PUBLIC SPACES AND RECREATION STRATEGY

Engagement summary

Council is developing a Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy (the Strategy) that will help to meet our community's growing and evolving recreation needs and interests. This Strategy will provide a guide for the planning, design and management of our public spaces over the next 10 years.

In February 2023, we commenced engagement with our community and stakeholders to inform the Strategy. We asked about the public spaces you love, how you use public spaces, current challenges, and your ideas for how to increase the recreational offering across the Willoughby Local Government Area (WLGA).

What did we do?

We heard from **318** community members and stakeholders

Over the two-month engagement period, we heard from 318 people from diverse ages, genders and cultural backgrounds who live, work and study in the WLGA.

We sought input from our community and stakeholders through:

- Online survey
- Interactive mapping tool
- Community pop-up stalls
- Stakeholder interviews
- Council staff workshop.

We promoted these engagement opportunities via Have Your Say Willoughby, social media channels, newsletters, emails, and on-site signage.

What did we hear?

Our community loves to use public spaces for recreation

Engagement participants told us that public spaces are very important and help to bring people together. Our community use public spaces for many recreational purposes – from walking the dog, going to events, bushwalking, or playing sports.

Some of the public spaces our community loves most are Artarmon Reserve, Chatswood Oval, Naremburn Park, The Concourse, as well as our bushland areas and walking paths.

"As a non-dog owner, I love to go to Artarmon Reserve to look at the dogs."

"I love walking from Artarmon to Tunks Park."

"Night markets are great!"

When we asked what the public spaces and recreation challenges are for the WLGA, you told us:

Although 75% of online survey participants reported having good access to public spaces in the WLGA, some residents lack access to public spaces, such as people living in Roseville, Lane Cove North, Chatswood and Castlecrag.

Many public spaces require a car to access them, and it can be challenging for older community members and people with disability to access some public spaces, such as the Northbridge Baths and Artarmon Parklands.

Managing competing interests, for example, some participants would like to see more formal sporting spaces, while others would like more informal spaces to play sports and socialise with family and friends.

Like other areas across Greater Sydney, public spaces are increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts and as such we need to manage and plan for the potential impacts, for example, more shade.

Careful planning and resource allocation is important to ensure public spaces are well maintained. WLGA is smaller in size compared to neighbouring LGAs and has a high quantity of public spaces which is resource intensive.

Given WLGA is experiencing new and high density development, we need to increase recreational opportunities to cater to the growing population.

The NSW Public Spaces Charter principles will guide our Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy. The principles that resonate most with our community are:

1. Public spaces should be well-managed and maintained
2. Public spaces should be open and welcoming to all
3. Public spaces should allow everyone to participate in activities that strengthen their health and wellbeing

We heard the following ideas to improve our public spaces and recreation network:

- Extend the network of recreational links to improve access to public spaces.
- Increase access to greenery and natural areas, including preserving our bushland areas and greening our CBD.
- Transform local streets into social spaces, where people and children can play and residents come to relax and meet neighbours.
- Support diverse sports and provide access to all types of sporting facilities, including hockey, athletics, badminton, volleyball and basketball.
- Improve amenity of existing public spaces by providing more seating, shade, greenery, toilets, bubblers and signage.
- Diversify the recreational offering in WLGA by providing outdoor exercise stations, ping pong tables, all-ages playgrounds, waterplay parks, and spaces for young people.
- Improve communications around public spaces so that our community has information about the facilities, activities, opening hours and events occurring in our WLGA.
- Plan alongside and in collaboration with the wider region to maximise benefits and avoid duplication in neighbouring LGAs.
- Reimagine underutilised spaces and transform them into great places for the community, including laneways, cul-de-sacs, small parks and reserves.
- Strengthen community co-management of public spaces to increase sense of pride and ownership.
- Represent the different cultures and identities of people who call WLGA home and acknowledge First Nations cultures throughout our public spaces.
- Create more vibrant public spaces through activations such as markets, food festivals, live music, exercise programs and public art.

"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

"I believe that it is critical that there are more spaces to play organised sport and ideally multi-sport facilities for lots of different users and needs."

— Online survey respondent

What's next?

We are using insights from this engagement, as well as findings from provision and proximity analysis, evaluation of public spaces, best- practice and innovation trends, and changing participation trends to prepare the draft Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy. We are aiming for the draft Strategy to be on public exhibition towards the end of 2023, offering further opportunity for our community and stakeholders to provide input.