



**Tree fund an idea
worth planting**

Unley is facing unique challenges as we strive to become greener and more sustainable. Council has committed to a 20% tree canopy increase by 2045, targeting 31% coverage.

Many residents support our environmental goals and aims for more trees, but the challenge is not having enough public land to plant them on; Unley has the lowest percentage of open space of any metropolitan council in Adelaide. We have beautiful tree-lined streets, but many residents worry about the loss of trees from private homes.

The average tree cover on private land across the City of Unley is currently 22%. While the State Planning Code stipulates at least one tree for new developments, Council's concern is that home extensions and subdivisions are impacting tree numbers across Unley.

Council has several initiatives which aim to retain and grow more trees on private land, including grants to maintain large trees and competitions for new tree vouchers.

One concept we are exploring is when new developments increase the built footprint, with more dwellings on a block - or house extensions, pools, and garages – this would trigger an assessment of tree canopy against a 15% target.

This idea proposes that if this target isn't met, landowners would be charged an extra rate on top of annual rates until the required level of cover is reached. This could take several years, depending on the extent of landscaping, and time it takes for trees to mature. Money collected would be used for a 'tree offset fund', enabling Council to purchase more public land for planting trees.

A 15% target would encourage residents to make informed decisions about retaining trees when planning extensions, and ensure new trees are planted and looked after so they eventually contribute to Unley's canopy. For blocks with limited landscaping space, an offset fee would allow Council to increase urban greenery elsewhere in the area.

We will engage widely with our community about this concept and seek other ideas which could help retain and increase canopy cover, on private land and across the city. We look forward to residents and businesses contributing to the debate to tackle this important issue.