



CREATING LIVEABLE OPEN SPACE: CASE STUDIES

This document has been prepared by the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure to assist local government, industry, property owners and other government agencies in understanding the opportunities to improve open space across Victoria.

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Photo: Brimbank Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

Having access to a variety of quality open spaces is vital for any community.

Throughout our lives we are likely to use many different types of open space, from playgrounds and active sporting facilities, to places where we can have a barbeque, enjoy the natural environment or sit down to read a book.

Research confirms that convenient access to quality open space has a positive influence on our sense of wellbeing, as well as our physical health.

As urban populations continue to grow and change, open space is in even greater demand. The challenge for planners is to ensure we get the maximum benefit from our existing open space assets and seek opportunities to deliver new open space where there is an identified need.

To do this we need to identify new ways to deliver open space that are driven by innovation and challenge conventional or traditional approaches.

This *Creating Liveable Open Space: Case Studies* showcases a number of innovative approaches for upgrading and delivering new open space assets. It includes case studies where open space has been reclaimed from existing roadways, quarries and drainage reserves as well as examples of new ways of working in partnership across government and with local communities.

One of the lessons from the case studies is the need to develop a robust plan, an Open Space Strategy, to guide open space development – one that includes a clear vision and a staged implementation process.

Experience shows that no open space issue is solved overnight. Detailed planning and consultation is essential to ensure the needs of current and future open space users are taken into account.

Strong leadership is also vital to take a project from concept through to completion, and to maintain the original vision when issues or objections arise.

A common theme running through the case studies in this best practice guide is the importance of building partnerships across government, the private sector and the community to ensure open space assets deliver the maximum possible benefits to the people they serve.

OPEN SPACE CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Open Space Strategy

- Do you have an Open Space Strategy? If so, is it less than ten years old?
- Do you need to review your Open Space Strategy?
- Do you have a current GIS layer of existing open space assets, including key attributes?
- Is your Open Space Strategy on your website and publicly available?

Implementation

- Do you have a dedicated officer/manager responsible for implementation of the Open Space Strategy?
- Do you have an annual implementation plan? Is it aligned with the Council capital works budget?
- Is your Open Space Strategy a reference document to your planning scheme?
- Are there any other policies or strategies that need to be included in the Local Planning Policy Framework to support implementation of your OSS?
- Is there land that needs to be rezoned to reflect its open space designation?
- How do you collect open space development contributions? Does this need to be reviewed?
- Do you have a transparent process for documenting the funds and land that are accepted as open space contributions?
- Do you have a transparent process for documenting how open space contributions are spent?

Outcomes

- Do you monitor changes in the quality, quantity and access of open space?
- Do you provide Council with an annual report on open space improvements and additions?
- Do you communicate open space improvements and additions to the community and other stakeholders?
- Do you have information publicly available on your website about the open space in your municipality and the facilities it includes?



2 OPEN SPACE



Open Space Strategy

Central to high quality open space outcomes is a high quality strategy. Open Space Strategies are a critical component of understanding what open space assets you have now, likely demands from existing and potential population, demographic change and cultural preferences, where you need new or improved open space, and how you can work towards achieving your open space goals.

Open space planning is complicated by the fact that there are numerous types of open space, locations and community needs/desires, all with competing opportunities and constraints. Open space planning ensures all of these factors are considered and planned for in a detailed way. Without a strategy, open space assets can be left to deteriorate, which increases the risk of these spaces not meeting the community's recreation and leisure needs.

Implementation

Once you have an Open Space Strategy, it is critical to start implementing the key elements. Two important first steps are to include the strategy as part of the local planning scheme and to consider the best mechanism for leveraging open space development contributions. By making sure your strategy is effectively embedded into your planning scheme, you will have a policy framework for decision making as part of the development process.

Delivering actions in the strategy and reporting regularly on achievements will show progress and build broad understanding of the initiatives required to improve open space in your area.

Outcomes

Detailed planning and implementation of an Open Space Strategy should result in improved and better used open space in your area. Monitoring and feedback are critical to maintain support and improve delivery. Achieving these outcomes will not be easy or quick but the short and long term benefits will prove it was a worthwhile investment.



Photo: Whitehorse Council



Photo: DTPLI

3 OPEN SPACE CASE STUDIES

The following case studies illustrate different ways that state government, local councils, landowners and other stakeholders have delivered a variety of innovative open space outcomes.

The case studies are from across Victoria and are only a small selection of the many successful examples of innovative approaches to open space planning and management that can be found.

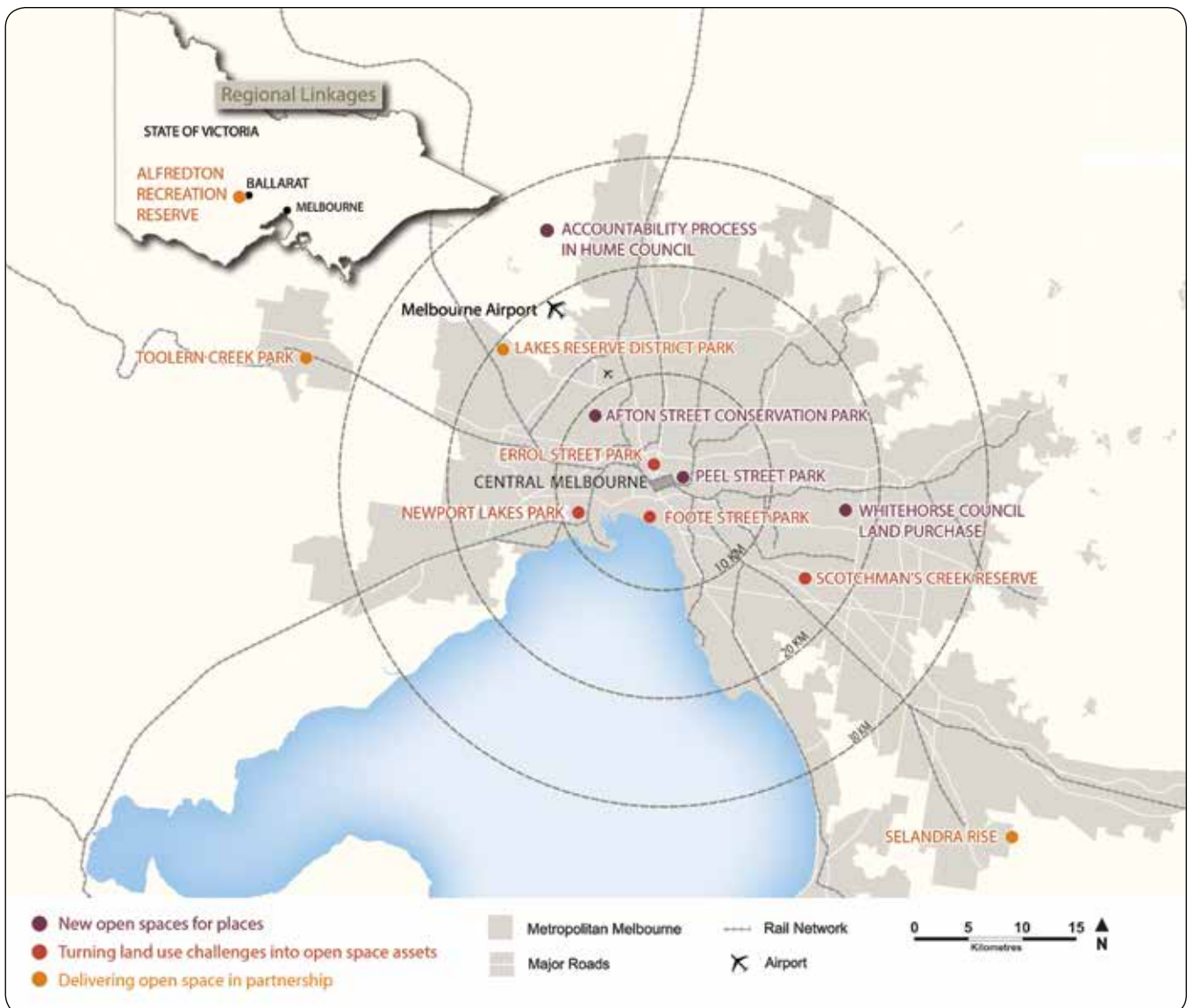




Photo: Moonee Valley Council



3.1

NEW OPEN SPACES FOR PLACES

Opportunities for new open space are important for those communities that have little or no open space relative to demand. There are a number of different ways new open space can be created, depending on locational needs, land capabilities and how existing assets are performing. In recent years land managers have been challenging the status quo of how new open space is created by developing innovative processes for acquiring land.

Acquiring new land for open space 'on-market'

Councils are able to participate in the property market and buy land for new open space through a competitive process, whether that be private sale or auction. This method requires rigour in understanding the opportunity of the preferred site but also speed to participate effectively in the 4-6 week cycle that a property is generally listed for sale.

Creating new urban open space from existing assets

To create new urban spaces in existing suburbs, councils are increasingly reviewing their existing land assets and identifying opportunities to turn underperforming assets – or assets that could be converted into a better use – into urban parks. This approach can give rise to conflicts between different users of space and challenges the conventional understanding of the highest and best use of a land asset.

Creating new open space through development contributions

New subdivision may add more pressure on existing open space. Development contributions provided through the *Subdivision Act 1988*, Clause 52.01 of the Victoria Planning Provisions or through a Development Contributions Plan, enable land, cash or a combination of both to be levied towards new or improved open space.

Buying land from an agency or government department for new open space

A potential source of new open space is former government or agency land that is surplus to requirements. These sites can come with challenges including poor access, contamination and/or heritage controls. However, through good planning, these sites can be turned into valuable open space assets.

The following pages provide one case study for each of these processes.



Photo: Ian Moodie

ACQUIRING NEW LAND FOR OPEN SPACE 'ON-MARKET'

CASE STUDY:

Whitehorse Council Land Acquisition Process

Municipality: Whitehorse

Location: Land across municipality

While open space contributions offer the opportunity to improve or acquire new open space in a municipality, the challenges of purchasing new open space are sometimes more difficult in established areas. Faced with high land costs, long timeframes for land acquisition, approvals, lengthy consultation processes and financial probity obligations, many councils choose not to pursue privately-owned land sales. Yet small parcels of land can often provide important pocket parks, opportunities to add to existing parks and open space linkages that meet local needs.

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy* (2007) (WOSS) has a number of key objectives that focus on the improvement of existing open space. One of these key objectives identifies 13 priority locations for Whitehorse Council to purchase land for open space. These priority locations were selected after careful analysis of expected population growth and demand for open space in specific locations across the municipality and the gaps in the open space network.

New acquisition process

To put itself in a position to successfully acquire land, Whitehorse Council has established a new acquisition process to facilitate the purchase of land on the private market. Buying 'on-market' means Council can achieve a competitive price for the land without needing to pay compensation, which can be as much as an additional 30% of the purchase price if the Council was to compulsorily acquire land. Recognising the property market usually works in a four to six week auction cycle, Council has developed a clear, robust process for moving quickly

when a property in a priority area is identified for sale. This process triggers a system to (a) identify, (b) assess and (c) acquire land for open space.

Step 1 – Identify

Council established an internal 'alert' system when properties in priority locations become available through private sale or auction. Using online real estate websites, potential properties are identified and considered as they come on to the market. This ensures that opportunities are not missed.

Step 2 – Assess

After a property is identified, a quick assessment is completed which includes two parts – the first being a brief report to the Planning and Property Managers and the General Manager outlining the property's suitability for open space and alignment with the WOSS.

Once permission is received to pursue the property, a report is prepared for Council seeking approval to purchase the property. This report is based on a standard proforma and includes a detailed assessment of property characteristics, costs, method of purchase and due diligence. The benefit of a standard proforma is that the information required and the considerations that need to be made appear in a consistent format. The report always recommends an 'upper limit' towards the purchase of the site based on an in-house and independent valuation. This is a confidential report to Council.

Step 3 – Acquire

If Council agrees to purchase the property, the final part of the process is to acquire the property – either through negotiation (if it is a private sale) or through an auction process. Council can appoint an officer internally to act on its behalf for the purchase or contract a Buyer's Advocate.

Whitehorse Council Open Space Acquisition Process

Identify

Assess

Acquire

Photo: DTPLI



Outcome

Whitehorse Council is well placed to respond promptly and successfully within the property market to acquire land for open space. Senior staff and councillors are familiar with the new land acquisition initiative and are committed to responding quickly to reports. As of 2012, two properties have been acquired through this accelerated process. Funding for the purchase of the open space has been made through the Open Space Reserve – cash contributions that

have been collected through the subdivision process under either the *Subdivision Act 1988* or through a Schedule to Clause 52.01.

Lessons to date

Setting up a new land acquisition process can take time but the ability to move quickly once a property is listed for private sale/auction means council is more likely to be successful in acquiring open space 'on-market.'

FAST FACT: Whitehorse Open Space Strategy (2007)

The act of purchasing land for open space is one of several key recommendations of the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy. The strategy is a robust, comprehensive document that explores the current and future needs of the city and provides clear direction on the actions required for improving open space and purchasing land for open space 'on-market'.

Whitehorse priority locations for future open space acquisition.



Source: Whitehorse Open Space Strategy, 2007



OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT



Photo: DTPLI

CREATING NEW OPEN SPACE FROM EXISTING ASSETS

CASE STUDY:

Collingwood from car park to urban park

Municipality: Yarra

Location: Peel St, Collingwood (Melway 44 B6)

In the 2009–13 Yarra Council Plan an ambitious goal was set to create five new parks for the municipality by 2013. Supported by the *Yarra Open Space Strategy* (2006), which had identified a significant lack of open space in Collingwood due to changes to local land uses and increases in local population, Council began work in 2009 to turn an existing car park into a new urban park.

Located on the corner of Peel and Oxford Streets, the chosen site was freehold land owned by Council covering an area of 1145m². It was used as a public car park for up to 28 vehicles, predominately servicing local traders and employees and included a small Council-owned building. Working with the community, Council decided the site offered an opportunity to create a new urban park.

The starting point for exploring the type of park that could be achieved was the preparation of the concept plan in 2010. The concept plan considered:

- the site characteristics and constraints
- improving pedestrian movement within and around the site
- providing seating for rest and relaxation and open space for passive recreation
- incorporating Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) treatments to capture and treat stormwater runoff before it enters the drainage system
- lighting to improve safety and amenity without impacting on adjoining residents
- garden beds with drought-tolerant planting to add colour and visual interest.

Consultation on the new park was completed in two phases. Initial consultation took place with residents, traders and employees around the site. Using the concept plan, Council

sought wide-ranging views about the potential of the new park. The second consultation phase was focused on the detailed design of the park prior to construction.

In July 2011, the new Peel Street Park was officially opened for residents, workers and visitors to Collingwood to enjoy. The car park was transformed into a green oasis through an open lawn and tree planting, the creation of a rain garden to capture and treat rainwater, and the addition of pathways, custom-designed seating and landscape features which contribute to an adaptable open space with a unique sense of place.

FAST FACT: Planning And Delivery

New parks, even if they appear to be simple, take time to deliver. Always expect the unexpected. Discovering a large empty fuel tank buried on the Peel Street site was not anticipated at the start of the project. A general rule of thumb is: one year to plan; one year to construct.

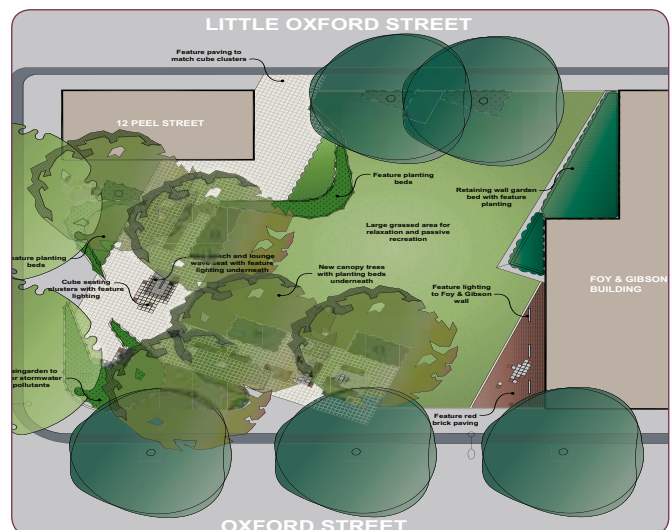


Image: Peel St Concept Plan, Yarra Council (2010)



**OPEN
SPACE
SNAPSHOT**

IMPROVING OR CREATING NEW OPEN SPACE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

CASE STUDY:

Implementing the Hume Open Space Strategy through development contributions

Municipality: Hume

Location: Land across municipality

A key source of open space funding for councils is the collection of development contributions. In Victoria, there are a number of mechanisms that enable open space contributions to be collected as land, cash or a combination of both, as part of the development process. Existing mechanisms include the *Subdivision Act 1988*, Clause 52.01 of Victoria Planning Provisions and Development Contributions Plans.

These funds and land can be used to make improvements to existing open space or acquire new open space.

Hume City is a vibrant, multicultural community experiencing rapid population growth. It is located on Melbourne's urban-rural fringe, approximately 20km north-west of the CBD. The municipality contains diverse land uses including rural areas, established residential areas and growth areas to accommodate future residential communities.

Hume Council collects open space contributions for both its established areas and its growth areas as part of the subdivision process. This source of land and cash provides important resources for implementing the Hume Open Space Strategy. Completed in 2010, the strategy identifies a number of projects for improving the municipality's open space network.

In finalising the open space strategy, Hume Council recognised the need to provide clear accountability of how contributions were collected and expended. Council developed a specific end-to-end process which provides a rigorous methodology and transparency for open space contributions. The 11-step process begins when an application for subdivision is received and finishes with advice to the Projects and Contract Management Department to start physical works on a project.

Critical to the success of the 11-step process was its development within Council – a partnership that included the statutory planning, open space planning, finance

and capital works departments. Together, these four areas of Council worked together to refine the process, ensuring they understood their respective roles and responsibilities and that appropriate documentation and transparency was incorporated into the process to record contribution amounts and how they are used and/or spent. The roles of these departments within Council are:

Statutory Planning Department – manage the subdivision application, correspond with the applicant and assess the application for a subdivision contribution.

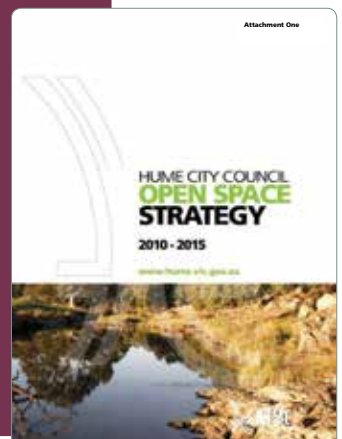
Open Space Planning Department – identify projects that need to be implemented in the Hume Open Space Strategy and try to support projects where there is a link between the location of the application and where the funds are spent.

Finance Department – receive advice on expected contributions, ensure contributions are kept within a specific trust reserve, and make contributions available to fund improvement projects.

Projects and Contract Management Department – undertake and project manage the physical improvement works in open space.

FAST FACT: Annual Reporting

The four departments collaborate on a report annually to the Council Executive advising on the outcomes of the Open Space Strategy that includes improvements and acquisition/disposal of open space. This report provides a valuable record of the annual open space achievements against the contributions collected. It also details overall progress on the implementation of the Hume Open Space Strategy.





OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT



Photo: Moonee Valley Council

BUYING LAND FROM AN AGENCY OR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT FOR NEW OPEN SPACE

CASE STUDY:

Former Defence land now major conservation park

Municipality: Moonee Valley

Location: Afton St, Aberfeldie (Melway:28 A5)

Following years of negotiation, lobbying and an active community campaign, Moonee Valley Council purchased 17 hectares of public open space in West Essendon from the Commonwealth Government in 2003. Formerly Department of Defence land, the site was used for storing, testing and disposing of munitions from the larger Defence site on the opposite side of the Maribyrnong River. The land was identified as surplus to Defence needs and initially identified for residential development. However, after a three-year campaign, the land was sold to Council for \$900,000.

The Afton Street Conservation Park is located approximately 6km from Melbourne's CBD, and is bounded by the Maribyrnong River to the west, a vegetated escarpment to the north and a small creek to the east. Land adjoining the park is predominately residential. It has had a variable history including sand quarrying, sheep grazing, bee keeping and Defence-related activities. Stone artefacts found on the site are evidence of prior occupation by the Wurundjeri Aboriginal People, a clan of the Woiwurrong.

Soon after the transfer of the land, Council started a long-term planning process, including the development of a master plan to guide future actions. Developed over two years, the master plan recognises the site could potentially support up to 64 indigenous plant species with regional or local significance and a range of indigenous fauna including the Striped Legless Lizard and the Ring Tailed Possum. The master plan proposed a series of actions to attract and 'hold' indigenous wildlife through habitat protection and extensive revegetation.

Some of the first tasks included extensive revegetation, installing walking paths around the site and a new car park. Major efforts have been made to progressively remove Box Thorn and replace it with native vegetation in a staged process to ensure small birds have a continuous habitat.

The development of a wetlands at the park in 2010 was a significant achievement. It was designed to help protect and improve the water quality of the Maribyrnong River. The wetlands harvest stormwater from the Hoffman Main Drain and support biodiversity by providing a better environment for plants and animals. It will eventually provide a sustainable water supply to three neighbouring parks – Aberfeldie Park, Clifton Street Park and Maribyrnong Park – with recycled water piped directly to these parks and used to irrigate sports fields.

FAST FACT: Expecting The Unexpected

Even after completing the master planning process, the detailed design component of open space development can be challenging. For the establishment of the new wetlands, the discovery of a large sewer pipe on the site meant the wetlands could only be half the size of that originally envisaged.

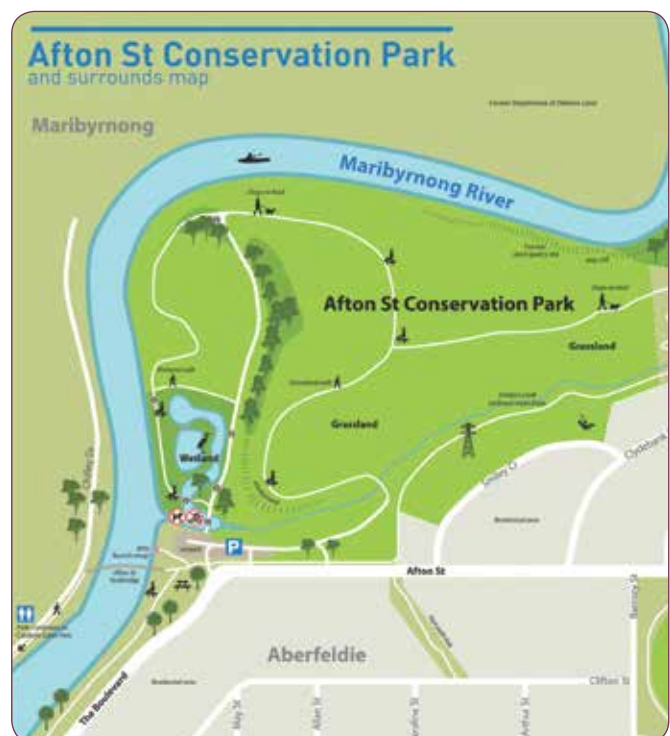


Image: Moonee Valley Council



3.2

TURNING LAND USE CHALLENGES INTO OPEN SPACE ASSETS

Opportunities for new open space often exist in a local area without people even realising it. For some councils, long-term land use challenges may even provide opportunities for new open space in ways that were not previously anticipated. For example, places that are unattractive or underutilised can be redesigned as new innovative open spaces. However, developing an inventive response for new open space is a long process. Innovation can challenge traditional ideas, and this can result in the need for comprehensive and time-consuming consultation. The investment in this process will deliver better outcomes.

Creating open space from road space

Challenging the status quo of the role of the road network near to open space is allowing planners to identify opportunities to create new open space and increase park sizes to improve the quantity and quality of open space.

Creating open space from a roundabout

Taking an existing small pocket park and dramatically increasing its size is not usually possible without spending millions of dollars. However, additions to existing open space are occurring more frequently with innovative design solutions that peel back the tarmac of adjoining roads.

Creating open space from a drain

One of the places to explore resolution of gaps in the open space network is existing government or authority land that might be underutilised. For many councils, existing drainage reserves are well placed to provide new opportunities for open space to provide for some leisure and recreation uses. However a clear vision and plan for delivering an enhanced open space asset is essential, especially if the Council doesn't own the land.

Creating open space from a quarry

While some large, former quarries may pose a range of problems for councils, many offer opportunities to create new open space for the local community.

The following pages provide one case study for each of these projects.



CREATING OPEN SPACE FROM ROAD SPACE

CASE STUDY:

New open space for Albert Park Secondary College and the community

Municipality: Port Phillip

Location: Foote St, Albert Park (Melway 57 D4)

In inner urban areas, the ability to deliver new open space is fraught with high land costs, fragmented land ownership and administrative difficulties. Increasingly, councils are working with partners to achieve innovative solutions where open space is shared between users and meets multiple needs in the community.

While planning for a new secondary college in Albert Park to cater for 900 students, it quickly became apparent the existing school site could not accommodate sufficient open space for the students. With high land prices and high ambitions for the new Albert Park College, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in partnership with the City of Port Phillip decided to convert a local Council road into new open space to create a new shared park for the local community and students.

Foote Street Reserve

In late 2009 the DEECD formally wrote to the City of Port Phillip requesting Council close Foote Street, between Danks Street and the north-east side of Graham Street including the Graham Street intersection, to create a new park. DEECD envisaged the area would provide (a) a new local park with pedestrian and bike linkages between Gasworks Park, the new college and the foreshore and (b) would assist in developing more positive relationships between the school and the local community through the establishment of shared community space. As the concept of road closures to create new local parks was supported by the City of Port Phillip Open Space Strategy, the Council resolved to progress the idea.

Step 1: Traffic assessment – Council completed a traffic assessment to understand how the existing road network

was used. The study found the street was predominately used by residents and ranked traffic speed and use as 'light volume.'

Step 2: Statutory process – Council commenced the statutory process for the permanent closure of Foote Street in accordance with Section 207 and clause 9 of the *Local Government Act 1989*. Nearly 500 letters were sent to owners/occupiers in the local area and an advertisement was placed in the local paper to advise the community about the proposal and seek their views. A total of 14 submissions were received, six in support, six raising some concerns and two raising issues unrelated to the project.

Step 3: Council decision – In June 2010, Council resolved to close Foote Street Park between Danks Street and the north-east side of Graham Street to vehicular traffic.

Consultation played a key role in the development of the project, with Council acting as the public face of the new park by undertaking the formal consultation, attending public meetings and responding to concerns. DEECD was responsible for the construction of the park and committed to working collaboratively with Council to ensure the new park was aligned with Council policies and planning frameworks.

DEECD paid for the initial construction of the park, including landscaping, while Council supplied park benches and rubbish bins. Council will be the owner of the park and is responsible for ongoing maintenance.

Park In Action – One year on, the school, its students and the community have been enjoying the new park. For students the new space has provided safer passage around the school, passive recreation opportunities and even the occasional classroom activity there. "It provides a refreshing natural environment" Steve Cook, Principal of Albert Park Secondary College says "a green wedge next to the school for all to use."

Photo: DTPLI



Outcome

Opened in January 2011, the new Foote Street Park is an innovative example of high quality urban space that caters for a variety of users. The site provides clear linkages to surrounding infrastructure and acts as a seamless interface between the school and the public realm. Approximately 2080m², it includes green space, shade, public seating, recreational facilities and designated pedestrian and cycle routes.

Council is committed to ongoing monitoring of the traffic in and around the park to ensure measures are introduced or modified to respond to changing traffic demands.

Lessons to date

Considering user desire lines – such as the way in which students use and move through a space – was important to the design of the park. Landscaping and pathways were designed to take account of the way students tend to walk in groups.

FAST FACT: Planning Scheme Amendment

In mid-2011 the Minister for Planning approved Planning Scheme Amendment C62 to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme which included a schedule to Clause 52.01 Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision for a mandatory 5% public open space contribution. This will ensure all residential, commercial and industrial subdivisions of three or more lots contribute either 5% of the site value, 5% of the land (or a combination of both) as an open space contribution. These funds will provide Council with resources to implement other initiatives of the City of Port Phillip Open Space Strategy.

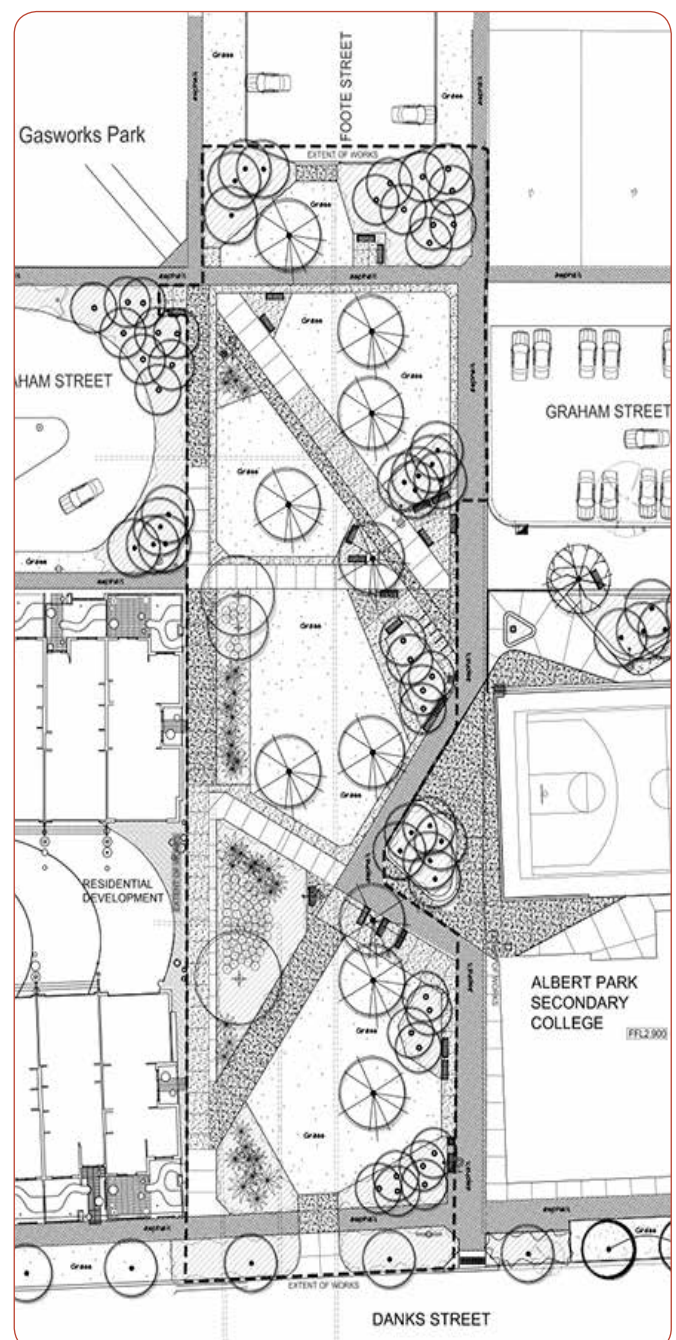


Image: Foote St Concept Plan, Port Phillip Council (2010)



OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT

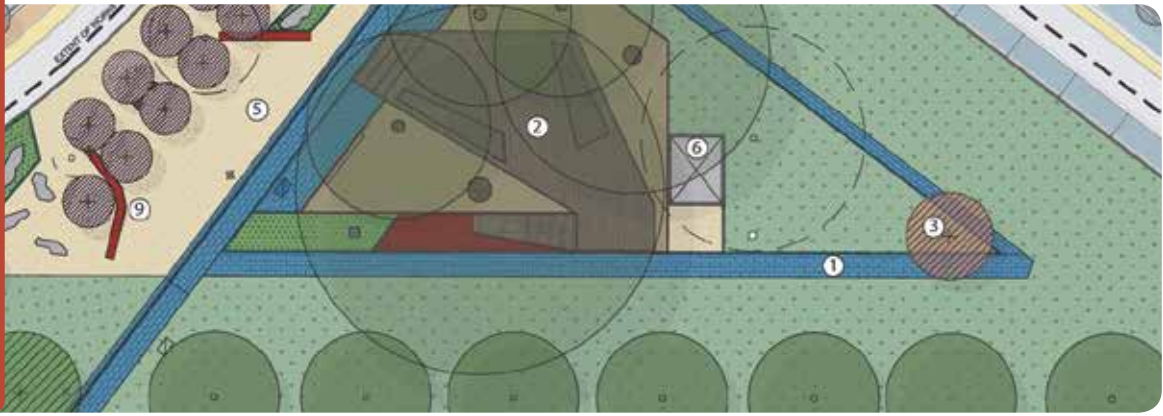


Image: Melbourne City Council

CREATING OPEN SPACE FROM A ROUNDABOUT

CASE STUDY:

Expanding the Errol Street Reserve in North Melbourne

Municipality: Melbourne

Location: Errol St, North Melbourne (Melway 43 E4)

The suburb of North Melbourne is a medium-high density suburb characterised by a few scattered pocket parks and bordered by Royal Park. The *North and West Melbourne Local Plan 2010* (February 1999) identified the need for increasing open spaces in these suburbs given the projected population increase. The plan identified opportunities to increase and improve local public open space using existing road space. In May 2002, the *Open Space Opportunities in North and West Melbourne* document investigated nine potential sites to expand existing small open spaces into adjoining road space in conjunction with traffic management and calming measures. Many of the nine potential sites identified were relatively small-scale such as the opportunity to expand Errol Street Reserve pocket park/roundabout into the abutting wide roads.

Errol Street Reserve is a triangle-shaped open space in North Melbourne. The 529m² space houses a substation building and is raised from ground level with a pedestrian pathway on three sides. There are a number of mature trees on the site. To the north is North Melbourne Primary School on Courtney Street, while to the south and west are residential properties.

The Errol Street Reserve stood out as an excellent opportunity to expand an existing underutilised open space asset by increasing its size and functionality to better meet the needs of the local community. Council embarked on an ambitious plan to make the existing park 10 times bigger by recovering road space, incorporating existing median plantations/roundabouts and re-routing a bus route.

Step 1 – In 2008 Council completed an extensive community consultation and design process to progress the development of Errol Street Reserve. The consultation phase included feedback from the local community on proposed designs and three community reference group workshops to prepare the final design.

Step 2 – Traffic engineering assessments were undertaken in 2009 to evaluate the potential traffic impact that might result from an expanded park. The final report concluded there would not be any significant amenity or vehicle traffic impacts in the area as a result of the plan. In fact the plan would enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety. Council also worked with Department of Transport and Sita Buslines to re-route the bus in this area.

Step 3 – A planning permit for removal of a building (bus stop) and other works in a heritage and special building overlay was applied for in March 2010. Council issued a Notice of Decision in favour of the application in May 2010. This decision was appealed to VCAT who upheld the Council's decision to issue a planning permit in February 2011 with some additional conditions relating to heritage. Amendments to design required under the new planning permit conditions were approved in early January 2012.

Step 4 – In April 2011 Council began the formal road discontinuation process for portions of road in Errol, Harcourt and Courtney Streets that abut the Errol Street Reserve, under the *Local Government Act 1989*. Council resolved to discontinue the roads on 30 August 2011 following a submission process.

Step 5 – Detailed traffic and flood management design analysis were conducted in late 2011.

The new Errol Street Reserve will provide many benefits to the local community including improved amenity, the opportunity for informal recreation and improved pedestrian, cyclist and motorist safety. The additional tree variety and shading will assist in cooling the local environment and improve biodiversity in Melbourne. Stormwater flow control and treatment has been incorporated into the design.

In June 2012, all the approvals were in place and construction began on-site. With a project budget of \$1.8 million (approximately) the physical works are complete and it is expected that landscaping and planting will occur in Autumn 2013.



**OPEN
SPACE
SNAPSHOT**

CREATING OPEN SPACE FROM A DRAINAGE RESERVE

CASE STUDY:

An ecological approach to planning at Scotchman's Creek

Municipality: Monash

Location: Warrigal Road, Chadstone to Crosby Drive, Glen Waverley (Melway 69F4 – 70K4)

Scotchman's Creek Reserve is a 9km linear park from Holmesglen TAFE, Glen Waverley to Warrigal Road, Chadstone. One of its main roles is to provide a waterway corridor for environmental values and community use, as well as adequate floodplain area for the management of urban stormwater. Until the late 1990s it was a degraded area, with poor water quality, high levels of weed infestation, significant urban rubbish and undesirable activities. Monash Council recognised significant work was required to redevelop the area as open space for public use and to provide habitat for native flora and fauna.

Although the drain outlets and creek corridor was predominately the responsibility of Melbourne Water, Monash Council wanted to take an active role in the management and conservation of land surrounding Scotchman's Creek. Driving the Council's priorities was the need to develop a scientific approach that placed ecological and conservation values at the centre of its works on site.

The first step was to undertake an investigative study of the indigenous habitat of the corridor. In 2000, Monash Council appointed Ecology Australia to prepare an Indigenous Reserve and Conservation Management Plan to review a number of sites including Scotchman's Creek. The plan provided a comprehensive understanding of the current flora and fauna in the study area. It recognised the deterioration of the environment at Scotchman's Creek and the need to respond with targeted action to rehabilitate the corridor, focussing predominately on revegetation and conservation of remnant indigenous habitat.

Working with Melbourne Water, Council completed a number of different works throughout the reserve including improved shared paths and a new wetland/billabong.

Facilities were installed at various locations throughout the park to provide opportunities for active sport and passive recreation. Thousands of native trees, shrubs and understorey were planted by Council and friends groups while new wayfinding signage helps people move around the park.

More than 10 years on, the stormwater system has been maintained and the quality of open space has significantly improved. There is a large increase in the number of people using the park for walking, running and riding their bikes. The flora is now well established and native trees are providing habitat for native fauna. Birds that have not been observed for some time are being sighted in the area.

FAST FACT: Open Space Planning

The development of open space is a long-term commitment, especially when trying to repair degraded physical environments. It is important to develop a long-term strategy and deliver action in progressive stages.

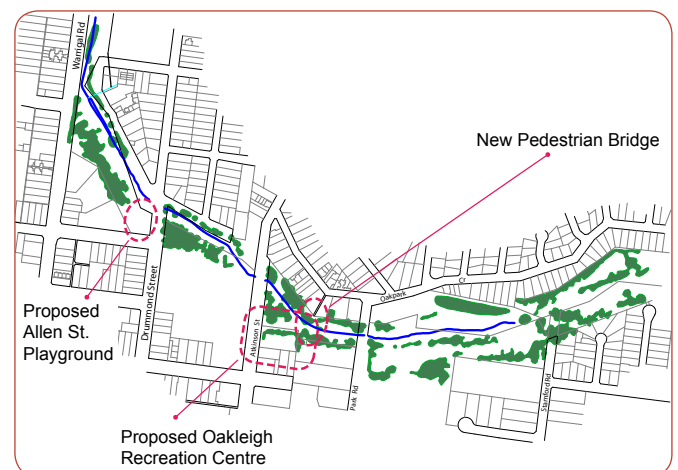


Image: Scotchman's Creek Location Plan, Monash Council



OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT



Photo: DTPLI

CREATING OPEN SPACE FROM A QUARRY

CASE STUDY:

Turning Newport Quarry into Newport Park Lakes

Municipality: Hobsons Bay

Location: Lakes Drive, Newport (Melway 55 G3)

In Newport, west of Melbourne, a site that was once a bluestone quarry is now a 33ha bushland haven. Quarrying first began on the site in the late 1800s and continued through to the 1960s, when some of the site was used for landfill until 1993. Following an active and successful community campaign, the Williamstown Council (now Hobsons Bay) resolved to turn the site into a park for the local community.

Due to its size, the site was split into four different segments for planning purposes. The first segment had little conservation value and was identified as a location for active play. Over time this area was developed to include a playground, picnic area, toilet block and BBQ facilities. It also has an arboretum of North American pine, European trees and ornamental Australian trees.

The second and third segments are the 'lakes component' – where two quarry holes were transformed into large lakes. A number of walking paths were constructed around the lakes, providing an aesthetically pleasing walking track, including a number of lookouts and resting places. Works were also undertaken to increase safety – particularly by reducing the depth of the lakes from 9m to 3m and introducing a connecting stone wall that acts as a path between the two lakes. The final segment in the north-west of the site is predominately vacant and is currently very heavily used by dog walkers as it is one of the rare places in the area where dogs can be exercised off leash.

A primary focus of Council activity since the quarry was first rezoned as a park has been revegetation of the site. Initial planting was extensive and included any type of native species that could be sourced. However, in recent years, the focus of replanting has been on local indigenous varieties.

Today, Newport Lakes provides a sanctuary for flora and fauna and a peaceful retreat for visitors. It supports over 200 species of plants and 160 species of birds, and meets a diversity of open space needs.

Lessons to date

One of the key challenges for this site was the development of the lakes themselves. While they provide an aesthetically pleasing environment, they are not naturally occurring and sit at the top of the catchment where there is little opportunity to redirect stormwater. As a result, Council has invested in a water bore that is intended to operate two to eight hours per day. The bore is used as little as possible as it is costly to run and pumps saline water into what is intended to be a fresh water system.

FAST FACT: Planning For Habitat

In highly urbanised areas, foxes, feral cats and domestic cats can be a threat to native animals. It is important to plan vegetation that provides places for ducks and other native wildlife to hide.



Image: DTPLI



3.3

DELIVERING OPEN SPACE IN PARTNERSHIP

As there are many different owners and users of open space, partnerships often provide the best open space outcomes. Genuine cooperation between State and Commonwealth government departments and agencies, local councils, community groups and other stakeholders ensures that open space provides high quality outcomes that meet the needs of communities.

Delivering active and passive open space

One of the key challenges of delivering new open space is balancing the competing needs of conservation values and recreational needs. Traditionally it has been difficult to reach agreement on how these two competing objectives can be met. However, through partnership and a commitment to high quality open space outcomes, it can be achieved.

Council and agencies working in partnership to deliver open space

When a Council doesn't own a lot of open space or there is a need for new open space, one option to explore is locations where existing government or authority land might be underutilised. For many councils, existing drainage reserves are well placed to provide new opportunities for open space. However a clear vision and plan for delivering an enhanced open space asset is essential, especially if the Council doesn't own the land.

Building communities through open space development

Where a community is yet to be established (such as a growth area) or the demographic mix is changing (such as an established area), the development of open space offers an opportunity to bring communities together. New open space development or an upgrade of existing open space can act as a focal point for communities to come together to discuss how the space should be developed.

Working with communities to develop open space

It is important to ensure the development of open space meets the needs of the local community and one of the best ways to do this is to involve the community from the beginning in planning for future needs. There are numerous engagement tools for facilitating community involvement in the planning and development of open space. The key challenge is picking the right one for your community and project.

The following pages provide one case study for each of these processes.



Photo: Parks Victoria

DELIVERING ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OPEN SPACE IN PARTNERSHIP

CASE STUDY:

Creating a new regional park in Melton

Municipality: Melton

Location: Bridge Rd, Melton South (Melway 343 B8)

In 2004, government policy set out a plan to create six new regional parks – one of which was in Melton. A parcel of 130 hectares of land owned by Melton Council was identified as the location for the new regional park. Situated alongside the Toolern Creek, the land was seen as an ideal location for a large open space asset to cater for the area’s significant urban growth. Melton Council knew such a park was needed to provide a full mix of recreation, relaxation and conservation activities, including sports grounds.

Toolern Creek Regional Park

Located approximately 45km west of Melbourne, Toolern Creek Regional Park provides habitat for marginalised native fauna as well as a range of recreational and sporting facilities. In 2006, the State Government committed \$3.27 million to the planning and establishment of visitor facilities at the park.

Melton Council as the owner of the land and Parks Victoria as the future owner, came together early to start planning for the park. Recognising the high rates of population growth across the municipality, Melton Council was adamant the new park should include active recreational facilities as well as passive recreational opportunities. Traditionally, regional parks are managed primarily to protect and enhance conservation values, while providing opportunities for passive visitor recreation. Co-locating sporting facilities at the park was not initially a priority for Parks Victoria, however after detailed discussions it was agreed the park would house 18ha for active recreation, including facilities.

A key aspect of delivering the active recreation components was to ensure the right location was selected. This involved a number of criteria:

- *Geography/topography* – an assessment was undertaken to determine which parcels of land would be suitable for sports fields. A key criteria was that the land was flat.
- *Visibility* – it was important the sports fields had high visibility from the main road for people who would be using the facilities.
- *Conservation values* – an assessment was undertaken to ensure that only areas with low conservation values, generally areas that had been heavily cleared and farmed, were considered for the location of the sports grounds.
- *Buffer* – the location of the sports fields was seen as an opportunity to create a natural buffer with the adjoining residential development and the sensitive conservation areas.
- *Accessibility* – it was important to locate the sports fields close to facilities such as community hubs and proposed new schools.
- *Irrigation* – sports fields generally require a high level of irrigation. Therefore, the design of the new sports fields takes into account opportunities for captured stormwater or recycled water for irrigation.
- *Compatibility* – it was important that the active sporting areas be located where they wouldn’t impact on the opportunity for passive recreation.

“The purpose of the Toolern Creek Regional Park is to provide diverse recreational opportunities and improved connectivity for the communities in Melbourne’s western growth corridor while further enhancing the protection of areas of ecological, Indigenous and European cultural, and landscape significance. While equitable access for recreation purposes is a key driver of the need for new parks, protection of the varied conservation values of the Toolern Creek corridor is also a primary objective for this new regional park.”

Toolern Creek Regional Park Melton Landscape draft Master Plan 2009



A total of 23ha has now been identified as active open space at Toolern Creek Regional Park. Melton Council, supported by Sport and Recreation Victoria, is undertaking a needs and demand analysis to determine the best mix of organised sporting facilities. This process will include a review of the anticipated demographic profile of the community and existing participation levels. It is envisaged the sporting fields will be completed in late 2013. Parks Victoria has completed construction of some elements identified within the Toolern Regional Master Plan. These elements include the shared path and associated social spaces/lookout areas.

Lessons

Although the whole park will be given to the State for Crown land, the management and maintenance of the sporting fields will remain the responsibility of Melton Council. This was a critical decision given Parks Victoria is not generally responsible for managing these types of facilities. However, it was seen as important that the park in its entirety be planned and owned by the State, to ensure a continuity of overall management.

It is envisaged that the inclusion of the sporting grounds within the regional park has the potential to attract a broader range of visitors to the park. This project also has the added benefit of maximising infrastructure such as parking, public toilets, play equipment and barbeques that will be for both Regional Park and District Park (sportsground) visitors.

FAST FACT: Multipurpose Infrastructure

Instead of building a sewer pipe across Toolern Creek as part of the 6.1km Melton sewer upgrade, Western Water designed and built a \$2 million bridge that is both a sewer and a pedestrian link to the new Toolern Creek Region Park. Parks Victoria and Western Water worked together to construct the bridge linking the pedestrian trail to the park following consultation with the Melton Council and local community.



Image: Toolern Creek Regional Park Masterplan, Parks Victoria (2009)



OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT



Photo: Ballarat Council

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE EXISTING OPEN SPACE

CASE STUDY:

Improving the Alfredton Recreation Reserve Ballarat with the local community

Municipality: Ballarat

Location: Cuthberts Rd, Alfredton

- new signage, BBQ facilities and rotunda
- refurbishment of the existing netball courts
- A new “Village Green” – a multi-purpose playing field and associated change rooms, landscaping and car parking.

Alfredton is a suburb west of Ballarat that is in close proximity to the Ballarat West Growth Area, an area experiencing significant residential growth. The suburb is also home to the Alfredton Recreation Reserve, a 12.7ha park that provides a mix of recreational uses including football, cricket, tennis, lawn bowls and netball and provides important access to open space, especially to adjoining schools.

Recognising the importance of the park for current and future users, Ballarat Council started work on a master plan for the park in 2007. This process focused on access to the park, water sustainability, major issues with existing vegetation obscuring good passive surveillance, future expansion and development opportunities, and involved working with the community on broader planning and detailed design for the park.

Consultation on the master plan – the consultation process included engagement with eight sporting/user groups, two primary schools, a mail-out to residents and a public forum. Following consultation the master plan was adopted by Council in 2008.

Council immediately embarked on an ambitious program of improvement including:

- development of a connected walking trail throughout the reserve
- installation of a sustainable water supply and irrigation system

Consultation on the detailed design – even though the master plan provided guidance on the future development of the park, detailed design was required for each precinct earmarked for improvement. The redevelopment of an existing play space in 2010 was seen as an important opportunity to engage directly with park users and to ensure the final design met the needs of local children.

Inviting play space users to participate in the design process enabled a greater understanding of the types of facilities that children would like to see in the space. Adjoining the park is the Alfredton Primary School and a large group of students were invited to talk to Council officers about the future of the play space. Children of various ages and gender were invited to participate in the workshop. They were asked to describe how they would like to see the park develop and what play equipment should be provided.

This direct involvement from local children has ensured the finished play space is a well used asset by children of all ages. It complements the surrounding play areas at the school and neighborhood parks as well as encourages greater use of Alfredton Reserve’s other facilities.

‘A guide to planning your community and stakeholder engagement strategy’ has been prepared to assist in planning for projects, programs and policy initiatives using an engagement approach. It is available electronically at www.dtpli.vic.gov.au.

FAST FACT: Community Engagement

There is often a concern that when you actively engage with the community you may not be able to deliver the outcomes envisaged. However, a good facilitator, a genuine partnership, informed discussion and robust feedback to the community can ensure tangible outcomes are delivered that meet everyone’s expectations.

Photo:Stockland



**OPEN
SPACE
SNAPSHOT**

BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

CASE STUDY:

Planning new open space at Selandra Rise with the future community

Municipality: Casey

Location: Corner Lipizzan Way and Heather Grove
Clyde North (Melway 134 K5)

Community involvement in the development of open space can be limited to picking the colours of the swing or deciding where to place the slide. The development of open space at Selandra Rise in south-east Melbourne was seen as an opportunity for early engagement as well as an important community building initiative.

Selandra Rise is a master planned community in south-east Melbourne. Approximately 120ha, it will provide 1200 new homes and associated facilities including a shopping centre, medical facilities, primary and secondary schools. This is a demonstration project involving a partnership between the Growth Areas Authority, Stockland, Casey Council and the Planning Institute of Australia, with three key objectives of creating a healthy and engaged community, local jobs and housing diversity. Open space plays a major role in defining the new estate, with every home within 300m of parkland. But rather than guessing what kind of parkland new residents might want, the developer Stockland and Casey Council decided to actively engage with the community so they could decide on the kind of open space they wanted.

Community engagement took place once the broad master plan was prepared but prior to the detailed design phase. This was seen as an important shift in thinking as traditionally community consultation occurs more as a series of information session once most of the open space decisions have been made, including the types of space and facilities provided.

Although there were no residents living at Selandra Rise at the time community engagement started, the opportunity to participate in the development of a new park was a major drawcard, attracting a number of families who were yet to move to the estate. The consultation session focussed on

exploring the big issues for open space in the area – how the space would be used, and what open space means to residents. Each resident brought a unique perspective to the table during the consultation, which provided a wealth of ideas, examples and considerations from which to draw from during detailed design. However, through discussions about what other parks people liked and an understanding of future community needs, there was a robust exchange of ideas that informed the final design.

Complementing the design of the parks, Council in partnership with the developer, worked with leisure industry practitioners to conduct programs in the estate's parks to encourage residents to participate in physical and social activities. The commencement of these initiatives in the early establishment of this new community is critical to establishing positive and healthy behaviour amongst the community.

A BBQ following the consultation session was also valuable. For the first time, new neighbours were able to meet and chat informally. Participants talked broadly about the new community that was forming on the estate and even started to plan housewarming parties. Community leaders also emerged through the consultation process, which was a positive sign for the future health and vibrancy of the community.

The Growth Areas Authority is an independent statutory body with a broad, facilitative role to help create greater certainty, faster decisions and better coordination for all parties involved in planning and development of Melbourne's growth areas. Established in 2006, the Growth Areas Authority aims to develop communities in growth areas that are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable and work with industry and local Councils to ensure economic, employment and housing priorities are achieved in Melbourne's six growth areas.



OPEN SPACE SNAPSHOT



Photo: Brimbank Council

COUNCILS AND AGENCIES WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER OPEN SPACE

CASE STUDY:

Brimbank Council and Melbourne Water working together to improve The Lakes District Park

Municipality: Brimbank

Location: Chichester Drive, Taylors Lakes (Melway 13 J2)

Since the adoption in 2008 of the *Creating Better Parks Policy and Plan* by Brimbank City Council, a major transformation of their open space network has been occurring. Part of this transformation is the establishment of five new district parks as major destination places for the community. One of these parks is the Lakes Reserve District Park.

The Lakes Reserve District Park is a 16.6ha wetland and lake system surrounded by open space and forms part of a larger open space corridor along Taylors Creek. Located in the suburb of Taylors Lakes, approximately 25km north-west of Melbourne, it is predominately owned by Melbourne Water and is part of the stormwater drainage network.

Before being upgraded, the area that is now Lakes Reserve District Park provided a well-used path network for local residents. However, these paths were not easily accessible or safe. There was also no focal point to the area, and no safe car parking or other facilities.

It was important for developing the park to determine roles and responsibilities from the outset. Whilst Melbourne Water is the owner of the land and is responsible for the lakes system as part of the broader drainage network, the City of Brimbank is responsible for areas where it has completed capital works, including maintenance.

After Council nominated the park as a potential district park and reached an agreement with Melbourne Water, it appointed planning and design consultants to prepare a Landscape Master Plan for the Park. The purpose of the master plan was to create a new vision for the park that could be implemented over time. The master planning process took into account the existing landscape character, access, pathways and recreational facilities. It also included a community information day and questionnaire to help inform the future vision.

"The Lakes Reserve will be a well developed contemporary parkland which provides a range of recreational opportunities in an attractive natural landscape setting. The Reserve will become a focal point for the community of Taylors Ward, while continuing to provide for local fauna."

Lakes Reserve Master Plan, 2008

Once finalised, Council used the Lakes Reserve Master Plan to drive implementation. The first stage of the works included creating a formal park entrance as well as building BBQ facilities, picnic tables and a children's playground. The works also included new paths, shared trails and wooden jetties on the lake for people to fish. The second stage of the works is now complete and includes a new toilet block. Stage 3 and 4 are planned to occur in future years and include a circuit path around the lake, an extension of the boardwalk built in Stage 1 and a formal grassed area with associated landscaping.

For the past two years, The Lakes Reserve District Park has been the location of Brimbank City Council's annual FUNtasia Children's Festival, which attracted around 10,000 people.

A strong partnership between Melbourne Water and Brimbank Council has been fundamental to the success of this project. The Lakes is a great example of where the two uses of flood protection and recreation can coexist with a clear understanding of responsibility and without compromising public safety or asset protection.

Melbourne Water has a number of important roles, including as the caretaker of river health in the Port Phillip and Westernport region. This includes managing rivers and creeks, floodplains - the land surrounding rivers and creeks that can sometimes experience flooding and the regional drainage system - drains, gutters and channels that carry rainwater from roofs, roads and buildings to rivers and creeks.



NOTES

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THANK YOU

We would like to thank officers from the Ballarat, Brimbank, Casey, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Melbourne, Melton, Monash, Moonee Valley, Port Phillip, Whitehorse and Yarra Councils, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Growth Areas Authority, Melbourne Water, Western Water, Parks Victoria, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Stockland who assisted in the development of the case studies.

