



The Envision Eby: Farmstead Engagement Initiative

October 2024

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Executive Summary

In advance of the upcoming 2025 Waterloo Park Plan process, the City of Waterloo would like a better idea of what to do with Eby Farmstead. In 2024, Waterloo Council approved a staff recommendation to review the future of Eby Farmstead in Waterloo Park and consult with the residents of Waterloo to understand what the community wants to do with that space.

Through recent surveys and engagement sessions, Waterloo residents expressed mixed feelings about the future of the live animal displays. While some residents value the farmstead for its nostalgic and educational roles, others raised concerns about animal welfare, particularly in an urban environment.

The Envision Eby: Farmstead Engagement Initiative asked two central questions:

1. Whether the city should continue to maintain an animal display in the park?
2. What other things can the community imagine in that space, with or without the animals?

Do We Keep the Animals?

- **Concerns Over Living Conditions:** Respondents raised concerns about the well-being of the animals in their current environment
- **Support for Animal Retirement:** Participants suggested retiring the animals to sanctuaries, especially considering that many are aging.
- **Improvement Suggestions:** to keep the animals, recommendations included expanding enclosures, creating noise barriers, and enhancing visitor/animal boundaries

Innovative community ideas for the Space

- **Ecological Learning Center:** Transforming the space into an environmental and ecological learning hub, offering interactive exhibits that educate visitors about Indigenous histories, sustainability, farming, and local wildlife.
- **Community Garden or Play Area:** Respondents imagined a community garden or accessible playground designed to foster greater social interaction and provide educational opportunities for children.
- **Year-Round Use:** Other suggestions included creating a year-round attraction, such as a greenhouse or covered event space, to make the area functional and engaging throughout the year.

This report was written by LURA Consulting, the independent community engagement team that was retained to deliver the community engagement. It summarizes the community's diverse feedback and offers recommendations and pathways for Eby Farmstead to align with modern community goals.

History of Animals and Eby Farmstead

The Eby Farmstead was named after the Eby Family, who actively farmed the land until 1890 when they sold it to the Town of Waterloo to construct a public park. Eby Farm has been a beloved part of Waterloo Park since the late 1960s when it was gifted to the City's parks board of management from the Waterloo Lions Club as a Centennial project. The original project was promoted as a "zoo" (live animal display) but later became known as the Eby Farmstead. The live animal display initially displayed deer before growing to include wild animals, including black bears, cougars, and timber wolves. In 1990, due to safety concerns for the animals and staff, the live animal display transitioned to exhibiting domestic animals.

History of the Eby Farmstead

The 1989 Waterloo Park Plan (WPP) acknowledged the attraction and popularity of the live animal display and recommended improvements to the area (as does the 2009 WPP).

In 1992, the City commissioned the "Eby Farm Study" - a program definition and implementation plan. The study was undertaken to provide staff with a concept and implementation strategy for the development of Eby Farm.

The 1992 study set a mandate to preserve the agricultural heritage of the Waterloo area. The study's objectives were to improve animal display by promoting traditional values of respect and care towards animals and understanding the historically based working relationship. This was to be accomplished through year-round free educational opportunities and programming in a rural landscape.

In 2009, the City developed the Waterloo Park Plan (WPP). The Plan includes several recommendations, design considerations, and a preferred conceptual design for the Farmstead area. The WPP-preferred design carried forward some of the design considerations from the 1992 Implementation Plan, acknowledging the need for improvements and upgrades to the Farmstead.

The recommendations within the 2009 WPP for Eby Farmstead have not been implemented. However, in 2016, an updated vision emerged through the Functional Study of the Central Promenade through Waterloo Park. Although the project focused on the Central Promenade, the consultants studied relationships between the promenade and adjacent spaces. Aligned with the current WPP direction to retain and reconfigure the live animal displays, the study identified the Eby Farmstead area as a place that may accommodate programming possibilities of a major urban park - such as flexible spaces, a central pavilion (covered shelter, wash/change rooms), a central plaza and a natural amphitheater that offers all-season interest and attractions.

Eby Farmstead Now

The farm currently has two donkeys, a miniature horse, two alpacas, three llamas, and an Appaloosa horse.

As the park changes, with more visitors, the ION route, and different and longer public use hours, there is a growing conversation about the ethics of animals being kept in pens for entertainment and how the hustle and bustle of the park and the nearby trains affect the well-being of the farmstead's animals. Furthermore, the animals of Eby Farmstead are aging, and how to plan for their retirement is another consideration.

In 2025, the City will be engaging Council, the public, and staff in a comprehensive review and update of the Waterloo Park Plan. A conscious decision was made to address the Eby Farmstead ahead of the Park Plan renewal to ensure that the correct amount of time, resources, and discussion was allocated to deciding the role of live animals in Waterloo Park. The Eby Farmstead has been studied for the past 35 years with extensive plans and reports documenting the need for improvements, making it a priority to be addressed ahead of the overall Park Plan.

In June 2023, staff met with the Waterloo Park Advisory Committee (a committee of Council) to discuss the future of the Eby Farmstead. Committee members discussed the current operation of the Eby Farmstead and concluded that the public should be engaged before an alternative use for the space is proposed.

On Monday, May 13th, 2024, Waterloo Council approved a staff recommendation to review the future of the Eby Farmstead in Waterloo Park. Councillors carried this recommendation after hearing feedback that suggested public consultation to determine whether the Eby Farmstead is feasible to continue or if it was time to reimagine the space as something different.

This report is the outcome of that direction from Council.

Media Coverage of Eby Farmstead

Overall, the discourse on the Farmstead is a binary: those concerned with animal welfare and want the space repurposed and those excited for the animals to return.

Much of the media coverage, including social media sites like Twitter and Reddit, discusses residents' concerns about the animals' welfare at the Farmstead.

Envision Eby: Farmstead Engagement Initiative

Engagement Activities

Envision Eby engaged Waterloo Mayor, Council, and Residents throughout the summer of 2024, utilizing tools like local context assessments and media scans, an online survey, community pop-ups, and one-on-one stakeholder interviews to gather input from the community. The engagement initiative reached over 1,000 people.

The purpose of the engagement activities was to:

- Have an inclusive engagement by connecting with residents in a meaningful way and ensuring their voices are heard
- Engage in genuine dialogue with residents to participate and contribute their insights and feedback
- Involve the community in the process to ensure that decisions about the Farmstead's future reflect community values
- Gather diverse thoughts, concerns, questions, and ideas to inform the decision for Eby Farmstead through the online survey

Here is a summary of the engagement activities:

Engagement Activity	Date	Location or Format	Group	Approximate Attendance or Response Count
Pre- Engagement Feedback	May 13, 2024	Online Outreach	Waterloo Residents	138
Pre-Engagement Community Pop-ups	June 8, 2024	In-person	Service Centre Open House	500+
	June 16, 2024	In-person	Friends of Waterloo Park “Summer Start” event, held in Waterloo Park	
	July 20, 2024	In-person	Waterloo Jazz Fest, held in City Centre Lot	
	July 24, 2024	In-person, Public Square	Community Campfire	
	August 7, 2024	In-Person, Public Square	Community Campfire	
	August 10, 2024	In-Person, Waterloo Park	Day of Play	
Online Survey	August 26, 2024 – September 20, 2024	Engage Waterloo		382
1:1 Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings	August 11 – 16 2024	Virtual Meetings	Interviews from Councillors and Mayor	5

Engagement Activity	Date	Location or Format	Group	Approximate Attendance or Response Count
	September 11, 2024	Virtual Meeting	Waterloo Park Advisory Committee 2023-2024	6
	September 10, 2024	Virtual Meeting	Friends of Waterloo Park	7
	Sept 18, 2024	Virtual Meeting	Wonders of Winter	3
Community Pop-ups	Aug 28, 2024	In-person	Community Campfire	500+
	Aug 30, 2024	In-person	Waterloo Art Market	
TOTAL				1541+

The City's website and the ' Engage Waterloo ' page were regularly updated with general information regarding engagement activities and the project.

The following section summarizes what we heard from the community through the engagement activities noted above, categorized thematically.

What We Learned

The feedback from the pre-engagement 130+ people was clear, with ~70% of responders wanting to retire the animals and repurpose the space. The 350+ people that responded to the online survey were quite a bit more divided. Respondents were 55% in favor of making significant capital investment into Eby Farm and keeping the animals while 40% wanted to see an end to live animal displays and completely reimagine the space. On almost all of the feedback, regardless of whether residents want to see the animal display kept or reimaged, it is clear that the current condition of the animal display is inadequate, and people have a vested interest in the current and future wellbeing of the farmstead animals.

Interviews from Councillors and the Mayor

In mid-August, a series of interviews were conducted with City Councillors and the Mayor. This is a summary of the main points of those interviews.

Prioritizing Community Input

Members of Council and the mayor strongly emphasized involving the community in the redesign process to ensure that the park reflected local desires.

- Community feedback through engagement and surveys.
- Council wanted the community to "think big" about the park space and share ideas to generate excitement and foster community connections through activities and gathering areas promoting interaction.

Repurposing the Space for Greater Engagement

Ideas for repurposing the park space to increase and prioritize community engagement.

- Moving away from live animals as a central attraction.
- Create gathering places, performance areas, and interactive public art installations
- Spaces that reflect the community's history and local flora.
- Emphasize educational opportunities related to plants and local history, which would attract a wider variety of residents.

Family-Friendly and Accessible Design

Ensuring a family-friendly and accessible park.

- Introduce child-friendly natural play areas.
- Increased naturally shaded areas, leveraging the large old-growth canopy in the space.
- Calls for intergenerational spaces and programming.
- The feeling of creating "Everyone's Backyard".
- One Councillor noted that less engaging features replaced Lion's Lagoon and does not want to see that happen again.

Animal Welfare and Ethical Considerations

The welfare of the animals currently in the park was a concern.

- The disturbances from nearby urban infrastructure like the ION.
- Retiring the aging animals to sanctuaries or more open, comfortable spaces where they could live peacefully.
- Concern for exposing animals to high-traffic areas.
- A shift to farm-based exhibits showcasing animals in natural roles could be more suitable for education purposes.

Sustainability and Long-Term Maintenance

The importance of long-term maintenance and sustainability

- Acknowledging financial and staffing constraints.
- Leverage local resources, such as farming connections, and involve new Canadians in maintaining the park's infrastructure and educational programs.
- Preserving the park's historical identity while transitioning to a more modern vision.

Central Community Hub and Amenities

Eby Farmstead space as a focal point in the park.

- Transform the space into a central hub with diverse amenities, such as playgrounds, gardens, event spaces, and pathways for active transportation.
- Serve the broader community, enhancing accessibility for diverse groups.
- Transform the area into a vibrant community space offering year-round activities that balance historical preservation with new, engaging features.

Community Stakeholder Meetings

Waterloo Park Advisory Committee 2023-2024

Animal Welfare:

- Ensure the welfare of the park's animals through adequate downtime and shelter. This is especially needed considering the disturbances they experience from the ION commuter train.
- Concern was expressed regarding maintenance costs and animal management, especially concerning bird flu.
- Desire was expressed to maintain the animal presence, however, by ensuring adequate living conditions and looking at non-permanent options.
- A suggestion was made to consider displaying fewer animals or to partner with local farms for rotating animal exhibits.

Educational and Interactive Opportunities:

- Ideas emerged regarding creating interactive displays that appeal to a wide range of ages and abilities, potentially attracting local schools to visit on field trips.

Future Park Developments:

- Discussions included potential new amenities, such as a bandshell or concert venue, and improvements to open spaces, trails, and gathering areas.
- Concerns about safety and the need for more open and engaging spaces were also highlighted.

Friends of Waterloo Park

Ideas for Animal Engagement

- There was interest in maintaining the farm theme, suggesting using animal statues to represent different countries and encourage engagement without live animals.
- Suggestions included having a single feature animal each season to highlight agricultural practices.
- Include Indigenous teachings.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of community gatherings around animals while ensuring safety.

Reimagining the Space

- Several attendees discussed the idea of creating a multi-functional space that could include a greenhouse and an ecological education center for agricultural learning.
- Suggestions included designing the park for year-round use and providing various educational displays about the farm's history.
- The importance of staffing was noted to ensure proper farmstead management and to answer visitors' questions.

Wonders of Winter Group

Winter display

- The winter display is in the park from November 30, 2024 to January 4, 2025 at 5:00. The display work is often changed to keep people interested.
- The loss of the pen will not affect the light display. They suggested that could be an opportunity to reimagine the winter display.
- They would like more electrical infrastructure in the space.

Lights festival, and fireworks

- This is a holiday-themed light festival.
- There is a concern about fireworks displays as they disrupt the animals.
- There is a discussion whenever the foot traffic disrupts the animals.

Animal Enclosures

- Animal enclosures are used to hang lights on. This protects the lights from vandalism and theft, which the city security has been helping with.
- The group didn't think that the enclosures were a necessary part of the light installation, just noted that they use them currently, and could adapt without them.
 - Also highlighted it would be an opportunity to reimagine some of the displays.

Eby Farmstead

- There was much concern for the animals. Many members do not want the animals to be there as they think it is cruel.
- They suggested having a petting zoo instead of the farmstead, as in other parks. They suggest that kids like it, and it helps to have a full-time staff member there during opening hours to avoid people feeding the animals.

Reimagine space

- They suggested making an interactive area for artists to display, such as face painting or puppet show, in the park.
- They suggested adding a washroom in the park.
- There is a suggestion to build a gazebo, beer garden, café atmosphere, food kiosk, mini market, farmers market, or food truck events.
- They emphasized that the park needs a light on the pathway in winter as it gets dark at 5 pm. This has been asked for 30 years.

Pre-engagement Feedback

Waterloo residents were able to respond to a question about Eby Farmstead on the Engage Waterloo Page: **Share your thoughts about the live animal display at Eby Farmstead**

Over 130 people responded to the question. Here is a summary of those responses:

- **Remove the animals and repurpose the space:** Approximately **65-70%** of respondents expressed the opinion that the animals should be removed from the park, with a focus on improving animal welfare. Common themes in this category include concerns about the animals' living conditions, noise from the LRT, and the lack of adequate space and care for the animals. Many called for rehoming the animals to sanctuaries where they could live in more natural and peaceful environments.
 - Example: One respondent mentioned, *"The animals deserve better than being confined in an urban park with constant noise. It's time to send them to a sanctuary."*
- **Keep the animals in improved conditions:** Around **20-25%** of respondents supported keeping the animals in the park but advocated for significant improvements in their living conditions. This group acknowledged the importance of maintaining animal exhibits for educational purposes, especially

for children, but emphasized that current conditions are inadequate. Suggestions include expanding enclosures, increasing staff presence, and adding educational programming.

- Example: A respondent said, *“I love the animals in the park, but their enclosures need to be larger and better maintained. It’s important to teach kids about animals, but they need to be cared for properly.”*
- The remaining **5-10%** of respondents expressed a desire to keep the animals in the park with minimal changes, citing nostalgia and the animal’s role as a park attraction. They highlighted the joy that children and families experience when visiting the animals.
 - Example: *“The animals have always been a cherished part of the park for my family. I would be sad to see them go, and my kids love visiting them every year.”*

Key Themes

Animal Welfare Concerns

Most respondents expressed concerns about the welfare of the animals, particularly regarding the negative impact of noise pollution from the nearby LRT and park visitors. There were repeated observations about the lack of shade, inadequate space, and insufficient care, with some respondents witnessing inappropriate behavior from visitors, such as feeding or harassing the animals.

- Example: *“The noise from the LRT is relentless, and these poor animals have no escape from the constant stream of people. It’s cruel to keep them here.”*

Suggestions for Space Repurposing

Many respondents suggested repurposing the space if the animals were removed. Ideas for alternative uses of the space included creating community gardens, expanding playgrounds, adding more green areas, and developing educational features such as botanical gardens or interactive exhibits about plants and animals.

- Example: *“This area could be turned into a peaceful garden or educational space that benefits everyone in the community, without needing live animals.”*

Support for the Educational Value of the Animals

Several respondents highlighted the educational importance of live animal displays, particularly for families with young children. They indicated that the animals allow urban children to engage with animals that they might not otherwise encounter. However, this group often added that if the animals remain, the enclosures and educational signage must be improved.

- Example: *“My children love seeing the animals, and it’s one of the few free ways they can learn about farm animals. I think this part of the park should stay, but with better care for the animals.”*

Nostalgia and Tradition

A smaller group of respondents emphasized the emotional and nostalgic value of the animals. Many had childhood memories of visiting the park and expressed sadness at the thought of losing this aspect of the

park. They saw the animals as a defining feature of Waterloo Park, which connected families and generations.

- Example: *“I remember visiting the animals as a child, and now I bring my children here. It’s a cherished part of the park that I would hate to see go.”*

Online Survey

To engage local community members, a 16-question survey was posted on the Engage Waterloo Region project website from August 26 to September 9, 2024.

Below is a summary of the data collected from the survey.

Question 1: When was the last time you visited the Eby Farmstead?

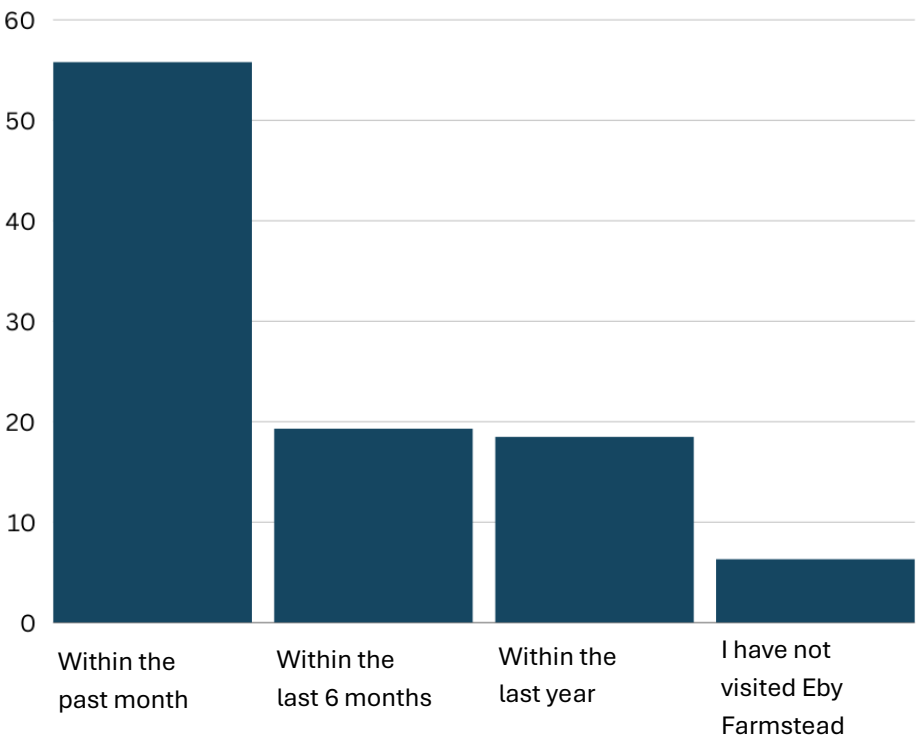


Figure 1. Summary of the last time participants visited to Eby Farmstead.

Question 2: How often do you visit the Farmstead?

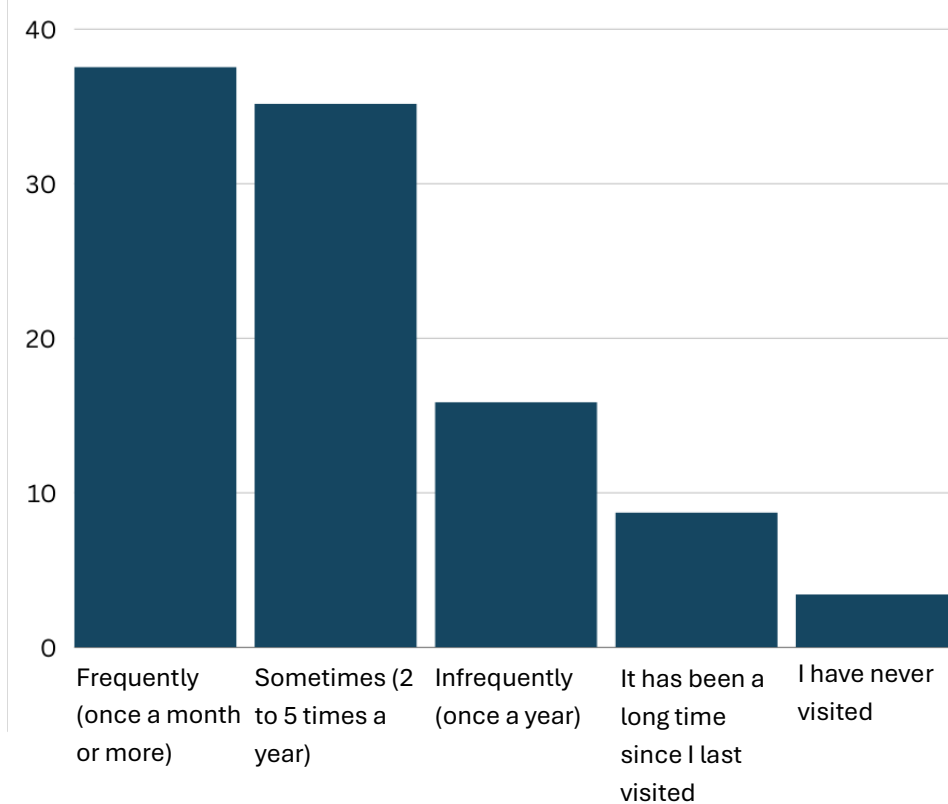


Figure 2. Summary of the visit frequency to Eby Farmstead.

Question 3: What brings you to Eby Farmstead? (Children, exercise, dog walking, etc)

People visit the farmstead for four (4) main purposes: Family and Educational Value, Community and Social Engagement, Exercise and Casual Visits, and Scenery and Mental Health.

Here is a summary of the responses:

An Attraction for Families and Children:

- **Animal Visits:** Many participants shared that their primary reason for visiting the farmstead is to see the animals, either with their children or for nostalgia, as they visited the park as kids themselves.
 - Example: *“I’ve been coming here since I was a child, and now I bring my own children to see the animals.”*
- **Family Time:** Several participants mentioned visiting the park with their families for picnics, walks, or other park activities, with many noting that these visits provide educational opportunities for their children to learn about animals.
 - Example: *“It’s a great place to spend time with my family, and the kids get to learn about animals.”*

- **Playground and Attractions:** Many participants appreciated the playground and other family-friendly activities at the farmstead, while some participants highlighted specific animals, such as alpacas, as a key attraction for their visit.
- **Occasional Visits:** A few participants shared that they visit the park only on special occasions.

Community and Events:

- **Social Gatherings:** Many participants shared that they visit the park to meet friends or attend community events.
 - Example: *"I come here regularly for special events and to meet friends."*
- **Volunteering:** A few participants mentioned volunteering at the park, while others came for community-focused activities like book club meetings.
- **Work-Related:** Some participants noted that visiting the park is part of their job responsibilities.

Exercise and Activities:

- **Exercise:** Many participants visit Eby Farmstead for exercise, including running, biking, or walking.
 - Example: *"I come here for my daily run and enjoy passing by the farmstead while I exercise."*
- **Dog Walking:** Many visitors walk their dogs around the park, and the farmstead is part of their regular route.
- **Casual Walking or Biking:** Many participants shared that they pass by the farmstead while walking or biking around the park, enjoying the fresh air or the scenic surroundings.
 - Example: *"I like to take a casual walk around the park, and the farmstead is always part of my route."*
- **Other Activities:** A few participants mentioned other forms of exercise, such as riding scooters or rollerblading through the park, as their reason for visiting.

Other Comments:

- **Enjoying the Scenery:** Many participants visit the park to enjoy the natural scenery and appreciate the peaceful outdoor environment.
 - Example: *"I come here just to enjoy the beauty of the park and the natural surroundings."*
- **Special Displays and Features:** A few participants mentioned the winter light display as a reason for their visit.
- **Animal Welfare Concerns:** Many participants visit the park to advocate for better animal welfare, expressing concerns about the animals' living conditions. However, several participants noted that they avoid visiting the farmstead entirely because of these concerns and the noise in the area.
 - Example: *"I come to advocate for the animals, but their conditions are heartbreaking, and sometimes I just avoid the farmstead because of it."*
- **Out-of-Town Visitors and Commuters:** A few participants mentioned visiting the park as out-of-town guests, while others noted that they pass through the farmstead as part of their commute to the university or work.

- **Mental Health and Fun Outings:** A few participants shared that they visit the park for mental health walks or fun outings to relieve stress and enjoy the outdoors.

Question 4: How would you get to the Eby Farmstead?

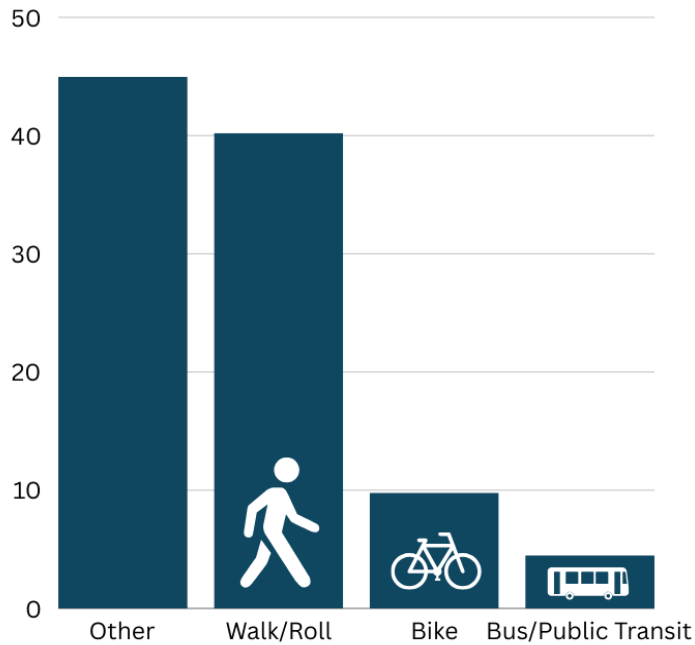


Figure 3. Summary of how participants get to Eby Farmstead.

Question 5: How was your last experience visiting Eby Farmstead?

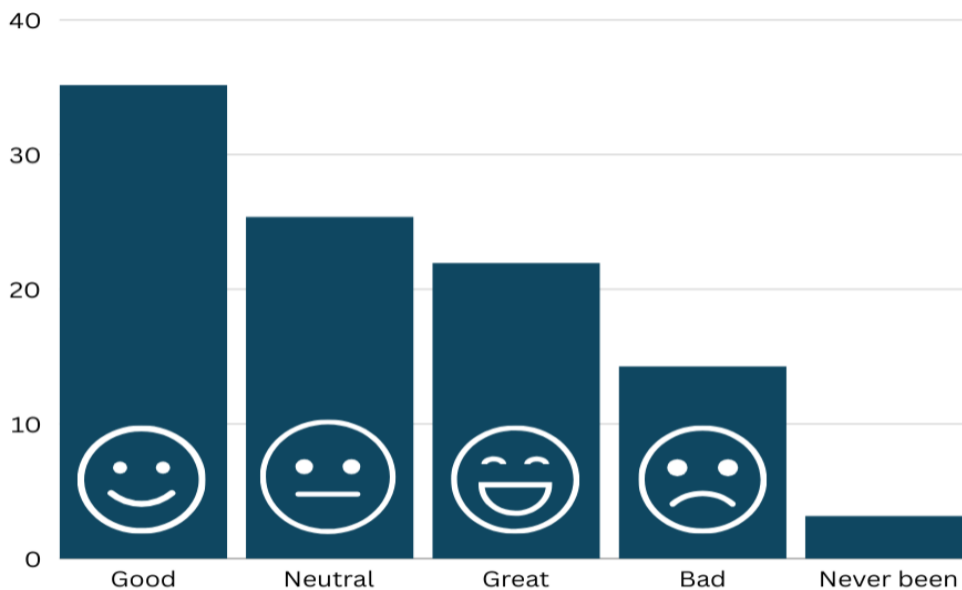


Figure 4. Summary of participants' experience visiting the Eby Farmstead.

Question 6: What features that you like about Eby Farmstead?

Overall, the most talked-about subject was the animals, with a mixed sentiment on Animal Welfare. While many enjoy the animals, there are also significant concerns about their care and living conditions. People reported that the farmstead offers an affordable, family-friendly outing with educational benefits, and the shaded areas, walkability, and peacefulness of the park were appreciated by many, alongside the occasional public art display.

Here is a summary of the responses:

Animals:

- **Positive Views:** Many participants enjoy seeing a variety of animals, with some specifically mentioning favorites like alpacas, llamas, and donkeys. They also appreciate that the animals bring joy to their children.
- **Negative Views:** Many respondents expressed concerns about the restrictive environment for the animals, with some feeling that keeping animals in the park is unethical or akin to animal abuse. Many suggested relocating the animals to sanctuaries, while others noted that the variety of animals has diminished over the years. Some participants acknowledged that, while the animals are "cute," they deserve better living conditions, and a few participants wished for more animals with better care.

Family Enjoyment:

- Many participants appreciate that the farmstead is a convenient, cost-free outing, offering a family-friendly experience with minimal walking required between attractions. They highlighted the park as a great, affordable way to spend time with young children, especially in contrast to other costly activities.
- Participants with families appreciated the educational value, noting that the farmstead provides a safe space for children and adults to learn about and interact with animals. Some, like daycare teachers, use the farmstead as a teaching tool for compassion and animal care.
- Additionally, participants appreciated the peaceful environment, with some finding it to be a place for a mental health break or a place that fosters conversations about animal welfare and nature.

Park Features:

- Participants liked the farmstead's accessibility and features, especially the new playground, bike stations, shaded areas, and walking paths. Many appreciated the open space to walk around the animals and the woody, shady feel of the park.
- Several participants commented on the availability of places to sit, access to bathrooms, and occasional public art exhibitions, which add to the overall park experience.

Nostalgia and Connection:

- Many respondents shared a strong sense of nostalgia, recalling fond memories of visiting the animals during their childhood. They appreciated the combination of animals and the park's natural environment, which makes Eby Farmstead unique in an urban setting.
- Participants also appreciated the farmstead's simplicity and relaxed atmosphere, noting that it fosters connections with other visitors and nature.

Other Comments:

- Many participants viewed Eby Farmstead as a unique part of the city, especially since few urban parks offer animal displays. They enjoyed the open space and recognized the efforts to care for the animals.
- Families valued the opportunity to expose their children to animals in an urban setting, and some appreciated seasonal events, like Christmas decorations.
- A few participants noted that while their children enjoyed the farmstead when they were younger, they no longer visit once they grow up.

Question 7: What are features of Eby Farmstead that you have concerns about?

Most notably, many respondents believe the animals are living in suboptimal conditions and need better care and enclosures. They also believe that a lack of supervision and care, combined with environmental stressors from the urban park, contributes to a poor living environment for the animals. There are strong calls for facility upgrades, educational programs, better animal care practices, and measures to limit public interaction for the animals' well-being.

Here is a summary of the responses:

Animal Welfare and Enclosure Conditions:

- **Widespread Concern:** Many participants raised significant concerns about the animals' welfare, with several feeling the current conditions are inhumane. Participants noted the animals appear cramped, unhealthy, and lacking in basic needs like grass and dirt.
 - Example: *"The animals seem depressed and unwell, with little space to move or express natural behaviors."*
- **Safety Concerns:** Participants highlighted the lack of shade, and the absence of emergency procedures as risks to the animals' well-being.
 - Example: *"There's little shade for the animals, and the constant noise from the train and activities nearby must be stressful."*
- **Lack of Stimulation:** Respondents highlighted the lack of enrichment for the animals, with many pointing out that the enclosures provide no natural grazing areas, and animals are deprived of stimulating environments.
 - Example: *"There's nothing to stimulate the animals, and they don't have appropriate space for natural behavior like grazing."*

- **Suggestions for Better Care:** Several participants recommended that the city invest more in animal care and facilities, including improving enclosure conditions, creating more space, and providing grass or dirt for the animals.

Supervision and Care Issues:

- **Insufficient Supervision:** Many respondents expressed concerns about the lack of proper supervision and care for the animals during the day and at night. They noted that this leads to inappropriate behavior from visitors, including teasing, feeding unsuitable food, or stressing the animals.
 - Example: *“There’s no supervision, so visitors tease the animals or feed them food that could harm them.”*
- **Facility Maintenance:** Many participants expressed concerns about the deteriorating conditions of the farmstead facilities, calling for better maintenance as the enclosures appear old and worn down.

Environmental Stressors:

- **Inappropriate Urban Setting:** Many respondents expressed concerns that the farmstead’s location in a busy urban park is inappropriate for the animals, noting frequent foot traffic, events, and fireworks that disturb the animals.
 - Example: *“The park is too busy for animals with all the foot traffic and events, and the fireworks must scare them.”*
- **Noise and Light Pollution:** Participants also mentioned the constant noise from the nearby train and sports fields and bright security lights that prevent the animals from experiencing natural darkness at night.
 - Example: *“The bright security lights keep the animals from experiencing darkness at night, and the noise from nearby fields is constant.”*

Suggestions for Improvement:

- **Facility Revamp:** Many participants called for a complete overhaul of the farmstead facilities to improve conditions for both the animals and visitors. This included the addition of better toys, feeding puzzles, and more engaging activities for the animals.
 - Example: *“The facilities need to be revamped, with better toys or feeding puzzles to stimulate the animals.”*
- **Educational Programs and Signage:** Several participants recommended introducing better educational signage about the animals and their care and offering guided tours or programs on animal welfare and proper care practices.
 - Example: *“There should be better educational signage about the animals, their care, and ethical considerations.”*

- **Limit Public Interaction:** Respondents called for limiting the public's direct interaction with the animals to prevent stress and ensure their safety, suggesting establishing guidelines or training staff to manage visitor behavior.
 - Example: *"There should be a limit on how much the public interacts with the animals to ensure their well-being."*
- **Volunteer Programs:** Some respondents suggested introducing volunteer programs that would allow the community to engage with and help care for the animals in a controlled, supervised manner.
- **Indoor Quiet Space for Animals:** A few participants proposed creating an indoor space where animals could retreat from the noise and public interactions to rest in a quieter, more private environment.
 - Example: *"An indoor space would allow the animals to escape the constant noise and have some quiet time away from the public."*

Other Comments:

- **No Concerns:** Some participants shared that they had no concerns about the farmstead's features, with a few stating that they enjoyed the space as it is.
- **Desire for Animal Relocation:** Many participants expressed a desire for the animals to be relocated to a more suitable environment, such as a farm or rescue centre where they could live more safely and comfortably.
 - Example: *"The animals would be better off in a proper farm or rescue centre."*
- **Concern About Decline:** Many participants were worried about the future of the farmstead, fearing that without proper investment and care, the facilities and animal care standards would continue to decline.
 - Example: *"I fear the farmstead will continue to decline without proper investment."*
- **Desire for More Animals:** Several respondents mentioned that they would like to see more animals in the park and an improved diversity of species to engage visitors more fully.

Question 8: How do you feel about live animal displays, like Eby Farmstead?

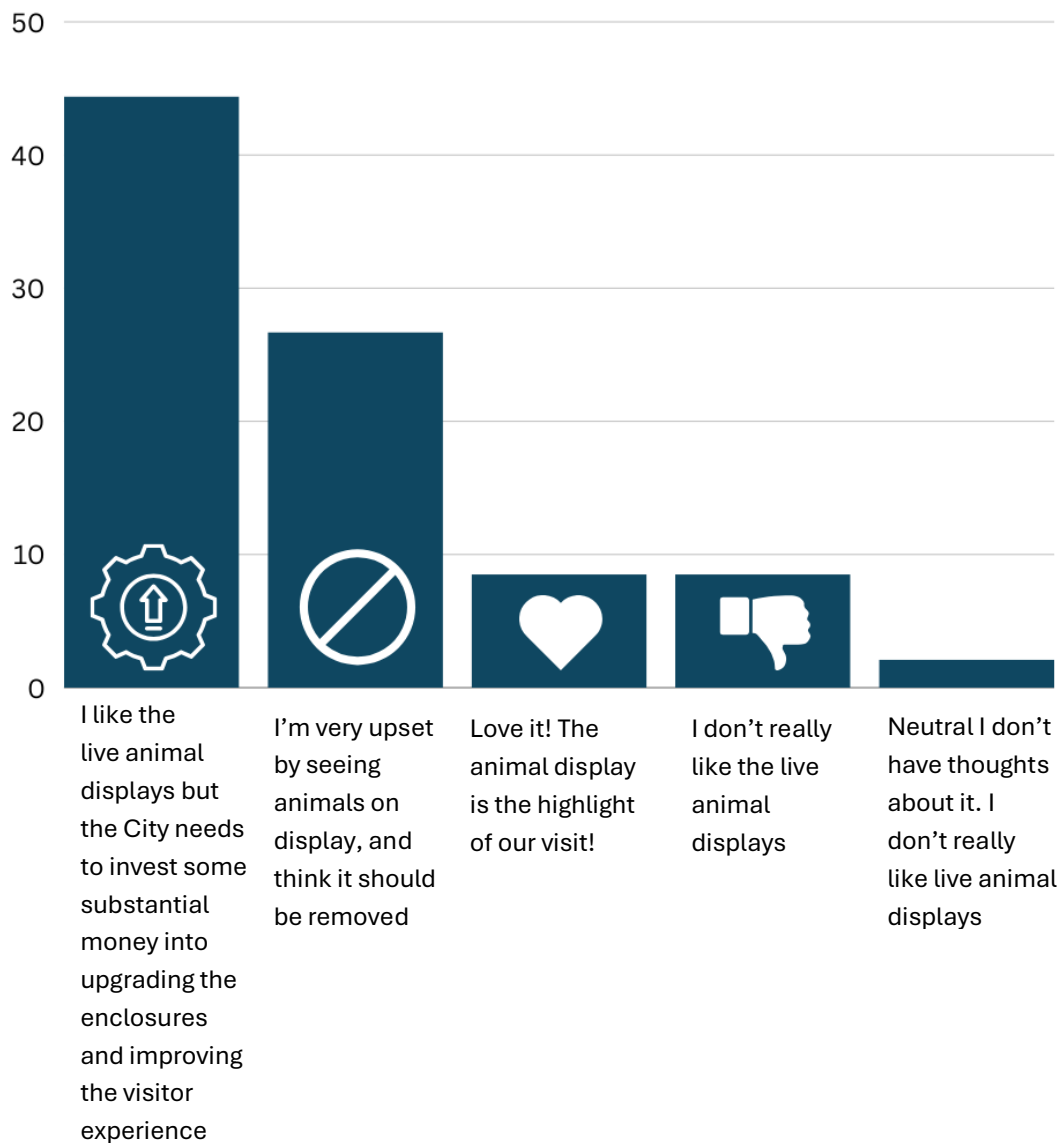


Figure 5. Summary of participants feelings on live animal display.

Question 9: If the Eby Farmstead was to be maintained as a live animal display, there are significant upgrades that would be required to improve the conditions for the animals and the visitor experience. It is estimated that required improvements would cost approximately \$5 million. Would you support that level of spending on Eby Farmstead?

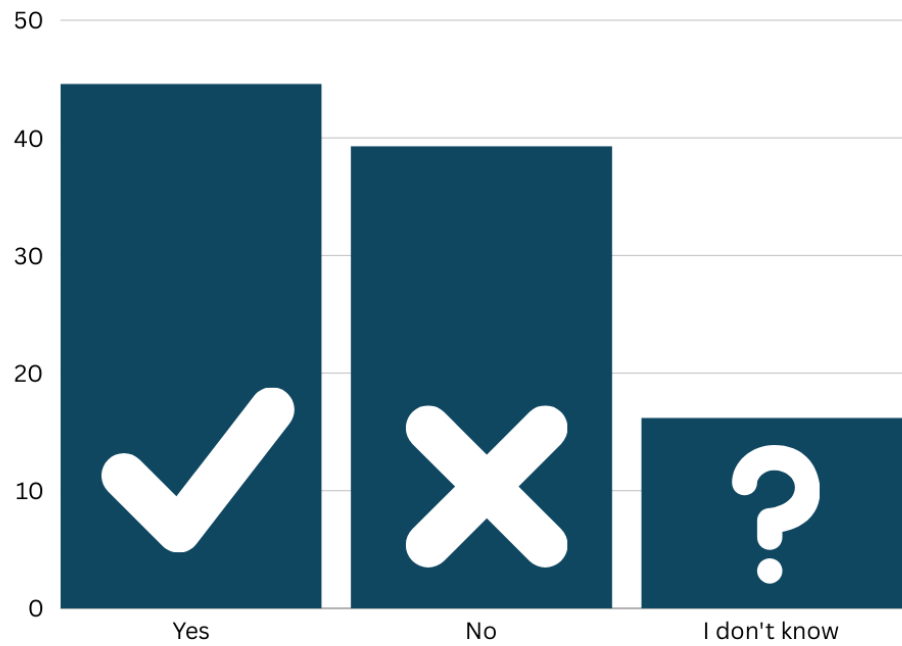


Figure 6. Summary of support of level of spending on Eby Farmstead.

Question 10. Based on your thoughts about Eby Farmstead, animal displays and park spending above, what ideas (including potential alternate uses) do you have for the Eby Farmstead space in Waterloo Park?

Respondent feedback can be organized into 4 categories:

1. **Community-Focused Spaces:** Participants want more interactive and accessible green spaces, picnic areas, and playgrounds with features for all age groups.
2. **Animal Welfare and Educational Opportunities:** Many participants support improving animal welfare or replacing the farmstead with interactive learning centers, petting zoos, or educational displays.
3. **Event and Sustainable Initiatives:** There is a desire to create community gardens, event spaces, and sustainable initiatives like pollinator-friendly gardens and environmental education programs.
4. **Recreational Enhancements:** Suggestions include off-leash dog parks, outdoor gyms, water features, and improved park facilities for exercise and recreation.

Here is a summary of the responses

Picnic and Green Spaces:

- Many participants suggested adding more **picnic areas** and **flower gardens** that bloom throughout the seasons, enhancing the park's natural beauty.
 - Example: *"Create more picnic spots and seasonal flower gardens."*

Playground and Park Equipment:

- **Expanded Playgrounds:** Participants proposed increasing the size and variety of playgrounds, including features for different age groups, accessible equipment, creative structures, and mini villages for exploration.
 - Example: *"Expand the playground with accessible features for kids of all ages."*
- **Additional Amenities:** Suggested amenities include seating areas with shade, splash pads, and cooling fans. Some participants also recommended adding a **bike track for younger children**, and a few proposed a **roller or ice rink for winter**.
 - Example: *"Consider adding a splash pad and a small bike track for children under 12."*
- **Accessible and Community-Focused Features:** Participants expressed a desire for more community-oriented features, such as dog parks, playgrounds for various age groups, and accessibility improvements for children with special needs.
 - Example: *"Include accessible playground features and create a dog park under the trees."*

Eby Farmstead Concerns and Improvement:

- **Preserving the Farmstead:** Many participants wanted to keep the farmstead but with improved animal welfare. Others suggested replacing the farmstead with playgrounds, gardens, or other recreational features.
 - Example: *"Keep the farmstead, but invest in better animal care and make it more interactive for visitors."*
- **Animal Interaction:** Some participants wanted more interaction with animals, such as petting zoos, feeding events, or educational displays. A few suggested turning the farmstead into a rescue or rehabilitation center.
 - Example: *"Consider making it a rescue center and have feeding events for visitors."*
- **Improving Animal Welfare:** Suggestions included upgrading enclosures, providing animals with proper food, water, shade, and enrichment, and adding interactive signage and educational programs for visitors. A few suggested adding feed machines for appropriate animal food and organizing fundraisers for upkeep.
 - Example: *"Improve enclosures and create interactive learning opportunities for visitors."*

Educational and Interactive Experiences:

- **Learning Stations:** Many participants suggested creating interactive learning stations about nature, sustainability, and local wildlife. Some proposed educational programming for children to learn about animals and farm life, with interactive features like weekend shows or guided tours.

- Example: *“Set up learning stations about nature and sustainability with interactive programs for kids.”*
- **Preserving Historical Aspects:** Many emphasized the importance of preserving the historical significance of the farmstead while also providing educational opportunities about the history of the park and local indigenous communities.
 - Example: *“Preserve the historical aspects and create educational programs about the park’s and the land’s heritage.”*

Event and Community Spaces:

- **Event Rentals:** A few participants suggested using the space for birthday parties, weddings, or other community events, turning it into a rentable event space.
 - Example: *“Rent the space for birthday parties or weddings.”*
- **Community Gardens and Art Installations:** Many participants suggested creating a community vegetable garden with educational opportunities about gardening and sustainability. Others suggested incorporating art installations, outdoor art exhibitions, coffee shops, and food stands.
 - Example: *“Create a community garden with educational programs and install public art displays.”*

Environmental and Sustainable Initiatives:

- **Pollinator and Native Plant Gardens:** Some participants suggested creating a bee-friendly environment with pollinator gardens and educational spaces about the local ecosystem and wildlife habitat restoration.
 - Example: *“Develop a garden with native plants and create a pollinator-friendly space.”*
- **Re-naturalization:** A few participants suggested focusing on re-naturalizing the area to improve the habitat for native species and maintain the park’s existing trees.
 - Example: *“Re-naturalize the area to improve habitat for native species.”*

Financial and Practical Concerns:

- **Budget Concerns:** Many participants raised concerns about the project's cost and sought clarification on how the budget would be spent. Some suggested exploring cost-effective alternatives for farmstead upgrades.
 - Example: *“Evaluate whether the funds are better spent on animal welfare or other park features.”*
- **Fundraising and Community Support:** A few participants suggested considering fundraisers or community support to help maintain and enhance the park.
 - Example: *“Consider fundraisers to support the park’s improvements.”*

Recreational Facilities Ideas:

- **Off-Leash Dog Trails and Outdoor Gym:** Many participants suggested adding off-leash dog trails and exercise equipment for adults.
 - Example: *“Add an outdoor gym for adults and off-leash dog trails.”*

- **Other Recreational Facilities:** Ideas included a ball hockey rink, pickleball courts, water features like fountains or splash pads, and community gardens with shaded picnic areas.
 - Example: *“Create a ball hockey rink or disc golf area, and expand shaded picnic spaces.”*

Improvements and Enhancements:

- **Maintenance and Accessibility:** Many participants suggested improving the maintenance of existing features and enhancing accessibility with better sidewalks, parking, and lighting for safety.
 - Example: *“Improve the sidewalks and add lighting to make the park safer.”*
- **Inspirational Models:** A participant suggested using Riverdale Farm in Toronto as a model for the farmstead, emphasizing attractively maintained animals without chain fences.
 - Example: *“Follow the Riverdale Farm model to create a beautiful, well-maintained farmstead.”*

Question 11: Is there anything else you like to add?

Many participants are split on whether to keep the farmstead or relocate the animals, with a strong focus on improving their welfare if they remain.

Animal Welfare and Comfort:

- **Mixed Views on Keeping the Farmstead:** While many participants felt the Eby Farmstead is still worth keeping, they emphasized the need for animal comfort and welfare upgrades rather than focusing on the visitor experience. On the other hand, many participants suggested that it is time to end the live animal display, advocating for relocating the animals to a sanctuary like the Black Goat Farm and Sanctuary.
 - Example: *“The animals deserve a sanctuary where they can live better, and we should focus on animal welfare.”*
- **Value of Animal Exposure:** Some participants emphasized the importance of exposing both children and adults to live animals beyond just dogs and cats. However, they also acknowledged the need to prioritize the animals' well-being.
 - Example: *“It's important for kids to see animals like goats and sheep, but we must ensure their welfare too.”*
- **Cost Concerns:** A few participants raised concerns about the \$5 million cost, suggesting that the funds could be better spent elsewhere or invested in other city projects. One participant suggested combining the two paddocks to give the animals more space.
 - Example: *“The \$5 million could be used for other city needs or park improvements.”*

Accessibility and Safety:

- **Improvements to Paths and Fencing:** Several participants suggested the addition of concrete paths for better accessibility and fencing for improved safety. A participant recommended installing a main fence to contain the animals and prevent them from being overly attracted to visitors.
 - Example: *“Concrete paths and better fencing would make the park safer and more accessible.”*

- **Need for Shade:** A few participants highlighted the need for more shaded areas to improve the comfort of both animals and visitors.

Community and Educational Opportunities:

- **Volunteer and Learning Programs:** Participants suggested creating volunteer opportunities, such as having vets or caregivers on site. Others proposed the idea of day camps or learning centers where visitors could sign up for hands-on educational experiences with the animals, like a petting zoo or learning exhibition.
 - Example: *“Offer volunteer programs or day camps where people can interact with and learn about the animals.”*
- **Educational Relationships with Animals:** Many participants felt it would be beneficial to build stronger educational relationships between visitors and the animals, such as learning the animals’ names, personalities, and care routines.
 - Example: *“It would be great to know more about the animals’ personalities and their care routines.”*

Aesthetic Improvements:

- **Park Maintenance and Aesthetic Enhancements:** A participant commented on the need to improve the park’s aesthetics, feeling like maintenance was lacking. Others suggested adding more animals, signage about the animals, and colorful murals on the enclosures created by local artists to enhance the visual appeal.
 - Example: *“Add murals, more signage, and maybe even more animals to make the space more visually engaging.”*

Visitor Experience and Nostalgia:

- **Love for the Animals:** Many participants expressed their love for the animals, stating that they are their favorite part of the park and are central to the nostalgic memories they associate with the farmstead. Some mentioned the peacock in particular, highlighting the unique sounds and sights they might not have experienced without the farmstead.
 - Example: *“I love the peacock, it’s such a unique part of the farmstead and something I wouldn’t have experienced elsewhere.”*
- **Impact on Children:** Many participants mentioned that visiting the farmstead is a highlight for their children, and they would be sad to see it go. They noted that some animals, such as the peacock, are no longer present.
 - Example: *“My children love visiting the animals, and it would be disappointing to see this experience taken away.”*
- **Historical and Unique Feature:** Several participants shared that the Eby Farmstead is a defining feature of Waterloo Park, contributing to what makes it unique. They fondly recalled their own childhood visits and stressed the importance of continuing the farmstead’s legacy for future generations.

- Example: *“Eby Farmstead is what makes Waterloo Park unique, and it’s a part of our history that should be preserved.”*

Suggestions for Activities:

- **Cost Management and Other Investments:** Some participants expressed concern about the high cost of maintaining the farmstead, suggesting that better management or alternative strategies could reduce expenses. Others suggested redirecting the \$5 million toward more pressing needs like housing or playground equipment.
 - Example: *“We need to better manage the farmstead costs or perhaps use the money for something more pressing like housing or other park facilities.”*
- **Running Loop:** A participant suggested establishing a marked running loop in the park to encourage physical activity for both children and adults.
 - Example: *“A marked running loop would be great to get people of all ages active in the park.”*
- **Pop-up Cafes:** One participant proposed the idea of having pop-up cafes around the Farmstead area to enhance the visitor experience.
 - Example: *“Pop-up cafes could add a nice element for visitors as they walk around the park.”*

Question 12: Survey Responder Demographics

80% of survey participants agreed to respond to the demographic questions 13-16. Most survey participants were located at N2L, with 8.13%. Most of the participants are from the 1980s, with 27.55%. A majority do not identify with any following identification group, with 47.50%. Most of the participants were women, with 56.16%.

Question 13: What are the first three digits of your postal code?

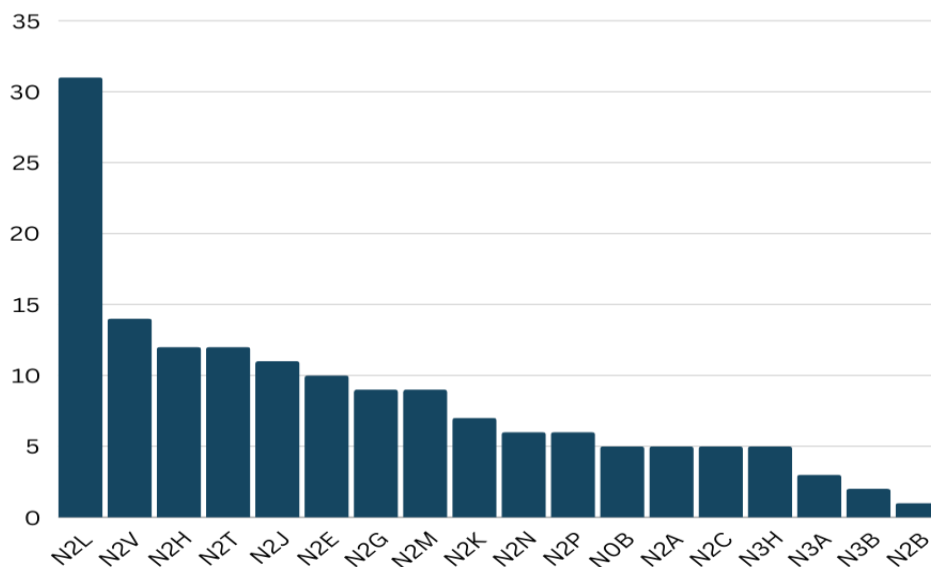


Figure 7. Summary of participants postal codes.

Question 14: What year were you born?

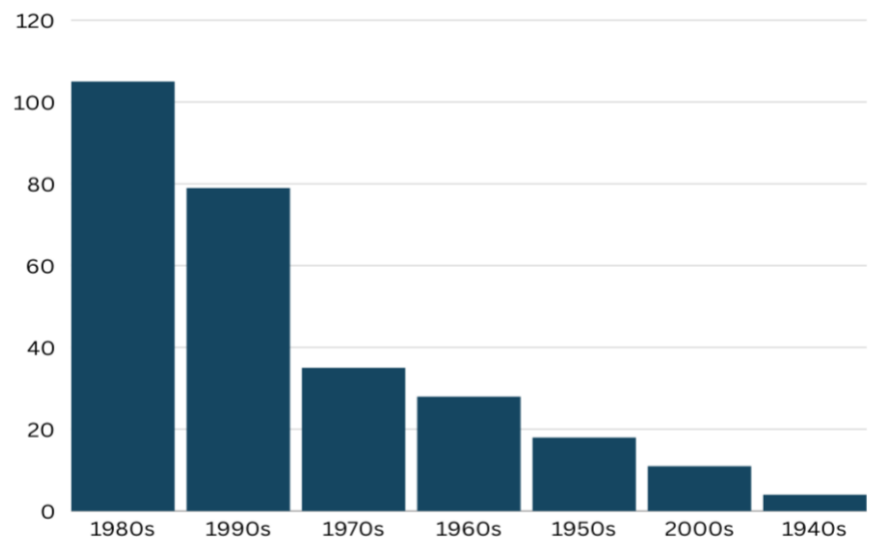


Figure 8. Summary of participants year of birth.

Question 15: Do you identify as a member of any of the following group?

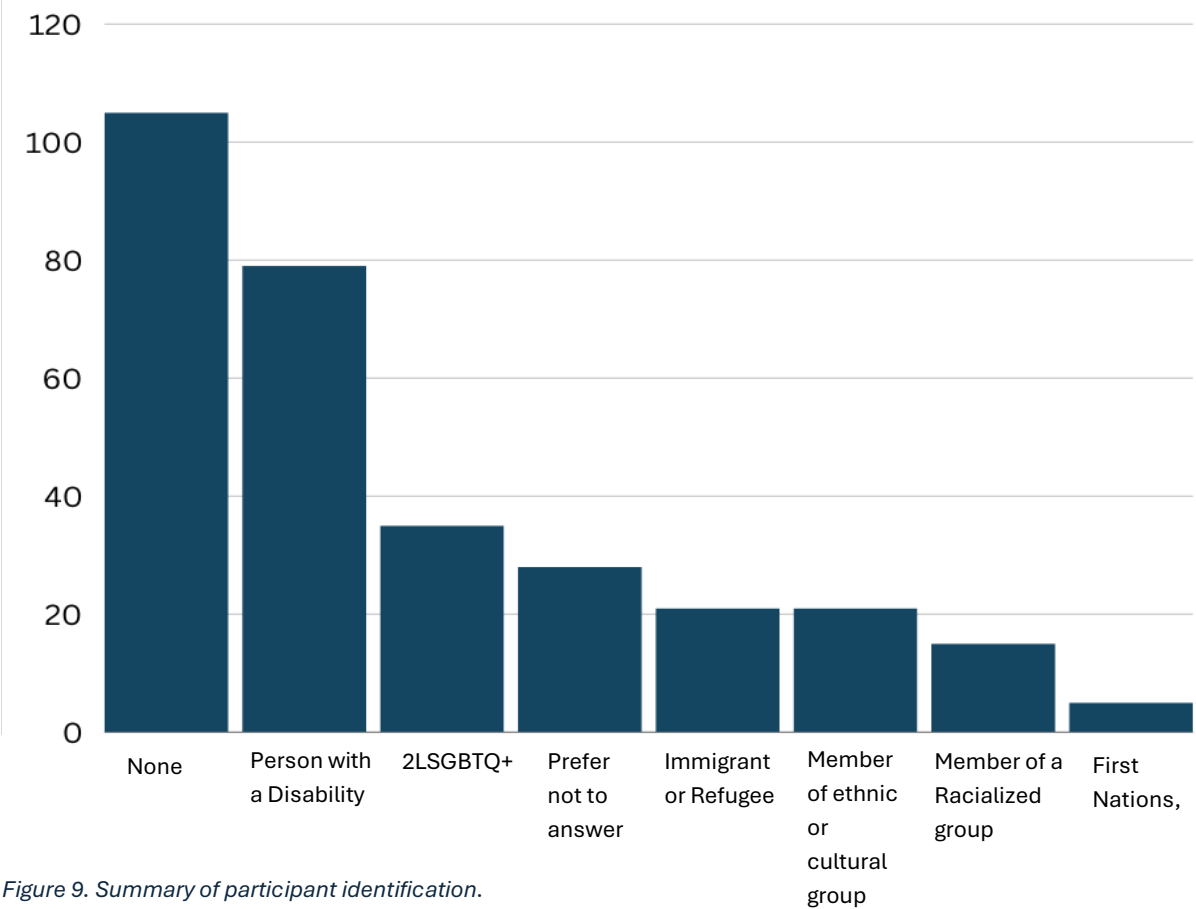


Figure 9. Summary of participant identification.

Question 16: Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

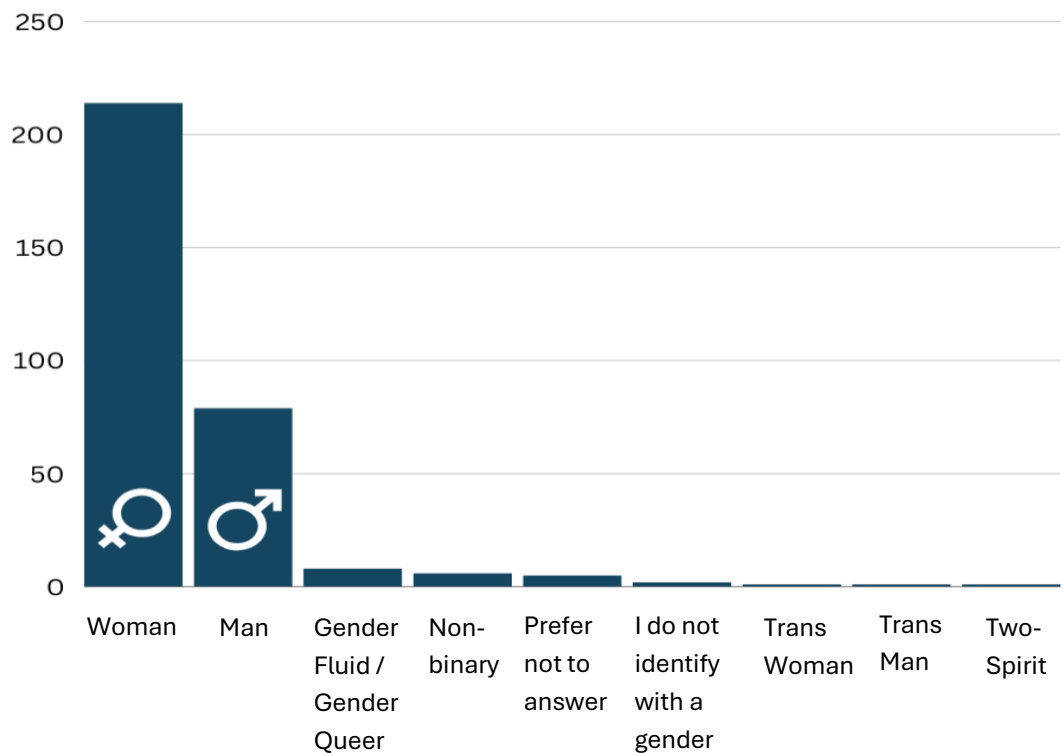


Figure 10. Summary of participant gender identity.

Recommendation

The **Envision Eby: Farmstead Engagement Initiative** highlighted a range of community opinions on the future of Eby Farmstead pertaining to the animals, engagement opportunities, and sustainability (Appendix A). Most importantly, the welfare of the animals was a top priority, across all participants. Given this insight, we recommend that a clear action plan is developed to prioritize the well-being of the animals with a focus on appropriate care, habitat, and supervision, whether that is in the park, or at a different facility.

Appendix

Appendix A

Community Driven Ideas for the Future of Eby Farmstead

The Envision Eby: Farmstead Engagement Initiative asked two central questions: 1) whether the city should continue to maintain an animal display in the park, and 2) what other things the community can imagine in that space, with or without the animals.

Reaching a solution that aligns with most of Waterloo's population is complex. The community offered many innovative suggestions and ideas for envisioning the future of Eby Farmstead.

Question 1: Should the City of Waterloo continue to maintain an animal display in the park?

Yes, the animals should be maintained at the park

Note: while some residents were in favour of keeping the animal display, respondents were clear that the enclosures and animal display would need significant upgrades and improvements.

- **Educational Opportunities**
 - Opportunities for children and families
 - Provides a unique chance to interact with animals beyond pets like cats and dogs.
- **Nostalgic Value**
 - Beloved part of the Park amenities
 - Family-friendly environment that the farmstead brings, which creates
 - Lasting memories and experiences of Waterloo Park
- **Community Engagement and Well-Being**
 - No cost activity
 - Supports mental well-being
 - Offers a peaceful, enjoyable space for visitors to connect with nature

No, the city should not maintain the animals at the Park

- **Animal Welfare**
 - Concerns about the animals' living conditions
 - Insufficient space
 - Lack of natural habitats
 - Stress from constant noise and visitor interaction.
 - Animals being fed human food
 - No space for the animals to shelter
 - The animals are old and need to retire in peace
 - Relocating the animals to sanctuaries would ensure better care and quality of life.

- **Cost and Resource Allocation**
 - Maintaining the animal display is costly
 - The capital cost of upgrading the facility and the operational cost of ongoing staffing to care for the animals
 - The \$5 million upgrade budget could be better spent on other community projects like housing, playgrounds, gardens, or accessible facilities that benefit a larger portion of the community
- **Changing Values**
 - Public sentiment is shifting away from keeping animals in captivity for entertainment
 - Modern parks should focus on sustainability and environmental education rather than animal exhibits
 - The community wants more natural spaces and interactive learning opportunities

Innovative Win-Win Options

Some alternative options are to maintain the spirit of the animals or offer semi-permanent animal displays without having animals in the Park full-time.

Rotating Animal Exhibits

- Partner with local farms or sanctuaries to bring animals in for **short-term, rotating exhibits**. This could offer seasonal educational experiences where different animals are displayed for brief periods, ensuring the animals do not stay long-term.

Example: A rotating schedule of farm animals (e.g., goats, sheep, chickens) could provide educational opportunities while reducing the strain of full-time care.

Petting Zoo or Farm Experience Days

- Host **seasonal or monthly petting zoo events** where animals are brought in for **limited interactions**. This would allow families and children to still engage with animals in an ethical and controlled manner without the need for permanent display.

Example: Partner with local farms to host farm days where families can interact with animals and learn about their care and welfare, as well as the role of animals in agriculture.

Animal-Themed Educational Programming

- Introduce **educational programs** with virtual or interactive exhibits focused on animal life, farming, and nature. This could include **virtual tours** of local farms, **QR codes to videos**, and **educational workshops** about animal welfare and farm life.

Example: Install interactive kiosks or video stations that show real-time footage of animals from nearby farms, providing learning experiences without keeping live animals in the park.

Animal Rehabilitation or Rescue center

- Transform the space into an **animal rehabilitation or rescue center**, where animals needing short-term care (e.g., wildlife or farm animals) are housed, and visitors can learn about rescue

efforts. Animals would not be kept long-term and would eventually be returned to nature or their homes.

Example: Collaborate with local animal rescue organizations to provide temporary care for animals and offer visitors a chance to learn about rehabilitation efforts.

Animal-themed art Installations and Public Displays

- Incorporate **animal-themed public art** and **sculptures** into the park, allowing for the representation of animals without the need for live exhibits. This could be a creative way to maintain the spirit of the farmstead and engage the community in art and nature.

Example: Install animal sculptures or interactive art pieces representing local wildlife or farm animals, providing an engaging and educational space.

Interactive Learning Stations and Events

- Develop **interactive learning stations** focusing on animals, farming, and sustainability. These stations can include **virtual reality experiences**, **audio tours**, or **guided educational events** with educators or local farmers.

Example: Set up interactive exhibits where visitors can learn about animal care, farming techniques, and sustainable practices without the presence of live animals.

Virtual Engagement and Storytelling with current animals

- Set up a virtual camera viewable online to allow the community to “visit” the animals in their retirement.
- Tell monthly social media stories about the animals for families and children to follow along with
 - This drives more traffic to the social media channels, which helps with ongoing engagement with the community

Question 2: What other things does the community imagine in that space

The community was asked what other things they could imagine in that space, with or without the animals. The animal-focused options are listed above. This section will focus on options alongside or without animal displays.

Community Gardens

- Many participants suggested transforming the space into community vegetable or flower gardens with educational opportunities about gardening, sustainability, and local ecology.

Example: “Create a community garden where people can learn about growing food, composting, and sustainability.”

Pollinator or Native Plant Gardens

- Create a pollinator-friendly environment with native plant gardens that bloom through the seasons, offering both educational and aesthetic benefits.

Example: “Turn the space into a bee-friendly garden, with native plants and educational programs on pollinators.”

Playgrounds and Recreational Areas

- **Expanded Playgrounds:** Participants suggested larger, more creative playgrounds with features for all age groups and accessible equipment.
- **Splash Pads and Water Features:** Add splash pads, water fountains, or water play areas for children.
- **Bike Tracks and Outdoor Gyms:** Create a small bike track for young children or an outdoor gym with exercise equipment for all ages.
- **Roller and Ice Rinks:** Some participants proposed adding a roller rink for summer and an ice rink for winter, expanding recreational offerings.
- **Ball Hockey Rink and Pickleball Courts:** Introduce a ball hockey rink or pickleball courts to create more diverse recreational opportunities.

Event and Community Spaces

- **Concert and Event Venues:** Transform the space into a multipurpose event area where community gatherings, concerts, and other events can be hosted.
- **Rental Space for Events:** Rent out the space for community events, birthday parties, or weddings, offering a scenic outdoor setting.
- **Community fire pits:** areas where people can gather and have bonfires
- **Art Installations and Exhibitions:** Incorporate public art, such as murals, sculptures, or outdoor exhibitions created by local artists, to enhance the park’s cultural value.
- **Pop-up Cafes and Market Stalls:** Add pop-up cafes, food stands, or kiosks for local businesses to sell products, such as farm produce, snacks, or beverages.
- **Farmers Markets and Workshops:** The space can be used for seasonal farmers’ markets or hands-on workshops about gardening, sustainability, or art.

Ecological Learning Center

- Set up an interactive learning center focused on sustainability, local wildlife, and environmental education, with learning stations for children and adults. Include topics on farming, nature, and ecological conservation.
- Example: “Develop an ecological learning center where visitors can learn about sustainable practices and local ecosystems.”

Historical and Cultural Displays

- Include Indigenous history, education, teachings
- Preserve the historical aspects of the farmstead and park by including educational programs or displays about the park’s history, the farmstead’s heritage, and local indigenous cultures.

Volunteer Programs and Learning Camps

- Develop community involvement programs such as volunteer opportunities for park upkeep, learning camps, or workshops on gardening and sustainability.

Example: *“Offer volunteer programs where people can learn and help maintain the space.”*

Re-naturalization Projects

- Re-naturalize the area to restore native habitats and improve the local ecosystem. This could include wildlife habitat restoration, tree planting, and creating natural spaces for quiet reflection and walking.

Example: *“Turn the space into a re-naturalized area with native species and quiet, shaded walking paths.”*

Mental Health and Relaxation Spaces

- **Shaded, Quiet Spaces:** Create quiet areas with benches, picnic spots, and shaded spaces where people can relax and enjoy the scenery.
- **Running or Walking Loops:** Establish marked running or walking loops to encourage physical activity in a peaceful, natural environment.

Example: *“Create a marked running loop or walking path for visitors to enjoy peaceful exercise.”*