



OPEN SPACE STRATEGY DRAFT SUMMARY

Making the best of open space



About This Summary

Maroondah City Council is preparing a new Open Space Strategy to guide its planning, development and management of open space¹ for the next decade, with a focus on the next five years.

This is a summary of key issues and strategies for Maroondah's open space. A full version of the strategy and large print version of this summary is available at www.maroondah.vic.gov.au. Feedback is welcomed via the contact details on the back page by 11 July 2005.

The City of Maroondah covers 6,152 hectares, 9% being open space areas. With over 400 reserves covering 540 hectares its open spaces vary from playgrounds (118), turf sports fields (47) and golf courses (4) to wetlands and bushland. Currently there are 700,000 trees in Maroondah's reserves and 50,000 trees planted in our streets. About 70,000 people use our parks at least once a week.

Changing Times

The average Australian family is now smaller but the average house size has doubled. As residential density increases, open space becomes more valuable.

As Maroondah grows and attracts new people (families, businesses and visitors) we need to continue to improve parks and provide new recreation facilities.

Further commercial and residential development around transport nodes will occur in Maroondah. New spaces could be created to offer recreation opportunities in these areas.

Strategies

- Provide open space in walking distance of every household.
- Reserve land for future indoor sports and civic buildings.
- Work with owners and developers to better meet commercial and open space objectives.
- Look at semi-commercial and commercial paved open spaces as possible leisure spaces.
- Review open space contributions policy.

Safety

Council needs to continue to ensure it provides open spaces that are safe and manage risks effectively. If a space is well designed, maintained and well used, people tend to feel safer in it and look after it.

Strategies

- New open space to be an appropriate size for its intended function.
- Use open mesh fencing on reserve boundaries.
- In a reserve, put facilities together to improve safety and surveillance.

- Build challenges into open space to suit a range of age groups.
- Provide attractive spaces for young people (ie interesting and challenging) while managing unacceptable risk.
- Better lighting, particularly along trails.
- Encourage community involvement in open space management (eg 'Friends' groups).

Dogs

In Maroondah, dogs must be under effective control at all times and owners must carry a receptacle to clean up after them.

Dogs need to roam free, but some areas such as playgrounds, barbecue areas and fenced sports fields should be off limits.

Strategies

- Continue the Responsible Pet Owners campaign.
- Enforce regulations.
- Make some areas dog free.

Older Adults

The population is ageing. Although more people will be playing sport longer, it is anticipated overall participation in team sports will fall.

Older residents will seek more walking paths and seats, as well as places to gather, picnic and socialise with families.

Strategies

- Provide seats, paths and toilets to encourage older adults to get out and about.
- Publish information widely about park facilities, accessibility and walking routes.

Utilising Open Space

The pressure on open space for new infrastructure like freeways, utilities and community buildings must be managed to protect environmental, aesthetic and recreational values. Council must ensure that these are planned for, whilst minimising impacts.

Strategies

- Ensure adequate consultation is undertaken when planning for new infrastructure and utilities in open space.
- Minimise adverse affects on the environment and the amenity of new infrastructure.

Character and Heritage

Indigenous people lived along our waterways before European settlers arrived. Our history is recorded in parks, gardens, pavilions, monuments, buildings, artwork, place and road names. Examples include the antimony mine poppet head and miner's cottage at Ringwood Lake, and stands of pine trees that were once orchard windbreaks.

¹ Open space is publicly owned land, parks, and reserves valued for recreation, sport, conservation and aesthetics. It includes roadsides, waterways, trails and other corridors that provide connections between spaces and habitats.



Strategies

- Reflect Neighbourhood Character Precinct features in open space.
- Preserve identified sites of cultural heritage.
- Protect remnant vegetation along roadsides, ridgelines, water courses and in open space.
- Protect notable trees and encourage private owners to do the same.

Trees

There are about 50,000 native and exotic trees in local streets protecting users from weather and glare and making roads safer by showing road direction.

There are more than 700,000 (mostly native species) in parks and reserves providing shade and shelter, helping to control water runoff, evaporation and erosion and providing a home for wildlife.

Council gets around 2,000 requests per year from residents ranging from pruning to claims of tree damage to property. Council's primary goal is to maintain the tree canopies and prevent injury to people and property damaged caused by trees under its management.

Strategies

- Promote the value of trees in public and private spaces, particularly indigenous species.
- Have a net annual gain in trees (i.e. more trees planted than die or are removed).
- Select trees carefully for each location.
- Implement Council's *Public Places Shade Policy* by planting appropriate trees.
- Seek to recover costs for tree replacement if removal is required for development.
- Focus resources on risks that present the greatest danger to the public and property.
- Encourage utilities to put overhead cables underground or use Aerial Bundled Cabling.

Waterways

Maroondah is the starting point for many of Melbourne's waterways. Many have been modified to control floods and erosion, thus diminishing their habitat value.

The Maroondah *Stormwater Management Plan* looked in detail at stormwater issues. Designs are now available to help manage stormwater from its source to the waterway. Some are simple (eg rainwater tanks and grass or rock swales in reserves) and others are complex and expensive (eg wetlands).

Strategies

- Enhance the value of open space along waterways in partnership with other land managers.
- Make sure management practices (and developments) in reserves do not adversely impact on nearby waterways.
- Insist developers use best practice measures to mitigate the impact of increased volumes and peak rates of stormwater runoff.

- Establish off-stream water quality treatment wetlands where space is available.
- Tell the community how they can help: use education programs in schools, volunteer groups, businesses and Council publications.

Habitats and Biodiversity

Residents, Council and other public land managers must all work together to protect biodiversity.

However, we also use habitat corridors for recreation and our car use affects remnant roadside vegetation. Nevertheless, some transport corridors could be used to revive degraded habitat and create new open space connections.

Strategies

- Encourage public and private partnerships to protect, conserve and enhance habitat and environmental values.
- Use transport corridors to revegetate and remediate habitats.
- Continue to support volunteers who address weed infestation, pests and revegetation.
- Ensure Bushland Management Plans are regularly updated and adequately resourced.
- Develop a Weed Management Strategy to protect biodiversity and habitat values.

Walking and Cycling

Walking is the most popular activity and more walking and cycling paths should be built.

Trails encourage people, especially children, to ride or walk to schools and community facilities. The benefits include a fitter community, reduced car use (and greenhouse gas emissions) and less crime (due to greater surveillance).

Council could create a hierarchy of trails for those who walk, cycle and skate, that suit people who push prams or use wheelchairs, and for children just learning to ride or skate.

Strategies

- Link existing off road paths and corridors.
- Consider linear open spaces and work with land management agencies and adjoining councils on options for new trails.
- Create connections to schools, transport hubs and community facilities.
- Build new trails to best practice standards, upgrade existing trails, then monitor and maintain them.
- Create activity hubs to be used as rest stops, parking or toilets for those on longer rides/walks or for people who drive to a trail.
- Build perimeter circuits around larger parks for walking or jogging.
- Utilise existing reserves and streets, and either acquire land or use access agreements to extend the trail network.
- Provide clear signage and trail information (who and what they are suitable for, connections, facilities, etc) in prominent places.
- Reinforce the "Trail Safety Code of Conduct".



Families

More reserves in Maroondah should be designed to cater for families seeking social recreation experiences or for larger community gatherings.

All social family recreation spaces need to provide access and social opportunities for people of all abilities. However the degree to which parks are specially designed for people with a disability is to be determined by the catchment of the park (eg a park with a city-wide catchment should have the highest degree of accessibility).

Strategies

- Develop one key reserve in each precinct for social family recreation.
- Ensure a social family recreation space or play area is within 500 metres of each household.
- Use management techniques to minimise conflict between activities in large spaces.
- Publicise social family recreation spaces - what is provided and who they target (eg age groups and activities).

Inclusive Play

Play equipment is expensive to install and maintain and is not the only answer for children. Small playground sites can only offer limited experiences and are often under-used. It makes more sense to develop some sites to a higher standard. Nevertheless, every playground, however small, should offer choice for users with a disability - to find something that gives them pleasure, lets them succeed, and allows interaction with others.

Strategies

- Relocate play equipment from smaller less viable play spaces and turn them into places for relaxation and contemplation instead.
- Make at least one park in each precinct accessible to all users as a minimum: access *into* the park, *onto* play equipment, and *for* social interaction.

Adolescents

Activities for young people are important in parks. Teenagers spend 40% of their time in front of a screen and often drop out of mainstream team sports. Girls participate even less, so facilities and spaces for them are important. Young people should be involved in their design.

Strategies

- Provide opportunities for adolescents (especially girls) to be active, or just 'hang out', in safe, observable open spaces in each precinct.
- Develop skate and BMX facilities and youth-orientated open space. Involve young people in the design and management.

- Work with developers and shopping centre managers to include design elements of interest to young people in open spaces.
- Consider further equestrian trails such as those in Candlebark Walk and Warranwood Reserves.

Schools

Schools, often under-utilised after school hours and on weekends, are mostly located close to residential areas, or at least within walking or cycling distance. Partnerships between schools and local government could prove fruitful.

Strategies

- Work with schools to develop new opportunities.
- Support programs like the 'Walking School Bus' and provide infrastructure to make safe routes to schools.

Design for Accessibility

More people are now living longer with medical conditions and disabilities. Better design practices can make a difference for people with disabilities.

Strategies

- Progressively implement compliance with current Australian access standards, the *Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan* and the *Maroondah Health, Safety and Wellbeing Plan*.
- Involve the whole community in accessible open space planning and design processes.
- Upgrade park facilities to encourage participation by people with a disability.

Sustainable practices

Council is already introducing sustainable practices, especially for grassed areas and natural turf playing surfaces. For new and improved parks, conserving water and energy will be essential.

Also, people using our parks should be encouraged to be mindful of resources.

Traditionally open space has been seen as a free community asset, but people want access to more and better facilities and these can only be funded through rate revenue or user fees. An even-handed pricing and access policy for sport, as well as for commercial and community use of open space, will ensure equity.

Strategies

- Introduce water wise practices for playing surfaces.
- Encourage park users to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Ensure staff and contractors follow Council's environmental management practices.
- Introduce an equitable pricing and access policy.



Core Service Levels

Council is responsible for the maintenance of over 540 hectares of open space. Not all spaces can have the full range of services and development, eg. BBQ's and toilets, nor is it viable to provide play facilities in all parks. Maintenance levels need to be appropriate to the location, amount of use and required standards.

Strategies

- Advise the community about achievable levels of service for different types of park.
- Have three core levels of service for each key type of reserve, primarily based on the catchment, the activities present and levels of usage.

Design Standards

Design of open space infrastructure can affect how people use it and whether they do so safely. Good design can build on our sense of identity and civic pride and therefore help with maintenance and sustainability issues.

Strategies

- Develop guidelines for the design of park furniture and structures that are accessible, inclusive as well as reflect Heritage and Neighbourhood Character Study findings.

Asset Management

The investment made by the City in park facilities is substantial and should be protected by good management practices. Park facilities only have a relatively short life and need a plan to ensure they are kept in good condition, and continue to be relevant.

Strategies

- Devise a Total Life Cycle Asset Management System.
- Develop asset management plans for all classes of assets, including trees and park infrastructure.
- Maintain a parks asset inventory and include relevant master plans and policies.
- Conduct regular audits of all park infrastructure and record, monitor and schedule all maintenance.
- Claims for adverse possession of open space need to be avoided by appropriate protection and monitoring.

The Best Mix of Open Space

Sports Reserves

Although a great deal of open space is dedicated to sport, these areas are also used for play, social family recreation and flora/fauna conservation.

There are no obvious opportunities to acquire extra sport reserves. However, schools may play a role in beginner sports,

especially where public reserves are in short supply and the topography is difficult.

Single playing field reserves are a problem for clubs, who must then find extra grounds. There is demand for grounds of a higher quality.

Golf courses are significant open space areas that provide important habitat. Only the Dorset Golf Course currently provides perimeter walking opportunities.

Strategies

- Work with schools to offer more opportunities for beginner level sports.
- Seek more consistency across the municipality in terms of access to quality sports playing fields.
- Make multiple playing-field sports complexes a priority where practicable.
- Seek to develop all weather or indoor sports facilities where viable, in partnership with neighbouring Councils and the State Government.

Flora/ Fauna Conservation Sites

Protection of Maroondah's many flora and fauna conservation and bushland sites should be driven by their significance rather than their distribution.

Strategies

- Seek to acquire and manage key sites of Biological Significance, and habitat corridor sites of strategic importance or negotiate to have these managed consistently under one land management agency.
- Nominate suitable Council reserves for inclusion in the "Land for Wildlife" scheme.
- Ensure adequate resources to maintain current and future Flora/ Fauna Conservation reserves.

Play Spaces

Playgrounds require regular inspection and maintenance of equipment and under-surfaces to ensure their safety and useability.

Play areas are generally very small, often of house block size. A program to replace and upgrade old play equipment has been implemented.

Strategies
















- Where possible provide play equipment as part of social family recreation spaces within 500m of every household.
- Where two playgrounds are close to each other, change the landscape setting of one.
- Offer play spaces that cater for all ages and abilities, provide a variety of challenges and experiences.



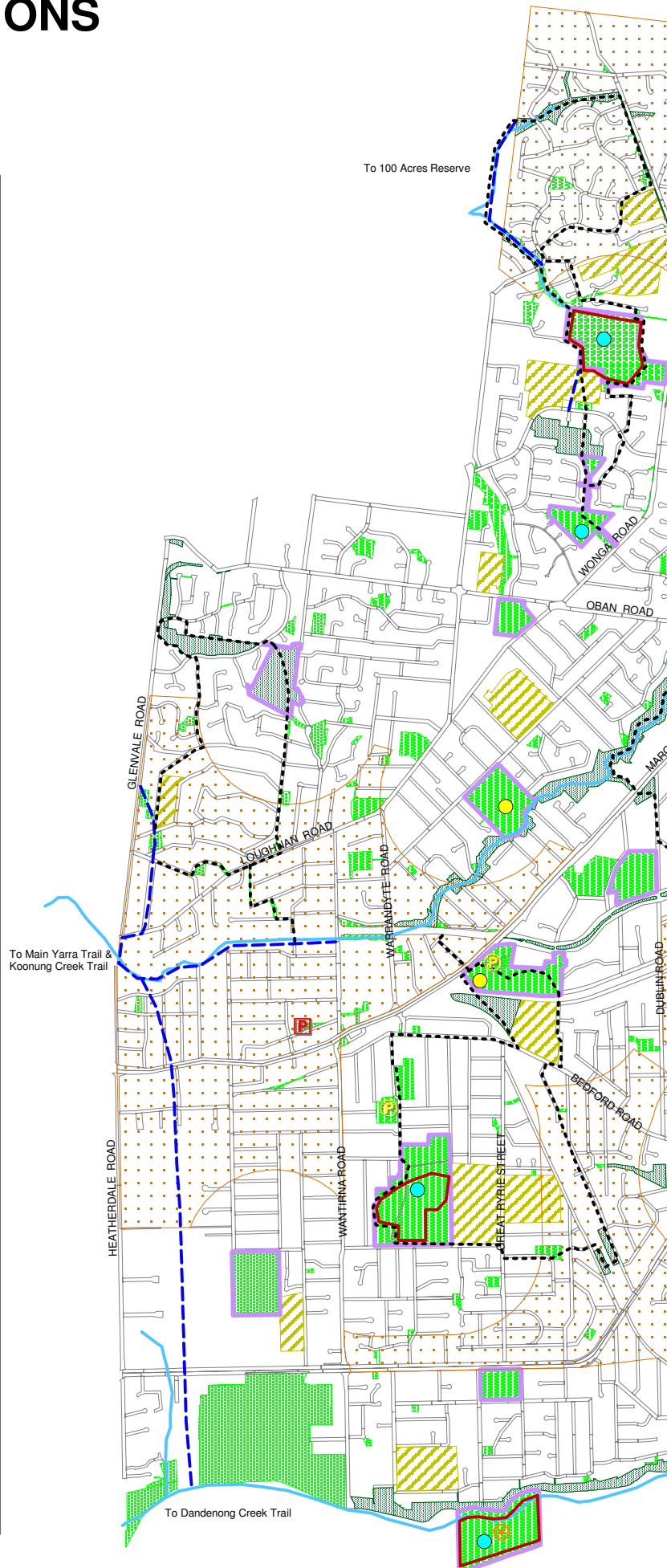
Map 11

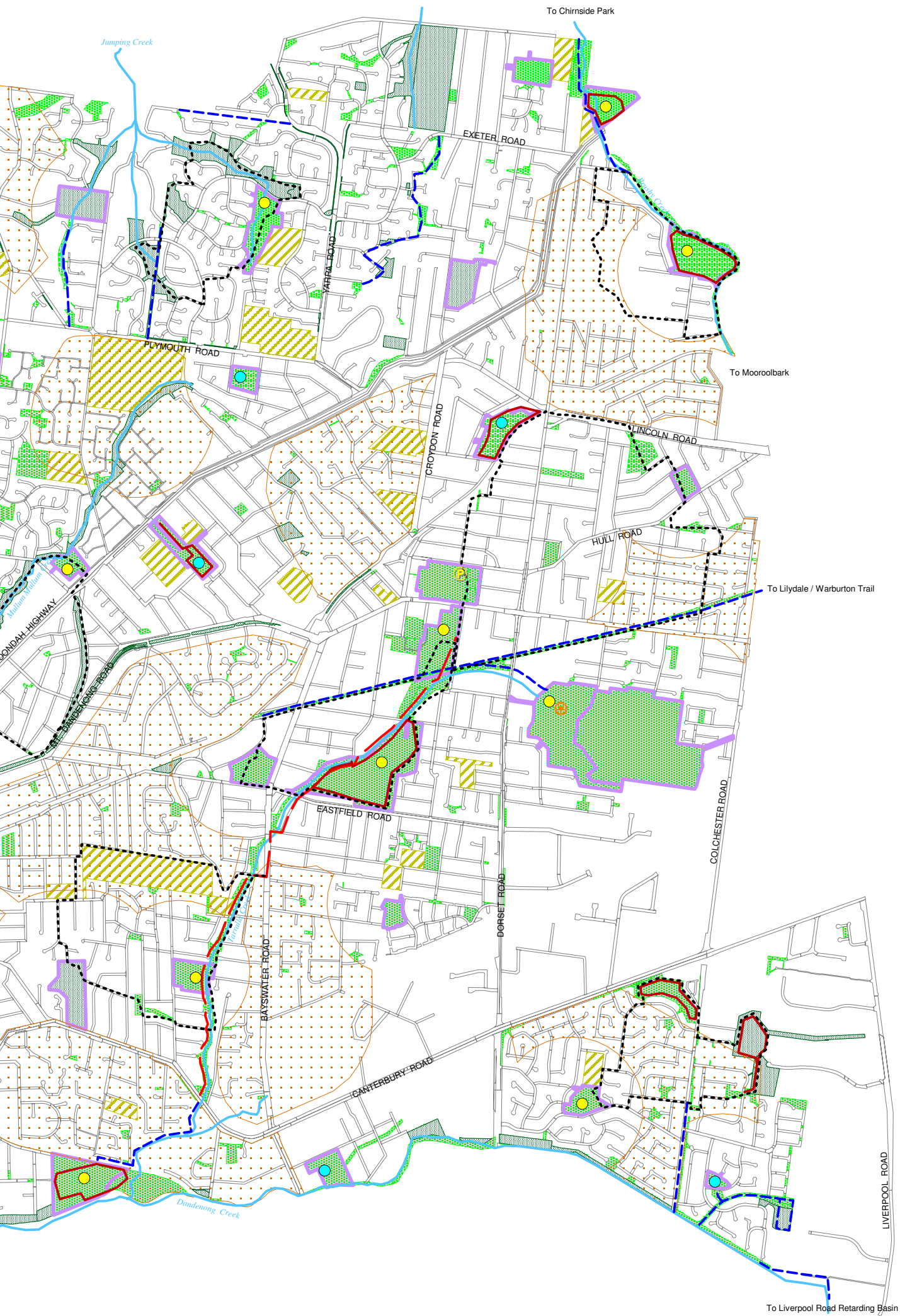
KEY OPEN SPACE ACTIONS

LEGEND

-  Develop Primary Trail Hub
-  Develop Secondary Trail Hub
-  Future Skate Park
-  Future Accessible Playspace
-  Future Soccer Facilities
-  Future Path / Trail
-  Upgrade Tarralla Creek Trail
-  Future Perimeter Path
-  Future Walking Route
-  Open Space
-  Areas underserved by Precinct Facilities - seek opportunities for expanded / new open space
-  Key Precinct Parks - upgrade facilities & improve accessibility
-  Schools - create partnerships for use of open space
-  Protect & enhance Flora / Fauna Conservation Reserves & sites of significance
-  Protect & enhance waterways & habitat corridors

N.B.
Path routes and potential new open space are indicative only and do not imply that any specific private property will be acquired.





To Chirnside Park

Jumping Creek

EXETER ROAD

To Mooroolbark

PLYMOUTH ROAD

GROVYDON ROAD

LINCOLN ROAD

HULL ROAD

To Lilydale / Warburton Trail

CONDAL HIGHWAY

EASTFIELD ROAD

COLCHESTER ROAD

BAYSWATER ROAD

DORSET ROAD

CANTERBURY ROAD

Dandenong Creek

LIVERPOOL ROAD

To Liverpool Road Retarding Basin

Drains and Service Corridors

Partnerships with other land owners could open up new opportunities on linear drainage and service corridors, particularly for complementary uses, but care needs to be taken to avoid developing these encumbered spaces for functions that are not compatible, such as sports fields and social family recreation spaces.

Strategies

- Use drainage reserves to support leisure activity and enhance landscape amenity and environmental values and work closely with other government agencies (eg Melbourne Water, VicRoads) to maximise the value of open space with non-recreation functions.
- Seek to take open space in association with drainage reserves to enhance the perception and potential of the combined space.

Diversity

People need access to their own local parks and reserves but will travel reasonable distances to access regional level facilities such as golf courses, aquatic centres and indoor sports stadiums, or to enjoy particular landscapes and scenery.

Strategies

- Provide an accessible Precinct standard open space within a maximum of one kilometre (ideally 500 metres) of every household (without major barriers).
- Vary landscape types and functions according to demand and distribution.
- Try to provide landscape settings and functions not present now (eg rough natural area and water based recreation).
- Use artwork and cultural heritage interpretation in open space for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Develop and Extend the Network

The priorities are to link existing reserves and extend linear trails, protect flora and fauna, and to service areas lacking adequate open space.

Strategies

- Protect sites of cultural, historical and environmental significance.
- Use management and maintenance agreements to ensure that useable Crown Land (and land managed by other agencies) is retained as part of the open space system.
- Zone all existing land identified as open space as either Public Park and Recreation Zone or Public Conservation and Resource Zone.
- Hold regular forum/meetings between municipalities on open space issues.

Implementation

The actions of the plan have been prioritised and will form the basis of annual capital works budgets. As part of this plan's implementation Council will:

- Ensure that the benefits of open space are promoted to the community.
- Form a Council committee to review the progress of the plan.
- Refine Council inter-departmental processes.
- Prepare specific policies on issues requiring further analysis.
- Use industry benchmarks and community surveys to measure the performance of Council and report these to the community.



To contact Council telephone 1300 88 22 33
visit our website at www.maroondah.vic.gov.au
or call in to one of our Service Centres:

City Offices Service Centre

Braeside Avenue
Ringwood

Civic Square Service Centre

Civic Square
Croydon

Eastland Service Centre

Level 2 Eastland Shopping Centre
Ringwood

