TREE AND URBAN FOREST POLICY 2019

Date of Adoption: 6/11/2019
Date of Last Review: 2019
Date of Next Review: 2023
Responsible Officer: Urban Forest Planner

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VISION

Wyndham City will sustain and expand a healthy tree population that benefits the community and the environment, by valuing each tree as an integral part of an urban forest network.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines how Wyndham City will manage its urban forest in order to achieve the above vision.

This policy defines how Wyndham City will -

- manage individual trees from planting to whole of life tree management;
- manage and plan for growth and health of Wyndham's urban forest; and
- protect the tree population as an interconnected urban forest.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all trees on land owned or managed by Wyndham City, including streets, parks, reserves and other open space.

The policy is also intended to influence utility and government authorities, along with community members, on how trees are managed on their land.

Wyndham City will encourage appropriate tree retention on freehold land.

BACKGROUND

Trees and urban forests provide multiple benefits to people and the environment. This includes (but is not limited to) mitigating the Urban Heat Island Effect, enhancing health and wellbeing, supporting biodiversity and creating neighbourhood character.

However, Wyndham City faces challenges in managing a healthy urban forest as a result of local environmental conditions, climate change, residential growth and development, and the loss of trees in the private realm.

A healthy population of trees and a functioning urban forest requires effective planning for the present and future. Wyndham City is committed to valuing our trees, providing trees in the urban environment, and implementing practices that manage, protect and enhance the tree coverage across the municipality.

Increasing Wyndham's tree population is critical in developing an urban forest. Mature trees represent a long-term investment and value; Wyndham City will continue to invest in their care and health. Wyndham City will collaborate with external stakeholders in greening initiatives that benefit the municipality.

Wyndham City has a diverse population with diverse and sometimes conflicting views regarding our tree population. Engagement with the community to ensure these assets are valued and supported is essential.

This policy provides a decision-making framework for achieving Wyndham City's aim for our tree and urban forest management.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Wyndham City strategically manages trees on the land it is responsible for, in accordance with the principles set out within this policy.

Wyndham City has the final decision on tree management and removals on Council owned or managed land.

Council's Environment and Water Department is responsible for the strategic planning for Wyndham City's urban forest in accordance with this policy. This includes tree protection strategies and procedures, tree planting plans, policies and action plans, and internal and external consultation as required.

Council's Facilities and Open Space Department is responsible for the management of the trees through their lifecycle. This includes the creation of strategies, plans and procedures for the management of these trees in accordance with this policy.

Wyndham City will reference this policy in planning and designing urban spaces.

KEY RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

Road Management Act 2004
Victorian Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations (2015)
Planning and Environment Act (1987)
Wyndham Community Amenity Local Laws (2015)
Australian Standard AS4373:2007 - Pruning of Amenity Trees
Australian Standard AS4970:2009 - Protection of Trees on Development Sites
Australian Standard AS2303:2015 - Tree Stock for Landscape Use
Greening the West Strategic Plan
Living Melbourne: Our metropolitan urban forest
Wyndham 2040 Community Plan
Wyndham City Forest and Habitat Strategy (2018)

Wyndham Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2016-2020)
Wyndham Open Space Strategy 2045
Wyndham Road Management Plan 2017
Wyndham Landscape Development Levels of Service (under development)
Wyndham Tree Amenity Fee Guidelines (under development)
Wyndham Tree Selection Matrix 2019

POLICY

1. **Wyndham City will set a canopy cover target**

   To meet this target, Wyndham City will:

   - Implement tree planting on Wyndham's streets, boulevards and avenues;
   - Incorporate tree planting in parks, open spaces and other public areas;
   - Protect and retain mature trees; and
   - Encourage tree planting in the private realm.

2. **Trees are valuable assets**

   - All Wyndham City owned or managed trees are Council assets and will be managed as such; and
   - Wyndham City owned or managed trees have a monetary value; this value is derived using Wyndham's Tree Amenity Calculator.

3. **Trees will be managed for multiple benefits, including their contribution to:**

   - The overall tree canopy cover;
   - Reducing the Urban Heat Island Effect;
   - The biodiversity and habitat of Wyndham;
   - Neighbourhood character and foundation of placemaking;
   - Providing canopy covered connections across the municipality; and
   - Encouraging activity in open space, enhancing liveability and social interaction.

4. **Tree Management and Maintenance**

   - Risk management is a primary management factor in tree management;
   - Mitigation of risk does not necessarily result in action to a tree;
   - Pruning will be undertaken in accordance with AS4373 - 2007 *Pruning of Amenity Trees;*

- Formative pruning will be undertaken to develop appropriate tree structure and reduce future maintenance costs;
- Trees stock planted on current or future public land will meet AS2303 - 2015 *Tree Stock for Landscape Use;*
- Trees will be maintained to provide clearances as per the Roads Act (2005) and Wyndham's Road Management Plan; and
- Trees will be maintained to provide clearances as per the current Victorian Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations and Wyndham's Electrical Line Clearance Management Plan.

5. Urban Forest Planning

- Trees and urban forests require technical planning to ensure the best whole of life outcome;
- All trees planted on current or future public land in Wyndham must be selected to ensure their ability to thrive in Wyndham's soil, environment and climate conditions;
- The performance of tree species will be monitored for their resilience to current and future environment and climatic conditions;
- Wyndham City will reduce the risk of disease, pests or other factors affecting a genus or species through maintaining a diverse tree population;
- Planting the right tree in the right location is critical;
- Tree species will be selected for each site based on available space, constraints and the functionality of the tree;
- Nature strips within new subdivisions must include a minimum of one tree per lot, or per 12 metre spacing where one tree per lot is not feasible;
- Where a location does not meet the requirements for planting, due to factors including constraints, clearance requirements or planning issues, trees will not be planted;
- Tree species selected for planting near or adjacent to designated conservation reserves will be sensitive to the vegetation class and ecological function of the conservation reserve;
- Nature strips are a Wyndham City asset; priority will be given to public tree planting;
- Objections to tree planting on Wyndham City property must be submitted to Wyndham City; an objection must outline the reason and include accompanying evidence; and
- Wyndham City has the final decision on tree plantings on Wyndham City's property.

6. Tree removal to facilitate development

- Existing trees on public and private land must be included in all plans and drawings submitted with planning applications; this includes developments proposed by Wyndham City.
- Consideration must be given to the retention of trees at the design phase; the priorities are:
    - the avoidance of tree removals,
    - minimisation of tree removals.

- Removal of a Wyndham City owned tree will be considered, provided it is demonstrated that the tree cannot be incorporated into the design of the development, and that the development cannot be avoided.
- A request to remove a Wyndham City owned tree must be submitted to and approved by Wyndham City prior to any removal.

- Any Wyndham City tree approved for removal will require payment of a tree amenity fee and associate administrative costs.
- The arrangements and cost of the tree removal will be borne by the proponent of the tree removal, ensuring works are undertaken by an appropriately qualified arborist.
- Unauthorised removal and/or damage of Wyndham City trees are subject to penalties.
- Wyndham City has the right to refuse removal of its trees.

7. Tree Protection on development sites

- Wyndham City trees to be retained on or near development and other construction sites must be adequately protected both above and below ground;
- Protection of Wyndham City's trees within development and other construction sites will meet, at a minimum, AS4970 - 2009 *Protection of Trees on Development Sites.*
- Failure to protect trees throughout the development process may incur penalties.

8. Tree removals - maintenance

- Wyndham City will remove a tree if it presents an immediate risk to people or property, and there are no other viable options to mitigate the risk.
- Wyndham City may remove a tree if it is diseased, unhealthy, dead or terminally damaged; although these factors will not always result in the removal of a tree.
- All tree removals over 150mm diameter at breast height must be approved by a senior Wyndham City arborist.
- All Wyndham City owned trees requiring removal will be considered for repurposing as a habitat structure.
- Community requests for a Wyndham City tree to be removed for risk or maintenance purposes will be assessed by a senior Wyndham City arborist; this may not always result in the removal of the tree.
- Trees will not be removed because of reasons including (but not limited to) –
    - Personal preference;
    - Perceived nuisance (e.g. leaf litter);
    - Limbs extending over private property;
    - A desire for parking space;

- Allergies, unless medical advice from a medical specialist in the field of allergies is provided, demonstrating the tree significantly diminishes the quality of life and there is no other way of managing the problem; or
- Fauna living in trees.

9. Tree Planning Controls

- Many trees in Wyndham City are subject to controls within the Wyndham Planning Scheme. Tree removal or lopping may require a planning permit.
- If the tree is indigenous, proponents must comply with relevant Victorian and Federal native vegetation requirements.
- The above requirements apply to all potential tree removals, including those proposed by Wyndham City Council.

ENDS