

# Newtonbrook Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study

## Public Consultation Report

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# Executive Summary

The City of Toronto initiated a study to identify sewer and watermain infrastructure within Newtonbrook Creek and Blue Ridge Creek that is at risk of damage due to erosion impacts as 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 Geomorphic Systems Master Plan (GSMP) for the creek to be implemented over a multi-year period.

This report details the activities and feedback received during consultation on the Newtonbrook Creek Study that took place between October 2, 2023 and November 3, 2023. During Consultation, information was provided about the risks to sewer and watermain infrastructure along the creek along with a summary of the recommended solutions. Interested individuals were able to ask questions and provide feedback on the recommended solutions for creek restoration and water infrastructure protection.



### Summary of engagement:

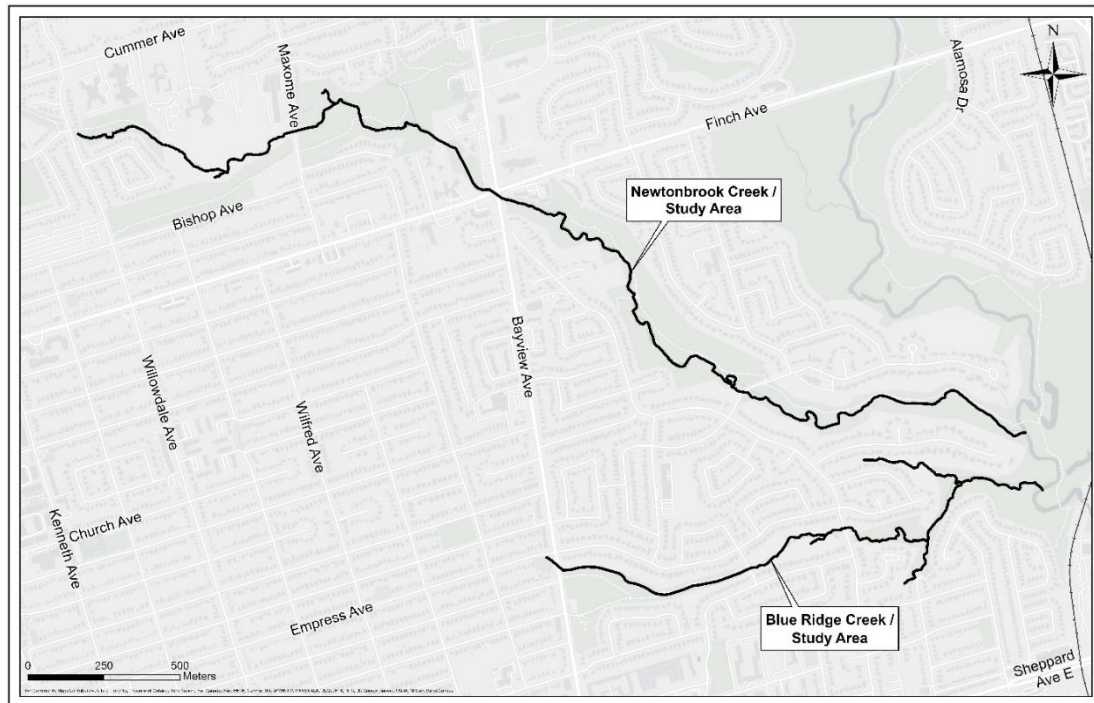
- One public event with 32 participants
- Ten comment submissions from the public via telephone and email
- Seventeen survey responses

Overall, most participants were concerned with erosion along the creek and there was general support for the recommended solutions. Emerging themes from public feedback included:

- An interest in technical details about design, future improvements, risks related to project work and implementation plans
- Concern for that trail closures during construction will be disruptive for the community and impact community wellness
- A preference for having the trail return to its current character of natural dirt and pea-gravel
- Concern for impacts of construction on the natural environment including tree and canopy loss and the turtle habitat area downstream
- A desire by the Newtonbrook Nature Stewards to be involved in the restoration and replanting of the areas along the creek post-construction.

# Study Summary

## Study Area



The study area is made up of approximately four kilometers along the length of Newtonbrook Creek from Willowdale Avenue south of Cummer Avenue to its confluence with the Don River west of Leslie Avenue, and two kilometers along the length of Blue Ridge Creek from Bayview Avenue East to its confluence with the Don River.

Within the Newtonbrook Creek study area, a multi-use trail runs along the path of the creek. The trail is used regularly by walking groups, residents, and those within the broader area.

## Study Summary

This report summarizes consultation activities and feedback received during consultation for the Newtonbrook Creek Restoration and Water Infrastructure Protection Study (the Study) which took place between October 2, 2023 and November 3, 2023.

The purpose of the Study is to identify the most appropriate solutions for protecting the City's water infrastructure, which is at risk of damage from erosion; mitigating potential damage to surrounding park infrastructure, such as the trail, as a result of creek restoration work will be remediated. The study was carried out following the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) master planning process for Schedule A and Schedule B projects.

Following a risk analysis of 72 water and stormwater infrastructure sites, possible solutions to address 24 priority sites were evaluated according to a range of criteria including overall ability

to address risk to infrastructure, improvements to the physical and natural environment, protection of the social and cultural environment, economic considerations and technical and engineering requirements.

Based on the risk assessment and evaluation, the City is recommending creek restoration through natural channel design for four local works projects that are less than 150 metres in reach, and seven local works projects that are greater than 150 metres. Implementation of the recommended projects will be prioritised over the medium to long term, city-wide, and construction is not expected to begin until 2025.

The focus of the study is erosion impacting water infrastructure.

## Notification & Consultation Activities

### Notification

A variety of communication methods were used to notify interested community groups and members of the public about consultation.

A Notice of Commencement was circulated in October 2022 to First Nations, Agencies and Utilities providing information on the study and the study process.

The following communications were issued on the week of October 2, 2023 at the onset of the public consultation period:

- An update on the project website including public consultation materials and link to the feedback survey [toronto.ca/newtonbrook](https://toronto.ca/newtonbrook)
- Canada Post direct mail to 9,809 addresses in study area
- Notification to private property owners where the potential project areas intersects with or is adjacent to private property
- Direct email to 23 interested parties including community groups and organizations institutions and elected officials
- Direct email to 63 government agencies and utility companies
- Direct email to First Nations including those identified by the Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks:
  - Alderville First Nation
  - Beausoleil First Nation
  - Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
  - Chippewas of Rama First Nation (Chippewas of Mnjikaning)
  - Curve Lake First Nation



- Hiawatha First Nation
- Huron-Wendat First Nation
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Six Nations of the Grand River

## Consultation Activities

### Public Event

A public drop-in event and site walk took place on Wednesday October 18, 2023, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. The drop-in was hosted on the front lawn of the Forest Grove United Church at 43 Forest Grove Drive, a short walk from the creek.

Information panels were displayed at the drop-in area and staff were available to provide information and respond to questions. The project team on site included representatives from Engineering & Construction Services and Toronto Water and the engineering consultants working on the study. A site-walk to view the creek and infrastructure at risk was led by the project manager.

The site-walk along the Newtonbrook Creek included stops at infrastructure sites for Project #4 and Project #5. During the site-walk there was an opportunity for further questions, feedback and dialogue.



The event was attended by approximately 32 people although not all participants registered. Materials prepared for the public event included display panels and handouts for those who joined the site-walk. Event materials were adapted from the project information deck and the Understanding Streams information deck that were available on the project website. Printouts of the complete information decks were available upon request.

Notes were taken during the event although participants were encouraged to provide feedback via the online survey.

### Community Interest Groups

A virtual meeting was held with the Newtonbrook Ravine Stewards on October 31, 2023. The Newtonbrook Creek Park Nature Stewards are registered with the Toronto Nature Stewards in

agreement with the City of Toronto Urban Forestry Division to support ecological restoration and clean-up activities. The Newtonbrook Stewards remove invasive species by hand in identified areas of the creek. Their primary interest in study and restoration is in identifying areas of the creek and ravine that will eventually be cleared out for construction as areas to avoid for stewardship.

Nine members of the group participated in the meeting. The meeting provided a platform for the project team to respond to questions that had been raised via email by the Nature Stewards prior to the meeting. During the meeting there was an opportunity for further questions, feedback and dialogue.

### Phone & Email Comments

Questions and feedback were accepted via phone, email, or written letter. Eight comment submissions were received between October 2 and November 3, 2023. All comments were recorded and reviewed for consideration and response by the project team.

### Online Survey

An online survey was used to collect feedback on the study and recommended projects. The survey was available October 2, 2023 – November 3, 2023. Seventeen responses were received. Participation was anonymous.

### Outreach to First Nations Communities

The Provincial Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) has been delegated by the Crown to ensure consultation with “Aboriginal communities” where there is possibility that treaty rights could be impacted. Consultation with First Nations is a standard process for environmental assessments. The MECP has provided instruction on communications with relevant First Nations communities in the study area. As Newtonbrook Creek is within Treaty 13, 1805 with the Mississaugas and within the Traditional Territory of both the Mississaugas of the Credit and Williams Treaties First Nations (WTFN), the following First Nations communities were contacted:

- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Curve Lake First Nation
- Hiawatha First Nation
- Alderville First Nation
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation



- Chippewas of Rama First Nation
- Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- Beausoleil

Communications was sent by email at various stages of the consultation process.

An Archaeology Report was completed with the purpose of identifying whether the lands under study potentially contained archaeology value or evidence. The report was shared with First Nations in December 2023 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 to 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 is no infrastructure conflict. Communications with agencies and utilities included circulation of the Notice of Commencement, and Public Consultation notice with an opportunity to provide feedback.

## Feedback Summary

There was significant interest in knowing details for recommended projects and potential scheduling and bundling of projects. There was also an interest in seeing work completed prior to conditions worsening. Primary concerns were around tree removals and erosion along the trail. A turtle habitat which should be protected was brought to the attention of the project team.

### Public Event

A summary of questions, comments and feedback received during the Public Event are summarized below:

#### **General Feedback and context:**

Most participants were concerned with erosion at the creek and supported the recommended projects. There was a desire to see restoration of heavily eroded areas completed as soon as

possible and with minimum impact to the trees and wildlife. The presence of a turtle breeding area was made known and appreciation for the current character of the trail path, which is a dirt and pea-gravel path was expressed. There was concern for trail disruptions during construction as much as possible.

There were several questions for more information on design elements of the project and construction staging which will only be known during the later design phase for project work.

More information was asked about:

- Design and technical details for erosion control measures and channel treatments
- How creek restoration could change the nature of the creek and surrounding environment
- Potential opportunities to assist with monitoring construction impacts and replanting during restoration
- Whether invasive species would be removed as part of the creek restoration;
- Whether removed trees could be left behind to biodegrade and support local ecosystems
- The prioritization of projects city-wide and knowing when work at Newtonbrook Creek is likely to take place
- The length of time for trail closure(s), and the frequency as a result of how many times work will be done in the creek
- Emergency response protocols should conditions worsen (as a result of a storm)
- The purpose of tree tagging in the area and whether the tree inventory and species list could be shared

Participants provided observations on current conditions:

- Erosion along the banks and bed of the creek
- The concrete rubble and log jams (throughout the creek) are potential hazards and an eyesore
- The smell of sewage and whether the sewage is leaking into the creek

Most comments and concerns were related to project implementation and construction:

- Canopy loss along the creek as a result of tree removals during project implementation
- The impact of trail closures and restricted access to the multi-use trail for local residents and trail users who use the trail for exercise and leisure
- Possible damage to the trail during construction and impacts on the trail as a result of heavy equipment being transported to project sites during restoration

- The number of times work crews will enter the ravine and damage trees if adjacent projects are implemented at different times
  - A preference to complete all necessary works within a determined timeframe;
- A preference to maintain the natural trail over potential paving during reconstruction;
- Loss of the natural environment and ambiance as a result of construction and approach to restoration:
  - A preference for natural approaches to landscaping during reconstruction; and
  - Feedback was not in favour of the 'overly engineered' character of the landscaping post-construction at Duncan Creek.

## Community Interest Groups – Newtonbrook Ravine Stewards

Most of the questions and concerns were related to areas of stewardship and access to the trail and ravine. The stewards would like to avoid work in areas that overlap with future projects and are interested in maintaining the monitoring site at least another 3 years.

Questions were forwarded to the project team via email in preparation for the meeting.

Below is a summary of concerns raised and feedback received:

More information was asked about:

- Timelines for project implementation, the expected length of time for construction and the order in which projects implementation would happen
- Areas that will be cleared for project implementation (so that stewards can avoid work in those areas)
- Creek and path closures including the location and type of barriers
- Whether stewardship work can continue during construction
- Information on the City tree and plant inventory for the area

Participants provided comments on current conditions and preferences for restoration:

- Current log jams and fallen tree branches should be removed as they are hazardous to trail users
- Some native plant species have begun to grow (black maple, white snakeroot, beech), and should be retained or relocated, if possible
- There are invasive species in the area, removing the invasive species during construction would be beneficial

- There is a preference to see the creek return to a natural winding flow
- The stewards have offered their assistance, where possible, with replanting during reconstruction

Participants shared concerns with project implementation and construction:

- Protection is needed for the birds and the nesting areas along the creek
- Concerns on the loss of trees during construction, especially for more mature trees
- The woodchip path was appreciated, there was concerns that trail improvements may change the current character of the gravel path; paving of the path in the future after restoration was not preferred
- The Nature Stewards' have a monitoring site above Forest Grove Road (approximately 10' X 10'), which was used as an observation and testing area for native plant species; it was requested for the area to remain undisturbed for a minimum of 3 more years for monitoring purposes
- Restoration and landscaping should have a natural and rugged design for attracting fish and adding character to the area
  - The restored landscaping at Duncan Creek was not preferred, as it was considered artificial

## Email and Phone Comments

Comments received via phone/email from members of the public were generally in support of the recommended changes with a few concerns raised.

Comments in support of recommendations:

- Gratitude and support for the study and recommended project works
- Recognition that the recommended projects are preventative measures for potential future sewage spills as a result of extreme weather events (as a result of climate change)
- Recognition that the creek provides an important role to the recreation park system and as stormwater conveyance for the neighbourhood
- A preference for Projects #8, #5, and #3 to be implemented first

Concerns raised:

- Potential impacts on Cummer Valley Middle School, as the property backs on to the creek
- Preserving plant life during reconstruction

Additional concerns raised which are out of the project scope:

- Litter in the creek
- Safety concerns as a result of the increase in homeless and marginally housed people living in and spending increasing amounts of time in the creek

## First Nations Communities

There were no objections to the recommended projects.

The Alderville First Nation would like to participate in any potential Stage 2 archaeological assessments.

All feedback has been shared with the project team and will be resolved or passed forward in the Environmental Study Report.

## Agencies and Utilities

There were utilities in the study area that may be impacted. All feedback has been shared with the project team and will be resolved or passed forward in the Environmental Study Report which is the technical report that will move forward with the project.

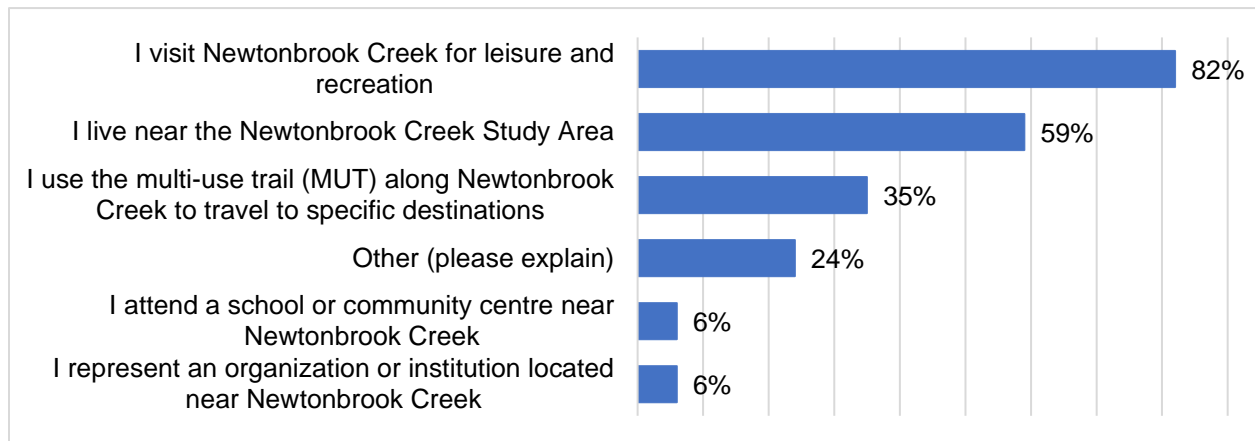
## Survey

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

### **About You**

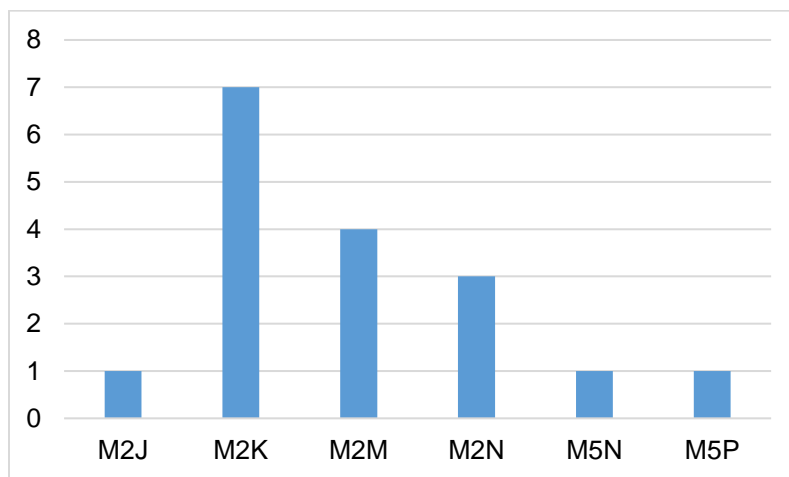
This section of the survey asks respondents about their relationship to the project area which provides context for the responses received.

### Which statements best describe your relationship to the project?



Most of the survey respondents (82%) visit Newtonbrook Creek for leisure and recreation. Those who responded with “Other” (24%) identified as working with the Newtonbrook Creek Ravine Stewards (3) or have ‘walked through the creek (1).

### What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?

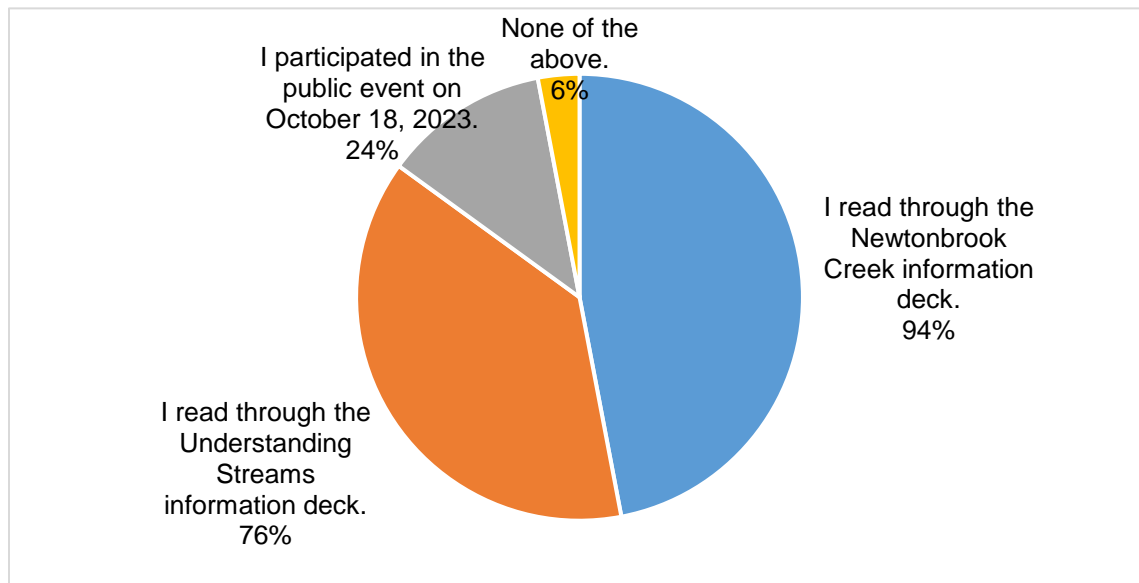


Postal code data verifies that most respondents were local to the area, with 2 out of 17 respondents visiting from a little farther away.



## How did you review project information?

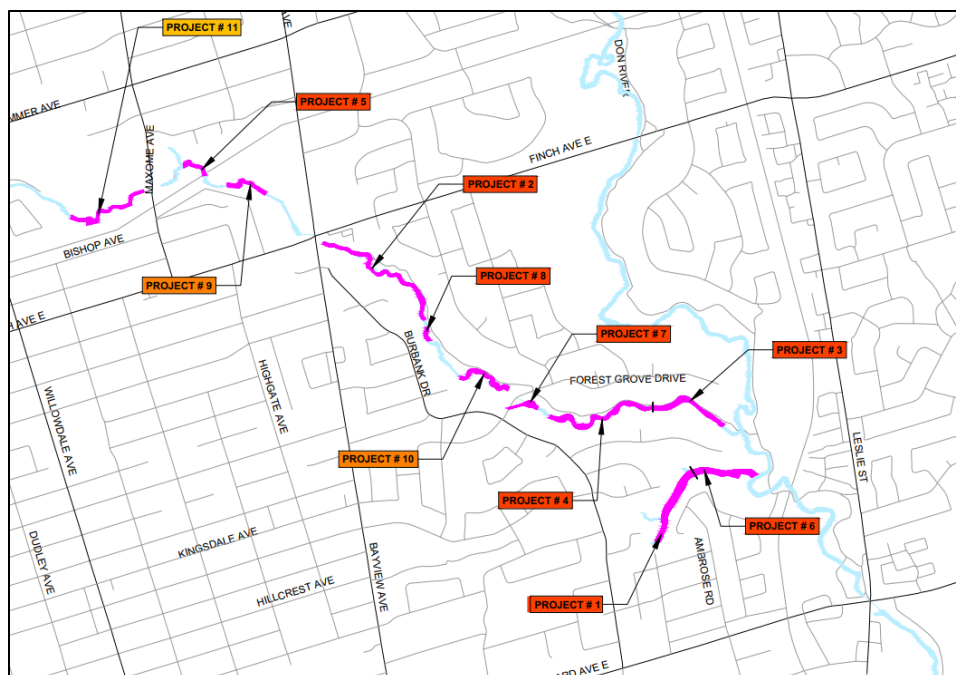
It was recommended that respondents review the project information on the webpage or at the public event prior to giving feedback.



Almost all respondents read through the Newtonbrook Creek information deck which was available on the project webpage and at the public event on October 18, 2023. A majority of respondents also reviewed the Understanding Streams information deck, with several respondents participating in the public event.

## Study Details

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to provide feedback on the recommended projects and for the study recommendation overall.



### Do you have specific comments for any of the recommended projects?

Feedback repeated across most, or all of the projects included a request for more information and trail realignment and restoration.

Feedback for Projects #1 - #4 and Project #7 and #10. A summary of the comments is in the table below.

Project #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the proposed alternative as the maintenance hole is exposed</li> <li>• Large tree looks to be in danger of falling</li> <li>• Small American Elm trees are in the area</li> <li>• Preference for the current character of the valley, please do not turn it into a park-like setting</li> <li>• Project falls within the Newtonbrook Stewards area</li> </ul>
Project #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project falls within the Newtonbrook Stewards area; they would like to be involved where possible and kept updated on activities</li> </ul>
Project #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank erosion is extensive</li> <li>• Minimize tree removals</li> <li>• Protection of natural species should be prioritised</li> <li>• Aesthetic of armour stone, may not be pleasing but is preferred over gabion baskets</li> </ul>

Project #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of invasive species</li> </ul>
Project #7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of required project work</li> <li>• Request for minimal tree removals as it affects the view from local properties</li> </ul>
Project #10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project falls within the Newtonbrook Stewards area; they would like to be involved where possible and kept updated on activities</li> </ul>

### **Do you have any general feedback about the study recommendations?**

Responses are summarized below:

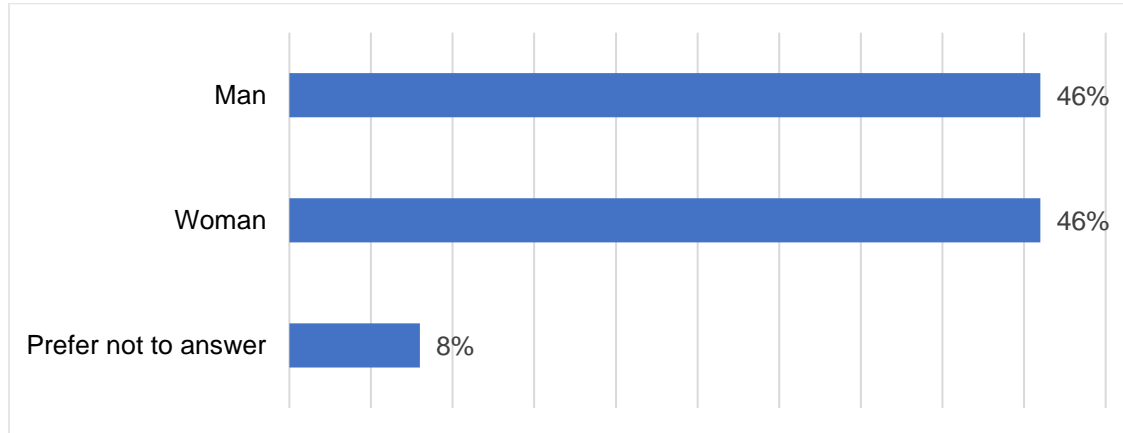
- General support for recommended projects with recognition that work needs to be done:
  - Supports a 'healthy creek'
  - protects the watershed and private residential properties
  - gratitude for 'looking after' the ravine
- Appreciation and gratitude for the creek and the role it plays in the lives of local residents
- Emphasis on minimal damage to nature and minimal tree removals
- Trail impacts and project restoration
  - Requests to preserve "natural" trail conditions
  - Requests for a paved multi-purpose trail
- Preference to close the trail (all areas) once and implement all projects
- Request for on-going communication leading up to project implementation and construction
- Requests to expand the scope of study to include the trails managed by Parks and Forestry and Recreation

## Appendix A - Survey respondent demographic information

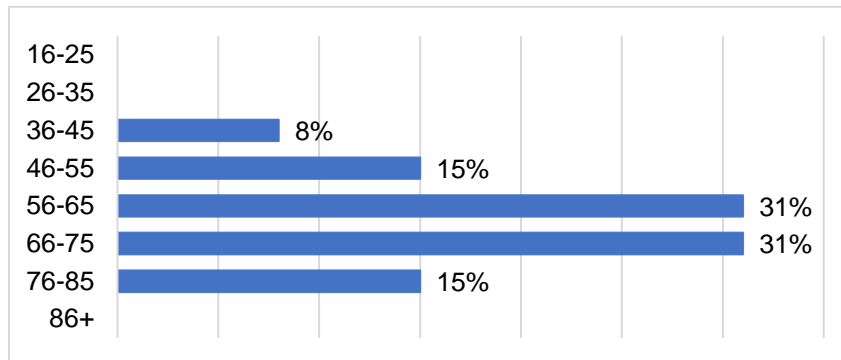
### Demographics

A total of 13 of the 17 respondents provided optional demographic information described below.

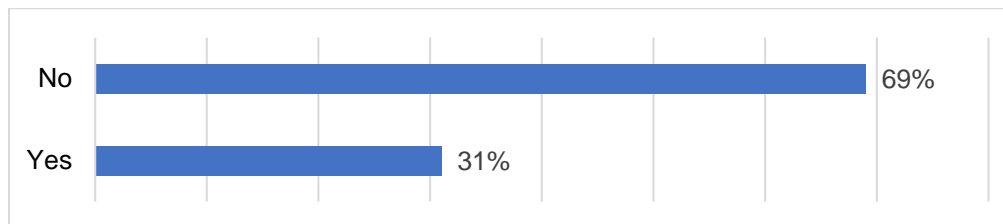
#### What is your gender identity?



#### What is your age category?



#### Do you identify as a person with a disability?



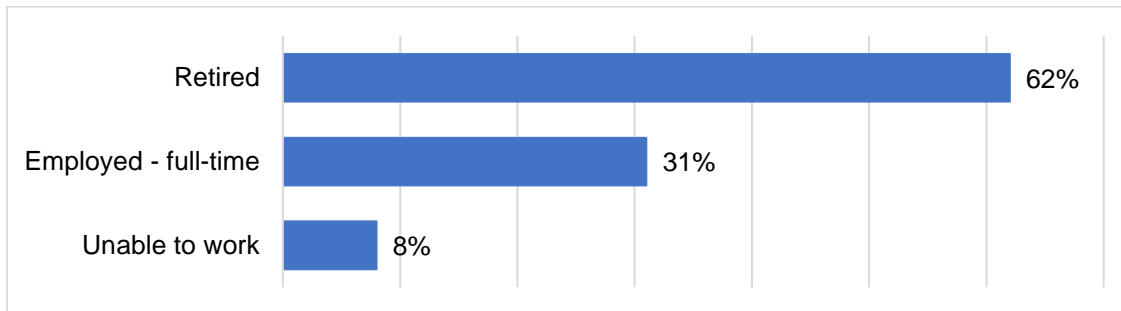
The majority of respondents feel in either the 56-65 age group (31%) or the 66 – 75 age group (31%). The 36 – 45 year old age category is under-represented (8%).

There was an equal response rate among men (46%) and women (46%).

Twenty per cent (31%) of respondents identify with a disability, 69% do not.

## Employment

**Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**



Majority of the 17 respondents are retiree (62%) or unable to work (8%). Those who work full-time contributed 31% of responses.

## Source of Information

**How did you hear about this study?**

Majority of respondents (62%) heard about the study through a Local Councillor's e-newsletter, followed by those who heard about the study from the Public Notice distributed through Canada Post.

