

Green Streets Policy 2019

Policy Number:	2019/01	Directorate: Engineering & Infrastructure
Approval by:	Council	Responsible Officer: Coordinator Open Space and Landscape Design
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear and concise decision making platform to both Council and the community with regard to the planning, management and maintenance of street trees and nature strips i.e. green streets.

2. Context

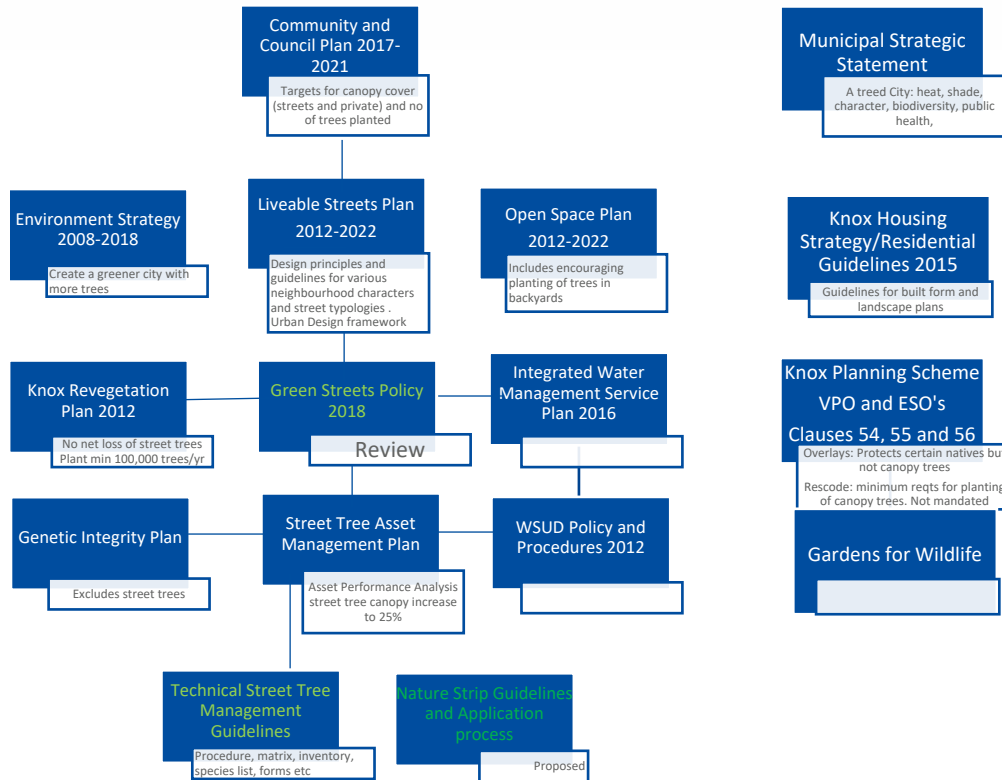
The Green Streets Policy 2019 succeeds the Green Streets Policy 2014. The Policy should be referred to when planning for or carrying out works on new or existing streets.

The Green Streets Policy provides the platform for decision making for two Council assets: street trees and nature strips. Whilst it is recognised that both are managed via different programs and decision making frameworks, Council considers their influence on each other and towards Councils' existing priorities strong enough to warrant their continued inclusion in the same Policy.

The Policy reflects Council's current strategic priorities, in relation to the management of street trees and nature strips as key assets within Knox's Liveable streets.

In the broader ecological context, Knox City Council is a signed partner to the strategic and visionary document; Living Melbourne- our metropolitan urban forest. This document was launched on 5 June 2019 and presents a transformative approach to respond to urban challenges with nature

The Green Streets Policy will fit into the below hierarchy of documents:



The Council Plan 2017-2021, The Municipal Strategic Statement and the Liveable Streets Plan 2012-2022 together provide a comprehensive strategic context around the importance and benefits of street trees, urban vegetation and nature strips for the future of Knox.

These high level documents provide clear links between urban greening and liveability, urban heat island reduction, biodiversity, human health and wellbeing, sense of place, community connection and active transport.

The Green Streets Policy outlines the key principles and position of Council around decision making for street trees and nature strips, which are the Green Streets component of Liveable Streets.

The Street Tree Asset Management Plan regularly reviews the performance of the street tree management program in ensuring quality assets, risk mitigation, and progress towards targets as set in the Community and Council Plan.

The newly formed Technical Street Tree Management Guidelines provides the day-to-day procedures, tools, inventory and standards required to manage street tree assets within the boundaries of the Green Streets Policy.

3. Scope

The Green Streets Policy 2019 outlines the key principles and decision making platform for planning and management of street trees and nature strips.

The scope of this Policy includes management statements for street trees and nature strips to be relied upon by:

- Staff;
- Councillors;
- Developers;
- Civil contractors;
- Event organisers; and
- The community.

4. References

4.1 Community & Council Plan 2017-2021

- Goal 1: We value our natural and built environment.
 - Strategy 1.1: Protect and enhance our natural environment (plan for water sensitive urban design in Council projects)
 - Strategy 1.2: Create a greener city with *more large trees*, indigenous flora and fauna.
- Targets: Increase tree canopy along streets
 Increase tree canopy on private land
 Increase in no of indigenous plant species in Knox
 An increase in local Knox resident’s biodiversity awareness

4.2 Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 1989 – Conflict and Interest Provisions

4.3 Charter of Human Rights

This Policy has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

4.4 Related Council Policies

- WSUD Policy and Procedures 2015
- Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure Policy 2019

4.5 Related Council Procedures

- Knox City Council Standard Drawings

4.6 Related Council Plans

Liveable Streets Plan 2012-2022

Theme 1: Streets as Places (character and neighbourhood amenity)

Action 2.1: Implement planting of Knox’s key streets

Theme 2: Streets for travel (encourage pedestrian and cycling activity)

Action 1.3: Increase shade along active transport routes

Action 2.1: Implement green streets

Action 2.3: Separation of pedestrians and traffic through plantings

Theme 3: Streets for environment (habitat, shade, connectivity)

Action 2.3: Increase street tree planting across the municipality to provide shade and reduce summer heat gain

Action 3.1: Promote edible streetscapes within the Street Tree and Nature Strip Policy

Theme 6: Streets for community (community pride and connection)

Action 1.3: Initiate community consultation of the neighbourhood green streets in identified priority suburbs.

Action 3.1: Work with community groups and residential street groups to create edible streets and private edible gardens

Theme 7: Streets for Infrastructure (balance of parking, water sensitive urban design)

Action 1.1: Develop plan for undergrounding power lines

Action 3.1: Develop street renewal program

Action 4.1: Design of new streets must incorporate all requirements such as road widths and adequate nature strip width for required trees. It should also consider stormwater infrastructure protection, passive irrigation of street trees and reductions in stormwater runoff volumes.

Action 5.1: Ensure the design and location of on-street car parking is responsive to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and the space requirements for street tree and nature strip planting.

Environment Strategy 2008-2018: (due for review)

Goal 1: To improve biodiversity and health of ecosystems

Approach 1.3: Establish a *network of habitat corridors* to join sites of significance with other areas of indigenous vegetation

Approach 1.7: Create a greener city with *more trees* and indigenous vegetation *in public spaces*, and thriving iconic species

Goal 3: To lead engaged and empowered community

Approach 3.2: Provide opportunities for community members to participate in meaningful ways (*Gardens for Wildlife*)

Approach 3.3: Provide effective resources to the community to facilitate behaviour change

Goal 5: To increase liveability of the City and develop sustainably

Approach 5.3: Create a city where people can live, work and recreate locally (*reduce the urban heat Island effect*)

Knox Revegetation Plan 2013

Open Space Plan 2012-2022

Street Tree Asset Management Plan 2016

Knox Housing Strategy and Residential Guidelines 2015

5. Definitions

Detail any definitions within the Policy.

Amenity value	The monetary value of an urban tree based on factors such as species, size, condition and local environment.
Biodiversity	In this context, refers to local (indigenous) flora and fauna.
Community Group(s)	means a legal entity who provide services, support or activities to the Knox community.
Council	means Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy.
Green streets	An important component of liveable streets and includes both street trees and nature strips.
Individual(s)	means a resident(s) of the Knox Municipality.
Liveable streets	As defined in the Liveable Streets Plan.
Naturestrip	Council owned land between the property boundary and the road adjacent to a footpath. It is typically covered by either mown grass or low plantings.
Street tree	Trees situated within, or selected by Council for the purpose of planting within, the Road Reserve or Tree Reserve.
Water Sensitive Urban Design	Water Sensitive Urban Design is a land planning approach based on scientific analysis and engineering design which integrates the urban water cycle (including the management of stormwater, groundwater, wastewater and drinking (potable) water supply into urban design to minimise environmental degradation and improve aesthetic and recreational appeal.

6. Council Policy

In setting out the Policy, Knox City Council recognises that:

- street trees, nature strips and water are integral to Knox’s green, leafy image and local landscape character;
- green streets are one of the core components of Liveable Streets which aim to enhance health and wellbeing, encourage active transport, improve urban ecology and encourage integrated planning and design;
- there are opportunities to create cooler spaces within the urban environment;
- collaboration and engagement with the community is important in proactively managing green streets;
- nature strips can form an important part of the city’s biodiversity through habitat provision and connectivity;
- nature strips can form an important part of the city’s flood mitigation, stormwater treatment, and waterway protection;
- urban development and maintaining Knox’s leafy green image is a careful balance that requires evidence based, integrated planning and management;
- private realm, park and reserve trees and vegetation strengthen the diversity, health and resilience of the network of green streets;
- street trees are planted, owned, managed and maintained by Council; and
- nature strips are owned by Council yet planted and maintained by residents.

Street Tree Policy:

6.1 Tree Protection

- 6.1.1 All street trees will be protected from construction or development works that adversely affect their health and/or structure in accordance with Australian Standard *AS 4970- Protection of trees on development sites*.
- 6.1.2 Trees must not be pruned in any form and branches or roots may not be removed unless authorised by a Council arborist. Any pruning undertaken on Council street trees must conform to *AS 4373 Pruning of amenity trees* will only be undertaken by appropriately sufficiently qualified and insured personnel engaged by Council.

6.2 Street Tree Removals

- 6.2.1 Council will manage and monitor all street trees throughout their lifecycle and remove and replace them as appropriate.
- 6.2.2 Street trees will not be removed unless in accordance with Council’s Street Tree Assessment or relevant Technical Street Tree Management Guidelines.
- 6.2.3 The assessment of street tree retention or removal will include consideration of tree retention values, monetary value of the asset, liabilities, public risk, public benefit, impact to the environment and biodiversity, and existing risk to infrastructure.
- 6.2.4 Any street tree removed as part of construction works will be replaced wherever possible.
- 6.2.5 Council will seek to minimise the visual and environmental impact of the loss of groups of street trees through the staggered removal and replacement of trees where appropriate.
- 6.2.6 Where planning applications request the removal of street trees, Council’s arborist will accord with the Street Tree Asset Management Plan or Technical Street Tree Management Guideline to determine whether the removal is supported.
- 6.2.7 Council’s relevant planning overlays and permit conditions cover the protection and removal of native vegetation.

- 6.2.8 Council will seek to inform the Community of proposed tree removals prior to the works occurring, although trees posing an immediate risk to the public may be removed without notification.
- 6.2.9 Council will generally not remove a street tree to reduce the extent of leaf/flower/fruit drop, improve views, increase light to adjacent residences or gardens or due to a dislike of species. Council's arborist will follow the Street Tree Assessment Workflow to determine whether the removal is supported.
- 6.2.10 Alternative options may be explored to enable retention of the trees and employed where practical in consideration of 6.2.3.

6.3 Street tree valuation

- 6.3.1 When the removal of a Council tree asset is deemed necessary for construction, development or works, all associated costs must be paid by the property owner, developer or applicant prior to removal.
- 6.3.2 Total cost for street tree removal includes amenity value of the tree plus tree and stump removal costs plus planting and maintaining a new tree for two years, as per the City of Melbourne method of tree valuation.

6.4 Street Tree Management

- 6.4.1 Council will regularly update tree management and maintenance standards and procedures to ensure they reflect legislative requirements and industry best practice.
- 6.4.2 Council will maintain an up to date street tree inventory that will be used to formulate cyclic tree management and maintenance programs.
- 6.4.3 The tree inventory will be updated every five years but will also record results of proactive tree inspections.
- 6.4.4 All tree pruning will be in accordance with *AS 4373 Pruning of amenity trees*.
- 6.4.5 Council will maintain vegetation clearance from above ground electrical conductors under the Electrical Safety Act 1998 and most recent Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations.
- 6.4.6 Council will undertake reactive maintenance of street trees as a result of extreme weather events, change in tree condition or from customer requests.
- 6.4.7 Council will monitor and appropriately treat pest and disease incursions that threaten the viability of street trees in consideration of the long-term viability of the species as a street tree and the resource available.

6.5 Street Tree Planting

- 6.5.1 Council is responsible for selecting and planting the most appropriate species for a location based on site suitability, aesthetic, functional and environmental attributes and the potential to contribute to the predominant or preferred landscape character as set out in the Liveable Streets Plan 2012 and Residential Housing Guidelines 2015.
- 6.5.2 Street tree planting will aim to enhance canopy cover across the Municipality and be implemented by an annual tree planting and renewal programs.
- 6.5.3 All tree stock must meet *AS 2303 Tree stock for landscape use*.
- 6.5.4 Trees will be planted in accordance with Council's tree planting technical guidelines.
- 6.5.5 Council will maintain an up to date and evidence based preferred species list suitable for planting within the municipality.
- 6.5.6 Where planting of street trees is adjacent to a Site of Biological Significance, preference will be for use of local provenance indigenous species.

6.6 Street trees, Infrastructure and public safety

- 6.6.1 Should there be a possibility of public or private infrastructure damage that could be influenced to an adjacent street tree(s), Council will undertake a risk assessment that accords with the Street Tree Asset Management Plan or the Technical Street Tree Management Guidelines.
- 6.6.2 Knox Council will undertake appropriate and regular street tree inspections to maintain public safety through the use of an industry recognised tree assessment method.

Street Tree Re-use

- 6.6.3 Council will develop a tree re-use guideline to maximize the benefits of tree removals and minimize waste.

6.7 Community Consultation

- 6.7.1 Council will consult with residents regarding relevant street tree and nature strip works.
- 6.7.2 This Policy and associated relevant documentation will be included on Councils website.

6.8 Street Trees and Water

- 6.8.1 Council will adhere to the Water Sensitive Urban Design Policy, WSUD & Stormwater Management Strategy 2010 and integrate stormwater collection for the benefit of street trees where possible to meet the objectives of the Liveable Streets Plan.

6.9 Biodiversity

- 6.9.1 Street trees along bush boulevards will be planted to enhance local biodiversity where possible in alignment with the Liveable Streets Plan and any other Council plan for urban biodiversity.
- 6.9.2 The planning and delivery of street trees will aim to reflect the adopted Living Melbourne – Urban Forest Strategy.

6.10 Private trees

- 6.10.1 Council will continue to review and implement the planning scheme to strive to protect canopy trees and allow space for future trees on private land.
- 6.10.2 Council will continue to encourage the protection and planting of trees in the private realm through education, active programs like Gardens for Wildlife and any future strategic biodiversity work.
- 6.10.3 Private trees will be considered as a contributory part of the streetscape during street tree planting programs where applicable.

Nature Strips:

6.11 Existing Nature Strip plantings

- 6.11.1 Existing landscaping to nature strip areas as of the date of this Policy can be retained provided that the landscaping;
 - is deemed to not present a risk to the community;
 - allows for the safe and unencumbered movement of pedestrians along adjacent footpaths;
 - meets the requirements outlined in Councils Nature Strip Guidelines; and
 - is maintained to the satisfaction of Council.

- 6.11.2 Naturestrips that are deemed not to meet Council Policy are to be modified by the resident within thirty (30) days of being notified. Nature strips that are not modified after thirty (30) days, will be removed or modified by Council at the resident's expense.
- 6.11.3 Trees that have been planted by residents in the road reserve that do not meet Council's approved species including environmental weeds, or that are deemed unsuitable based on growing characteristics that will cause damage to Council infrastructure or public utilities are to be removed by the resident within thirty (30) days of being notified. Nature strips that are not modified after thirty (30) days, will be removed or modified by Council at the resident's expense.

6.12 Nature strip plantings

- 6.12.1 Watering systems are not to be installed to nature strips
- 6.12.2 Artificial turf is not to be installed on nature strips
- 6.12.3 Council approval is not required to grow mown grass on the nature strip
- 6.12.4 Trees are not to be planted by residents in their nature strips
- 6.12.5 Resident initiated landscaping to nature strips will only be permitted through an application and Council approval process. Considerations in allowing residents to plant nature strips will include:
 - Erosion prevention
 - Public safety enhancement
 - Contribution to local landscape character
 - Contribution to biodiversity and Gardens for Wildlife program
 - Benefits or impacts of proposed planting on existing trees
 - Where evidence of a resident's inability to maintain a grass nature strip can be demonstrated
 - Ensuring that existing services and maintenance requirements are prioritised e.g. waste collection and drainage.
 - Tenant/owner status of the applicant
 - If edibles are to be planted *in situ* whether soil contaminant testing has been undertaken
- 6.12.6 A written request to Council is to be submitted as per the Nature strip Application Procedure, addressing the Nature Strip Guidelines which at a minimum, outline the design, landscape enhancement, species selection and ongoing maintenance of the proposed planting.
- 6.12.7 Council will not be responsible for repair, replacement or reinstatement of naturestrip garden beds/plants should they be disrupted by asset renewal/repair works from Council or other parties.

Other:

6.13 Management of greens streets

- 6.13.1 Council will continue to administer an internal stakeholder working group to effectively manage the implementation of this Policy.

7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Policy, it must be considered by Council.