

CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY 2021-28 OVERVIEW

In the City of Greater Dandenong, we all have a role to play in preparing for climate change and greening our city.

Having lots of shade trees – also known as canopy cover, helps cool our neighbourhoods and makes our streets, parks, and local areas safer and more enjoyable places to be.

The City of Greater Dandenong has a very low canopy cover, contributing to higher temperatures than other metropolitan areas. This puts our community at a greater risk of negative impacts from extreme heat events and our changing climate.



COUNCIL HAS SET A TARGET TO INCREASE TREE CANOPY COVER FOR THE MUNICIPALITY FROM THE EXISTING

9% → 15%
BY 2028.

Council's vision is: **A healthy, green and resilient urban forest that is well managed, protected and provides benefits to the community.**

To support this, Council has adopted the *Urban Forest Strategy 2021-28*, the *Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28* and the *Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy 2021-28*.

The key objectives that Council will work towards are:

1. Provide a framework for managing the urban forest
2. Improve Greater Dandenong's resiliency to climate change
3. Cooling through greening our city

4. Improve the health of our community
5. Engage and educate our community about the importance of trees

The *Urban Forest Strategy* provides a framework for how Council and the community can grow the City of Greater Dandenong's urban forest. It is the overarching document to the existing *Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28* (public land) and the draft *Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy 2021-28* (private land).

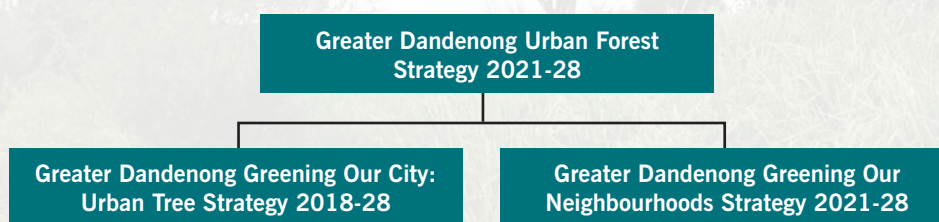


Figure 1 Hierarchy of Urban Forest Strategies



Greening Our City considers the issues and opportunities for street trees and park trees.

Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy considers Council's role in advocating and supporting our community to plant trees close to where people live and work. This strategy is especially important as 73 per cent of land in the City of Greater Dandenong is privately owned and has a very low canopy cover.

Greening Our Neighbourhoods also aims to demonstrate the value and benefits of trees in shading our homes and businesses. These benefits include reducing the impact of extreme heat and improving the amenity of our streets and the health of our community.

WHAT IS AN URBAN FOREST AND HOW DOES IT HELP COOL OUR CITY?

An urban heat island is when urban areas are warmer than surrounding rural areas. Urban heat islands occur due to:

- limited canopy trees to shade and cool
- increased hard and dark surfaces that absorb and radiate heat
- heat production from machines
- air pollution creating local greenhouse effects.

URBAN HEAT ISLAND PROFILE

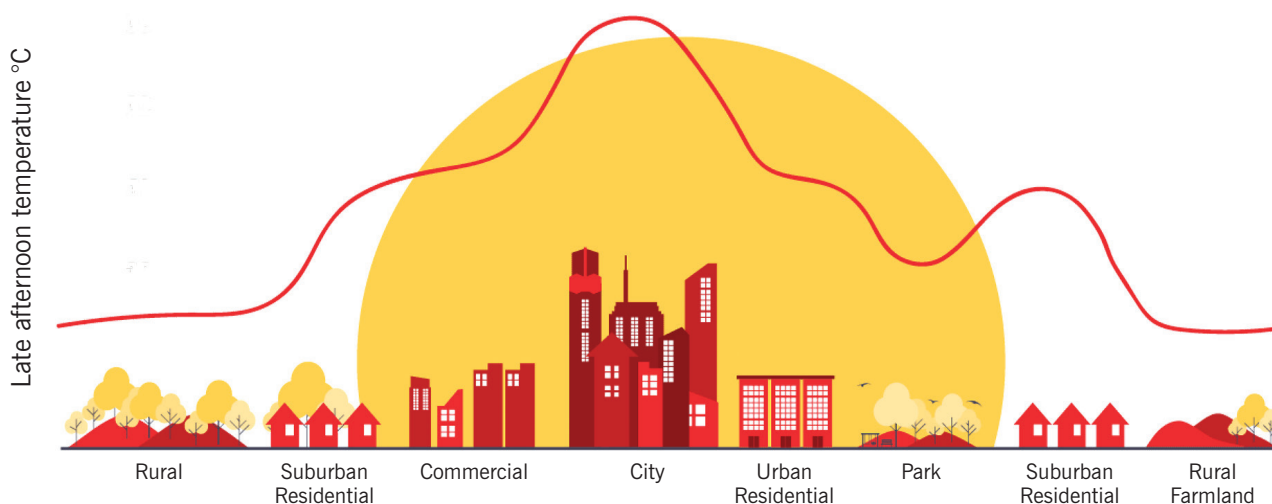


Figure 2 Urban Heat Island Effect

The City of Greater Dandenong's urban forest includes all vegetation, big and small, native, and non-native growing on private and public land. Greening backyards and gardens can significantly reduce the urban heat island, with canopy trees reducing daytime surface temperatures by between 5-20°C.

Canopy trees are defined as any tree above 3 metres. Canopy trees provide shade and the leaves on the tree cool the air around them canopy trees reduces the amount of heat absorbed by hard and dark surfaces, such as roofs, driveways and roads.

As well as shade canopy trees deliver immense economic, social, and environmental benefits, such as streetscape amenity, air pollution reduction, habitat for wildlife and help us tackle climate change.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PLANT TREES AND INCREASE CANOPY COVER?

The combined circumstances of a very low canopy cover with higher temperatures and a disadvantaged population lead to Greater Dandenong suburbs being

assessed as of 'High Vulnerability'. The population of these suburbs are considered 'highly vulnerable to urban heat due to high heat exposure (lack of shade), sensitivity to heat and low adaptive capability (due to their pre-existing disadvantage)'.

The City of Greater Dandenong community is the most socio-economically disadvantaged in metropolitan Melbourne. Vulnerable people, such as the elderly, children, people living with a disability and those from low socio-economic backgrounds are at an even greater risk to extreme heat events and a changing climate.

For the City of Greater Dandenong, growing our urban forest is as much about greening and cooling our streets, car parks and industrial precincts as it is about greening and cooling down our gardens and our homes.

For the protection of the community's most vulnerable Council and community can work to respond to the impacts of climate change, to green and cool our neighbourhoods and make our community more resilient.

HOW HAS CANOPY COVER BEEN MEASURED?

To inform our knowledge of canopy cover across Greater Dandenong, in 2021, the City of Greater Dandenong undertook mapping of the municipality's canopy cover.

The mapping completed in 2021 identified that the City of Greater Dandenong has a very low canopy cover of 9 per cent. The mapping also identified a loss of canopy cover for most suburbs between 2016 and 2021.

This mapping has provided Council with a deeper understanding of the City of Greater Dandenong's vulnerability to the urban heat island and an understanding of how we can develop actions to increase our overall canopy cover and in turn reduce our risk to climate change. The 2021 mapping will assist Council in monitoring Greater Dandenong's progress toward the adopted target of 15 per cent canopy coverage.

HOW WILL COUNCIL INCREASE CANOPY COVER ACROSS GREATER DANDENONG?

The Urban Forest Strategies play a key role in Council's commitment to taking emergency action on climate change. The strategies aim to cool our neighbourhoods through greening, by strategically planting trees in areas of greatest need and by encouraging private landowners to increase canopy trees on their land.

Without increasing canopy cover on privately-owned land, the full positive health and wellbeing benefits of a greener city will not be found in the places where we are most vulnerable – the places we live.

The *Urban Forest Strategy* commits Council to delivering 15 per cent canopy cover by 2028. To achieve this the *Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28* recognised Council's role in greening public land and committed Council to implementing a 15-year planting plan to ensure trees are planted in locations of greatest need and to reduce vacant street tree sites down to zero by 2033.

The *Greening Our Neighbourhoods Action Plan* focuses on how Council and the community can help 'cool, through greening our neighbourhoods' and commits to:

- advocating for high quality landscape design and the inclusion of canopy trees on private land.
- improving the skillset of our development community by preparing a set of landscaping guidelines to achieve high quality landscaping in all developments.
- expanding and enhancing Council's provision of educational programs that aim to improve the perception of trees and landowners' and residents' knowledge on species selection and maintenance.

These strategies will contribute to the target of 15 per cent canopy cover and to reducing the urban heat island and cooling our neighbourhoods to improve our community's health and resilience in a changing climate.

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

To get more information on the draft strategies, please:

- Visit greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/urban-forest-strategy-2021-2028
- Contact Council's Strategic Planning Team on 8571 1000 or by email at council@cgd.vic.gov.au

