

Report to the Future Melbourne (Environment) Committee

Agenda item 6.6

Melbourne Green Factor Tool**15 September 2020****Presenter:** David Callow, Acting Director Parks and City Greening**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Melbourne Green Factor Tool (GFT) as the City of Melbourne's preferred mechanism for demonstrating urban ecology outcomes on new developments. The GFT is referenced in the proposed Urban Ecology standard in the Sustainable Building Design Amendment C376.
2. The development of a green infrastructure assessment tool for Melbourne was first contemplated in the Green Our City Strategic Action Plan 2017–21 (GOCAP), where it was listed as a consideration under Action 4.1 to 'pursue changes to the planning scheme to require all types of development in the City to play a part in achieving environmentally sustainable design targets, including green roofs and vertical greening'. Action 4.1 also identifies that established Green Factor tools, such as that applied in Seattle, could be adapted for the Melbourne context.
3. Future Melbourne Committee endorsed 'mandating greening and zero emissions buildings through the Planning Scheme' as one of the City's priorities for accelerated action in its Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Response, February 2020.

Key issues

4. The GFT is the first online tool of its kind in Australia. The GFT has been designed to support developers to deliver green infrastructure that makes a meaningful and effective contribution to the municipality's climate and biodiversity emergency response by encouraging a greater quantity and quality of green infrastructure on new developments. It will provide a consistent assessment methodology for greening on buildings for applicants, planners and referral experts.
5. Green Factor is a simple online interface (www.GreenFactor.com.au), for designers to input information about a proposed development—such as plant numbers, soil depths and accessibility—and receive a Green Factor score. The score represents the proportion of a site covered by greenery, and weighted for provision of prioritised functions.
6. Weightings were determined by an assessment of priority functions based on City of Melbourne policy and the effectiveness of lot-scale ecosystem services. The seven priority functions are: (1) urban temperature regulation, (2) habitat for biodiversity, (3) runoff mitigation, (4) food supply, (5) recreation, (6) place values and social cohesion, and (7) aesthetic benefits.
7. The GFT was tested and calibrated during its pilot phase (July 2019–February 2020) through use by select users (Landscape Architects, Architects and ESD consultants).
8. The GFT entered the voluntary use phase following an online launch in May 2020. Since that time, development permit applicants have been encouraged to use the GFT and to submit a Green Factor scorecard with their applications.
9. Research and monitoring of the GFT's use during the voluntary phase will inform its next iteration as a regulatory tool, in line with the progress of the Sustainable Building Design Amendment. The application of the GFT as a regulatory tool is expected to facilitate green infrastructure industry growth, including the creation of design, construction and maintenance jobs.
10. The GFT is owned and operated by the Council. A governance structure is proposed to be established to guide and support the GFT's development to a regulatory phase, to oversee technical updates and to ensure the weightings of the priority functions remain reflective of the latest research and evidence.

Recommendation from management

11. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 11.1. Endorses the Melbourne Green Factor Tool for use through the Melbourne Planning Scheme as the preferred approach for demonstrating urban ecology outcomes on new developments.
 - 11.2. Authorises the establishment of a governance structure to oversee technical updates to the tool and to ensure the tool continues to meet its objectives.

Attachment:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 4)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. It is mandated in the *Local Government Act 2020* that in performing its role, Council must under section 9(2) of the Act:
 - 1.1. give priority to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations
 - 1.2. advance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district which includes mitigating and planning for climate change risk.

Finance

2. The costs for establishing a governance structure and further developing the GFT for regulatory use are included in the 2020–21 Green Our City Strategic Action Plan Implementation capital maintenance budget.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

5. External consultation to seek the views of and test the GFT with stakeholders (peak development industry bodies, planners and designers) has been undertaken over the last 14 months through the following activities: GOCAP Planning Scheme Amendment External Advisory Committee meetings; a testing and calibration phase with select users of the pilot GFT; a workshop and feedback session with 30 end-users; an online event launching the voluntary use phase of the GFT to an audience of 700 and which has been viewed a further 700+ times since 27 May 2020.
6. In addition, the GFT has benefited from extensive and ongoing collaboration and engagement with Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment councils, Development Victoria and other governments and agencies across Australia.

Relation to Council policy

7. The GFT is consistent with Council policies, including:
 - 7.1. Green Our City Strategic Action Plan 2017–21
 - 7.2. Urban Forest Strategy 2012–2032

- 7.3. Nature in the City Strategy 2017
- 7.4. Municipal Integrated Water Management Plan 2017
- 7.5. Climate Change Mitigation Strategy to 2050.

Environmental sustainability

- 8. The GFT is a direct and necessary response to the declared climate and biodiversity emergency.
- 9. The GFT encourages a greater quantity and quality of green infrastructure to be incorporated into building design by prompting applicants about onsite vegetation retention, green roofs and vertical greening. It effectively provides applicants with a range of options to meet the required level of green infrastructure. It's the first online tool of its kind in Australia and supports applicants as well as designers, Architects, developers, builders and the community to consider and optimise inclusion of green infrastructure by being intuitive and educative.