

Submission on Draft Melbourne Open Space Strategy

Nillumbik Shire Council
22 November 2019

Introduction

Nillumbik Shire Council values this opportunity to give comment on the Draft Melbourne Open Space Strategy (draft MOSS). As a Green Wedge Council we understand the importance of providing access to quality and diverse open spaces and the intrinsic benefits that connecting with nature provides. From an environmental perspective, Melbourne's open spaces provide critical habitat corridors, supports biodiversity and can enhance climate change resilience as a greener, cooler city.

A strength of this draft is its focus on optimizing existing open space assets whilst recognising the need for a benchmarking system for open space provision. Aligning this with the importance of strong and effective governance arrangements, especially across the different types of ownership and management of our open space assets requires a higher level of coordinated governance and decision-making than is current. The draft MOSS makes several references to the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017*, as a model for how multiple authorities can manage and invest in an integrated, living, multi-value entity. Such a model, if successfully realised through the Yarra Strategic Plan (in development) and decision making framework, could be adopted and scaled to Melbourne's other major open spaces and networks.

Council also welcomes the commitment of more than \$154 million for the short term investment priorities (2020 - 2023), particularly the Northern Trails network. This includes the extension of the Diamond Creek Trail from Diamond Creek to Hurstbridge which is a key current project for Nillumbik and the region.

The intent of this submission is to respond only on specific sections where there is the opportunity to strengthen or, where further clarity and detail would be useful.

General Comments:

- The vision is too general. Livability relates to multiple factors that affect quality of life, and in which access to open space is just one. Rather than having the very ambitious aim of 'best livability in the world', it would be better to have a more meaningful and achievable standard beyond an arbitrary livability ranking.

- It would be good to understand what is already been invested across the multiple authorities such as finding out what Council expenditure on open space, the types of projects (e.g. equipment, site maintenance, master planning) and how much they collect in levies, State and Federal funding.
- The draft should identify increased funding options to support Council's long term investment and maintenance costs of additional open space assets.
- We agree with the importance of optimizing existing open space assets and also capturing new opportunities to extend regional open space corridors. The current suite of major transport projects being delivered by the State Government are one example of how this open space potential is being unlocked. There are many opportunities to maximize open space linear corridors, as well as leverage on existing or planned transit infrastructure expansion to make new linear urban parklands. The 22.5 hectares of additional open space provided as part of the LXR upgrade between Caulfield and Dandenong rail corridor is a wonderful example of this.
- There are large tracts of land across Metropolitan Melbourne that were acquired by VicRoads and reserved for roads that are no longer being considered. There is the opportunity to unlock this land for open space. For example, in Nillumbik there is a corridor of land, mostly undeveloped and owned by VicRoads that is designated as a proposed road. This originally was reserved as part of a potential ring road link and was included as an option for the North East Link (Corridor C). An alternative route has been selected (Corridor A) and so this land could be divested by VicRoads for the purposes of open space.
- Further to the above point, there should be a review of the Victorian Government Land Transaction Policy and Guidelines to align with the MOSS. This policy generally supports land sold on the basis of its highest and best value. In many cases, the land is rezoned into residential prior to disposal so as to maximize the financial return. It would be a significant opportunity if the value for land was also defined by its environmental or social values, not just

economic. Applying a multi value based system for land divestment would give potential for the State or local government to strategically acquire land for open space provision. This land could be reserved as Public open space and zoned accordingly (applying either the Public Park and Recreation Zone or Public and Resource Zone).

- Funding models – consider contributions collected under either the Public Open Space levy, Subdivision Act, or explore other mechanisms can be increased, especially for areas with less access to quality open space or where more intensive development is occurring.
- However, the challenges for open space provision within the land use planning framework goes beyond funding. Often the land that is left available to Councils to spend funds collected via open space levies is of poor quality, such as drainage reserves or steep, inaccessible land. There needs to be a mechanism to ensure that land put aside for open space is not just the undevelopable lots, but land that is strategically identified for the purpose of open space.

For developers, this may mean a reduced yield, but community, it will bring a level of quality and access to open space that meets the needs of the current and future residents. A current example in Nillumbik is that through Schedule 2 to the Development Contribution Plan Overlay (DCPO), over \$1.3 million has been collected for open space improvements. However, there is no remaining land within the overlay, suitable for this purpose. As this DCP Incorporated Document and schedule 2 is specific to only land with the DCPO, the funds cannot be reallocated to any other sites for open space improvements.

- Under the principle '*Innovation and Creativity*', taking a multi-disciplinary approach to open space planning, such as urban design, strategic, statutory and social planning, recreation and leisure, environmental sustainable design, place making and landscape architecture, will be necessary drivers for improved open space outcomes for the community, especially in activity centres and areas with higher residential densification. For example, applying best practice environmental sustainable design to the public realm, such as requiring a mix of formal and informal green public spaces, and maximizing

green infrastructure will reduce the urban heat island affect as well as improve amenity and urban biodiversity.

Structure and Text Edits

- The document title is Melbourne Open Space Strategy but is referred to on the Engage Vic site as the Metropolitan Open Space Strategy. Consistency is needed here.
- Page 6 - the projected Melbourne growth figure of 11 million appears to be incorrect. Victoria in Future 2019 projects the Greater Melbourne population to reach more than 9 million people by 2056.
- Page 12 -The 'optimise' direction uses the term 'urban precinct planning'. However, in Figure 1 (p.4.) it is referred to as 'urban place-based planning. The terminology should be consistent and our preference is for 'urban place-based planning' to be used.
- Define what is meant by landscape scale (p. 12).
- Page 22 – The first paragraph talks of a framework that remove barriers. What are the types of barriers this is referring too?
- It would be better to include case studies within the document rather than at the end.

Conclusion

The draft MOSS aligns with Council's own vision and strategic direction for open space, and we support the Government's commitment to equitable access to a diversity of open spaces and the recognition that this requires an integrated model of governance. Not only will this bring positive physical and mental health outcomes, greater social inclusion and equity, but will also enhance biodiversity and Melbourne's resilience to the impacts of climate change.