Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL

Tree Management Policy

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Introduction

Trees are a living community asset and play a critical role in building a vibrant and sustainable city life, their impact is significant and includes:

- **Environmental:** Trees provide oxygen, remove carbon dioxide from the air, and help reduce the urban heat island effect by shading hard surfaces. They also help clean drinking water, stabilise soil, improve air quality, and conserve water.
- **Health:** Trees can improve people's health by reducing stress, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, and improving concentration.
- **Mental Health:** Trees can provide a sense of well-being and psychological refreshment. They can also create a sense of permanence as they mature.
- **Economic:** Trees can increase property values and reduce energy costs.
- **Biodiversity:** Trees support biodiversity by providing shelter and food for local flora and fauna.
- **Aesthetic:** Trees add to neighbourhood character and create a sense of place.
- **Stormwater:** Trees can help manage stormwater runoff by intercepting rainfall and reducing runoff, and also by ground water absorption from root systems.
- **Social:** Trees can help encourage people to spend more time outdoors by providing shelter from weather. This leads to increase passive surveillance and can help reduce crime.

Given the inherent value of these living structures, all options to retain trees must be explored before their removal is approved by Council and suitable offsets are confirmed.

The endorsed Urban Forest Strategy (2018) sets the goal of increasing canopy cover on public land to 20% by 2040. Maribyrnong City Council is committed to quality tree planting and best practice tree management and maintenance for a resilient and diverse Urban Forest.

Purpose

The Tree Management Policy provides the framework for creating a net positive increase in the quantum and canopy cover of trees within the City of Maribyrnong. This will provide the policy foundation for:

- **Planting**
  - To increase canopy cover in the public realm.
- **Removal**
  - No net loss and under what circumstances removal will be allowed.
- **Maintenance**
  - Trees are maintained to ensure they are healthy and long-lived.
- **Adaptation**
  - Trees selected for tomorrows conditions.
- **Protection**

- Protect the investment during construction.

Scope

This policy applies to all trees on Council owned and managed land. The scope of the policy guides decision making in the following areas:

- Planting
- Removal
- Maintenance
- Adaptation
- Protection

This policy is applicable to:

- All trees on Council owned and managed land
- All Council Projects
- Councillors, Council staff, and Council contractors
- Residents and tenants
- Local businesses and traders

Definitions

Term	Definition
Amenity Value	the calculated (by an Arborist) monetary value of a public tree
Arboriculture	the professional discipline of tree management and maintenance
Arborist	a person who is qualified professionally in Arboriculture
Canopy Cover	the area of ground shaded by the tree crown
Council	Maribyrnong City Council
Councillor	a person elected to a vacant chair of Maribyrnong City Council at any Victorian Local Government Election, or the most recent by-election as applicable
Council owned or managed land	public land within the City that is either owned by Maribyrnong City Council or owned by another organisation where Council is the land manager
Establishment period	the maintenance time (period) required for a tree to become established after it has been planted. This is usually 2 years.
Fauna	animals

Flora	plants
Maintenance	the physical tasks required to ensure tree health, structure and performance are acceptable
Planting season	the time of year trees are planted due to suitable weather conditions. In the City of Maribyrnong this is usually April-late October, unless there is a wet spring then planting can occur as late as November. This is at the discretion of the Coordinator Urban Forest
Pruning	the action of trimming or removing parts of a tree, including leaves and branches
Urban Heat Island Effect (UHIE)	the higher temperatures experienced in cities/urban areas than in rural areas. This is due to increased hard surfaces in cities that absorb and hold heat
Significant Tree	trees included on Maribyrnong City Council's register for scientific, social, horticultural or aesthetic reasons
Species	a classification/group of plants with similar biological and visual characterises that can breed with one another
The City	the City of Maribyrnong
Tree	a large woody or palm vegetation species, usually growing to 3 metres or more and usually single stemmed (i.e. one trunk)

Responsibilities

The Recreation and Open Space team are responsible for the management of this policy. Any Council teams and staff, and Council contractors who participate in tree related activities and processes are required to follow and implement this policy.

Policy

The urban forest plays an important role in the overall health and liveability of the City. To recognise the importance and value of the urban forest it is necessary to construct a policy that enshrines adequate protections to ensure each tree has its best chance for full growth potential.

The following policy pillars set out the respective positions.

Planting

Planting will be prioritised to achieve 20% canopy cover by 2040 in the public realm.

Only Council staff, Council contractors, or community planting groups with permission to plant trees on Council land, may plant trees.

- Prioritised planting locations include:
    - Shading of hard surfaces to reduce Urban Heat Island Effect,
    - Known active transport routes i.e. walking and cycling to school, work, and to public transport,
    - Areas of low canopy,
    - Shade street and park infrastructure, such as seats, benches and picnic tables,
    - Support biodiversity,
    - At least one tree in front of every property frontage in the nature strip.

Resident requests for planting will be assessed and if the site is found suitable a tree will be planted in the next available planting season.

New plantings in reserves will not be prevented on the grounds of impeding access for residential views.

Where a tree has been removed, and the site is suitable for replanting, a replacement tree will be established in either the current or next planting season.

Removal

Tree removals will be considered as the last available option and only allowable under certain circumstances where trees meet removal criteria.

The removal of individual street and reserve trees will only be approved when:

- Removal is the only option to mitigate a high or extreme risk as determined by a Council arborist; or
- The tree is dead (with no signs of regeneration) or in decline and unlikely to recover; or
- The tree is causing damage to infrastructure, property and/or creating significant risk and there is no reasonably option to otherwise resolve the issue; or
- The tree is affected by development and there is no other design option available
    - If a person wishes to remove a tree, an application must be made in writing to Maribyrnong City Council.
    - If approved by Council, removal can only occur if the applicant agrees to pay all costs, including the removal and the tree canopy contribution value calculated (Amenity value); or

- The tree is unable to be maintained to meet Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements; or
- The removal of trees is required to facilitate projects of high community value, such as an endorsed master plan; or
- The removal of trees is required as part of an approved planning permit with relevant offsets confirmed at the planning stage.

Healthy and established trees will not be considered for removal. Some reasons for not considering removal include:

- On the basis of aesthetics,
- On the basis of dropping of fruits, seeds, or litter drop alone,
- Due to the presence of insects, parasites, animals, or pathogens,
- On the basis of personal preferences for a different type of tree,
- In order to facilitate development on an adjacent site,
- To accommodate a new vehicle crossover where alternative options exist,
- To increase local car parking,
- To reduce or minimise the obstruction of views, advertising or signage, or
- To allow solar access for gardens or solar panels.

Where a planning permit has been approved, a building permit and asset protection process will determine if a public tree can be removed.

Risk to public safety and property will take priority in tree removal decisions in emergency situations.

In cases where applicants believe they have a legitimate reason to seek a tree removal, they may appeal the decision to the responsible Director for the Urban Forest Strategy for review.

Maintenance

Trees are maintained to ensure they are healthy and long-lived, contribute to the Urban Forest population, and to mitigate risk.

Best arboricultural practice in line with Australian Standards will be applied at all times to promote a healthy tree population.

Street and reserve tree maintenance will be undertaken on a regular basis to improve tree health and safety, and to provide clearances for pathways, roads, buildings, and other essential infrastructure.

Street trees are maintained on a 16 month cycle.

Park and reserve trees are maintained on a 12 month cycle.

Trees will be maintained to ensure compliance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements.

Trees will not be pruned to facilitate views, to provide solar access to solar panels or gardens, or to reduce the impact from wildlife waste or noise.

The dropping of leaves, fruit, bark, or other debris by trees ordinarily will not provide the basis for the removal or pruning of a street or reserve tree.

Trees in areas of environmental or heritage significance will be managed to promote safety, the environmental values of the site and habitat opportunities for wildlife. Many trees in Maribyrnong are subject to controls within the Planning Scheme. Tree removal or lopping may require a planning permit and or follow native vegetation removal regulations. Areas with Heritage overlays or Significant Tree overlays might also require a planning permit.

Adaptation

Adaptation of the urban forest is important for ensuring resilient species selection and tree management for tomorrow's conditions.

A diverse range of tree species will be planted across the City to enhance urban forest resilience, and prevent against pest and pathogen invasion.

Landscape function objectives will inform tree species selection. These include shading hard surfaces, cooling immediate areas, and infrastructure that may limit what size and type of tree species can be planted.

Species expected performance in the Maribyrnong landscape will be prioritised above species origin.

Tree species selection will be based on suitability for climate change.

Existing tree species that are not expected to adapt to climate change will remain in the landscape. Once the tree reaches the end of the useful life, it will be replaced with a more suitable species.

Maximum canopy cover tree species will be prioritised over small canopy trees to maximise urban greening and cooling where locations allow.

New technology in the field of arboriculture will be incorporated into management and maintenance techniques where appropriate.

Protection of Trees

Protecting trees during construction is important to ensure trees are retained and remain healthy in order to contribute to urban forest canopy goals.

Trees will be protected and bond payments will be required where works may impact trees. Tree impact reports, and tree protection and management plans need to be prepared and submit to Council for approval prior to any works starting.
The City will work with developers to protect as many public trees as is feasible.

Development applications must include all information necessary to allow a full assessment of the potential impacts on trees on site or adjacent to the site.

All trees will be protected in accordance with Australian Standard 4970:2025 Protection of Trees on Development Sites. Developers are required to meet all costs related to tree protection. This will include any associated loss of amenity value costs.

All development and construction works must make allowances for the protection of trees on Council managed land during the planning, design and implementation process.

Trees included in a Significant Tree Register are captured in the Significant Tree Register Policy.

Key Stakeholders

This policy is applicable to the following stakeholders:

External
- Residents, property owners and tenants

Internal
- Infrastructure Services Directorate
- Operations and Maintenance
- Recreation and Open Space
- Urban Forest
- City Planning
- Assets
- City Design
- Environmental Sustainability
- Strategic Planning
- Engineering
- Local Law

Related Legislation

Legislative requirements and standards relating to the management of trees include:
- Electricity Safety Act 1998
- Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020
- Road Management Act 2004 (VIC)
- Local Government Act 2020

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)
- Flora and Fauna Act 1988
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992
- Heritage Act 1995

Related Documents

- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
- Maribyrnong Planning Scheme
- Urban Forest Strategy 2018
- Climate Emergency Strategy 2020
- Significant Tree Register (Nomination) Policy 2021
- Open Space Strategy 2014
- Risk Management Policy 2018
- Maribyrnong City Council Road Management Plan 2021
- Electrical Line Clearance Management Plan – updated 31 March annually
- Nature Strip Policy and Guidelines 2020 – currently being updated
- AS 4373-2007 Australian Standards Pruning of Amenity Trees
- AS 4970-2009 Australian Standards Protection of Trees on Development Sites
- AS 4970-2025 Australian Standards Protection of Trees on Development Sites
- AS 2303-2018 Australian Standards Tree Stock for Landscape Use
- Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017)
- Air Quality Improvement Plan 2022
- Road Management Plan 2017
- Vehicle Crossing Policy 2019
- City Design Manual 2017
- General Purpose Local Law 2015

Review of Policy

The date set for review of the policy. Policy will be reviewed three years from the date of approval, or whenever Council determines that a need has arisen unless there is a requirement for more frequent/longer cycle.