

## Public Exhibition – Street Tree Master Plan

**File No: X085710**

### Summary

This report recommends that Council approve for public exhibition the draft Street Tree Master Plan.. The draft Street Tree Master Plan (the Plan) sets the policy principles and nominates the species of tree to be planted in all streets within the City of Sydney. The nominated species will only be planted for future new and replacement trees.

The Plan aims to ensure the continued success of our street tree planting program, by selecting the most appropriate tree species suited to the local conditions, improving our urban forest diversity and resilience for future generations, and increasing the overall canopy cover provided by our street trees. The Plan also includes technical specifications and details to support quality tree planting outcomes.

The previous Plan was unanimously adopted by Council in December 2011. The Council resolved that a comprehensive review be undertaken in 10 years to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the City's policies and strategic direction.

The recommended new Plan for public exhibition supports the Greening Sydney Strategy and builds upon the directions outlined within the draft Urban Forest Strategy, collectively working towards a cooler, calmer, and more resilient city.

Early community engagement was undertaken from 6 July to 3 August 2022. Consultation provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide early feedback on street trees in their area before the revised plan is drafted. A total of 559 submissions were received, consisting of 505 online surveys and 54 email submissions received. All submissions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, the draft Plan has been updated in response to the issues raised.

The Plan has been updated to include species that will thrive in the changing climate, increase in locally indigenous species, and has been transitioned from a document format to an interactive online platform, allowing for standard and advanced filtering and user experience.

This report recommends that Council approve for public exhibition the draft Street Tree Master Plan.. Following the exhibition period all public comments will be considered and the Plan will be presented to Council, with any required changes, for adoption.

## Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve for public exhibition the draft Street Tree Master Plan, as shown in the online link in Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note that the planting of street trees will be in accordance with the draft Street Tree Master Plan, from the start of the planting season commencing in mid-March 2023, unless a submission from the community is received that does not support the recommended species for that specific site;
- (C) Council note that the Street Tree Master Plan including any recommended changes, will be reported to Council for adoption following the exhibition period; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor editorial amendments for clarity or correction of drafting errors prior to the exhibition of the draft Street Tree Master Plan.

## Attachments

- Attachment A.** Draft Street Tree Master Plan 2022
- Attachment B.** Supporting Information
- Attachment C.** Technical Specification and Planting Details
- Attachment D.** Early Engagement Report

## Background

1. Trees play a vital role in the future of Sydney. They are the largest living things in the urban environment and their environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits are well established and beyond doubt.
2. Community health, climate change and urban heat, and biodiversity and nature have been identified as the key risks to our city. Green infrastructure, which includes street trees, mitigates these risks. Whether it is for managing heat or mental health issues, happiness, physical activity or reduced incidence of disease and illness, an increase in our canopy cover provides multiple benefits to the community.
3. There are approximately 88,500 trees currently located within the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). This includes the City's 34,500 street trees, 14,000 park trees, as well as an estimated 40,000 private trees. Collectively, these tree canopies cover 19.8 per cent of the LGA. The City is one of only a few councils in Australia that has consistently increased canopy cover over the past decade.
4. The Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision strategy commits the City to becoming green, global and connected. In the Sustainable Sydney community survey 77% of respondents want a green city with parks, trees and nature. Of the respondents, 84% want to see more trees in local streets.
5. The Greening Sydney Strategy 2020-2030 was adopted by Council in July 2021, and its target is to increase green cover to 40 per cent across the local area, including a minimum of 27 per cent tree canopy by 2050.
6. The draft Street Tree Master Plan (the Plan) directly supports the City in achieving its targets to increase canopy cover. The Plan also responds to the diversity and resilience objectives outlined in the Greening Sydney Strategy, and also the draft Urban Forest Strategy (currently under review). The plan nominates tree species for planting in each street across the LGA, for when a tree is eventually removed or for new planting opportunities, to ensure a healthy and resilient street tree population contributes to our canopy cover.
7. Early community engagement was undertaken from 6 July to 3 August 2022. Consultation provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide early feedback on street trees in their area before the revised plan was drafted. A total of 559 submissions were received, consisting of 505 online surveys and 54 email submissions. All submissions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, the Plan has been updated in response to the issues raised.
8. This Plan updates and will supersede the current Street Tree Master Plan adopted by Council in December 2011. The key changes/updates from this Plan include:
  - (a) Transitioning from a document format to an interactive online platform, allowing for standard and advanced filtering and user experience;
  - (b) A focus on street tree species and urban forest resilience to respond to the changing climate;
  - (c) Change of species in 52 per cent of the streets;
  - (d) Overall increase in the use of locally indigenous tree species;

- (e) Increased use of two (or more) species within each street's footways, largely to provide a mix of evergreen and deciduous species;
- (f) Recommendation of species for three new planting types; constrained, traffic islands and median strips; and
- (g) The 2022 plan draws from a higher overall number of tree species compared to the 2011 plan (81 compared to 68 species).

### **Street Tree Master Plan 2023-2033**

9. The Plan is a critical part of the City's suite of policies and strategies that are used to proactively manage our urban forest. Trees like all living things, grow, age and eventually die. The Plan has been carefully developed to guide our future street tree planting. It guides where trees are planted and what species will be used to replace existing trees when they eventually reach the end of their useful lives.
10. Our focus for future street tree planting responds to the challenges facing our community and city from the impacts of climate change and the need to build more resilient and sustainable communities. This Plan is focussed on increasing canopy cover and species diversity, to help the City meet our greening and canopy targets, and our core objectives to create a cool, calm and resilient city.
11. The Plan consists of the following key components:
  - (a) An interactive online map which nominates the tree species and planting arrangements for each street, allowing users to view and filter the information for a variety of uses;
  - (b) Introductory information relating to context, objectives and use of the Plan;
  - (c) Supporting information detailing the various criteria, factors and principles that guided tree species selection;
  - (d) Technical guidelines for the supply, installation, and establishment of new street trees; and,
  - (e) Links to other key resources and documents.
12. The key objectives of the Plan are to;
  - (a) Increase canopy cover and promote the establishment of attractive, resilient and well shaded streets;
  - (b) Develop a palette of reliable street tree species that are well suited to the street environment and are likely to thrive into the future;
  - (c) Increase the use of locally Indigenous species, improve the biodiversity of our streets, and increase habitat for native fauna;
  - (d) Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities by creating streets that promote and support active transport, and social interaction;
  - (e) Inform and direct a consistent and effective approach to tree planting in streets – ensuring 'the right tree for the right place'; and,

- (f) Reinforce and enhance the character of our city's precincts through distinct and appropriate street tree planting.
13. To develop this Plan we have
- (a) Reviewed each street across the local area and assessed the performance of the existing street trees as well as the unique character and landscape conditions of the street;
  - (b) Reviewed the 2011 plan's planting palette on each street;
  - (c) Engaged experts in the field of street tree planting with a range of skill sets – arboriculture, plant science and Indigenous ecology;
  - (d) Reviewed our tree species list to ensure proposed trees are suitable and resilient for a changing climate;
  - (e) Consulted with the community and listened to feedback; and,
  - (f) Recognised the need to balance a range of competing priorities and aspirations related to street trees.
14. The Plan has been developed by the City's Tree Management Team and Arterra Design, arborists and landscape architects, who were engaged to assist with the comprehensive review of the 2011 Plan. The City's Spatial Information Services Team created the online mapping tools.
15. This is a plan for the future. It means we use it when choosing species for new planting locations and where a replacement tree is required. Existing trees will not be removed to implement the new species listed in the plan. This will only happen gradually – as existing trees need replacing. Existing street trees will normally be left to grow for their natural life and they will only be removed once they have become a safety issue or an unacceptable hazard. The exception to this might be when major street improvements or infrastructure upgrade works are required. However, tree removal will always be a last resort option.
16. The implementation of the Plan will occur over the next 10 years, until the next iteration is comprehensively reviewed, consulted and adopted.

## Key Implications

### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

17. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 2 - A leading environmental performer - The Plan's key aim is to increase canopy cover, by selecting the largest appropriately sized tree species for each street. Further, species for planting in 'constrained' sites and within traffic islands or median strips have also been included. Ensuring a resilient street tree population, that can tolerate the changed climate conditions, will also provide long term canopy cover.

- (b) Direction 3 - Public places for all - The Plan will provide improved streetscapes, increasing the amenity, thermal comfort and provide more opportunities for social interaction and inclusion.
- (c) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - The Plan has been developed to include expert Indigenous knowledge, to improve connection to Country, improve biodiversity and overall resilience.
- (d) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - The Plan supports this Direction by ensuring the City's network of streets are shaded to provide thermal comfort, and support active transport all year round.
- (e) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The Policy supports the provision of equitable community access to canopy cover, based on geographic location and also for future generations.

### **Organisational Impact**

- 18. In developing the Plan, consultation was undertaken with relevant City staff. The Plan will be implemented primarily by the City's Tree Management Team and related tree maintenance service providers.
- 19. Third parties will also have a minor involvement in implementing the Plan as part of development or major street upgrades, with technical details provided to ensure the City's standards are met.
- 20. This Plan will be implemented and scheduled for review in 10 years' time, to follow the next Urban Forest Strategy review scheduled in 2032.

### **Social / Cultural / Community**

- 21. The Plan will have significant benefits for the community, including providing the significant physical and mental health benefits outlined in the Greening Sydney Strategy. Compelling research proves that:
  - (a) in neighbourhoods with a tree canopy of 30 per cent or more, adults had a lower likelihood of:
    - (i) developing psychological distress (by 31 per cent);
    - (ii) developing diabetes by (31 per cent);
    - (iii) developing cardiovascular disease (by 21 per cent);
    - (iv) developing cardio hypertension (by 21 per cent); and
    - (v) rating their general health as fair or poor over six years (by 33 per cent); and
  - (b) connecting with nature for as little as a couple of hours can reduce blood pressure, lower stress, improve cardio vascular and metabolic health, improve concentration, memory and attentiveness, lift feelings of depression, improve pain thresholds, improve feelings of energy, boost immune systems by increasing the count of the body's natural killer cells, increase anti-cancer protein production and help people lose weight.

**Environmental**

22. The United Nations describes climate change as the defining issue of our time. In June 2019, the City of Sydney declared that climate change poses a serious risk to the people of Sydney and should be treated as a national emergency. Our city must adapt to the changing climate and increase its resilience to the likely impacts.
23. Heatwaves are Australia's deadliest natural hazard. They now arrive earlier, are hotter, and last longer. Urban temperature extremes can present us with life-or-death situations. Urban heat mitigation through greening can significantly reduce human heat related morbidity and mortality. Research has found that:
  - (a) Individual trees can make a valuable difference to air temperatures, by as much as 10°C.
  - (b) At the local scale, temperatures at ground level also vary significantly. One study showed the difference was 10°C cooler in the street that had 30 percent canopy cover, compared to a street with just 10 percent canopy cover.
  - (c) At the precinct scale, groups of trees that combine to provide greater than 40 per cent canopy cover at the scale of a city block have been found to reduce local ambient air temperature by more than 1.3°C.
24. The Plan supports the City's actions to accelerate an increase in canopy cover, biodiversity and urban forest resilience. The focus on achieving the most from each street tree, through species selections that tolerate and thrive in the changing climate, are suited to the local street environment, and are planted and established using best practice tree management. This will help us in cooling local streets, reducing heat absorption, reducing energy needs, improving storm water quality, reducing storm water runoff, reducing dust and air pollution, sequestering carbon, and improving the diversity of the City's urban ecology.

**Economic**

25. The Plan will deliver economic benefits to the city. Research in other cities has shown that green urban environments increase property values, improve commercial activity in retail centres and are an attraction for employers to recruit and retain quality staff.
26. Tree canopy cover is the most cost-efficient method of addressing urban heat. As greening also provides a multitude of environmental, social and economic benefits, every dollar invested provides a higher return.
27. Best practice street tree selection, such as selecting species that are proven performers, will grow to an appropriate size within the street, and are planted in accordance with the quality specifications and details, will increase the trees' longevity and reduce maintenance impacts. This is vital to increasing canopy cover and the benefits the canopy cover provides over time.

**Financial Implications**

28. The implementation of the Plan is funded from within the City's operational and capital budgets and forward estimates that form part of the City's Long-Term Financial Plan. Note that individual capital projects will include funding for tree planting, where appropriate, and approval will be sought as part of total project budgets.

### Relevant Legislation

29. Local Government Act 1993.
30. Roads Act 1993.
31. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
32. State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas 2017.
33. Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.
34. Sydney Development Control Plan 2012.

### Critical Dates / Time Frames

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 35. Start of public exhibition                          | Mid December 2022 |
| 36. End of public exhibition                            | Early 2023        |
| 37. Final Strategy submitted to Council for endorsement | Mid 2023          |

### Options

38. Not proceeding with the Plan impacts the City's short, medium and long term tree planting projects. This includes detrimental impacts regarding urban heat mitigation and community health and wellbeing.

### Public Consultation

39. Early community engagement was undertaken from 6 July to 3 August 2022. Consultation provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide early feedback on street trees in their area before the revised plan was drafted. An Early Engagement Report is provided in Attachment D.
40. A project page was available at [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au) and was viewed 3,009 times. 2,071 people read 50 per cent or more of the page and 40 per cent of those who visited the page clicked the survey link.
41. A City of Sydney News Story was created to share across the City's channels and drive users to the Sydney Your Say page and survey.
42. The City of Sydney news story and consultation page was shared organically on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. There was also paid promotion of the consultation via Instagram / Facebook stories.
43. Information about the consultation was shown on our community screens throughout our local area to create broad awareness.
44. A notification email was sent on 8 July 2022 to 95 key stakeholders with information about the consultation and inviting feedback.



45. A total of 559 submissions were received, consisting of 505 online surveys and 54 emails.
46. All submissions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, the draft Plan has been updated in response to the issues raised. The majority of responses were able to be accommodated to some extent.
47. Following endorsement by Council, the draft Plan will be placed on public exhibition for eight weeks.
48. Public exhibition will be undertaken through the Sydney Your Say web page and advertised via the City's communication channels.
49. Notice of the exhibition will be published on the City's website.

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Director City Services

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