



Greening Port Phillip - Urban Forest Strategy Stage 1 Engagement Findings Report

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Acknowledgement

Activate Consulting and its partners respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land now known as the City of Port Phillip, the people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

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CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW	6
Project background	6
Engagement overview	6
Stage 1A Engagement Program	7
3. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – VISION	9
Vision	9
Vision challenges	11
4. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES	13
5. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – SUGGESTED ACTIONS	22
Individual actions	22
Ideas to consider or trial	24
Important perspectives to consider	27

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Port Phillip (Council) is developing a new Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) which aims to build on the success of its pioneering 2011 Strategy and incorporate a more advanced contemporary understanding of urban greening best practice.

The UFS development process will occur over two stages:

- Stage 1 – Developing and adopting the Vision and Strategic Principles
- Stage 2 – Developing and adopting the Action, Implementation, and Evaluation Plan

To ensure the Strategy is locally responsive, innovative and can be delivered in partnership with the community, Council is undertaking a comprehensive engagement process throughout the two stages. This will build on the significant community feedback related to the urban forest that has already been received through other recent projects.

This report presents the findings of the very first stage of engagement (Stage 1A) with key stakeholders to inform the development of the Draft Vision and Strategic Principles.

A total of 41 key stakeholders (active individuals or representatives of local groups) participated in this stage, at a Mayor's Round Table held on Monday 22 May 2023, or via email submission or interview (offered to those unavailable for the event). Participants represented a diverse range of perspectives including environment, biodiversity, business, cultural heritage, older persons, sustainability, young people, and community.

Participants were invited to share their aspirations for what a 'green' Port Phillip would be like in 2040, and the challenges that need to be overcome to achieve this.

Words or terms that participants most frequently referenced relating to the vision for 2040 included: Community, Species, Trees, Biodiversity, Nature, Water, Spaces, Climate and Corridor. Refer to Section 3 for a summary and the full detailed findings.

To help shape guiding strategic principles, table-based group discussions then centred around three topics and participants identified what was important, challenges and priorities for each. The three topics were:

- Protect and manage the existing urban forest
- Enhance the urban forest
- Engage and collaborate with the community

Across the three topics, some repeated themes emerged including:

- The need to engage the whole community to truly value the urban forest for its benefits to health and wellbeing, beauty and neighbourhood character, and climate resilience and adaptation.
- Enhancing and supporting biodiversity should be a critical aim of the urban forest, through establishing and connecting corridors in particular.
- Focusing on caring for, and retaining, what already exists and succession planning over time with resilient species, understory, and more canopy.
- The need to engage and incentivise developers and private landowners to see vegetation as highly valuable and a priority to retain and enhance.
- A shared commitment, and sufficient funding, to long-term goals and short-term actions, as well as a more equitable approach to greening across different parts of the City.
- Improved, innovative urban water management practices are a foundational requirement for a thriving urban forest.
- A desire for bold leadership, cultural change, partnerships, and investment in urban forestry.

Refer to Section 4 for a summary and the full detailed findings.



These overarching themes were again present when participants were invited to reflect on how they could personally contribute to greening the City as well as ideas to trial and consider as part of the Strategy. Refer to Section 5 for a summary and the full detailed findings.

The insights gathered through Stage 1A engagement are being used to inform the Draft Vision and Strategic Principles for the new Urban Forest Strategy, which will be considered by Council before further input and feedback is invited from the broader community (Stage 1B engagement).



2. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Project background

Port Phillip City Council (Council) was one of the first councils to develop an Urban Forest Strategy in 2011, sparking recognition amongst the community of the importance of greening for people and the environment. It is now time for a new Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) to be developed, to build on the achievements so far and incorporate a more advanced contemporary understanding of urban greening best practice.

Over the 10 years since the last strategy, the following factors have emerged:

- An increase in community awareness and interest in urban greening, locally and globally
- An increased focus by the community on nature strip and 'street' gardening in response to COVID
- An expanded understanding of the urban forest to include all vegetation, not just street trees
- A rise in the number and influence key stakeholders championing urban forest issues
- Greater compliance focus on electrical line clearance
- Canopy loss on private property due to housing development and the need to accommodate more homes
- Loss of large canopy trees due to age and health

Council has engaged a mixed consultant team to map its current canopy and research and prepare a new UFS. Activate Consulting is engaged to plan and deliver the community and stakeholder consultation program to inform this process.

The UFS development process will occur over two stages:

- Stage 1 – Developing and adopting the Vision and Strategic Principles
- Stage 2 – Developing and adopting the Action, Implementation, and Evaluation Plan

Engagement overview

Over recent years, Council has already heard significant community feedback related to the urban forest through the development of other projects such as the Public Spaces Strategy, Nature Strip Guidelines, and Act and Adapt (sustainability) strategy revision.

The aim of this engagement program is to build on what has already been heard and work with the community to inform the development of an UFS that balances community needs and desires, with council's legal requirements (e.g., accessibility, electrical line clearance), and engenders collaboration between the community, Council and key stakeholders to implement the actions developed as part of this strategy.

To achieve this, the objectives of the engagement process are to:

- Gather feedback and input from key stakeholders and the broader community to:
 - Develop our understanding of the current context
 - Gain an understanding of their needs, desires, concerns, and ideas about the urban forest, what and where it is; and
 - Effectively harness and focus community passion and expertise positively into the strategy development.
- Create community interest in the project, bring them along the journey to develop the strategy, and generate buy-in for its implementation
- Implement a robust and transparent engagement process that properly reflects the diversity of community needs and builds confidence in the findings
- Gather, analyse, and report feedback to meaningfully inform the UFS.

Figure 1 outlines the key engagement stages and target timelines.



Figure 1. Key community and stakeholder engagement stages and target timelines

Stage	Timeframe	Inputs	Who we are engaging	Purpose
Planning	March 2023	Background research, benchmarking, best practice, Port Phillip content, summary of previous consultation findings	CoPP project working group Urban forest consultants	Inform Stakeholder analysis, and Engagement and Communication Plan
Stage 1A	May/June	Background information, previous consultation findings	Key stakeholders Advisory Groups	Inform Draft Vision and Strategic Principles
Council endorsement draft Vision and Strategic Principles for consultation (5 July)				
Stage 1B	Early-July – early-Aug	Draft Vision and Strategic Principles, Background information (summary)	Broad community	Test and refine Draft Vision and Strategic Principles Invite specific greening ideas for Stage 2
Council endorsement of Vision and Strategic Principles (October)				
Stage 2A	Nov/Dec	Vision and Strategic Principles Specific greening ideas and other input already received	Internal staff Key stakeholders Advisory Groups Interested community	Inform Draft Action Plan for the UFS
Council endorsement of Draft UFS Action Plan for consultation (December)				
Stage 2B	Feb/Mar 2024	Draft Urban Forest Strategy Action Plan	Broad community	Test and refine the Draft UFS and Action Plan
Council endorsement of Final UFS and Action Plan (April 2024)				

Stage 1A Engagement Program

This report presents the findings of Stage 1A engagement with key stakeholders to inform the development of the Draft Vision and Strategic Principles.

A total of 14 key stakeholder groups and 14 highly active individuals were invited to attend a Mayor’s Round Table held on 22 May 2023. Representation was sought from a diverse range of perspectives including environment, biodiversity, business, cultural heritage, older persons, sustainability, young people, and community.

The Round Table provided stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss their views on urban greening directly with the Mayor and Councillors. Participants were involved in the interpretation of the background research



and helping to translate this, using their local knowledge and expertise, to the Port Phillip context to inform the draft Vision and Strategic Principles.

As shown in Table 1, 41 key stakeholders (individuals or group representatives) participated. Key stakeholders unable to attend the Round Table could participate in an interview.

Table 1. Overview of Stage 1A engagement program and participation

Engagement activity	Details of participants	Number of participants
Mayor’s Round Table (Monday, 22 May, 5.30 to 8.30pm, St Kilda Town Hall)	Key stakeholders (by invitation)	37
Interview-based feedback	Key stakeholders unable to attend the Round Table	3
Email feedback	3 key stakeholders participating in the Round Table 1 key stakeholder unable to attend the Round Table	1
Total participants		41

A total of 37 stakeholders attended the session comprising 16 highly active individuals and 21 representatives of key stakeholder groups. Four other stakeholder groups participated via an interview or an email submission.

The stakeholder groups, community organisations, and Council Advisory Groups represented are listed below accompanied by the number of representatives, if more than one.

- BEST (3)
- Business Advisory Group (3 representatives)
- Clarendon and Coventry Streets Business Association
- Cultural Heritage Reference Committee
- Dig-In Community Gardens
- EarthCare (2)
- Ecocentre (3)
- Friends of Alma Park
- Friends of Elder Creek (2)
- Older Person’s Advisory Committee
- Port Melbourne Walks
- Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) (4)
- Port Phillip Pickers
- Protect Our Planes (POP) (2)
- South Melbourne Sustainability Group
- The Heart Gardening Project
- Westgate Biodiversity/Billi Nursery (3)
- Youth Advisory Group

Round Table participants provided a substantial volume of detailed feedback and a total of 842 individual pieces of information were gathered. In addition, in-depth interview-based and email feedback was also received, with all feedback informing this report.

3. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – VISION

Summary – Vision

Words or terms that participants most frequently referenced relating to the vision included: Community, Species, Trees, Biodiversity, Nature, Water, Spaces, Climate and Corridor.

Eleven descriptive themes emerged from participants presenting the aspirations for the Urban Forest Strategy. These related to:

- Extending natural habitat, interconnecting corridors, and increasing biodiversity.
- Appreciating the importance of the urban forest through community education and shared responsibility.
- A non-negotiable commitment to greening, with bold leadership, shared knowledge, investment, and creative approaches.
- Understory and layered canopy integrated in roadways, laneways, nature strips, coastline, and privately owned properties.
- Strategic choices and policies around planning and development, open space, and species selection.
- Valuing trees and vegetation and protecting established, mature, and heritage trees on all land in the City.
- Balancing and integrating the needs of nature with people, respecting environment and heritage.
- Better managing water as a precious resource.
- Mitigating a climate emergency and building climate resilience.
- Re-imagining open green spaces and unused spaces (roads, median strips) to increase equity.
- Embracing sustainability principles and minimising all forms of waste.

In 2021, Council adopted the Community's 2040 Vision for Port Phillip: *'A liveable and vibrant City that enhances the wellbeing of our community'*.

The Greening Port Phillip Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) is one action to help work towards this Vision, and Council is seeking to develop a clear and shared aspiration or vision, specific to greening, which reflects what the Port Phillip community wants to achieve.

Vision

Mayor's Round Table participants were prompted with three questions to explore ideas for the Vision:

- What should we be trying to achieve with the Urban Forest Strategy?
- If this UFS was successful, what would Port Phillip look, feel and be like in 2040?
- How can Port Phillip be a leader and innovative in this space?

Participants contributed to table-based discussions and expressed a wide range of views and ideas including: improving the quality of life, creating bio links, integrating people and nature, shared responsibility, tree equity, healthy soil and habitat, plant and species selection, water management, canopy cover, community involvement and education, and being self-sustaining and a leader in urban forestry. The relevant feedback from email/ interview participants has also been incorporated.

As shown in the word cloud visualisation in Figure 2, participants suggested a wide range of ideas to inform the draft Vision ((based on 100 most frequently reported words with four or more letters).



Participant ideas were grouped and categorised into 11 descriptive themes. Taken together, these themes present the aspirations for the UFS based on what participants want to achieve:

- We will extend our beautiful healthy natural habitat and interconnected corridors and increase urban biodiversity for plants, wildlife, birdlife, animals, insects, and microorganisms to thrive and support the liveability, health, and wellbeing of current and future generations.
- We will realise the importance of our vibrant urban forest by educating, engaging, and supporting our community to share responsibility and become proud custodians of our urban environment.
- Greening Port Phillip is not negotiable, and will require bold leadership, shared knowledge, investment, and creative approaches to achieve our ambitious targets and desired practical outcomes.
- We want Port Phillip to look and feel greener with understory and layered canopy thoughtfully and creatively planted on our roadways, laneways, nature strips, coastline, and privately owned properties.
- We will need to collectively, and carefully, make choices that align with Greening Port Phillip, from planning and designing quality developments and more open green spaces, to selecting plants and resilient species.
- Valuing our trees and vegetation is a crucial element to our urban forest and we will increase, maintain, monitor, and protect our beautiful trees, especially established, mature, and heritage trees on Council, public, and private land across Port Phillip.
- We will need to balance and integrate the needs of nature with people as it is our responsibility to restore and respect our environment and heritage.
- Water is a precious resource, and we will get better at capturing and managing water via creative uses of permeable spaces and protecting our bay and coastal character.
- Greening Port Phillip will be integral to our climate resilience, mitigating a climate emergency and the associated effects of urban heat and ecological crisis.
- Integrated urban greening will involve re-imagining the way we plan for, and use, our open green spaces and unused spaces (roads, median strips), so there is more equitable access to green spaces across our growing City for passive and active users.
- We will support our urban forest environment by embracing sustainability principles, self-sustaining food forests or orchards, seed harvesting, composting, and minimising all forms of waste.

Vision challenges

When asked “What are the challenges of realising this Vision?”, the following comments were recorded during the whole-of-room discussion and noted in the interview/email feedback:

- Actions getting 'lost in translation', not original intent
- Activating community 'we can'
- Budget or funding
- Community ownership and sharing of open spaces
- Community perceptions, education, and knowledge
- Conflicting policies (examples traffic planning and management of Albert Park)
- Council support
- Diversity of communities and needs across Port Phillip, one-size approach will not suit all

- Ephemeral or transient nature of community
- Effectively communicating and reaching the community by using multiple methods
- Insufficient ecological knowledge
- Making greening enforceable and achieving compliance from all
- Needs positive leadership
- Nurturing and supporting young plantlings
- Opposition from individuals either residents or businesses over small details rather than broader policy
- Population growth, housing, carparks
- Risk aversion and too much influence of a few loud voices
- Setting valuable and impactful targets
- Water and irrigation.



4. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

Summary – Strategic Principles

Table-based group discussions centred around three topics and identified what was important, challenges and priorities for each. Key elements of each topic are outlined below.

Protect and manage existing urban forest

- Important because: It has a proven ability to survive, we have a moral obligation to protect it and it is a community asset with economic value. It is beautiful, fosters a sense of community spirit, supports health, wellbeing, and liveability, and is integral to neighbourhood character. It supports clean air, protects us, builds climate resilience, and supports biodiversity.
- Challenges: Community awareness and buy-in, and conflicting views around legacy trees, safety, and native planting. Human behaviours, lack of capacity and incentives for private greening, conflicting developer priorities. Council budget priorities and legacy infrastructure and maintenance practices. Environmental challenges and some areas being more difficult to green than others.
- Priorities: Greater prioritisation and sustained budget investment by Council. Prioritising existing urban forest and sequentially adding to it following clear principles. Enhancing compliance and strengthening the planning scheme. Educating and empowering the community and improving urban water management. Focussing on vegetating the difficult areas.

Enhance the urban forest

- Important because: We need an urban forest suitable for 2040, a climate emergency, and growing population. It is important for liveability, health, and wellbeing and has environmental, economic, cultural, and social benefits. A holistic approach requires equitable greening across the municipality and succession planning with resilient species, understory, more canopy, and new biodiversity.
- Challenges: Increasing awareness and understanding. Finding incentives to engage and empower the community to get active. Securing sufficient budget for consultation, Strategy development, implementation, and ongoing management. Climate change and urban heat island effects on air and water quality. Gaps in evidence, expertise, and data. Inequity of open space across the municipality and engaging owners of private and other government land.
- Priorities: Educating and engaging the community and establishing partnerships. Learning from others. Enhancing corridors, canopy coverage, biodiversity, permeability, diversity, and species propagation. Maintaining what we already have. Incentivising shared responsibility. Conflicting views around setting long-term goals and moving to action with a sense of urgency. Funding new open green space and quality maintenance.

Engage and collaborate with the community

- Important because: Nature requires stewardship, we need to be actively involved, address resistance and share responsibility to protect urban biodiversity and achieve cultural change. Engagement ensures different voices are heard and ideas, resources, and expertise are shared. This leads to collaboration which supports implementation, outcomes and celebrations.
- Challenges: Reaching and informing diverse segments of the community, those disinterested in or opposed to Council's involvement in urban forestry. Budget constraints, ongoing support for



initiatives to create interest, and reporting back outcomes. General complacency to be part of the conversation, understand the long-term impacts of climate change, and take responsibility.

- **Priorities:** A comprehensive education and outreach engagement program reinforcing the importance of the urban forest to a healthy community and providing activities to learn and participate. Sharing positive stories, showing progress and celebrate success. Working collaboratively with the right stakeholders, creating a Council key contact point, and collecting baseline data.

In addition to the table-based discussions, seven descriptive themes emerged from individual feedback on the importance of greening and top priorities:

- Adapting to climate change, rebalancing efforts to cool our City, and reducing carbon emissions to protect and increase our local biodiversity and ecosystem
- Protecting and enhancing tree canopy on Council, public and private land
- Selecting suitable and functional trees and vegetation to support a beautiful urban forest
- Fresh air, clean water, and shared green open spaces enhancing community health and wellbeing
- Equity of greening across the city
- Council commitment, bold leadership, cultural change, and investment in urban forestry
- Community education about the importance of an urban forest, community engagement and partnerships

Alongside the vision of the Greening Port Phillip Urban Forest Strategy, Council is also seeking to establish a set of Strategic Principles to guide decisions about how this Vision should be pursued, and what is prioritised.

Mayor’s Round Table participants were presented with three discussion topics to inform the draft Strategic Principles:

- Protect and manage existing urban forest
- Enhance the urban forest
- Engage and collaborate with the community

Each discussion topic was elaborated with three prompt questions “Why is this important?”, “What are the challenges?”, and “What should we prioritise?”.

Participants contributed to table-based discussions and relevant email/interview feedback has been incorporated. As shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4, participants provided a wide range of ideas which have been grouped and categorised by discussion topic and question. Selected verbatim comments are incorporated throughout to illustrate key themes.

Table 2. Themes in feedback from table-based discussions – Protect and manage

Why is it important?	
<p>We have a moral obligation to protect and manage our existing urban forest. It has proven its ability to survive. While some aspects are not in optimal condition or are difficult to green, they are a community asset with economic value and worthy of protection and ongoing investment.</p> <p>Our urban forest is beautiful. It fosters a sense of community spirit and supports our health, wellbeing, and liveability now, and into the future. Urban forestry is integral to our neighbourhood character and adds value to our</p>	<p><i>“Our urban forest is a small part of the larger forestry asset, and we have a moral obligation to maintain our patch Fostering sense of community, community building, health and</i></p>



<p>properties, however it is currently limited. Competing priorities often trees being removed or reduced with new developments, and we need to learn from the past.</p> <p>Our existing urban forest supports clean air, cooling, and carbon offsetting. It provides habitat for existing wildlife, birdlife, insects, and biodiversity. It protects us from the elements and assists with flood mitigation and erosion control.</p>	<p><i>wellbeing and sanctuary</i></p> <p><i>“Protecting health of trees, trees take years to grow and health of people, birds, air, water, and cooling”</i></p> <p><i>“Existing trees are a good investment rather than always focusing on new planting”</i></p>
<p>What are the challenges?</p>	
<p>Community awareness, education, involvement, and gaining support for urban forestry.</p> <p>Conflicting views around retaining older or legacy trees and vegetation that is no longer suitable for locations or environmental conditions as well as pruning or removing trees for safety reasons, and varying perceptions of native plants.</p> <p>Some human behaviours such as dumping by ships and private yachts, and tree vandalism and theft. Private property residents may not have the capacity to green their property and a lack of imagination and incentives for reimagining lawns and gardens. Developer goals are often unsupportive with new developments involving the removal or reduction of trees, and tree removal penalties appear to be a cost of a business.</p> <p>Competing priorities for Council’s budget, built infrastructure versus green infrastructure, inherent practices around maintaining paths and planting, need to overhaul the maintenance and care system for green areas are maintained, maintenance being outsourced to contractors, and engineered designs that divert flood waters through areas that impact trees and vegetation.</p> <p>Environmental factors such as erosion, flood mitigation, weather, water availability, beach water quality and run off on hard surfaces after heavy rains.</p> <p>Some areas of the municipality are difficult to green.</p> <p>Evidence and knowledge gaps.</p>	<p><i>“Community awareness, educate, involvement of citizens”</i></p> <p><i>“Penalties for tree removal are not enough, cost of business and not valued by developers”</i></p> <p><i>“Species composition and vegetative structure is not meeting our future desires, plants in the 1980’s is not suitable now”</i></p>
<p>What should we prioritise?</p>	
<p>Trees and vegetation as they have a community and economic value and must be a higher priority for Council. A sustained budget investment beyond Council cycle (generational benefits), funding, quality maintenance, and technology to understand and monitor nature.</p> <p>Producing a long-term plan that draws on our history with planting and gathering baseline data before moving forward. Prioritise existing urban forest and big or established trees for carbon offsetting and sequentially add through an evolving approach. Have clear principles to guide the selection</p>	<p><i>“Engaging the broader community in owning and valuing the importance of our existing urban forest”</i></p> <p><i>“Establishing a culture of ‘valuing’ vegetation through leadership and education, celebrating programs,</i></p>



<p>and removal of species, plants, and trees and climate resilient succession planning for tree canopy continuity and local indigenous climate resilient species.</p> <p>Reviewing and strengthening the current planning scheme so urban forest and important tree protection on private land is enforceable. Increasing tree removal penalties to protect/preserve trees and requiring developers to deliver long term, quality maintenance contracts.</p> <p>Educating and engaging community members to value the importance and benefits of our urban forest. Working together to empower people to plan and make appropriate choices and celebrating our success stories.</p> <p>Improving the quality and use of urban water and adopting a more integrated approach to capturing water including rethinking suburban topography, footpaths and bluestone laneways and trapping sediment.</p> <p>Being clear on the purpose of vegetation in each area or precinct, focusing on the more difficult, neglected areas.</p> <p>Preserving, valuing, and investing in green, natural spaces.</p>	<p><i>successes and what we have done and storytelling</i></p> <p><i>“Preserve and maintain established trees for carbon offsetting, especially big trees”</i></p>
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Table 3. Themes in feedback from table-based discussions – Enhance

Why is it important?	
<p>We need to create a grand plan for an urban forest that is fit for the climate in 2040, a climate emergency, and our growing population.</p> <p>Enhancing our urban forest and green space is important to our liveability, health, and wellbeing. Urban forestry brings many benefits – environmental (cooling, greener, shade, fresh air, oxygen, and biodiversity), economic (food, trading, and property values), cultural (connection to country for first peoples), and social (sense of belonging). Yet, our existing urban forest is ageing or dying, and some suburbs experience significant water and storm water issues.</p> <p>We need succession planning for integrated greening and a functional urban environment with more resilient species. Let’s focus on understory, more canopy, carefully selecting more plants and trees, bringing new biodiversity into the area, permeability, saving threatened indigenous flora and fauna species. Enhancing our urban forest permits us to take a more holistic approach to managing corridors and spaces for migration, address areas of deficit, and work towards a more equitable spread of greening and urban forestry across the municipality.</p> <p>We will need to empower our community through education, communication, and engagement and draw on available resources. Regulations, developer contribution fees, and urban forest contributions may be necessary to reinforce the importance of our urban forest.</p> <p>Port Phillip can learn from case studies of different examples from Australia</p>	<p><i>“We want things to be greener”</i></p> <p><i>“Trees can have habitat value. Even if not providing canopy”</i></p> <p><i>“Ensuring indigenous flora and fauna don’t become extinct”</i></p> <p><i>“Something similar to Urban Art Contribution - Urban Forest Contribution”</i></p>



and around the globe.	
What are the challenges?	
<p>Community attitudes, public opinions, and perceptions that neat is well maintained. Sharing information to raise awareness and understanding that an urban forest is more than trees; plants have an ecological function, and we all share the benefits.</p> <p>Finding incentives and ways to engage and empower the community to get active, grow food and plants, and/or participate in local nature networks or gardens for wildlife programs.</p> <p>Creating an urban forest before being able to enhance it. Council planting species for canopy and biodiversity that are suitable to the environment, establishing and implementing best practice techniques for pruning, street tree planting, and spraying.</p> <p>Securing Council agreement and a budget commitment that is sufficient for consultation, to develop and implement the Strategy including sequential planting, ongoing quality maintenance and management. Working through the complexity and moving beyond a short-term focus and low hanging fruit.</p> <p>Environmental factors such as climate change and urban heat island effect on air and water quality.</p> <p>Evidence and expertise gaps, limited data on the net effect of tree removals, canopy cover assessments, gross primary productivity of trees, Street Tree Program plantings, and impacts.</p> <p>Addressing litter and rubbish so it does not reach get into our waterways or get eaten by animals and enforcing the collecting of dog waste which causes pollution.</p> <p>Enhancing the urban forest is difficult due to inequity of open space across the municipality, Parks Victoria owning and controlling parkland, capacity to protect greening on private land, naked patches where trees will need to be replaced, electrical line clearance (and placing lines underground), and limited opportunities to green high rise and multi-storey buildings.</p>	<p><i>“An ongoing discussion between the community and Council”</i></p> <p><i>“Lack of data - net effect of tree removals, canopy cover assessments, delay and impact of this”</i></p> <p><i>“Compelling landholders to protect greening on private land”</i></p>
What should we prioritise?	
<p>Consulting, educating, and engaging community members in the value of greening, enabling people, and presenting inspirational examples. Working together with citizens, schools, community organisations, and government agencies.</p> <p>Gathering information and evidence through canopy cover assessments, auditing and mapping, tree health audits and seeking expertise for species selection and ecological outcomes. Learning from what others have already done successfully.</p> <p>Creating and enhancing corridors, increasing canopy coverage, enhancing urban biodiversity, increasing permeability, diversity, and species propagation. Maintaining what we already have, creating and implementing</p>	<p><i>“Engage people in the value of greening”</i></p> <p><i>“Ecological outcomes - including ecological experts in the formation of landscape plans (in the planning scheme)”</i></p> <p><i>“Setting realistic targets and staging these targets - review to make sure its successful”</i></p>



<p>planting guides so tree planting and street tree planting is successful. No tokenistic urban forest.</p> <p>Incentives for shared responsibility such as rate reductions for greening on private land, incentives for the community and developers. Encouraging green walls, façades, and roofs, as well as de-lawning or de-grassing to increase urban biodiversity.</p> <p>Focusing on the overall benefit by setting long-term goals with actions, having realistic and staged targets, and tangible accountability. Incorporating the urban forest strategy into planning schemes.</p> <p>Moving to action, having a sense of urgency, increasing the pace of the process and progress.</p> <p>Funding and expenditure on new open green space and quality maintenance.</p>	<p><i>“Fast tracking and implementation”</i></p>
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Table 4. Themes in feedback from table-based discussions – Engage and collaborate

Why is it important?	
<p>Nature needs us all to get onboard this journey, to get involved, and have a sense of ownership and stewardship. Through information, engagement, and working together we can build understanding, resilience, a sense of community, and empower ourselves to make a difference.</p> <p>Individually and collectively, we need to address resistance and preconceptions, and reach consensus on decisions about sharing responsibility to protect urban biodiversity and achieve cultural change.</p> <p>Through engagement we can hear different voices and generate shared knowledge, broader perspectives, new ideas, and access previously untapped expertise and resources.</p> <p>Engagement can transform and build knowledge and create momentum.</p> <p>Engagement leads to collaboration which supports progress, implementation, outcomes, success, and celebrations.</p>	<p><i>“Collaboration is important so we can make progress”</i></p> <p><i>“Better ideas from different people”</i></p> <p><i>“Transforms existing knowledge and builds knowledge”</i></p>
What are the challenges?	
<p>Reaching and informing diverse stakeholders, developers, schools, transient community, harder to reach demographic groups (young people, migrants, older persons, persons who are socially isolated), those disinterested or opposed to Council’s involvement in urban forestry.</p> <p>Budget constraints and ongoing support for initiatives to create interest (primary school projects, workshops with guest speakers, printed signage, stakeholder engagement, promoting inspiring projects) and reporting back outcomes.</p> <p>Complacency, engaging community members to be part of the conversation, understand the long-term impacts of climate change, and take responsibility.</p>	<p><i>“Involving the least interested people in the community”</i></p> <p><i>“Finding the right channels of communication”</i></p> <p><i>“Ongoing support for initiatives”</i></p>



What should we prioritise?	
<p>Comprehensive education and outreach engagement program that focuses on environmental initiatives for neighbourhoods or set areas, young people, and schools and meaningful engagement. Raise awareness about the importance of the urban forest to a healthy community, provide opportunities to connect with nature, walking tours, trial plantings, free indigenous plants, 'best street' or 'best suburb' competition to encourage a sense of pride, and use signage to promote greening activities.</p> <p>Sharing positive stories with the community about the benefits of getting involved and to generate discussion. Demonstrate actions that are happening, show progress and celebrate success.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with the right stakeholders such as VicRoads, Gardens for Wildlife, restoration ecologists, indigenous groups, innovators, as well as residents, organisations, and agencies.</p> <p>Creating a Council key contact point such as the Urban Forest Concierge.</p> <p>Data collection, mapping land ownership and available resources.</p>	<p><i>“Engage and collaborate locally - different areas have different priorities”</i></p> <p><i>“Inviting early generation to get involved - encourage them to be leaders, guiding them, indigenous involvement, walking tours, education”</i></p> <p><i>“Collaboration with all parties and residents, organisations, and agencies”</i></p>

Following the table-based discussions, participants were invited to individually reflect and respond to two questions/prompts to elicit their personal feedback:

- Why is greening important for Port Phillip?
- The top priority should be ...

As shown in Table 5, participants ideas have been grouped and categorised into seven descriptive themes. This includes relevant feedback from emails/interviews.

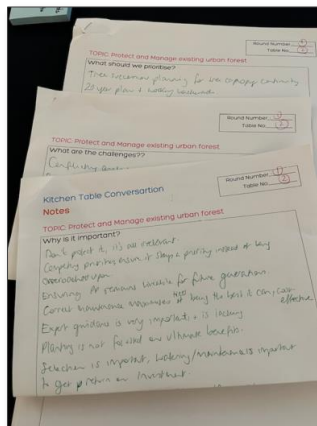
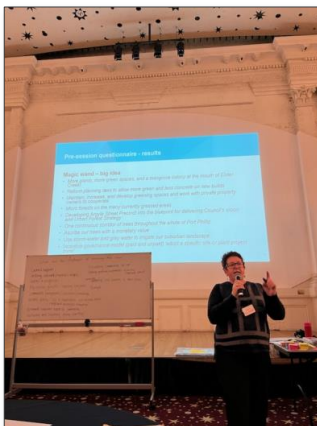
Table 5. Themes in individualised feedback for the draft Strategic Principles

Adapting to climate change, rebalancing efforts to cool our City, and reducing carbon emissions to protect and increase our local biodiversity and ecosystem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Climate change impacting biodiversity</i> • <i>Biodiversity increase</i> • <i>Top priority should be increasing biodiversity and increasing biomass</i> • <i>Top priority decarbonisation</i> • <i>Climate, resilience, biodiversity enhancement</i> • <i>Increase biodiversity</i> • <i>Biodiversity, climate change mitigation, water retention, soil health</i> • <i>Heat Island... reduction</i> • <i>Greening Port Phillip will rebalance our landscape in ways that honour our natural heritage; rebalance our microclimates during a climate and biodiversity crisis; and beautify our city</i> • <i>Addresses urban heating caused by pavements and buildings without setbacks.</i> • <i>Urban heat island effect.</i>
Protecting and enhancing tree canopy on Council, public and private land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tall canopy to rival high rises</i>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because tree canopy and natural places are essential to tackle the climate crisis • More trees • Protecting our heritage (plane) trees • Future-proof public greenery • Top priority should be maximising budget contributions to tree planting asap. Trees take time to grow, and we are in a CLIMATE EMERGENCY • The top priority should be setting an achievable planting goal, which has a built-in growth plan • Top priority, the green line implementation • Environmental imperative, regeneration, beautification • Shade trees
<p>Selecting suitable and functional trees and vegetation to support a beautiful urban forest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top priority should be indigenous plants that are climate-suited to the future of CoPP • Multifunctional plants • Tree choices that restore eco-systems • Taller trees for fauna highway • Acknowledge original EVC's - mid storey, upper storey, plenty of ground covers already • Ensuring that outcomes and planting plans reflect aims of biodiversity benefit through consultation beyond landscape architects • CoPP to link in with Pollinator corridor MBG - Yalakut William • Emphasise trees must be selected to meet ecological criteria alongside structural and aesthetic criteria. The prioritisation of indigenous species as street trees will see broadscale environmental benefits, so desperately needed at this time. Many of the existing introduced street trees will still be with us in decades or even centuries to come, but their presence should be an exception, not the dominant rule, if we are to have a healthy, functioning, and beautiful urban forest.
<p>Fresh air, clean water, and shared green open spaces enhancing community health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greening supports our health. People, mental and physical. Supports our journey into the future • Green spaces have many positive health and society benefits • Fresh air and habitat for animals and people. Respite from urban environment. Micro-climate. Something that belongs to everyone • To provide shelter for birds and beauty of shade for people as well as better air for all • Top priority rewilding open spaces and making more • Improves the liveability of the city • Encourage a healthier lifestyle by making outdoor living more attractive. • Mental health, it brings care and joy. When you're greening, it is an ongoing process. That creates connection – which spans mental health, connection to land, connection to each other.
<p>Equity of greening across the city</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top priority greening 'forgotten' areas • Safer greener Argyle St Precinct • Massive funding for greening • Mapping possibly with community engagement (via EcoCentre) to better understand public and private realms and create a sense of 'our' urban forest, not councils. ('bald spots?') • Segmenting the municipality by area not suburb • Top priority is delivering equity of green spaces for St Kilda East, stop the cross-subsidising from East St Kilda to the leafier parts of council • Equitable distribution of urban forest benefit

Council commitment, bold leadership, cultural change, and investment in urban forestry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By continuing to be active in this topic. Employing expert individuals to tackle this project</i> • <i>Connecting people with similar ideas/needs</i> • <i>Top priority should be community understanding and appreciation of the strategy</i> • <i>The top priority should be to encourage the community to be part of the goal setting and helping to achieve the goals</i> • <i>Deliver quick wins, fast</i> • <i>Quick wins; cheaper the better (e.g., converting nature strips to indigenous plants by the community under council guidance)</i> • <i>Cultural change rather than a big bold vision</i>
Community education about the importance of an urban forest, community engagement and partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community collaborations (educate, engage, activate) (e.g., EcoCentre as community champions)</i> • <i>Community education</i> • <i>Community consultation and education as to why urban forests are important</i> • <i>Community engagement</i> • <i>Community connectivity and security (food, water)</i>





5. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Summary – Suggested actions

When asked about **personal actions** participants could take to help green Port Phillip, three descriptive themes emerged:

- Taking action, rewilding my own garden, backyard and nature strip by planting and maintaining biodiverse vegetation, trees, and local plant species.
- Joining in, getting others involved, participating in community activities, and contributing my time and expertise.
- Advocating for a greener Port Phillip and the protection and improvement of our urban forest.

A further seven descriptive themes emerged when discussing **ideas to trial and consider**:

- Information sharing, engaging educational activities, and incentives that empower the community to get involved.
- Strengthening partnerships with environmental community organisations, neighbouring Councils, environmental experts, and local schools, and establishing local nature networks.
- Protecting specific types of trees and more tree planting in specific locations and throughout Port Phillip.
- Producing an urban forest strategy that shows bold leadership, respects the beauty and importance of nature in precincts and across the municipality, and is informed by best practice and expert input.
- Getting better at capturing and managing water and being creative with impervious surfaces, non-porous materials, soil, kerbing, drainage, and storm water.
- Other specific ideas for Council to consider.

Participants also reported a comprehensive list of cohorts and stakeholders that should be heard and considered as part of the UFS development.

While Stage 1A engagement with key stakeholders was focused on informing the draft Vision and Strategic Principles for the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), it was an important opportunity to gather initial input into desired priorities and action ideas. This information will help add context to the draft Vision and Strategic Principles and will also be used in Stage 2 to help inform the draft Action, Implementation and Evaluation Plan.

Individual actions

Participants were presented with a discussion prompt to generate ideas about the personal actions they could take to contribute to greening:

- I can help make Port Phillip greener by...

As shown in Table 6, participants ideas have been grouped and categorised into three descriptive themes. This includes relevant input from interviews/emails.



Table 6. Themes in individualised feedback for personal actions to make Port Phillip greener

<p>Taking action, rewilding my own garden, backyard and nature strip by planting and maintaining biodiverse vegetation, trees, and local plant species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lead by doing (not talking)</i> • <i>I can help by continuing to plant more indigenous flora in my garden</i> • <i>Taking it on myself to maintain the trees that are neglected</i> • <i>Increasing vegetation in my own backyard</i> • <i>Wilding my nature strip</i> • <i>Planting local plant species</i> • <i>I can help Port Phillip be greener by planting more where I can</i> • <i>Planting vegetation that houses and feeds wildlife</i> • <i>I can help Port Phillip be greener by maintaining and watering local plants and trees.</i> • <i>Encouraging others to do the same</i> • <i>Planting a biodiverse nature strip</i> • <i>I can help Port Phillip be greener by more rewilding of our garden</i> • <i>Spending more time outdoors</i>
<p>Joining in, getting others involved, participating in community activities, and contributing my time and expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Directly involving under-represented demographics e.g., youth groups</i> • <i>Joining a 'friends of' group</i> • <i>Contributing my environmental and social science experience and qualifications from the last 25 years across Australia and international</i> • <i>Stonington Biodiversity Early Learning Centre package by EcoCentre has been very successful - up skilling them to plant</i> • <i>I can help through community activation, supporting this work, planting in my neighbourhood</i> • <i>Attending community planting days to increase biodiversity</i> • <i>I can volunteer time, do not have my own garden but love gardening</i> • <i>I can help Port Phillip be greener by committing to be engaged in urban forest discussions and getting my family and friends to be more engaged</i> • <i>Help be greener by community activities/events to connect people to nature where they live</i> • <i>Putting our hands up. The EcoCentre can lend superpowers, people power, education, and public events (thousands of volllies), technical knowledge, work at ecosystem scale solutions and cross check. Partner based work from early years and seniors, businesses, and scientists. We are excited to help and bring community along.</i> • <i>Offering expert technical advice on the attainment of ecological goals through design</i>
<p>Advocating for a greener Port Phillip and the protection and improvement of our urban forest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Safer greener Argyle St Precinct</i> • <i>Voting further LEFT</i> • <i>Council should consider diversifying large parks which are mostly used by MALE sporting - intimidating. More planting quiet spaces for females to go, diverse people, not just men with balls</i> • <i>Help Port Phillip be greener by putting a value on trees in private land, and restricting urban growth around existing trees</i> • <i>Protecting our heritage (plane) trees</i> • <i>Improve parks with indigenous plants, trees, shrubs, ground cover etc.</i> • <i>Creating green spaces in new developments</i>



Ideas to consider or trial

Ahead of the Mayor’s Round Table, registered participants were invited to submit a response to the following question “If you could wave a magic wand, what would be your big idea to green Port Phillip?”.

In addition, at the Round Table, participants were presented with two discussion prompts elicit further personal feedback and action ideas:

- Council should consider...
- Let’s trial a....

As shown in Table 7, participants ideas and suggestions have been grouped and categorised into six descriptive themes. This includes relevant feedback from emails/interviews.

Table 7. Themes in individualised feedback for ideas to consider or trial

Information sharing, engaging educational activities, and incentives that empower the community to get involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Holding get togethers on a Saturday or Sunday during daylight and save the environment</i> • <i>Massive mobilisation to green Port Phillip</i> • <i>Incentives for sharing private land for neighbourhood gardens</i> • <i>Better communication channels with community (ongoing)</i> • <i>Getting involved!</i> • <i>Love your local park day</i> • <i>Working with locals more</i> • <i>Counteract biases in plantings - trees over other plant forms, eucalypts over other trees</i> • <i>The council should consider doing community plant giveaways in conjunction with the local indigenous nursery</i> • <i>EcoCentre 'living water workbees' calendar event model but around greening/biodiversity</i> • <i>Director of communication at council</i> • <i>Start the education process with children engagement</i> • <i>Engaging community members to 'adopt a tree garden' when new plantings are made in their local area. This would help to establish and maintain them.</i> • <i>Community information sharing forum (plant species etc.)</i> • <i>A compost solution for all homes</i> • <i>A community online forum and noticeboard to share successful ideas and projects, thereby inspiring others to try new ideas</i> • <i>A rolling set of workshops on local biodiversity for community members and residents</i> • <i>A community garden just for local bush foods, for community education and engagement</i> • <i>Developing a list of approved edible trees for planting and encouraging a project for community to plant in urban spaces (for example similar to the fruit trees on Bank St, South Melbourne)</i> • <i>Showcase Garden or a Garden Show to attract people and focus on the natural resources</i> • <i>Giving away of indigenous plants for nature strips</i> • <i>Would love clips of some local experts (e.g., Neil Blake/April Rhod at Bili Gio), so clear and inspiring!</i>
Strengthening partnerships with environmental community organisations, neighbouring Councils, environmental experts, and local schools, and establishing local nature networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Council should consider strong partnerships with nearby local governments and EcoCentre development</i>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council should consider supporting a local nature network for ongoing monitoring of local nature • Council should consider further consulting ecologists • How to leverage the EcoCentre in - education, buy-in ('we can' vs 'they should') and activation, plantings and maintenance, mapping and monitoring flora and fauna (e.g., citizen science which leads to education and buy in), leveraging/accessing non CoPP money to plant • Council should consider getting kids at creche, primary school and high school to collaborate on urban forest initiatives and strategy • Involving schools/young people in education around importance of biodiversity • Encourage citizen science and research • Seeking advice from ecological consultants/restoration ecologists prior to and during plant selection/design • A long-term maintenance and up-skilling, education delivery across community and organisations to skilfully look after their effectively local green spaces and plantings • Forest stewardship program • primary schools being part of urban forest activation • Citizen science with school age children and families to monitor changes in biodiversity over time • Gardens for wildlife/urban forest biodiversity role funding for EcoCentre to deliver • A paid and in-kind incentive program for community representatives to set up and lead on 're-wilding' and 're-greening' programs in that local area • Implement a Gardens for Wildlife program
<p>Protecting specific types of trees and more tree planting in specific locations and throughout Port Phillip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting our heritage (plane) trees • Protecting our exotic trees which are large with dense canopy. Not thin dry shadeless eucalyptus • Reintroducing mangroves or trialing a mangrove forest Elster Creek mouth • Plant trees in St Kilda cemetery • Planting trees in the middle of wide streets such as Alexandra St, East St Kilda • Planting more fruit and culturally important trees and plants • Chapter or section in the next strategy dealing with the maintenance and protection of the plane trees and their boulevards with associated actions and targets • Mangrove trees in Elwood • Let's trial planting lots of beautiful native plants that enhance community at all levels • Learn from which trees thrived through the millennial drought - use them • Assessment of trees health in the municipality • Safer greener Argyle St Precinct • Precinct based plans • Let's trial seagrass and mangrove planting at St Kilda west bend • Micro forests on the many currently grassed areas • One continuous corridor of trees throughout the whole of Port Phillip
<p>Producing an urban forest strategy that shows bold leadership, respects the beauty and importance of nature in precincts and across the municipality, and is informed by best practice and expert input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To display a strong positive leadership role. • To ensure decision making is based on policy and not reactive. • Placing a dollar value on trees that reflect their true value to the community and adjust penalties for removals • Bring in innovations in habitat, creation, and management. These should include management of noisy miner populations.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of public realms are limited by insurance policies (risk aversion). Look into what other more biodiverse councils are doing. • Wonder if it is possible to put together a panel of external experts who can be consulted throughout the process (e.g., tree specialists that are not part of the current culture) • Educating decision makers to environmental holistic approach and not just cost and aesthetics • Mother nature - treat her like a person • Council should consider the beautification enhanced urban forest provides • Hire an ecologist to oversee municipality-wide Biodiversity audit • For CoPP to revisit the Nature Strip Guidelines 2022 once the UFS is completed • Use a precinct perspective not just an overall municipality approach • Looking at equity and using heat mapping to focus on priority precincts • Council being an enabler
Getting better at capturing and managing water and being creative with impervious surfaces, non-porous materials, soil, kerbing, drainage, and storm water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-paving by justifying every square metre of existing impervious surface (i.e., if not justified then depave it) • Greening not just about trees, more porous materials, better drainage, improving soil • Consider greater use of storm water • Let's trial a storm water harvesting scheme for Catani Gardens • Trial more mud treatment in kerbs and other council managed areas
Other specific ideas for Council to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under planting of existing tree assets to grow our forest • Altering the streets to meet needs • Set forest goals for public/private encoded in planning schemes (e.g., enforceable) • Support the better management of Westgate Park, especially through close relations with Westgate Biodiversity and Bili Nursery • Consider the devastating loss of locally native flora/fauna • Consider change style, foreshore triangle other • Replacing grass median strips with wildflowers • Creating 'quiet', 'reflection' or even 'work' open spaces • Let's trial a pollinator corridor • Daylighting rules (in developments) • Let's trial more delightful moments (like crookshank street meadow) • Consider planting rare and endangered species • Greenline • Wildlife-friendly neighbourhood, gardens for wildlife, sympathetic vegetation choices on public land • Let's trial a green corridor from Balaclava to St Kilda east • Green corridor from Alma Park to Yalukit William Reserve • Rewilding our parks and Elwood land • Re-do the front garden beds at the St Kilda Town Hall with indigenous plantings to demonstrate and highlight biodiverse plantings. Currently it is just an exotic garden • Species succession planning 70 years plus like Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (Landscape Succession Strategy) • Reform planning laws to allow more green and less concrete on new builds • Developing Argyle Street Precinct into the blueprint for delivering Council's vision and Urban Forest Strategy

Important perspectives to consider

Participants were asked “What are the different perspectives we need to hear and consider?” and contributed to table-based discussions. As shown below, participants provided a comprehensive list of cohorts and stakeholders to be heard and considered as part of the UFS development. This includes relevant feedback from emails/interviews.

- Ageing population
- Apartment dwellers
- Bike riders
- Body corporate
- Business owners/operators
- Commuters - bicycle
- Council
- Developers
- Different demographics - faith groups, spiritual
- Ecologists
- First Nations
- Homeless people
- Indigenous
- Landlords and property owners
- Local business
- Multi-faith-spirituality of perspective
- New arrivals/migrants
- Organised sport
- People who do not have off-street parking
- People with mobility challenges
- Ratepayers
- Residents - renting and owners/occupiers, private realm
- Residents (short term and long term)
- Seniors living at home, older persons
- Silent majority (unengaged)
- Social housing
- Street workers
- Tourists and visitors
- Traders and businesses
- Tree permit holders
- Workers who do not live here
- Young people

