



Draft Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040

Summary document

Free telephone interpreter service



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A place for all

whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.

Introduction

About Whittlesea: The City of Whittlesea is a growth Council on the northern edge of metropolitan Melbourne covering an area of approximately 489km², of which around 70 per cent is rural 30 per cent urban. Our 17 suburbs comprise diverse landscape uses, ranging from established urban centres, through rural pastures, to remnant bushland. Whittlesea is home to a number of rare, endangered, and iconic species. Within the last 30 years, 52 threatened flora and fauna species have been recorded within Whittlesea.

Why we need a strategy: A key driver for the Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040 (GWS) is the City's long-term vision 'Whittlesea 2040 *A place for all*', through which our community identified the value they place on our natural landscapes and trees, and which calls for Whittlesea:

'....to be ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring, ensuring that the City of Whittlesea is a great place to live now and in the future.'

The Strategy: The Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040 aims to protect and enhance our landscapes, trees and green cover. It addresses three major challenges faced by our city; climate change, urban expansion (including population growth), and urban heating. These factors are placing increasing pressure on our existing city forest, and impact liveability across our city.

The GWS builds on the W2040 vision with its own strategic vision which sees the City of Whittlesea:

'creating and managing liveable and resilient places for the benefit of people and the environment through responsibly greening diverse landscapes'

What is 'greening': Greening refers to all traditional planted elements, including grass, shrubs, and trees, as well as contemporary elements such as rain gardens, green walls, and green roofs.

Why 'greening' matters: Increased green cover, creates healthier ecosystems, reduces temperatures, provides more habitat for flora and fauna, and creates more green spaces for people to use and enjoy.

How 'green' are we: Currently tree canopy covers just 19.7% of our City, with some suburbs like Donnybrook, Wollert, Epping, Lalor, Thomastown and Mernda having less than 10% tree canopy coverage. We also have large areas of rural pastures and dry grasslands. Both large areas of dry grass, and highly built up areas (with roads, buildings, pavement) create 'hotspots' or 'heat islands' where temperatures are higher than average – impacting our wellbeing, productivity and our plants and animals.

What the strategy says: The GWS consist of four goals, each with a set of objectives and priority actions (outlined on the following four pages). The Strategy has a 20-year lifespan with reviews proposed every five years. Implementing the actions will be prioritised as follows:

1. Our first priority is to provide benefit at the *local* level.

'We will prioritise making people's lives better, improving liveability within connected communities across our city.'

2. Our second priority is to provide benefit at the *suburb* level.
3. Our third priority is to provide benefit at the *regional* level.

This summary outlines the goals, objectives and priority actions in the Strategy. To view a full copy of the GWS that includes the detailed background, research and context that has informed these goals, objectives and actions, please visit www.greening.whittlesea.vic.gov.au.

Our Strategy - *goals, objectives and actions*

The GWS will guide our city's future greening actions, driving the realisation of our shared strategic vision

This Strategy is based on four goals for city greening. Each goal will be realised through a series of objectives, which will in turn be achieved through implementation of a set of priority actions.

Goal 1. "PROTECT and MANAGE": Preserve existing trees and green cover on Council and non-council land.

Objective 1. Ensure a legislative framework for the protection of trees during planning and development processes.

Priority Actions:

- Undertake a review of relevant planning and development legislation to identify where tree protection measures can be strengthened at all development stages.
- Encourage the protection of trees on Council and non-council land during development.

Objective 2. Advocate, incentivise, and encourage the retention and protection of trees on private land.

Priority Actions:

- Assess community behaviours and perceptions in each focal area to identify barriers and incentives to tree retention and protection on private property.
- Examine the suitability of previous incentives schemes in the context of community survey feedback and re-instate or develop new incentives as relevant.
- Implement incentives for encouraging tree retention and protection on private land.
- Advocate for the protection and conservation of high value biodiversity assets.

Objective 3. Right tree, right place, right way, right time

Priority Actions:

- Incorporate consideration of tree growth rate, form and requirements together with existing and future infrastructure into Landscape Approval and Council planting processes.
- Develop a database of tree species showing growth characteristics and climate change resilience to guide approval planting decisions, and lifecycle management.

Objective 4. Infrastructure is part of the solution not the problem

Priority Actions:

- Integrate best-practice design to support healthy tree growth.
- Implement innovative retrofitting solutions for addressing infrastructure and community conflicts with existing mature trees.

Objective 5. Establish reliable water supplies for trees on Council land.

Priority Actions:

- Review global best-practice water sensitive urban design (WSUD) approaches for supporting urban trees, including complementary landscaping/vegetation plantings and built infrastructure.
- Update local tree planting and development guidelines and with regard to WSUD integration.

Objective 6. Landscape vegetation management is informed by traditional and ecological knowledge and burning methods.

Priority Actions:

- Manage the city forest on Council land in a sustainable way to ensure overall good health is maintained and promoted
- Identify traditional and ecological burning methods and knowledge relevant to the city.
- Engage with Wurundjeri Council and relevant fire ecology experts to advise on landscape fire management practices that will help to protect trees and other vegetation from severe bushfire impacts and improve overall vegetation and landscape condition.

Goal 2. “ENHANCE”: Grow our tree population and green cover to achieve a 20% canopy increase for the city.

Objective 1. Increase tree plantings on Council land.

Priority Actions:

- Identify and quantify Council plantable opportunities across the city.
- Develop a planting program.

Objective 2. Advocate, incentivise, and encourage the planting of trees on non-council land.

Priority Actions:

- Assess community behaviours and perceptions in each focal area to identify barriers and incentives to tree planting on private property.
- Examine the suitability of previous incentives schemes in the context of community survey feedback and re-instate or develop new incentives as relevant.
- Implement incentives for encouraging tree planting on private land.
- Advocate for the establishment of high value biodiversity asset.

Objective 3. Maximise tree planting opportunities in development areas.

Priority Actions:

- Review and update planning scheme revisions and amendments to allow for tree planting opportunities (e.g. set-backs that allow for size and type of trees).
- Review street design principles and guidelines to allow for planting and watering of larger and healthier street trees.
- Work with developers to achieve better than legislated outcomes where practical.

Objective 4. Develop Council tree database to guide strategic planning and tree management.

Priority Actions:

- Undertake a baseline audit of all Council trees in each focal area, including species, size, canopy spread, and health/condition.
- Develop a database of all Council trees based on the baseline audit.

Objective 5. Improve diversity, resilience, and wildlife habitat.

Priority Actions:

- Apply asset lifecycle principles to the management of Council trees, incorporating successional and in-fill plantings on Council land to ensure that at least 90% of the city forest on Council land is maintained at a useful life expectancy of more than 20 years.
- Review Council tree planting lists in the context of:
 - improving species diversity.
 - increasing fire resistance.
 - native wildlife requirements.
 - climate change resilience and adaptability.
- Integrate best-practice elements of biodiversity sensitive urban design (BSUD) in tree planting plans, particularly along waterways.
- Incorporate complementary vegetation plantings around trees in planting plans.

Objective 6. Prioritise greening in locations that will best mitigate heat islands and hot spots.

Priority Actions:

- Strategically prioritise tree plantings in each focal area based on the location of local hot spots and heat islands, and in consideration of social and physical vulnerability.
- Apply alternative options for greening and cooling where tree plantings are not feasible (e.g. green walls, green roofs, impervious surface treatments, pop-up gardens/parks).

Goal 3. “ENGAGE”: Inspire community support for the Greening Whittlesea Strategy and contribution towards achieving the shared strategic vision.

Objective 1. Improve community engagement and education around tree benefits

Priority Actions:

- Develop social media campaigns about the importance of trees and greening to the city’s community well-being, environmental resilience, and economic health.
- Develop online interactive mapping platform that provides information about mapped and assessed Council trees.
- Investigate other opportunities for community engagement around trees as part of existing community events or citizen science projects.
- Invite and encourage community and business involvement in planning and implementation of planting programs.
- Actively seek to communicate the Wurundjeri connection with landscape to the broader community (e.g. “sense of place”).

Objective 2. Maximise opportunities to deliver Vision through partnerships with stakeholder and aligned organisations

Priority Actions:

- Work with major non-council landowners (private and public) to develop a portfolio of greening projects.
- Participate in local and regional greening projects to develop and implement greening initiatives.
- Identify and target current and emerging offset programs to encourage mass planting opportunities within the city.

Objective 3 Gain additional funding to support greening actions

Priority Actions:

- Develop funding opportunities to promote planting and tree retention on private land.
- Understand the value of ecosystem services provided by trees.
- Calculate the business-case for trees based on ecosystem services values provided by trees and annual expenditure on managing and maintaining trees
- Advocate for additional external funding to support tree planting and management actions
- Target available government and private grant opportunities.
- Commit to more internal funding to support greening actions.

Goal 4. ‘BUILT ENVIRONMENT’: Construct infrastructure that contributes to the greening of our city

Objective 1. Providers of physical infrastructure prioritise and incorporate greening

Priority Actions:

- Develop guidelines for the use of materials and practices that support the intent of the GWS.
- Incorporate the guidelines into Council’s infrastructure planning and delivery processes.
- Explore advocacy and incentive-based methods of incorporating the guidelines into private infrastructure planning and delivery processes.

Prepared in consultation with:

Seed Consulting Services (now Edge Environment)

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