



LIVINGSTONE

# OPEN SPACE

framework





#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Livingstone Shire Council acknowledges and pays respect to the Darumbal and Woppaburra people as Traditional Custodians of the land within Livingstone Council also acknowledges and pays its respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area.

The Open Space Framework commits to acknowledging the history and ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the Livingstone region and the fundamental role they have played and continue to play in shaping, preserving, and protecting the open space network across the region.

As the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Framework seeks to respond to and be informed by their knowledge of the land and land management practices as we continue to define and develop the open space network. The Framework is underpinned by a commitment to protect and repair important indigenous sites, assets and stories that remain in the landscape.

#### ONE

Livingstone's **natural assets** provide the foundation for a multitude of **open space opportunities** and functions across the region.

Livingstone's open space network and natural environment forms an integral part of the region's character, identity and sense of place.

Livingstone is one of the most biodiverse regions within Queensland, with 300 kilometres of open coastline and beaches adjacent to the world-famous Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The region is home to a diverse range of natural features including scenic coastline, wetlands, islands, volcanic plugs, national parks, cycle paths, bush trails and expansive areas of productive rural land between the Fitzroy River and the coast.

The natural landscapes are synonymous with living in Livingstone shire, and a key reason the region has a fast-growing population.



# Framework purpose

Just as communities depend on traditional hard infrastructure programs to underpin their aspirations, so do they depend on soft or green infrastructure – the trees and trails, the parks and playgrounds, the natural environment.

It is the green infrastructure that defines the amenity, the appeal, the character, and the liveability of a community. It distinguishes one neighbourhood or community from another and therefore influences why people want to live or visit there.

The intent of the Open Space Framework (the Framework) is to identify the purposes and components of this 'green infrastructure' and to unite all elements and delivery functions under one efficient umbrella.

The Framework connects the purpose of all open space related functions within a single strategic document, promoting a principles and outcomes-based approach to open space planning and delivery.

*The Framework is the construction manual, the open space network is the outcome.*

Livingstone's open space network is underpinned by many different natural characteristics and existing assets that play a vital role in the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Open space is physically and psychologically essential to human wellbeing. Open space provides people with a place to exercise, gather, play, relax, and enjoy nature. A successful open space network also supports resilient ecosystems and biodiversity conservation, while delivering a multitude of economic, social, and cultural benefits.

Given the size, distribution and complexity of the network, the Framework will play a critical role guiding future planning and prioritisation of Council open space resourcing and investments.

The Framework is needed to respond to the growing population of the Livingstone region, competing community needs and emerging environmental priorities. It will ensure that the existing open space network is retained, enhanced and valued, and that future open space opportunities are recognised and acted upon. Approaching open space strategically will enable future open space needs and opportunities to be more easily identified and prioritised by Council in its forward planning.

As such, one of the key purposes of the Framework is to optimise efficiencies in the delivery of open space components by Council. It provides guidance for future planning, resourcing and budgeting and includes recommendations and prioritised actions for Council.



## WHAT IS A FRAMEWORK?

The OSF is a strategic document, detailing guiding principles and a roadmap that integrates all existing and future open space assets, services, and management functions.

The OSF constitutes the community's green infrastructure blueprint. It is designed to facilitate ongoing evaluation and updating of open space assets and service levels in response to changing community priorities, the emergence of unforeseen opportunities and constraints, and other circumstances.

Council and the community are responsible for this ongoing evaluation, for completion of the initial document and, most critically, implementation.

## HOW THE FRAMEWORK WORKS

### Framework Overview

provides a detailed summary of the various components that make up the Framework, including Livingstone's Open Space Network, Functional Themes and the Framework Principles and illustrates how each of these are connected – defining their individual and collective importance and services to community.

### Framework Delivery

provides an overview of the existing initiatives, strategies, and policies that contribute to the planning and delivery of the open space network as well as focus areas for addressing the identified gaps of the Framework.

### Framework Implementation

provides guidance on key initiatives and commitments to respond to identified focus areas, including a detailed action plan for implementation and catalyst projects to ignite change.





TWO

## Framework Overview

A creatively planned, thoughtfully designed and well managed open space network provides our community with multiple benefits including a suite of social and cultural values fundamental to our quality of life.

For the purposes of this Framework, open space includes all areas of land and water that contribute to the open space network. This includes natural landscapes, parks and playgrounds, paths, and cycle routes, sports fields, beaches and 'green infrastructure' such as naturalised stormwater networks and drainage.

While acknowledging the importance of all open space, whether public or private, the primary purpose of this document centres on open space directly managed by the Council.

It needs to be stressed that the cultural heritage associated with our open space network is of particular importance to First Nations peoples and will be prioritised wherever applicable.





# Open Space Themes

Livingstone's Open Space Network is made up of green and blue grids of natural features and improvements that create a clearly defined, linked system of public and private lands delivering a rich assemblage of active, passive, and environmental services.



Developing an integrated network of multi-functional open spaces requires considerable forethought and commitment in planning and delivery. An effective network needs to promote multi-functionality, versatility and diversity while limiting potential conflicts such as environmental protection versus recreational use.

This is why all open space components must be considered, planned and managed as a collective network.

OPEN SPACE THEMES

active



passive



environmental





- coastline and beaches
- water bodies, wetlands and flats
- parks and civic spaces
- sports and recreation
- recreational trails
- natural areas
- trees
- active transport network
- unallocated open space
- islands



Understanding the functional theme(s) of an open space component is crucial to ensuring that the optimal range of open space types and experiences are provided for in the network.

Open space components that achieve more than one functional theme generally provide a higher return on investment in benefits to the community.



# Open Space Framework Principles

The Framework principles are derived from Council's existing policy framework and strategic direction, in conjunction with widely accepted best practice approaches to open space planning and delivery. The principles align with the priority commitments outlined in section 4, and provide the highest order direction for Council.

The Framework provides the roadmap for establishing and delivering on Council's open space priorities through assessment criterion for existing and future projects and proposals.

01

Deliver an integrated network of open space infrastructure and services.

05

Create a connected network.

02

Consider natural and coastal hazard risk and resilience.

06

Enhance local identity and character.

03

Enhance the health, culture and wellbeing of the community.

07

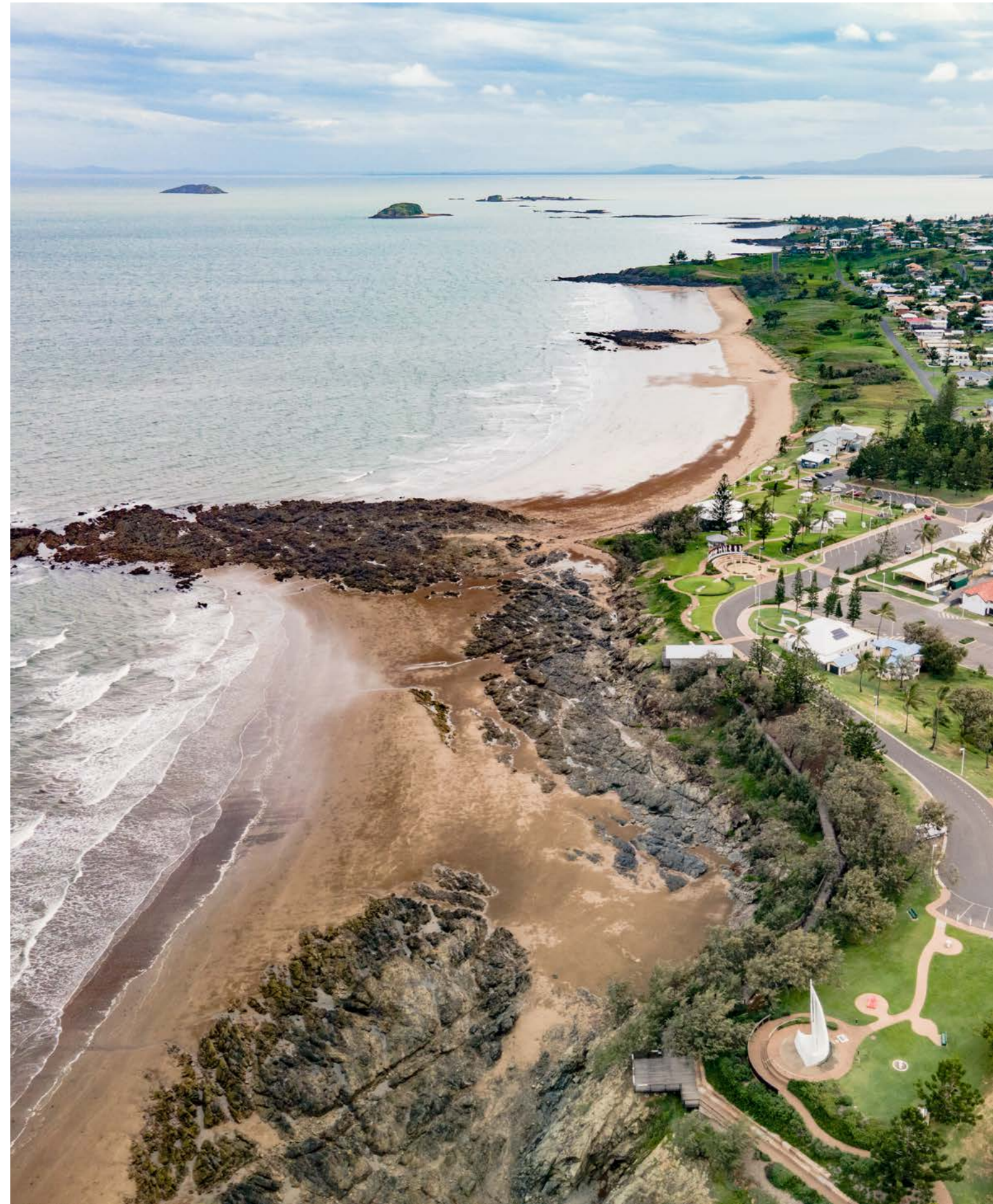
Deliver multi-functional and activated spaces that are accessible to all.

04

Protect, manage and rehabilitate natural features and environmental services.

08

Improve service efficiencies and community return on investment for all open space investments.





# SECTION 03

COUNCIL PLANS  
THEMES  
FRAMEWORK  
STRATEGIES AND PLANS



### THREE

## Framework Delivery

The Framework relates to multiple existing corporate strategies. For example, the community has clearly communicated how important open space is through strategic documents like the *Community Plan: Towards 2050* and the *Active Living Strategy*. The Framework addresses and responds to the opportunities outlined in these strategic documents and will ultimately enhance the authority of these documents to deliver on the five themes contained in the Community Plan.

The figure on the previous page demonstrates Council's existing policy framework relating to open space. The proposed Framework has been developed to encompass all components of the existing open space network, building upon, and better enabling implementation of the suite of existing policies, strategies and initiatives as well as catering to currently missing components.

Council's approach to open space planning has historically been framed by the ad hoc assemblage of assets in the Shire's early days and more recently via the legislative and policy environment, which has typically delivered sub-optimal open space outcomes.

The proposed Framework encompasses implementation of a complete open space network that more comprehensively, more efficiently and more effectively meets the community's needs and expectations.



# Focus Areas

Focus areas to deliver the framework principles.

The Framework references existing initiatives, strategies, and policies contributing to delivery of the open space network. Focus areas are directed towards rectifying gaps and missing components of the Framework.

Gaps stem from several sources, including insufficient recognition in existing policies, inadequate planning, limited infrastructure project scoping, insufficient resources, and missing relevant skills. Unfortunately, open space and landscaping are frequently undervalued relative to other more pressing Council priorities, which has led to accumulating service deficits over time.

This section provides an overview of the identified gaps in the framework, and the key focus areas for completing the missing components of the framework.

Key components of the open space network that provide further opportunities for Council to better plan, manage, protect and deliver open space are represented in the following images.



sport and recreation



parks and civic spaces



natural areas - beaches, coastal dunes lakes, bush, etc.



landscaping



connections - local cycle network, footpaths, trials



trees on public land



significant amenity trees



open space infrastructure



vacant land





FOUR

# Framework Implementation

Planning, management and delivery of the identified focus areas is organised into three key initiatives. These initiatives and commitments account for Council's existing priorities, while also establishing a foundation for new actions and recommendations required to achieve the purpose and full potential of the Framework.

## KEY INITIATIVES

1

Meet the Community's Needs

2

Holistic Network Planning

3

Greening Livingstone



# MEET THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

Understanding the broad and complex recreation requirements of the Livingstone community in line with acknowledging what we have, what we could use better and what we need.

Three priority commitments that will collectively achieve this initiative are outlined below.



## Understand the community's needs and preferences

*A successful open space network is one that responds to the region's current and future demographic profile, based on an understanding of how open space requirements change over time.*

*Understanding the community's needs and preferences is the essential first step in developing an effective open space network.*

- Adjust open space services and facilities to respond to existing needs, demographic changes and evolving community aspirations.
- Ensure open space components are as inclusive as possible, responding to the needs of all demographics, including all abilities access, and diverse experiences for different and traditionally underserved community subsets such as the neurodivergent, elderly and teenagers.
- Monitor trends in sport, recreation, and physical activity to ensure that the open space network remains relevant and effective.
- Regularly evaluate user opinions to ensure that the Framework and implementation priorities remain aligned with community needs and preferences.



## Manage our existing open space infrastructure

*Understanding what Livingstone has informs how to optimise its service to community and to understand what will be required to complete the open space network.*

- Establish a consistent approach to ongoing management and maintenance of open space across the region.
- Develop guidelines to ensure equitable consideration of requests from the community (community groups, commercial operators, sporting clubs) regarding the private use of public assets.
- Ensure annual budgets are aligned with preferred service levels to optimise operations and maintenance of the open space network. Ensure that ongoing reviews and monitoring are undertaken to identify needed operational improvements.
- Provide proactive, preventative maintenance to limit the costs of renewing or replacing assets. Maintenance standards should be informed by an appropriate classification of open spaces that reflects the open space function and level of use of each asset. All classifications need to aim for maximising community and organisational return on investment.
- Transition maintenance standards and servicing requirements to a more multi-functional approach that addresses such issues as minimising environmental impacts, restoring ecological functions and accommodating additional uses.
- Develop an acquisition plan to target key assets not adequately represented in the current system, with sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities, such as bolstering ecological corridors or creating new areas for passive appreciation (for example, views and vistas).



## Develop a viable network

*Ensure the open space network is affordable, sustainable, appropriately resourced and funded to ensure that it provides the highest economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. The open space network needs to maximise ecological functions, whilst balancing against increasing demand for public use.*

- Ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to developing, improving and maintaining the open space network in accordance with Framework recommendations.
- Ensure that resources are assigned strategically, equitably, and transparently.
- Plan and design parks and civic spaces to balance capital costs against ongoing maintenance and operational costs, aka, base investment decisions on life cycle costs and benefits, not first year costs.
- Optimise return on investment from open space infrastructure by promoting multi-functional spaces that can be utilised by user groups for different purposes, at different times (e.g. shared use and time share of school facilities, use of nature reserves for compatible recreation purposes, etc.)
- Where possible, seek to achieve open space objectives via renewals and upgrades of existing open space assets rather than developing new assets.
- Employ management approaches that reduce life cycle costs and environmental footprint.
- Provide for the acquisition of strategic properties and assets necessary to fulfil the intent of the framework.



# Sport and Recreation

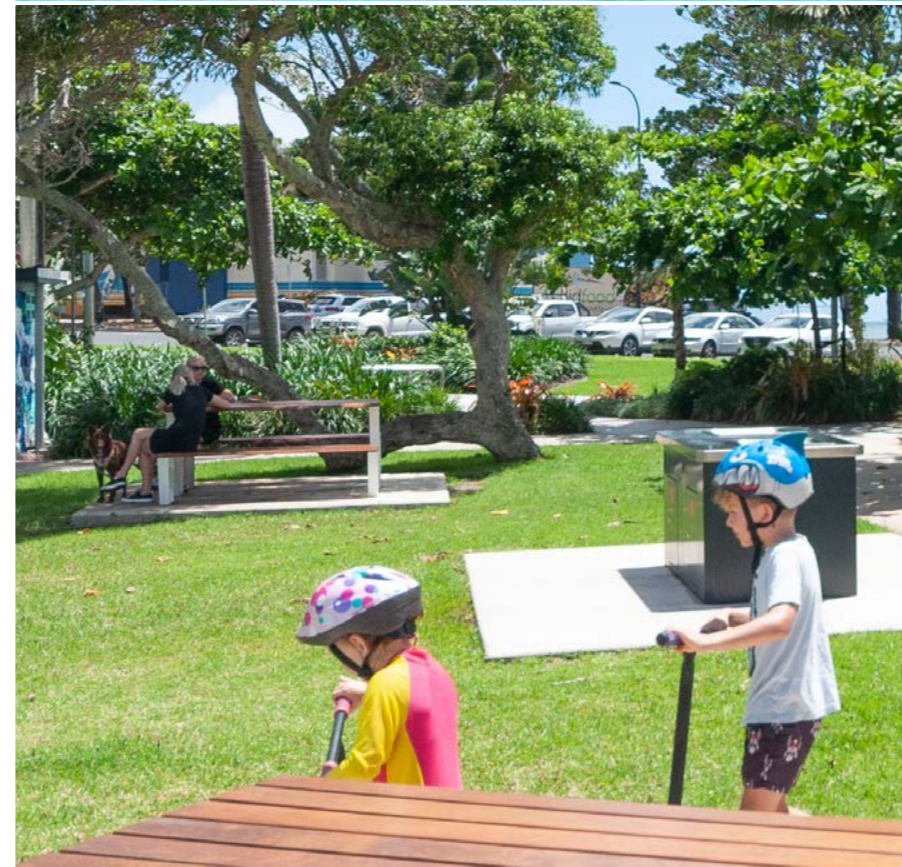
## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY

Undertake a Sports and Recreation Community Needs Assessment and catchment analysis to inform development of a Sports and Recreation Facilities Strategy.

- Undertake a comprehensive 'stock-take' of existing Council-owned and managed facilities and their capacity levels (including clubs and visitation), public accessibility (physical access, hours of operation) and patterns of use. The intent is to identify general quantity and quality of services relative to needs, service gaps, current and anticipated shortfalls in the provision of sport and recreation facilities, and opportunities for more productive/ effective utilisation.
  - In collaboration with local sports and recreation user groups, undertake a similar stock-take of equivalent private and school owned facilities, with the aim of determining opportunities for integration of services under a larger umbrella encompassing these community needs.
  - Identify all clubs and groups currently accessing or leasing Council owned sports and recreation facilities and assets. Match users with location to determine relative benefits provided by Council to enable a move towards more equitable support for user groups and to identify new opportunities for multi-use.
  - Identify and prioritise necessary upgrade requirements for existing facilities and assets to address service deficiencies and respond to future growth.
  - Create a hierarchy of locations with commensurate roles and functions (i.e., including multi-functional shared spaces vs exclusive use), supplemented by catchment mapping that considers current and future demographic profiling.
  - In alignment with needs analysis findings, review management programs for each facility (e.g. lease and license) to optimise return on investment and community benefit.
  - Refine and streamline the assignment of asset responsibilities across Council departments to achieve optimal performance for each asset in alignment with the Framework, department purpose and resources.
  - Develop a seamless, coordinated system for ongoing management and maintenance, aligned with Council's resources, best practice approaches and community expectations.
- Undertake a cost-benefit analysis of existing facilities and review lifecycle costs to inform future investment priorities. Accelerate capital works/ acquisitions that deliver optimal, value-for-money sport and recreation facilities in line with needs assessment findings.
  - Identify surplus assets for decommissioning or repurposing (tennis courts to basketball or pickle ball, for example).
  - Identify community needs or demands that are currently not being serviced. Evaluate and integrate into the Framework to guide future action.
  - Develop a long-term investment strategy, that considers, inter alia:
    - Accessibility for all users
    - Connectivity
    - Acquisition, disposition, repurposing of existing assets to optimise Framework objectives
    - Expansion of services provided by existing assets
    - Waste management efficiency and reduction
    - Maintenance and restoration
    - Land tenure
    - Lease/license
    - Integration of solar to reduce management costs
    - Environmental stewardship
    - Amenity (shade and facilities)
    - Placemaking enhancements
  - Amend the LGIP and Planning Scheme to reflect the findings of the Needs Assessment and Strategy, ensuring a consistent and strategic approach to sports and recreation planning and delivery.

CATALYST PROJECT

MEET THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS





# HOLISTIC NETWORK PLANNING

Set a clear strategic direction for open space planning and delivery, therein building a network of open spaces with varied purpose, function and character to provide a diverse range of opportunities and experiences for the community.

Three priority commitments that will collectively achieve this initiative are outlined below.



## Deliver multi-functional, multi-user spaces

*The open space network should provide a diverse range of landscape settings and functions that caters to the varied recreational needs of visitors and residents. Council should strive to ensure that open spaces in the network are multi-functional, and thus multi-beneficial.*

- Build a network of spaces with different values, functions and settings, providing a wide range of recreation opportunities to meet the community's needs.
- Create and maintain quality open spaces to enhance community well-being and improve the regions' liveability.
- Provide an open space network that is accessible to everyone, with flexible and multipurpose spaces.
- Provide parks for separate purposes, where warranted, ranging from formalised and organised sports facilities to semi-natural and natural landscapes.
- Wherever possible, ensure open space areas include informal recreation opportunities to cater for diverse user groups.
- Utilise the open space network to provide for a range of outdoor recreation activities, including, where appropriate, camping, hiking, and mountain bike riding.
- Better utilise existing open space areas, such as school grounds and ovals, and promote their contribution to the open space network and opportunities for further activation.
- Ensure that open space design is flexible to enable adaptation to changing uses over time while encouraging and facilitating the creative use of open space.
- Remove arbitrary barriers (real and perceived) that limit public access to Council-owned land.



## Stitch our network together

*An interconnected network of open spaces provides more value than isolated components. Livingstone's open space network should be an integrated system that is well connected, and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.*

- Prioritise the delivery of active transport infrastructure including footpaths and cycle routes (including the Rail Trail) that connect open space components. Prioritise people needs over vehicle movements as much as possible.
- Ensure investment decisions for key connections are strategic and focused on maximum return on investment.
- Advocate for removal of limitations on State infrastructure funding that limit the capacity to construct trails with 'necessary' accoutrements like seats and water. In the interim, ensure that Council funding is aligned to ensure fully complete projects (i.e. seats, water bubblers, shade and in some instances, lighting) in accordance with best practice design.
- Ensure the equitable distribution of open space and recreation areas across the network, ensuring all abilities access as much as feasible.
- Take a "highest and best use" approach to the use of Council land. Determine if infrastructure assets such as utility easements, road reserves and transport corridors can incorporate linkages within the open space network, likewise for detention basins and natural drainage.
- Enhance, where possible, the essential role of linear open space, coastal parks and narrow esplanades in encouraging active and passive recreation.
- Promote safe connections and accessways to open space, from where people live and work.



## Build distinctive communities

*Celebrate and promote the unique landscapes, natural processes, and cultural heritage of the open space network.*

- Respond to previous community input in the development of the open space network and pursue ongoing collaboration to ensure that the network is as much designed, invested in and owned by the community as by Council.
- Develop open spaces to positively contribute to existing and emerging communities to support their distinctive character and sense of place.
- Cater for a variety of outdoor activities and experiences that promote social cohesion through gathering, walking, playing and relaxing.
- Create memorable, vibrant and captivating spaces that attract and delight local, regional and international visitors.
- Recognise that the region is large and diverse, and that location and context influence how people use and recreate in open space.
- Ensure the open space network is integrated with community facilities and important civic spaces and activity nodes to create vibrant community focal points.
- Ensure public art, placemaking and landscape design are woven throughout the open space network to enhance and celebrate local character and identity, and to establish a distinct regional identity.
- Promote activation of open space assets to leverage the considerable economic and tourism opportunities afforded by a high-quality open space network.
- Increase the provision of soft and locally distinct infrastructure such as nature play instead of homogenous, standardised and sterile playgrounds. Collaborate with community to facilitate the design and construction of preferred assets.
- Identify gaps and deficiencies and develop a strategy for addressing these (e.g. wildlife corridors, missing pathway components).



## Parks Strategy

The Parks Strategy will provide guidance for the planning of recreation parks and recreation trails across the Livingstone Shire. A comprehensive parks strategy will ensure that each open space asset is assessed in terms of existing and optimal future functions (classification) and its role (hierarchy) within that function. The Parks Strategy will also focus on the utilisation and enhancement of existing parks to create the most sustainable network of parks and civic spaces possible.

- Identify procedures and staff roles needed to enable the most efficient coordination and management of the park network.
- Create a hierarchy of open spaces within the network based on their classification.
- Articulate clear roles and functions for each park/open space along with specific preferred uses (aka casual picnics, community activities, events, general recreation, commercialisation opportunities, environmental services, private/ public uses).
- Articulate staff skills and resources needed to achieve specified park roles and functions.
- Undertake community needs assessment to inform strategy objectives.
- Identify preferred siting and level of embellishments within each park.
- Develop management and maintenance plans for each park
- Align maintenance standards with role and function of each park and components.
- Identify opportunities to enhance the ecological performance of all properties within and connected to the network.
- Develop land acquisition, disposition and repositioning strategy to optimise network performance and address future needs.
- Employ access and conservation easements (as examples) to achieve open space network objectives without acquiring land.
- Review the structure of infrastructure charges to ensure that revenue for park contributions is dedicated to open space network improvements. Consider increasing these charges or employing a supplemental levy to fund the acquisition of properties or delivery of services identified as essential to the network.
- Align with other components of the Framework, the planning scheme, LGIP and related Council initiatives
- Ensure LGIP and Planning Scheme amendments integrate the principal components of the Parks Strategy regarding recruitment of new parks and civic spaces that have been 'identified as necessary', while also avoiding unnecessary recruitment of property and assets that do not contribute to the open space network. Develop corporate safeguards to ensure the allocation of appropriate resources to implement.
- Create a Parks Manager position to lead development and oversight of the Parks Strategy and management of the open space network.





# GREENING LIVINGSTONE

Preserve and restore Livingstone's natural systems, to form an ecologically healthy and engaging tapestry of connected natural areas and related green infrastructure. The green function of the open space network provides visual amenity, numerous environmental services and public recreation access.

Three priority commitments that will collectively achieve this initiative are outlined below.



## Grow Livingstone's urban forest

*Livingstone's sub-tropical climate and coastal location make it well placed to achieve significant improvement in its urban canopy cover thereby generating multiple benefits and services, including shade, climate change mitigation, run-off attenuation, wildlife habitat, property value enhancement, increased tourism and improved individual and community well being.*

- Ensure existing trees are appropriately valued, so that protection and retention are prioritised during Council operations and works.
- Evaluate existing development standards to retain high value vegetation in private developments and prevent unnecessary clearing.
- Prioritise planting of endemic species, or otherwise suitable native species to maximise beneficial impacts and minimise ongoing maintenance costs
- Adopt a best-practice approach to planting, irrigation, maintenance and replacement to ensure optimal survival and growth rates.
- Increase street tree planting in developed areas and areas undergoing intensification for urban development.
- Set a community standard for street trees and landscaping by requiring that relevant capital projects completed by Council are properly scoped to include substantive quality green infrastructure and that implementation funds are quarantined to prevent the green component of the project being used as contingency to cover cost overruns on hard infrastructure.
- Review current DA conditions and development standards to ensure planting is undertaken when survival chances are optimal. Increase monitoring to ensure that required landscaping and street trees are maintained post development completion (applies to commercial and residential).
- Identify orphan (not used) spaces currently being mowed that could be planted with trees/native veg and develop plans to execute planting and maintenance (preferably with community assistance).
- Provide appropriate utility buffers and other necessary specifications for tree/native vegetation planting in urban areas. Permit street tree planting within easements containing utilities that have anticipated long service lives (sewer, water).
- Encourage and accommodate increased planting of native species and gardens within private residential lots and verges.
- Incentivise yard and verge planting by offering free or heavily discounted trees to the public on a regular basis. Emphasis should be on stock grown from local seed and which is not available from commercial outlets.
- Work with Landcare and related organisations to enable replanting of unnecessarily cleared public and private spaces.
- Develop educational materials to explain the values generated by tree retention and planting.



## Protect natural assets at all scales

*All components of open space and their contribution to the overall network should be respected and recognised regardless of scale.*

- Prioritise coastal ecosystem/vegetation protection, such as dune systems, headlands, and connections between remnant vegetation. Besides their intrinsic natural values, these ecosystems provide an essential, and the most cost effective, bulwark against climate change impacts.
- Ensure the protection of views and vistas to and from open spaces, including significant views of the coast or mountains. Enhance access to viewpoints.
- Ensure that important natural areas are protected and restored in a strategic and efficient manner
- Acknowledge and support the protection of culturally significant Indigenous landscape features and sites and assist First Nations people to protect and preserve culturally significant land and assets within the open space network. Identify how traditional peoples interacted with their environment via examples of what was most significant (or interesting) – culturally, medically, or dietary.
- Improve under-utilised or neglected open space areas such as gullies and road reserves, to increase the quality of these spaces and their contribution to the open space network
- Capture the full value of environmental assets in decision making regarding land clearing and habitat damage, such as contributions to climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, allayed energy usage and other essential environmental and social services currently treated as externalities in economic calculations regarding development and the allocation of financial resources.
- Protect and enhance important green infrastructure components of the network that interlace between natural and built environments (degraded creek lines for example)
- Develop educational materials that outline how to improve degraded remnant vegetation. One example would be identifying and destroying problem weeds.
- Develop suitable interpretive materials – digital and physical – to communicate the values of green assets, what Council is doing to restore and protect them and what the community can do to help.
- Undertake a best practice review of other local government open space approaches to incentivising the retention and restoration of native ecosystems and disincentivising clearing and degradation. Implement the most effective techniques.



## Design for climate

*The open space network must be grounded in sustainable design principles that acknowledge and respond to a changing climate and the important role of open space in mitigating negative climatic and other environmentally detrimental influences.*

- Design open space components to integrate and enhance local natural features, such as dunes, ridgelines, waterways, and vegetation.
- Ensure the open space network is resilient and adaptive. Future infrastructure, wherever possible, should use local materials, be safe and durable financially and environmentally sustainable over the lifecycle (thus requiring that budget considerations be based on lifecycle costs and benefits, not first year costs).
- Approach funding, planning and management of green infrastructure with the same strategic regard as 'grey' infrastructure like roads and utilities. Consider how to integrate and prioritise green, blue, and grey infrastructure to deliver the highest return on investment to the community.
- Utilise the open space network to address climate change exacerbated hazards such as bushfires, severe weather, and coastal erosion, likewise to appropriately manage and respond to future hazard risks including flood and heat island effects, and the protection and restoration of vegetation and biodiversity corridors.
- Prioritise the delivery of sustainable systems, such as integrating stormwater management into the open space network to provide multi-functional and multi-beneficial services.
- Ensure that the open space network promotes sustainable design and considers maintenance requirements in the planning inception and design phases.



## Street and Amenity Tree Policy and Valuation

A suggested catalyst project is for Council to establish a clear and consistent approach to tree retention and planting across the region. There are several pathway options that Council can follow to achieve these objectives, including one or more of the following:

- Street tree strategy/ master plan
- Planning scheme policy or local law
- Valuation of amenity trees in Council operations
- Urban canopy cover study

Further detail regarding these options is provided below.

### Street tree strategy/ master plan:

- Develop clear directions for future planning, design, and delivery of streetscapes within Livingstone, aka 'the overarching gameplan'.
- Prioritise locations and capture within rolling 5 year budgeted plans.
- Create planting standards, including the use of planting cells (in hardscape areas), and general best practice site preparation to support optimal tree health in all locations (suitable species, root systems accommodation, etc.).
- Provide localised direction (right tree for the right location) to guide public and private plantings.
- Seek community input on priority planting locations.
- Instigate an ongoing community discussion regarding the social, economic and environmental values and benefits provided by street trees. Emphasise integration into local school curriculums, along with the development of planting and maintenance partnerships.
- Identify and develop solutions to current management and maintenance issues.

### Planning scheme policy:

Provide statutory effect to any strategic documents or master plans such as a street tree strategy. Incorporate into existing planning scheme policies regarding landscaping and development standards.

### Valuation system:

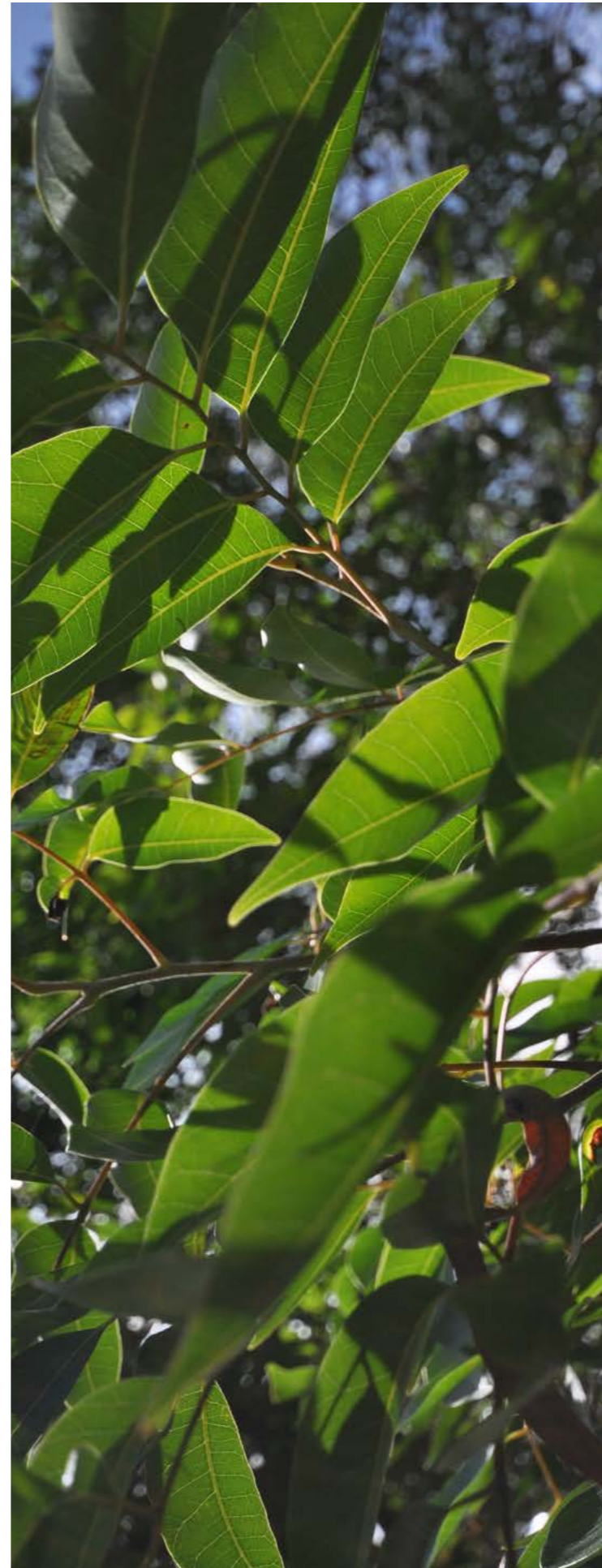
Council should consider recognizing trees as assets (with defined values) within the planning framework.

Implement a valuation system to assign a dollar value (offset) for trees (aka internalise the externality). This enables Council to articulate actual values lost when existing vegetation is removed, including street trees and coastal vegetation. Also enables determination of values gained through planting or saved through retention. Example systems include the modified Burnley Method, Thyer System, Helliwell System, STEMS or I TREE Eco. Valuation techniques can be modified to increase value for particular amenity outcomes (e.g. locally significant, hollow bearing).

### Canopy cover study:

Review trends in tree canopy coverage across the region to identify precise challenges and opportunities relative to achievement of the Framework and related documents (biodiversity, shoreline management, climate change et al).

This study can guide more targeted policy interventions required to protect and restore natural environmental functions, counterbalance losses, generally enhance the region's green assets, and inform interventions to support sustainable growth.







FIVE

# Action Plan

This matrix consolidates recommended actions required to progress implementation of the Framework.

While each action is associated with a key initiative, many actions achieve multiple commitments and initiatives, showcasing the interrelationships that underpin the purpose of developing the Framework. The action plan is meant to function as a living document. It is, and will always be subject to further detailed planning, investigations, prioritisation and annual capital and operational budget considerations. Actions will continue to be refined internally in Council, priorities will evolve, and new opportunities will be identified and integrated into the action plan to ensure that Council's focus always remains on those priorities delivering the highest return on investment to the community.

PREPARE, DEVELOP AND ADOPT THE OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK:

REVIEW AND UPDATE FRAMEWORK

IMPLEMENT FRAMEWORK

REVIEW ACTION PLAN

MONITOR PROGRESS













































































# Action Plan and Prioritisation Matrix

The Framework reflects Council's strategic direction and policy position regarding open space and is designed to continually evolve in response to changing circumstances. As such, its success depends on there being clear Internal ownership for delivery, as well as periodic review across Council. This document also provides the essential evidence-base required to support grant applications.










































































The action plan identifies a variety of recommended actions, their alignment with the Framework principles, their achievement of the functional themes and prioritises them with consideration of Council's existing policies, strategic direction and objectives.

INITIATIVE	COMMITMENT	ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS	ALIGNMENT WITH PRINCIPLES								FUNCTIONAL THEMES ACHIEVED			PRIORITY ACTION			ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNITY PLAN		
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	active	passive	environmental	1	2	3			
MEET THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS	UNDERSTAND the community's needs and preferences.	1.1 Undertake a detailed community needs assessment targeting sport and recreation facilities and recreation-based parks. Update findings approximately every five years to sustain currency and accurately reflect demographic changes in the community.	●		●		●	●	●									TBC	
		1.2 Develop a Livingstone Sports and Recreation Facilities and Management Strategy with clear ambitions and conditions regarding community leases.	●		●		●	●	●										
		1.3 Continue to progress, review and update the Active Livingstone Strategy which articulates and identifies how Council can assist all the activities in the region that are founded in active recreation, activities which may or may not involve Council controlled lands encompassed in the open space network. These activities include all marine activities, such as beach swimming, sailing, boating, kite surfing, snorkelling, etc., hang gliding, mountain biking, climbing, bird watching, jogging, bushwalking and more.	●		●	●	●												
		1.4 Develop design guidelines to incorporate best practice universal (accessible) design principles into park design, to promote inclusivity and intergenerational use of the open space network.	●		●		●		●										
		1.5 Undertake regular engagement with the community to evaluate the performance of the open space components – positive and negative (e.g. via community survey and focus groups)  Accompany community engagement with ongoing progress evaluation of Open Space Framework implementation, using findings to identify required updates to the action plan.																	



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			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	 active	 passive	 environmental	 1	 2	 3			
MEET THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS	MANAGE our existing open space infrastructure.	2.1 Complete a comprehensive stock-take of the existing open space network and finalise incomplete mapping of the open space components that are Council- owned and managed.	●	●		●	●	●	●										
		2.2 Assess opportunities to utilise existing vacant Council-owned land to improve active, passive and environmental outcomes.	●	●		●	●	●	●										
		2.3 Develop an Asset Management Plan for the open space network. Review Strategic Asset Management Plan to more clearly articulate the park and civic spaces network, including values, purpose, standards, timing and respective responsibilities.	●		●		●	●	●										
		2.4 Review Buildings Asset Management Plan to address buildings in the open space network (toilets, shelters, etc.) and to reflect findings from the Sports and Recreation Facilities and Management Strategy (action 1.2)	●						●										
		2.5 Develop an evaluation framework to support a consistent approach to sporting clubs, community groups and commercial operators seeking private use of public assets and the open space network. Assess proposals based on optimal community benefit and the identified role and function of each location/facility in line with the classification system and Parks Strategy (action 4.1).	●		●				●	●									
		2.6 Develop a comprehensive acquisition and disposition program for the open space network, to optimise Framework services and community return on investment. Adopt an agile approach to acquisition to ensure key opportunities can be harnessed as they arise.	●	●		●	●	●	●										
		2.7 Where practicable, undertake Council-led structure planning for key greenfield development areas that have fragmented ownership to ensure the open space network, green infrastructure and key corridors are preserved and enhanced as development progresses.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●										
		2.8 Review investment decisions in line with the strategic direction of the Framework and its principles. For example, look to reduce unnecessary embellishments in the wrong locations as informed by action 1.2 and 4.2.	●		●	●	●	●	●										
	DEVELOP a viable network.	3.1 Develop a framework to assess the long-term viability of the open space network, with clear understanding of the trade-offs between service levels and costs to ensure the community receives the best return from open space infrastructure. Prioritise capital works funding allocation in line with these assessments.	●					●	●										
		3.2 Undertake a complete asset inventory with associated mapping to determine asset condition, performance, and level of service to identify any operational improvements that can be made in line with the objectives and purpose of the Framework.	●		●				●										
		3.3 Undertake budget reviews and create pathways to address identified funding shortfalls in the open space network, in conjunction with consistent reviews of the open space network to identify 'excessive' levels of service. Review should articulate the strategic investment approach required to finance and implement the highest priority actions articulated by the Framework in an orderly manner.	●		●				●	●									
		3.4 Review park provision, embellishment and landscaping requirements (as applicable) in the Planning Scheme (LGIP and Landscaping Planning Scheme Policy), to ensure all new improvements align with findings of the Parks Strategy (action 4.1).	●		●	●			●	●									
		3.5 Develop design guidelines to assist in the transition to more wholly integrating green infrastructure. Endeavour to source locally produced materials, particularly for Council assets and Council-led construction.	●	●	●	●			●	●									











































INITIATIVE	COMMITMENT	ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS	ALIGNMENT WITH PRINCIPLES								FUNCTIONAL THEMES ACHIEVED			PRIORITY ACTION			ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNITY PLAN
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	 active	 passive	 environmental	 1	 2	 3	
HOLISTIC NETWORK PLANNING	DELIVER multi-functional, multi-user spaces.	4.1 Develop a comprehensive Parks Strategy, including an open space assessment and audit that identifies the shortfalls in the provision of LGA-wide recreation parks to meet current and future user needs. Categorising types of open space and target clientele will also highlight the different purposes and values of these areas and identify where gaps in the network exist. Identify types and locations of open space that need to be acquired or otherwise protected.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
		4.2 Develop a classification framework that assesses Council-controlled open space and classifies components of the network according to their functions (or sub-functions), service, land, and activity use. Determine the current open space network's function and capacity and level of service provided to the community. Identify priorities for improvement against the findings of 4.1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
		4.3 Investigate the creation of new open spaces from existing assets (e.g. repurposing underutilised areas, excess car parking capacity and well positioned but unutilised private lands to develop new open space in accordance with 4.1). Investigate the potential and pathways for conversion of surplus Council-owned land and State road reserves to open spaces.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
		4.4 Determine opportunities for aligning private and commercial open space services and facilities with the open space network, such as the sailing club, school grounds and ovals.	●		●		●		●								
		4.5 Develop criteria (aligned with Framework principles) to assess requests/ opportunities for land acquisition/ purchase that contribute to the open space network (not otherwise targeted in 4.1).	●	●			●	●	●								
		4.6 Identify opportunities to enhance the multi-functionality of open space assets by adding functions that increase value to the community. Similarly, identify where services can be removed from open space assets, if not well utilised or in the wrong location.															
	STITCH our network together.	5.1 Create an active transport network plan that integrates pedestrian strategies (footpaths and trails), with the State principal cycle network and localised cycle network planning to optimise active linear open space functionality and accessibility. Review capital works priorities to identify where business cases need to be developed to support this goal coincident with existing and future project priorities.	●		●		●		●								
		5.2 Promote active recreation and greater utilisation of active transport infrastructure (such as cycleways and footpaths) and the open space network through promotions, events, activations, and tourism activities. For example, public art trails, park runs, endurance events, destination marathons, environmental facilities/ walks. Identify supporting facilities (such as seating, shade, and water) as well as placemaking enhancements to increase the appeal and utilisation of the network by a broader cohort of users.	●		●		●		●								
		5.3 Identify key gaps in the open space network and prioritise actions to deliver necessary connections and linkages to complete the network's services across active, passive, and environmental functions. Identify incomplete parts of the footpath network and cycle routes for completion, with a gameplan for funding and implementation as resources and priorities permit.	●	●	●		●	●	●								
		5.4 Identify priorities for acquisition and disposition of open space assets where this can optimise services to community and Council efficiencies in providing these services.															
		BUILD distinctive communities.	6.1 Allocate funding for placemaking including the incorporation of public art, streetscaping, lighting and signage that reinforce a distinctive local sense of place and identity within the open space network across the region. Improved lighting will be essential for facilitating increased evening use of facilities as an adaptive response to climate change. Adopt a 'complete project' policy to ensure that Council projects incorporate those elements necessary to optimal functionality and value. Require that this component of project budgets is quarantined to prevent use for contingency purposes.	●		●		●	●								
	6.2 Improve education and awareness of the open space network and its various components, encouraging community initiatives that assume responsibility for ongoing care and maintenance.			●	●	●			●	●							
	6.3 In collaboration with Traditional Owners, prioritise the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage through interpretation and storytelling that communicate the local history and identify of each location. Integrate traditional names and cultural messages into park names and interpretive materials wherever possible.			●	●	●	●	●	●								



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GREENING LIVINGSTONE	GROW Livingstone's urban forest	7.1 Increase Nursery capacity for propagating and growing trees for planting in the Open Space network. Allocate appropriate resources to enable tree planting, establishment watering and long term maintenance.		●	●	●				●										
		7.2 Develop an urban forest or street tree strategy that systematically identifies strategic locations for the establishment of enhanced streetscapes across the region. This will primarily consist of enhancement of key streets with street trees and may include small revegetation plots in reserves, medians and orphaned spaces. Assign funds to implement this strategy. Develop partnerships with community groups and private sponsors to assist in delivering, establishing and maintaining new plantings.																		
		7.3 Encourage and actively support community initiatives that supplement tree propagation, planting and care. Champion new programs and initiatives for community involvement such as local neighbourhood greening programs, coastal rehabilitation, tree planting days, and 'adopt a tree' schemes. Review Council procedures to ensure that these procedures support such actions with the least amount of process.			●	●	●				●	●								
		7.4 Review specifications to ensure alignment with best-practice approaches to planting, irrigation, maintenance and plant re-plantment.			●	●	●				●	●								
		7.5 Review planning scheme policies to ensure that these optimise effective and enduring landscaping outcomes required in association with development approvals. Required practices should include deep planting provisions, naturalised detention basins and swales, quality communal open space, street canopies, stronger provisions for replacement of dead materials, and connections with internal and external open space services. Investigate opportunities to incentivise improved landscaping quantity and quality within new developments.		●	●	●	●				●	●								
		7.6 Collaborate across departments to prioritise streets and active transport routes for improved landscaping and canopy cover. Use these examples as 'pilot projects' to demonstrate exemplary 'complete street' outcomes.		●	●	●					●	●	●							
		7.7 Implement policies highlighting the value of trees (based on economic evaluations) and require that this be considered in cost calculations regarding projects where trees may be removed (aka full cost accounting). Demonstrate that the retention of trees is more financially and environmentally viable and effective than removal and offset.																		
		7.8 Develop appropriate specifications for land transfers to Council, particularly regarding retention of existing native vegetation and planting within and adjacent to parks.		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								



INITIATIVE	COMMITMENT	ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS	ALIGNMENT WITH PRINCIPLES								FUNCTIONAL THEMES ACHIEVED			PRIORITY ACTION			ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNITY PLAN		
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GREENING LIVINGSTONE	PROTECT natural assets at all scales.	8.1 Prioritise tree retention and tree planting in new development. Improve provisions in planning policies addressing preservation of existing vegetation and offset requirements where trees are lost. This may be achieved through a Street Tree Strategy, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), Vegetation Protection Order (VPOs) or amendments to the Planning Scheme including implementation of a significant tree overlay. Develop criteria to ensure works in the vicinity of trees do not damage root zones.		●	●	●			●	●									
		8.2 Develop an inventory and mapping of significant trees (individual and groupings) on public land. Identify tree health needs and actions. Incentivise or encourage protection of significant trees on private property through conservation easements, rates concessions, TPOs and VPOs.		●	●	●			●										
		8.3 Undertake community education on designing in a sub-tropical climate and the benefits of designing with vegetation. Promote retention of vegetation on private land. For example, disseminate and promote information that explains the benefits and methods for designing homes to integrate existing vegetation, resulting in cooler homes, higher property values and reduced energy needs.		●	●	●	●	●	●										
		8.4 Develop a coordinated strategy to address the protection and rehabilitation of natural areas. The strategy should identify important environmental assets to retain across the region and prioritise actions and recommendations that align such actions with the Framework principles. Support Traditional Owner's engagement in raising the community's environmental and cultural awareness around natural and protected areas.		●	●	●	●	●	●										
		8.5 Respond to and be informed by First Nations knowledge of the land as Council defines and protects and develops open space resources across several key categories (such as natural areas). Commit to adopting traditional cultural land management practices where possible, protecting and repairing important remaining indigenous sites, assets and stories.			●	●	●				●								
		8.6 Investigate and identify where deficiencies in landscaping outcomes are most concentrated and most in need of rectification (e.g. parks, streetscapes, coastal dunes), to inform targeted policy and remedial interventions.																	
		8.7 Undertake a regional landscape character study to define the key natural assets, landscape heritage and character across the region. The study will highlight the unique and distinct landscape identity and its connection to the open space network, ensuring open spaces can preserve and enhance the region's unique as- sets and landscapes that promote liveability and amenity.																	
		8.8 Identify key assets for acquisition or protection through easements and related conservation tools.																	
		8.9 Develop materials to educate the community on the values of native vegetation, trees, and their retention, including distinguishing the relative values of natives versus exotics.																	
		DESIGN for climate		9.1 Establish a framework within Council that prioritises environmental protections during the development of hazard management approaches that address bushfire mitigation, flooding and other climate change exacerbated impacts. Investigate opportunities to develop a clear and coordinated approach to coastal erosion in line with the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS).	●	●	●	●			●	●							
9.2 Investigate the establishment of a clear planning framework internally within Council for retrofitting stormwater management using green infrastructure, where practicable, to supplement the environmental functions of the OS network. Examples include filtration detention ponds and wetlands, bioswales and naturalized drainage channels. Strengthen requirements from developers to provide same, with capacity to accommodate multiple uses. Incentivise naturalized over engineered solutions.	●			●	●	●	●				●								
9.3 Evaluate probable climate impacts on public and private open space and develop strategies to appropriately mitigate.																			





This chapter identifies a model corporate structure for delivering the Framework, recognising that implementation efficacy will be limited by the current organisational structure.

Recommendations are structured towards clearer acknowledgement of the role and importance of green infrastructure to ensure appropriate consideration in Council's policy priorities and budget process. Guiding principles are articulated to identify internal ownership and responsibilities, and required resources and procedural changes, underpinned by understanding the essential role that open space plays in achieving community wellbeing and economic success.

SIX

## Operations Implementation

The success and effectiveness of the Framework will be totally reliant on its implementation.

In addition to describing the preferred composition of the open space network the Framework is designed to also function as an operational efficiency and productivity initiative.

It achieves this through organizational structural reform, increased efficiencies, enhanced asset performance and acting on neglected opportunities.

Optimising delivery of the Framework therefore requires that Council consider certain structural and procedural changes, specifically:

- Elevating the corporate role of Framework services
- Identifying ownership of the Framework and implementation responsibilities
- Reassignment of positions and responsibilities to facilitate Framework implementation
- Acquiring or developing missing staff skills and resources needed to deliver the Framework.
- Establishment of baseline internal collaboration and consultation requirements regarding Framework considerations
- Procedural changes to ensure appropriate consideration of Framework objectives during corporate forward planning and budget deliberations.



# Guiding principles

Open space services warrant acknowledgement and resourcing commensurate with their essential role supporting liveability and community prosperity. This means appropriate funding, recruitment of appropriate professional skills and, most importantly, shared commitment across the organisation regarding implementation of the Framework.

Fully embraced, the Framework will:

- optimise open space quality, functionality and use
- optimise community/individual wellbeing, environmental and economic outcomes.
- optimise operations and services, through:
  - enhanced efficiencies,
  - improved quality and quantity of outcomes,
  - improved alignment and effectiveness addressing open space functions across Council,
  - improved staff productivity resulting from better cross-council alignment, clarity of purpose and ROI based project prioritisation,
- mitigated maintenance and replacement obligations (and costs),
- alignment with private open space features and services to expand the diversity of services available to the community and visitors.
- increase accessibility to open space for growing and diversifying demographics
- optimise community benefits.

The Council Leadership team will contribute to the Framework implementation plan on an ongoing basis by ensuring equitable consideration of Framework priorities relative to other Council ambitions, acknowledging the values articulated throughout this report. This applies to budget discussions, allocation of resources, staffing, and other deliberations about Council priorities.

First steps include:

- 1 Identify ownership for Framework management and implementation. This includes responsibilities for general oversight of the Framework's integration into Council operations, including prioritisation, budgeting, resource assignment, project and program oversight and ultimately, implementation. This function does not currently exist. Creation of a new senior leadership position (ELT level) would provide the authority necessary to champion Framework values and ensure equitable consideration during budget and related considerations.
- 2 Clarify specific collaborative and oversight roles and responsibilities commensurate with Framework ownership and implementation.
- 3 Clarify the functions and responsibilities of all Council units as they relate to the planning, provision, protection, maintenance, management, and enhancement of open space functions and services, as defined within the Framework. The proposed leadership function will necessitate transfer and assemblage of currently dispersed operations under this new umbrella, to create efficiencies in procedures, delivery, and budgeting.
- 4 Designate the necessary funding to undertake the above steps and other framework implementation priority actions.

## Council Operations

Council's existing organisational structure disperses open space services across multiple roles and teams with a primary focus on maintenance rather than strategic considerations. Revamping this structure will be necessary to enable successful implementation of the Framework, ensuring it functions as intended, and delivers on its full potential. The resulting return on investment to the community will be considerable.

From a personnel perspective, restructuring means an adjustment of current roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines, counterbalanced by the promise of greater clarity of purpose, sense of accomplishment, improved productivity, and therefore job satisfaction. The current distribution of open space responsibilities hampers operational efficiencies in several ways, with the biggest limitation being the absence of an overarching 'game plan', which role the Framework fulfills.

By providing a clear strategic direction, the Framework will mitigate distractions, such as those generated through reactive, single purpose, 'suggestions.'

The consideration of green infrastructure as a comparable suite of assets to grey infrastructure is foundational in contemporary planning practice. Approaching the design of built environments around the wellbeing of people, not simply the infrastructure that enables transportation, water, etc., acknowledges the reality that green and grey are both essential for high functioning communities.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the efforts of everyone who has contributed to the development of the open space network as it exists today, past and present. While the intent of this framework is to produce a more tailored and strategic open space network and services, it needs to be stressed that those who currently work in the open space world are doing an incredible job under the circumstances, and in the absence of the framework document. They are to be lauded for their efforts, as one and all, they are already committed to the intent and objectives of the Framework.







LIVINGSTONE

# OPEN SPACE

framework