2 Purposes and Principles of Open Space Planning

2.1 Introduction

The study defines open space as land that is, or will be managed in an undeveloped or developed form for a range of natural and human purposes. This study generally addresses spaces that are publicly owned but also recognises the role of private land in the perception of what is "Open Space". As such, the study recommendations also have regard to areas of private land that contribute to the role and function of Open Space in the municipality.

The main purposes for the public reservation of open spaces are:

- Provision of recreational opportunities;
- Protection, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity, conservation, habitat and heritage places;
- Protection and enhancement of landscapes and amenity;
- Educational, scientific and other research opportunities;
- Provision and management of utilities and services;
- Ensuring opportunities exist to meet unforeseen needs and;
- Contribution to the livability and appeal of the municipality for residents and visitors.

Typically, open space includes parks, gardens, trails, habitat corridors, utilities reserves, foreshores, waterways, sportsgrounds and conservation reserves. Some open space sites may have buildings and services on them to enhance their capacity to meet the needs for which they are reserved or because their uses are compatible with the open space purposes.

Through the understanding of the principles and definitions of open space it is possible to evaluate the importance that open space plays, not only in providing opportunities for recreation but providing a range of social, economic and cultural benefits or values to the community.

This is particularly relevant to the City of Greater Geelong where open space is intrinsic to the lifestyle and image of the region. The iconic features of the flat plains to the north, the monocline that frames urban Geelong to the west, the foreshore and wetlands of Geelong and the Peninsula and the inland hills are important landscape and environmental features that create the sense of place.

This sense of openness is intrinsic to the social and cultural value that the community has about their home and is an important factor in promoting the City of Greater Geelong as a liveable place for new residents, tourists and broader economic investment. These are the critical features, which should be protected as having open space value. The opportunities to create linkages between and through these features is important (including access, wildlife and view corridors).

2.2 Principles of Open Space Provision

The following principles will guide all future decisions and recommendations on open space acquisition, reservation, use and management in the City of Greater Geelong. These are underpinned by the premise that open space should have due regard to the environmental and cultural heritage values embedded in the landscape.

- Conserve and protect the natural and cultural environment.
  Open space should protect and enhance natural and cultural environments, particularly areas of remnant vegetation or habitat and those areas of indigenous and post European contact cultural value.

- Reflecting community needs
  Open space provision and use decisions will be guided and influenced by, but not necessarily limited to, information from local and municipal communities on their open space interests, needs and aspirations; by demographic characteristics, and by information on the types and patterns of leisure activity pursued by the community.

- Enhancing recreation and tourism opportunities
  Ensure that open space provision reflects the importance of recreation and tourism to the City of Greater Geelong and the regional economy.

- Improving provision and optimizing access
  Decisions on open space acquisition, management and use will give a high priority to creating an equitable distribution of open space and types of open space across the City. Particular attention will be given to providing and developing open space linkages between different open space resources and different parts of the City, and to activity nodes where linkages are difficult but compatible uses are concentrated.
Purposes and Principles of Open Space Planning (cont.)

- Ensuring diversity of provision
  Ensure that open spaces with a wide range of characteristics are provided and that in making this provision, conservation and heritage values are retained and, where possible, enhanced.

- Expanding the network of linkages
  Ensure that existing pedestrian and bicycle trail networks are enhanced and that additional provision is made to effectively meet recreation and commuter needs.

- Providing for people with disabilities
  The planning and provision processes must ensure that the needs of community members, including those with disabilities are provided for.

- Site responsive uses
  Ensure that the uses of open spaces are appropriate to the nature, sustainable capacity and characteristics of the sites.

- Maintenance
  Ensure that open spaces are sited, planned and maintained to agreed service and safety standards, with due regard to economic sustainability.

- Providing clear guidance to Council
  The open space planning process must provide Council with guidance as to development and management actions, which are affordable and are consistent with government policy and funding criteria.

- Contribute to social and/or economic well being and growth
  Open space planning and provision should contribute to the social and/or economic well being of the community.

- A flexible and long term focus
  The planning process should focus on long term strategic outcomes so as to provide flexible opportunities to meet and adapt to future needs. The outcomes of planning and management should ensure that alienation of open space is minimised.

- Provision partnerships
  Opportunities for partnerships in the provision and management of open space should be integral to the planning process.

2.3 Classification of Open Space

In conducting the study a classification system, specific to open space in The City of Greater Geelong, was devised with eleven categories created. This classification recognises that open space is a major community resource that needs careful planning and management for maximum benefits. It is also recognised that all categories contribute to the overall amenity and environmental values of the city.

The eleven open space categories defined are:

- Linear and Linkage
- Sport
- Informal Parks
- Landscape and Amenity
- Conservation, Habitat and Heritage
- Waterway and Lake
- Foreshore, Beach and Ocean
- Utilities and Services
- Possible Future Use,
- Undeveloped, and
- Crown Land

The categories are defined as follows:
Linear and Linkage (LL)
Linear and linkage open space consists of cycle and pedestrian paths, off and on road cycling reservations, unused road reservations, service easements, and relevant sections of other open space categories which provide local, sub-regional and/or regional linear reserves, routes and links. These are predominantly for human use but may also be wildlife corridors. Some habitat linear links may cross private land (eg. along creek alignments).

Sport (S)
Sports open spaces are sites predominantly used for active, competitive recreation. They may also contribute to passive recreation and environmental values of the area. They include sports grounds for a wide range of team and individual competitions, golf courses, tennis courts, race tracks, outdoor courts, rowing courses, equestrian courses, outdoor pools, rifle ranges, lawn bowls and outdoor sports facilities at schools.

Sports open spaces can have a range of other recreation facilities and support amenities associated with them including halls and sports stadia, clubrooms, management buildings, toilet/change facilities, carparks, playgrounds, BBQs, and informal gardens. Some areas designated as sports provide an open space function although they are on private land (eg. private golf courses).

Informal Parks (IP)
Informal Parks are sites which have been developed to meet a range of non-competitive recreational pursuits in a predominantly informal setting. In addition to providing passive recreation opportunities, informal parks also make a significant contribution to the amenity and environmental values of the city.

Informal Parks include playgrounds and vantage points which support activities such as walking, cycling, rollerblading, BMX, horse riding, exercising dogs, children’s and adult play, picnic and sports facilities in association with their outdoor uses.

Landscape and Amenity (LA)
Landscape and Amenity Open Spaces are defined as sites which have landscape and amenity features and/or components, which require reservation and protection ahead of use for other purposes. Landscape and Amenity Open Spaces include buffer areas between differing land use zones, small gardens and tree plantings in retail areas, rural fringe areas protected to provide scenic views and ridge lines which provide a backdrop to urban land uses.

Conservation, Habitat and Heritage (CH)
Conservation, Habitat and Heritage Open Spaces are defined as natural and cultural heritage places which have features and/or components which are of local, sub-regional or regional significance and which warrant protection ahead of their use for other purposes. Conservation, Habitat and Heritage Open Spaces include areas of natural vegetation, botanic gardens and sites which record Aboriginal and European settlement and use of the land.

Waterway and Lake (WL)
Waterway and Lake open spaces are creeks, rivers and lakes and the land areas associated with them (eg. floodplains) which warrant protection ahead of their use for other purposes. Waterway and Lake open spaces serve a wide range of purposes including recreational use, transport, water system management, habitat protection and amenity.

Foreshore, Beach and Ocean (FB)
Foreshore, Beach and Ocean open spaces consist of bays, straits and oceans and their associated inter-tidal areas. Foreshore, Beach and Ocean open spaces serve a wide range of purposes including recreational use, transport, coastal protection, aquaculture, habitat protection and amenity.

Utilities and Services (US)
Utilities and Services Open Spaces are reserved to accommodate a range of essential urban and rural services. These include flood management, water catchments, forest harvesting, fire surveillance and control, road development, utilities easements (power, water, gas), sand extraction and other mining activities, airports and noise impact zones.

Possible Future Use (PF)
Possible Future Use Open Spaces are developed or undeveloped sites that have been or are to be reserved to ensure adequate future provision of each of the other Open Space categories in response to changing demographics and leisure needs. The future designation of these sites for recreation purposes will be subject to investigation into issues of biodiversity, archaeology, aboriginal and post European contact heritage, soil stability and potential contamination.
Undeveloped

Undeveloped open spaces are sites that have not been allocated for use for one or more of the other open space categories. The future designation of these sites will be subject to investigation into issues of biodiversity, archaeology, aboriginal and post-European contact heritage, soil stability, potential contamination and recreational needs.

Crown Land (CL)

Areas of other undesignated Crown Land have also been included in the inventory for the role they potentially play in contributing to the overall open space network. (This does not preclude the other categories of open space from containing Crown Land elements).

It is noted that in applying this classification to open space in the City of Greater Geelong, the primary use of a site has been used as the basis for the category to which it is allocated. In practice, some sites serve a number of functions and as such, it is possible for a site which has been classified as Waterway and Lake to also play a role as a Linear and Linkage site or for a Linear and Linkage or Informal Park site to also have a Landscape and Amenity role. While this approach most probably under-states the provision of some types of open space, it serves to highlight the variations in terms of the predominant present provision and the opportunities for future development.

Future refinements of the classification may usefully allocate sites to primary, secondary or tertiary categories or may subdivide sites into different sections based on their category so as to enhance management processes.

Local, Sub-Regional and Regional Open Spaces

For the purposes of this Plan:

- **Local open spaces** are sites which because of their generally small size, the similarity of the uses made of them and/or their high frequency of provision, predominantly or totally serve individual neighbourhoods or suburbs within the City of Greater Geelong. Small playgrounds, ball sport kickabout areas and neighbourhood pathways are common local open spaces which reflect their community of interest.

- **Sub-regional open spaces** are sites which by virtue of their larger size, more specialised uses and/or less frequent level of provision, serve substantial districts in the City of Greater Geelong. Many sports facilities, large playgrounds and large informal parks serve a sub-regional role.

- **Regional open spaces** are sites which because of their large size; mix of uses; specialisation of use; standard of provision; environmental, heritage, amenity or other special significance, draw from a broader catchment than the local community. In some instances they serve the whole of the City of Greater Geelong and areas well beyond the City. Botanic gardens, golf courses, state and national competition level sports grounds (eg. Kardinia Park), racetracks and long-distance linear trails are typical regional open spaces.

Category: Foreshore Beach and Ocean

note: strong Landscape and Amenity role