

Deer Management Project

Engagement #1 Summary from June 15 – July 18, 2023

Department of Parks and Recreation
October 2023

Who Participated?

2,625 Participants

2,524



ONLINE FEEDBACK FORM

**2,524 Online
Feedback Form Responses**

*Through these responses, we
received 6,028 comments*

75



Community Forum

75 attendees

*Input received from all
attendees through
multiple interactive
engagement activities*

26

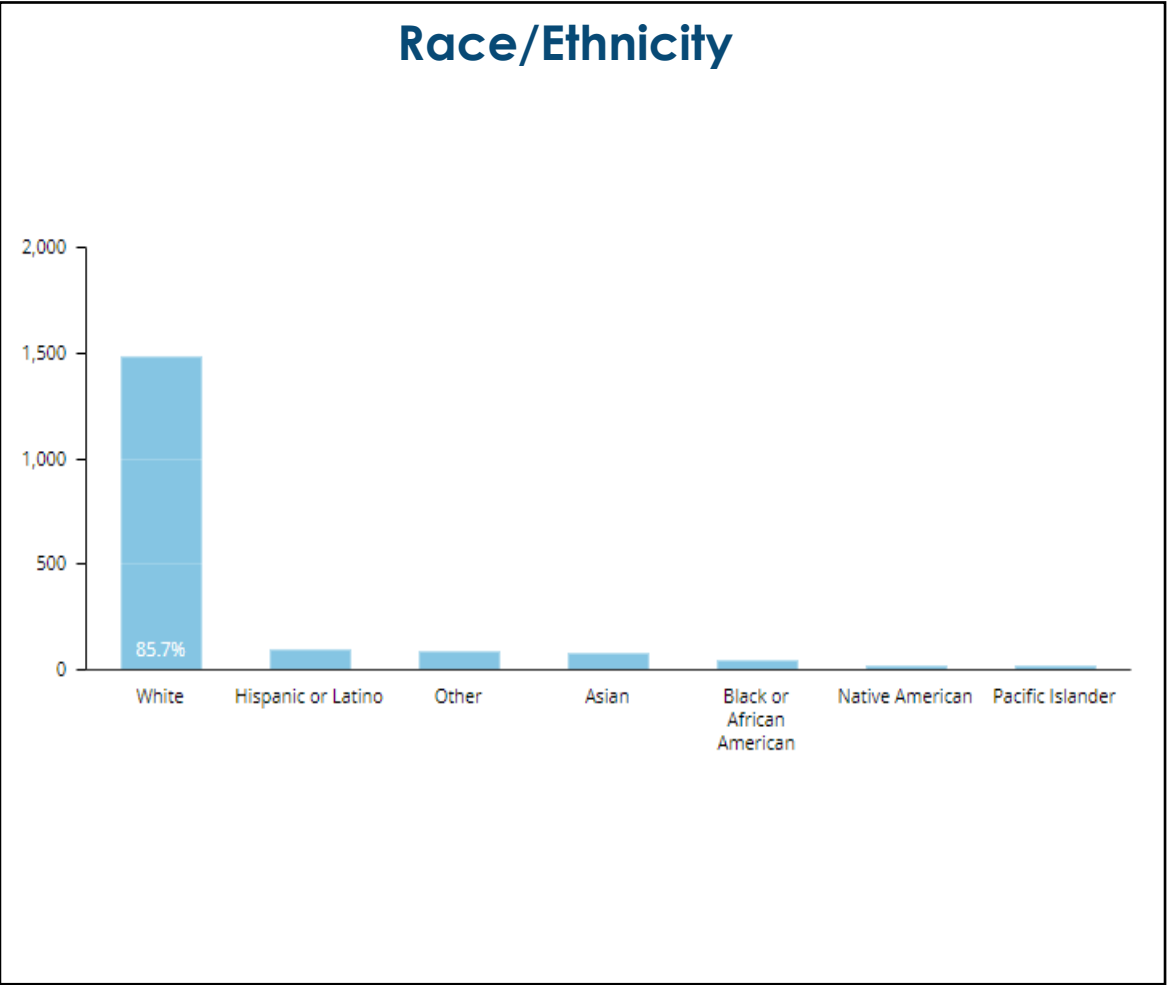
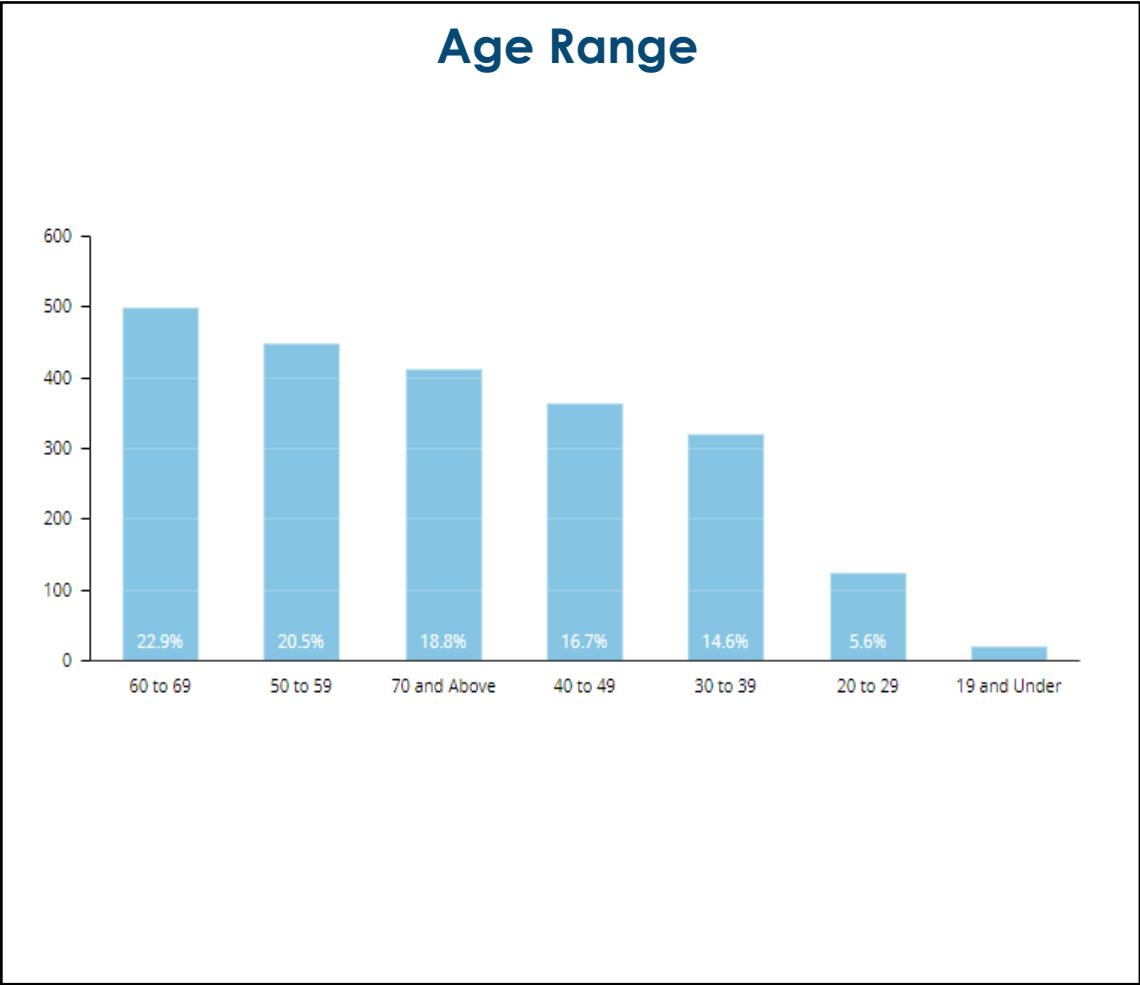


Deep Dive Conversations

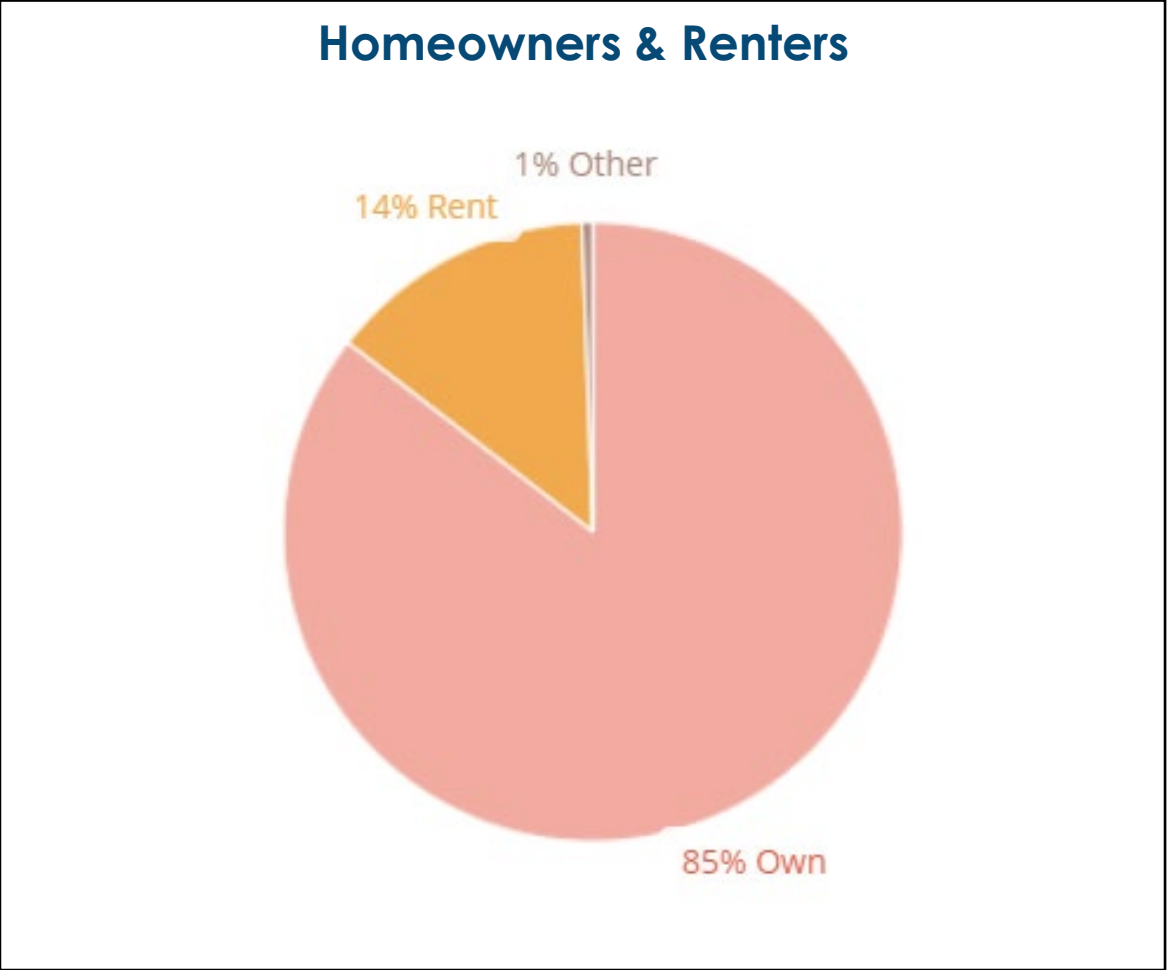
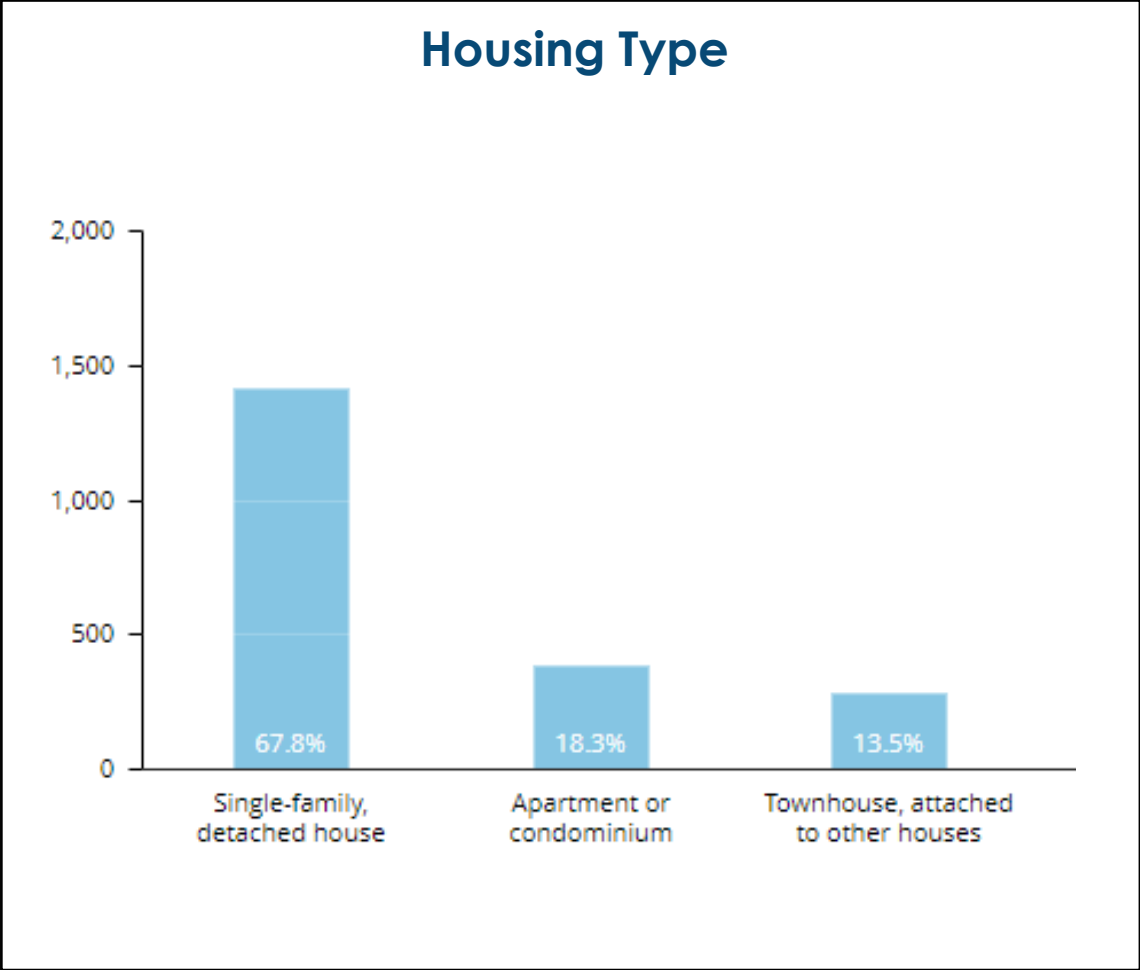
26 attendees

*Two separate sessions were
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stakeholders on focused
topics related to the project.*

Who Participated: Online



Who Participated: Online



Who Participated: Online

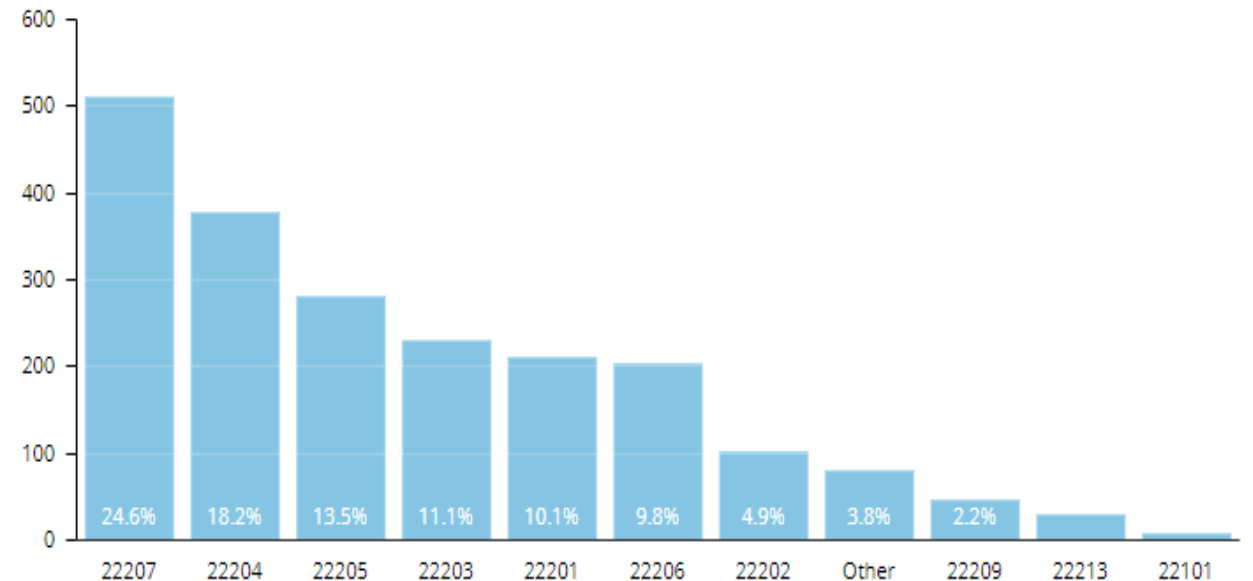
Neighborhoods

In total, the project team heard from respondents located in **all 62** of Arlington's civic associations.

Top Neighborhood Responses

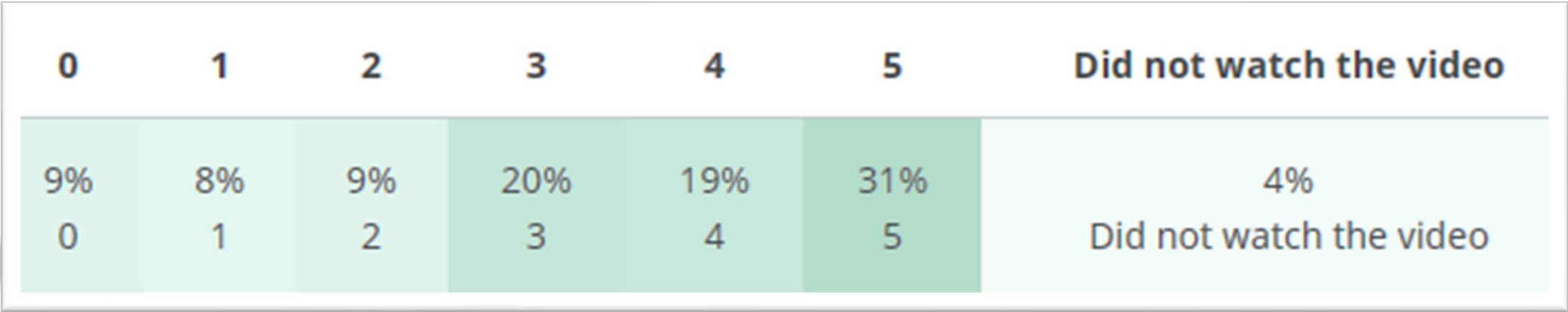
- Arlington Forest (5% - 107 participants)
- Bluemont (5% - 104 participants)
- Arlington East Falls Church (5% - 99 participants)
- Fairlington (4% - 91 participants)
- Shirlington (4% - 91 participants)
- Ballston-Virginia Square (4% - 87 participants)
- Donaldson Run (4% - 85 participants)

Zip Code



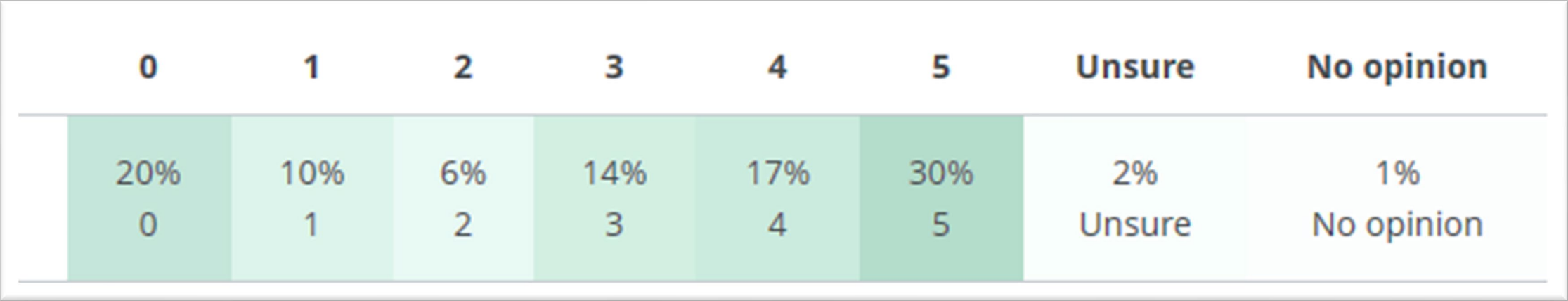
On a scale of 0 to 5, how would you describe your level of **awareness** regarding the impact of overbrowsing on deer health and Arlington's ecosystem **prior to watching the project video?**
(0 being no awareness at all and 5 being very aware)

2,095 Respondents



On a scale of 0 to 5, how would you describe your level of **concern** regarding the impact of overbrowsing on deer health and Arlington's ecosystem?
(0 being no concern at all and 5 being very concerned)

2,043 Respondents



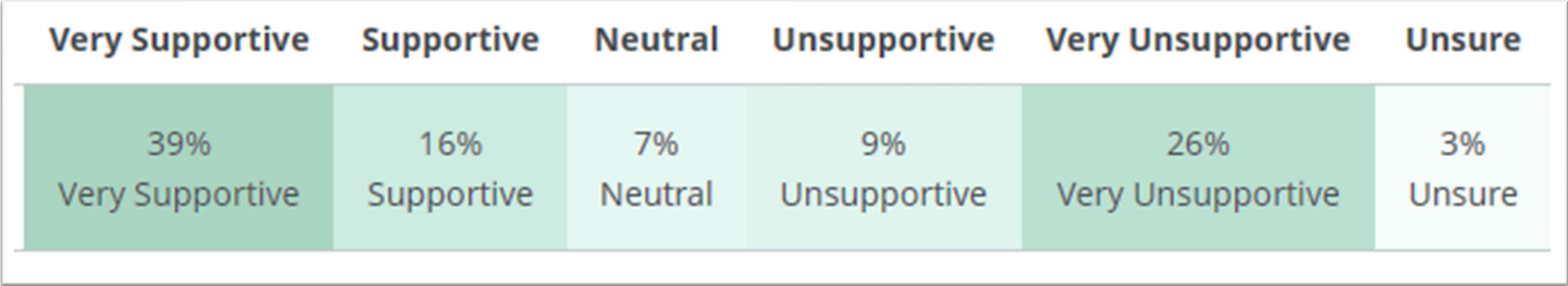
What is your level of support regarding the recommendation for Arlington to develop a deer management implementation strategy for Arlington County Parks?

2,367 Respondents

Professional Sharpshooting (Lethal)	30% Very Supportive	13% Supportive	4% Neutral	7% Unsupportive	44% Very Unsupportive	1% Unsure
Surgical Sterilization (Non-lethal)	32% Very Supportive	31% Supportive	11% Neutral	9% Unsupportive	15% Very Unsupportive	2% Unsure
Public Archery Hunting Where Permissible (Lethal)	25% Very Supportive	9% Supportive	6% Neutral	9% Unsupportive	51% Very Unsupportive	1% Unsure
Fencing Entire Parks (Non-lethal)	19% Very Supportive	12% Supportive	12% Neutral	20% Unsupportive	36% Very Unsupportive	2% Unsure

What is your **level of support** regarding the recommendation for Arlington to develop a **deer management implementation strategy** for Arlington County Parks?

2,018 Respondents



Professional Sharpshooting Comment Summary

Feedback in support of professional sharpshooting	Feedback in opposition of professional sharpshooting	Additional Considerations in Comments
Respondents highlighted the benefits of sharpshooting deer as a fast, efficient, and humane management strategy when executed by properly vetted professional sharpshooters. They noted its cost-effectiveness and the added value of meat donation. The practice was recognized for its role in controlling zoonotic diseases like ticks and Lyme disease, reducing deer-vehicle collisions, and mitigating deer damage to yards, gardens, and natural areas. Overall, these respondents saw sharpshooting as a viable option backed by regional precedent, serving both ecological and community needs.	Respondents voiced concerns regarding sharpshooting deer, citing it as inhumane and contrary to Arlington's values. Safety issues, especially in urban settings, and the potential of the meat containing diseases were prominent worries. Many were skeptical of its efficacy, with doubts about addressing the perceived overpopulation problem, and concerns about rebound reproduction. The method was seen as unsuitable for urban areas due to noise from firearms and the discomfort of witnessing dead or injured deer. Additionally, the approach was viewed as a costly, short-term solution. Respondents favored alternatives like archery, public hunting, or non-lethal methods, advocating for sharpshooting only as a last resort.	Respondents emphasized the need for proper vetting of sharpshooters and recommended that culling activities remain discreet, ideally outside park hours, to preserve public sentiments. There was a strong sentiment recognizing deer's innocence, their intrinsic beauty, and the joy they bring to observers. The feedback leaned towards a focus on forest restoration and addressing habitat degradation. Many expressed the idea that managing human activities is paramount, as they play a central role in the issue. There was a call for more comprehensive data and transparent communication about the decision-making process. Lastly, a hybrid approach, incorporating various methods, was suggested to address the complexities of the situation. A full list of all comments are provided here

Surgical Sterilization Comment Summary

Feedback in support of surgical sterilization	Feedback in opposition of surgical sterilization	Additional Considerations in Comments
Supportive comments towards surgical sterilization underscore it as a well-established safety protocol and a leaning towards non-lethal control methods. They note this approach, supported by regional precedents, benefits from methodical planning. Many respondents applaud the humane treatment of deer through this strategy, emphasizing its efficacy in deer management. From a political standpoint, it was noted by these comments that this strategy is viewed favorably, with public safety often highlighted. There were suggestions to integrate this strategy with other methods, suggesting a hybrid approach.	Concerns raised by respondents center around potential delays in affecting deer populations and the experimental status of this proposed strategy. Financial aspects, particularly the program’s perceived cost and scalability, elicited a lack of support. Ethical reservations were noted, with some doubting the strategy's long-term effectiveness in deer management. Comments note apprehension about potential complications stemming from surgical sterilization. Additionally, the feasibility of executing humane treatments was noted as presenting logistical challenges.	Comments asked that decisions be hinged on expert insight. The public asked for additional data to form informed viewpoints. Contemplation of potential effects on private properties is crucial. Comments noted that any adopted strategy should resonate with Arlington's intrinsic values. A consideration for the duration until tangible outcomes are evident was noted as essential. Respondents noted that the sustainability of the solutions proposed hold weight. Addressing the logistics and financial facets is imperative, and fostering innovative techniques in deer management remains a recommendation from respondents. A full list of all comments are provided here

Public Archery Where Permissible Comment Summary

Feedback in support of public archery	Feedback in opposition of public archery	Additional Considerations in Comments:
These comments note that this approach is a less intensive intervention when juxtaposed with other strategies. Notably, many respondents believe that this approach is inherently safer than the use of firearms. Furthermore, its effectiveness is underpinned by regional precedents, with commenters pointing to its efficacy. The strategy was lauded by respondents for its perceived cost-effectiveness.	These comments question the safety of this approach, with some noting that firearms might be a more effective solution. The humane treatment of deer under archery has also come under question in these comments. Some feel this strategy doesn't align with the broader community values of Arlingtonians. A preference is noted in these comments for non-lethal, humane alternatives. Comments here lean towards the adoption of a data-centric, humane strategy for deer management.	Respondents here note the urgency for adept deer management, with a clear emphasis on ecological balance. While there exists opposition, chiefly stemming from the perceived inhumane nature of archery, there's a call for a holistic and compassionate approach. Key suggestions include minimizing any potential distress to the deer and seriously considering sterilization as an alternative. At the heart of these discussions is an emphasis on the vital role of community engagement, underscored by the need for transparent and exhaustive information dissemination.

[A full list of all comments are provided here](#)

Fencing Entire Parks Comment Summary

Feedback in support of fencing entire parks	Feedback in opposition of fencing entire parks	Additional Considerations in Comments
Respondents emphasized the advantages of a non-lethal approach, valuing the well-being of both deer and residents. They expressed a preference for strategic, targeted fencing over encompassing the entire park. The method was acknowledged for its potential efficacy when applied with discretion. Respondents viewed selective fencing as a practical solution that addresses both environmental and societal concerns.	Respondents voiced concerns regarding the cost-effectiveness of fencing entire parks. The practicality of the approach was questioned, given the deer's natural ability to leap over barriers. There were apprehensions about unintentionally driving deer into residential zones, thereby escalating risks. Aesthetic reservations about the impact on park spaces were evident, coupled with a pronounced inclination to maintain the parks' open and innate essence. Respondents viewed the method as inadequate in holistically tackling the prevailing challenge of deer overpopulation.	Respondents underscored the significance of delving into alternative solutions, such as sterilization procedures and introducing deer-resistant vegetation. There were pronounced concerns regarding the potential adverse effects on surrounding wildlife and the broader ecosystem. There were calls for a meticulous cost-benefit evaluation, highlighting the essential nature of ensuring uninterrupted public access to parks. There were questions raised about the implications of fencing, particularly its role in possibly relocating deer to residential vicinities, leading to possible disputes. There were call for the judicious utilization of taxpayer monies and the possible environmental repercussions.

[A full list of all comments are provided here](#)



75 attendees

*Input received from all attendees
through multiple interactive
engagement activities*

Community Forum: July 2023

Lubber Run Community Center

Project Feedback



Community Forum Question #1

Having reviewed the options available, which ones are you most supportive of and why?

All comments from this question have been bucketed into 5 themes with summaries below them.

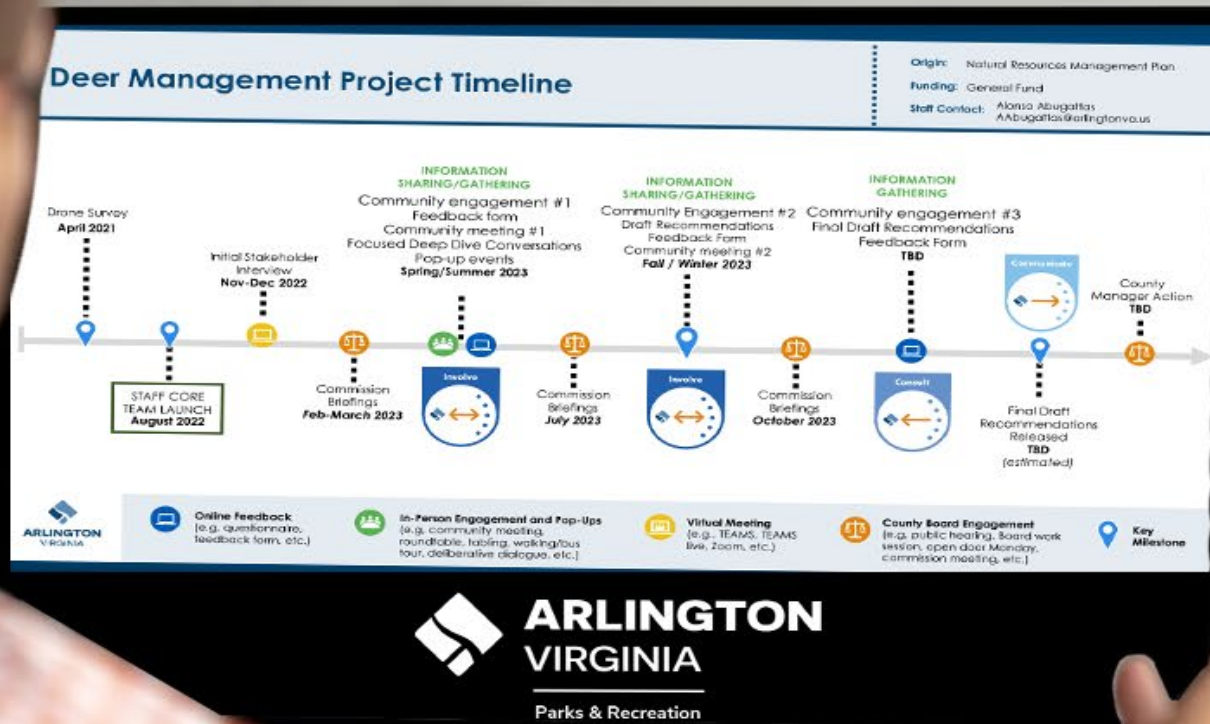
Theme	Lack of Consensus on Deer Management Methods	Preferences for Sharpshooting, Sterilization, and Hybrid Approaches:	Opposition to Lethal Methods and Human Impact	Request for Science and Evidence-Based Analysis	Need for Broader Perspective and Lesser Harmful Approaches
Summary	There is a general agreement about the necessity for deer management, yet consensus eludes on the best approach. The options most discussed were sharpshooting, sterilization, archery, and hybrid methods.	Some members advocate for sharpshooting, citing its perceived effectiveness and humane nature. Others are more inclined towards sterilization or a combination of multiple methods in a hybrid approach. Non-surgical sterilization had interest; however, concerns arise regarding costs and the use of darts and tranquilizers.	A number of members express a strong opposition to lethal methods, advocating for non-lethal alternatives and pointing out that humans could be seen as the invasive species causing the problem.	There is a demand for a scientific and evidence-based evaluation of the impact of deer and the proposed management strategies. Some attendees express the desire for more tangible evidence supporting the effectiveness of the current proposals.	Certain attendees call for a wider lens on the issue, promoting non-lethal methods and focusing on resolving the problem in the least harmful way. They emphasize the importance of considering the broader environmental and ecosystem impacts.

Community Forum Question #2

Which strategies are you most concerned about and why?
Are there any ideas that you think are missing?

All comments from this question have been bucketed into 5 themes with summaries below them.

Theme	Concerns about Fencing and Sterilization	Need for Ongoing Monitoring	Demand for Immediate Action	Ethical Concerns with Archery	Park-by-Park Approach and Safety Concerns
Summary	The community voiced concerns about the effectiveness of fencing and sterilization. Fencing may pose risks to children, other wildlife, and may not be a viable solution for larger areas. Sterilization might not be effective if implemented only on female deer, and not sterilizing bucks could be seen unequal – but either is costly.	The fluctuating nature of deer populations necessitates regular monitoring and a more metrics-focused approach. The community suggested the current methods might not adequately quantify the entire deer population.	There is a desire for swift action in some parts of Arlington. Some community members believe that more studies without action will only prolong the problem.	There are ethical concerns about using archery for population control due to potential suffering and inhumanity. Some people are strongly against any killing methods.	The community expressed a preference for park-specific solutions, given the unique circumstances of each park. Additionally, residents living near the deer habitats voiced concerns about their personal safety.



2 Deep Dive Conversations

27 attendees

Two separate sessions were held to garner input from key stakeholders on focused topics related to the project.

Representatives from the following organizations participated:

Animal Welfare League of Arlington
 Arlington Outdoor Lab
 Arlington Regional Master Naturalists
 Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
 Barcroft School & Civic League
 Bluemont Civic Association
 Civic Federation
 Donaldson Run Civic Association
 Earth Sangha
 Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation
 Friends of Gulf Branch Nature Center
 Glencarlyn Civic Association
 Humane Society
 Northern Virginia Bird Club
 NOVA Parks
 Plant NOVA Natives
 Tree Stewards
 Virginia Cooperative Extension

Deep Dive Question #1

Were there any findings from either the browse report or explainer video that most interested you?

All responses from this question have been condensed into 4 themes with summaries below them.

Theme	Education is Crucial for Residents in Highly Populated Areas	Broadening the Reach of the Browse Report and Explainer Video	Urgent Issues Not Addressed in the Browse Report	Non-Lead Ammunition and Lead Fragments in Harvested Meat
Summary	There is a pressing need for education among residents, particularly those living in multi-family units, to raise awareness about the impact of deer.	The browse report and explainer video should be disseminated to a wider audience. Additionally, including the county's interpretations on biophilia, climate change, and the role of the private sector is important vis-a-vis the report.	The browse report fails to cover critical concerns such as chronic wasting disease, deer meat consumption, cost, and the presence of lead/heavy metal contamination in the meat.	Non-lead ammunition has shown promise, but concerns remain about lead fragments found in meat.

Deep Dive Question #2

Having reviewed the deer management options that are most suitable for Arlington, which ones are you most supportive of and why?

All responses from this question have been condensed into 5 themes with summaries below them.

Theme	The Importance of Taking Action	Support for Controlled Culling	Mixed Opinions on Fencing and Repellants	Experience from Fairfax County and Urgency in Conservation	Humane Approaches and Hybrid Solutions
Summary	Comments emphasize that doing nothing and allowing deer-related problems to persist, such as car collisions, is not an acceptable approach, with no specific preference among the options.	Some express support for controlled culling, especially in areas with significantly high deer populations, citing clear evidence of browse threats to forest health, and view culling as a more humane alternative to deer suffering from accidents or starvation.	Mixed opinions on the effectiveness of fencing and repellants were articulated, with some supporting fencing but highlighting maintenance challenges, while others oppose repellants due to frequent washing off and interference with insect herbivory.	Mention was made of the positive experience with deer control in Fairfax County, and the urgency of conserving green spaces for all species, not just deer, was stressed.	Comments stress the need for humane practices in deer management and express openness to hybrid approaches, combining various methods, and considering the potential benefits of utilizing deer meat to address hunger.

Deep Dive Question #3

Which of the management options are you most concerned about and why?
Are there any ideas that you believe are missing?

All responses from this question have been condensed into 5 themes with summaries below them.

Theme	Concerns About Surgical Sterilization	Implications of Fencing	Need for Education and Information Dissemination	Unaddressed Issues and Involvement of Local Groups	Role of Deer in Spreading Invasive Plants
Summary	Sterilization could render deer meat unusable, posing donation and use issues, especially with the risk of Chronic Wasting Disease.	Fencing could hinder access to sensitive ecological sites for monitors and volunteers, limiting mitigation of invasive species.	Enhancing education might reduce community anxiety. Partnerships with the Civic Association and Civic Federation could support this effort.	Changes in wildlife movement and deer diseases need addressing in the report. Inclusion of groups like the Nova Wildlife Rescue League and others in discussions is requested.	The role of deer in spreading invasive plants needs addressing in public outreach and education efforts.