

# Public Realm Greening Program Update

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

Tuesday, 20 May 2025

Infrastructure and Public  
Works Committee

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**Approving Officer:**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the progress of the Public Realm Greening Program which aims to meet Council's aspirations as set out in the Integrated Climate Strategy 2030 by reducing the heat island affect through achievement of the following targets:

- 40% tree canopy cover by 2035.
- Net increase of 485 street trees every year until 2035.
- 40% of street trees (5,143) have a WSUD passive watering by 2030 and 60% by 2035

In 2021, Adelaide was the second city globally to be recognised as a National Park City where people and nature flourish. The Public Realm Greening Program Update provides an overview of the work that has occurred to date to assess where trees are required in the City of Adelaide, as part of this program. The process to plant a tree involves many steps and checks to ensure that a tree can be planted and that it flourishes.

Tracking this process and keeping a tally of the streets where trees can be planted has required various tools and data sets that support the delivery of this program. Trees are now being planted, and it is anticipated that 58 streets will receive approximately 200 trees by June 2025. The delivery of this program will ensure that Adelaide continues to evolve as a National Park City.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL  
THAT COUNCIL

1. Notes the Public Realm Greening Program Update as contained in this report.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

|                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| City of Adelaide<br>2024-2028<br>Strategic Plan                        | <p><b>Strategic Alignment – Our Environment</b></p> <p>The Public Realm Greening Program aligns with Our Environment as part of the City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and the Key Action is:</p> <p>Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of the Park Lands, squares, open space and streetscapes.</p> |
| Policy                                                                 | <p>City Plan – Adelaide 2036: Strategy 1 – A Green City Grid driving the need for greener, cooler streets.</p> <p>The Integrated Climate Strategy 2030: Goal 1 – A Climate Resilient City, and Goal 3 – A City Where Nature Thrives, driving the need to increase urban greening for a cooler, more comfortable and resilient city.</p>                        |
| Consultation                                                           | Residents and external stakeholders / asset owners are consulted in all street designs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Resource                                                               | Resources are currently allocated to this program.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Risk / Legal /<br>Legislative                                          | Offsets from other assets in all streets are adhered to.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Opportunities                                                          | This Program delivers a greener city that can mitigate the impacts of future climate shocks and support the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to Adelaide.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 24/25 Budget<br>Allocation                                             | Current funding allocation is \$3.459m.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Proposed 25/26<br>Budget Allocation                                    | \$2,232,000 is proposed in the Draft 2025/2026 Business Plan & Budget.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Life of Project,<br>Service, Initiative<br>or (Expectancy of)<br>Asset | Not as a result of this report.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 24/25 Budget<br>Reconsideration<br>(if applicable)                     | Not as a result of this report.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Ongoing Costs<br>(eg maintenance<br>cost)                              | With an increase in tree numbers, future operational costs will need be to be increased to enable appropriate level of service to maintain these trees.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Other Funding<br>Sources                                               | Opportunities for extra funding will be sought from State and Federal Governments if made available.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

# DISCUSSION

## Background

1. Over the last 10 years City of Adelaide (CoA) has delivered multiple streetscape projects that focussed on the movement of people and cycling and the provision of blue/green infrastructure. Market to Riverbank is a fine example of CoA's commitment to creating people and nature places and spaces within the city grid.
2. Frome Street has created an exemplary cycling corridor into and through the city where green infrastructure plays a key role in creating a pleasing, resilient urban environment while delineating modes of movement along this street.
3. At the same time, CoA also explored and delivered Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) infrastructure to begin to create resilient urban trees to mitigate future climate impacts.
4. Key drivers for the Public Realm Greening Program include:
  - 4.1. The City Plan – Adelaide 2036 has eight strategies that provide direction for future investigations, investment, advocacy, planning and policy interventions with Strategy 1 – A Green City Grid driving the need for greener, cooler streets.
  - 4.2. The Integrated Climate Strategy 2030 has five goals with Goal 1 – A Climate Resilient City, and Goal 3 – A City Where Nature Thrives, driving the need to increase urban greening for a cooler, more comfortable and resilient city.
  - 4.3. In line with the above, CoA has set the following targets:
    - 4.3.1. 40% tree canopy cover by 2035.
    - 4.3.2. Net increase of 485 street trees every year until 2035.
    - 4.3.3. 40% of street trees (5,143) have a WSUD passive watering by 2030 and 60% by 2035.

## Budget

5. City of Adelaide has committed \$5.7m for the Street Tree greening program. The budget for the 2024/25 financial year is \$3.459m with remaining funds to be administered through the forward Business Plan and Budget.

## Scope of Work

6. Deliverables for the 2024/25 financial year include a minimum of 200 street trees to be planted across four streams (refer below).

## Investigation and Design

7. CoA is committed to greener streets (and parks). As such, 918 streets have been assessed for tree planting and grouped into four streams:
  - 7.1. Stream 1 – 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 Road and Footpath Renewals
  - 7.2. Stream 2 – Streetscape Projects
  - 7.3. Stream 3 – Heat Map Greening for small streets and laneways
  - 7.4. Stream 4 – Priority Boulevards and Squares.
8. A total of 58 streets have progressed to design in financial year 2024/2025 with around 200 trees to be planted by June 2025. Tree planting will continue during the winter months and conclude sometime in Spring.
9. As part of the design phase, a resilient tree species list has been prepared from which trees are selected for planting, noting that opportunities exist to partner through existing relationships with the Universities to identify tree species that are resilient to pests, drought, and climate change. A list of the tree species can be viewed at [Link 1](#).
10. There are around 80 trees on this list with 49 being exotic and 31 natives.
11. Tree size ranges from small trees, up to 8m in height, to large trees over 15m. Two important attributes for tree selection contained in the list are shade capacity and biodiversity outcomes. Given the commitment to increase both shade and biodiversity, tree selection focuses on these attributes. This list provides for a range of trees that can be chosen for any situation and is updated regularly to incorporate new trees and to remove trees that appear not to thrive in an urban environment. Diversity of species is important as it assists in preventing a disease impacting a singular type of tree.

12. The process involved in determining if a tree can be planted is complex and requires five key stages: Site Conditions, Consultation, Tree Suitability, Environmental Outcomes and Maintenance & Life Span.
13. There are many steps required before planting a tree in the ground, a flow chart is available at [Link 2](#). This process is mostly related to services located in footpaths and the roads where trees are being planted. City of Adelaide streets often do not have nature strips so the places available for tree planting are highly contested in relation to other services. This process seeks to minimise conflicts with other services at the time of installation.
14. In addition, CoA must work with conditions laid out by the Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR) in relation to tree planting. The OTR in South Australia plays a crucial role in regulating tree planting around powerlines and other infrastructure, particularly when it comes to safety and potential interference. They provide guidance on acceptable tree species and planting distances, and they may grant exemptions for planting trees not on the approved list.
15. Key aspects of the OTR's role in tree planting:
  - 15.1 Clearance Zones: The OTR sets regulations and guidelines for maintaining safe clearances between trees and powerlines, considering factors like voltage, tree species, and mature height.
  - 15.2 Approved Tree Lists: The OTR has established lists of approved tree species that can be planted near powerlines without requiring exemptions.
  - 15.3 Exemptions: For planting trees not on the approved list, individuals or councils may apply for exemptions from the OTR.
  - 15.4 Water Infrastructure: The OTR also regulates tree planting near water mains and connections, requiring approval for planting within certain distances.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

16. Most locations that are being considered for tree planting now and into the future compete with a range of other infrastructure in streets while trying to ensure trees grown in hard paved footpaths and roads can be challenging. At times there are too many services in some small laneways which may only accommodate one tree. In this situation it may not be planted given the cost and minimal impact it would have in meeting the Climate Strategy. Ideally, at least three trees or more are preferred in small lanes/streets.
17. Where trees are being planted in hard pavements it is often in association with Stratavault Cells which are installed to replace structured soils under hard pavements. These cells provide more space for tree roots to grow and water to spread. These cells are an underground grid that support hard surface pavements while allowing trees to thrive in harsh, urban conditions.
18. Adelaide was declared a National Park City in 2021 and was the second city globally to achieve this recognition. The key to this recognition is how people and nature thrive together. The ongoing investment for trees in streets will ensure that Adelaide continues to be a National Park City that supports liveability and biodiversity. It should be noted that trees are the only Council asset where their value increases over time. A tree planted now that grows to its full potential can be valued anywhere between \$20,000 - \$100,000. However, more importantly, trees keep cities cool and support the health and wellbeing of people and fauna.
19. Expanding the urban forest into most streets across the City of Adelaide will ensure the positive impacts of trees are maximised, supporting a growing population and visitors to this city.
20. A Tree Dashboard Reporting Map is in development ([Link 3](#)). The Dashboard is an in-house GIS program to graphically map where trees are being planted across Adelaide either this financial year or in future years. The Dashboard will have two tabs with one highlighting all the streets that have been assessed as per the above streams. Another tab will show the total of trees planted at any point in time, how many trees are in the design and delivery phase, and how the planted trees are contributing to an increase in tree canopy cover.
21. The CoA has commenced use of the Forestree app which offers a platform for urban forest management, enabling the CoA to make informed, data driven decisions about tree care and planning. By centralising detailed information on tree health, species, maintenance history and environmental value, the app enhances operational efficiency, supports long term sustainability goals and improves risk management.
22. With real time updates and mapping functionality, Forestree allows for greater transparency, accountability, and community engagement by making urban tree data accessible and meaningful to both staff and the public.

## **Community Engagement**

23. The City of Adelaide has implemented a comprehensive community engagement strategy to support the Street Tree Planting initiative, aligning with the Integrated Climate Strategy and Strategic Plan 2024–2028. This strategy aims to inform residents and stakeholders, gather feedback and foster community involvement in delivering a greener, more climate-resilient city.
24. Engagement with the community has occurred through a range of channels, including on-street signage, direct mail, community meetings, email correspondence and digital platforms. This multi-channel approach ensures information is accessible and timely, supporting inclusive participation and strengthening awareness of the program's environmental and urban design goals.
25. At street level, confluence signs have been installed at proposed planting sites, each featuring a QR code linking to [Our Adelaide](#). This content includes general information about the tree planting program, individual street maps, the species selected for planting, timeframes for delivery, and the broader canopy cover targets.
26. The project team has attended multiple on-site meetings with residents and business owners, particularly where significant works or parking changes were proposed. These meetings offered an opportunity to explain the rationale behind planting locations and species selection, address questions, and adjust plans where feasible. Additionally, the team continues to respond to individual stakeholder enquiries by phone and email, offering tailored information and support.
27. In addition to localised engagement, the Our Adelaide website provides a dedicated project page featuring interactive maps, species lists and details about current and future planting locations. The page outlines the program's contribution to heat mitigation, biodiversity, and liveability outcomes, helping to build long-term community understanding and support.
28. Council Members are briefed through a monthly section of the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee report, ensuring ongoing visibility of the initiative at the governance level.
29. These updates will highlight delivery progress, showcase before-and-after visuals, and report on milestones such as increased canopy coverage or the rollout of passive watering infrastructure.

## **Delivery (including maintenance)**

30. The challenge to plant 200 trees within the 2024/25 financial year has required efficient delivery processes involving different CoA business units (Procurement, Community Engagement, Technical Services and City Operations).
31. A further challenge to meet the target has been the planting season (April to June) and the dry conditions where planting has not been possible for most of the year, preparation for planting has occurred in April 2025.
32. An expedited procurement approach has seen formation of a 'Greening contractor panel' to provide the resources needed. This has seen eight delivery contractors engaged to service the program with an on-call approach to work packages issued through Technical Services. The aim is to maintain a pipeline of design-ready work packages, that can be issued continuously to market.
33. Each contractor has been provided a trial work package to test their quality standards and performance. There is also the expectation they have resource capacity and previous CBD experience. Contractual arrangements also require contractors to maintain the plantings for a period of 12 months beyond the practical completion hand over.
34. Establishing a supply chain for trees has been critical with engagement of two local and one interstate supplier. To date the team have upward of 200 trees (across 20 species) ordered, each satisfying a level of maturity and health for planting.
35. The recommended planting season is between April and June, so rate of trees planted is expected to generally align with these months.

36. Tree Planting status as at 30 April 2025

|                             | Stream<br>1 | Stream<br>2 | Stream<br>3 | Stream<br>4 | Totals |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| No. Trees @ IFT             | 33          | 29          | 53          | 131         | 246    |
| No. Trees Ordered           | 33          | 29          | 53          | 137         | 252    |
| Proposed Planting April '25 | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0           | 217    |
| Proposed Planting May '25   | 5           | 0           | 3           | 61          |        |
| Proposed Planting June '25  | 28          | 16          | 50          | 54          |        |
| No. Trees Planted           | 0           | 13          | 0           | 18          | 31     |

36.1 **Stream 1** – 2023/24 and 2024/25 Road and Footpath Renewals

36.2 **Stream 2** – Streetscape Projects

36.3 **Stream 3** – Heat Map Greening for small streets and laneways

36.4 **Stream 4** – Priority Boulevards and Squares

37. Progress is being tracked across the four streams, including number of designs issued for tender, tree numbers ordered, and trees planted.

38. The planting program will continue into 2025/26 financial year to meet the longer-term target of 485 trees.

39. In support of street trees Council recently purchased an additional watering truck that will support the new trees beyond the 12 months of maintenance period delivery contractors are obliged to meet.

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## DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

**Link 1** – Approved Tree Species

**Link 2** – Tree planting flow chart

**Link 3** – Tree Dashboard Reporting Map

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## ATTACHMENTS

Nil

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