



Community Survey 2025 Engagement Summary Report

2025 Community Survey

Community engagement was open from 30 April to 9 June 2025.

467 survey responses were received, including 5 youth surveys. Feedback was received via online and hardcopy survey.

The Community Survey is undertaken every two years and includes multiple choice and open-ended questions.

In recognition of people's time, they could go in the draw to win one of three vouchers to Warrawong Wildlife Sanctuary, Cleland Wildlife Park or Gorge Wildlife Park.

Survey Promotion

The survey was promoted via:

- Roadside signs
- Community centres and libraries
- Postcards and posters in businesses
- Emails to engagement subscribers and community groups
- Council website and Adelaide Hills Engagement Hub
- Promotion through Council eNewsletter
- Courier newspaper
- Social media promotion
- Messages on hold when calling customer service teams





467 feedback submissions, including 5 youth submissions



Age: Majority aged 45–74 (63%); youth (under 25) underrepresented (2%)



Gender: 66% female, 30% male, 4% preferred not to say

Disability: 6% reported having a disability



Housing: 92% own their home; 5% rent; 3% live with family



Length of residence: 70% have lived in the area for 10+ years

Top suburbs of respondents: Stirling, Bridgewater and Aldgate

Cultural diversity: 1% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 93% speak only English at home

Snapshot of who participated

Living in the Adelaide Hills

Why people choose to live here

Top reasons for living in the Adelaide Hills

1. Lifestyle
2. Natural environment
3. Bigger block sizes
4. Community feel

What you like most about the Adelaide Hills

1. Natural environment
2. Strong sense of community / community feel
3. Open space/block size
4. Access and location
5. Lifestyle and amenity



What are residents most worried about?

1. Traffic and roads - congestion, inadequate parking, road maintenance and safety.
2. Environment and vegetation loss - anxiety about the clearing of native vegetation, biodiversity decline and threats to bushland.
3. Development and overdevelopment - perceptions of urban sprawl, inappropriate subdivisions and loss of rural character.
4. Council performance – concerns around transparency, engagement and leadership were raised.
5. Infrastructure and services - access to basic physical and community infrastructure.

One thing residents want us to focus on to improve sustainability

- Improving sustainable transport / walkability - need for better footpaths, cycling routes and public transport connections.
- Biodiversity protection - stronger action on protecting native vegetation and biodiversity.
- Sustainable development and housing - the balance between population growth and maintaining village character, environmental integrity and housing affordability.
- Waste reduction and management.
- Water conservation.



Adelaide Hills Character and Amenity

Character and amenity features residents' value most

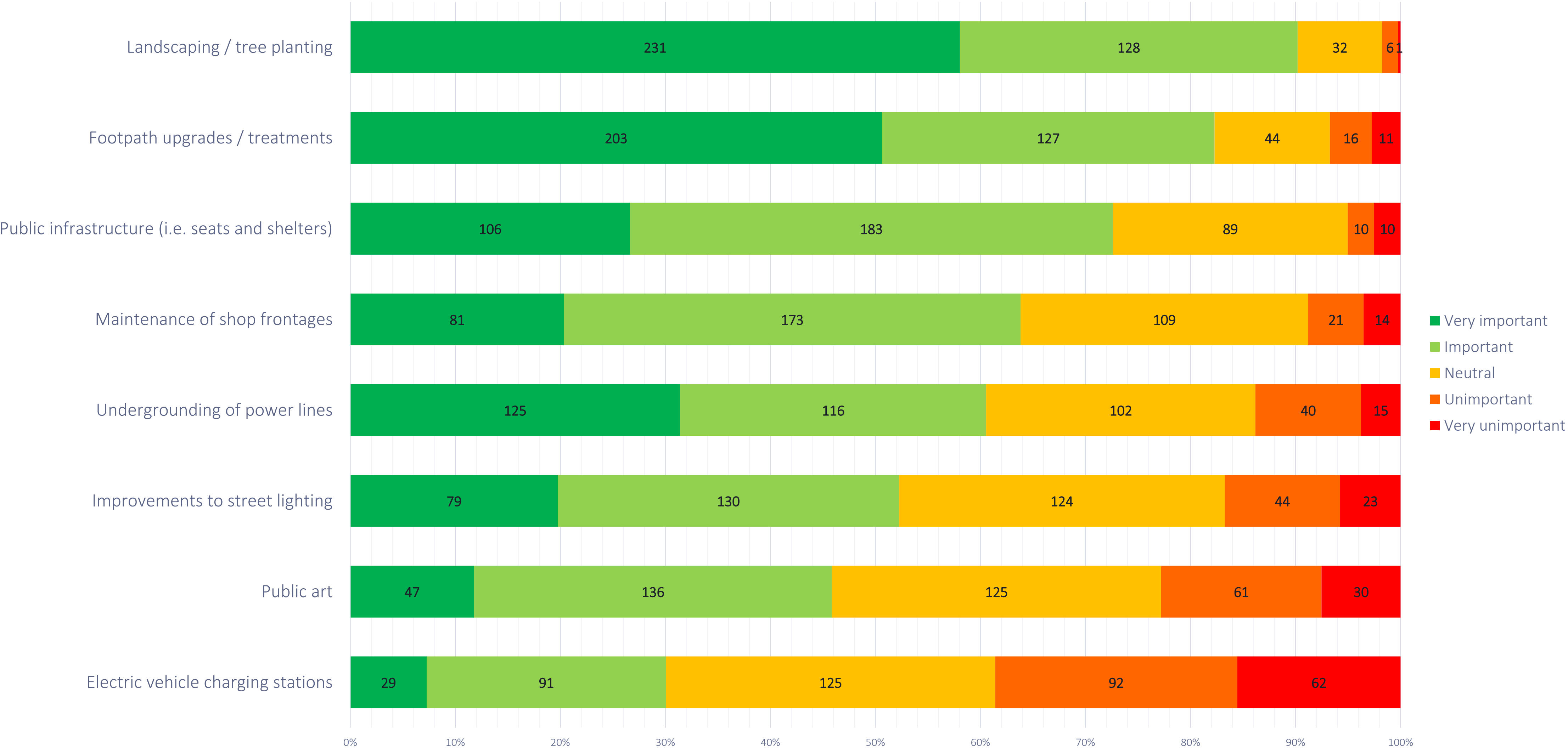
- Natural environment and bushland - highlighting features such as trees, wildlife, green spaces and scenic landscapes.
- Access to amenities and townships - proximity to schools, shops, parks and local services.
- Rural character and block sizes.
- Community feel.
- Built environment or village character.

Ideas for enhancing character and amenity

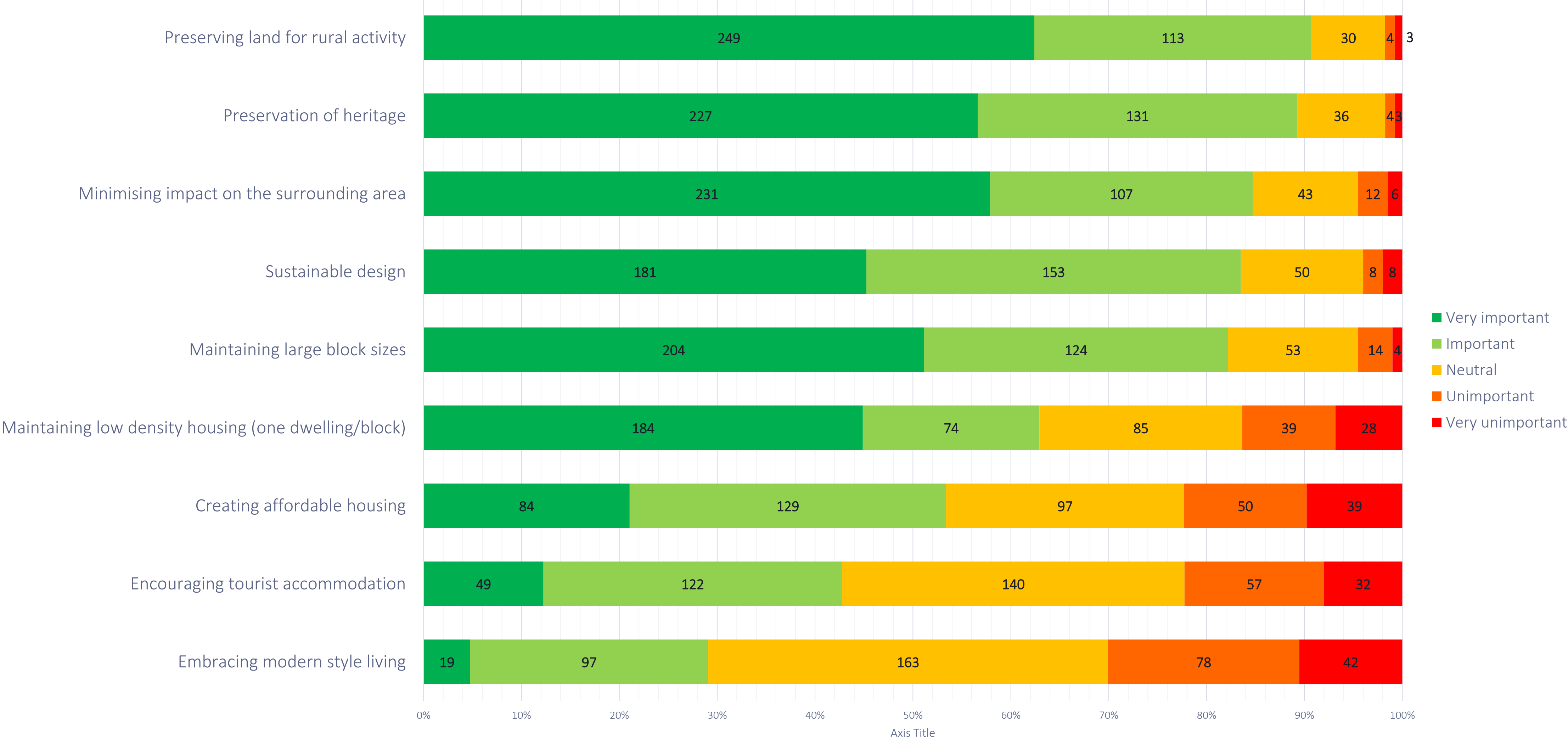
- Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and walkability - construction or repair of footpaths, safer road crossings, better lighting and improved access to community trails.
- Enhancement of the natural environment - more tree planting, weed control and protection of bushland.
- Traffic and road management - concerns about safety, maintenance and congestion.
- Development controls - development controls to retain rural character.
- Streetscape and town centre upgrades.



When thinking about what should be the focus for any future upgrades of main streets and town centres, how important are the following items to you?



When considering development in your local area, how important are the following matters to you?



Top ideas for preserving nature and enhancing streetscapes

- **Landscaping and tree planting** - suggestions included planting native trees, ensuring tree canopy cover along main streets, and integrating natural landscaping into streetscape design.
- **Footpaths and walkability** - calls for footpath extensions, improvements to surface quality, and the provision of shared paths and crossings to accommodate people of all ages and mobility levels.
- **Build form and design** - consistency in architectural style, appropriate signage, and maintaining the character of historic shopfronts or main street façades.
- **Street furniture and lighting** - seating, shade structures and lighting as practical enhancements, particularly in high-traffic or high-visitor areas.

Top ideas for enhancing rural landscapes

- **Native vegetation** - restoration or reinforcement of natural systems, with native vegetation planting.
- **Tree planting** - increased / improved tree planting.
- **Weed and pest control** - need to manage threats to rural landscape quality, particularly in the form of weeds and pests.
- **Biodiversity protection.**



Community Connection and Wellbeing

How do people feel?

Respondents were asked to share their level of connection to their Adelaide Hills community and to give their physical and mental wellbeing a score out of 0-10 with 0 being extremely poor and 10 being as good as it could be.

Community connection: majority of respondents feel positively connected to their community with 60% rating their sense of connection as 8 or higher. Very low connection scores (0-3) were rare making up just 7% of responses.

Physical wellbeing: most respondents feel positively about their current health, rating themselves at the upper end of the scale with 61% selecting 8, or higher. Lower scores were uncommon with fewer than 10% of respondents rating themselves below 5.

Mental wellbeing: generally respondents had a positive outlook, though slightly more varied than physical wellbeing. 66% of all responses rated their mental health as 8 or higher. There was a wider spread in the lower scores, with 11% rating themselves at 6 or below and a small but notable group reporting very low scores of 0-3 (12 respondents).



Thinking about your experience of living in the Adelaide Hills Council, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?



Additional comments provided about living in the Adelaide Hills

Top themes of comments:

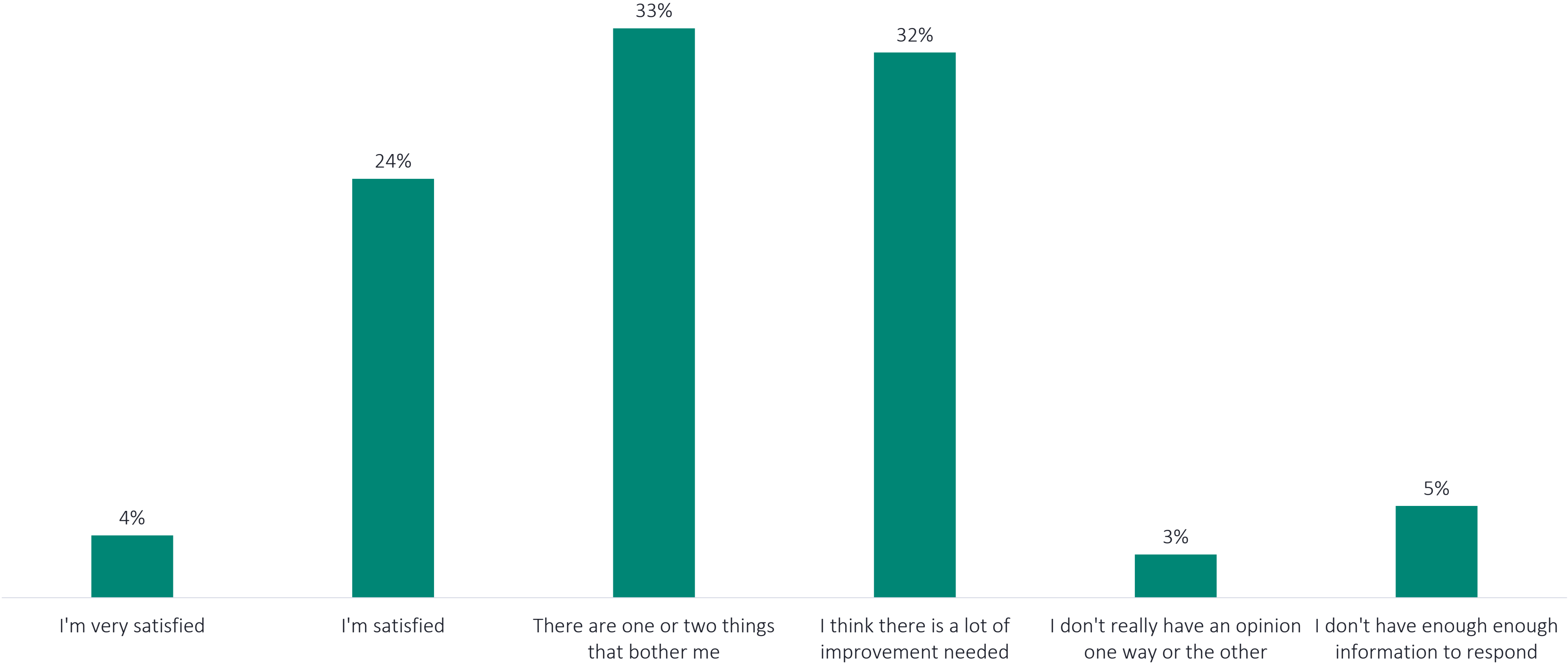
Transport and infrastructure : Respondents shared comments highlighting issues related to road conditions, adequacy of public transport, traffic flow in both rural and township areas. Common concerns included insufficient bus services, poor road maintenance, and unsafe or congested intersections.

Mobility and accessibility : Respondents shared concerns about the lack of infrastructure supporting people with mobility impairments, elderly residents and others who require accessible public spaces. Common issues included uneven footpaths, inadequate kerb ramps, poor lighting, and the absence of pedestrian infrastructure in rural areas and smaller towns.

Council representation and trust : There was significant level of community concern about how effectively the AHC engages with and responds to its residents. Many respondents expressed frustration with what they perceive as a lack of transparency, accountability or genuine community consultation in Council decision-making processes.



Which statement below best describes your feelings about how Adelaide Hills Council is doing as an organisation?



Satisfaction
with
Adelaide
Hills Council

How do our people think we are doing as an organisation?

Community sentiment reveals a mix of moderate dissatisfaction, cautious approval and a desire for improvement.

The most common response was “There are one or two things that bother/concern me”, closely followed by “I think there is a lot of improvement needed”. This suggests that while outright discontent may not be dominant, many residents see room for improvement and hold specific concerns about Council operations, services or decision-making.

Approximately one-quarter of respondents expressed general satisfaction, with only a small minority indicating they are very satisfied.

Tell us why you feel like this . . .

The most dominant theme was Council representation and trust, cited in over half of all comments.

Many residents expressed concerns about perceived gaps in transparency, consultation and responsiveness.

A common thread across these responses was frustration with how decisions are made – often described as top-down or disconnected from community sentiment.

This theme underscores a significant challenge for AHC in rebuilding confidence in governance and better communicating how resident feedback is incorporated into policies and services.



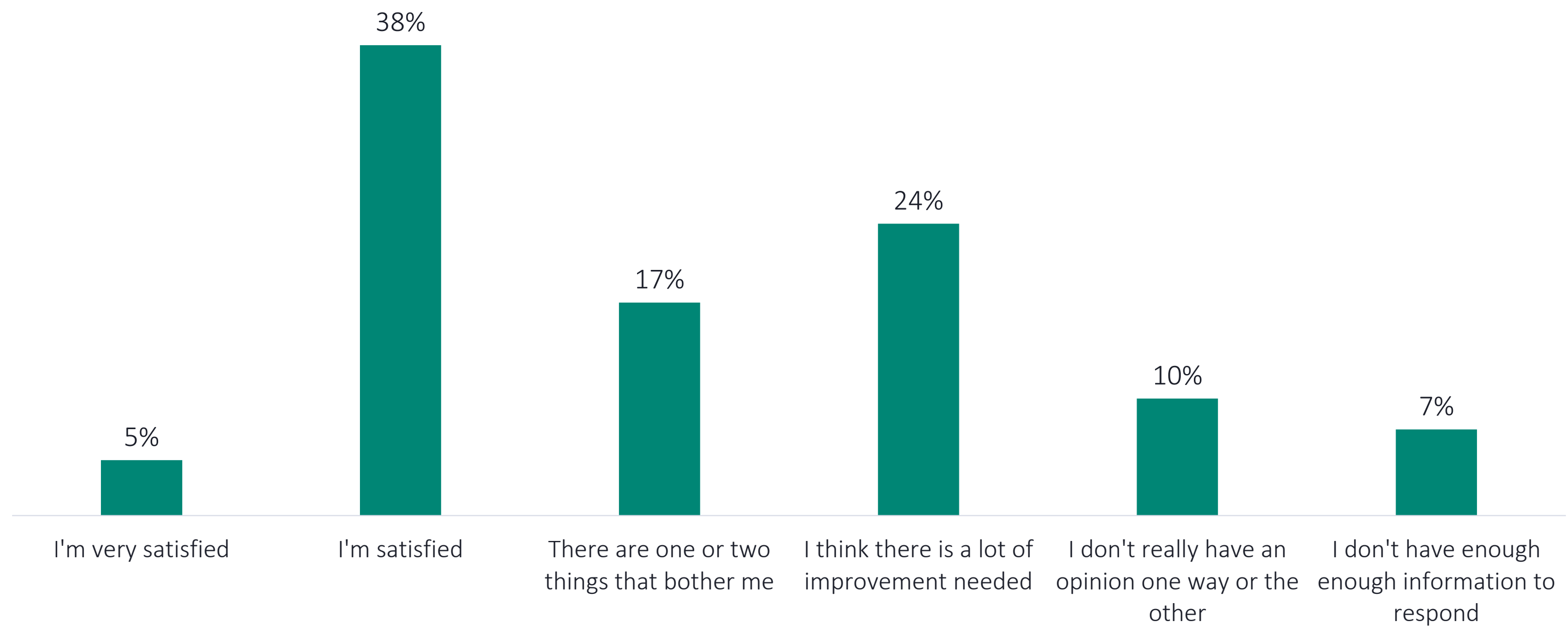
Community levels of satisfaction with current opportunities to engage on issues that affect their area.

42% of respondents feel there are adequate opportunities to engage with issues affecting their area. However, this still leaves a majority who either saw room for improvement or were undecided. Almost one-quarter (24%) believed “a lot of improvement is needed”, while 17% noted “one or two things that bother me”, indicating mild to moderate dissatisfaction.

When asked “How would you like to participate or be more involved in local issues and Council decision making in the future?” one-third of respondents indicated they were content with the current level of engagement or expressed no interest in further participation.

For those who do wish to be more involved, **online surveys** or **feedback mechanisms** were the most preferred method. This preference reflects a growing demand for low-barrier, convenient and time-efficient forms of engagement that align with modern lifestyles.

A further 25% expressed interest in **community forums** or **meetings**, showing that in-person, dialogue-driven engagement still has strong relevance.



Youth survey summary

Participants: 5 youth aged 11–13 years

Key values

- Adelaide Hills natural environment
- Open space
- Limited urban development
- Sense of community

Concerns

- Urbanisation – loss of vegetation
- Lack of public transport options
- Lack of local recreation opportunities for teens
- Poor road conditions

Future vision

- Desire for the area to remain green, natural, and community oriented, Improved footpaths / pedestrian infrastructure
- Inclusive spaces for all ages



How we'll be using your feedback

The feedback we received during engagement will be used to inform a number of current and upcoming Council initiatives, including (but not limited to):

- The development of our Housing Strategy and Framework for Town and Precinct Planning.
- The creation of our Community Engagement Framework.
- Planning for our 2026/27 Annual Business Plan.
- Updating of our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.
- Implementation of our Your Place Your Space Strategic Plan 2024.
- Implementation of our Towards Net Zero Carbon Management Plan.
- Review of our Biodiversity Strategy.

View the following pages to see how the feedback we received aligns with the goals of our Your Place Your Space Strategic Plan 2024.



Alignment with our Your Place Your Space Strategic Plan 2024

Goal 1: Natural Environment

Survey Findings:

Sustainability focuses

- Waste reduction and management
- Water conservation
- Energy and emissions reductions

Future developments

- Landscaping and tree planting rated as highest focus
- Undergrounding of power lines
- Youth and recreation infrastructure - Skate parks, youth spaces, seating, sports courts, BMX tracks, community events spaces, play equipment for older children

Strategic Plan Alignment:

NE2 Support the community and businesses to decarbonise and transition to sustainable lifestyle practices

- NE2.2 Continue to promote the highest principles in the waste management hierarchy – avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle – through education programs, services and by example.
- NE2.3 Explore alternative kerbside waste collection models that divert more waste from landfill.

NE5: Improve landscape character and amenity value

- NE5.2 Implement a succession planting program for street trees and other vegetation in key precincts, with a focus on sustainable species selection.
- NE5.3 Maintain parks and reserves to be fit for purpose and enhance livability.

Goal 1: Natural Environment

Survey Findings

Valued aspect of living in the Adelaide Hills

- Natural environment – most values, highlighting features such as trees, wildlife, green spaces and scenic landscapes.

Top concerns

- Environment and vegetation loss - anxiety about the clearing of native vegetation, biodiversity decline and threats to bushland

Sustainability priorities:

- Biodiversity protection
- Fire risk and land management

Enhancing character

- Enhancement of natural environment – more tree planting, weed control, protection of bushlands.

Future developments

- Landscaping and tree planting rated as highest focus

Strategic Plan Alignment:

NE3 Protect, improve, expand and connect habitat

- NE3.1 Protect remnant native vegetation from threats or threatening activities. NE3.2 Promote the value of biodiversity protection and management on private lands. NE3.3 Develop and implement a new Biodiversity Strategy detailing how we will protect and improve biodiversity, and expand native vegetation coverage where appropriate.

NE4 Build resilience in the natural environment to adapt to climate and other environmental changes

- NE4.2 Implement actions from the Tree Strategy.
- NE4.3 Collaborate and advocate for greater investment in environmental protections and improvements.

Goal 2: Community Wellbeing

Survey Findings

What you love most about the Hills

- Strong sense of community / community feel

Community connection and wellbeing

- High scores in physical (8.2/10) and mental wellbeing (7.9/10)
- 93% of respondents feel safe in their neighbourhood
- Community connection rated 7.2/10

Mental Health

- with 11% rating themselves at 6 or below and a small but notable group reporting very low scores of 0–3.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

CW2 Enrich, empower and support connected communities.

- CW 2.3 Provide welcoming spaces, programs and services at our libraries and community centres that offer opportunities for connection, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, growth and literacy.
- CW2.4 Support community members to gain skills, experience, and connections through our volunteering programs, and strengthen pathways to external volunteering opportunities in our region.

CW5 Foster cultural identity and connection to place.

- CW5.3 Develop connection for people and place by fostering public art and supporting arts and cultural experiences, including events, markets and festivals.

Goal 2: Community Wellbeing

Feedback Findings

Community connection and wellbeing

- High scores in physical (8.2/10) and mental wellbeing (7.9/10)
- 93% of respondents feel safe in their neighbourhood
- Youth concerns: lack of teen activities, poor transport

Ideas for enhancement and town upgrades

- Accessibility and inclusion - lack of infrastructure supporting people with mobility impairments, elderly residents and others who require accessible public spaces.
- Footpaths and walkability - shared paths and crossings, improved / extended footpaths
- Improving sustainable transport / walkability

Strategic Plan Alignment:

CW3 Embrace diversity in our community and build on community strengths.

- CW3.2 Update and implement our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and continue to improve universal access to our community supports and services
- CW3.4 Renew and implement a Youth Action Plan that promotes access to opportunities, resources and supports for young people.

CW6 Promote physical, mental and social wellbeing

- CW6.1 Adopt a strategic and evidence-based approach to plan for the provision of accessible sport and recreation opportunities and facilities.
- CW6.2 Deliver our priority actions outlined in our Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-27 and advocate for improved mental health services for our region.
- CW6.3 Plan and promote walking and cycling projects and infrastructure that facilitate health and wellbeing as well as sustainable forms of transport.

Goal 3: Built Form and Economy

Feedback Findings

What you love about the Hills

- Bigger block sizes / open space
- Rural character

Concerns

- Development and overdevelopment - urban sprawl, inappropriate subdivisions, loss of rural character.

Development priorities

- Preserving land for rural activity
- Preservation of heritage
- Sustainable design / housing

Enhancement ideas

- Build form and design - consistency in architectural style, appropriate signage, maintaining historic character.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

BFE1 Guide development that fosters vibrant and resilient communities, promotes appropriate design and enhances livability

- BFE1.1 Develop and implement a housing strategy that responds to the community's needs and balances expectations regarding character, growth, affordability and the natural environment

BFE2 Nurture a distinctive sense of place, support activation activities and recognise and celebrate our rich heritage

- BFE2.2 Develop a strategic framework to town and precinct planning, with prioritisation guidelines to ensure equitable investment in public spaces.
- BFE2.4 Continue to strengthen Council's planning framework to preserve and enhance the unique heritage and character of the Hills.

Goal 3: Built Form and Economy

Feedback Findings (Contd)

Concerns

- Traffic and roads - congestion, inadequate parking, road maintenance and safety, poor road maintenance, and unsafe or congested intersections, adequate public transport.
- Accessibility and inclusion - lack of infrastructure supporting people with mobility impairments, elderly residents and others who require accessible public spaces.
- Infrastructure and services - access to basic physical and community infrastructure

Enhancement ideas

- Footpaths and walkability - shared paths and crossings, improved / extended footpaths
- Street furniture - seating, shade structures and lighting

Strategic Plan Alignment:

BFE3 Develop and maintain infrastructure to support livability and sustainable economic activity

- BFE3.1 Continue to pursue co-funding for community infrastructure and road safety improvement projects.
- BFE3.5 Prioritise planning for new footpath, trail and cycling infrastructure where it will foster better health, wellbeing, economic and transport outcomes

Goal 4: Organisation

Feedback Findings

Council performance

- 31% say “a lot of improvement needed”
- The most dominant theme was Council representation and trust, cited in over half of all comments (53%, n= 152).
- Frustration with how decisions are made – often described as top-down or disconnected from community sentiment.

Community Engagement

- Online surveys or feedback mechanisms - growing demand for low-barrier, convenient and time-efficient forms of engagement.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

O1 Embrace technology solutions and digital transformation to enhance our organisation and the community experience.

- O1.1 Use technology and digital solutions to improve and streamline the customer experience.

O2 Operate with integrity using best practice governance processes.

- O2.1 Demonstrate accountable and transparent decision making

Goal 4: Organisation

Feedback Findings

Council performance

- 31% say “a lot of improvement needed”.
- Frustration with how decisions are made – often described as top-down or disconnected from community sentiment.

Community Engagement

- Satisfaction: 24% want major improvement.
- 25% expressed interest in community forums or meetings.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

O4 Engage and advocate for our communities.

- O4.1 Develop a robust Community Engagement Framework including exploring opportunities for community to participate in decision making.
- O4.2 Advocate on behalf of the community to represent its needs and views with relevant stakeholders and decision makers.

O5 Evolve Council’s functions and services to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of our community.

- O5.3 Undertake regular customer surveys to seek feedback and measure customer experience.

08 8408 0400
mail@ahc.sa.gov.au
ahc.sa.gov.au

