

# PRACTITIONER'S REPORT ON GREENING MARION

February 2021

This is the Executive Summary from the 'Practitioner's Report on Greening Marion pilot'. The full report can be downloaded from [greenadelaide.sa.gov.au/greening-marion-pilot](https://greenadelaide.sa.gov.au/greening-marion-pilot)

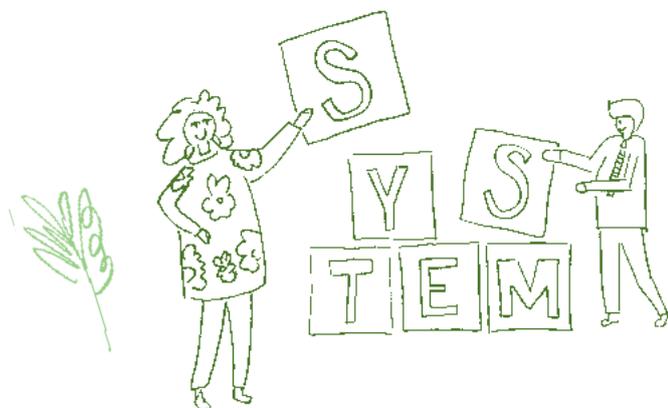
## Executive summary

Green urban spaces are good for people, wildlife and our planet. Yet they face significant challenges from development, global loss of biodiversity and climate change.

These are wicked problems. They have many interconnected causes, and no one person or organisation can solve them. There is no 'silver bullet' solution, and often attempts to 'fix' them can have unforeseen consequences.

On the flip side, improving our urban green spaces is a 'wicked opportunity', and may be 'brought into being' using a collaborative, adaptive and complex systems approach.

Greening Marion was a pilot project to trial such an approach, by delivering a Systemic Innovation Lab for the first time in South Australia, across three suburbs in the City of Marion.



## Purpose

Greening Marion focused on building the capacity of the local 'greening system' (the various projects, programs, services, and activities that contributed towards greening across the pilot area), so people could work better together to achieve greener and more sustainable suburbs.

To do this, the project had a key objective to **strengthen the local greening system** by:

- improving stakeholder understanding of the greening system
- increasing stakeholder capacity, connections and collaborations to progress greening efforts
- building cohesive action across the greening system.

As a pilot project, it also had the key objective to **make a contribution to the urban greening and complexity science fields** by:

- improving project partner capacity to work in complexity and progress greening
- developing a model that can be used for wicked problems elsewhere
- shaping a vision for urban greening
- developing a community of practice for applying complex system approaches.

## What happened

The project ran over 18 months (January 2019 – June 2020) and involved:

- interviewing 41 people, from 15 different organisations or formalised groups, including community groups, community enterprises, NGOs, schools, council and state government
- mapping 56 greening initiatives delivered (mostly in partnership) by 21 organisations in the pilot area (suburbs of Marion, Oaklands Park and Park Holme)
- analysing how each initiative contributed to the way the overall greening system functioned
- identifying system strengths and opportunities
- developing a range of engagement methods (information sheets, illustrated video, webpages, and presentations)
- holding a number of online workshops to share system mapping results, create a collective vision for greener, more sustainable suburbs, and support stakeholders to identify how they might contribute to strengthening the overall system.



## System mapping results

Of the 56 greening initiatives mapped, most had local government (77%) or state government (63%) involvement, 21% had involvement from a formal community group, 18% included either a social enterprise or NGO, and 13% from an educational organisation.

The vast majority (89%) supported (impacted or influenced) greening in the public realm, and about 57% supported greening in the private realm (46% supported greening in both the private and public realms). This finding is significant because the private realm plays a very important role in urban greening, and is generally where urban areas experience loss of green space and canopy coverage from urban infill.

There was a relatively even spread in the number of initiatives that were addressing different types of urban greening barriers – except for those addressing ‘funding and investment’:

- Knowledge and skills (41%)
- Culture and community (36%)
- Climate and environment (34%)
- Policy and planning (29%)
- Funding and investment (5%).



The key **strength of the greening system** was the number of initiatives (89%) that were ‘shaking things up’, and looking to improve the current way of working. For example by creating passion for action and bringing out different points of views on greening. This is a key step a system needs to take so it can improve the way it works together.

**Opportunities** to further strengthen the system relate to increasing the number of initiatives that:

1. **Amplify action**  
Connect people within the system, and amplify current greening efforts.
2. **Encourage self-organisation**  
Support people to make sense of the system, issues and different perspectives.
3. **Connect community and government**  
Improve two way communication between government and the community.

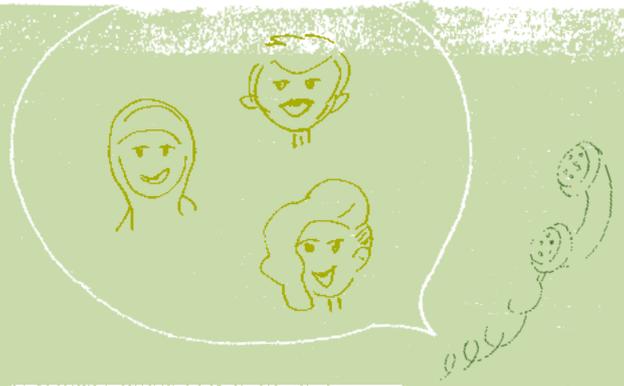
## Results on project objectives

### 1. Strengthen the local greening system

Workshop polls and phone calls to participants showed people did improve their understanding of the greening system and opportunities to strengthen. For example, of the 20 people called at the end of the project:

- 100% could explain what the greening system was
- 61% identified increasing and enhancing connections, networks, and collaboration were most needed to strengthen the system.

The workshops supported diverse participants to meet, share ideas and develop new, organic connections. For example, connections were made between project stakeholders (e.g. council projects and community group, a resident and community groups, school initiatives and Green Adelaide) as well as beyond the current stakeholder group and greening system – including internationally.



**Early actions (as of September 2020) stakeholders had taken or planned on doing as a direct result of Greening Marion ranged from tree planting days, connecting with international schools, nominating a local champion for an award, developing an information resource for developers, and sharing residents' greening stories.**



A longer timeframe would be required to measure changes across the greening system.

### 2. Contribution to the urban greening and complexity science fields

The pilot project delivered on three of the four objectives that related to development of the project partners' capability and the urban greening and complexity sectors. These were:

- Improved project partner capacity to work in complexity and progress greening, including a stronger connection between the lead organisations.
- Development of an adapted model that can be used for wicked problems elsewhere (see 'Reflections and future considerations' below).
- Shaped a collective vision for cooler, greener, more sustainable suburbs. A rich narrative that covered Karna knowledge and learning, water, biodiversity, connectivity, equitable access to open spaces, and personal responsibility. Developing this vision helped to bring together different perspectives and unify thinking.



A formal community of practice beyond this pilot project has not yet been developed (due to time and resources), however project partner Wicked Lab will instigate this in the near future.



# Recommendations

## 1. Leverage benefits and learnings

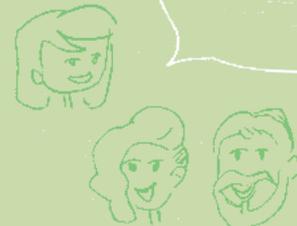
**1.1. Deliver regular council-wide greening forums** for people involved in greening initiatives from across the council area. This forum would bring together different sections of council, the greening sector and the community. It would build system capacity and support communication, shared learning, collaboration and innovation in urban greening.

**1.2. Expand and elevate the 'Greening Marion' identity,** to represent and promote the collective efforts of all urban greening activities across the City of Marion.

**1.3. Inspire efforts to continuously build system capability** by sharing relevant system mapping results in an accessible and engaging way across the City of Marion to raise awareness of system opportunities and share stories of people involved in greening initiatives.

**1.4. Provide financial incentives and strategic links** by ensuring grants and strategic planning processes consider current and evolving system needs.

**1.5. Continue to build understanding of system strength and changes over time** by ensuring strategic planners and engagement specialists continue to build knowledge and skills in the applications of complexity science (including through development of sector capacity, as outlined below).



## 2. Adapting the approach to address wicked problems

**2.1. Create a diverse, multidisciplinary and cross sector reference group and working group.** Deliver whole team training workshops at the start and use an online team collaboration space.

**2.2. Undertake a system 'readiness assessment' before starting,** that looks at leadership, connections, mindset and willingness to learn, past and existing efforts, knowledge of past efforts and resources and skills.

**2.3. Start together with a bang, and journey together.** Use initial workshops to agree on the wicked problem, create a shared vision, build community and stakeholder capacity and appetite to strengthen the system, and increase connectivity.

**2.4. Map the system rapidly together, through two different lens – causal factors (barriers) and system functionality.** Use a simplified, online survey tool that stakeholders can complete together to replace the interview process in FEMLAS.

**2.5. Support initiatives to deliver outcomes and provide system functionality at the same time.**

A well-functioning system is dependent on having relevant and quality initiatives that are addressing causal factors and providing system services. Integrate both lenses to ensure both aspects are being considered.





**2.6. Collectively commit** to a vision and which areas the system will initially concentrate on.

**2.7. Increase capacity steadily once the system starts to mature,** by supporting stakeholders to deepen their system capacity if/how they wish.

**2.8. Deliver a range of engagement activities,** with different levels of information, for different stakeholders who have varying degrees of communication needs and interests.

**2.9. Balance findings represented in the Transition Card with knowledge of the system,** by undertaking a 'deep dive' process to look at the data within the Transition Card.

### 3. Developing sector capacity

**3.1. Role model working in a space with unknown outcomes,** with courage and strong leadership.

**3.2. Act as an enabler** and supporter of future system-level projects, allowing stakeholders to take more ownership and reducing perceived risk of a project not performing.

**3.3. Catalyse a community of practice,** by bringing together Australian and international contacts who are delivering (or planning) projects using a complex adaptive systems approach.



The Greening Marion pilot project was a partnership between:

