



Urban Hens Public Consultation Report

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Executive summary	3
About this report	4
Summary of public education and engagement sessions	4
Key survey demographics	5
Public engagement themes	6
Support for hens	7
Concerns about hens	8
Considerations for a City-wide hen program	9
Public expectations and information gaps	10
Public thoughts on how to regulate and monitor a hens program	10
Conclusions / Recommendations	12
Appendix 1: Online Survey Questions	13
Appendix 2: Select Survey Data by Postal Code and Ward	14
Appendix 3: Quotes by survey theme	19
Educational opportunities	19
General enjoyment	20
Personal consumption	21
Doesn't belong in urban area	21
Property values	21
Noise, smell and wildlife attraction	22
Animal welfare	23
Conflict	24
Appendix 4: Quotes to inform a City-wide hen program	24
Allowance based on ward or plot size	24
Regulations and monitoring	25
Hen care	25
Communal henkeeping	26
Permission from neighbours	27



Executive summary

Public consultation of Mississauga residents on the topic of urban hens ran from July 12 to August 8, 2021 through an online survey, a public education session and a public engagement session. Results of survey and public engagement sessions were consistent and provide an insight to Mississauga residents' perspectives on the topic of urban hens.

Key findings of the public engagement include:

- Urban hens attract significant public interest and concern, which is illustrated by the number of people who engaged in the four-week urban hens public consultation.
 - Of ≥ 4,400 people who expressed interest online, 1,858 people responded to the survey and 72 attended virtual public education and engagement sessions.
- A slim majority of survey respondents – 53.88% – support residents being allowed to keep urban hens in backyards on a residential property in Mississauga.
- Main reasons for supporting urban hens:
 - **Educational opportunities**, e.g. opportunities and benefits for all to learn about food systems and environment through personal interactions with hens
 - **General enjoyment**, e.g. shared positive experiences of hen ownership or of interactions with hens at neighbouring properties.
 - **Access to eggs**
- Main concerns around urban hens:
 - **Pest/wildlife attraction** (e.g. rats, coyotes and foxes)
 - **Noise and odour**
 - **Animal welfare**
- Public education sessions and information about urban hens can help inform, but may not shift opinions of those who are against hens. With the level of interest and concern in Mississauga, it is likely that there will need to be a continued investment in public education and communication of any proposed City of Mississauga urban hens program. Themes around implementing a hens program emerged and include:
 - **Rules and regulations:** While some people want fewer regulations around hen keeping, others shared suggestions relating to setbacks, restrictions based on ward or plot size and number of hens.
 - **Need for training and support:** e.g. education for hen keepers to ensure animal welfare.
 - **Permission from neighbours:** Most think that hen keepers should not have to ask neighbours for permission.
 - **Communal hen keeping:** e.g. an urban hens program with communal coops hosted on public property, similar to community gardens.
- Any potential urban hen program for Mississauga should consider equitable access for Mississauga residents.

About this report

This report offers a snapshot of what people in Mississauga think about urban hens. It outlines the results of a public engagement of Mississauga residents on the topic of urban hens that ran from July 12 to August 8, 2021 on the City of Mississauga's website (<https://yoursay.mississauga.ca/urban-agriculture-strategy>). The report was mandated by City Council in response to the presentation of a corporate report entitled "Urban Hen Review" (April 12, 2021) by the Commissioner of Transportation and Works. City staff conducted an urban hens public engagement process that included an online survey (July 12 to August 8, 2021), a virtual public education session (July 12) and a virtual public engagement session (July 28). The findings from this report will inform the City in deciding whether to develop an urban hen program, and will inform a forthcoming urban agriculture strategy also being developed by the City of Mississauga.

Both quantitative data and qualitative data from the survey are reported on, including who responded to the survey and basic demographic analysis. Themes and results that emerged from the survey and process are offered to help illustrate common concerns, interests and gaps in public understanding of hens. Opportunities and ideas around how the City might develop a City-wide hen program are shared and illustrated by a sampling of survey comments.

Summary of public education and engagement sessions

Along with the public's strong interest in the survey, community interest in virtual sessions was strong too. A total of 49 people attended a virtual public education session to learn more about hens on July 12. Another 23 attended a virtual public engagement session on July 28 to hear a presentation, offer comments and ask questions. Both virtual sessions were advertised on the City of Mississauga's website (<https://yoursay.mississauga.ca/homegrown/>) and through the city's social media channels.

The first session featured educator Sandra Grilo from Chickens-in-the-Six (<https://chickensinthesix.com/>) to talk about hen keeping in an urban environment. The second session featured city staff speakers from Environment Outreach and Animal Services to discuss the urban hens pilot, provide education on hen keeping and answer questions. Both sessions used Mentimeter, an interactive presentation tool, to take a survey of initial thoughts and interest levels of attendees, and the same survey after the presentation. In the first session, interest and excitement in the program increased by 23% and concerns for a neighbour having hens in their backyard went down 27% at the end of the session. The change in opinions in these sessions indicate that education may be an effective tool for addressing public concerns.

Questions and comments raised in the sessions were similar to the survey results and the analysis resulting from the surveys remains an accurate representation of community thinking.



Key survey demographics

Responses to the public survey represent the perspectives of Mississauga residents across wards, age and income. Below is a summary of key demographics:

- Overall, 53.88% of respondents were in support of residents keeping urban hens on residential property, 41.93% were not in support and 4.20% were not sure
- Overall, 34.80% of respondents expressed interest in keeping urban hens on their own residential property, 55.60% were not interested and 9.60% were not sure
- 20.08% of respondents identified as a member of a visible minority in Canada
- 0.97% of respondents identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)
- Ward 9 had the highest engagement with 31.75% of overall responses to the survey
- Gaps in engagement appear in lower-income and younger people (only 9.31% of respondents were under 34 years old and 21.64% of respondents had an income level below \$80,000). This may be due to hen keeping being (and being perceived as) an activity for house owners and long-term house renters, which would exclude many Mississauga residents.
- See [Appendix 2](#) for details.

Support for urban hens was highest in the postal codes L5N, L5M, L5L with a slight majority in support of residents being allowed to keep urban hens in backyards on residential property.

Postal Code	No	Unsure	Yes	Total	Ward
L5N	147	24	204	375	9
L5M	96	11	108	215	9
L5L	68	7	85	160	8

Public engagement themes

A range in opinions about a potential backyard hen program emerged from the survey and community education and engagement sessions. These have been organized into themes:

- **Educational opportunities:** Comments highlighted the benefits to children and adults of learning about the food system through personal interactions with hens.
- **Pest/wildlife attraction:** Respondents outlined concerns about backyard hens attracting insects such as flies as well as animals including rats, coyotes and foxes.
- **General enjoyment:** Respondents shared positive experiences of hen ownership or of interactions with hens in neighbouring properties.
- **Noise and odour:** Concerns were raised about hens creating noise and odour that would negatively affect neighbours.
- **Access to eggs:** Respondents identified regular access to fresh, healthy eggs as a benefit of a backyard hens program.
- **Animal welfare:** Respondents spoke to the importance of hens being well cared for, safe and healthy, and shared concerns that some hen owners might underestimate the responsibilities of keeping backyard hens.

Common ideas also emerged for implementation of a hen program:

- **Rules and regulations:** While some comments reflected a desire for fewer regulations around hen keeping, others shared suggestions relating to setbacks, restrictions based on ward or plot size and number of hens.
- **Training and support:** Respondents commented on the importance of education for hen keepers to ensure animal welfare, with some suggesting “rent a chicken” programs as a potential approach to provide training.
- **Permission from neighbours:** Comments around this issue opposed requiring hen keepers to ask neighbours for permission, with some respondents emphasizing that residents are not required to ask neighbours for permission to undertake other activities on their property.
- **Communal hen keeping:** Some respondents suggested that an urban hens program could operate similar to community gardens, with communal coops hosted on public property.

Support for hens

Many survey respondents highlighted the educational opportunities, especially to children, that come from owning or having exposure to backyard hens. Of those interested in keeping hens, 29.9% selected “I want to keep them for educational purposes” as a reason (Q9). They highlighted how urban hens can help people understand where food comes from. This connects people to the food system and helps them develop new skills.

- *“We had urban hens years ago when our children were young. It helped our kids understand the food chain, and about care and concern for it.”*
- *“Seamless experience as a neighbour of urban hen owner - wouldn't even know they were there. Other neighbours were curious and supportive. It makes us a little more connected to providing our own foods - and extension to using garden/patio space wisely to enjoy urban agriculture!”*

Other people spoke of their enjoyment of having hens as pets or the benefits of having them in their neighbourhood. Nearly 42% of respondents interested in keeping hens said they wanted to have hens as pets (Q9). Some commented that they did not experience any issues with odour, noise or wildlife attraction, with several respondents acknowledging that hens can help with insect control. A number of comments highlighted examples from European countries where they said hen keeping is more common (e.g. England, France, Romania).

- *“I felt it built community as neighbours I had not met before from further up the street would come round with curious children, some would save kitchen scraps to feed the hens, some came by looking to buy eggs, and lots just enjoyed having hens to visit on their walk.”*
- *“My neighbour has hens and they are very well cared for in a well designed coop and pen. The hens are pleasant and fairly quiet. The coop is kept very clean. I have not seen rodents. Some of the neighbours including myself have been given eggs to sample. Some of the neighbourhood children have come to visit the hens and learned about them and their habits. It's been a real pleasure having the hens in our neighbourhood.”*

Respondents also discussed access to fresh eggs as a benefit of a backyard hens program; 95.7% of respondents who were interested in keeping hens said they wanted fresh eggs for their household (Q9). Some cited benefits related to food security, nutrition, ethically produced eggs and preventing antibiotic resistance. While some respondents had raised hens for eggs themselves, others had been given them by neighbours who kept hens.

- *“The eggs are much better than anything you buy in the grocery.”*
- *“Collecting eggs in the morning was very gratifying, and watching the chickens grow and run around the pen can be entertaining. I'd love the opportunity to raise hens for eggs again. It's great!”*



Concerns about hens

The top three concerns respondents identified in Q10 around keeping hens on their own property were: attracting predators and/or wildlife (48.6%), disapproval from neighbours (45.7%), and odour and/or mess. Knowing how to care for chickens, health and sanitation, and noise also ranked as concerns. Regarding others keeping hens (Q13), attracting predators and odours were the top concerns. More than half of respondents identified health and sanitation (56.9%) and animal welfare and treatment of hens as concerns (52%).

In the open-ended questions, many respondents expressed concerns around potential odours and noise from backyard hens. Some shared negative personal experiences or anecdotes from others who had lived near a hen-keeping neighbour. Some respondents expressed that they felt they could not enjoy their backyard or had to keep their windows closed because the smell was overwhelming. It seems smell is a larger concern for most people than noise.

- *“People who visit my yard complain of the smell as well, and my neighbor actually attempts to keep his coop and run clean. They still smell. This is a bad idea.”*
- *“The hens stink, I can't use parts of my backyard because it smells like a farm. There are more flies, there are feathers everywhere, as they come through the fence.”*

There were also many comments about the attraction of wildlife and flies. Concerns – or experiences – involving rats, coyotes and foxes were the most prominent, but respondents also identified potential for attracting mice, raccoons, minks, hawks, skunks and possums. Some identified this as a safety and health issue that can prevent children and dogs from being outside on the house owner's property.

- *“A neighbour two houses from me had chickens. That is when the rat problem started. I have lived here 40 years and never had a rat problem until chickens were introduced to the street. My neighbour's and myself were infested with rats. We set traps and caught dozens. It has slowly got better since the chickens were removed and we had to stop bird feeders. Rats are full of disease. Also coyotes began to come into our yards and still do.”*
- *“It has really reduced the happiness of those living near this house, including the overwhelming smells that can occur and the safety of their small children and pets (it is attracting a lot of rats and these are big rats that do not seem to show fear towards people at all).”*

Some respondents commented that they were concerned about the welfare of backyard hens. They expressed concerns about hens being mistreated by people who underestimated the work required; that hens would not be protected against the cold during the winter; that they might not be able to find adequate vet care in the city; that the activity would not be regulated properly or that regulations would not be followed; and then hens could be put at risk from dogs or wild predators.

- *“People's treatment of them is terrible. People get pets all the time that they discard because they realize their care requires a little work. The same will happen with these poor birds.”*
- *“I also worry greatly that hens will not be protected enough from severe cold weather in makeshift backyard pens (because who will spend money on proper insulated housing and heating and no-freeze water supplies for just 4 birds).”*

Some respondents expressed the sentiment that hens do not belong in an urban area and that people who wish to raise them should live in the country. A couple of people suggested backyard hens could have negative impacts on property (e.g. destroying grass) and housing values.

- *“If someone wants to keep farm animals, they should be looking to purchase a home in an area zoned for farming.”*
- *“I have never heard of hens being raised in the city....that's what farms are for!”*

Some people acknowledged the potential for a backyard hens program to create conflict between neighbours.

- *“Please don't approve this program. It will create a lot of problems between neighbours.”*
- *“You will never get all your surrounding neighbours to agree. I don't think we need more controversy and conflict.”*



Considerations for a City-wide hen program

It is recommended that the City consider the following public expectations, concerns and questions – and work to address potential information gaps – when developing options/recommendations around a City-wide urban hens program.

Public expectations and information gaps

In response to Question 15, “If the Urban Hen program is approved, what do you think are important guidelines and considerations?”, survey participants identified the following priorities:

- Cleanliness standards: 83.2%
- Health and wellbeing of hens: 73.5%
- Location of where chickens are contained in yards: 64.3%
- Minimum distance and screening from other houses: 63.1%
- Size of coops and run area: 63.1%
- Permission from neighbours: 59.4%
- Lot size: 57.5%
- No commercial sales of eggs or chickens: 51.7%
- Other: 6.6%

However, nearly three-quarters of respondents (73.4%) said that they have not kept hens or known someone in an urban area who has kept hens (Q16). This suggests that many residents do not have direct experience with hen keeping and may have knowledge gaps.

Public thoughts on how to regulate and monitor a hens program

Respondents expressed myriad opinions about how backyard hens could be regulated and monitored. Here are some of their suggestions:

- To only allow hens on larger properties, or in less densely populated areas that back on to natural areas (e.g. a park or ravine).
- To change the setbacks regulations (e.g. to 6 metres away from property, with standards for cleanliness or to 1.5 m from other buildings).
- To remove the need for licensing or make the fee more affordable/waive in some instances to increase accessibility.
- To require each owner to register their flocks with the province and obtain an ID number (as mandated in Alberta).
- To clarify which rules would be upheld in the instance of a conflict between municipal and condo regulations regarding animals.
- To reconsider the number of hens permitted (e.g. to have a minimum of 2 hens; to decrease the maximum from 4).
- To begin with a pilot project and allow residents the opportunity to vote on whether urban hen keeping moves forward.



Bridging rules and regulations information gaps: While the City's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page addresses questions regarding unwanted pests and animals from backyard hen keeping, the survey results indicate that this remains a significant area of concern. If a hen program proceeds, the City will need to provide information to prospective hen keepers and other residents about pest and animal prevention. It may be helpful to share experiences from municipalities that have implemented a hens program. The City will need to provide educational materials to address concerns about odours, and mitigation strategies such as setbacks and hen enclosure maintenance. A proactive educational campaign may help to address the concerns of some residents who have not had direct experience with urban hens.

Concerns and suggestions related to hen care were also prominent:

- Several respondents suggested that the City could enable “rent a chicken” programs that provide hens, coops and more, and then take the hens back for the winter.
- Create standards for animal welfare.

Bridging hen care information gaps: Several respondents suggested that the City could implement a mandatory training course to obtain a licence for hen keeping. The course could provide an introduction to hen keeping, including hen care (e.g. food and water needs), maintenance of hen enclosures (including any changes needed for winter) and an overview of by-law requirements. This will help ensure all hen keepers have a base level of knowledge, which may also assuage some concerns from other residents about whether hens will be properly cared for.

There were several comments around the proposed requirement to obtain neighbours' permission to keep hens:

- Respondents shared comments that people should not have to get permission from neighbours, as residents do not have to obtain permission for other activities on their private property (e.g. dog ownership).
- The City could require hen keeping applicants to notify neighbours rather than asking for permission.
- In Q14, regarding how they would want to be informed if their neighbour was keeping hens, 62.2% said notification from City staff, 21.5% said notification from neighbour, 13.3% said visit from Animal Services Officer and 3.1% said other.

Some respondents suggested that the City consider communal hen keeping:

- A community coop could follow the model of community gardening, taking place at schools, churches, parks or other public land.
- Respondents suggested this could prevent problems between neighbours, make it easier for the City to monitor hen keeping, allow people to participate who do not have backyards (or space that meets licensing requirements), and create a source of fresh eggs for food banks.
- 71.7% of respondents said they would be eligible to keep hens under the program requirements, while 18.3% were unsure and 10.1% said no (Q11).



Conclusions / Recommendations

Urban hens attract significant public interest — and concern — in cities across North America and this is also the case for Mississauga residents. Community engagement was conducted on the topic of urban hens through a survey, a community education and a community engagement session of Mississauga residents. Survey results are considered an accurate representation of public interest and concern, and results were consistent with comments and questions raised in the public engagement sessions.

The community engagement process has confirmed that there is slightly favourable support for an urban hens program, yet some mixed concern. Support is expressed with notable interest in educational opportunities surrounding hens, opportunities for general and shared enjoyment, and access to eggs. Residents' concerns around urban hens are also high and are primarily focused around pest / wildlife attraction, noise and odour, and animal welfare. Additional information and educational opportunities may address these concerns and increase support.

Public education sessions and information about urban hens can help people learn more about their questions and concerns, but may not shift opinions of those who are against hens. In other cities, public education is used to address concerns and share the benefits of urban hens. Given the level of interest and concern in Mississauga, it is likely that there will need to be a continued development of, and investment in, the public education and communication components of a City of Mississauga urban hens program.

Some of the themes around implementing a hens program to be considered include the need for rules and regulations, training and support, clarity around neighbour consents for hens, and communal hen keeping. In proceeding with any pilot or program development, people who engaged in the process suggested other cities to look to for examples of backyard hen programs, including [Brampton](#); [Toronto](#); [Kingston](#); [Newmarket](#); [Niagara Falls](#); [Edmonton](#); [Surrey](#); [Victoria](#); [Kitchener](#); [Guelph](#); [San Francisco](#); [New York City](#); and [Chicago](#). Other factors to consider when reviewing other urban hens programs are the number of complaints and charges and the impact of that on City staff work plans and City budgets.

Any potential urban hen program for Mississauga should consider equitable access for Mississauga residents. As reflected in this report, youth and residents with an income below \$80,000 had a lower engagement rate. Further engagement and understanding of these groups can help the City learn about their interest, concern and barriers to participation. In addition, access for residents who are not homeowners should be addressed.

The findings of this report will be considered in development of the urban agriculture strategy, also under development by the City of Mississauga.



HOFFMANNHAYES

healthy food programming,
gardens + community development

Report

City of Mississauga Urban Hens Public Consultation

Prepared by Hoffmann Hayes, August 18, 2021

12 of 24

Appendix 1: Online Survey Questions

1. What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?
2. In what age category do you belong?
3. Do you identify as a member of a visible minority in Canada?
4. Do you identify as Indigenous; that is First Nations, Métis or Inuit?
5. If "Yes", select the options that you identify with:
6. Which of the following best describes your average annual household income?
7. Do you support residents being allowed to keep urban hens in backyards on a residential property in Mississauga under the circumstances outlined at the beginning of this survey?
8. Are you interested in having urban hens on your property?
9. Why are you interested in being allowed to keep urban hens? Select all that apply.
10. What concerns would you have about keeping hens on your property? Select all that apply.
11. Under the Urban Hen Program requirements in the diagram and listed below, would you be eligible? (Click Setback diagram).
12. Would you be supportive if your neighbours had urban hens, provided that they were registered (i.e. similar to a dog licence) with the City and met the program and licensing criteria?
13. What concerns do you have about residents, including potentially your neighbours, being allowed to keep hens on residential properties? Select all that apply.
14. If the proposed program is approved, notification to adjoining neighbours will be required in order to obtain their consent before the license is granted. How would you want to be informed if your neighbour(s) was interested in keeping hens?
15. If the Urban Hen program is approved, what do you think are important guidelines and considerations? (Select all that apply)
16. Have you ever kept hens or known anyone in urban areas that has kept hens for the purpose of urban farming? If yes, please describe any of your positive or negative experiences with urban hens?
17. Are there any examples of urban hen programs from other municipalities you'd like to see here in Mississauga?



Appendix 2: Select Survey Data by Postal Code and Ward

Summary of survey respondents by Ward

Ward	Respondents	% of Respondents
9	590	31.75%
2	285	15.34%
5	225	12.11%
8	160	8.61%
3	160	8.61%
7	153	8.23%
6	145	7.80%
1	117	6.30%
11	23	1.24%

Age and income of survey respondents

Age	% of Respondents	Income	% of Respondents
Under 25	1.88%	Under \$20,000	1.51%
25-34	7.43%	\$20,000 - \$49,999	7.00%
35-44	22.17%	\$50,000 - \$79,999	13.13%
45-54	22.87%	\$80,000 - 124,999	21.42%

55-64	24.00%	Over \$125,000	25.08%
Over 65	17.22%	Prefer not to answer	31.59%
Prefer not to answer	4.41%	Other	0.27%

Do you support residents being allowed to keep urban hens in backyards on a residential property in Mississauga under the circumstances outlined at the beginning of this survey?

Postal Code	No	Unsure	Yes	Total	Ward
L5N	147	24	204	375	9
L5M	96	11	108	215	9
L5L	68	7	85	160	8
L5J	51	6	94	151	2
L4Y	72	1	43	116	3
L5H	48	1	55	104	2
L5A	27	6	51	84	7
L5C	35	3	42	80	6
L5G	34		45	79	1
L5B	25	2	42	69	7
L5V	31	1	33	65	6

L4W	26	4	31	61	5
L4Z	31	3	21	55	5
L4T	19	4	26	49	5
L5R	21	2	23	46	5
L4X	13		31	44	3
L5E	14	1	23	38	1
L5K	11	1	18	30	2
L5W	6	1	16	23	11
L4V	4		7	11	5
L5T			2	2	5
L5S			1	1	5
Grand Total	779	78	1001	1858	

Are you interested in having urban hens on your property?

Postal Code	No	Yes	Unsure	Ward
L5N	212	120	43	9
L5M	122	70	23	9
L5L	84	57	19	8



L5J	71	65	15	2
L4Y	81	28	7	3
L5H	59	38	7	2
L5A	43	35	6	7
L5C	44	21	15	6
L5G	45	27	7	1
L5B	38	29	2	7
L5V	36	25	4	6
L4W	35	22	4	5
L4Z	39	14	2	5
L4T	27	20	2	5
L5R	28	14	4	5
L4X	18	21	5	3
L5E	20	16	2	1
L5K	12	13	5	2
L5W	11	6	6	11
L4V	8	3		5
L5T		1	1	5
L5S		1		5

Grand Total	1033	646	179	
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The support to keep urban hens in backyards on a residential property in Mississauga from residents and interest in keeping urban hens in responding wards is as follows:

Responses to residents keeping urban hens on residential property

Ward	Yes	Yes (%)	No	No (%)	Unsure	Unsure (%)
9	312	31.17%	243	31.19%	35	44.87%
2	167	16.68%	110	14.12%	8	10.26%
5	111	11.09%	101	12.97%	13	16.67%
7	93	9.29%	52	6.68%	8	10.26%
8	85	8.49%	68	8.73%	7	8.97%
6	75	7.49%	66	8.47%	4	5.13%
3	74	7.39%	85	10.91%	1	1.28%
1	68	6.79%	48	6.16%	1	1.28%
11	16	1.60%	6	0.77%	1	1.28%
Total	1001	53.88%	779	41.93%	78	4.20%

Responses to residents interested in keeping their own urban hens

Ward	Yes	Yes (%)	No	No (%)	Unsure	Unsure (%)
9	190	29.41%	334	32.33%	66	36.87%
2	116	17.96%	142	13.75%	27	15.08%

5	75	11.61%	137	13.26%	13	7.26%
7	64	9.91%	81	7.84%	8	4.47%
8	57	8.82%	84	8.13%	19	10.61%
3	49	7.59%	99	9.58%	12	6.70%
6	46	7.12%	80	7.74%	19	10.61%
1	43	6.66%	65	6.29%	9	5.03%
11	6	0.93%	11	1.06%	6	3.35%
Total (%)	646	34.80%	1033	55.60%	179	9.60%

Appendix 3: Quotes by survey theme

The following selected quotes are illustrative of the themes that emerged from analysis of the urban hens survey.

Educational opportunities

- “Positive - the eggs they gave me were great and I loved how they had the ability to teach their kids new skills”
- “They are quiet and clean animals: a great education opportunity for the public, too.” (Q17)
- “They are great, friendly, teach kids (and adult) about where food comes from. I am delighted that Mississauga is taking this up. Well done!!!!”
- “We had urban hens years ago when our children were young. It helped our kids understand the food chain, and about care and concern for it. Our hens were well-tended, safe, and secure in a great coop. We shared eggs with our neighbours the way they shared tomatoes from their garden with us. They became a part of our neighbourhood community with children stopping in to help feed them. Hens are quiet and friendly. They need to be protected from wildlife (hawks and raccoons).”
- “With the right education, having chickens is easy, they don't smell, they barely make any noise and they are fun and a great addition to any neighbourhood. It would be a successful program if you just offer the right education.”
- “It's all positive - children learn about where food comes from and how to ethically take care of animals. I would love chickens to help control pests in my garden too.”

- “In European cities people keep hens and as long as they keep the coop clean no one ever complains. It's important people know where their food comes from. There is more respect for the animal and conservation.”
- “Seamless experience as a neighbour of urban hen owner - wouldn't even know they were there. Other neighbours were curious and supportive. It makes us a little more connected to providing our own foods - and extension to using garden/patio space wisely to enjoy urban agriculture!”

General enjoyment

- “I have never had bad experiences with neighbours keeping hens.”
- “Very positive - the hens were clean, quiet and enjoyable to have around. No issues with predators or rats.”
- “Great!!! Good for kids, make great pets.”
- “Hens were amazing pets, sweet and smart”
- “Kids and family have much more fun. It helps be more responsible, has more farm experience, enjoy healthy eggs and nutrition. My friends, kids build coop by themselves, feed chickens, share pictures.
- “Great family experience provided the hens are well cared for.”
- “Mostly positive - as hens are fairly quiet. As long as the person caring for the hens does so in a manner that keeps the hens' wellbeing in mind, especially with regards to coop size and cleanliness, it would be welcomed. It is also a form of food security or a matter of health and well-being for those keeping hens, so the city should endeavor to encourage such initiatives or strategies which promote any form of urban farming, beekeeping, or keeping hens for example.”
- “Only positive.....personally had 2 or 3 pet chickens many times and find them to be great pets. They eat mice ...rats..snakes..spiders..centipedes...etc. they know their name and come if called..”
- “Our neighbour currently has hens (without permission I guess) and it seems to be going well. He will not be getting a rooster, keeps it clean, and they aren't often very noisy.”
- “All my grandparents and many of their neighbors keep hens in Romania and they live in semi detached homes in neighborhoods that are similar to Mississauga's in terms of density. It helped them be self sufficient and caring for animals is also a good exercise for the people.”
- “Cute to see. We get eggs from time to time. Our neighbour cates for them like pets. Very clean, no sounds or odours.”
- “This was a great experience for my family in the past at a previous residence. Collecting eggs in the morning was very gratifying, and watching the chickens grow and run around the pen can be entertaining. I'd love the opportunity to raise hens for eggs again. It's great!”
- “They are wonderful additions to any family. They are great for kids and their eggs are quite yummy too!”
- “Neighbours were great. I felt it built community as neighbours I had not met before from further up the street would come round with curious children, some would save kitchen scraps to feed the hens, some came by looking to buy eggs, and lots just enjoyed having



hens to visit on their walk. This was located in Edmonton and the hens were on a back alley so people could see the coop from the laneway. It was great.”

- “Keeping hens provided Very positive management of insects such as ticks, grubs, mosquitoes etc. And natural weed control. It’s an activity that provides mental health benefits, as tending to hens decreases anxiety & depression. And having access to our own fresh eggs has health benefits such as preventing antibiotic resistance which is a very serious threat to our healthcare efficacy.”
- “My neighbour has hens and they are very well cared for in a well designed coop and pen. The hens are pleasant and fairly quiet. The coop is kept very clean. I have not seen rodents. Some of the neighbours including myself have been given eggs to sample. Some of the neighbourhood children have come to visit the hens and learned about them and their habits. It’s been a real pleasure having the hens in our neighbourhood.”
- Examples from Australia, France, England, Edmonton, Victoria, Romania

Personal consumption

- “Fresh eggs from happy chicken”
- “Get fresh eggs every day”
- “The eggs are much better than anything you buy in the grocery.”
- “Had chickens in the past, it was an amazing experience for my kids. Only had them from spring to fall to avoid heating the chicken coop. They laid eggs, and we ate the chickens in the fall. The chickens are table scraps and chicken food. It was easy to clean the coop, I used the poop as fertilizer in my gardens, it was a positive experience.”
- “Positives are healthy eggs, cute pets and valuable learning for kids.”

Doesn’t belong in urban area

- “If someone wants to keep farm animals, they should be looking to purchase a home in an area zoned for farming.”
- “I have never heard of hens being raised in the city....that's what farms are for! It starts out as one little hen and then after approvals, the setup will grow and the coop along with the smell will increase. Hens belong on a farm not in a residential area!”
- “If people want to live in a farm like setting they should move into these areas.”

Property values

- “Urban hens are already being kept in the area, more than the 4 suggested for the program. They are usually quiet and the clucking isn't really a problem. There is one hen who can sometimes be vocal with a low growling cluck but on the whole the noise is reasonable. Seeing what has happened to the yard and loss of green space is sad. I didn't know that their natural behavior would destroy the grass. They are well looked after but I feel there are too many (I think there are 9) for the lot size.”
- “The hens were lovely but the neighbours had negative views about them. They believed it brought down housing values.”



Noise, smell and wildlife attraction

- Animals mentioned: rats, mice, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, minks, hawks, flies/insects, skunks, possums
- “Dirty and noise.”
- “Noise and smell. Animal conditions are always sketchy and more traffic from cash sales.”
- “I have a friend (as above) who experiences noise and smell and also knew someone who sold eggs. I would not want to live close by in either case.” (Q17)
- “A neighbour in a condo townhouse complex had them. The stink was unbearable.”
- “The odour and spread of fecal feces through air.”
- “The nieghbour's yard was dug up and unsightly. Rats/mice attracted to the area. The smell!!!! Horrible.”
- “Attracted lots of wildlife (foxes and coyotes), terrible smell and very noisy.”
- “Negative experience with neighbour keeping hens. Could not enjoy use of my back yard due to odour from hen next door.”
- “After the neighbours started caring for hens in a coop, the neighbourhood started to have a rat problem within 6 months! Children were not allowed to play in their own yard near dusk because the rats would be out. The people adjacent to the coop had the most issues.”
- “1. Makes too much noise. 2. Brings on mices and rodents. 3. Brings odors.”
- “Once my neighbour got hens/pheasants we then had large rats which we didn't have before.”
- “My neighbor had hens and pigeons, it was disgusting! He did kill some, ate them and ate pigeons. The smell was awful and our kitchen doors and windows had to be closed all the time. We could smell the feces and all from out table as we ate our meals. So disgusting! No no no i am not for city people having chickens or any other farm animals in their yards!!!! We have more wildlife here now than at the cottage so we don't need to add more animals at home properties! NO!”
- “If you had asked me if I supported this a few years ago, I would have said yes. But I know of one case where there was a huge rat issue that arose over chickens in a backyard coop, yet they were within the guidelines of the municipality and so the municipality could do nothing about it, and also did nothing about the rats getting into people's houses. It has really reduced the happiness of those living near this house, including the overwhelming smells that can occur and the safety of their small children and pets (it is attracting a lot of rats and these are big rats that do not seem to show fear towards people at all).”
- “My friend's neighbor down the street has kept chickens (in Mississauga!). They let the hens free range on the yard - but they also had a rooster that called at all hours which I don't think is acceptable in the city!! And you know someone will buy roosters accidentally, so there needs to be strong regulations against that. I would be concerned also as a dog owner, having chickens near by, what is the liability here if my neighbor's chickens get loose and my dogs get to it on a walk!? I also think it would attract more coyotes for sure.”
- “The hens stink, I can't use parts of my backyard because it smells like a farm. There are more flies, there are feathers everywhere, as they come through the fence. I'm



concerned about enforcement as they can have more than 4 easily (and do). The chickens escape, some into my backyard (they can fly over a 6ft fence), other times into the street and neighbors are trying to find their owner. If enough got away, you could have a wild chicken population. It attracts coyotes and sometimes they do get eaten by wild animals.”

- “We had hens in our cottage and while I’m very much in favor of organic production and consumption, keeping animals in an tightly designed urban areas will lead to health issues, noise issues and possibly conflict. I always go to farms to buy my eggs but hens don’t belong to city neighborhoods.”
- “My neighbour had 4 hens. I was not informed about it, but my dogs were not able to be in our own backyard because they were trying to jump the fence to catch these Hens. We had to add extra height and under the fence reinforcements to keep my dogs away..the smell, and the nocturnal racket noise of raccoons & foxes getting into the coop was alarming my own dogs at 4 am that we have to go outside to investigate 3 to 4 time’s a week. In many occasions we found chickens walking loose in the front yard, again causing distress to my dogs.”
- “I have a friend whose neighbours do in Toronto and it was a nightmare for my friend. Chickens always got out and into their property doing damage that no one paid them back for. They had a problem with foxes and coyotes who came after the neighbours chickens. The smell impeded their ability to enjoy their backyard. The neighbours kept more chickens than they were allowed to forcing my friend to rat them out all the time.”
- “A neighbour two houses from me had chickens. That is when the rat problem started. I have lived here 40 years and never had a rat problem until chickens were introduced to the street. My neighbour's and myself were infested with rats. We set traps and caught dozens. It has slowly got better since the chickens were removed and we had to stop bird feeders. Rats are full of disease. Coyotes came into our yards and still do.”
- “While I am fine with people keeping hens, the smell and noise affect neighbour's whose property is more than 50ft away. Fleas, flies, disposal of dead fowl, crushed shells not getting cleaned up, and poop washed to neighboring properties are issues. How ecologically sound is it to say the birds cannot be eaten? How would this be enforced?”
- “Negative impact on health.”

Animal welfare

- “She treat them not well, sold eggs and produce more chickens, and sold little chickens in WeChat group.”
- “People's treatment of them is terrible. People get pets all the time that they discard because they realize their care requires a little work. The same will happen with these poor birds. Plus, egg laying hens have been genetically modified to lay more eggs than their poor bodies can handle. The whole idea promotes animal abuse.”
- “In Westmount, Montreal a friend has 5 hens in their yard. It has been a great educational tool for him, his children and friends. They also get daily fresh eggs from their hens. The challenges for them have been predators: a neighbours cat and racoons. So the set up has to be robust enough to keep the animals safe. You also do no want to encourage any mistreatment of the predators. Owners should be aware of winter accommodations as well for the hens.”



HOFFMANNHAYES

healthy food programming,
gardens + community development

Report

City of Mississauga Urban Hens Public Consultation

Prepared by Hoffmann Hayes, August 18, 2021

23 of 24

- “I also worry greatly that hens will not be protected enough from severe cold weather in makeshift backyard pens (because who will spend money on proper insulated housing and heating and no-freeze water supplies for just 4 birds).”
- “Hens occasionally catch disease. Diarrhea. Parasites (coccidia) which can be treated. Alas medicines are expensive. It is hard to find a vet with experience of chickens and such a visit is expensive if needed.”
- “My main concern is the welfare and well-being of these poor hens and chickens. The farming industry exploits them enough, therefore, I don’t think they need to be in residential areas as well. I also don’t believe that it will be regulated properly. People have always done what they want to do without obeying bylaws.”
- “People don’t realize the work and money involved with caring for chickens. People get baby chicks because they are cute, then end up with roosters because it is too hard to identify them at a day old. Also, when they realize that they only lay eggs for 2 years, then what do they do with them.”
- “A hen went in a neighbour’s yard. I worried it would come in mine. I have two dogs.”

Conflict

- “Please don’t approve this program. It will create ...problems between neighbours.”
- “You will never get all your surrounding neighbours to agree. I don’t think we need more controversy and conflict. You want a hen, move to the country!”
- “keeping animals in an tightly designed urban areas will lead to health issues, noise issues and possibly conflict.”

Appendix 4: Quotes to inform a City-wide hen program

The following quotes highlight public expectations, concerns and questions on options and recommendations identified for consideration in the possible development of a City-wide urban hen program:

Allowance based on ward or plot size

- “It would be OK to keep them in the area codes that have a more rural feel to them, but not in the densely populated urban areas where most lots are 100-200 ft deep. it is not fair to the neighbours to endure this.”
- “This only makes sense for absolutely massive properties where you would not be able to see nor hear nor smell them from neighbouring properties.”
- “I don’t believe this kind of program will be suitable for houses that have joined backyards. It might be suitable for larger bigger houses with detached backyards.”
- “I think that houses that back onto... a park or ravine, should be allowed to keep 4 hens for egg production.”



Regulations and monitoring

- Potential cities to look into based on responses: Brampton; Toronto; Scarborough; Hamilton; Richmond Hill; Kingston; Newmarket; Niagara Falls; Edmonton; Surrey; Victoria; Montreal; Kitchener; Barrier; Guelph; Palo Alto; San Francisco; NYC; Chicago
- “I think the stipulation that the enclosure needs to be 3m away from the property line will be challenging and will only allow people with very large yards to own chickens. I think the stipulation that it should be 6m away from property and should answer to standards of cleanliness is a better approach.”
- “Live in a townhouse complex. There are restrictions on allowable animals. If there is a conflict, will the condo act overrule municipal program?”
- “City of Toronto’s Urban Hen Program: minimum 2, because they are social animals, and purchase hens when they are 4 months old, regular cleaning.”
- “I feel 4 hens are too many. 2 or 3 are plenty as chickens lay 1 egg per day. 2 chickens x 7 eggs equal 14 eggs per week. That’s plenty.. or 3 chickens is 21 eggs per week...plenty. I am an expert at keeping hens and know and understand their character and behaviour. I volunteer as a consultant.”
- “I think Mississauga’s proposed strategy is great, and we are on the right track.”
- “Remove the need for licensing”
- “...It should start as a pilot project for a year or two then residents can decide if it should continue or not.”
- “Perhaps the city can explore making the fee as affordable as possible, or waive it in some instances.”
- “I am asking for LESS rules, and regulations with regard to this keeping of urban hens NOT MORE!”
- “Guelph recently updated it’s bylaw from 15 m from other buildings to 1.5 m.”
- “The Province of Alberta requires all owners of poultry (including small urban flocks) to register flocks [in a] provincial database and obtain a Premise Identification (PID) Number. The PID enables the province to keep track of livestock site locations in case of potential disease outbreak.”
- “Can Residents of Mississauga not have a vote? It would lower our property value. If this happens I will say goodbye to Mississauga!!!”
- “Toronto’s limit of 4 hens and No roosters allowed is reasonable.”

Hen care

- “I’m not aware of any other programs in the GTA but have looked into companies like “Rent A Chicken”, who provide hens, feed, coop, instructions and on call care. You can rent the hen for the season and return over the winter. Think it is a wonderful idea and have always hoped we would be allowed to do this in Mississauga.”
- “The parameters of the survey do little to indicate any standard of animal welfare. For example, will perspective owners be trained on raising hens, necessary dimensions of coop, winterization? What about leaving them while on vacation or if they get sick? Are vets in the area willing to treat chickens? I also understand a fee is under consideration. What would this be for? It should also be noted there is a significant rat issue in Mississauga from infrastructure development and the City allows citizens to utilize rat



poison. Have you also considered the potential of unintended contamination? There are a number of variables which must be fully scrutinized.”

- “I’m not opposed to this but many people do not know what they are getting into. I am concerned about diseases with hens. People need mandatory education and periodic vet check for this program to work. My uncle is also a vet who specializes in chickens and is an expert in the field. This is something that needs to be done correctly....”
- “I hear some places allow for renting of the chickens so that they are returned to a place of safety in winter.”
- ““We are a sanctuary for chickens located outside of city limits. We receive calls on a daily basis. Please give us a call at 226-791-0757 because the list of concerns is vast. I could write 1000 word essays every single day about a new experience we’ve had. I’m overwhelmed just trying to think where to even begin. The person threatening to feed a live hen to a dog, or the one who only went to check on the hens once a week, leaving them without food, water, or protection from predation for days at a time on a weekly basis [...]”
- “Would you sell Prefab kits for winterized chicken coops? Would you have an inspector come periodically to inspect the hygiene and care standards and size of the living/roaming space for the chickens?”
- “Yes, but from friends in a more rural part of the country (PEI). They had a much larger lot than I am currently on for their hens. They also had support from local farmers when they built their coop, and received their hens through a program that loaned urban hens - this really helped with both training them in care and protecting the wellbeing of the animals.
- “I didn’t have urban hens, but grew up with hens and ducks and all other kinds of birds. They need proper space, and need their cages cleaned regularly to make sure no smell is experienced.
- “Only heard positives. Like any pet/animal owner, if the animals are cared for properly, there shouldn’t be a problem that arises. The city can put in place checks to ensure that people and animals are at ease.”

Communal henkeeping

- “Could apartments apply to have a communal hen pen on the grounds?”
- “The houses in the city are too close together, I can see many not being ok with the program. Maybe like community farming, something could be arranged.”
- “Maybe public lots could be used for this purpose as it would be easier for the city to inspect and keep in check. I just find citizens barely do a good job taking care of and registering their pets I can see the backyard hen program causing many problems for neighbours as well as the well being of hens.”
- “Offering eggs to food-banks. Allowing hens on church property and school property. Many people have backyards that do not meet the requirements, but they could be capable of raising chickens. Perhaps a similar program to community gardens?”
- “A community coop in Ron Searle park (similar to my community garden at small arms) numerous residents could co-own and tend the coop and share the eggs in our community and with the Mississauga food bank.”



Permission from neighbours

- “I don’t think you should need permission from your neighbours to keep hens. Currently if you want to buy a cat or dog who live outside you don’t need permission of your neighbours. The same rule should apply to hens.”
- “What if you go to the expense of setting up a coop and a neighbour changes their mind or a new neighbour objects? I think hens should either be allowed or not allowed based on a set of yard/coop requirements. It shouldn’t be up to your neighbours. I have neighbours with dogs that bark, wind chimes, polka music all day by the pool. I get no say in what they do/put in their yard.”
- “I hope that it will be 'notification' to neighbors not permission, e.g. edmonton: Prior to submitting an application, every hen keeping applicant must notify their neighbours.”
- “I have researched other Urban Hen programs in Ontario and Western Canada. I find that the requirement to have permission from neighbours in the Mississauga program is not required in all municipalities. If a resident is following all the guidelines and registration of the program to the satisfaction of the City and health authorities, neighbours' approval should not be a factor in obtaining a licence.”
- “What is the point if you have to have your neighbours permission. Do they often need yours when they are renovating, tearing down, or breaking other bylaws, the answer is NO. What the emphasis should be on if you are serious about urban farming is the welfare, licensing and upkeep of the animals. Not the permission of others whom do not own the land nor pay the property tax, that a proper coop may be placed upon.”
- Furthermore, requiring consent from neighbours could lead to a lot licences not getting approved. Especially if said neighbours are not well informed about actually having hens, regarding noise levels, smells, etc. - and then they oppose their neighbour for wanting to acquire them. Perceived issues relating to having hens can all be managed, but there must be an effort to educate and inform neighbours prior, so it doesn't lead to discord or misunderstandings. I still don't think it's reasonable that the fate of a person's plans to get hens is in the hands of their neighbours.”