

A forest city or city forestation: What is this?

The City of Cape Town Municipality (the City) has recently issued its draft Urban Forest Policy to replace and update the Tree Management policy that has been in place since 2015.

How does a city become a 'modern' forest?

According to a municipal spokesperson, constant and ever-increasing urbanisation make it necessary for municipalities, and specifically the City of Cape Town, to find a balance between sustainable development, protection of the environment, and creating quality living and working environments. As the existing policy of the City did not adequately address the interaction between these factors the draft Urban Forest Policy was issued for comment. Ultimately, if put into operation and given effect, this would mean that **Cape Town will be classified as an 'urban forest'**.

This classification is not achieved overnight. According to the City, a lot of work has already gone into this project, including a tree mapping pilot project that was a first for South Africa. This is part of the effort to achieve a 10% tree canopy cover that is required to qualify as an urban forest.

The draft Urban Forest Policy is aimed at growing the urban forest through new planting to maximise the benefits of trees and urban greening, protect the urban forest from threats and loss by preserving the city's existing trees, manage and maintain the urban forest to ensure sustainability, hold stakeholder engagements and awareness campaigns, and ensure tree monitoring and valuation.

Apart from the fact that trees mean cooler urban environments, reduce pollution, provide healthy recreational spaces, the urban forest concept is likely to increase property values. It is probable that more cities within South Africa will follow cue going forward.

The comment period has closed and we await the City's responses to the input received from interested parties. We will report on this in a next **Development Law Update** once further news is available. (Make sure to be subscribed.)

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