

POLICY

Greenspace

Street and Reserve Trees

1 Introduction

In urban environments trees have a significant environmental role to play in enhancing streetscapes; breaking up the visual impact of buildings, softening hard landscapes and adding a natural element to an otherwise artificial environment. Mature trees are often the only significant natural landscape feature in a new development area and can act as landmarks within the District.

Mature trees provide most environments with a sense of scale. They are an important part of the landscape, providing colour, form, focal points, signposts and continuing interest. Trees are considered by many to have an intrinsic value because of their aesthetic beauty, the amenity and character they provide to an area and an economic value to residents and landowners.

Trees can be important links to the commemoration of significant people or events of the past and serve as a cultural element spanning generations of community members. Some individual trees or species have a customary use or significance to Maori and are notable in that context.

In recent years, greater public awareness of environmental issues has led to increased acknowledgement of the value of trees. In particular, trees contribute to the health of the environment by aiding climate control, combating air pollution, providing ecological diversity, attracting and supporting bird life and providing shade and shelter.

2 Policy Context

Trees are an important part of the community infrastructure. There is a need to recognise that different tree species have different life spans and there is a need to manage trees to ensure their longevity and to plan for their replacement.

Trees are a vital element in the District and contribute to the social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being of the residents and visitors to the District.

For the purposes of clarity the terms "street tree" or "tree" used within this policy also refers to Council owned trees located on Council owned land and reserves.

3 Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to:

- Protect and effectively manage trees located on Council land; and
- Plant appropriate trees on Council managed land for the benefit and well-being of current and future generations; and
- Support the continued protection, retention and well-being of publicly notable trees; and
- Support community based tree initiatives on Council managed land.

4 Policy Statement

4.1 General

The Council supports the planting of street trees in urban areas where practicable to enhance communities and neighbourhoods. Factors determining this include physical constraints, safety, the opinions of residents, traffic issues and the location of essential services. All street tree planting must have Council approval and will generally be undertaken by the Council on existing streets and by developers in new subdivision areas.

The Council will maintain an inventory of street trees. As part of this an audit will be carried out to assess the condition of each street tree and the information entered into a database. The database will be updated on an ongoing basis as part of the Council's tree maintenance contract.

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All street tree planting will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Engineering Code of Practice.

4.2 New Street Trees

All trees selected for planting shall be approved by the Community Greenspace Team.

All new subdivisions, as part of their landscape plan, will incorporate street tree plantings. These landscape plans are approved by Council as part of the subdivision consent.

The Council is responsible for planting trees in existing streets. Urban streets will be planted with street trees where possible. Collector roads are likely to have trees planted on either side as an avenue or incorporated into a median strip. Minor streets vary between having trees planted on one or both sides of the street, outside each or every second house or in groves at the end of the street. Exact locations are site specific.

Council does not generally plant street trees in rural or semi-rural road reserves except as part of an approved landscape plan which is usually developed to enhance the entrances to a subdivision. Where trees have been planted as part of a rural or semi-rural subdivision Council will maintain the trees for their health and public safety.

The Council has a street tree planting programme for the District. In addition, or as part of this programme, the Council will consider requests from residents for new street trees to be planted. Where there is a request for trees to be planted in a street with no existing trees, the Council will generally seek agreement from the majority of residents so that a contiguous pattern of tree planting can be achieved. The Community Greenspace Team will provide residents with a shortlist of tree species that have the appropriate characteristics for the environment and are suitable for that particular street. In streets where existing trees are planted the same or similar species will be planted where practical.

When preparing designs for upgrading roads, kerb and channel and footpaths the Council will endeavour to preserve existing trees where possible. Works should avoid interfering with the trees in any way including roots and surrounding soil where possible. Where this is not possible an agreed street tree plan will be prepared, approved and implemented as part of the road improvements, unless impractical due to the location of services. Where practical any new or relocated services will be installed in locations that provide the best opportunity for the planting of street trees and their continued growth and development.

4.3 Succession Planting

Some streets and reserves in the District are currently defined by the presence of large mature trees. Large trees provide a living link to the history of the area and have visual and amenity benefits.

As trees age past maturity, they begin to deteriorate. Eventually they reach a point where they need to be removed because either they can no longer be maintained in a safe and healthy state, or they have died.

To continually provide streetscapes and reserves with mature trees it is essential that trees are replaced on an ongoing basis. The following will apply:

- Where a Council owned street tree is removed for any reason a replacement tree may be planted. The replacement will be planted on, or as near as practicable, to the site of the removed tree as determined by Green Space staff in consultation with adjacent residents.
- Where mature trees in streets and reserves are nearing the end of their expected life a replacement tree may be planted in a nearby position prior to the removal of the mature tree

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(having regard to location, and any relevant planting or reserve management plan). This allows for the replacement tree to sufficiently establish prior to removal of the mature tree.

4.4 Removal of Street Trees

The removal of a healthy tree will only be considered in the following circumstances and even then, only when all options for retaining it have been eliminated:

- Where it causes severe hardship consistent with District Court decisions;
- Where it causes severe disruption to essential services;
- Where it is necessary for a street tree redevelopment plan to be implemented;
- Where it is necessary for the realignment/reformation of a footpath.

In situations where residents claim healthy street trees are having a negative impact on their properties, the following procedure will be followed:

- The tree(s) will be inspected by a Council Community Greenspace Team advisor to ascertain the problem(s).
- Any appropriate works will be carried out by Council's approved tree contractor at the Council's expense. Appropriate works are defined as those necessary to alleviate the problem(s), although not to the extent that the natural attractive form, health or stability of the tree is compromised in the operation.

Where a resident's request for the removal of a tree is received, staff will consult with the neighbours and prepare a report for the relevant Community Board for its consideration.

In the event of road widening or other type of public work where trees are present and have to be removed, consideration is to be given to relocate the trees, if they are suitable for this purpose. Where this is not possible replacement tree planting should be carried out as an integral part of the project and provision for this included in the project assessment and design.

4.5 Removal/relocation of Street Trees in New Subdivisions

The first owners of sections in new subdivisions where street trees have been planted as part of the landscape plans may need to remove or relocate these trees to facilitate vehicle access to the house designed for that section.

In this situation requests for the removal or relocation of a tree must be made in writing to the Council stating:

- The street address of the property and the lot number; and
- The name of the contact person; and
- Contact details; and
- The reason for the tree to be removed or relocated.

On receipt of the request staff will assess the quality of the tree and if the tree can be relocated. This assessment will include:

- Any conditions of sale by the developer;
- Any conditions of the resource consent;
- The streetscape

If the tree can be relocated, an appropriate site is to be marked on the ground in the road berm, where the tree shall be shifted to.

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If the tree is removed the householder is required to engage Council's tree maintenance contractor or other contractor approved by the Community Greenspace Team to plant another tree of a large initial size (over 2.5 metres) in the road berm as its replacement. It shall be of the same species unless otherwise approved by the Council.

The cost of removing or relocating the tree is to be borne by the householder, not the Council. If an agent of the householder makes the request then the agent is deemed to be the person responsible for the payment of all expenses relating to removal or relocation of street trees.

4.6 Removal/relocation of established trees to allow for minor subdivisions

It is becoming more prevalent that larger, established sections in urban areas are being subdivided into one or more smaller sections to accommodate the demand for housing in established urban areas. At times this will mean that existing well established street trees will be located in a position where they will impede access to the new sections by either completely blocking the proposed vehicle access points or be directly adjacent to the proposed vehicle crossings. In these circumstances no vehicle crossing should be constructed closer than 3 meters to the centreline of an established street tree. This will ensure that damage will not be done to the tree or the vehicle crossing as the tree matures.

In these situations every option must be explored to determine if an alternative vehicle access is available that will protect the tree from damage.

Where alternative access is not available an application must be made to the Community Greenspace Team for permission to remove the tree which will be referred to the appropriate Community Board. Sub-dividers should be made aware that it may take some time for the Board to consider the matter.

Where Council authorises an established street tree to be removed the developer is required to engage Council's tree maintenance contractor or other contractor approved by the Community Greenspace Team to plant another tree of a large initial size (over 2.5 metres tall) with a calliper measurement of a minimum 50mm, in the road berm as its replacement. It shall be of the same species unless otherwise approved by the Council.

4.7 The cost of removing or relocating the tree is to be borne by the developer, not the Council. Species Selection

To minimise complaints about trees which include: leaf drop; fruit, shade creation and invasive roots, a list of tree species commonly used and suitable for street planting is maintained by the Council's Community Greenspace Team. This list is not exhaustive, nor does planting the species on the list guarantee that individual trees will survive and flourish.

Prior to planting new trees (other than replacement trees) in an existing street the Council will supply a list of suitable trees and ascertain residents' opinions about the species to be used. Consensus among residents will confirm the species to be planted. The final decision on choice of tree species for a particular street rests with the Council's Community Greenspace Team.

The planting of fruit and nut trees is at the discretion of the Community Greenspace Team and the factors listed below will influence that decision.

Factors influencing appropriateness of a species for the site will include the following:

- Soil type
- Drainage
- Local climate
- Width of footpath and width of roadway
- Proximity of houses to street and aspect (potential shading)

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- Location of services
- Existing nearby species and character of neighbourhood
- Suitability of species in relation to growth habit and other characteristics
- Cost
- Any additional requirements of the Council's Engineering Code of Practice

4.8 Maintenance

To provide the best opportunity for street trees to grow healthily and reach their full potential at maturity a proactive approach to tree health will be under-taken. This will ensure many problems are dealt with before serious damage occurs.

The first three years after trees are planted are the most crucial to their successful establishment and it is important that they are given extra attention during this period.

All maintenance of street trees owned by Council will be carried out by skilled tree contractors employed by the Council and their performance will be monitored by the Community Greenspace Team. Subdividers will maintain all trees planted by them for the full term of the maintenance period defined in the development consent.

Street trees under three years old from planting will be monitored and watered at least once a fortnight during the summer period if required.

Maintenance work to be carried out in the first three years following planting will include the following:

- Eradication of any weeds within the tree ring
- Replenishment of mulch
- Replacement or removal of the mower guard
- Re-staking or removal of stakes as required
- Pest and disease control
- Remedial works on any damaged limbs
- Removal of suckers
- Fertilising

Chemicals including pesticides and herbicides may sometimes be required to ensure the health and survival of a tree. The application of either herbicides or pesticides is allowed only by Council's tree maintenance contractor or another contractor approved by the Community Green Space Team who will be required to hold an up-to-date, relevant qualification.

4.9 Pruning and Training of Trees

To enhance the health and form of street trees and minimise future maintenance requirements the Community Greenspace Team has a pruning and training programme designed to ensure young trees are correctly trained to fit the streetscape and to minimise any future maintenance.

The primary aim of pruning is to maintain adequate clearance above roads and away from footpaths and to enable trees to develop a proper branch structure with a strong central leader. Such a structure will reduce long term maintenance costs and promote the growth of a healthy and aesthetically pleasing tree.

Pruning may also be carried out on street trees to alleviate shading and leaf fall problems on residential properties where this can be done without detrimentally affecting the tree and following recognised good arboricultural practice. Topping or pollarding of trees is not considered good practice and therefore will be carried out in extreme circumstances and with the authority of the Community Greenspace Team.

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Pruning of street trees will be carried out by authorised Council staff or skilled tree contractors employed by the Council.

The Council will take the following action if it becomes aware of unauthorised pruning or interference with street trees:

- A letter will be sent to the resident concerned informing the resident of the Council's stance on unauthorised pruning of street trees;
- If necessary the Council will notify the Police of this intentional damage.
- If the tree is so detrimentally affected it has to be removed, the resident concerned will be asked to pay the full cost of removing the tree and purchasing and planting a replacement tree.

4.10 Planting

It can be difficult to establish new trees in a street environment. Trees can suffer from a lack of shelter and water and vandalism also takes its toll.

To ensure new trees have the best possible chance of surviving the first three years after planting a flyer is put into the letter box of the property the tree is located outside providing information for the resident on how they can assist in ensuring the tree remains healthy and is kept watered.

Planting is generally carried out between May and September and will be carried out according to the Council's Engineering Code of Practice and the Community Greenspace Team's planting specifications.

5 Links to legislation, other policies and community outcomes

Waimakariri District Plan
Waimakariri District Council Engineering Code of Practice
QS-R905 Street Trees – Standard Operating Procedure
Property Law Act 2007, section 333

Community Outcomes:

There is a safe environment for all

6 Adopted by and date

Approved by the Community and Recreation Committee on 21 March 2017 and adopted by Council on 4 April 2017.

7 Review

Review every six years or sooner on request.