



# Help Shape the Future of Countryside Park

Public Open House and Online Survey Summary  
November 2024

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Prepared for the City of Kitchener

## Executive Summary

The City of Kitchener is enhancing water quality and reducing flood risks through stormwater management at Countryside Park. This project involves updates to improve stormwater runoff collection and filtration while enhancing park amenities. There are two large stormwater pipes currently carrying runoff from Balzer Creek and the Grand River. Countryside Park is a good place to add stormwater management facilities. This is to collect and filter runoff.

### Planned Park Updates

- **Trail Upgrades:** Improved paving and winter maintenance.
- **Stormwater Facilities:** Two new systems to manage runoff from Balzer Creek and the Grand River.
- **Tree Canopy Improvements:** Preserving mature trees and planting diverse, well-maintained trees.
- **Seating Options:** Increased seating for community use.

### Benefits of Stormwater Management

- Improved water quality in Balzer Creek and the Grand River.
- Reduced flood risks and erosion in Balzer Creek.
- Enhanced resilience against climate change.
- Increased community safety.

### Community Engagement

In Fall 2024, the City of Kitchener and Aquafor Beech hosted an open house and conducted an online survey to gather community feedback. Engagement methods included:

- **In-Person Open House:** October 29, 2024 (22 attendees).
- **Online Survey:** Open from October 29 to November 29, 2024 (4 responses).
- **Direct Feedback:** Via email to the project team.

### Key Insights from Community Feedback

- Strong support for the proposed stormwater pond location.
- Concerns about children's safety near the pond, given its proximity to school routes.
- Broad support for trail upgrades, including paving and maintenance.
- Endorsement of preserving mature trees and maintaining diverse, safe tree varieties.

This project aims to combine environmental sustainability with community safety and improved park amenities, guided by resident feedback and collaboration.

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# Introduction

## Background

In 2016, the City of Kitchener Council approved the Stormwater Plan. This plan created a strategy to manage stormwater for the next 15 years. The plan shows that only 25% of untreated runoff in the city is through stormwater facilities. This means 75% of untreated runoff from heavy rainfall and snow melt flows into storm sewers. This contributes to contamination of local creeks, erosion, and flooding.

In this neighbourhood, runoff flows through a sewer to Balzer Creek. This sewer collects stormwater runoff from a significant part of the neighbourhood (**Figure 1**). A new stormwater management pond would intercept and filter the runoff before it enters the creek. This would reduce downstream flood risks and reduce erosion. Countryside Park is a good place to place a stormwater management facility in the area. It meets several technical criteria that were required as part of the Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund, including:

- The park is larger than 1 hectare
- The park is public land
- The park has a stormwater sewer connection greater than 450 millimetres
- The park is not too steep
- The park does not have large, treed areas or wetlands
- The area has the potential to meet water quality criteria

The Master Plan identified initial concepts for projects to be installed throughout Kitchener. In the Winter of 2023, the City gathered insights to understand the community's park uses. They also shared park features that are important to the community. This is to help inform the proposed design. In the fall of 2024, the City of Kitchener and Aquafor Beech staff hosted an open house to share information. As well as gather community feedback on the proposed project. These include the pond design, plantings, cross sections, and safety measures. The open house materials were shared online. A brief survey was shared to gather insights from people who could not attend in person.

To help build these projects, the City got nearly \$50 million from the Government of Canada. This funding is through the Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund. This funding means the City can install needed facilities at a lower cost.



**Figure 1: About 10.5 hectares drains to Countryside Park from Rittenhouse Road and Countryside Crescent. None of the runoff from this area is treated to improve water quality.**

## Event Purpose

- Provide context of the Stormwater Management Master Plan.
- Share what we heard from previous winter 2023 engagements.
- Share the initial draft design for Countryside Park and gather feedback
- Outline the engagement and design process ahead.

## What We Heard

Overall, we heard positive feedback about the design option for Countryside Park. Details from the open house and survey are below.

### Surface Stormwater Management Pond and Fencing

Comments received about the surface stormwater management pond and fencing indicated:

- Participants expressed support for the proposed surface stormwater management pond location.
- Participants supported the proposed landscape options surrounding the surface stormwater ponds.
- A participant liked the gradual decline of the wooden fence.
- Individuals suggested:
  - Installing a more secure fence around the pond, given many kids are walking around the area. Once the pond plantings grow, a more robust fence like the metal fence might be needed. This may be more suitable and last longer.
  - Installing fencing that enables plants to grow.
  - There was a suggestion to use a farm fence or something suitable to deter pond access.
  - Sump Pump over to Catch basin (CB).
  - Starting construction sooner than 2028
- An individual had questions about where the pond maintenance access points for cleaning would be. As well how often the surface pond needs to be maintained.

### Safety

- Participants are concerned about children's safety around the pond. They shared that many kids use the trail to and from school.
- Participants suggested:
  - Accessibility and safety are priorities for all users and visitors.
  - The design should be easy access for emergency vehicles (such as ambulances) when needed.
  - Installing signage around the pond or keeping the pond shallow as safety measures.

## Trails

Comments received about trails indicated:

- Participants supported the proposed trail design. The new paving and winter maintenance will be great for people who use the trail daily.
- Participants supported the preservation of the existing walkway/trail.
- They suggested adding more trails.

## Open space

Individual comments about open space noted the following:

- Uncertainty if the soccer field is necessary. They shared that there are other large fields at McLennan Park.
- The preservation of the open space for future sports activities is great.
- The existing open space near the trees is a key view.

## Seating and gathering spaces

Individual comments about seating and gathering spaces noted the following:

- Support for visitor seating.
- Support for the use of armour stone and benches.
- A suggestion for more benches.

## Planting plan

Comments received about the planting plan included:

- Participants supported the variety of trees. This includes the preservation of existing mature trees. As well as keeping them well-maintained and in a safe condition. There was interest in having more trees in the park.
- Participants are concerned about mosquitoes, geese, and other wildlife around the park.
- Participants suggested:
  - Keeping the tree's canopy cropped high.
  - Considering tree selection when designing views and sightlines of the park.
  - Planting larger trees (larger diameter than 25 millimeters).
  - Selecting vegetation that is pest/insect (e.g., mosquitoes) resistant.
  - Proper and ongoing maintenance of the plants, trees, and vegetation is needed
  - Proper weed management.
  - Planting more native species around the area. They suggested enlisting volunteers for the work to keep cost projects down.
  - Clean up the existing remaining trees near the canopy improvements.
- Participants shared that the trees located at the fork of the trail (mid-park) need to be maintained.

## Overall Community Engagement

Participants offered more feedback on the community engagement process, noting:

- They enjoyed the open house. Many indicated they felt better after the meeting and learning about the project.
- They like the plan and are eager to see the results soon. They liked seeing the layouts of the draft plan. They thought it was well-planned and informative.
- Some participants shared they would like more regular updates as the project continues. It had been a while since feedback was taken in 2023. They contacted the local councillor to get information about the open house.
- One participant suggested that the event registration confirmation should include more information. This includes the event's name, date, location, and time in the thank you message. This is to make it easier for registrants to find the meeting details.
- Participants suggested looking for extra methods to inform the public on the project. They shared some of their neighbours were unaware of it.
- A participant suggested a presentation would have been better for this project phase.

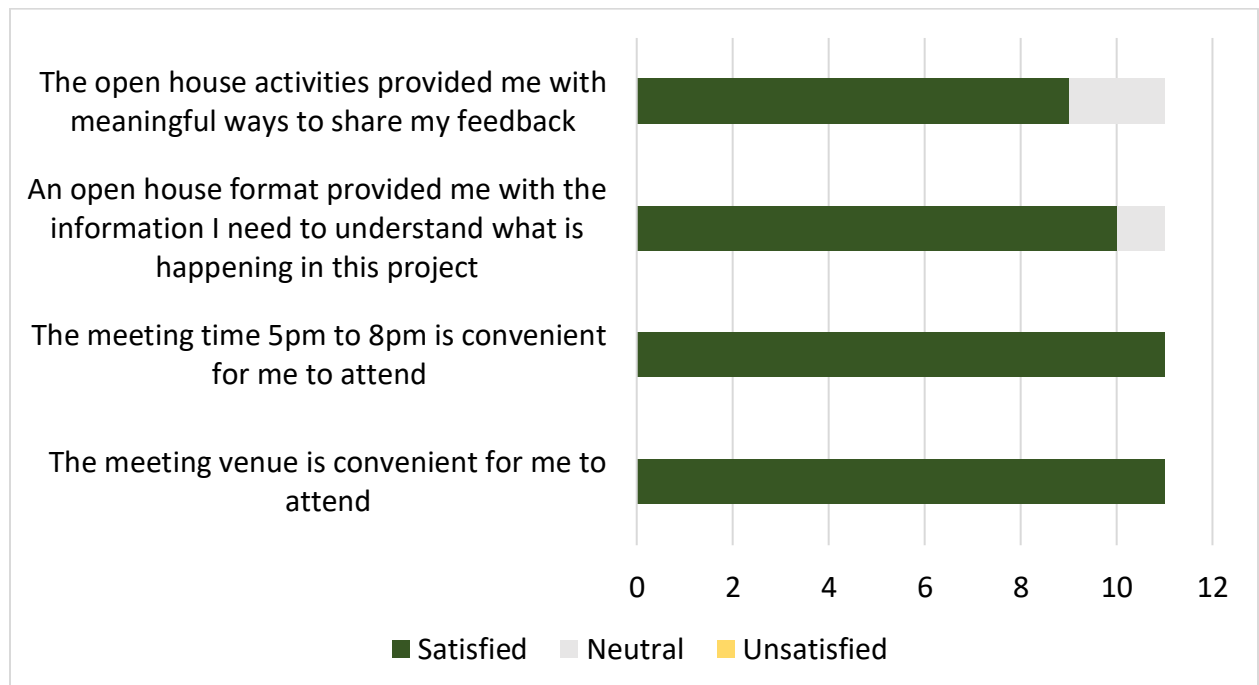


**Figure 2. Responses to Open House Passport feedback on participant experience attending the meeting (n=11)**

## Engagement Opportunity Details

### Public Open House

The City of Kitchener and Aquafor Beech hosted an in-person open house on October 29, 2024. The open house was from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. It was at Alpine Public School. Open house attendees could review information about the City's Stormwater Management Master Plan. They can also see the proposed design for Countryside Park. A series of boards provided information on the design site plan, cross sections, planting plan, and safety features. City and consultant team staff were available to answer questions and listen to feedback.

The event was a drop-in style. Throughout the open house, people could provide feedback by:

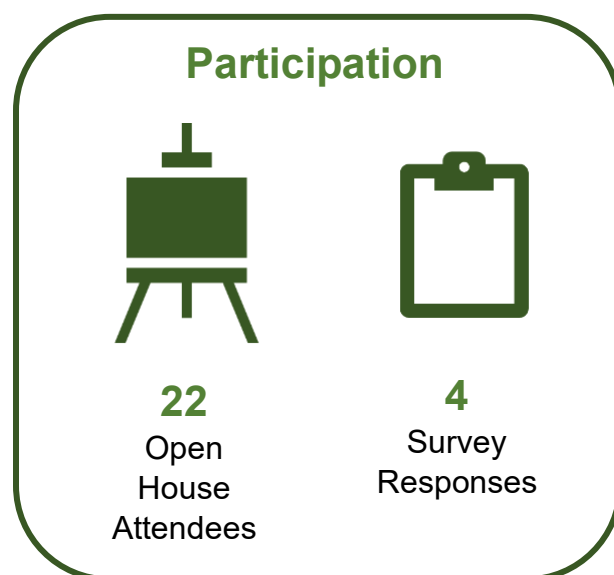
- Placing sticky notes with comments and questions on display boards.
- Completing the Countryside Park Passport Activity.
- Completing a written survey.
- Speaking to project team staff one-on-one.

Twenty Two (22) people signed into the open house.

### Online Survey

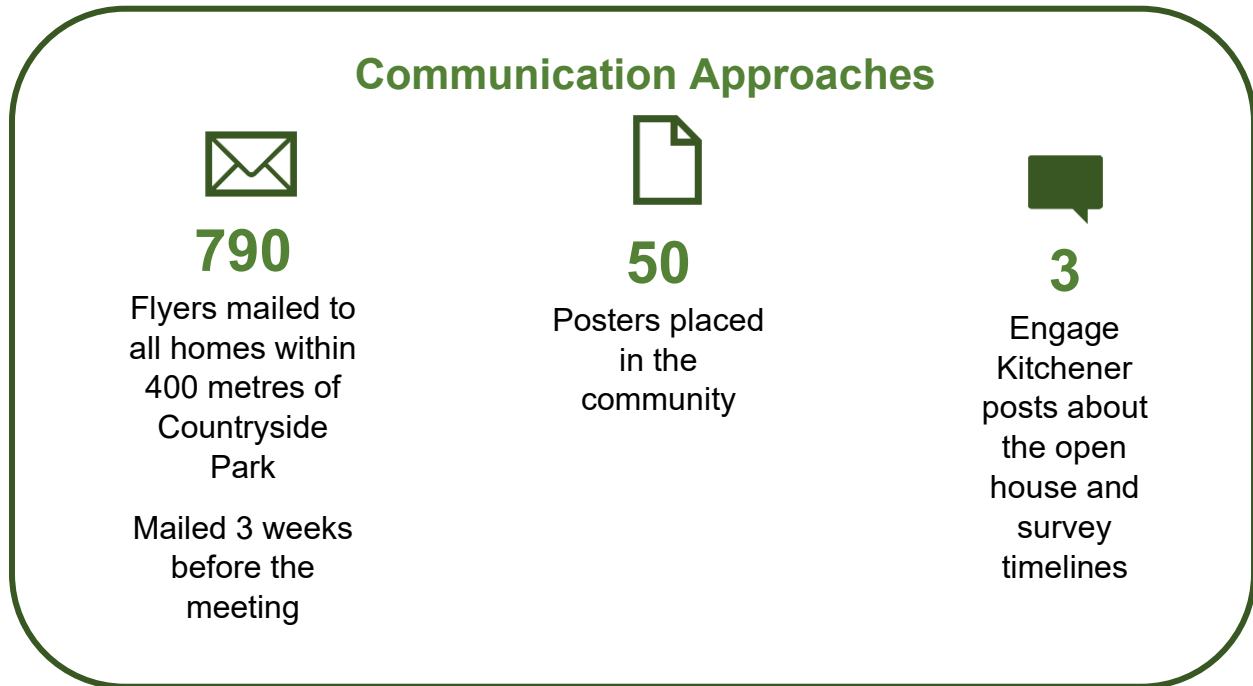
Following the open house, the City published an online survey. This is on the [Help Shape the Future of Countryside Park page](#). The survey was available from October 29, 2024, to November 29, 2024.

The survey included six (6) questions to gather feedback about the design concepts. Four (4) optional demographic questions. Twenty two (22) people completed a Park Passport Activity at the meeting. One (1) person completed a paper copy of the survey and three (3) responded to the survey online.



## Communication

City of Kitchener staff communicated the engagement opportunities using the following methods.



## Next Steps

The feedback received at the open house and through the survey will be used as the final design is refined. The final design will be shared with the community before construction. Expected construction timelines are:

- Countryside Park final design - 2028.
- Countryside Park construction in 2029-2030

## Appendix A: Survey Demographics

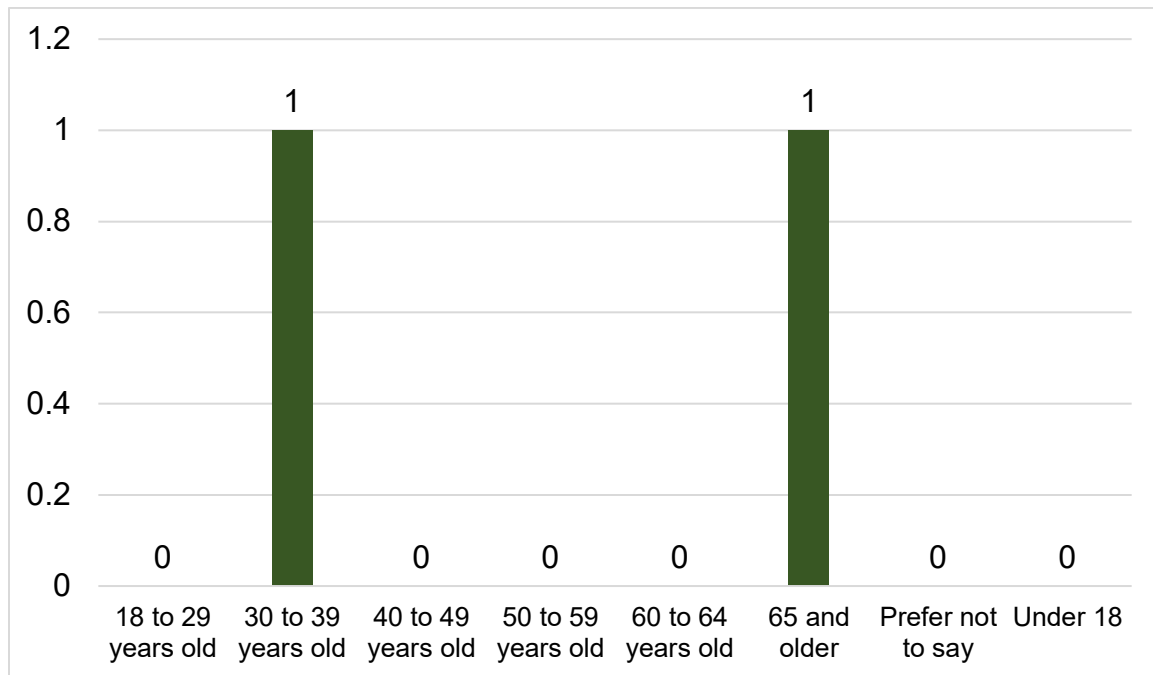


**Figure 2. Age of survey participants (n=4)**

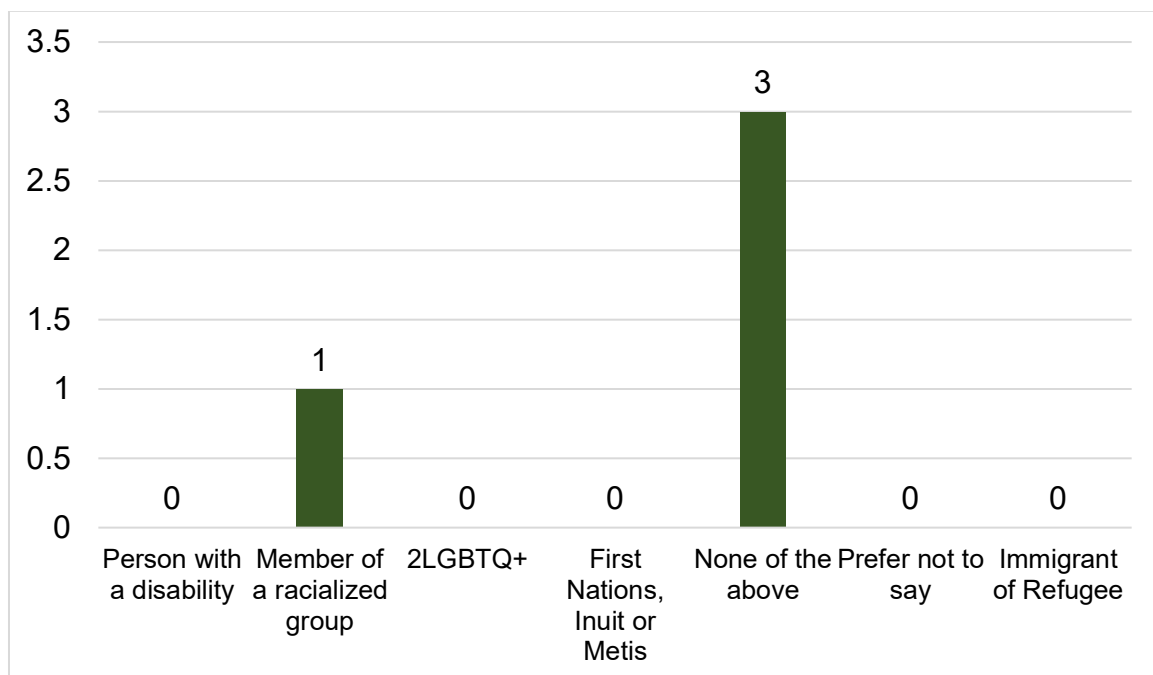


**Figure 3. Personal self-identification of survey participants (n=4)**

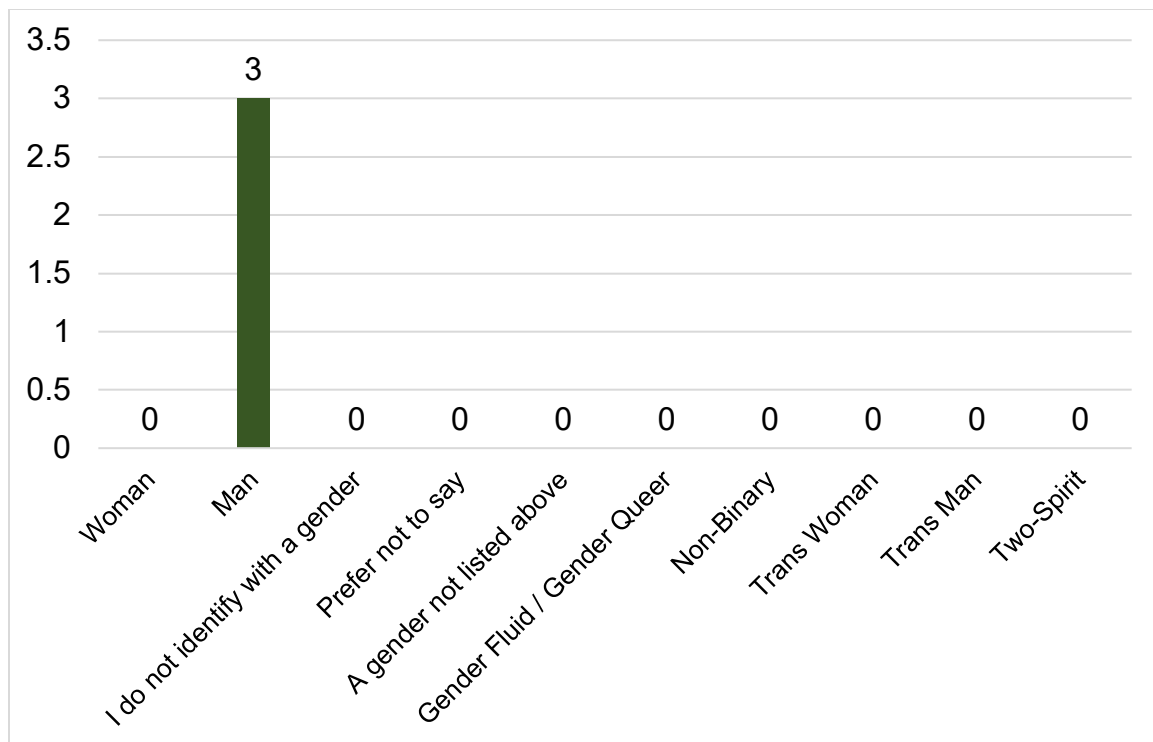


**Figure 4. Gender self-identification of survey participants (n=4)**

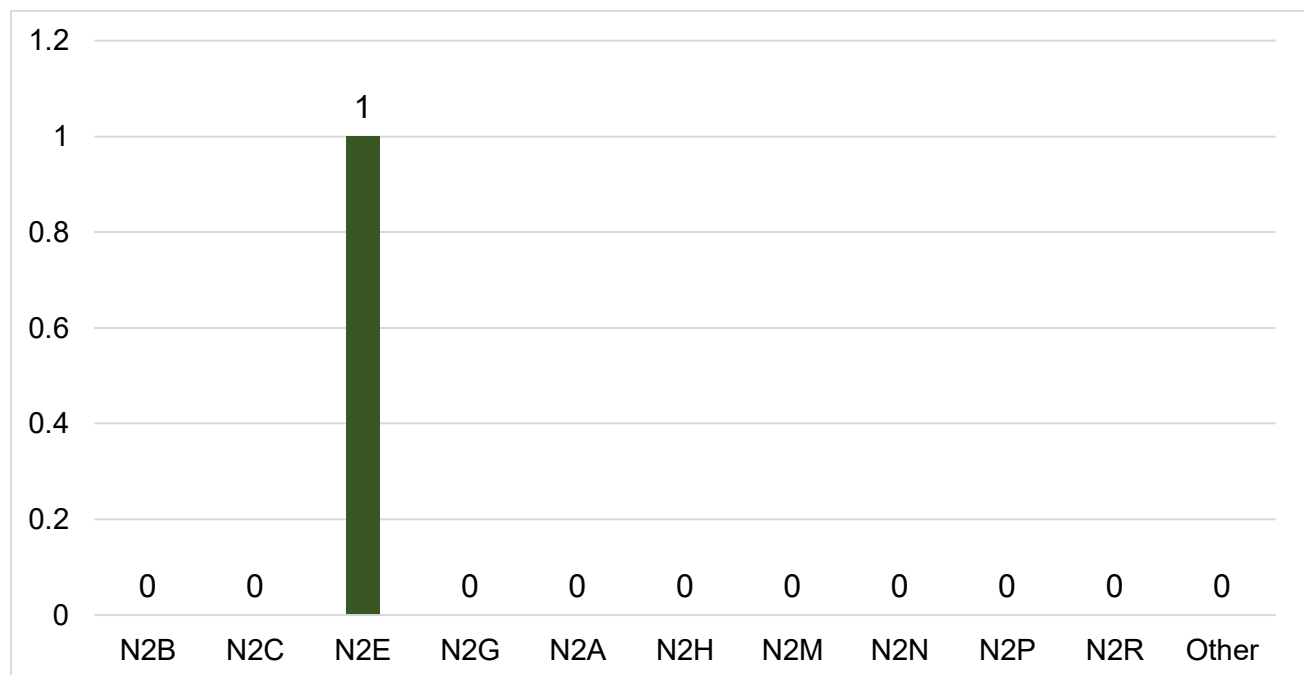


**Figure 14. Postal code of survey participants (n=4)**