

Tree Management Policy

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

Tuesday, 6 October 2026

City Planning, Development
and Business Affairs
Committee

Program Contact:

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Approving Officer:

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Shaping

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the updated Tree Management Policy (the Policy) as contained in **Attachment A**, which provides the overarching policy framework for the management and protection of the City of Adelaide's urban forest, including trees within the Park Lands, Squares and streets. The updated Policy reflects Council's current legislative and operational responsibilities, contemporary tree management practices and strategic objectives for maintaining a healthy, safe and resilient urban forest.

The Policy has been reviewed to ensure it provides a contemporary and clear framework for tree management that reflects current legislation, recognised industry standards, the City's strategic objectives and the increasing importance of trees to the City's environmental, social, economic, ecological, cultural and heritage outcomes.

The updated Policy strengthens the connection between tree management and the City's objective of achieving 40% tree canopy cover by 2035. It also provides greater clarity around tree replacement, useful life expectancy, tree risk, species and age diversity, climate resilience, habitat, cultural and heritage values, and the management of trees throughout their lifecycle.

A key principle of the updated Policy is that tree management requires a balance between the needs and condition of individual trees and the collective benefits provided by the urban forest. Tree management decisions will continue to be informed by risk, legislation, industry standards and professional arboriculture assessment, while recognising the environmental, ecological, cultural and heritage values that trees can provide.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 13 October 2026 for consideration

THAT THE CITY PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the updated Tree Management Policy, as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee, held on 6 October 2026.
2. Rescinds the Park Land Olive Management Plan, as the management of olive trees is incorporated in the updated Tree Management Policy, contained in Attachment B to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee, held on 6 October 2026.
3. Notes that the updated Policy provides the overarching framework for the management of the City of Adelaide's urban forest and is supported by operational documents including the Tree Operating Guideline, as contained in Attachment C and Tree Risk Assessment Protocol as contained in Attachment D to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee, held on 6 October 2026.
4. Notes that the updated Tree Management Policy will support the City of Adelaide's strategic objective of achieving 40% tree canopy cover by 2035 through continued tree planting, replacement of trees removed

for reasons such as replacement due to end of life, protection of existing trees and identification of additional planting opportunities.

5. Notes that the Tree Management Policy will be reviewed every four years, or earlier where legislative or operational change requires review, with the next scheduled review in 2030.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Environment Supports Our Environment by strengthening sustainable tree management, protecting urban canopy and biodiversity, managing tree-related risks proactively and supporting Council's commitment to a greener, healthier city.
Policy	The Tree Management Policy and associated procedures will be updated as required to support consistent implementation and contemporary tree risk management.
Consultation	Input has been provided by relevant Council teams across business, events, policy, governance, infrastructure, planning and strategy.
Resource	The associated work is funded through existing operational budgets and can be delivered within current resources, with no additional funding or savings requiring redirection.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	The updated Policy strengthens Council's risk-based approach to tree management, recognising that tree-related risks need to be managed alongside the significant environmental, social, ecological, cultural and amenity benefits trees provide. The City applies the International Society of Arboriculture's Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) methodology, with qualified arborists undertaking routine and ad-hoc assessments to identify and prioritise higher-risk trees. As tree risk cannot be completely eliminated, the Policy supports a reasonable, proportionate and practicable approach to managing risk while retaining the benefits of the urban forest. It also provides a framework for addressing longer-term risks arising from climate change, pests and disease, aging trees, infrastructure impacts and declining growing conditions.
Opportunities	Strengthens Council's proactive tree risk management, supports consistent decision-making and improves community confidence through clear, evidence-based processes and alignment with contemporary arboriculture practice.
26/27 Budget Allocation	General operating budget for tree maintenance is \$2,776,944
Proposed 27/28 Budget Allocation	Estimated general operating budget for tree maintenance is \$2,860,252
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	The Policy will be reviewed every four years, or earlier where legislative or operational change requires review, with the next scheduled review in 2030.
26/27 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the updated Tree Management Policy (the Policy) as contained in **Attachment A**, which provides the overarching policy framework for the management and protection of the City of Adelaide's urban forest. The updated Policy reflects Council's current legislative and operational responsibilities, contemporary tree management practices and strategic objectives for maintaining a healthy, safe and resilient urban forest.

Background

2. Trees are an important and highly visible component of the City of Adelaide's public realm. The City's tree population contributes to the character and amenity of the city while providing shade, cooling, habitat, biodiversity and other environmental benefits. The management of this resource also involves balancing these benefits with the need to maintain safe and accessible public spaces and respond to changing environmental, infrastructure and community expectations.
3. City of Adelaide has established a range of policies, plans, guidelines and operational practices that support the management of its tree population. These have developed over time in response to changes in legislation, industry practice, tree management knowledge and the City's strategic priorities.
4. The current Tree Management Framework provides the overarching policy framework for the management of the City's trees. The Framework has been in place for a number of years and is due for review to ensure it continues to appropriately reflect the City's current tree management responsibilities, operating environment and strategic direction.
5. The review has also been undertaken in the context of increasing pressures on the urban forest, including climate change, extreme weather, pests and diseases, development and infrastructure requirements, as well as the need to maintain and increase urban canopy and tree health over the longer term.

Purpose and policy framework

6. The updated Policy establishes a clear overarching position for the management of the City's urban forest.
7. This provides a consistent, integrated approach to tree health, risk, maintenance, conservation and heritage significance.
8. It recognises that effective tree management requires consideration of individual tree condition and risk alongside the collective benefits of the urban forest. This provides a framework for decisions that considers safety and statutory requirements while also recognising canopy, amenity, habitat, biodiversity, cultural and heritage values.
9. The Policy is intended to remain an overarching policy document, with detailed operational processes and technical requirements managed through supporting documents such as the Tree Operating Guideline (**Attachment C**) and Tree Risk Assessment Protocol (**Attachment D**).

Strengthening canopy and tree replacement

10. The updated Policy reinforces the importance of maintaining and increasing canopy cover.
11. It establishes that trees removed through the City's tree management program will be replanted through an ongoing replacement program, while routine tree data collection and strategic planning will identify additional opportunities for new planting.
12. New plantings will focus on quality, diversity and resilience, including the use of quality tree stock, climate-ready species and best-practice planting techniques. Water Sensitive Urban Design and Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design will also be integrated where appropriate.
13. This approach supports the City's objective of achieving 40% tree canopy cover by 2035 while recognising that maintaining canopy requires both the protection of existing trees and continuous replacement and new planting.

Managing trees throughout their lifecycle

14. The updated Policy introduces a clearer lifecycle approach to tree management through the consideration of Useful Life Expectancy (ULE).
15. ULE considers the period a tree can reasonably be expected to continue providing benefits at an acceptable level of risk under current site conditions. Understanding ULE supports forward planning for replacement and helps maintain a diverse age structure across the urban forest.

16. The Policy recognises that management objectives change as trees mature:
 - 16.1. Young trees are managed to establish sound structure and address future conflicts.
 - 16.2. Mature trees are managed to mitigate risk, manage site constraints and maintain amenity.
 - 16.3. Veteran trees are managed to reduce risk while retaining habitat and amenity values where practicable.
 - 16.4. End-of-life trees are removed or replaced when their useful life expectancy is reached, unless ecological, cultural or historic values warrant retention.
17. This provides a more balanced framework for decisions involving older or declining trees, recognising that tree age alone does not determine whether a tree should be retained or removed.

Climate resilience, biodiversity and habitat

18. The updated Policy strengthens the connection between tree management and climate resilience.
19. Management will support a diverse and appropriately aged urban forest, improve water availability and growing conditions, and increase the use of species suited to projected climate conditions. Pest and disease management will incorporate routine monitoring, species diversity, improved tree health and integrated pest management practices.
20. The Policy also recognises the ecological value of trees and identifies biodiversity and habitat as considerations in species selection and tree management.

Heritage and cultural values

21. The updated Policy recognises the importance of trees within the Adelaide Park Lands and City Layout, including their contribution to nationally recognised heritage values through the National Heritage Management Plan (September 2024) provided as [Link 1](#) and Implementation Project – Designed Landscapes and Historic Plantings report, [Link 2](#).
22. It also recognises culturally significant trees that contribute to the City's sense of time, place and identity. These trees are recorded in Forestree and are managed in accordance with the same legislative requirements and best-practice standards that apply to other trees, while allowing additional resources to be allocated where appropriate to reflect their importance.
23. This provides a clearer basis for considering cultural, historic and heritage values alongside risk and tree condition when determining appropriate management responses.

Park Land Olive Management Plan

24. The City of Adelaide currently has a standalone Park Land Olive Management Plan (Olive Management Plan) as contained in **Attachment B**, adopted by Council 2 April 2001, that provides specific guidance for the management of heritage olive trees.
25. As part of the review of tree management, it has been identified that the management principles and considerations contained within the Olive Management Plan are appropriately incorporated into the updated Tree Management Policy. The updated policy provides a consistent framework for the management of all trees, while specifically recognising the cultural, historical and heritage values that may apply to individual trees, including heritage olive trees and groves.
 - 25.1. Heritage olive trees are both trees and heritage assets, so can be effectively managed through the existing Tree Management Policy and Heritage Management Plan.
 - 25.2. This provides a consistent, integrated approach to tree health, risk, maintenance, conservation and heritage significance.
 - 25.3. Updating a separate Olive Management Plan would largely duplicate existing policy requirements and create an additional layer of governance and documentation.
26. It is proposed that the Olive Management Plan be rescinded upon approval of the updated Tree Management Policy.

Governance and implementation

27. The updated Policy will be supported by existing operational and technical documents, including the Tree Operating Guideline and Tree Risk Assessment Protocol.
28. Implementation will continue to be overseen through the City's Arboriculture and Asset Management functions, with accountability through Executive and Council. The Policy will be applied in conjunction with relevant legislation, Council policy and recognised industry standards.
29. The updated Policy does not replace the technical assessment processes used by qualified arborists. Rather, it establishes the overarching principles within which those assessments and operational decisions are made.
30. The CEO has specific authority to make minor changes during the policy's currency, including "legislative, formatting, nomenclature or other minor changes."

Financial and resource implications

31. The updated Policy establishes the strategic and policy framework for existing tree management activities.
32. The Policy supports continued tree replacement, new planting, tree maintenance, risk management and improved growing conditions. These activities will continue to be managed through existing operational and capital planning processes and future budget considerations.
33. No specific additional funding is sought through this report.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 - National Heritage Management Plan (September 2024)

Link 2 - Implementation Project – Designed Landscapes and Historic Plantings report

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Tree Management Policy

Attachment B - Park Land Olive Management Plan

Attachment C - Tree Operating Guideline

Attachment D - Tree Risk Assessment Protocol

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