

8.3. MM03: Open Space and Recreation Strategy

Over the last 40 years the residential and commercial population of the North Sydney local government area has doubled.

In 2009 Council undertook and published the North Sydney Open Space Provision Strategy.

The introduction to the Strategy stated:

“The North Sydney Council area is one of the most densely populated in Australia and with new development both the residential and worker populations are growing.

The uneven distribution of parks and reserves means there is a lack of open space in some areas, particularly in St Leonards, Crows Nest and along Military Road.

This, together with insufficient sporting facilities, a lack of linkages and connections and the small size of many parks, mean that additional open space is required to meet the current and future recreational needs of the community.

The North Sydney Open Space Provision Strategy has been prepared to ensure new land provided for open space meets the needs of the population, providing useful and usable open spaces in areas of population growth and low open space provision, in an economically viable manner.”

Fourteen years later, population density has significantly increased and yet open space has not kept pace with the needs of the existing population let alone projected future population.

There have been significant changes in the way we, as a community, use open space and recreational facilities since the Strategy was adopted. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the NSW Department of Planning and the Environment’s Greater Sydney Outdoors study found that:

- 85% of people want to walk/run in parks and open spaces close to home,
- 77% want to relax in open space, and
- 64% want to be able to enjoy a picnic in a park or reserve.

Overall, 70% of Sydneysiders consider open space to be an important factor in their lives. One may argue that in high and medium density areas such as North Sydney that demand is likely to be higher still.

The pandemic reinforced the value and necessity of public open space, parks, playing fields, streets, foreshores, urban bushland and spaces. Like most local government areas, our community engaged intensely with local spaces and that level of engagement and expectation has not diminished since

We have also witnessed the devastating loss of public parks, trees and habitat as part of the major toll road projects – a reduction in both area and quality of these spaces. For example,

the Warringah Freeway Upgrade and Western Harbour Tunnel project will see the permanent loss of 1.5h hectares of Cammeray Park for the provision of operational sheds.

There are huge challenges to provide new open space within the 11km² of the local government area.

In this context, it is time for Council to review the Strategy and develop a new Open Space and Recreation Strategy to address the challenges and opportunities we face now and into the next decade.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT Council prioritises the preparation of an Open Space and Recreation Strategy in the 2023/24 operational plan

**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER
MAYOR**