

Whitehorse Urban Forest
Implementation Plan
2021-2031
(Internal Working Document)

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Introduction

Whitehorse values the important contribution of trees and vegetation in making the municipality a vibrant place to live, work and visit. Across both private and public land, the urban forest is an essential element of Whitehorse. This Urban Forest Strategy aims to protect, enhance and connect Whitehorse's natural assets, including trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, soil and water across the entire municipality. This implementation plan sets how Council plans to meet the Vision as set by the Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031.

Considering the key challenges, priorities, community feedback and the targets of the urban forest strategy, this action plan sets out a list of key actions to achieve our urban forest vision.

Central to the success of the implementation is ensuring that all departments, officers and managers involved are co-ordinated in their management approach. The five objectives are laid out with a set of actions to be undertaken over the next 10 years. Each action has an indicative timeframes, cost and is assigned to a lead department for implementation.

Vision


A healthy, diverse and resilient urban forest

Objectives

1	Protect and enhance the urban forest Maximise the health, vigour and condition of Council managed vegetation, while managing risks. Protect Trees on private property.
2	Expand the urban forest and adapt to climate change Grow more trees and vegetation across both the public and private realm to adapt to climate change.
3	Enhance biodiversity Protect native bushland, extend and connect habitat and improve connectivity.
4	Build community capacity Provide opportunities for people to connect with and care for nature.
5	Develop our knowledge base Capture information to strengthen our understanding of the urban forest

Targets

The objectives will be measured by targets to:

	Increase tree canopy to 27% by 2031
	Increase tree canopy cover to 30% by 2050

*By 2030 this represents an overall increase of 9% total tree canopy cover (for trees taller than 5 metres)

Timelines of actions

Stage	Year	Estimated project timeline identified in Action Plan tables
Immediate	In-progress	Already commenced
Short term	1-2 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - prior to 30 June 2023.
Medium term	3-5 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2026
Long term	5-10 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - between 1 July 2026 and 30 June 2031

Indicative Costs

Indicative cost	Classification
\$0-\$20,000	Low cost
\$20,000 – \$40,000	Medium cost
> \$40,000	High cost

Funding options

- Existing operating
- New operating
- Grant dependent
- Open space Fund

Review

This action plan is a “living” document and will be reviewed after 2 years in 2023, then 3 years in 2026 and after 5 years in 2031. The review should track progress towards reaching the vision, objectives and targets of the Whitehorse Urban forest Strategy and that it is in line with the Urban Forest Background Document.

Action Plan

Objective 1: Protect and enhance the urban forest

Council's highest priority is to protect and retain trees and vegetation that already exists on both private and public land. Given the time it takes for trees to grow to maturity and provide the maximum social, economic and environmental benefits, removal of vegetation is a last resort. The management of the existing street and park tree population is aimed to minimise the risk and maximise the health, vigour and structural condition of the urban forest.

To protect trees on private land, Council needs to ensure an enforceable legislative framework is in place for the protection of trees during planning and development processes. Council advocates for and encourages the retention and protection of trees on private land.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
1.1	Extend the Council tree inventory to capture standalone park trees to develop a proactive management plan and improve risk management.	ParksWide	3-5 years	Park Inventory complete	\$80 000	Operational
1.2	Integrate tree inventory into Council's asset management system to better manage funding, scheduled works program and auditing processes.	ParksWide	Immediate	IPS asset management system updated	No additional	
1.3	Adopt a purpose built tree and urban forest asset management program	ParksWide	1-2 years		\$13 000 set up \$10 000 annual	
1.4	Review and strengthen the 10-year proactive management program based on results of inventory to minimise risk and maximise tree health and vigour.	ParksWide	1-2 years		\$300 000	New Capital Expenditure
1.5	Review the Street Tree Valuation Procedure to include Ecological Services Value, review the valuation cap and set up an accounting process to ensure reinvestment into the urban forest.	ParksWide	1-2 years	New Policy in place. Reinvestment process in place.		Existing operational
1.6	Review the existing Whitehorse Tree Policies and tree management plan to standards, best practice in a changing	ParksWide	1-2 years	New Policy in place	No additional funding	Existing operational

	climate and the Whitehorse Urban Forest Background Document.					
1.7	Trial the use of structural soils in footpath and road construction projects to support tree growth and surrounding infrastructure in high density areas.	ParksWide	1-3 years		\$25 000	Existing Operational
1.8	Integrate bushfire management principles into urban forest management to manage risk.	ParksWide	Immediate	Bushfire risk assessment	No additional funding	Existing Operational
1.9	Advocate for the permanent application of Amendment C219 to the Minister for Planning to strengthen tree protection measures on private land.	Planning	Immediate		No additional funding	Existing Operational
1.10	Improve accessibility of information regarding tree removal, retention and replanting through the planning process whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act and the Privacy legislation"	Planning and Building		Trees to be removed and replaced is easily accessible to the public.	No additional funding	Existing Operational
1.12	Review Landscape Design Guidelines for new development.	Planning	Immediate	New Guidelines are in place.	No additional funding	
1.13	Investigate and design a program for allocating annual special charge accounts to go towards cable bundling program.	ParksWide	1-2 years			Existing Operational
1.14	Implement asymmetrical street tree plantings where powerlines exist to manage the interface between hard infrastructure and trees.	ParksWide	1-2 years	New street plantings have smaller trees under powerlines and tall canopy trees on the other side		Existing Operational
1.15	Improve accessibility of information about tree removal, retention and replanting through the planning process whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act and the Privacy legislation.	Planning and Building	1-2 years	Mechanism in place to access centralised data of tree removals and replacements that trigger a planning permit.		

Objective 2: Expand the urban forest and adapt to climate change

To expand the urban forest, we will need more trees and vegetation across both the public and private realm. By applying right tree, right place, right way, and right time principles; the diversity and resilience of the urban forest will be improved.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
2.1	<p>Identify and quantify existing opportunities for planting on Council land across the city including within the streetscape, parks, reserves and other council managed land.</p> <p>Identify streetscapes for increased tree planting beyond the standard practice such as kerb outstands, median, plazas, carpark and roundabout plantings.</p> <p>Identify wide streets suitable for in-road planting in conjunction with traditional nature strip tree planting as part of traffic calming treatments and improved canopy cover.</p>	ParksWide Engineering	3-5 years	GIS and prioritisation plan	50 000	Existing Operational
2.2	Prioritise areas for planting over the next ten years targeting areas of low canopy areas, hot spots, social vulnerability, biodiversity and green corridors.	ParksWide	1-2 years	10 Year planting plan in place	No new funding	
2.3	Set thresholds for street tree diversity to improve the resilience of the street tree population.	ParksWide	1-2 years	Thresholds established in management plan	-	Existing Operational
2.4	<p>Develop urban forest precinct plans to maximise opportunities to extend canopy to achieve a range of prioritised outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced biodiversity shading and cooling Improved amenity 	ParksWide	3-5 years		More cost analysis required	Grant dependent

2.5	Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to implement the Council ESD Policy to achieve canopy targets using tools such as the Green Factor.	ParksWide, Engineering and Environmental Services, Capital Works, City Works	Immediate	Project brief for capital works projects include canopy cover targets	-	Existing Operational
2.6	Develop an integrated water management plan to encourage the use of water sensitive urban design as appropriate incorporate use of stormwater for passive irrigation in streets and open spaces wherever possible.	ParksWide	1-2 years	IWM Strategy adopted	50 000	Existing Operational
2.7	Develop planting guidelines for easements on private property.	Planning	1-2 years	Guidelines in place	-	Existing Operational
2.8	Develop a tree palette with a suite of future-proof trees suitable for streets, parks and the home garden for a range of outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced biodiversity shading and cooling Landscape Character and improved amenity 	ParksWide Planning	1-2 years	Guidelines are in places	-	Existing Operational
2.9	Explore non-regulatory mechanisms to encourage planting of canopy trees in new developments e.g. incentives, educations, supporting innovative developers.	Planning ParksWide	Immediate	Education program ongoing	-	Existing Operational
2.10	Increase the use of passive irrigation within the streetscape to improve soil moisture levels for street trees.	Engineering & Environmental Services	5-10 years	Increase in percentage of street trees that receive passive irrigation in line with Catchment Management Strategies.		

2.11	Renew the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy to increase opportunities for urban greening to mitigate heat island effect, to improve connectivity and to extend canopy cover.	Leisure and recreation	5-10 years			100 000
2.12	Advocate for changes in the Planning Scheme for greater uptake of green walls, roofs and facades in both residential growth and commercial zones.	Planning & Building	5-10 years			
2.13	For each new structure plan include canopy targets that support the Municipality to achieve the overall target of 30% across Whitehorse. In some areas it may be necessary to set higher canopy targets than 30% to compensate for areas where trees are lacking.	Planning & Building	1-2 years			Existing Operational
2.14	Develop a climate resilient species trial program to test suitability and resilience within the streetscape and collaborate with other LGAs.	ParksWide	Immediate	Trial in place		Existing Operational
2.15	Develop a drought response plan to manage the health of individual Council managed trees within streetscapes and parklands during times of drought.	ParksWide	3-5 years	Drought response plan in place		Existing Operational

Objective 3: Enhance Biodiversity

Protect native bushland, extend and connect habitat and improve connectivity.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
3.1	Scope and develop green corridors enhancement program which identifies, prioritises areas for new vegetation throughout the urban landscape to improve connectivity. Once the scoping has been done a feasibility and business case be developed to cost the project.	ParksWide	1-2 years		\$50 000	
3.2	Develop Master Plans for the Gardiners Creek, Dandenong Creek, Mullum Mullum Creek and Koonung Corridors to improve connectivity for both biodiversity and active modes of transport.	Leisure and recreation	3-10 years	Master Plans in place	\$300 000	NBI
3.3	Adopt a Biodiversity Asset Management System approach to allocate appropriate resources for long term planning.	ParksWide	3-5 years			Op Ex Approx. \$150 000 (Rapid Map)
3.4	Develop an animal pest management action plan to protect biodiversity assets in line with Eastern Region Animal Pest Management Strategy.	ParksWide	1-2 years			Existing Operational
3.5	Develop vegetation and biodiversity sensitive design guidelines for council capital works and upgrades.	ParksWide (Environmental Sustainability)	3-5 years	Guidelines in place		Existing Operational

3.6	Collaborate with Local Indigenous Plant Nurseries to better understand the impacts of climate change on indigenous vegetation and conservation approaches.	ParksWide	Immediate	Established approach to managing biodiversity and climate change		Existing Operational
3.7	Assess the success of artificial hollows to decide an ongoing practice.	ParksWide	1-2 years	Monitoring program in place.		Existing Operational
3.8	Strengthen the Whitehorse Tree Management Plan to preserve the treed character of classified streets cited by the National Trust.	ParksWide	1-3 years			

Objective 4: Build Community Capacity

Provide opportunities for people to connect with and care for nature. Keep the community informed and build capacity within the community to share knowledge and enhance the urban forest on both private and public land. Ensure culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups are reached by utilising CALD networks to distribute information and by translating material and resources into other languages.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
4.1	Support the planting and care of healthy vegetation and trees in the home garden through programs such as the Tree Education and Gardens for Wildlife programs.	Planning	Immediate	Increase in subscriptions of programs	-	Existing Operational
4.2	Offer a range of public talks, workshops, incursions and excursions to pre-schools, schools, tertiary groups and other community groups to raise awareness and encourage the interaction between people and their local natural environment.	ParksWide	Immediate	Environmental education program in place	-	Existing Operational
4.3	Raise awareness of the importance of indigenous flora and fauna of Whitehorse to enhance biodiversity on private land.	Planning	Immediate	Resources for indigenous gardening readily available	-	Existing Operational
4.4	Advocate to partner with the State government to Implement a community planting program for schools and local residents within areas identified as a green corridors.	ParksWide	2-3 years	Number of schools subscribed to planting program. Increase in canopy cover on school grounds.	-	Grant dependant
4.5	Deliver a citizen science program in partnership with citizen science agencies such as iNaturalist to extend awareness of biodiversity and improve data collection.	ParksWide	Immediate	Increase in citizen science data.	-	Existing Operational

4.6	Facilitate a series of environmental events such as Clean up Australia day and National Tree Day to invite the community to actively care for nature through weeding, planting and rubbish collection.	ParksWide	Immediate	Environmental Events occur each year.	-	Existing Operational
4.7	Provide technical & logistical support to volunteers and community groups such as 'Friends' groups who carry out weeding, planting, mulching and monitoring within Council managed land.	ParksWide	Immediate	Friends of groups are well supported	-	Existing Operational
4.8	Collaborate with surrounding municipalities, waterway managers and community groups to enhance biodiversity links within and outside of Whitehorse.	ParksWide	Immediate		-	Existing Operational
4.9	Increase communications and media coverage about our urban forest and its significance.	Planning	Immediate		-	Existing Operational
4.10	Develop a program for working with residents to increase nature strip planting to strengthen connectivity.	ParksWide	3-5 years			
4.11	Develop an interactive online map with individual tree data to raise awareness of the value of our urban forest students, such as the city of Melbourne urban Forest Visual interactive map.	ParksWide	1-2 years		\$20 000	New Capital

Objective 5: Develop our knowledge base

Capture information to strengthen our understanding of the urban forest.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
5.1	Extend the street tree inventory to include all council managed trees within high traffic areas of public open space including the identification of vacant sites.	Immediate Repeated every 5 years	ParksWide	A comprehensive tree inventory for measurement, forward planning and management	\$4.20 per tree +\$140 000 per contract – streets trees	
5.2	Maintain the Biodiversity Inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record notable flora and fauna sightings Repeat Biodiversity inventory surveys every 5 years Draw on citizen science programs within the community to gain a better understanding of biodiversity in Whitehorse. 	Ongoing 2023 – then every 5 years	ParksWide	Updated		\$100 000
5.3	Monitor canopy cover changes to understand changes in canopy cover according to land tenure.	ParksWide Planning	1-2 years	Concise data sets collected		\$20 000 New Op ex 10 000 existing op ex
5.4	Collaborate across sectors and regions to achieve better monitoring outcomes through Living Melbourne.	ParksWide Planning	1-2 years			
5.6	Review the list of trees deemed to have significant characteristics including that were in VPOs 2 and 4 to extend the reach of the Tree Assistance Fund.	Planning	1-2 years	Complete list of trees	12 000	
5.7	Track tree removal, retention and replacement to better understand canopy loss and gains where a planning permit has been required.	Planning	1-2 years	Centralised data base and analytics in place.		Existing Operational

End of document

