



Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program

AJAX SNAP



Toronto and Region
Conservation
Authority

High-Level Ajax Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP)

In collaboration with:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 The Neighbourhood	3
2.1 Parks and Open Spaces	8
2.2 Industrial, Commercial, Institutional (ICI) Building Stock	11
2.3 Residential Building Stock	11
3.0 Neighbourhood Boundary Refinement	12
4.0 Key Drivers for Success	14
5.0 Governance Model	15
6.0 Process to Date	17
7.0 Engagement and Stewardship Activities	18
7.1 Community Outreach and Education	21
7.2 Community Interests & Motivating Themes	23
7.2.1 Housing Crisis	24
7.2.2 Community Safety	24
7.2.3 Environmental Health	24
7.2.4 Social Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction	24
7.2.5 Active Transportation and Right-of-Ways (ROWs)	24
7.2.6 Climate Action	24
7.2.7 Community Greening	25
7.2.8 Community Cohesion	25
8.0 Shared High-level Action Plan Objectives (Emerging)	25
8.1 Climate Action (Mitigation & Adaptation)	27
8.2 Social Resilience, Health & Well-being	27
8.3 Sense of Place & Belonging	28
8.4 Natural Systems Resilience	28
9.0 Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Plan	29
9.1 High-Level Action Plan Implementation Action Areas	29
9.1.1 Action Area 1: Sustainable Connections to Nature	33

9.2.2 Action Area 2: Sustainable Physical Connections	38
9.2.3 Action Area 3: Sustainable Community Connections	41
9.2.4 Action Area 4: Sustainable Buildings	45
10.0 Emerging Framework for Measuring Success	49
11.0 Overall guiding principles	54
12.0 Next Steps	55

LIST OF FIGURES:

Figure 1. Ajax SNAP Boundary Area	5
Figure 2. Ajax SNAP Water Resource System	6
Figure 3. Ajax SNAP Ground Surface Temperature	7
Figure 4. Ajax SNAP Land Use Map	9
Figure 5. Ajax SNAP Natural Heritage System Map	10
Figure 6. Ajax SNAP ICI Building Stock.....	11
Figure 7. Ajax SNAP Typical Housing Stock.....	12
Figure 8. Ajax SNAP Year Two Boundary Expansion Map	13
Figure 9. Ajax SNAP Management Structure.....	17
Figure 10. Ajax SNAP 1yr Planning Process	18
Figure 11. SNAP Community Engagement Booth in Exeter Park, Ajax ON	20
Figure 12. (L) SNAP’S Passive Engagement Installation: Penny for Your Thoughts Wishing Well, Ajax Public Library, Ajax ON. (R) A child writes a wish for the Wishing Well, Pat Bayly Square, Ajax ON.....	21
Figure 13. Community Motivating Themes	23
Figure 14. Ajax SNAP Sustainability Framework of Shared Objectives	26
Figure 15. Ajax SNAP Action Plan Map	30
Figure 16. Bee Hotel and Pollinator Plants, St Andrews Park, Ajax ON.....	33

Figure 17. (L) Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden, (R) Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden Leader and local Ajax Resident Kyla Paonessa wins the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee (DECAC)’s Durham Environmental Achievement Award in 2023.....	36
Figure 18. Boulevard Garden Ajax SNAP, Ajax ON	38
Figure 19. Intersection of Harwood Avenue and Bayley Street E in Ajax, ON	41
Figure 20. Community Seed Saving Workshop, featuring local speaker, St Andrews Park (Ajax, ON)	42
Figure 21. Construction seen behind Pat Bayly Square (Ajax, ON)	45
Figure 22. (L) Ajax Sustainability Assistants delivering a Retrofit Program consultation (Ajax, ON), (R) South Ajax Home Retrofit Program’s Home Visit Folder	48
Figure 23. SNAP Guiding Design Principles.....	54

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1. Ajax SNAP Project Management Team.....	16
Table 2. Ajax SNAP Year 1 Engagement Results	19
Table 3. TRCA’s Community Outreach and Education Team’s Event Results in the Ajax SNAP Study Area- Year One	22
Table 4. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 1: Sustainable Connections to Nature	34
Table 5. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 2: Sustainable Physical Connections.....	38
Table 6. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 3: Sustainable Community Connections.....	42
Table 7. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 4: Sustainable Buildings	45
Table 8. Long term Target Outcomes	49
Table 9. Short Term Output Indicators.....	53

*The information contained in this document is copyright
© Toronto and Region Conservation Authority*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We respectfully acknowledge that the Town of Ajax is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Mississauga, and in the territory covered by the Williams Treaty, and is adjacent to The Mississauga's of Scugog Island First Nation.

The development of the Ajax SNAP project was made possible through a partnership between Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Durham Region and the Town of Ajax.

Thank you to the Project Management Team, and those who provided guidance and expertise on the development of this High-Level Action Plan:

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority:

Adriana Gomez	Supervisor, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, TRCA
David-Angelo Williams	Coordinator, Community Outreach & Education, TRCA
Holly Shaw-Lopez	Program Manager, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, TRCA
Jennifer Taves	Senior Manager, Sustainable Communities, TRCA
Lauren Moretto	Coordinator, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, TRCA
Mary Gawen	Supervisor Community Learning, TRCA
Michelle Sarmiento	Program Support, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, TRCA
Reem Bairam	Coordinator, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, TRCA
Reina Marie Suemith	Community Development Student Intern, Centennial College

Town of Ajax:

Alessia Pereira Mendoza	Sustainability Assistant, Town of Ajax
Ayca Kocakusak Sezgin	Sustainability Assistant, Town of Ajax
Cameron Richardson	Supervisor Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change, Town of Ajax
Craig Blencowe	Supervisor of Forestry and Horticulture, Town of Ajax
Stephanie Saroff	Communications Coordinator, Town of Ajax

Durham Region:

Ian McVey	Manager of Sustainability, Durham Region
Shannon Logan	Policy Advisor-Sustainability, Durham Region
Tara Zupancic	Climate Change and Health Specialist, Durham Region Health Department

Other:

Kyla Paonessa	Mama is in the Garden, Ajax Resident
Kyle Meenie	Director of Operations, Windfall

TRCA has authored this report on behalf of project partners, Durham Region and the Town of Ajax. This High-Level Action Plan's recommendations were identified through a co-creation process involving residents and stakeholders, the Region, the Town, and TRCA staff. **A special thank you to resident leaders, local stakeholders, and numerous staff groups that were involved in collaborative engagement activities and that have helped identify motivating themes and shape the recommended action areas.**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

TRCA's Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program's (SNAP) High-Level Action Plan provides recommendations that were developed through a consultation and co-creation process involving multiple stakeholders, including the Ajax SNAP community and project partners. The High-Level Action Plan is intended to guide progress toward the Ajax SNAP neighbourhood vision: to flourish as a growing community, rich in history, with a love for people and the planet.

This initiative brings a "top-down" and "bottom-up" approach to action planning, blending Municipal, Regional and Conservation Authority priorities with community interests. This initiative directly aligns with, and supports the implementation of, several existing plans and policies, including the Ajax Climate Risk & Resiliency Plan, Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan, Durham Community Energy Plan, TRCA's Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan (CCWP), and Durham Region's "A2" Priority Health Neighbourhood directions, among others. The project also showcases initiatives like the Durham Greener Homes Program and the Town of Ajax's Adopt-A-Garden program.

What is SNAP?

TRCA's Sustainable Neighbourhood Program (SNAP) is a collaborative, neighbourhood-based approach for advancing sustainable urban renewal and climate action in strategic older urban areas. SNAPS help municipalities and other community collaborators improve efficiencies, draw strong local support and build innovative partnerships for the implementation of a broad range of initiatives in the public and private realms. It uses both, a top-down and bottom-up approach, bringing together municipal and TRCA Technical objectives, with residents' dreams and priorities.

There are 16 SNAP neighbourhoods across 11 municipalities in Ontario. The Ajax SNAP is the first SNAP in Durham Region. For more information, go to trca.ca/snap.

For this project, a one-year accelerated SNAP planning approach was piloted, which aimed to achieve two key deliverables: the design and implementation of a residential retrofit program tailored to the neighbourhood (leveraging the Durham Greener Home Program) and the development of a High-Level Action Plan. This accelerated process pairs the design and implementation of a Residential Retrofit program with on-the-ground engagement and quick-start projects. This unique approach leverages these activities as opportunities to meet residents and uses the Retrofit Program as a tool for engagement in the development of a high-level SNAP Action Plan.

What is a Quick Start Project?

The use of quick-start projects is a strategy of the SNAP Action planning process, which encourages the implementation of quick and easy community projects alongside action planning. These projects help the SNAP team to meet and engage with community members, build early implementation partnerships with groups that are already active in the area, keep momentum going through the planning phase, and build trust with the community, that the SNAP approach results in on the ground transformative action.

TRCA conducted community engagement for the development of the plan through various education and stewardship activities and the Conservation Youth Corps program. The SNAP team conducted initial stakeholder engagement of relevant internal TRCA, Town of Ajax, and Durham Region staff, as well as individuals from the local utilities and key community organizations. Through a series of one-on-one conversations, they introduced SNAP, obtained local insights, and encouraged project support. This High-Level SNAP Action Plan sets the tone for continued action plan work in Ajax, and further design and implementation of future projects and programs.

2.0 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Located within the Town of Ajax and Region of Durham, the Ajax SNAP neighbourhood in year one (Figure 1 Ajax SNAP Neighbourhood) is 238 hectares in size and bounded by Highway 401 in the north, Dreyer Drive E to the south, Harwood Avenue to the west, and Pickering Beach/Salem Road to the east, and resides on highly vulnerable aquifers (HVAs) and Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas (ESGRAs), (see Figure 2- Water Resource System Map). Selection of the neighbourhood was based on a Neighbourhood Screening Process that identified alignment of multiple sustainability and urban renewal priorities of the Town, Region and TRCA. This process supported strategic identification of a SNAP that could address multiple partner priorities by leveraging local planned projects and initiatives. For the Ajax SNAP neighbourhood, these priorities include low urban forest cover, high heat stress (See Figure 3- Ground Surface Temperature Map), an equity-deserving population, a regional health priority area, older buildings with high energy intensity, deep retrofit needs and historic relevance, and opportunities to leverage planned infrastructure renewal.

The Ajax SNAP neighbourhood is located within the Carruthers Creek Watershed and contains a variety of land uses including low to medium density homes and ten apartment towers (including Durham housing), four schools, the Town Hall and Library, four places of worship, and ten parks. It encompasses the locally known areas of Neighbourhood One, portions of Downtown Ajax and Southwood, which were developed throughout the 1940's-1980's and is home to 11,500 people living in 4,500 households (54% apartments, 46% houses). The average household income is \$91,611, although poverty and homelessness are also concerns in the area. With an average home maintainer age slightly higher than average at 57 years old, there is an aging population with families that have adult children, empty nesters, and seniors living alone. Environics data from 2022, reports that 40% of residents are a part of a visible minority (typically Black, South Asian, or Filipino) just less than one third are immigrants born outside of Canada. Only 1% of residents in the Neighbourhood have a mother tongue

that is not an official language of Canada. Notably, 63% of households have a household size of just 1 or 2 people. Overall, this neighbourhood is upper middle-class, made up of first, second or even third generation Canadians, with a large population of seniors and other residents who could potentially be facing issues of social isolation.

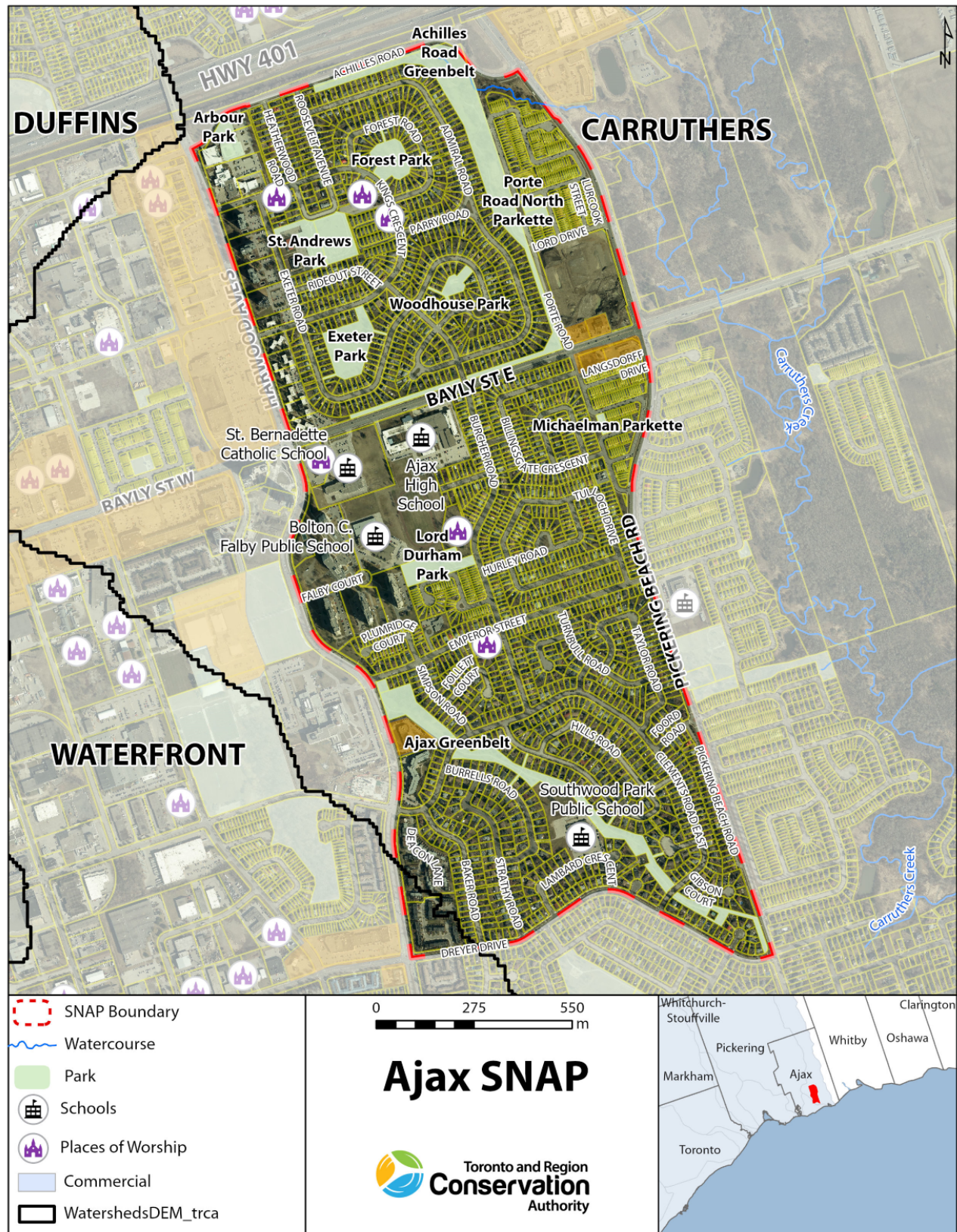


Figure 1. Ajax SNAP Boundary Area

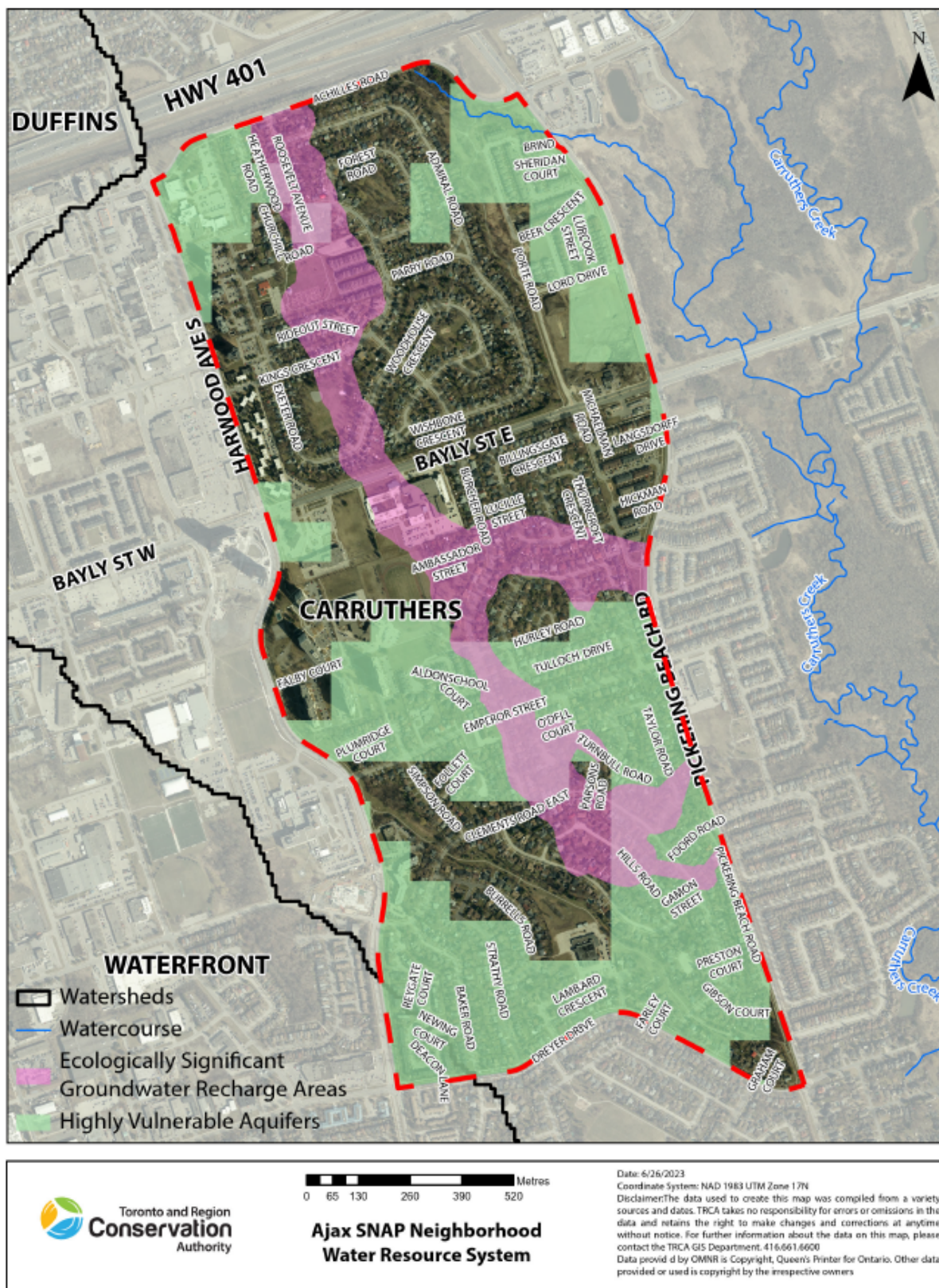


Figure 2. Ajax SNAP Water Resource System

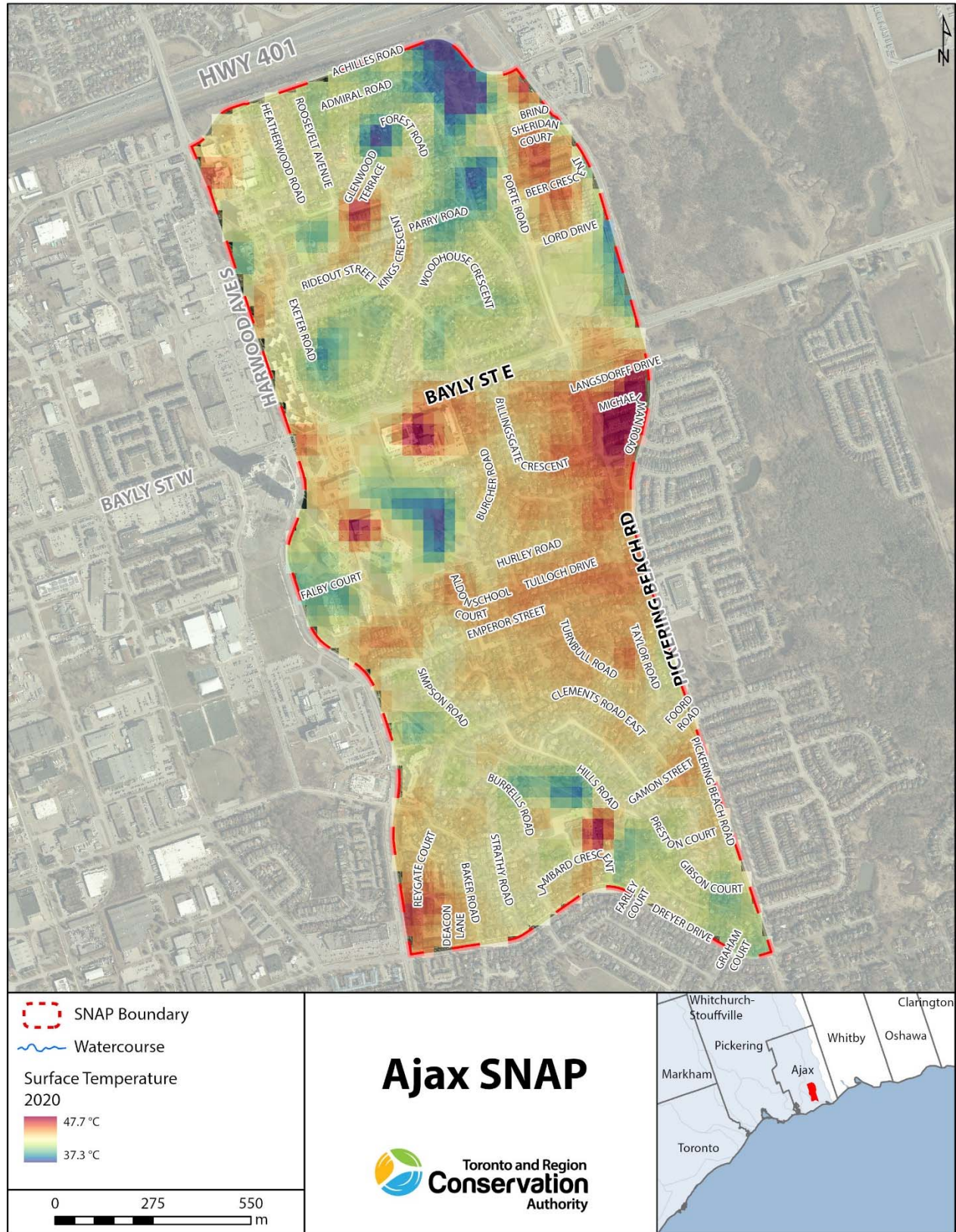


Figure 3. Ajax SNAP Ground Surface Temperature

2.1 Parks and Open Spaces

There is some variation in land use throughout the community, including several green spaces and natural features (Figure 4-Land Use Map). The neighbourhood contains portions of the Natural Heritage System in the North-East and South-West. Green spaces are found throughout the neighbourhood, totaling almost 12 ha, and including 10 recreational open spaces/parks and natural features including the Ajax Greenbelt in the south end and the Achilles Road Greenbelt in the north which borders Carruthers Creek (see Figure 5. Natural Heritage System Map).

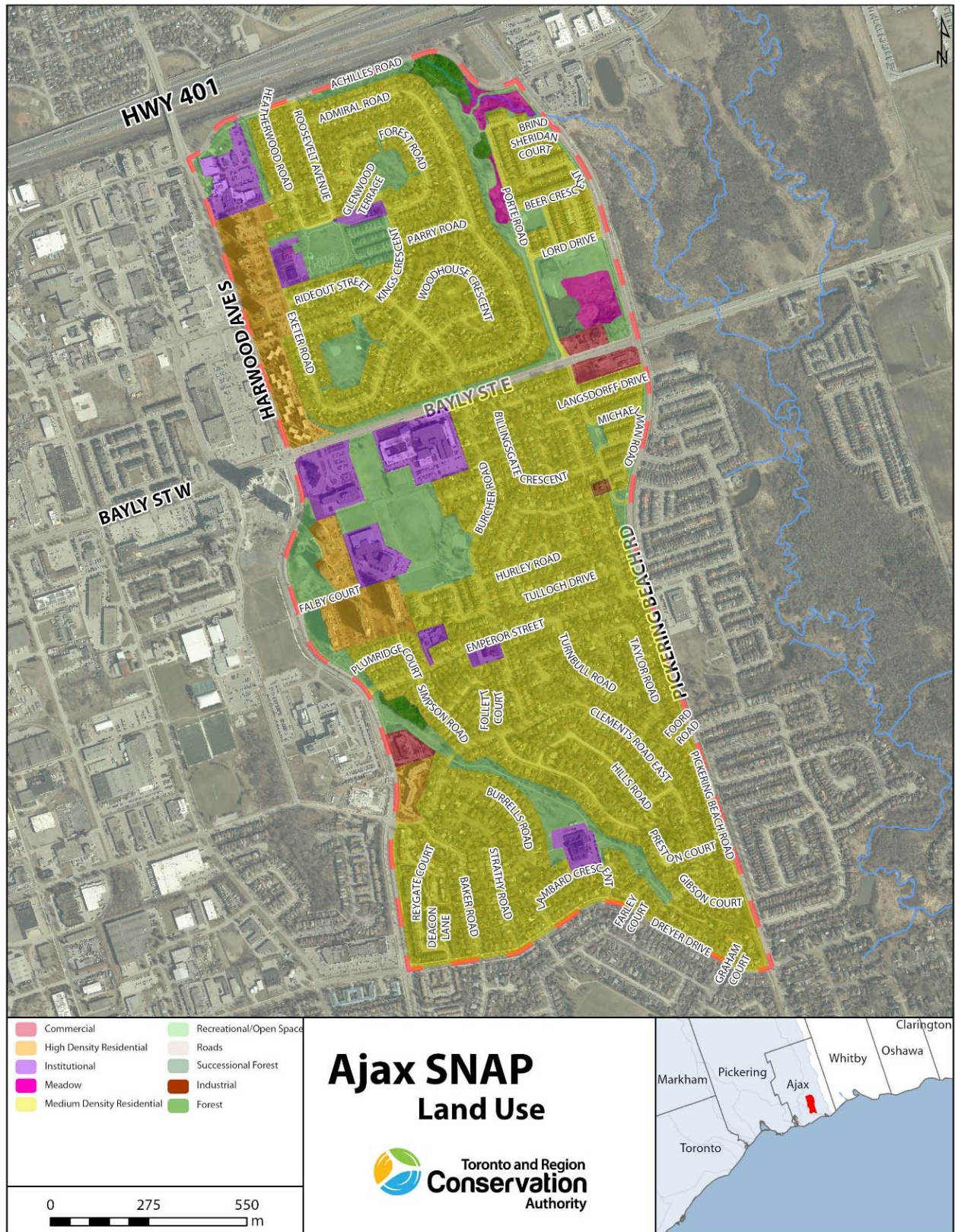


Figure 4. Ajax SNAP Land Use Map



Figure 5. Ajax SNAP Natural Heritage System Map

2.2 Industrial, Commercial, Institutional (ICI) Building Stock

The neighbourhood contains only small pockets of institutional, industrial, and commercial land uses. The neighbourhood's nine institutional areas include four schools (one public high school, two public elementary schools, and one Catholic elementary school), one library, and four Faith-based buildings.



Figure 6. Ajax SNAP ICI Building Stock

2.3 Residential Building Stock

In this neighbourhood 57% of the homes are owned while 43% are rented. There are 1,555 single family homes present, with around 12 percent (approximately 184) that have swimming pools in their backyards, which is a notable neighbourhood feature. There is one Durham Region Social Housing building for seniors- Harwood Manor, also located in this neighbourhood, and 10 other residential towers. In the northern area of the neighbourhood, houses tend to be older with some pre-1960's construction (Archetype F and B). Whereas homes in the southern portion of the neighbourhood tend to be slightly newer and many are built between the 1960s and 1980s (Archetype A).



Figure 7. Ajax SNAP Typical Housing Stock

3.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD BOUNDARY REFINEMENT

Very early on in community engagement it became clear that embracing a study area so focused on single family homes —excluding the west side of Harwood Avenue and terminating in the south before Lake Ontario— was likened by one community stakeholder to ‘cutting the heart of Ajax in half’. The SNAP model adopts the flexibility of a ‘fuzzy boundary’ during the action planning process to account for such local knowledge to come forward and be incorporated. And so, a boundary extension was proposed to the PMT at the end of 2023, for implementation in year two of the Ajax SNAP. The new study area will include a more interesting mix of industrial, commercial, and institutional properties (for which the community feels a deeper connection) and more of the natural features this community loves, namely Lake Ontario and Ajax Waterfront. This expansion will require an update to the neighbourhood characterization research and mapping, to gain deeper insights into the expanded area, and find alignments with the Town’s Waterfront Management Plan. The expanded neighbourhood comes into effect in 2024. See Figure 8 Year Two Ajax SNAP Neighbourhood Boundary Expansion below.



Figure 8. Ajax SNAP Year Two Boundary Expansion Map

4.0 KEY DRIVERS FOR SUCCESS

The Ajax SNAP's High-Level Action Plan's accelerated approach was supported by the opportunity to lead engagement for the High-Level Action Plan, with the design and delivery of a home retrofit program. The two key drivers that made this approach successful were: the presence of a housing stock in need of retrofitting and the launch of a financing mechanism to fund the needed retrofits.

In 2022 Durham Region authored a report on market characterization as part of the Durham Greener Homes Program scoping and design, in which several housing archetypes were put forward. The Ajax SNAP neighbourhood, has a blend of archetypes A, B and F.

Archetype A consists of two-story single detached homes built mostly in the 1980's but anywhere between the mid 1960's to 1990; this is typical of homes found in the south end of the Ajax SNAP neighbourhood. The houses in the north end are either single-story detached homes constructed in the 1950s and 1960s which typifies archetype B, or even older two-story detached homes built between the 1920's- 1960's, typical of archetype F.

The report stated archetypes F and A make up two of the top three most carbon intensive homes in Durham Region. The report also noted that archetype B homes provide significant neighbourhood pilot opportunities because they represent the second highest adopter in terms of fuel switching projects. These homes also make a good target, to market deeper retrofit actions because they are an older construction, due for upgrades.

The presence of these archetype building styles in the study area provided a significant pilot opportunity to test regional characterizations at a neighbourhood scale. Firstly, seeing if the regionally identified needs ring true for the houses participating in the SNAP home retrofit program, and secondly, allowing SNAP staff to strategize for increased uptake of measures, by quickly identify to homeowners' typical retrofits their housing type could consider.

Durham Region also launched the Durham Greener Homes program in 2022, as a mechanism for residents to either finance the retrofits that these older homes need or receive rebates making upgrading affordable.



Spotlight: Durham Greener Homes Program:

As an integral component of the South Ajax SNAP Home Retrofit Program, one primary objective is to promote and enhance participation in the Durham Greener Homes Program.

Launched in 2022 by Durham Region and administered by Windfall Ecology Centre, the Durham Greener Homes program is designed to help Durham homeowners overcome the challenges of completing energy retrofits by providing support throughout the home retrofit journey.

This initiative offers residents two avenues for sustainable home upgrades: a rebate or a loan. The rebate option provided residents the opportunity to receive up to \$10,000 for deep retrofits, contingent upon the extent of greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction demonstrated during post-evaluation. Additionally, a rebate of up to \$2,000 is available specifically for heat pump installations, model dependent.

The Durham Greener Homes Loan option facilitates financing through a Credit Union, to assist homeowners in covering the costs of home upgrades. During consultations with the home energy coach, tailored advice is provided to participants based on their individual circumstances. For those with the financial means to cover upfront costs, direct enrollment in the Durham Green Homes Program is recommended. However, for those facing financial constraints, exploring the loan option, and leveraging it alongside rebates offered through other incentive programs is advised. Learn more at <https://durhamgreenerhomes.ca/>.

The characterization report results, coupled with the Durham Greener Homes Program launch, became the impetus for the decision for SNAP to design and implement a residential retrofit program; alongside High-Level Action Plan development, in year one of the Ajax SNAP program. The aim was to leverage the recently launched Durham Greener Homes program, increase program uptake among SNAP homeowners through tailored approaches, and encourage additional climate action measures offered through the retrofit program's home consultations.

5.0 GOVERNANCE MODEL

The multi-stakeholder Project Management Team (PMT) for the Ajax SNAP consists of members from TRCA (chair), Town of Ajax, Region of Durham, implementation partners Windfall Ecology Centre, and a local resident leader. Table 1 below, lists all project management team members for 2023. The PMT champions the project, provides leadership and strategic guidance, and supports planning. The PMT also supports integrated

implementation, ensures that duplication of effort is avoided, efficiently leverages resources, and fosters cross-organizational coordination, including information and cost-sharing.

To support clear understanding and commitment among all partners, the PMT developed and signed-off on a Project Charter and detailed work plan. Six lead PMT members make up the core team indicated in bold font in the chart below, and were the key champions of the project, convening on a more frequent basis, to move forward day to day activities on behalf of each organization. See Figure 9 for a depiction of the management structure for this project, including descriptions of roles and responsibilities with lead PMT members identified in bold.

The diverse expertise on the PMT reflects the comprehensive scope of this project, and includes staff from Sustainability, Energy, Climate, Public Health, Planning, Communications, Forestry and Horticulture, and Environmental Education. The PMT also includes a Home Energy Retrofit program implementation partner and a Resident Community Leader. Other relevant departments active on the project include TRCA's GIS and Ecosystem and Science Teams, Town of Ajax's Operations & Environmental Services, Planning & Development, and Fire & Emergency Services. Members of these departments are not on the PMT but are consulted when necessary.

Table 1. Ajax SNAP Project Management Team

Ajax SNAP Project Management Team		
Organization	Team Member Name	Role
TRCA	Holly Shaw-Lopez	Program Manager, Sustainable Neighbourhoods
	Jennifer Taves	Senior Manager, Sustainable Communities
	Adriana Gomez	Supervisor, Sustainable Neighbourhoods
	Mary Gawen	Supervisor, Community Learning
Town of Ajax	Cameron Richardson	Supervisor, Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
	Alessia Pereira Mendoza	Sustainability Assistant
	Ayca Kocakusak Sezgin	Sustainability Assistant
	Stephanie Saroff	Communications Coordinator
	Craig Blencowe	Supervisor, Forestry and Horticulture
Durham Region	Ian McVey	Manager of Sustainability
	Shannon Logan	Policy Advisor, Sustainability
	Tara Zupancic	Climate Change and Health Specialist, Durham Region Health Department
Windfall Ecology (local NGO)	Kyle Mennie	Director of Operations
Mama is in the Garden Founder & Community Member	Kayla Paonessa	Resident Champion

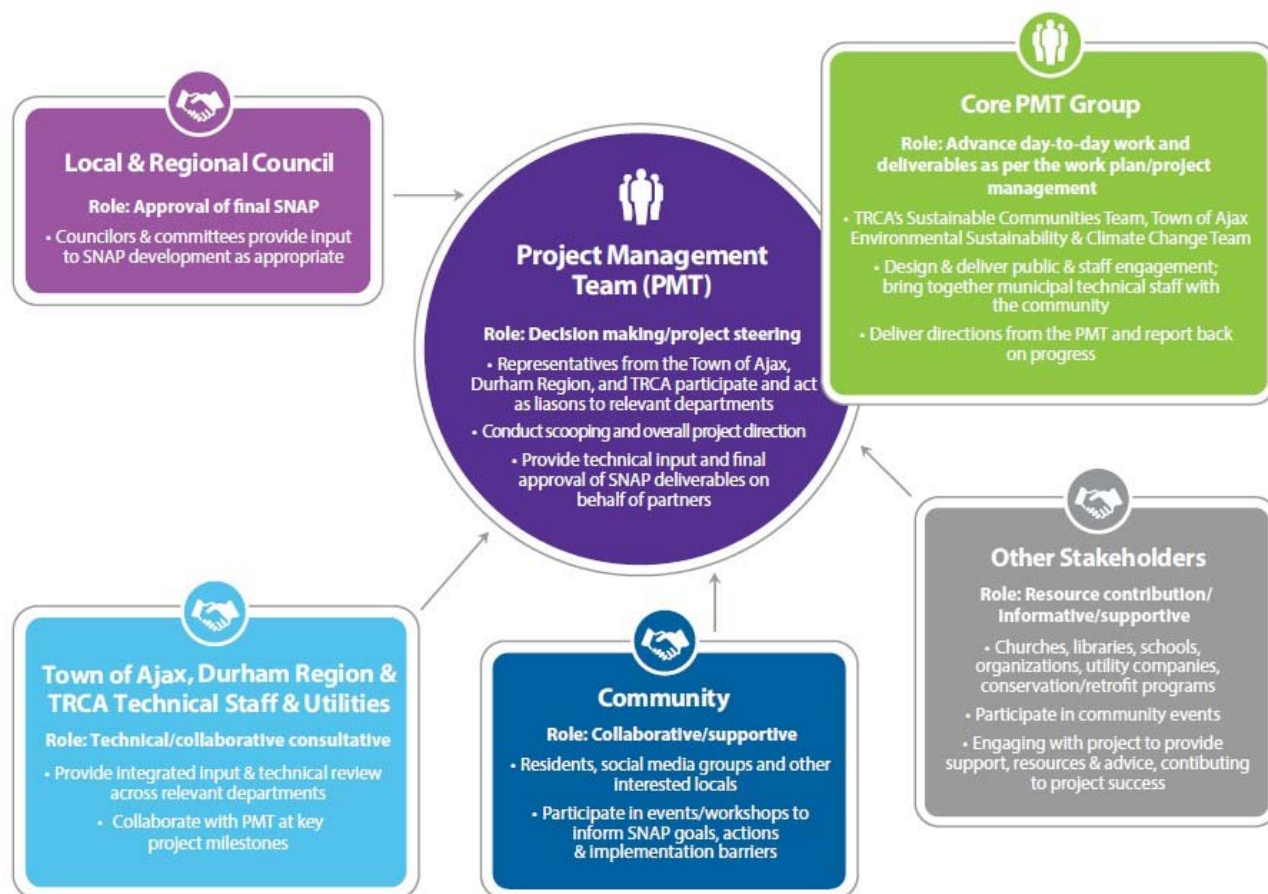


Figure 9. Ajax SNAP Management Structure

6.0 PROCESS TO DATE

Two key deliverables were required in year one of the Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Planning process. These were: the design and implementation of a tailored Residential Retrofit Pilot Program for low density residential homes within the neighbourhood, and the development of this High-Level SNAP Action Plan.

The SNAP action planning process used in year one of the Ajax SNAP, can be seen in Figure 10 below. It consists of two phases that have key engagement activities tied to each. The first phase is for scoping issues, identifying stakeholders, and learning about neighbourhood priorities and interests. The key engagement component in this phase was a community-wide survey, mailed out to all homes within the original Ajax SNAP boundary, including to residents from both single-family homes as well as apartment building units. 129 survey responses were returned.

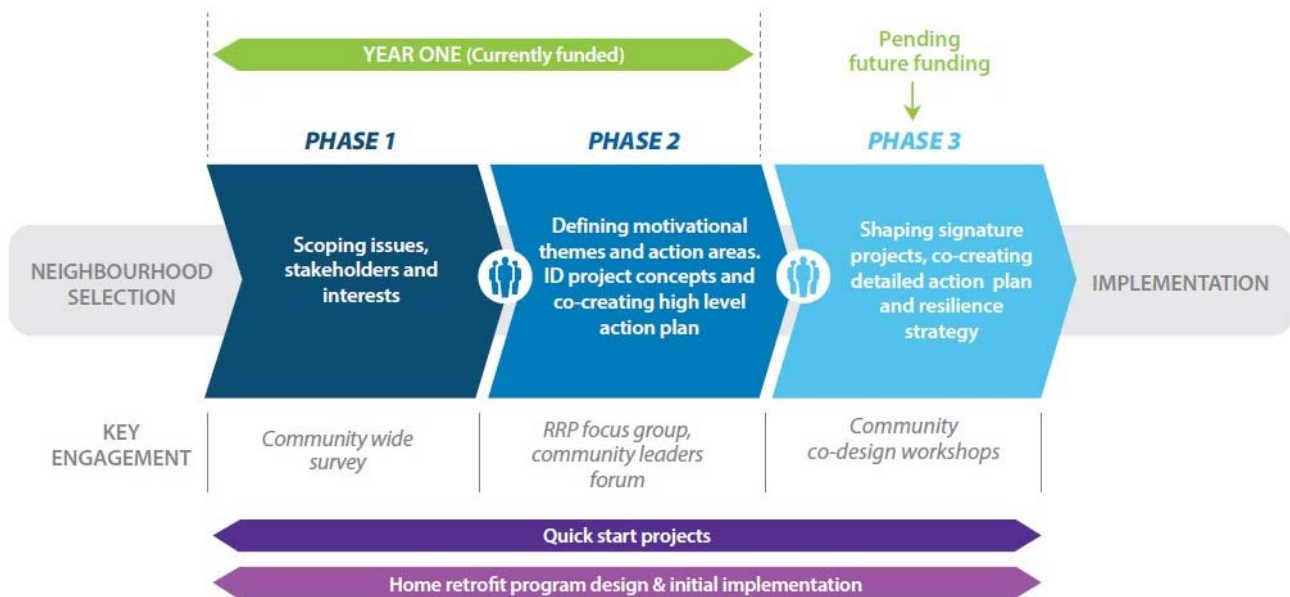


Figure 10. Ajax SNAP 1yr Planning Process

During the second phase, the objective is to define community motivating themes and action areas, as well as identify potential project concepts and co-create the High-Level Action Plan. Key community engagement elements of phase two consist of a community focus group and a community leader's forum. These activities resulted in incredible contributions to community motivating themes, neighbourhood knowledge transfer, and infusion of community flavour into the Plan.

Technical knowledge transfer took place during a TRCA design charette in the Fall of 2023. A multidisciplinary group of technical staff from diverse fields (including ecology, hydrology, climate and energy, planning, etc.) exchanged information about the neighbourhood. The group provided further insights and excellent brainstormed ideas for innovative use of technology and best practices for creative solutions to plan for a revitalized sustainable neighbourhood in Ajax.

Several funding applications and funding proposals were made in 2023 to aid the action planning and implementation process. Which included Ajax SNAP receiving a private sector contribution from the Peter Gilgan Foundation to incentivize climate action. Most notably, an application was submitted to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, for a two-year action planning grant to complete the third and final phase of the planning process, create more detailed design projects for future implementation, and to conduct a neighbourhood wide resilience strategy.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

During phases 1 and 2 key engagement activities were carried out to increase project visibility, build an understanding of local interests and seek input to action plan directions. The engagement plan was designed to leverage planned partner activities, and was a collaborative effort led by both the Town of Ajax's Sustainability

Office and TRCA's Community Outreach and Education groups, along with the SNAP team. Collaboration with local partners in implementing sustainability initiatives was used to animate the community towards participation in the action planning process. Table 2 below summarizes the engagement results from the first year of Ajax SNAP.

Table 2. Ajax SNAP Year 1 Engagement Results

Type of Engagement	# of Events	# of People Engaged
Pop-Up Booths	23	1695
Home Visits	33	49
Sustainability Newsletter	8	126
Community Stakeholder 1-on-1's	9	9
Workshops/ Webinars	7	201
Community Plantings	4	59
Passive Engagement	2	97
TOTAL	86	2,236



Figure 11. SNAP Community Engagement Booth in Exeter Park, Ajax ON

Spotlight: Passive Engagement: Penny for Your Thoughts- Wishing Well

Goal: The objective of this activity was to engage a wide segment of the community, from various ages and backgrounds and encourage participants to envision big ideas and express their opinions regarding neighborhood issues, ideas for revitalization, and aspects of neighborhood pride. This aimed to pinpoint immediate concerns, inspiring themes, personal passions, and areas of interest.

Activity Description: The Penny for your Thoughts, Wishing Well Activity was placed at the Main Branch Library and at a pop-up booth during a children's event. The Wishing Well was placed in prominent locations with paper coins set nearby. There was an instruction sheet that asked community members to write a wish for their neighbourhood on a penny and throw it into the Well. It also included the following prompt questions to help community members generate ideas:

1. What would you love to see happen in this neighbourhood, what would you love to see built, what programs do you wish to see started?
2. What would you wish changed about your neighbourhood, what issue do you want to see solved?
3. What do you hope never changes about where you live? What do you wish to grow and celebrate about your community?

The community responded well to this innovative approach to passive engagement and willingly participated with 97 comments and ideas submitted.



Figure 12. (L) SNAP'S Passive Engagement Installation: Penny for Your Thoughts Wishing Well, Ajax Public Library, Ajax ON. (R) A child writes a wish for the Wishing Well, Pat Bayly Square, Ajax ON.

7.1 Community Outreach and Education

Alongside the SNAP planning process, TRCA's Community Outreach and Education team delivered community plantings and workshops to Ajax SNAP residents and received funding from the Town of Ajax in the form of Ajax Partnership Fund support, for the Ajax Youth Greening Project. The Ajax Youth Greening Project supported community plantings of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, and TRCA's Conservation Youth Corps which engaged Ajax's youth with environmental action (i.e. – invasive species removal, tree maintenance, and pollinator garden maintenance). This partnership allowed for the alignment of great on the ground action to animate the community toward participation in the Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Planning process and foster a sense of community ownership over environmental sustainability actions, as summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. TRCA's Community Outreach and Education Team's Event Results in the Ajax SNAP Study Area- Year One

Community Outreach Events					
	Community Activity	# Participants	Date	Location	Description
Ajax Youth Greening Project Programming	Community Plantings	24	27-May	Porte Rd Trail, Ajax	250 native trees and shrubs planted and mulched.
		20	3-Jun	Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden, Ajax	350 native wildflowers planted.
		13	17-Jun	St. Andrew's Pollinator Garden, Ajax	Pollinator garden maintenance, invasive species removal, and 100 native wildflowers infill planted.
	Conservation Youth Corps - Garden Maintenance	15	16-Jul	Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden	6 cubic metres of invasives removed and mulch added
		7	3-Aug	St Andrew's Park Pollinator Garden	9 cubic metres of invasives removed
Community Events	Residential Workshops	34	9-Sep	St. Andrew's Pollinator Garden, Ajax	Seed Collection and Exchange Workshop
	Habitat Creation (Commissioned by Ajax Library)	14	15-Nov	Ajax Public Library, Ajax	Winter Backyard Birdfeeder workshop with pinecone birdfeeder activity.
	Community-Needs	16	6-Dec	Ajax Public Library, Ajax	Winter Road Salts Educational Booth

7.2 Community Interests & Motivating Themes

As an outcome of community engagement in 2023, eight community motivating themes that represent the community's top of mind concerns, passions, and interests were documented. Organizing community interests and concerns into themes, facilitates a better understanding of the community perspective, and allows projects to be developed with a distinctly local look and feel, customized to the neighbourhood study area. It is an exercise in listening and spotlighting community trends to be able to integrate a clear community perspective into the recommendations of this High-Level Action Plan.

Data collected to create these themes came from both open-ended and pointed questions about what residents of this neighbourhood care about, what they would highlight about their community to a newcomer, or what they would warn them of, upon moving here. Feedback was solicited both passively and actively, and responses came from a wide variety of individuals of all ages, as mentioned in the section above on our 'Process to Date'.

The eight categories of motivating themes are described below, and summarized in Figure 13:



Figure 13. Community Motivating Themes

7.2.1 Housing Crisis

Housing stands out as a significant community concern in this neighborhood, covering issues such as rising homelessness, declining affordability, and the need for renovations and home maintenance, particularly due to the aging housing infrastructure. The presence of rooming houses and issues related to short-term rentals and their effects on the sense of community people from this neighbourhood are trying to foster, balanced with the real need for innovative house-sharing opportunities for seniors and under-housed individuals, is also a concern.

7.2.2 Community Safety

This community is changing and growing, with this change has come an increased concern for safety, with respect to a perceived increase in drug use, crime, violence, and the prevalence of drivers speeding on local roadways. Residents are calling for traffic calming measures as well as more social services and programs to be brought to the neighbourhood to address concerning social issues.

7.2.3 Environmental Health

Environmental health is of interest to the community. They have identified the issues of heat stress and related illness, air quality and respiratory conditions. As well as the impacts of biodiversity loss and habitat loss on vector borne diseases. The increase in health emergencies and the adverse effects of greenhouse gases (GHGs) on the environment, are currently impacting and will continue to negatively impact their health in the future. The community needs to be supported in developing the tools necessary to face these challenges.

7.2.4 Social Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction

This theme focuses on concerns about raising costs, especially food costs for families with young children, and the need to have better access to fresh local food and urban agriculture opportunities. Questions arise regarding the social isolation of seniors, and the high proportion of homeowners desiring to age in place. There is also a call for innovative solutions, given the issues with an underhoused population (in an over-housed area). Residents are looking for more opportunities to collaborate with local governments and organizations to strengthen the social fabric, reduce poverty, and provide support to vulnerable groups, including youth, newcomers, and individuals struggling with addiction or health issues.

7.2.5 Active Transportation and Right-of-Ways (ROWs)

The community is interested in seeing enhancements to active transportation experiences, and improvement to ROWs. This includes improvements to active transportation networks for non-motorized ways of transport including walking and biking. Improvements to road safety, the addition of shade along roadways, reducing the negative environmental impacts of road salts, the addition of right of way enhancements through plantings, stormwater controls and roadway beautification would all be welcomed changes to this community.

7.2.6 Climate Action

Climate action is a significant community passion. Residents want to do their part to protect the planet and combat climate change. They wish to learn with and from their neighbours about the natural environment, and

find ways to protect the flora and fauna that shares the land, air, and lake with them. They want to be prepared for extreme weather and climate emergencies. They want to learn more about climate mitigation and adaptation and explore ways to build neighbourhood resilience through collective action and civic collaboration. They want to share their concerns with all levels of government and lend their voices to spotlight global environmental impacts through actions taken in and by their own hometown.

7.2.7 Community Greening

Community greening, and educating on its importance, is also a keen interest to the community. They want sod removed and areas naturalized to meadows and wetlands, with no-mow zones introduced. They want greening to take place in non-traditional areas, like parking lots and rooftops and of course in parks and open spaces, along roadways, in the Greenbelt, along the waterfront, on private properties and even in backyards. The effort is not just to plant trees, (which are sometimes seen as a risk due to the potential for falling branches, in this community that still has overhead power lines) but to plant a variety of native species, flowers, grasses and shrubs, to enhance habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, purify the air, manage stormwater and have enhanced spaces for residents to access nature.

7.2.8 Community Cohesion

The final theme of interest identified by residents in this community is that of community cohesion. Residents love the small town feel in the area and want to hold onto the sentiment that people in this neighbourhood are friendly and welcoming. They are interested in developing and enhancing a culture of community belonging, building community connections with newcomers, and acknowledging the historical significance of the past, while reimagining the future. There is also interest in building community connections through celebrations and special events, local neighbourhood social media applications and platforms, and through opportunities for collective learning and civic participation.

These themes, when integrated with the project partner priorities, generate a framework of shared objectives, which will become the basis for future targets, recommended actions and solutions for the neighbourhood. They are presented together as the Sustainability Framework of Shared Objectives found in the following section.

8.0 SHARED HIGH-LEVEL ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES (EMERGING)

The project team developed a Sustainability Framework of Shared Objectives to ensure initiatives, targets, and proposed actions, equitably aligned with both partner and community interests. To design this framework, several more TRCA, Regional, and Municipal plans and strategies, which addressed similar priorities, or concerns brought up during community engagement (see Community Motivating Themes above), were consulted, beyond the five guiding documents (in bold below) which were reviewed at neighbourhood selection. The full list of plans and strategies reviewed include:

- **Town of Ajax: Ajax Climate: Risk and Resiliency Plan (2019)**

- **Towards Resilience: Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan (2016)**
- **Seizing the opportunity: The Clean Energy Economy in Durham: Durham Community Energy Plan (2018)**
- **Durham Region's Guide to Health Neighbourhoods (2022)**
- **Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan (2021)**
- Town of Ajax: A Journey to Sustainability: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2013)
- Town of Ajax Emergency Response Plan (2019)
- Town of Ajax Official Plan (2022)
- A Summary of Durham Region's Food Security Task Force (2021)
- Town of Ajax Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2021)
- Region of Durham: Master Housing Strategy (2020)

The project team classified the diverse shared objectives and priorities into four key themes to create the Sustainability Framework of Shared Objectives (see Figure 14). The goals and targets in this framework will form the basis of the monitoring framework moving forward.



Figure 14. Ajax SNAP Sustainability Framework of Shared Objectives

8.1 Climate Action (Mitigation & Adaptation)

Addressing climate change is a key priority for the community and partners. Both the Town of Ajax and Durham Region Councils have declared a climate emergency, reaffirming the commitment to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts wherever possible. The Town of Ajax outlined a vision statement for climate response between 2019 and 2029 in their Climate Risk and Resiliency Plan (Ajax, 2019), aiming for “a climate-ready Ajax that is Collaborative, Leading, Engaging, Action-oriented, and Resilient”. Moreover, Durham Region outlines their objective to “enhance natural capital and build climate resilience in the natural environment” in their Community Climate Adaption Plan (Durham Region, 2016). In terms of climate mitigation, Durham’s Community Energy Plan (Durham Region, 2019) puts forward a framework of ‘reduce, improve and switch’ to help frame actions toward a low carbon scenario. The Town of Ajax’s Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (Ajax, 2013) calls for a reduction in the amount of electricity and gas that residents use in their homes.

Residents relate climate change to climate emergencies, and they recognize that a collaborative response builds resilience. One resident put it this way: “Our community is highly engaged with one another. During ice storms, neighbours help clear snow, during windstorms neighbours help neighbours” (SNAP Community Forum, 2023).

The theme of Climate Action encompasses both mitigation and adaptation strategies. Retrofits and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions can be implemented at the property-level, where homeowners can be educated and prepared to address climate impacts at home (i.e. through identification of resources and rebates, key retrofits, low-impact development, etc.), or through Community Energy Solutions. Conversely, flood risk, heat stress, and power outages can be assessed across the community, with goals and targets designed across a larger spatial scale (e.g. tree planting in public spaces, flood-risk mapping, etc.). Emergency preparedness can be addressed at both the property level and across the community and can tap into strong community ties to build resilience.

8.2 Social Resilience, Health & Well-being

The theme of social resilience and community health and well-being encompasses a variety of resident and partner interests. Durham Region’s Guide to Health Neighbourhoods (Durham Region, 2022) recognizes the need for the community to “come together to build stronger relationships with all sectors ... to create a synergy in efforts that will address the root causes of health inequities ... and [work with residents to] determine the next steps and create innovative solutions”. Durham Region recommends more engagement, relationship-building, and collaboration to build healthier neighbourhoods by establishing resident champions for neighbourhood health, understanding the perspectives of residents, advocating for adequate income for residents, mitigating the impact of living in low income or poverty, and measuring and evaluating progress throughout the process (Durham Region, 2022).

Shared interests among the parties to address this theme include access to local food through the initiation of community gardens and farmers markets, increasing social services in the neighbourhood, and addressing housing needs. The community would also like to address community safety and establish greater support for vulnerable populations. The community and partners would like to promote opportunities for active living while

addressing, heat stress and air quality concerns and foster greater community connections and collaboration to help keep everyone healthy and thriving.

8.3 Sense of Place & Belonging

Creating an inclusive sense of place and belonging is a third theme among the Shared Objectives. The community and partners want to foster increased connections to the neighbourhood, in a fresh and positive way. For example, resident feedback heard during the Ajax SNAP Community Forum expressed “This is a changing place with interesting history, but we have to do more research, and learn more about the community beyond wartime history”. Residents were interested in learning about indigenous and black history in the neighbourhood as well as the prominent Quaker community. The Town of Ajax Official Plan (Ajax, 2022) also encourages fostering a strong sense of identity, community, and pride by strategically improving, enhancing, and beautifying public open spaces/parks and the built environment, through neighbourhood greening.

Some topics of interest within this theme expand on enhancing the aesthetic experience, for instance, community beautification is seen as removing manicured lawns in favour of naturalized native plantings; and improved pedestrian experience includes restricting vehicular traffic in favour of active transportation, bike, and e-scooter sharing and improved transit.

Improving equitable access to open spaces, as well as establishing spaces for more celebrations, educational and art exhibits, and special events within the neighbourhood, can be paired with improvements to knowledge sharing about the neighbourhood’s historical heritage, while confirming a sense of belonging for new residents.

8.4 Natural Systems Resilience

The Shared Objective of natural systems resilience directly targets improvements to the health of ecosystems and biodiversity within the neighbourhood and can support action to address other Shared Objectives. The Town of Ajax’s Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (Ajax, 2013) recognizes the co-benefits that result from building resilience of natural systems. It highlights the importance of improving the health and diversity of ecosystems and the urban forest, maintaining sufficient accessible greenspace for the health and well-being of residents, and fostering appreciation of the natural environment. Both residents and project partners recognize the inter-relation between the planet’s health and human health.

Through consultation with the community and published reports, especially TRCA’s Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan completed in 2021, several interests were identified and grouped into this objective. This included protecting and enhancing natural habitat, biodiversity, the urban forest, natural heritage systems, as well as watershed, shoreline, and lake health, and promoting sustainable stormwater and groundwater management. Improving connections to nature and nature-based educational opportunities are also of importance within the neighbourhood. One long-standing Ajax resident explained it as the desire to “go back to the good old days in terms of: less traffic, more green areas, wider shoreline and safer walking paths”.

9.0 AJAX SNAP HIGH-LEVEL ACTION PLAN

This High-Level Action Plan brings together technical analysis with results from community engagement. It also supports existing plans and strategies. It aims to recommend relevant actions for neighbourhood sustainability and climate resilience, quick win projects and identify sustainability objectives, goals, and guiding principles for future projects. A graphic map of the Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Plan can be seen in Figure 15 below.

9.1 High-Level Action Plan Implementation Action Areas

The Action Areas present in SNAP's Sustainable Neighbourhood Action plans are developed through merging four key components:

- The neighbourhood technical priorities
- The neighbourhood retrofit needs and opportunities discovered during stakeholder and community engagement
- The Shared Objectives set out in the Sustainability Framework
- The overall neighbourhood vision which captures the flavour of the neighbourhood

The Ajax SNAP Action Areas listed below aim to combine these four essential elements into distinctive implementation areas. These areas are enriched with relevant project opportunities and recommendations, providing a well-rounded balance of top-down and bottom-up priorities. This approach ensures that all partners can identify their objectives easily and see how they can be achieved within the Plan.

AJAX SNAP ACTION PLAN

A Growing Community Rich in History with a Love for People and the Planet



Figure 15. Ajax SNAP Action Plan Map

9.1.1 Action Area 1: Sustainable Connections to Nature

This community is already familiar with living alongside nature. This neighbourhood has the desire to increase biodiversity, enhance local habitat, remove invasive species, and become experts in environmental stewardship on both private and public lands. They want more and easier access to park lands and the waterfront, well-thought-out improvements to outdoor spaces, and increased food production, and greening on underutilized spaces. Refer to Table 4 for all recommendations related to Action Area 1: Sustainable Connections to Nature.



Figure 16. Bee Hotel and Pollinator Plants, St Andrews Park, Ajax ON

Table 4. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 1: Sustainable Connections to Nature

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
Improve access to, and enjoyment of, parks, open spaces, the greenbelt and the waterfront	
1.1	Improving active transportation options and the pedestrian experience to get to these areas, with more shade, cleared trails, benches, bike lanes, and e-scooter availability.
1.2	Providing shuttle bus services to bring residents from the neighbourhood to the waterfront, other greenspaces and recreational areas outside of the neighbourhood, especially during peak use times of the year.
1.3	Improving wayfinding through increased signage, dedicated labeled easy-to-follow pathways, and through the development of wayfinding apps, interactive maps, and QR codes.
1.4	Sharing a variety of historical perspectives (Indigenous & Black) through storytelling, interactive experiences, plaques, art features and educational installations in these areas.
1.5	Streamlining parking and permitting requirements and reducing restrictions for local residents to access local parks and green spaces.
1.6	Enhancing community amenities in parks and open spaces including, upgrading these facilities to include more seating and lighting, playground and workout equipment, off-leash areas, splash pads, water fountains, shade structures, gathering spaces and community vegetable gardens.
1.7	Providing a variety of year-round community events and activities including art exhibits, celebrations, movie screenings, and nature-themed workshops in these areas, making them multifunctional culturally rich spaces.
Increase the quality and quantity of the natural environment	
1.8	Identifying the plantable spaces within the SNAP neighbourhood through alignment with the Town of Ajax's 5-year Naturalization and Restoration Plan to be completed in 2024. As well as exploration of the Natural Heritage System (Potential Natural Cover Areas) specific to within the SNAP boundaries through a Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-led Green Infrastructure Siting Plan considering which spaces would be best for tree and shrub planting, meadow and wetland restoration, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, or other Green Infrastructure (GI).
1.9	Identifying plant species that will thrive in the varying conditions of the Ajax SNAP neighbourhood through a Neighbourhood Greening Design and Implementation Plan , resulting in planting the right species for the right location, eg. salt-tolerant plants along roadways, water-loving plants in wet and low-lying areas, drought resistant plants in hot spots etc.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
1.10	Improving biodiversity by planting native species, planting pollinator-friendly species, creating habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife by converting lawns into restored naturalized areas.
1.11	Providing opportunities for community stewardship activities and citizen science projects, through community plantings, community invasive species removal activities, the use of citizen reporting apps such as Merlin App for migratory bird spotting, iNaturalist for invasive identification, iTree to decrease the knowledge gap of tree species present in urban settings, outside of the natural heritage system.
1.12	Creating a Tree Canopy Conservation Rebate program , which could alleviate the financial burden for homeowners to maintain mature trees on their private properties. This approach could be pilot tested in the SNAP neighbourhood, and potentially be expanded more broadly through the Durham Greener Homes Program, or through partners like LEAF.
Strengthen Land to Lake connections	
1.13	Identifying opportunities to align neighborhood action and educational activities with the Ajax Waterfront Management Plan .
1.14	Undertaking a Low Impact Development (LID) feasibility and opportunity assessment for stormwater management, considering the application of TRCA's Treatment Train Tool to the neighbourhood.
1.15	Reviewing the Town of Ajax Stormwater Retrofit Master Plan and consider the need to update or expand it.
1.16	Incorporating watershed knowledge and education into community events , workshops, signage, and engagement activities.

Key Emerging Projects and Initiatives:

Three key implementation initiatives have emerged in this Action Area during year one of the Ajax SNAP action planning process.

Community-Led Blooming Boulevard Gardens

This was implemented as part of a quick start project - the Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden - which was a partnership between TRCA's SNAP team and the Town of Ajax's Adopt-A-Garden program. This project was the first of its kind, converting a grassy island of a residential cul-de-sac, into a beautiful pollinator garden with over 350 native plants installed. A group of 5 local residents have agreed to care for and maintain the garden in a unique partnership with the Town, aimed to allow residents to participate and take ownership of community

greening and climate action. The feasibility of scaling the project both within the SNAP neighbourhood and replicating it across the Town of Ajax is being explored by TRCA and the Town's Sustainability office.



Figure 17. (L) Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden, (R) Aldonschool Court Pollinator Garden Leader and local Ajax Resident Kyla Paonessa wins the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee (DECAC)'s Durham Environmental Achievement Award in 2023.

Exeter Park Revitalization Project

The Town of Ajax's planned revitalization of Exeter Park (which is located within the SNAP boundary) provides a great opportunity to apply SNAP's community engagement feedback to enhance the park's revitalization, through a partnership with the Town's Parks Department and the SNAP team. The addition of a pollinator garden, sustainable stormwater management feature and educational signage throughout the park will help link the park retrofit to sustainability actions identified through the Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Plan. Opportunities to have the SNAP program partner on future park revitalization projects could bring efficiencies in community engagement and public consultation, as well as enhance the environmental sustainability of Park retrofit projects in the future.

Tree Canopy Conservation/Maintenance Rebate

The idea for this initiative was identified through the delivery of the South Ajax SNAP Home Retrofit Program. The community has expressed deep concern over the changing climate and the impact of extreme weather on large trees on their properties. The fear of branches breaking and falling on assets and power lines and increasing the risk of power outages, which are already frequent in the neighbourhood, is top of mind.

A recommendation is to investigate the cause, risk and frequency of these power outages in the SNAP area, and take steps to address them, through the engagement of Elexicon and relevant Town of Ajax departments.

There is a sentiment among neighbours that large trees are a risk and a burden, and that it is easier to cut down mature trees than to maintain them. Work needs to be done to foster an understanding of the many beneficial

ecological services large trees provide to the neighbourhood and find creative solutions to support residents in their concerns.

There is currently a tree planting rebate in place to incentivize planting new trees on private property, but there is a gap in programming for the conservation/maintenance of the existing mature tree canopy on private property. The recommendation is to create a Tree Canopy Conservation Rebate program which could fill a service gap in this neighbourhood to relieve the burden of large limb removal, help properly care for already damaged trees, or even provide reimbursement for treatment/removal of pest and disease (Black naught, Emerald Ash Borer, Spongy Moth) in trees before it spreads. If such a program is developed it could be piloted in the SNAP neighbourhood for testing and refinement before being rolled out across the Town and Region. Due to the stormwater benefits large trees provide, there may be potential for alignment with the new stormwater levy fund to support the initiative, along with Tree Compensation Fund resources.

Spotlight: Benefits of Urban Forest Enhancement and Maintenance in the Ajax SNAP

Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan management recommendations 1.1.7 & 3.3.2 call for Urban Forestry projects within the most developed areas of the watershed, the SNAP neighborhood is one of them. The CCWP also lists this neighbourhood as a priority for both tree planting and tree conservation. The town of Ajax Official Plan calls for the implementation of measures to protect, enhance, and expand the tree canopy, including preserving the existing tree canopy. The Integrated Community Sustainability Plan calls for the development of awareness programs that both encourage tree planting and tree care on private property to increase the total amount of urban forest canopy in Ajax.

This neighbourhood's proximity to Highway 401 and indications from Durham Health that this area has elevated respiratory illness (asthma), and above average emergency room visits for respiratory illness, further supports the fact that this neighbourhood will benefit from the air purifying services trees provide.

Large trees not only purify the air but also provide shade, helping to reduce the heat island effect. Additionally, within one year, a mature tree (approximately 30 years old) can remove greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those produced by a week's worth of gas burned by a passenger vehicle. Moreover, mature trees retain 317 liters of water in their root systems, compared to only 54 liters retained by a young sapling. This ability of mature trees to retain water aids in mitigating stormwater issues, such as flooding, in the neighborhood.

The Environics Report for this neighbourhood, stated that while approximately 15% of residential properties had new trees planted in the past 5 years, 18% had trees on their property cut down or removed in the same time period (Environics, 2022). The need for a concerted effort to protect mature trees in this neighbourhood is evident.

9.2.2 Action Area 2: Sustainable Physical Connections

Sustainable Physical Connections deals with how people move around the community via roads, trails, and transit. This aspiring '15 min neighbourhood' has many amenities all within a 2.5km radius, however, it is not always easy to access them. The lack of tree canopy and shade along roadways makes summer walking unbearable due to heat. Flooding along roadways during rainstorms, and other road safety and transit issues are all top-of-mind concerns for residents. They call for enhanced connections, safer streets and crossings, and opportunities for active transportation along roadways, through interconnected green spaces and trail systems, throughout the neighbourhood. Refer to

Table 5 for all emerging recommendations related to Action Area 2: Sustainable Physical Connections.



Figure 18. Boulevard Garden Ajax SNAP, Ajax ON

Table 5. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 2: Sustainable Physical Connections

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
Green the Road Right of Way	
2.1	Exploring opportunities to implement green streets in the neighbourhood , ideally through synergies with road reconstruction capital projects.
2.2	Beautifying road right of ways with pollinator plants, roadside planter baskets, native species plantings, litter pickups, and invasive species removal initiatives; and by expanding implementation of community-led Blooming Boulevard Gardens, through the Town of Ajax's Adopt-A-Garden Program.
2.3	Exploring feasibility of tree trenches and other LID practices along roadways , sidewalks and medians to manage stormwater sustainably.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
2.4	Exploring alternative solutions to reduce the impact of road salts and providing road salt education and awareness for residents.
Improve walkability, bike-ability and transit, and promote active transportation	
2.5	Conducting a focus group with residents on neighbourhood walkability , to identify areas where pedestrian experience could be improved.
2.6	Adding interconnected bike lanes with associated signage (for wayfinding and warning drivers of bike lanes starting or ending) and apps with maps describing the best biking and walking routes throughout the neighbourhood.
2.7	Improving transit connections through express buses to regional and GO transit stations and other significant locations both within and outside of the neighbourhood, like community centers, shopping centers and hospitals.
2.8	Changing car-dependent culture, by closing off select streets to car traffic on weekends or for special events and hosting open-air artisan and farmers markets, block parties, festivals and events for foot traffic only and supported by shuttle bus services.
2.9	Improving education and awareness of public transit including how to understand bus routes & payment methods, using the library to teach residents the best ways to get around Town by active transportation or transit.
2.10	Installing more shaded seating areas, benches and rest stops along roadways for a better pedestrian experience, especially for residents coming from apartment towers or senior's buildings, to and from grocery stores.
2.11	Improving traffic signals in favour of pedestrians.
2.12	Promoting e-scooters and e-bikes.
2.13	Installing improvements along roadways such as art, educational signage, and special story walks throughout the neighbourhood, especially along routes children use to walk to school, routes that go through historic areas, and roads and trails that go down to the Lake.
Upgrade the roadway and right-of-way infrastructure for climate resilience, functionality, and enjoyment	
2.14	Exploring the potential to bury electrical lines in the neighbourhood, in alignment with road work and redevelopment projects . This could be explored further as part of a Neighbourhood Resilience Strategy, considering the issue of proximity to large trees and the risk of falling limbs.
2.15	Improving north-south connections in the neighbourhood .
2.16	Adding traffic calming elements throughout the neighbourhood.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
2.17	Updating storm drains and catch basins to reduce roadway flooding .
2.18	Incorporating sustainability and safety features into bus stop shelters : green roofs, solar panels, bird safety dot matrixes, heating, seating, lighting, and emergency alert call buttons.

Key Emerging Projects and Initiatives:

Several key roadways (some municipal and some regional) were highlighted as having work coming up by the Town or Region in the next 5 years. These projects offer great opportunities for synergies to incorporate green street elements. There are also roads spotlighted by the community as needing attention:

- Harwood Avenue
- Dryer Drive East
- Pickering Beach Road
- Kinds Crescent
- Achilles Road
- Rossevelt Avenue
- Admiral Road
- Bayly Street East
- Burcher Road

More work is needed to understand which exact locations require roadway, and pedestrian experience improvements in this neighbourhood. Residents are calling for a more meaningful and authentic public engagement process. Developing a walkable downtown Ajax could be the perfect issue for which to embrace a more innovative and creative way to engage with the community, focused on roads and active transportation improvements and incorporate local knowledge into the revitalization and planning process. Analyzing if there is an overlap between roadways slotted for improvements in the near future, with the roadways residents identified above as needing improvements would be the ideal point to start this work.



Figure 19. Intersection of Harwood Avenue and Bayley Street E in Ajax, ON

9.2.3 Action Area 3: Sustainable Community Connections

This community has a strong desire to interact, build meaningful connections, learn and grow together. They desire to collectively do what is right for the planet, have a united response to emergencies, and create a shared sense of place where all community members have equitable access to all the benefits of this great neighbourhood. Whether it's seniors living alone, newcomers, people facing housing insecurity, or families who want a better future for their children and youth, this community wants to rally into action alongside municipal and regional allies to create positive change. Refer to Table 6 for all emerging recommendations for Action Area 3: Sustainable Community Connections.



Figure 20. Community Seed Saving Workshop, featuring local speaker, St Andrews Park (Ajax, ON)

Table 6. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 3: Sustainable Community Connections

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
Foster a network of interconnected residents for emergency preparedness and climate action	
3.1	Developing a neighbourhood wide Resilience Strategy to understand key climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation opportunities.
3.2	Developing a Neighbourhood Climate Ambassador program to train and equip resident leaders to promote climate action.
3.3	Encouraging the use of hyper-local social media apps that promote neighbour to neighbour interaction , such as South Ajax Facebook Group, and Nextdoor App.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
3.4	Investing in nature-based education and awareness programs for the neighbourhood including the continuation of TRCA's Conservation Youth Corps program.
Promote a welcoming, engaging tight-knit culture amongst both longstanding residents and newcomers to the area	
3.5	Acknowledging the unique shared history of Ajax while creating a fresh sense of place , through local art and commemorative plaques, themed walks, or neighbourhood tours.
3.6	Creating a new neighbour's welcome package highlighting interesting/important info about the neighbourhood, calendar of community events etc. distributed through the library or posted on the Town's website.
Plan Innovative celebrations, events, festivals, and activities for the community	
3.7	Surveying residents on what new events they would love to see the Town host, or reviving well-loved events recently disrupted by the Covid-19 Pandemic, such as Ajax Home Week
3.8	Offering local Community Event Grants where groups could apply to fund the planning and delivery of community activities.
Encourage participatory civic action	
3.9	Developing a community engagement strategy that amplifies community voices, and tells people's stories, in Town newsletters, local blogs, and community forums.
3.10	Creating multidisciplinary, local community planning committees , boards or advisory tables that have a voice in project shaping and decision-making, considering the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Planning Tables and Community Coordination Plan Clusters as a model.
3.11	Reimagining traditional public consultation processes to incorporate deeper community engagement in idea generation phases, to foster more community collaboration, and therefore community input and support for projects.

Key Emerging Projects and Initiatives:

The community engagement, education and stewardship activities delivered during the planning process were designed to encourage community connections and to start fostering the development of future community leaders, who will play a critical role in the success of this action area. In addition, the following initiatives could be moved forward in the short term:

Neighbourhood Walks and Bus Tours

The Town of Ajax has seen great success in bringing people together to explore its unique history through the delivery of an annual Jane's Walk through the historic streets of this neighbourhood, with a focus on the local Bomb Girls narrative. Expanding on that walk to create a series of neighbourhood exploratory walks or tours to highlight for example the best restaurants of Ajax, ecologically significant sites, best walking trails, or simply favourite local spots. This could be a great way to build community and create a refreshing sense of belonging for residents, old and new. Submissions for new topics or locations could be voted on every so often by the public.

Resident Network for Neighbourhood Action

Creating a resident network that acknowledges the challenges faced by those in the neighborhood and empowers them to devise their own solutions is needed. For instance, residents commute to other parts of the GTA for work, work from home, or relocate from Toronto without owning or desiring a personal vehicle. Some require addiction support, while others are seniors aging in place. Concerns range from air quality and extreme heat to food access and how to complete green home retrofits. These issues present opportunities for residents to take ownership of their daily challenges and collaborate through discussions and information sharing to develop effective solutions, foster efficiency and build community resilience. Leveraging the deep community engagement of SNAP action planning and resilience work can synergize with the establishment of a resident action network.

9.2.4 Action Area 4: Sustainable Buildings

This community, the first and oldest in Ajax, retains some of its original infrastructure. Despite newer developments over the years, significant retrofits are required to modernize its building stock. Sustainable upgrades, such as climate-resilient structures with low carbon emissions and a blend of indoor and outdoor sustainability features, are necessary. Refer to Table 7 for all emerging recommendations for Action Area 4: Sustainable Buildings.



Figure 21. Construction seen behind Pat Bayly Square (Ajax, ON)

Table 7. Emerging recommendations for Action Area 4: Sustainable Buildings

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
Advance Climate Goals in Single Family Homes	
4.1	Continuing the promotion of the Durham Greener Homes Program through the delivery of the South Ajax Home Retrofit Program for 4 more years, documenting lessons learned on homeowners’ perceptions and needs for additional incentives and supports that could inform the next generation of the program.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
4.2	Partnering with industry professionals on education and awareness efforts for the public to learn about GHG-reducing actions , especially promoting the options of dual fuel and fuel switching, adoption of Heat Pump technology, electric vehicles and incentive/rebate programs available.
4.3	Fostering resident-led activities, such as Do it Yourself Parties , to promote GHG reduction and climate resilience actions among neighbours.
4.4	Offering innovative community incentives, challenges, competitions and events to boost both community spirit and accelerate climate action, such as providing information and rebates for backup power generators, solar pool heaters, flood prevention and eco-landscaping in the neighbourhood.
Advance Sustainable Action on Multi Unit Residential Buildings (MURBs) and Industrial Commercial Institutional (ICI) sector	
4.5	Promoting TRCA's Corporate Flood and Heat Risk Management Program , to engage ICI/MURB sectors with education and empowerment to take action and build climate resilience. The program will promote the uptake of Green Infrastructure (GI) and Low Impact Development (LID) practices on these properties. Solutions are geared towards best practices in stormwater management, flood resilience, and heat risk adaptation. The program could potentially be customized to the community's interests and neighbourhood needs.
4.6	Developing a program that identifies incentives, supports and resources to help MURB owners in the neighbourhood to reduce their GHG and become more resilient to climate change , and that also incorporates tenant engagement, capacity building and behaviour change (this initiative could be coordinated with a MURB program currently under development by TRCA across its jurisdiction).
4.7	Promoting TRCA's Partners in Project Green's existing supports for businesses and institutional properties (including supports related to energy, circular economy and water).
4.8	Aligning with Durham Region's new "Durham Greener Buildings" program which launched in early 2024. Ajax SNAP could help increase uptake and awareness on this program, which targets building owners, property managers, and tenants of Commercial, MURB, municipality, university, schools and hospitals, and hospitality and recreational buildings. Durham Greener Buildings is a benchmarking and disclosure program delivered by Windfall Ecology Centre to support building owners participating in the provincial Energy and Water Reporting Benchmarking (EWRB) program by helping them to measure, report and act on efficiency and conservation opportunities.
4.9	Exploring the feasibility of reusing waste heat from the industrial sector and hospitals for community energy needs. One example of an innovative idea that came up during technical staff engagement was to power self-melting sidewalks to reduce salt use.

Unique Identifier	Recommendation
4.10	Exploring opportunities for balcony gardens, rooftop gardens and for rainwater harvesting, or collecting sump-pump water from MURBs and ICI's , for use in watering local green infrastructure.
Explore District/ Community Energy solutions in the neighbourhood	
4.11	Analyzing potential renewable energy and waste energy sources and demand within the neighbourhood, as well as planned road and open space reconstruction projects that could offer synergies with the implementation of district energy underground infrastructure.
4.12	Exploring opportunities related with the local steam plant for district energy endeavours .
4.13	Exploring the feasibility of district energy related to the local aquifers .
4.14	Exploring opportunities for geothermal heating or heating with ground source heat pumps .
4.15	Identifying opportunities related to new development or redevelopment projects , including opportunities to upgrade recreational facilities and community centers.

Key Emerging Projects and Initiatives:

Three important projects are currently underway in this action area, but the potential for many other projects is evident. Ajax SNAP could act as a powerful living lab that tests the adoption of new technology, while piloting approaches that become precedents in other neighbourhoods or cities across this Region by pushing the envelope on sustainable building practices.

Implementation of the South Ajax Home Retrofit Program

In 2023 the South Ajax Home Retrofit Program was offered by the Town of Ajax in partnership with Durham Region and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority through the Sustainable Neighborhood Action Program. This initiative was free for residents in the Ajax SNAP boundaries living in detached or semi-detached houses. Participants had the opportunity to explore diverse approaches to saving money and aiding environmental conservation by cutting down on home energy and water usage, while improving home comfort, incorporating eco-friendly behaviours and landscaping practices.

Objectives:

- Promote the Durham Greener Homes Program
- Offer additional incentives, education and supports to deepen sustainability action across diverse fields, beyond energy
- Engage homeowners towards the development of the overall Ajax SNAP High-Level Action Plan

Results Summary:

- 162 surveys completed
- 33 Home Visits completed
- 32 Rain barrels distributed
- 25 events, pop-up booths, or workshops conducted
- 1307 residents engaged in total
- 18 implementation partner relationships developed or managed

Continuing this program for at least 5 years will promote sustainable actions both inside and outside homes, strengthen local partnerships, empower residents, and create a culture of eco-action in the Ajax SNAP area and beyond.

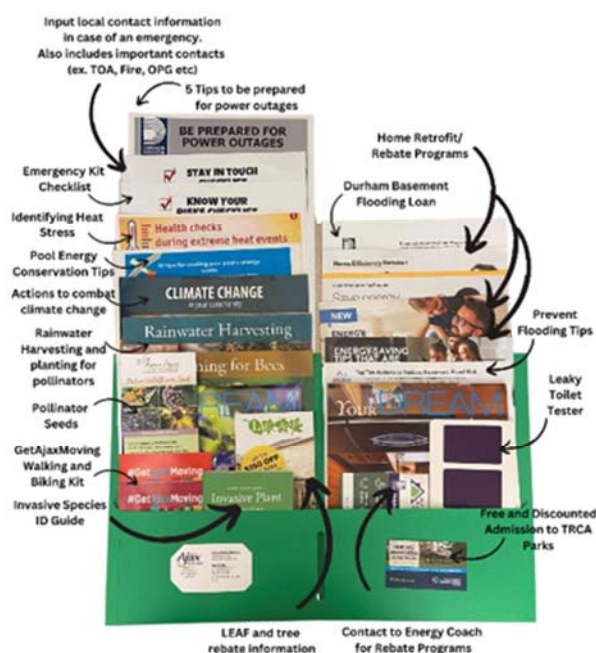


Figure 22. (L) Ajax Sustainability Assistants delivering a Retrofit Program consultation (Ajax, ON), (R) South Ajax Home Retrofit Program's Home Visit Folder

Renovation of the Durham Region Senior Building located at 655 Harwood Ave

In support of Durham corporate energy and resilience strategies, Durham Region Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC) is implementing deep energy retrofits at 655 Harwood Ave (Harwood Manor), a 4 storey, 129-unit seniors building located in the Ajax SNAP. DRLHC will be developing an updated energy model and energy audit as part of pre-retrofit planning and targeting a 48% energy reduction and 54% GHG reduction through prefabricated insulated planning, and fuel switching to heat pumps for building heating and cooling. Contract procurement and retrofit work are anticipated to begin mid-year 2024. In future there may be opportunities to leverage the broader SNAP neighbourhood effort to identify and explore complementary property sustainability and capacity building efforts that engage tenants and building management.

Increased promotion of Heat Pump technology through partnerships, information sharing, and workshops

In 2023 heat pumps became an important point of interest among homeowners and tenants of single-family homes in the neighbourhood. Residents have many questions and are willing to learn about this technology. The Town of Ajax, in conjunction with TRCA’s SNAP & Sustainable Technology Evaluation Program (STEP) teams conducted a Heat Pump Workshop at the local library with around 35 residents in attendance. Our follow-up activities after the workshop confirmed that six attendees received consultations from industry professionals, regarding installing heat pump units in their homes. With resident interest aligning with available incentives, now is an opportune moment to encourage heat pump adoption in Ajax SNAP, indicating sustained efforts would maximize uptake.

10.0 EMERGING FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING SUCCESS

The Ajax SNAP has been designed to address core environmental and socio-economic priorities. A framework for measuring success is of vital importance. Long-term neighbourhood-scale targets, which can be observed over time are outlined in Table 5 below as Target Outcomes. These are based on the Sustainability Framework’s shared objectives. Table 6 below that, further outlines how shorter-term progress will be tracked based on Output Indicators that move the yardstick on achieving progress through direct actions, that support the High-Level Action Plan’s Action Areas and in turn overall Sustainability themes. While only one key plan or policy is being highlighted under each sustainability sub-category in Table 8 below, numerous regional, municipal, and TRCA plans and strategies support these themes. Table 9 illustrates a selection of example measurable output indicators for each of the action areas, as well as a summary of the sustainability themes they collectively support.

Table 8. Long term Target Outcomes

Sustainability Theme	Sustainability Sub-Category	Key outcome	Plan/ Policy/ Program it will support
Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)	Retrofits and GHG Reductions	Improved energy system, through increased retrofits of existing buildings, and reduction of GHG emissions by 80% below 2007 levels by 2050	Durham Community Energy Plan
	Flood Risks	Reduced Flood Risk in the neighbourhood through implementation of green infrastructure and retrofits to the built environment	Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan
	Heat Stress	Reduced heat risk in the neighbourhood by	Keeping our Cool – Managing Urban Heat

Sustainability Theme	Sustainability Sub-Category	Key outcome	Plan/ Policy/ Program it will support
Social Resilience, Health and Well-being		reducing average ambient summer temperatures	Islands in Durham Region
	Power Outages	Improved adaptive capacity for the Town and local residents' preparedness for, and recovery from power failures	Ajax Climate Risk and Resiliency Plan
	Emergency Preparedness	Increased education and awareness programs on emergency preparedness delivered to the community	Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan
	Local Food	Increased access to food that is affordable, nutritious and locally or regionally produced	Town of Ajax Integrated Community Sustainability Plan
	Access to Services	Improved social wellbeing through facilitating equality, inclusiveness, and accessibility to support people through all stages of their lives	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan- Target 11
	Community Safety	Improved sense of community, including that Ajax is a safe and inclusive place for everyone	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan- Target 12
	Support for vulnerable Populations	Improve emergency planning for weather extremes and in particular for vulnerable populations	Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan
	Community Connections and Collaboration	Improved sociable environment for community members that is welcoming and accepting of new members to the community	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan- Target 12
	Housing	Strengthened housing sector through strategic regeneration and redevelopment	Region of Durham Master Housing Strategy

Sustainability Theme	Sustainability Sub-Category	Key outcome	Plan/ Policy/ Program it will support
	Active Living	Increased modal share of trips through improvement to active transportation and transit opportunities	Town of Ajax Official Plan
	Air Quality	Increased awareness and education of the public about negative health effects and environmental costs of activities that generate air pollution	Town of Ajax Official Plan
	Celebrations and Special Events	Improved organization, promotion, and continued success of community events, festivals, and celebrations	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan-Target 8
Sense of Place and Belonging	Historical Heritage	Increased promotion and celebration of the history, cultural and natural heritage of the Ajax community	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan-Target 8
	Equitable Access to Open Spaces	Supported and improved open spaces and parks through facilities that are integrated, sustainable, accessible and inclusive	Town of Ajax Official Plan
	Pedestrian Experience	Increased network of streets that support pedestrian comfort facilitating multiple pedestrian and vehicular options and amenity	Town of Ajax Official Plan
	Community Beautification	Increased civic beautification initiatives among corporate citizens; and which promote preservation of natural, archaeological, or cultural resources to showcase Ajax's rich heritage	Town of Ajax Official Plan
Natural Systems Resilience	Habitat and Biodiversity	Increased number and area for species and	TRCA'S Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan

Sustainability Theme	Sustainability Sub-Category	Key outcome	Plan/ Policy/ Program it will support
		vegetation communities of concern	
	Sustainable Stormwater and Groundwater Management	Protected groundwater and surface water sources	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan- Target 15
	Urban Forest	Increase the urban forest cover within the developed portion of the watershed to improve social and environmental well-being	TRCA'S Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan
	Natural Heritage System	Protected, restored and expanded Natural heritage systems across the SNAP, to support biodiversity and improve their overall resiliency to climate change impacts	Ajax Climate Risk and Resiliency Plan
	Nature Based Learning	Improved appreciation and respect for the natural environment, due to providing ongoing opportunities to learn about it	TRCA'S Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan
	Contact with Nature	Maintain sufficient and accessible green space to support the health and wellbeing of people	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan- Target 10
	Watershed and Lake Health	Improved quality of the water entering creeks and Lake Ontario from Regional sanitary services, the municipality's stormwater system, and surface runoff to meet and potentially exceed the applicable water quality standards	Town of Ajax Official Plan

Table 9. Short Term Output Indicators

Action Area	Example Output Indicators	Sustainability theme Addressed
Sustainable Connections to Nature	# of trees and pollinators planted and LID implemented	Natural Systems Resilience
	# of urban agriculture projects	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
	# of nature-based programs and educational signs implemented	Natural Systems Resilience
	# of users satisfied	Sense of Place and Belonging
Sustainable Physical Connections	# trails improved	Natural Systems Resilience
	# of community wayfinding signage installed	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
	% of residents that travel by active transportation or transit	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
	# of trees and plants planted on ROW	Natural Systems Resilience
Sustainable Community Connections	# of people reached with climate and personal preparedness communications	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
	# residents participating in neighbourhood climate action	Natural Systems Resilience
	# of new community leaders trained or supported	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
	# of programs to improve community connections	Sense of Place and Belonging
	% of residents that feel safe	Social Resilience, Health and Well-being
Sustainable Buildings	# of homes and buildings retrofitted	Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)

Action Area	Example Output Indicators	Sustainability theme Addressed
	# of outdoor and indoor retrofit actions implemented	Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)
	# of residents or tenants engaged in eco-landscaping	Natural Systems Resilience
	Tonnes of GHG reduced	Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)
	# of flood risk prevention measures implemented	Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)
	# of buildings with facilities that are equipped with backup power	Climate Action (Mitigation and Adaptation)

As detailed action planning continues, and more signature projects take shape, a more detailed monitoring framework will be developed to align with both the shared objectives and future projects and programs of Ajax SNAP.

11.0 OVERALL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

After analysing all engagement feedback from the community, the SNAP team put forward 3 principles to help guide future work in this neighbourhood. Initiatives developed for this community should:

- Endeavour to enhance both climate and social resilience.
- Always provide opportunities for meaningful civic collaboration and community interaction
- Acknowledge the neighbourhoods past historical relevance, while creating a fresh sense of place



Figure 23. SNAP Guiding Design Principles

12.0 NEXT STEPS

The first year of the Ajax SNAP project has been highly successful. We designed and implemented the South Ajax Home Retrofit Program, conducted focus groups, forums, and design charrettes with partners and stakeholders to gather valuable feedback for this High-Level Action Plan. Additionally, we raised awareness of sustainability issues through events, booths, and workshops and initiated quick-start projects that led to tangible community transformation. Moving forward, we anticipate even greater success through continued application of the SNAP approach.

In year two, key next steps include:

- Recruit and reconfirm representatives for a multidisciplinary Project Management Team
- Develop an engagement strategy to ensure this High-Level Action Plan is validated and accepted by stakeholders and the community
- Build on this Plan with community members and stakeholders, by creating an integrated Neighbourhood Climate Resilience Strategy, and signature project co-designs
- Continue early implementation, including the South Ajax Home Retrofit Program and short-term projects (Exeter Park Revitalization, other green infrastructure, or LID initiatives as they arise)
- Develop a detailed performance monitoring plan, to track ongoing results
- Secure funding for the 2024 initiatives outlined above and continue discussions on funding strategies for the ongoing Ajax SNAP project and the establishment of additional SNAP projects in Durham Region in the long term.

www.trca.ca