



The framework priorities

Framework Priorities			
1	2	3	4
Enhancing Council’s capacity and capabilities to implement the greening vision across all land tenures.	Creating liveable places for people to enjoy and increase community capacity to participate in the greening vision.	Enhancing ecological resilience and responding to climate change across the region.	Improving value for money alternative transport options such as walking and riding, leading to an improvement in liveability, real estate demand and tourism potential.



The guiding principles for greening

1	Urban green spaces, in particular the urban forest on both private and public land benefits the Central Coast community through the provision of ecosystem services.
2	Public open space is enhanced by suitable plantings of trees, shrubs and ground covers and successional tree planting and replacement must be an integral part of all open space planning.
3	Existing trees, in particular large mature canopies and the space they occupy have a high replacement value and tree retention should be given precedence over removal.
4	The urban forest canopy must be maintained at the suburb scale, avoiding trees during the planning stage of individual developments and any loss to be offset through supplementary planting nearby.
5	Trees and other landscaping contribute to a particular 'sense of place' for people in individual locations or suburbs, such as Norfolk Island pines at Terrigal and The Entrance or canopy trees retained at Pearl Beach and as such, tree cover in those areas should be maintained or expanded through succession planning.
6	Native trees and shrubs provide greater habitat value to wildlife than exotic species and as such, should be favoured over exotic species.
7	Urban green spaces including pockets of shrubs and low unmanaged vegetation such as sedges and native grasses provide habitat for a range of urban wildlife and allow movement of wildlife.
8	The planting and maintenance of trees and large shrubs may not always be possible, but other urban greening such as rain gardens, green roofs and walls and median strips planted with midstorey vegetation can still contribute to the broad aims of urban forestry.
9	At times ageing or defective trees may need replacement, however their removal must be supported by appropriate expert opinion or analysis and successional planting.
10	Community play a critical role in the successful implementation of the greening vision through Landcare, community planting & Backyard Habitat programs, tree management on private and public lands



Greening Outcomes

The intended strategic outcomes in 2030 for each of the framework priorities is explored below.

Strategic Priorities	2030 Strategic outcome 1	2030 Strategic outcome 2
<p>Enhancing Council's capacity and capabilities to implement the greening vision across all land tenures.</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Council is a leader in supporting the greening vision and climate resilience by implementing planting programs that address Urban Heat Island Effects, improve urban amenity and provide habitat for urban wildlife.</p>	<p>Planning controls are producing development that provides improved urban amenity through exemplar landscaping.</p>
<p>Creating liveable places for people to enjoy and increase community capacity to participate in the greening vision.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Use of formal and informal open space increases and community wellbeing is improved.</p>	<p>Residents and school students actively participate in urban greening as observed through increased urban canopy cover.</p>
<p>Enhancing ecological resilience and responding to climate change across the region.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Urban Heat Islands are decreasing in urban centres and along main pedestrian routes.</p>	<p>Increased observations of insects and birds in urban areas.</p>
<p>Improving value for money alternative transport options such as walking and riding, leading to an improvement in liveability, real estate demand and tourism potential.</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Improved perception that areas subjected to urban greening are higher value.</p>	<p>Increased use of shared paths and footpaths in areas subjected to urban greening.</p>



Priorities and actions at a glance

From the four Framework Priorities, 21 Key Actions have been developed, as shown below. Actions may relate to more than one Framework Priority however have been included below in the priority that the action most aligns with. Actions are prioritised by their importances.

Framework priorities	Key Actions	Priority
Enhancing Council's capacity and capabilities to implement the greening vision across all land tenures. <div>1</div>	1.3 Complete a Landscape Design Manual/ Guidelines to allow for improved greening outcomes in urban areas from both Council and private development.	Immediate priority
	1.4 Develop a Tree Planting / Replacement procedure for Council.	Immediate priority
	1.5 Review and align relevant procedures/ processes to ensure tree management compliance with relevant Australian Standards for trees.	Immediate priority
	1.6 Develop a tree management system to track the success of plantings over time.	Future low resource actions
	1.7 Complete the draft Central Coast Green Grid plan by March 2021.	Immediate priority
	1.8 For each Social Planning District, develop a Green Grid implementation plan.	Immediate priority
	1.9 Develop methodology & process to review and update local heritage significance trees in the Comprehensive Local Environmental Plan on needs basis.	Future low resource actions
	1.8 Amend planning controls to require that all new medium and high-density development to consider appropriate Urban Heat Island mitigation as part of the development.	Immediate priority
	1.9 Prepare planning controls and consider development incentives to improve tree planting and retention outcomes from development and require medium and high-density developments to propose and implement best practice green infrastructure such as green roofs.	Immediate priority



<p>Creating liveable places for people to enjoy and increase community capacity to participate in the greening vision.</p> <p>2</p>	2.1 Mitigate urban heat islands in the 19 priority suburbs through planting canopy trees along high activity pedestrian routes.	Future high resource actions
	2.2 Develop and promote community/School programs and events to improve regional biodiversity and tree management such as a Backyard Habitat program, Citizen Science program & support establishment of native gardens on private lands.	Future low resource actions
	2.3 Ensure all areas of open space have sufficient canopy cover and undertake successional planting in areas with an ageing canopy.	Future low resource actions
	2.4 Coordinate community street greening activities where Council is approached by six or more properties in a street.	Future low resource actions
<p>Enhancing ecological resilience and responding to climate change across the region.</p> <p>3</p>	3.1 Undertake planting of suitable native species of trees, shrubs and groundcovers to act as biodiversity corridors in areas where connection between remnant bushland has been lost.	Future low resource actions
	3.2 Review and update Council's Water Sensitive Urban Design Manual and Civil Works Specification to increase areas of non-forested habitat on both private lands and in new subdivisions.	Immediate priority
	3.3 Review and update Council's planning controls to include consideration of Urban Heat Island Effects for all future subdivision and medium and high-density development.	Immediate priority
	3.4 Audit and enhance aquatic habitat quality throughout Council's constructed and natural wetland network.	Immediate priority
	3.5 Develop partnerships with Universities to facilitate research projects that determine which species are best suited to future climate.	Immediate priority



<p>Improving value for money alternative transport options such as walking and riding, leading to an improvement in liveability, real estate demand and tourism potential.</p> <p>4</p>	4.1 Partner with the development industry to investigate development models that sustain tree populations and deliver return on investment.	Future low resource actions
	4.2 Identify opportunities for community partnerships to fund and resource landscaping and streetscape improvement projects.	Future low resource actions
	4.3 Require consideration of walkability and connected open space in all Masterplans and planning proposals.	Immediate priority



Implementation

The actions identified will be delivered over the next 15 years through operational planning and considered in the operational and capital budgets by the relevant areas of Council. This will be supplemented by grant funding where available.

The staged implementation will occur over the following pathways:

1. Embed the greening principles across Councils strategic and project planning, operational delivery and ongoing asset management or maintenance. These includes a tree management planning and maintenance regime as described on page 34.
2. Development of technical documents that ensure the correct species are selected and that urban design outcomes are met.
3. Development the Green Grid Plan for the Region identifying broad locations for urban greening.
4. Developing Operational Planting Project Plans, including for the 19 priority suburbs through Green Grid delivery plans for 17 social planning districts.
5. Implementation of projects until 2030.
6. Develop and facilitate ongoing community-based planting projects and involvement of community in planning and delivery of planting projects.
7. Partnerships with Universities to ensure greening programs are scientifically sound and consider future climate.

Important considerations for implementation

Ensuring the implementation of this Strategy does not significantly increase bush fire risk

Approximately 70% of the Central Coast is classified as bush fire prone and historically large bush fires have occurred regularly. It is important that tree management completed as part of this Strategy does not significantly increase bush fire risk to assets on the Central Coast. This will be achieved by the following practices in bush fire prone land:

- Installation of large shrubs and trees rather than ground layer vegetation in bush fire prone areas, where ground layer vegetation will be maintained through regular mowing and slashing;
- Installing canopy plantings that contain smooth, less flammable bark in bush fire prone areas;
- Ensuring a gap of at least two metres occurs between the roofline any building and likely edge of canopy plantings;
- Ensuring that planted trees reach a maximum intended canopy of less than 15% foliage cover, with spacing of at least five metres between stems.
- Priority will be given to planting non-sclerophyll species at the bushland interface with species with high moisture such as Lilly Pilly and Tuckeroo.
- Suburb specific planting plan or park successional planting plan, these will be compliance with relevant Codes of Practice such as the Rural Fire Service's Planning for Bush fire Protection.

The importance of appropriate tree selection

Historically during the planting of trees on road reserves, their future size was not always considered. This resulted in damage being caused to roads and footpaths and the requirement of regular pruning of trees planted under power lines. At other times, species selection has not considered aspects such as provision of shade, benefits to wildlife or use of species that are best suited to the space.

To ensure appropriate tree species selection, the following questions must be addressed during place based planning including:

- Are there height restrictions for the site, such as overhead power lines or nearby buildings? If so, only plants with an estimated maximum height of less than five metres should be used.
- Are underground services present? If so, could sedges, grasses or small shrubs be used?
- Is the site highly developed such as within a main street and as such, is a deciduous species more suitable for use than an evergreen species such as allowing additional solar access in winter.
- How large is the space? Should a species that reaches a large maximum height and spread be used rather than smaller specimens from species that reach a smaller height and spread? What planting mix would best address any heat island issues?
- How can the specimen enhance the space? For example, would a large tree with a spreading canopy enhance the space or make it feel cramped?
- In parkland situations, which specimens will enhance the passive recreational opportunities of the area? In these situations, one or two larger species should be used instead of multiple smaller ones?
- Are there other historical plantings in the area which future plantings need to complement? If so, the same or similar species must be considered.

- Is the site on bushfire prone land? If so, bushfire considerations need to be met.
- Is the site adjacent to bushland? If so, only local native species should be used.

The selection of appropriate tree stock is also essential, with any trees planted as part of this Strategy being in accordance with any relevant Australian Standard regarding Tree Stock for Landscape Use. Prior to Council accepting any stock, inspections must occur to ensure root growth and growth form is consistent with the Australian Standard.

Replacement of removed public trees and maintenance of urban wildlife habitat

Each year Council removes over 1,500 public trees. To ensure that public tree canopy cover is maintained, this Strategy identifies a number of standards in which removed trees must be adequately replaced and maintained where suitable funds occur. Accordingly, the following procedures are to be followed:

- All removed trees must be replaced within 12 months of their removal by no less than two replacement trees.
- Where practicable, replacement trees should be planted within 50 metres of the site of the tree removal or alternatively within the same suburb.
- Replaced trees must be monitored for no less than two years and if they are substantially damaged or die during that time, they must be replaced.
- If removed public trees contain tree hollows, their loss must be compensated by the installation of at least two nesting boxes nearby for every hollow that is lost.

This process is captured within Council's internal systems and subject to regular internal reporting.



The importance of involving community groups in implementing this Strategy

Existing community groups are already actively involved in promoting the retention and expansion of the urban trees and green spaces. It is considered that these types of groups offer the greatest benefit in incorporating their on-ground work in parks rather than along roads due to the inherent risks along roadsides from utilities and traffic.

Street tree Planting

When suitable funds are available, street tree planting events will occur through Council coordination rather than through coordination by community groups. These events will occur where six or more properties on a street contact Council requesting street tree planting in a single application by Council staff. Council will then contact a representative of the interested residents and arrange a date for planting. The development of a community education program where tubestock will be provided to residents as part of the Backyard Habitat program will be investigated, where funds allow. It is then expected that the residents will undertake initial watering and monitoring of trees to determine if failure or damage occurs.

Backyard Habitat program

The majority of the urban trees, which make up the Central Coast Urban Forest occur on private land and as such, the involvement of the community in protecting and expanding the urban forest is paramount. To maintain and expand the urban forest on private land, a three-year trial of the Backyard Habitat program will be trialled where residents can join the program and receive free tubestock to be planted on their property along with advice and networking opportunities with other local residents.

Promoting Citizen Science

This Strategy supports the use of Citizen Science programs to quantify the value of the Central Coast urban greenspace as providing habitat for fauna, including insects, mammals and birds.

Possible Citizen Science programs that will be investigated for development through the Backyard Habitat program include:

- The development of a smartphone application which allows the community to log sightings of different vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife, including the establishment on an online community that can assist with species identification.
- Annual urban ecology “BioBlitz” events to engage the community in Citizen Science activities, where the community participate in activities to survey invertebrates and vertebrate fauna in urban parks along with quantifying diversity of plants and fungi.
- Recording the effects of shade trees on lowering air temperatures in urban areas.



Monitoring & Reporting

Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement strategies for the urban greening

A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) committee will be established to guide the implementation of this Strategy. It will consist of representatives from relevant sections of Council. The committee will meet twice annually and track the progress towards meeting the identified actions and benchmarks. Once every two years the committee will undertake a review of the identified actions and determine if the actions require amendment or modification, allowing for continuous improvement of the Strategy. A full review of the Strategy will occur alongside the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework cycle. The full review is to:

- Resurvey of tree canopy cover using the iTree application in each urban suburb.
- Resurvey of heat island mapping using Landsat 8 imagery to determine the level of change in heat mapping.
- Determine if the level of tree removal has changed over time and if so, if additional planting is required in suburbs not currently considered for broadscale planting.
- Determine if the levels of identified planting are being met and if not, what strategies can be put in place to meet the planting targets.
- Determine progress towards the 2030 Strategic Goals identified against the four framework priorities.
- Present the results of the review to the elected Council.



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