

# FYI



**FRONT YARD INITIATIVE**



## ***FYI Homeowner Survey Report***

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2023 Residential Survey Results

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# Executive Summary

Increasingly erratic weather patterns require New Orleanians to plan for periods of drought as well as inundation. From its inception in 2015, the Front Yard Initiative was designed to create spaces in our urban landscape for our rainfall to spread out and soak in rather than overwhelm our pumping system. However, current drought conditions remind us that urban heat island effect is another effect of over-paving that must be addressed for New Orleans to thrive.

The Front Yard Initiative (FYI) incentivizes homeowners to remove paving and replace it with residential Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) as a complement to stormwater management mandates for large commercial and other redevelopments required by the City.

We have provided financial assistance (a taxable incentive) to 158 property owners, and technical assistance to thousands more through the distribution of educational materials, workshops, and presentations to catalyze the use of GSI on residential properties in New Orleans. To date, FYI has provided a total of \$133,672 in financial incentives ranging in amounts from \$105 to \$1250 each, based on square feet of paving removed, and an additional \$143,334.37 in direct funding to contractors for vulnerable homeowners, resulting in the removal of over 91,700 square feet of paving resulting in nearly 4 million gallons annually being diverted from our pumping systems. These projects have provided \$1,093,417 in economic stimulus to the green sector for goods and services procured. Most projects are a combination of sweat equity and contract labor, keeping average project costs between \$5000 and \$6000 (although project costs range from \$120 to \$35,244).

This translates into an investment of between \$5 and \$6 dollars per gallon of storage capacity created. Significantly, this average is the same as it was when we conducted our first survey in 2020, despite a significant increase in all costs since the Covid-19 pandemic. A closer analysis of the numbers showed us that projects undertaken in 2021 were far smaller than our average project across the life of the program, offsetting the much higher total project costs we would see in 2022.

Philanthropic funding sources for the program have included the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Wisner Fund, the Southeastern Sustainable Communities Fund, and other local and national

## Methodology

Surveys (see Appendix A) were emailed in May to 122 participants, of whom 102 responded, an 84% response rate. Because we were interested in seeing how FYI projects do over time, we surveyed only those with established GSI, whose projects had been completed since December 2022 or before. We only collect detailed data on those projects that receive financial incentives as part of FYI; there are countless property owners who install GSI and receive technical assistance from the UC (e.g. call our technical advisor with questions, attend our workshops, use our Green Sector Directory to find contractors and vendors, or our Homeowner Toolkit to design their project). Those projects are not included here.

# Key Findings

These findings show our success in addressing issues identified in the 2020 survey, as well as where there is still room to grow and improve. For example,

- More is desired from us in terms of advocacy for green infrastructure across the city, as well for providing opportunities for continuing education. Educational opportunities can take many forms, so the best methods to achieve this goal require more research and community input, and trying a wide array of programs. Data shows that participants replace native plants with plants that they either know to be non-native, or whose native status they don't know. Learning opportunities on this topic are necessary, and would be welcome.
- The percentage of participants who identify as Black or African American increased by 75% since 2020, showing the success of the FYI Direct program and active efforts to fund the projects of people of color. It also shows that enormous, unfulfilled demand for green infrastructure is not income specific—in other words, it doesn't exist simply amongst people who can afford some new landscaping for their home. Residents across the racial and socio-economic spectrum are actively seeking solutions to flooding.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents have seen dramatic improvement in localized flooding on their properties, and those improvements increase over time as the plants are established and soil conditions improve. However, area flooding remains a problem.
- Respondents are clear that participation helped them understand the green sector's importance for New Orleans's future and increased water literacy.
- Installations created through FYI have staying power and become more effective over time. We are creating lasting change on people's properties that also leads to changes in lifestyle. Respondents report spending more time outside and seeing more pollinators and wildlife on their properties as the biggest benefits of GSI.
- The FYI sign is helpful for years for sparking conversations with passers-by and maintaining participants' interest in talking about their installations and the FYI program and process.
- As the program is now six years old, there is a notable handful of participants who have moved away from the property they installed green infrastructure on. They are in diverse situations: Some have sold old properties, some are now renting out homes they previously lived in, and one has divorced a spouse who still lives in their FYI house. In the case of participants who sold their home, they often have no idea as to whether their water-smart installation was maintained by the new homeowner. This situation potentially undermines the investment made in that home.

# Recommendations

These recommendations are based on data collected both by tabulating answers to quantitative questions, and by analyzing the open-ended comments from respondents.

- Develop programs, events, and/or literature for more education, especially around native plants, but in all topics that pertain to GSI installation and maintenance. This may include literature to hand to neighbors of participants to prepare them for the change on their block, a class series on topics of interest to our participants, web content, etc.
- Redouble efforts to fund the projects of people of color and those in low- to middle-income households. While data shows an optimistic increase in the number of participants of color, it is nowhere close to closing the gap in equity and access to this critical resource.
- Take advantage of opportunities to advocate for the promotion, funding, and installation of GSI on a city-wide and regional level.
- Continue outreach to realtors and others who may help maintain the integrity of GSI should a homeowner sell their home after installation. Develop other ideas to help educate the general public, not simply those who are currently engaged in the installation of GSI on their property.
- Continue to consider the amount of funding offered for each project. With the rise in prices of both labor and materials, green infrastructure has become out of reach to all except those with lots of disposable income. While participants cite that the reimbursement is a crucial first foot in the door for them, even if it covered very little of the cost, we know from information gathered at intake that these households could have afforded it anyway. Many would-be participants report being priced out of the program. As prices continue to rise and our reimbursement stays the same, there is concern that this will be the case for more and more people.
- More deliberately and explicitly encourage our participants to recommend and promote their contractors, and work with contractors to learn about what the most effective ways to do that are. Promoting the green sector in general, and supporting individual businesses within the green sector, is a key part of our work. Without them, there is no new green infrastructure, and most firms are too small to weather significant droughts (both literal and figurative).

## About the Urban Conservancy

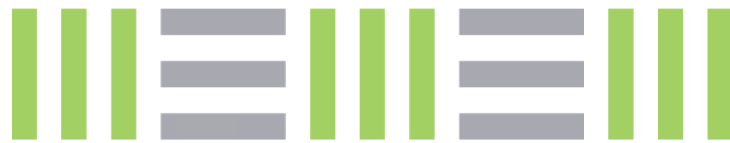
The Urban Conservancy is a non-profit organization leading and collaborating to strengthen New Orleans' urban environment and local economy through equitable practices, policies and programs. We engage in hands-on programming to alleviate neighborhood flooding and create green sector job opportunities through our Front Yard Initiative.

Learn more at [urbanconservancy.org/fyi](https://urbanconservancy.org/fyi)

# ***FYI Homeowner Survey Report***

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# **FYI**



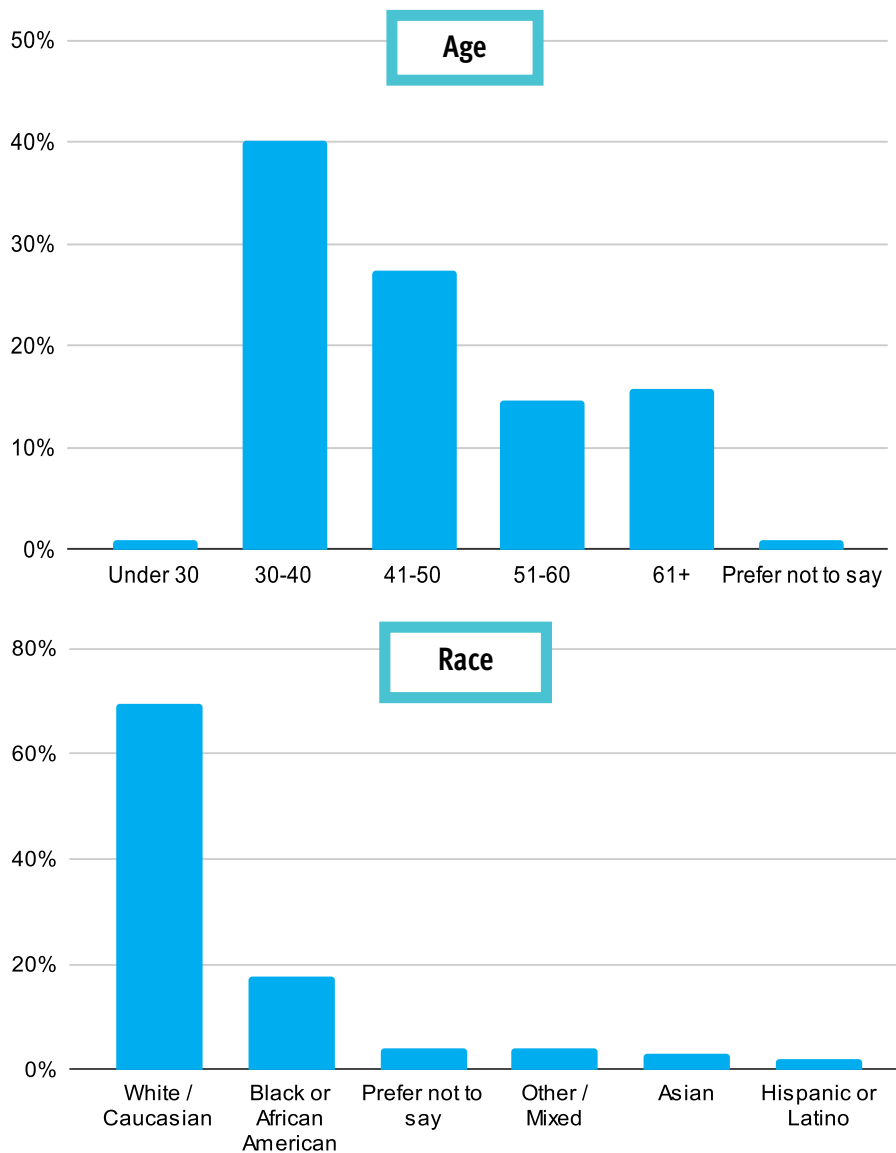
**FRONT YARD INITIATIVE**

**2023  
Results**

# Demographics

Compared with our program participant age and racial demographics in 2020, we had a wider range of both ages and racial identity. FYI had its first under-30 participant and a larger portion of older participants than before. In 2020, almost 80% of our participants were in the 30-50 range. Now, that figure is closer to 68%. In terms of race, 18% of respondents this year identify as Black or African American, compared to 10% in 2020. While this is still an enormous racial gap, and we have much further to go, it shows that we are making some small progress in terms of serving homeowners of color.

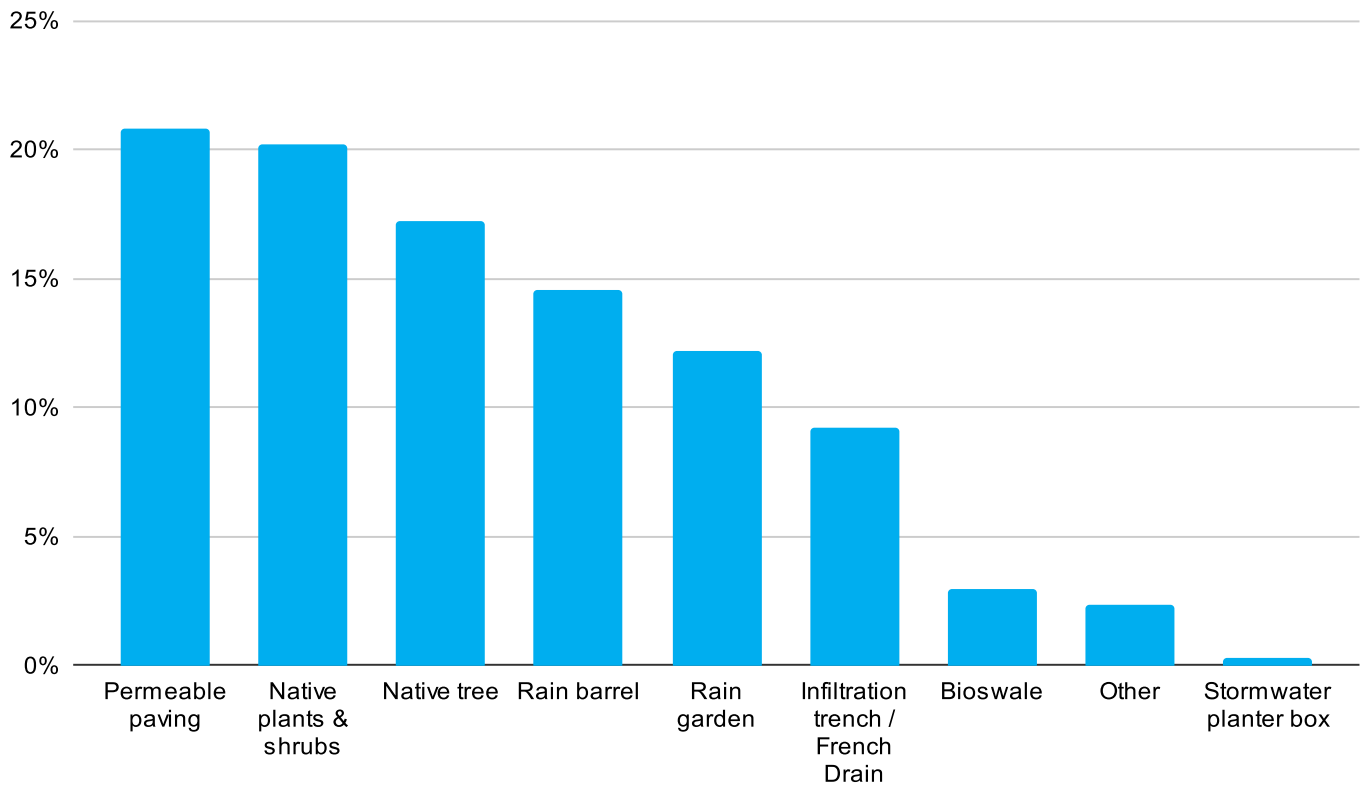
Both changes are in part due to our Direct Install program, where we cover the cost of a few small installations a year for homeowners who are mostly older, People of Color with low or fixed incomes, who have been in their homes for many years. Improvements in these metrics shows the importance of funding projects for those who can't afford it.



# Green Infrastructure

This chart shows the total number of green infrastructure improvements installed on all FYI properties, with permeable paving, native plants (including trees) and rain barrels being the most common installations. Because most homeowners install more than one type of intervention, the total number exceeds the number of survey respondents.

Which green infrastructure forms are installed at your property? Check all that apply.



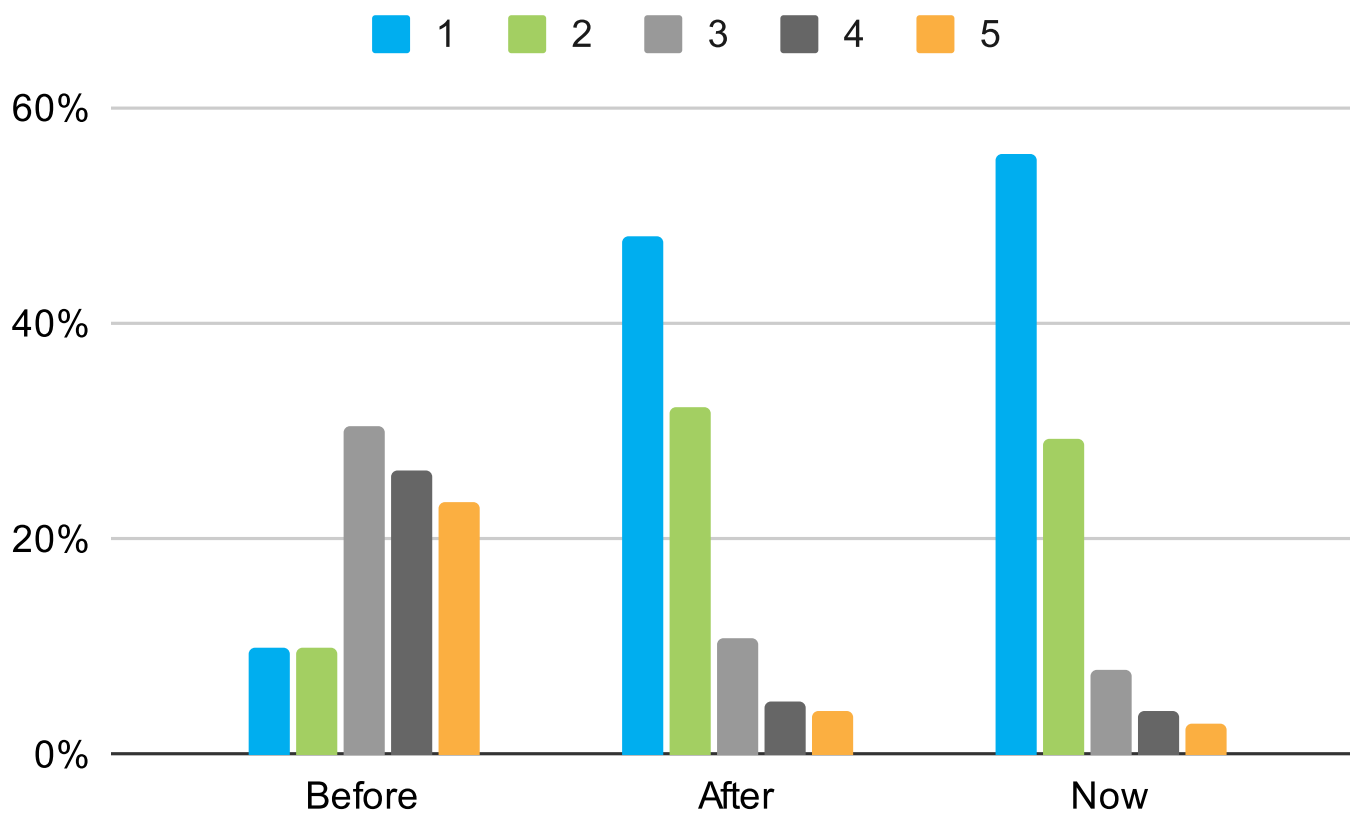


# Flooding Severity

Participants were asked to rate their property’s flooding and drainage issues at three different points in time on a scale of 1 (mild) to 5 (severe). We asked them to compare flooding and drainage before they started their project; immediately after they completed their project; and “now,” which could be anywhere from 6 months to 8 years after completion of their project depending on when they participated in FYI.

Because drainage-enhancing, flood-reducing effects of green infrastructure measures become stronger over time, especially when native plants and rain gardens are involved, for many, results continue to improve years after the project was installed.

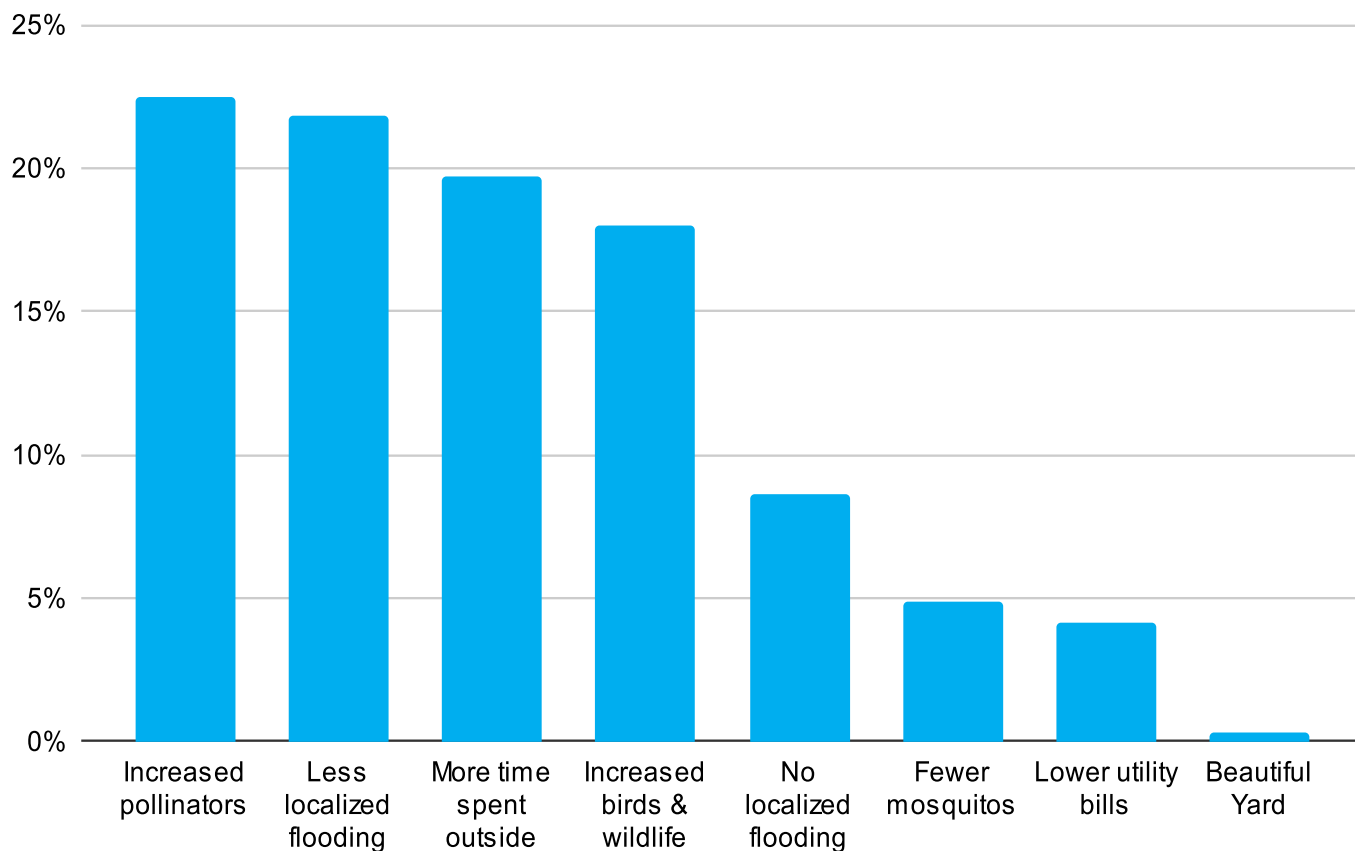
- Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property before completing FYI.
- Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property after completing FYI.
- Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property currently.



# Project Benefits

Respondents were offered a check-box menu listing multiple potential benefits of installing green infrastructure, and asked to check all that their project had brought them. Most people reported at least two benefits. Some respondents reported the presence of positive effects like increased pollinators, while others noted the removal of negative effects, such as reduced localized flooding. It is notable to us that increased local pollinators was the most popular benefit, with more time spent outside a close third.

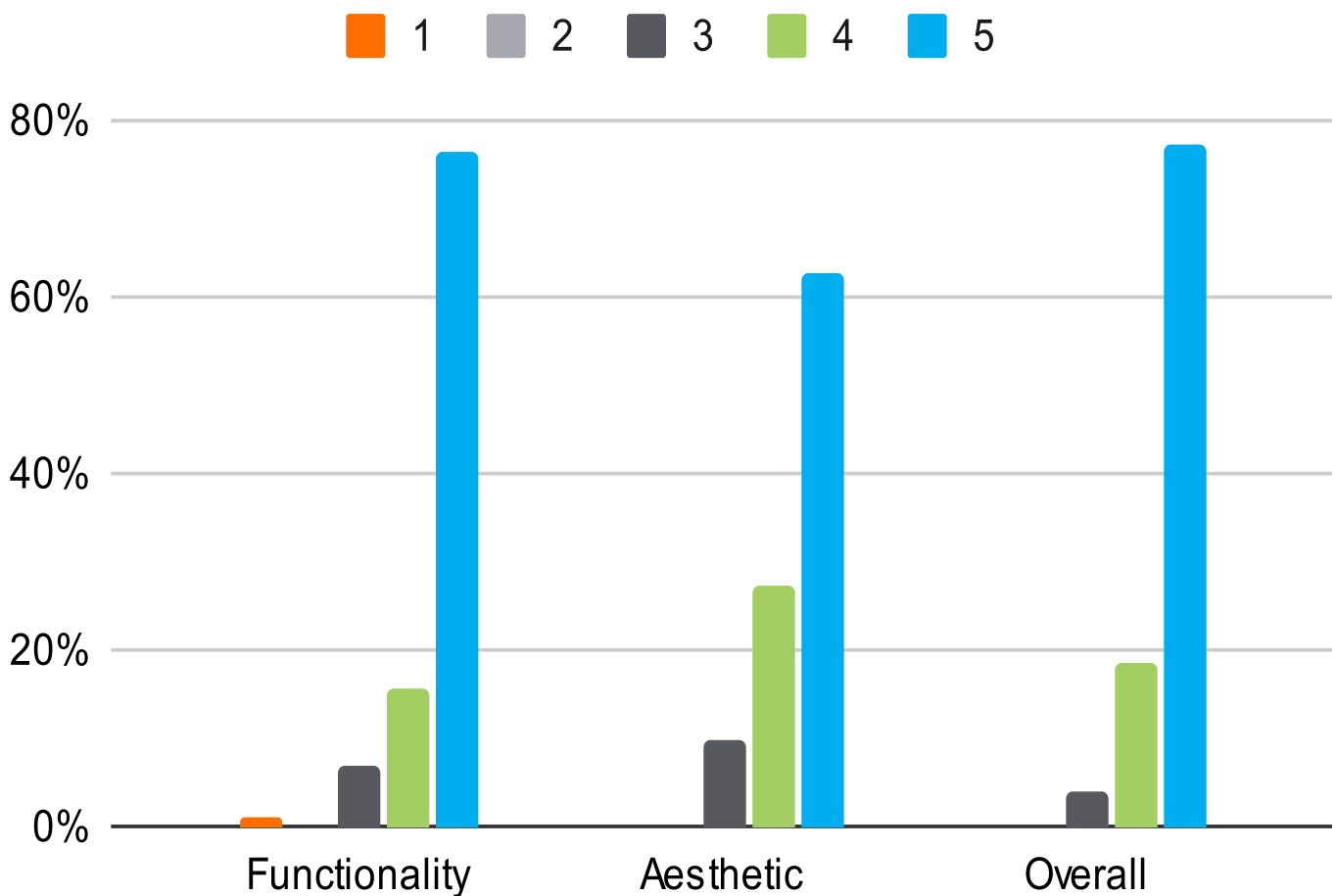
**Which of the following benefits have you seen as a result of your FYI project?**



# Project Ratings

Respondents were largely very satisfied with their FYI projects both functionally and aesthetically. 96% of participants rated their project a 4 out of 5 or better overall.

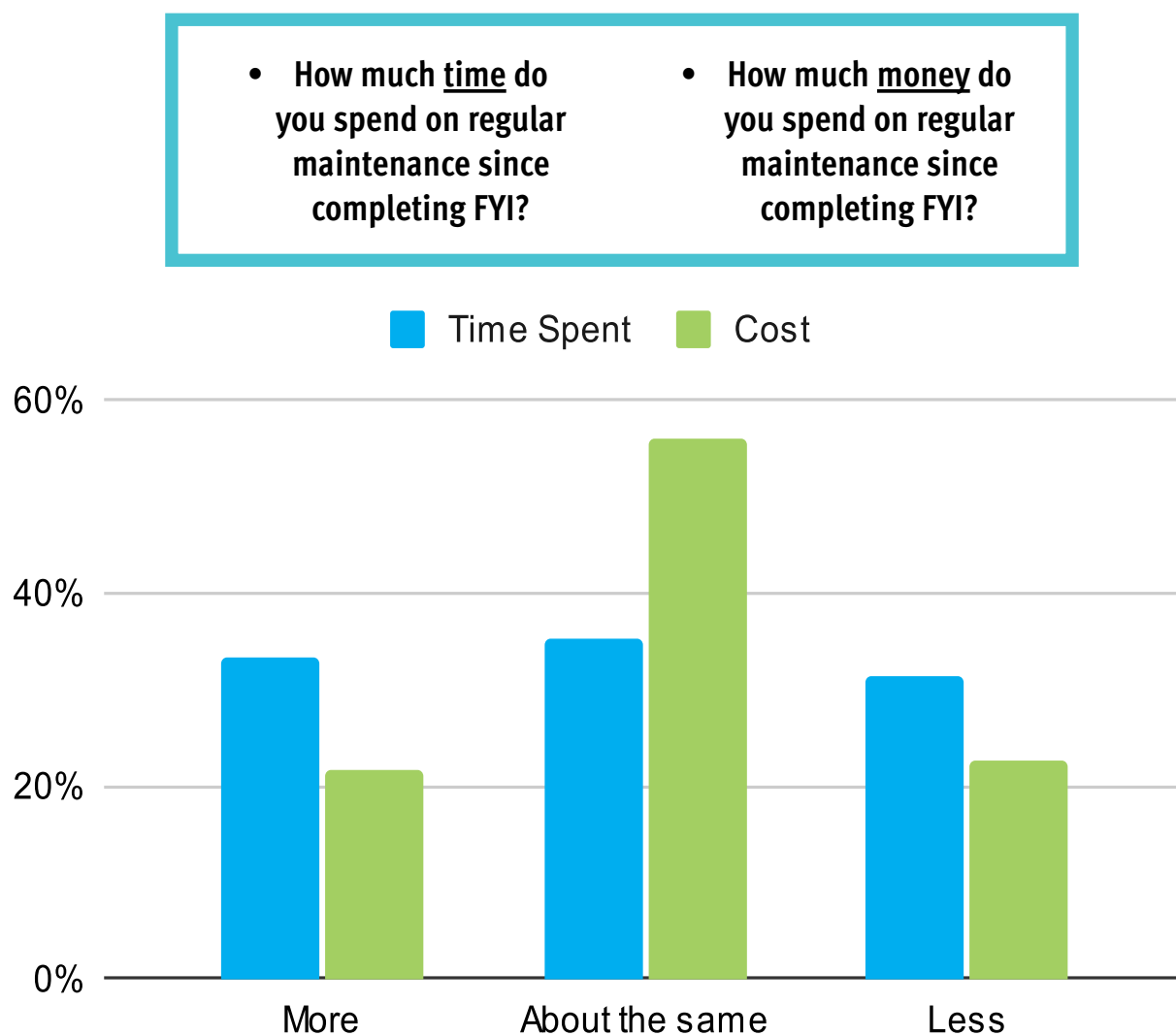
- Rate your current satisfaction with the functionality of your FYI project.
- Rate your current satisfaction with the aesthetic of your FYI project.
- Rate your current satisfaction overall with your FYI project.



# Maintenance Costs

We first asked participants about the time they spend maintaining their installations. Participants were evenly split between whether they feel their installation takes more of their time, less time, or the same amount of time. While we can't assume much, we know that a garden takes more time if there was no garden before it; that a gravel driveway takes the same amount of maintenance as a paved one; and that a permeable walkway needs to be weeded, unlike a paved one. This shows us that green infrastructure can be customized to meet the needs of an individual.

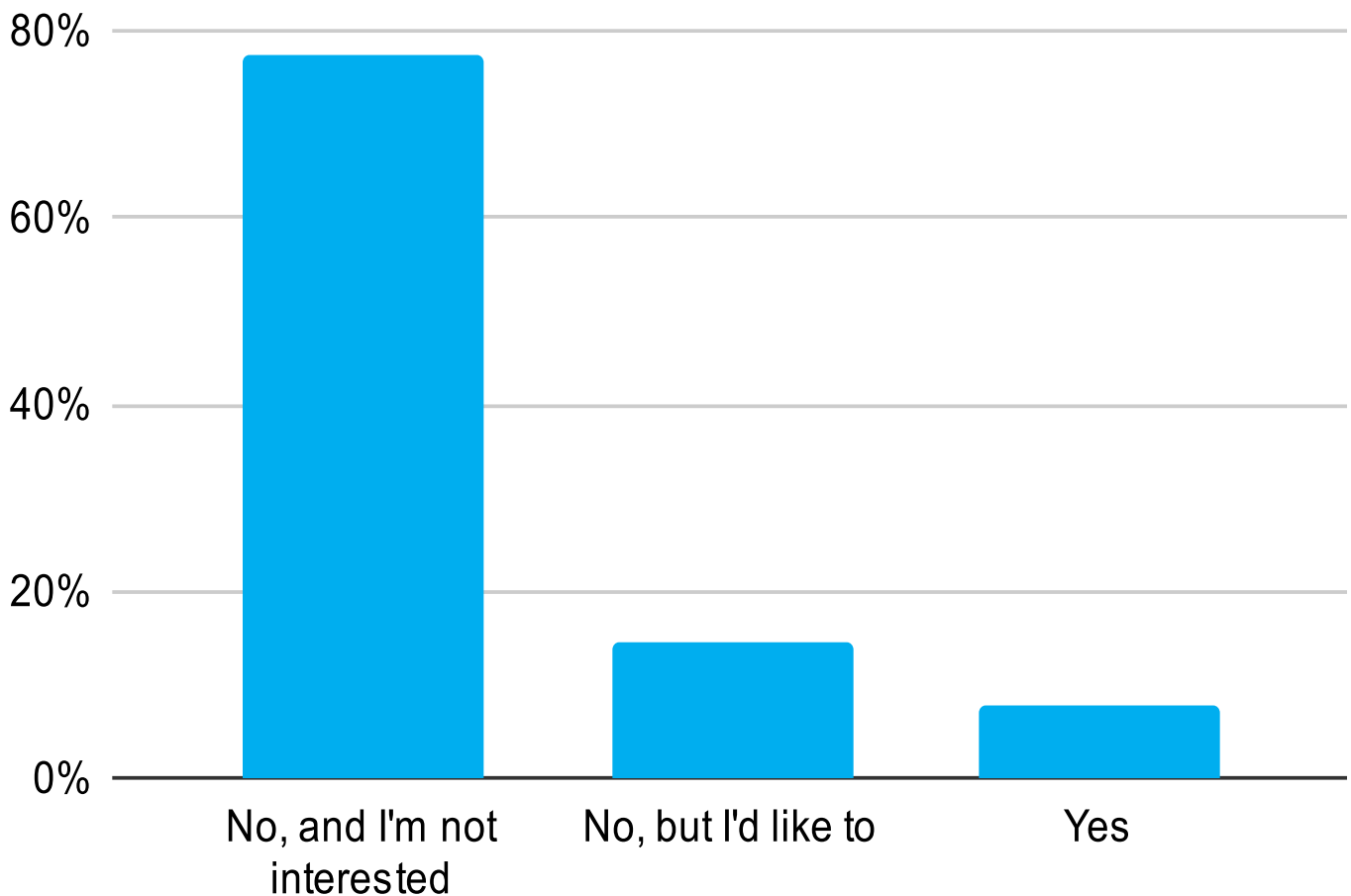
Then we asked participants about the money they spend maintaining their installations. Fifty-six percent said that their financial commitment stayed the same. Remaining respondents were fairly evenly divided between saying they spent more money vs. less.



# Maintenance Contractors

77% of our participants report that they are not interested in hiring a contractor to maintain their installation, while 8% said that they do, and 15% said that they would like to. This is nearly even with 2020 results, except that interest in hiring a contractor has increased slightly.

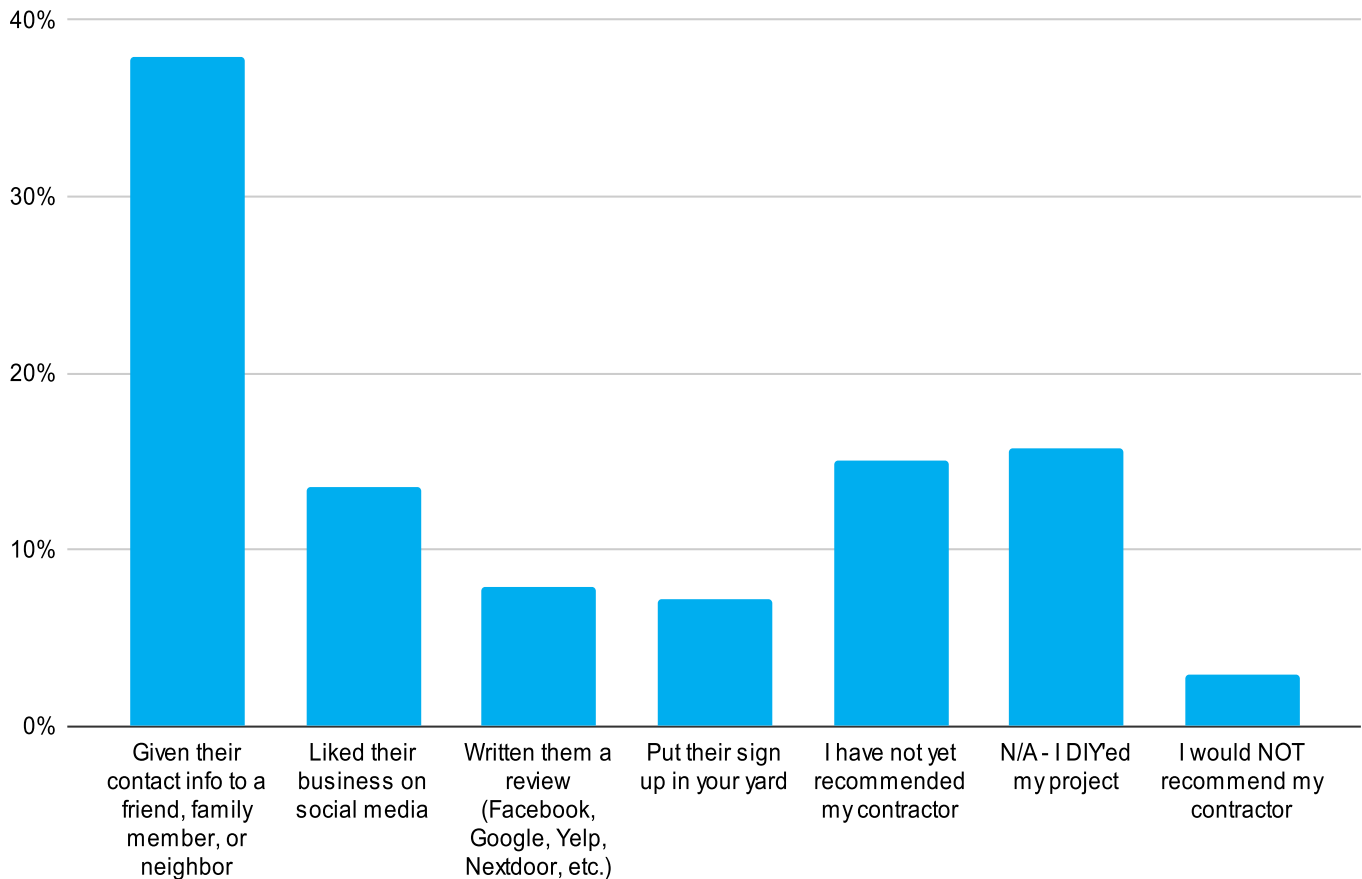
Have you hired a contractor for regular maintenance of your FYI project?



# Contractor Endorsement

Most respondents who hired contractors passed their project contractor's information along, with less than 3% saying they would not recommend their contractor. Over half of all contractor recommendations were given by word-of-mouth; other methods included posting online reviews, following company social media pages, and posting the contractor's sign in their yards.

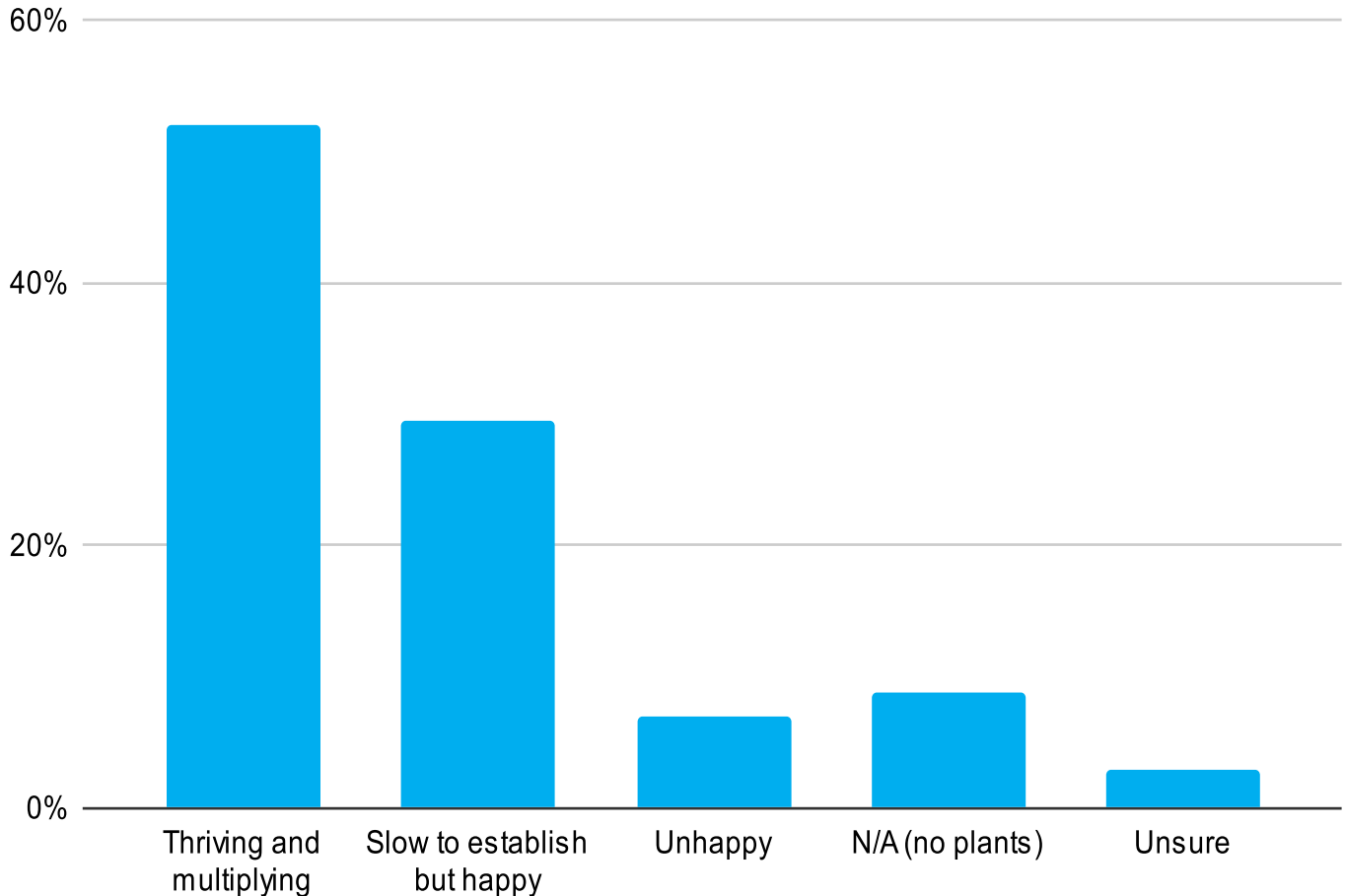
**How have you recommended the contractor/business who completed your FYI project?**



# Native Plant Health

81% of our participants reported that their native (or naturalized) plants are “happy” since being planted. While most FYI participants have not needed to replace plants in their native plant gardens, sometimes unanticipated circumstances (like extended periods of drought, extreme heat, and roadwork) cause plants to die. This reflects the dynamic nature of residential GSI as it matures.

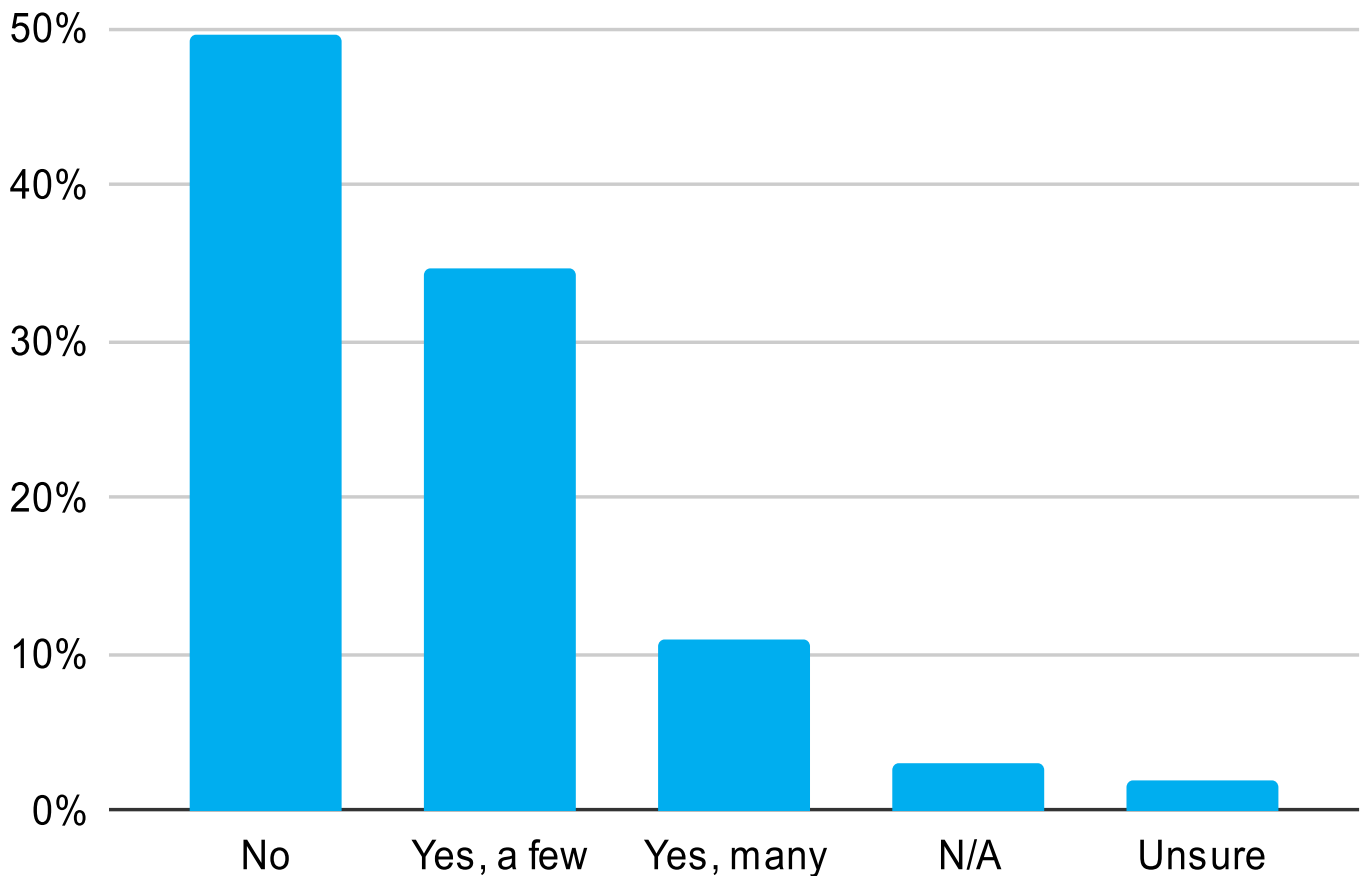
**How have your native plants done since being planted?**



# Native Plant Replacement

We're pleased to report that 50% of respondents say that all of their original plants are happy and healthy. Given the extreme drought conditions during the summer of 2022, this is a big success. Of those who have had to replace plants, only 10% said they've had to replace "many."

Have you had to replace any original native (or non-invasive, naturalized) plantings?



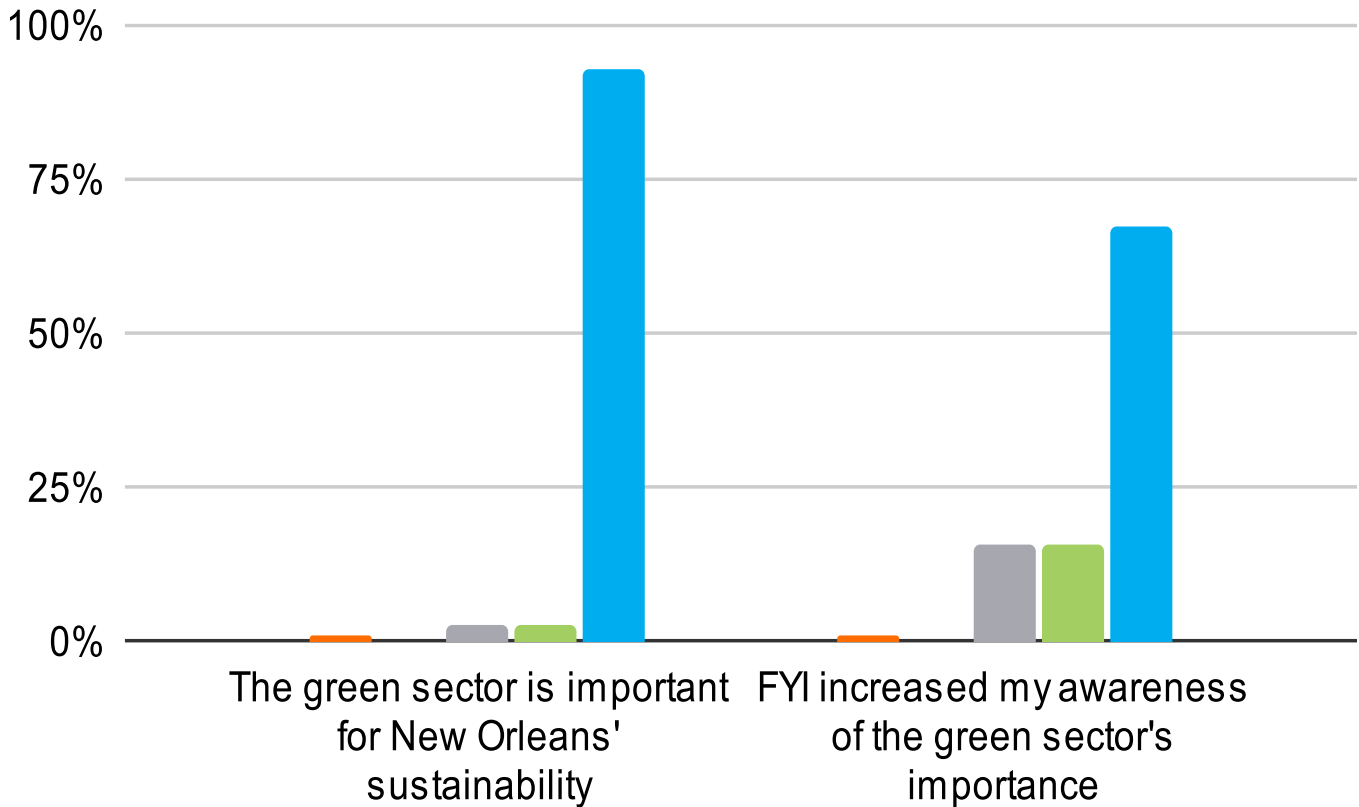


# Green Sector

This graph combines two questions. Respondents were asked to report on how well FYI participation educated them on the importance of the **green sector** in New Orleans, and how they feel about the statement that “the green sector is important for New Orleans’ sustainability.” While many of our homeowners were already familiar with the green sector, 83% reported that FYI increased their awareness of the green sector’s importance.

The green sector includes professionals who understand living with water principles and provide goods and services in support of climate resilience, including holding water where it falls to minimize runoff into our drainage system.

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)

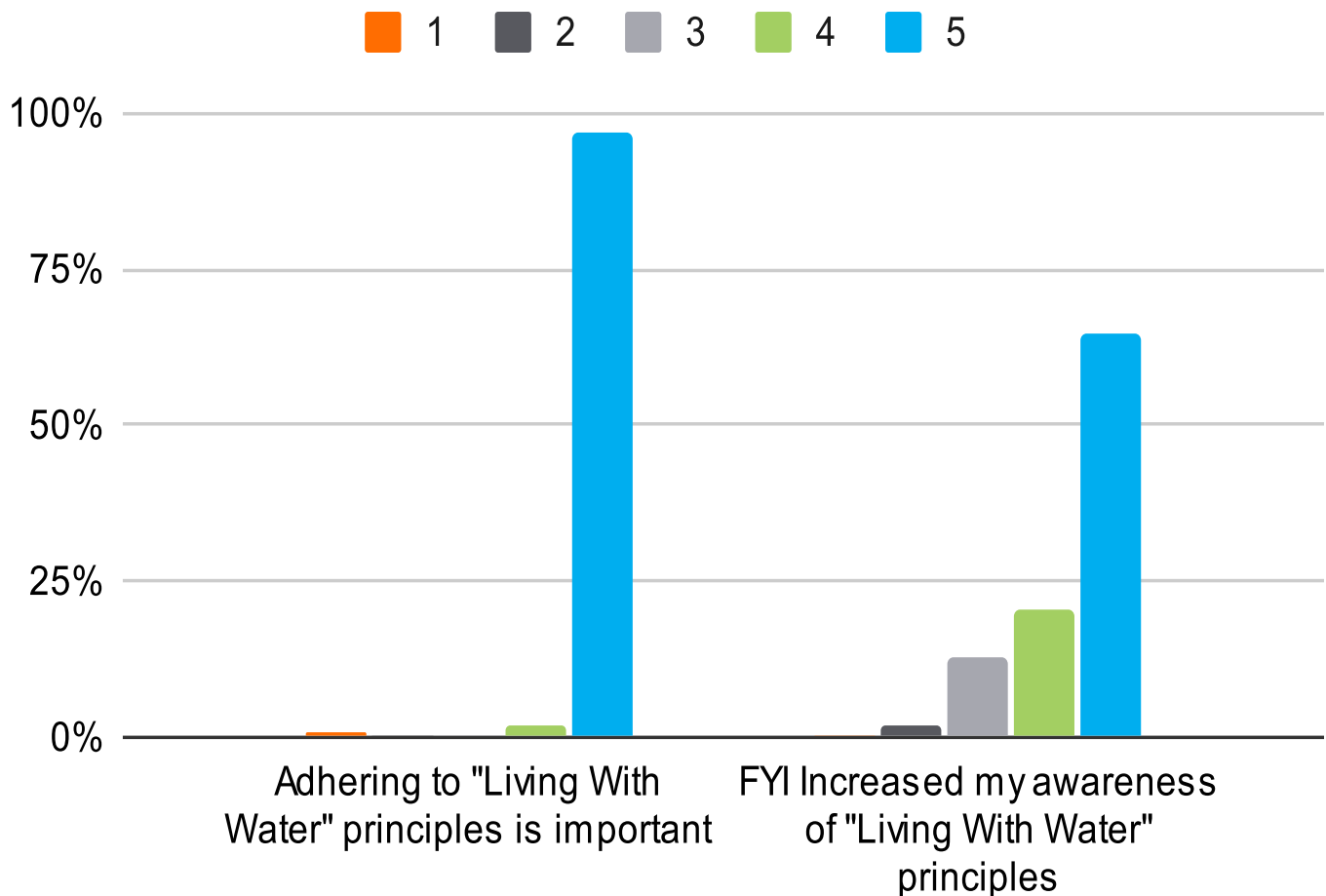


# Living With Water

This graph combines two questions. Because FYI is designed to deliver water education as well as facilitate GSI installation, we asked how FYI participation had increased awareness of the “living with water” principles, and what “living with water” principles mean for New Orleans’ sustainability. The vast majority of respondents said that they believe that living with water is important. A smaller majority stated that FYI increased their awareness of living with water principles, implying that those who seek out FYI already understand those principles on some level.

Living with water means incorporating water-smart landscaping that slows rainwater down, spreads it out, and allows it to soak back into the soil where it falls.

Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)



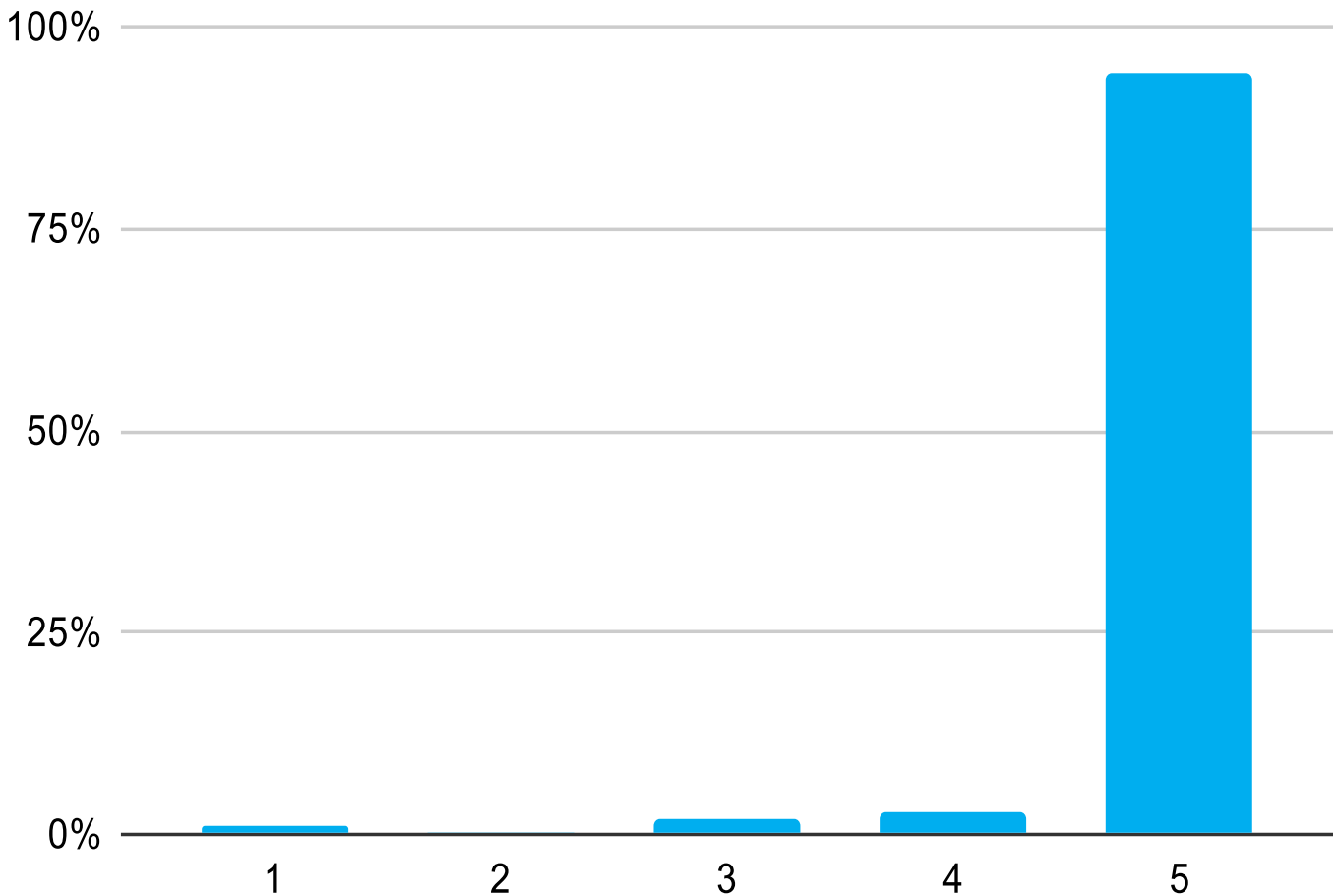
# Incentive Programs

We asked FYIers how important incentive programs (like FYI) are to expanding GSI throughout New Orleans. Despite the decrease in value of our incentive due to inflation, respondents overwhelmingly report that the incentive was essential for them to put their first toe in the water. This quote from one survey respondent is representative of feedback we often receive:

“Thank you so much! We never would have spent the money on our project if we hadn’t had the scholarship from FYI! It was incredibly helpful to us being able to accomplish our project.”

As with previous questions, this highlights the importance of continuing to fund these efforts.

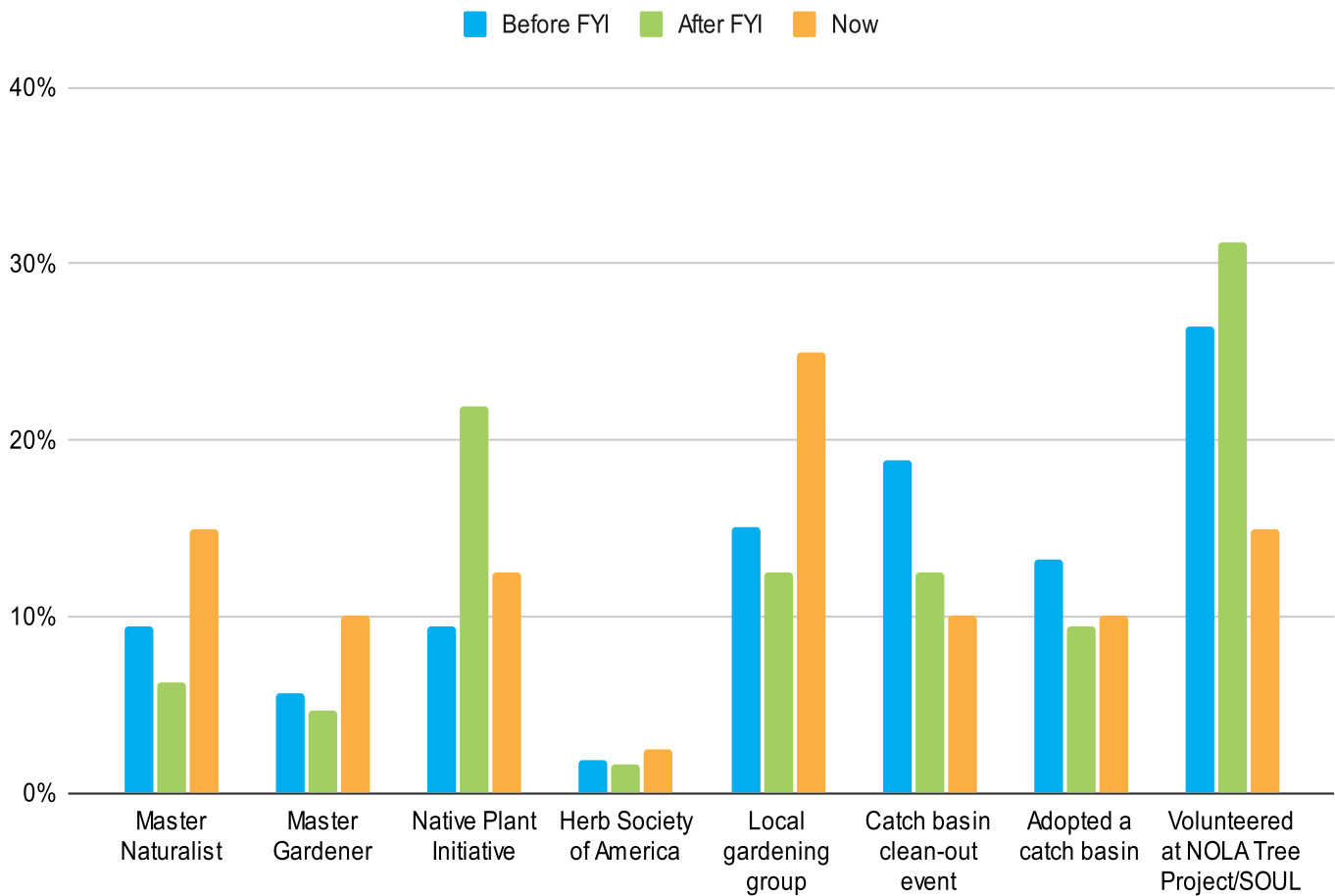
Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree)  
to 5 (Strongly agree)



# Group Participation

We asked what other groups and initiatives FYI participants are involved in. We added participation in tree planting activities with either SOUL or the NOLA Tree Project to the survey this year, and it turned out to be the most popular involvement category overall. In most cases, participation in related activities increased upon enrollment in FYI. Drought conditions are possibly responsible for the decline in “Catch Basin clean-out event” and “Adopted a catch basin” participation.

Have you been involved in any of the following groups or initiatives? Check all that apply.



# ***FYI Homeowner Survey Report***

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**FYI**



**FRONT YARD INITIATIVE**

**Survey**

# FYI Homeowner Survey - 2023

Thank you for completing a Front Yard Initiative project at your home. Since 2016, FYI has helped 155 residents go from #graytogreen, and your project is an integral part of a larger movement to improve New Orleans' safety, beauty, and storm water management. To help us improve the FYI program, please take 10 minutes to reflect on your project outcomes.

\* Indicates required question

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## Demographic Info

Note: Demographic data is required by grantors. All information is kept confidential and the Urban Conservancy only uses data collected in the aggregate.

1. Your full name: \*

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2. Age: \*

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3. Race/Ethnicity \*

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4. Gender: \*

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5. How many years have you lived in New Orleans? \*

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## Property Info

6. FYI Property Address \*

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7. Do you still own this property? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

8. If you DO NOT still own your FYI property, do you know if the new owners maintained the installation?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes, they did

No, they tore it out

I don't know

9. If you DO NOT still live at your FYI property, did you/will you install green infrastructure on your new property?

*Mark only one oval.*

I have!

I plan to

I don't plan to

10. Do you own any additional properties? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

11. Please list any other properties you own (including LLCs)

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12. Which green infrastructure forms are installed at your property? Check all that apply. \*

*Check all that apply.*

Rain barrel

Infiltration trench / French drain

Rain garden

Bioswale

Stormwater planter box

Permeable driveway, patio, walkway, etc.

Native tree

Native plants & shrubs

Other: \_\_\_\_\_



13. Rate your current satisfaction with the functionality of your FYI project (1=Not satisfied, 5=Very satisfied) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1   2   3   4   5

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14. Rate your current satisfaction with the aesthetic of your FYI project (1=Not satisfied, 5=Very satisfied) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1   2   3   4   5

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15. Rate your current overall satisfaction with your FYI project (1=Not satisfied, 5=Very satisfied) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1   2   3   4   5

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### Property Maintenance

Please enter N/A for questions which are not applicable for your property.

16. How much maintenance does your water-smart property require? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

Non      A great deal

17. How much time do you spend on regular maintenance since completing FYI? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

More

Less

About the same

18. How have your maintenance costs changed since completing FYI? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Increased

Decreased

About the same

19. Have you hired a contractor for regular maintenance of your FYI project? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No, but I'd like to

No, and I'm not interested

20. If you hired a contractor for regular maintenance, who are they? Any info you can provide (name, business name, phone number, and email address) is helpful!

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21. If you hired a contractor for regular maintenance, would you recommend them?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Any other comments on maintenance cost or effort?

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### Plants

23. How have your **native** (or non-invasive, naturalized) plants done since being planted? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

My plants are thriving and multiplying

My plants were slow to establish but are happy

My plants are unhappy (due to soil, light requirements, etc.)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24. Have you had to replace any original native (or non-invasive, naturalized) plantings? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, all
- Yes, many
- Yes, a few
- No
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

25. Have you replaced original plantings with **more native** (or non-invasive naturalized) plants?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

### Project Impact

26. Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property **before** completing FYI. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1   2   3   4   5
- 
- Mild      Severe
-

27. Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property **immediately after** completing your FYI project. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

Mild      Severe

28. Rate the severity of flooding and drainage issues on your property **now**. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

Mild      Severe

29. Which of the following benefits have you seen as a result of your FYI project? (check all that apply) \*

*Check all that apply.*

- Increased pollinators
- Increased birds & wildlife
- Fewer mosquitos
- Lower utility bills (decreased heat-island effect; more rain water harvested)
- More time spent outside
- Less localized flooding
- No localized flooding
- None of the Above
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Water Education

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

30. Adhering to "living with water" principles is important for New Orleans' sustainability. \*

*"Living with water" means incorporating water-smart landscaping that slows rainwater down, spreads it out, and allows it to soak back into the soil where it falls.*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro      Strongly Agree

31. FYI increased my awareness of "living with water" principles. \*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro      Strongly Agree

32. The green sector is important for New Orleans' sustainability. \*

*The "green sector" includes professionals who understand living with water principles and provide goods and services in support of holding water where it falls to minimize runoff into our drainage system.*

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro      Strongly Agree

33. FYI increased my awareness about the green sector's importance for New Orleans' sustainability.

\*

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

Stro      Strongly Agree

34. The financing of incentive programs like FYI is important for New Orleans' sustainability.

\*

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5

Stro      Strongly Agree

Community

35. Have you been involved in any of the following groups or initiatives? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

	Before FYI	After FYI	Current Member
<b>Master Naturalist</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Master Gardener</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Native Plant Initiative</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Herb Society of America</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Local gardening group</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Catch basin clean-out event</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adopted a catch basin</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Volunteered with SOUL/NOL A Tree Project</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



36. Have you received any of the following certifications for your property? Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

- NABA Butterfly Certification
- NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat
- Million Pollinator Garden Challenge
- Louisiana Certified Habitat program

37. Are you an active member of our [FYI Facebook group](#)? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No, but I would like to join
- No, and I don't want to join

38. We are considering designing plant ID signs for purchase, so that you can educate your neighbors. What would you be willing to pay per sign?

*Mark only one oval.*

- \$1.00-\$2.00
- \$3.00-\$5.00
- Upwards of \$5.00

39. Would you be interested in serving on the committee to create the signs?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, please call me!
- No thanks

Advocacy

40. How have you recommended the contractor/business who completed your FYI project? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- Liked their business on social media
- Written them a review (Facebook, Google, Yelp, Nextdoor, etc.)
- Given their contact info to a friend, family member, or neighbor
- Put their sign up in your yard
- I have not yet recommended my contractor
- I would NOT recommend my contractor
- N/A - I DIY'ed my project

41. Would you be interested in getting more involved with FYI efforts through advocacy, focus groups, or joining a committee?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

42. What else would you like to see FYI offer?

*Check all that apply.*

- Social/networking events like happy hours
- Education opportunities like workshops
- More visibility in local advocacy for GI/flood mitigation/habitat restoration
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

43. Please feel free to share any ideas, reflections, recommendations or stories about your FYI project or the program.

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***Thank you for reading!***

**Contact Us:**

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