

Yellow Creek Geomorphic Systems Master Plan – Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study **Consultation Report**

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Executive Summary

The City of Toronto has conducted a study to identify storm sewer and watermain infrastructure within Yellow Creek that is at risk of damage due to erosion impacts as a result of high flows from storms and snow melt.

This study looks at how the City's storm sewer and watermain infrastructure can be protected within the creek using recommended solutions to help reduce or prevent future impact to City infrastructure resulting from erosion. This will ensure the City's infrastructure continues to operate and service residents and businesses. The solutions will be part of a Yellow Creek Geomorphic Systems Master Plan (GSMP) for the creek that is implemented over a multi-year period.

This report details the activities and feedback received during consultation on the Yellow Creek Study that took place between November 13, 2023, and December 17, 2023. Members of the public and interest groups were provided with information about the risks to City water infrastructure and a summary of the recommended solutions. People were invited to ask questions and provide feedback on the recommended solutions for creek restoration and water infrastructure protection.

Summary of engagement:

- One virtual public event with 51 participants
- One community interest group meeting with 10 participants
- Twelve comment submissions received from the public via telephone and email
- One hundred and forty-five completed survey responses

Overall, there was a high level of concern for erosion along the creek. There were no specific concerns raised with the recommended solutions. However, there was some concern with the indicated timeframes for implementation. Many people who provided feedback were concerned that the scope of the study was too limited in its focus on the watercourse and wanted the study to address the impacts of erosion on the trails and ravine slopes.

Study Summary

In Yellow Creek there are ten City of Toronto water infrastructure sites at risk of erosion. Following a risk analysis of each site, and detailed evaluation of alternative solutions, four projects greater than 100 metres in reach are recommended to protect all ten infrastructure sites. The risk to water infrastructure was determined low for most of the infrastructure sites except for one site just south of the St Claire Avenue bridge. This site has been identified as having a higher priority level and the project will be identified for implementation in the next 5 –

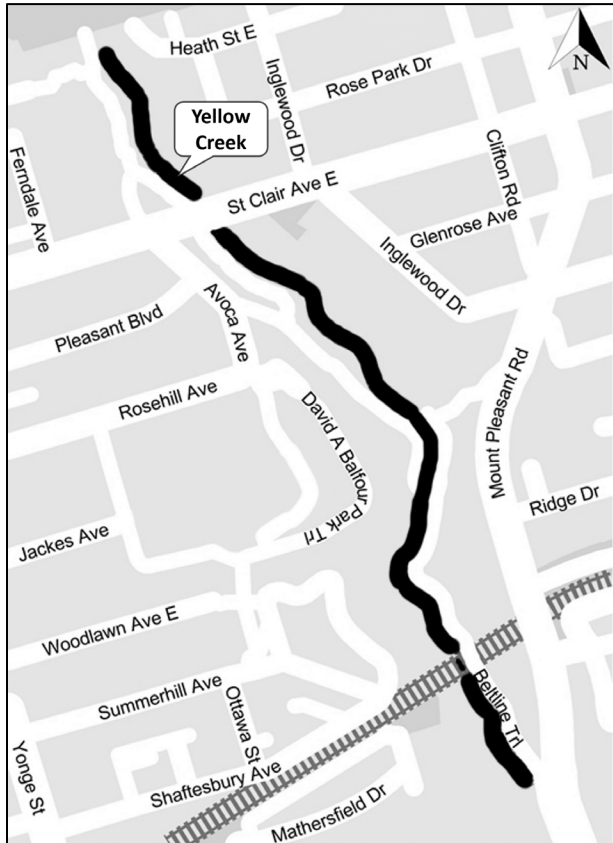
10 years. All other projects were identified as low priority for long term implementation. Ultimately, the prioritization of GSMP projects will be done city-wide and will include the review of sanitary sewers, storm sewers and watermain supply infrastructure.

Study Area

The study area is the 1.3 km aboveground length of Yellow Creek from south of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, east of Yonge Street at Heath Street, to the southern part of David A. Balfour Park, south of Summerhill Avenue near Mount Pleasant Road.

The study area is in between a residential area on the east and a business area with retail shops, restaurants, services and a public school with a playground and soccer field on the west.

Within the ravine, there are several interconnected trails that connect from north of the project area to south-east of the project area and the Belt Line trail. The trails are used regularly by the community for leisure and to access the business area and school.



The area is under the joint responsibility of Toronto Water for the water infrastructure sites, Parks Recreation and Forestry (PF&R) which is responsible for the walking trails and City recreational facilities and Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) which is undertaking erosion control projects related to the ravine slopes and private property.

Recent and on-going projects in or near to the study area include:

- Yellow Creek Outfall repair just downstream of St. Clair Avenue East (Toronto Water)
- Yellow Creek Below Summerhill Gardens (TRCA)
- Yellow Creek Near Heath Street East Erosion Control and Slope Stabilization Project (TRCA)

There are several active local resident associations in the neighbourhood. Many of the members volunteer as part of a midtown ravine working group to monitor the creek and assist with the removal of invasive plant species in the area.

Notification & Consultation Activities

Members of the public, community groups and interested parties were provided with information about the study at the study onset and at the beginning of the public consultation period. Public Consultation took place between November 13, 2023, and December 17, 2023.

Notification

A variety of communication tools were used to notify the public and interested parties about the Yellow Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study, public consultation, and opportunities to provide feedback.

A Notice of Commencement, announcing the study and provide information on the study process was circulated in January 2021 by email to First Nations, Agencies and Utilities. A printed Notice of Commencement was circulated to 8,107 local residents and businesses by Canada Post.

The following communications were issued the week of November 13, 2023 at the onset of the public consultation period:

- The project website, toronto.ca/YellowCreek, was updated to include public consultation materials and a link to the feedback survey
- Notices were sent via Canada Post direct mail to 11,360 addresses in the study area
- Where the recommended projects intersect with private property, letters were sent via addressed mail to private property owners
- Email was circulated to community groups including 28 residents' associations, community groups, organizations, institutions and elected officials
- Email was circulated to 63 government agencies and utility companies
- Individual emails were sent to First Nations identified by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks:
 - Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council
 - Huron-Wendat Nation
 - Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
 - Six Nations of the Grand River

Consultation Activities

Public consultation activities included a virtual public meeting, a meeting with interested community groups, follow-up with First Nations, agencies and utilities. There were opportunities to provide feedback during meetings, through an on-line survey, via email and by phone.

Public Meeting

A virtual public meeting took place on Monday, November 27, 2023 from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. and was attended by 51 people. The meeting included a presentation by the City of Toronto project team followed by an opportunity for questions and feedback.

Meeting with community groups

A virtual meeting with community groups in the study area was held on Friday November 24, 2023. Ten participants from local organizations participated, including representatives from:

1. Avoca Residents Association
2. Deer Park Residents Group
3. Midtown Ravines Group
4. Moore Park Residents Association
5. North Rosedale
6. Summerhill Residents Association

The presentation panel included representatives from Engineering & Construction Services, Toronto Water, PF&R, and the TRCA.

Phone & Email Comments

Members of the public and interested groups were invited to share comments and ask questions via phone, email, or written letter. Comments were received from 13 people between November 13 and December 17, 2023. All comments were recorded and reviewed for consideration and responded to by the project team.

Outreach to First Nations Communities

Consultation with First Nations by the project team is by delegated authority through the Provincial Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and fulfills the Crown's legal duty to consult "Aboriginal communities" where there is a possibility that treaty rights could be impacted.

Communications with First Nations identified by the MECP were circulated by email at various stages of the consultation process including a Notice of Commencement, a Stage 1 Archaeology Report and a Public Consultation Notice.

A Stage 1 Archaeology Assessment was completed with the purpose of identifying whether or not the lands under study potentially contained archaeology value or evidence. The report was shared with First Nations in January 2021 with an invitation to provide feedback.

In October 2023 the Public Consultation notice was circulated to provide information about the study outcomes and recommendations and invite feedback as part of the public consultation process.

Outreach to Agencies and Utilities

Communications with agencies forms part of the study review process. Communication with utilities ensures there are no infrastructure conflicts within the study area or provides the project team with an opportunity to mitigate impacts. Agencies and utilities received the Notice of Commencement and the Public Consultation notice with an opportunity to provide feedback.

Survey

An online survey was used to collect feedback on the study and recommended projects. The survey was available from November 13, 2023, to December 17, 2023, and received 145 responses. Participation was anonymous.

Feedback Summary

Many people are concerned about increasing erosion along the creek and the impact of erosion on the trails and ravine slopes. The need for creek restoration was emphasised. There was very little feedback on the specific project recommendations to protect Toronto Water infrastructure, and no objections raised.

Feedback beyond the scope of the study focused on the need for trail improvements and the prevalence of invasive plant species in Yellow Creek, and the need for water infrastructure maintenance city-wide.

Public Event

Questions and comments from the November 27, 2023 event are themed and summarized below.

Participants asked questions about:

- Overall water infrastructure maintenance needs across the City, and the anticipated funds required to address the issues.
- Where the responsibility lies, and what approach would be taken to ensure a coordinated approach among multiple departments and agencies at the City for creek restoration, surrounding green space, and trail repairs.
- The timeline for project roll-out based on infrastructure site risk and the identified priority of the recommended projects.
- TRCA's time frame to address the eroding gabion baskets near Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Participants provided observation on current conditions

- Staircases at the ravine entrances are deteriorating as a result of erosion.
- There is concern for further erosion along the slopes in the future.
 - There have been previous ravine slope adjustments in the past 10 years due to erosion and the steep ravine slopes.
- Erosion along the watercourse near Inglewood Drive is severe.

Study and project details

- Participants expressed concern that the scope of the study is too limited and does not acknowledge the impacts of erosion on the ravine slopes and surrounding infrastructure such as the trails, and the stairs at Heath Street.
- There are concerns with the implementation timeframe; participants commented that erosion could get worse with future storms, and delaying the work in the creek could be more costly in the future.

Additional feedback

- Completing work in the creek and surrounding ravine area should be given greater urgency.
- It has been reported that certain erosion areas in the ravine are losing one foot of soil each year.
- There are concerns for the degradation of ravines across the city and the need for a city-wide plan to address this.

Meetings with community groups

Questions and comments from the meeting with neighbourhood groups are themed and summarized below.

Participants asked questions about:

- Coordination among city departments and divisions, specifically for the working group of City divisions responsible for the ravine area and the City's Ravine Strategy.
- Further details on the working relationship between Toronto Water, PF&R, and TRCA.
- Whether public comments and the study report will be shared with the joint working group, and who is ultimately responsible for implementation of the recommended projects.
- Where the responsibility for maintenance of the trail network lies.
- The relationship between Toronto Water and TRCA for the work at the bottom of Summerhill Gardens.
- How projects were prioritized and the implementation time frames, with an interest in knowing what factors would increase the priority of work in Yellow Creek.
- Whether erosion issues beyond the watercourse could be included in the study scope
- How to address erosion on private property.
- The potential total cost for creek restoration including rehabilitation of Toronto Water infrastructure and trail repairs, with the aim of securing private funding.
- Whether there will be further consultation for the Yellow Creek GSMP.

Participants provided observations on current conditions

- Erosion is impacting the slopes, the trails, bridges and private property.
- There is erosion near the trails and in the areas surrounding sites #1 and #4.
- Erosion near Inglewood Drive has been recorded as resulting in 6 ft of bank loss since 2016.
- Concerns that erosion in the creek is affecting infrastructure in the ravine and on private residential property.

Comments on the study and project details

- Many participants felt that the study scope should include an assessment, and provide recommended solutions, for the slopes, trails and access points to the ravine area.
 - Erosion adversely impacts use of the creek and ravine area for recreation and travel.

- Further deterioration will make the problems more expensive to repair later on
- There is concern the medium term and long term priority level for restoration work in the creek will lead to further deterioration of the creek and ravine.

Additional Feedback

- The slope at site #4 is eroding and needs to be addressed during project implementation, including repair of the trail above site #4
- Feedback emphasised the need to maintain and repair the last remaining pedestrian bridge that crosses the creek.
- The Yellow Creek trail is a vital part of the Beltline Trail connection and there is concern that access between the Beltline Trail and the waterfront will be lost if erosion of the trails continues.
- Local groups are interested in looking at the potential for private funding to support restoration work in the creek.
- There is support for a coordinated work approach in Yellow Creek between TRCA, PF&R, and ECS (the latter on behalf of Toronto Water).

Phone & Email

Questions and comments received via phone/email from members of the public are themed and summarized below:

Concerns for current conditions

- There are several sites outside the scope of the study where erosion is worsening.
- Erosion is a concern near trails, the ravine slopes and private property.
- That erosion of the slopes could impact access points to the ravine and potentially street connections at the top of the ravine.
- There is concern that Yellow Creek is treated as an open storm sewer and that the flow rate during storms is high and getting worse with climate change.
- There are invasive plant species, including phragmites which need to be removed.
- Wildlife habitats need to be protected.

Comments and feedback related to project implementation and construction

- There should be greater urgency to complete work.
- There is an interest in daylighting more of Yellow Creek. This includes exposing more of the creek upstream and downstream of the study limits.

- Creek restoration, to address erosion, around the old sawmill dam site, near Inglewood Drive, should be a higher priority.
- Ensuring soft infrastructure is used along the creek.
- Restore as much natural habitat as possible.

Expanding the scope of the study

- There are requests to expand the study scope to include the broader impacts of erosion on the trails and ravine slopes;
 - Trails are deteriorating and maintenance is needed.
 - There is worsening erosion near the pedestrian bridge, where the City has temporary barricades to cordon off erosion beside the trail.
 - Previously there was a second pedestrian bridge, which should be brought back.
 - The wooden staircases that are part of the trail in the ravine are deteriorating.
 - Specific areas of concern are the east entrance to the creek near Heath Street E., the stairs from Mount Pleasant Road south of Inglewood Drive, the trail on the west side of the creek, north of the railroad tracks, and the old sawmill dam site.
- Residents identified a possible initiative among community groups to pursue private fundraising for work, such that work within, and outside of, the scope of the water infrastructure assessment could happen sooner

First Nations

Feedback requested that soft infrastructure be used along the bed of the creek.

All communication has been shared with the project team. Feedback will be address and all comments will be included in the Study Report.

Agencies and Utilities

Several utilities have responded with technical feedback. All communication has been shared with the project team. Feedback will be address and all comments will be included in the Study Report.

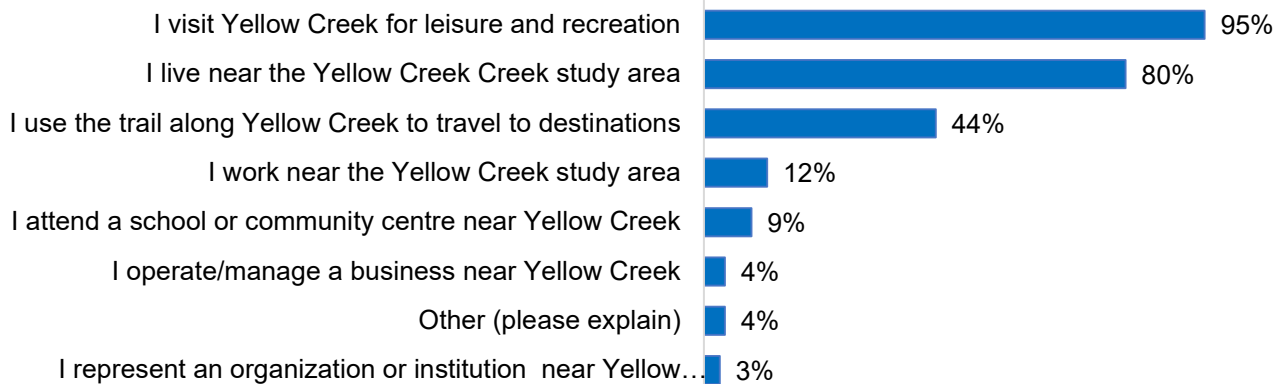
Survey

Responses received to each question in the online survey are described in this section.

About You

This section of the survey asked respondents about their relationship to the project area which provides context for the responses received.

Which statements best describe your relationship to the study?

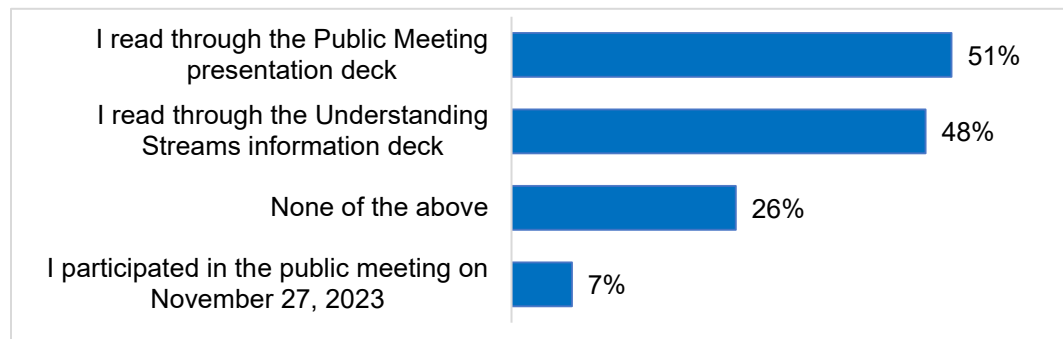


Most of the survey respondents visit Yellow Creek for leisure and recreation (95%). A large number live near the study area (80%), and a significant number of respondents (44%) use the Yellow Creek trail to travel to specific destinations.

Those who selected 'Other' include property owners, those who previously lived near the creek and those with an interest in celebrating or conserving the natural heritage of urban areas and ravine systems.

How did you review project information?

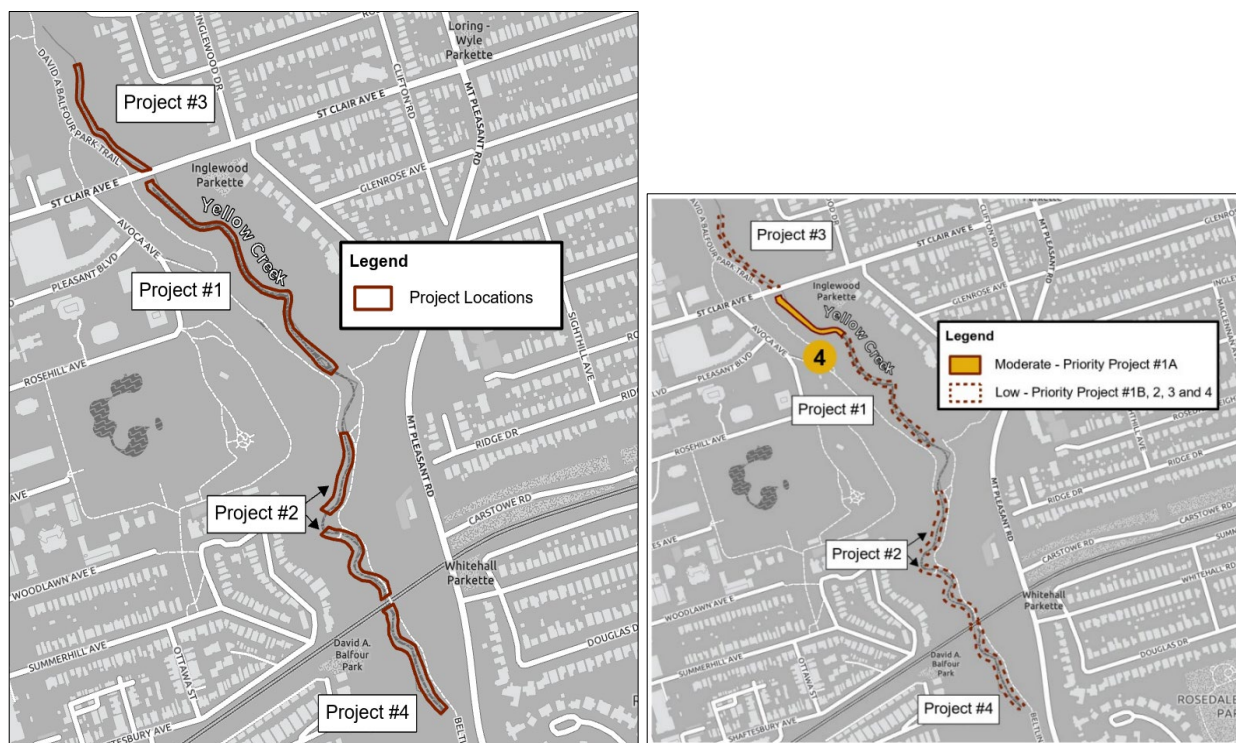
It was recommended that respondents review the project information on the webpage or at the public event prior to giving feedback.



More than half of respondents read through the Public Meeting presentation deck (51%) and almost half read the Understanding Streams information deck (48%). Twenty-six per cent (26%) of respondents completed the survey without reviewing the project materials.

Study Details

This section of the survey asked respondents to provide feedback on the recommended projects. The project map was provided as a reference in the survey. The image on the right, was in the presentation deck, indicates a higher priority for the up-stream half of Project #1.



Do you have specific comments about any of the recommended projects?

Many of the responses received to this question included feedback that was outside of the specific scope of erosion impacts on water infrastructure. Many comments focused on the trail alongside Yellow Creek.

The following comments were relevant to the general study area:

- Support for recommended projects, but a greater sense of urgency is needed.
- Expand project scope to include repair and maintenance to trails and pedestrian bridges and access points. The trail is used by many and is important to the community.
- Access to the west side of the creek (Project #3 area) is needed for children to get to school.

- Protection is needed for native tree species and wildlife habitats.
 - Trail maintenance would protect the ravine's natural habitat from human destruction.
- Recognition that projects to protect sanitary sewers, which aren't in Yellow Creek, take precedence city-wide.
- Maintaining access to the trail during construction is important.

Detailed feedback on trail improvements was shared in 20 of the 40 comments received.

Responses were similar, and in some cases identical, which is indicative of an organized group effort to bring attention to this concern.

The common and repeated feedback referenced the need for improvements at three locations along the trail:

1. The trail on the west side of the creek from the base of the St Clair Ave. bridge to the Avoca Trail
2. The Heath Street staircase
3. The pedestrian bridge at the bottom of Reservoir Park

While improvements beyond the creek and banks are outside the scope of the study, this feedback is documented to note concerns that could be addressed as part of future projects in the ravine.

Some survey respondents provided feedback on the recommend projects and future implementation of the projects:

Project #1 Alternative 3, Sub-Reach Works

- Support for both the project and the priority level within the creek to repair the upstream half, near site #4, in the medium term.
- Concern for the erosion and clean up at the old sawmill site.

Project #2 Alternative 3, Sub-Reach Works

- Concerns for erosion in this area. The impact of damage from storms is noticeable.
 - Concern that there is potential risk of creek erosion worsening here.
 - Consider increasing the priority level of this project.
 - Concern that the pedestrian bridge that crosses the creek is at risk.
- There are native plant species along the creek and west slopes which are considered to be the original vegetation in the ravine.

Project #3 Alternative 3, Sub-Reach Works

- Native species along the creek and west slopes are considered to be remnants of original vegetation.

Project #4 Alternative 3, Sub-Reach Works

- The recommended project is not considered urgent, but is necessary to prevent erosion near Mount Pleasant Road.

Do you have any general feedback about the study recommendations?

Support for the recommendations:

- Proactive work is needed to protect the creek, the natural environment and surrounding infrastructure.
- Recognition of the need for multi-year planning and budgeting.
- Support for recommendations, but a greater sense of urgency is needed.

Current Conditions

- An observed increased water flow in the creek during storms over the past 50 years.
- The length of ravine has different states of deterioration due to neglect over a long period of time.
- The broader area is in danger of collapse as a result of erosion. The slopes and the City's walkable ravine sites need to be protected.
- The ravine has large tracts of mud and swamp following previous tree removals. The City should only carry out work where necessary and ensure restoration efforts are maintained.
- A concern that recent work on the Rosehill Reservoir project increased slope erosion.

Feedback on the study and recommendations

- Increased urgency is needed to address erosion in Yellow Creek.
- The study scope is too narrow, it should include a larger area and should include trails and ravine slopes.
 - The Vale of Avoca is one of eight priority areas in the Ravine Strategy.
- With the increase in water flow, consider including mitigating measures such as a pond or well to hold water and lessen the flow during storm events.
- A holistic approach should be taken to restoration:
 - The narrow scope of the study limits a holistic analysis of what is needed to remediate the whole creek, which will under-value the cost of the work.

- TRCA should be involved in the work to address all issues (for the watercourse and the ravine slopes)
- Mitigate erosion through the planting of native plant and tree species and remove invasive plants.

Construction concerns

- Concerns for impacts to vegetation:
 - There has been 20+ years of removing invasive trees. Take care in preparing for construction and remediation.
 - There are significant individual trees that will need protection.
- Concern for construction impacts is based on the recent experience with the Rosehill Reservoir project, including the length of time for construction, trail closures, and slope erosion.
- Minimise trail closures during construction to keep the ravine accessible.

Implementing creek restoration

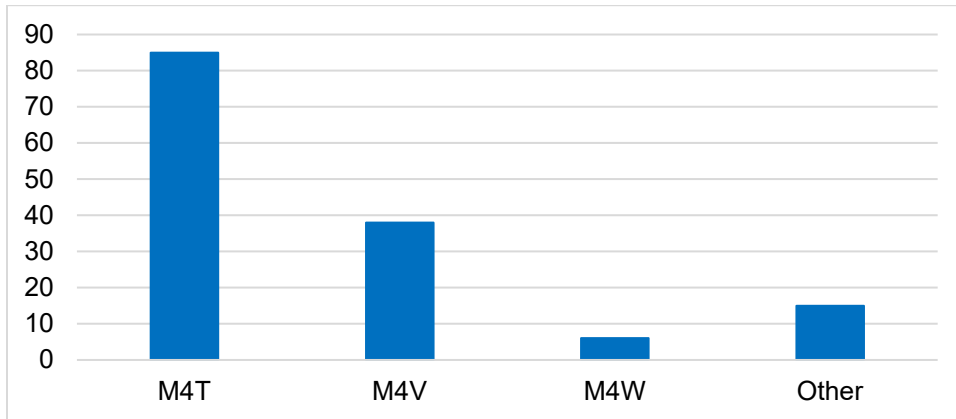
- Concerns that the City is not directing sufficient funds to creek restoration projects.
- Concerns that the City's Ravine Strategy needs greater funding; the City should explore private-public partnerships.
- Concerns that the inter-divisional approach to the creek does not seem to be working; there needs to be better coordination for implementation of all needed improvements
- Comments identified that there is the potential for private funding to be used to undertake a master plan that includes all the work that residents would like to see done to restore the creek.

Requests for trail restoration

- Repair trails at the same time as creek work project implementation; make most use of the equipment and labour.
- Access from the east side of the creek is needed to connect students to Deer Park Public School and to connect residents to the business area for shopping.
- Many of the existing guardrail fences, paths, stairways, and other trail elements are failing or have failed.

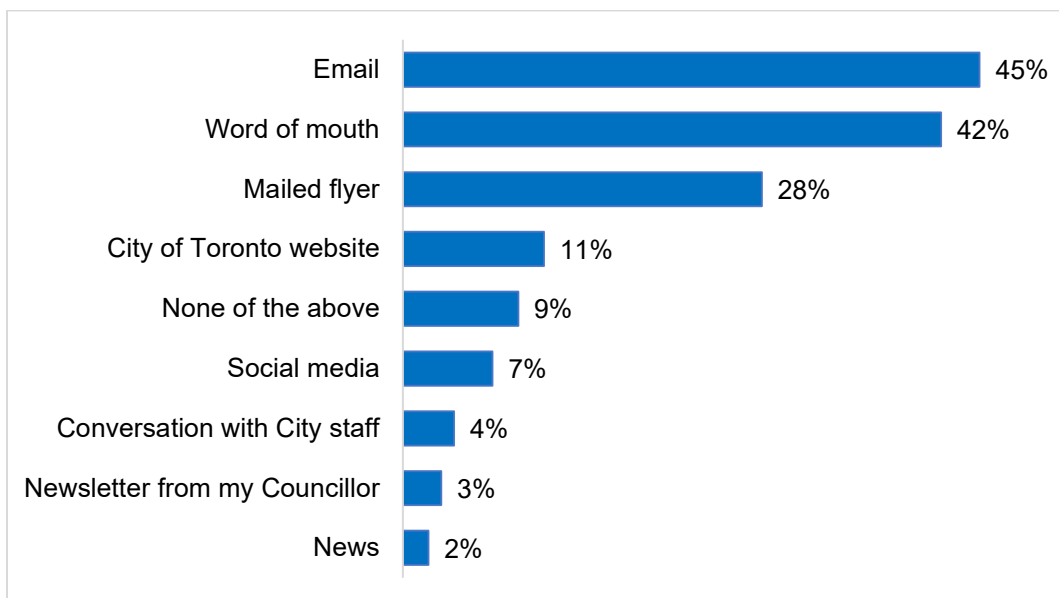
Appendix A – Survey Respondent Profile

What are the first three digits of your postal code?



Postal code data is requested to understand where in the city respondents who have an interest in the project are coming from. The responses indicate that most respondents live close to the project area.

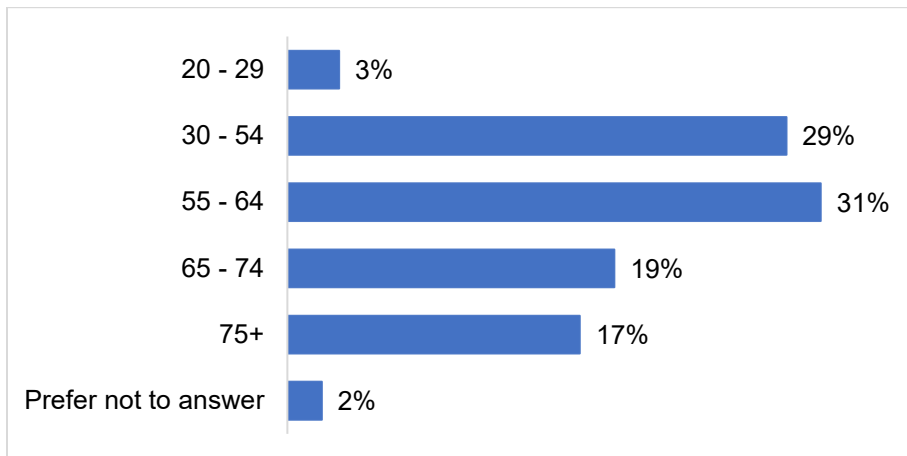
How did you hear about this study?



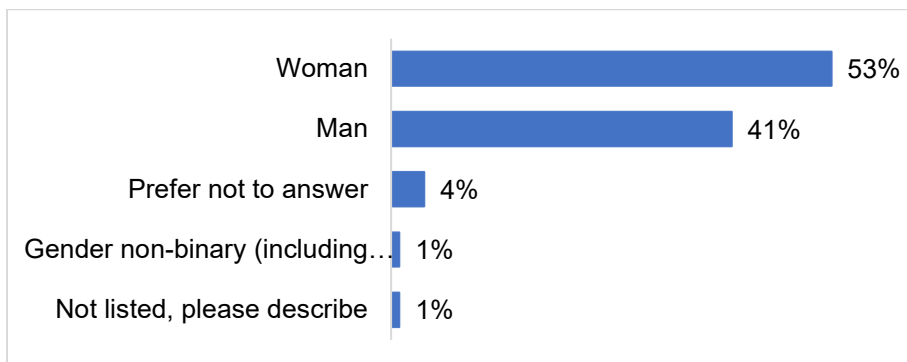
Most of the respondents heard about the study via email and word of mouth. Over 25% of respondents heard about the study from the flyer which was circulated through Canada Post.

Demographics

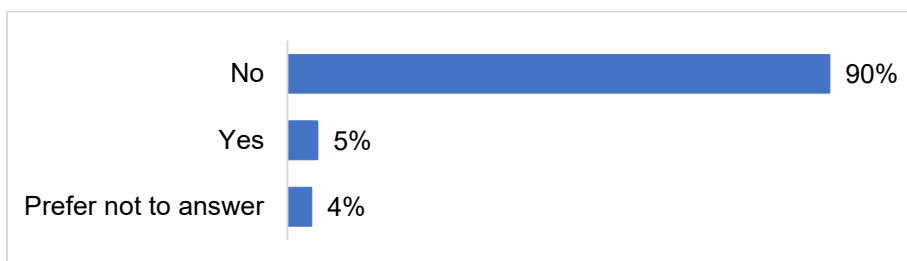
What is your age category?



What is your gender-identity?



Do you identify as a person with a disability?



This information is used to help City staff recognize general trends among those who participate in public consultations.