



Open Space Strategy

Summary document



Introduction

The Cardinia Shire Open Space Strategy 2023–2033 (the Strategy) provides a framework for Cardinia Shire Council to plan, deliver and maintain open space to create a network of enticing, inclusive, well connected, sustainable and equitable open space, that meets the current and future needs of our community.

Quality open spaces are vital to supporting the health and wellbeing of our community and the environment they live and work in. The Strategy is aligned with the Community Vision 2040, Council Plan 2021–25 and Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan 2017–29 and supports several of the key strategic directions and objectives for the Shire. As we strive to provide equitable provision of and access to open space, engaging our community in the development and implementation of the Open Space Strategy is a key priority and vital to its success over the next 10 years.



Development of the Strategy

The development of the Open Space Strategy included the following elements:

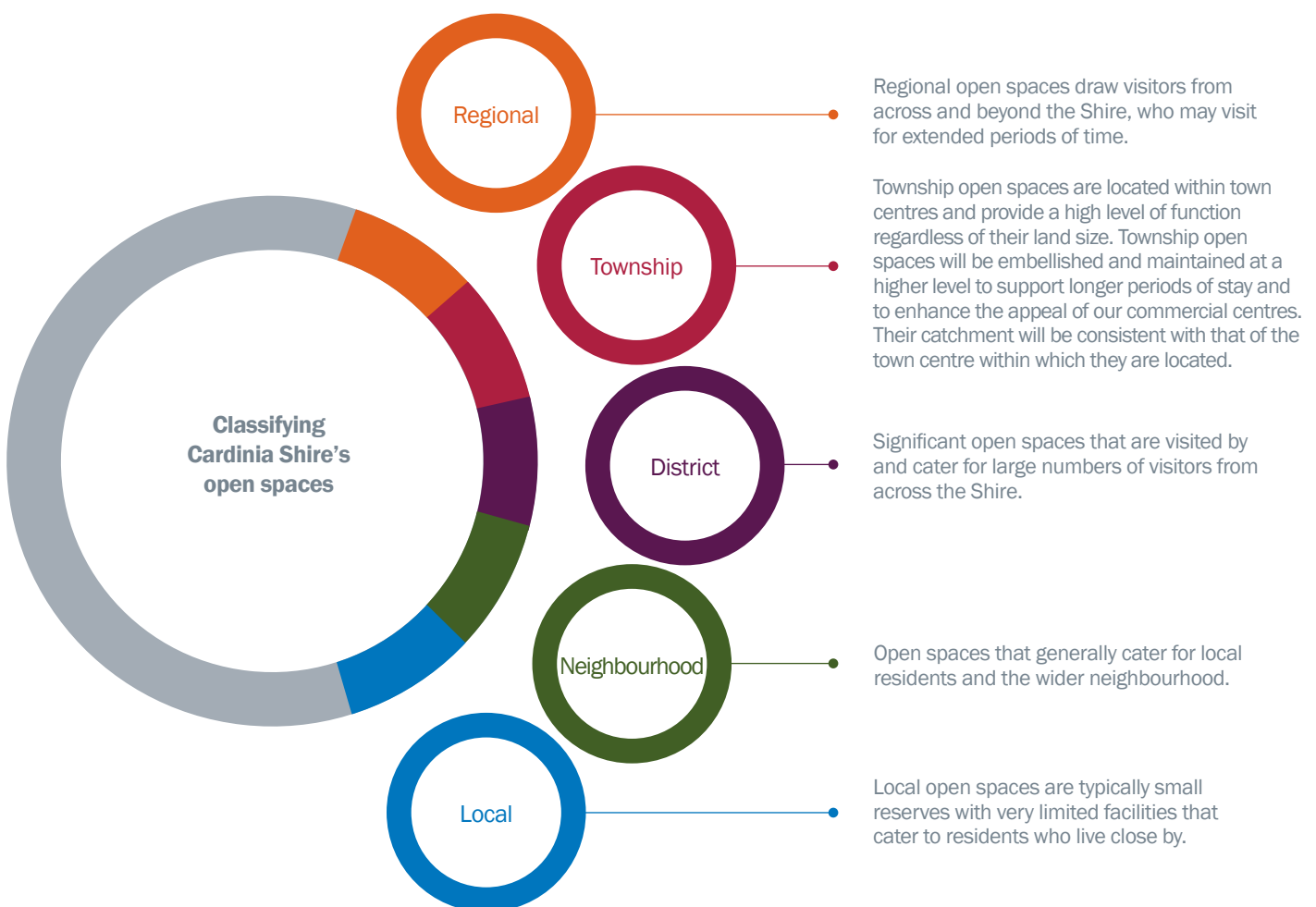
Community engagement	Consultation with a variety of community groups and members to inform the Strategy
Vision and objectives	Development of a vision and objectives for the Cardinia Shire open space network
Open space framework	Development of a framework that includes the definition of open space, type and classification of open space, and open space targets
Assessment of open space network and current and future needs	Application of the open space framework to assess the open space network, and analysis of current and forecast gaps in open space provision and access
Recommendations	Identification and prioritisation of recommendations and actions to improve the open space network
Implementation	Development of an implementation plan and process for monitoring and review

Defining open space

This strategy defines open space as **land that is publicly owned, freely accessible, and able to be used for recreation, leisure and/or environmental benefits.**

Open space in Cardinia Shire is managed differently based on its function, size, the catchment from which visitors are expected to come, the needs of the community, and the level of service it provides. **The different types of open space include passive reserves, active reserves, natural resource areas, and linear connections.**

The classification of open space uses catchment and function as the main system for grouping and identifying the different open spaces across the Shire. The open space classifications are shown below.

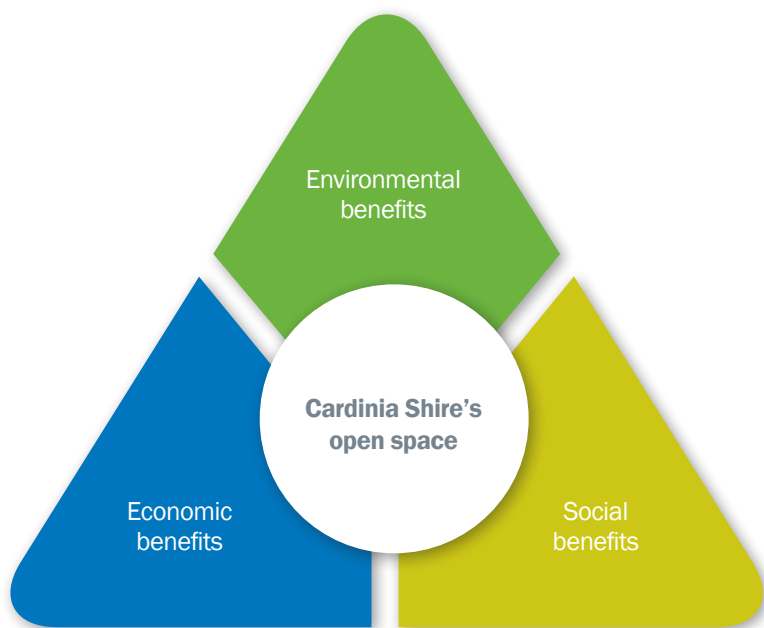


Benefits of open space

Our diverse open spaces are an important resource for our community. They provide places for residents and visitors to gather, enjoy recreational activities, and spend time in nature. Open spaces provide habitat for native plants and animals and contribute to the unique environment of Cardinia Shire. When open spaces are connected by safe walking and cycling paths, they are more accessible, as residents can walk and cycle to their destination. Quality open spaces are vital to supporting the health and wellbeing of our community and the environment they live and work in.

The continuing and rapid population growth and need to support community health and wellbeing in the Shire means the role of open space is increasingly important. Climate change and urban development is placing pressure on our open spaces while accentuating their role in helping our community adapt to climate change. Significantly increased visitation of open spaces during the COVID19 pandemic demonstrated the value the community place on open space.

The Open Space Strategy recognises the variety of benefits provided by open space, and that different benefits are provided by different types of open space.



Environmental benefits

- Increase biodiversity by protecting and enhancing habitat and wildlife corridors
- Reduce stormwater pollution by infiltrating rainfall and providing space for stormwater treatment systems
- Improve air quality by capturing airborne pollutants
- Mitigate the urban heat island effect through shading and evapotranspiration
- Promote carbon sequestration in vegetation in open spaces

Economic benefits

- Increased investment by providing attractive places for people to live and work
- Improved health of workers and increased productivity in green workplaces
- Increased property prices with greener neighbourhoods and proximity to open space
- Opportunities for workforce upskilling and environmental education

Social benefits

- Improved mental health of the community by providing space to relax and connect with nature
- Improved physical health of the community by providing space for sport and physical activities, and green corridors for active travel
- Increased social cohesion by providing places to meet others from the community and opportunities to volunteer

Open Space Strategy Vision

The Cardinia Shire Open Space Strategy 2023–2033 provides a framework for the planning, delivery, and management of open spaces within Cardinia Shire for the next 10 years. The following vision was developed following consultation with the community and summarises what we are working to achieve.

To plan, deliver and maintain enticing and inclusive open spaces across Cardinia Shire that are well connected, sustainable, and equitable, meeting the current and future needs of our community.

Open space in Cardinia Shire

At the time of preparing the Strategy, Cardinia Shire Council manages 633 different parcels of open space providing a range of different functions. Open space covers approximately 17,201.45 hectares across the Shire. The Strategy focuses on ensuring there is adequate provision of public open space and that our open spaces are easily accessible within our residential areas.

Provision and access targets guide the planning and development of open space within the Shire to provide the best outcomes for the community. The same provision and access targets are proposed across the whole Shire.

Currently, 85% of residents living within residentially zoned areas of Cardinia Shire have access to public open space within 500m walking distance.

As part of the development of the draft Open Space Strategy, analysis of provision and access to open space in Cardinia Shire has been undertaken at the Shire wide, Subregion (divides the Shire into 3 main sections) and Profile Area Level (further divides the Shire into 15 sections).

Provision of open space

Defined as the amount of open space.

Target: 5 hectares per 1,000 head of population (further broken down into 3 hectares of passive open space and 2 hectares of active open space)

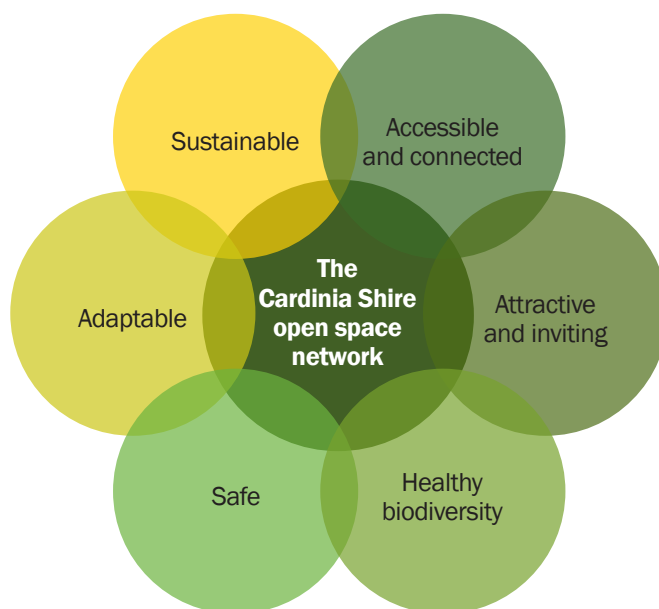
Access to open space

Defined as the proportion of the community that are within walking distance to public open space.

Target: To provide public open space within 500m walking distance of residentially zoned properties

What are we aiming to achieve through the Strategy?

In addition to the vision, we are working to achieve the following carefully considered and holistic objectives.



Sustainable	Adaptable	Safe	Healthy biodiversity	Attractive and inviting	Accessible and connected
<p>Manage open space in a financially sustainable manner.</p> <p>Design, construct and manage open space to reduce the impact on the natural environment.</p> <p>Ensure climate change is considered when planning and delivering open space assets.</p> <p>Integrate water sensitive urban design into open spaces.</p>	<p>Open space that is adaptable and resilient to changing recreational, environmental, cultural and community needs.</p>	<p>Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to improve safety, accessibility, natural surveillance in open space.</p> <p>Maintain appropriate fire breaks to reduce bushfire risk.</p> <p>Maintain high quality public open spaces to minimise hazards and risk of injury and increase the perception of safety.</p>	<p>Protect indigenous flora and fauna in urban landscapes to enhance biodiversity and promote environmental resilience.</p> <p>Identify and protect key environmental, social, heritage, and cultural values of public open space from the impacts of development.</p> <p>Enhance ecological connections through open space planning.</p> <p>Connect people to nature and increase stewardship of our natural environment.</p>	<p>Open space that accommodate a variety of activities and activations.</p> <p>Provide an appropriate level of infrastructure and facilities in open spaces to support different uses, interests and needs.</p> <p>Improve the visual appeal of open spaces through public art and landscaping.</p>	<p>A network of different types of open spaces, well connected to residential, employment and industrial areas.</p> <p>Open spaces are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>Open space corridors that connect neighbourhoods and townships with signage and wayfinding information to support community members to use active transport between destinations.</p>
<p>Deliver in partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve collaboration within Council, with other stakeholders and with the community to seek multiple benefits from open spaces. Optimise open space outcomes by aligning with State and Federal policies and strategies. Ensure community needs and aspirations are embedded in open space planning and implementation. Advocate for funding to enhance our open spaces. 			<p>Equitable planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, develop and maintain open spaces with a consistent level of service, provision and amenity based on their classification and context. Support the evolving needs of communities for open space. Ensure that public open spaces are zoned appropriately to reflect the primary role of the land. 		

Key influences and considerations for open space

The Open Space Strategy seeks to ensure the open space network supports the needs of our community and environment and is healthy and resilient into the future. There are several key influences and considerations that need to be understood if the vision and objectives of the Strategy are to be achieved.

Traditional Owner values

The Strategy will support the delivery of a number of Cardinia Shire's Reconciliation Action Plan actions in relation to open space management, development, education and naming.



Healthy biodiversity

The Strategy recognises the role of open space in the creation, enhancement, and protection of biodiversity. Connecting and creating habitat supports a healthy environment and connecting people with nature supports a healthy community.



Active communities

Providing access to a diverse range of quality open spaces and facilities to support all types of physical activity is critical in supporting community health and wellbeing. The community's preference for recreational activities changes over time, so it is important that the open space network is flexible and responsive to emerging trends.



Inclusive and healthy communities

A core objective of the Open Space Strategy is to ensure there is an equitable amount of open space across the Shire and that it is accessible for our residents. This enables our community to receive the health and wellbeing benefits of open space.

The Strategy identifies the importance for all members of the community to be able to engage in activities in open space and through volunteerism.



Responding to population growth

The Strategy responds to the Shire's current and future demographics and settlement patterns. Where possible, place-specific recommendations have been made to improve the open space network.



A diverse landscape

The Strategy recognises that Cardinia Shire has a diverse landscape and settlement pattern. The provision of quality open space is important in all communities in Cardinia Shire.



Climate change resilience and sustainability

The Strategy supports opportunities for the open space network to mitigate the impacts of climate change, enhance resilience, adaptation, and support the natural environment.



Implementation

Implementation of the Open Space Strategy over the next 10 years will assist Council to achieve enticing and inclusive open spaces that meet the needs of our current and future community. Action plans will be developed and aligned to Council's endorsed Council Plan and Budget. Delivery is dependent upon sufficient funds and resources, and partnerships with other levels of government, developers, and other agencies.

Funding sources to implement the actions will include council revenue, developer contributions, developer works, open space contributions, and grant funding.

The Strategy will be implemented in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the strategy as well as via subsequently prepared action plans. The action plans will not only consider actions to be delivered at the Shire level but also at the Profile Area level for the fifteen areas making up the Northern, Growth, and Southern sub-regions.

Progress on the implementation of the Open Space Strategy and the Action Plan will be reviewed every 3 years. An overall evaluation of the Open Space Strategy and its implementation will be undertaken at the completion of the ten-year period and will be considered as part of the development of a revised Open Space Strategy.

The following pages present the general recommendations to guide the implementation of the strategy at the Shire wide level. The recommendations for each Profile Area can be found in the main strategy document.

The renewal and embellishment of existing open spaces is a holistic process that considers the following:



Recommendations

Adaptable

- Engage the community in the planning for Council open space projects and initiatives to ensure they respond to their needs and aspirations in a sustainable way within the scope of the project.
- Explore opportunities to increase the flexibility of our open spaces creating dynamic places that can be used by multiple age groups and people of all abilities, for physical, social and environmental activities.
- Respond to the needs of the natural environment to support biodiversity and provide opportunities to strengthen responses to climate change as part of open space planning.
- Provide infrastructure to support emerging trends such as social sport opportunities when upgrades are undertaken, and such facilities align with the open space classification.

Sustainable

- As part of Council's project management framework, consider whole of life costs when undertaking Open Space projects (including construction, ongoing maintenance, and renewal costs) to ensure financial sustainability of services provided.
- Support the implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan by looking for opportunities to integrate water sensitive urban design measures and exploring alternative water supplies such as storm water harvesting as part of master planning for existing and new open spaces.
- Explore opportunities for the open space network to reduce impacts in flood prone areas and for any new flood mitigation areas to also act as open spaces for the local community.
- Support the implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy by:
 - including the use of natural, sustainably sourced, recycled and weather resilient materials in open space design and promoting increased permeability of surfaces;
 - ensuring the sustainable management, use and design of built assets and the protection of water quality and waterway health;
 - and ensuring energy is supplied from renewable sources and utilised efficiently.

Equitable planning

- Develop a network of public open spaces that supports our community to have access to open space within 500m walking distance in residential areas.
- Develop quality, innovative, community-driven master plans for district, township and regionally classified open space to provide a diverse open space network offering the community a range of opportunities to be active and stay for longer periods of time.
- Planning for new open space or enhancements to existing open space will look to provide diverse types of open space, taking into consideration nearby types of open space and community needs.
- Undertake a quality assessment of the open space network within each Profile Area and assess alignment with the associated open space classifications. As part of the assessment, identify the key environmental, social, cultural and heritage values in public open space for protection and enhancement of these values.
- Prioritise future infrastructure based on the quality assessment of the open space network, strategic alignment, and available resources and funding.
- Develop guidelines for Open Space Furniture for a standard suite of products and materials.
- Prepare planning scheme amendments to rectify zoning anomalies in the open space network.
- Review and update the Cardinia Shire Play Space Strategy.

Healthy biodiversity

- Retain and protect natural resource areas as valuable natural assets. Identify sensitive areas within these open spaces to protect from recreation impacts, and less sensitive areas which may provide opportunities for recreation in nature (walking, cycling, viewing platforms).
- In line with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Weed Management Strategy and Biolink Plan, explore opportunities to support biodiversity in open space areas, including strengthening habitat corridors, key biodiversity connections, links to and between open space.
- Support community friends' groups and sporting Committees of management to protect, enhance and monitor remnant vegetation they manage.
- Support habitat improvements and increase the planting of indigenous species in appropriate open spaces to enhance biodiversity and meet revegetation targets within the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

Accessible and connected

- Increase the number of residents within 500m walking distance of public open space.
- Investigate connectivity across barriers to improve access to open space.
- Identify, prioritise, and deliver access paths to open space as part of the annual footpath delivery program.
- Conduct an accessibility audit to identify priority areas for enhanced accessibility, universal design, and inclusiveness as part of the master planning process for all district, township and regional open spaces.
- Work with reserve committees that support the management of open space to ensure open space is accessible to the broader community. Where appropriate ensure facilities are open and available to support public access.
- As part of a review of Council's Pedestrian and Bicycle Strategy, undertake an assessment of regional, local, and shared use paths to identify key connections and opportunities to link to and within open spaces, provide wayfinding signage, connect neighbourhoods and townships, and provide shaded routes to encourage active transport.

Safe

- Design, manage and maintain open spaces in accordance with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Reduce bushfire risks through the preparation and implementation of bushfire management plans where required for open spaces across Cardinia Shire.

Attractive and inviting

- Provide a variety of infrastructure and facilities in open spaces in alignment with classifications (regional, township, district, neighbourhood, local).
- Support community led Placemaking in public open space in accordance with the Cardinia Shire Council Placemaking Guide.
- Further investigate provision and access to open space in employment areas to support physical activity and enhance visual amenity.
- As part of upgrades to existing open spaces, identify amenity enhancement opportunities, where possible, such as through public art, landscaping, and optimising views, to enhance the visual appeal (considering Councils Arts and Culture Policy 2012).
- Activate open space to support community connection, and active living.

Deliver in partnership

- Engage and collaborate with the community on open space projects and strategies.
- Investigate partnerships with land managers of encumbered and undeveloped drainage reserves and waterways to provide passive recreation.
- Seek opportunities to share and celebrate Aboriginal heritage and culture, and opportunities to incorporate traditional land management practices in public open spaces.
- Engage and be guided by Traditional Owners (as represented by Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation) for open space planning and naming or renaming of public open spaces.
- Encourage collaboration across Council and with external agencies to incorporate opportunities for the open space network to provide additional functions such as water sensitive urban design, community gardens and urban agriculture projects, enhanced climate resilience, and biodiversity protection.
- Continue to support volunteer community groups and organisations in the maintenance and enhancement of open spaces.
- Partner with the Victorian Planning Authority in the planning for future communities in growth areas to achieve Cardinia Shire Council open space targets.
- Engage and collaborate with other levels of Government, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, neighbouring Council's, and other external agencies on joint open space projects and strategies, including exploring recreational opportunities on encumbered land.
- Advocate to the state government for more support of community committees of management and Council in the management of crown land and renewal of aging infrastructure.
- Advocate for the delivery of the Cardinia Creek Regional Parklands Future Directions Plan 2022.
- Engage the education department and relevant schools across the Shire in discussions regarding the establishment of MOUs to support community use of school grounds outside of hours in areas where such an agreement would address an access gap.

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