

Trees on your land

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



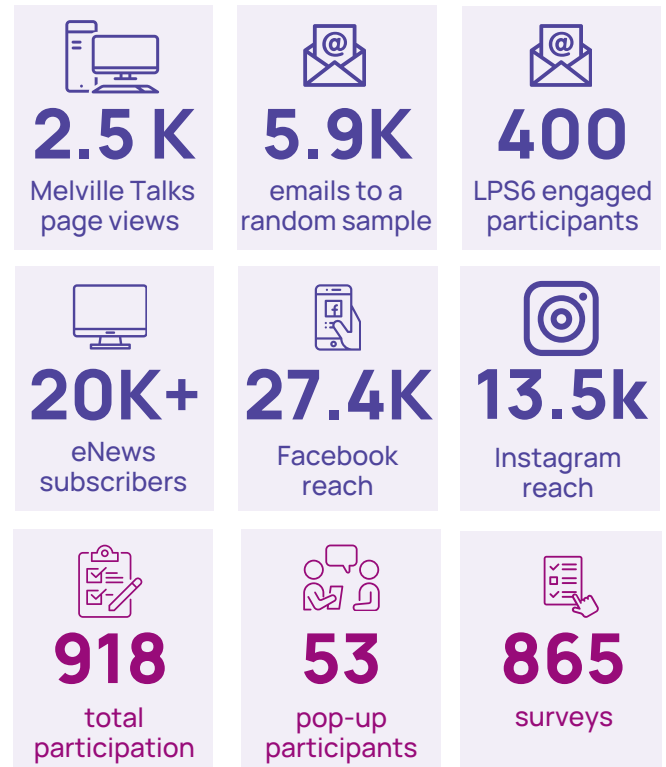
Trees and vegetation play a vital role in urban environments, providing economic, environmental, and social benefits to the community. The City of Melville's Urban Forest Strategic Plan, building on the Urban Forest and Green Spaces Policy adopted in 2016, aims to protect and enhance the city's leafy character, visual amenity, and biodiversity. While managing public land has been a primary focus, the City is increasingly recognising the importance of trees on private land in achieving its urban greening goals. Nearly half of the City's urban forest is located on private properties, and with significant loss of tree cover between 2017 and 2022, it is essential to address this decline.

A review of the Urban Forest Strategy in 2024 highlighted that, even with full use of available public land for tree planting, the city's canopy would still only reach 17%, underscoring the need to involve private landowners in efforts to preserve and enhance Melville's urban forest. In response, the City is exploring flexible policies that allow property owners to develop their land while retaining and replacing trees. These policies aim to balance the need for sustainable development with the preservation of the urban canopy, aligning with broader goals outlined in the Council Plan 2024–2034 and the City's declaration of a climate emergency.

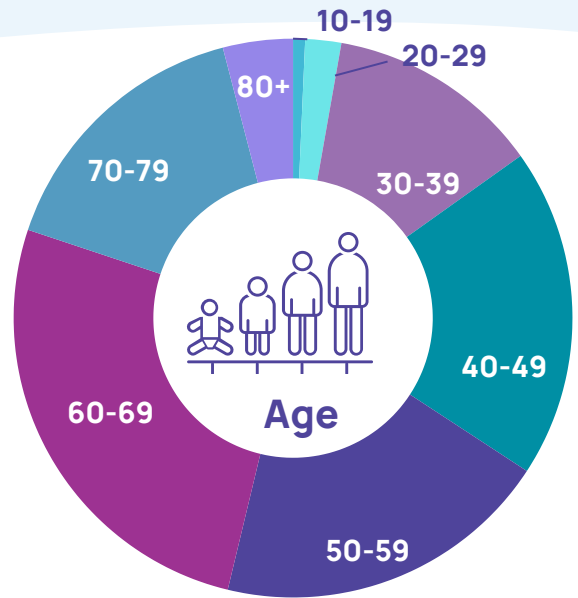
Engagement approach

To engage the community, the City launched the "Trees on Your Land" project to understand public views on tree canopy loss and the roles of both the City and residents in its preservation. Feedback was gathered through an online survey on the Melville Talks platform, as well as in-person at three pop-up sessions. The consultation period ran from **1 October to 17 November 2024**, allowing residents to share their thoughts and contribute to shaping future policies for a greener, more resilient urban environment.

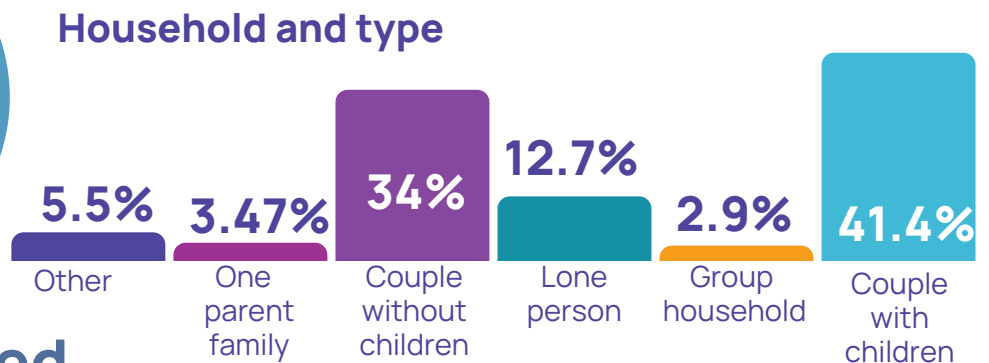
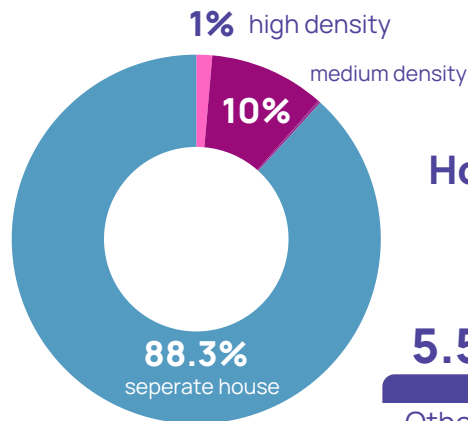
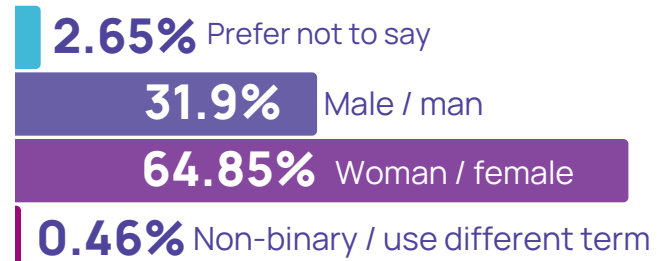
Reach and Participation



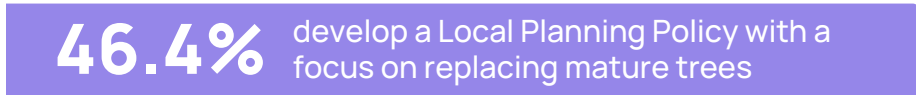
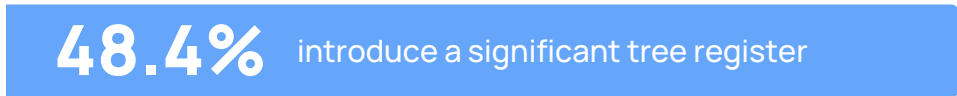
We heard from



Gender



You supported



Note: participants could select multiple options

Key themes

Throughout the engagement process, it became evident that achieving a consensus on the retention or replacement of large trees is challenging. However, the roles of the community, individuals, and the City of Melville remain essential in finding solutions that balance environmental and community needs. Key themes from the engagement include:

Preservation of large trees

The importance of preserving large, mature trees on private property for various reasons, such as:

- Providing shade, cooling, and habitat for wildlife
- Enhancing the character and aesthetics of the neighborhood
- Sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change

“we need to keep the city cooler with canopy and animal life.”

Enforcement and regulation

Mixed sentiment on Council’s authority to:

- Require permits or approval for the removal of large trees on private property
- Impose fines or penalties for the unauthorised removal of significant trees
- Maintain a registry or inventory of large trees on private property

“landowners should be guided by council policies that support the maintenance and growth of canopy and habitat”

“it is the landowner’s decision”

Balance development and tree preservation



- Between development and the preservation of large trees, especially in the context of subdivision and redevelopment of properties.
- Implement policies and regulations to ensure that new developments are designed around existing large trees
- Require replacement or compensation for the removal of large trees during development

“build around the tree, incorporate it in the design”

Take no action

- Concerns about interference with landowners' rights.
- Issues related to the costs and responsibilities of maintaining large trees.
- Perceptions of hypocrisy regarding the council's maintenance of public trees.

Assistance and subsidies

- Council should provide support and assistance to landowners in maintaining large trees, such as:
- Subsidies in the cost of tree maintenance, pruning, and health assessments
- Encouraging and incentivising landowners to preserve large trees
- Providing advice and guidance on suitable tree species and care
- Assisting landowners with the maintenance of large trees

“maintaining trees is for everyone’s benefit and not every household can afford it”

Collaboration and communication

Council should work closely with landowners to:

- Educate them on the importance of preserving large trees
- Facilitate communication and resolve conflicts between neighbours regarding tree-related issues
- Provide guidance and support on the appropriate management and care of large trees

“keep them within their boundaries and have consideration for neighbours”



Community role in tree retention

Mixed sentiment on the role of both individual and community:

- Private landowners should have the right to care for, manage, maintain, remove, or replace trees on their property
- Encourage tree planting and inspire others to do the same

“feed, water, prune as necessary”

- Impact of development policies on the availability of space for trees.
- Preference for a collaborative approach rather than strict regulations.
- Issues with certain tree species affecting infrastructure and health.