

Engagement report – street tree master plan (early engagement)



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Background

The City of Sydney's street tree master plan nominates the species of tree to be planted in each street across the local area. Our current plan was adopted by Council in 2011 and has guided our street tree planting since then.

We're gathering feedback from our communities, advice from experts, and experience gained during the implementation of the existing master plan to revise and update the street tree master plan.

This engagement report summarises the feedback received by community during early consultation.

This feedback will inform the final draft master plan, which will be placed on public exhibition in late 2022 to early 2023 for further community feedback.

Engagement summary

From 6 July to 3 August 2022, we asked the community for feedback on the type of street trees planted in the local area.

Consultation provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide early feedback on street trees in their area before the revised plan is drafted.

Consultation activities included online engagement, targeted stakeholder engagement, and an extensive digital communications plan.

This report outlines the community engagement activities that took place to support the consultation and summarises the key findings from the consultation.

Purpose of the engagement

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- educate the community about the range of information inputs and complex decision-making process that is undertaken when developing a street tree master plan
 - raise general awareness in the community about the master plan
 - hear people's views on specific examples of street trees across the local area
 - gather feedback from stakeholders and the community
 - identify key issues or themes raised by community
 - inform the final draft plan.
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Outcomes from the engagement

Over 559 submissions were received during the consultation. Below is a break-down of the feedback received:

- 505 completed an online survey
- 54 email submissions were received

Submissions received from community groups and organisations

- Michael Mobbs Sustainable Projects
- Surry Hills Business Alliance
- Woolloomooloo Insider

Key findings

London Plane trees

The planting of London Plane trees within specific streets and in general across the City was strongly commented on. People are concerned that the trees exacerbate / cause allergies, that the trees mature size is too large for some streetscapes, and that they aren't a native species.

There were some comments in support of the continued planting of London Plane trees. People commented on their hardiness, how they mark the change of seasons and provide extensive shade in summer and solar access in winter and how they create a sense of place in some streetscapes.

Canopy cover increase

Increasing the extent of canopy cover was another recurring theme in submissions received. This included requests to increase the canopy cover across the City, within a specific area and for tree planting within specific streets / locations. There was only one comment requesting a reduction in canopy cover.

People are supportive of increasing tree planting within roadways, with 66% of respondents wanting more trees in median strips.

Existing tree issues

There were a range of comments regarding existing tree issues that don't directly impact the future street tree master plan. Many relate to historic tree plantings, with the planting of those species not in our current street tree master plan, nor proposed in the future master plan. Specific requests for existing tree maintenance were also received. These requests were noted and actioned where required.

Native trees

Comments were received to increase the planting of native tree species within particular locations or generally across the City. This included requests for specific species and for specific outcomes, with bird habitat being a common request.

There were many comments requesting an increase in natives and deciduous species. The comments mostly indicated people want a deciduous native tree, without realising the limitations on this (there are only a few native trees that are deciduous, and they aren't suited to Sydney).

Positive comments

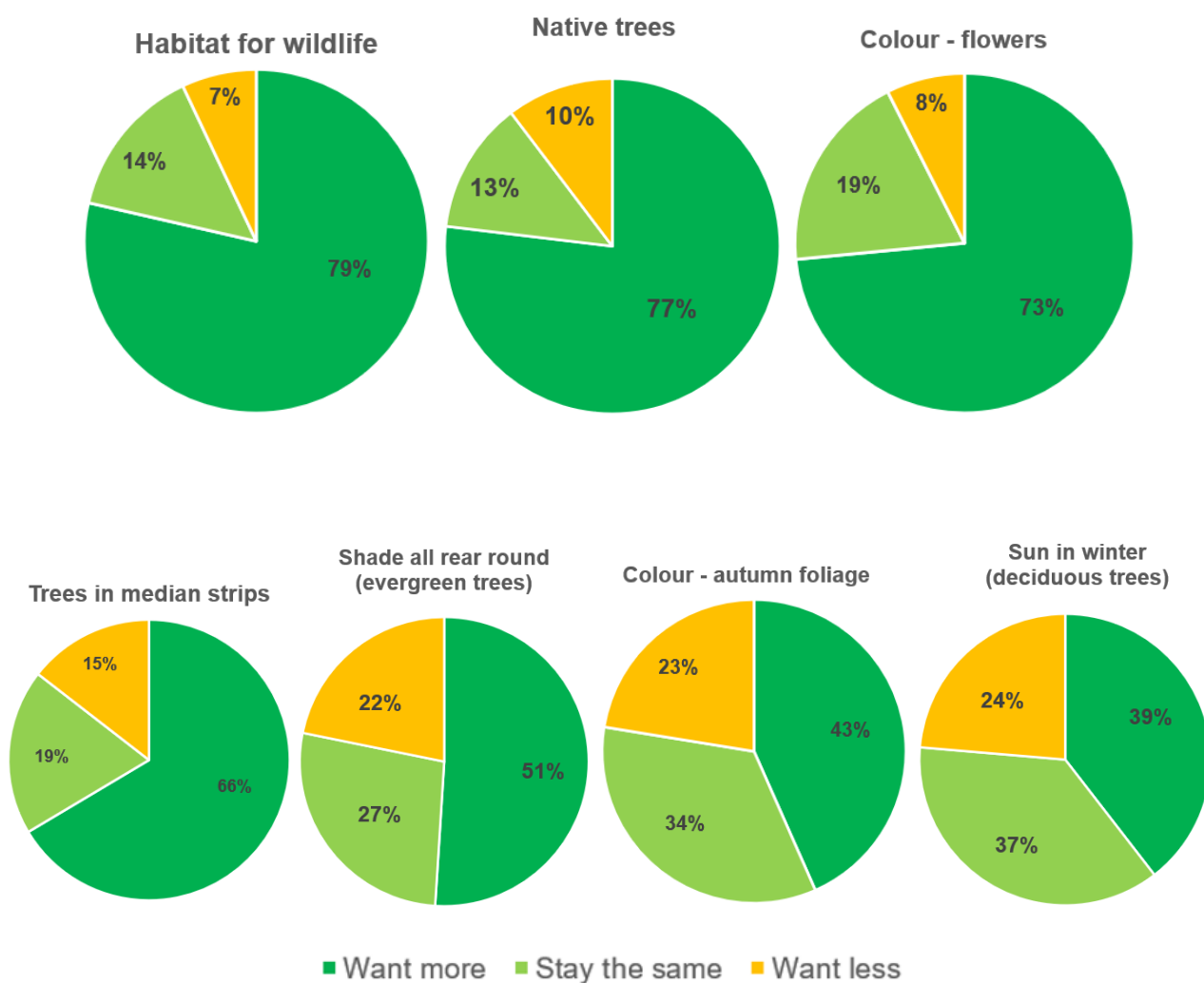
When asked how people feel about the trees in a particular street, respondents were given two options "I love them and want to tell you why" and "I have feedback or suggestions about the trees planted in my local area". A total of 25% of respondents selected "I love them and want to tell you why" as their feedback option.

Respondents detailed a range of reasons, such as their preference for a particular species, appreciation of the shade the tree provides, enjoyment of the birds, and a connection to nature generally.

Summary graphs of the survey results are outlined below. Habitat for wildlife, native trees and more colour through flowers were the top three things people wanted to see more of on their streets.

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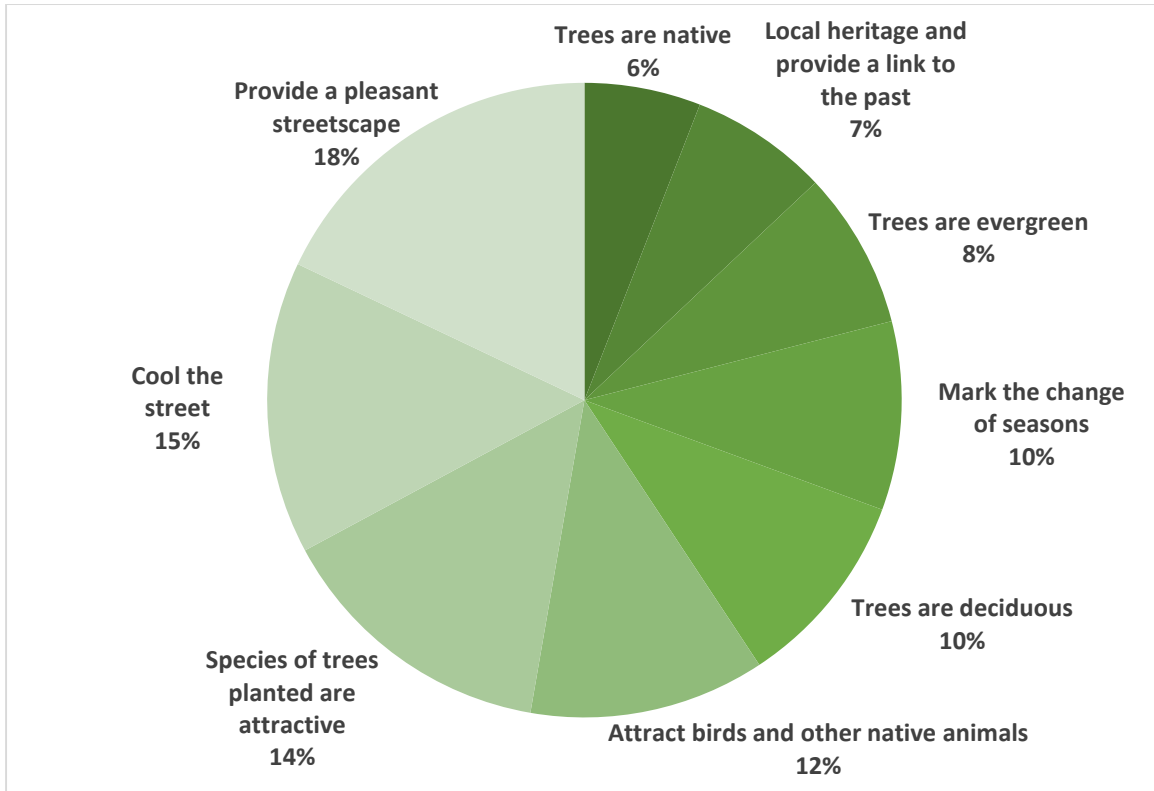
Would you like to see more/less/stay the same of the following...	More	Less	Stay the same
Habitat for wildlife	79%	7%	14%
Native trees	77%	10%	13%
Colour – flowers	73%	19%	8%
Trees in median strips	66%	15%	19%
Shade all year round (evergreen trees)	51%	22%	27%
Colour – autumn foliage	43%	23%	34%
Sun in winter (deciduous trees)	39%	24%	37%



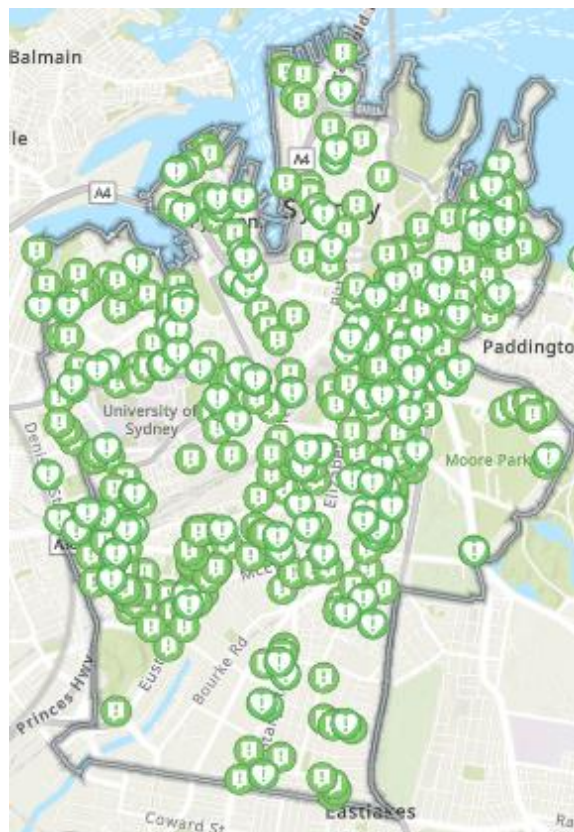
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When people selected “I love the trees on this street and want to tell you why”, respondents were given a range of options and asked to select all options that apply.

The top 3 responses included ‘provide a pleasant streetscape’ (18%), ‘cool the street’ (15%) and ‘species of trees planted are attractive’ (14%).



The map below shows that submissions were received from across the local council area



Subjects/issues raised in submissions

Subjects/topics raised in submissions

Several subjects/topics were raised in the feedback received. These were presented as concerns, suggestions and/or requests and are summarised below.

Feedback themes	Number of comments	City of Sydney response
London Plane Trees – comments regarding allergies, tree size and aren't a native species	119	<p>The City is limiting the planting of new Plane trees within the Plan.</p> <p>Plane trees have been a reliable, hardy urban species, and are a prominent feature in many parts of the City. As large mature trees they provide extensive canopy cover, and form many of the historic and significant avenues of trees and contribute to the sense of place in many of the local residential and commercial areas. Being deciduous they provide valuable shade to moderate summer heat but also allow sun to filter through their canopies to light and warm public spaces and private homes during winter.</p> <p>As the impact of climate change on urban environments is increasingly evident, research is focusing on the ability of plants and trees to cope with these changed conditions. Trees need to be able to cope or adapt to potential increases in average temperature as well as increased numbers of extreme heat days. They need to cope with periods of prolonged wet as well as periods of drought.</p> <p>Based on the latest research Plane Trees have limited capacity to deal with the predicted environmental conditions of a changing climate, and this requires us to now limit the number of new plantings of Plane trees.</p>

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Feedback themes	Number of comments	City of Sydney response
Canopy cover increase – comments requesting an increase in canopy cover across the City, within a specific area and for tree planting within specific streets / locations	81	The City is using a range of methods to increase canopy cover across our streets, parks and in private property. The Plan is a key tool to assist increasing canopy cover in streets.
Positive comments – generally supportive and ‘love these’ survey responses	69	Noted
Existing tree issues – items that do not affect the future master plan, such as historic tree plantings and maintenance requests	58	Noted. Issues passed to other teams within the City for action where required.
Native species (increase) – comments requesting an increase in natives in specific locations or generally	45	<p>The City’s key tree selection objective is to ensure the selection of the ‘right tree for the right place’. In other words, to ensure the selection of the species is optimised for the local environmental conditions and any other constraints of the planting location.</p> <p>We have increased use of native species in this Plan, while still catering to some important other needs such as winter solar access, appropriate tree sizes, tree longevity, tree form and habit, ongoing maintenance requirements, heritage and community expectations.</p> <p>Deciduous (and therefore exotic) trees are preferred in some locations since they shade streets from the summer heat, but also allow access to light and heat in inner city homes and public spaces in winter.</p> <p>Cities can be tough places for trees to grow, with paved surfaces and buildings reflecting light and heat, and soil that is often disturbed or compacted. This altered and challenging environment requires a wide variety of trees to suit a wide variety of conditions. To meet the current and future challenges that face our city, the urban forest will continue to be a mix of native and exotic, evergreen and deciduous tree species, ensuring the future resilience of the forest and a liveable city.</p>
Mixed comments – these responses had a broad range of themes, including request for native and deciduous trees, maintenance requests etc.	45	Noted. Comments passed to other teams within the City for action where required.

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Feedback themes	Number of comments	City of Sydney response
Species specific – comments included requests for the planting, or removal, of specific species of trees (not including Plane trees).	26	Noted
Outside LGA – comments related to issues outside the City.	19	Noted
Other – comments included requests for planting or greening in parks or areas not owned by the City (RMS land etc), specific greening requests for nesting birds and a botanical heritage information / request.	15	Noted
London Plane Trees - positive comments about their hardiness, shade in summer and solar access in winter etc. Comments also commented on specific streets (such as Bourke Street) and the mixed planting of Plane trees and Brush Box.	13	Noted. Please see comments above regarding Plane trees.
Species specific – comments (positive or not) about a particular species including species such as Jacaranda, Paperbarks, Pistachia, Blue Berry Ash, Crepe Myrtles (excludes Plane trees).	12	Noted
Deciduous species (increase) – comments requesting an increase in the planting of deciduous species	10	Noted. Please see comments above regarding increasing native trees, and the City's response to plant the 'right tree in the right place'.
Biodiversity, habitat and canopy - comments requesting an increase in the provision of a diverse urban forest, with more habitat and canopy cover.	10	The Plan strives to increase the diversity of street tree species, thereby providing a greater diversity and abundance of food sources, shelter, roosting and nesting opportunities. This has typically been through providing a greater diversity of trees within individual streets, often in combination with increased use of native species, while still catering to some important other needs such as winter solar access, appropriate tree sizes, tree longevity, tree form and habit, ongoing maintenance requirements, heritage and community expectations.
Solar access – comments relating to an increase in solar access, in winter and also all year round.	9	Noted. Please see comments above regarding increasing native trees, and the

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Feedback themes	Number of comments	City of Sydney response
		City's response to plant the 'right tree in the right place'.
Powerlines – comments relating to the excessive impact caused to existing trees and canopy cover overall, by overhead powerlines (including the Optus cable).	8	Noted. The City continues to advocate to minimise the impact of powerlines on our trees (including conversion to underground or bundled cables, and improve pruning by Ausgrid).
Native species (decrease) - comments requesting a decrease in the planting of native species	6	Noted. Please see comments above regarding increasing native trees, and the City's response to plant the 'right tree in the right place'.
Fruit trees (increase) – comments requesting more fruit (and nut) trees being planted to help feed the community.	4	Noted. The City supports the planting of fruit or nut trees in appropriate parks, but not as part of the street tree population.
Deciduous species (decrease)- comments requesting a decrease in the planting of deciduous species	4	Noted. Please see comments above regarding increasing native trees, and the City's response to plant the 'right tree in the right place'.
Footpath access - comments relating to the size of trees in narrow footpaths and impacts to pedestrian access.	3	Noted. Selecting the appropriately size tree for each street has been a key consideration in this Plan. This includes planting trees in traffic islands and median strips to allow for larger trees to be planted to deliver increased canopy cover while minimising pedestrian access issues.
Fruit trees (decrease) – comments requesting fewer trees that produce fruit and nuts being planted due to the maintenance issues they create.	2	Noted. Please see comments above regarding fruit / nut trees.
Canopy cover (decrease) – comment to stop tree planting and decrease canopy cover to allow the Council rates to be better spent.	1	Noted. The City's adopted policies to increase canopy cover are clear and are being undertaken to provide important benefits to community health and wellbeing and urban heat reduction.

Quotes from submissions illustrate a range of views from the community

I love the trees on my street. I do prefer deciduous trees generally to let light in however I wouldn't change the beautiful mostly paper barks that we have. I also want to say that the City of Sydney has some of the best street trees in the country. Great job team.

I just especially hate paperbark trees, find them really ugly and unappealing. The bark is messy, the leaves aren't that nice, the colour is really dull. Just not at all a fan. Wish there weren't so many of them around Alexandria!

London plane trees are beautiful and very helpful shade/sun trees but dreadful to live under. The fluff irritates our breathing and blocks up all the drain/gutters in our house. The fluff means we don't open our windows very often and windy days are dreadful. This is a year round problem.

Parramatta Road is a baking concrete hell, let's not sugar-coat it! Please plant more trees here! Give us a buffer along the edge of the road. I'd love to see any plantings here coupled with installation of permeable paving so that we can improve water management at the same time. Even better if there can be water gardens added.

All opportunities must be taken to plant European species such as Oaks, Elms, Beeches and Maples. These species are far more attractive than Australian natives, contribute to better shade-cover, better show the changing seasons, and make the city more urbane and sophisticated. I contend that those who dismiss European species as inappropriate are conflating their hatred of European history and culture and the objective suitability of northern-hemisphere species as street planting trees.

Changes to the plan

Changes to the plan from the community feedback

All feedback was considered during the master plan review. The table below indicates the extent of change made from the current master plan to the new draft master plan. The majority of responses were able to be accommodated to some extent.

Change type	Number of changes
Minor change supported – includes streets where the changes in species share similar attributes, such as changing from one native / evergreen species to another, or decisions species to another.	213
Major change supported – includes streets where the change was considerable, such as from an all deciduous species street to an all evergreen / native street.	21
Noted – includes comments that were general in nature, such as the positive ‘love this’ survey responses or those requesting an increase in canopy cover, with no impact to the master plan.	148
No change required - includes streets that had already been changed in the current street tree master plan (i.e. an existing tree species issue that has already been addressed in the current plan, and not change required for future plan).	94
Suggest change not supported – includes streets / comments where the change is not supported for technical reasons (such as planting large Figs into footpaths), or for other changes such as all native or all deciduous.	44
Not applicable – relates to comments provided that are outside the scope of the master plan (such as outside the council area, park trees or other issues)	39

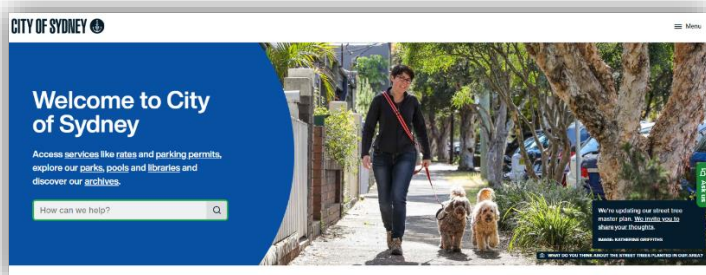
Communications activities

Activity	Outcome
Sydney Your Say webpage <p>The Sydney Your Say page had high time on site and scroll depth which suggest people were reading the content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,009 unique page views • 40% of those who visited the page clicked the survey link • 4:56 average time on page • 1,200 unique clicks on survey link • 2,071 people read 50% or more of the page
City of Sydney News Story <p>A news story was created to share across the City's channels and drive users to the SYS page and survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 406 unique page views • 8:21 average time on page • 814 people read 50% or more of the page from this channel
Notification email to key stakeholders <p>An email was sent to key stakeholders with information about the consultation and inviting feedback.</p>	<p>Sent on 8 July 2022 to 95 stakeholders</p>
Sydney Your Say eNews <p>An item was included in the July 2022 Sydney Your Say eNewsletter.</p>	<p>Sent on 7 July 2022 to 7,152 subscribers</p>
Social media posts (organic) <p>The City of Sydney news story and consultation page was shared on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.</p> <p>Instagram had the most positive engagements and reached the most people.</p> <p>But Facebook led to the most click throughs to the survey.</p>	<p>Facebook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,473 impressions • 6,160 reach • 214 engagements • 104 survey link clicks <p>Instagram</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A impressions • 21,266 reach • 482 engagements • 44 survey link clicks
Social media (advertising) <p>There was paid promotion of the consultation via Instagram / Facebook stories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 107,071 people were reached • 1,498 unique page views • 452 unique survey link clicks
Community screens <p>Information about the consultation was shown on our community screens throughout our local area to create broad awareness.</p>	

Appendices

Appendix A: City of Sydney web pages

The consultation was featured on the corporate homepage banner:



Links to City of Sydney web pages

- [Sydney Your Say page](#)
- [City of Sydney News Story](#)

Appendix B: targeted stakeholder notification

Links to targeted stakeholder communications

- [Stakeholder email notification](#)
- [Inclusion in July 2022 Sydney Your Say eNewsletter](#)

Appendix C: QMS community screens

Information about the consultation was shown on our community screens throughout our local area to create broad awareness.

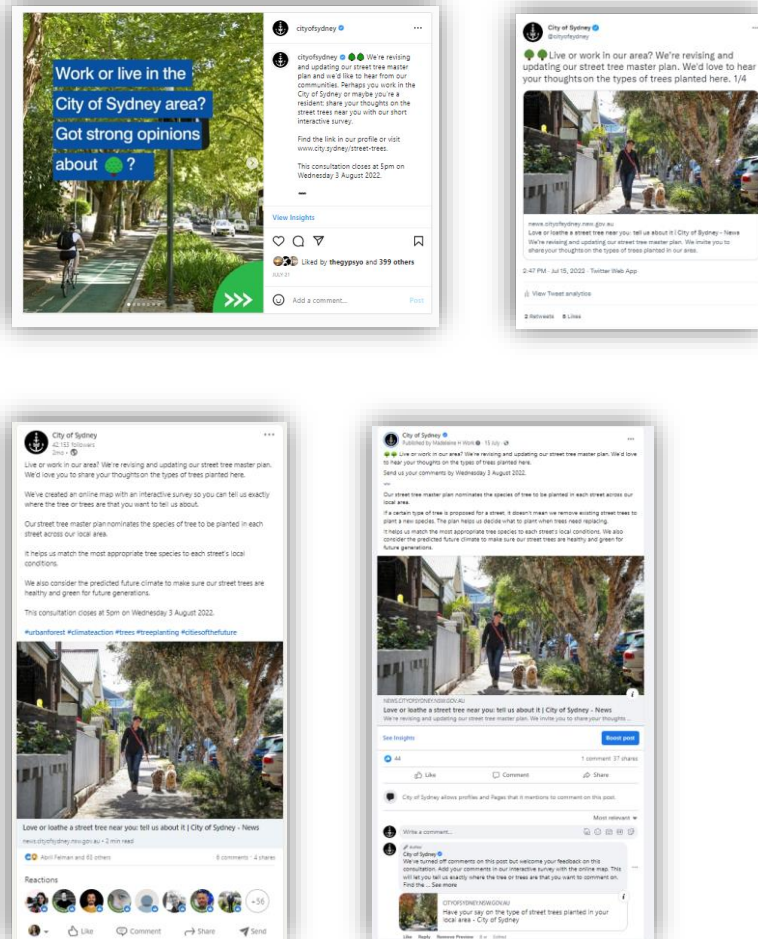


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Appendix D: organic social posts

Links to example posts on Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook

- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)



Appendix E: paid social media ads

The following ads led to the most click throughs.

