

Background

Greenspaces and natural corridors play a vital role in our lives. We rely on nature for food, shelter, clean air, clean water, recreation, and well-being.

We are creating two new initiatives:

- Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan Bylaw (Greenspace Plan)
- Biodiversity Policy

These will guide how we protect, restore, and care for natural areas, and how we support biodiversity in Winnipeg.

This project will integrate Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, honouring a Two-Eyed Seeing approach. Indigenous knowledge keepers and scientists will help bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on living systems and community.

We are partnering with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments and organizations to co-develop the plan and policy.

Engagement

We’re not starting from scratch. Winnipeggers have told us many times that protecting greenspaces matters. We also heard concerns about climate change, biodiversity, and the need to build climate resilience. This project builds on what people have already shared through past City projects.

Engagement will happen in three phases. Phase 1, completed in spring 2025, focused on hearing from residents and stakeholder groups about priorities, challenges, and opportunities.

Alongside public engagement, a core working group is helping guide the work. The group brings together

people with experience in environmental stewardship and Indigenous knowledge. They provide advice and input for both the Greenspace Plan and the Biodiversity Policy.

Key findings



Nature matters
Residents and stakeholders value greenspaces and biodiversity for health, culture, and the environment.



Most-used spaces
Parks, trails, rivers, and forests are the most visited and important places to connect with nature.



Biggest threats
Habitat loss, development pressure, invasive species, and climate change are urgent risks.



What’s needed
Safer, well-maintained, and accessible greenspaces; stronger protections and long-term funding.



Shared responsibility
Residents, stewardship groups, and the City all play a role in protecting and caring for nature.



Future focus
Plan for future generations, integrate Indigenous knowledge, and expand greenspaces in underserved areas.

Table 1 below gives an overview of public and stakeholder engagement opportunities. **Table 2** provides details on how public engagement opportunities were promoted.

Greenspace Plan & Biodiversity Policy

Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary



Table 1: Public and stakeholder engagement

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPATION
Public engagement opportunities		
 Online survey	Available from March 18 – April 15, 2025. Self-selected participation (not representative of all Winnipeggers) See full results in Appendix A.	2,222 respondents
 Online mapping tool	Available from March 18 – April 15, 2025. Complete results in Appendix B.	646 pins from 236 contributors
Stakeholder engagement opportunities		
 Stakeholder workshop	Two in-person stakeholder workshops held on April 8 and 9, 2025. See Appendix C.	23 participants
 Stakeholder meetings	Three in-person stakeholder meetings held between February 21 and May 26, 2025. See Appendix D.	3 meetings with 21 participants
 Core working group meetings	One meeting held on March 12, 2025. See Appendix E.	5 working group members

Greenspace Plan & Biodiversity Policy

Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary



Table 2: Promotion of public engagement opportunities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH
 Project webpage	Online hub for all project information. Stats reflect unique visits from March 18 and April 15, 2025. winnipeg.ca/greenspaceplan	4,602 unique visits
 News release	City of Winnipeg news release issued on March 18, 2025.	1 news release
 Public engagement newsletter	Featured the project in the City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter (March 20, 2025).	5,800 subscribers
 Direct emails	Sent to 150 stakeholder organizations (March 19, 2025).	150 emails sent
 Social media	18 posts shared from March 18 – April 11, 2025: • Facebook (45,000 followers) • X (131,000 followers) • Instagram (16,000 followers) • LinkedIn (52,000 followers)	18 posts on 4 platforms

See Appendix F for promotional materials.

Who we heard from

In Phase 1 engagement, we invited residents to participate through an online survey and mapping tool. We also met with Indigenous organizations, community groups, developers, health organizations, environmental and stewardship groups, education institutions, students, and researchers.

Online survey respondents

We received 2,222 responses to the online survey. Response to the survey was self-selected and was not a representative sample.

- Most responses came from individuals; 31 were submitted by organizations. Overall, responses were similar between individuals and organizations.
- More responses came from people who live in the south part of the city, near the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. A map of respondent locations by postal code can be found in Appendix G.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents were between 35 to 74 years old (37 percent each).
- Eight percent identified as an Indigenous person (7 percent Métis, 1 percent First Nation, less than 1 percent Inuit).
- Twelve percent identified as a person with a disability, four percent as a person of colour or racialized, three percent as a recent newcomer to Winnipeg.
- Twenty one percent identified as a man, 59 percent a woman, 11 percent as gender and/or sexually diverse (2SLGBTQIA+), two percent non-binary, less than one percent two-spirit.

What we heard

Residents and stakeholders shared their thoughts about greenspaces, natural areas, and biodiversity in Winnipeg. This section summarizes their input.

Connecting with nature and access

Residents and stakeholders shared the spaces they visit, why they matter, and how they could be improved.

Public input

- Most survey participants connect with nature in parks (93 percent), trails (80 percent), rivers, riverbanks, and creeks (72 percent), their own yards or common area when they live (72 percent), and forests (70 percent).
- Mapping results were similar, with most pins placed on parks (250), trails (118), rivers and creeks (105), and forests (73). See Appendix B.
- Common reasons for visiting included recreation, exercise, connection to nature, and mental well-being
 - Parks and trails: walking, biking, skiing, outdoor activities, connection to nature
 - Forests and rivers: peace, beauty, wildlife viewing, cultural or spiritual experiences
 - Community gardens and schoolyards: learning, volunteering, socializing, cultural sharing
 - Other spaces (cemeteries, ponds, prairies, wetlands): reflection, wildlife, inspiration, creativity

Figure 1 shows the types of greenspaces and natural areas people connect with nature the most.

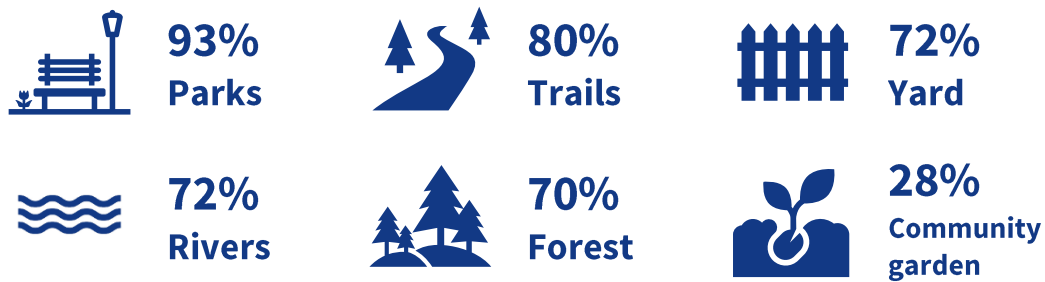


Figure 1: Where people connect with nature

Stakeholder input

- Transportation and distance are major barriers, especially to large greenspaces like Assiniboine Park and Forest
- Suggested improvements: more parks in the inner city, safer and well-maintained spaces, and areas welcoming to cultural and land-based practices
- Other ideas: restore underused sites and increase investment in greenspaces

Shared findings

- Greenspaces should be safe, welcoming, and easy to reach
- Parks, trails, rivers, and forests are the most important for recreation, cultural practices, and connecting with nature

Value of greenspaces and biodiversity

Residents and stakeholders see greenspaces and biodiversity as essential for protecting nature and creating a healthier city.

Public input

- Most survey participants value greenspaces and biodiversity in their neighbourhood (89 percent) and are passionate about environmental issues (93 percent combined strongly/somewhat agree).
- Many take action to support the environment (93 percent) and want to learn more about the benefits of greenspaces and biodiversity (79 percent). Only 2% felt that greenspaces do not affect them.
- The top greenspaces or features people want more of included:
 - Naturalized park spaces (89 percent)
 - Trails and pathways (88 percent)
 - Forests (87 percent)
 - Access to rivers and creeks (80 percent)
- The top-rated benefits of greenspaces included:

Community and wellness benefits:

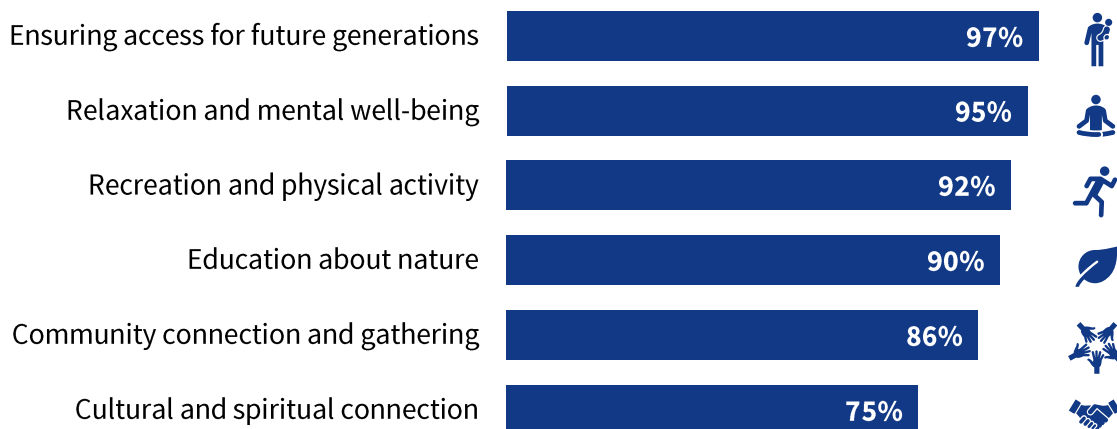
- Ensuring access to nature for future generations (97 percent rated as very important or important)
- Relaxation and mental well-being (95 percent)
- Recreation and physical activity (92 percent)
- Education and awareness about nature (90 percent)

Environmental benefits:

- Improving air and water quality (98 percent rated as very important or important)
- Providing habitats and food for animals (94 percent)
- Protecting against climate change (93 percent)
- Stabilizing riverbanks (94 percent)

Figure 2 shows the benefits that survey participants rated as very important or important, highlighting the top priorities for both environmental and community wellness outcomes.

Community wellness benefits



Environmental benefits

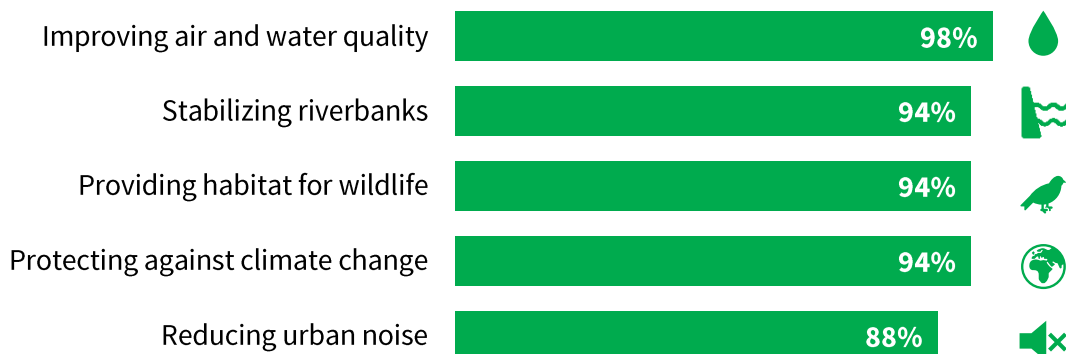


Figure 2: Benefits of greenspaces and natural areas (very important/important)

Stakeholder input

- Protecting existing greenspaces and natural corridors (rivers, creeks, and wetlands) is a high priority.
- Restoration and new natural areas are valued but protecting what already exists is more cost-effective.
- Riverbank vegetation, boulevards, schoolyards, and hospital grounds provide health and ecological benefits.
- Greenspaces also support food security, cultural practices, and ceremonies.
- Long-term planning to protect biodiversity for future generations is critical.

Shared findings

- Greenspaces are highly valued for health, culture, and ecological benefits.
- Protecting what exists, restoring what is lost, and ensuring access for all are shared priorities.

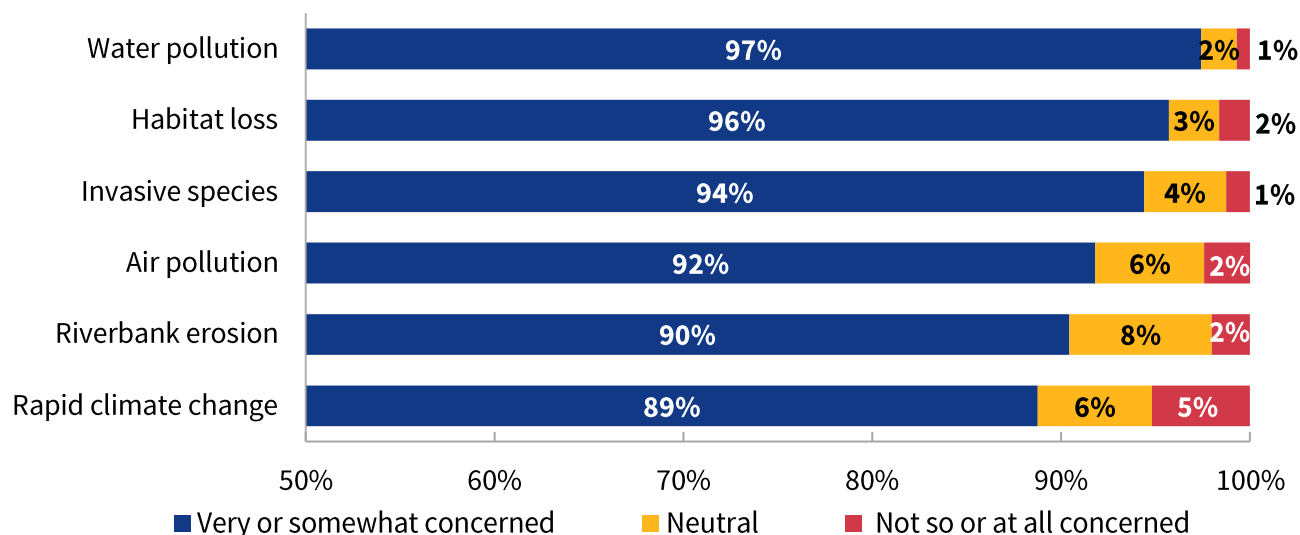
Threats and challenges

Residents and stakeholders identified risks to ecosystems, health, and long-term sustainability.

Public input

- Almost all survey participants said they are concerned about protecting greenspaces and natural areas in Winnipeg (97 percent were very or somewhat concerned).
- When asked why they feel this way, participants highlighted several key concerns (see Appendix A for the full open-ended survey analysis):
 - Habitat loss and biodiversity: Protect native plants and animals and prevent fragmentation
 - Invasive species: Worries about pests such as Emerald Ash Borer and buckthorn
 - Climate change: Greenspaces and trees help with cooling, flood prevention, and overall resilience
 - Development pressure: Greenspaces and mature trees are being lost to development; some participants expressed distrust in decision-making and policy enforcement
 - Policy and maintenance gaps: Existing rules are weak or inconsistent, and parks need better upkeep
 - Equity and access: Some neighbourhoods have less access to quality parks and trees
 - Indigenous knowledge and stewardship: Indigenous leadership is important for sustainable and culturally meaningful management
- When asked about specific threats, at least 89 percent of participants said they were very or somewhat concerned about each threat. See Figure 3 for details.

How concerned are you about the impact of the following threats to nature within the city?



Total responses: 2145 (77 skipped this question)

Figure 3: Concern for threats to nature

Stakeholder input

Threats:

- Habitat fragmentation
- Riverbank erosion
- Invasive species (like elm beetle and buckthorn)
- Climate change
- Pressures from city growth and new development
- Other risks: hard surfaces, light and noise pollution, and lack of public and political understanding
- Maintenance is an ongoing challenge for both new and existing parks

Ways to reduce threats:

- Education and awareness, including about invasive species
- Stricter protections, like limits on tree removal, stronger by-laws, and protecting key corridors
- Better maintenance, such as controlled burns, pruning, and more resources
- Economic approaches, like showing the value of ecosystems and offering incentives to developers

Roles and responsibilities:

- City: Provide education, clear policies, funding, and small grants
- Stewardship groups: Help with labour, outreach, and cleanups
- Residents: Protect trees, care for yards, and volunteer

Shared findings

- Habitat loss, invasive species, development, and climate change are urgent threats
- Stronger policies, funding, and maintenance are needed
- Education and stewardship are critical at all levels
- City, stewardship groups, and residents all play key roles

Priorities for the future

Residents and stakeholders want long-term planning that protects nature, increases access, and supports ecological health.

Public input

- Protect nature and biodiversity: preserve forests, wetlands, and riverbanks; plant native species; support pollinators; reduce pesticide use
- Climate action: invest in tree canopy, wetlands, and rain gardens to manage heat and flooding
- Equitable access: ensure greenspaces are safe, accessible, and support year-round use
- Long-term thinking: preserve greenspaces for future generations, embed ecological health into planning
- Indigenous knowledge: involve Indigenous leadership and support cultural and land-based practices
- Policy and planning: provide stable funding and strengthen protections

Stakeholder input

- Protect, restore, and create parks, forests, wetlands, riverbanks, and schoolyards
- Acquire natural areas proactively and plan for long-term connectivity
- Find a balance between protecting greenspaces and meeting the City's growth and development goals
- Maintain greenspaces with adequate resources; use transitional employment for stewardship
- Preserve key habitats and corridors; plant native species to support biodiversity
- Integrate biodiversity and resilience into development and planning
- Expand greenspaces in underserved areas and restore vacant sites
- Design parks and trails for safety, accessibility, and year-round use
- Support cultural and traditional uses, including harvesting, ceremonies, and education

Shared findings

- Strong support for protecting and restoring natural areas
- Agreement on nature-based solutions for climate resilience
- Importance of equitable, safe, and inclusive greenspaces
- Indigenous knowledge and leadership critical for management and planning
- Stable policy, planning, and funding essential for long-term success

Next steps

In Phase 2, we will the draft policies, goals, and actions for the Greenspace Plan and the Biodiversity Policy. We will continue gathering feedback from stakeholder organizations to help refine the policies and make sure key issues are addressed.

Input from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 will come together to shape the draft Greenspace Plan and Biodiversity Policy. We will also consider technical analysis, Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, and guidance from the co-development team.

In Phase 3, the draft plans will be shared with the public and stakeholders, along with an explanation of how feedback was considered. This phase will focus on making sure the draft plans reflect community priorities. Based on what we hear, some refinements may be made before the final Greenspace Plan and Biodiversity Policy are presented to City Council for their review and decision.

Appendices

Appendix A – Online survey results

Appendix B – Mapping tool results

Appendix C – Stakeholder workshop notes

Appendix D – Stakeholder meeting notes

Appendix E – Core Working Group

Appendix F – Promotional materials

Appendix G – Map of survey respondents