Urban Forest Strategic Plan

Public Engagement

What We Heard Report

August 2026



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Project overview

Calgary Parks & Open Spaces is updating its Urban Forest Strategic Plan (The Plan) to guide how trees are planted, protected, and cared for across the city. The current plan was developed in 2007 and is outdated, no longer reflecting Calgary's growth, climate realities, or community needs.

The updated plan will support Calgary's goal of increasing tree canopy coverage from 9.62% (as measured in 2024) to 16% by 2060. Key challenges include tree loss due to redevelopment, climate-related impacts (such as drought, severe weather, pests, and disease), and inequitable canopy distribution across the city.

In June 2026 we conducted a citywide engagement for the project focusing on private property and exploring how The City can better support residents, businesses, and landowners in planting and caring for trees on private land. Public input will help identify barriers, supports, and incentives to inform updates to the Strategic Plan.

To learn more about the engagement process visit: https://engage.calgary.ca/UrbanForestPlan

Feedback collected and how it will be used

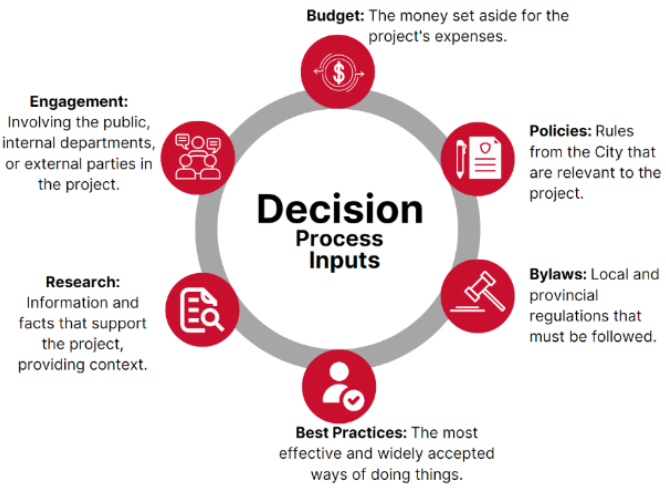
We asked Calgarians to share their ideas on how The City can support more tree planting on private property. About 70% of Calgary's land is privately owned, meaning property owners play a key role in growing the city's tree canopy.

We wanted to know:

- What would encourage you to plant, protect, and maintain trees on your property?
- What types of support or incentives would help the most and how should The City share this information?
- How could wood waste from tree removals be reused?

We will use the feedback gathered to help shape and prioritize strategies in the new plan.

How feedback fits in:
Public input is important, but it's one piece of the puzzle. The project team will also consider best practices, available resources, technical and operational feasibility and internal policies to develop the plan.

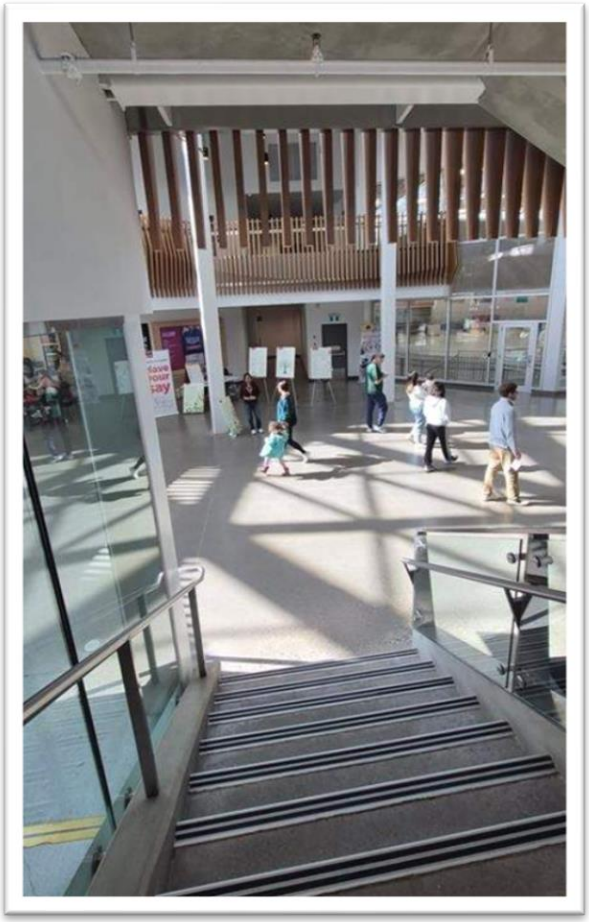


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Engagement and communications overview

The following strategies were used to inform and engage the public on the project.



Engagement opportunities

To gather feedback from interested parties and the public, we joined and hosted the following events and opportunities:

Online feedback form (open May 25 to June 26):

- 3,331 views of the webpage
- 392 contributions/survey responses

In-person pop-up events:

- June 4: Winston Heights Trees for Life Event, approximately 55 participants
- June 6: Sien Loc Society Tree Planting Event (Downtown), approximately 85 participants
- June 7: Branching Out Event (Whitehorn NE), approximately 330 participants
- June 9: Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge NW, approximately 75 participants
- June 11: Brookfield Residential YMCA at Seton SE, approximately 123 participants
- June 16: MNP Community & Sport Centre (Central), approximately 23 participants
- June 20: Prairie Winds Park NE, approximately 135 participants
- June 21: Branching Out Event (Douglas Glen SE), approximately 350 participants

Getting the word out

Engagement opportunities were advertised and promoted in the following ways:



- 1000+ postcards distributed at events
- Social media: Paid ads on Facebook and Instagram; Organic posts on Facebook, Threads, BlueSky and NextDoor
- Paid media: Printed Bold signs, YouTube bumper ads, In-language banner ads translated into Arabic, Simplified & Traditional Chinese, Punjabi, and Spanish, and Digital C-Train platform ads (cycling through Bridlewood, City Hall, 6th Street S.W., Centre Street and Chinook stations)

What we asked/what we heard

What we asked and what we heard online is summarized below. For more detail, see the **Detailed summary of feedback** section of this report and the **Verbatim comments (Appendix 1)**.

High-level themes

During the engagement process we gathered public feedback in person and online and identified the following key themes:

Barriers to planting trees on private property

- Cost of trees and maintenance.
- Choosing the right tree.
- Limited space and yard conditions.
- Lack of tree care information.
- Calgary climate and growing conditions.

Supports wanted

- More free or discounted trees.
- Tree selection support.
- Tree care education and resources.
- Expert advice and planting assistance.

Ideas for wood waste

- Public art
- Mulch
- Firewood
- Woodworking

Detailed summary of feedback

Online Feedback

An online feedback form was available from May 25 – June 26, 2026, to gather input from the public. Below are the questions we asked and a summary of the responses we received through the online portal.

What we asked/ what we heard:

Question 1: What community within the city do you live in?

What we heard:

Residents from across Calgary participated in the survey, with a total of 392 responses from more than 150 communities throughout the city. Feedback represented a broad range of neighbourhoods and perspectives, including inner-city, established, and newer suburban communities, with participation from all areas of Calgary.

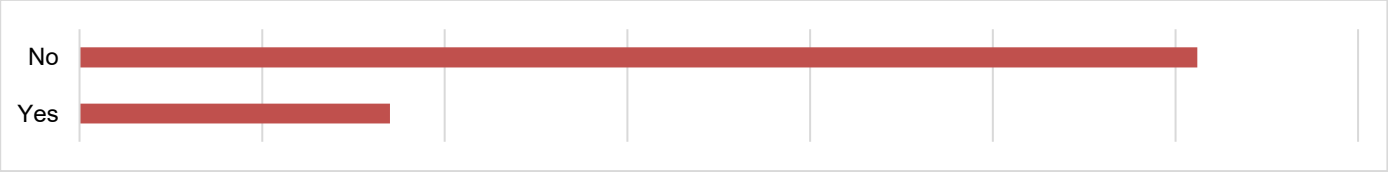
Summary of participating communities

Area of Calgary	Responses received	Example communities represented
Central / Inner City	106	Beltline, Crescent Heights, Inglewood, Hillhurst, Renfrew, Sunnyside, Bridgeland/Riverside, Killarney/Glengarry, Altadore and others.
Northeast Calgary	82	Coventry Hills, Hidden Valley, Thorncliffe, Saddle Ridge, Taradale, Falconridge, Cornerstone, Redstone and others.
Southwest Calgary	78	Evergreen, Lakeview, Millrise, Signal Hill, Shawnessy, Somerset, Aspen Woods, Springbank Hill and others.
Northwest Calgary	68	Brentwood, Silver Springs, Tuscany, Bowness, Charleswood, Royal Oak, Citadel, Dalhousie and others.
Southeast Calgary	55	McKenzie Towne, Mahogany, Auburn Bay, Seton, Copperfield, Cranston, New Brighton and others.
Other / Not Specified	3	East Victoria Park, Rockland Park

Question 2: Have you participated in the Branching Out Program before?

What we heard:

Most respondents said they had not participated in the Branching Out program before.



391 respondents

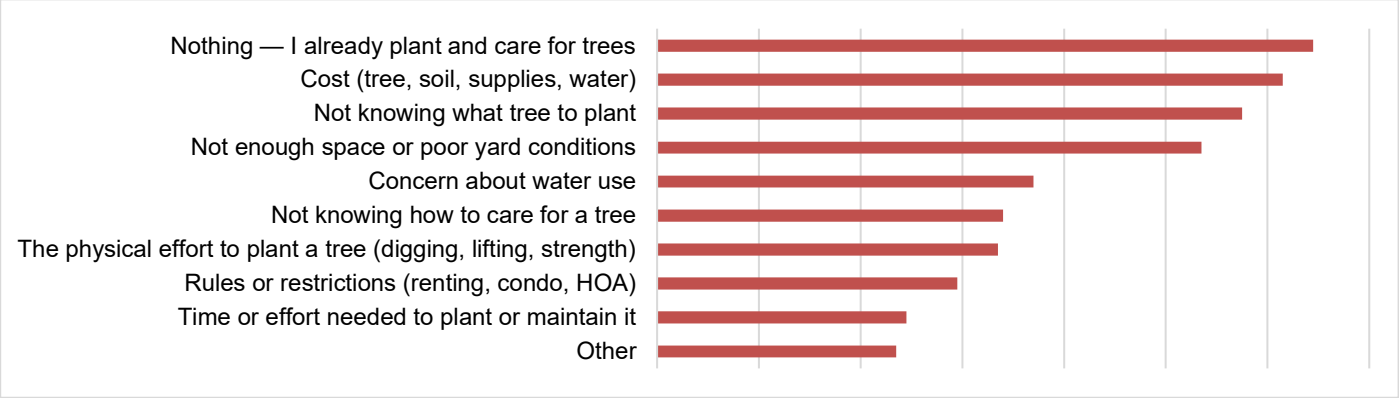
If not, why?

- Many respondents said they were not aware of the program.
- Some respondents said they live in a condo or rent their home and therefore could not participate.
- Some respondents said they wanted to participate, but the trees were claimed quickly, and they were unable to reserve one.
- Some respondents said they did not have enough space on their property to plant a tree.

Question 3: What are the things that make planting or caring for a tree on your property difficult for you? (Check all that apply)

What we heard:

Most respondents said that they didn't experience any barriers, while many indicated cost, not knowing what to plant and not enough space or poor yard conditions as major barriers.



390 respondents

'Other' responses:

Respondents mentioned:

- Maintenance and cost concerns.
- Property and space limitations.
- Utilities and planting constraints.
- Personal capacity and accessibility barriers.
- Concerns about City planning and development policies and tree management.

Question 4: Tell us if there is anything else we should know about the barriers you are facing to planting and maintaining trees on your property (optional).

What we heard:

Respondents mentioned:

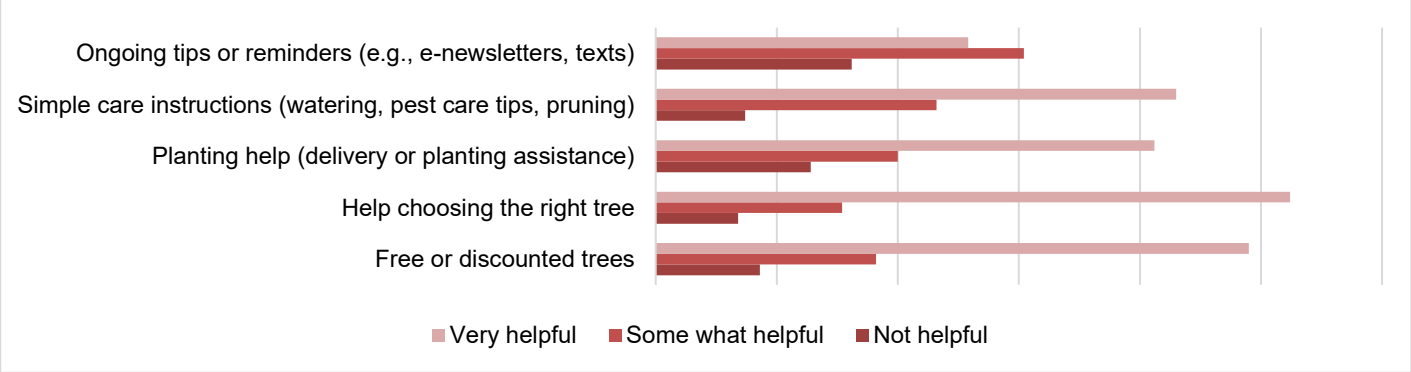
- That their properties are small, making it difficult to find space for a tree and choose a tree species that will thrive.
- Support is needed to help select the right trees based on soil and property conditions.
- The cost of pruning and other tree maintenance can be a concern.
- There is a lack of information about how to care for trees, including when to water and fertilize them.

- Keeping up with watering schedules can be challenging due to other commitments and the need to monitor weather forecasts for rain or snow.
- Trees often struggle to survive in Calgary's climate, making it difficult to decide whether to plant a tree and which species to choose.

Question 5: How helpful would each of the following supports be for you?

What we heard:

Respondents indicated that support choosing the right tree would be most helpful, followed by discounted trees and simple care instructions.



382 respondents

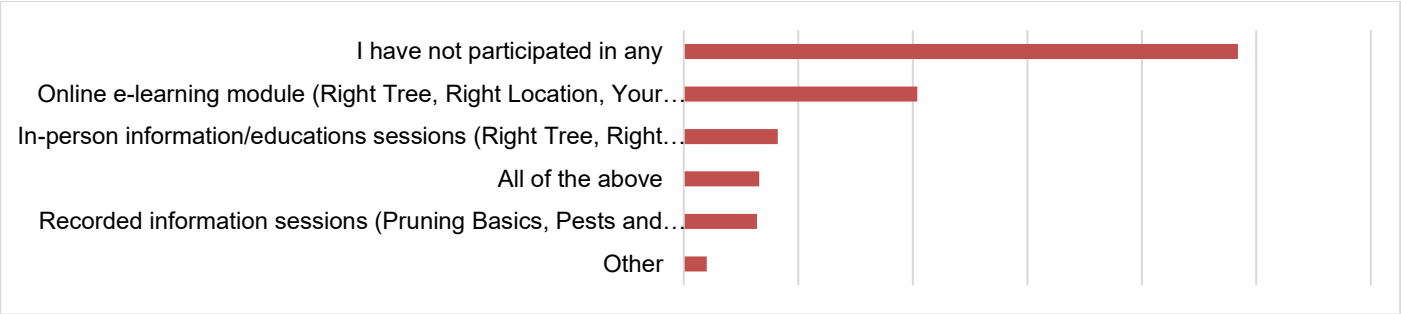
Tell us why these supports would help (optional):

- Many respondents said free trees would help because quality trees can be expensive, particularly for people with limited or fixed incomes.
- Many respondents said they lacked confidence in choosing the right tree for their property, selecting an appropriate planting location, and caring for trees over time. They felt that planting guidance, care instructions, and support in choosing the right tree would help them plant more trees.
- Many respondents said access to reliable, Calgary-specific information would be valuable, including guidance on local growing conditions and climate, reminders about seasonal maintenance tasks, and information on tree health, diseases, and pest management.
- Some respondents said they would value tree delivery and planting support because they do not have suitable vehicles to transport a tree or have physical limitations that make planting difficult.

Question 6: Which of the following City Tree care and education programs or supports have you heard of or used? (Check all that apply)

What we heard:

Most respondents said they had not participated in any City tree care or education programs. Among those who had participated, the most common activity was online e-learning modules. A smaller number reported attending in-person education sessions, while a few indicated participating in all program types, information sessions, or other activities.



379 respondents

'Other' responses:

- A few respondents mentioned not being aware of any of the programs.

How would you describe your experience with The City's tree care and education programs? (Optional)

- Many respondents said they had a good experience accessing The City's current programs, indicating they were helpful and informative.
- Many said they didn't know about the education programs currently offered or have not participated in them.
- Some indicated they only have had experience with the Branching Out Program.

Question 7: What supports would help you keep mature trees on your property?

What we heard:

- Many respondents said they would like information on caring for the trees on their property, including pruning, watering, fertilizing, tree health, and disease and pest management. They said resources such as brochures, emails, workshops, and visits from a City arborist would be helpful.
- Many respondents said they would value support with pruning, particularly for older trees that could cause damage to their homes or affect neighbouring properties. Many also noted that professional pruning services are expensive and would support free or subsidized pruning assistance.

- Many respondents said a free tree assessment by a City arborist would be valuable to provide tree care advice and help troubleshoot maintenance issues.
- Some respondents suggested subsidies to help offset costs related to watering, fertilizing, tree maintenance, and pruning.

Question 8: Any additional ideas for how The City can support tree planting and care on private property? (Optional)

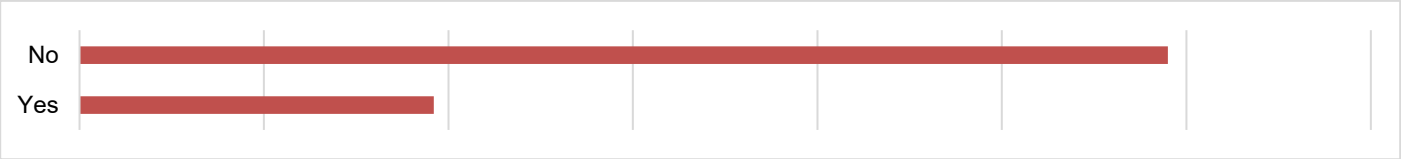
What we heard:

- Many respondents expressed that The City's growth and development need to be managed more carefully to help preserve trees. Some suggestions included requiring tree replacement when trees are removed, protecting healthy mature trees, and charging developers fees for removing healthy trees, with the funds used to plant additional trees. Respondents also suggested providing incentives for developers and property owners to retain or plant trees and reducing lot coverage requirements in some areas to create more space for trees on private properties.
- Many respondents said they would like more information on selecting and caring for trees to help ensure they survive and thrive over the long term.
- Some mentioned that access to free trees and a wider variety of trees for the public would support more tree planting on private property.
- Some respondents said educational resources should extend beyond trees to include plants and shrubs that support healthy communities and are drought-tolerant and resilient to Calgary's climate.
- Some respondents said more public education is needed about the benefits of trees to encourage tree retention and support more tree planting.

Question 9: Have you ever used The City's mulch program?

What we heard:

Most respondents had not participated in The City's mulch program.



391 respondents

If not, why?

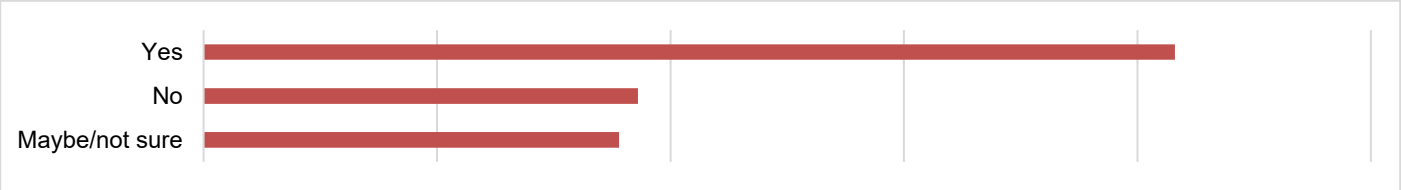
- Most respondents said they were not aware of the program.
- Many respondents said they did not need mulch.

- Some respondents said the mulch offered through the program was not the type of mulch they wanted to use in their yards.

Question 10: Would you use firewood provided by The City if it was available?

What we heard:

Most respondents indicated they would use firewood provided by The City if it were available. Some respondents said they would not use it or were unsure.



390 respondents

Question 11: Do you have ideas for how wood waste could be reused? (Ex. woodworking, community projects, art, or other uses etc.) (optional)

What we heard:

Respondents mentioned:

- Public art, ex. Use wood waste to create sustainable and unique public art.
- Mulch
- Firewood
- Woodworking, ex. Allow residents and community groups to use wood waste for local woodworking projects and classes.

In-person feedback



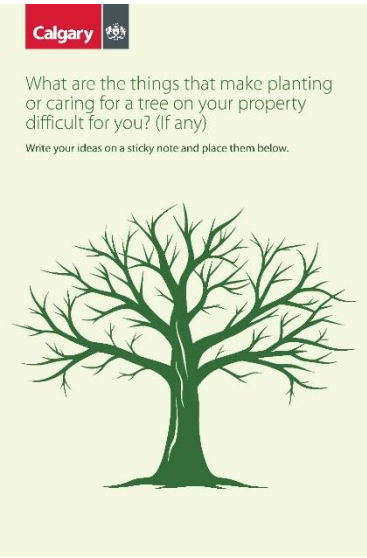
In June 2026, we hosted pop-up engagement events at the Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge, Brookfield Residential YMCA at Seton, MNP Community & Sport Centre, and Prairie Winds Park. We also participated in City of Calgary Branching Out tree pick-up events and at additional invite-only community events with interested groups and residents to gather feedback on the project.

Note: Feedback was collected directly at some events. At busier events, participants were encouraged to share their feedback through the online survey instead.

Below is a summary of the feedback we received.

What we asked:

We asked participants about the barriers they face in planting trees, the supports The City could provide that would help most and any additional feedback they have about planting trees on their properties.





The images above show the information and engagement boards we used to educate the public about the project at events and collect their feedback.

What we heard:

Tree care information and education
Many participants wanted more information and support to help them plant and care for trees such as, pruning, watering, pest management, species selection, and tree care.

- Suggestions included step-by-step planting videos, educational workshops, plain-language resources, and information about available tree planting programs. More tree planting and protection

Many participants supported planting more trees and protecting existing trees.

- Suggestions included replacing trees that are removed, protecting mature trees during development, improving tree planting practices, and increasing tree planting in neighbourhoods, parks, and green spaces.

Barriers to planting private property
Some participants identified barriers that make it difficult to plant trees on private property such as mobility challenges, physical limitations, budget constraints, rocky soil, limited planting space, and challenges associated with renting or living in apartments or condominiums.

- Suggestions included support such as assistance with digging, planting, and tree delivery.

Long-term tree health and maintenance

Some participants highlighted the importance of long-term tree health and maintenance.

- Concerns were expressed about pests and diseases, damage to trees during maintenance activities, caring for aging trees, and ensuring trees receive ongoing care after they are planted.

Next steps

The project team will review and consider all feedback as we develop the new Urban Forest Strategic Plan. We will provide a status update on the Plan in late 2026. This will include information about the timing of the **What We Did Report**, which will explain how public feedback helped shape the Plan. We will also share more on our approach to finalizing the new Plan.