Water Efficiency Engagement

Report Back: What We Heard

January 27, 2026

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Project overview

Calgary is a growing city built on two small rivers, the Bow and the Elbow. These rivers provide drinking water for more than 1.5 million people in our region and support many local businesses. Water is a precious and limited resource, and managing it wisely is key to Calgary's long-term success.

Over the past 20 years, Calgarians have made great progress in using less water. Without our collective efforts, our city would have been among the highest water users in North America, meaning:

- Local rivers would have faced greater strain during dry conditions, threatening both water quality and availability.
- Households and businesses would have experienced more frequent service disruptions.
- The City would have been forced to make premature and costly expansions to our water treatment infrastructure, placing pressure on municipal budgets and utility rates.
- Our natural ecosystems would have suffered from reduced river flows and degraded habitat.

Water efficiency is a smart investment and a shared responsibility. It reflects Calgary's commitment to protecting the rivers that support our city, maintaining a strong economy, and meeting the needs of a growing population. By using water wisely, we help ensure a secure and resilient water future, for tomorrow and for generations to come.

As part of Calgary's Drought Resilience Plan, The City of Calgary is updating its 2005 Water Efficiency Plan to help ensure a reliable and resilient water supply, now and for future generations. This renewed approach reflects our commitment to manage water wisely and support Calgarians in using water more efficiently. We are aiming to make water efficiency easier and more accessible for everyone through future investments in programs, infrastructure, and education.

The updated plan will include a suite of policies, programs, and new targets designed to align water demand with water availability in the context of a changing climate and a growing population.

Engagement overview

The objectives of the public engagement were to gather input on:

1. Design and implementation of programs and tools to support Calgary residents and businesses in achieving targets specified in the Water Efficiency Plan.
2. Water rates that encourage efficient water use.
3. The proposed Outdoor Watering Schedule (OWS).

Engagement was open from November 17 to December 7, 2025. Note that engagement took place the year following the Bearspaw South Feeder Main break and before the feeder main break of December 30, 2025. A dedicated page for the project's engagement was included on the Engage portal on calgary.ca

(https://engage.calgary.ca/waterefficiency). The page was open to the public and included information about the purpose of the project, the role of engagement, the project timeline, and two questionnaires: one for Calgary residents answering on behalf of themselves/their household and one for people representing Calgary businesses, industry and community partners. There were 10,663 page visits and 8,848 visitors. There were 1,842 submissions to the Calgary residents' questionnaire and 34 submissions to the Calgary businesses, industry and community partners questionnaire.

Engagement questions were designed to gather participants' input on:

- Challenges and barriers to reducing water use outdoors and indoors.
- Support, tools and information that would make it easier for Calgarians to use less water outdoors and indoors.
- Ways The City can help Calgarians benefit from potential water efficiency programs and tools.
- Water rates to encourage water efficiency among Calgarians (in the residential questionnaire only).
- The proposed Outdoor Watering Schedule.

Accessibility of the portal page was enhanced by:

- Using plain language as much as possible in the portal page content.
- Enabling the Engage portal's translation feature, which uses translation software powered by Google Translate, Amazon Translate and Localize to translate the portal page content into: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), French (Canada), Hindi, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.
- Adding alternative text to images to aid those using screen readers.

Key industry partners were engaged throughout 2024 and 2025 as part of The City's routine work of gathering their input on water-related initiatives. These partners were Landscape Alberta, Canadian Prairie Chapter of the Irrigation Association (CPCIA), Building Industry and Land Development Association – Calgary Region (BILD), and representatives from Calgary's urban growers community.

Communications overview

The following communications and marketing tactics were used to inform Calgarians about the Water Efficiency Plan public engagement and to encourage participation. Communications activity was coordinated across paid, owned and social channels to support awareness early in the engagement period and drive traffic to the Engage portal.

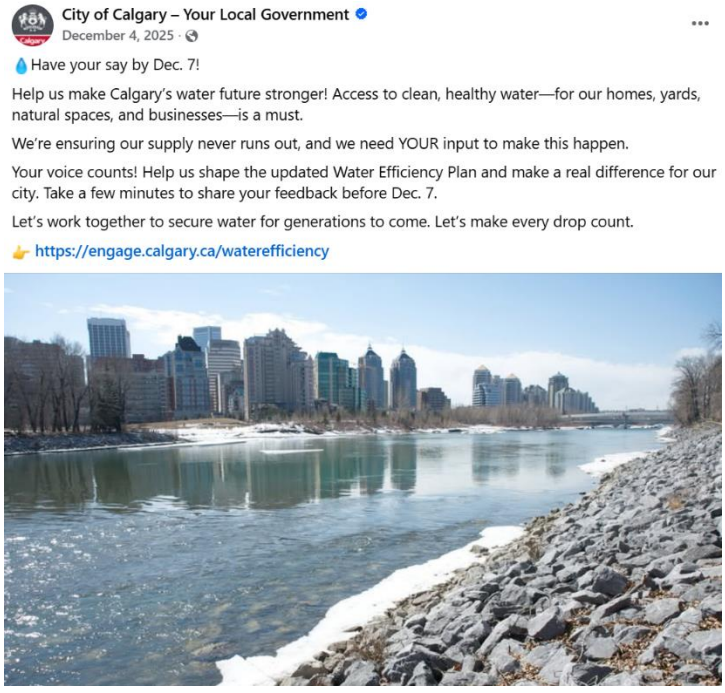
Paid advertising

A paid media campaign supported city-wide awareness through digital banner ads, Bold signs and radio advertising. Across all paid tactics, the campaign delivered approximately 538,000 total impressions. Digital banner ads delivered 148,000 impressions, reaching more than 36,000 Calgarians. 20 Bold signs were installed over three weeks in high-visibility locations. Radio ads ran on four major stations, delivering approximately 390,600 impressions.

Social media

Paid and organic social media content ran primarily on Facebook and Instagram, with additional organic posts on Nextdoor, Threads and Bluesky. The social media campaign reached approximately 953,000 people and generated 1.19 million impressions. Paid social advertising resulted in 4,132 link clicks to the Engage portal.

Example of a social media post:



Social media posts generated high visibility and traffic but also attracted a significant volume of comments. Comment sentiment was mixed to negative on some paid posts, with discussion often shifting away from the engagement topic to broader water-related issues.

Media

In addition to paid and social media, a news release was issued through the Calgary.ca newsroom. This led to coverage by the following local media outlets: CityNews, 660 News, CBC and CTV.

What we asked and what we heard – Residential

More than 1,800 people participated in the online engagement opportunity, which was open from November 17 to December 7, 2025. Participants generally agreed that using water wisely is important, motivated by awareness of the city's dry climate, recurring drought, and long-term water supply concerns. Many participants emphasized protecting Calgary's future water security, maintaining healthy river ecosystems, and managing costs related to treatment and infrastructure. While many participants reported already conserving water indoors and outdoors, they described a variety of barriers (e.g., climate conditions, protecting mature trees and food gardens, physical limitations, scheduling conflicts, and the cost or feasibility of upgrades) that make further reductions challenging.

Participants identified supports that would enable greater water efficiency, such as free or subsidized rain barrels, larger rain-harvesting options, practical Calgary-specific education, and real-time usage tools like apps or smart meters. Regarding indoor water use, residents requested clearer guidance on leaks, high-impact upgrades, efficient appliances, and greywater reuse options, along with rebates, grants, and programs that help households overcome affordability constraints. Renters and condo dwellers highlighted barriers tied to shared meters, landlord decision-making, and building-wide systems they cannot control.

Views on rate-based strategies and watering schedules were mixed. Some supported tiered rates and drought-stage surcharges as fair and effective, while many expressed concerns about inequitable impacts (e.g., for larger households, lower-income Calgarians), affordability, and administrative complexity. Participants stressed the need for adjustments based on household size, seasonal differences, and essential uses such as tree care and growing food. Regarding the Outdoor Watering Schedule, many found it clear and do not anticipate difficulty in following the proposed designated watering hours. However, some participants requested more flexibility, better definitions, exemptions for vulnerable residents and essential watering needs, and improved communication tools to minimize confusion, conflict, and enforcement concerns.

Across the engagement questions, a vocal minority of participants expressed deep frustration and distrust toward The City's approach to water efficiency, characterizing proposed restrictions, schedules, and rate structures as punitive, intrusive, or unfair. Their view is that The City should first address its own system challenges (i.e., water main breaks, perceived infrastructure neglect, and operational water use) before introducing additional rules for residents. These participants also raised concerns about affordability, one-size-fits-all policies, and the perceived inequity of asking households to reduce consumption while believing commercial and industrial users contribute more significantly to water demand.

Others emphasized that water-use policies need to reflect diverse household needs, physical abilities, gardening and tree-care requirements, and shifting work schedules. They expressed fear about losing plants and green spaces, frustration with rising costs, and concern that enforcement may create tension within communities. Across this feedback, participants called for more transparency, more meaningful incentives and supports, and less emphasis on regulation. Their preference is for voluntary guidelines, practical education, and improved City accountability over additional restrictions or higher fees.

1. **Is using water wisely important to you? Why or why not?**

   Using water wisely is important to the majority of participants. The most frequently mentioned themes were:

   - Water as a precious, limited resource
     - Water is a valuable resource that should not be taken for granted.
     - Calgary's dry climate, recurring droughts, shrinking glaciers, and reduced snowpack reinforce the need to treat water carefully.
     - Climate variability is increasing the strain on available supply.
   - Protecting current and long-term water security
     - Ensuring clean, potable water for Calgarians and for downstream communities now and in the future.
     - Recognition that Calgary's population continues to grow, increasing pressure on supply.
     - Desire to build resilience for future water shortages.

   Other themes mentioned:

   - Financial considerations
     - Saving money on household water bills.
     - Wanting to reduce The City's costs for treating water and maintaining infrastructure, which ultimately affect taxpayers.
   - Protecting the environment
     - Supporting healthy ecosystems, river flows, fish/wildlife, and riparian areas.
     - A general anti-waste ethic, viewing water conservation as part of using all resources responsibly.
     - Desire to leave adequate environmental flows in the Bow and Elbow Rivers, not solely meet municipal demand.

Residential Water Efficiency and Conservation Programs

What is it?

Water efficiency and conservation programs offer practical approaches to help households use water more wisely. From simple no-cost or low-cost actions to financial incentives for larger changes, like switching to drought-tolerant landscaping, these programs make saving water easier and more affordable.

Why are we considering this?

Calgary is growing quickly, with the population expected to reach 2 million by 2033. This growth, along with the impacts of climate change, such as warmer temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and the risk of drought are affecting when and how much water we receive from our rivers. Without careful planning, these challenges could make it harder to provide safe, reliable drinking water. As using water wisely becomes more important, City programs help Calgarians take action, from small daily practices to bigger home and yard upgrades, with support through education and incentives.

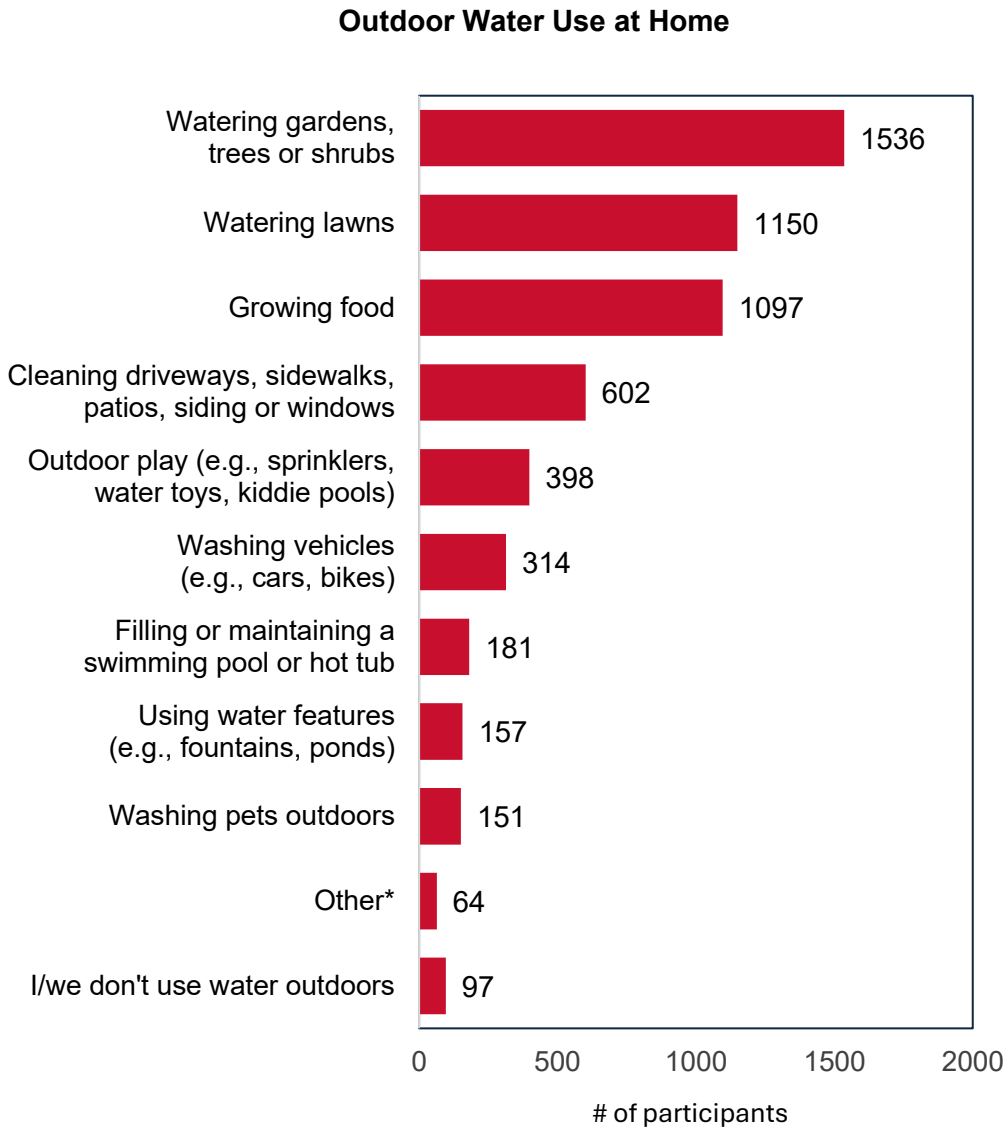
What do you think?

The next three questions are about **outdoor** water use.

2. Which of the following ways do you use water outdoors at home? Select all that apply.

Multiple selections allowed

Answered: 1,819/1,842; Skipped: 23



*The most commonly mentioned “other” outdoor water uses included outdoor cleaning of bikes and other outdoor gear, watering potted plants and filling bird baths.

3. **What challenges or barriers do you face in reducing outdoor water use at home? If you do not use water outdoors at home, you may skip this question.**

The most mentioned themes were:

- Watering needs for plants, trees, lawns, and food crops
  - Preventing the loss of gardens, established trees, shrubs, lawns, and perennial beds.
  - Mature trees require deep, consistent watering and people are not willing to lose decades of growth.
  - Food gardens require regular watering, especially during heat waves, and some households rely on home-grown produce due to rising grocery prices.
  - Some residents are willing to accept brown lawns but will not risk losing trees or food crops.
- Households already using minimal water outdoors
  - Many participants report they are already at “bare minimum” use.
  - Practices already in place include drought-tolerant landscaping, mulching, drip irrigation, hand-watering, using rain barrels, and watering only trees and food crops.
  - Some residents mention that they rarely wash house siding or vehicles, and do not water lawns at all.
- Calgary’s climate challenges
  - Hot, dry summers and extended drought periods, as well as low humidity and poor soil moisture retention, require use of potable water outdoors.
  - Inconsistent rainfall reduces the effectiveness of rain barrels, as they often run empty.

Other themes mentioned:

- Rain barrel–related barriers
  - High cost and limited availability of barrels.
  - Insufficient storage capacity: barrels fill quickly but drain quickly in droughts.
  - Installation challenges such as downspout modifications, pumps, stands, hoses, overflow management.
  - Low/no water pressure from barrels makes watering large areas impractical.
  - Concerns about using roof runoff on edible crops.
  - Lack of space for barrels or winter storage.

- Physical ability and accessibility constraints
    - Hand-watering and carrying watering cans can be difficult for seniors and people with mobility limitations, chronic pain, or injuries.
    - Rain-barrel watering is far more labour-intensive than using a hose.
- Scheduling conflicts
    - Fixed watering days/times conflict with work schedules, shift work, childcare, and vacations.
    - Watering windows may not align with when plants need water, especially on days of extreme heat.
    - Lack of automated irrigation or timers makes compliance difficult.
- Condos, townhouses, and shared properties
    - Residents often:
        - have no control over irrigation schedules
        - do not have permission to install rain barrels
        - share water meters, which obscures individual conservation
        - are subject to landscaping rules that limit drought-resistant options
- Cost barriers
    - High cost of converting to drought-resistant landscaping.
    - Expense of irrigation upgrades, pumps, soil improvements, or turf replacement.
    - Large one-time costs (e.g., removing/planting trees, redesigning yards).
- Household & lifestyle uses
    - Water play for children (sprinklers, kiddie pools), an inexpensive way to keep children cool and entertained in hot weather.
    - Maintaining hot tubs and pools.
    - Cleaning house siding, decks, patios, windows, bikes, and occasionally vehicles, especially in high-construction or dusty areas.
- Property-specific challenges
    - Large yards require more water than can be carried by hand.
    - Slopes, sun exposure, and poor soil increase watering needs.
- Aesthetic, social, and neighborhood norms
    - Pressure to maintain green lawns.
    - Bylaws, condo rules, or social expectations discouraging xeriscaping.
    - Fear of neighbourhood conflicts or judgement for brown lawns.

- Environmental, practical, and emotional considerations
    - Desire to protect urban tree canopy and support biodiversity.
    - Gardening contributes to mental health, enjoyment, and community connection.
    - Loss of plants, trees, or gardens is seen as both emotional and financial harm.
- Refusal to reduce outdoor water use, citing reasons such as:
    - Their current use is reasonable.
    - They will use it because they pay for it.
    - The City should address infrastructure leaks before asking residents to do more.

4. **What types of support, tools, or information would make it easier for you to use less water outdoors?**
   If you do not use water outdoors at home, you may skip this question.

   The most mentioned themes were:

- Rain barrels and other rainwater harvesting options
    - Free or subsidized rain barrels.
    - Increased supply of and easier access to rain barrels.
    - Access to rain barrel accessories such as diverters, connectors, stands, pumps, filters, and hose adapters.
    - Larger storage options (e.g., totes, cisterns) to collect sufficient water to last through dry spells.
- Education and guidance
    - Calgary-specific, practical guidance
        - amount of water needed for lawns, plants, trees, shrubs, etc.
        - best times to water (e.g., to avoid evaporation)
        - native and drought-tolerant plants that can succeed in Calgary's climate
        - converting lawns to lower-water alternatives
        - workshops, community classes, or expert consultations on sustainable yard design
        - water efficient gardening
    - Rain barrels and rain harvesting (see also above)
        - how to set up and optimize a rain barrel system
        - information about rain barrel accessories (e.g., diverters, connectors, stands, pumps, filters, and hose adapters) and how to install them

Other themes mentioned:

- Usage tracking and smart meters/apps
    - Real-time water-use data.
    - Smart meters, dashboards, phone apps.
    - Hose-end flow meters or usage trackers.
    - Comparative benchmarks with neighbours.
- Water efficient systems and tools
    - Drip and soaker irrigation.
    - Smart controllers, timers, scheduling tools.
    - Rain/moisture sensors.
- Financial incentives and rebates
    - Rebates for rain barrels and pumps to make it easier to water lawns and gardens using rainwater.
    - Rebates on drip irrigation kits, soaker hoses, water-saving irrigation components and upgrading inefficient irrigation systems.
    - Grants for lawn replacement and xeriscaping.
    - Incentives for water-efficient landscaping.
- Well-communicated watering schedules and/or restrictions.

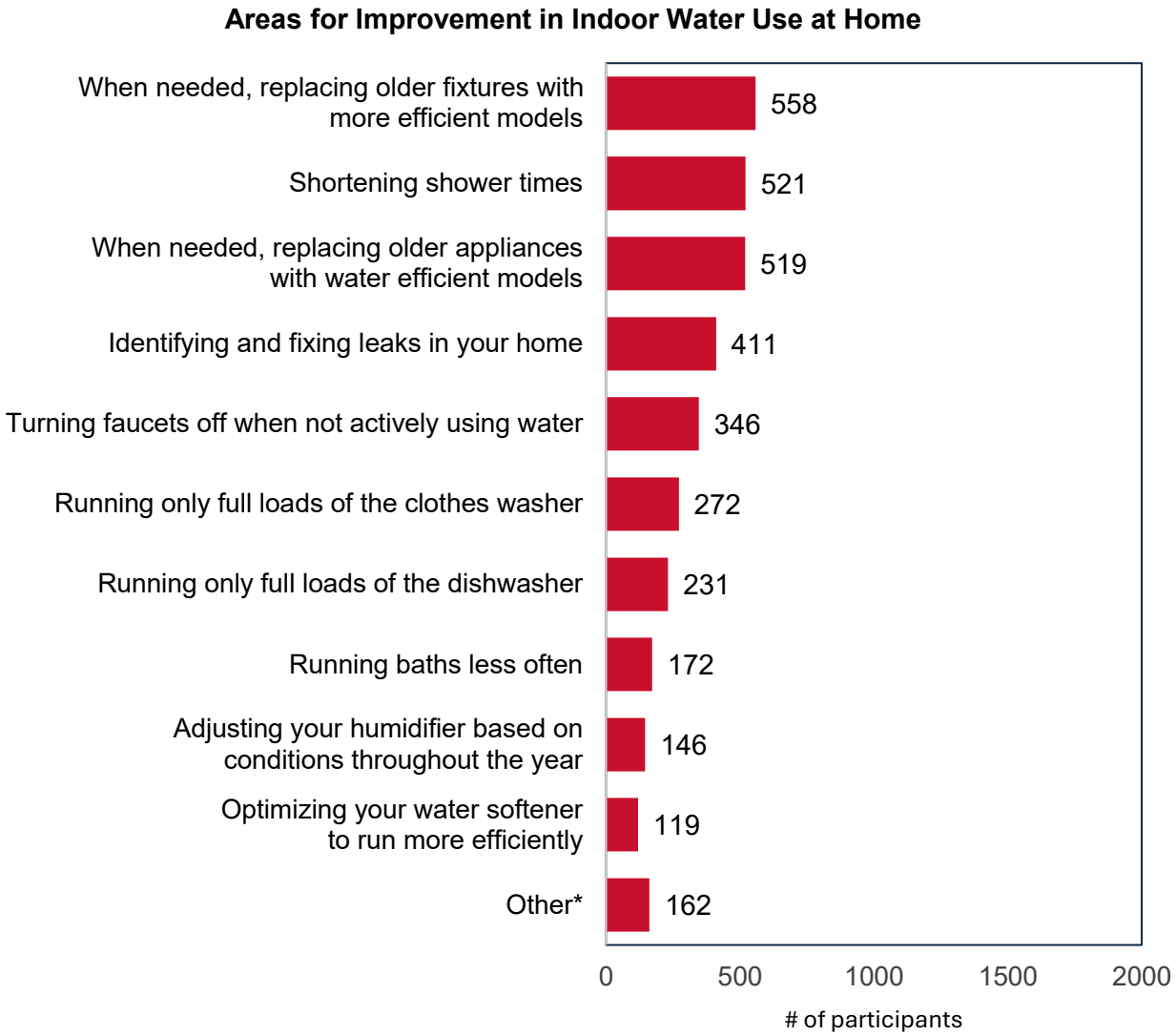
Some participants said they don’t need tools or information because they already use water wisely.

The next three questions are about **indoor** water use.

5. **Of the following indoor water uses, where do you feel you could be more water wise? Select all that apply.**

   Multiple selections allowed

   Answered: 1,297/1,842; Skipped: 545



*Many participants who selected “Other” specified that they “already do all of the above” or “none”/”nothing”. Among those who specified areas where they could be more water wise, the most commonly mentioned were flushing the toilet less frequently and collecting greywater for reuse.

6. **What challenges or barriers do you face in reducing indoor water use at home?**

   The most mentioned themes were:

   - Households already using minimal water indoors
     - Many participants said they do not face barriers because they already do everything possible:
       - appliances and fixtures are already efficient
       - they have fixed leaks, run only full loads, take short showers, and avoid baths
       - there is “nothing left to reduce” without harming health, hygiene, or quality of life
   - Cost
     - High cost of replacing older appliances (washers, dishwashers, toilets, water heaters).
     - High cost of replacing fixtures (faucets, shower heads) or repairing leaks.
     - Plumber fees and renovation costs can be prohibitive.
     - Difficult to justify replacing functioning appliances and fixtures for new ones.
     - Some feel newer “efficient” models perform worse (e.g., require multiple flushes or extra rinses), which undermines the point of replacing them.
   - Household size and personal needs
     - Large families, multigenerational households, and homes with babies, toddlers, teenagers, or frequent guests generate unavoidable higher water use (more showers, laundry, dishes, toilet flushing).
     - Some individuals prefer long showers or baths and are unwilling or unable to change that habit.
     - Many note that long showers, baths, or frequent laundry are required due to:
       - hygiene needs for young children
       - medical or disability-related needs
       - physically demanding or dirty jobs
       - mental health or pain management needs

Other themes mentioned:

- Challenges specific to renters and condo residents
    - Renters must rely on landlords to replace appliances, fixtures, water heaters, or toilets.
    - Landlords may be unwilling to fix leaks or install efficient models, especially if tenants pay the water bill.
    - Condo boards control building-wide systems (boilers, hot water tanks, humidifiers), leaving residents with no ability to upgrade.
    - Shared water meters in condos make individual conservation feel meaningless.
- Hot water delay and plumbing system limitations
    - A major barrier is wasting water while waiting for hot water, especially in:
        - older homes
        - condos with long pipe runs
        - homes with on-demand/tankless systems
- Knowledge and confidence gaps
    - Difficulty identifying leaks, especially hidden ones.
    - Uncertainty about:
        - when to replace aging appliances
        - how to optimize water softeners or furnace humidifiers
        - what fixtures actually save water
        - whether replacing a functioning appliance is environmentally responsible
    - Some are unsure how to assess whether toilets, water softeners, or other systems are inefficient.
- Lack of greywater systems
    - Many participants want a greywater system for flushing toilets or watering plants.
    - Barriers include:
        - prohibitive retrofit costs
        - unclear regulations or legal restrictions
        - lack of built-in greywater infrastructure in Calgary homes
    - Several participants reuse water manually (e.g., bucketed shower warm-up water) but find it inconvenient.

- Habit change and household behaviour
  - Some household members forget or refuse to change habits, such as:
    - long showers
    - running taps unnecessarily
    - flushing the toilet after each use
    - washing dishes inefficiently
  - Conflict within households, especially with teens and roommates.
  - Some households simply lack motivation beyond crisis situations.
- Participants reporting no barriers
  - Many responded “none,” “nothing,” or left the field blank.
- Refusal to reduce indoor water use, citing reasons such as:
  - Their current use is reasonable.
  - Water is necessary for health and cleanliness.
  - The City should address infrastructure leaks before asking residents to do more.

7. What types of support, tools, or information would make it easier for you to use water more efficiently indoors?

The most mentioned themes were:

- Calgary-specific, plain language information
  - Real-time or daily household water-use data via an app or online dashboard, including:
    - alerts for unusual consumption
    - comparisons to neighbourhood or similar-household averages
    - visualizations that make usage easier to understand (e.g., “bathtubs,” “buckets”)
  - Clear, simple information about how much water different activities use, such as:
    - showers, baths, laundry cycles, dishwasher cycles, toilet flushes, running taps
    - specific litre and dollar savings from specific changes
  - Leak-finding information, including:
    - step-by-step checklists and “how-to” guides
    - identifying hidden leaks (e.g., toilets, water softeners, humidifiers)

- Efficiency guidance, such as:
    - prioritized lists of the highest-impact upgrades
    - tips tailored to Calgary homes (older homes, condos, rentals)
    - greywater reuse ideas and examples
- Appliance and fixture guidance, including:
    - lists of recommended water efficient models
    - life-cycle and performance comparisons
    - help interpreting specs and identifying truly efficient products
- Educational materials in multiple formats:
    - mailers, fridge magnets, flyers, and videos
    - multilingual resources
    - school-based education for children
    - public campaigns using TV, transit ads, and social media

- Rebates, grants, and financial support
    - Rebates for water-efficient appliances and fixtures (toilets, washers, dishwashers, showerheads, aerators).
    - Financial support for tankless/on-demand hot water systems, recirculation pumps, or upgrading old plumbing to reduce hot water wait time waste.
    - Subsidized or free leak inspections, leak-detection devices, and repair support.
    - Incentives tied to measurable usage reduction, not only purchases.
    - Grants, low-interest loans, and discount programs to make upgrades affordable for all households, including low- and moderate-income families.

Other themes mentioned:

- Support for renters and landlords
    - Information specifically designed for landlords about:
        - fixing leaks promptly
        - upgrading to efficient appliances and fixtures
        - installing efficient toilets, showerheads, or aerators
    - Incentives or cost-sharing programs that encourage landlords to upgrade units.
    - Require or encourage individual metering in condos and rentals so tenants can see and influence their water use.

- Greywater and reuse systems
    - Guidance on how households can safely reuse greywater (e.g., shower warm-up water).
    - Clarity around what is legal, feasible, and safe in Calgary homes.
    - Support or incentives for households interested in installing greywater or recirculation systems.
    - Ideas to make capturing and reusing water easier and less physically demanding.
- Other suggestions:
    - Strengthen building codes for water efficiency in new builds.
    - Encourage or require hot water recirculation systems in new homes and condos.
    - Tools to help with behaviour change (e.g., shower timers, reminders, household comparison charts).
    - Information on water softener and humidifier optimization, which many find confusing.
    - Tips on how to collect and reuse cold water while waiting for taps to heat.
    - User-friendly “water-wise kits” including aerators, leak-detection dye tablets, and low-flow attachments.

The City is considering a variety programs and tools to support Calgarians in being more water efficient, including:

- **Promotion of low- cost or no cost practices** through education and outreach programs like YardSmart and Fix-a-Leak
- **Landscape transformation programs** that incentivize low-water-use design and drought-tolerant plantings
- **Rebates and subsidies** for efficient irrigation tools, rain barrels, and drought-tolerant landscaping materials
- **Improved access to water-efficient products and services** through industry partnerships
- **Equity-focused initiatives** to ensure all households can participate in water efficiency programs

8. What would help you to use or benefit from programs and tools like the ones listed above?

Many participants expressed support for or interest in one or more of the proposed programs and tools. Suggestions for how The City can aid in uptake of the programs and tools included:

- Affordability and up-front cost support
    - Remove up-front payment barriers through instant/point-of-sale rebates, automatic bill credits (rather than claim-and-wait).

    - Make incentives meaningful with rebate values that materially offset real costs (e.g., landscaping materials, smart irrigation, pumps/diverters).
    - Offer sliding-scale/means-tested supports such that there are higher incentives for low-income households and people on fixed incomes.
    - Provide grants/financing for larger projects such as zero/low-interest loans for landscape conversion or irrigation retrofits.
- Awareness and promotion of programs and tools
    - Use a variety of outreach channels (e.g., email, utility-bill inserts, community signage, bus/TV/radio ads, social media).
    - Advertise outdoor water reduction programs and tools before the growing season begins and send reminders when programs open.
    - Use plain language messaging and examples and real case studies (e.g., expected savings).
- Ease of access to programs and tools
    - Provide a clear, centralized “one-stop” location (online and/or via phone) where residents can easily find, compare, and access all available programs and tools.
    - Design simple, streamlined application processes with minimal paperwork and clear eligibility criteria, avoiding complex or time-limited sign-ups where possible.
    - Offer flexible intake windows (e.g., rolling or extended application periods) to reduce barriers caused by first-come, first-served programs that fill quickly.
    - Enable easy participation options such as automatic enrollment, pre-approval, or point-of-sale application where feasible.
    - Ensure programs are accessible outside standard work hours and offer phone-based or in-person assistance for those who are not comfortable with online systems.
- Installation help and hands-on support
    - Offer low/no-cost install services for rain barrels (especially for seniors) and set-up help for diverters/pumps.
    - Host hands-on workshops and demonstrations about fixing leaks, drip irrigation, downspout retrofits, and practical troubleshooting.
    - Provide delivery options for bulky materials (mulch, barrels) and tool-lending where feasible.
- Renters, condos and multi-residential inclusion
    - Design programs that work through condo boards, HOAs, and landlords/property managers (e.g., building-level rebates, toolkits for condo boards).
    - Enable suite-level metering or fair recognition mechanisms so individual efforts are visible and rewarded.

    - Provide information about compact/space-aware solutions (e.g., small-footprint collection, shared systems).
- Retail partnerships and point-of-sale support
    - In-store instant discounts/rebates at garden centres and hardware stores; on-shelf “water-wise” labels.
    - Curated product lists and broader local availability so residents can act in one trip.
- Seniors & accessibility supports
    - Accessible workshop times/locations, phone-based assistance, and simple application steps.
    - At-home installation options and reduced-cost services geared to mobility/fixed-income constraints.

9. **If you have any other feedback about using water outdoors or indoors more efficiently, please share it with us.**

   Broader themes were:

   - Water is a precious, limited resource that must be protected
     - Responsible and conscious water use is essential.
     - The City should lead long-term planning, conservation, and watershed protection.
     - Learn from Indigenous communities and other regions for better water conservation.
     - The issue is urgent.
     - Participants appreciate City consultation on the issue.
     - Develop water-use benchmarks for building types; promote water-friendly norms (e.g., “a brown yard is beautiful,” “native pollinator lawn,” or “if it’s yellow, let it mellow, if it’s brown, flush it down”).
   - Concerns about losing trees, gardens, and food crops if outdoor water use is reduced
     - Mature tree lost in older neighbourhoods and infill areas.
     - New trees struggle in harsh weather, reducing appeal and the urban canopy.
     - Require mandatory water/wastewater efficiency standards and “quality green” in all development permits.
   - Many participants feel they are already using minimal water, both indoors and outdoors.
     - Let Calgarians decide their water use; avoid voluntary restrictions.
     - Residents believe they are already doing their part.
   - Financial cost is a major concern
     - Increase transparency on utility bills, showing full water costs including wastewater and administration fees.
     - Install water meters in all homes, although there are mixed views on smart meters.
     - Stop charging for wastewater not entering the system.
     - Provide free or affordable greywater storage devices (e.g., rain barrels, collection systems).
     - Mixed opinions on tiered rates:
       - apply tiered water rates per household size or impose higher charges for excessive usage
       - no tiered system, no rate hikes
       - keep energy affordable or free, lower Enmax bills, and address affordability issues
     - Support upgrades for old systems and fixtures.

- Physical ability, accessibility and household realities
    - Consider water use in apartment buildings.
    - Allow exemptions for multigenerational families, seniors, people with disabilities, and needs related to gardening, tree canopy, and food security.
- Practical, Calgary-specific education and real-time usage data to support conservation is required
    - Continue consulting and educating residents, schools, and businesses about water/utility conservation and consumptions.
    - Build trust and change how The City communicates about the issue:
        - report progress on repairs
        - engage grassroots and community organizations to spread the word, including non-English speaking communities
    - Share practical resources and best practices (gardening, water-saving tips, peer support).
    - Use apps and technology to track water use and alert waste.
- Rainwater harvesting and greywater capture is supported but limited by cost, storage capacity, and usability
    - Provide incentives for rainwater and greywater collection and use.
    - Develop accessible, affordable systems and pilot programs (e.g., rain barrels, storage devices, catchment reservoirs).
    - Legalize greywater systems, especially for businesses and industry.
    - Increase residential storage capacity for rainwater and greywater capture.
    - Require rainwater collection in new builds and infill homes.
- Mixed feelings about outdoor watering schedules, which need clearer definitions, exemptions, and support to be workable for all households
    - Support restricting outdoor watering by scheduled days or addresses but allow flexible watering times (night/early morning).
    - Do not institute outdoor watering schedules.
- Key suggestions for The City
    - Leadership:
        - take responsibility for the problem
        - model efficient use of water on public land and buildings

- Policy and regulations:
  - apply outdoor water restrictions equitably to households and businesses
  - Reward reduced water consumption (e.g., tax breaks, rebates, free rain barrels)
  - enforce penalties for wasteful practices (e.g., watering during rain or midday)
  - require water efficiency standards in new developments and permits
  - limit excessive commercial water use (car washes, golf courses, water parks)
  - provide funding for green/smart water use and expand programs
  - mandate rainwater or greywater use for luxury water applications (e.g., golf courses)
  - ensure fairness and affordability for low-income households and large families
- Planning and infrastructure:
  - be proactive in detecting and fixing leaks quickly and upgrading water mains and pipes
  - invest in expanding water supply, distribution and storage capacity (dams, reservoirs)
  - invest in rainwater harvesting, greywater systems, and rebates for efficient fixtures
- Operations:
  - fix the leaks
  - implement smart irrigation systems and drought-resistant landscaping
  - identify and target the biggest “water wasters”
  - consider tiered pricing or variable rates for excessive use
  - improve coordination between City departments that use and/or manage water
  - prioritize food gardens over ornamental plants
  - maintain tree canopy and green spaces with flexible watering schedules
  - encourage native and water-wise plants
  - reduce lawn watering and discourage watering grass on public land
- Monitoring and continuous improvement:
  - regularly review and monitor program effectiveness
  - report progress on repairs and conservation efforts
  - keep engagement ongoing

    - Equity and accessibility:
        - Ensure equitable access to water for vulnerable groups (low-income, seniors, large families)

- Participants' cautions
    - Long-term outdoor water restrictions could harm tree canopy, gardens, and green spaces.
    - The City should prioritize fixing leaks.
    - Skepticism about climate change impacts.
    - Concerns over population growth, development policies (e.g., blanket rezoning), and economic expansion.
    - View of fluoride as toxic addition to water supply.

Water Rates that Encourage Efficient Water Use

What are water rates?
Calgarians and businesses pay two types of charges for water services: a basic service charge that helps cover the fixed costs of maintaining and delivering water, and a usage charge based on how much water they actually used each month. These rates fully fund the cost of providing water services – no money comes from property taxes.

Every four years, The City undertakes a financial study – a best practice in the utility sector – to help guide future water rate planning. This study ensures rates are fair, reflect the true cost of delivering clean, safe water, and support reliable service for all Calgarians. Any future rate changes would continue to be informed by this rigorous process

As part of this approach, The City is exploring adjustments to how Calgarians are billed for water, with the goal of encouraging wise and efficient water use. Potential options include:

- Tiered or block rate – Different cost per unit volume charged based on water usage levels. One billing rate would apply to water used within a basic household water use threshold, while a higher rate would apply to usage beyond that amount.
- Shortage surcharge – An additional charge for excessive water use during periods of drought or water shortage.

Why are we considering this?
In both the 2022 Drought Resilience Plan engagement and 2024 public opinion research, Calgarians expressed support for the concept of rate-based strategies to promote water conservation. We've heard several important questions for The City to consider in pursuing this strategy, such as:

- What amount of water represents efficient household use? The objective of a tiered rate would be to ensure that the basic water needs for human consumption and hygiene are met at a more affordable level.
- How might a different rate structure impact affordability, especially for low-income households?
- How can a rate structure be equitable for larger or multigenerational households, where the basic household amount that still represents efficient water use might be higher?
- What considerations are needed for residents who grow food or contribute to Calgary's urban canopy and rely on water for these purposes?

Each of these questions will be carefully considered as this strategy is explored further.

10. The City is continuing to explore water rates that encourage efficient use. Tell us what you like and/or dislike about this approach.

What participants like about this approach:

- Encourages conservation and reduces water waste
    - Belief that cost signals are one of the few tools that reliably change behaviour ("people pay attention when it hits their wallet").
    - Seen as a way to curb chronic outdoor over-watering, long showers, and unnecessary water use.
- "Use more, pay more" is fair
    - Belief that high-volume users should pay more than water efficient users.
    - Acknowledges the efforts of those who already conserve water.
- Drought-only shortage surcharge
    - Seen as a targeted response during actual scarcity, rather than a blanket system.
    - Adds fairness by penalizing those who ignore restrictions.
    - Viewed as a good deterrent for people who continue heavy watering during shortages.
- Potential to help fund system upgrades and long-term resilience
    - Some participantes recognize water utilities require sustained investment (e.g., pipes, reservoirs, treatment).
    - Supporters believe tiered rates may provide a more stable funding model.
    - Seen as a proactive approach to preparing for future droughts and city growth.

What participants dislike about this approach:

- Unfair to large and/or multigenerational households
    - Many argue water use naturally rises with more people, not with wastefulness.
    - Tiered billing without occupancy adjustments is seen as discriminatory.
    - Households with adult children, grandparents, roommates, or cultural multigenerational living arrangements will be targeted.
    - Concern about being penalized for temporary increases (guests, newborns, medical recovery).

- Penalizes gardening, tree-care & food growing
    - Strong concern that tiered rates will discourage:
        - watering vegetables and fruit trees
        - supporting Calgary's urban tree canopy
        - pollinator-friendly gardens
    - Some argue these uses benefit the whole city (e.g., shade, cooling, biodiversity).
    - Fear that increased costs will lead to tree loss and reduced gardening.
- Punishes essential, unavoidable indoor use
    - Families with children, babies, teens, seniors, or disabled members have higher unavoidable water needs.
    - Fear of being punished for hygiene, cooking, bathing, laundry, medical cleaning, or washing cloth diapers.
    - Households already conserving feel they "have no room left to reduce use."
- Affordability and cost-of-living pressures
    - Some cite financial strain from housing, groceries, utilities, taxes, and inflation.
    - Fear new rates will disproportionately hurt families, seniors, renters, and lower-income households.
    - Some say this could lead to choosing between essential bills and hygiene.
- Distrust and "government overreach" concerns
    - Worry that rate increases are a hidden form of taxation.
    - Skepticism that drought surcharges could be misused or applied too easily.
    - Concerns about The City's intention ("Is this about conservation or revenue?").
- Administration complexities
    - Doubts that tiered billing can be implemented fairly given:
        - different household sizes
        - mixed-use properties
        - seasonal variability
    - Fear of high administrative costs and complicated appeals processes.

- Unfair for renters/condos/shared meters
    - Many buildings lack unit-level meters and tenants cannot control building-wide usage.
    - Renters fear landlords will pass on surcharges without fixing leaks or upgrading fixtures.
    - Shared meters make per-household fairness very difficult.
- Privacy concerns
    - Fear of being required to report household size, garden type, or watering habits.
    - Worry about intrusive monitoring or “smart meter surveillance.”
    - Anxiety that enforcement will require data people do not want to share.
- Will not impact wealthier households in the way intended
    - Concern that affluent homeowners will simply pay higher rates without reducing consumption.
    - Could lead to visible inequity (green lawns vs. brown lawns).

Participants, even those supportive of the approach, had concerns and suggestions that highlighted the following:

- Need for fair treatment of diverse household types
    - Strong expectation that any system must adjust for household size.
    - Concerns about fairness for:
        - multigenerational households
        - large families
        - co-living arrangements
        - basement suites and rentals
    - Households with medical equipment, chronic conditions, mobility issues, or hygiene needs require more water.
- Need for education, information and tools
    - People want to understand:
        - what is considered “efficient use”
        - how base and threshold amounts are set
        - how to monitor usage in real time

    - Desire for apps, dashboards, text alerts, and better bill design to aid understanding of water rate charges.
    - Education is widely preferred before penalties are introduced.
- Lot size, yard size, and landscape differences
    - Larger lots have inherently higher irrigation needs.
    - Older neighbourhoods have boulevard trees that homeowners maintain using their own water.
    - Homes with more trees, xeriscapes in transition, or shared green space face unique needs.
- Interest in incentives, rebates and rewards
    - Positive reinforcement preferred over penalties.
    - Requests include:
        - rebates for low-use households
        - incentives for efficient appliances
        - rain barrel programs
        - irrigation system upgrades
    - People want to be rewarded for good behaviour, not punished for necessities.
- Indoor vs. outdoor water should not be treated the same
    - Many note outdoor use does not enter the sewer system but still increases wastewater charges.
    - Strong interest in separate outdoor meters or seasonal wastewater adjustments.
- Need for seasonal adjustments (summer vs. winter)
    - Water use patterns vary dramatically by season.
    - Some participants ask for:
        - seasonal tiers
        - winter baselines
        - summer allowances tied to tree or garden watering needs.

- Commercial/industrial fairness
    - Many believe large commercial users should face stronger conservation measures before households.
    - Golf courses, car washes, industrial facilities, and data centres are frequently mentioned.
    - Concern that residential behaviour change alone will not meaningfully reduce total demand.

11. Are there any questions, other than those above, that we should consider when exploring rate-based strategies?

While the intent was to gather suggestions for additional considerations, the most frequently mentioned questions reiterated the considerations regarding household size and care of food crops and/or Calgary's urban canopy. Many other responses reflected participants' own questions or concerns about rate-based strategies. Extrapolating from these questions and concerns, additional questions that might be considered when exploring rate-based strategies include:

- Household size, composition, and essential needs
    - How will the system account for people with essential or unavoidable high-water needs (e.g., medical needs/chronic illness, disabilities, infants/young children, seniors, pets)?
    - Should household thresholds be per-capita rather than per-household, and how will occupancy be tracked fairly and without privacy concerns?
    - Can the system treat differently those households where usage fluctuates due to temporary visitors or caregiving responsibilities?
- Multi-unit buildings, rentals, and shared meters
    - How will multi-family buildings with shared meters be treated so tenants are not penalized for others' use?
    - What requirements will apply to landlords, so renters with no control over fixtures, appliance, repairs and irrigation are not disproportionately impacted?
    - How will older condos, seniors' residences, and co-living arrangements be fairly included if suite-level metering is not feasible?
- Indoor vs. outdoor use and responsible vs. discretionary use
    - How can we differentiate between water used indoors and outdoors, with the latter often considered more discretionary?
    - How can we distinguish responsible outdoor uses (food gardens, tree care, pollinator support, new plant establishment) from more discretionary uses (lawns, car washing, pools)?
    - How can seasonal needs, heat waves, drought stress, and early-season plant establishment be reflected in rate structures?

- Property size, landscape type, and ecological value
    - How will yard size, lot size, and tree canopy coverage be reflected fairly?
    - How will new or recently planted trees and gardens be treated, considering their elevated water needs during establishment?
- Real-time tracking, alerts, and resident tools
    - Are there real-time tools (apps, dashboards, text alerts) The City can offer to help households monitor usage and receive warnings before crossing tiers or incurring surcharges?
    - Can The City provide residents with timely, easy-to-understand usage data?
    - Can the system allow for usage carry-over between months?
- Affordability, hardship protections, and rate impacts
    - What incentives (rebates, credits, free rain barrels, appliance/fixture rebates) and education programs can accompany rate-based strategies so households can reduce use without financial hardship?
    - What hardship programs, grace periods, or leak-forgiveness processes will exist to prevent disproportionate impacts on vulnerable households?
    - How will low-income Calgarians, seniors, and fixed-income households be protected from increased utility costs during a cost-of-living crisis?
    - Will rate-based strategies be revenue-neutral?
- Equity across sectors and water users
    - How will rate-based strategies apply to industrial, commercial, and institutional heavy users, ensuring residential users do not bear the brunt of efficiency efforts?
    - How will the system treat car washes, greenhouses, bottling plants, data centres, golf courses, or large irrigated properties that are major water consumers?
- Administrative simplicity, dispute processes, and fairness
    - What will the dispute resolution, bill review, and exception processes look like?
    - How can the structure remain simple enough to understand and administer, avoiding unnecessary complexity or privacy concerns?
    - How will accidental events (e.g., undetected leaks, appliance failures) be handled so households are not punished with severe surcharges?

- Transparency, infrastructure performance, and City leadership
    - How will The City address concerns about system leaks and infrastructure inefficiencies before shifting responsibility onto households?
    - What transparent reporting will show progress on repairing leaks, upgrading mains, reducing water loss, and improving operational efficiency?
    - How will The City ensure its own parks, irrigation systems, athletic fields, and streetscapes follow water-wise practices, so residents trust the system's fairness?

Outdoor Watering Schedule

What is it?

The City of Calgary is planning to introduce a permanent outdoor watering schedule to help respond to drought, manage seasonal water demand, and maximize the efficiency of potable water used outdoors for landscapes. This approach aligns Calgary with nearby municipalities, such as Airdrie and Okotoks, that have already adopted similar schedules, helping create a more consistent regional approach to water conservation.

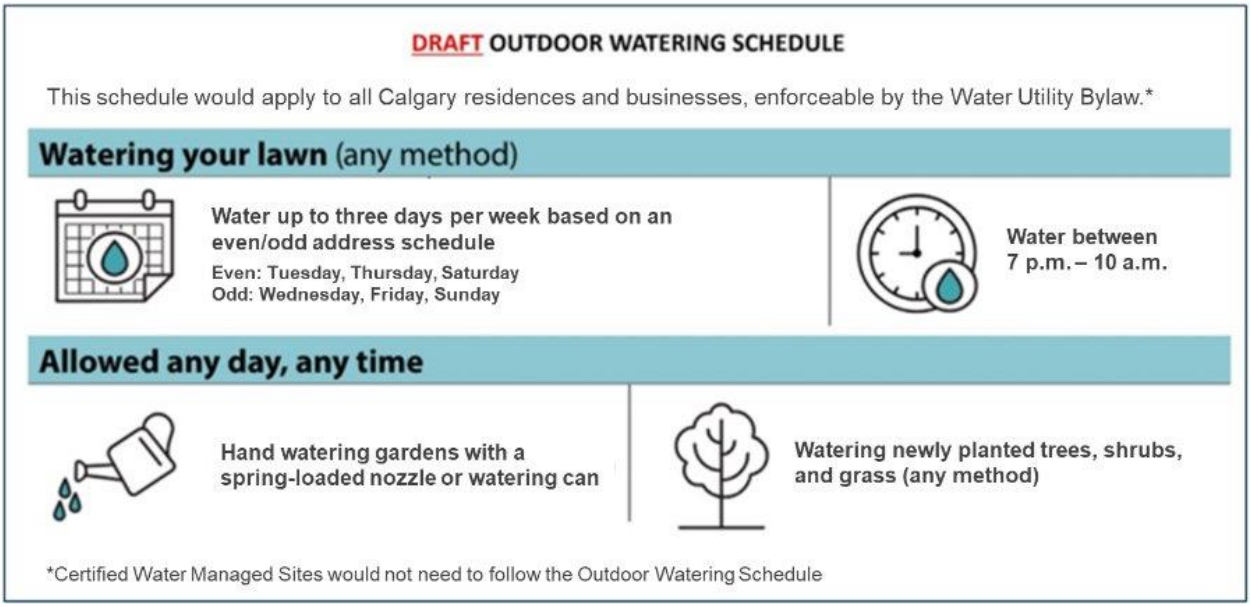
Under the schedule, homes and businesses would follow set days and times for using water outdoors for irrigation systems and sprinkler watering.

Some activities would still be allowed any day, at any time:

- Hand watering gardens using a watering can or a hose with a spring-loaded nozzle
- Watering newly planted grass, trees, and shrubs using any watering method
- Properties enrolled in the Water Managed Sites program would not need to follow the Outdoor Watering Schedule

The schedule would be enforced through the Water Utility Bylaw and remain in place year-round. Watering days would be based on your address. For example, odd-numbered homes water on certain days, and even-numbered homes on others.

This schedule would stay in effect unless outdoor water use restrictions are needed during a water shortage.



Why are we considering this?

An outdoor watering schedule is a proactive tool that helps Calgary prepare for drought by making water-efficient practices part of everyday life. By spreading out lawn watering on different days of the week, it helps make demand more predictable and manageable for our water treatment plants and distribution system – especially during summer months.

The schedule promotes best practices, such as watering during the cooler morning and evening hours, which helps maintain healthy landscapes while reducing water loss from heat and evaporation.

Leading drought resilient cities across Canada and North America – including nearby municipalities like Airdrie and Okotoks, as well as Kamloops, Kelowna, and Denver – have successfully implemented outdoor watering schedules. Research and experience shows that these schedules support more efficient watering habits, optimizes the use of water treatment and distribution system infrastructure, and reduce overall water waste.

What do you think?

12. Is the Outdoor Watering Schedule easy to understand? If not, what could make it clearer?

A large segment of participants say the Outdoor Watering Schedule (OWS) is clear and straightforward, with many noting that they already water in the evening/early morning. Those who see room for improvement recommend clarifying:

- Scope and definitions
    - Clearly distinguish lawns vs. gardens vs. trees/shrubs, and hand watering vs. sprinklers vs. drip/soaker hoses, including where automatic/inground irrigation systems fit.

    - Provide plain language definitions and visuals, including a photo of a spring-loaded nozzle, explicit wording that it must be attached to a hose, and examples of allowed vs. not allowed methods.
    - Clarify whether drip irrigation, micro-irrigation, and smart/soil-sensor irrigation systems count as hand watering, sprinkler watering, or Water Managed Sites.
- Applicability to different types of residences
    - Clarify what “address” means for multi-unit dwellings and complexes with mixed odd/even units sharing one irrigation controller.
    - Clarify how the rules apply to condos, townhomes, and managed properties, and how sites can be identified as Water Managed Sites (WMS).
- Exemptions and special cases
    - Clarify whether edible gardens/food crops are included under “gardens,” and address concerns that many food crops require daily watering.
    - Explain rules for trees, established shrubs, newly planted vegetation, and whether exceptions apply beyond the first planting season.
    - Clarify whether using rain barrels/rainwater is exempt from the schedule.
    - Clarify rules for children’s water play, small pools, and outdoor washing (cars, driveways, windows, garbage bins).
- Timing and watering windows
    - Some participants misunderstood the watering window to be 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. or 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., suggesting a need to emphasize that the permitted window is continuous from 7:00 in the evening to 10:00 in the morning.
    - Address confusion about date boundaries (e.g., whether watering after midnight belongs to the previous or next day for odd/even addresses).
    - Clarify whether there are maximum time limits (e.g., number of minutes per zone or per property) within the permitted window to prevent misuse.

Concerns were raised about how the OWS will be enforced, suggesting a need for:

- Providing clear information about how the schedule will be enforced
    - Whether enforcement is education-first, complaint-based, or proactive patrols.
    - Penalties/fines are.
    - How enforcement works for automatic systems, behind-fence watering, and nighttime use.
- Many expressed concerns about schedules increasing neighbour conflict or “snitching” without clear, fair enforcement.

Some participants provided suggestions about accessibility, communication, and ease of use of the OWS:

- Ensure the OWS is accessible for visually impaired residents (e.g., large text, high-contrast graphics).
- Provide printable formats, fridge-friendly versions (e.g., magnet), and a QR code linking to detailed rules.
- Translate materials into multiple languages, including plain language versions.
- Provide calendars, timelines, or a simple weekly chart to reduce confusion.
- Offer an OWS app, similar to the Calgary Garbage Day app, or send push notifications/reminders to help residents remember their watering days.
- Add a FAQ/guide (e.g., guidance on recommended watering durations/limits for grass, trees, etc., specific examples of what is allowed and what is restricted).

13. The schedule includes exceptions for hand watering and watering newly planted grass, trees, shrubs, and edible food crops. Are there any other exceptions you think should be considered?

The majority of participants answered “none” or “nothing” or left this answer field blank. Among participants who mentioned an exemption, suggestions included:

- Food production using efficient irrigation
    - Watering vegetable/edible food gardens (including greenhouses and fruit/berry trees) using sprinklers/hoses or efficient systems beyond hand-watering only.
    - Drip, micro-irrigation, soaker hoses, moisture-sensing or weather-responsive smart systems, and other low-volume methods beyond hand-watering.
    - Allow watering of planters, container gardens, and hanging baskets that dry out rapidly.
    - Provide flexibility for community gardens and shared food-production spaces.
    - Clarify that rain barrels and captured rainwater (including via a hose/pump) are exempt.
- Trees, urban canopy, and ecosystem protection (i.e., ecological importance of biodiverse gardens, pollinator-supporting plantings, and wildlife-supporting shrubs)
    - Watering of mature/established trees, not just new plantings.
    - Deep-root watering, slow-drip injection, and Fall pre-freeze watering.
    - Watering required for arborist-recommended treatments, disease/pest management, or drought recovery.
- Accessibility, health, and household realities
    - Exemptions for seniors, people with disabilities, and anyone unable to lift watering cans or hold spring-loaded nozzles.
    - Allow flexible watering for shift workers, night-shift households, and residents who are away and miss their watering days.

    - Safety and hygiene needs (e.g., washing pets, cleaning dog runs, decks, garbage bins).
- Water source or technology-based exemptions
    - Rain-capture systems (rain barrels, cisterns) used with a hose or pump.
    - Non-municipal water sources, such as private wells or hauled water.
    - Greywater reuse (where safe/permitted).
    - Smart irrigation controllers that apply minimal water only when needed.
- Climate, weather and site conditions
    - During days/periods of extreme heat/lack of rainfall.
    - Following dust/poor air quality events.
    - South-facing yards/gardens.
- Special outdoor uses outside the scope of the OWS but frequently requested
    - Children's water play, sprinklers, slip-and-slides, and small pools, especially during heat waves.
    - Pool and hot tub top-ups for pump protection, sanitation, or safety.
    - Pet washing, rinsing of dog runs, and other small household hygiene uses.
    - Occasional outdoor cleaning: windows, siding, patios, driveways, cars (rare or time-limited).
    - Maintenance of small wildlife ponds, birdbaths, and low-volume recirculating fountains.
    - Construction-related circumstances:
        - concrete curing, saw cooling, and similar construction tasks
        - establishing landscape renovations (beyond sod)
        - dust suppression in certain yards or near construction zones

14. Do the designated watering hours of 7 p.m. – 10 a.m. work for your household? If not, what would be more convenient, while still meeting the goals of the Outdoor Watering Schedule?

While a large segment left this answer field blank, many participants say the designated hours work for their household, noting that the hours:

- Already match their existing habits (e.g., evening/early-morning watering).
- Make sense for reducing evaporation and conserving water.
- Are easy to follow, especially with automated systems.
- Reflect common practices for lawns and gardens.

Some participants' concerns about the watering hours were:

- Conflicts with real-life schedules and situations
    - Shift workers who are away during the designated watering hours.
    - Those with young children, bedtime routines, or after-work obligations.
    - People with multiple jobs or variable schedules.
    - People who travel and miss their days/times.
    - People whose watering time depends on their mobility issues.
    - Not having/not being able to afford a timed irrigation system.
    - Night watering can cause fungus, mildew, and bugs to infiltrate a garden/yard.

Some participants said an earlier start time of 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. would be helpful and a few suggested a later end time of 11 a.m. or noon.

15. What challenges, if any, do you anticipate in following the schedule?

Many participants answered "none" or "nothing" or left this answer field blank. Among those who cited challenges in following the schedule, the most common challenge mentioned was:

- Fitting watering into real-life routines and circumstances
    - Working night shifts, early-morning shifts, rotating shifts.
    - Busy with evening childcare, dinner, and bedtime routines.
    - After-work activities, sports, or long commutes.
    - Mobility/health challenges resulting in late-evening or early-morning watering being difficult.

Other challenges mentioned:

- Lack of automation, timers, or programmable irrigation.
- Without an automated system, one must be physically present to turn hoses or sprinklers on/off.
- Older irrigation controllers do not work on alternating calendar days.
- Large yards or many zones require long cycles that do not fit the schedule.
- Buying new timers or upgrading systems is financially or technically difficult.
- Children's water play typically occurring during late morning and afternoon, as this is typically the hottest time of the day.
- Remembering designated watering days and times.
- Mid-day watering needs during extreme heat.

Although not a challenge, some participants expressed concern about compliance and enforcement.

16. Is there anything else you want to share about water efficiency and conservation in Calgary?

- Infrastructure and development standards
  - Mandatory water/wastewater efficiency in all development designs.
  - Greywater capture, rainwater reuse, drought-resistant landscaping.
  - Expand water supply systems (dams, reservoirs, pipelines).
  - Upgrade irrigation technology and water storage devices.
  - Rebates and incentives for fixture upgrades.
- City leadership, planning, governance and operations
  - Invest in rapid leak detection and repair programs and proactively prevent watermain breaks.
  - Fix leaks in water pipes quickly.
  - Upgrade old water systems and build back-up lines.
  - Develop long-term water demand plan for sustainable water service delivery.
  - Protect headwaters, watersheds, and reservoirs.
  - Stronger leadership in conservation conversations.
  - Learn from and work with other municipalities and Indigenous communities to protect rivers and watersheds.
  - Transparent communication on costs, restrictions, and progress.
  - Monitor program effectiveness and report results.
  - Provide funding to groups that want to save water but cannot afford upgrades.
  - Use smart meters to alert homeowners if they have a leak.
- Education, engagement and communication
  - Ongoing education for schools and public on water conservation.
  - Leverage social media, campaigns to communicate and educate Calgarians; use apps, social media, and community events to spread the word.
  - Share practical resources and best practices; create group chat for residents to exchange helpful tips and practices; give new homeowners brochures and tips on water-saving plants.
  - Share easy tips for watering gardens and lawns without wasting water.

    - Use apps for water tracking and alerts.
    - Engage grassroots and non-English speaking communities.
    - Partner with water-conserving groups and local greenhouses.
- Incentives and pricing fairness
    - Incentives for reducing water use (tax breaks, free rain barrels, rebates).
    - City purchases of bulk water efficient appliances on behalf of residents.
    - Tiered pricing for excessive use vs. affordability concerns.
    - Mandate rainwater and greywater for luxury uses (golf courses).
    - Address fairness in billing (wastewater charges, fixed costs).
- Responsible water use and social norms
    - Promote conscious water habits and voluntary restrictions, such as not wasting water to clean vehicles, sidewalks, or running automatic sprinklers.
    - Create benchmarks for water use by building type.
    - Encourage food gardens and flexible watering schedules.
    - Balance exemptions for trees and pollinator gardens.
- Equity and accessibility
    - Ensure equitable access for low-income households, seniors, and large families.
    - Provide affordable rainwater and greywater collection programs.
    - Address billing fairness and compensation for poor water quality.
- Target approaches to major water users (i.e., businesses and industries)
    - Restrictions should apply equally to businesses and residents.
    - Target high-use sectors (car washes, golf courses, water parks).
    - Report business vs. household usage before applying restrictions.

Other suggestions included:

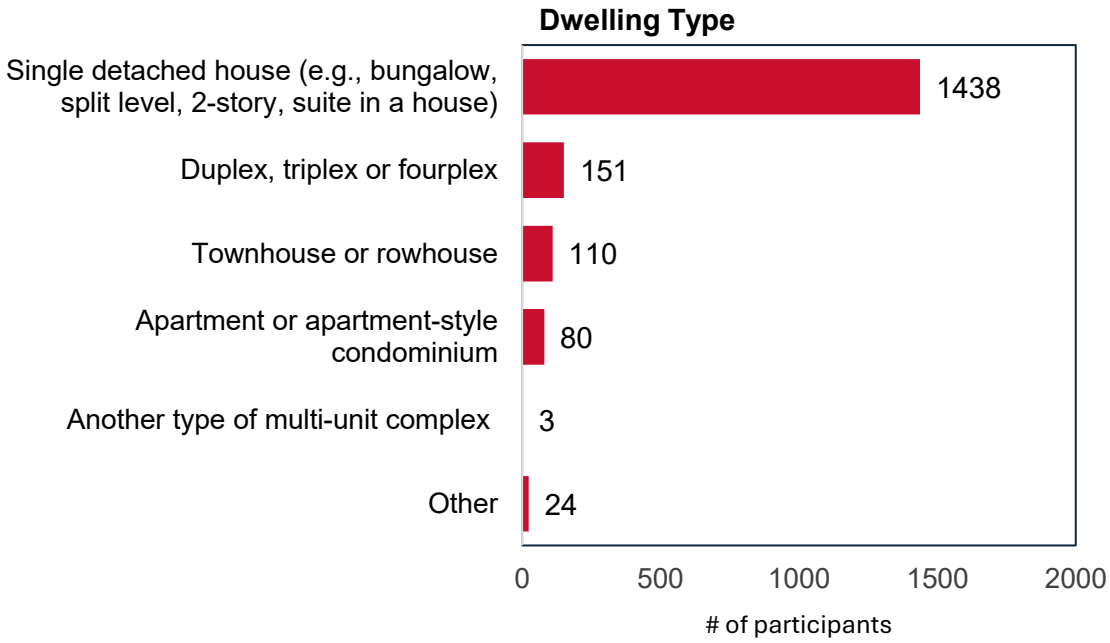
- Rules for new homes and communities
    - Make builders plant native and drought-tolerant trees and plants instead of grass or trees that need lots of water.
    - Legalize greywater usage in new builds and upgrade water systems in households to allow collection and reuse of greywater for outdoor needs

  - Stop using plastic turf and big lawns in new neighborhoods.
  - Use smart irrigation systems that do not waste water and do not run when it is raining.
  - Fine people and businesses that waste water (e.g., washing sidewalks with a hose).
- Change lawns and landscaping
  - Encourage people to plant clover, native plants, and food gardens instead of grass.
  - Let yards look natural instead of forcing manicured lawns.
  - Plant more trees and native plants in parks, boulevards, and medians.
  - Use mulch, swales, and rain gardens to keep water in the soil.

Participant Demographics

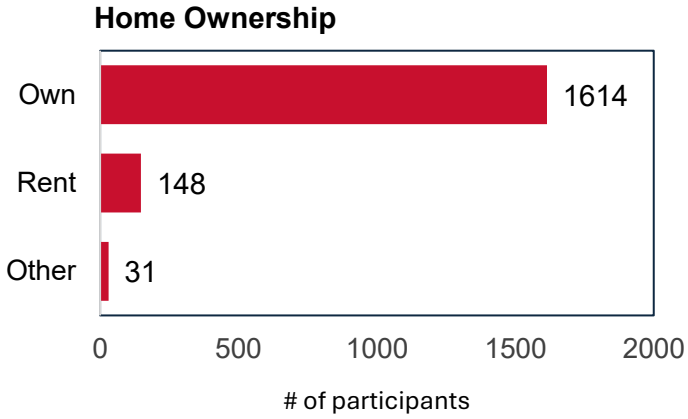
17. In which type of home do you live?

Answered: 1,806/1,842; Skipped: 36



18. Do you own or rent your current residence?

Answered: 1,793/1,842; Skipped: 49



19. In which community do you live?

Answered: 1,622/1,842; Skipped: 220

Community	#	Community	#
Abbeydale	3	Cedarbrae	16
Acadia	10	Chaparral	15
Albert Park/Radisson Heights	4	Charleswood	11
Alpine Park	1	Chinook Park	5
Altadore	10	Christie Park	2
Arbour Lake	12	Citadel	9
Aspen Woods	10	Cliff Bungalow	2
Auburn Bay	20	Coach Hill	3
Banff Trail	7	Collingwood	7
Bankview	4	Copperfield	11
Bayview	2	Coral Springs	1
Bearspaw	1	Cornerstone	4
Beddington Heights	15	Cougar Ridge	5
Belmont	2	Country Hills	4
Beltline	13	Country Hills Village	1
Belvedere	1	Coventry Hills	10
Bonavista Downs	1	Cranston	24
Bowness	22	Creekview	1
Braeside	12	Crescent Heights	9
Brentwood	11	Crestmont	4
Bridgeland	7	Currie Barracks	2
Bridlewood	11	Dalhousie	17
Britannia	1	Deer Ridge	9
Cambrian Heights	5	Deer River Estates	1
Canyon Meadows	21	Deer Run	14
Capitol Hill	5	Discovery Ridge	5
Carrington	1	Douglasdale/Glen	19
Castleridge	3	Dover	11

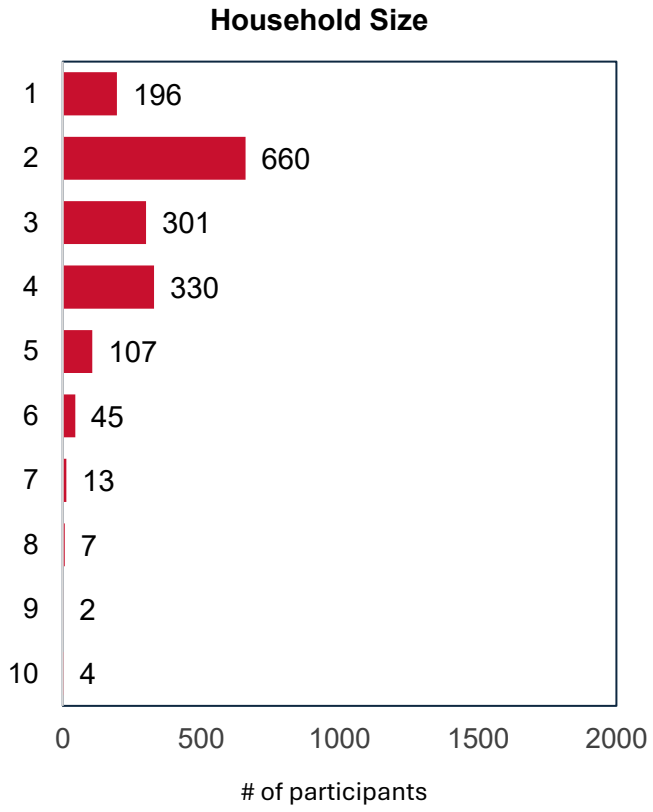
Community	#	Community	#
Downtown East Village	1	Highland Park	2
Downtown West End	1	Highwood	3
Eagle Ridge	1	Hillhurst	11
Eau Claire	4	Homestead	1
Edgemont	15	Hounsfield Heights/Briar Hill	7
Elbow Park	3	Huntington Hills	19
Elboya	2	Inglewood	9
Erin Woods	4	Kelvin Grove	2
Erlton	1	Kensington	1
Evanston	8	Killarney/Glengarry	13
Evergreen	18	Kincora	3
Fairview	7	Kingsland	4
Falconridge	2	Lake Bonavista	23
Forest Heights	6	Lakeview	12
Forest Lawn	5	Legacy	11
Garrison Green	1	Lincoln Park	1
Garrison Woods	1	Livingston	6
Glacier Ridge	3	Lower Mount Royal	2
Glamorgan	7	Lynnwood	4
Glenbrook	12	Macewan Glen	12
Glendale	6	Mahogany	11
Greenview	1	Maple Ridge	1
Hamptons	7	Marda Loop	8
Hanson Ranch	2	Marlborough	4
Harvest Hills	5	Marlborough Park	4
Hawkwood	10	Martindale	2
Haysboro	19	Mayfair	1
Hidden Valley	14	Mayland	1

Community	#	Community	#
Mayland Heights	2	Quarry Park	3
Mckenzie Lake	21	Queensland	7
Mckenzie Towne	21	Ramsay	7
Meadowlark Park	1	Ranchlands	12
Midnapore	11	Rangeview	1
Millrise	6	Redstone	1
Mission	3	Renfrew	8
Monterey Park	2	Richmond	7
Montgomery	10	Rideau Park	1
Mount Pleasant	21	Riverbend	18
Mount Royal	2	Riverstone	2
New Brighton	17	Rocky Ridge	12
Nolan Hill	4	Rosedale	4
North Glenmore Park	3	Rosemont	3
North Haven	8	Rosscarrock	6
Oakridge	11	Royal Oak	15
Ogden	12	Rundle	6
Palliser	9	Rutland Park	6
Panorama Hills	15	Saddle Ridge	4
Parkdale	3	Sage Hill	5
Parkhill	7	Sandstone Valley	5
Parkland	9	Scarboro	2
Patterson	5	Scenic Acres	19
Penbrooke Meadows	7	Seton	3
Pine Creek	1	Shaganappi	7
Pineridge	5	Shawnee Slopes	4
Point Mckay	6	Shawnessy	16
Pump Hill	1	Signal Hill	22

Community	#	Community	#
Silver Springs	16	West Springs	14
Silverado	6	Westgate	6
Skyview Ranch	2	Westmount	1
Somerset	10	Whitehorn	1
South Calgary	8	Wildwood	10
Southview	5	Willow Park	7
Southwood	9	Windsor Park	3
Springbank Hill	11	Winston Heights/Mountview	9
Spruce Cliff	6	Wolf Willow	1
St Andrews Heights	11	Woodbine	21
Strathcona Park	19	Woodlands	11
Sunalta	4	NE - community not specified	1
Sundance	18	NW - community not specified	24
Sunnyside	6	SW - community not specified	22
Taradale	1	SE - community not specified	12
Temple	4	Inner city	3
Thorncliffe	10	Downtown - community not specified	2
Tuscany	40	North - community not specified	2
Tuxedo Park	10	South - community not specified	2
University District	2	Central - community not specified	1
University Heights	3	West - community not specified	1
Upper Mount Royal	1	Airdrie	1
Valley Ridge	7	Chestermere	1
Varsity	13	Okotoks	1
Victoria Park	3		
Walden	11		
Wentworth	4		
West Hillhurst	15		

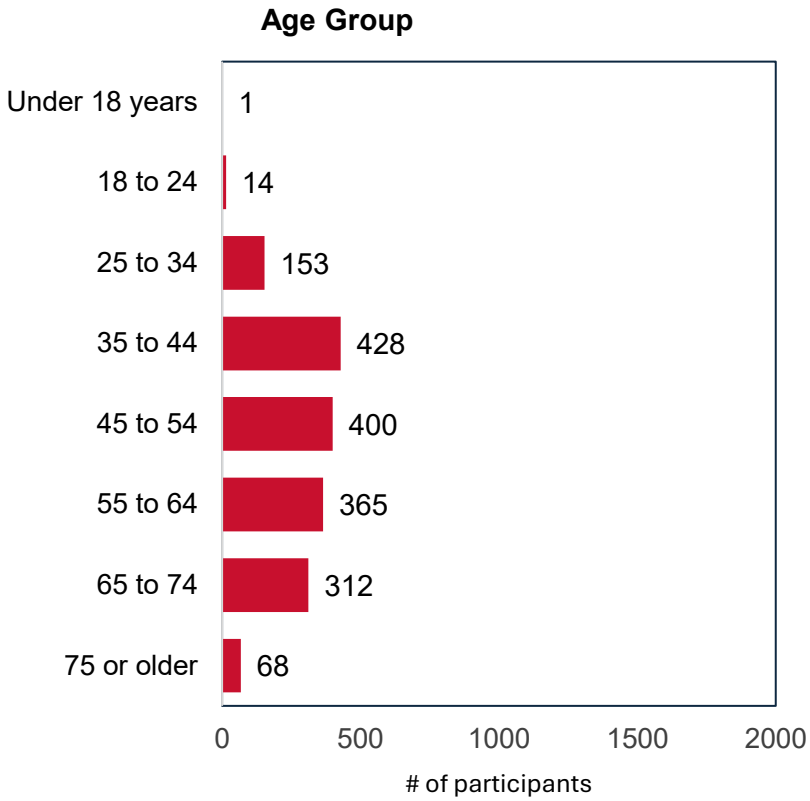
20. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

Answered: 1,665/1,842; Skipped: 177



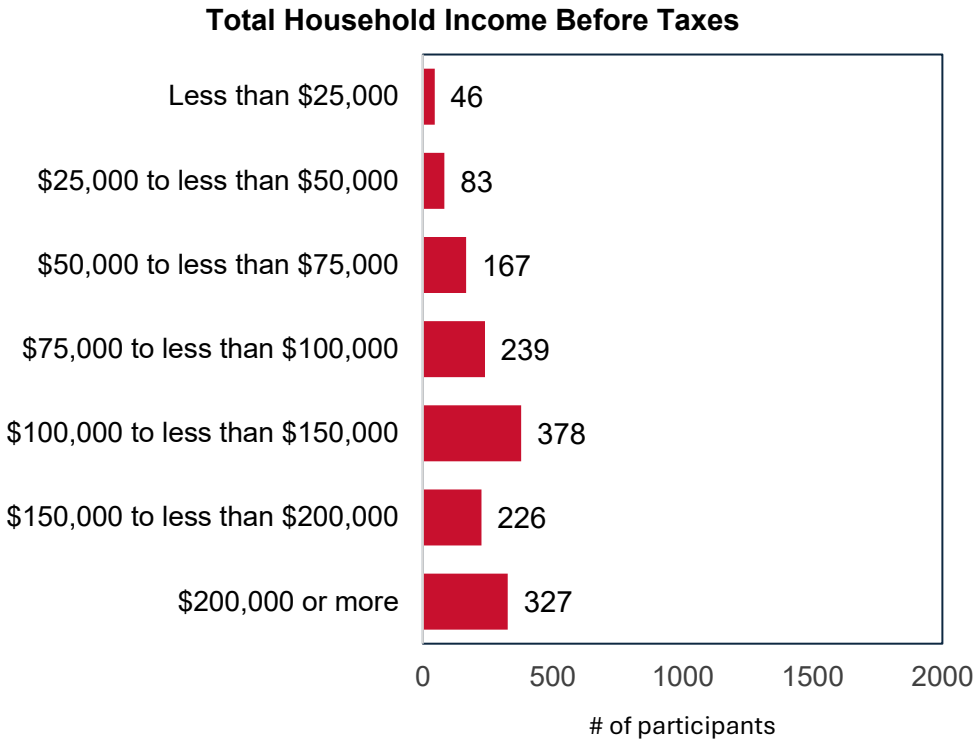
21. Which of the following age ranges applies to you?

Answered: 1,741/1,842; Skipped: 101



22. What is your total household income before taxes?

Answered: 1,466/1,842; Skipped: 376



What we asked and what we heard – Businesses, industries and community partners

The questionnaire for businesses, industries and community partners received 34 submissions. Participants agree that water efficiency is important for operational, financial, and environmental reasons. Key challenges to reducing water use include high costs for upgrades, aging infrastructure, and limited visibility into water use, alongside behavioural challenges and tenant-controlled spaces. Suggested supports focus on funding, education, modern technology, and clear policies, with calls for City leadership and simplified rules. While many find the Outdoor Watering Schedule clear and workable, some request flexibility for large properties, cultural plantings, and smart irrigation systems.

1. **Is using water wisely important to your organization? Why or why not?**

   The majority of participants affirmed that using water wisely is important to their organization. A common theme is operational dependency, especially for businesses like agriculture, ice arenas, and property management. Other reasons included cost and financial considerations and environmental responsibility. A few expressed dissent, suggesting water should remain cheap or that concern will rise only when costs increase.

Water Efficiency and Conservation Programs

What is it?

Water efficiency and conservation programs offer practical approaches to help businesses and organizations use water more wisely. From simple, no or low-cost actions to financial incentives for larger changes, these programs make saving water easier and more affordable.

Why are we considering this?

Calgary is growing quickly, with the population expected to reach 2 million by 2033. This growth, along with the impacts of climate change, such as warmer temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and the risk of drought are affecting when and how much water we receive from our rivers. Without careful planning, these challenges could make it harder to provide safe, reliable drinking water. As using water wisely becomes more important, City programs will help businesses and organizations take action, from small daily practices to bigger operational and landscaping upgrades, with support through education and incentives.

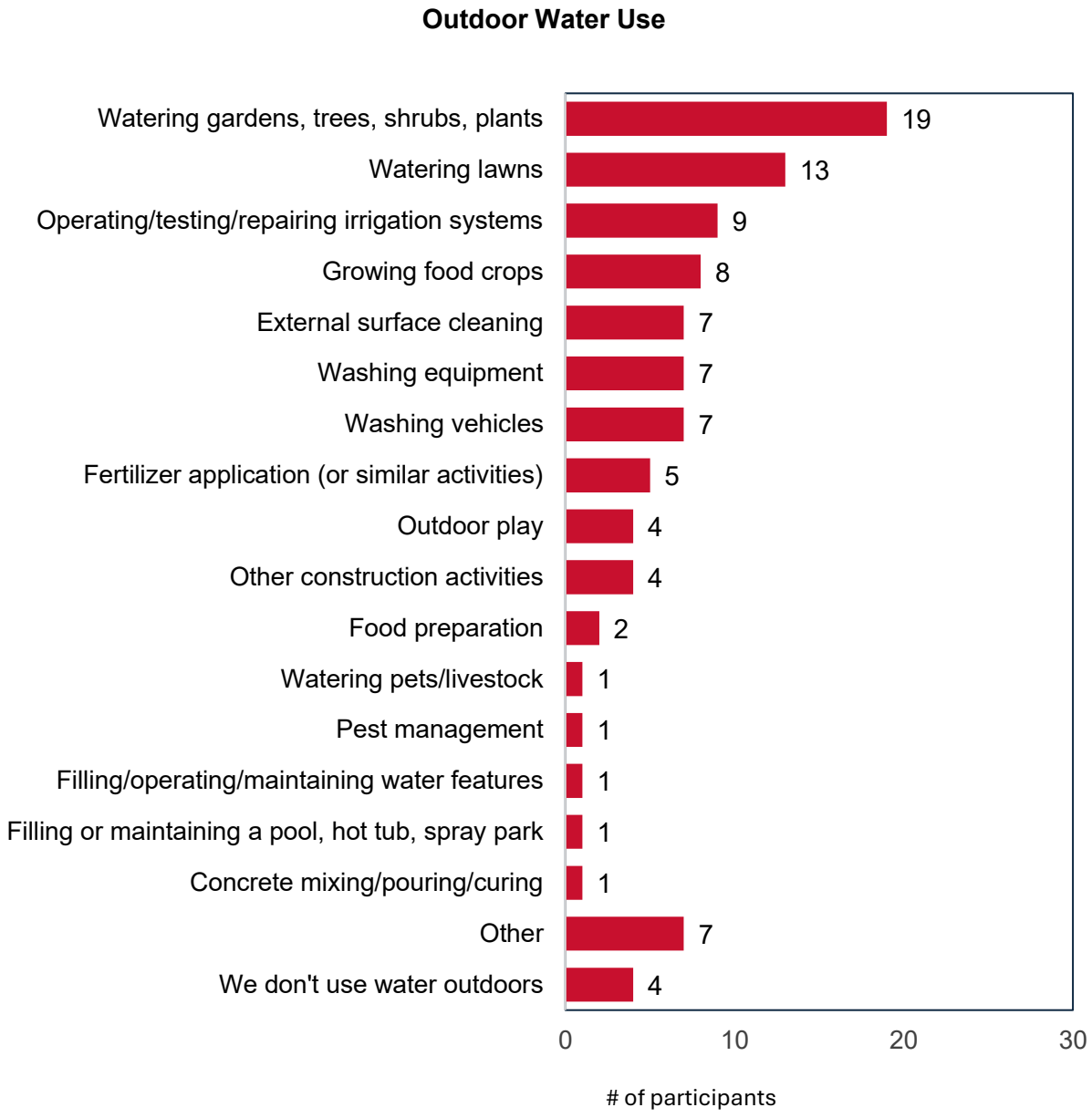
What do you think?

The next three questions are about **outdoor** water use.

2. Which of the following ways do you use water outdoors at home? Select all that apply.

Multiple selections allowed

Answered: 33/34; Skipped: 1



3. **What challenges or barriers do you face in reducing outdoor water use at home?**
   If your organization does not use water outdoors, you may skip this question.

   Several participants reported that they do not have challenges or that they use minimal water outdoors. Among the other participants, challenges or barriers cited included:

   - Dry, variable climate and vegetation needs that require irrigation.
   - High costs and lack of funding for water-saving upgrades.
   - Aging systems, property design issues, and maintenance challenges.
   - Rules limiting rainwater harvesting and watering schedules.
   - Dependence on staff practices and gaps in education about water use.

4. **What types of support, tools, or information would make it easier for you to use less water outdoors?**
   If your organization does not use water outdoors, you may skip this question.

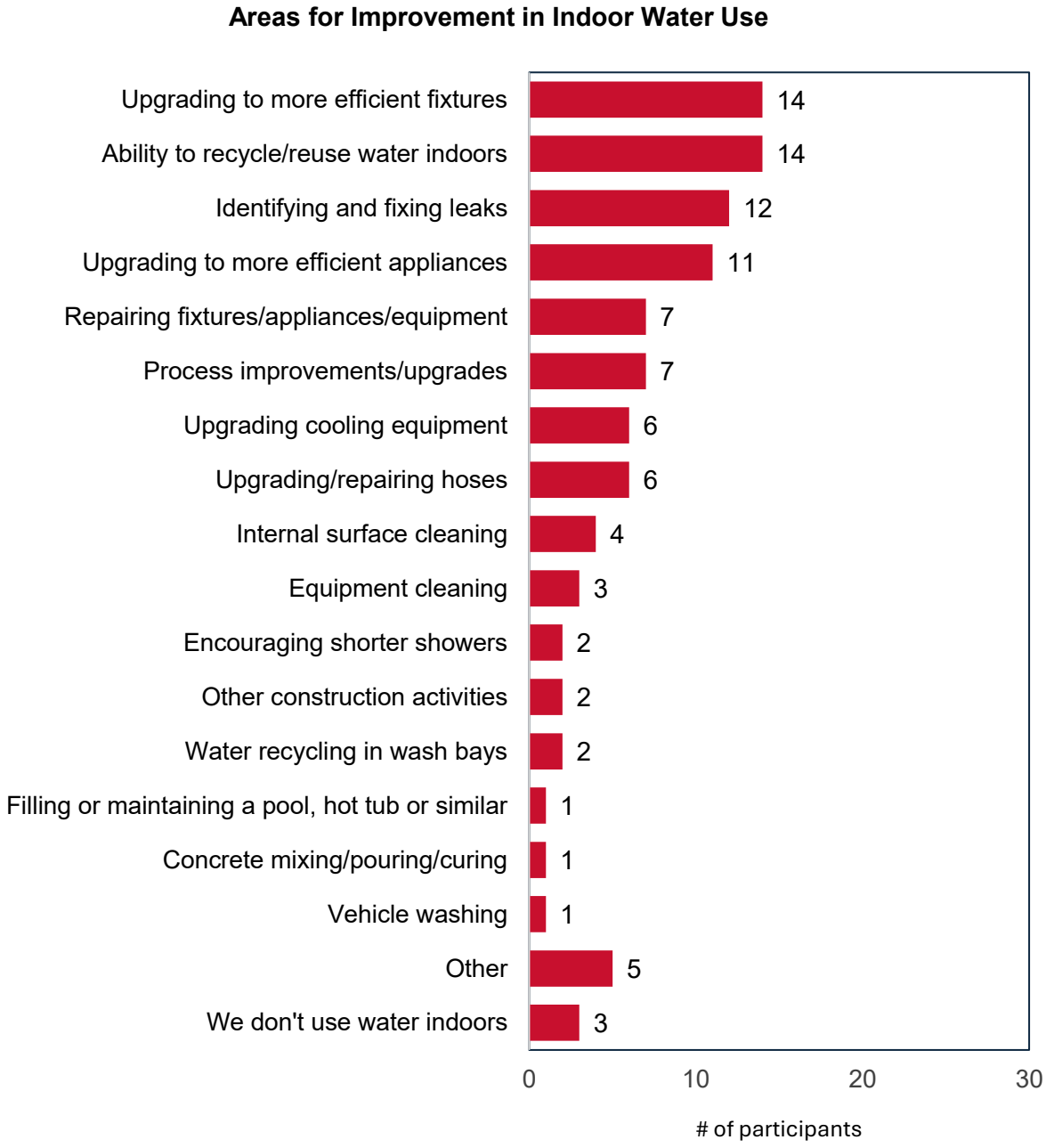
   Several participants left the answer field empty or answered “not applicable.” Other participants noted the following:

   - Grants, rebates, or payments for water-saving initiatives (e.g., turf replacement, rain barrels, irrigation upgrades).
   - Funding for infrastructure improvements and water recycling systems.
   - Modern irrigation equipment (smart controllers, moisture sensors, efficient sprinkler heads).
   - Leak detection systems, submetering, and automated alarms.
   - Online dashboards, accurate metering, and visibility into water usage.
   - Benchmarking and ideas from other organizations.
   - Clear, practical education on efficient watering and smart technologies.
   - Training and standards for irrigation design and management.
   - Simplified rules for rainwater capture and storage.
   - Incentives for innovation and flexibility in watering restrictions.

5. Of the following indoor water uses, where do you feel your organization could be more water wise? Select all that apply.

Multiple selections allowed

Answered: 31/34; Skipped: 3



6. **What challenges or barriers does your organization face in reducing indoor water use?**
   If your organization does not use water indoors, you may skip this question.

   Challenges mentioned included:

   - High cost of water recycling systems and upgrades and lack of municipal grants or subsidies.
   - Older plumbing and fixtures, with limited visibility into water use due to absence of submeters.
   - Ice arenas require large volumes for flooding and breweries and food safety processes need water.
   - Difficult to enforce water-saving practices in tenant spaces, coupled with unclear accountability for upgrades.
   - Water-wasting habits and the need for education and building new behaviours among staff and tenants.

7. **What types of support, tools, or information would make it easier for you to use water more efficiently indoors?**
   If your organization does not use water indoors, you may skip this question.

   Participants mentioned:

   - Training for staff and tenants on water-efficient practices and habits.
   - Grants, subsidies, rebates, or zero-interest loans to support upgrades and recycling systems, especially for charitable/not-for-profit organization.
   - Access to technology and programs for reusing water indoors and outdoors.
   - Tools to monitor water use, detect leaks, and provide detailed consumption data.

The City is considering a variety of programs and tools to support local businesses and organizations in being more water efficient, including:

- **Water use assessments**, including audits and performance benchmarking, that support existing ICI customers in understanding water use throughout their operations
- **Subsidies, incentives and rebates** that promote water efficiency through equipment retrofits and upgrades
- **Landscape transformation programs** that incentivize low-water-use design and drought-tolerant plantings
- **Partnering with industry** to support water efficient business practices through employee training opportunities

8. **What would help you to use or benefit from programs and tools like the ones listed above?**

   Some participants left the answer field empty or noted that they do not need help to use or benefit from programs and tools. Other participants noted the following:

   - Funding and financial incentives (grants, subsidies, rebates, tax deductions).
   - Landscape transformation support.
   - Water-use assessments, audits and benchmarking.
   - City leadership and policy support (e.g., lead by example; enabling policies/legislation).
   - Education and guidance for staff/tenants.

9. **If you have any other feedback about using water outdoors or indoors more efficiently, please share it with us.**

   Several participants left the answer field empty or responded “none.” Among other participants, comments mentioned:

   - Policy and bylaw changes (updated, fair rules) and visible City leadership (lead by example).
   - Education and guidance such as ongoing, practical best-practice materials and reminders to help organizations and residents use water efficiently.
   - Funding and financial assistance to overcome upfront costs for water-saving upgrades and technologies.
   - Climate risk and peak-demand planning (i.e., proactive planning for drought and seasonal peaks to safeguard supply and guide conservation).

   A few participants provided critical feedback, expressing frustration with current approaches or priorities, including fairness concerns and perceived overreach.

Outdoor Watering Schedule

What is it?

The City of Calgary is introducing a permanent outdoor watering schedule to help respond to drought, manage seasonal water demand, and maximize the efficiency of potable water used outdoors for landscapes. This approach aligns Calgary with nearby municipalities, such as Airdrie and Okotoks, that have already adopted similar schedules, helping create a more consistent regional approach to water conservation.

Under the schedule, homes and businesses would follow set days and times for using water outdoors for irrigation systems and sprinkler watering.

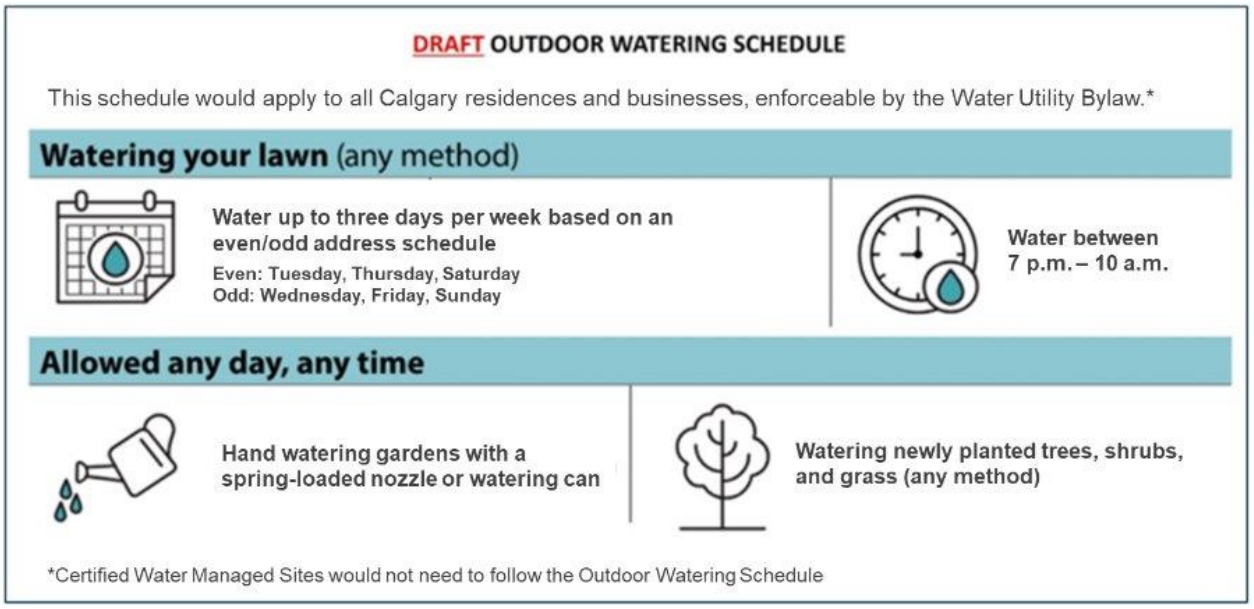
Some activities would still be allowed any day, at any time:

- Hand watering gardens using a watering can or a hose with a spring-loaded nozzle

- Watering newly planted grass, trees, and shrubs using any watering method
- Properties enrolled in the Water Managed Sites program would not need to follow the Outdoor Watering Schedule

The schedule would be enforced through the Water Utility Bylaw and remain in place year-round. Watering days would be based on addresses. For example, odd-numbered addresses water on certain days, and even-numbered addresses on others.

This schedule would stay in effect until outdoor water use restrictions are needed during a water shortage.



Why are we considering this?

An outdoor watering schedule is a proactive tool that helps Calgary prepare for drought by making water-efficient practices part of everyday life. By spreading out outdoor watering, it helps make demand more predictable and manageable for our water treatment plants and distribution system – especially during summer months.

The schedule promotes best practices such as watering during the cooler morning and evening hours, which helps maintain healthy landscapes while reducing water loss from heat and evaporation.

Leading drought resilient cities across Canada and North America – including nearby municipalities like Airdrie and Okotoks, as well as Kamloops, Kelowna, and Denver – have successfully implemented outdoor watering schedules. Research and experience shows that these schedules support more efficient watering habits, optimizes the use of water treatment and distribution system infrastructure, and reduce overall water waste.

What do you think?

10. Is the Outdoor Watering Schedule easy to understand? If not, what could make it clearer?

Many participants said the Outdoor Watering Schedule is easy to understand, although a few mentioned that more clarity, examples and visual aids (e.g., examples of methods, sample address, weekly calendar graphic, accessibility considerations) would be helpful.

11. The schedule includes exceptions for hand watering and watering newly planted grass, trees, shrubs, and edible food crops. Are there any other exceptions you think should be considered?

Many participants did not identify other exceptions. Among those who did, suggestions included:

- Smart controllers with rain shut-offs (similar to Airdrie's approach)
- Low-flow irrigation systems and drip irrigation for crops/food production.
- Initial watering for wetting agents and fertilizer applications that reduce long-term water use.
- Native plant restoration projects.
- Culturally significant plantings (e.g., Indigenous-led sites, traditional medicines).
- Memorial trees and plants.
- Allow larger properties and sports fields (e.g., lawn bowling) to water more frequently based on weather and maintenance needs.

12. Do the designated watering hours of 7 p.m. – 10 a.m. work for your household? If not, what would be more convenient, while still meeting the goals of the Outdoor Watering Schedule?

Many participants said yes, the designated hours work for their organization. A few indicated conflicts with work hours, suggesting watering between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. for convenience, and a couple of participants suggested the option to request exemptions for special circumstances.

13. What challenges, if any, do you anticipate in following the schedule?

Several participants left the answer field empty or noted that they do not anticipate any challenges in following the schedule. Challenges cited included:

- Large properties with many irrigation zones may struggle to complete watering within limited hours.
- Ensuring staff follow the schedule, especially when irrigation requires supervision outside normal work hours.
- Could negatively impact ornamental landscaping, celebrations, or playing surfaces, risking costly damage if flexibility isn't allowed.
- Designated hours do not align with operating or staffing schedules.

14. Is there anything else you want to share about water efficiency and conservation in Calgary?

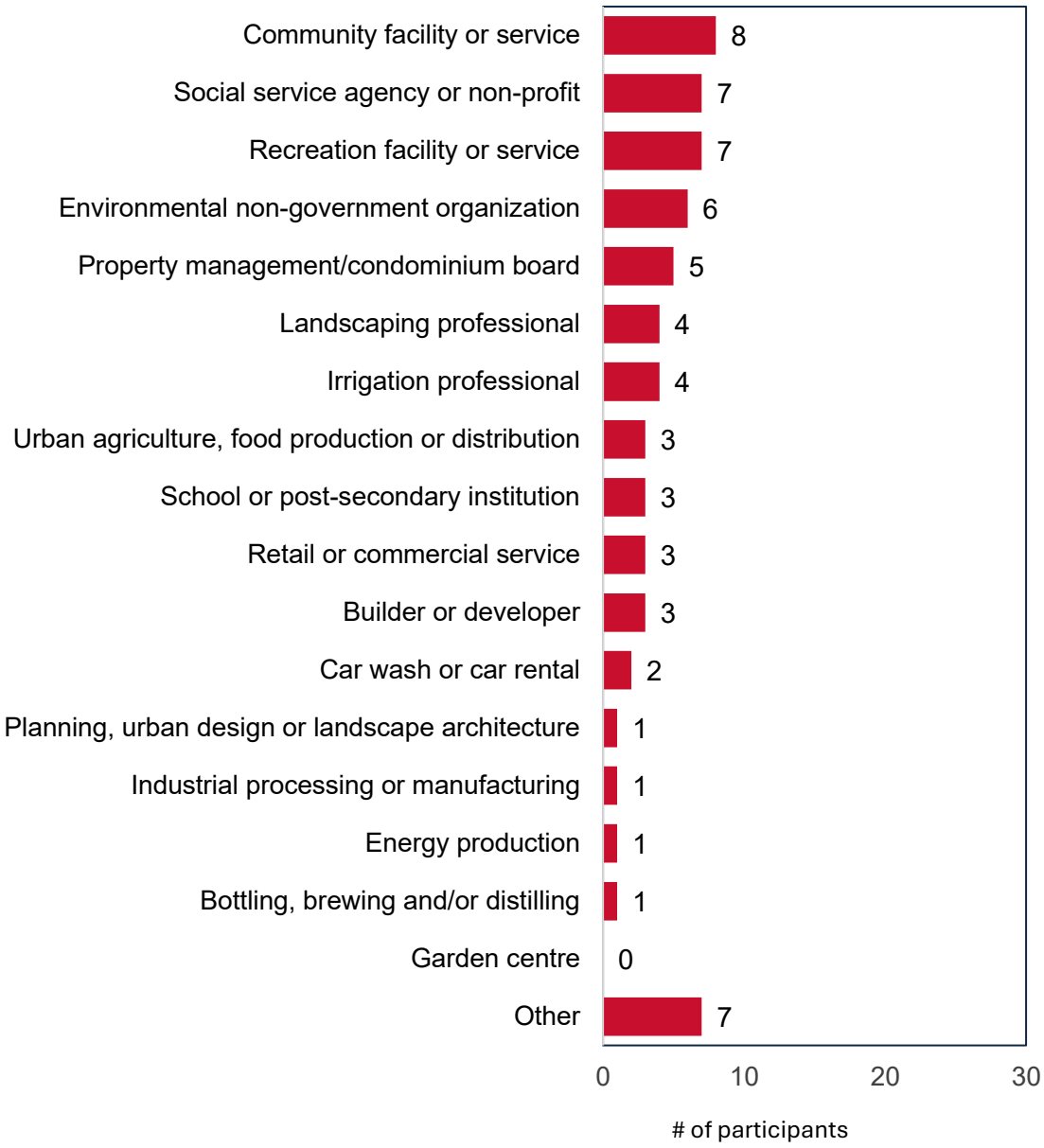
- Water is a critical resource for Calgary's future and we need to plan for growth, climate change, and drought, and safeguard headwaters and ecosystems.
- Criticism of the initiative as unnecessary or fear-based.
- Concerns about costs.
- Positive feedback on The City's conservation efforts.
- Desire for water recycling systems.
- Need for better irrigation education, proper design, and rewarding responsible businesses.
- Interest in city-wide water consumption data and neighbourhood comparisons.

15. How would you categorize your business, industry or organization? Select all that apply. Select all that apply.

Multiple selections allowed

Answered: 33/34; Skipped: 1

Type of Business, Industry or Organization



Next steps

The Water Efficiency project team will review and finalize the Water Efficiency Plan and proposed Water Utility Bylaw amendments, informed by what was heard through public and industry engagement. Engagement feedback will continue to guide implementation priorities, with particular attention to education, equity, affordability, and practical support for residents and businesses.

Pending Council consideration, The City will begin short-term implementation actions, including targeted communications, education, and program delivery to support water-efficient practices. Progress will be monitored through existing reporting and dashboard tools, with future updates aligned to City business planning and budget cycles.

Verbatim comments

Due to the volume of input received, verbatim comments are reported in a separate document, which can be found here.