



The **Research** Shop

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

## YORKLANDS GREEN HUB AREA SURVEY

AUGUST 2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Yorklands Green Hub Board of Directors, for collaborating with us on this project, and bringing our attention to the beautiful land and their plan for revitalizing the space where the former Ontario Reformatory once was. We would specifically like to acknowledge Norah Chaloner, the current Chair of the Board of Directors for all of her hard work, and patience while designing and carrying out this project. We could not have done it without you!

Thank you to the Two-Rivers Farmers Market and the Grange Hill Farmers Market for allowing us to share the space with them and conduct our data collection at their sites. We are grateful for your hospitality as it allowed us to complete this project. A special thank you to all of the local vendors who spread the word and encouraged other locals to participate in our survey.

Thank you to Karen Nelson, Research Shop Coordinator, and Liz Jackson, Principal Investigator for all of their support with this project, your guidance is always appreciated. A special thanks to Kathleen Slemon, project manager for her guidance and advice throughout this process.

And finally, thank you to our research participants. We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey.



## SUMMARY

This was a collaborative project involving the Research Shop, part of the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute at the University of Guelph, and the Yorklands Green Hub. The Yorklands Green Hub intends to buy an area in Guelph, Ontario, which was formerly occupied by the Guelph Correctional Centre. YGH aims to create a sustainable environment centre which will benefit the community and region. This project was a community needs assessment survey conducted for the Yorklands Green Hub in the summer of 2018. The objectives of the project included:

1. Gathering information that will be useful to the Yorklands Green Hub in determining their programming choices.
2. Identifying possible reasons why people in the community are not using resources that are already in place, and what improvements can be made to engage the community.

A total of 131 participants responded to surveys distributed at farmer's markets and through social media. Highlights of the results include:

- The majority of participants were aware of (83%), and had visited (87%), the YGH space.
- 74% participants drove to the space while 41% were not aware that the space was accessible by bus
- 70% of survey participants identified being interested in activities for adults and children and 25% were interested in activities for adults only
- Only 5% of respondents identified being interested in activities for children only
- Participants identified being interested in a variety of outdoor and skill building activities

YGH intends to review the results from this project and use them within their organization to develop programs that meet the needs of the surrounding community.



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## INTRODUCTION

The following report presents the results from a needs assessment conducted for Yorklands Green Hub (YGH) in the summer of 2018, in Guelph, Ontario. The survey aimed to learn more about the kinds of programs community members would enjoy, as well as to better understand the low turnout at current YGH programs. The survey was conducted online and in person at local farmers markets. This report begins by discussing the two main goals of the project. Additional background information on Yorklands Green Hub is then provided, and the rationale for the project is explained. Next, the survey methods are further explained, followed by a section on the findings. The report concludes by summarizing the implications and conclusions of the project.

### Background

The Yorklands Green Hub (YGH) has a mission to create a space for self-sustaining education, demonstration, and a research hub at the former Ontario Reformatory site in Guelph. In 1972, the use of the Ontario Reformatory was discontinued, and in 2006, it was determined that the Guelph Correctional Centre was a significant heritage property. Although this land is able to be used by members of the public, YGH believed that few people in the neighbourhood were aware of this which has led to the space not being used to its fullest potential.

The Ontario Reformatory was an example of tackling social problems in the province with innovative ideas, and YGH intends to carry on this legacy by promoting both the cultural history of this site and the ideas of reformation of the environment. They intend to bring together businesses, organizations and people with the common purpose of being engaged stewards of a shared environment and sense of wellbeing (Yorklands Green Hub, n.d.).

Yorkland Green Hub's organizational objective is to secure 70 acres of designated heritage land for small-scale agriculture, energy, and environmental sustainability initiatives. The YGH intends to purchase this land from the provincial government and ensure that people in the neighbourhood know that it is a public place, and that there is infrastructure and programming available to encourage people to come and use the area. The YGH has already begun programming on the site in a small capacity, such as Guided Hikes, and a Noticing Nature Family Workshop, however they intend to run more programs and have infrastructure put in so that the space can be used by more people and for longer periods of time.



YGH, an ongoing community partner of the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, approached the Research Shop to carry out a project intending to assess the current knowledge and use of the site, as well as the needs and desired greenspace use by the community. YGH was specifically interested in those located in, and around, the Two Rivers Neighbourhood, which is the community directly adjacent to the site. Our partners at YGH felt that the Two Rivers neighbourhood would benefit from having a space for children and adults to enjoy.

## Research Goals

This project aims to assist the Yorklands Green Hub as they investigate the community's knowledge of the specific site, if and how they use the site, and how they would like to use a public green space. The survey was open to the broader community with a specific target to those living in the Two River's Neighbourhood, adjacent to the site. This research will inform YGH as to what kinds of programs meet the needs of the community, and lead to more community interaction and benefit. These goals were identified by the community partner and include:

1. Gathering information that will be useful to the Yorklands Green Hub in determining their programming choices.
2. Identifying possible reasons why people in the community are not using resources that are already in place, and what improvements can be made to engage the community.

In order to achieve these objectives, surveys were conducted at two farmers markets that are located around the general area of the YGH site, as well as distributed online. The in-person survey provided an opportunity for the community partner to speak to community members about the YGH mission, which led to an increased membership of their organization, while gathering useful feedback on community needs. It is hoped that feedback from this survey will help in the creation of programs that meet the needs of community members.

## METHODS

To meet the project's goals, the work was split into several phases. First, the Research Shop team (Karen Nelson, Kathleen Slemmon, Rebecca Pereira, and Kimberley Goh), in partnership with YGH, created survey questions to address the research goals of the



YGH. These questions examined the community's current awareness of the space and what programs they may be interested in participating in the future (Appendix A). The survey had 12 questions and was broken into two sections: Background and Preferences for Activities.

Ethics approval was received from the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. All surveys were confidential and no directly identifying information was collected. Participants were free to withdraw at any time and were offered a chance to win a guided tour with snacks for six as an incentive for their participation.

The survey was administered by Research Shop students who paired with YGH volunteers at predetermined community events, mainly farmer's markets. Surveys were distributed at the Grange Hill Farmer's Market twice, and at the Two-Rivers Farmer's Market four times. YGH was responsible for securing permission for the team to distribute surveys at these farmers markets, and a table was set up for interns to explain the goals of the project to potential participants. The survey took approximately five minutes to complete, and participants had the option to fill it out on an electronic device such as a cell phone or tablet, or on paper.

Additionally, a social media campaign run by YGH was used to encourage community members to fill out the survey. YGH posted the survey on both Twitter and Instagram and circulated the link of the survey to their members email list. Furthermore, YGH spread the word about the survey by handing out flyers which had the link to complete the survey online at community events when the researchers were not present. In total, 131 participants completed the survey.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

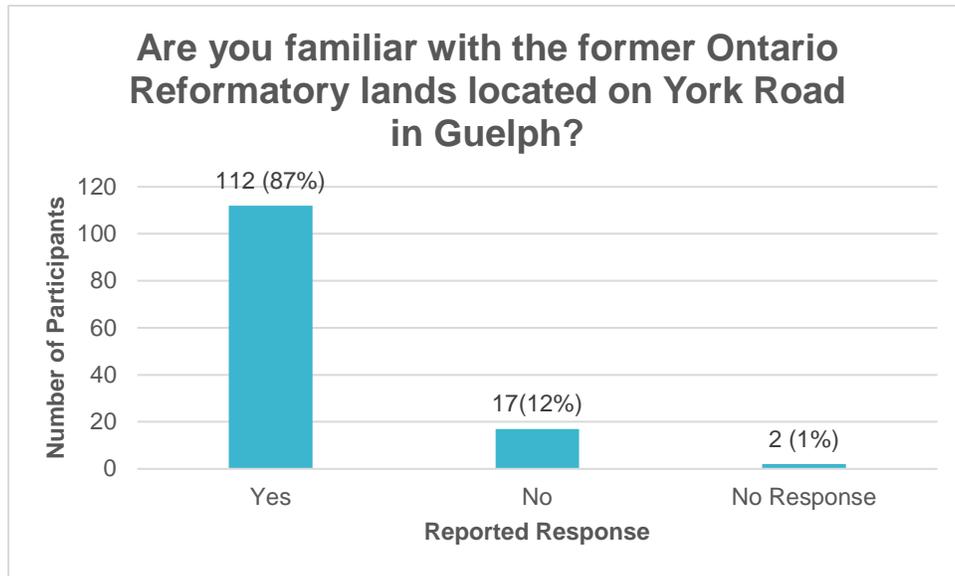
### Quantitative Results:

#### Background Questions:

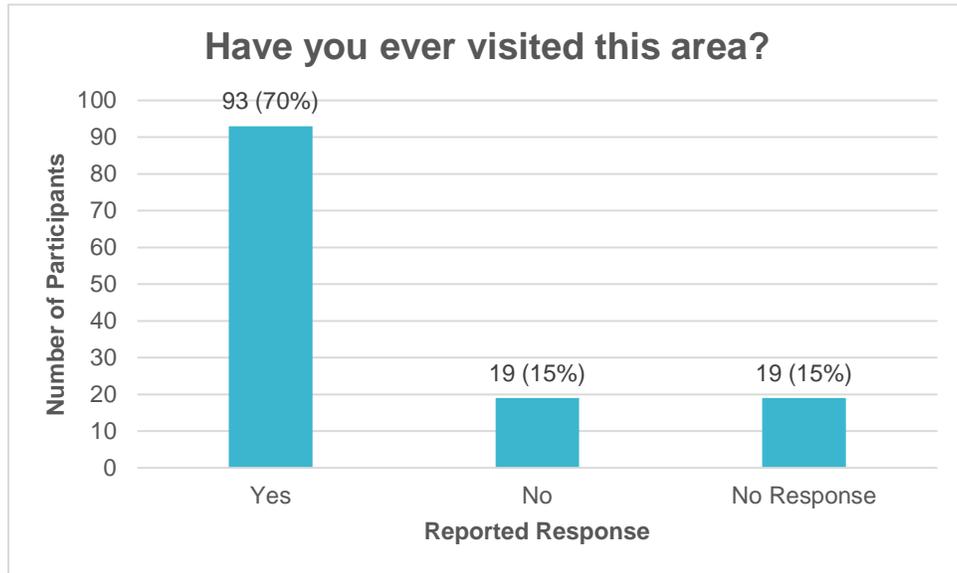
The following section describes the results of the background questions in the YGH survey.



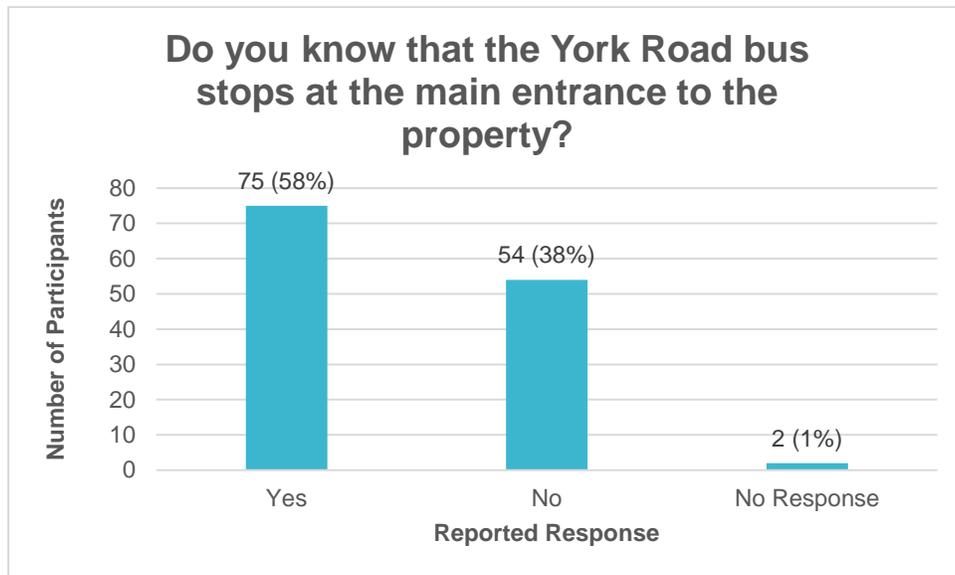
The findings show that 87% of participants (n=112) were familiar with the former Ontario Reformatory lands located on York Road in Guelph.



Of the respondents who were aware of the area, 70% (n=93), had visited the area before. While this is a high rate of awareness and use of the site, this is to be expected given the survey was distributed to the Yorklands Green Hub social media platforms and email list.

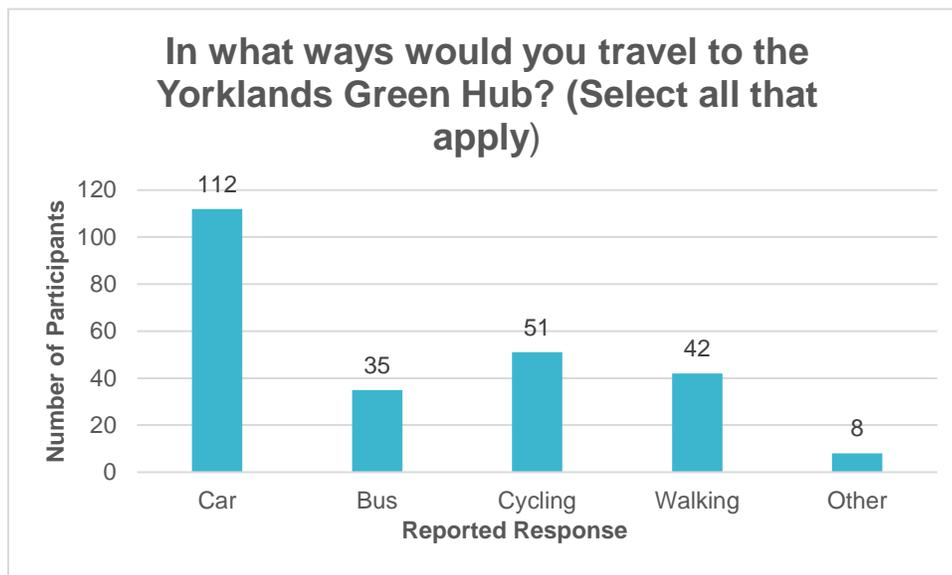


Over half, 58% of participants (n=75), were aware that the York Road Bus stopped at the main entrance to the property.





When asked about the ways they would travel to the YGH, participants were able to select more than one option. The majority (n=112) selected that they would travel by means of a car, followed by cycling (n =51), walking (n=42), and taking the bus (n=35).



Eight participants selected “other” and listed canoeing, kayaking, running, riding a motorcycle, or taking rail as a way to get to YGH.

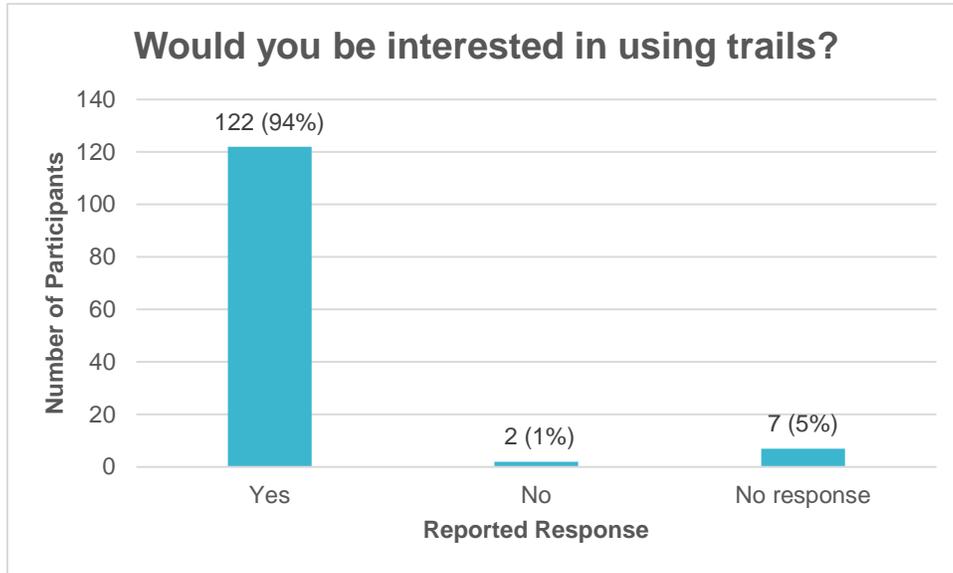
This section demonstrates that many participants were aware of, and had visited, the YGH space. Most participants drove to the space, and many were not aware that the space was accessible by bus.

#### Preferences and Activities:

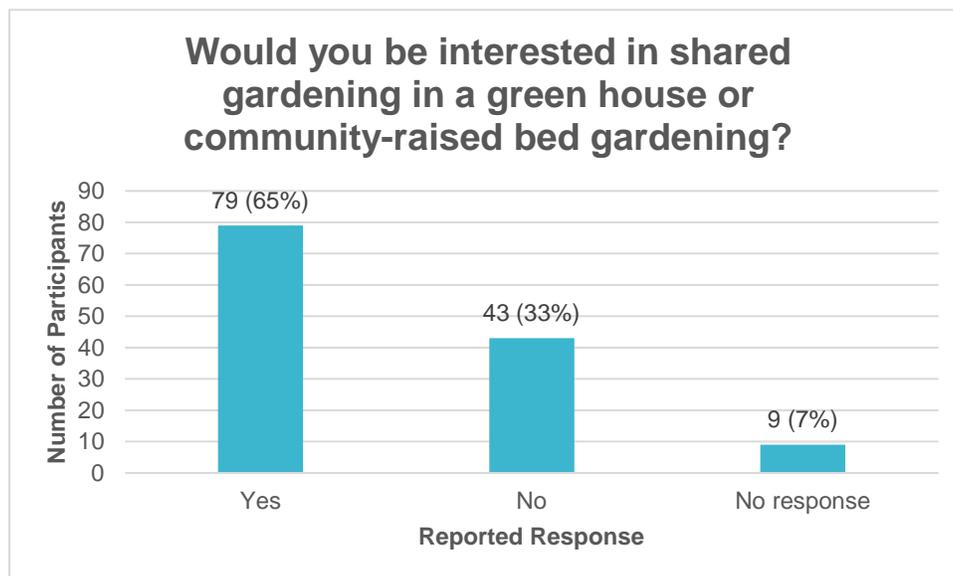
The following section summarizes the results of the preferences and activities section of the survey:



Nearly all (94%) of participants (n =122) indicated that they would be interested in using trails at YGH.

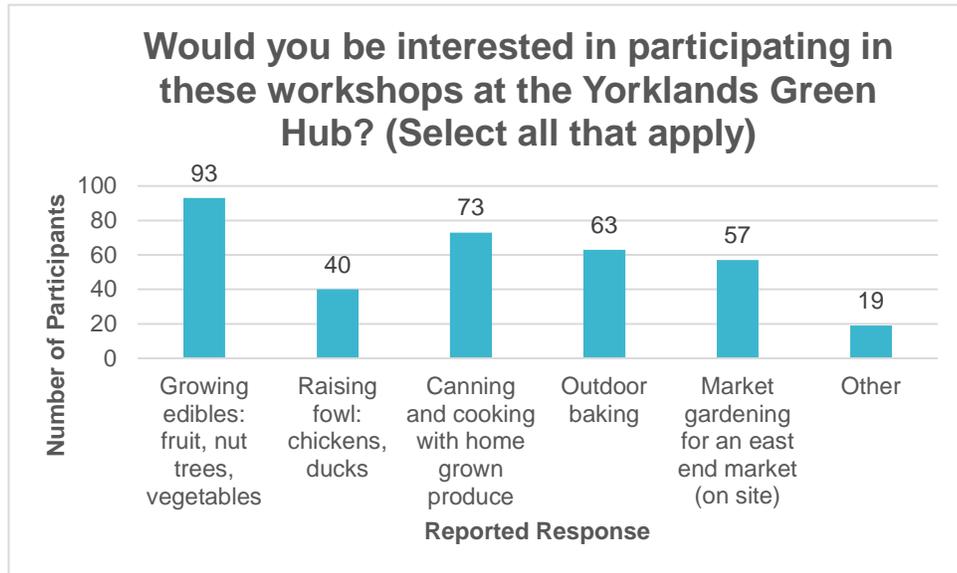


Nearly two thirds, 65% of participants (n=79), would be interested in participating in shared gardening activities.

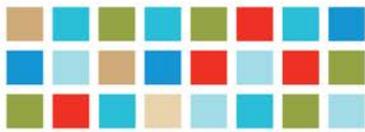




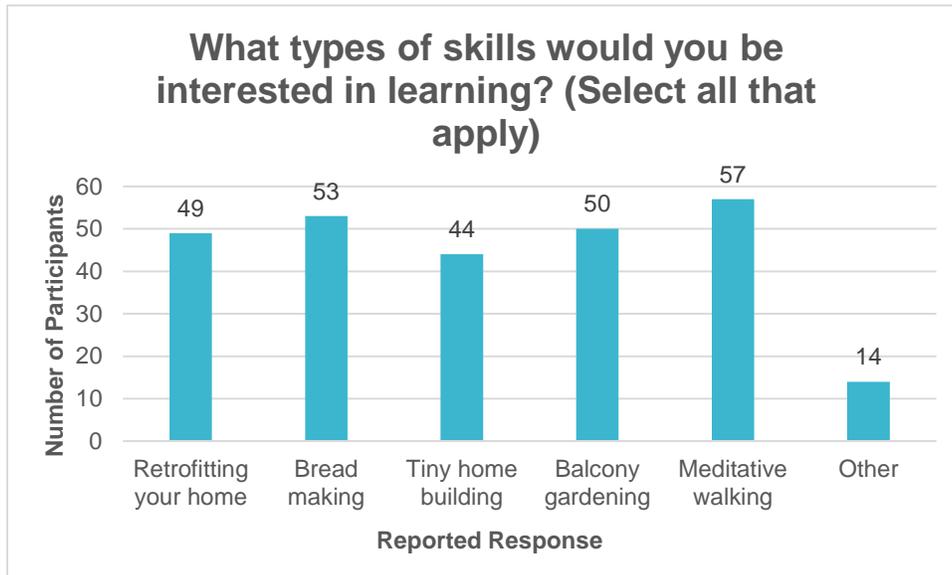
Participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in specific workshops at the YGH site. Participants indicated that they would want to primarily participate in workshops on the topic of: growing food, canning, outdoor baking, market gardening, and raising fowl.



Some other options participants identified being interested in including: beekeeping, fermenting, greenhouse gardening, wild food gathering, creating small scale alternative energy systems, raising small animals, plant identification, bird watching, hiking, canoeing/kayaking, fishing, foraging, natural crafts, innovations to reduce environmental impact, and creating a model small living sustainable community for seniors.

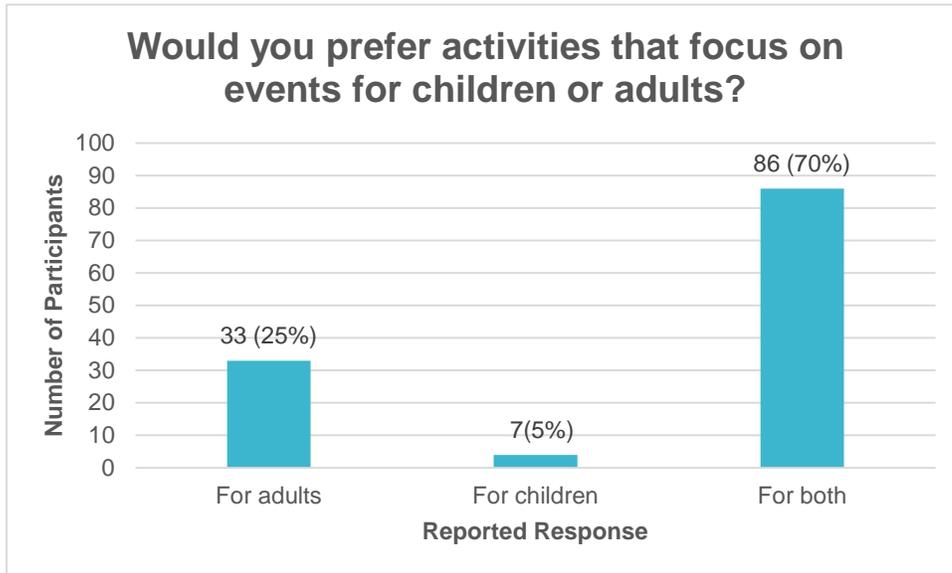


In terms of skills participants might be interested in learning, participants identified that they would be interested in meditative walking, followed by bread making, balcony gardening, retrofitting your home, and tiny home building.

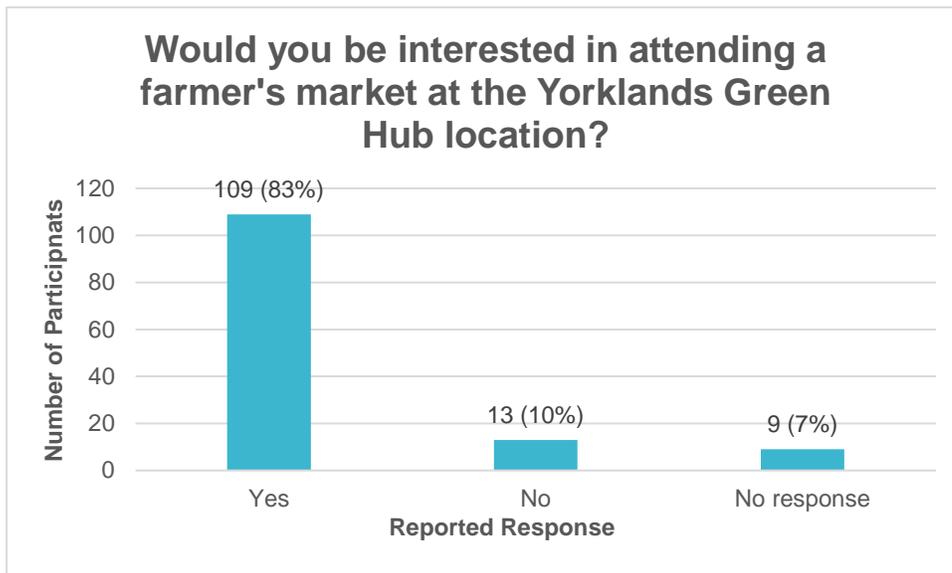


Some of the other options participants identified include: art and music classes, canoe paddle making, skills for aging well, organic pest control, companion planting, gardening, home brewing, plant and wildlife identification and appreciation, mindful movement, urban sustainability.

The majority of participants (70%) identified that they would prefer activities for adults and children (n=86). The next most popular option was activities for adults which was endorsed by 25% of respondents (n=33).



Finally, 83% of participants indicated that they would be interested in attending a farmer's market at the YGH location (n = 109).



To conclude, participants identified being interested in activities for adults and children, as well as for adults only. Only 5% of respondents identified being interested in



programs for children only. In addition, the majority of participants would be interested in various outdoor and skill building activities, such as art and music classes, attending a farmer's market and engaging in nature appreciation events.

### Qualitative Responses

When participants were asked what types of activities they might be interested in partaking in, there was a range of answers. Their responses were broken into three categories: educational activities, recreational activities and activities which require creating infrastructure. See Appendix B for a more detailed list.

- Educational activities: such as birdwatching, plant identification and stargazing.
- Recreational activities: such as biking, hiking, and doing yoga in the space.
- Activities which require creating infrastructure: such as creating public toilets, community gardening, and a farmer's market.

### IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of the survey, the majority of participants were aware of the YGH and had suggestions for what they wanted to see happen in the area. The results also show that community members want to be engaged and use the land in the case that YGH is successful in purchasing the 70 acres of land which they intend to.

In many questions, the results that we received were as expected. However, there were many examples of activities that community members mentioned that had not come up when developing the questions for the survey. This is a positive result of the survey as it allowed us to collect data on activities community members might want to partake in that had not been considered.

### CONCLUSIONS

This research project was able to achieve the two goals which were:

1. Gathering information that will be useful to the Yorklands Green Hub in determining their programming choices.
  - 1.1. Participants identified they wanted programs that were appropriate for adults and children. Examples of these programs include outdoor education



activities like birdwatching, art and music classes, and opportunities to develop skills, such as home brewing and growing edible foods.

1.2. Additionally, 83% of participants indicated that they would like to attend a Farmers market on the YGH site. Given that the survey was conducted at two farmers markets, YGH could be a space to bring several of these vendors together in a larger, more permanent area.

1.3. Finally, 65% of participants indicated that they would be interested in participating in community gardening, which is something that could be added to the YGH programming.

2. Identifying possible reasons why people in the community are not using resources that are already in place, and what improvements can be made to engage the community.

2.1. 38% of respondents were not aware that YGH is accessible by bus. Further awareness of how to get to YGH without a car may allow more members of the community to visit the site and participate in programming.

2.2. 70% of respondents identified that they would rather do activities that focused on adults and children, however the current programming does not have this focus. The current programs require adults to supervise their children, however they might be more successful if they incorporate the entire family throughout the activity.

These results will be useful to the community partner as they will help the community partner to know what types of programs the community members would like to see happen at YGH. Additionally, this survey has helped to spread awareness about the mission of YGH and has helped YGH to gain membership for their organization. By creating this dialogue, the distribution of these surveys has increased knowledge and enthusiasm of community members towards using the YGH space.

### **Limitations of the Report**

Although the intention was to target individuals in the Two-Rivers community, none of the survey questions specifically asked the participants about where they lived. The choice to not ask participants for information about where they live was made in order to



prevent participants from feeling stigmatized for living in areas in Guelph which are typically associated with people who have a lower income.

An additional limitation to this survey is that it was circulated on the social media of YGH, and if individuals did not already know about YGH there is a chance that they would not have been exposed to the tweets or Instagram posts which promoted the survey. This may have limited the online participant pool to individuals who already knew about YGH.



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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

### Background Questions

1. Are you familiar with the former Ontario Reformatory Lands located on York Road in Guelph?  
 Yes  
 No
2. If you have answered **Yes** to **Question 1**, have you ever visited this area?  
 Yes  
 No
3. Do you know that the York Road bus stops at the main entrance to the property?  
 Yes  
 No
4. In what ways would you travel to the Yorklands Green Hub?  
 Bus  
 Car  
 Cycling  
 Walking  
 Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

### Preferences and Activities

5. Would you be interested in using trails?  
 Yes



- No
- 6. What types of activities would you be interested in participating in?  

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- 7. Would you be interested in shared gardening in a green house or in a community raised-bed gardening at the Yorklands Green Hub?
  - Yes
  - No
- 8. Would you be interested in participating in these workshops at the Yorklands Green Hub?
  - Growing edibles: fruit, nut trees, vegetables
  - Raising fowl: chickens, ducks
  - Canning and cooking with home grown produce (local and on site)
  - Outdoor baking
  - Market gardening for an east end market (on site)
  - Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. What types of skills would you be interested in learning?
  - Retrofitting your home
  - Bread making
  - Tiny home building
  - Balcony gardening
  - Meditative walking

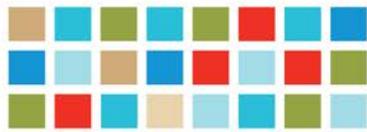


- Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Would you prefer activities that focus on events for children or adults? (ex. Running, hiking, kite festival, music festival)
  - Prefer events for adults
  - Prefer events for children
  - Both
- 11. Would you be interested in activities that involved both adults and children? (ex. outdoor activities like birding, nature play, tree hunting, making art, restoration planting<sup>1</sup>)
  - Yes
  - No
- 12. Would you be interested in attending a farmer's market at the Yorklands Green Hub location?
  - Yes
  - No

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<sup>1</sup> A healthy urban forest canopy is important to the air and water quality of our city. There is a lack of necessary diversity of native species of trees and shrubs on the site. This is a unique place to increase the diversity and number of trees with **community planning** to benefit the surrounding community. Heritage species are better able to cope with future climate impacts. We would be restoring many of the trees that were original to the community. Citizens of all ages enjoy connecting with nature in this way.





## APPENDIX B: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

- **Educational activities:** birdwatching, stargazing, herbing, bugging, and wildflower searching, trips on the flora and fauna, historical tours, learning alternate food production, water research/education, promoting pollinator gardens/bee keeping, informative environmental seminars, plant and wildlife identification, partnership with first nations communities and groups around Guelph, getting elders to teach about culture and how it relates to YGH, stewardship of the land, community building over a 6 week course with a specified group, eco learning, guided walks
- **Recreational activities:** biking, walking and hiking trails, canoeing, kayaking, enjoying the scenery, swimming, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, yoga, outdoor movement classes, taking amateur pictures, dog walking, listening to birds, fishing, paddling on the Eramosa, companionship with likeminded people, picnicking, outdoor painting and dancing classes
- **Activities which require creating infrastructure:** public toilets, preservation of the prison, tiny houses, community gardening, community festivals, off leash dog walking, farming workshops, farmers market, change the space to an artist venue, musician venue, active transportation routes, natural boardwalks, family picnic area