

Urban Residential Infill Scenario

The State Government has an urban canopy target for the Greater Metropolitan Area of 40%.

Councillor Sandy Lane of Sunny Hills Council led the Council's resolution to adopt an urban forest target of 35% for its local government area (LGA) five years ago. She has asked for a report from Council Officers on progress towards the urban forest canopy target.

Council's strategic planner, Ms Dee Zein, provided the report which reveals that over the past five years the urban forest canopy in Sunny Hills has actually declined from 20% to 18% over its 25 km² area. The decline has not been consistent across different land uses.

The major reduction in canopy has occurred in residential land, where it has declined from 23% to 16% over the five-year period. Residential land accounts for 25% of land in Sunny Hills. Canopy declined slightly in transport and commercial zones; remained about the same low level in industrial zones; and has improved significantly in public open space. Council's urban forest manager, Ms Olivia N Lovett, provided an appendix for the report which detailed how strategic tree planting in council parks had positively contributed to canopy and mitigated the decline in the overall canopy.

The report identifies the reasons for decline in residential areas as infill development to increase housing stock and population density. Medium density residential development has replaced single detached dwellings (e.g. where a block or adjacent blocks become developed into many 1 to 2 storey residences). Furthermore, highrise/high-density residential towers are being developed along the rail corridor. Development planner, Mr Greg Mason, reports there are many more medium and high-density DAs in the pipeline, and the rate of submission is not slowing.

Council's social planner, Mr Fred Gathering, is aware of the benefits of good tree cover for social cohesion, sense of wellbeing, physical health, productivity and learning, and supports whatever can be done to improve urban canopy.

The Council is concerned by the decline in urban canopy in residential areas and has decided to review its development control plan (DCP) with the aim of facilitating improved urban forest canopy cover in residential zones specifically, without compromising strategic urban development in the LGA.

- What issues will need to be addressed by Council?
- What significant issues cannot be addressed by Council and what should be done to address them?
- What initiatives can be taken in the DCP that will result in improved urban canopy cover in residential zones?
- What could Council put into its DCP to resolve conflict between increasing housing stock and improving urban canopy?