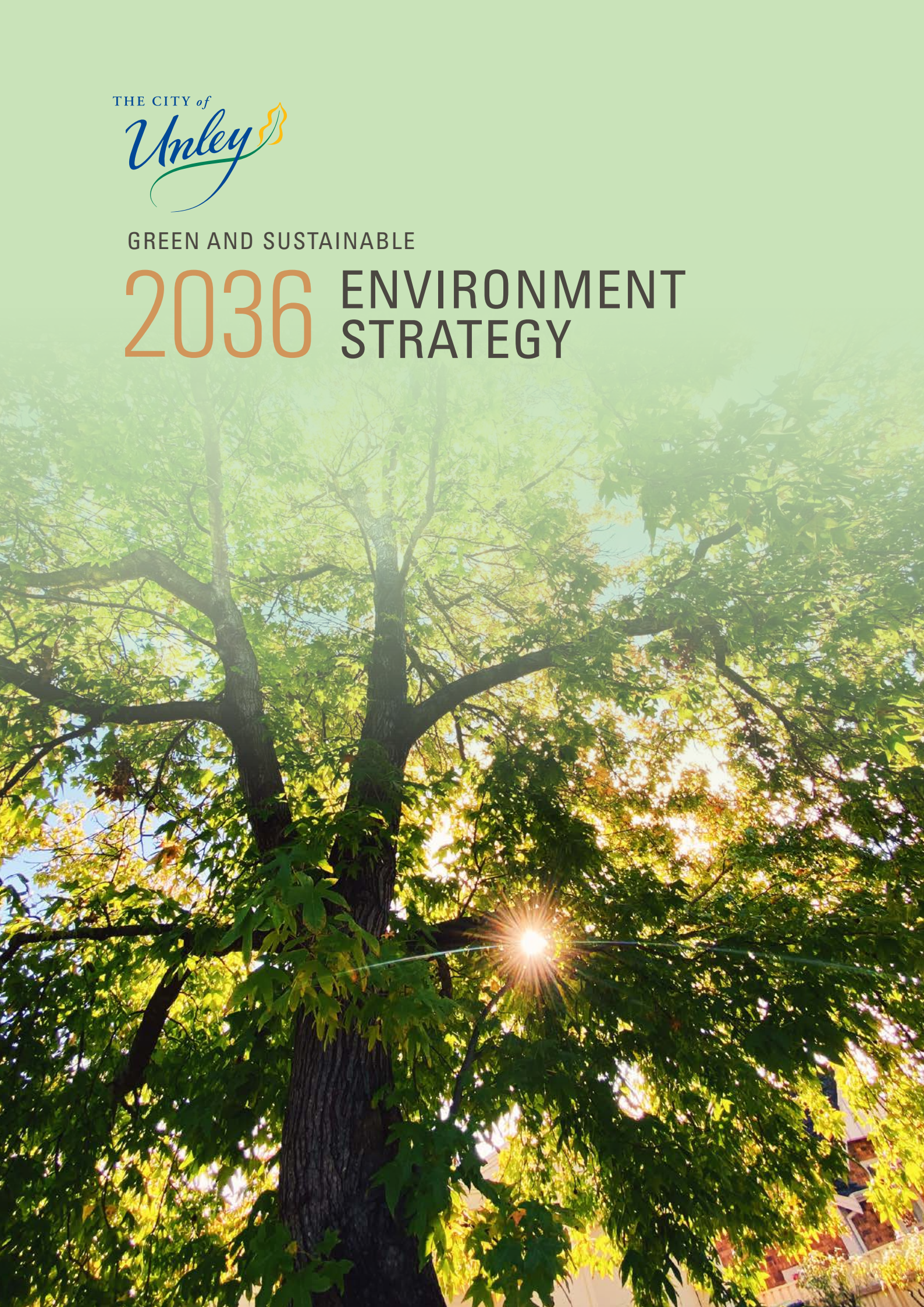
THE CITY of Unley

GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE

2036 ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY





We would like to acknowledge this land is the Traditional Lands for the Kaurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kaurna people as the Traditional Custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today.

Ngadlurlu tampinthi,
ngadlu Kaurna yartangka
inparrinthi. Ngadlurlu parnuku
tuwila yartangka tampinthi.

Ngadlurlu Kaurna Miyurna yaitya yarta
mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku tampinthi.

Parnuku yailtya, parnuku tapa purruna
yalarra puru purruna.

*Kaurna Translation provided by
Kaurna Warra Karrpanthi



INTRODUCTION

This Environment Strategy outlines the City of Unley's commitments over the next 10 years to support a City that is green and sustainable – strengthening our position as a progressive and innovative leader in sustainability, climate action and resilience.

We are proud of the proactive steps we have taken in recent years to:

- Cut emissions and power our operations by installing solar, batteries and LED lighting, switching to renewable electricity, and supporting community renewables to reduce energy costs and strengthen the local grid.
- Grow a greener, cooler city by expanding the urban forest in streets and parks, and encouraging residents to plant, protect and retain trees and greenery at home and on verges.
- Reduce waste and recycle better through practical education programs, clearer guidance on using the three-bin system, and initiatives such as the weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) trial.

In preparing the Environment Strategy we have considered the changes and challenges we can expect in our City as 2036 approaches, how we can leverage the strengths of our community and natural environment, and what we will need to do differently to meet our City's long-term goals.

The commitments in this Environment Strategy reflect what we have heard from our community about the importance of protecting and enhancing our environment. There is a clear expectation that Council will lead by example, reduce emissions, address climate risks, make our city greener and more biodiverse, and prioritise sustainable outcomes in everyday decisions.

We cannot achieve our environmental ambitions in isolation. Real progress will come through strong collaboration with our community - including residents, property owners, local businesses, visitors, schools, industry, and all levels of government. By working together, we can create a green, resilient and sustainable Unley that benefits everyone.

On the following pages you will find our 10-year commitments to progressing the Environment goal and objectives in our Community Plan.

This is one of Council's four lead strategies that will guide the decisions we make, the services, programs and facilities we deliver, and how we allocate resources to respond to the needs of our diverse and growing community. Together, these strategies provide a clear roadmap for how we will deliver and measure our vision of a connected, progressive, and resilient City.



CITY OF UNLEY

Located on Traditional Lands of the Kaurna people just three kilometres south of Adelaide's CBD, the City of Unley is an inner-urban community known for its cosmopolitan character and atmosphere.

Our neighbourhoods are characterised by well-laid out leafy green streets, which frame historic homes, open spaces and lively local streets.

Unley's four village-style mainstreet precincts - King William Road, Goodwood Road, Fullarton Road, and Unley Road – and a growing number of business precincts provide an exciting mix of retail, hospitality, and services.

Our civic hubs, including our libraries, museum and community centres, offer spaces for connection, culture and learning. Unley's public spaces and streetscapes are designed to be welcoming and accessible for all.

The natural beauty and historic character of our City, along with our strong and flourishing community life make Unley a desirable place to work, visit or call home.



25%
of our City is covered by tree canopy



28,000
Council trees

4
Creeks run through our City

59%
residential waste diverted from landfill

61%
recycled water use for irrigating parks, reserves and ovals



40,327
Residents

5,308
additional people projected to call Unley home by 2041



OUR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Our Strategic Planning Framework reflects how our organisational strategies and plans support the delivery of our Community Plan 'Towards 2050'.

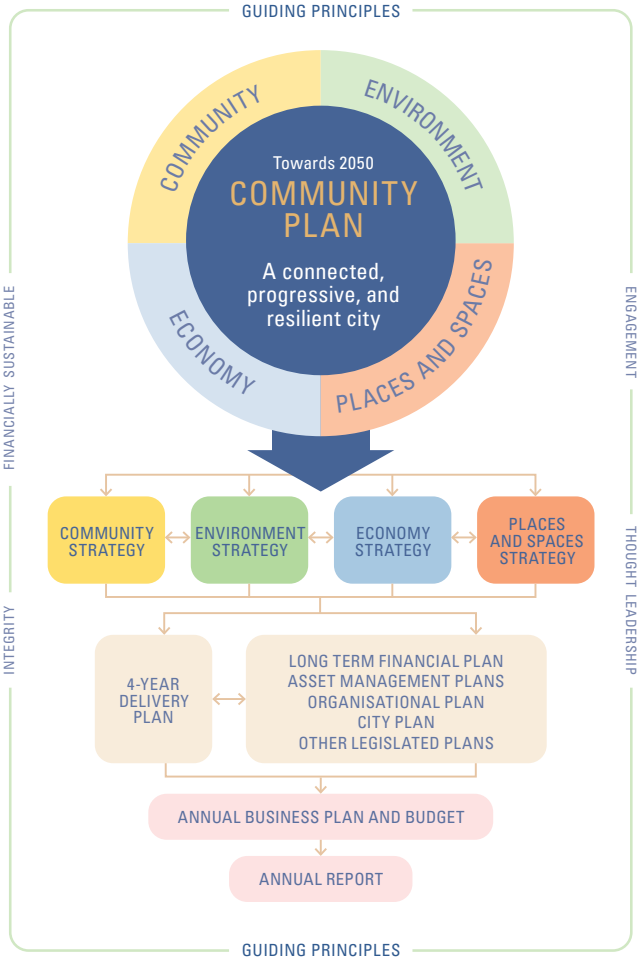
Our Community Plan sets our strategic direction for the next 25 years, outlining key goals and objectives. It serves as the foundational structure for guiding our detailed strategies and plans.

Our four lead strategies define our strategic priorities for the next 10 years, identifying key opportunities and addressing potential challenges for our City. By providing a clear and cohesive direction, these strategies guide decision-making, resource allocation, and program development, ensuring that our efforts are effectively aligned with the long-term vision and aspirations of our community.

Our 4-Year Delivery Plan translates the Community Plan vision and lead strategies into action, outlining the steps we will take to achieve our objectives in the short to medium term.

Our Strategic Management Framework is supported by a number of theme-based plans that have been developed over the years to provide additional guidance about how we will achieve our goals. These plans will be progressively reviewed, updated or retired throughout the life of this lead strategy.





We will deliver our strategies and plans through prudent financial management, guided by our Long-Term Financial Plan, which will ensure resources are allocated effectively and efficiently. Our Annual Business Plan and Budget will set priorities, activities, and budgets each year to demonstrate how your rates support community services, programs and infrastructure, whilst also being innovative to deliver best community outcomes.

Regular monitoring and reporting against our outcome indicators will be undertaken to keep us accountable, ensuring we meet our commitments and demonstrate the value we deliver to our community.

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ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

Green and Sustainable

GOAL

Our City is a progressive and innovative leader in sustainability and climate resilience.

OBJECTIVES

1 We lead by example and innovate to grow our urban forest and make our City greener, cooler, and more biodiverse.

2 We lead, promote, and incentivise local action on a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.

3 We maximise sustainable resource recovery and advance a circular economy through innovation and new technology.

4 We seek nature-positive outcomes in the management of our natural resources.

5 We partner, facilitate and advocate to overcome constraints and achieve our environmental ambitions.



Highlights of our ten-year strategy include our commitments to:

- Lead by example in our community and the local government sector by embedding environmental outcomes into everyday planning, investment and decision-making.
- Grow a greener, cooler and more biodiverse city by expanding and protecting the urban forest across public and private land, including introducing a Tree Offset Incentive Scheme.
- Reduce emissions, take action to minimise our exposure to climate risks and adapting to climate change by increasing our resilience as a City and a community.
- Increase recycling and reuse to reduce waste and support a circular economy.
- Managing water as a critical natural asset by reducing reliance on potable supply and increasing climate-independent and recycled water sources.
- Embed water-sensitive and nature-positive design into public realm and infrastructure projects.
- Trial new materials and construction techniques that support lower carbon alternates in construction.
- Advocate strongly for our community and achieve influence over the policy, regulatory, and funding decisions of others to support our environmental ambitions.



CURRENT AND EMERGING TRENDS AND CHALLENGES



Over the next decade, Unley will be shaped by a convergence of climate change, urban growth and rising community expectations for greater civic leadership towards sustainability and resilience.

Hotter temperatures and more frequent storm events are already affecting public health, liveability and infrastructure performance, while pressure on green space and tree canopy challenges the City's ability to stay cool and biodiverse.

Reducing emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon future will also be a strong focus. Increasing State and Federal targets and compliance requirements, along with grid transformation and electrification, will place growing expectations on Council, residents and businesses over the next decade.

At the same time, increasing waste complexity, and long-term water security constraints are reshaping how cities manage resources.

The following insights have informed the commitments we have made within this strategy about how we will achieve our long-term Environment goals and objectives.

Tree Canopy Cover	Tree canopy is one of Unley's most valuable environmental and liveability assets. Current canopy cover is 25%, placing Unley above many inner-metropolitan councils but below levels needed to offset rising temperatures and increased density. Council has committed to increasing canopy cover to 31% by 2045, consistent with state targets and contemporary urban greening benchmarks.
Greening the City	Unley has the lowest provision of public open space per capita in metropolitan Adelaide. Opportunities to expand public green open spaces across the City should be sought through strategic purchase, or partnerships with development to grow our urban forest and enhance biodiversity, critical to achieving the community's environmental ambitions.
Greening Private Land	80% of land in Unley is not owned by Council, meaning the majority of the urban forest sits outside Council's direct control. Infill development and higher-density housing are steadily reducing private green space; increasing the importance of incentives, education, regulation and partnerships to protect and grow canopy on private land.

Biodiversity	Streets, parks, verges and private gardens and play a critical role in providing habitat, urban cooling, and maintaining ecological connectivity - particularly connections to the Adelaide Park Lands and foothills. Unley's limited diversity of species increases vulnerability to pests, disease and climate extremes, reinforcing the need for more biodiverse, climate-resilient planting choices on public and private land.
Climate Risk and Resilience	Inner-metropolitan Adelaide is projected to experience rising temperatures and more frequent, intense heatwaves, making heat the leading climate risk for Unley. It will impact public health, community wellbeing, infrastructure, vegetation and outdoor activity, amplified into the evenings by the increasing urban heat-island effect. More intense rain events are projected to result in increased flooding risk, particularly in areas influenced by Brown Hill and Keswick Creeks. Climate extremes are accelerating asset deterioration and increasing operational and maintenance costs, placing pressure on Council budgets. Building resilience for a growing community will require adaptive design, urban greening, increased shading and cooling, resilient streetscapes, and community preparedness to support liveability, biodiversity and long-term sustainability in a changing climate.
Reducing Carbon Emissions	The City of Unley's Climate and Energy target focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon, climate-resilient City. It typically centres on achieving net zero emissions for Council operations, monitoring Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, while supporting the broader community to significantly reduce emissions over time through energy efficiency, renewable energy uptake, urban greening, and sustainable transport. The target reflects a dual approach of leading by example within Council's own assets and operations, and enabling community-wide change through advocacy, partnerships and policy - positioning Unley as a proactive, climate-responsive local government.
Reducing Waste	Population growth, urban densification and changing consumption patterns are increasing waste volumes and complexity, placing pressure on landfill and driving higher costs. While Unley's kerbside diversion rate of around 59% reflects strong systems and community participation, further gains will require systemic change. Transitioning to a circular economy, focused on reuse, repair, recycling and regeneration, will be critical. Council will also need to drive behaviour change, reduce waste generation, and improve resource recovery through partnerships, innovation, procurement and education. Addressing complex waste streams such as e-waste, batteries, textiles and soft plastics will require coordinated action beyond local government to achieve meaningful environmental and economic outcomes.

Water Management and Security	Lower seasonal rainfall and hotter conditions creates greater need for irrigation to ensure sustainability of green open spaces, streetscapes and other urban landscapes. The City remains heavily reliant on mains water, particularly for irrigation. The increase in cost of mains water supply will place increased financial pressure on the Council to maintain our parks, playing fields and streetscapes. Strengthening water security will require an expanded network of alternative supplies, including stormwater reuse, recycled water and managed aquifer recharge, alongside improved irrigation efficiency and storage.
Nature-Positive Principles	Nature-positive means actively restoring, protecting, and enhancing nature so that ecosystems are healthier, more resilient, and more biodiverse than they are today. For the City of Unley, it means reversing environmental decline by increasing canopy, improving habitat, regenerating soils, and embedding improved ecological outcomes into all planning design and maintenance decisions over the next decade.
Policy and Regulation	Many environmental outcomes in Unley, such as tree retention, water and waste management, and climate-ready housing, are shaped by state planning policy, market conditions and limits on Council's statutory role. While Council plays an important role as land manager and service provider, progress will depend on opportunities to advocate, influence, incentivise and partner where outcomes are beyond our direct control. As regulatory frameworks evolve, Council will adopt evidence-based, pragmatic approaches that balance leadership, affordability and community trust while responding to changing obligations, opportunities and funding environments.



FOCUS AREAS



The following chapters outline the five key focus areas that will guide the City of Unley towards its long-term Environment goal.

Each focus area directly aligns with the Environment objectives of the Towards 2050: Community Plan:

1 Urban Forest & Biodiversity

2 Climate Resilient

3 Sustainable Waste Management

4 Sustainable Natural Resources

5 Partner & Advocate

Each of the focus areas is closely interconnected, and delivering on our other lead strategies - Community, Economy, Places and Spaces - will also play a key role in progressing our Environment objectives. The strategic connections between each focus area have been highlighted.





While we have grouped our 10-year commitments into key focus areas to make the information easier to navigate, they will not be delivered in isolation. Our Strategic Management Framework is planned, implemented, monitored, and reported on as one cohesive and connected set of strategies - reflecting the way our community, services, and priorities are linked in everyday life.

FOCUS AREA 1: URBAN FOREST & BIODIVERSITY

Unley's urban forest is one of the City's most important assets, shaping local climate, biodiversity, health, character and liveability. As heat exposure, urban density and climate pressures increase, growing and protecting green cover is essential to cooling neighbourhoods, supporting wildlife and safeguarding community wellbeing. This focus area commits Council to lead by example, expand greening across public and private land, and strengthen habitat connectivity. Guided by data, innovation and evidence, Unley will grow a resilient, biodiverse urban forest that delivers lasting environmental and community benefits.

Our 2050 Objective	We lead by example to grow our urban forest and make our City greener, cooler and more biodiverse.
Our 2036 Commitments	We will: 1.1 Grow a resilient, diverse and climate-ready urban forest across the City by protecting and expanding tree canopy, mid-storey, under-storey and ground-cover greening. 1.2 Work with residents, landowners, government and partners to protect existing trees and accelerate new greening on private land through incentives, education and practical support. 1.3 Strengthen habitat connectivity and biodiversity by creating greener streets, verges and corridors that prioritise climate resilient native species and healthier ecosystems. 1.4 Use data, innovation and evidence to guide urban forest and biodiversity decisions, track progress and continuously improve outcomes over time.
What Success Looks Like in 2036	Neighbourhoods across Unley feel greener and cooler, with our expanded urban forest improving comfort, character and liveability. Residents see and value a nature-positive approach to the design and maintenance of local streets, parks and private land, to create more biodiverse and climate-resilient neighbourhoods across Unley.
Related Plans	Tree Strategy (2020), The Living City – Open Space Strategy (2015), Community Land Management Plans (2025)

Strategic Connections

COMMUNITY
- Safe & Welcoming
- Active & Connected

ECONOMY
- Thriving Precincts
- Local Advantage

ENVIRONMENT
- **Urban Forest & Biodiversity**
- Climate Resilient
- Sustainable Waste Management
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- Partner & Advocate

PLACES AND SPACES
- Open Space & Recreation
- Activated Spaces
- Local Streets
- Planning for Growth
- Advocacy

FOCUS AREA 2: CLIMATE RESILIENT

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing Unley over the coming decade, with heat, extreme weather and emissions reduction shaping community wellbeing, the natural environment, asset performance and long-term sustainability. This focus area commits Council to lead by example, embed climate considerations into decision-making, and accelerate action toward a low carbon and climate-resilient future. By making it a priority to address the causes of climate change and building preparedness for climate impacts, Unley will strengthen resilience for current and future generations.

Our 2050 Objective	We lead, promote, and incentivise local action on a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
Our 2036 Commitments	We will: 2.1 Accelerate the transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient Council operations, assets and services to meet our Climate and Energy Plan targets. 2.2 Embed climate risk, emissions reduction and resilience considerations into Council planning, decision-making and operations. 2.3 Prioritise action to reduce heat, manage climate extremes and protect community wellbeing in the locations most at risk. 2.4 Enable residents and businesses to reduce emissions by supporting energy efficiency, electrification, renewable energy uptake and low-carbon transport choices.
What Success Looks Like in 2036	People in Unley are better protected from heat and climate extremes, with targeted actions improving comfort, safety and wellbeing. Council decision-making reflects consideration of known climate risks and the requirements for more resilient infrastructure, services and places over the long term. More households and businesses in Unley are making low-carbon choices.
Related Plans	Climate and Energy Plan 2030 (2023), Asset Management Plans (2023), Walking and Cycling Plan (2022)

Strategic Connections

COMMUNITY
- Safe & Welcoming
- History & Identity
- Active & Connected
- Creativity, Culture & Learning
- Civic Participation

ECONOMY
- Igniting Innovation
- Thriving Precincts
- Local Advantage
- Collaborative Growth
- Strategic Investment

ENVIRONMENT
- Urban Forest & Biodiversity
- **Climate Resilient**
- Sustainable Waste Management
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- Partner & Advocate

PLACES AND SPACES
- Open Space & Recreation
- Activated Spaces
- Local Streets
- Planning for Growth
- Advocacy

FOCUS AREA 3: SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

As our population grows and the way we consume changes, managing waste in a smarter way is becoming increasingly important for Unley. Our focus is on reducing waste, reusing materials and recycling more so resources stay in use for longer. By cutting down the amount of waste we create, improving recycling, and finding better ways to deal with items like e-waste and soft plastics, Council will reduce landfill and support a circular economy. Working together with the community, we can build everyday habits that lead to a cleaner, more sustainable future for Unley.

Our 2050 Objective	We maximise sustainable resource recovery and advance a circular economy through innovation and technology.
Our 2036 Commitments	We will: 3.1 Work with our service delivery partners to enhance waste services, innovate and maximise recovery of resources. 3.2 Encourage residents and businesses to reduce waste, increase recycling and reuse materials through education, incentives and practical tools. 3.3 Embed circular economy principles into Council, operations, asset management and procurement to reduce waste and drive market change.
What Success Looks Like in 2036	Less waste is sent to landfill in Unley, with more materials reused, repaired and recovered through everyday council, household and business practices. Policy, education and services better support sorting and recovery, helping residents and businesses make the right choices with less confusion and contamination. Circular economy principles are embedded across all Council operations, with a measurable reduction in the waste generated by our services, construction, and events.
Related Plans	Waste Management and Resource Recovery Plan (2021)

Strategic Connections

COMMUNITY
- Active & Connected
- Creativity, Culture & Learning

ECONOMY
- Igniting Innovation
- Collaborative Growth

ENVIRONMENT
- Urban Forest & Biodiversity
- Climate Resilient
- **Sustainable Waste Management**
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- Partner & Advocate

PLACES AND SPACES
- Open Space & Recreation

FOCUS AREA 4: SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

Water and natural systems are critical to Unley's environmental resilience, character, liveability and long-term sustainability. As climate change, urban development and water security pressures increase, Council must manage natural resources more strategically and with a nature-positive mindset. This focus area prioritises using alternative, recycled or reclaimed water and expanded infrastructure to strengthen environmental resilience and deliver lasting benefits for the community and the urban environment.

Our 2050 Objective	We seek nature-positive outcomes in the management of natural resources.
Our 2036 Commitments	We will: 4.1 Transition to long-term water-security by treating water as a critical city asset and accelerating access to a network of alternative, fit-for-purpose water sources. 4.2 Embed water-sensitive and nature-positive design into Council projects to improve water retention and reduce runoff, leading to urban cooling, biodiversity and landscape resilience. 4.3 Mitigate flood risk by strengthening integrated water planning and management.
What Success Looks Like in 2036	Water is managed as a valued city resource in Unley, with greater use of alternative water sources supporting greener streets, parks and public spaces. Streets, open spaces and civil infrastructure are designed to restore, protect and enhance nature, improving urban cooling, biodiversity and the health of local ecosystems.
Related Plans	Development and Stormwater Management Guide (2016), City Wide Flood Mitigation Plan (2023), Asset Management Plans (2023)

Strategic Connections

COMMUNITY
- Active & Connected

ECONOMY
- Igniting Innovation

ENVIRONMENT
- Urban Forest & Biodiversity
- Climate Resilient
- Sustainable Waste Management
- **Sustainable Natural Resources**
- Partner & Advocate

PLACES AND SPACES
- Open Space & Recreation
- Local Streets
- Advocacy

FOCUS AREA 5: PARTNER & ADVOCATE

Achieving Unley's environmental ambitions will require action beyond Council's direct responsibilities and resources. Many of the most significant opportunities and constraints sit within broader policy, regulatory and market systems. This focus area positions Council as a partner, facilitator and advocate - working with governments, industry, research organisations, residents and businesses to overcome barriers and unlock environmental outcomes. By building strong partnerships, advocating early for supportive settings and empowering local action, Unley will amplify its impact and drive meaningful progress towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient City.

Our 2050 Objective	We partner, facilitate and advocate to overcome constraints and achieve our environmental ambition.
Our 2036 Commitments	We will: 5.1 Build strong partnerships to co-design and deliver environmental outcomes that cannot be achieved by Council alone. 5.2 Advocate for policy, funding and regulatory settings that enable urban greening, climate resilience, circular economy and nature-positive outcomes in Unley. 5.3 Seek State Government approval for a 10-year trial of a Tree Offset Incentive Scheme to be implemented across the City. 5.4 Share knowledge and empower residents and businesses to take meaningful environmental action.
What Success Looks Like in 2036	The community is working in partnership with councils to enhance and protect our environment. State Government policy, funding and regulatory settings increasingly support and enable Unley's environmental goals. A Tree Offset Incentive Scheme is driving greater retention of trees on private land Residents and businesses feel informed, supported and empowered to take positive environmental action.

Strategic Connections

COMMUNITY
- Active & Connected
- Civic Participation

ECONOMY
- Igniting Innovation
- Collaborative Growth

ENVIRONMENT
- Urban Forest & Biodiversity
- Climate Resilient
- Sustainable Waste Management
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- **Partner & Advocate**

PLACES AND SPACES
- Open Space & Recreation
- Advocacy



MONITORING OUR PERFORMANCE

To ensure we remain accountable and focused on the outcomes that matter most to our community, Council will monitor progress against this set of high-level outcome indicators over the life of this strategy.

Baseline data will be established, and progress will be reported regularly. These outcome indicators will be used to inform Council's decision-making, priority setting and continuous improvement.

OUTCOME INDICATOR	BASELINE	2036 TARGET	PRIMARY DATA SOURCE	REPORTING FREQUENCY
Urban tree canopy, green cover, and urban forest extent across the City	25% Canopy (2024 mapping)	On track toward 31% canopy by 2045, with consistent increases by 2036	Urban Tree Canopy Mapping	5 years
Urban Biodiversity	Establish Baseline by Project-Level Assessments	Delivering a net positive biodiversity gain across all council land by 2036, supported by project-level assessment	Capital Works Program; Asset Management System; Project Reporting	Annual
Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Emissions Reporting Baseline (2024–25)	Carbon neutral operations and 100% renewable electricity by December 2030. Conduct mid-term review by 2030 to establish a 2036 target	Council Emissions Inventory (Scope 1–3)	Annual
Waste Diversion and Resource Recovery	Diversion Rate Baseline (2025)	70% diversion from landfill for residential waste. 75% diversion from landfill for waste from council operations	Waste Audits; Contractor Data	Annual
Recycled Water Use	Recycled Water Use Baseline (2025)	70% - 75% of council's operational water needs are met through alternative water sources by 2036	Council Water Consumption Data	Annual

THE CITY of Unley

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