



Brunswick West Tree Planting

Community Engagement
Findings Report

August 2021

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CITY OF MORELAND

WEST BRUNSWICK TREE PLANTING

Outcomes Report

Introduction

The City of Moreland Urban Forest Strategy 2017 - 2027 commits to increasing street tree canopy by 30%, one strategy is to plant additional street trees. Cohuna, Mincha and Guthrie Streets in Brunswick West were chosen as sites, wide enough to accommodate new street tree planting within the centre of the road.

The purpose of this community consultation was to survey residents and identify the preferred tree species for each street, from three shortlisted options. Conversations also sought to understand the features people most liked about each species.

Methodology

The engagement program consisted of an online survey hosted on Council's engagement platform Conversations Moreland, which was open from 19 July 2021 to 15 August 2021. The survey asked participants to provide a star rating (from 1 to 5 stars) for each shortlisted tree. The survey also invited comments about each tree species and about the project.

Residents could register for a 'call back' through Conversations Moreland. These residents were contacted for a telephone interview between 17 August 2021 and 24 August 2021.

Flyers were distributed to every house in the project area and signage was installed at the ends of each street. Figure 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1. Flyer

Tell us what street trees you prefer

Spotted Gum

Pin Oak

Smooth-barked Apple Myrtle

Street Tree Planting along Guthrie, Mincha and Cohuna Streets, Brunswick West

As part of Moreland's Urban Forest Strategy, we are committed to improving the appearance of the municipality and increasing tree canopy to keep the city cooler.

We are now proposing to plant canopy trees in the middle of the road in Guthrie, Cohuna and Mincha Streets in Brunswick West in late August or September.

Planting trees in the middle of these roads will not affect parking, traffic flow, or underground drains and will

make walking and cycling more enjoyable, especially during hot weather.

Have your say

Our plan was to hold a pop-up event near you, where our team could chat to you face-to-face about this project. Unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions, we have had to slightly change plans.

It's important we provide you with a number of opportunities to discuss this project with us. Here is how you can have your say:

- **Request a call** – call **8311 4731** or email openspace@moreland.vic.gov.au to arrange a time for one of our team members to discuss this project with you. We can also organise a time to meet you in the street for a discussion.
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We look forward to hearing from you!

Contact us

Visit www.moreland.vic.gov.au

Call us on 9240 1111

Moreland Language Link

廣東話 9280 1910	عربى 9280 1913	हिन्दी 9280 1918	All other languages 9280 1919
Italiano 9280 1911	Türkçe 9280 1914	普通话 9280 0750	
Ελληνικά 9280 1912	Tiếng Việt 9280 1915	ಕನ್ನಡ 9280 0751	

Figure 2. Signage

Help choose street trees for this area

VOTE

for your preferred tree at Conversations Moreland

Moreland
City Council

SCAN ME

Adapting the program

The engagement program was interrupted by changes in State Government COVID-19 restrictions twice.

A pop-up coffee caravan event with residents was planned for Saturday August 31st. When COVID-restrictions limited the number of people who could gather, the coffee event was replaced with a series of smaller resident meetings. A letterbox flyer and street signage had to be re-made which caused a delay notifying residents of the project.

Shortly before resident meetings were planned to begin, COVID-19 stay at home orders came into effect and the meetings were no longer permitted. The online project page was updated to offer residents a 'call back' telephone interview option.

Participation

Any interested City of Moreland residents or property owners were invited to participate, however only residents of Cohuna, Mincha and Guthrie Streets (project area) could influence which tree would be selected. Participants were asked about their connection to the project so that results could be organized into residents from each street and other interested people. Tables 1 and 2 show participation from within the project area and across the Moreland municipality.

Table 1. Participation by method

	Participants from the project area	Other Moreland Residents	Total
Conversations Moreland Online Survey	53	131	184
Telephone Interview	12	0	12

Table 2. Participation by location

	Cohuna Street residents	Mincha Street residents	Guthrie Street residents	Residents of Surrounding streets	Other participants
Participants	24	16	13	105	26

Key Findings

In this section we look at the results from the engagement program. The findings are organised by method, tree species and stakeholder group.

Where a comment is followed by a number in brackets, this shows how many similar comments were made. For example, 'Flowering trees were supported (4)' would mean four comments showed support for flowering trees. Appendix 1 and 2 show the online survey questions and tallied responses..

Conversations Moreland Online Survey

Following are the results from the Conversations Moreland online survey.

Tree Species

In this section we look at feedback by tree species. Participants were asked: 'What type of street tree should we plant? Tell us what you think.' Using stars participants were asked to vote for their preferred tree. Each 'star' allocated to a tree was counted as a vote. Some participants chose not to rate every tree. Only star ratings from 1 to 5 stars were used to calculate the average star ratings seen in this report.

Spotted Gum

Spotted Gum received 617 votes and was rated 3.4 stars. This was the most liked tree from across all participants. Some participants used the answer text box to object to tree planting in their street (10) or state that they dislike the species (2).

There were 84 responses to the question "If you liked the spotted gum, tell us why?" Of these, 62 answered the question and 12 used the free text box to raise a concern about the species and 10 made other statements.

Those in favour:

- Local native: this tree is native (43); it is a Victorian native (20) and it is suitable for local climate conditions (8).
- Ecologically appropriate: this tree was regarded as having a positive impact on local ecosystems (19); for being bird attracting (16) (including the endangered swift parrot(3) and supporting pollinators (6).
- Aesthetically pleasing: this tree is a flowering variety (18); flowers during the long and cooler month; provides shade (8) and has an attractive trunk and bark pattern (5).

Those against:

- Not indigenous to the local area (5).
- Mess and maintenance: falling branches (3); and mess from flowerdrop (2).
- Blocking views: being too big (2); blocking views (1) and light (1).
- Increased pollen/hayfever (1).

Apple Myrtle

Smooth-Barked Apple Myrtle received 583 votes was rated 3.2 stars. Some participants used the answer text box to object to tree planting in their street (7) or state that they dislike the species (2)

There were 80 responses to the question “If you liked the smooth-barked apple myrtle, tell us why?” Of these, 68 answered the question and 12 used the free text box to make other statements.

Those in favour:

- Local Native: this tree is native (34), supports biodiversity (19) attracts and supports bird life (11), is suitable for our climate (11) and provides shade (10).
- Aesthetically pleasing: this tree is a flowering variety (23), has an attractive trunk and bark (14), is evergreen (6) and has an attractive and suitable shape (5) and preferred the year-round leaf drop pattern (3)

Those against:

- Mess and maintenance: this tree would drop flowers (3),
- Not indigenous to the local area (3)

Pin Oak

The Pin Oak received 387 votes and was rated 2.1 stars. While this was the least supported tree across all participants, it was also the most liked tree from residents within the project area.

There were 88 responses to the question “if you liked the Pin Oak tell us why?” Of these 22 answered the question, 41 used the free text space to express a preference for native trees and 25 used the free text space to make other comments.

Those in favour:

- Aesthetically pleasing: this tree (13) and how it would positively affect the character of their street (6). Pin Oaks were described as “more formal” trees that “add grandeur” and “chang[e] the vista” of the street across seasons.
- Shade canopy: this tree provides good shade (9), greater leaf density than natives (4) and has an autumnal display (4).
- Mess and maintenance: participants liked that leaf dropping occurs once a year (3) making the Pin Oaks less messy overall.

Those against:

- Concerns were raised about this tree making a mess (13) including concerns about slipping hazards (3), and drainage (3).
- Participants disliked the Pin Oak for being an exotic species (41) that does not support local ecology (18)

Survey results by stakeholder group

In this section we look at feedback by stakeholder group. This section includes an analysis of the Conversations Moreland online survey.

Mincha Street Residents

There were 16 surveys completed by residents of Mincha Street West Brunswick. Of the 16 survey participants, three expressed support for the project, nine made statements asking for the project to be stopped, two expressed concerns about the project and two did not leave a comment.

Nine of the 16 survey participants rated the shortlisted tree species, while the remaining seven did not cast any votes. Residents from **Mincha Street preferred the Pin Oak**, followed by the Spotted Gum and Apple Myrtle. Table 3 show this preference.

Table 3. Preferred tree species Mincha Street

Tree Species	Average Star Rating	Total Votes/Stars
Pin Oak	3.4	31
Spotted Gum	2.5	23
Apple Myrtle	2.1	19

Guthrie Street Residents

There were 13 surveys completed by residents of Guthrie Street West Brunswick and 1 completed by a property owner who resides elsewhere. Of the 14 survey participants, eight expressed support for the project, three expressed concerns about the project and three did not express strong sentiment about the project.

Eleven of the 14 survey participants rated the shortlisted tree species, while the remaining three did not cast any votes. Residents from **Guthrie Street preferred the Pin Oak**, followed by the Apple Myrtle and Spotted Gum. Table 4 shows this preference.

Table 4. Preferred tree species Guthrie Street

Tree Species	Average Star Rating	Total Votes/Stars
Pin Oak	3.5	39
Spotted Gum	2.1	23
Apple Myrtle	2.6	29

Cohuna Street Residents

There were 24 surveys completed by residents of Guthrie Street West Brunswick. Of the 24 survey participants, three expressed support for the project, nine made statements asking for the project to be stopped, seven expressed concerns about the project and five did not leave a comment or left a neutral comment.

Of the 24 survey participants, 22 rated the shortlisted tree species, while the remaining 2 did not cast any votes. Residents from **Cohuna Street preferred the Pin Oak**, followed by the Spotted Gum and Apple Myrtle. Table 5 show this preference.

Table 5. Preferred tree species Cohuna Street

Tree Species	Average Star Rating	Total Votes/Stars
Pin Oak	2.5	48
Spotted Gum	2.5	45
Apple Myrtle	2.3	40

Other Moreland residents

There were 105 surveys completed by residents from surrounding streets and a further 26 from other parts of the City of Moreland. Responses from these participants were collected to understand community priorities when selecting street trees for future projects.

Of the 131 survey participants from this group, 130 rated the shortlisted trees and one did not cast any votes. **Other Moreland residents preferred the Spotted Gum**, followed by the Apple Myrtle and Pin Oak. Table 6 show this preference.

Table 6. Preferred tree species Other Moreland Residents

Tree Species	Average Star Rating	Total Votes/Stars
Pin Oak	2.3	269
Spotted Gum	4	526
Apple Myrtle	3.9	495

Telephone Interview Findings

Following are the results from the Conversations Moreland online survey.

Telephone interviews were offered as a COVID-safe substitute for in-person meetings. Interviewees were invited to give feedback about the project not captured through the online survey. Each interview ran for 30 to 60 minutes. In total, 12 interviews were conducted with six Mincha Street residents, four Guthrie Street residents, two Cohuna street residents and a Cohuna Street property owner.

All participants were established residents or property owners with a long-term interest in their street. Several participants had lived in their homes for decades and had a wealth of local knowledge about the history of their street.

Interviewees were asked to:

- share their thoughts about the project,
- provide their views on the shortlisted trees,
- suggest what actions Council could take to improve confidence in the project,
- identify areas where they felt street tree planting would be suitable.

Findings Summary

Feedback and sentiment expressed across all interviews and streets has been summarised below. This feedback provides the residents' perspective towards the project and additional feedback received. Statements have not been verified for accuracy and are included as stated. In summary the biggest concerns are that the project does not take into consideration the uniqueness of the streets, the current design and the concerns (flooding, impact on traffic and development).

Lack of confidence in future maintenance

- All interviewees expressed that they have higher expectations of the aesthetics and level of tree maintenance than they observe in surrounding areas.
- That the street would not be maintained by Council, including repairs if/when needed.
- Residents were concerned about the planting in Donald Street, in particular the lack of maintenance and care, unhealthy trees, loss of mulch and deteriorating garden edging.
- That if Council proceeds with planting trees, there is a high risk of tree vandalism. "I think they'd be fighting a losing battle".
- That leaf litter will not be cleaned from public streets and footpaths. Participants recalled specific examples where they had requested street cleaning or tree maintenance and were unhappy with Council's response. Complaints included damage from tree roots, blocked drainage, falling tree limbs and cleaning of leaf litter. "I don't trust the council to look after them because they're not looking after them now."

Proposed Design

- The design of the planting areas does not address the significant slope of the street and potential issues with loss of mulch and water runoff.
- Some participants were receptive to street trees planted toward the side of the road, or on existing or newly created nature strips.
- The shortlisted trees are all too large for the site.

Potential impact on traffic

- That placement of trees in the road median would negatively impact traffic visibility and movement, particularly when entering and exiting driveways.
- Due to the slope of the road, residents tend to maneuver into their driveways on an angle, and this is unlikely to have been considered when selecting tree placement. “You really have to swing around to get into the driveway.”

Potential impact on underground infrastructure

- That the existing street trees have negatively impacted plumbing, drainage and road surfacing.
- The root systems of trees could damage underground infrastructure on both public and privately-owned land.
- That smaller trees were believed to have less impact on underground infrastructure.

Potential impact on light and views

- Large canopy trees will block artificial street lighting to one side of the street.
- Some homes in the project area rely heavily on natural light from the front of their property and will become shaded if canopy trees are planted.
- The project area includes highly valued views of the city skyline and New Year’s Eve fireworks, which would be obscured by canopy trees.

Project scope

- All interviewed residents stated that they were “not against trees.” or supported planting of trees within a clearly defined scope.
- Additional planting does not consider the existing trees in Mincha Street “has 21 established trees along one side of the street providing canopy.”
- 39 residents of Mincha street signed a petition in June 2020 stating their opposition to further planting of trees in their street.
- Residents stated that the area has “rock hard clay” about 1m below ground level.

Communication with residents

- None of the residents interviewed were aware of the Urban Forest Strategy prior to this engagement program.
- Every interviewee expressed that communication from Council about this project had been unsatisfactory.
- Some participants felt that Council were deliberately avoiding communication with residents. This was evidenced by delays in promoting consultation and delays in the petition being tabled with Council.
- All participants expressed that they wanted a more active role in making decisions about changes in their street “local knowledge is invaluable for these kinds of things.”

Street style, character and pride

- Residents expressed pride in their neighborhood and a desire for public street trees to enhance rather than compete with the established look and feel of their street. “We take pride in our street; we take pride in our garden.”
- Residents value that their street is a “beautiful wide street” that feels “open” with some homes having views of the city skyline.
- It was reported that most homes in the project area have established non-native gardens. “fig trees... olive trees... magnolia”, “None of us have got gum trees.”

Suggested locations for street tree planting

To further understand sentiment and attitude towards street tree planting, participants were asked to suggest other nearby areas where they would support new street trees. Participants nominated main roads, shopping strips parks and reserves where street trees would not cause the list concerns mentioned above. Participants avoided local neighbourhood streets.

Responses included:

- Major roads rather than residential streets (Brunswick Road, Grantham Street, Fleming Street to Union Street).
- Parkland, or on streets in front of parklands.
- Create nature strips on Guthrie Street (vegetation as opposed to concrete).
- Fill gaps in existing canopy by replacing dead trees.

Recommendations

In this section we make recommendations based on the combined results from the online survey and telephone interviews. Recommendations are organised by relevance to the current project in Cohuna, Mincha and Guthrie streets, future street tree planting and communications.

Recommendations for planting within the project area

The findings of this community consultation recommend that:

- Tree planting be delayed until residents' concerns are resolved to the greatest extent possible within the scope of this project.
- Resident street meetings should be rescheduled when COVID-19 restrictions allow..
- Should tree planting proceed at this time, the Pin Oak should be selected for Cohuna, Mincha and Guthrie streets, based on the results of the Conversations Moreland Online survey.

Recommendations for street tree planting in other areas

The findings of this community engagement recommend that:

- Council consider combining communications about the Urban Forest Strategy before and during engaging on projects that seek to implement it.
- Future street tree planting projects include a communications plan to reach directly affected residents early in the engagement process.
- Residents be provided with detailed information about proposed tree species including mature height and width; several images showing the shape, canopy density, leaf type and seasonal features; information about how the tree supports local ecosystems.
- Residents have an opportunity to discuss the finer details of the project with Council officers during in the engagement process.
- Shortlisted species should include at least one native tree, preferably one that is indigenous to the local area.
- Shortlisted trees include a range of sizes and leaf dropping habits.
- Existing front gardens and town character are considered when shortlisting tree species.

Closing the loop

Participants in this community consultation have provided valuable insight into the project area. We recommend the following actions to 'close the loop' on this round of engagement and maintain communication into the future:

- Thanking participants for providing their input and sharing their local knowledge in this consultation.
- Sharing any decisions or actions that result from this consultation to the participants via direct mail or email.
- Providing more detailed information about any future proposed tree planting in the project area, including more information about the species of trees and precise information about where new trees are to be located.
- Using letterbox or other direct options to reach all affected residents should this project progress.

1) Appendices

- a) Appendix 1 Results table
- b) Appendix 2 Survey questions

Appendix 1 Results Table

	Total # votes	Overall Star rating	Cohuna # votes	Mincha # votes	Guthrie # votes	Surrounding # votes	Other Participants # votes
Spotted Gum	617	3.4	45	23	23	424	102
Myrtle	583	3.2	40	19	29	398	97
Pin oak	387	2.1	48	31	39	215	54

Appendix 2 Survey Questions

Do you live in one of the proposed streets?

- Yes, Mincha Street
- Yes, Guthrie Street
- Yes, Cohuna Street
- No, I live in a surrounding Street
- Other [Please specify]

Do you think we should plant the Smooth-barked Apple Myrtle tree? Give this tree a star rating. [unrated, 1-5 stars]

If you liked the Smooth-barked Apple Myrtle tree, please tell us why. [free text box]

Do you think we should plant the Spotted Gum? Give this tree a star rating. [unrated, 1-5 stars]

If you liked the Spotted Gum tree, please tell us why. [free text box]

Do you think we should plant the Pin Oak? Give this tree a star rating [unrated, 1-5 stars]

If you liked the Pin Oak tree, please tell us why. [free text box]

Do you have any feedback or comments about our proposal to plant trees on streets in West Brunswick [free text box]