

2.2 DRAFT PLAYGROUND AND PLAYSPACE STRATEGY

(Author:JG)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A draft Playground and Playspace Strategy (Attachment 1) has been developed for Council consideration. Officers seek Council approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community submissions for review before finalising the Strategy to Council for consideration.

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the development of a new Playground and Playspace Strategy (the *draft Strategy*) and seek Council approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community submissions for review before presenting a final Strategy for Council consideration.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

The community has been advised that a new Monash Playground and Playspace Strategy will be developed in stages over the following timeframes:

- Stage 1 (June - August 2019): Research and Data Review
- Stage 2 (July - September 2019): Community Consultation
- Stage 3 (October - November 2019): Data Analysis and Synthesis
- Stage 4 (Mid 2020): Exhibition of draft Strategy (timeline extended due to COVID-19).

Stages 1-3 have been completed and officers seek approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy (as detailed in Attachment 1) for community feedback before presenting a final version for Council consideration and endorsement at a future Council meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The draft Strategy is aspirational and not all of the recommendations will be implemented in the life of the Strategy.

The development of new playspaces is reliant on a number of factors including the availability of open space in appropriate locations (i.e. gap areas), site suitability and budget approval. Playground Upgrades will continue to be funded through Council's annual Playground Upgrade Program where six to eight playgrounds are upgraded annually (subject to Council budget adoption).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Following comprehensive community consultation, a draft Playground and Playspaces Strategy (Attachment 1) has been developed for Council consideration. Officers seek approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community feedback. All community submissions will be reviewed and appropriate feedback will be integrated into a final Strategy to be presented to Council for consideration.

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RECOMMENDATION

That:

Council approve the draft Playground and Playspace Strategy (Attachment 1) for public exhibition and invite community submissions for review before finalising the Strategy for Council consideration and endorsement.

INTRODUCTION

To provide an update on the development of a new Playground and Playspace Strategy (or *draft Strategy*) and seek Council approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community submissions for review before presenting a final Strategy for Council consideration.

BACKGROUND

Monash Council provides a diverse array of play opportunities for children throughout a network of 136 playgrounds located in parks and reserves. The draft Strategy has been developed to guide playground service standards and ensure a planned, equitable and sustainable approach to the future provision and management of playgrounds in Monash.

The draft Strategy considers playspaces with a holistic and systematic approach, involving consultation with internal Council departments and the community to establish:

- A clear vision that ensures Monash playspaces offer a broad range of high quality, creative play opportunities for different age groups and abilities across the municipality.
- A Playground Hierarchy or classification framework that provides clarity around playground provision and services levels and a variety of play experiences for the community i.e. from larger regional destination playspaces to small pocket playspaces.
- Future demand for playspaces in Monash including potential gaps in provision and possible sites for the development of new playgrounds.
- Equitable access to playgrounds.

Importance of Playgrounds

Play is important for children's physical, cognitive and social development. Through play, important life skills are learnt using interaction, risk taking, imagination, socialising and self-expression. Playing allows children to learn about themselves and others.

Playgrounds provide environments where children can explore, create, imagine, interact and reflect. Successful playgrounds enable children of all ages to take calculated risks, interact with others and be physically active. Playgrounds have evolved from simple slide and swing sets to integrated equipment that incorporate a range of features, challenges, themes and experiences.

Strategy Principles

Like the Monash Open Space Strategy (2018), the draft Strategy supports the development of quality, diverse and accessible playspaces to drive the liveability, health and wellbeing of our community through:

- Meeting the current and future needs of the community – having playgrounds close to where people live, work and play.
- Having a diversity of playground functions for social, physical and environmental experiences.
- Strengthening the ‘Garden City Character’ of Monash by enhancing planting and nature play opportunities.
- Equitable access - ensuring an appropriate level of access to playgrounds is available for all residents regardless of where they live, their age, gender, income, ethnicity, education or ability.
- Diversity of opportunities and experiences to ensure all residents can use and benefit from play.
- Quantity – the provision of playgrounds across Monash will continue to be increased where there is a demonstrated need (i.e. in gaps) to ensure an appropriate level is available for all residents.
- Quality (fit for purpose) – ensuring that the function of a playground meets the requirements for that function (i.e. primary design focus).
- Sustainability – in design, development and management of playspaces.
- Dependency – some people, activities and assets are more dependent on playgrounds (e.g. children) and as a priority, playgrounds should support activities and users who are more dependent upon it.
- Environmental protection, enhancement and appreciation including the protection of canopy trees, habitat, flora and fauna and waterways in and around playspaces.

Community Consultation

The community consultation and engagement program for the draft Strategy included:

- A community survey available in hard copy at customer service centres, libraries, and aquatic leisure facilities and online at ‘have your say’. Playgroups and school students were also directly targeted and encouraged to complete a shorter version of the on-line survey and provide a survey response. In total, 204 people completed the survey.
- Promotion of the survey through Council’s website, publications and social media e.g. article in the August 2019 *Monash Bulletin* and the summer 2019 edition of the *Monash Student Space* Newsletter.
- Communications to existing networks e.g. emails to members of Council networks and community groups such as Monash Playgroups, Primary and Secondary schools, Monash Age Friendly Ambassadors, Positive Aging Seniors Network and local schools.
- Discussions with Council’s advisory groups and networks including the Disability Advisory Committee, Young Persons Reference Group, Positive Aging Reference Group and Gender Equity Advisory Committee etc.
- Written submissions – three written submissions were received.
- Targeted consultation with key internal services
- Targeted consultation in Monash schools and playgroups – surveys and submissions from individuals and organisations visited included: Wellington Secondary College, Waverley

Meadows Primary School, Glendal Primary School, Wheelers Hill Primary School and Cabena and Legend Park Playgroups.

DISCUSSION

Current Provision

The City of Monash has 138 designated playgrounds (inclusive of two new playgrounds to be constructed within the next 12 months).

An analysis of playground provision levels across Monash's four wards is detailed in provided in the table below:

Playground Provision – Ward Analysis

Ward	Number of Playgrounds	Population 2016 Census	Ratio – Play ground per total population
Oakleigh	39	59,400	1:1,523
Mulgrave	44	41,945	1:953
Glen Waverley	19	29,930	1:1,575
Mount Waverley	36	51,399	1:1,428
Total	138	182,674	

The wards vary significantly in size but based on a per capital analysis, playground provision across the wards sits at approximately 1 playground to every 1,500 residents with the exception of Mulgrave. Mulgrave has comparatively more playgrounds and more playgrounds per capita than the other wards with 1 playground to every 950 residents.

With a limited number of high quality district (10) and regional (3) scale playgrounds across the municipality, a key direction of this strategy is to improve the quality of existing playgrounds across the municipality and plan for an equitable distribution of district and regional playground across the municipality.

Note: There are high numbers of existing pocket and local playgrounds across all wards.

Demographic Analysis

The City of Monash Estimated Resident Population for 2018 is 200,077, with a population density of 24.57 persons per hectare. Monash's resident population will continue to grow and is forecasted to reach 249,287 by 2041.

Population growth is expected across all suburbs in Monash from 2016 to 2041 but the following area will see significant growth in excess of 2% per annum:

- Oakleigh and
- Oakleigh East.

With continued population growth forecasted across Monash, and in particular in the Oakleigh Ward, there will likely be an increased demand for playgrounds into the future.

Of particular note is the significant increase in the percentage of children (aged 0-17) in Monash from 2016 to 2041. Over this period, the 0 to 17 year cohort is forecast to grow by a total of 21.3% or 8,300 children. This will result in an increase demand for playgrounds across Monash, particularly in the south-west of the municipality or Oakleigh Ward (Oakleigh, Huntingdale, Oakleigh South and Clayton) where persons aged 0 to 17 years are expected to increase by 81.8% in Oakleigh and 62% in Clayton.

With an increasing population of 0-17 year olds in the municipality, a key direction of the draft Strategy is to improve the quality of existing playgrounds across the municipality to encourage longer, more enjoyable visits to playground sites and to increase the quality and number of playgrounds in the Oakleigh Ward.

Residential growth zones also exist in Clayton and Glen Waverley which potentially places more pressure on local infrastructure, such as playgrounds, in these areas.

LGA Benchmarking

Benchmarking with other Local Government Areas (LGAs) was undertaken in June 2019, to seek information about playground provision trends and service standards.

The comparative statistics between authorities were similar with approximately 1 playspace per 1,400 head of population and 1 playspace per 275 head of children between the ages of 0-17 years. Both of these benchmarks only measure against the number of playspaces provided in each LGA - there is no assessment provided on the overall quality of playgrounds in each municipality.

Local Government Playground: Population Benchmarking 2019

LGA	Population ERP 2018	No. of Playspaces	Ratio Playspaces per total population	Total population of children (0-17 years) ERP 2018	Ratio Playspaces per child	Service Level - Minimum Distance to a playground
Monash	200,077	138	1:1,449	38,993	1:282	400m
Glen Eira	153,232	48	1:3,192	32,609	1:679	400-500m
Knox	163,203	211	1:773	34,974	1:165	500m
Casey	340,419	299	1:1,138	80,804	1:268	400m
Manningham	129,908	159	1:817	23,180	1:146	400m
Boroondara	181,289	104	1:1,743	39,521	1:380	400-500m
Stonnington	116,207	62	1:1,873	15,363	1:247	n/a
Maroondah	117,498	127	1:925	24,543	1:193	400m
Whitehorse	176,196	175	1:1,006	36,993	1:209	400m

Monash has playground provision ratios that are very similar to the average level of provision provided across the benchmarked local government areas. Most LGAs aim for the provision of playspaces to be within a 400-500 metre radius of every residential property. Although very challenging to achieve, this benchmark provides a guide for **identifying gaps** in playground provision and for informing recommendations for the location of new playspaces within wards.

Gaps in Open Space (and playground) Provision

The Monash Open Space Strategy (MOSS, 2018) sets the minimum open space provision standard for open space to be within a 400 metre radius of every residential property. In accordance with the MOSS (2018), it is recommended that Council aspires to meet a minimum playground provision standard of within a 400 metre within a radius (as the crow flies) of 95% of all residential dwellings.

In most instances, playgrounds are located in public open space. Gaps in playground provision will typically mirror gaps in open space provision.

The MOSS (2018) assesses the amount of open space available in Monash precincts. Across Monash there is currently around 2.7ha provided per 1,000 people provision of community open space. Half of the twelve open space precincts either meet or exceed the 30m² per capacity benchmark, whereas half are below the benchmark. Five precincts currently have a significant shortfall (or undersupply) in open space:

- Precinct 8: Notting Hill 5m² per capita (0.5ha per 1,000 people)
- Precinct 3: Clayton 6m² per capita (0.6ha per 1,000 people)
- Precinct 5: Hughesdale 6m² per capita (0.6ha per 1,000 people)
- Precinct 11: Oakleigh East/ Huntingdale 12m² per capita (1.2ha per 1,000 people)
- Precinct 2: Chadstone 20m² per capita (2.0ha per 1,000 people).

In order to address gaps in playground provision, gaps in open space in these five precincts will likely need to be redressed.

When local demographic data is considered in conjunction with gaps in open space provision, there is evidence to support that Clayton, Oakleigh/Huntingdale, Nottinghill and Hughesdale should be prioritised for open space improvements such as playgrounds.

Future Provision

It is important to note that a large majority of residents in Monash currently live within 400 metres of a playspace.

There are some areas within Monash that are not fully serviced by the 400 metre benchmark. Many of these areas do not have residential properties due to large parcels of land being locked up by industry and technology, private golf course(s) and/or tertiary institutions (e.g. Monash University Clayton Campus) i.e. high technology areas.

A 400 metre benchmark would also ensure Monash playgrounds are accessible in terms of Plan Melbourne's concept of 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. The 20-minute neighbourhood is all about 'living locally'—giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home, with safe cycling and local transport options.

Council should explore opportunities to increase the provision of playspaces within areas that fall outside 400m catchment area (or buffers) and prioritise the development of new playgrounds in gap areas.

Draft Strategy Recommendations

The key directions of the draft Strategy focus on providing sustainable and equitable future playground provision and include recommendations pertaining to:

1. Service Levels and Infrastructure Provision Standards
2. Playground Upgrades
3. New Playgrounds and
4. Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of Council policies, strategies and plans that provide an important framework for the draft Strategy. In particular, the Council Plan, A Healthy and Resilient Monash, Monash Open Space Strategy, Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, Age Friendly Monash, Active Monash Capital Works Priorities Framework and Council's Asset Management Policy. The draft Strategy is consistent and aligns with each of these key documents.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The social implications of adopting and implementing the draft Strategy include:

- a) enhancing a sense of community – e.g. playground upgrades, playground openings, active recreation opportunities for families and social cohesion;
- b) improving community health and well-being – e.g. improved playgrounds (intergenerational and accessible playspaces) for active recreation will contribute to happy and healthier communities;
- c) education and skills development – e.g. SRV's Good Play space Guide (2007) acknowledges that through play children develop qualities necessary in adulthood, such as:
 - problem solving
 - independence
 - self-awareness
 - creativity
 - resilience
 - spatial knowledge
 - flexibility and ability to deal with change.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The United Nations (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31) has stated that:

...every child has a right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, and to participate freely in cultural life and arts.

Sport and Recreation Victoria's Good Playspace Guide (2007) also acknowledges the importance of play as follows:

All children need to play. All children have the right to play. When children play they are not just filling in time, they are learning to interpret their world. Play facilitates the learning of life skills, and for this reason, the provision of quality outdoor playspaces is vitally important in local communities.

CONSULTATION

The community consultation identified:

The top 4 most important playground pieces were:

- Swings & slides (24%)
- Youth play opportunities (20%)
- Climbing Structures (18%)
- Space & equipment for ball games (13%).

The top 4 most important playground infrastructure requirements were:

- Public Toilets (20%)
- Shelters e.g. shade sails over play areas (16%)
- Water fountains (15%)
- Rubbish bins (14%)

The top 4 play features or themes they would like to see more of in Monash were:

- Adventure Play (25%)
- Water play & features (18%)
- Nature play and education (16%)
- Play opportunities for all ages (12%)

Overall satisfaction with playgrounds:

- 58% think existing playgrounds in Monash sometimes meet their family's and the community's needs
- 23% think existing playgrounds in Monash currently meet their family's and the community's needs
- 16% think existing playgrounds in Monash do not meet their family's and the community's needs.

The top 4 things respondents would like to see changed or improved:

- Improve play equipment and maintenance (36%)
- Better play opportunities for all ages and families (14%)
- Exercise and fitness equipment (12%)
- Improve Toilets (12%).

A full report of consultation findings is provided in Attachment 2: Playground Strategy Community Consultation Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Over the last five years as part of the Council’s annual Playground Upgrade Program, Active Monash has used the playground classifications as outlined in the draft Strategy to help inform minimum standards for playground services levels and infrastructure provision. The playground classifications are detailed below:

Playspace Classification	Primary Design Focus/Target Group	Indicative Catchment Area	Indicative Duration of Stay	Indicative no. of Play Pieces (+ Nature Play)
Regional	Intergenerational	10km	2+ hours	15+ pieces
District	Intergenerational	2.5km	1+ hours	8-12 pieces
Neighbourhood	Pre-Schoolers – High School	1km	Up to 2 hours	8-12 pieces
Local	Pre-schoolers – Primary School	500m	Up to 1 hour	5-8 pieces
Pocket	Toddlers – Pre-schoolers	400m	Up to 30 mins	3-5 pieces

The recommended playground classifications (above) and infrastructure provision standards have been:

- developed in consultation with an internal playground working and reference groups (i.e. with representatives from Horticulture, City Design, Capital Works, Family and Children’s Services, Strategic Planning, Strategic Asset Management, Communications, Facility and Infrastructure and Recreation Services)
- based on historical playground classifications (i.e. partially informed by the previous Monash Playground and Playspace Strategy 2010-2015)
- informed by a review of actual play provision levels and spatial analysis across Monash
- cognisant of key Council strategies and plans (such as A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan and the Monash Open Space Strategy) and a vision to provide “...a diverse range of quality, fun, accessible, well designed and maintained playspaces that assist children’s physical, cognitive, emotional and social development...” (Attachment 1, p.7 Vision).

The indicative costs associated with delivering the minimum service levels and infrastructure provision standards associated with each level playground classification is shown below:

Playspace Classification	Play Equipment (play value incl. nature play)	Associated Infrastructure Provision (public toilets, shade, BBQs, rubbish bins, seating etc.)	Design, PM & Contingency (30%)	Total Construction Cost	Est. Annual Maintenance (10% of play value for first 3 years)	Est. Annual Operational Costs (Public Toilets & BBQ)
Regional (incl. public toilets)	\$750,000	\$496,500	\$373,950	\$1,620,450	\$75,000	\$30,000
District (incl. public toilets)	\$300,000	\$485,500	\$235,650	\$1,021,150	\$30,000	\$30,000
Neighbourhood	\$300,000	\$30,000	\$99,000	\$429,000	\$30,000	n/a
Local	\$200,000	\$11,500	\$63,450	\$274,950	\$20,000	n/a
Pocket	\$80,000	\$9,500	\$26,850	\$116,350	\$8,000	n/a

CONCLUSION

The Monash Playground and Playspace Strategy will guide the future planning, provision, design and management of playgrounds in Monash for the next decade. The Strategy is a high level strategic document that seeks to identify the playground needs of existing and future residents of Monash and identifies potential gaps in the provision and opportunities to address those gaps.

The Playground and Playspace Strategy is cognisant of and reinforces the key directions and findings detailed in the Monash Open Space Strategy (2018), and like open space provision, recognises that current playground provision levels are insufficient in some areas to address the future needs of population growth and residential development in Monash.

The Playground and Playspace Strategy is aspirational, and it is acknowledged that not all of the recommendations will be able to be implemented in the life of the Strategy. Implementation (new playgrounds) relies on a number of factors including available budget, the pace of redevelopment and population growth, site suitability and the availability of land acquisition in appropriate locations.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Draft Monash Playground and Playspace Strategy 2020 -2025 (summary)

Attachment 2 - Playground Strategy Community Consultation Report