

2.3 DRAFT ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY – APPROVAL REQUESTED TO EXHIBIT DRAFT FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

(Author:JG)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A draft Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy (Attachment 1) has been developed for Council consideration. Council approval is sought to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community submissions for review before finalising the Strategy for Council adoption.

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the development of an Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy for Monash and seek Council approval to publicly exhibit the *draft* Strategy and invite community submissions for review before presenting a *final* Strategy for Council consideration and endorsement.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

The Strategy is being developed over five (5) stages:

Stage 1 (Nov 2020 - Jan 2021)	Background & Data Collection - Information Gathering Refer to Attachment 2: Background Report
Stage 2 (Dec 2020 - March 2021)	Consultation & Stakeholder Engagement Refer to Attachment 3: Engagement Report
Stage 3 (April – May 2021)	Data Synthesis, Needs Analysis and Spatial Mapping (gap analysis) Refer to Attachment 4: Active Recreation Framework and Needs Analysis
Stage 4 (May - July 2021)	Draft Strategy – Development of a draft strategy for public exhibition Refer to Attachment 1 - Draft Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy
Stage 5 (Sept – Oct 2021)	Final Strategy - Final Strategy presented to Council for consideration and/or adoption

Stages 1-3 have been completed. A draft Strategy (stage 4) has been prepared for Council approval (Attachment 1). Subject to Council approval, the draft Strategy will be exhibited for community feedback before a final version is presented to Council for consideration and/or endorsement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The draft Strategy is aspirational and not all of the recommendations will be implemented in the life of the Strategy. The preliminary and indicative capital costs for recommendations are outlined in the draft Strategy *Implementation Plan* (Attachment 1, p. 27-20) and are presented as high, medium or low priority actions that total \$7.52m.

Facility developments and infrastructure improvements will be considered as part of Council annual capital works budget process and subject to Council budget approval.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Following a lengthy community consultation, a draft Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy (Attachment 1) has been developed for Council consideration. Officers seek approval to publicly exhibit the draft Strategy and invite community feedback via written submissions. All community submissions will be considered, and appropriate feedback will be integrated into a final Strategy to be presented to Council for consideration and endorsement.

DRAFT ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY – APPROVAL REQUESTED TO EXHIBIT DRAFT FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

(Author: JG)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

RECOMMENDATION

That:

Council approve the draft Active Recreation Opportunities 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 *draft* Active Recreation Opportunities 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 and endorsement.

BACKGROUND

The restrictions experienced during COVID-19 resulted in increased participation in non-organised active recreation, highlighting the vital role that local parks and reserves play in improving our health.

Council, with support from Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), is in the process of developing an Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy to guide the future enhancement of parks and reserves to encourage healthy physical activity in Monash.

The draft Strategy focuses on non-organised recreation (casual and informal activity as opposed to organised sport) in parks and reserves by developing environments that encourage residents to get active in their local communities.

Fifty (50) site assessments of parks and reserves have been undertaken to identify opportunities to introduce active recreation infrastructure and enhance the existing environment. Facilities such as outdoor fitness equipment, walking circuits, bocce courts, basketball courts, skate parks, climbing walls and other infrastructure that encourage residents to engage in healthy physical activity have been considered.

The draft Strategy is cognisant of and aligns with the key strategic directions in the State Government's Active Victoria Framework and is intended to assist Council to:

- Implement a strategic plan designed to activate open spaces and provide enhanced opportunities for physical activity.
- Provide free, flexible and accessible recreation facilities in local parks and reserves that will reduce barriers to participation (such as cost, access and convenience). This will enable families and friends to recreate together on their own terms, close to home and at times convenient for them.
- Better plan and budget for the development of new and improved outdoor recreation infrastructure (such as fitness stations, climbing walls, basketball half courts, circuit paths

and tennis hit-up walls etc.) that will provide the community with a range of active participation opportunities.

- Support inactive (or active) individuals to become physically active (or more physically active), thereby improving their overall health and wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

Current Provision

Monash currently has a range of outdoor recreational facilities in public parks and reserves such as:

- Fitness or exercise stations and equipment (12 sites)
- Basketball hoops, quarter, half and full courts for social basketball (15 sites)
- Community tennis facilities such as public tennis courts, hit-up tennis walls and table tennis tables (8 sites)
- Bocce courts (6 sites)
- Skate park (2 sites) and
- Bouldering/climbing walls (2 sites).

Many of these sites are old and in need of renewal and large sections of the community do not have equitable access to existing facilities.

Recent developments have seen new active recreation sites added to this list such as:

- Caloola Reserve – hot shot tennis courts, tennis wall and basketball hoop
- Electra Reserve – quarter basketball court and hoop
- Waverley Park (Mirvac) – 2 x community futsal goals and mini pitch.

The draft Strategy provides a strategic plan to guide the renewal and/or development of new outdoor active recreation facilities that:

- Responds to community needs and demand for additional outdoor recreation infrastructure
- Plans for future informal/unstructured physical activity opportunities in local parks and reserves especially for women, families, older adults, disadvantaged groups etc.
- Considers appropriate services levels for infrastructure maintenance to ensure recreation infrastructure is appropriated maintained, relevant and fit-for-purpose and supports physical activity and community participation in active recreation
- Identifies potential partnership opportunities with service providers (e.g. neighbourhood houses and sports clubs) to activate outdoor recreation facilities
- When implemented, will contribute to enabling more people to tap into the health and wellbeing benefits that participation in active recreation provides.

The audit of 50 parks and reserves across Monash informs a Needs Analysis which identifies gaps in provision, areas of need and opportunities for development. The proposed establishment of a series of 'key active recreation sites' will increase the diversity of facilities, creating destinations for active recreation and providing new opportunities for residents to become active. Supporting key sites with additional local-level active recreation nodes will increase access to regular opportunities for physical activity. Engagement with the community highlighted the importance of convenience and facility location in encouraging residents to be more active more often. The implementation plan is included in Attachment 1.

Community Consultation

Recent community consultations have confirmed our community would like more opportunities to be physically active. For example:

- The *Monash 2021 and Beyond (2017)* community survey identified that ‘encouraging people to be physically active was the top health promotion priority for Council with 53% respondents ranking this as their first or second priority.’ Male respondents were more likely to rank this as the number one issue. Some key actions recommended for Council to achieve some positive change included: continuing to provide parks and gardens with walking tracks – perhaps including exercise bars/rails and community exercise times in these local parks.
- A more recent community survey undertaken in 2019 to inform the development of *Monash’s Playground and Playspace Strategy 2020* confirmed many residents would like to see new and improved outdoor recreation facilities and infrastructure provided in our parks and reserves. When asked ‘what are the most important playground features’, playground survey respondents confirmed climbing structures, youth play opportunities, space and equipment for ball games and exercise and fitness stations, balancing and stretching bars were the top 6 most important features.

As part of the development of the draft Strategy an extensive consultation and engagement program has been undertaken that has included:

1. On-line and hard copy survey submissions
2. Community drop-in session at Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre
3. Consultation with Council Advisory and Reference Groups (e.g. Positive Aging Reference Group, Gender Equity Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee, Multicultural Advisory Committee and Young Persons Reference Group)
4. Direct engagement with year 7 secondary school students
5. Direct engagement with Monash’s new Community Panel Group members.

A full report of consultation findings is provided in Attachment 3 - Engagement Report.

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, Active Monash’s Vision and Active Communities Framework and Council’s Asset Management Policy.

Key State Government strategies and plans that impact on this project include:

- Active Victoria Framework
- Safe and Strong - A Victorian Gender Equality Policy

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

- a) Enhanced sense of community and community pride e.g. active recreation opportunities for families and social cohesion.

- b) Improved community health and well-being and opportunities to participate will contribute to happy and healthier communities.
- c) Improved physical literacy skills development.
- d) Improved flexibility, accessibility and reduced barriers to participation i.e. people can *participate in their own way*.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Page 11 of the draft Strategy specifically discusses *Female Participation in Active Recreation* and recognises increasing opportunities for participation in active recreation is vital for encouraging women and girls to be more physically active.

An analysis of the gendered experiences of active recreation was undertaken during the development of the *Monash Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy*. There was good representation of both female (61%) and male (36%) voices in the community survey consultation. The participation rates are similar to the 2019-2020 Ausplay data for Victoria which shows that more women (58.4%) participate in Active Recreation than men (33.88%). Consultation was also undertaken with all of Council's Advisory Committees and a range of stakeholders to inform the priorities in the Strategy.

The consultation findings showed the top three priorities for women and girls for active recreation were feeling safe (78%), supporting infrastructure (63%) and convenience (61%).

The research and consultation findings informed the priorities and recommendations of this Strategy to increase physical activity options for women and girls across the City of Monash through:

- The development of active recreation facilities that provide convenient access to walking, fitness and other diverse activity actions options is a core principle of the Strategy;
- An increased focus on ensuring that perceptions of safety and accessibility are addressed through facility design will also address a key barrier identified by women and girls during the community engagement;
- The delivery of programs that target female participation and encourage less-active women and girls to engage in physical activity will increase opportunities to engage in more active recreation in council-managed parks and reserves.

In addition, Monash Council along with 18 other councils, has partnered with Monash University, CrowdSpot and XYXLab to participate in a digital platform that will advance knowledge of safety in public spaces for women, girls and gender-diverse people. YourGround is a crowd-mapping website that enables women, girls and gender-diverse people to anonymously 'drop a pin' to identify and share public recreational spaces in Monash that make them feel uneasy, scared, unwelcome or happy, safe and included. The data collated from this will further help Council inform the Active Recreation Strategy by creating inclusive spaces for women, girls and gender-diverse people in public recreational spaces, such as trails, paths, parks and facilities.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no human rights implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of the Strategy has been jointly funded by an SRV planning grant (\$30k) and Monash Council (\$30k).

Implementation Plan

The draft Strategy is aspirational and not all of the recommendations will be implemented in the life of the Strategy. The preliminary and indicative capital costs for recommendations are outlined in the draft Strategy *Implementation Plan* (Attachment 1, p. 27-20) and summarised below:

Actions	Estimated Cost
High Priority	\$1.77m
Medium Priority	\$5.25m
Low Priority	\$0.5m
Total	\$7.52m

Facility developments and infrastructure improvements will be considered as part of Council annual capital works budget process and subject to Council budget approval.

CONCLUSION

Our community is telling us that outdoor recreation infrastructure is important in helping keep them physically active and that they would like to see more, accessible and free active recreation infrastructure in Monash.

The Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy will guide the future planning, provision, design and management of active recreation spaces and facilities in Monash for the next decade. The draft Strategy is a high-level strategic document that seeks to identify the active recreation needs of existing and future residents of Monash and identifies potential gaps in the provision and opportunities to address those gaps.

The draft Strategy is cognisant of and reinforces the key directions and findings detailed in the Active Victoria and Monash Open Space Strategy and recognises that current provision levels are insufficient in some areas to address future needs, population growth and urban densification equitably across the city.

The draft 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 relies on a number of factors including budget approval, the pace of redevelopment and population growth, site suitability and the availability of land to acquire in appropriate locations.

It is recommended Council approve the draft Strategy (Attachment 1) for public exhibition with the view to inviting written submissions from the community for consideration before a final Strategy is presented to Council for consideration and endorsement.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Draft Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy

Attachment 2 – Background Report

Attachment 3 – Engagement Report

Attachment 4 – Active Recreation Framework and Needs Analysis