

Naturalization Fall 2026 What We Heard Report

September 2026

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Project Overview

Background

Naturalization is a process that transforms a manicured landscape into one reflective of the natural region. Responsible parkland care means sustainable practices that contribute to a healthy, climate-resilient, livable City for generations to come. Naturalization helps preserve and celebrate the natural plant and animal species found in our region.

For more than 25 years, Edmonton has been restoring sections of City green spaces to a more natural state. Naturalization is occurring throughout the city, along roadways, stormwater ponds, park spaces and in new development communities.

Some of the benefits of naturalization include:

- Reduces flooding caused by stormwater runoff
- Increases surrounding property values
- Reduces taxpayer burden for green space maintenance
- Adds fruit-bearing trees and shrubs for public use
- Regulates temperature of ground and air and adds shade
- Increases biodiversity

The Naturalization Program supports the City's goal to expand our urban forest by planting two million new trees by 2030 and working toward 20 per cent canopy coverage by 2071. To achieve our planting goal, the optimal locations for sustainable plantings must be determined. The City conducted city-wide public engagement in [2022](#) and [2023](#) which gauged Edmontonians support for naturalization. This city-wide engagement helped inform our planting strategy and what was wanted from residents.

As individual planting sites are identified and scheduled for planting, a more local level of public engagement occurs within neighbourhoods near the sites. This engagement helps identify unique site-specific issues and better understand how area residents use the site.

This report summarizes what was heard through public engagement for Fall Naturalization plantings in 2026. This includes five regional planting projects within nine neighbourhoods.



Engagement Activities

Respondents were asked to engage with a Social Map made available on engaged.edmonton.ca; a total of 231 contributions¹ from 110 contributors² were made across all surveys.

Each contributor was welcomed to participate in the following steps:

1. Explore the neighbourhood map to see the planned naturalization sites and provide your feedback on planting priorities. Planting sites were highlighted in orange on each map.
2. Select the coloured pin for the particular naturalization site that you would like to provide feedback on.
3. Complete the linked survey that will appear on selection.

Full details on the survey components can be found in Appendix A.

All contributors were able to provide feedback on any planting sites.

Engagement Objectives

The public engagement process aimed to:

1. Ensure the naturalization of park spaces can be achieved in alignment with the preferences of residents whenever possible.
2. Understand how residents will be impacted by the naturalization of selected sites.
3. Align public expectations with site technical requirements and long-term sustainability to deliver on naturalization goals.

¹ Contributors are defined as unique users that contribute to the Naturalization survey.

² Contributions are defined as individual entries made to a single proposed Naturalization site.

Decision-Making Inputs

To inform project decisions, the Project Team will consider public engagement data along with a variety of other inputs, such as:

1. **Financial Considerations**, including:
 - a. *Two Billion Tree Grant*: This federal grant supports our efforts to plant trees and shrubs throughout the City. As part of this grant, there is a requirement for two trees to be planted for every one shrub.
2. **City Policies and Plans**, including:
 - a. *City Design and Construction Standards*: The Design and Construction Standards apply to City contracts and/or private development projects throughout Edmonton. This ensures all infrastructure work in the City is constructed to a consistent standard.
 - b. *Development Standards and Design Guidelines*: The City of Edmonton has implemented policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure sustainable development. Various ecological, environmental, economic and social/cultural factors are considered when planning for housing, businesses, schools, parks, infrastructure, roads and public facilities.
 - c. *Urban Forest Asset Management Plan (UFAMP)*: The UFAMP outlines the activities and programs for managing the City's urban forest over the next 45 years and their forecasted costs. The plan transparently connects investments with services and progress towards achieving strategic goals.
3. **Technical and Utility Requirements**, including:
 - a. *Soil Conditions*: Soil and ecological conditions impact what species will grow successfully in a given area's ecological conditions.
 - b. *Protection of Utilities*: To protect vital infrastructure, naturalization must take into account assets such as underground water mains, overhead power lines, protection of Stormwater Management Facilities (SWMF) and other factors to ensure functional operations continue as our urban forest expands.

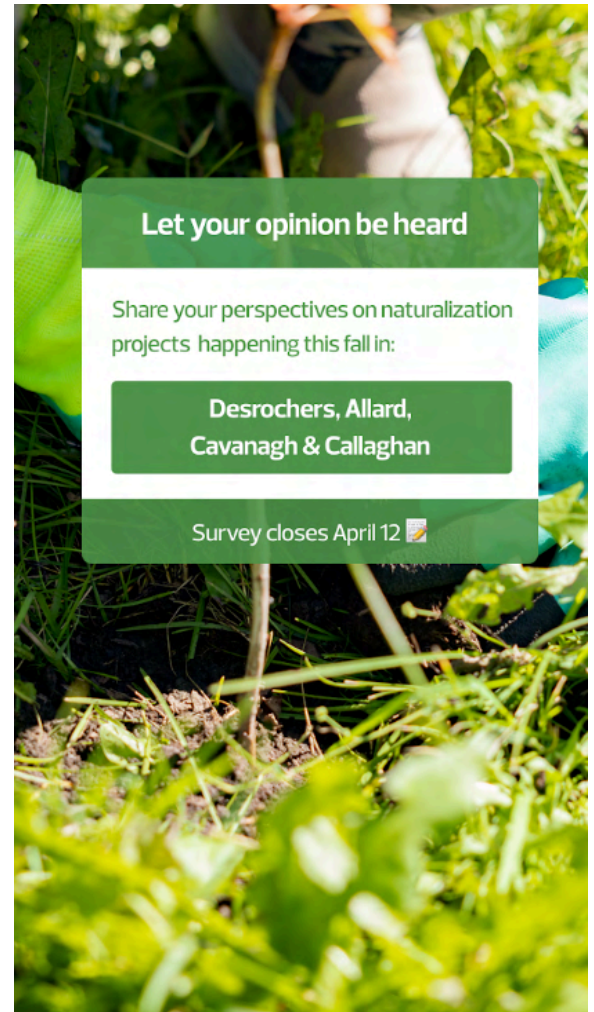
Public Engagement Approach

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes. Public engagement was completed at the Refine level meaning we asked participants for feedback to help us adapt and adjust the layout and species of plants within specified naturalization areas. Please visit edmonton.ca/publicengagement for more information on the City's public engagement process.



How We Communicated

1. [Road signs](#) placed at high traffic areas near naturalization sites.
 - a. Total number of signs: 16
(2 per neighbourhood)
2. Naturalization webpage updated and included a survey link.
3. Notifications sent through registered Engaged Edmonton users.
4. Direct mail was used for neighbourhoods with mid-complexity or higher planting sites.
5. Social Media posts on X, Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor.
6. Emails to the Neighbourhood Resource Coordinators, Community Leagues and Homeowners Associations.
7. Surveys were included in the City's weekly Public Engagement Public Service Announcement.
8. Shared in the PARS Weekly Council Update for Council members to share in their communications.



How We Engaged

Site specific surveys were available from March 24 to May 3, 2026 through Engaged Edmonton (engaged.edmonton.ca/naturalizationplantingsites). Site maps can be found in Appendix B.

Neighbourhood(s)	Proposed Naturalization Sites within Scope	Engagement Period	Participation
Allard, Cavanagh and Callaghan	Allard Central SWMF Allard NE SWMF Cavanagh North SWMF Cavanagh Central SWMF Callaghan Central SWMF	March 24 - April 12	27 contributors 75 contributions
Chappelle and Heritage Valley	Chappelle North Central SWMF Chappelle NE Central SWMF Chappelle NE SWMF Chappelle SW SWMF Chappelle South Central SWMF Chappelle SE Central SWMF Heritage Valley Town Centre NE SWMF	March 31 - April 19	5 contributors 16 contributions
Desrochers	Desrochers Area Natural Stand Desrochers Area Central SWMF	March 24 - April 12	15 contributors 24 contributions
Keswick and Glenridding	River Valley Keswick Top of Bank Keswick NW SWMF Keswick NW Central SWMF Keswick Joey Moss School & Central SWMF Keswick Joan Carr School Glenridding Heights NE SWMF Glenridding Ravine Central SWMF Glenridding Ravine South SWMF	April 13 - May 3	21 contributors 32 contributions
Windermere	Windermere North SWMF Windermere North NE SWMF Windermere NE SWMF Windermere NW Central SWMF	April 7 - April 26	42 contributors 86 contributions

	Windermere West Central SWMF Windermere East Central SWMF Windermere South Central SWMF Windermere SE SWMF		
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What We Heard / What We Did / What We Are Doing

Site Usage

Respondents were asked to identify their connection to the site they left feedback on.

- 11 per cent were residents who directly backed onto the naturalized area³
- 52 per cent were residents of the neighbourhood
- 30 per cent represented visitors of the neighbourhood
- The remainder were a business owner/employee in the area or none of the categories

Full details can be found in Appendix E.

How often respondents used the sites throughout the year varied significantly. Complete site usage data for all neighbourhoods can be found in Appendix F.

Planting Priorities

Respondents were asked to prioritize a variety of options that will help shape new naturalized sites. Neighbourhood level feedback helps the City understand the local context and integrate priorities where possible.

Outlined in the table below are the top three priorities per neighbourhood and additional priorities identified in the “other” option. To view all prioritization data by neighbourhood, see Appendix C; for results by naturalization site, see Appendix D; for a breakdown of plants used as examples for each priority, see Appendix G.

³ Average of all neighbourhoods (n=231)

Neighbourhood	Top Three Priorities	Other Priorities ⁴
Allard	Attraction of birds (24%) Mosquito control (23%) Fruit / nut picking opportunities (13%)	Wildlife support/ habitat restoration Safety risks Native plants
Callaghan	Attraction of birds (29%) Fruit / nut picking opportunities (17%) Noise Absorption / Noise Control (14%)	Climate mitigation Native plants Wildlife support
Cavanagh	Attraction of birds (27%) Mosquito control (17%) Fruit / nut picking opportunities (11%)	Wildlife support Native plants Climate mitigation Maintenance sitelines
Chappelle	Mosquito control (22%) Attraction of birds (19%) Wind buffers (17%)	<i>No additional priorities identified</i>
Desrochers	Attraction of birds (30%) Mosquito control (18%) Water absorption / flood prevention (13%)	Native species
Glenridding	Mosquito control (27%) Attraction of birds (24%) Shade offerings / large canopy coverage (15%)	<i>No additional priorities identified</i>
Heritage Valley	Shade offerings / large canopy coverage (33%) Mosquito control (33%) Attraction of birds (33%)	<i>No additional priorities identified</i>
Keswick	Shade offerings / large canopy coverage (21%) Mosquito control (21%) Attraction of birds (21%)	Weed control
Windermere	Mosquito control (22%) Attraction of birds (16%) Shade offerings / large canopy coverage (13%)	Weed control Replace dead trees

⁴ Other Priorities were qualitative comments from the 'Other' option in Question 3 of the Survey (see Appendix A for more details).

Open-Ended Feedback and Actions

Respondents were asked to share additional information about the site conditions and usage. Feedback is summarized below along with how the City applied insights to inform actions for the upcoming fall plantings.

Respondent Feedback	City Action
General / Multiple Site Feedback	
→ Installation of more benches/picnic tables	→ This item is out of scope for this project. However, the desire for benches/picnic tables will be passed on to the Play Spaces and Amenity Services Team.
→ Native species should be used when naturalizing	→ All trees and shrubs planted will be native to the Edmonton region.
→ Maintaining green spaces for recreation/play	→ Plantings will be placed strategically to allow for continued recreation and walkability; trails will not be obstructed.
→ Maintaining walkability in naturalized areas	
Allard	
Allard Central SWMF	
→ Children are often seen walking across the frozen water in the winter, posing a risk to their safety → Strong winds from the N/NE → High volume of black knot in the area	→ Planting will reduce access to the water by providing a vegetative barrier. → Planting will reduce winds blowing in from the N/NE by providing a windbreak through planting a variety of trees and shrubs. → Reduced planting of pincherry and chokecherry, which are vulnerable to black knot.
Chappelle	
There were no comments for any site in this area.	
Cavanagh	
Cavanagh North SWMF	
→ Many trees were lost a few years ago due to beavers coming up from the nearby ravine	→ Planned planting will aim to replenish tree loss.

Respondent Feedback	City Action
Desrochers	
Desrochers Area Central SWMF	
→ High quantity of mosquitoes in the summer	→ New plants will create habitat for dragonflies, which prey on mosquitoes.
Desrochers Area Natural Stand	
→ High quantity of mosquitoes in the summer → There is a coyote den in the area → There is a high level of dampness around the stormwater pond → High winds in the area → Request for shorter trees/shrubs closer to the road to ease drivers' ability to see pedestrians	→ New plants will create habitat for dragonflies, which prey on mosquitoes. → The City will ensure awareness of coyote homes while planting. → The plant species selected will absorb much of the excess moisture in the area. → Windbreaks with trees and plants will be established. → Planting plans will ensure sightlines are maintained.
Glenridding	
Glenridding Ravine South SWMF	
→ High winds from the west	→ Planting will reduce the high winds by providing a windbreak through planting a variety of trees and shrubs.
Heritage Valley	
<i>There were no comments for the site in this area.</i>	
Keswick	
Keswick Joan Carr School	
→ Part of this area may be used as a sledding hill	→ The planting area will be pulled away from sledding slopes to ensure it does not interfere with activities.
Keswick Joey Moss School & Central SWMF	
→ High wind from the north and west	→ Planting will reduce the high winds by providing a windbreak through planting a variety of trees and shrubs.

Respondent Feedback	City Action
Keswick NW Central SWMF	
→ High volume of dogs in the area	→ A mowed buffer strip will continue to be maintained on either side of the pathway to provide pets with areas to explore. → Tree selection and placement will consider usage by pets.
Keswick NW SWMF	
→ A high volume of weeds develop here	→ Before and after we plant, we will ensure proper weed control is performed to ensure plant survival.
Windermere	
Windermere East Central SWMF	
→ Large dog meet-up place → High traffic walking path → Sledding hills are located behind the townhomes → Problem with thistles overgrowing	→ Tree selection and placement will consider meet-up places used by residents and pets. → A mowed buffer strip will continue to be maintained on both sides of the pathway. → The planting area will not affect the sledding areas. → Weed control is performed prior to planting, during tree and shrub establishment and ongoing in established naturalization areas.
Windermere NW Central SWMF	
→ Little shade on walking trails → Has a small playground nearby; concerns about attracting wildlife that would interact with children playing	→ The trees planted near trails will help provide shade to those using walking trails. → The distance between the planting areas and the playground exceeds the required distance mandated in the City of Edmonton Design and Construction Standards. → Sightlines around playgrounds will be maintained.
Windermere SE SWMF	
→ Little shade on walking trails	→ The trees planted near trails will help provide shade for those using walking trails.
Windermere South Centre SWMF	
→ Little shade on walking trails → High traffic noise from Wright Drive SW	→ The trees planted near trails will help provide shade for those using walking trails. → Trees and shrubs will help to reduce noise from Wright Drive SW.

Respondent Feedback	City Action
Windermere West Central SWMF	
→ Frequent use of trails, high volume of dogs → Problem with thistles overgrowing	→ Tree selection and placement will consider usage by residents and pets. → Weed control is performed prior to planting, during tree and shrub establishment and ongoing in established naturalization areas.

Additional Feedback

While many respondents expressed general support for naturalization, additional comments focused on how naturalized areas should be designed, maintained and integrated into existing neighbourhoods. Respondents shared ideas for enhancing biodiversity, improving visitor experiences and ensuring projects reflect local site conditions and include ongoing maintenance.

Respondents supported increasing biodiversity and restoring habitat for birds, pollinators and other wildlife through a diverse mix of native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, while preserving existing mature trees and habitat.

Suggestions for enhancing naturalized areas included increasing tree canopy, incorporating diverse vegetation and adding amenities such as benches and walking trails. Many also emphasized maintaining recreational access, water views and sightlines, while ensuring naturalized areas remain safe, well maintained and enjoyable for the community.

Although some concerns about the City's broader approach to naturalization were raised across projects, the majority of opposition was concentrated within one neighbourhood. Their concerns included the loss of manicured green space, safety hazards like the loss of sightlines, increase in wildlife activity, maintaining resident funded maintenance, safety, neighbourhood character and property value impacts. They suggested focusing naturalization efforts on roadway corridors instead of stormwater management facilities and green spaces.

Next Steps

The Project Team is integrating these findings into final technical planting plans. These plans will incorporate public feedback where possible, including designing naturalized spaces for windbreaks, the development of dragonfly habitats for natural mosquito control and the implementation of mowed buffer strips for pets. The plans strive to minimize conflicts with active community recreation. Planting in the proposed naturalization sites is scheduled to begin in September 2026. City-led planting in Windermere, Keswick, Glenridding and Glenridding Ravine will be paused for 2026, pending further technical review outside of this engagement process. For project updates please visit engaged.edmonton.ca/naturalizationplantingsites.

The Naturalization Project Team would like to thank everyone who participated in this engagement process.

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

1. Which of the following best describes your connection to this site?
 - a. Resident that backs onto the naturalized area
 - b. Residents of the neighbourhood
 - c. Visitors of the neighbourhood
 - d. Business owner / employee in the area
2. How often do you use this site throughout the year?
 - a. I don't visit this site
 - b. 1-3 times a month
 - c. 4-9 times a month
 - d. 10+ times a month
3. What are your top priorities on naturalizing this site? (select all that apply)
 - a. Fruit / nut picking opportunities (ex. Raspberries, Saskatoon berries, Gooseberries, Beaked Hazelnuts)
 - b. Water absorption / Flooding mitigation (ex. Willows, Poplars, Aspens, Birches)
 - c. Noise absorption / noise control (ex. Spruces, Pines, Willows, Larches)
 - d. Maintain current sight lines / visibility (ex. Aspens, Snowberries, Roses, Larches)
 - e. Shade offerings / large canopy coverage (ex. Poplars, Aspens, Spruces, Pines)
 - f. Mosquito control (ex. Willows, Birches, Dogwoods, Currants)
 - g. Wind Buffers (ex. Poplars, Pines, Spruces, Birches)
 - h. Attraction of birds (ex. Dogwoods, Saskatoons, Chokecherries, Birches)
 - i. Visual Buffers (ex. Poplars, Pines, Spruces, Birches)
 - j. Other: (free short write)
4. Is there anything about the site conditions that you would like us to know (ex. High wind from the west, bench locations, dog meet ups, sledding hills, etc.)
 - a. Open-Ended Question (500-character limit)

Appendix B: Site Maps

Allard

Allard Central SWMF / Helm Pond



Allard NE SWMF



Callaghan

Callaghan Central SWMF



Cavanagh

Cavanagh Central SWMF



Cavanagh North SWMF



Chappelle

Chappelle NE Central SWMF



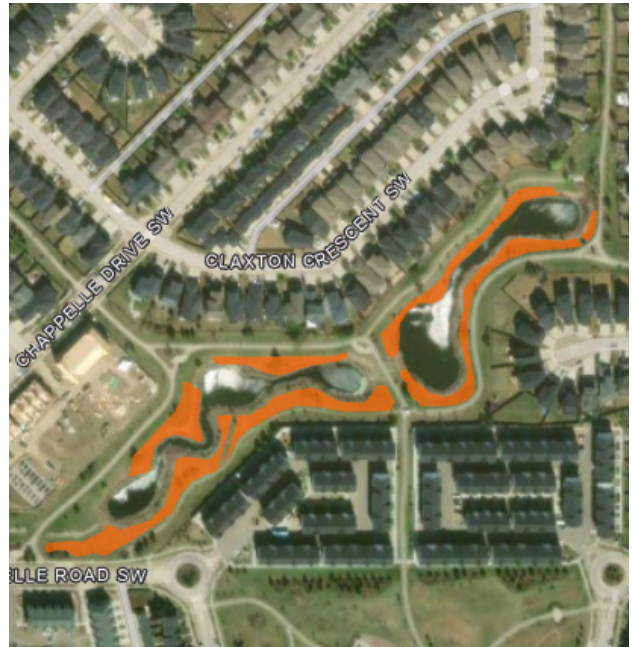
Chappelle NE SWMF



Chappelle North Central SWMF



Chappelle SE Central SWMFs



Chappelle South Central SWMF



Chappelle SW SWMF

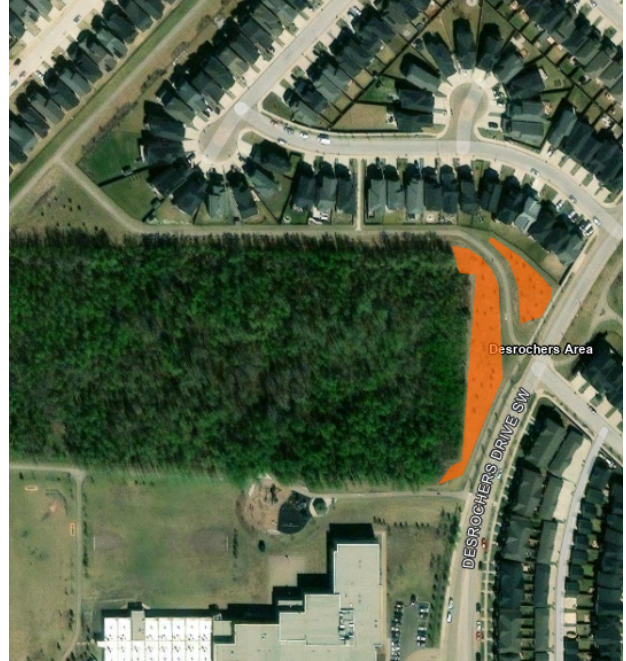


Desrochers

Desrochers Central SWMF

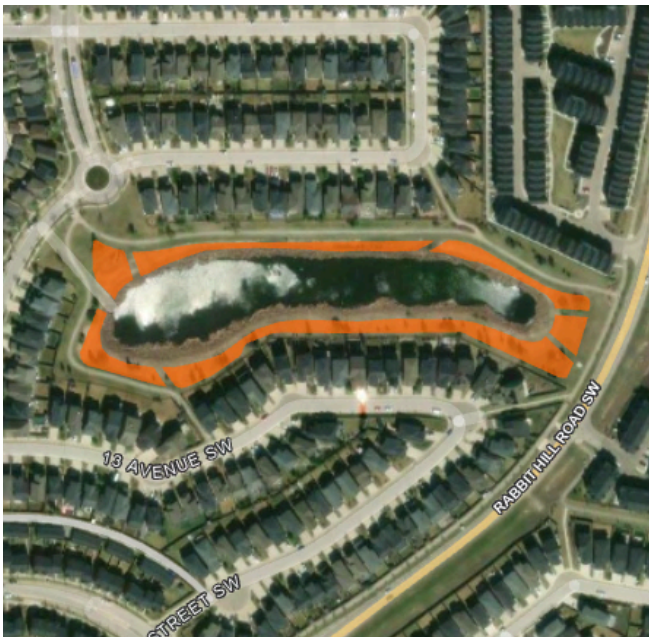


Desrochers Natural Stand



Glenridding

Glenridding Heights NE SWMF



Glenridding Ravine Central SWMF



Glenridding Ravine South SWMF



Heritage Valley

Heritage Valley Town Centre NE SWMF



Keswick	
Keswick Joan Carr School	Keswick Joey Moss School & Central NE SWMF
	
Keswick NW Central SWMFs	Keswick NW SWMF
	

Keswick River Valley Top of Bank

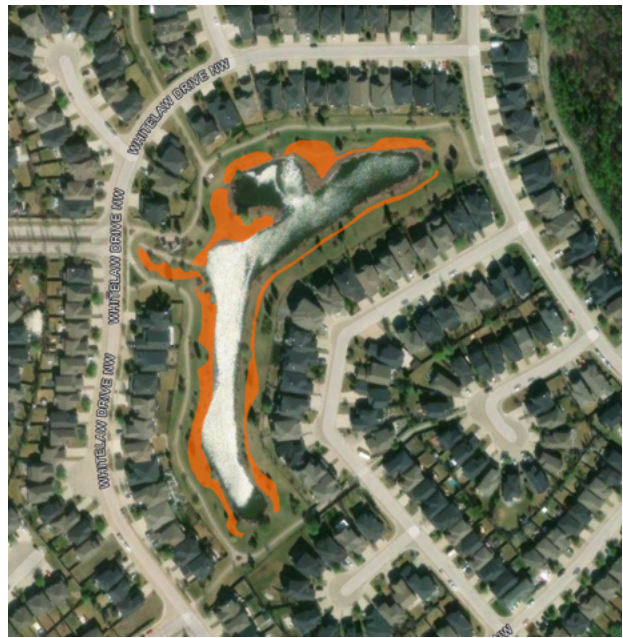


Windermere

Windermere East Central SWMF



Windermere NE SWMF



Windermere North NE SWMF



Windermere North SWMF



Windermere NW Central SWMF



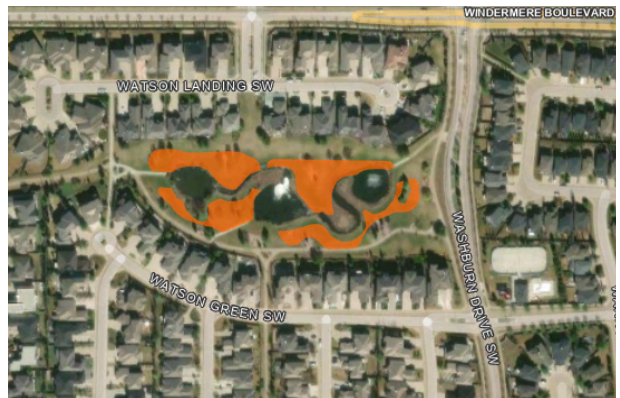
Windermere SE SWMF



Windermere South Central SWMF

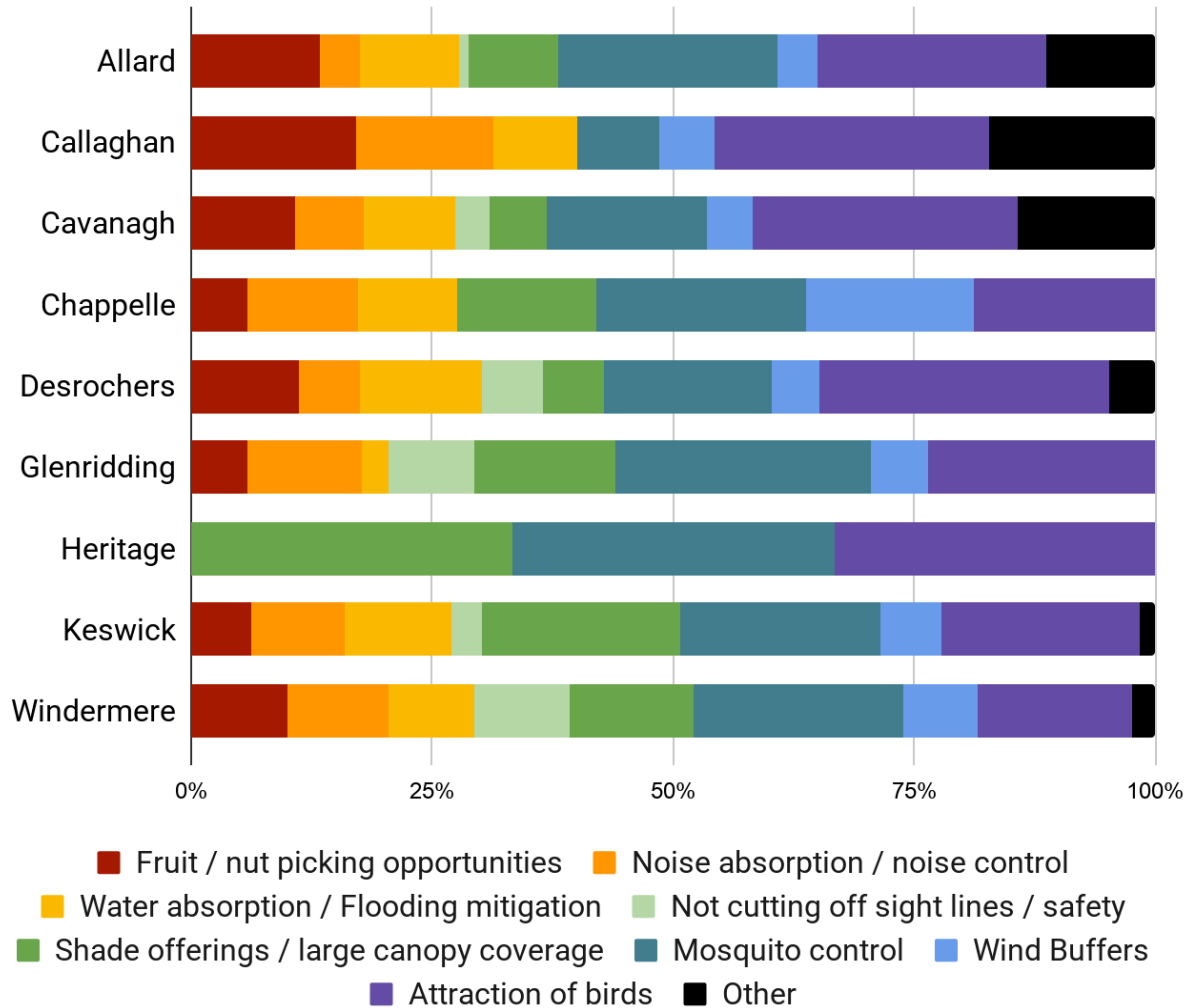


Windermere West Central SWMF



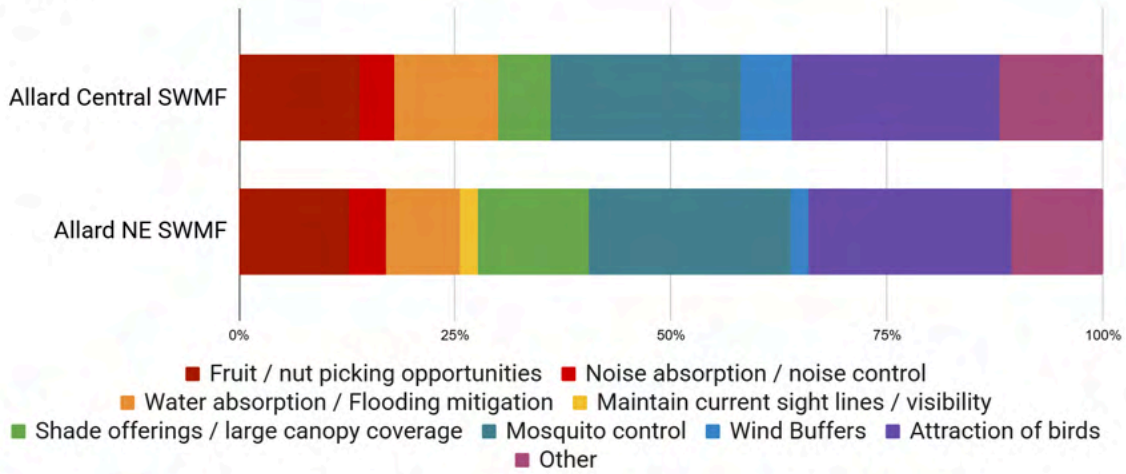
Appendix C: Prioritization per Neighbourhood

What are your top priorities on naturalizing this site?

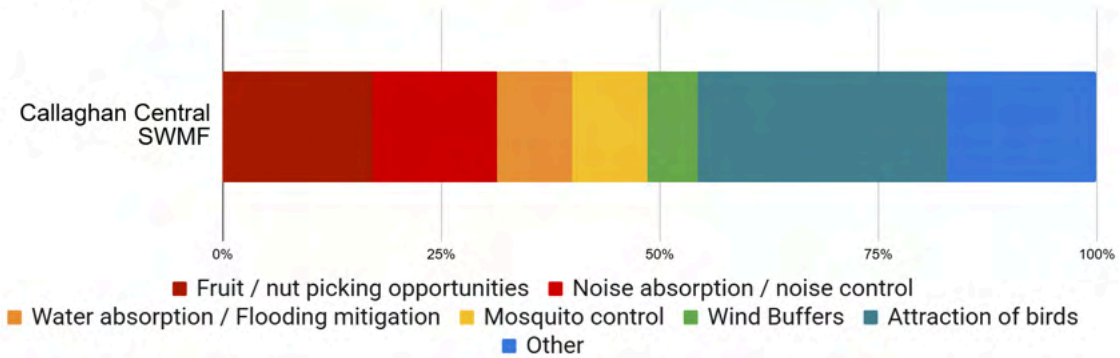


Appendix D: Prioritization by Neighbourhood Site

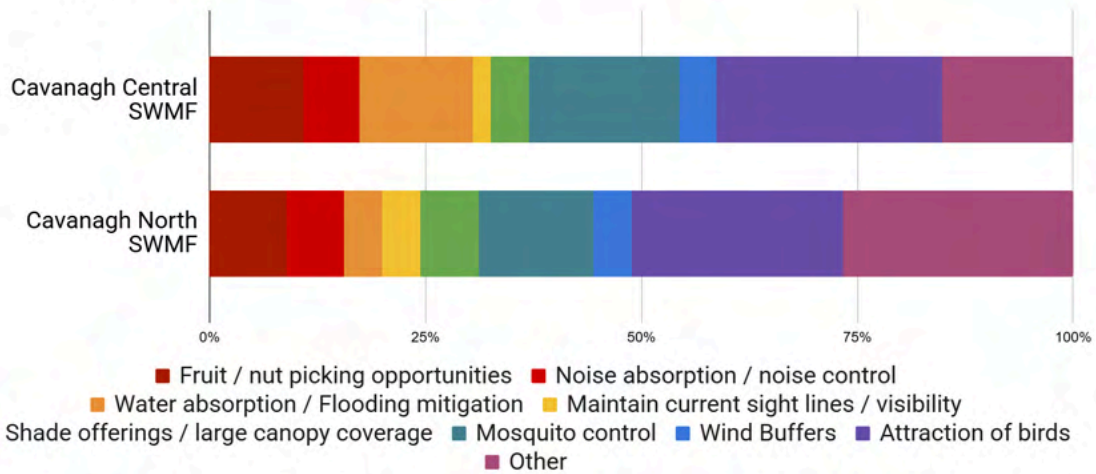
Allard



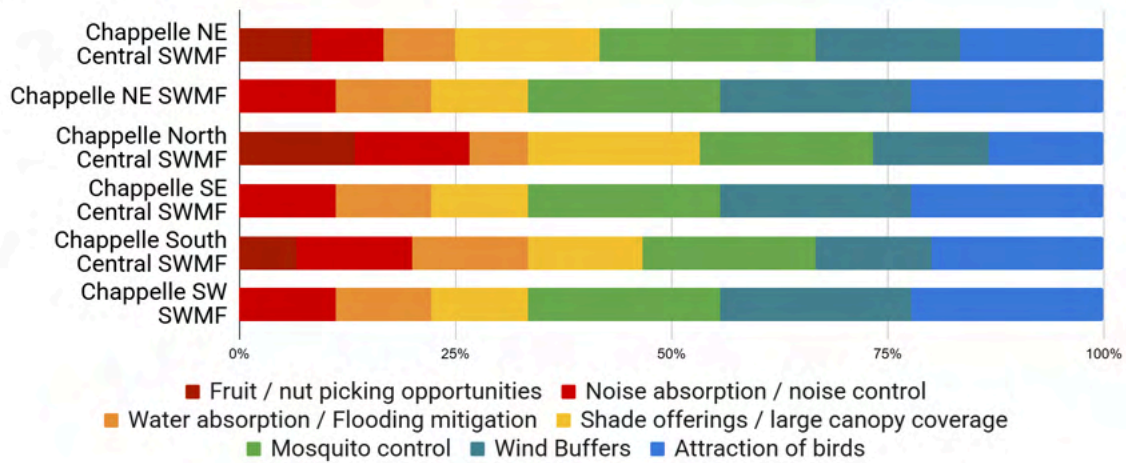
Callaghan



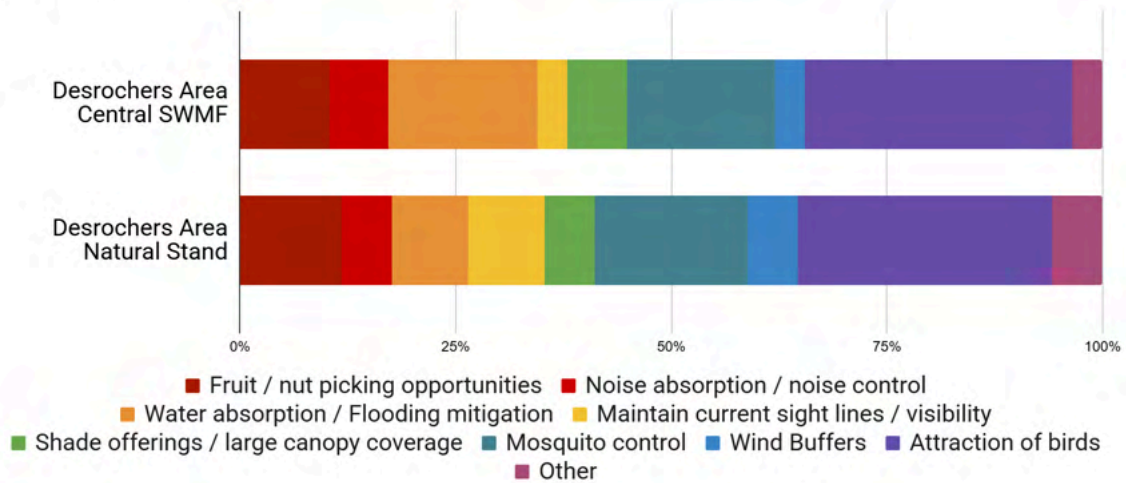
Cavanagh



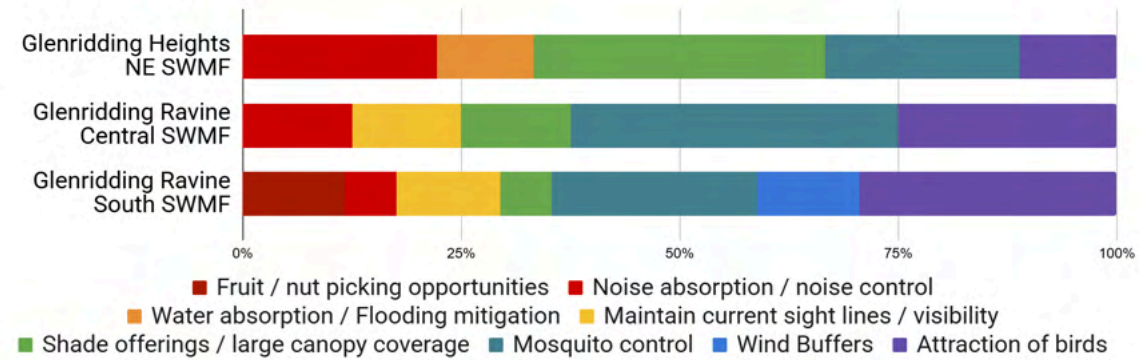
Chappelle



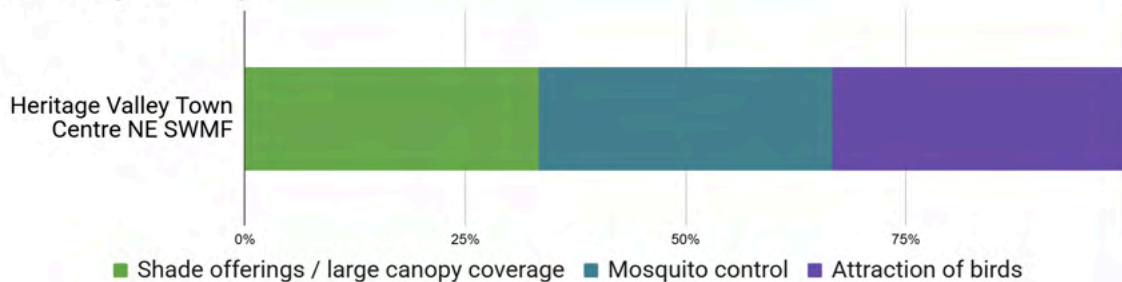
Desrochers



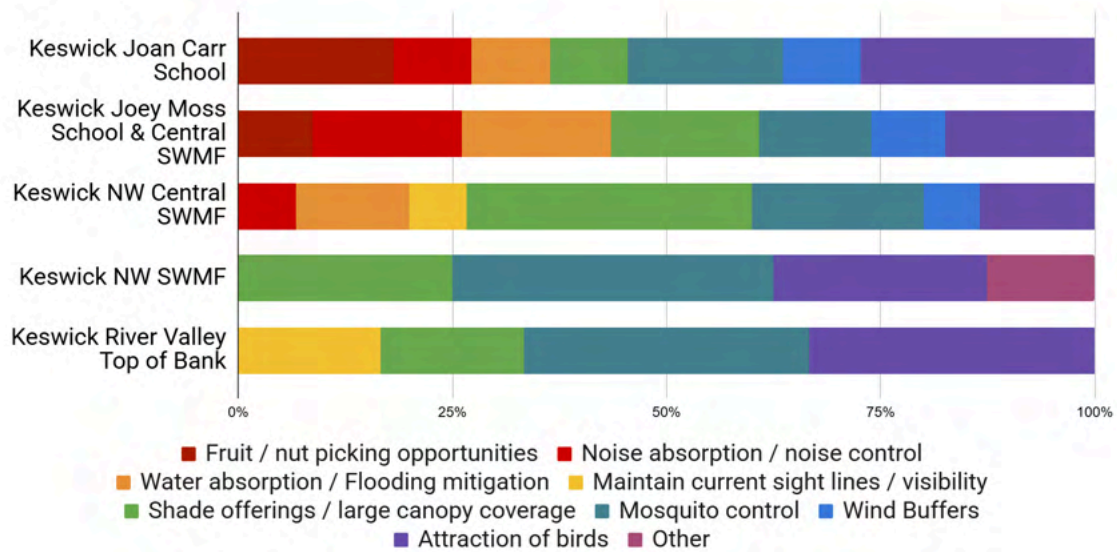
Glenridding



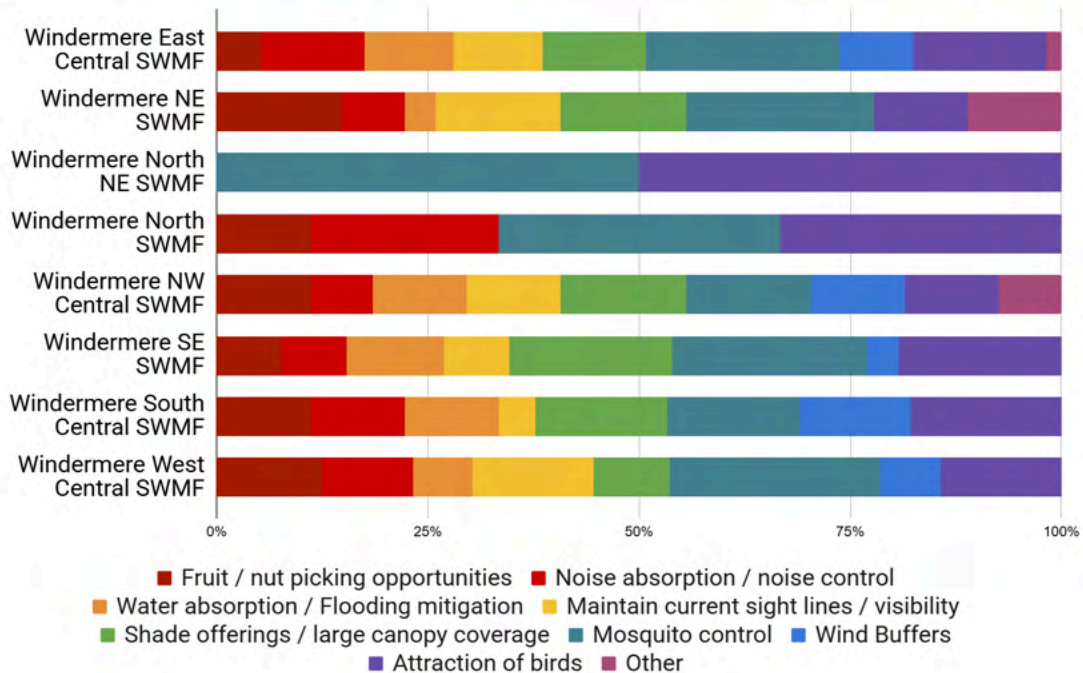
Heritage Valley



Keswick



Windermere

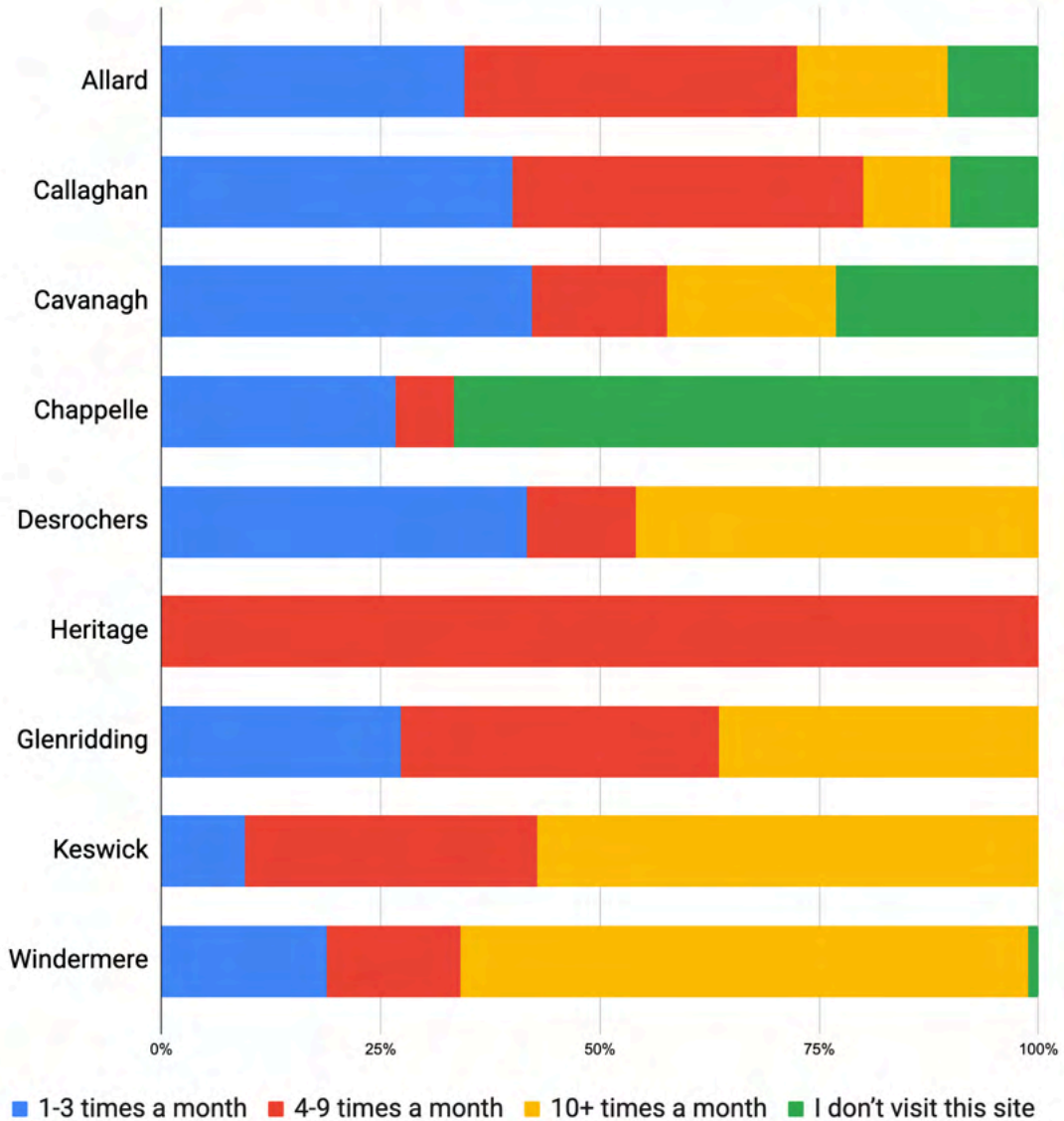


Appendix E: Respondent User Data

Which of the following best describes your connection to this site?					
	<i>Resident that backs onto the naturalized area</i>	<i>Residents of the neighbourhood</i>	<i>Visitors of the neighbourhood</i>	<i>Business owner / employee in the area</i>	<i>None of the above</i>
Allard (n=33)	6%	33%	52%	0%	9%
Callaghan (n=13)	0%	39%	46%	0%	15%
Cavanagh (n=29)	3%	31%	52%	3%	10%
Chappelle (n=15)	13%	20%	27%	0%	40%
Desrochers (n=24)	8%	54%	33%	4%	0%
Heritage Valley (n=1)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Glenridding (n=11)	18%	82%	0%	0%	0%
Keswick (n=21)	10%	76%	14%	0%	0%
Windermere (n=84)	17%	64%	19%	0%	0%

Appendix F: Site Usage Frequency Data

How often do you use this site throughout the year?



Appendix G: Plant Species Selection Breakdown

The following table provides an explanation of example plants in naturalized areas from Question 3.

Plant	Function Related to Priorities
Foraging Opportunities	
raspberries	Fast growing, edible fruit shrub that spreads through its roots, often creates small patches
saskatoons	Shrub-form is more common but there are some tree-form specimens around Produce delicious berries from Late June to early August
gooseberries	Moisture loving shrubs with many, small thorns Produce delicious berries that ripen to shades of yellow, red and purple depending on the species
beaked hazelnuts	A favourite of squirrels! Beaked hazelnuts are larger shrubs that produce edible hazelnuts
Water Absorption / Deep Roots	
willows	Flood tolerant species that have deep roots which prevent erosion and absorb vast amounts of water relative to other plant species
poplars and aspens	Flood tolerant, rapidly growing tree species that can pump large quantities of water out of the surrounding area and into their trunks
birch	Tolerant of periodic flooding, they have wide-reaching, shallow root systems that absorb large quantities of water which it uses for fast growth and sap production
Noise Absorption / Noise Control	
spruce	Dense foliage conifer (conifers are best for noise absorption), Spruce are the best for noise absorption
pinus	Not as dense of foliage as spruce, but faster growing
willows	Fast growing and dense thicket forming trees and shrubs that help reduce noise, especially in wetter areas
larch	Least dense foliage of the conifers but the fastest growing
Not Cutting off Site Lines / Safety	
aspen	Limited branch spreading below the canopy; tall, thin and straight trunks make aspens some of the best native trees to plant while preserving sightlines
snowberry	Short native shrub that does not cut off sightlines

roses	Similar to snowberries, though they can be taller, the prickles also deter individuals from walking through or hiding in them
larch	Lush green foliage that is not as dense as other conifers Needles fall off in winter creating open lines of sight
Shade Offerings / Large Canopy Coverage	
poplar and aspen	Largest, wide-spreading canopies of native trees After leaf out in the spring they provide great shade throughout the Summer and Fall
spruces	Dense foliage and can reach heights of 20m+ providing great shade for residents wanting a picnic or to simply enjoy the outdoors
pine	Similar to Spruce, not as dense but have a wider canopy reach
Mosquito / Insect Control	
willow	Grow well along the waters edge providing prime habitat for dragonflies, spiders and other mosquito-eating predators
birch	Similar to willows, they also provide excellent homes for birds who hollow out cavities in the trees. These birds often eat mosquitoes and other pest-species
dogwood	These shrubs flower out and attract beneficial insects that aid in balancing pest insect species in an ecosystem
currant	
Wind Buffers	
poplar	The most common species planted in windbreaks on the prairies for their wide canopy spread
birch	Similar to poplars though they do not reach the same heights Good in wetter areas and can handle a variety of soil qualities
pine	Fast growing conifers with high needle density to support windbreaking year-round
spruce	Conifers with the densest foliage Slow growing species but the best for windbreaks
Attraction of Birds	
dogwood	Produce large clusters of white berries which are edible to birds but should not be eaten by people They produce so many that they are often some of the few remaining fruits for birds come late winter, making them an important source of food for species such as the black-capped chickadee
Saskatoon	Birds love these berries just as much as we do Their thicket-forming shrubs also provide sanctuary and a place to build nests for smaller birds
chokeberry	

birch	Can grow in poor soils at a range of sites Good trees to build nests in, the bark is used as a waterproofing nesting material and provide food in the form of catkins and seeds Even when aging, birches provide an excellent source of food for beneficial insects and a home for woodpeckers
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