

Moonee Valley Open Space Implementation Plan

This Open Space Implementation Plan (Plan) is a high level overview of programs to be implemented to achieve the objectives of the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy 2024. The specific details and priority order of projects within each program will be refined through Moonee Valley City Council's four year Council Plans, and annual budget processes.

Prioritisation of projects and programs will be considered with regard to both the Open Space Strategy objectives and the building blocks of the MV2040 Strategy; Council's long-term plan for improving the health, vibrancy and resilience of our city. MV2040 outlines thirteen neighbourhoods in Moonee Valley, and this Plan refers to those throughout (rather than to suburb names).

This Plan will be updated periodically over the coming years, so that it can be responsive to the changing context in Moonee Valley.

Timeframes described in this document include:

- Short - indicates 1- 4 years
- Medium - indicates 5 -7 years
- Long - indicates 8+ years

Program costings are not included in this high level Plan. Funding for the programs will be defined in annual budgets and will include a mix of contributions from developers, Council revenue and grant funding.

Different open space types mentioned in this Plan include:

- **Regional/municipal:** minimum 3 hectares (ha), ideally within 1km safe walking distance, although they may also attract and cater to visitors from across Moonee Valley and other parts of Melbourne.
- **Neighbourhood:** 1-3ha, and within 500m safe walking distance from residences
- **Local:** 0.26 -1ha, and within 300m safe walking distance from residences
- **Small Local:** 0.03 - 0.25 ha, and within 150m from residences

This Plan is organised by the four Strategic Directions in the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy 2024.

Implementation Plan Summary of Programs

Strategic Direction 1	1.1 Increased community access to open spaces and nature
Strategic Direction 2	2.1 Major park upgrades
	2.2 Minor park upgrades
	2.3 Sport and recreation improvements
	2.4 Park activation
Strategic Direction 3	3.1 Improving the health of waterways
	3.2 Improving ecological outcomes within the open space network
	3.3 Climate resilient open spaces
Strategic Direction 4	4.1 Planning tools and processes to protect, expand and enhance the open space network
	4.2 Partnerships and advocacy for new and improved open spaces

Strategic Direction 1 - Increased community access to open spaces and nature

This Strategic Direction is about community access to open space, including addressing “gap areas”, so communities gain improved access to open space in parts of the municipality that are currently short on such spaces or have greater density. This Strategic Direction also relates to improving the community’s access to nature, and providing ecological connectivity corridors, especially along waterways. Increasing connections to and through open space is another component of this Strategic Direction.

We have mapped our different open space types and their ideal catchments (1km safe walking distance to regional/municipal parks, 500m to neighbourhood parks, 300m to local parks, and 150m to small local parks). The identified gaps, together with the population density projections, show us where we can strategically prioritise new open space.

To ensure new open space can be successfully delivered in the different neighbourhood contexts, four delivery models will be particularly useful to increase community access to open spaces and address the shortfall in the open space network.



Improved Access: provide additional and improved access points and connections, and remove barriers to accessing existing open space.



Expansion: expand existing open space to create a larger open space via repurposing adjacent land.



Purchase: provide new open space through property developer land contributions, land acquisition or compulsory purchase.



Repurpose: repurpose existing underutilised land into new open space e.g. rail reserves, roads or service easements.

Program 1.1: Increased community access to open spaces and nature

The focus of this program will be projects that can provide more open space. Strategic priority is given to gap areas, particularly those with higher density populations, where the ratio of residents to nearby public open space is low.

Opportunities will be prioritised for the four Moonee Valley neighbourhoods with identified gap areas that also have the least open space per person:

- Flemington
- Keilor Road/Essendon North
- Essendon
- Moonee Ponds

Acquisition of land to link habitat areas, provide access to nature and increase climate resilience, particularly along waterways, and between regional/municipal parks and waterways will also be a focus of this program. Sites will be considered based on the potential quality of the habitat link available, likelihood of being able to extend the corridor into the future, or benefit in terms of climate adaptation (e.g. acquiring land for flood attenuation).

Another consideration will be land acquisition for walking, cycling and mobility device connections to improve access to and through open space. Sites will be prioritised based on how well they improve access to and through open space, especially if providing continuous access along waterways trails, providing cooler route choices for people walking, cycling or using mobility devices, or reducing travel distance to open spaces by creation of new connection points.

Timing	Ongoing ¹
Responsibility	Property and Assets, City Futures, Engineering Services, Parks and Gardens
Prioritisation	High

¹ Timing is ongoing rather than a specific time period as acquisition is generally opportunistic, when land might be for sale, or may be contributed through urban development.

Strategic Direction 2 - Improved open space quality

This Strategic Direction is intended to provide increased quality and diversity of open spaces. This includes amenity, maintenance, sense of safety, inclusive access, opportunity for social interaction, and varied sport, recreation and play opportunities in open space. The Strategic Direction also considers diverse events and activities in open space such as festivals, arts, education, community biodiversity activities and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural practices.

Program 2.1 Major park upgrades

This program will include improvements to larger parks, through maintenance and renewal of assets, plus implementation of more significant upgrades, guided by a park plan.

Park plans (master plans, precinct plans or landscape concept plans) are typically prepared for larger or more complex open spaces or community infrastructure to guide coordinated upgrades of a greater range of open space offerings. Sports infrastructure priority lists, and asset renewal lists (for playgrounds, shelters and other equipment) also guide park upgrades. New or upgraded public toilets will be integrated into park improvements in line with Council's public toilet plan (under development).

Park plans guide the context, approach for, and coordination of all elements located within the open space. Community and stakeholder engagement is undertaken with park plans, to ensure that the community's aspirations for the space are understood and can inform the plan. Ongoing renewal and maintenance activities for major parks will be included within this program.

High priority in this program will be given to implementation of projects identified in park plans that are already well progressed, such as:

- Aberfeldie Park sports infrastructure and landscape upgrade, Aberfeldie
- AJ Davis Reserve sports infrastructure and landscape upgrade, Airport West
- Clifton Park pavilion and landscape upgrade, Aberfeldie
- Boeing Reserve pavilion and landscape upgrade Strathmore Heights
- Moonee Ponds Creek naturalisation project, Strathmore
- Fairbairn Park sports infrastructure upgrade, Ascot Vale
- Rosehill Park landscape upgrade, Milleara

A number of other major parks will be considered a medium level priority. These include parks that have new plans (as such no detailed project documentation or costing has yet been developed), or conversely, parks where the plans have already been substantially implemented. Parks where the plans are in part superseded by other plans, or have some uncertainty around future uses and stakeholder groups are also a medium. This includes for instance:

- Buckley Park, Niddrie/Essendon West
- Five Mile Creek Reserve, Strathmore

- Montgomery Park, Essendon
- Nursery Corner, Strathmore Heights
- Overland Reserve, Milleara
- Ormond Park, Moonee Ponds
- Riverside Sport and Recreation Precinct Plan, Ascot Vale

As some of these park plans were written some time ago, as they get closer to implementation, Council will also consider the 2023 feedback on the Open Space Strategy and community desire for sustainable building materials, trees, lighting, access routes. Design will consider how these elements can contribute to the stated vision for the park, and if they can be introduced even if not explicitly included in the original park plan. In some cases, a refresh on community consultation will be undertaken, in line with Moonee Valley's Community Engagement Policy.

The following open spaces have been identified as possible candidates for new, or updated, park plans. These or other open space reserves, will be scheduled through future Council Plans and annual budgets.

- Border Drive Reserve, Keilor East (underway)
- Bradshaw Street Reserve, Niddrie/Essendon West (underway)
- Canning Reserve, Avondale Heights
- Cliff Allison Reserve, Keilor Road/Essendon North (underway)
- FJ Davies Reserve, Keilor East (underway)
- JH Allan Reserve, Milleara (underway)
- Maribyrnong River Cultural Precinct Master Plan (underway)
- Queens Park, Moonee Ponds
- Quinn Grove Precinct Plan, Keilor East (underway)
- Victory Park, Ascot Vale
- Steele Creek Linear Park

Prioritisation of the medium priority parks and future plans will consider:

- funding or partnership opportunities or constraints
- scheduling of works to complement other Council projects and policies
- positive impacts on communities within areas of greater population density and MV2040 target populations
- responsiveness to the climate emergency or biodiversity crisis.
- equitable distribution of quality open space across Moonee Valley

Timing and Prioritisation	Various, as noted above
Responsibility	City Futures, Engineering Services, Major Projects, Sports and Recreation, Parks and Gardens

Program 2.2 Minor park upgrades

This program will deliver coordinated upgrades across Moonee Valley's open space network for *Local* and *Small Local* open spaces. The program will also include ongoing maintenance activities in minor parks. Upgrades may include play spaces, recreational elements², furniture, paths, incorporation of elements to support dog off leash areas, lighting, shelters, viewing platforms, water bubblers, planting and/or biodiversity improvements. Project scopes will be considered in reference to the park classification.

Prioritisation will be guided by:

- Spatial distribution – ensuring a mix of improved parks across the municipality and particularly where there are few other upgraded open spaces.
- Coordination with other Council projects
- Existing asset condition
- Consideration of park usage rates (where available)
- Positive impacts on communities within areas of greater population density and MV2040 target populations
- Ecological condition and opportunity to connect people to nature and/or mitigate against urban heat.

Timing	This will become an ongoing program, however the short term priority is to assess and develop a list of parks where this program will be delivered.
Responsibility	Parks and Gardens, City Futures
Prioritisation	High

² Such as basketball keys, tennis hit-up walls, exercise equipment

Program 2.3 Sport and recreation improvements

This program will complement the Major and Minor Park Upgrade programs with a focus on delivery of outdoor sport and recreation facilities. This could include recreation elements such as skate parks or mountain bike tracks. It will also deliver on some of the major formal sporting projects detailed through Council's Development Contribution Plan, and sports strategies and infrastructure needs assessments.

Prioritisation of informal recreation projects will be guided by:

- Existing asset condition
- Measurements of park usage rates (where available)
- Coordination with other Council projects
- Proximity to other similar sport or recreation facilities
- Park size and service standards
- Positive impacts on communities within areas of greater population density and MV2040 target populations

Projects for formal sport and recreation, to optimise use of facilities may include:

- Sports lighting projects to activate more facilities during evening hours
- Sportsfield and court upgrade projects to accommodate increased usage hours
- Outdoor recreation and leisure facilities improvements to respond to increased utilisation
- Sports and multi-use building upgrades (including improved changerooms/amenities)
- Implementation of key sport plan/strategy priority projects
- Sports training facilities renewal projects
- Associated sports infrastructure projects (i.e. scoreboards, time-keeper boxes, etc.)

Timing	Ongoing
Responsibility	Sport and Recreation, Parks and Gardens, City Futures, Major Projects
Prioritisation	High

Program 2.4 Park activation

This program will support community events and activation in urban plazas and larger open spaces (neighbourhood, municipal/regional). It will include funding for public art, shelters, viewing platforms, public toilets and seating to support the upgrade of public open space to promote use of these spaces for festivals, arts and education.

Priority will be given to sites where there is existing use for learning, leisure, arts and cultural practices, where there is proximity to community groups that intend to use the space in a specific way (e.g. kindergartens wanting to run bush kinder programs); or where the upgrade to the open space will support the local economic activity and sense of place in business precincts. Local community input will inform design and location of facilities, in line with Council guidelines and policies.

Projects will be selected that are likely to encourage the community to visit and use open space through activities and events.

Timing	This will become an ongoing program, however the short term priority is to create a list of open spaces where this program will be delivered.
Responsibility	Parks and Gardens, City Futures, Arts, Culture & Place, Major Projects
Prioritisation	Medium

Strategic Direction 3 - Strengthened ecological connectivity and climate resilient open space

This strategic direction is about protecting and enhancing areas of ecological value, building climate resilience into our open space network, and improving waterway health. It is intended to increase habitat areas and tree canopy cover, increase ecological complexity, improve habitat connectivity, provide greater community access to encounters with nature, more cool irrigated spaces and improve water security by harvesting stormwater.

It should be noted that some of the outcomes sought under this Strategic Direction can also be delivered as part of the programs under Strategic Direction 2 of this Plan.

Program 3.1 Improving the health of waterways

Integrated Water Management (IWM) will allow Council to improve waterway health, generate an alternative water source for irrigation (rather than using drinking quality water), and provide habitat and ecological biodiversity outcomes. This program will fund the planning, design, delivery and ongoing maintenance of IWM assets.

IWM includes the capture and treatment of stormwater, for example through wetlands or permeable surfaces, to improve the water quality of waterways, increase soil moisture and improve habitat. It can enable the reuse of stormwater for irrigation.

New IWM and waterway health projects in the following open spaces will be prioritised in the short and medium term:

- AJ Davis Reserve stormwater harvesting (Airport West)
- Moonee Ponds Creek upgrades with Melbourne Water and other partners (Strathmore)
- Boeing Reserve swale, raingardens and stormwater harvesting (Strathmore Heights)
- Buckley Park wetland and stormwater harvesting (Niddrie/Essendon West)

Longer term priorities include:

- Queens Park stormwater treatment and harvesting (Moonee Ponds)
- Aberfeldie Park wetland (Aberfeldie)

The timing of projects will be captured by funding and partnership opportunities.

Note that maintenance regimes such as litter management in and around our waterways are not included in this Plan, as it is part of Council's and Melbourne Water's broader remit, rather than a specific open space program. However, advocacy to ensure adequate funding of initiatives will be part of this Improving the Health of Waterways program.

Timing	Ongoing
Responsibility	City Futures, Engineering Services, Major Projects, Parks and Gardens, Advocacy and Engagement
Prioritisation	Medium

Program 3.2 Improving ecological outcomes within the open space network

This program is to provide funds to manage and maintain existing and additional habitat areas within open space. It will include additional trees and understorey planting, expanding on core habitat areas, managing weeds and pests. It will include management contracts and specialist firms and increasing opportunities to incorporate cultural 'Caring for Country' principles. It will include integrating climate adapted vegetation species into open spaces to increase landscape resilience to climate change. It may include projects to encourage community participation in biodiversity programs (on public or private land) and generate community appreciation of the natural environment.

New habitat areas will be identified with consideration for:

- potential contribution to improving waterway health and priority biodiversity corridors
- funding and partnership opportunities
- coordination with other Council initiatives
- input from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung engagement and other community partnerships
- opportunities to extend and enhance habitat corridors – e.g. connecting with greener streetscapes.

This program will also include projects to manage, protect and promote community appreciation of the Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains located in Moonee Valley's open spaces. This is a critically endangered ecological community.

Significant grasslands are located in the Milleara Neighbourhood, at:

- Arcade Way Reserve
- The Crossways South Reserve
- JH Allan Reserve
- Rosehill Park Easement

Timing	Ongoing
Responsibility	Parks and Gardens, City Futures, Advocacy and Engagement
Prioritisation	Medium

Program 3.3 Climate resilient open spaces

This program will cover three key areas:

- Using water for urban cooling
- Managing flood water in open space
- Increasing the urban tree canopy in open space

Using water for urban cooling in open space is about increasing evapotranspiration by increasing soil moisture to support increased vegetation mass. The additional vegetation has a primary benefit of creating a cooler microclimate through the plants' evapotranspiration. Initiatives to achieve this may include constructing passive irrigation systems to support vegetation growth via redirection of stormwater, installing irrigation systems and changes in vegetation management.

Locations for urban cooling projects in open space will be prioritised based on:

- locations most vulnerable to urban heat
- potential for use of harvested stormwater
- proximity to areas of greater population density and MV2040 target populations
- proximity to complementary community facilities or neighbourhood 'anchors' (as per the MV2040 Strategy) where community will often gather.

Managing flood water in open space may include projects that retain, and slow water run off and mitigate flood risk, and those that relocate open space infrastructure from flood plains to more suitable places or replace with flood resilient infrastructure.

This program will include identifying locations across the open space network for tree planting to support a protected, expanded and climate resilient urban tree canopy. Locations with the lowest urban forest canopy coverage and greatest urban heat vulnerability will be prioritised. Tree planting opportunities will align with identified open space character and function for each open space.

Timing	Medium term
Responsibility	Parks and Gardens, City Futures, Sport and Recreation, Engineering Services
Prioritisation	Medium

Strategic Direction 4 - Well-planned, collaborative, and community informed open spaces

This strategic direction concerns the planning that goes on behind the scenes to enhance our open spaces. It includes engaging the community in open space planning, ensuring that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage cultural values and connections to Country are promoted in open space, undertaking research and evaluation, trialling new, best practice ways of managing open space, and partnering with others to deliver open space improvements. It also includes development of plans, feasibility studies and other processes to inform and prioritise our open space investments.

4.1 Planning tools and processes to protect, expand and enhance the open space network

Short to medium term projects in this program include:

- Update internal processes and guidelines to inform land acquisition and disposals for open space (via Council's Property Strategy).
- Refine policy informing the allocation of developer contributions to public open space investments.
- Amend the Moonee Valley Planning Scheme to support the strategic directions and objectives of the Open Space Strategy.
- Update the Open Space Guidelines (internal document) to ensure they guide staff to follow best practice for open space planning and management.
- Develop plans for infrastructure improvements (e.g. public toilets, play, recreational equipment, dog off leash areas) that will inform programs of open space upgrades.
- Identify highest priority biodiversity corridors across Moonee Valley, to guide the enhancement of habitat connectivity within and between open spaces.
- Review opportunities to expand lighting in selected open spaces to enable informal recreational use in the evening of open space facilities such as outdoor exercise equipment, circuit paths and basketball keys. Lighting may be extended from existing sports field lighting to adjacent areas.

Medium to long term projects include:

- Review the public open space contribution rate to ensure it adequately contributes to meeting the objectives of the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy 2024.
- Apply planning controls to protect areas of environmental significance and facilitate expansion of open space, including continuous public access and connection, along waterways and protection of remnant native grasslands.

- Review the classification and service standards³ of open spaces.
- Implement measurement and evaluation projects, including open space quality audit, implementation of devices that can count pedestrian usage of open spaces, to inform implementation programs for the next update of the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy 2024.
- Improve the quality and scope of information about Council's open spaces.

Timing	As noted above
Responsibility	City Futures, Property and Assets, City Safety and Amenity, Sports and Recreation, Parks and Gardens, Statutory Planning, Information Technology and Transformation, Corporate Affairs
Prioritisation	High

4.2 Partnerships and advocacy for new and improved open spaces

Initiatives include continuing to:

- Engage with community groups (e.g. friend of groups) to progress open space opportunities.
- Work with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to identify opportunities for land management, cultural heritage protection, cultural practices, and cultural interpretation.
- Advocate to, and work with, the Victorian Government, other private landowners, and asset managers to unlock opportunities for new and improved open space and open space connections that meet community needs.
- Participate in cross agency forums and project partnerships to support the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy 2024 strategic directions. e.g. Maribyrnong Integrated Water Management Forum, Chain of Ponds collaboration.

Timing	Ongoing
Responsibility	City Futures, Parks and Gardens, Advocacy and Engagement
Prioritisation	High

³ Classification of open spaces identifies the open space's function and use together with its hierarchy. Service standards define the appropriate open space facility provision and associated maintenance applicable for the park classification. Service standards will also consider provision of facilities across Moonee Valley and Neighbourhoods.