

22.04

14/10/2014
C160

TREE CONSERVATION

This policy applies to all land.

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30/07/2020
C219whse

Policy basis

The importance of tree conservation in the City of Whitehorse is set out in the Municipal Strategic Statement.

Clause 21.05 *Environment* identifies trees as being an integral aspect of the neighbourhood character and landscape of Whitehorse, particularly many of its residential areas.

Clause 21.06 *Housing* outlines how vegetation has been identified as being the most significant determinant of neighbourhood character. Trees in particular play a crucial role in this regard.

The retention of existing trees and the provision of sufficient space for regeneration and replanting are therefore key strategies to preserve and enhance the amenity of the City.

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Objectives

- To improve the tree canopy cover in residential areas across the municipality.
- To protect and strengthen the preferred neighbourhood character of residential areas within the municipality.
- To recognise the positive contribution of tree canopy to development and built form outcomes.
- To assist in the management of the City's tree canopy by ensuring that new development minimises the loss of significant trees.
- To ensure that new development does not detract from the natural environment and ecological systems.
- To identify techniques to assist in the successful co-existence of trees and new buildings or works.
- To promote the regeneration of trees through the provision of adequate open space and landscaping areas in new development.

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Policy

It is policy that:

Tree retention

- All trees that are sound in health, reasonable in structure, of an appropriate species, and are in a location that can be reasonably designed around be retained.
- All trees that are significant for aesthetic, neighbourhood character, ecological, cultural or historic reasons, so that they are important beyond the immediate surrounds of the site, be retained.
- Trees that have been identified by Council or a suitably qualified arborist as being dangerous, or identified by Council as an environmental weed, be removed.
- All trees that are to be retained on a development site be protected with appropriate measures, particularly during the construction phase.

Buildings and works near existing trees

- Appropriate minimum separation distances between any tree to be retained and proposed buildings and works be provided and maintained to ensure that an adequate proportion of the root system is protected from disturbance, and that adequate oxygen and nutrients are available for the tree to survive in the long term.

Note: Greater than usual separation distances may be required depending on the size and species of tree, and the nature and extent of the building or works proposed, and in the areas included in a Significant Landscape Overlay or Vegetation Protection Overlay due to the importance of retaining trees in this area and the predominance of very tall, native trees which are more sensitive to disturbance.

Techniques for successful tree retention

- Site responsive designs for buildings, hard surfacing and other such works be encouraged to minimise potential damage to trees and their root systems, particularly where separation distances are at a minimum and the size and species of a tree requires additional steps to be taken to ensure its long-term health.

Tree replanting

- New upper canopy trees be planted and significant trees that are unable to be retained be replaced to ensure that the treed canopy of the City is maintained in the long term.
- New trees have sufficient space and separation from buildings and impervious areas to successfully obtain their optimum height, avoid any damage to property in the future and to minimise competition from other tree canopies.
- The species of new trees be considered, to determine if they are appropriate for the location, soil type and neighbourhood character.
- Juvenile trees be used for replanting, as opposed to advanced species, as they are better able to adapt to their surroundings and develop a strong, healthy root system.

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Performance standards

The following performance standards are considered to satisfy the policy objectives and statements outlined above:

Tree retention

Trees be retained except if:

- The tree is in a location which in the opinion of the responsible authority makes it impractical to be retained.
- The structure of the tree is unsound due to any of the following:
 - Major limbs either dead or dying.
 - Major fungal or insect damage.
 - Rot.
 - Termite attack.
 - Major forks low in the trunk.
 - Any other reason to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- The tree has not been identified as being significant for aesthetic, neighbourhood character, ecological, cultural or historic reasons.
- The species of the tree is unsuitable for the site due to any of the following:
 - It is, or will be, too big for the area where it is located.
 - It is a species known to drop limbs or block drains.
 - It is an environmental weed.
 - It is inappropriately located near power lines or other services.
 - Any other reason to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Buildings and works near existing trees

- For areas not included within the Significant Landscape Overlay - Schedules 1-8 or a Vegetation Protection Overlay, a minimum separation distance of 3 metres between the tree trunk and any building or works.
- In the areas included in the Significant Landscape Overlay - Schedules 1-8 or a Vegetation Protection Overlay, a minimum separation distance of 4 metres between the tree trunk and any building or works.

Note: The separation distances specified above are minimum standards which may need to be increased depending on the size and species of tree, and the nature and extent of the building or works proposed.

Techniques for successful tree retention

- Application of the following techniques as part of a site responsive design, if relevant:
 - Sensitive footing systems (pier and beam or waffle slabs as opposed to the usual strip footings or slabs).
 - If a hard surface needs to be within 3 metres of the tree trunk, a surface which will allow the penetration of water, such as crushed rock.
 - If a driveway needs to be within 3 metres of the tree trunk, a driveway constructed on top of natural ground level so that no excavation occurs, and the introduction of filling is avoided.
 - Investigation of the installation of air and drainage vents if a significant proportion of the tree's roots may be affected by the introduction of hard surfacing.
 - Locating services such as drainage and cabling outside of the tree's root zone or a minimum of 3 metres from the tree trunk. If this cannot be achieved, services are to be thrust bored under the root system.
 - Avoidance of stripping topsoil from around the tree as most of a tree's absorbing roots are located in this area.
 - The erection of tree barriers a minimum of 3 metres from the tree trunk to avoid damage to the tree and minimise soil compaction and disturbance during construction.

Tree replanting

The site for a new tree should be:

- Separated by a minimum distance of 3 metres from a building.
- For land not within a bush environment character precinct and included in a Significant Landscape Overlay, situated in a minimum area of 35 m² of open ground with a minimum dimension of 5 metres that is free of buildings and impervious surfaces and of other tree canopies, to minimise competition and facilitate normal growth.
- For land within a bush environment character precinct and included in a Significant Landscape Overlay, situated in a minimum area of 50 m² of open ground with a minimum dimension of 5 metres that is free of buildings and impervious surfaces and of other tree canopies, to minimise competition and facilitate normal growth.
- Is not within land encumbered by an easement.
- Juvenile trees should be used for replanting.

Application requirements

Applicants for all proposals must provide a report from a suitably qualified arborist to:

- Assess the health of the trees and justify the removal of trees.

- Outline the measures to be taken, particularly during the construction phase, to ensure the long-term preservation of trees on, or adjoining, the development site.

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Policy references

City of Whitehorse- Statements of Tree Significance-2005

City of Whitehorse Streetscape Policy & Strategy, January 2002

KLM City of Whitehorse, Neighbourhood Character Study Review of areas 14 and 16, February 2004

Neighbourhood Character Study, 2014

Significant Tree Study, City of Whitehorse (Tree Dimensions, September 2006)

Review of Three Precincts in Character Areas 16 & 18, May 2008

Walker Estate Special Character Area, Urban Character Area, May 1999

Municipal Wide Tree Study Discussion Paper, March 2016

Municipal Wide Tree Study Options and Recommendations Report, June 2016

Municipal Wide Tree Study Part 2: Additional Analysis in Garden Suburban and Bush Suburban Character Precincts, March 2019