



Staff Report

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Report To:	Planning and Development Committee	
Date of Meeting:	October 20, 2025	Report Number: PDS-045-25
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Submitted By:	Darryl Lyons, Deputy CAO, Planning and Infrastructure Services	
Reviewed By:	Mary-Anne Dempster, CAO	
By-law Number:		Resolution Number: PD-090-25
File Number:	PLN 15.17	
Report Subject:	Community Engagement for the Clarington Waterfront Strategy Vision and Guiding Principles - What We Heard	

Recommendation:

1. That Report PDS-045-25, and any related delegations or communication items, be received for information.

Report Overview

As part of the renewal of Clarington's Waterfront Strategy, this report provides Council with background on the engagement process and a summary of community input gathered during the second phase of public consultation.

Between June 25 and July 30, 2025, a comprehensive survey was conducted to collect feedback on the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Five Distinct Experiences. The survey was made available both online and in person, supported by a multi-channel outreach campaign designed to ensure broad and meaningful participation. In total, 602 responses were received, reflecting a wide range of perspectives from residents and stakeholders.

All comments received will be considered and will help inform the development of a Waterfront Strategy that is meaningful, responsive, and reflective of the values and aspirations of the Clarington community.

This report outlines key themes from the survey results, summarizes what was heard from the public, and outlines next steps in the process. Additional engagement will be undertaken once the draft Waterfront Strategy is prepared, ensuring continued opportunities for public input prior to finalization.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Municipality of Clarington is renewing its Waterfront Strategy to build on the previous successes of the 1992 Strategy, and guide planning and development along its 34 kms of Lake Ontario shoreline for the next 30 years. This report shares the results from the public survey, which gathered input on the draft Vision, Guiding Principles and Five Distinct Experiences. Community engagement continues to be a key part of the process, ensuring that feedback from residents and stakeholders can help shape the direction of the Waterfront Strategy moving forward.
- 1.2 The Draft Strategy will envision Clarington's waterfront as a vibrant, inclusive destination where nature, community, parks, and heritage come together. It is expected to emphasize ecological resilience, connected trails, inclusive recreation, and economic vitality. Once developed, the Strategy will be anchored by a long-term Vision, Guiding Principles, and Five Distinct Waterfront Experiences tailored to the character and potential of each shoreline area.

Summary of Engagement to Date

- 1.3 Engagement for the Waterfront Strategy began in 2022 with a series of waterfront trail surveys, community pop-ups, Councillor interviews, and stakeholder meetings. These early efforts helped establish a baseline understanding of community interests and concerns, laying the groundwork for future phases.

- 1.4 Building on this foundation, the community engagement phase of this project was launched in 2025 to gather feedback on the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Five Distinct Experiences that will inform the draft Strategy. This phase included a public survey, targeted outreach, and promotional efforts designed to reach a broad cross-section of residents.
- 1.5 To further support transparency and collaboration, the draft Vision and Guiding Principles were presented to the Planning and Development Committee (PDC) in May 2025 ([PDS- 024-25](#)), inviting feedback from both the public and Council. This presentation provided an opportunity for open dialogue and ensured that the foundational elements of the project were shaped by a broad range of perspectives.
- 1.6 To ensure broad and inclusive participation, the Municipality deployed a multi-channel outreach campaign for community engagement on the Waterfront Strategy draft Vision and Guiding Principles. The survey was made available both online and in-person at Clarington Connected kiosks located in the Clarington municipal recreation facilities, and the Municipal Administrative Centre. Promotional tactics included press releases, a story in Clarington Connected newsletters mailed to every household, social media posts, trail signage, radio advertisements, Google Ads, and direct email invitations to interested parties and registered ActiveNet users.
- 1.7 Feedback was also received through Clarington's *communityservices@clarington.net* email and the project email *waterfrontstrategy@clarington.net*. Comments from residents submitted via email were considered and have been reflected in the "Additional Feedback" section of this report.
- 1.8 As part of Clarington's commitment to strengthen Indigenous partnerships, First Nations communities have been invited to learn about the project and provide feedback through dedicated outreach to help shape the draft Strategy.

Response Rates

- 1.9 Between June 25 and July 30, 2025, the Waterfront Strategy webpage on Clarington Connected received over 4,700 visits and a total of 602 surveys were completed.
- 1.10 To ensure the integrity and reliability of the data, respondents were required to register through Clarington Connected before completing the survey. This measure helped track where respondents reside, prevented duplicate submissions, and eliminated automated responses from Artificial Intelligence (AI) bots.
- 1.11 To encourage broad participation and support a diverse respondent pool, participants that completed the survey were entered into a draw for a \$250 VISA gift card. This approach is commonly used by municipalities to boost response rates and reduce bias.

2. Survey Results

- 2.1 The survey results reflect strong community interest and general support for the draft Vision and Guiding Principles. Respondents emphasized the importance of environmental protection, inclusive public access, and small scale, community-focused amenities. The feedback provides a clear mandate to prioritize nature, accessibility, and thoughtful, community driven planning.

- 2.2 This section provides a broad overview of the survey results. A more detailed summary of results is outlined in Attachment 1.

Demographics

- 2.3 Survey respondents represented a broad cross-section of Clarington residents. More than 95% of the respondents reside in Clarington, with the majority living in Bowmanville (37%), Courtice (30%), and Newcastle (23%), while smaller percentages reside in rural areas (4%), Orono (1%), and outside Clarington (4%).
- 2.4 Many respondents are long-term residents, with 30% having lived in Clarington for over 25 years (and 80% of all respondents having lived in Clarington for 5+ years). The age range was diverse and spanned from 15 to over 85, with the largest group between 30 and 49 years old.

The Draft Vision

- 2.5 A Vision statement sets the long-term direction, guiding priorities and ensuring decisions contribute to a cohesive, future-focused Strategy. Participants were asked to rank their support of the draft Vision statement on a scale of 1 to 5.

Draft Vision: Clarington's waterfront is a vibrant, accessible destination where community, nature, parks, and heritage meet. Our shoreline thrives through ecological resilience, connected trails, diverse recreation, and economic vitality. By focusing on sustainable growth, cultural preservation, and public access, we're creating a legacy that enriches the lives of residents, captivates visitors and establishes a legacy of stewardship for generations to come.

- 2.6 Respondents supported the draft Vision for Clarington's Waterfront, especially its emphasis on environmental protection and inclusive public spaces. The overall Vision received an average rating of 3.84 out of 5. This feedback reinforced the importance of creating a waterfront that prioritizes sustainable growth, ecological resilience, and public access, reflecting the values of both residents and visitors.

The Guiding Principles

- 2.7 To support the implementation of this draft Waterfront Vision, four guiding principles have been developed to establish a framework and set priorities for future decision-making. They include:

Environmental Stewardship: Protect and enhance the natural environment, including the Lake Ontario shoreline, wetlands, and wildlife habitats.

Economic Viability: Foster a vibrant and sustainable waterfront economy that supports local businesses, attracts investment and tourism, and creates employment opportunities.

Public Access, Connection and Enjoyment: Ensure equitable, safe and inclusive access to the waterfront for all residents and visitors.

Design Excellence and Cultural Heritage Preservation: Create high-quality and impactful public and private realms, while also recognizing, protecting, and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the waterfront

- 2.8 Participants were asked to rank their support of the draft Guiding Principles on a scale of 1 to 5. Among the Guiding Principles, Environmental Stewardship was rated highest at 4.37 out of 5, followed by Public Access, Connection and Enjoyment at 4.29, Design Excellence and Cultural Heritage Preservation at 3.88, and Economic Viability at 3.73. Overall, these principles were broadly supported, with particular emphasis on environmental protection and inclusive design.

The Five Distinct Experiences

- 2.9 Five key waterfront destinations, linked by the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, offer a diverse mosaic of experiences that reflect the Guiding Principles and draft Vision. The survey evaluated each waterfront area separately.

Courtice Waterfront Park:

- 2.10 The draft Vision: a new waterfront community featuring a prestigious 16-hectare/39-acre Courtice Waterfront Park – bigger than the former Bowmanville Zoo lands. The park would significantly increase public access to Lake Ontario, offer year-round recreational opportunities, preserve the entire shoreline, and enhance the existing trail network.
- 2.11 The draft Vision for Courtice Waterfront Park was rated 4.03 out of 5. Residents supported shoreline preservation and recreational access but expressed concerns about overdevelopment and infrastructure strain.
- 2.12 Specific to the Courtice Waterfront Park, the survey also asked, “How much do you support or oppose the creation of a new residential community (including shopping, dining, and services) to help fund and acquire land for the 16-hectare/39-acre Courtice Waterfront Park?” Although a park was highly supported, support for funding the park through residential development was more mixed, with a rating of 3.36 out of 5.

Bowmanville Waterfront:

- 2.13 The draft Vision for the Bowmanville waterfront includes three key elements:
- Protect and improve environmentally sensitive landscapes and natural heritage areas, including the Bowmanville Westside Marshes Conservation Area.
 - Position Port Darlington West Beach Park as Clarington's main beach, with excellent access to the water and passive/active onsite programs and amenities (i.e. beach volleyball, boardwalks, playground).
 - Reimagine Port Darlington East Beach Park as an enhanced and accessible waterfront park.
- 2.14 This draft Vision for this destination was supported with a rating of 3.98 out of 5. Feedback highlighted support for environmental protection and beach enhancements, alongside concerns about infrastructure limitations and marina conditions.

Newcastle Waterfront:

- 2.15 The Newcastle Waterfront's draft Vision includes a vibrant marina village with waterfront living and enhanced public spaces:
- Create a municipal-wide gateway park to the waterfront, featuring public art installations, a boardwalk, food services, and passive/active water programs.
 - Position the Port of Newcastle Park on Lakebreeze Drive as a resilient shoreline park with flexible program spaces (i.e. outdoor fitness areas).
 - Position Bond Head Park as a primary boat launch area.
- 2.16 This draft Vision for this destination was rated 3.76 out of 5. While there was support for public amenities and a gateway park, residents strongly opposed designating Bond Head Parkette as a primary boat launch due to size and infrastructure constraints.

Agricultural Heritage Area

- 2.17 The waterfront lands between Newcastle and Port Granby are envisioned(draft) as a celebrated agricultural heritage hub with preserved food production traditions, opportunities for agri-tourism, continued environmental stewardship and public access to the waterfront. The draft Vision suggests new access points to the shoreline will include enhanced and accessible waterfront trails, rest stops, lookouts, public event spaces and passive activities to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Lake Ontario shoreline.
- 2.18 This destination area was rated 4.01 out of 5. Respondents supported farmland preservation, agri-tourism, and environmental stewardship.

Port Granby Nature Reserve

- 2.19 Through the previously endorsed Port Granby Nature Reserve Concept Plan, there are opportunities for continued environmental restoration, education and public access to this natural area. Here, residents can experience the beauty of a nature reserve through protected and preserved forests, meadows, wetlands, pastures and trails.
- 2.20 This destination was rated 4.14 out of 5. There was strong support for restoration, education, and low-impact public access to the lands.

Additional Feedback

- 2.21 Feedback was also received through Clarington's *communityservices@clarington.net* email, as well as the project email *waterfrontstrategy@clarington.net*. Comments submitted via these emails were considered and have been reflected below, along with "final thoughts" from survey respondents.
- 2.22 Key themes included the need to preserve nature and heritage, ensure equitable and inclusive public spaces, avoid privatization, engage Indigenous communities and youth, and plan realistically for infrastructure and growth. Respondents consistently prioritized environmental protection and community benefits.

- 2.23 Residents identified several missing principles, including climate resilience, Indigenous engagement, infrastructure planning, and youth programming. There was a clear desire for stronger environmental protections and long-term stewardship. Respondents also emphasized the importance of meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and the need for inclusive, family-friendly spaces and beachfronts. The importance of meaningful resident involvement in future planning and decision-making processes was also identified.
- 2.24 Feedback received has reinforced the importance of protecting natural landscapes, maintaining public access, and avoiding over-commercialization. Residents expressed a strong preference for small-scale, locally owned businesses that complement public use, and voiced concerns about traffic, infrastructure strain, and the potential loss of community character.
- 2.25 Residents overwhelmingly supported shoreline preservation, year-round recreational access, connected trail networks and walkways, and the integration of small-scale, locally owned businesses. There was strong opposition to high-density residential development near the waterfront and a clear preference for maintaining the natural character of these spaces.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 As outlined previously, ([PDS-024-25](#)), the feedback and insights from engagement on the draft Vision and Guiding Principles, will inform the development of the draft Waterfront Strategy, which is targeted for presentation to Council in December 2025.
- 3.2 Key themes, such as the need for clear development boundaries, infrastructure that supports growth, and transparent planning processes, will help inform a Strategy that reflects community values and promotes long term sustainability, equity, and stewardship.
- 3.3 The Municipality of Clarington is working closely with Dillon Consulting to develop the draft Strategy. Continued engagement is planned prior to its finalization to ensure the Strategy remains responsive to community priorities and reflects a shared vision for the waterfront.

4. Financial Considerations

- 4.1 No financial considerations.

5. Strategic Plan

- 5.1 This approach towards meaningful public engagement directly supports Clarington's Strategic Plan to Lead, Connect and Grow Responsibly. Specifically, the following strategic priorities have been addressed:
- 5.2 L.4.1 – Increase opportunities for civic engagement and public participation: Through public surveys, pop-ups, stakeholder meetings, and presentations to Council, the engagement process has created multiple avenues for residents to contribute to the visioning of the Waterfront Strategy.

- 5.3 L.4.2 – Proactively communicate with residents about the planning process and how we are responsibly addressing growth: The engagement included outreach and education efforts to inform residents about the Strategy and its role in shaping future growth along the waterfront.
- 5.4 L.4.3 – Continue to cultivate an informed community through meaningful communications: By incorporating feedback from various channels, including surveys, emails, and community associations; the process has supported transparency and constructive dialogue around municipal planning initiatives.
- 5.5 C.1 – A Connected Community: This engagement has fostered stronger connections between residents, staff and council, reinforcing the community’s role in shaping public spaces.
- 5.6 G.2 – Growth is proactively addressed: The Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan provides recommendations to prioritize action items for implementation of the Waterfront Strategy, informed by feedback from public engagement.
- 5.7 G.3.3 – Enhance Clarington’s Waterfront: The Waterfront Strategy is a direct initiative under this goal, and the engagement process ensures that enhancements reflect community values, needs, and priorities.

6. Climate Change

- 6.1 Sustainability and resilience are central to waterfront planning and are reflected in the draft Vision and Guiding Principles, including Environmental Stewardship, Public Access and Enjoyment, and Economic Viability. As the Waterfront Strategy evolves, public feedback will continue to help shape the final Vision and Principles, aligning with Clarington’s Corporate Climate Action Plan to support long-term environmental goals. This approach promotes responsible growth and ensures the waterfront remains vibrant and resilient in the face of climate change.

7. Concurrence

- 7.1 Not Applicable.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 It is respectfully recommended that this report be received for information only.

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Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Clarington Waterfront Survey

Interested Parties:

List of Interested Parties available from Department.

What We Heard – Clarington Waterfront Survey

Draft Vision, Guiding Principles and Five Distinct Experiences

Survey highlights (between June 25-July 30, 2025):

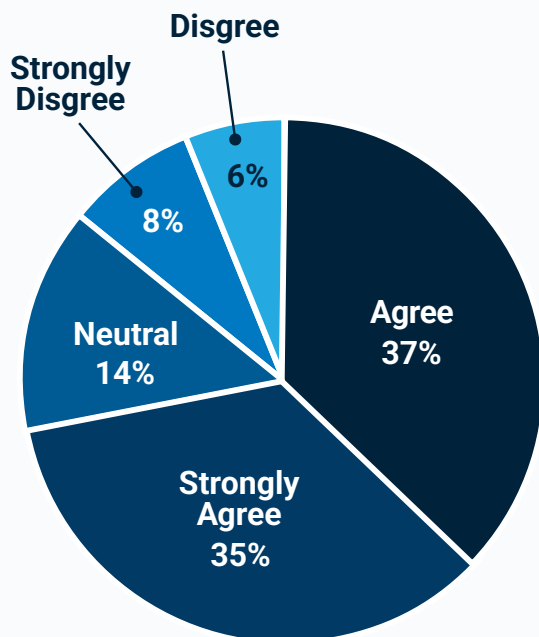
- ✓ 602 survey respondents
- ✓ 4,700 webpage visitors
- ✓ 95% of survey respondents reside in Clarington
- ✓ 80% of survey respondents have lived in Clarington for 5+ years
- ✓ Diverse age range of respondents, from 15 to 85+
- ✓ 49% of respondents between the ages of 30-50



The Vision

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the draft Vision for Clarington’s waterfront?”

Overall Rating: 3.84 out of 5



Overall:

The community envisions Clarington’s waterfront as a publicly accessible, ecologically resilient, and culturally respectful space that prioritizes nature preservation, connected trails, and inclusive recreation. Respondents overwhelmingly support a vision that enhances quality of life through sustainable growth, while expressing concerns about overdevelopment and the loss of natural and community character.

Key Priorities:

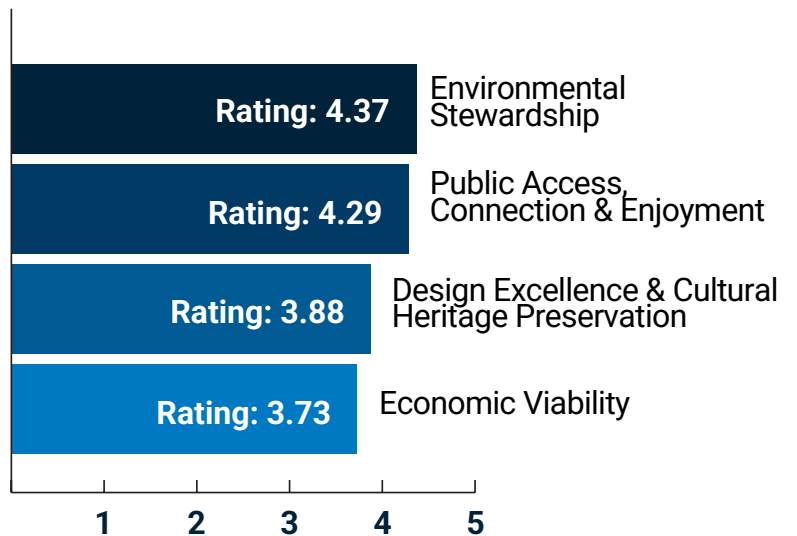
- Environmental stewardship and ecological resilience
- Connected trails and safe, accessible public access
- Year-round recreation and community use
- Support for small-scale local businesses
- Concerns about overdevelopment and high-density housing
- Requests to meaningfully integrate Indigenous voices and local history

The Guiding Principles

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the draft Guiding Principles of Environmental Stewardship, Public Access, Connection and Enjoyment, Design Excellence and Cultural Heritage Preservation, and Economic Viability?”

Overall:

Respondents broadly support the draft Guiding Principles of Clarington’s waterfront strategy, especially those emphasizing environmental stewardship, public access, and inclusive design. However, there is concern that large-scale commercial development and high-density residential expansion could undermine the natural character, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of the waterfront.



Key Priorities:

- Strong protection for wetlands, wildlife habitats and shoreline ecosystems
- Safe, accessible and barrier-free access to trails, beaches and green spaces
- Indigenous consultation, preservation of historic sites along the waterfront
- Support for small-scale, local businesses that complement public use
- Thoughtful, sustainable design that enhances natural beauty and community use



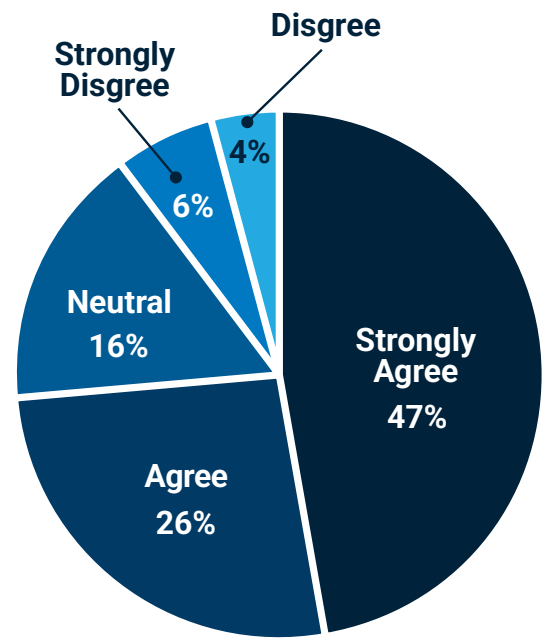
The Five Unique Experiences

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the vision for the Courtice Waterfront Park?”

Rating: 4.03 out of 5

Overall:

The Courtice Waterfront is seen as a rare and valuable opportunity to create a landmark public space that balances environmental preservation, recreational access, and community well-being. While many residents are excited about the potential for trails, year-round activities, and shoreline protection, there are concerns about overdevelopment, infrastructure strain, and the loss of natural character.



Key Priorities:

- Preserve the shoreline, protect habitats and enhance natural features
- Naturalized landscapes, shade and minimal impacts to the environment
- Offer year-round recreational opportunities, splash pads and family-friendly activities
- Connect Courtice to the broader trail networks and waterfront destinations
- Offer safe, inclusive access via walking, biking and transit – especially across barriers like Highway 401 and rail lines
- Concerns about high-density housing and large-scale commercial sprawl
- Support for small-scale, local businesses (i.e. cafes, ice cream shops)

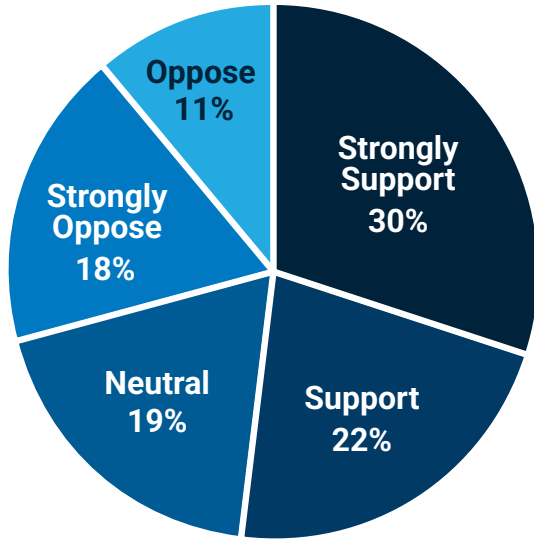


When asked, “how much do you support or oppose the creation of a new residential community to help fund and acquire land for the 16-hectare/39-acre Courtice Waterfront park?”

Rating: 3.36 out of 5

Overall:

More than half of respondents support the idea in principle—recognizing the need for funding and infrastructure—while others express strong opposition due to concerns about environmental impact, overdevelopment, and loss of public access.



Key Priorities:

- Guarantee the park’s creation
- Offer nature-focused amenities and quiet public spaces
- Opposition to high-density housing and large-scale commercial businesses
- Ensure strong environmental safeguards, including habitat protection, shoreline preservation and sustainable design
- Support for small-scale local businesses that enhance the park experience
- Phased infrastructure delivery to support growth (i.e. schools, transit, services)



Bowmanville Waterfront

When asked, "how much do you agree or disagree with the vision for the Bowmanville Waterfront?"

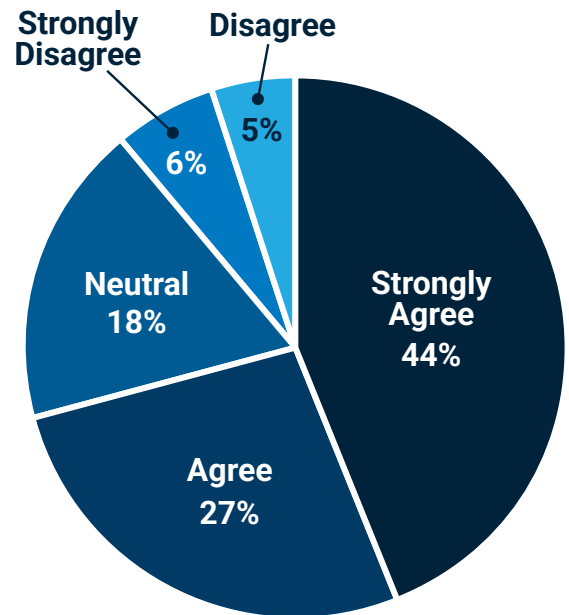
Rating: 3.98 out of 5

Overall:

The Bowmanville waterfront vision is widely supported for its emphasis on environmental protection, improved public access, and recreational amenities. However, residents raised concerns about infrastructure limitations, environmental risks, and the need for clearer planning and community consultation.

Key Priorities:

- Protect the Bowmanville Westside Marshes Conservation Area and other sensitive areas
- Position Port Darlington West Beach as Clarington's main beach, and reimagine East Beach as a more accessible and inclusive space
- Suggestions for year-round programming, food vendors and family-friendly features
- Revitalize the Bowmanville Marina as a primary boat launch
- Improve road access, parking, sidewalks, bike paths and public transit
- Preserve heritage cottages, maintain quiet natural areas
- Emphasize accessibility for seniors, children and people with disabilities



Newcastle Waterfront

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the vision for the Newcastle Waterfront?”

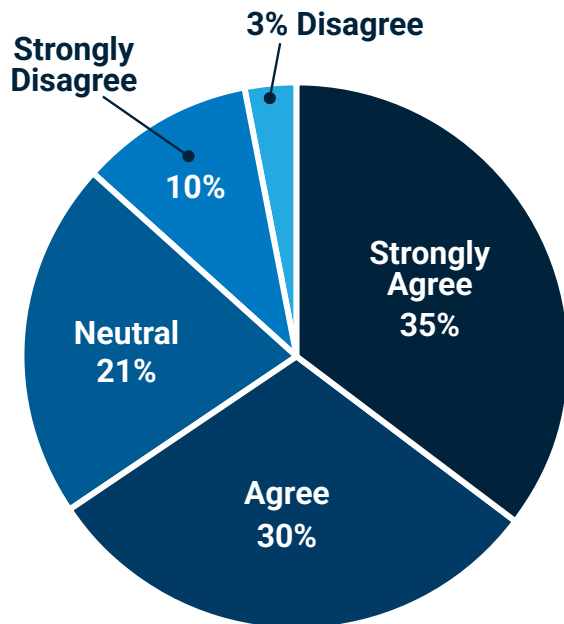
Rating: 3.76 out of 5

Overall:

The Newcastle waterfront vision—featuring a gateway park, resilient shoreline, and primary boat launch—has sparked both enthusiasm and concern. While many residents support improved public spaces and amenities, there is strong opposition to designating Bond Head Parkette as a primary boat launch due to its size, infrastructure limitations, and impact on the local community.

Key Priorities:

- Broad support for a municipal-wide gateway park with public art, food services and water programs
- Desire for connectivity between waterfront areas via trails and boardwalks
- Emphasis on resilient shoreline design, erosion control and habitat protection
- Opposition to Bond Head Parkette as primary boat launch
- Support for small-scale commercial development (i.e. cafes, restaurants, shops)
- Better transit, accessible washrooms, parking, senior-friendly designs
- Calls for outdoor fitness areas, splash pads and family-friendly amenities



Agricultural Heritage

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the vision for an Agricultural Heritage Area?”

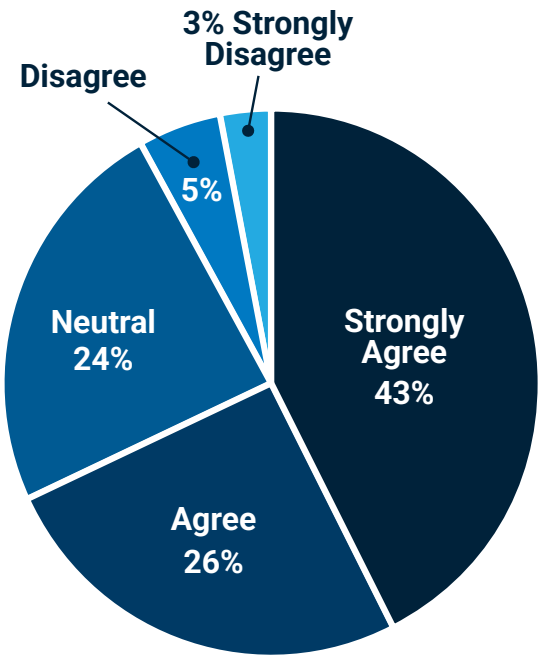
Rating: 4.01 out of 5

Overall:

The vision to celebrate Clarington’s agricultural heritage along the waterfront is widely supported, especially for its focus on preserving farmland, enhancing public access, and promoting environmental stewardship. However, residents expressed a need for clarity, balance, and protection—ensuring that development does not compromise the area’s rural character or ecological integrity.

Key Priorities:

- Protect vital farmland and maintain local food production
- Prevent urban sprawl and subdivision development on agricultural lands
- Provide educational opportunities, like farm tours, markets, and community gardens
- Offer accessible waterfront trails with lookouts and rest stops
- Provide passive recreation that respects the natural landscape (bike paths, shade structures, washrooms)
- Native plantings, wildflower gardens and low-impact design



Port Granby Nature Reserve

When asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with the vision for the Port Granby Nature Reserve?”

Rating: 4.14 out of 5

Overall:

The Port Granby Nature Reserve vision—focused on environmental restoration, education, and public access—is widely supported. Residents value the opportunity to experience protected natural landscapes, but many emphasize the need for minimal impact, controlled access, and preservation of ecological integrity.

Key Priorities:

- Preserve forests, wetlands, meadows and pastures
- Maintain the area’s wild, untouched character
- Provide low impact trails, lookouts and quiet nature experiences
- Offer environmental education, especially for youth and schools
- Consider Indigenous-led programming and features
- Ensure limited infrastructure and no commercial development
- Need for accessibility features for seniors and those with disabilities

