

## Strategic priority 4: Urban environment

### Context

#### A healthy environment supports a healthy community.

Well known for its tree lined streets and established parks and gardens, the City of Stonnington has the second highest canopy cover of an inner Melbourne metropolitan council. A highly developed area, it also has the second lowest amount of public open space of any Victorian municipality.

Stonnington's natural landscape has changed dramatically since European settlement. While some natural areas remain, the construction of buildings, streets and footpaths has resulted in a significant loss of natural environment.

The most significant natural environmental areas within the municipality include the riparian corridors of the Yarra River, Gardiners Creek and Scotchmans Creek, the Malvern Valley Golf Course, Darling Park and the Urban Forest Reserve. These areas contribute to biodiversity in Stonnington by providing habitat for native animals and maintaining local plant diversity. Protecting and maintaining these areas is a key priority for Council.

Due to its location within the inner city, surrounded by dense and solid surfaces that trap heat, the City of Stonnington is vulnerable to the 'urban heat island effect', which impacts on the health, amenity and liveability of the city. Protecting and enhancing our natural areas is important to ensure the natural environment is healthy, resilient and able to support diversity and wildlife. These areas are also essential for helping keep our city cool and supporting community health and wellbeing.

Developing new greening opportunities in dense urban environments requires innovation. Introducing trees can be challenging as there is often competing demand for the limited available space in busy city streets and conflict with surrounding infrastructure. New and diverse habitat types, such as green roofs and walls, can complement natural areas and help grow the urban forest.

A healthy and attractive physical environment supports a high level of biodiversity and essential ecosystem services, facilitates educational opportunities and recreational activities, and adds to the colour and amenity of a community. Protecting and enhancing the natural environment can improve community cohesion and local ecological knowledge while increasing physical and mental wellbeing.

### Our approach

Council recognises the importance of biodiversity and the need to increase habitat connectivity, improve water quality and provide recreational and educational opportunities for the community.

#### Biodiversity

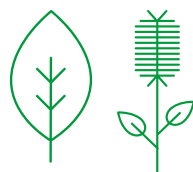
Council has focused its revegetation efforts on seven key biodiversity sites to best recreate their natural environment and provide habitat for native wildlife. These sites are:

- » Glenburn Bend Park
- » Muswell Bend Park
- » Glen Iris Wetlands
- » Darling Park
- » Malvern Valley Golf Course
- » Urban Forest Reserve
- » Yarra River Corridor

In addition to these key biodiversity sites, Council maintains and protects a network of parks, reserves, gardens and street trees that provide natural corridors, or islands, for local wildlife, creating a green web across the city and beyond its borders. These corridors provide habitat and food sources for local wildlife and urban pollinators.

Council will continue to explore opportunities to promote and encourage a variety of green and natural environments to enhance biodiversity and support healthy ecological communities.

#### In 2016-17 Council planted



1,590 trees  
+ 29,000 plants

in Stonnington streets, parks, reserves  
and along our waterways.



## The urban forest

This strategy is closely aligned with Council's **Urban Forest Strategy**, which aims to support "a healthy, resilient, diverse and valued urban forest that will continue to be a core element of the character and liveability of the City."

Council's annual planting program develops and maintains the urban forest. This involves planting tens of thousands of trees and plants throughout Stonnington's streets, parks and reserves, including native trees and indigenous tube stock.

Over 90 per cent of land area in Stonnington is privately owned with private trees and green space comprising a significant proportion of the urban forest. Council encourages the planting and maintenance of vegetation on private land and runs workshops and events to raise awareness amongst the community on the value of biodiversity.

Council will continue to investigate ways to grow and protect the urban forest through design, innovation and collaboration and deliver the key directions outlined in the **Urban Forest Strategy**.

## Environmentally Sustainable Development

Council recognises the importance of maintaining and enhancing the health of urban ecosystems, for local biodiversity but also for community health and wellbeing.

This Strategy is complemented by the City of Stonnington's **Strategies for Creating Open Space**, which aims to create open space to enhance the health and wellbeing of the Stonnington community, recognising the benefits of a healthy urban environment on quality of life.

Stonnington's planning application process requires developers to include Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) considerations within their applications. This requirement has now been incorporated into the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a Local ESD Policy, part of which supports urban ecology initiatives including communal spaces, vegetation, food production and green walls, roofs and facades.

## Community engagement and education

Council promotes and supports the continued protection of biodiversity in Stonnington through its environmental events and programs, which aim to increase the understanding of the many benefits that biodiversity provides to both the community and the environment. As over 90 per cent of Stonnington land area is privately owned, there is a significant opportunity to engage the community in expanding habitat and supporting local biodiversity.

Council will continue to explore ways to support community connection to the natural environment, supporting biodiversity in both the public and private domain.

## Urban environment strategic objectives



### Council will:

- 4.1 protect, maintain and enhance areas of natural environment throughout the City
- 4.2 manage the urban forest to ensure a cool, healthy and liveable city
- 4.3 integrate green infrastructure throughout the municipality, and
- 4.4 grow the urban forest by planting 250,000 plants and trees throughout the municipality over the next five years.

### Council will support the community to:

- 4.5 integrate green infrastructure in developments
- 4.6 increase connection and engagement in Council's natural environment, and
- 4.7 improve habitat on private land for native wildlife.

