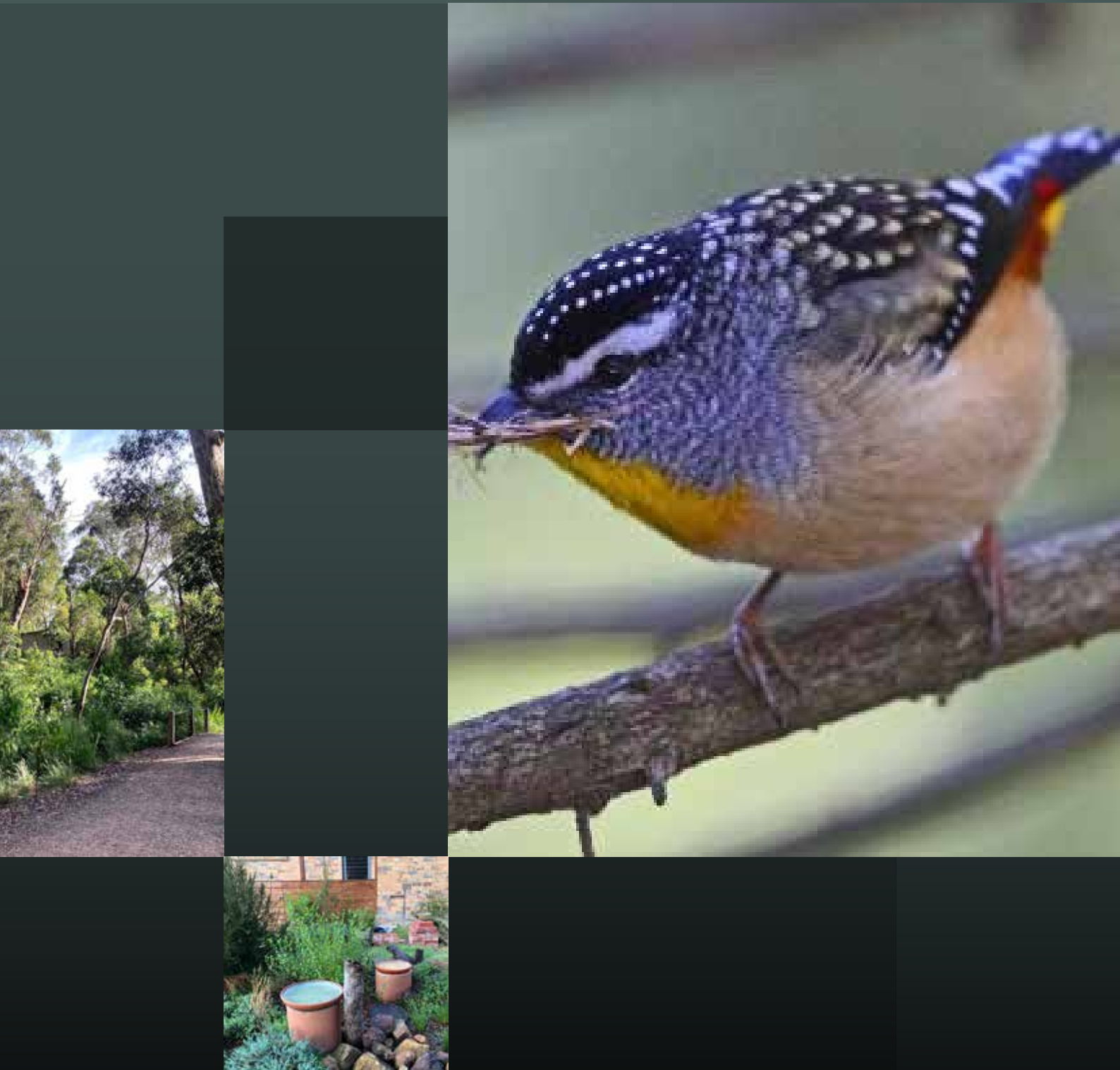




WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL

# Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN



# Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy Action Plan

2021-2031

## Contents

Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy Action Plan 2021-2031 .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Funding options .....	4
Action Plan .....	5
Objective 1: Protect and enhance the urban forest .....	5
Objective 2: Expand the urban forest and strengthen climate resilience .....	8
Objective 3: Enhance biodiversity .....	12
Objective 4: Build community capacity to learn from each other, protect and enhance the urban forest. .	14
Objective 5: Develop our knowledge base.....	16

## Introduction

Whitehorse City Council values the important contribution of trees and vegetation in making the municipality a vibrant place to live, work and visit. Across both private and public land, the urban forest is an essential element within Whitehorse. This Urban Forest Strategy aims to protect, enhance and connect Whitehorse’s natural assets, including trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, soil and water across the entire municipality. This implementation plan sets how Council plans to meet the vision as set by the Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031.

Considering the key challenges, priorities, community feedback and the targets of the urban forest strategy, this action plan sets out a list of key actions to achieve our urban forest vision.

Central to the success of the implementation is ensuring that all departments, officers and managers involved are co-ordinated in their management approach. The five objectives are laid out with a set of actions to be undertaken over the next 10 years. Each action has an indicative timeframe, cost and is assigned to a lead department for implementation.

## Vision

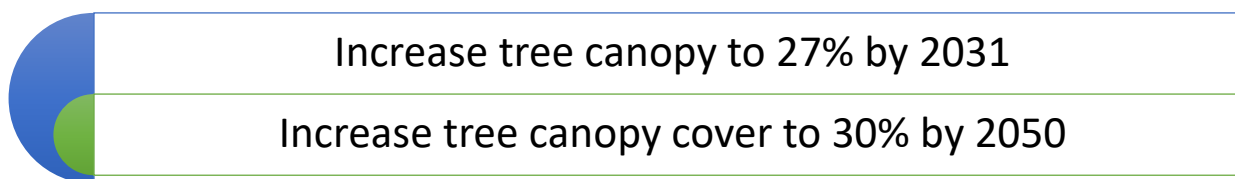
**A healthy, diverse and resilient urban forest**

## Objectives

<b>1</b>	<b>Protect and enhance the urban forest</b> Maximise the health, vigour and condition of Council managed vegetation, while managing risks. Protect trees on private property.
<b>2</b>	<b>Expand the urban forest and adapt to climate change</b> Grow more trees and vegetation across both the public and private realm to adapt to climate change.
<b>3</b>	<b>Enhance biodiversity</b> Protect native bushland, extend and connect habitat and improve connectivity.
<b>4</b>	<b>Build community capacity to share knowledge, protect and enhance the urban forest.</b> Provide opportunities for people to connect with and care for nature in their own gardens and within the community.
<b>5</b>	<b>Build on Council’s knowledge base</b> Capture information to strengthen our understanding of the urban forest

## Targets

The objectives will be measured by targets to:



\*By 2031 this represents an overall increase of 9% total tree canopy cover (for trees taller than 3 metres)

## Timeline of actions

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Estimated project timeline identified in Action Plan tables</b>
Immediate	In progress	Already commenced
Short term	1-2 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - prior to 30 June 2023.
Medium term	3-5 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2026
Long term	5-10 years	Commenced – depending on the level of difficulty and funding available - between 1 July 2026 and 30 June 2031

## Indicative costs

<b>Indicative cost</b>	<b>Classification</b>
\$0-\$20,000	Low cost
\$20,000 – \$40,000	Medium cost
> \$40,000	High cost

## Funding options

- Existing operating
- New operating
- Grant dependent
- Open Space Fund

## Review

This action plan is a 'living' document and will be reviewed after 2 years in 2023, then 3 years in 2026 and after 5 years in 2031. The review should track progress towards reaching the vision, objectives and targets of the Whitehorse Urban forest Strategy and that it is in line with the Urban Forest Background Document.

## Action Plan

### Objective 1: Protect and enhance the urban forest

Council's highest priority is to protect and retain trees and vegetation that already exists on both private and public land. Given the time it takes for trees to grow to maturity and provide the maximum social, economic and environmental benefits, removal of vegetation is a last resort. The management of the existing street and park tree population is aimed to minimise the risk and maximise the health, vigour and structural condition of the urban forest.

To protect trees on private land, Council needs to ensure an enforceable legislative framework is in place for the protection of trees during City Planning and Development and development processes. Council advocates for and encourages the retention and protection of trees on private land.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
1.1	Extend the Council tree inventory to capture standalone park trees to develop a proactive management plan and improve risk management.	Parks and Natural Environment	3-5 years	Park inventory complete	\$80,000	New operational
1.2	Integrate tree inventory into Council's asset management system to better manage funding, scheduled works program and auditing processes.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	IPS asset management system updated	No additional funding	
1.3	Develop a purpose-built tree and urban forest asset management program.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Program developed	\$13,000 set up \$10,000 annual	New operational
1.4	Review and strengthen the 10-year proactive management program based on results of inventory to minimise risk and maximise tree health and vigour.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Review completed	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.5	Review the Street Tree Valuation Procedure to include Ecological Services Value, review the valuation cap and set up an accounting process to ensure reinvestment into the urban forest.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	New procedure in place.		Existing operational

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
1.6	Revise the existing Whitehorse Tree Policies and tree management plan to bring into line with best practice in a changing climate.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Policy revised	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.7	Trial the use of structural soils in footpath and road construction projects to support tree growth and surrounding infrastructure in high density areas.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-3 years	Trial completed	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.8	Integrate bushfire management principles into urban forest management to manage risk.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Bushfire risk assessment completed	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.9	Advocate for the permanent application of Amendment C219 and strong tree protection measures within the Victorian Planning Scheme to the Minister for Planning.	City Planning and Development	Immediate	Advocacy undertaken	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.10	Improve accessibility of information about tree removal, retention and replanting through the City Planning and Development process whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the City Planning and Development and Environment Act and the Privacy legislation.	City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Mechanism in place to access centralised data of tree removals and replacements that trigger a City Planning and Development permit	\$20,000 initial set up \$5,000 ongoing membership	New operational
1.11	Review Landscape Design Guidelines for new development.	City Planning and Development	Immediate	New Guidelines are in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.12	Investigate opportunities for developing a program for cable bundling of powerline spans where high value trees are negatively impacted by powerline clearing requirements.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Investigation undertaken and relevant areas/spans identified	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.13	Develop an approach that preferences asymmetrical planting street design where overhead powerlines exist while recognising the historic nature of 'avenue' planting.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	New street plantings have smaller trees under powerlines and tall canopy trees on the other side	No additional funding	Existing operational
1.14	Develop plans for select street trees that would otherwise require significant pruning for powerline clearance.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Plan developed	No additional funding	Existing operational

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
1.15	<p>Advocate strongly to the State Government to retain trees and vegetation when it is designing and installing new and revised infrastructure.</p> <p>When there is no option but to remove it is expected that for every tree removed three would be planted in its place within the Municipality.</p>	<p>City Planning and Development Parks and Natural Environment</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Trees are protected</p>	<p>No additional funding</p>	<p>Existing operational</p>

## Objective 2: Expand the urban forest and strengthen climate resilience

To expand the urban forest, we need more trees and vegetation across both the public and private realm. By applying right tree, right place, right way, and right time principles, increasing species diversity and innovative design the resilience of the urban forest will be improved.

Actions	Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
<p>2.1</p> <p>Identify and quantify existing opportunities for planting on Council land across the city including within the streetscape, parks, reserves and other council managed land.</p> <p>Seek partnerships with state agencies to provide further planting opportunities to establish more canopy.</p> <p>Identify streetscapes for increased tree planting beyond the standard practice such as kerb outstands, median, plazas, carparks and roundabout plantings.</p> <p>Identify wide streets suitable for in-road planting in conjunction with traditional nature strip tree planting as part of traffic calming treatments and improved canopy cover.</p>	Parks and Natural Environment Engineering	3-5 years	GIS and prioritisation plan improved	No additional funding	Existing operational
<p>2.2</p> <p>Prioritise areas for planting over the next 10 years targeting areas of low canopy areas, hot spots, social vulnerability, biodiversity and green corridors.</p>	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	10-year planting plan in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
<p>2.3</p> <p>Set thresholds for street tree diversity to improve the resilience of the street tree population.</p>	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Thresholds established in management plan	No additional funding	Existing operational



Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
2.4	<p>Develop urban forest precinct plans to maximise opportunities to extend canopy to achieve a range of prioritised outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced biodiversity</li> <li>• Shading and cooling</li> <li>• Improved amenity</li> </ul>	Parks and Natural Environment	3-5 years	Precinct plans developed	More cost analysis required	New operational
2.5	Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to implement the Council Environmental Sustainable Design Policy to achieve canopy targets using tools such as the Green Factor.	Parks and Natural Environment, Engineering and Environmental Services, Capital Works, City Works	Immediate	Project brief for capital works projects include canopy cover targets	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.6	Develop an integrated water management strategy to encourage the use of water sensitive urban design as appropriate incorporated use of stormwater for passive irrigation in streets and open spaces wherever possible.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	IWM Strategy adopted	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.7	Develop planting guidelines for easements on private property.	City Planning and Development, Engineering and Investment	1-2 years	Guidelines in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.8	<p>Develop a tree palette with a suite of future-proof trees suitable for streets, parks and the home garden for a range of outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced biodiversity</li> <li>• Shading and cooling</li> <li>• Landscape character and amenity</li> </ul>	Parks and Natural Environment City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Guidelines are in places	No additional funding	Existing operational

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
2.9	Explore non-regulatory mechanisms to encourage planting of canopy trees in new developments e.g. incentives, educations, supporting innovative developers.	City Planning and Development Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Education program ongoing	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.10	Increase the use of passive irrigation within the streetscape to improve soil moisture levels for street trees.	Project Delivery and Assets	5-10 years	Increase in percentage of street trees that receive passive irrigation in line with Catchment Management Strategies	No additional funding	Included in capital project budget allocation
2.11	Renew the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy to increase opportunities for urban greening to mitigate heat island effect, to improve connectivity and to extend canopy cover.	Leisure and Recreation	1-2 years	Open Space Strategy reviewed	No additional funding	New operating
2.12	Advocate for changes in the Planning Scheme for greater uptake of green walls, roofs and facades in both residential growth and commercial zones.	City Planning and Development	5-10 years	Increase in percentage of planning applications with green infrastructure	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.13	For each new structure plan include canopy targets that support the Municipality to achieve the overall target of 30% across Whitehorse. In some areas it may be necessary to set higher canopy targets on public land to compensate for areas where there is little space for canopy trees on private property.	City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Canopy targets established	No additional funding	Existing operational

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
2.14	Develop a climate resilient species trial program to test suitability and resilience within the streetscape and parks in collaboration with other Councils and research agencies.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Trial in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
2.15	Develop a drought response plan to manage the health of individual Council managed trees within streetscapes and parklands during times of drought.	Parks and Natural Environment	3-5 years	Drought response plan in place	No additional funding	Existing operational

### Objective 3: Enhance biodiversity

Protect native bushland, extend and connect habitat and improve connectivity.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
3.1	<p>Scope and develop green corridors enhancement program which identifies and prioritises areas for new vegetation throughout the urban landscape to improve connectivity.</p> <p>Once the scoping is completed, set targets to drive an increase in area of land managed to enhance biodiversity.</p>	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Program developed and targets in place	\$30,000	New Capital Works
3.2	Develop Master Plans for the Gardiners Creek, Dandenong Creek, Mullum Mullum Creek and Koonung Corridors to improve connectivity for both biodiversity and active modes of transport.	Leisure and Recreation Services	3-10 years	Master plans in place	\$300,000	New Capital Works
3.3	Develop an animal pest management action plan to protect biodiversity assets in line with Eastern Region Animal Pest Management Strategy.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Action plan developed	No additional funding	Existing operational
3.4	Develop vegetation and biodiversity sensitive design guidelines for Council's capital works and upgrades.	Parks and Natural Environment (Environmental Sustainability)	3-5 years	Guidelines in place	No additional funding	Existing operational

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
3.5	Collaborate with local indigenous plant nurseries to better understand the impacts of climate change on indigenous vegetation and conservation approaches.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Established approach to managing biodiversity and climate change	No additional funding	Existing operational
3.6	Map habitat street trees and artificial hollows to better manage those trees to protect wildlife.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Monitoring program in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
3.7	Strengthen the Whitehorse Tree Management Plan to preserve the treed character of classified streets cited by the National Trust.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-3 years	Tree Management Plan revised	No additional funding	Existing operational
3.8	Align Open Space Strategy property purchases criteria to allow for improved habitat connectivity.	Leisure and Recreation Services and Parks and Natural Environment	1-3 years	New Open Space Strategy updated to reflect action	Part of Open Space Strategy Review	Part of Open Space Strategy Review
3.9	Plant a range of indigenous species including trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers to improve habitat and connectivity within public open space.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	30,000 indigenous plants planted annually	No additional funding	Existing operational

#### Objective 4: Build community capacity to learn from each other, protect and enhance the urban forest.

Provide opportunities for people to connect with and care for nature in their own gardens and within the community.

Keep the community informed, support and build capacity within the community to share community knowledge and enhance the urban forest on both private and public land. Ensure Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups are reached by utilising CALD networks to distribute information and by translating material and resources into other languages.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
4.1	Support the planting and care of healthy vegetation and trees in the home garden through programs such as the Tree Education program.	City Planning and Development	Immediate	Increase in subscriptions of programs	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.2	Formalise and expand the indigenous plant co-contribution program for local residences and schools.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Formalised program in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.3	Offer a range of public talks, workshops, incursions and excursions to pre-schools, schools, tertiary groups and other community groups to raise awareness and encourage the interaction between people and their local natural environment.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Environmental education program in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.4	Raise awareness of the importance of indigenous flora and fauna within Whitehorse to enhance biodiversity on private land.	City Planning and Development	Immediate	Resources for indigenous gardening readily available	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.5	Advocate to partner with the State government to implement a community planting program for schools and local residents within areas identified as a green corridors.	Parks and Natural Environment	2-3 years	Number of schools subscribed to planting program and increase in canopy cover on school grounds	No additional funding	Grant dependant

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
4.6	Deliver a community science program in partnership with community science agencies such as iNaturalist to extend awareness of biodiversity and improve data collection.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Increase in community science data	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.7	Facilitate a series of environmental events such as Clean up Australia Day and National Tree Day to invite the community to actively care for nature through weeding, planting and rubbish collection.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Environmental events occur each year	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.8	Provide technical and logistical support to volunteers and community groups such as 'Friends of' groups who carry out weeding, planting, mulching and monitoring within Council managed land.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	'Friends of' groups are well supported	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.9	Collaborate with surrounding municipalities, waterway managers and community groups to enhance biodiversity links within and outside of the City of Whitehorse.	Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Collaboration activities undertaken	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.10	Increase communications and media coverage to celebrate our urban forest and its significance. Raise awareness about planning controls that protect trees on private property.	City Planning and Development Parks and Natural Environment	Immediate	Communications and information released and available	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.11	Develop a program for working with residents to increase nature strip planting to strengthen connectivity.	Parks and Natural Environment	3-5 years	Nature strip planting guidelines reviewed	No additional funding	Existing operational
4.12	Develop an interactive online map with individual tree data to raise awareness of the value of our urban forest students, such as the City of Melbourne Urban Forest Visual interactive map.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-2 years	Online map developed	\$20,000	New Capital Works

## Objective 5: Develop our knowledge base

Capture information to strengthen our understanding of the urban forest.

Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
5.1	Extend the street tree inventory to include all council managed trees within high traffic areas of public open space including the identification of vacant sites.	Immediate  Repeated every 5 years	Parks and Natural Environment	A comprehensive tree inventory for measurement, forward City Planning and Development and management	\$4.20 per tree  +\$140,000 per contract–street trees	New operational
5.2	Maintain the Biodiversity Inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record notable flora and fauna sightings</li> <li>Repeat biodiversity inventory surveys every 5 years</li> <li>Draw on community science programs within the community to gain a better understanding of biodiversity in Whitehorse.</li> </ul>	Ongoing  2023 – then every 5 years	Parks and Natural Environment	Updated inventory	\$100,000	New operational
5.3	Monitor canopy cover changes to understand changes in canopy cover according to land tenure.	Parks and Natural Environment City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Concise data sets collected	\$20,000	New operational
5.4	Collaborate across sectors and regions to achieve better monitoring outcomes through Living Melbourne.	Parks and Natural Environment  City Planning and Development	Immediate	Participation in Living Melbourne program	No additional funding	Existing operational
5.5	Review the list of trees deemed to have significant characteristics including those that were in VPOs 2 and 4 to extend the reach of the Tree Assistance Fund.	City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Complete list of trees	\$12,000	New operational



Actions		Who	When	KPI	Cost	Funding source
5.6	Track tree removal, retention and replacement to better understand canopy loss and gains where a City Planning and Development permit has been required.	City Planning and Development	1-2 years	Centralised database and analytics in place	No additional funding	Existing operational
5.7	Review and report against targets annually to demonstrate progress.	Parks and Natural Environment	1-10 years	Information reported publically	No additional funding	Existing operational