

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program Pilot Project - Neighbourhood Selection Report

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** September 23, 2024

**Report Number:** CAO 17-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

**Submitted by:**

Sarah Klein  
Director, Strategic Initiatives

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

**For additional information, contact:**

Junaid Khan, Project Manager,  
Sustainability & Climate Change

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO 17-24 be received for information; and,
2. That Council endorse the delivery of a SNAP Pilot Project in the preferred neighbourhood of West Lynde, as outlined in Report CAO 17-24.

#### 2. Highlights:

- The Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP) has been identified as a priority in Whitby's Climate Emergency Response Plan, Phase 1: Resilience.
- The purpose of Whitby's SNAP is to identify and develop an action plan for neighbourhood revitalization to integrate local community interests and sustainability objectives such as stormwater management, energy conservation, and natural heritage.
- Whitby's SNAP has been divided into three (3) phases, and staff are currently focusing on Phase 1:
  - Phase 1 - Background research, neighbourhood selection, scoping of issues, and identification of stakeholders and interests of the community.

- Phase 2 - Defining motivational themes and action areas. Identifying project concepts and completing action plan.
- Phase 3 - Shaping signature projects, actions and implementation.
- Three candidate neighbourhoods: West Lynde, Fallingbrook, and Meadowcrest were identified based on Town documents and Town staff's knowledge of opportunities to meet the sustainability objectives of the SNAP Model.
- A Whitby SNAP Pilot Screening Analysis has been developed for the three neighbourhoods to identify a priority neighbourhood for the program. Six sustainable categories were selected to incorporate and assess information about building age and archetypes, infrastructure and mobility, flood safety and erosion risk reduction, natural environment and watershed systems, parks, recreation and culture, and human health and well-being.
- The Town has provided initial funding to Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) in 2023 in the amount of \$80,000. Additional funding may be provided by the Town from Capital Project 55217604 Durham Climate Change Adaptation Plan (DCCAP), should it be required.
- Based on the screening and selection process and in close consultation with staff from the Project Management Team, Town of Whitby staff recommend the West Lynde Neighbourhood for the Whitby SNAP Pilot Project.

### 3. Background:

Staff Report CAO 26-23 Whitby's Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP) – Phase 1: Resilience, was endorsed by Council in September of 2022 and implementation of the Plan commenced in 2023. One of the major sub-actions of CERP initiated in 2023 is the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP) pilot project in partnership with the CLOCA. CLOCA's Board endorsed the delivery of a SNAP pilot project in the Town of Whitby in September 2023. As such, the Town entered a formal partnership with CLOCA for the delivery of a SNAP pilot project within a neighbourhood in Whitby through a Memorandum of Understanding. The SNAP pilot project was initiated as per sub-action 3.2.5 of the Implementation Plan: "Select a neighbourhood for a pilot project to install green infrastructure, with signage and community participation where possible."

SNAP is a replicable program and process developed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) that helps to implement complex and interconnected watershed plans, municipal strategies, and climate change adaptation and mitigation plans by bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to encourage and support climate action. To date, TRCA has implemented SNAPS in neighbourhoods across Peel Region, York Region, Toronto, and Peterborough. In Durham Region, the Ajax SNAP was implemented in 2023 in partnership with the Region of Durham, TRCA, and the Town of Ajax. A communication piece, *Activating Neighbourhoods – Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority* prepared and published by the TRCA is provided in Attachment 1 for further details.

Using the SNAP's model of a multi-objective approach, several environmental and climate priorities can be addressed and informed to deliver significant social and economic benefits in the Whitby SNAP pilot project. The collaborative approach aims to build implementation partnerships and capacity in local leaders for sustained action. The following specific priority objectives have been identified for this project:

- Urban forest enhancements
- Improved stormwater management
- Energy efficiency and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reduction
- Infrastructure renewal
- Human health outcomes
- Reducing heat stress resulting from unnatural heat waves
- Supporting populations at risk of the impacts of climate change
- Community engagement

This program will also benefit Durham Region in delivering on commitments outlined in the Durham Climate Change Action Plan, Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan, and the Durham Community Energy Plan.

Work related to climate change adaptation and resilience planning and action at the community level also directly supports several of CLOCA's core strategic priorities, including watershed planning and health, sustainable solutions to watershed management to build climate resilience, and community engagement and education. By taking a leadership role in the development and delivery of the Whitby SNAP pilot project, CLOCA staff will not only develop new expertise and capacity to leverage the delivery of future projects within the Town of Whitby but also to other Durham Region area municipalities within its jurisdiction.

The Whitby SNAP Pilot is divided into three phases, and this Report focuses on Phase 1.

Phase 1 - Background research, Neighbourhood selection, scoping of issues, and identification of stakeholders and interests of the community.

Phase 2 - Defining motivational themes and action areas. Identifying project concepts and completing action plan.

Phase 3 - Shaping signature projects and actions and implementation.

#### **4. Discussion:**

The Town of Whitby continues to demonstrate leadership in environmental sustainability by developing and implementing a diverse range of projects and programs that address air quality, waste management, natural cover, water quality, and climate change. These projects and programs require cross-collaboration between all divisions at the Town of Whitby and with external stakeholders. In 2023, the Town of Whitby worked with the Region of Durham and CLOCA to scope the Whitby SNAP pilot project, as the first in CLOCA's jurisdiction.

**SNAP Governance**

The project is governed by a Project Management Team (PMT) comprised of staff from relevant departments in the Region of Durham, the Town of Whitby, and CLOCA with the potential to include representatives from interested community organizations.

The purpose of the PMT is to provide overall leadership, strategic guidance, direction, and support for the initiation, development, and implementation of the Whitby SNAP pilot project. The PMT's involvement will support integrated implementation, ensure duplication is avoided, resources are efficiently leveraged, and foster cross-departmental and multi-level governmental coordination.

CLOCA will lead overall project responsibilities, including workplan development and delivery in collaboration with the PMT. As part of its role, CLOCA will lead stakeholder and community engagement, technical and design services as necessary, project design, implementation and documentation. The Region of Durham and the Town of Whitby will provide input/updates, assist in seeking relevant departmental approval and advocate for the project throughout their internal and external networks. They may lead special working groups and implementation projects, as appropriate, and assist with communications and engagement activities.

CLOCA has existing planning tools, data, a range of relevant technical experts to draw on, and the necessary internal infrastructure to support this type of program; however, this new program/service has required them to bring on a new dedicated SNAP Coordinator to develop and deliver the program on behalf of the partnership described above.

A Program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Whitby and CLOCA has been executed, outlining roles and responsibilities, project scope, workplan and deliverables, and approved total budget. The agreement also outlines future funding needs to help develop and implement identified actions.

**SNAP Deliverables**

Recognizing that incorporating high-level technical and strategic planning documents is essential to getting it right, the Whitby SNAP pilot project will apply the guidance provided by those documents and truly focus on collaborative action planning and mobilization. Key project deliverables are as follows:

- Stakeholder and partner identification, characterization, and engagement. This includes engaging individuals from the Region, Town, CLOCA, residents, businesses, and organizations.
- Identification of community priorities related to climate change resilience.
- Initiation of at least one "quick start" implementation project within the first year of the program. This project could include home energy retrofits, lot-level stormwater management, urban forestry improvements, pollinator habitat creation, or other climate change resilience projects.
- Completion of a Neighbourhood Action Plan.

The Whitby SNAP pilot project will require meaningful engagement of the community and implementation partners throughout all three phases. To support this, the Whitby SNAP pilot project will integrate innovative approaches as well as lessons learned from other successful SNAP engagement programs implemented across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA). Final project documentation will include an Action Plan summary report, Neighbourhood Action Plan concept map(s), concept designs for implementation projects, expected outcomes and targets, and an implementation framework. The Action Plan will form the rationale for any future budget and/or funding requests.

### **Neighbourhood Selection Process**

As an initial step toward selecting a neighbourhood for the Whitby SNAP pilot project, Town of Whitby staff identified three candidate neighbourhoods based on corporate documents and their knowledge of opportunities to meet the sustainability objectives of the SNAP Model. Total populations and geographical areas were also comparable to other implemented SNAP neighbourhoods across the GTHA.

The three candidate neighbourhoods are:

1. West Lynde – located north of Highway 401, south of Dundas Street between Henry Street on the east and Lynde Creek and Fothergill Court on the west.
2. Fallingbrook – located north of Rossland Road and south of Taunton Road; east of Garden Street and west of Thickson Road with a portion located south of Dryden Boulevard to Rossland Road.
3. Meadowcrest – located in Brooklin, east of Ashburn Road, along Way Street and Heber Down Drive, with a block located in the north-west corner of Columbus Road West and Ashburn Road.

\*Maps for the three neighbourhoods can be found in the Whitby SNAP Pilot Screening Analysis Executive Summary in Attachment 3.

A Whitby SNAP Pilot Screening Analysis has been developed for the CLOCA jurisdiction which has been applied to the three Neighbourhoods. This incorporates a fair and equitable comparison of high-level analysis of existing conditions to identify a priority Neighbourhood for the program. Six sustainable categories were selected to incorporate and assess information about building age and archetypes, infrastructure and mobility, flood safety and erosion risk reduction, natural environment and watershed systems, parks recreation and culture, human health and wellbeing.

This process identifies where and when planned capital projects are scheduled, priorities included in strategic plans and other known urban renewal or climate action plans prepared by various departments within the Town of Whitby, the Region of Durham, CLOCA and other agencies and not for profits with a vested interest in social, economic and environmental conditions.

The Whitby SNAP Pilot Screening Analysis Executive Summary, which provides an overview of the methodology and how each Neighbourhood scored for the indicators within the six sustainability categories noted above, can be found in Attachment 3. A full Whitby SNAP Neighbourhood Selection Methodology has been created and provides an important and relevant framework for future SNAP Neighbourhood selection efforts in the Town of Whitby and other municipalities within the CLOCA jurisdiction.

### **Priority Neighbourhood**

The three identified neighbourhoods were scored using a high, high-medium, medium or low point system for the forty-two (42) indicators with consideration for issue severity and potential ability of the Whitby SNAP pilot program to support climate change adaptation and or mitigation outcomes.

Based on the screening and selection process and in close consultation with staff from the PMT, Town of Whitby staff recommend the West Lynde Neighbourhood for the Whitby SNAP pilot program. The West Lynde neighbourhood received the highest score and aligned strongly with planned projects, environmental, social and economic challenges, opportunities and strategic priorities. Some of the challenges facing this neighbourhood identified in the Whitby SNAP Pilot Screening Analysis Executive Summary, Attachment 3, can be addressed within the potential actions listed below:

- Plant and improve the urban forest canopy to strengthen watershed health, regional biodiversity, and climate resilience as identified by the Town of Whitby CERP Phase 1: Resilience and Phase 2: Mitigation, Region of Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan, and CLOCA's Lynde Creek Watershed Management Plan
- Improve stormwater management with lot-level controls and Low-Impact Development projects for water quality and quantity and further support ecologically significant groundwater recharge areas as identified in the Lynde Creek Watershed Management Plan
- Address urban flood risks as identified in Durham's Urban Flood Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Study, the Town of Whitby Lynde Creek Master Drainage Plan and the Town of Whitby Bridge and Culvert Master Plan Environmental Assessment with new green technology
- Offer existing Durham Greener Homes retrofit program to reduce GHG emissions from homes built prior to 1980
- Model sustainability practices with improved transit linkages and enhanced local and regional hubs, making stronger connections for residents to Lynde Creek and its associated Provincially Significant Wetland
- Align SNAP programs to support improved outcomes for childhood and teenage health issues, asthma, cardio-vascular health among adults, and falls among seniors (Durham Region Health Neighbourhoods – Building on Health in Priority Neighbourhoods, 2015)
- Reduce the effects of urban heat islands and the associated risk of heat stress

- Support at-risk populations, including low-income residents, the unemployed and seniors, with programs that address challenges and bridge equity gaps
- Define a sense of place for this evolving neighbourhood by recognizing its aging infrastructure and its potential as a self-sufficient community that aligns well with an 8 to 80 concept – that if everything we do in our urban environment is great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, it will be better for all people
- Engage Neighbourhood assets like schools, the Whitby Library (just on edge of boundary) and parks to enhance engagement and community partnerships toward action

**Next Steps & Workplan**

The PMT will further refine roles and responsibilities, project scope, workplan, and deliverables as identified in the MOU and finalize a Charter document to guide the delivery of the program. Once the implementation plan is developed, staff will come back to seek Council approval of the plan in Q3 of 2025.

With the Town of Whitby Council endorsement of the Whitby SNAP Pilot neighbourhood of West Lynde, the SNAP Coordinator will begin detailed community characterization to identify and contact appropriate stakeholders who will be vital in developing and implementing the program.

**TABLE 1: Whitby SNAP Pilot Workplan**

<i>Phase 1: Project Planning &amp; Action Research</i>	Agreements, Project Team and Community partnership formation, Scoping key issues and Neighbourhood Context, Residential Program design considerations	Q1 2024 to Q3 2024  January to September 2024
<i>Phase 2: Detailed Design &amp; Delivery</i>	Community Leaders Workshop #1, launch of Residential Retrofit Program, confirm motivating themes, and identify signature and quick-win project opportunities	Q4 2024 to Q3 2025  October 2024 to September 2025
<i>Phase 3: High-level SNAP Action Plan Concept</i>	Action Plan concept with integrating themes, shared goals, integrated signature projects and Implementation Framework. Review of Residential Retrofit Program pilot year 2.	Q4 2025 to Q2 2026  October 2025 to June 2026

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

As per Report CAO 26-23, the Town has committed \$80,000 to the development of the SNAP, which was allocated within the 2023 budget for capital project # 55217604 Durham Climate Change Adaptation Plan (DCCAP). In addition to Town funding, the Region of Durham allocated \$120,000 for Phase 1 and 2 of the Whitby SNAP in 2024.

The Town will explore grants, with assistance from CLOCA, to fund the implementation of the actions developed through the Plan. Additional funding may be provided by the Town from capital project # 55217604 Durham Climate Change Adaptation Plan (DCCAP), should it be required.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

This project is expected to garner significant positive feedback from the community based on the implementation of equitable climate action. Additionally, this project will provide opportunities for additional community engagement, including hosting community events, tree plantings, educating the public about the project and increasing their involvement in, and awareness of, the Town of Whitby's sustainability initiatives and the Region of Durham's Climate Change programs and accomplishments. CLOCA will be leading community engagement in Phase 2 of the project.

## **7. Input from other Departments & Sources**

In the Fall of 2023, Sustainability staff had initial conversations with CLOCA and Town Staff, including Policy and Heritage Planning and Creative Communities. In June 2024, a formal internal project team was created to oversee the development of Whitby's SNAP. The Project Team ensures expertise from across the organization and includes representation from the following Departments:

- Community Services – Parks and Waste
- Organizational Effectiveness – Corporate Communications
- Strategic Initiatives – Creative Communities and Economic Development
- Planning & Development – Engineering, Stormwater and Transportation Services

Once the neighbourhood is approved, collaboration with the identified departments above will continue to successfully implement the SNAP pilot project.

## **8. Strategic Priorities**

This project aligns with the following sections of the 2023-2026 Community Strategic Plan:

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



Objective 2.1: Demonstrate environmental leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change

Action 2.1.3: Implement actions to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change.

**9. Attachments:**

Attachment 1- Activating Neighbourhoods – Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program - TRCA

Attachment 2 - Signed Memorandum of Understanding

Attachment 3 - Whitby SNAP Pilot Project Screening Analysis Executive Summary