

What We Heard - Winter 2023 in Countryside Park

Winter 2023 Engagement Summary

Introduction

We are looking for ways to add stormwater measures at Countryside Park to:

- protect and improve water quality,
- reduce future flood risks, while
- preserving current park uses

There are two large stormwater pipes currently running next to Countryside Park. They carry runoff from storm sewers through the neighbourhood to Balzer Creek and the Grand River. Countryside Park is a good place to add stormwater facilities to collect and filter runoff. By adding stormwater storage to the neighbourhood, we will:

- Improve water quality in Balzer Creek and the Grand River;
- Reduce the risk of flooding;
- Reduce erosion in Balzer Creek;
- Improve resilience against climate change; and
- Enhance community safety.

Project background

In 2016, the City of Kitchener Council approved a stormwater master plan. This plan created a strategy to manage stormwater for the next 15 years. Through this plan, we learned that only 25% of runoff in the city is managed through stormwater facilities. This means that 75% of runoff from heavy rainfall and snow melt flows into storm sewers, contaminating local creeks.

The master plan identified initial concepts for projects to be installed throughout Kitchener. As we look at each project more closely, we will examine the technical feasibility of adjusting the designs to meet community needs.

To help us build these projects, we were awarded nearly \$50 million from the Government of Canada through the Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund. Access to this funding means we can install needed stormwater measures at a reduced cost to the community much sooner than possible without the funding.

Engagement purpose

- To understand the community's park uses
- To understand what park features are most important to the community

Engagement approach

- So far, we have gathered community feedback through the following avenues:
 - Engage Kitchener page Q&A's,
 - Direct email inquiries, and
 - Online survey
- We plan to continue using those tools as well as additional consultation and collaboration engagement tools, such as:
 - Mailed notices,
 - Public open houses, and
 - Enhanced visualizations of concepts.

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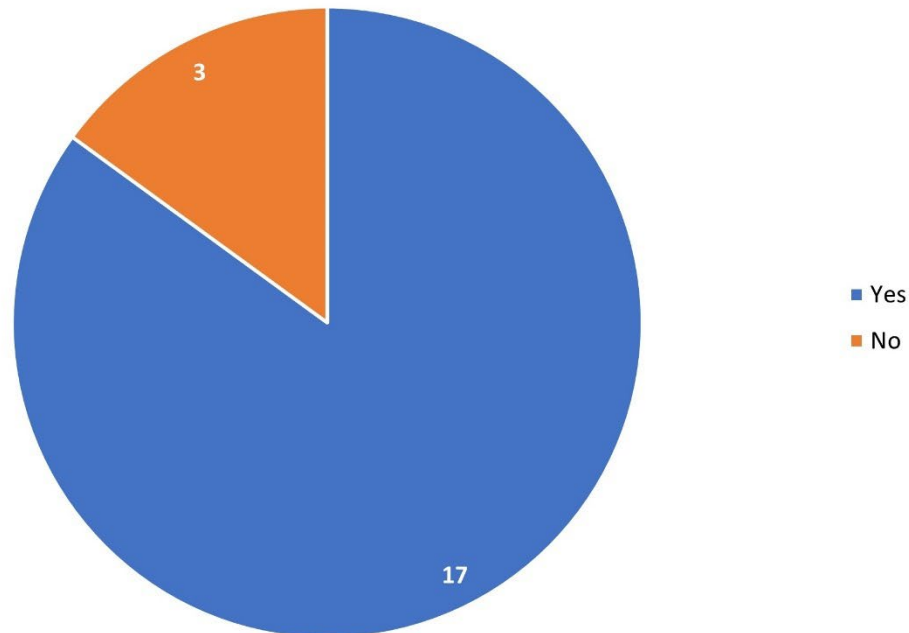
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Survey Feedback – "What You Told Us"

Survey details

The survey was active from January 5, 2023, to January 30, 2023. We received 20 survey responses.

Do you ever spend time in Countryside Park?



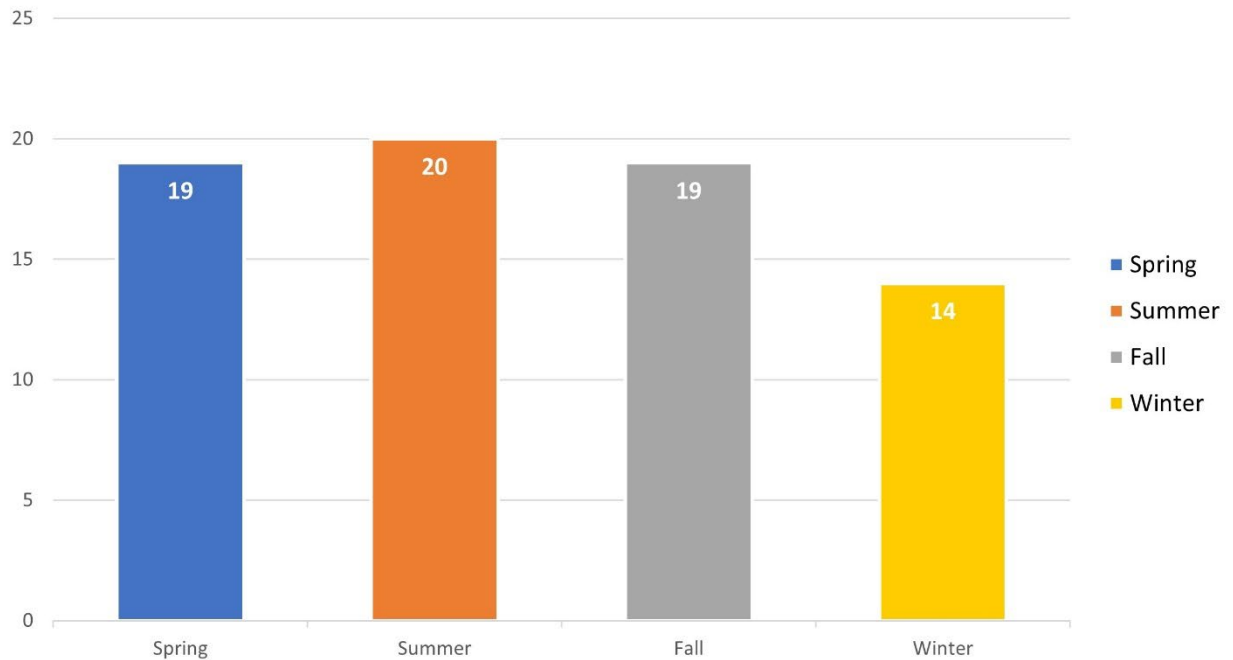
If someone asked you to describe this park, what would you say?

The analysis of the survey responses identified several recurring themes and insights about the park:

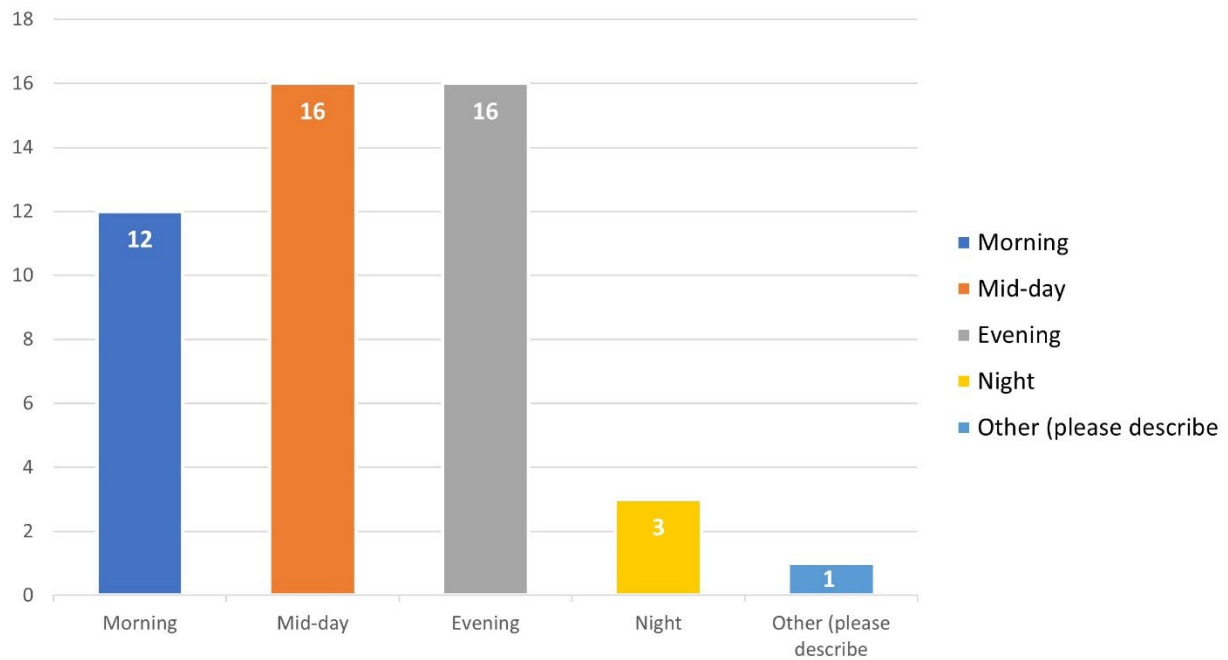
- **Walking trails.** Many respondents enjoy using the trails with their families and by themselves. Respondents also mentioned that the trails provide connection to other neighbourhoods.
- **Multi-use field.** Respondents highlighted the field and open green space. Respondents described the park as spacious, sizeable, and nice.
- **Nature and trees.** Respondents described the park's trees and the connection to nature. The opportunity for nature studies for students was mentioned.
- **Peaceful atmosphere.** The park was described by respondents as peaceful, quiet, and pleasant. It is a place where people go to relax.
- **Sports and recreation.** Respondents mentioned using the park for play and activities. Sports in the field, picnics, and the hill were all described. Respondents also use the park to exercise.
- **Lots of potential.** Several respondents suggested improvements to the park, particularly more benches and seating. The field was described as under-utilized.

- **Family-friendly.** Respondents highlighted the proximity to the school and playground.
- **Basic and boring.** The park was described as grass and a trail.
- **Accessible.** Respondents mentioned how the park is close to their home and is user-friendly.
- **Uncertainty over park boundaries.** Some respondents confused Countryside Park with the nearby schoolyard or Lion's Park across the street. Both of these areas have playgrounds, where Countryside Park doesn't.
- **Muddy.** A few respondents described how the grass and trails get muddy and wet in the spring.

During which seasons do you spend time in this park?



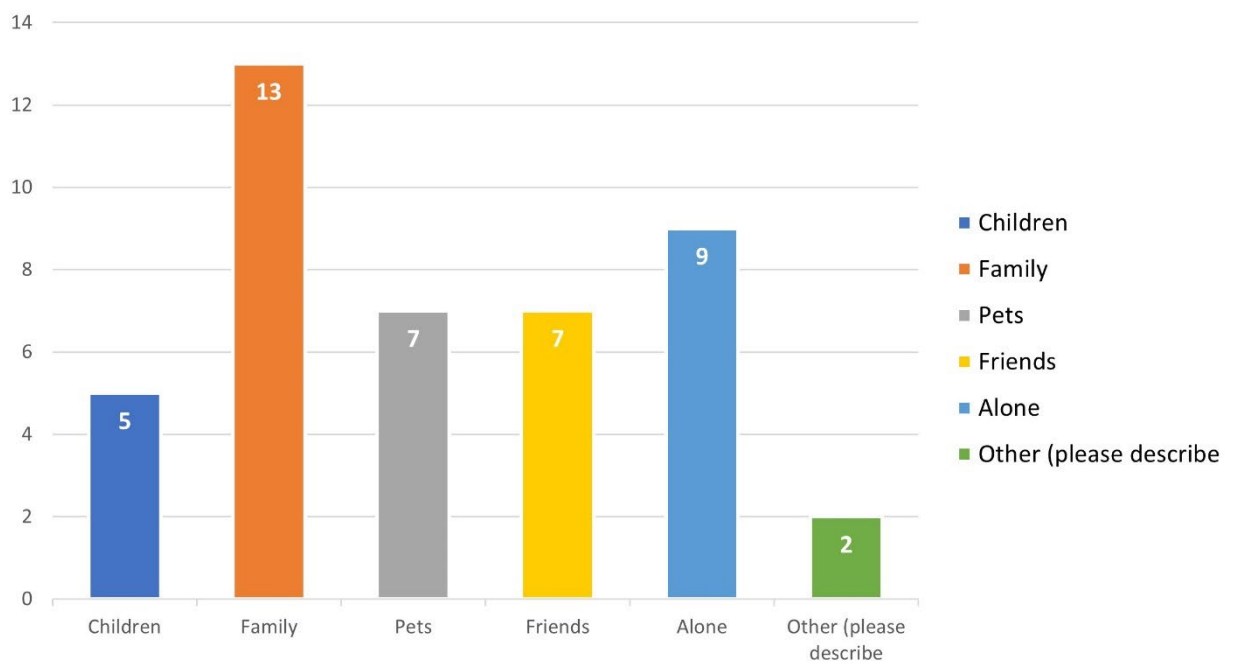
What time of day do you visit this park?



Other responses included the following:

- Various times throughout the day.

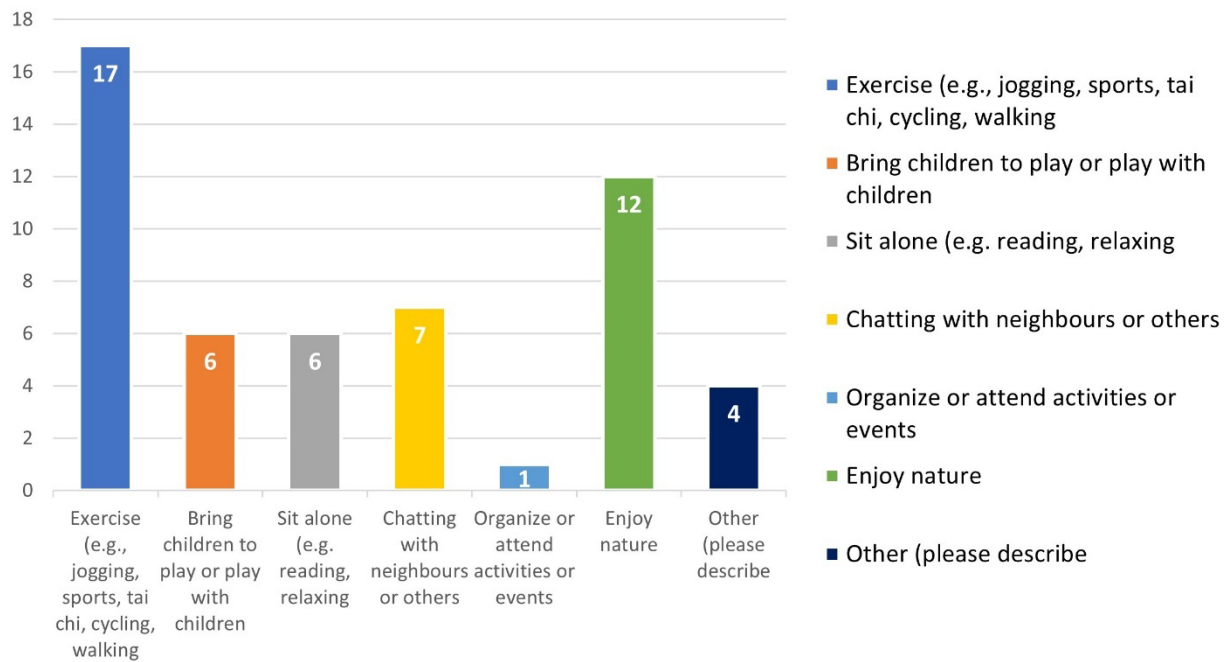
Who do you visit this park with?



Other responses included the following:

- Visiting the park with neighbours

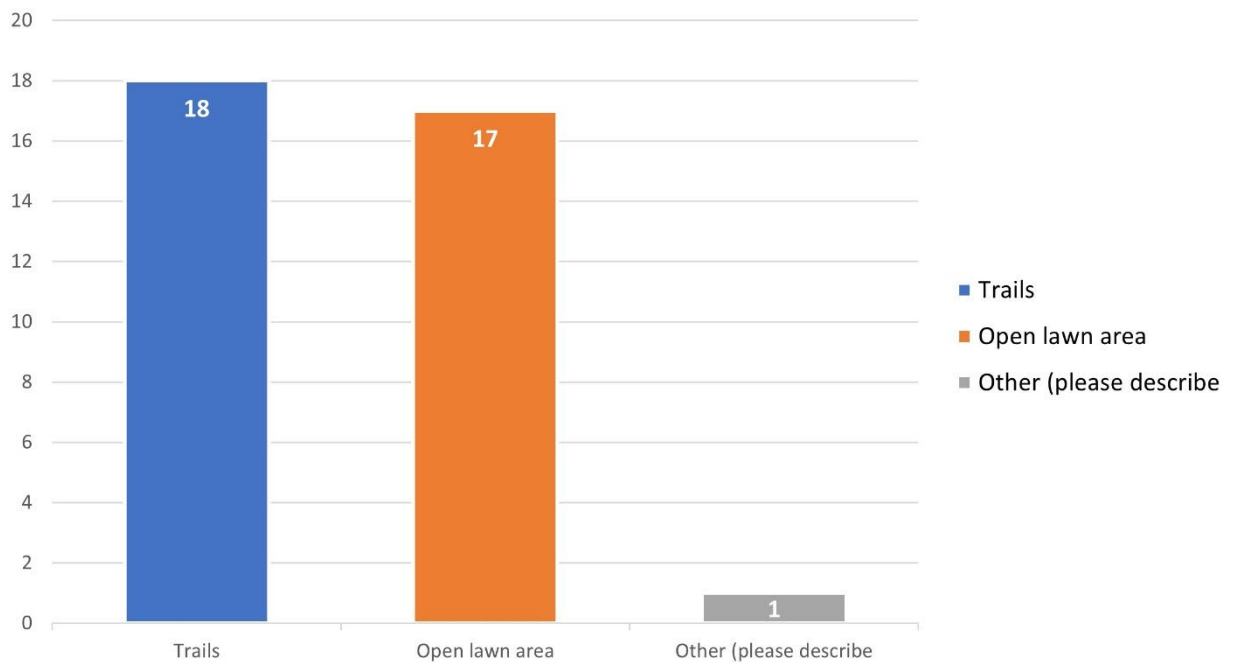
What do you and/or your family typically like to do when you visit this park?



Other responses included the following:

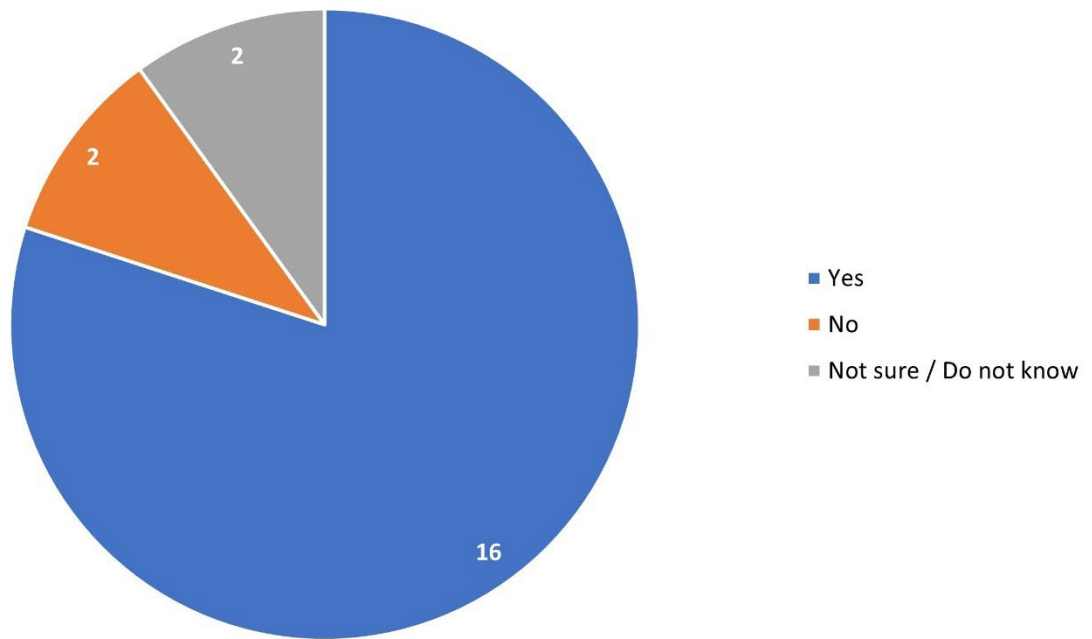
- Social events and occasions
- Disc golf practice

What features do you and/or your family use at this park?

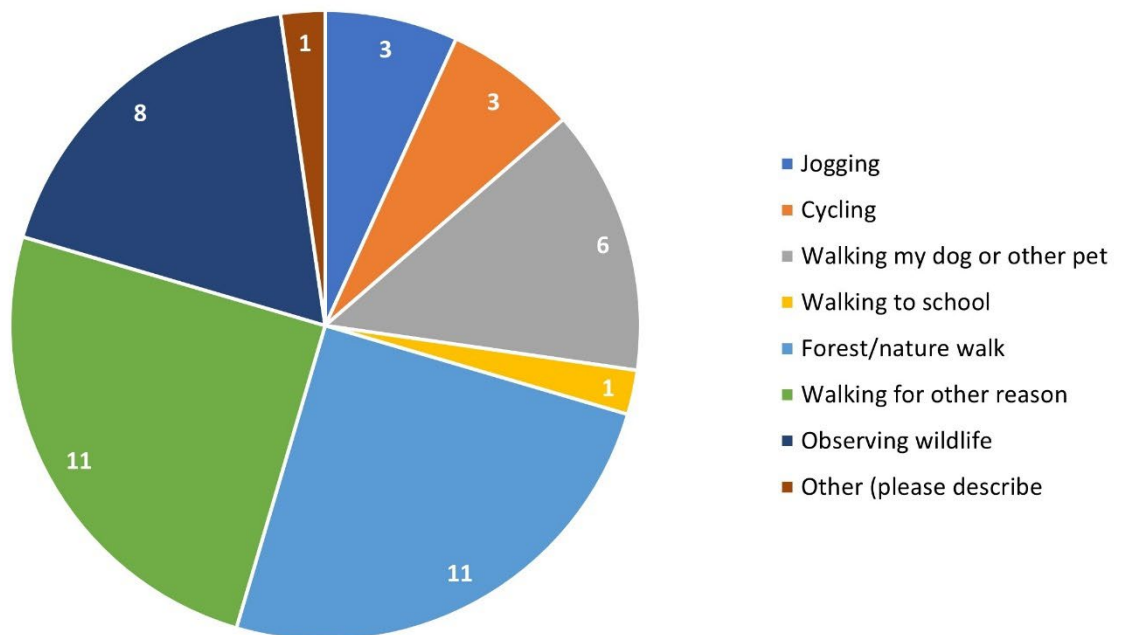


Other responses did not provide any additional information.

Do you or your family ever use the trail system through the park?



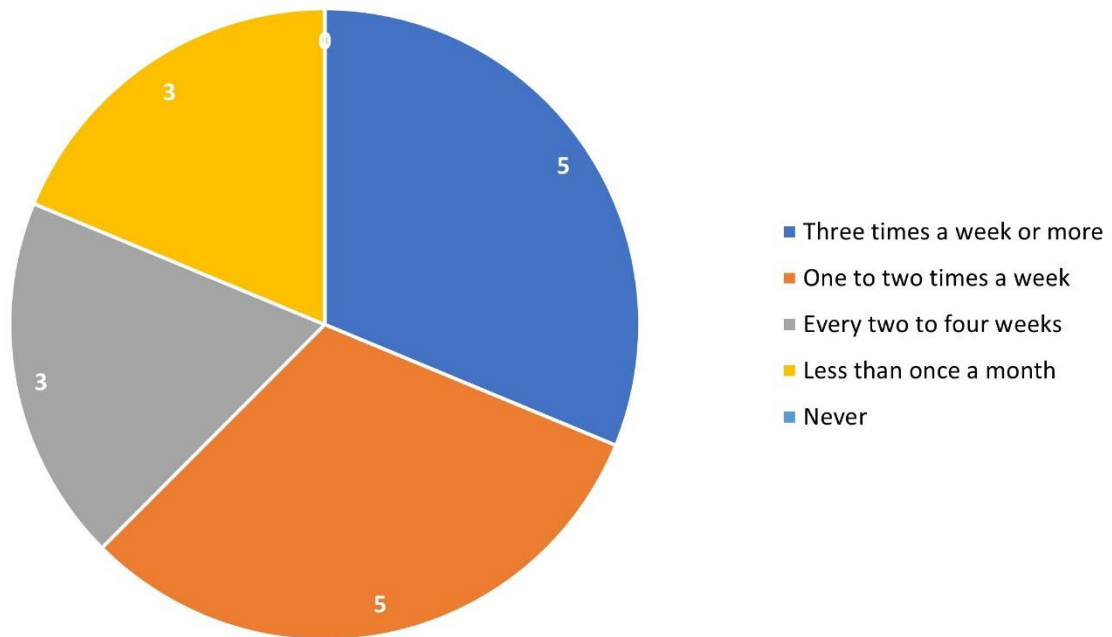
What are you typically doing when you use this trail system?



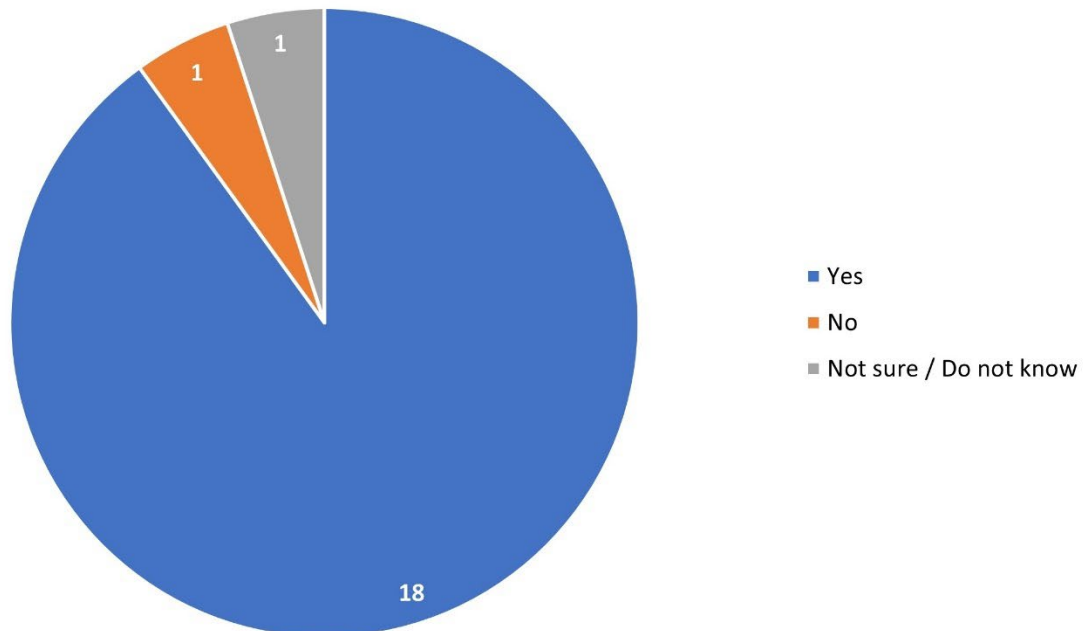
Other responses included the following:

- Using the hill for exercise in warm months, and using the hill for winter activities.

How often do you typically use this trail in the winter?



Think back to the last time you visited Countryside Park. Did you feel comfortable in the park?



Please tell us why you gave that answer:

- Respondents described how the park is open, quiet, and easy to see all around
- Respondents mentioned how they are familiar with the people who use the park and their neighbours

- Respondents felt comfortable because they use the park every day
- Some respondents also mentioned the:
 - lack of lighting causes them to feel less safe at night;
 - trails are not all cleared, creating a falling hazard; and
 - the park is used by people experiencing homelessness

Demographic information

In this survey, most respondents (80.0%) were from the N2E postal code area (Laurentian Hills, Laurentian West, Country Hills, Country Hills West, and Alpine), and the majority were over 65 years old (35.0%) and 40 to 49 years old (30.0%), with several respondents 65 years and above (16.4%). Several respondents identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community (10.5%). No respondents identified as belonging to First Nations, Inuit, or Métis. Most respondents identified as women (47.3%), followed by men (31.6%), with a small percentage selecting non-binary or genderqueer identities or preferring not to answer.

Conclusions

- The community uses the park for the walking trails, exercise, and sports.
- The community loves the nature, open space, and mature trees in the park.
- The community spends time in the park year-round.
- The community uses the park all day, except for at night. Respondents mentioned how a lack of lighting makes the park feel unsafe after dusk.
- The community enjoys using the park with family and alone.
- The community has expressed diverse concerns and interests related to park activities and nature.
- The community expressed that a lack of seating options and trail clearing in the winter makes the park less accessible.

Next Steps

- We want to ensure park neighbours know about this project. We will mail a notice to residents living in the vicinity of Countryside Park.
- We will organize an open house event for the next engagement stage, where we will share design concepts and gather your feedback.
- We will continue to post all project updates on the Engage page. Subscribe to receive updates at engagewr.ca/countryside-ponds