strategies to attract and retain the best staff to serve the community
	<u>Objective 4.3</u> Deliver exceptional customer service and community engagement. - include a reference to staff [Recommendation from TOW staff.] -Add a new bullet highlighting the opportunities for Council to engage the community	Action revisions: Implement opportunities for Council to engage the community Provide timely and transparent reporting to the community, staff, and Council