

Open Space Strategy 2016 - summary

Connecting People and Spaces

Working towards a clean, green and sustainable community





Introduction

The Maroondah City Council Open Space Strategy 2016 will direct open space provision and enhancement throughout Maroondah for at least the next 10 years.

The document recognises the key functions of Council in relation to open space engagement, planning, development, management and promotion. Drawing from the Maroondah Community Vision 2040 key directions, the strategy aligns with the vision through 15 policy positions established to guide and underpin decision making regarding open space in Maroondah. The Policy sets Council's position on how it will make key decisions that impact on open space, the people who use it, and the protection of the natural environment.

The development of the Maroondah Open Space Policy and Strategy was made possible by funding assistance from the Victorian Government.

Strategy purpose

Feedback from an extensive community consultation for the Maroondah Community Vision 2040 and specific consultations for other Council strategy development processes, highlighted the value the community places on a leafy green city with generous open space and parklands. Within the 2040 Vision are many directions aimed at enhancement of the liveability of the city through open space improvement and utilisation. The importance the community places on open space emphasises the need to have a succinct policy and strategy document to underpin the provision and enhancement of open space in Maroondah.

The aim of the Open Space Strategy is to:

- facilitate the implementation of Maroondah's Open Space Policy.
- align directions of open space provision with the 2040 Vision.
- direct and underpin the creation of open space strategies, service plans and planning tools.
- assist decision making in relation to the planning, protection or development of open space environments.
- enable options for the development of open space to be prioritised and programmed.
- provide a basis to evaluate and respond to proposals for the use of open space.
- encourage and facilitate open space improvements within the public setting, where land is not owned by Maroondah City Council.
- provide a basis for allocation of funding resources towards open space projects.





Strategy scope

This Strategy is applicable across Maroondah City Council owned and managed open space landholdings and assets. The strategy also guides Council's engagement, negotiations and responses to private and public land owners in relation to open space in Maroondah, that is not owned or managed by Council. While streetscapes are considered as important contributors to the perception of open space within a community, the scope of the strategy focuses more on the public landholdings of Council.

Open space definition

Public open space is defined as any parcels of land within Maroondah that is managed by Council or other public authorities and is accessible to the public for the purpose of community outdoor use or environmental protection.

Value of open space land: **\$621million**



Community aspirations and values

An extensive amount of community consultation has been undertaken by Maroondah City Council throughout 2014-2015. The consultation generated feedback on the elements and values that the community sought within Maroondah.

The feedback emphasised the importance that open space plays in underpinning community life in Maroondah. In this regard the community consultation consistently expressed the importance of a 'leafy green' environment that includes high quality open spaces, parks, playgrounds, bushland, sporting and recreational facilities.

The community's vision is for Council to be aspirational towards Maroondah's network and connectivity of open space.

Feedback also indicated there is an expectation on: accessibility, safety, diversity, equity, sustainability, vibrancy and accountability in the provision and enhancement of open space. The key driving principle therefore is that the Open Space Strategy is vital for community enrichment and so should be a major focus for Council.

Case study 1: Creating new forms of open space - The Range, Croydon

The development of the The Range Housing Estate in Croydon has provided a significant amount of new open space for local residents to enjoy. Much of it is based around the wetlands that have been built to provide management of stormwater flowing from the estate, creating large permanent water bodies that help to clean and control the run off from roads and private properties before it enters the Brushy Creek. A range of amenities have been added around these spaces including a playground, shelter and barbecues. There are also outdoor fitness stations in a circuit linking the parks, as well as seating, paths and solar lights.

Current status of open space in Maroondah

The current status in relation to open space in Maroondah is summarised below:

Limited new large open space contributions

The era of new large subdivisions has come to an end with almost all large parcels of subdividable residential land in Maroondah now having undergone development.

The opportunity for new open space land to become available to the Maroondah community through land developments into the future is very limited. Rather, land assets will need to come from existing site redevelopments, land swap negotiations or from planned acquisition utilising open space contributions as the investment mechanism.

As a result, the use and development of open space and the pressures between activity types for the provision of quality environments will require greater attention than ever before.

Current open space capacity

Maroondah's open space network does not include the large state owned regional parkland sites that some other municipalities benefit from. It also has limited 'green wedge' zoned land where development is restricted, as opposed to some other outer ring Councils that have large green wedge areas. This increases the pressure to ensure open spaces are allocated, utilised and improved in accordance with a defined strategy. Decision making must become more strategic and evidence based to ensure the open space assets are equitably provided as resources for the whole community and for the long term preservation of the natural environment.





Demographic change

Maroondah's population continues to change. In the last decade Maroondah's population increased by 11% with a further 10% increase forecast for the upcoming decade. The population structure is becoming older, with the median age across all Maroondah residents now at 38 years. There are also an increasing number of retirees living in the municipality. The crux of these evolving changes is that Maroondah's open space will need to be more adaptable and accommodating of an increasing number of people, variety of age and cultural demographics.

Household size and structure

Maroondah's household size and structure is also undergoing change. In the last decade the ratio of lone person households or couples without children households increased. This is contributing to the increasing number of people moving into smaller medium density housing. The forecast is that the demand for smaller private residential dwellings will continue to grow in Maroondah and that much of this demand will be met by the development of attached or semi-detached medium density townhouses and apartments. This type of housing structure has by nature less private open space per property, increasing the requirement to influence the design of developments and to utilise accessible public and private open spaces as a mechanism to improve social connection and liveability.

Development of activity centres

The increasing and dynamic nature of Maroondah's ageing and changing population is creating demand for innovative forms of development close to existing transport, commercial and service hubs.

Planning strategies have for some time supported the concept of development nodes facilitating growth in locations where these services exist. The Ringwood 'Metropolitan Activity Centre' is one of 11 metropolitan activity centres that are considered secondary only to the Melbourne CBD on a development hierarchy.

Central Croydon is considered a 'Major Activity Centre' and Ringwood East and Heathmont are 'Neighbourhood Activity Centres'. These activity centres are experiencing an increasing level of medium density housing development within them. They are also important commercial hubs where many people work and connect. This has implications for the provision and use of open space resources in these locations.

Area of open space
in Maroondah:
650ha /11% of
land area





Current issues for open space in Maroondah

A number of key issues that impact on the provision of open space in Maroondah are:

High community expectations

The community consistently demonstrates that they place a high value on open space, in terms of the 'liveability' of a particular location, the visual amenity across the municipality and the extent of opportunities to participate in sport and recreation activity. This value perception is also influenced by the quality of open spaces, how they connect with built forms and how the open space is maintained.

Therefore, the Open Space Policy and Strategy are aspirational, and work towards a future open space network with the functionality and quality that the community wants. The challenge for Council in meeting high community expectations within Maroondah is how to maintain and enhance open space environments within the bounds of finite resources.

Limited Council resources

The commitment of Council to deliver on the wide range of outcomes expressed in Maroondah 2040 places a great pressure on available resources. All the endeavours and activities have merit, so a process of prioritisation is necessary to ensure a staged or phased implementation is documented and undertaken. The focus can then be directed towards innovative solutions and timely, efficient implementation. A clear message around the timing of implementation of strategies adopted will need to be communicated to the community to avoid creating unrealistic expectations.

Risk mitigation

Personal safety and security are crucial issues in the planning and management of open space. Council's Risk Management Policy, as well as government and insurance industry driven initiatives, require greater consideration in open space design, usage policies and maintenance accountability. These elements support the quality control of services and assist in the process of project management. Risk mitigation holds an increasingly influential say in the assessment of open space decisions, whether related to design, installation, purchase or use.

Specific needs

Consultation also highlighted that the community was very connected and committed towards specific groups or activity types. This means that there will be community pressure to invest in a wide range of particular activities, regardless of the level of participation. Enhancement of recreation facilities that reach the end of their asset life will be required in the future so that they can continue to cater for a broad range of age groups, abilities and pursuits. The Open Space Strategy sets a framework for prioritising projects that protect, develop or improve Maroondah's open spaces.



Infrastructure development expectations and user conflicts

The level of investment in community facilities and in sports and recreation infrastructure continues to grow with changing user expectations around such things as surface condition, support infrastructure, social amenities, on-site parking and training facilities. Risk mitigation measures are also contributing to additional costs, and to the decisions as to what use is acceptable and under what conditions. In some locations, this has impacted on the multipurpose capacity and accessibility of particular open spaces, contributing to user conflicts. Endeavours to further define and emphasise the functional purpose of some open spaces will be central to navigating through issues of competing interests.

Exclusive use and economic context

An increased expectation by some clubs and community groups is also creating a perception of exclusivity of certain open spaces. The accessibility and general community usability of certain open spaces is being scrutinised, as is the cost benefit value, where the use is confined to a small number of users. The cost of meeting sporting expectations is also increasing in light of the diversity of sporting needs expressed across the municipality. Regional partnerships together with increasing site carrying capacity will need to be considered as a mechanism to underpin open space planning.

Pressures on the natural environment

Protecting Maroondah's unique natural features, including ridgelines, waterways, canopy vegetation, green open space and bushland reserves was identified as a community priority in recent consultations. This is a challenging outcome to achieve in light of increasing housing density, concerns about trail and site safety, increasing demand for amenities for sports and increased risk mitigation in relation to trees and infrastructure. The Open Space Strategy allows for innovative solutions to find the right balance to ensure that open space environments continue to meet the expectations of the Maroondah community, while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Balancing trail use

The shared trail network is a significant community asset that exists for the provision of commuter linkages as well as encouraging walking, recreational cycling and other informal activity. With Maroondah's vision to "enhance and promote Maroondah's walking and cycling shared path network, ensuring connections with the wider Metropolitan Melbourne trail network", there is a need to consider the identification, design suitability and promotion of a trail network that supports trail use for commuting and recreation activity.

Emerging trends in open space provision

A number of the wider trends in open space provision that are relevant to Maroondah include:

Balance between active sport and passive recreation space

The functional use of open space and the relationship between formal active sport environments and informal recreation activity environments will require greater consideration. Participation figures show that the traditional membership model of sports participation is decreasing in favour of a more informal and consumer driven participation. The growth in small fitness groups, walking and cycling events are evidence that people are increasingly interested in a shorter term and evolving commitment to activity. While the change is not rapid, the expectations of the community to have informal active spaces will continue to grow, especially as housing densities rise.

Promotion of physical activity

A great deal has been presented about the growing health risks associated with inactivity. In some ways this has come from a change from an outdoor lifestyle to more sedentary indoor lifestyle and less active travel options. It is well recognised that open space provision and the opportunity to choose more active lifestyles is an important element of community health planning moving forward. The provision of opportunities in open space as well as the promotion of those opportunities is highlighted in Council's 2040 Vision towards "promoting physical activity and providing a diverse range of accessible open spaces and recreation facilities, including entertainment spaces, events and activities".

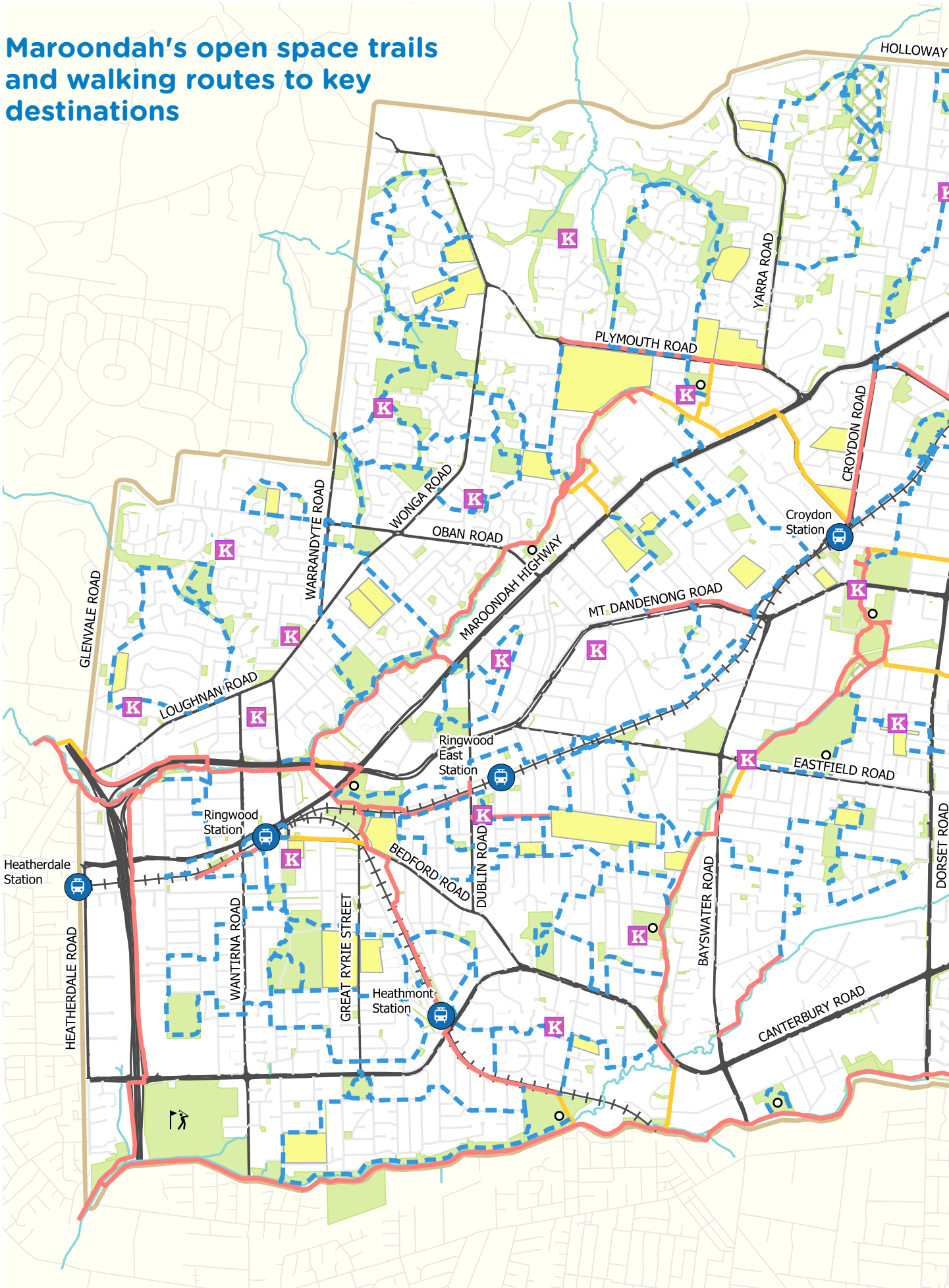
The Open Space Strategy therefore identifies open space environments that can support the actions of the Maroondah Physical Activity Strategy.

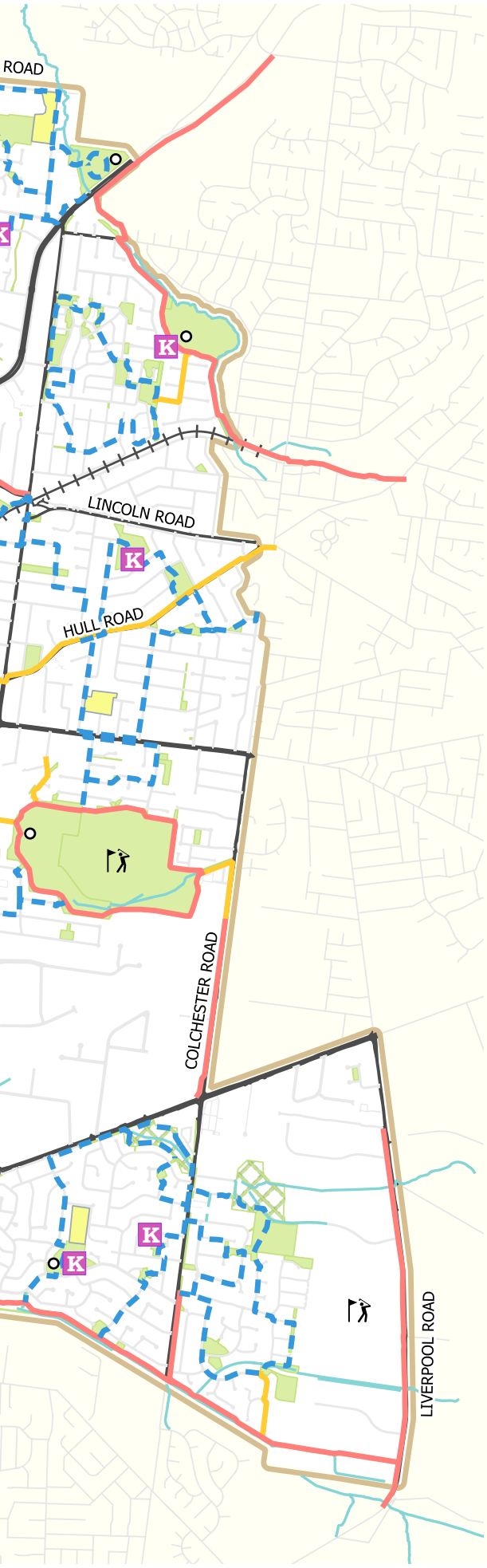
Number of reserves
in Maroondah:
430





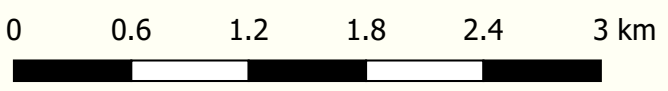
Maroondah's open space trails and walking routes to key destinations





Legend

- Existing Trail (Shared)
- - - Local Circuit
- Trail Connection
-
- Council Reserve
- Crown Land (Restricted Public Access)
- School
- K Kindergarten
- Natural Waterway
- Maroondah City Council Boundary
-
-
-





Adapting to climate change

The response to climate change has been woven into the directions of a number of Council strategies. Council has a role as an influencer and potential educator to the community on climate change responses. At the very least, it should be seen as introducing mechanisms and measures that are countering climate change contributors. The Open Space Strategy is a vehicle through which strategies and partnerships can be presented that send the right messages to the community in relation to the impacts of climate change and the possible solutions and adaptations.

Length of shared trails in Maroondah:
35km

Fostering partnerships

With limited options for new open space in Maroondah, key decisions around functional use of existing open space areas will need to become more strategic. Where there are competing interests for the use of open space, the option that new alternate sites may become available through ongoing development can no longer be considered a realistic solution. For example, Council has a key direction through Maroondah 2040 to “protect and restore biodiversity and native habitat for local plants and animals on public and private land” and hence, Council must achieve this outcome through existing sites and through partnerships with the private or public sector land holders. The innovation and negotiation around partnership projects to enhance liveability will be vital to the success of the Open Space Strategy.

Case study 2: Safe, healthy and active people and spaces - walking and running circuits

Council has been developing a number of local walking and running circuits within reserves for all the community to enjoy. These have been built in Barneong Reserve, Cheong Park, Glen Park, Heathmont Reserve, Jubilee Park and Quambee Reserve and have proved very popular with local residents for walking, running and dog exercise. Several of them have also included outdoor fitness equipment to provide extra opportunities for physical fitness. New larger circuits that are within one park, or that join several reserves, will be developed in coming years to ensure that all residents have easy access to these routes. These will encourage exercise and also provide ways to walk to schools, shops and other community facilities.



Open Space Policy

The role of Maroondah City Council in delivering open space to the community can be represented by five core activities that provide the framework for the Maroondah Open Space Policy and can be defined by the following descriptions:

- **Open space engagement** describes the process of connecting with key stakeholders, user groups and the broader Maroondah community to share information about our open spaces and to help inform decisions about open space.
- **Open space planning** is work done by Council to identify and help meet the future open space needs of the City of Maroondah.
- **Open space development** is work done to improve the quality and diversity of open spaces available to the community.
- **Open space management** relates to the maintenance, service standards, allocation and programmed use of open space assets.
- **Open space promotion** is how Maroondah City Council encourages residents, community groups and visitors to make the most of our open space assets.



Case study 3: Well designed and maintained spaces - X and Y Spaces, Croydon Park

The development of the X and Y Spaces in Croydon Park is a good example of extensive consultation and design processes that ensured a facility that exceeds community expectations. Firstly, a Masterplan was produced for the whole park to determine the most appropriate location for each activity. Then specific designs were developed over several years for the Y Space – skate, scooter and bike activities; and subsequently the X Space parkour and playspace was designed and constructed. A

significant factor in ensuring that both these facilities, and the whole park, are maintained to the high standard required for these regional facilities was the development and implementation of a comprehensive Management and Maintenance Plan that guides operational staff. The high use and visibility of the site requires daily maintenance to keep it clean and safe for all users.





Policy positions

The following statements form the basis of the Maroondah Open Space Policy and establish Council's positions on its key roles for delivering open space environments and assets throughout Maroondah.

Open Space Engagement will:

1. Actively seek to understand and respond to the aspirations of the community when planning for open space development.
2. Employ engagement processes for site planning and development that will include consultation with relevant authorities, and where appropriate, foster partnerships or advocate, to ensure effective improvement of open space.

Key strategies:

- Conduct meaningful and inclusive public participation in engagement processes when planning and designing community, recreation and sporting improvements in open space.
- Develop greater community understanding of the value of natural areas, and conservation of habitat and its importance for the future of Maroondah, through signage, brochures, interpretation and education.
- Advocate for improved design, use and management of public open space owned by other agencies.





Open Space Planning will:

3. Deliver diversity in recreational activities and sporting opportunities through well planned public open spaces which contribute to improved community health, physical activity and neighbourhood connection.
4. Establish an integrated network of trails across the municipality that provides connectivity for travel purposes as well as for recreational use.
5. Identify opportunities for strategic land acquisitions which would improve the accessibility, connectivity, natural environment and functionality of Maroondah's open spaces.
6. Use a thorough needs assessment to examine the open space network in regards to public open space sites being appropriate and adaptable for single purpose or multipurpose use.

Key strategies:

- Identify, assess and develop key parks in each suburb with capacity to accommodate a range of features for social family recreation activity with appropriate facilities including public amenities, BBQ's picnic settings, shade and playspaces.
- Investigate options to develop the local walking trail circuits by utilising existing reserves, streets, and either acquisition of land or by access agreements.
- Improve the design of existing linear open space to improve accessibility to major parks and community places.
- Review the current open space network to identify options to improve the structure and to acknowledge gaps where private and public land could strengthen current open space links and provisions.
- Review open space provision standards to plan for the future population increases within Maroondah's Metropolitan, Major and Neighbourhood Activity Centres.



Open Space Development will:

7. Respect the strategies and partnerships that have been created to enhance and protect the cultural value and heritage of the City of Maroondah.
8. Strive to improve open space environments that cater for physical activity, acknowledging the increasing need for informal participation, as well as providing for formal sporting activities.
9. Review development requests using a thorough site assessment and analysis process which considers outcomes for all stakeholders, to ensure responsible decision making.
10. Seek to preserve and rehabilitate natural bushland environments, wildlife corridors and remnant vegetation to nurture a sustainable environmental system.

Key strategies:

- Map, document and introduce actions to preserve and promote all significant cultural or heritage sites/artifacts including public art and heritage tree sites.
- Research and monitor the future impacts of climate change on Maroondah's open spaces and acknowledge the return on investment from incorporating climate change response design principles in developments.
- Undertake an external sportsground review to determine current capacity, potential capacity and to identify the capability for increased usage or alternate usage patterns.
- Improve streetscapes where they form links between open space, including upgrading crossing points over roads, planting of street trees and installation of seats as resting points.
- Engage with internal and external planning authorities for the inclusion of stronger environmental controls in the Planning Scheme to protect remnant vegetation, habitat corridors and bushland.





Open Space Management will:

11. Use thorough and accountable risk and safety assessment procedures to ensure best practice design, construction and maintenance processes.
12. Actively protect and nurture the health of natural environments containing significant trees, waterways and native flora, fauna and habitat.
13. Ensure that open space environments are maintained and improved through responsible decision making and service provision that considers site capacity, community need, user expectations and available resources.

Key strategies:

- Improve shade by planting appropriate trees wherever possible to provide shade and shelter in public places.
- Enhance recreational, amenity, habitat and open space values along Maroondah’s waterways in partnership with other land owners / managers.
- Develop a plan for the placement of designated ‘dog off leash’ enclosures in support of Council’s Domestic Animal Management Plan and broad management of dogs in open space.

Open Space Promotion will:

14. Embrace the use of technology to connect residents and visitors to increase awareness of, and encourage appropriate use of, Maroondah’s open spaces.
15. Consider current and emerging local area demographics when developing spaces and promoting activities to ensure they respond to community need and expectation.

Key strategies:

- Enhance Council’s website to better promote open space, exercise trails and other recreational opportunities.
- Provide information using a range of languages and mediums, about park facilities, accessibility, walking routes and programs that encourage the use of open space by the whole community.
- Undertake promotions to connect children and families with the natural environment for the purposes of play, education and greater awareness.





Case study 4: Greening the City's spaces - Dandenong Creek

Council has been a founding member of the 'Living Links' project since 2004, that brings together all the land managers and environmental groups in the Dandenong Creek Catchment with the vision of creating a web of green links for people and habitat.

A comprehensive masterplan has been produced that details a large number of potential projects that could be undertaken in Maroondah and along the whole length of Dandenong Creek.

Some of these projects have already been completed, or commenced, and include new paths connecting Glen Park and many new trees and shrubs planted; revegetation around the old 'Horse Pond' near Dorset Road; and now a plan to daylight nearly one kilometre of the creek that is currently in a drainage pipe upstream of HE Parker Reserve. By working together with all agencies and community groups in the Catchment, and having a common vision and plan, each Council is able to leverage external funding and support to further the greening of the City.



Number of street trees in Maroondah:
70,000

Open Space Action Plan

To enable effective and efficient delivery of the Maroondah Open Space Strategy each of the strategies identified under the policy positions will be assessed against a comprehensive criteria. The criteria will include, but not be limited to indicators such as: resources required; stakeholders; timeframes; and links to other key projects.

The process of assessment will determine the appropriate priorities, resources and timelines for implementation and form the foundation for the development of the Open Space Action Plan.

The Open Space Action Plan is a three year rolling implementation document that will be reviewed and progress evaluated on a regular basis.

The Action Plan will then be linked to relevant Council Service Delivery Plans to complete the planning cycle and ensure effective implementation.

Key actions

Valuing Open Space

We will promote the health, wellbeing and environmental benefits of open space by:

- promoting our parks and reserves in all forms of media
- investigating the use of mobile technology, such as interactive outdoor games, digital wayfinding maps and interpretive trails
- highlighting the environmental and social values of our open spaces.

Well Designed and Maintained Spaces

Careful consideration of the design and maintenance of our outdoor spaces is essential to ensure the best outcomes. We will:

- consult with all stakeholders when designing new open space facilities
- implement design and management strategies to adapt to climate change
- create asset management plans for all park infrastructure to ensure it is maintained and renewed when needed.

Greening the Cities Spaces

Over the next 10 years we will:

- plant 60,000 new street trees
- plant trees for shade around playgrounds and picnic areas
- support and encourage an increase of volunteer community groups that look after our bushland reserves
- identify new open space that improves links for people and habitat.

Accessible and Connected Spaces

Council will continue to:

- improve the trail network with better connections
- upgrade existing trails and signage
- upgrade public toilets and rest stops
- develop local walking circuits in each suburb
- implement a colour coded system for trail route identification.



Create New Forms of Open Space

As the population and housing density increases it is important to find new ways to provide outdoor experiences and protect the natural environment. We will investigate:

- opportunities for the public use of Government Agency land e.g. pipelines, railway corridors and road reservations
- greater use of road reserves that may not be required for traffic
- ways for multiple user groups to share facilities rather than single purpose venues.

Safe, Healthy and Active People and Spaces

Maroondah has a large number of sports and recreation facilities. We will endeavour to:

- provide more outdoor exercise equipment
- encourage nature play by children
- provide programs, activities & events to stimulate more people to be active
- improve opportunities for greater use at night of sportsgrounds and trails through better lighting.

To view the full version of the Open Space Strategy, please visit Council's website.

To contact Council

- phone 1300 88 22 33 or (03) 9298 4598
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- email maroondah@maroondah.vic.gov.au

Translating and Interpreter Service


13 14 50


National Relay Service (NRS)

13 36 77

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