



OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Review Summary

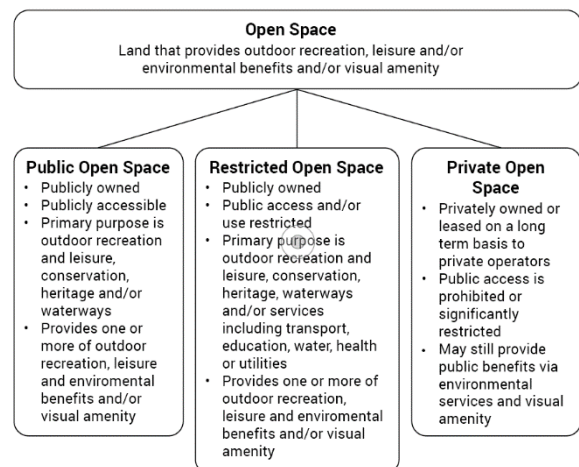
May 2018

Why a review?

Council's current Open Space Strategy (OSS) was developed in 2007 by external consultants. The 2007 OSS identified 300 open space reserves, demand levels based on population and asset data known at that time (e.g. Towns in Time - 2001) and defined a planning horizon out to 2021. We are now halfway through the planning horizon, and hence it is timely to consider our communities future needs out to 2036.

The Strategic Planning team was asked to review this document with a cross department team and work towards developing a new OSS to provide for current and future needs of Public Open Space. We will consider current information on available public open spaces, how we as land managers, and the community, view and value open space and what our future population and age profiles will require for good health outcomes.

We formed an internal multi-discipline Open Space Project Team (OSPT), providing a necessarily broad range of knowledge, responsibilities and skills to the review of the 2007 OSS.



Victorian Planning Authority

The review of the 2007 OSS has found that while many of the goals (objectives) and overall vision are still relevant, the information presented needs updating and expanding to provide for current knowledge, population growth scenarios and decision making needs.



What we found

Since 2007, Council has adopted a number of policies and procedures impacting the understanding and management of public open space. Some of these include the Infrastructure Design Manual, Paths and Trails Strategy (due for adoption) and the Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. We have also implemented a new Asset Management System (Conquest) and Graphical Information System (GIS). These need to be considered to develop consistent information within the 2018/19 OSS and take advantage of opportunities for improvement through the use of current information management and analysis tools (computer programs and interactive websites).

The 2007 OSS also did not include other public open space, such as crown land parks and reserves although it identified a need for 'greater strategic coordination of local, and regional initiatives'. The inclusion of these areas of open space in the 2018/19 OSS may result in meeting the needs of the community, without the need for as much Council managed land or infrastructure as anticipated in 2007 (for example, where beach foreshore is available for recreation, pocket parks may not be needed or desired).

The 2007 OSS inventory is a rudimentary, but reasonable for the time, listing of public open spaces and the strategy discussed the need to integrate this information into Council's GIS database. We now have the capability to collect and collate information within GIS and realise its potential for public communication and to guide Council's decision making.

The 2007 OSS is also considered deficient (compared to current standards) or superseded in relation to:

- The treatment of public open space in new subdivisions. State-wide planning scheme amendments have superseded the OSS provisions.
- How developer contribution funds are captured and expended to meet the objectives of the OSS.
- How the provision of new open space is justified as a result of supply and demand pressures.
- How Council can use the OSS to consider what open space to retain or sell.



How it guides us

All of the above deficiencies now provide a context for a change in our understanding of the wider scope of open space within the municipality. Hence updated information is sought for inclusion in a new 2018/19 OSS.

Work completed on the new 2018/19 OSS to date has provided a database, including private and state owned public open space land, which will more easily adjust to changed policy, allowing greater accuracy of information for decision making at any particular time, regardless of when an Open Space Strategy was developed. It also allows for the greater engagement of the community in understanding public open space in the wider landscape and user catchments.

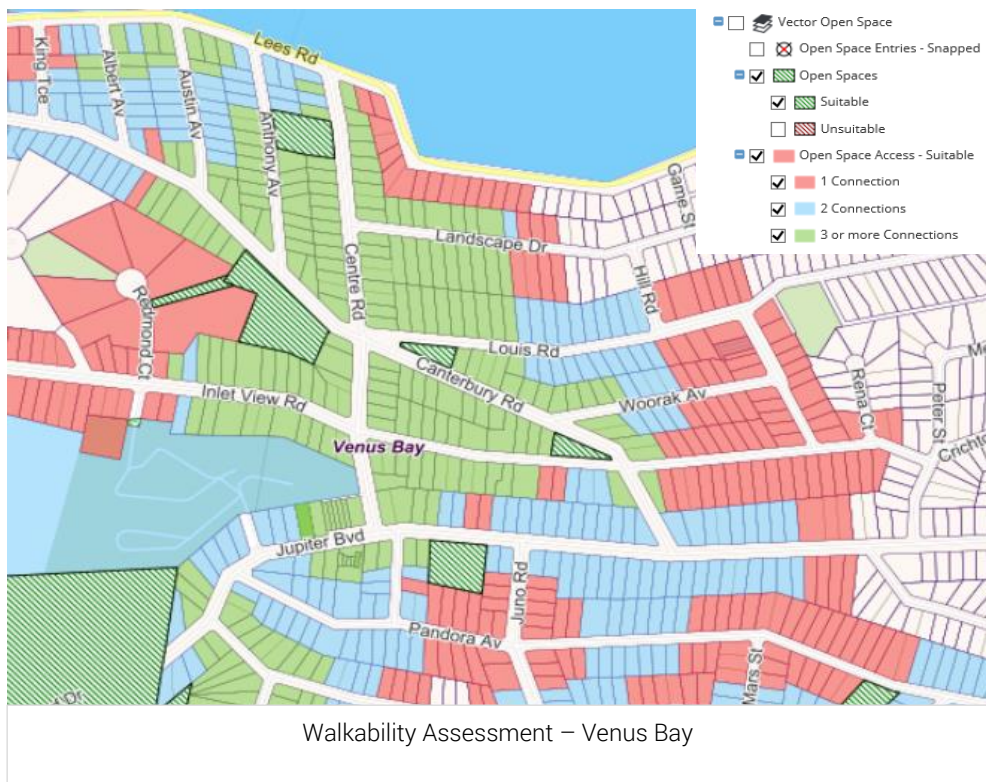


Simple locational map of POS



The review committee considered the 2007 OSS planning framework and agreed with its assertion that the use of an “area to population ratio” is too simplistic to deliver high quality accessible open space where it is needed. In response to this and the availability of GIS capabilities, we have commenced the assessment of townships for accessibility of POS to residential properties based on walking distance.

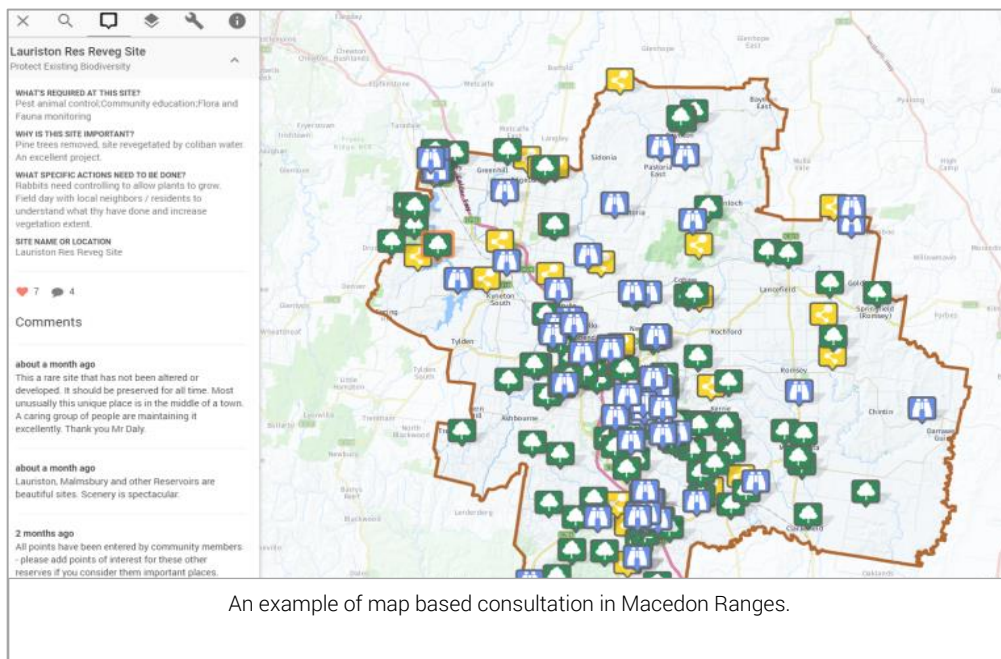
The initial assessment considered the Planning Scheme Standard C13 which recommends that public open spaces categorized as Local Parks be “within 400 safe walking distance of at least 95% of all dwellings”. The assessment to date has considered this on a property basis (whether or not it has a dwelling) as each has generally the right to develop a residential dwelling within the residential zones of townships. The further refinement of this tool will continue to improve our decision making, future town and recreation planning and service provision standards.





In the next phase of the Open Space Strategy project, key external stakeholders will be invited to join this group to help further build and validate our understanding of the public open spaces outside of Council's ownership or management.

The validated information will then be made available to the community to provide evidence of demand through comment on how they value the spaces and how often they use them.



An example of map based consultation in Macedon Ranges.