

5.1. OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to further the development of an Open Spaces Strategy and complete stage 1 of the development in future years' budgets.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Open Space is a highly valued asset by residents and visitors to Douglas Shire and contributes significantly to the regions character, lifestyle, health biodiversity and economy.

Douglas Shire Council have sought to develop an Open Spaces Strategy and this was one of the operational initiatives in the 2016/2017 Operational Plan. This work has been triggered by the need to provide an overarching strategic document for recreation, sport and natural areas that aligns with the current public parks and planning framework.

An Open Space Strategy is a strategic approach for planning the current and future uses of open space within a municipal area. It is reviewed every 10 years and incorporates key strategic priorities and enabling future incremental delivery in line with Asset Plans. The strategy will become a key document to assist council in the planning and delivery of Open Space now and into the future.

Preparing an Open Space Strategy provides an opportunity for council to review current open space assets in our area, level of service, desired standard of service and consider future needs.

The Open Space Strategy will align with the planning scheme, asset management plans and the Local Government Infrastructure Plan.

BACKGROUND

Douglas Shire Council sought to develop an Open Spaces Strategy and this was one of the operational initiatives in the 2016/2017 Operational Plan. The project framework was presented at the Council Workshop held on 22 February 2017 and it was determined at this meeting to progress this project under a staged development plan.

Public open space provides significant benefits to communities. These benefits include protecting biodiversity, improving psychological health and wellbeing, improving physical fitness, facilitating social interaction and cohesion, promoting community pride, and enhancing child development through play. Open space also provides a location for participating in civic life. The importance and value of open space is likely to increase over time as a result of emerging pressures of population growth, demographic change, urbanisation and climate change. Urban change means access to private open space may alter over time and appropriately located, well designed and maintained public open space will become more important for future communities.

Preserving existing open space is also important as it can be modified over time to perform different open space roles in response to changing community needs. Land that may appear to be of marginal benefit to one generation may be of critical importance to the next.

COMMENT

Local Government is the key provider and manager of open spaces for their communities. It is not a requirement of legislation that Council has an Open Spaces Strategy; however Queensland government legislation requires that Councils have minimum standards for Open Spaces. Some Councils have developed Open Spaces Strategies to guide the management of their Open Space networks.

This practical planning tool encourages collaboration across a range of fields of expertise including but not limited to open space planning, statutory planning, strategic planning, recreation planning, environmental planning, conservation and natural resource management, sports management and planning, landscape design, urban design, community health and wellbeing, and heritage planners.

The preparation of the Open Spaces Strategy involves several stages commencing with:

- Formulate Open Space Policy for Council consideration;
- Gap analysis & Needs Assessment for Open Space;
- Obtain community and stakeholder input;
- Classification of Open Space; and
- Development of the draft Open Spaces Strategy.

The diagram below summarises the proposed development of the Open Spaces Strategy showing the key inputs and outputs

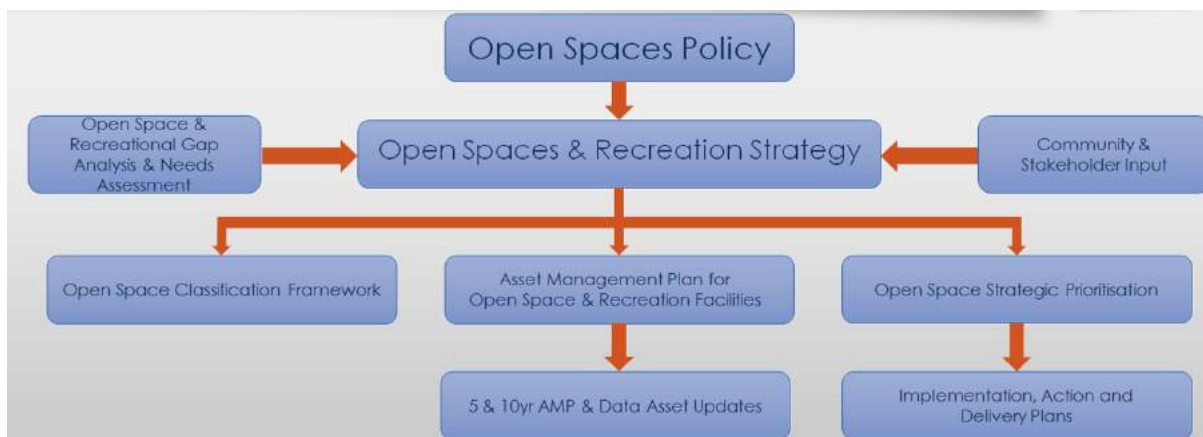


Figure 1.

It is proposed that council engage an external consultant to assist council in the delivery of the key input stages during future financial years.

The activities proposed to be completed in stage 1 are to develop an Open Spaces Policy, undertake a gap analysis and review linkages with the Planning Scheme and Local Government Infrastructure Plan.

The table below outlines the key activities and timeframes to complete the operational initiative.

Table 1.

Activity	Resource	Timeframe
Open Spaces Policy	Internal	4 weeks
Open Space & Recreational Gap Analysis & Needs Assessment	Internal & External Consultant	12 weeks
Community & Stakeholder Input	Internal & External Consultation Consultant	8 weeks
Strategy Formulation	Internal & External Consultant	8 weeks
Open Space Classification Framework	Internal & Planning Consultant	4 weeks
Asset Management Plans	Internal & AM Consultant	4 weeks
Open Space Prioritisation Plan	Internal	4 weeks
Implementation & Delivery Plans	Internal	Ongoing

PROPOSAL

That Council resolves to further the development of an Open Spaces Strategy and complete stage 1 of the development in future years' budgets.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Infrastructure Services have proposed an allocation for consideration in future years Operational budget to complete stage 1 of the strategy development.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

A consultant will be appointed to complete stage 1 of the strategy. The consultant will be appointed using professional services contract provisions and have a well defined scope. This will ensure effective and efficient delivery of stage 1 of the strategy development.

Climate Resilience – The strategy will provide an integrated approach to Open Space delivery that balances recreation need, storm water containment and mitigation of the heat island effect.

Flood Alleviation and Management - While maintaining the core recreation function of the Open Space, well designed and well located Open Space may assist in the mitigation of peak flood events; reducing pressure on drainage and flood defenses and delaying or reducing the impact of flood events.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Local Workforce - High quality Open Spaces have a positive impact on the local economy by attracting and maintaining the local work force.

Growth, Investment, Tourism - Proximity to well-designed and managed Open Space is shown to have a positive influence on business performance and investor confidence. The regional tourism base has a strong foundation in Open Space including events such as *Carnivale*. A quality natural environment provides further opportunity for exploration, supporting the local economy by attracting visitors.

Environmental: Biodiversity - Biodiversity is essential to the sustainability of ecosystems. The strategic importance of public Open Space becomes paramount when considering the development pressures on natural areas. Open Space planning can provide benefits to biodiversity through habitat management, nature conservation, maintaining green corridors and provision of diverse flora in a variety of Open Space typologies.

Social: Physical and Psychological Wellbeing - Open Space can facilitate active, healthy outdoor lifestyles in pursuit of a general state of wellbeing; a positive state of both mental and physical health.

Recreation and Leisure - Open Space supports both passive and active recreation and leisure providing an opportunity to experience and appreciate nature. Open Space and associated pathways that may extend far beyond the boundaries of the Open Space enable healthy, free recreation.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.1.3 - Develop management plans for Council's parks and reserves including coastal reserves and foreshore areas.

Operational Plan 2016-2017 Actions:

2.1.1 - Establish a Community Public Spaces Plan.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Asset-Owner Meeting the responsibilities associated with owning or being the custodian of assets such as infrastructure.

CONSULTATION

Internal: This initiative will require the formation of an internal project team that includes representatives from open space, strategic and statutory planning.

External:

Input and technical advice will be sought from a variety of external stakeholders during this project, including:

- FNQROC and other local government councils;
- Industry bodies and representatives;
- Local Sporting Clubs;
- Local Residents;
- Traditional Owners; and
- Tourism Groups.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One of the key stages in the development of the Open Spaces Strategy is Community & Stakeholder Input. This will occur in accordance with Council's Community Engagement General Policy.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil