WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL
City of Diversity



PUBLIC SPACES AND RECREATION STRATEGY

September 2023



Credit: Cred Consulting

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of the land on which we stand, the Aboriginal people, their spirits and ancestors.

We acknowledge the vital contribution that Indigenous people and cultures have made and still make to the nation that we share, Australia.

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Executive summary

The Willoughby Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy (the Strategy) guides the planning, delivery and management of Willoughby City's (our City's) public space and recreation network for the next ten years.

Public spaces for recreation

Public spaces for recreation include our:

- Public open spaces - Our parks, playgrounds, waterfronts, outdoor sportsgrounds, plazas and bushland trails. We have 455 hectares of public open spaces.
- Streets - We have close to 200km (or approximately 227 hectares) presenting an opportunity to increase our public space network for recreation.

A changing landscape

State housing targets mean an additional 13,000 people will live in our established and already densely populated areas. Our City has reached 'peak open space' meaning we have challenges in delivering new public spaces due to limited land availability and high land costs.

Alongside this, the recreational preferences of our community are shifting. We are more culturally diverse and more of us are living in apartments. Responding to these changes, cities worldwide are adopting innovative approaches to public space planning and delivery.

A new approach

In this context, this Strategy aligns with the *NSW Government Public Spaces Charter 2021*. It goes beyond conventional supply and demand approaches, and considers new ways to get the most out of what we have already, and to deliver new and improved public space outcomes through growth.

The Strategy adopts a placemaking lens. This means identifying opportunities to reimagine public spaces in partnership with our community to increase recreational opportunities, and deliver future public spaces that respond to community needs and interests. This placemaking approach is underpinned by active community involvement and shared responsibility for public space design, activation and management.

This will allow us to be more flexible and adaptable in our recreational offerings, as well as test and validate ideas promptly to ensure they suit our community's needs.

What our community told us

Our community's input and feedback has been key to the development of this Strategy. The consultation for this Strategy was conducted in two stages with the aim of understanding how people currently use public spaces and how they want to use them in the future, identifying priorities for this Strategy, and suggesting location-specific ideas.

Our community expressed a profound appreciation for the value and utilisation of our public spaces. In the future, they would like to use our public spaces for a wide range of recreational activities, including relaxation and reflection, play and creativity, sports and exercise, learning and connection, as well as socialising and celebrating.

They told us that some areas in our City have limited access to public spaces. This is further substantiated by a walking catchment analysis, which shows gaps in access within the suburbs of Chatswood, Artarmon, and Roseville. Notably, major roadways such as the Pacific Highway create barriers to seamless access.

Feedback highlighted that some of our existing spaces are currently underutilised but hold untapped potential for increased usage. Additionally, they told us our public spaces can be more effectively activated to encourage greater participation and foster stronger community connections. Another widely discussed opportunity was to reimagine spaces not traditionally designated for recreation, such as local streets, along with leveraging future growth to deliver new public spaces.

Our community were highly supportive of adopting a placemaking lens to public spaces. They believe this approach offers an increased opportunity for them to actively shape the future of these spaces through a grassroots, community-led process.

Based on extensive research, including input from the community, the Strategy outlines the following vision, principles and strategic priorities. It also includes suggested ideas for further investigation during the implementation of this Strategy.

Our vision

Our City's public spaces promote community connection, resilience, health and well-being.

They are hubs of community activity, making the most use of available spaces to offer a variety of recreational experiences for everyone, while also safeguarding and nurturing our natural environment.

Through collaborative efforts with the community, our public spaces not only enrich daily lives but also contribute to our City's identity, making it a sought-after destination for residents, workers and visitors alike.

Our implementation principles

The following principles, developed with our community, will guide the delivery of this Strategy:

- Collaborative.
- Courageous.
- Equitable.
- Inclusive.
- Iterative.
- High-quality.

Our strategic priorities

We have five strategic priorities:



Create and promote a network of public spaces connected with activated recreational links.



Leverage future development and underutilised assets to deliver new public spaces.



Activate existing public spaces for increased recreational participation.



Encourage shared use and multi-purpose design of sports spaces.



Promote collaborative and co-ordinated planning and delivery.

Ideas and opportunities

Research and community engagement has identified the following priority ideas to improve our public space and recreation network. They will be further investigated during the implementation of this Strategy.

- Extension and activation of roads as lively pedestrian connectors.
- Creation of recreational street links by reducing road space to allow more area for recreational uses.
- Development of a quiet recreational network- to interconnect natural areas, reserves and parks.
- Transformation of Council car parks with surface level recreational facilities and investigating underground options, where feasible.
- Encouraging the integration of new and improved public spaces as part of future development, especially in the Chatswood CBD growth areas.
- Collaboration with schools and other public land agencies for shared use of public spaces for recreation.
- Exploring the feasibility of re-purposing walls, roofs and terraces of Council buildings for recreational purposes.

Investigation of these opportunities will be prioritised where there are currently limitations in access to public spaces.

This Strategy is supported by a Placemaking Toolkit that will guide the adoption of a community-led approach and provide practical tools and ideas to enhance public spaces for recreation.





Credit: Cred Consulting

INTRODUCTION

Willoughby City has approximately 455 hectares of public space and recreation areas that is enjoyed by our residents, workers and visitors alike.

Willoughby City is forecast to have an increase in population due to natural increase and immigration, as well as the provision of new housing to address NSW Government housing targets.

To respond to the increasing and evolving recreational needs of both the current and future community, this Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy aims to improve our network of public spaces to promote community connection, resilience and health and wellbeing.

We are a city of many people, places and experiences

Willoughby City (our City) is home to a diverse population. Currently, our parks, playgrounds, sports spaces, scenic waterways, bushland, reserves and trails, and plazas provide a wide range of opportunities for our community to engage in recreational activities.

Our journey so far

Willoughby City Council (Council) adopted *The Open Space and Recreation Plan* in 2013. To implement that Plan, over the past decade, Council has prepared master plans to guide the delivery of new parks and park improvements.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of a Special Rate Variation (now ended) has cleared an infrastructure renewal backlog. For example, completed projects at Chatswood Park and Willoughby Park have enhanced the functionality, aesthetics, and accessibility of public spaces.

Our journey ahead

Population growth

By 2036, an additional 13,000 people will live in our City increasing the already high population density (particularly in areas like Chatswood).

Limited and expensive land

Like many inner urban Sydney Local Government Areas, our City also has limitations to increase the amount of public space due to limited land availability, constrained ownership, and very high cost. This means we need to find new ways to improve access to, increase the quality of, and expand the recreational offer of our public spaces.



Changing recreational preferences

People's recreational preferences are changing, with more people wanting to use public spaces to connect with nature, express creativity, and play and socialise with friends and family. Furthermore, there is a rising demand for places to walk and run, and opportunities for individualised exercise and casual sport.

Emerging innovative approaches

Cities worldwide are adopting tactical and placemaking approaches to public space planning, design and delivery. Innovative solutions are emerging including flexible and multipurpose design, shared competitive and social sports use, re-imagining streets for recreation, activating residual land, and connecting up the public space network with recreational links.

Taking a placemaking approach

Given our unique conditions and evolving needs of our community, this Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy (the Strategy) will be underpinned by the *NSW Government Public Spaces Charter 2021* as Council shifts its emphasis to 'placemaking'.

Placemaking is a practical process for transforming public spaces - both in retrofitting an existing space or in planning a new space. It emphasises involving the community in the design, planning, and management of public spaces to ensure that they reflect the needs, preferences, and identities of the people who use them.

Adopting this approach will allow us to be more flexible and adaptable, as well as test and validate ideas promptly to ensure they suit our community's needs.

It also involves a willingness from Council to share responsibility for creating places that our community will love. In essence, it is a process enabled by Council, but led by the community.

What we want to achieve

This Strategy will seek to promote community connection, resilience, health, and well-being by building on our successes, harnessing readily-available opportunities, all while actively involving our community to help shape the future of our public spaces.

What we mean by public space and recreation

In alignment with the *NSW Government Public Spaces Charter 2021*, public spaces are defined as all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. They include:

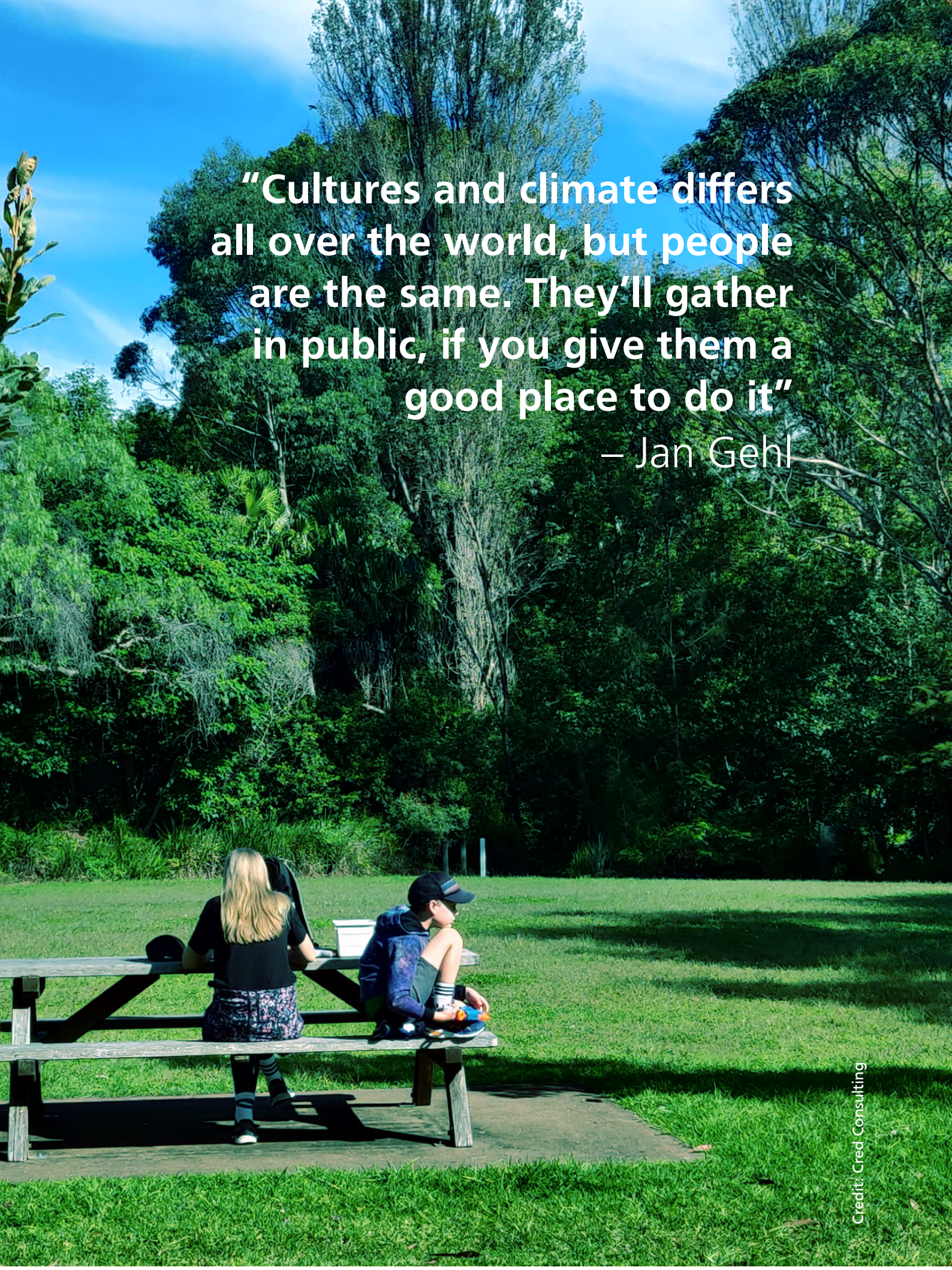
- Public open spaces – parks, playgrounds, waterfronts, outdoor sportsgrounds and bushland trails.
- Public facilities – libraries, museums, galleries, civic/ community centres (Note: these are not included as part of this Strategy).
- Streets – streets, avenues, squares and plazas, pavements, lanes and bicycle paths.

While streets have historically been the domain of cars, increasingly the footpaths that border them, and the streets themselves, are being seen as an important part of the public space network with opportunities to increase recreational activities in them, responding to high demand for more places to incidentally walk, cycle and play in comfort.

Recreation includes a broad range of active and passive activities that we participate in for fun, relaxation, health and wellbeing, and to connect with our families and communities. This includes:

- Casual activities like going for a walk, riding a bike, picnic with friends and family, kicking a ball around, playing games, enjoying nature, and participating in events in public spaces.
- Informal fitness activities like using outdoor fitness equipment, running, exercising in parks, and social sports.
- Organised sport activities, such as attending training sessions or competitions with a club or team.

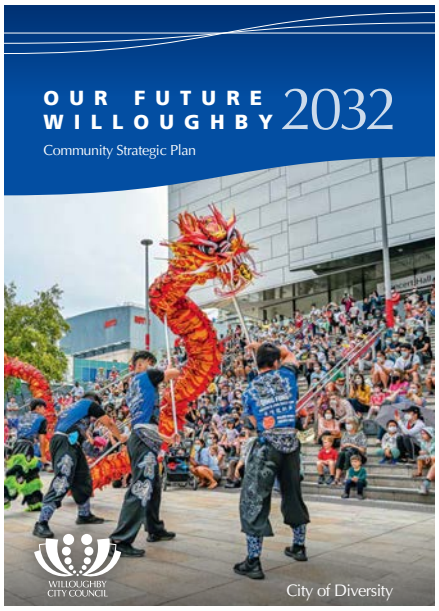



“Cultures and climate differs all over the world, but people are the same. They’ll gather in public, if you give them a good place to do it”
– Jan Gehl
Credit: Cred Consulting

STRATEGIC POSITION

This Strategy will help deliver all five outcomes of *Our Future Willoughby 2032*. It also aligns with a range of existing, and developing strategies that will deliver connected, resilient and thriving communities.

Figure 1 - Strategic Position of Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy



Our Future Willoughby 2032 Community Strategic Plan

OUTCOME 1
A City that is green

OUTCOME 2
A City that is connected, inclusive and resilient

OUTCOME 3
A City that is liveable

OUTCOME 4
A City that is prosperous and vibrant

OUTCOME 5
A City that is effective and accountable

Linked strategies:

- *Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020*
- *Willoughby Local Centres Strategy 2036*
- *Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan 2021*
- *Our Green City Plan 2028*
- *Integrated Transport Strategy 2036*
- *Chatswood CBD and Urban Design Strategy 2036*
- *Willoughby Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026*
- *Economic Development Strategy 2022*
- *Draft Night Time Economy Strategy 2022-2028*
- *Willoughby City Library Strategy draft 2024-2028*
- *Asset Management Strategy 2022-2032*



(this document)

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council will play a pivotal role as the lead agency in steering this Strategy and collaborating with partners to ensure its effective implementation. Council's leadership will adapt based on the specific action, ranging from planning, facilitation, execution, and advocacy for the enhancement of the public space and recreation network, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 2 - Council's role in planning for the delivery of public spaces and recreation (Source: Cred Consulting)

Lead and advocate	Listen, plan and regulate	Build connections, partnerships and capacity	Deliver infrastructure, programs and grants
Leadership Council's governance is aligned to the needs and aspirations of the community and decision-making is driven by social sustainability	**Research** Developing an evidence base to better understand, plan and advocate for the community	**Connector** Council can identify and connect different actors in order to encourage innovation and maximise social outcomes	**Grants and sponsorship** Supporting community groups and organisations through grants and in kind support
Advocacy Speaking up for your community needs	**Engagement** Talking to the community to understand their needs, aspirations and involving them in the development of plans and policies	**Partnerships** Partnering with organisations and the community to achieve shared goals	**Program** Council directly supporting the community with programs they need, where and when they need it
Custodian Council is the custodian of their community's aspirations and stories	**Policy, strategy and regulation** Developing policies and plans that actively respond to community needs	**Capacity building** Unlocking capacity within the community by equipping people with the skills they need to achieve social outcomes	**Infrastructure** Planning and delivering places and spaces that promote social connectivity

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS STRATEGY

This Strategy was developed through extensive research including analysis of relevant strategies and policies, current and forecast demographic analysis, audit and analysis of existing public spaces, evaluation of select public spaces using *NSW Government Great Public Spaces Evaluation Tool*, review of global and local best practices, and engagement with over 330 community and stakeholder members.

This Strategy is supported by a Placemaking Toolkit that will guide the adoption of a community-led approach and provide practical tools and ideas to enhance public spaces for recreation.

This Strategy has been informed by a suite of reports including:

- Background Report.
- Public Spaces Evaluation Report of 15 select public spaces in our City.
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report.
- Strategic Opportunities Paper.

These reports form the supporting documentation for this Strategy.

Figure 3 - Strategy development process (Source: Cred Consulting)





Credit: Cred Consulting

What we have

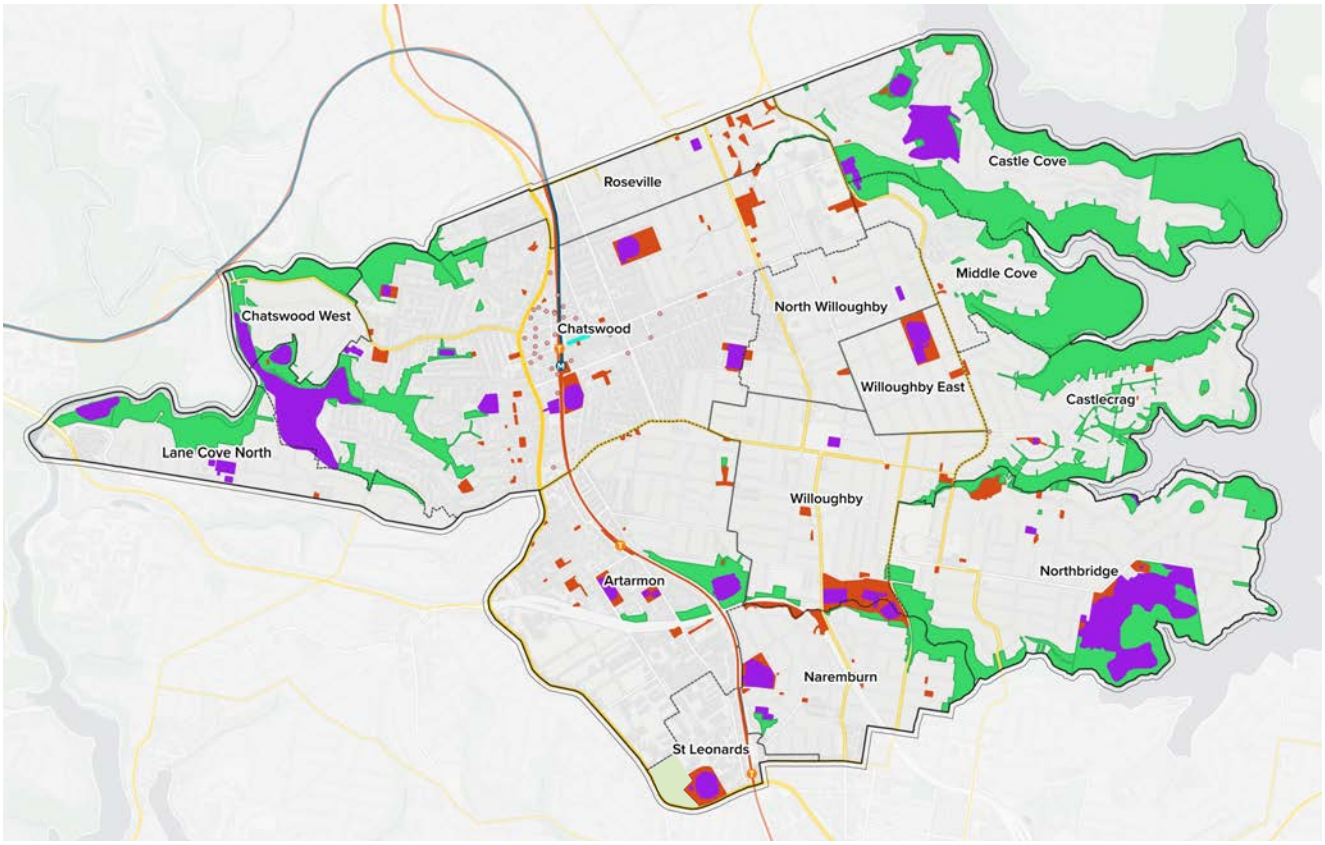
We have 330 hectares of natural spaces, 87 hectares of sports spaces, 38 hectares of parks, and 0.2 hectares of plazas.

Our recreation facilities include:

- 53 x sportsgrounds and sportscourts (this includes tennis, basketball, netball and futsal courts)
- 44 x playgrounds
- 8 x outdoor fitness stations
- 1 x skatepark
- 14 x dog off leash areas
- 1 x indoor aquatic centre (pool currently under renewal)
- 8 x community gardens, and
- 153 kms of on and off road cycleways and shared paths.

We have approximately 200 kilometres of streets, some of which present an opportunity for shared recreational uses in the future.

Figure 4 - Public spaces within Willoughby City, excluding streets (Source: Cred Consulting)



PUBLIC SPACES AND RECREATION IN WILLOUGHBY CITY

Regardless of the quantity of public spaces available, their ease of accessibility greatly influences their utilisation. According to the *NSW Government Draft Greener Places Design Guide 2020*, public spaces should be accessible within a 400m walking distance from residential areas. This guideline aligns with one of the *NSW Premier's Priorities*, which emphasises that all households should be within a 10-minute walk of a quality public space, approximately 400m away.

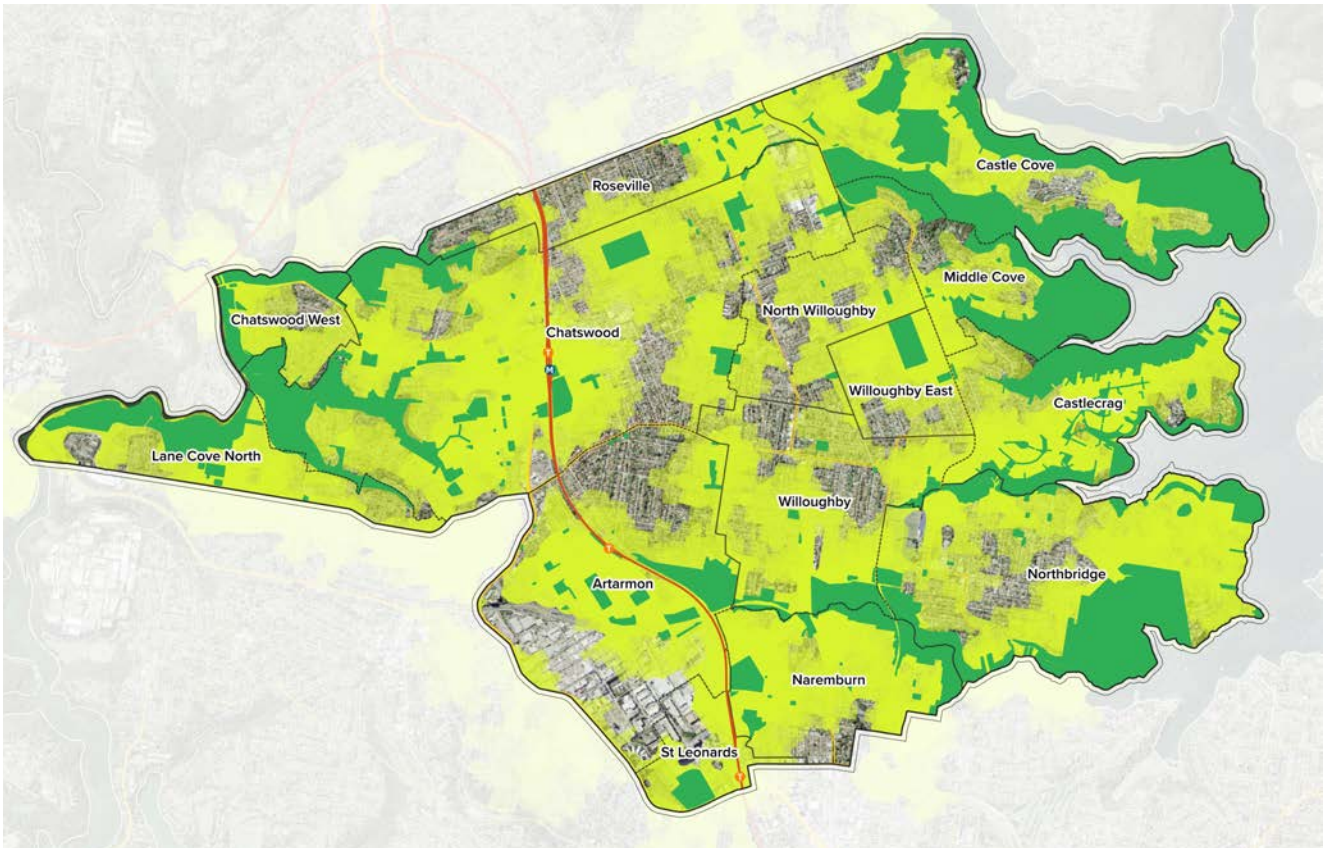
As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the majority of our City already meets the criterion of having public spaces within a 400m walking distance. However, there are notable gaps in access to public spaces in the suburbs of Chatswood, Artarmon, and Roseville.

Although parts of St Leonards show similar gaps, it's essential to note that these areas are primarily industrial.

Furthermore, the *NSW Government Draft Greener Places Design Guide 2020* also recommends that public spaces should be accessible within a 200m walking distance from higher-density residential areas.

An assessment of the 200m walking distance catchments from public spaces, overlaid on areas zoned for medium and high-density residential development within our City, shows notable gaps in access to public spaces within 200m walking distance in the suburbs of Chatswood, Artarmon, North Willoughby, Willoughby, Roseville, and Northbridge.

Figure 5 - 400m walking distance analysis from public open spaces (Source: Cred Consulting)



Our public space and recreation network has great strengths to build on

- We have a **diverse range of public spaces that offer a variety of recreational experiences**. Examples include The Concourse and the pedestrianised Victoria Avenue, which host regular events and markets. Parks like Willoughby Park, Naremburn Park, Bicentennial Reserve, and Beauchamp Park provide spaces for both active and passive recreation. Additionally, places such as Flat Rock Gully, Sailors Bay, and Harold Reid foreshore walking tracks offer tranquil spots to connect with nature.
- Our **community are passionate about public spaces and demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and involvement**. They actively engage in initiatives, offer feedback, and partake in co-management, as seen in community gardens.
- We are already **leading in providing innovative and best-practice public spaces**. Examples of pioneering efforts include the creation of a park at The Concourse's podium level, the conversion of sportsgrounds with floodlights into synthetic turf, and the implementation of roll-in and roll-out equipment for versatile court use.
- Council has completed significant improvements to existing public spaces through **capital works and asset renewal processes**. For seven years, the successful implementation of a Special Rate Variation (now ended) has cleared an infrastructure renewal backlog.
- Our **public spaces are platforms for social connection and cultural expression** as demonstrated by well-attended events such as Lunar New Year, Emerge Festival, Chatswood Street Fair, and the regular Chatswood Mall Markets.
- We have a **continued commitment to improve public spaces**, with several noteworthy projects planned for the upcoming years, such as local centre streetscape enhancements, shared paths, and improvements such as playground renewals.
- Our City has **planned development** in areas such as Chatswood that present opportunities to deliver new public spaces and urban greenery.

Credit: Fancyboy Photography for Cred Consulting

Our public space and recreation network faces some challenges

- Our public spaces need to cater to a **growing population**, especially in already dense areas.
- We are becoming a **more diverse community**, which means we need to be more adept at planning diverse and equitable spaces for different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and recreational preferences.
- **Land is limited**, constrained, and expensive, which is a barrier to providing significant new public spaces.
- Similar to other urbanised LGAs, we have **limited resources** that impact maintenance, asset renewals, and new projects.
- Public space is **distributed variably,** with some suburbs having lower provision and access.
- Highly urbanised areas such as Chatswood have **limited greenery**.
- Rising **climate change impacts** such as heat and floods is likely to necessitate additional future investments.
- We have a need to manage **competing needs** for public spaces, such as the need for more spaces for organised sports vs casual sports, and spaces for events vs infrastructure to enable events.
- Our public spaces have **limited connections**, especially across the east and west of the City, with the Pacific Highway being a barrier for easy access.
- Some of our public spaces are **underutilised**, while others, such as streets, have untapped potential.
- Our public spaces are **not always tailored to cultural groups' preferences**.
- **Inconsistent information** about public spaces poses challenges for users.



Credit: Fancyboy Photography for Cred Consulting

Over 330 members of our community have helped shape this Strategy

Our community's input and feedback has been key to the development of this Strategy. Consultation for this Strategy was undertaken in two stages.

Stage 1 consultation was undertaken between February and March 2023, it included an online survey, interactive mapping tool, community pop-up stalls and stakeholder interviews. Its aim was to understand how people use public spaces, their recreation needs and priorities for the future, and capture their ideas on how to increase recreational offerings across our City.

Stage 2 consultation was undertaken in August 2023 and it included two community workshops. Their purpose was to gather feedback on using a placemaking approach to expanding recreational opportunities in our City, refine the strategic priorities outlined in this Strategy, and suggest corresponding location opportunities.

These suggested opportunities will undergo additional testing as part of public exhibition, as well as ongoing consultation throughout the implementation process.

"Bring more nature into the urban areas of Willoughby. But keep the natural areas natural."

— Online survey respondent

"I think Council does a great job for the general community, but I think could do more targeted activities for adolescents and the elderly, whose needs are different."

— Online survey respondent

"It's important to acknowledge the Aboriginal pre-history of the spaces we use for public recreation. I believe that the relationship with Country should be highlighted."

— Stakeholder interview respondent

"We have the opportunity to truly use every bit of land we have to deliver quality public space and recreation outcomes for our community, it's what the rest of the world is already doing. "

— Community workshop participant

You shared the following ideas to improve our public space network:



Extend the network of recreational links to improve access to public spaces, particularly connect the east and west.



Transform well-located local streets that have the potential to cater to the wider community into social spaces.



Improve amenity of existing public spaces by providing more seating, shade, greenery, toilets, bubblers and signage.



Create more vibrant public spaces through activations such as markets, food festivals, live music, exercise programs and public art.



Reimagine underutilised spaces and transform them into great places for the community, including laneways, cul-de-sacs, small parks and reserves.



Represent the different cultures and identities of people who call our City home and acknowledge First Nations cultures throughout our public spaces.



Encourage future developments to deliver quality public spaces that are accessible to the public on the ground level.



Increase access to greenery and natural areas, including preserving our bushland areas and greening our CBD.



Support diverse sports and provide access to all types of sporting facilities, including hockey, athletics, badminton, volleyball and basketball.



Diversify the recreational offering by providing outdoor exercise stations, ping pong tables, all-ages playgrounds, waterplay parks, and spaces for young people.



Plan alongside and in collaboration with the wider region to maximise benefits and avoid duplication in neighbouring LGAs.



Strengthen community co-management of public spaces to increase sense of pride and ownership.



Improve communications around public spaces so that our community has information about the facilities, activities, opening hours and events occurring in our City.



Collaborate with other government agencies to unlock places such as schools and areas along train lines for public recreation.

Credit: Fancyboy Photography for Cred Consulting



"Placemaking is an ongoing process of tinkering and care in order to make public spaces that are well-used and well-loved"

– Fred Kent

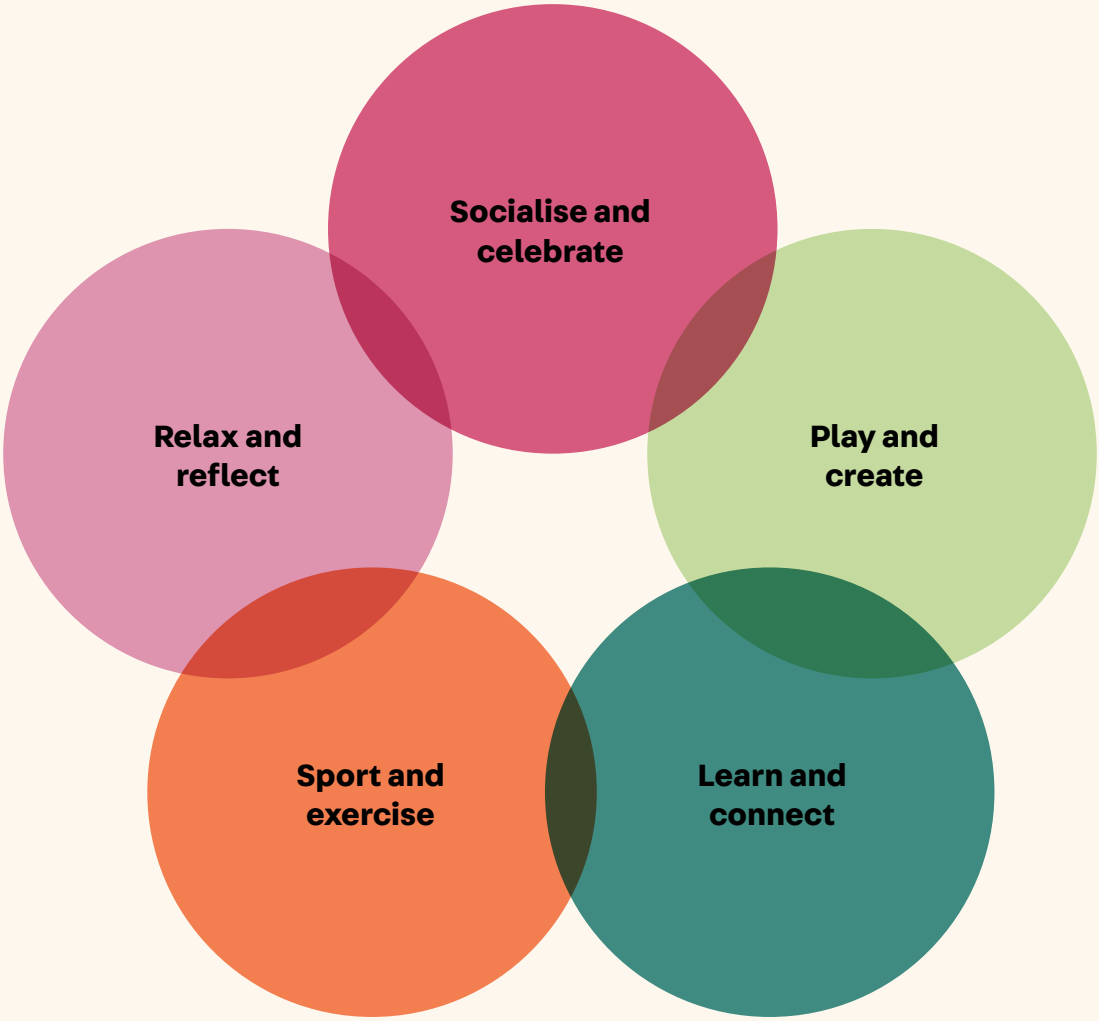
Our vision

Willoughby City's public spaces promote community connection, resilience, health, and well-being.

They are hubs of community activity, making the most use of available spaces to offer a variety of recreational experiences for everyone, while also safeguarding and nurturing our natural environment.

Through collaborative efforts with the community, our public spaces not only enrich daily lives but also contribute to the city's identity, making it a sought-after destination for residents, workers and visitors alike.

Figure 6 - Diverse recreation experiences we want to offer in our City's public spaces (Source: Cred Consulting)



Our implementation principles

The NSW Government Public Spaces Charter's ten principles will steer the implementation of this Strategy.

Additionally, we have distilled the following guiding principles from the feedback we received during consultation. They reflect our community's expectations about the way we will work to implement this Strategy.

Collaborative

We will engage the community at all stages enabling shared responsibility for the design, activation and management of public spaces.

Courageous

Our approach will be free from inhibitions, encouraging innovative ideas regardless of perceived constraints.

Equitable

Our project choices and locations will be strategic, prioritising areas of greatest need.

Inclusive

Our projects and initiatives will be designed to warmly embrace all members of our community, irrespective of age, gender, ability, or cultural background.

Iterative

We will test and validate ideas before committing to lasting change.

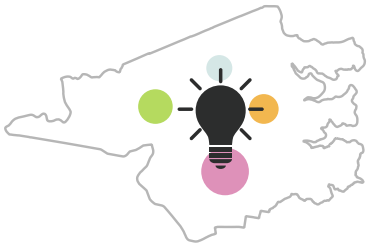
High-quality

Our projects and initiatives will be of a high-quality, both in terms of design outcome and sustainability.

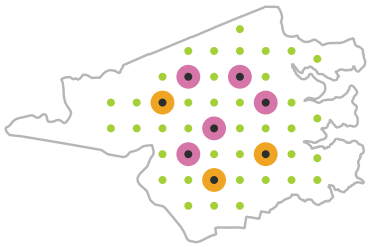
To achieve this, five strategic priorities have been identified:



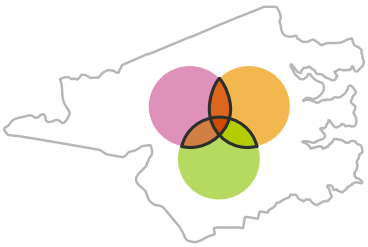
1 Create and promote a network of public spaces via activated recreational links.



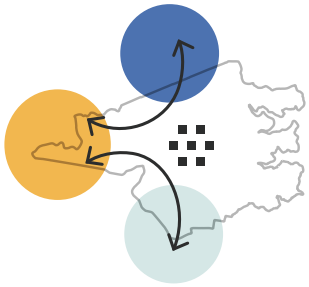
2 Leverage future development and underutilised assets to deliver new public spaces.



3 Activate existing public spaces for increased recreational participation.



4 Encourage shared use and multi-purpose design of sports spaces.



5 Promote collaborative and co-ordinated planning and delivery.



Credit: Fancyboy Photography for Cred Consulting

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1

Create and promote a network of public spaces via activated recreational links

Our City has significant public spaces, however, they are not well-connected. We have the opportunity to create a network of public spaces connected by activated recreational links.

Recreational links are attractive walking circuits designed to encourage higher levels of physical activity. They can be established through reallocating existing road space and providing an improved pedestrian and cyclist experience.

They can be destinations in their own right by offering a range of recreation activities, enhancing the overall appeal and functionality of the network.

ACTIONS	
1.1	Identify key connecting streets and laneways to explore implementation of recreational links.
1.2	Improve the visibility and identification of existing recreational links (e.g. bold and consistent signage, online interactive maps).
1.3	Explore opportunities for unique and diverse experiences along recreational links (e.g. nature-based links, waterfront links, cultural links, playful links).
1.4	Explore opportunities for stay and play along recreational links (e.g. swings, parklets, ping pong tables, hopscotch grids).
1.5	Explore ways to promote exercise and active lifestyles along recreational links (e.g. outdoor fitness stations).
1.6	Explore ways to improve comfort and amenity of recreational links for day and nighttime use (e.g. adding more trees and greenery, seating, bubblers, well-lit pathways).
1.7	Explore ways to make recreational links as opportunities for learning and connection (e.g. public art, information about the local area).
1.8	Encourage use of recreational links through programmable activities (e.g. park runs, guided walks).

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Location opportunities

In response to this strategic priority, location-based opportunities suggested through consultation for further investigation include:

- Recreational links connecting the east and west of our City to reduce access barriers currently posed by Pacific Highway.
- Creation of recreational street links by reducing road space, e.g. McClelland Street and various streets in Naremburn to allow more area for recreational uses.
- Streetscape improvements in Edward and Penshurst Street.
- Upgrades to the Rail to River Walk (West Ward).
- Development of a quiet recreational network- to interconnect natural areas, reserves and parks.
- Review and/or develop recreation network connecting:
  - Lane Cove and Thomson Park
  - Gore Hill Oval and Sailors Bay Walking Track
  - Artarmon Reserve and Thomson Park via Hampden Road, and
  - The Chatswood and Castle Cove Greenway.

Case study

GreenWay, Inner West

The GreenWay is an environmental and active travel corridor linking the Cooks River at Earlwood with the Parramatta River at Iron Cove.

It mostly follows the route of the Inner West Light Rail and Hawthorne Canal and features bike paths and foreshore walks, cultural and historical sites, cafes, bushcare sites and a range of parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities.



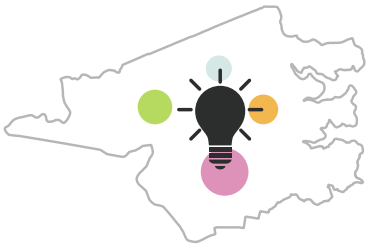
Underline, Miami

The Underline is a 16 kilometre recreational link that includes linear parks, urban trails and public art destinations located below the Miami Metrorail, in an area with 70% residents from non-English speaking backgrounds.

With it's series of "rooms", featuring butterfly gardens, gathering places, including a 50-foot dining table and smaller tables with dominoes, gym areas and dog friendly areas, the Underline is an example of reallocating existing spaces to meet diverse user interests.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 2

Leverage future development and underutilised assets to deliver new public spaces

We have limited opportunities to provide new public spaces due to limited land and high costs. So, we need innovative ways to provide new public space.

There is significant land in our City that currently remains untapped for recreational purposes. This includes our local streets, residual land owned and managed by other government agencies, such as those adjacent to train lines, and certain Council assets originally designated for other functions, such as car parks.

Additionally, we have significant forecast growth in areas where public space availability and connectivity is already limited.

We can reimagine and transform underutilised assets, as well as leverage future development to provide new public spaces.

ACTIONS	
2.1	Identify suitable local streets and explore ways to close them off to vehicular traffic, and transform them to offer a range of recreational activities.
2.2	Explore transforming suitable Council-owned land for recreational purposes (e.g. car parks).
2.3	Explore opportunities for recreational uses on rooftops and terraces of existing buildings (e.g. Council buildings such as community centres and libraries, shopping centres).
2.4	Advocate to Transport for NSW to explore ways to use fenced areas surrounding rail lines for low-risk recreational activities.
2.5	Actively pursue public-private partnerships to expand and create new public spaces, publicly-accessible private spaces and publicly-accessible through-links, including using Planning Proposals and Voluntary Planning Agreements.
2.6	Explore ways to proactively inform and guide the design of public spaces in new developments that meet community aspirations (e.g. create a best practice document for public spaces in high-rise development).
2.7	Seek to gain agreement at Council on the level of contributions from developers, rates and other revenue to support the implementation the building up of reserves to acquire public land in areas of agreed deficit not otherwise provided for, to support this and subsequent public spaces strategies.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Location opportunities

In response to this strategic priority, location-based opportunities suggested through consultation for further investigation include:

- Extension and activation of roads, e.g. Victoria Avenue, as lively pedestrian connectors over easy walking grades.
- Transformation of Council car parks with surface level recreational facilities and investigating underground options where feasible, e.g. Northbridge Plaza car park.
- Integrating public spaces into future developments – Council to leverage upcoming developments to introduce high-quality open/ public spaces, especially in the Chatswood CBD growth areas.
- Transformation of local streets and laneways such as Post Office Lane and Ball Lane as pedestrian-only zones with diverse activities for recreation.

Case study

Play Streets, Inner West

The Inner West Council of Sydney, Australia initiated a Play Streets pilot program as part of its Recreation Strategy, which was designed against a backdrop of increasing population density and limited scope for creating new recreation spaces in the locality. The pilot was undertaken in two streets. Following the trial, an evaluation of them was undertaken by Macquarie University that demonstrated that the Play Streets initiative is feasible and acceptable in an urban Australian setting.

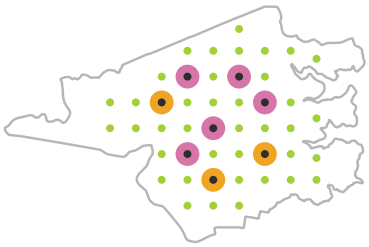
Triangle Park, Penrith

In 2013, Penrith City Council turned an underused plaza into a pop-up park through community-led co-design. After 16 months of testing, public backing for a permanent park led to the Triangle Park's creation, winning recognition in the Planning Institute of Australia (NSW) Great Place Awards for innovative public space transformation.


Credit: Inner West Council


Credit: Daily Telegraph

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 3

Activate existing public spaces for increased recreational participation

Our public spaces are already highly valued and well-used. However, many of our public spaces have the potential to be improved to provide more comfort and amenity, so more people can use them, and support diverse self-initiated and programmed activities.

ACTIONS	
3.1	Explore enhancing the quality and amenity of existing public spaces to make them more attractive and usable for the community.
3.2	Explore providing and building on existing activities that cater to the recreational preferences of multicultural communities (e.g. bocce, ping pong tables, mahjong tables, badminton courts, and areas for tai chi).
3.3	Encourage the regular hosting of destination events in key public spaces.
3.4	Investigate equipping suitable public spaces with event-ready infrastructure, such as accessible power outlets, to enable activation (e.g. Markets, nighttime movies, music performances, and community events).
3.5	Explore activating public spaces to support self-sustaining activities (e.g. mirrors on walls of Council buildings, outdoor libraries and lockboxes for equipment hire).
3.6	Encourage and support community-led initiatives to activate public spaces (e.g. affordable exercise classes, children's programs, and walking groups).
3.7	Explore the designation of certain areas within public spaces where community members can activate spaces without the need for permission (e.g. small-scale community events, community barbeques).
3.8	Explore integrating digital technologies to enhance public space appeal and use (e.g. interactive outdoor fitness stations providing real-time exercise feedback, interactive digital art boards).
3.9	Investigate opportunities for community expression in public spaces (e.g. co-created artworks that reflect community identity).
3.10	Investigate expanding suitable areas of existing golf courses as publicly accessible spaces for informal recreation.
3.11	Examine increasing the recreational potential of the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery within the requirements of its Conservation Plan (e.g. incorporate features such as walking and cycling trails).
3.12	Investigate the incorporation of courts (e.g. basketball and netball) near playgrounds and underused areas of parks.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Location opportunities

In response to this strategic priority, location-based opportunities suggested through consultation for further investigation include:

- Revitalising wall surfaces in the Chatswood CBD laneways, at The Concourse and the Chatswood Interchange pedestrian terraces.
- Improving amenity in these spaces - O.H. Reid Memorial Park, Mashman Park, Bales Park, Barcoo Reserve, Barambah Reserve, Northbridge War Memorial Reserve, and Wright Reserve.

Case study

Dancers Alley, Darling Harbour

The laneway between the ICC Theatre and the Exhibition Centre has installed stainless steel to act as mirror surfaces along the facades of the buildings. Young street dancers visit Darling Harbour to utilise this space, where up to a hundred dancers can be seen practicing, thus activating this previously unused area.

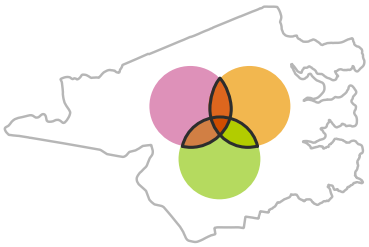
Interactive public spaces, Montreal

Montreal installs interactive equipment in its plazas to encourage social connections. One of these installations is the Loop at One Seaport Courtyard, which is a fusion of a music box, a zeotrope, and a railway handcar. Visitors can hop in two at a time into these illuminated, moving cylinders and pump a lever to bring a classic fairy tale to life. The faster you pull the handle, the faster the images inside the loop will play.


Credit: Cred Consulting


Credit: Quartier des spectacles

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 4

Encourage shared use and multi-purpose design of sports spaces

Council is already a leader in continuously enhancing the quantity, quality, and capacity of sports spaces. Building on this success, we have the opportunity to make our sports spaces more flexible and multi-purpose and encourage shared use, so we can support diverse sports.

ACTIONS	
4.1	Assess the designation of formal and informal sports areas during improvements to sports spaces.
4.2	Investigate further enhancements to outdoor courts for multi-purpose and shared use, where feasible.
4.3	Collaborate with sports hirers and the community to assess and improve existing sports fields for further shared use.
4.4	Investigate the feasibility of on-site digital signage to indicate when sports facilities are booked, facilitating the identification of available spaces for casual sports.
4.5	Explore the installation of modular sports equipment, such as collapsible net systems or adjustable basketball hoops, to enable the use of existing spaces for multiple sports.
4.6	Assess opportunities to simplify sport facility bookings through user-friendly digital platforms, so more groups can book and use these spaces.
4.7	Continue to enhance the capacity of sportsgrounds through improved design and lighting and expanded maintenance regimes.
4.8	In collaboration with sporting user groups, continue to investigate modernising traditional usage models such as reducing game times and training in locations other than sportsgrounds to build upon existing capacity.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Location opportunities

In response to this strategic priority, location-based opportunities suggested through consultation for further investigation include:

- Collaboration with community and sporting groups to explore the potential for maximising shared use at all Council sportsgrounds.
- Consult with sporting users to ensure that all sportsgrounds are offering the widest possible range of suitable recreation opportunities.
- Explore additional complementary recreation on golf courses, such as disc golf and foot golf.
- Consider reducing number of holes in golf courses and expanding their recreational offer.
- Promote use of bocce courts at Bales and Naremburn Parks to the wider community.
- Wider community access to the roof top basket ball court on the Chatswood Youth Centre.
- Consider including pickleball on one of the tennis courts at Tyneside Avenue.
- Additional complementary recreation on the tennis courts at 52, Fullers Road Chatswood.

Case study

Multiple locations, Greater Sydney

Volleyball is an increasingly popular social sport, seeing high demand and utilisation of volleyball courts across Greater Sydney.

Responding to local demand, Burwood Council have installed poles in Wangal Park for portable badminton and volleyball nets.

At Bronte Beach and Tamarama Beach, Waverley Council have dedicated areas for community to setup and play social beach volleyball.



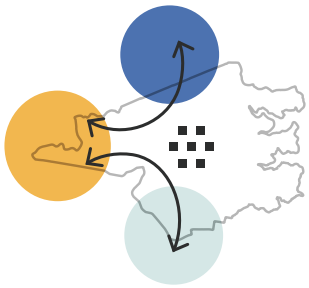
Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York

Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York offers a range of courts and fields for casual sports, including volleyball, pickleball, and basketball.

While some courts can be reserved in advance, others are designated as 'turn up and play' spaces for those who want to play spontaneously. The park's website provides up-to-date information on court availability, so visitors can plan accordingly.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 5

Promote collaborative and co-ordinated planning and delivery

Various stakeholders within our City own and manage public spaces. Simultaneously, our public spaces are used by both local residents and those from neighbouring areas.

To maximise collective impact, we need to strengthen our partnerships, both within and beyond our City.

Furthermore, to operationalise the core placemaking principle of this Strategy, we need to enhance community involvement in the planning, delivery and management of our public spaces.

ACTIONS	
5.1	Establish a high-level, multi-disciplinary working group within Council to co-ordinate placemaking, planning, resourcing and delivery to ensure projects arising from this Strategy are included in Council's Long Term Financial Plan.
5.2	Explore partnerships with Schools Infrastructure NSW to promote shared use of school facilities outside school hours.
5.3	Actively pursue partnerships with other government agencies to create, expand and activate public spaces.
5.4	Continue collaboration with neighbouring councils to collectively plan, deliver, and program public spaces.
5.5	Promote community awareness of existing channels and initiatives, such as 'adopt a street' and 'verge gardening' programs, to foster active community participation.
5.6	Provide up-to-date, consistent, and user-friendly information about public spaces.
5.7	Explore additional channels for community involvement in public space planning, delivery and management.
5.8	Investigate long-term maintenance plans in partnership with private development, local associations, or community groups for the care of public spaces.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Location opportunities

In response to this strategic priority, location-based opportunities suggested through consultation for further investigation include:

- Collaboration with Chatswood High School and other public schools to open up their spaces for community use in non-school hours, e.g. week-end markets.
- Continue applying improvements for access to all public spaces with assistance from Council's Access and Inclusion Committee.
- Collaborate with neighbouring councils for project opportunities from the NSW Government 'Sydney Green Grid' 2017.
- Consider the NSW Government 'Streets as Shared Spaces' program for further partnerships to improve public space.

Case study

Share Our Space 2023, NSW Government

'Share Our Space' is a NSW Government program that runs during school holidays when select schools open schoolgrounds to the public.

Through 'Share Our Space', NSW Government is demonstrating commitment to ensure that everyone has access to quality outdoor facilities during school holidays.



Community Activation Playbook, New York

New York City Council has developed a Community Activation Playbook, a how-to guide for residents and organisations to activate public spaces. It provides a comprehensive outline of how the community can take charge and play a vital role in transforming public spaces. This playbook also provides guidelines on when the community needs permission for activation, easy instructions on how to obtain permission, and situations where permission is not required.



MEASURES

This Strategy's success will be evaluated through a range of key performance indicators, including:

- **Number of high-quality public spaces in new developments:** We will monitor the number of high-quality public spaces incorporated into new developments. This measure emphasises our commitment to maximising recreational opportunities in tandem with urban growth.
- **Evaluation of public spaces using NSW Government tools:** We will assess our public spaces using existing tools provided by the NSW Government. This evaluation will establish the current baseline and serve as a reference point for tracking progress as we carry out placemaking initiatives.
- **Number of implemented placemaking projects annually:** We will track the annual count of public space placemaking projects that have been successfully implemented. This metric reflects our commitment to actively enhancing our public spaces.
- **Community satisfaction with placemaking projects:** Regular community surveys and feedback sessions will gauge the level of satisfaction among our community regarding the placemaking projects. This feedback will guide our efforts to align public spaces with the community's needs and preferences.
- **Utilisation of completed placemaking projects:** The utilisation rates of completed placemaking projects will be analysed to assess their effectiveness. This data-driven approach will help us refine our approach and ensure that our efforts translate into tangible benefits for the community.
- **Activation frequency:** Measure the frequency and variety of community-led activities and events taking place in public spaces. This can provide insight into the public spaces' vibrancy and community engagement.
- **Number of community collaborations:** Measure the level of community involvement in the planning and execution of placemaking projects. This could involve tracking the number of community members engaged, workshops conducted, and collaborative design sessions held.
- **Number of partnerships:** Keep track of the number of partnerships established between the local government, community organisations, businesses, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to implement placemaking projects.

RESOURCING AND TIMELINES

Council will implement the Strategy through its available operational resources and through project funding through its annual budget process. It will also seek additional external funding to enable some of the actions to be completed. These funding sources include the NSW Government and the Commonwealth Government, as well as private sector contributions.

The timeline for implementing actions arising from this Strategy will vary in accordance with the Council annual budget process. Milestone dates will be set for actions within the Projects and Capital Works program.



Credit: Fancyboy Photography for Cred Consulting



WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL