

Public Realm Greening Program – Revised Tree Planting Overview

Tuesday, 19 May 2026
Infrastructure and Public
Works Committee

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Program Contact:
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Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to inform Council on the Public Realm Greening Program - Revised Planting Overview. **(Attachment A)**

City streets are getting hotter, the Public Realm Greening Program seeks to tackle the Urban Heat Island effect and the impact to people choosing to live in the City, to support economic uplift of property and overall amenity and making it cooler for people to move through the City.

At its meeting held on 24 February 2026, Council considered a Draft Public Realm Greening Program - 5 Year Tree Planting Overview and resolved:

'That Council:

1. *Requests the following issues be addressed in a revised 5-Year Green Infrastructure Plan, to be considered at the May 2026 meeting of the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee:*
 - *Inclusion of a diversity measure aligned to the Santamour diversity index to guide tree selection*
 - *Provision of a map identifying 5-year indicative planting priorities and identifying the location of existing WSUD supported tree locations*
 - *Identification of how species are selected for planting to maximise potential canopy spread at planting locations*
 - *Proposed street level canopy targets in addition to Council wide and Park Lands targets*
 - *Prioritisation methodology used to determine the proposed planting locations and approach*
 - *Full cost estimate to 2035 including WSUD interventions and operational costs/savings associated with ongoing maintenance.'*

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 26 May 2026 for consideration

THAT THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Notes the Public Realm Greening Program – Revised Tree Planting Overview as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.3 on the Agenda for the meeting of the Infrastructure and Public Works Committee held on 19 May 2026.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	<p>Strategic Alignment – Our Environment</p> <p>Lead and advocate for the environment 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 cooler, more comfortable and resilient city.</p> <p>The Integrated Transport Strategy 2025: Goal 3.1 under Health & Sustainability - driving the need for streets to be cool, calm and connected to support cycling and walking</p>
Consultation	Residents, external stakeholders and property owners are consulted in all street designs.
Resource	Resources are currently allocated to this program for 2025/26. Further capital funding is required to continue this initiative into future years.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	<p>Targets defined within the Integrated Climate Strategy 2030 (ICS) - Greening supported by sustainable water resources, state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% canopy cover by 2035. • Net increase of 485 street trees every year until 2035. • 40% of street trees (5,143) have WSUD passive watering by 2030 and 60% by 2035. <p>The targets within the ICS are increasingly challenging and need to be considered in relation to Council’s aspirations based on cost estimates, available funding allocations, underground infrastructure impacts and complexities around street scapes (parking bays and available space).</p> <p>Distance offsets from other assets (utilities and telecommunications) in all streets will need to be adhered to.</p>
Opportunities	The 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.
25/26 Budget Allocation	\$4,787,000 Capital Budget
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	\$2,000,000 is proposed as an allocation within Council’s Draft 2026/27 Business Plan and Budget currently out for public consultation prior to further Council consideration and adoption.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	The Greening Program is subject to on-going funding.

25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	With an increase in tree numbers, future operational costs will need to be increased to enable appropriate level of service to maintain these trees.
Other Funding Sources	Opportunities for extra funding will be sought from State and Federal Governments if made available, such as Green Adelaide.

DISCUSSION

Background

1. The Public Realm Greening Program Plan is seeking to increase tree canopy cover in streets across the City and North Adelaide. Trees planted in streets will assist in making the City of Adelaide cooler while contributing to Council's objective of increasing tree canopy cover from 33% currently to 40% by 2035. This target includes trees in streets, squares and Park Lands.
2. City streets are getting hotter, the Public Realm Greening Program seeks to tackle the Urban Heat Island effect and the impact to people choosing to live in the City, to support economic uplift of property and overall amenity and making it cooler for people to move through the City.
3. Key drivers for the Public Realm Greening Program Plan include:
 - 3.1. Strategic Plan 2024-2028 – Our Environment – Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of Park Lands, squares, open spaces and streetscapes.
 - 3.2. The City Plan – Adelaide 2036 in relation to Strategy 1 – A Green City Grid driving the need for greener, cooler streets.
 - 3.3. The Integrated Climate Strategy 2030 (ICS) in relation to 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.
 - 3.4. The Integrated Transport Strategy 2025 (ITS) in relation to Goal 3 – Health & Sustainability driving the need for streets to be cool, calm and connected to support cycling and walking.
4. In line with the above, the City of Adelaide (CoA) has set the following targets:
 - 3.1. 40% tree canopy cover in streets and parks by 2035.
 - 3.2. Net increase of 485 trees every year until 2035.
 - 3.3. 40% of street trees (5,143) have water sensitive urban design (WSUD) providing passive watering by 2030 and 60% by 2035.

Overview of Recommendations included in the Public Realm Greening Program Plan

5. A Revised Planting Program has been prepared and includes details that respond to the following Council Recommendations:
 - 5.1. Inclusion of a diversity measure aligned to the Santamour diversity index to guide tree selection insert text.
 - 5.2. Provision of a map identifying indicative planting priorities and identifying the location of existing WSUD supported tree locations.
 - 5.3. Identification of how species are selected for planting to maximise potential canopy spread at planting locations.
 - 5.4. Proposed street level canopy targets in addition to Council wide and Park Lands targets.
 - 5.5. Prioritisation methodology used to determine the proposed planting locations and approach.
 - 5.6. Full cost estimate to 2035 including WSUD interventions and operational costs/savings associated with ongoing maintenance.

6. The following is a brief overview of the details in the Public Realm Greening Program Plan.

Santamour Diversity Index

7. The Santamour Diversity Index was developed in 1990 as a guide to ensure diversity of species for an urban forest. This index suggests the following breakdown for tree percentages as part of an urban forest:
 - 7.1. No more than 30% of any single family
 - 7.2. No more than 20% of any single genus
 - 7.3. No more than 10% of any single species.
8. This framework seeks to avoid the same tree being planted in urban areas which has been a common practice and creates a monoculture and a less resilient urban forest. With a diverse urban forest, impacts can be reduced from global diseases or pest, such as Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer, and from heatwaves associated with climate change.
9. Three street tree species fail to comply at the species level as follows:
 - 9.1. London Plane Tree with a score of 13.54%
 - 9.2. Hackberry with a score of 12.40%
 - 9.3. Desert Ash scored 14.95%.
10. The first two species will only be planted in streets where those trees are currently located, to maintain consistency in tree species. The third species is not proposed to be planted anymore, as it is considered unsuitable and is being replaced with other suitable Ash species.
11. Within the Park Lands, two Gum tree species do not comply with the genus and family percentages. Given the role and extent of Gum Trees in the Australian landscape and ecosystem this is to be expected. Whilst this means there is a future risk to environmental attacks, they are fundamental to birds, mammals and insects for habitat and food and will continue to be maintained in the Park Lands with new species being added, such as the Native Pine (*Calitris gracilis*) to increase diversity.

Tree Planting Dashboard

12. A Tree Planting Dashboard is currently in development and once complete will be available on Council's website. This dashboard will reflect:
 - 12.1. Trees planted to date in streets showing botanic and common names and year of planting.
 - 12.2. Street locations that are scheduled for planting in future years. Each year will have a distinct colour.
 - 12.3. Location of all existing WSUD installations and planned future installations.
13. It is anticipated that the Dashboard will go live for the 2026/27 financial year. This Dashboard will evolve over time to potentially show tree species totals, maintenance works conducted and trees of interest or significance.

Species selection to maximise tree canopy cover

14. The Preferred Tree Planting List has a range of trees that are suitable in a variety of urban situations and are chosen based on the site conditions that dictate what tree form and habit are suitable.
15. There are several factors that are considered when choosing a tree and these are discussed in the Revised Public Realm Greening Program Plan.
16. All trees on the Preferred Tree Planting List are recognised for the ability to flourish in urban situations and provide canopy cover.

Tree canopy targets in streets and parks and associated challenges

17. Council has a bold target of 40% tree canopy cover across streets and parks. The trees planted in the 2024/25 financial year are estimated to provide around 0.6% canopy cover when mature. It is vital that more trees are planted in parks to assist in reaching a 40% canopy target in the future.
18. The targets within the ICS are increasingly challenging and need to be considered in relation to Council's aspirations based on costs estimates, available funding allocations, underground infrastructure impacts and complexities around street scapes (parking bays and available space).
19. In addition, it is important to note the removal of trees for important State led projects such as North Adelaide Public Golf Course development, MotorGP, Adelaide Aquatic Centre and the Women's & Children's Hospital. Collectively these projects will see the removal of approximately 1,500 mature trees and have a significant

impact on the existing canopy cover and the ability for Council to reach its 40% target. Whilst it is noted that these trees will be replaced it will take some time for canopy cover to achieve desired outcomes.

20. Whilst the target of 40% may be challenging to reach, Council should continue to increase tree numbers in streets and parks to ensure liveability, to support economic activity and the visitor economy while ensuring Adelaide continues to evolve as a National Park City.

Methodology used to determine tree planting locations

21. The City Plan 2036, ICS and the ITS provide the directions and targets that dictate the selection of streets for tree planting.
22. The City Plan sets a clear direction and states:
 - 22.1. Strategy 1 – A Green City Grid – Under this direction the initial focus was on the easy wins and less congested streets. Diagram 4.3 within the City Plan on page 64 highlights street priorities.
23. The ICS has set the tree canopy target of 40% and the inclusion of Water Sensitive Urban Design to support trees flourishing into the future.
24. The ITS, is aligned with the City Plan with the following goal:
 - 24.1. Goal 3.1 under Health & Sustainability - driving the need for streets to be cool, calm and connected to support cycling and walking.
25. All streets have been assessed based on the Urban Heat Map and tree canopy data supplied by Green Adelaide in 2022. All the wide boulevard streets are the hottest streets and in particular, the east/west streets where road pavements are subject to direct sunlight all day. These are prioritised for tree planting in addition to streets with less than 5% canopy cover.
26. These two data sets are currently being reviewed and will be updated in 2026/27 financial year by Green Adelaide. Once this data is available the information will be integrated into future street assessments.

Full cost estimate to 2035

27. Between now and 2030 the approach will be to deliver greening in boulevards and streets where substantial change is not required.
28. The approach beyond 2030 is likely to focus on the delivery of both boulevards and small-scale streets in the CBD that were initially deferred due to their level of complexity.
29. Significant changes to street functionality to support greening will need to align with the ITS and if there are numerous boulevards and streets where this is required, Council may need to approve a refreshed program. This approach may also need a communication plan to engage with the community.
30. Cost estimates have been prepared for Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 based on costs to date in Year 1 - 2025/26 for years 3,4 and 5. Year 2 is based on the approved budget of \$2,000,000.
31. For the years between 2031 to 2035, a flat rate of \$25,000 per tree has been adopted for the delivery of 200 trees per year. This acknowledges the likely increase in costs and complexity over time.
32. To provide the best growing conditions for trees in CBD streets, underground cells and WSUD will support tree resilience and maximise their lifecycle and thus be more cost effective in the long term. This is more costly now, but it is envisaged that trees will live longer providing more environmental and economic benefits for the City of Adelaide.
33. With a focus on increasing tree canopy cover, future maintenance costs will increase given there are more trees to manage. This could be offset slightly with tree removals. In general, by planting the right tree in the right place, future maintenance costs will be minimised when trees reach maturity.
34. In addition, Council on the 28 April 2026 resolved.

'That Council agrees to establish a design award to encourage innovation and cost efficiencies in the implementation of sustainability measures, such as tree planting and residential EV charging, starting with a \$15,000 prize from the FY26 budget.'
35. The intent of the resolution being to develop an appropriate framework for a design award focused specifically on infrastructure solutions that enable and enhance street tree greening opportunities, this will include.
 - 35.1. The development of eligibility and assessment criteria that prioritise innovation in design, improved tree health and longevity, efficient use of public space in terms of tree planting, resources, constructability, and cost effectiveness.

36. The framework will also consider how proposed solutions respond to common constraints within the public realm, including underground services, competing street uses, and long-term maintenance requirements.
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Greening Streets – Green Infrastructure Plan (Revised May 2026)

- END OF REPORT -