



Public Open Space Plan

2026-2036

Public space for all

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of this place.

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Executive Summary

Open space is at the heart of our identity. It offers places for our community to connect, play and thrive. From our established suburbs in the south, majestic conservation reserves in our green wedge and parkland in Whittlesea township to the north, open space is central to our community.

Open space – in all its forms – is essential to liveability and our sense of place. Wurundjeri connections to Country are integral to our understanding of place and contribute to the distinctive character, cultural diversity and vibrancy of our municipality.

Open space is hard-working public land. It supports health and wellbeing, biodiversity, climate resilience, and economic and social activity.

This Public Open Space Plan is our road map for a world-class network of open space for now and for our future.

This plan sets a vision to protect, enhance and grow our open space to meet the needs of our diverse and growing community. Building upon the open space legacy we have while considering the challenges of climate change, increasing population, social change and the need to manage our assets effectively and efficiently.

When we think about open space we often think about our system of green spaces – neighbourhood parks, nature reserves and waterways – but our open space network is all around us. It is our tree-lined streets, local shopping strips and the spaces where we gather out the front of our favourite café, community centre or library.

This Public Open Space Plan describes our open space, provides context for the plan, and sets out our vision, focus areas and planning principles for the next 10 years.

The plan provides an ambitious agenda to transform how we lead, plan, deliver and manage our open space.

Note: For the municipal and suburb action plans, please refer to Background Technical Report.

Open Space Vision

A green city for people and wildlife. A city of connected open spaces, majestic river red gums, waterways and winding trails. A city of parks, town centres, cultural landscapes and streetscapes, that are welcoming, vibrant and well-designed for all.

Our approach to public open space

Focus Areas

The City of Whittlesea community enjoy a range of benefits, including:

OPEN SPACE
PROVISION

COMMUNITY HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING

BIODIVERSITY

CLIMATE CHANGE
RESILIENCE

ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL BENEFITS

Directions

Creating a network that is:

CONNECTED

IMMERSIVE

SHARED

Through planning and investing to:

PROTECT

OPTIMISE

GROW

Principles

With planning principles that encourage:

CARING FOR
COUNTRY

Caring for and valuing the open space network in line with legislation and traditional owner culture.

EQUITY AT HEART

Partnering with the community to create welcoming, safe and accessible open spaces for all.

A PLACE-BASED
APPROACH

Embracing local knowledge, community diversity and natural and cultural heritage in our planning.

INTEGRATED PEOPLE
APPROACH

A collaborative approach to planning and design with community at the centre.

About this plan

The City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne’s largest and fastest growing municipalities. We have a large and diverse network of public open spaces. This plan will guide open space planning and policy for the next 10 years.

Who is this plan for?



Community

Our community can read this Public Open Space Plan and understand our vision and what is planned for the open spaces they enjoy.



Council

The plan supports integrated planning. It gives our technical specialists the information they need to plan.



Developers

The plan is supported by the Neighbourhood Design Manual. Together, these give developers the information they need to understand Council’s vision.



Stakeholders and partners

The plan gives committees, government agencies and other public landowners the information they need to understand Council’s vision and our plans for the municipality.

Why do we need a plan?

This *Public Open Space Plan* guides the planning, provision, design, activation and management of open space in our municipality.

The plan includes an Open Space Framework. This framework will guide the provision of public open space and related services across the municipality.

The plan will:

- Communicate why our focus areas for open space are important and how they will be achieved
- Be included in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to support our review of open space contributions
- Guide where resources will be allocated
- Assist with government grant applications
- Align internal and external stakeholders to our focus areas
- Underpin the suburb gap analysis and action plans that guide capital works and initiatives.

Legislation

Council is the steward of the City of Whittlesea open space network. It makes land-use decisions for Country under delegated power from the state government.

Victoria Planning Provisions provide overarching policy to guide land use, subdivision and development in Victoria. These provisions are informed by Victorian Government policy, including *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*.

The *Subdivision Act 1988* covers open space contributions. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* sets out collection of development contributions, which can be financial or land contributions.

The *Local Government Act 2020* sets out rights and responsibilities, stated powers and reporting.

The Melbourne Strategic Assessment (section 146) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* is a streamlined process for decision making through the *Victorian State Government Minister of the day*.

Council is the responsible authority to assess planning applications under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* within the City of Whittlesea.

What is our strategic context?

Open Space for All replaces the previous *Open Space Strategy 2016*. The plan represents the high importance the community place on access to open space.

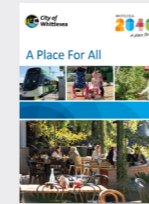
Strategic alignment

The Public Open Space Plan forms part of our Integrated Planning Framework. The plan sits under the Whittlesea 2040 Community Plan and Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy, as one of five strategies and two plans that outlines our commitments, the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community.

Each strategy expands on our long-term 20-year community vision, *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*, and our four-year Community Plans.

Level 1: Vision

Council’s overarching vision



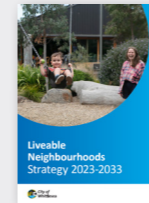
Whittlesea 2040



Community Plan

Level 2: Strategy

Strategic direction and action plan



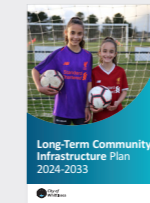
Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033



Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033



Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026



Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033



Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032

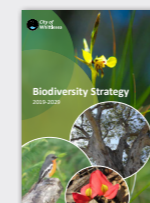


Aboriginal Action Plan 2024-2029

Level 3: Approach



Climate Change Plan 2022-2032



Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029



Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040



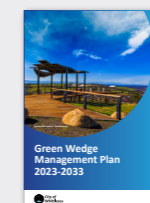
Future Directions Plan bunjil nganga Parklands (formerly Quarry Hills)



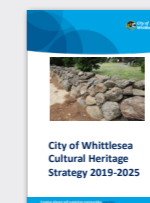
Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028



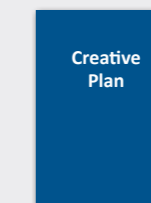
Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2034



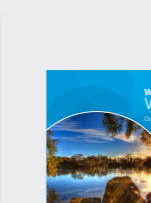
Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033



Cultural Heritage Strategy 2019-2025



Creative Plan



Whittlesea Water for All 2020-2030

Whittlesea at a glance

Overview

The City of Whittlesea begins around 25km north of Melbourne CBD. It is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria. Its location in the outer suburban area of Melbourne makes for a blend of urban and rural contexts and communities.

Since European settlement in the 1830s, the area has evolved from rural farmlands to a major urban growth corridor. It features a mix of natural reserves, including Plenty Gorge and Yan Yean Reservoir, alongside its rapidly urbanising residential areas.

Neighbouring Shires and City Councils include Mitchell Shire and Murrindindi Shire to the north, Nillumbik Shire to the east, City of Hume to the west and Cities of Merri-bek, Darebin and Banyule to the south. Its position bridges this shift from rural shires to suburban cities.

It is directly serviced by the recently extended Mernda metropolitan train line and major arterial roads, Hume Freeway and the Western Ring Road.

The area now known as Whittlesea is within Wurundjeri and Taungurung Country. Extensive Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity overlays protect landscapes and waterways across the municipality. These areas of cultural sensitivity are known to, or are likely to, contain Aboriginal cultural heritage places and objects. A considerable portion of Toorourrong Reservoir Park and Kinglake National Park in the north western corner of the municipality are protected by this overlay.

Some of the major Regional destination open spaces that anchor the municipality include Toorourrong Reservoir Park and Yan Yean Reservoir Park to the north, Plenty Gorge Parklands to the east and Merri Creek Parklands to the west.



View from bunjil nganga Parklands towards Melbourne CBD (Source: City of Whittlesea).

Role of Open Space in City of Whittlesea

Open space is at the heart of Whittlesea's identity. The network supports community through places that foster biodiversity, climate resilience, economic and social activity, health and well-being. From the smaller, transient Pocket parks to the Regional destination reserves, Whittlesea's open spaces are an essential contribution to the municipality's liveability and sense of place.

Municipality Wide Figures

Statistics and population figures are current and forecast as at August 2025.



734 ha of accessible open space



26% of total suburb area is public open space



263,903 estimated 2026 population



331,464 projected 2036 population



27sqm of accessible public open space per person (based on estimated 2026 population)



276 playgrounds



96 sports reserves



20% canopy coverage



43 town centres

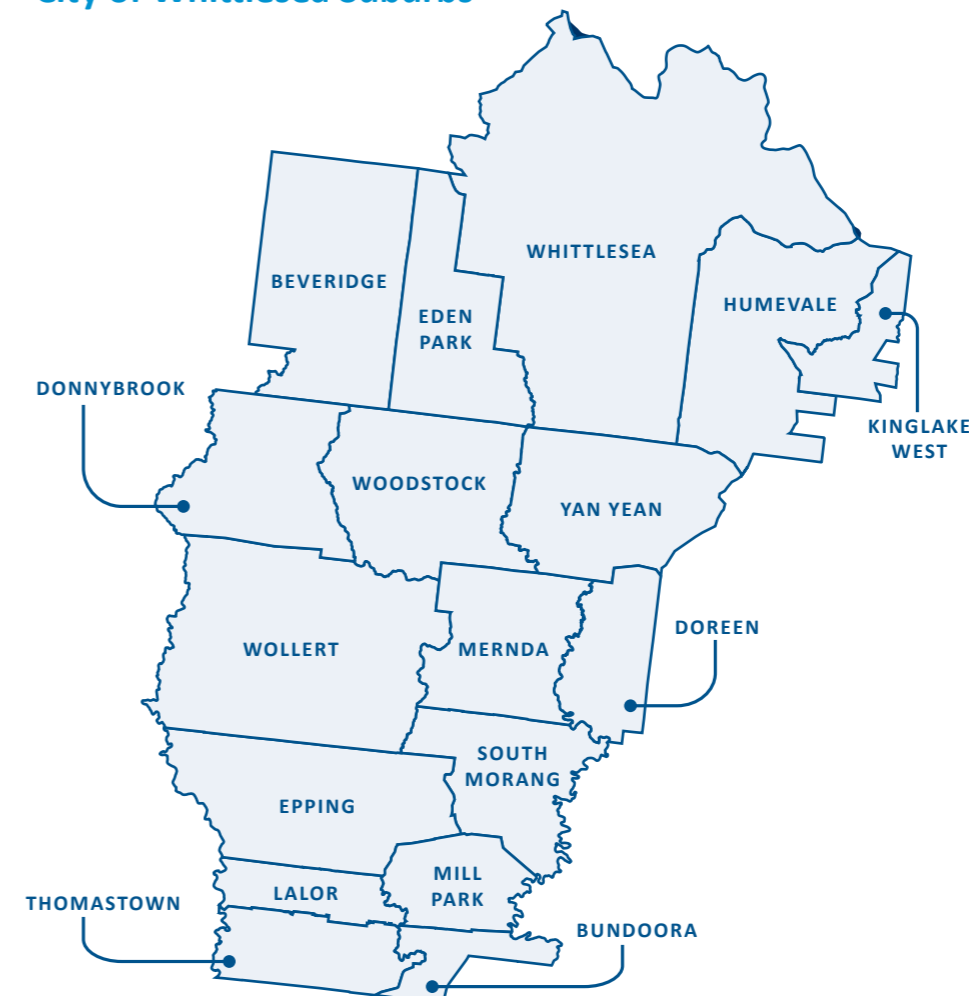


617ha of conservation reserve



162km of major waterways

City of Whittlesea Suburbs



Appreciation

The City of Whittlesea is working to deliver a range of benefits to its community through its open space provisions. This is currently led by planning principles encouraging an integrated people and place-based approach that has equity at its heart and embeds caring for Country principles.

Open space within the City of Whittlesea is continuing to evolve through open space contributions and the council's intersection with a Green Wedge Zone. As a council area planned to be immersed in nature, the City of Whittlesea community values its unique open space character



bunjil nganga Parklands

Indigenous history

The City of Whittlesea is located on the Country of the Wurundjeri and Taungurung Peoples. There are many culturally significant sites across the municipality, particularly in greenfield areas undergoing rapid growth and within the 60% of our land that forms the Green Wedge Zone.

The Wurundjeri Willum clan occupied the lands across the municipality with a focus on major drainages such as Plenty River, Merri Creek, Edgars Creek and Darebin Creek, and on elevated stony rises and prominent overlook sites. The Keelbundoora Scarred Tree Heritage Trail and Whittlesea Township Local History Walk celebrate indigenous heritage and historical landmarks of the region.

The recent renaming of bunjil nganga Parkland (formerly Quarry Hills Parkland) is derived from a Woi Wurrung language translating to "eagle view", reflecting the cultural connection of Traditional Owners to this prominent landform of saddles and ridges.



Mernda Wetlands

Post-contact

The Shire of Whittlesea was formed in 1875. In the years following Melbourne's suburban area continued to expand and connect to townships and settlements farther afield. By the 1960s suburbs such as Mill Park, South Morang and Thomastown evolved drastically shifting from farms to residential suburbs. By 1988, the Shire of Whittlesea became the City of Whittlesea.

Significant development occurred in Thomastown and Lalor in the post-war years, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, when large numbers of migrants from Greece, Italy, Malta, and Macedonia moved into the area.



Norris Bank Parklands

Open space framework

Open space responsibility

Our Public Open Space Plan includes all publicly accessible land owned and/or managed by Council. This includes:

- Some neighbourhood and local activity centres
- Our network of parks, reserves, active sports precincts, waterbodies and waterway corridors
- Powerline and drainage easements
- Streetscapes and shared trails.

Our plan includes active sports precincts as part of delivering a diverse open space network. The *Active Whittlesea Strategy* guides service provision for sports precincts. The *Northern Regional Trails Strategy* guides our approach to shared trails.

Melbourne Water is responsible for the beds and banks of waterways. Whittlesea Water for All guides our Council's integrated water management. Our open space may include or be adjacent to infrastructure. While our plan guides and directs infrastructure and sporting facilities, the buildings, pavilions, halls, transport and sporting infrastructure, and public toilets are not open space and not part of our plan. Our role in privately owned activity and town centres, state and national parks, cemeteries and other agency or privately-owned land is primarily through advocacy and partnerships.

Categories of open space

There are three categories of public open space.

Accessible open space

Public land and waters are primarily for outdoor recreation, leisure, environmental and cultural benefits, visual aesthetic, and shared trails.

Restricted open space

Public land and waters are for outdoor recreation, leisure, environmental and cultural benefits, visual aesthetic, and shared trails. However, there is limited accessibility or uses due to leases, agreements, specialised sporting infrastructure or conservation protection overlays.

Encumbered open space

Public land and waters are primarily for transport, health, education and utilities. As secondary and complementary purposes, encumbered open space but may potentially be used for outdoor recreation, leisure, environmental and cultural benefits, visual aesthetic, and shared trails. The Melbourne Open Space for Everyone strategy provides further information on the categories of open space.

Catchment target

The catchment target defines the spatial distribution of open space in the City of Whittlesea. It is based on the current or future catchment of users and the relative size of the open space.

We will apply the catchment target to open space in the municipality. The catchment target:

- Guides analysis of the spatial distribution of open space
- Advocates for sufficient open space provisioning in precinct structure plans
- Determines the provisioning of existing and future reserves, when combined with the function component, to ensure open space is fit for purpose and can be maintained effectively
- Provides guidance for appropriate levels of funding to open space, including external funding.

Urban parks, streetscapes and activity centres complement the green open space network. While they are not part of the catchment targets, we consider them when analysing open space provision.

Function

The functions help us to plan and be considerate of natural features, cultural elements and site restrictions such as waterbodies and service easements.

We will use the primary and secondary functions to define the intended use by the community and the level of service allocated to the open space.

The functions are:

- Access or service corridors
- Conservation and environment
- Community facilities
- Formal active recreation
- Informal recreation
- Major community park
- Passive
- Urban park
- Waterway

Our Open Space Hierarchy

We use our Open Space Hierarchy to structure open space in urban areas and to inform open space contributions.

1369 Small or pocket open spaces



Less than 0.25ha
300m walking
15 min visit

Located within easy walking distance from the home or workplace, (i.e. running, walking), these open spaces include connecting streets and cul-de-sacs, and compliment River Redgum conservation.

529 Local open spaces



Approximately
0.25ha to 1ha
300m walking
Up to an hour visit

Located within easy walking distance from the home or workplace, these parks provide for a short duration of stay with basic facility provision for informal active and passive recreation.

233 Neighbourhood open spaces



Approximately
1ha to 3ha
400m walking
1 to 3 hour visit

Located within comfortable walking distance to the neighbourhood, these parks provide for a longer duration of stay with an increase in facility provision for informal active and passive recreation. The facilities provided are intended for people of all ages, from toddlers through to young adults and older residents.

103 Municipal open spaces



Approximately
3ha to 7ha
800m walking
A few hours to
half a day visit

Located within walking distance to the suburb, catering to residents and workers in the municipality, and appealing to some in neighbouring municipalities. Generally, these open spaces provide a higher level of facility provision supporting the defined primary use of the reserve.

6 Regional open spaces



Greater than 7ha
Half day to full
day visit

Regional Parks are intended to be destinations for residents and workers of the City of Whittlesea and neighbouring municipalities. These spaces are unique and provide for a multilayered visitor experience with a high provision of facilities catering to the defined primary and secondary uses.

Action and Implementation Plan

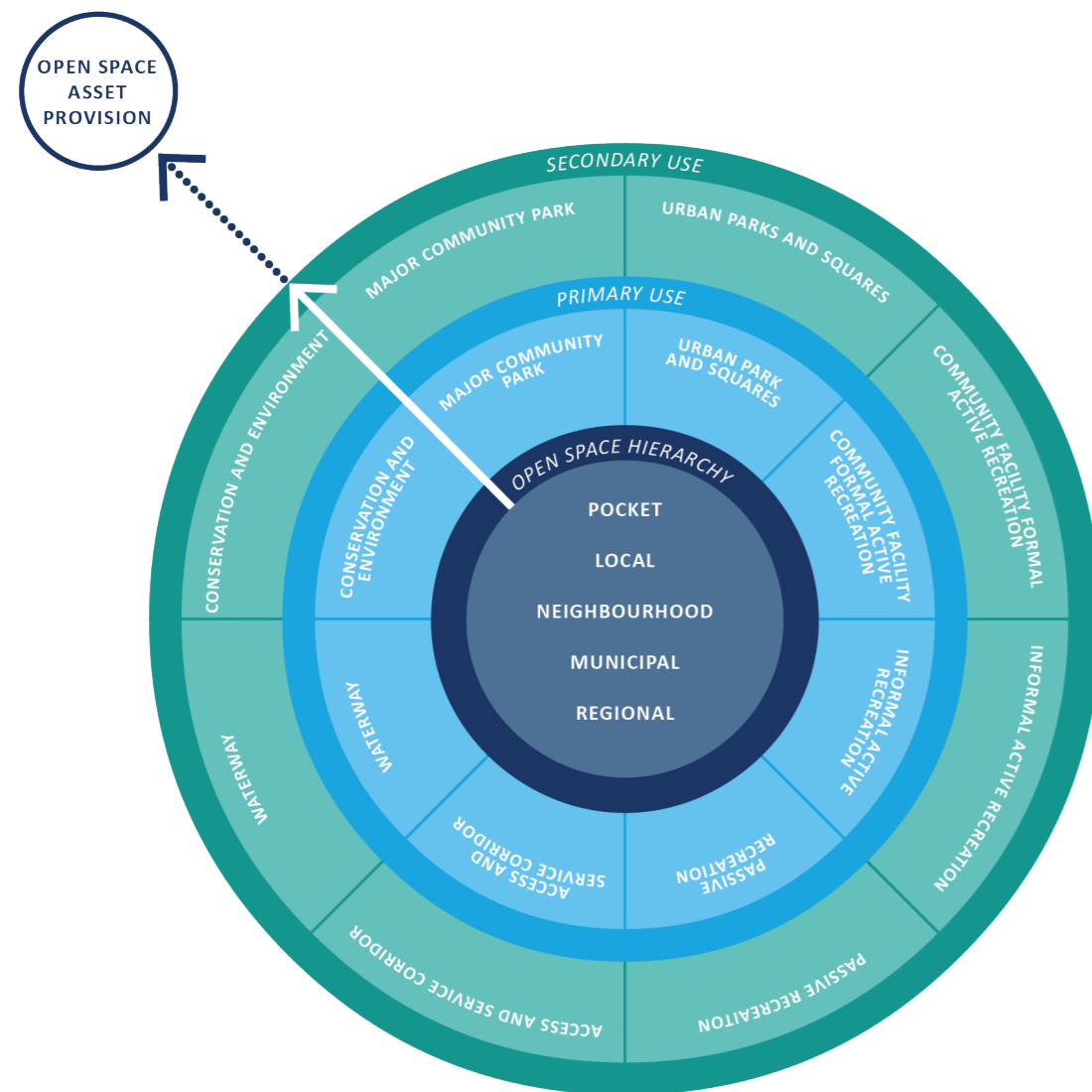
The City of Whittlesea utilises an open space hierarchy to categorise its broad spectrum of open spaces. This hierarchy specifies Pocket, Local, Neighbourhood, Municipal and Regional open spaces. As outlined overleaf, they are primarily defined by their size.

To form an action and implementation plan for the municipality's open space it is important that the categorisation of open space goes beyond scale. Many Pocket open spaces can function at a Neighbourhood level with the correct provisioning and amenity, just as a Regional open space could be functioning at a local level if it is not being supported by the appropriate maintenance plan.

City of Whittlesea applies a primary and secondary use to each of their open spaces. These uses include Major Community Park, Urban Park or Square, Community Facility or Formal Active Recreation, Informal Active Recreation, Passive Recreation, Access or Service Corridor, Waterway, Conservation and Environment.

These uses can influence what hierarchy an open space may fall into. For example, the facilities required to support Formal Active Recreation might encourage longer dwell times for users. If a Local sized open space offers a basketball half court, meaning users might spend longer than 1 hour at the open space, it might then be delivering the facility of a Neighbourhood open space.

The impact of these primary and secondary uses on open space hierarchy should be explored further as the City of Whittlesea Public Open Space Plan continues to evolve.



Hierarchy, primary and secondary all contributing to open space asset provision.

Baseline Facilities Provision Guidelines

The baseline facility provision should be seen as a guide only. In line with the Public Open Space Plan principles of a Place-based approach and Caring for Country, Council takes a site specific approach to the planning and design of the open space network. This extends beyond the hierarchy show below and takes into account the category, primary and secondary function of the open space being designed.

Facilities and features for Regional, Municipal, Neighbourhood, Local and Pocket open spaces have been identified as follows:

- Must - definitely have in the open space
- Should - Ideal to have in the open space if possible (limitations could be physical, contextual/use, community constraints)

- May - Could have in the open space if identified as a network gap, not entirely necessary but considered if there are demonstrated benefits and if requested by community.
- Restricted - Not to be in the open space, but can be considered in special circumstances (how it might work with the whole open space network, i.e. shelter and drinking fountain in a pocket park if it is next to a recreational shared path)
- N/A - Not to be provided in the open space

*Facilities and infrastructure provided under the *Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan* and *Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028*. Shade will be provided by trees throughout the open space network. In addition to trees, shade can also be provided by shelters, dependent upon the context.

Facility and feature	Regional	Municipal	Neighbourhood	Local	Pocket
Barbecues	Should	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Bins	Must	Should	May	Restricted	N/A
Car parking (on-site)	Should	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Changing places facility (no shower)	May	May	N/A	N/A	N/A
Changing places facility (with shower)	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A	N/A
Drinking fountain with dog bowl	Must	Must	Must	Should	N/A
EV charging	Should	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Festival / event infrastructure	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A	N/A
Garden bed - natives	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must
Garden bed - ornamental	Should	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Informal active recreation infrastructure*	Must	Should	Should	May	Restricted
Integrated Water Management	Should	Should	May	Restricted	N/A
Lighting	May	May	May	Restricted	Restricted
Play space	Must	Should	May	May	N/A
Power - single phase	Must	Should	May	Restricted	Restricted
Power - three phase	Must	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Public art	May	May	Restricted	Restricted	N/A
Public toilets	May	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Seating	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must
Shelters	Must	Must	Should	May	N/A
Signage - interpretation/educational	Must	Should	May	N/A	N/A
Signage - site identification	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must
Signage - wayfinding	Must	Should	May	Restricted	N/A
Sporting infrastructure*	May	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Trees	Must	Must	Must	Must	Must
Village green grassed area	May	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A
Water connection	Must	Must	Must	Should	Restricted
Water features	May	Restricted	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wifi/internet	May	Restricted	Restricted	N/A	N/A

The importance of open space

Whether in a rural or urban setting, open space is essential for biodiversity, cultural heritage and sense of place. Open space provides a diversity of landscapes and valuable ecosystem services. It supports physical activity, social connectivity, health, mental health and wellbeing. Open space is critical to achieving the *Whittlesea 2040* vision of ‘a place for all’.

Liveable neighbourhoods

Liveable neighbourhoods foster social cohesion by providing well-designed spaces that encourage interaction, belonging, and shared activities, leading to stronger social bonds and a sense of community.

Well-designed neighbourhoods have a diverse mix of open spaces and facilities for local shops, cafes, community gardens, recreation, sport, nature-based, social activities and community events. Within an environment that prioritises walking and cycling.

Walking and cycling

Designing neighbourhoods that prioritise walking and cycling encourages spontaneous encounters and interactions between residents.

Public open space is critical to our walking and cycling network, which provides alternatives to the on-road experience. Well-maintained footpaths, circuit paths and shared paths provide equitable and accessible recreational opportunities within walking distance of homes. Residents and pets can use open space to exercise, get to their destination and socialise.

Connected community

Creative culture and events

Public open space offers a place for the community to interact and express themselves through culture, performance and display of temporary and permanent public art. Open space brings people together, boosts social connections and strengthens a sense of identity within the community.

Open spaces are important to our culturally and linguistically diverse communities, where a sense of welcome and familiarity is valued. Play in open spaces is vital to children’s sense of wonder. It also fosters creativity, learning, confidence and cognitive development.

Community health and wellbeing

Open spaces contribute to physical and mental health by:

- Supporting cardiovascular and respiratory health, which reduces the rates of chronic disease, obesity, and urban heat stress
- Improving mental health and wellbeing through outdoor activities that enhance feelings of joy, awe and inspiration in nature. This can reduce stress, anxiety and depression
- Creating space for socialising, events and cultural expression, which strengthens community bonds and sense of identity
- Preserving cultural landscapes and sites that are important to Traditional Owners or have historical significance
- Encouraging volunteerism and a sense of purpose.

Strong local economy

Open spaces contribute to a strong local economy through:

- Encouraging economic activity through spending in local businesses, tourism, hospitality, creative arts, and recreation
- Reducing the cost of health care and energy through the cooling effects of open space and reducing the demand for on-road infrastructure
- Generating employment in environment, landscape architecture, arboriculture, horticulture, construction and recreation services
- Improving property value by enhancing attractiveness and liveability.



City of Whittlesea play spaces

Sustainable environment

Biodiversity and conservation

A healthy environment is fundamental to a healthy society. Our public open space includes sites of national and state significance with high biodiversity or cultural heritage values. This includes:

- Nicola Davis Reserve, which is a conservation reserve of national significance that is fully accessible to our community
- Open space with cultural significance, such as Hillcroft Park, Ziebell’s Farmhouse and Lutheran Church property
- bunjil nganga Parklands, which has Wurundjeri artefacts of significance and is a place of self-determination where Traditional Owners can connect to Country.

Open space protects and restores biodiversity by sustaining plants, animals and microorganisms. It connects ecosystems across waterways, wetlands, and geological features. It enables natural ecosystem services for clean air and water, nutrient cycling and pollination.

Our smaller urban reserves support threatened ecosystems, including critically endangered grassy eucalypt woodland and plains grassland.

Council works closely with developers and the state government to ensure the conservation of protected species. This is a design requirement in precinct structure plans for new suburbs.

Climate change resilience and sustainability

Open space with canopy cover and water-sensitive design can help with urban cooling. It enhances thermal comfort, reduces ultraviolet radiation exposure and lowers heat-related illnesses.

Open space contributes to water management and climate change resilience through:

- Absorbing stormwater run-off from streets
- Stormwater harvesting and flood water retention
- Providing vegetated areas, wetlands and ecosystems to absorb and store carbon dioxide.

Waterways and wetlands

Whittlesea is home to several significant rivers, creeks and tributaries. Waterways of all types play an important role in the local environment and community.

The Plenty River, Merri Creek and Darebin Creek all drain into the Yarra River catchment and shape much of the existing open space network. These riparian corridors form vital wildlife habitats, support biodiversity, contribute to ecological function and offer recreational and natural spaces for local residents.

Council aims to minimise the impact of urban development on water resources and ecosystems by emphasising the design of physical infrastructure and features that promote sustainable water management. By employing Water Sensitive Design WSUD principles, urban areas can effectively manage stormwater runoff, reduce flooding risks, and protect water bodies from pollution. Well designed and maintained WSUD can provide many co-benefits, including enhancing local amenity, reducing urban heat island effects, increasing local access to nature and supporting biodiversity.



Our public open space network

The City of Whittlesea is an area of 490 square kilometres. It is spread across rural, peri-urban and suburban areas with an open space network that includes regional parklands, urban spaces, streetscapes and waterways.

Public open space portfolio

The City of Whittlesea has 12,950m² hectares of publicly accessible open space, including Crown land and State-owned freehold land. Council owns and manages 2,364 hectares of this. Within this, 734 hectares of unencumbered accessible open space provides about 27m² per person, which sits within the recognised 25–30m² per person benchmark. When all open space is considered, the municipality is very well serviced. Our portfolio includes:

- 6 regional parklands
- 3 regional waterways and 3+ tributary creek corridors
- 75 conservation reserves
- 2,689 protected River Red Gums
- 4 cemeteries
- kilometres of heritage stone walls
- 29+ heritage protected Stony Rises
- 50 sport and leisure precincts
- 2 water play facilities
- 256 play spaces
- 120 public artworks
- 60 exercise and fitness spaces
- 14 skate, BMX and pump track facilities
- 12 off-leash dog parks.

Regional parklands

- **bunjil nganga Parklands** is our premier regional park. This 440 hectare conservation reserve is co-managed with the Traditional Owners the Wurundjeri woi-wurrung. A Future Directions Plan provides the vision for the parkland. Planned to expand to 1100ha the parkland features stunning views, facilities and natural features. The parkland is a place of healing and returning to cultural practices on Country. Home to the Aboriginal Gathering Place and Granite Hills major playspace the parkland is an excellent example of ongoing regeneration to restore the ecological health of the parkland.
- The **Growing Frog Parklands (Golf Course)** in Woodstock is home to an 18hole public access golf course with stunning views of the Southern edge of the Great Dividing Range. Set within a 115 hectares of conservation reserve of national significance, featuring Barbers Creek, wetlands and ancient River Red Gums.
- **Mill Park Recreation Reserve** is a 19.6 hectare Regional Reserve providing a mix of passive and active facilities including the Mill Park Leisure Centre, the reserve features mature trees and wide-open spaces. It features a high-quality accessible play space featuring public art and water play and public toilets.

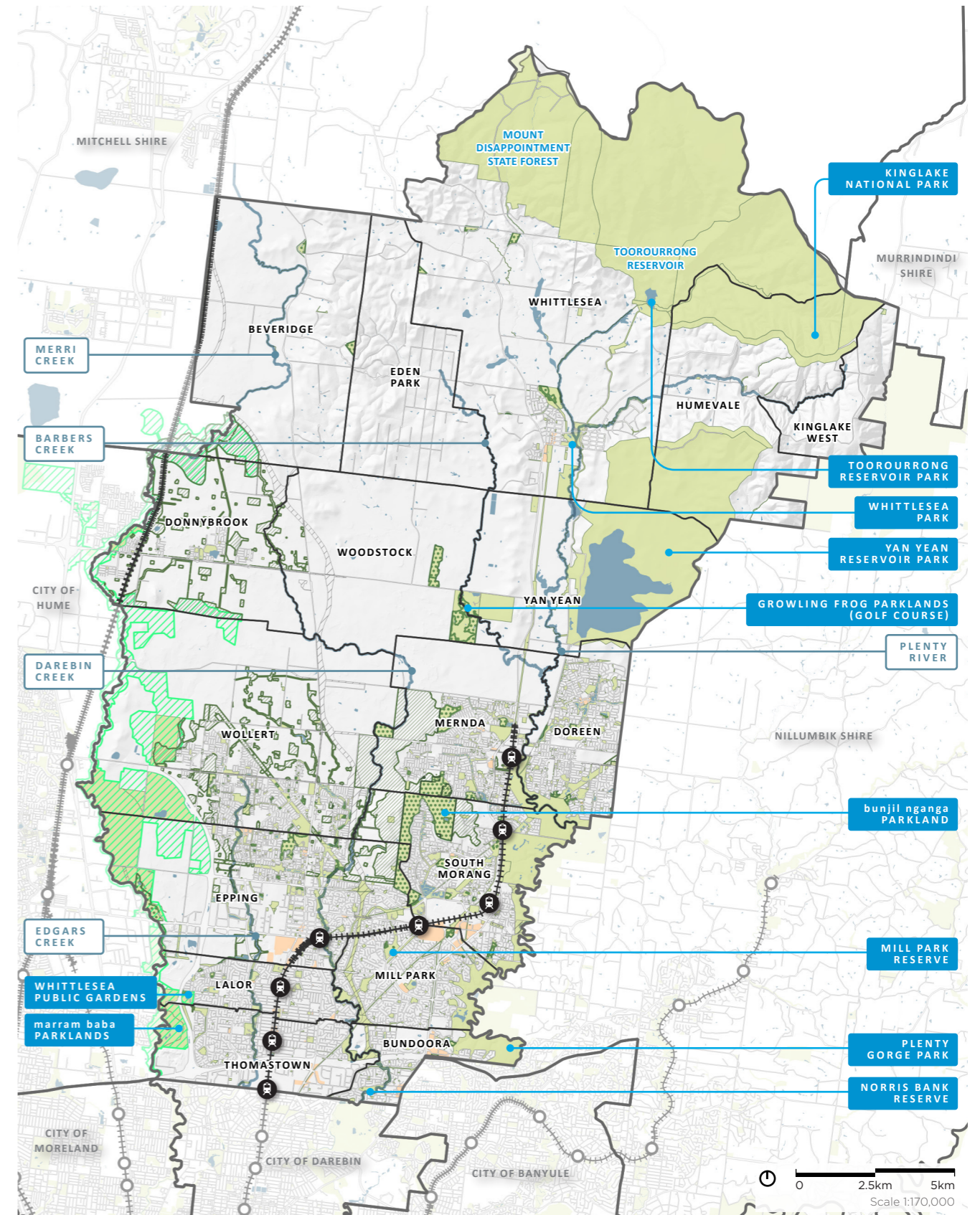
- **Norris Bank Reserve** is a 10.31 hectare open space in the suburb of Bundoora on the north bank of the Darebin Creek. The park features tennis facilities, a range of different play environments including a junior pump track, flying fox, picnic facilities, a dedicated youth area and dog of lead facilities.
- **Whittlesea Park** is a 25 hectare parkland precinct located in Whittlesea Township at the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. The park precinct includes: A.F. Walker Recreation Reserve, J.T. Towt Park, Lions Club Park, Little River Street Reserve, River Street Reserve and C. McDonald Reserve. Bruces Creek, the Plenty River and the Melbourne Water Aqueduct are all natural features of the park. Facilities include tennis, sports oval, picnic facilities, play and youth spaces.
- **Whittlesea Public Gardens, Lalor** is a 14.7 hectare park located within the marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands. Whittlesea Public Gardens has been the heart of Lalor and Thomastown for decades. Featuring high quality playspaces, learn to ride track, multi-purpose courts, outdoor fitness equipment, picnic facilities, public toilets and a dog off lead area.
- In addition to the 6 regional parks within the Council portfolio, the State Government owned and managed regional parks within the municipality include Kinglake National Park, Plenty River Corridor, the catchments of Yan Yean, Toorourrong Reservoirs and the foothills of Mount Disappointment State Forest. These have a role in protecting natural resources and biodiversity values for the City of Whittlesea. They contribute to visitor attraction and the visual landscape character of the municipality.

Key landscape types

Our open space is shaped by natural topography:

- 51% is Victoria Volcanic Plains shaped by large stony rises and fewer, but generally larger, remnant trees.
- 46% is Highlands Southern Fall, shaped by more intact, treed landscapes. This is in the north of the municipality.
- An isolated pocket of Central Victorian Uplands, shaped by distinctive granite outcrops and panoramic views. This is in South Morang and Mernda.
- Our urban landscape areas are highly modified with hard surfaces dominating the landscape. Streetscapes, open spaces, conservation reserves and waterways act as critical refuges for remaining flora and fauna.

The open space network



City of Whittlesea open space network map

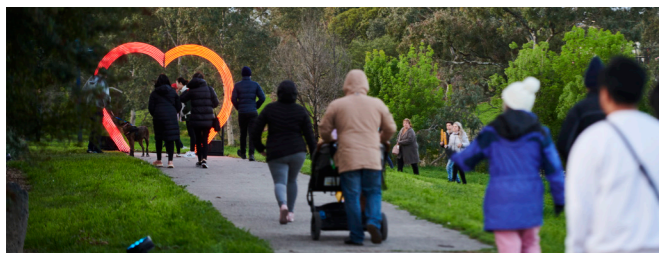


Playspaces

Council aims to provide playspaces within a 5 minute walk of all homes in urban neighbourhoods. There are 256 individual playspaces across the City providing a variety of experiences for different ages and abilities.

The play spaces located in our regional parks are unique designs providing a higher level of accessibility and taking advantage of the topography and local environment. These facilities are situated with public toilets, picnic facilities, art and accessible features, aiming to support longer visits and community enjoyment. All-abilities play space at Mill Park Recreation Reserve, Granite Hills at bunjil nganga Parklands, Norris Bank Reserve, Whittlesea Public Gardens and Whittlesea Park.

Council delivers a capital works playspace redevelopment program that prioritises high-quality, place-based design. Each project considers the broader park environment, ensuring that park improvements and playspace upgrades are planned and delivered in an integrated manner. The planning and design of playspaces are guided by the Landscape Guidelines and Playspace Guidelines.



Shared path network

The Northern Regional Trails Strategy and our Walking and Cycling Plan set out more than 10 types of trails. These range from nature-based trails around parks or along river corridors to major freeway and rail corridors. Recreational trails along river corridors include the Merri Creek Trail, Darebin Creek Trail and Plenty River Creek Trail.

Shared paths transform community habits by offering cost-effective and efficient travel options. Our shared path networks will be:

- Thoughtfully designed for functionality and appeal
- Shaded to enhance comfort and usability
- Clearly and effectively signed for ease of navigation
- Integrated with water-sensitive urban design principles to promote sustainability and resilience.



Sporting precincts

Council delivers and maintains sport and leisure facilities. These are planned through Council's long-term community infrastructure plan.

This Public Space Open Plan strategically plans for larger precincts with sports grounds, stadiums, indoor and outdoor courts, pavilions, golf courses and aquatic and leisure centres. These facilities create opportunities for the community to be physically active, improve health and wellbeing and connect with others.

Master planning for larger precincts will prioritise formal active use and cater to the open space needs of local communities. The Whittlesea Active Recreation Plan will guide our planning.



City Forest

Trees play an important role in cooling our open spaces, encouraging social interaction and providing habitat for wildlife. The shade trees provide and buffering effects from prevailing winds, making spending time getting to and at open spaces more enjoyable.

A feature of the City of Whittlesea is its trees. Council manages more than 387,000 trees in public areas. This includes 2,689 protected river red gums (*Eucalyptus Camaldulensis*), many of which are between 200 and 800 years old.

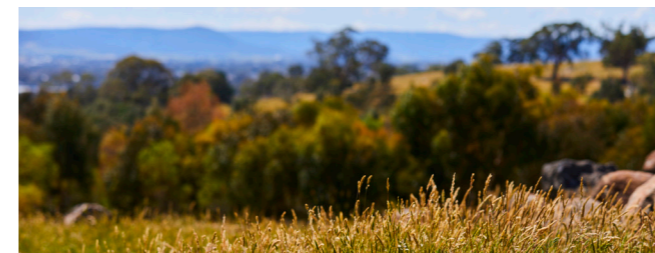
River red gums are spread throughout our municipality, in streetscapes, parks and our open plains grasslands. These majestic trees will continue to be a significant visual feature of our city.



Waterways

The City of Whittlesea is entirely within the Yarra River catchment and makes up approximately 12 per cent of its total area. We have three significant waterways: the Plenty River, Merri Creek and Darebin Creeks. We also have tributaries, including the Edgars, Findon and Hendersons creeks.

Waterway corridors are high in biological value. They contribute to the natural landscape and provide ecological connections to parklands. Our waterway corridors include the Craigieburn Grasslands Reserve and Plenty Gorge. Wollert and Doreen have substantial open space off Edgars and Laurimar creeks.



Conservation reserves

Conservation reserves protect natural and cultural heritage. They include areas and items of national and state significance, such as Wurundjeri artefacts, Traditional Owner gathering spaces, heritage stone walls, stony knolls, river red gums, and plant and fauna.

Most conservation reserves are planned and gifted to council through development contributions or the state government. Large conservation reserves have high biodiversity value but may have limited biodiversity where the reserve protects a single tree or cultural artefact.

Council will continue to deliver environmental education events and provide social employment in conservation reserves.



Urban spaces and streetscapes

Urban spaces are the streetscapes, forecourts, plazas and malls. They are generally around commercial areas, activity centres, transport hubs and community facilities.

Urban spaces are complex and need an integrated design approach. The complexity is due to the multiple functions and uses for urban spaces, such as informal recreation, trading, dining, social gathering and safe movement for people who are walking, cycling, riding or driving.

When situated in town centres, urban spaces support business functions such as outdoor dining and trading, advertising, bins, seating and deliveries. They have more foot traffic than residential areas and require high-quality design and maintenance to remain attractive, accessible and welcoming. Some urban spaces have public-private partnerships for management and maintenance, while Council manages others.

Urban spaces are important physical, social and cultural connectors for our local communities. They have a key role in our urban environment.



Festival and events spaces

Place-based community festivals and events that are bespoke and reflective of the local area play a vital role in building strong, cohesive communities and fostering creative social connections. Successful festivals in parks, reserves, or open spaces require equitable access to essential infrastructure to accommodate events and festivals at a range of scales, from local parks to improvements at the Civic Lawns, our premier festival site. This includes parking, access to water and power, vehicle access, and accessible pathways.

By reviewing available festival sites and investing in capital infrastructure, Council can ensure host small, medium and large events in suitable outdoor spaces.

Evolving open space

Established

Our established suburbs are primarily in the southern end of the municipality. The suburbs of Woodstock and Mernda have well established sections as well as areas which are experiencing significant growth. The majority of established areas are to the South of the municipality. These suburbs are experiencing pressures from infill development where it is difficult to access new open space.

Open space in these suburbs will require improvements to increase the useability of existing open space for more intense use. This priority here is to renew and retrofit existing parks so the community feel safe and welcome.

Growth

Victoria's Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines underpin planning for metropolitan urban growth areas. They provide a framework for precinct structure plans, which are prepared in consultation with the City of Whittlesea.

The Public Open Space Plan guides the future design and management of open space in our growth areas. It also guides the provision of open space where it has not been confirmed by the precinct structure plans.

This process has helped Council to achieve a high standard of design and to preserve drystone walls and river red gums.

Precinct structure planning has gifted open space to Council across Doreen, Wollert and Donnybrook since 2016. This includes:



1,000 open spaces
(170 hectares)



57 parks,
(84 hectares)



225 new open space reserves

Green Wedge

The City of Whittlesea is partially located within a Green Wedge Zone. Sixty per cent of the municipality is Green Wedge, including areas of natural beauty and environmental significance. The Green Wedge is:

- Land that is explicitly protected from urban development
- Home to productive agricultural land, scenic landscapes, heritage places, rural living, national parks, forests, waterways, reservoirs and nationally significant flora and fauna
- The food bowl that feeds us, the farms and markets where we work or get local produce
- Open space and landscapes for relaxing and recharging.

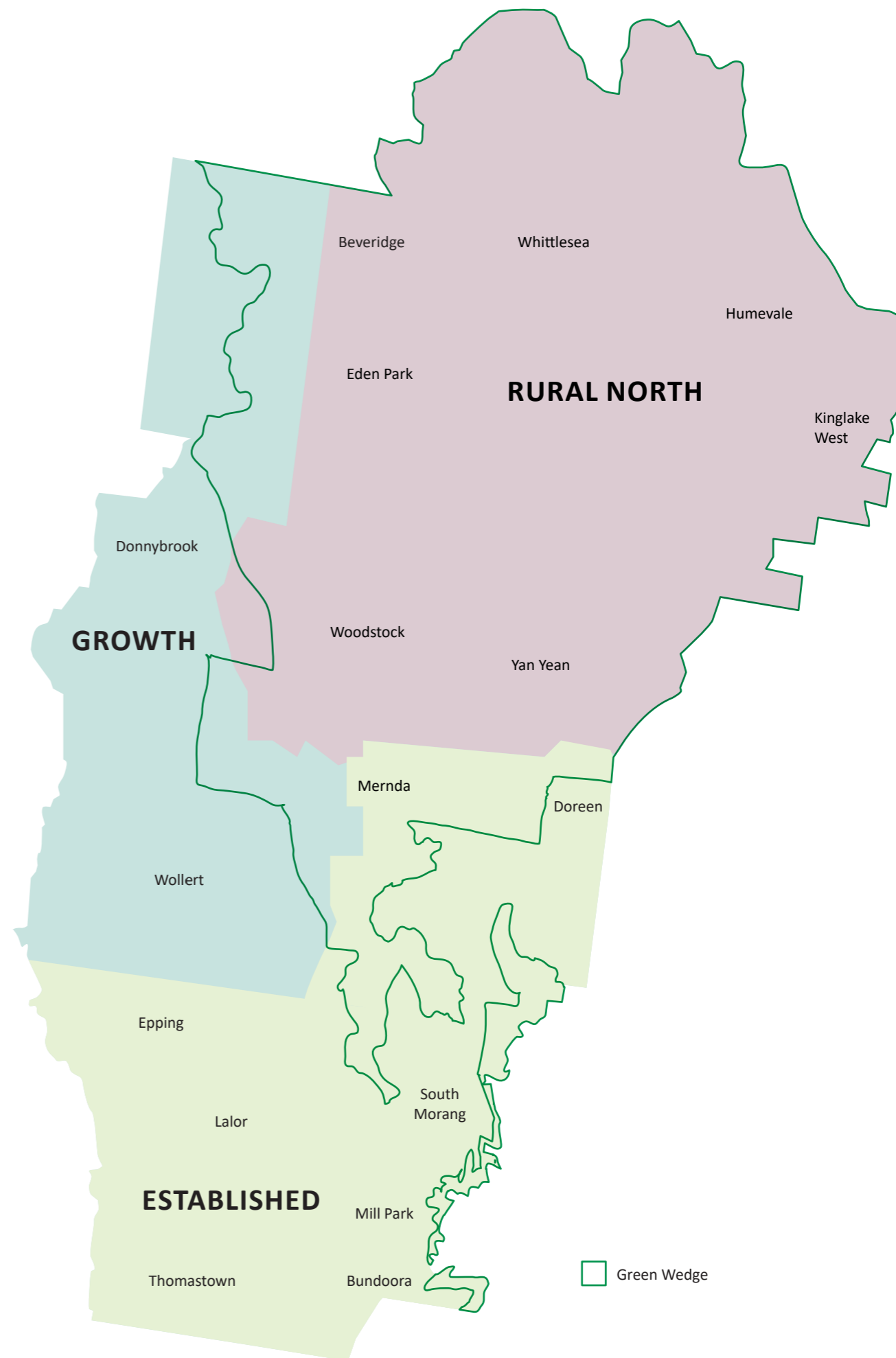
The Green Wedge holds a significant proportion of unimpacted cultural heritage. It has many sacred and special places for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and the Taungurung people. It provides the open space to celebrate and facilitate enhanced cultural practice.

Rural north

Open space in Whittlesea Township caters to the rural community living and working in the rural north. The needs of the rural community are different from those living in the urban area of the Whittlesea Township.

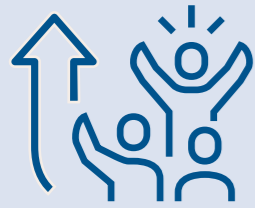
We will need to consider forecast for housing density and demographics when planning open space. To meet changing needs, Council has upgraded Whittlesea Park, introducing a new community park facility.

The rural north community has easy access to the large open spaces of Kinglake National Park and the Yan Yean and Toorourrong reservoirs.



Future context

Our open space is essential to the liveability of our city. Social, environmental and economic changes affect the way we plan. Understanding current and future challenges will help us to create an open space network for future generations.



Population growth

Urban expansion and increasing density are straining our open space network. We face significant challenges in providing equitable open space for the community.

Urban expansion and density

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest-growing areas in Greater Melbourne.

Our population has grown by **64,852 in the last 10 years**. It is expected to grow by another **111,020 by 2040**. Growth is expected across new residential developments and established suburbs. Population density is predicted to increase from **473 people per square kilometre in 2021 to 737 people per square kilometre in 2041**.

Established areas are likely to absorb 60 per cent of the population increase. Inequity in the provision and quality of open space between established areas and new growth areas may continue without further intervention.

Opportunities for private greening can be a challenge. Housing in new subdivisions typically have smaller lot sizes, with less private open space. New schools may have less open space than older schools. There is pressure on public open space to provide greening.

We typically work with developers who design the open space for communities that are yet to arrive. This can reduce our ability to engage community in the design of these spaces.

Open space infrastructure in new subdivisions does not always keep up with the arrival of the community. The reasons for this can be complex. For example, where a central open space extends across multiple land developments. Planning should include options to mitigate delays and reduce gaps in open space provision.

Competing interests

Park recreation zones are highly contested spaces. As open spaces become busier, conflict between user groups may increase; for example, dog walkers and cyclists on a shared path. New and expanding infrastructure can reduce open space. Buildings, telecommunications infrastructure and community facilities may not be complementary or included in our Open Space Framework.

When creating places for different purposes and users, engagement with the community about behaviour and use of open space will assist with design.

Council is promoting club sustainability and co-location of facilities for formal and informal sports participation and wider community use. The Victorian Government is also driving reforms for kindergarten, maternal and child health services over the next decade. The reforms will likely impact on open space provision.

Our integrated approach to community facility and property planning explores complementary commercial and Council services. It considers:

- Alternative options for facilities or infrastructure that detrimentally affect the quantity and useability of open space
- Whether one user group significantly restricts the access of other groups
- Partnerships with schools containing open space to ensure community sport and leisure needs can continue to be met in the long term.



Social need, vulnerability and equity

Our diverse and growing population needs well-designed and well-managed open spaces. Open spaces should be resilient to consistent and frequent use. They should foster community engagement and provide welcoming environments where people feel safe.

Expectations

Community expectations of open spaces have steadily increased over time. The increased promotion of new parks and facilities across Melbourne contributes to rising expectations. The Open Space Framework and its supporting plans and guidelines will help us to manage and address expectations.

Expectations for higher standards of equity and inclusion are supported by legislation, which mandates provision of safe and equitable open spaces.

Demographics

Changing demographics will increase demand for social activity opportunities and informal recreation.

By 2040 we expect:



35% increase in young people aged 10–25 years



66% increase in residents aged 50 years and over



119% increase in residents aged 75 and over

In the City of Whittlesea, 21% of people have a permanent or long-term disability. The number of young children with disabilities has been steadily increasing, which highlights the need for supportive open spaces now and in the future. Equitable access requires a human-centred design that considers the entire user experience.

Informal and passive opportunities

More than half of our residents do not engage in the recommended minimum level of physical activity. Long working hours, the rising cost of living and a shift away from club-based sports highlight the need for access to free and informal exercise opportunities in open space.

Social disadvantage, mental health issues, and poor perceptions of safety highlight the need for safe, welcoming outdoor spaces that encourage physical activity and community wellbeing.

Climate justice

Heatwaves are Australia's deadliest natural hazard and are increasingly prevalent in areas of social disadvantage.

Rising temperatures increase the risk of heat-related illnesses and discourage outdoor leisure activities. Access to cool green parks and shaded streetscapes is essential for providing relief.

Green space and canopy cover can moderate the effects of income inequality on mortality. In other words, people who make a smaller income but live near more green space have better health outcomes than people who earn the same income have access to the least green space.



Fast Fact

The City of Whittlesea has been identified as one of the top five hottest and disadvantaged local government areas in Victoria.

The Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect and Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score in the 27 'City' LGAs in Melbourne.



Environmental resilience and sustainability

In recent decades, the City of Whittlesea has become hotter and drier. Habitats are fragmented and climate change presents an unprecedented challenge both globally and locally.

Biodiversity

As one of Melbourne’s urban growth zones, ongoing residential development and climate change pose a threat to local biodiversity. They increase habitat fragmentation, wildlife displacement, the spread of weeds and pest animals, and alterations to fire and water regimes.

A healthy natural environment is resilient and genetically diverse. We are experiencing a change in natural selection, extinction of some species, reduced food production and threats to human health from ecosystem change. Human activity has dramatically increased the rate of change, making it hard for nature to adapt.

Within our municipality, 35% (17,000 hectares) is original native vegetation. Of this, 29% (4,860 hectares) is remnant vegetation under the permanent protection of crown land. Within the last 30 years, 52 threatened flora and fauna species have been recorded within the City of Whittlesea.

Land clearance is a key threat to our biodiversity. Clearing of Country reduces continuous areas of habitat. Smaller habitat patches become more vulnerable to weed and pest animals, droughts and catastrophic events such as bushfire. The connectivity of patches of habitat is important for animals to recolonise and disperse.

Water for life

The *Long-Term Water Resource Assessment for Southern Victoria* found:

- Water availability has decreased by 16–18 per cent in three of Melbourne’s river basins since 1975, and by 7 per cent in the fourth basin
- Average rainfall will continue to decline, particularly in winter and spring.

Potable water use in the City of Whittlesea is currently lower than the Melbourne average per person. Our need for water will increase substantially as the population grows. At the same time, potable water reservoirs are likely to have less water as our climate changes.

Open space design and management provides opportunities to reduce demand and more efficiently use our scarce water resources through retention and use of rainwater and by harvesting, treating and reusing stormwater.

Fast Fact

Biodiversity supports stormwater filtration, pollination, nutrient cycling, pest regulation, soil health, seed dispersal and carbon sequestration. As greenfield urban development expands, we lose biodiversity and fragment the remaining native vegetation. Without careful stormwater management, pollution of our waterways and their aquatic ecosystems will increase.

Climate change



Australia’s climate warmed by 1.50°C (± 0.23°C) between 1910 and 2023, leading to an increase in the frequency of extreme heat events. Global temperatures are continuing to rise.

Our open space network is a strength, but it is also vulnerable to bushfires, heat risk, rapid urban development and changes in land use.

While open space is vulnerable to climate change, it is also an opportunity to build resilience. For example, a healthy tree portfolio increases resilience in times of heat or drought. Planting programs, an even spread of tree canopy and resilient species choices are important. We need to continue to prioritise planting in low canopy cover areas such as Donnybrook, Wollert, Lalor, Epping and Thomastown.



Climate change, rate capping, and competition for funding will affect the financial sustainability of open space provision and management.

Extreme weather events

Climate change is shifting how rain falls, with greater downpours in summer and increasing risk of flooding in some areas.

Flooding can introduce pollutants into open spaces and damage sports grounds and vegetation. Extreme weather can harm well-established trees through strong and multi-directional wind gusts. Erosion of landscapes and pathways will increase rehabilitation costs and create accessibility issues.

Extreme weather will have financial impacts that directly affect maintenance schedules, asset renewal, vegetation and tree planting programs.

Fast Fact

Australia is experiencing more frequent and severe extreme weather events such as bushfires, floods, storms and droughts. Climate change will influence all aspects of the water cycle. Future climates are likely to be drier, hotter and more severe. This increases the chance that droughts will be more regular and affect the quality of open space.



Opportunities

Your ideas for change included:

- More shade, especially at play spaces
- More attractive off-lead dog parks where community can meet
- More play spaces which consider preschoolers and older children
- More opportunities for neighbourhood communities to meet at events, youth hubs in open space
- More lighting, covered facilities, toilets and bins
- More paths and path networks that connect
- Connections between parkland and wildlife corridors.
- More signage, mulch and care of gardens
- Control of e-bikes and motorbikes

Community Engagement on Draft Public Open Space Plan 2026-2036

The Public Open Space Plan 2026-36 development was informed by discussions and feedback from Wurundjeri elders, City of Whittlesea Youth Council, group submissions, stakeholder workshops and your feedback from community surveys, draft consultation survey and 14 pop-up's across the municipality.

Feedback has been analysed and has confirmed overwhelming support for the Plan. This valuable input has informed the plan through changes to the final plan and implementation of the plan actions. Including in the development of guidelines, and the planning, design, activation and management of the public open space network.

What you enjoy



Walking paths



Views and to be amongst the trees



Gardens and Natural bush



Wayfinding



Range of facilities



Socialise my dogs in a safe place



Small community atmosphere



Accessible and safe for my additional needs



Quiet and watching birds and kangaroos





Our Open Space Vision

A green city for people and wildlife. A city of connected open spaces, majestic river red gums, waterways and winding trails. A city of parks, town centres, cultural landscapes and streetscapes, that are welcoming, vibrant and well-designed for all.

We are planning for the City of Whittlesea to be embedded in nature. Our suburbs have superb landscapes, a natural environment and majestic trees. They are home to a connected network of open space, trails, town centres and streetscapes that are welcoming, vibrant and well-designed.

We are planning for a place where cultural and natural assets are an enduring source of pride. A place that embraces connection to Country, health and wellbeing – with a community that celebrates people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities. A place that has open space within five minutes of homes.

We want to increase the useability of open space for those who want to experience nature and for those who want options for physical activity.

We want our open space to be even more vibrant and welcoming. We want to increase the use and diversity of open space through public art, events and activities, informal physical activities and commercial opportunities.

We want our community to feel valued and safe in their neighbourhoods and when exploring. We want to reduce barriers to the use of open space and focus on the priorities of our community.

Our Public Open Space Plan recognises and celebrates the needs of our diverse community. It focuses on equitable, accessible and safe open space.

We want visits to open space to be equitable for those who need support for wellbeing. We want to increase the diversity of open space experiences, facilities and information.

We want our open space to be greener, cooler and more resilient to climate change. The natural environment is fundamental to our public open space network. To have a healthy community we need a healthy environment. We want an environment that the community can immerse themselves in, with cool spaces, trees and sustainable biodiverse gardens

Our open space legacy

Our past approaches to open space have shaped the open space legacy we enjoy today. But we need to adapt our approach to meet the needs of our future community.

We will evolve the way we plan and deliver open space to transform our open space network. Our key moves will include:

- Building on our open space legacy to grow and change with our community
- Evolving our open space service delivery model to better meet local community needs, increase community use of open space and improve perceptions of safety
- Using an evidence-based methodology to assess the effectiveness of our services and guide our approach
- Designing and building resilience in our open space network by prioritising canopy cover, biodiversity and environmentally sustainable design
- Maximising access to revenue streams, such as open space contributions, commercial and development opportunities, public art contributions, and private and public grants

- Exploring innovative design options for a holistic approach to planning, delivering, managing and maintaining open space
- Exploring innovative options and identifying opportunities to increase open space in areas with an open space deficiency.
- Evaluating large areas of open space that Council does not currently manage for potential inclusion in our management portfolio
- Evaluating non-Council open space that we manage to determine value and to balance maintenance costs against community benefit
- Exploring options for joint use agreements with other public space owners and partnerships with other local governments to find resource efficiencies.



Our open space principles

We have four planning principles. These underpin our approach to planning, designing, activating and managing the public open space network.



Our directions

This plan aims to strengthen open space by connecting it at local and regional scales. It aims to enhance Country, provide immersive experiences and ensure the network can be shared equitably by all. The City of Whittlesea and open space landowners need to work together to protect, optimise and grow our open space legacy.

Caring for Country

Caring for Country is central to planning. We will:

- Recognise the rights of Traditional Owners and their deep connection to and knowledge of Country
- Increase awareness of Country, traditional custodianship and cultural practice
- Support the Wurundjeri woi-wurrung Whole of Country Plan 2025 - 2035
- Integrate Traditional Owner custodianship into the management of Country through collaboration and partnerships
- Recognise legislative changes that may emerge from the Yoorrook Commission, including the Treaty process
- Make changes to the Public Open Space Plan where relevant to Country and public open space planning to incorporate the cultural landscapes approach
- Adhere to the principles in the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy*, *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy* and the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework*.

Equity at heart

Equity is at the heart of our open space plan. We will:

- Provide equitable open space outcomes for people of all abilities and include the open space needs of women and girls
- Improve our understanding of the use of open space, barriers to using open space and perceptions of safety
- Engage with Council committees and local user groups on projects of significance to gain insights and receive feedback
- Engage the community in the creation of welcoming and safe open space
- Adopt an outcome design approach that aligns with the Victorian Government Universal Design Policy
- Adopt a climate justice and human-centred approach to address climate change.

Place-based approach

We are committed to a place-based approach. We will:

- Embrace and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of neighbourhood communities
- Provide a targeted approach to municipal areas that recognises the characteristics of landscape and communities
- Promote the contribution of natural and cultural heritage to our sense of place
- Highlight the value of built form and landscape to liveable communities
- Work in partnership and collaboration with other levels of government, agencies and stakeholder groups to plan, fund and deliver local integrated outcomes for our community.

Integrated people-focused approach

Our plan has an integrated people-focused approach. We will:

- Use human-centred design for innovative solutions
- Collaborate with multi-disciplinary stakeholders, authorities and the community
- Incorporate a whole-of-lifecycle approach when planning the open space network.

Connected, immersive and equitable

We will strengthen the connected, immersive and equitable aspects of the open space network.

Connected

A network connected at the local and landscape scales to:

- Better protect biodiversity
- Reduce the fragmentation of habitat
- Enable movement through open space using on and off-road shared paths
- Enable enjoyment of an expansive and rich open space experience.

Immersive

Open space that enables an immersive experience through:

- Creating a city in nature
- Enhancing the enjoyment of nature connections
- Quality design and characteristics of a cooler greener city.

Equitable

An equitably accessible network shared by everyone as a community asset that we can all access, enjoy and benefit from regardless of age, gender, ability or location

Protect, optimise and grow

Council and open space landowners need to protect, optimise and grow our open space network.

Protect

Protection of our open space legacy through:

- Legislation and regulation that values open space as essential to liveability
- Actions to mitigate, adapt to and recover from the impacts of climate change, including integrated water management
- Strategic investment to cater for increased demand for open space for recreational use arising from population growth and higher population density.

Optimise

Optimisation of the open space network by:

- Better connecting ecological and blue-green corridors along waterways
- Increasing shade throughout the open space network
- Revitalising the quality, safety, functionality, aesthetics, shared use, accessibility and programming of existing open space
- Creating active, vibrant and welcoming spaces
- Repurposing underused existing and surplus public land.

Grow

Growth in our open space network by:

- Identifying and planning for new, high-quality open space in areas of deficiency and poor connection
- Planning for parks, trails and waterway corridors that improve radial and cross-radial connectivity
- Strategically and proactively acquiring land and applying public acquisition overlays that anticipate future needs.





Our open space focus areas



Open space provision

We will create and maintain open space. In doing so, we will address current and future challenges. We will rethink how we work efficiently and effectively with partners and the community to plan, fund, design and deliver, and manage open space.



Biodiversity

We will create and maintain high-quality, connected open space, landscapes and waterway corridors for the health of our diverse ecosystems, plants and animals – especially those that are threatened and endangered.



Community health and wellbeing

We will create and maintain safe, high-quality and connected open space that provides equitable access and supports the mental, physical and cultural wellbeing of residents.



Climate change resilience

We will plan for the impacts of extreme weather and for cooler, greener and water-sensitive open space.



Economic and social benefits

We will consider how open space can increase visitor expenditure, social health, property values and transport savings.





Focus area 1: Open space provision

We will create and maintain open space. In doing so, we will address current and future challenges. We will rethink how we work efficiently and effectively with partners and the community to plan, fund, design and deliver open space.

Our *Public Open Space Plan* anticipates challenges from population growth, urbanisation, climate change, competing pressures and increased demands on the public open space network. We must fundamentally rethink how we plan, fund, design and deliver open space.

This focus area emphasises planning and advocating for better open space outcomes. It places a high value on environment, property planning and land acquisition. It uses integration of cross-council planning and design, better documentation of design expectations, measuring outcomes, and efficiencies in planning, funding and delivery to achieve a high-quality open space network.

A Public Open Space Property Guide FA 1:12 will be prepared to support open space provision and improve the use of underutilised areas. Council may acquire or divest land to maintain a well-planned, high-quality open space network that is fit for purpose, equitable, and responsive to community needs, including securing strategic sites and protecting land with environmental, cultural, or recreational value. Any purchase, acquisition, or divestment will adhere to Council's Strategic Property and Land Plan 2025–2030 framework and processes and Council's community engagement policy, ensuring decisions are transparent, consistent, and focused on long-term community benefit.

Our focus area actions are:

- 1.1 Undertake a City-wide gap analysis of open space provision.
- 1.2 Prepare suburban action plans to achieve service standards.
- 1.3 Develop a prioritised long-term open space capital program.
- 1.4 Open Space Planning to advocate for the acquisition of open space.
- 1.5 Develop framework for community infrastructure in public open space.
- 1.6 Develop access and use guidelines for encumbered land.
- 1.7 Seek informed evidence and justification for the amendment of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to give effect to the new Open Space Plan.
- 1.8 Prepare the evidence base to support open space contributions in established areas.
- 1.9 Document a methodology and process for the transparent collection, management and expenditure of open space development contributions for established areas.
- 1.10 Prepare relevant guidelines to support the implementation of the Public Open Space Plan.
- 1.11 Establish criteria for financially valuing natural assets.
- 1.12 Develop a Public Open Space Property Guide which supports open space provision and addresses underutilisation of open space for local communities.
- 1.13 Integrate an ongoing review process of future open space provisions within Precinct Structure Plans.
- 1.14 Deliver considered entry points and connected path networks along Regional park interfaces.
- 1.15 Identify opportunities to deliver protected and legible crossings across the Northern Regional Trails network.
- 1.16 Submit open space advocacy priorities to the Advocacy Plan annually.
- 1.17 Review prioritisation and delivery of masterplans.
- 1.18 Deliver open space masterplanning along local creek corridors.
- 1.19 Deliver linear open space corridors and associated infrastructure





Focus area 2: Community health and wellbeing

We will create and maintain safe, high-quality and connected open space that provides equitable access and supports the mental, physical and cultural wellbeing of residents.

Our community needs equitable access to diverse high-quality, safe and connected open space for their cultural, mental and physical health and wellbeing. By identifying and removing barriers, we can enhance the usability of open space and support a better user experience.

Young children with disabilities need welcoming, accessible and informed open space that consider the user journey. The use of enhanced communication and technology will support visits. Dedicated passive spaces, shade, interpretive information and opportunities for casual exercise will encourage use of open space.

We will look at different models for interacting with open space, and how we can support the community to feel safe and welcome. We will build increased visibility and awareness of community cultural diversity through events, arts and interpretive material. Add another sentence. Planning and design approaches for play spaces will be reviewed to better accommodate all age groups through the development of the Play space Guidelines (Action 1.10).

By providing dedicated quiet spaces for connecting with nature we can enhance community life, strengthen communities and promote healthier, happier lives.

Individuals who are not actively engaged in their neighbourhood community, or who are no longer participating in the workforce, may face an increased risk of social isolation. Encouraging community connection through our parks and open spaces requires deliberate planning and activation.

Enhancement of the open space network will focus on expanding shade and greening initiatives, identifying suitable locations for irrigated lawns, enhancing sustainable garden beds, and designing spaces that better support events and community gatherings. Activation will be further supported through public art, programs, and events that draw people together.

Integrating age-friendly spaces, facilities, and programs will foster inclusive participation, helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness while supporting positive physical and mental health outcomes.

Some areas of our municipality are vulnerable to extreme heat and often there is an interim period where shade is dependent upon tree establishment. This applies to playspaces in particular, and increased shade will be considered when developing the Playspace Guidelines and Landscape Guidelines.

Our focus area actions are:

- 2.1 Engage with our local communities and our community development and diversity officers to better understand and address barriers to use of open space.
- 2.2 Develop online platforms, autism scripts, and maps for easy access to information about amenities, walking tracks, culture and facilities.
- 2.3 Prepare a Public Open Space Activation Plan.
- 2.4 Review and update open space design briefs to equitably incorporate contemplative, passive, and reflective spaces that support wellbeing.
- 2.5 Increase canopy cover along pedestrian and cycling routes.
- 2.6 Increase access to the connected open space network through the prioritisation of off-road circuits and thoroughfare paths in all planning.
- 2.7 Establish age-friendly, integrated spaces and multi-purpose recreation reserves to support specialist group programs, sporting clubs and the wider community.
- 2.8 Investigate methods to guide and support community-led environmental volunteering and informal engagement in parks and reserves.
- 2.9 Identify temporary open space activation opportunities.
- 2.10 Deliver the Public Lighting Guide.





Focus area 3: Biodiversity

We will create and maintain high-quality, connected open space, landscapes and waterway corridors for the health of our diverse ecosystems, plants and animals – especially those that are threatened and endangered.

A green, thriving biodiverse open space network – valued for its beauty and functionality – provides space where people can connect with nature and wildlife, meet, exercise and relax.

A healthy natural environment is resilient and genetically diverse. Human activity has dramatically sped up the rate of change making it harder for nature to adapt.

We need to consider:

- Biodiversity in all aspects of planning, implementation and management for open space
- Integrated strategic water projects at the precinct and local scale
- Revegetation informed by ecological assessments and thoughtful planting plans
- Biodiversity along water bodies, roads, recreation reserves and barren spaces such as powerline easements
- Increased planting and improving the efficiency of existing garden beds.

Council has a dedicated Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029 outlining Council's direction to improving the management and protection of biodiversity across the Municipality. It builds on the many efforts already underway by individuals, community groups, and government and aims to develop a coordinated approach that will allow for our natural environments to thrive as the City continues to grow.

The Public Open Space Plan biodiversity actions is aimed at expanding this effort, supporting the actions in the biodiversity strategy and by specifically bringing a strong focus to biodiversity across the broader open space network in addition to great work occurring in the municipalities Conservation Reserves.

Community empowerment, education and ownership of environmental challenges is essential. Our community want to know more about the environment and native plants. Where there is strong demand for community gardens and biodiversity projects in open space, we will support community participation. We will also support innovative projects that encourage increased ownership of local parks.

Council conservation efforts will continue to expand beyond traditional weed management, pest control and revegetation. We are restoring large and degraded areas using direct seeding, where seed is harvested. Seed production areas for indigenous plants and a productive nursery of rare plants are in place.

Whittlesea is home to a number of vulnerable and endangered species, with several listed under the EPBC Act at the national level, such as the Growling Grass Frog and Matted Flax Lily. This places an obligation on Whittlesea to manage these populations, and targeted open space planning and management is critical to this.

Our focus area actions are:

- 3.1 Advocate to secure the 1200ha Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve.
- 3.2 Establish guidelines to increase populations of bird and insect pollinators in open spaces.
- 3.3 Establish educational food, fibre, medicine indigenous gardens.
- 3.4 Expand low maintenance management regimes which benefit biodiversity.
- 3.5 Identify opportunities for wildlife habitat corridors.
- 3.6 Undertake ecological assessments, preliminary water balance studies, arborist reports, desktop CHMP audits and geotechnical investigations.
- 3.7 Prepare planting plans that increase biodiversity in all open space masterplans and Landscape improvement plans.
- 3.8 Incorporate a biodiversity-focused approach when preparing use and access guidelines for encumbered land.
- 3.9 Continue implementation of multi-year trial program for the collection and use of indigenous and local provenance seeds.
- 3.10 Deliver community engagement programs in locations identified for increased biodiversity.
- 3.11 Develop a strategic open space delivery program aimed at conservation and habitat creation along creek corridors.



A colourful parrot amongst white eucalyptus blossoms



Focus area 4: Climate change resilience

We will plan for the impacts of extreme weather and for cooler, greener and water-sensitive open space. This focus area aims for a connected, cooler, greener and water-sensitive open space network, resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Council has a clear commitment to a sustainable environment, outlined in the Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032 and the Climate Change Plan 2022-2032. These demonstrate the City of Whittlesea's contribution toward prevention and securing a sustainable, net zero emissions, and climate resilient future for all.

Resilience to fire, drought and storm events can be improved by integrated water management. Water sensitive urban design, water harvesting and increased canopy cover will all increase resilience.

Connected green streetscapes and waterways are vital to reducing habitat fragmentation and enhancing the overall strength of the open space network.

Climate change has the potential to adversely affect biodiversity in Whittlesea through changes to the quality, extent and distribution of vegetation and habitat, changes to hydrology (the natural wetting and drying cycles and frequency and duration of inundation) of wetlands and watercourses, and changes in the diversity and abundance of wildlife reliant upon those habitats. Actions to increase connectiveness of open space, habitat and increase habitat are included throughout the plan and in Focus Area 3 Biodiversity.

Working at a regional level with partners and neighbouring councils, we can create consistency by implementing joint management plans and exploring opportunities to expand and connect open space corridors.

Council is a member of the marram baba parklands working group, Greening the North and the Darebin and Merri Creek Management Committees. We collaborate with Melbourne Water to manage creek corridor interfaces, including conservation areas.

Our focus area actions are:

- 4.1 Integrate Sustainable Environment Strategy outcomes and Climate Action Plan priorities into open space network planning.
- 4.2 Prepare management plans for regional parks and waterways.
- 4.3 Continue to implement outcomes of annual landscape and River Red Gum audits.
- 4.4 Prepare arborist reports as part of all project scoping and business cases.
- 4.5 Deliver and enforce sustainable infrastructure design standards within open space.
- 4.6 Develop a strategy for priority tree planting in streets and reserves.





Focus area 5: Economic and social benefits

We will consider how open space can increase visitor expenditure, social health, property values and transport savings.

Expenditure by visitors, social health, property values and transport savings are among the direct economic benefits of open space.

The location and role of the municipality as a Green Wedge highlights our tourism value. The City of Whittlesea aims to be an eco-tourism hub. As a destination, we offer six major picnic and play facilities, an impressive portfolio of river red gums and 50 significant cultural sites.

Key attractions such as bunjil nganga Parklands and Whittlesea Public Gardens are close to the marram baba Merri Creek Parklands and Plenty Gorge Park. Interconnected trails draw visitors from all over Melbourne.

Our town centre refurbishment program is rejuvenating local hubs. Enhancing placemaking in these areas will contribute to neighbourhood vibrancy. Initiatives such as pop-up parks, streetscape enhancements, public art, community and business grants, and shopfront improvement schemes can yield positive social and economic outcomes.

The future development of a public open space property plan and an advocacy prospectus for regional parklands will support the identification and realisation of funding and commercial opportunities within open space, where culturally and environmentally appropriate, investing back into open space.

Highlighting attractions in our built and natural features helps our community and visitors to get to know the City of Whittlesea. This provides accessible holiday and leisure opportunities for community close to home. Promoting the open space network and trail network can be supported by visitor information and holiday at home plans to explore the municipality.

Our focus area actions are:

- 5.1 Develop standards and advocate for passive irrigation of trees, verges and gardens.
- 5.2 Integrate emerging and innovative Integrated Water Management (IWM) and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) measures into the public open space network.
- 5.3 Invest in Traditional Owner enterprise through management of open space and cultural practices.
- 5.4 Develop Suburb Place Frameworks and established area Precinct Plans to deliver a co-ordinated approach to renewal and investment.
- 5.5 Develop a process/policy to return commercial user fees to open space management, supporting increased use and activation of town centres and parks.
- 5.6 Develop improvement/maintenance plans for waterbodies, creeks and tributaries.
- 5.7 Create an integrated Visitor Experience Plan.
- 5.8 Develop frameworks that can measure the performance, user experience and utilisation of open space provision.
- 5.9 Develop a cultural investment plan for bunjil nganga Parklands, in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung.
- 5.10 Prepare an open space wayfinding guide for provision of all directional, regulatory and interpretive signage.
- 5.11 Establish criteria for calculating social return on open space financial investment.
- 5.12 Reduce barriers to access for Regional open spaces.
- 5.13 Deliver a legible and accessible shared user path network.
- 5.14 Develop an accessible wayfinding strategy.





Making it happen

Implementing and monitoring

The Public Open Space Plan 2026–36 sets a 10-year direction for the planning, design and management of open space across the municipality. It will be delivered through a prioritised Implementation Plan, supported by a detailed Background Technical Report.

Implementation will be guided by our open space principles and focused on achieving measurable outcomes for the community. Progress and performance will be tracked through the Integrated Planning Framework, alongside ongoing community engagement.

The Community Plan outlines Council’s commitments and how we measure success over time. Annual reporting will assess progress against our open space principles and the indicators in Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All, ensuring transparency and enabling Council to respond to emerging needs and priorities.

We will:

- Report progress annually through the Integrated Planning Framework
- Review overall achievements each year
- Undertake a comprehensive review of implementation priorities in 2030.



Implementation plan

Time Frame Legend

Immediate and ongoing
Short: 1-3 years Medium: 4-6 years
Long: 7+ years



Municipal-wide actions Focus area 1: Open space provision

	Anticipated Time Frame	Principle				Direction		
		Caring for Country	Equity at Heart	Place-based approach	Integrated people focused approach	Protect	Optimise	Grow
1.1. Undertake a City-wide gap analysis of open space provision.	Short	●	●	●	●	●		●
1.2. Prepare suburban action plans to achieve service standards.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.3. Develop a prioritised long-term open space capital program that complies with the Open Space Framework and directions to facilitate an equitable and holistic open space network.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.4. Open Space Planning to advocate for the acquisition of open space to protect, optimise and grow the open space network.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.5. Develop framework for community infrastructure in public open space.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.6. Develop access and use guidelines for encumbered land in partnership with agencies and landowners to optimise the open space network for the community.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.7. Seek informed evidence and justification for the amendment of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to give effect to the new Open Space Plan.	Short	●	●	●		●	●	●
1.8. Prepare the evidence base to support open space contributions in established areas.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.9. Document a methodology and process for the transparent collection, management and expenditure of open space development contributions for established areas.	Short		●	●	●	●		●
1.10. Prepare relevant guidelines to support the implementation of the Public Open Space Plan for developer and Council use. These may include maintenance, landscape, urban design or water management guidelines, the reframing of existing or the creation of new policy or guidelines.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.11. Establish criteria for financially valuing natural assets, considering ecological, cultural, and recreational values.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.12. Develop a Public Open Space Property Guide which supports open space provision and addresses underutilisation of open space for local communities.	Short	●	●	●	●		●	
1.13. Integrate an ongoing review process of future open space provisions within Precinct Structure Plans, to allow for shifting community demands.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.14. Deliver considered entry points and connected path networks along Regional park interfaces. Increase connectivity and permeability into Regional open space destinations to support accessibility and encourage use.	Short		●	●			●	●
1.15. Identify opportunities to deliver protected and legible crossings across the Northern Regional Trails network, enhancing Strategic Cycling Corridors and shared user paths. Work with neighbouring councils to ensure continuity in trail design and legibility.	Short		●	●			●	
1.16. Submit open space advocacy priorities to the Advocacy Plan annually.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.17. Review prioritisation and delivery of masterplans.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.18. Deliver open space masterplanning along local creek corridors, supporting riparian corridor protections and enhancement. Harness planning overlay changes to support these protections.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.19. Deliver linear open space corridors and associated infrastructure, including within powerline easements, to support shared user paths and an active travel network, improving connectivity between future open spaces and existing open spaces, including Whittlesea Township.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●		

Implementation plan

Time Frame Legend

Immediate and ongoing
Short: 1-3 years Medium: 4-6 years
Long: 7+ years



Municipal-wide actions

Focus area 2: Community Health and wellbeing

	Anticipated Time Frame	Principle				Direction		
		Caring for Country	Equity at Heart	Place-based approach	Integrated people focused approach	Protect	Optimise	Grow
2.1. Engage with our local communities and our community development and diversity officers to better understand and address barriers to use of open space.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.2. Develop online platforms, autism scripts, and maps for easy access to information about amenities, walking tracks, culture and facilities to increase access for vulnerable communities through user journey planning.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.3. Prepare a Public Open Space Activation Plan that audits the open space network, identifying and mapping opportunities for activation through festivals, events, programming, informal facilities, information and signage; assessing accessibility and infrastructure requirements; reviewing leasing arrangements and commercial enterprise payments; and making prioritised, costed recommendations to increase activation and use across the network.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.4. Review and update open space design briefs to equitably incorporate contemplative, passive, and reflective spaces that support wellbeing , through individual respite and small-group passive activities.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	
2.5. Increase canopy cover along pedestrian and cycling routes to reduce ultraviolet radiation exposure and enhance the amenity.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.6. Increase access to the connected open space network through the prioritisation of off-road circuits and thoroughfare paths in all planning.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.7. Establish age-friendly, integrated spaces and multi-purpose recreation reserves to support specialist group programs, sporting clubs and the wider community.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	
2.8. Investigate methods to guide and support community-led environmental volunteering and informal engagement in parks and reserves to encourage community ownership, support maintenance and reduce vandalism.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.9. Identify temporary open space activation opportunities. Explore opportunities for temporary activation through ephemeral art and/ or pop-up programming, where temporary open space gaps exist in new developments.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.10. Deliver the Public Lighting Guide that integrates CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles to guide lighting design for all open spaces.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	●

Implementation plan

Time Frame Legend

Immediate and ongoing
Short: 1-3 years Medium: 4-6 years
Long: 7+ years



Municipal-wide actions Focus area 3: Biodiversity

	Anticipated Time Frame	Principle				Direction		
		Caring for Country	Equity at Heart	Place-based approach	Integrated people focused approach	Protect	Optimise	Grow
3.1. Advocate to secure the 1200ha Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3.2. Establish guidelines to increase populations of bird and insect pollinators in open spaces, increasing connection to nature in multifunctional spaces.	Short	●	●	●	●			
3.3. Establish food, fibre, medicine indigenous gardens prioritising Whittlesea Public Gardens and bunjil nganga Parklands to engage with the community.	Medium	●						
3.4. Expand low maintenance management regimes which benefit biodiversity, including through trials on differential mowing, meadowing and pollinator garden trials beyond conservation reserves.	Immediate and ongoing		●	●			●	
3.5. Identify opportunities for wildlife habitat corridors when developing or approving precinct structure plans, development plans, master plans, park improvement plans and streetscape masterplans.	Immediate and ongoing		●	●	●			●
3.6. Undertake ecological assessments, preliminary water balance studies, arborist reports, desktop CHMP audits and geotechnical investigations during the preliminary scoping and technical investigation phase when preparing master plans for major open spaces.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●		
3.7. Prepare planting plans that increase biodiversity in all open space masterplans and Landscape improvement plans.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	
3.8. Incorporate a biodiversity-focused approach when preparing use and access guidelines for encumbered land (i.e. not owned by Council, but maintained by Council), in partnership with relevant agencies.	Immediate and ongoing	●		●				
3.9. Continue implementation of multi-year trial program for the collection and use of indigenous and local provenance seeds to increase local open space resilience.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3.10. Deliver community engagement programs in locations identified for increased biodiversity. Facilitate action and provide opportunities to share skills, knowledge and increase social interaction.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3.11. Develop a strategic open space delivery program aimed at conservation and habitat creation along creek corridors. Support the revegetation and revitalisation of the municipality's many creek corridors, through strategic open space delivery that provides habitat and conservation along and adjacent to the creek corridors.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Implementation plan

Time Frame Legend

Immediate and ongoing
Short: 1-3 years

Medium: 4-6 years
Long: 7+ years



Municipal-wide actions

Focus area 4: Climate change resilience

	Anticipated Time Frame	Principle				Direction		
		Caring for Country	Equity at Heart	Place-based approach	Integrated people focused approach	Protect	Optimise	Grow
<p>4.1. Integrate Sustainable Environment Strategy outcomes 1.2, 1.3, 2.1 and 2.3 and Climate Action Plan priorities 6 and 7 into open space network planning.</p> <p>Sustainable Environment Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2. Land management and land use are sustainable 1.3. Natural environment and biodiversity are resilient to climate change 2.1. City's green cover is enhanced to reduce the risk of extreme heat 2.3. Built environment and infrastructure are built to support safe and healthy communities in a changing climate. <p>Climate Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Climate resilient built environment and infrastructure 7. Climate resilient natural environment and biodiversity 	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<p>4.2. Prepare management plans for regional parks and waterways that provide for investment in the ongoing resilience, maintenance, protection, safety and operations of the open space network.</p>	Medium	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<p>4.3. Continue to implement outcomes of annual landscape and River Red Gum audits into maintenance specifications, open space planning, design briefs and landscape guidelines.</p>	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	
<p>4.4. Prepare arborist reports as part of all project scoping and business cases for landscape, civil and community infrastructure capital works projects.</p>	Immediate and ongoing			●				
<p>4.5. Deliver and enforce sustainable infrastructure design standards within open space and communicate the Neighbourhood Design Manual landscape and water guidelines, standard drawings and maintenance standards to Council teams and developers.</p>	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●		
<p>4.6. Develop a strategy for priority tree planting in streets and reserves where low tree canopy cover has been identified, guided by an inventory of heat vulnerability across the municipality.</p>	Short	●	●	●	●			

Implementation plan

Time Frame Legend

Immediate and ongoing
Short: 1-3 years

Medium: 4-6 years
Long: 7+ years



Municipal-wide actions

Focus area 5: Economic and social benefits

	Anticipated Time Frame	Principle				Direction		
		Caring for Country	Equity at Heart	Place-based approach	Integrated people focused approach	Protect	Optimise	Grow
5.1. Develop standards and advocate for passive irrigation of trees, verges and gardens, prioritising carparks and road renewal or upgrade.	Immediate and ongoing	●				●	●	
5.2. Integrate emerging and innovative Integrated Water Management (IWM) and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) measures into the public open space network by aligning project business cases and briefs with priority actions identified in the Integrated Water Strategy.	Immediate and ongoing			●	●			
5.3. Invest in Traditional Owner enterprise through management of open space and cultural practices.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	●
5.4. Develop Suburb Place Frameworks and established area Precinct Plans to deliver a co-ordinated approach to renewal and investment.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	●
5.5. Develop a process/policy to return commercial user fees to open space management, supporting increased use and activation of town centres and parks. Support increased use and activation of town centres and parks by taking a placemaking approach, including returning commercial user fees into open space management.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.6. Develop improvement/maintenance plans for waterbodies, creeks and tributaries.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.7. Create an integrated Visitor Experience Plan to strengthen visitor connection and experience across destination regional parks and places of significance. This includes major waterways, Westgarth, Epping Cemetery, bunjil nganga and guided by Cultural Investment Plans, heritage plans, Cultural Values Studies (including bunjil nganga Parklands), in partnership with Traditional Owners.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.8. Develop frameworks that can measure the performance, user experience and utilisation of open space provision. Ensure these results are integrated into open space asset decision making processes.	Immediate and ongoing	●	●	●	●		●	
5.9. Develop a cultural investment plan for bunjil nganga Parklands, in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung guided by the Quarry Hills Future Directions Plan, to inform and guide the Open Space Visitor Experience Plan.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.10. Prepare an open space wayfinding guide for provision of all directional, regulatory and interpretive signage, ensuring consistent provision of signage across the open space network.	Medium	●	●	●	●		●	
5.11. Establish criteria for calculating social return on open space financial investment to support business cases and communicating benefits to community.	Short	●	●	●	●	●	●	
5.12. Reduce barriers to access for Regional open spaces. Develop permeable edges and accessible entries where open spaces interface with residential areas.	Medium	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.13. Deliver a legible and accessible shared user path network that connects the linear parklands with safe crossings of road, rail and creek corridors.	Medium	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
5.14. Develop an accessible wayfinding strategy to be deployed across the active travel and open space network.	Short	●	●	●	●		●	●

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