East Gippsland Shire Council

Open Space Strategy

DRAFT

2025-2035



EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL



Acknowledgement of Country

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and the Bidawel people as the Traditional Custodians of this land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire, and their enduring relationship with country.

The Traditional Custodians have cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years.

Council value their living culture and practices and their right to self-determination. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders, past, present, and future.

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Acknowledgements
Thank you to the East Gippsland community, stakeholders, and Council staff for their valuable input. This Strategy reflects local priorities and has been shaped by evidence and engagement.

Disclaimer
This report was prepared in good faith with East Gippsland Shire Council and is based on available data, previous strategies, stakeholder input, and supporting documents. Information is current as of the dates stated and may change over time.
Illustrations and concepts are indicative only. All recommendations are subject to further planning, design, costing, consultation, and approval.
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EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

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1. Introduction



1.1 STRATEGY SCOPE

Why do we need a Open Space Strategy?

East Gippsland Shire Council (Council) was established in 1994 through the amalgamation of six individual local government areas. With this consolidation of local government administration, came an abundance of land, property and infrastructure assets to be managed and maintained. This includes open space.

Public open space is crucial for the wellbeing of towns and their communities. High-quality open spaces offer numerous benefits, including environmental, social, cultural, and economic advantages. They support residents' recreational activities, serve as venues for social interactions, enhance the character of urban areas, and improve the aesthetic appeal of streetscapes.

The Open Space Strategy ('the Strategy') provides a strategic and long-term framework for the provision, characteristics and standards for public open space in East Gippsland Shire.

By having a framework in place, East Gippsland Shire Council can effectively manage and service existing public open space whilst guiding future development to adequately reduce current or projected supply shortfalls, if applicable. The end point will be a fiscally responsible and efficient approach to management of the public open space network. The Strategy will be incorporated into the Planning Scheme and used as a daily decision-making tool.

What is Open Space?

Open space is defined as:

"Public land and waters that provide for one or more of these purposes:

- *Outdoor recreation*
- *Leisure*
- *Environmental, social and cultural benefits*
- *Visual amenity and off-road active transport"*

Source: Open Space for Everyone - Melbourne Open Space Strategy, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Victoria

How has the Open Space Strategy been developed?

The strategy has been developed from extensive internal engagement with Council, external engagement with the community and best practice peer review.

A working group of key Council staff has helped to shape the structure and direction of the strategy along each of the key milestone of the project.

Initial community engagement for the Open Space Strategy was carried out via an online survey. Engagement undertaken for other strategies and masterplans has helped to further inform open space priorities such as:

- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Draft Coastal and Marine Management Plan
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Bairnsdale and East Gippsland Sporting Facilities Plan
- Sporting Reserve upgrades and masterplans
- Park upgrades and masterplans
- Playspace upgrades and concept plans
- Trail improvements and plans

Further community engagement has been undertaken to directly shape the key directions and vision of the strategy.

What we heard

The following priorities emerged from the combined engagement efforts:

- Improve existing facilities, including playgrounds, and updating them more regularly
- Increase the activation and appeal of open spaces
- More "community hub" spaces which offer a high-quality experience which are flexible and offer something for all ages
- A greater level of consistency in open spaces and infrastructure quality
- Improved maintenance of existing open spaces
- More proactive management of activities that have potential for conflict and environmental harm (i.e. MTB, motor cross, horse riding)
- Improve connections and linkages between open spaces

In general, the community recognises the benefits of leisure, recreation and open space in contributing to the culture, lifestyle and character of the region.

The open space network facilitates a high level of participation in a range of physical activities, including aquatic sports, informal recreation, environmental appreciation and a range of traditional formal sports.

Please see **Appendix 3 - Community Engagement Results Summary** for more information

1.2 CONTEXT

Our Landscape



FIGURE 1 - Location of East Gippsland Shire

East Gippsland Shire ('the Shire') is located in Eastern Victoria approximately 270 kilometres from Melbourne. The Shire is 21,000 square kilometres which is equivalent to 10% of Victoria's total geographic area.

East Gippsland Shire is renowned for its remarkable diversity and beauty of its natural environment. It has the largest navigable lakes system in Australia. Extensive and undisturbed natural areas include coasts and forests; national parks (including marine parks); and wilderness areas.

East Gippsland is covered by a vast Crown Land estate contributing to almost 80% of the total land area. Of the East Gippsland Shire landscape, less than 1% of the area is under Council ownership.

There are 171 localities across East Gippsland. Only 64 square kilometres (or 0.12%) of land within the Shire is classified as urban, concentrated in the towns of Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance and townships of Orbost, Paynesville, Metung, Omeo and Mallacoota. There are also 35 smaller towns and rural localities.

The number of localities, and vast distances between them (e.g. 236km from Bairnsdale to Mallacoota) creates an enormous challenge in providing all residents equitable access to assets, and for efficient maintenance of those assets.

East Gippsland services 12 districts and many localities within each district, currently maintaining:

- 68 playgrounds (3 regional level)
- 19 sporting recreation reserves (2 regional level)
- 39 sports courts
- 10 skate parks
- 31 boat ramps
- 74 km of walking tracks

Our People

"East Gippsland is a large and vibrant region in a beautiful natural setting, home to proud and involved communities that embrace and encourage self-reliance, responsibility and new ideas." - Advocacy Strategy 2024

Traditional Owners
Gunaikurnai, Monero and the Bidhawel people are the Traditional Custodians of East Gippsland Shire. Their enduring relationship with country has cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years and continues to do so. 3.2% of population identified as Aboriginal in 2021. *Source: ABS & .id Forecast*

Population
The East Gippsland Shire population is 48,715 (2021) dispersed across 171 localities and towns across 13 districts.
The population forecast for 2031 is 54,481 and 60,271 for 2041 which is an approximate increase of 11,500 people close to a 24% increase or 1.1% average annual growth.
The locations that are forecast to experience the greatest amount of growth are: *Source: ABS & .id Forecast*

- Paynesville (2.1% annual growth rate)
- Twin Rivers (1.5%)
- Metung (1.3%)
- Bairnsdale (1.3%)

Visitors
There was a total of 2.5m domestic visitors to the East Gippsland Region in 2022 which was an increase of 11% on the previous year. The tourism sector contributes 6.7% of total employment and 211.8m in gross regional product. *(Source: Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032)*

Health
In East Gippsland, 49% of the adult population meets the physical activity guidelines, slightly lower than the state average of 51% in Victoria.
There is a lower proportion of adults engaging in regular walking for at least 10 minutes, at least four times per week, with only 11% in East Gippsland compared to 18% in Victoria. *(Source: Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025)*

Many residents acknowledge the importance of preserving and enhancing local ecosystems and wildlife habitats to maintain biodiversity for ecological health and population health outcomes.

Older Population
The Shire has a lower proportion of children under 18 (18%) and a higher proportion of persons aged 60 or older (29%) than Regional Victoria on average. *Source: ABS & .id Forecast*)

1.2 CONTEXT

Challenges & Opportunities

East Gippsland is a large Local Government Area (LGA) in Victoria, covering about 22,100 square kilometers, or 10% of the state's area. Unlike many large regional councils with one or two major population centers, East Gippsland consists of numerous small communities with low populations (200-1000). The main towns—Bairnsdale (17,468 people), Lakes Entrance (8,534), and Paynesville (6,387)are located in the west, leaving many smaller communities distant from service centres.

This geographic and demographic distribution poses significant challenges for providing public open space. Many small communities need facilities like sports fields, parks, and playgrounds, requiring East Gippsland Shire Council to maintain a higher number of facilities and assets than other councils with similar populations but fewer small communities.

Due to the distribution of the community in smaller settlements across vast distances, it is not feasible for Council to concentrate investment only in areas of higher density where multiple recreation groups can share assets.

The resources required to maintain and eventually replace these assets are far greater than for a more centralised LGA. Additionally, with a relatively centralised maintenance team, travel time and expenses further increase costs.

Although, the scattered population distribution poses challenges for the Shire when providing township open spaces, the extensive network of national parks and natural reserves significantly alleviates the pressure on the Shire to provide additional open spaces for recreational activities such as hiking, walking, cycling, and nature appreciation.

The region's national parks, including the iconic Alpine National Park, Snowy River National Park, and Croajingolong National Park, offer diverse landscapes ranging from rugged mountains and dense forests to pristine coastlines and river systems.

These parks provide unlimited opportunities for the community to explore and enjoy nature, with a wide array of trails and paths available for various activities.

Open space provision in townships therefore needs to respond to the unique qualities of the Shire which is dominated by large areas of national parks with small communities scattered throughout.

The Strategy identifies the need to maintain and upgrade parks in appropriate township locations with a sustainable population and catchments to attract sufficient use for activities that are not available in the extensive national parks such as sport, playgrounds and community event spaces.

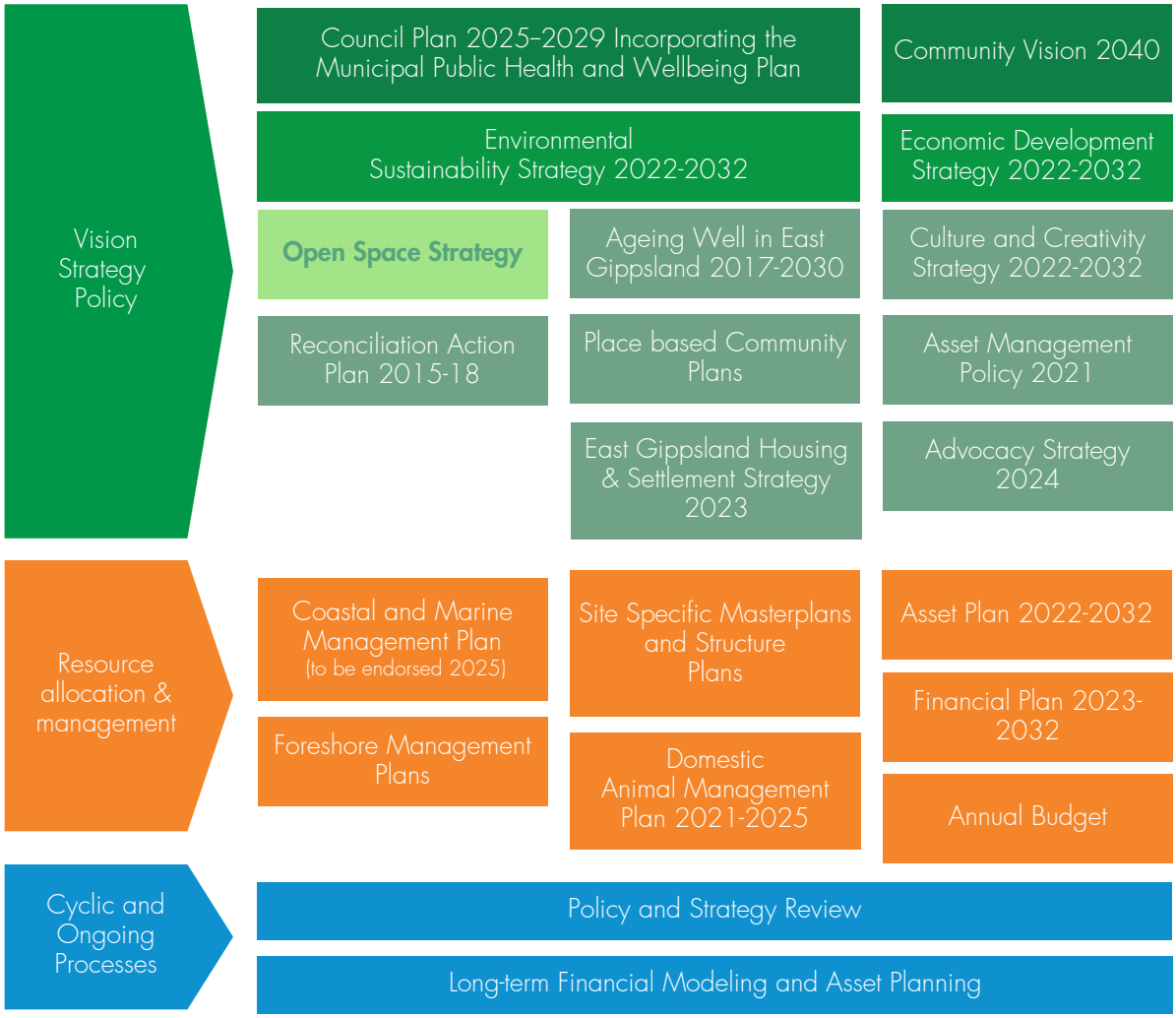
The service framework (pg. 18-21) responds to these unique characteristics and provides guidance for open space provision in East Gippsland.



Strategic Alignment

There is a suite of legislative and strategic documents that mandates and guides East Gippsland Shire Council's commitment and responsibilities to public open space planning and provision.

FIGURE 2 - Policy Map showing strategic alignment with the Open Space Strategy



Council Plan 2025- 2029

Council is committed, through its key strategic plan, East Gippsland Shire Council Plan 2025 to 2029, to fostering inclusive, connected communities and places where all East Gippslanders prosper, without leaving anyone behind.

By 2040, our people, place, environment and economy will be inclusive, connected, sustainable and resilient, supporting the growth and wellbeing of our unique and diverse communities.

To achieve this, Council will provide services and infrastructure that support residents and visitors at each stage of their life, while protecting the natural environment, building economic resilience and ensuring effective governance.

The Open Space Strategy aligns with the themes, outcomes and priorities of the Council Plan, as outlined.

Theme 1: Community Wellbeing and Social Responsibility

Outcome - A connected and inclusive community where no one is left behind.

Relevant Priorities:

- Work with local communities to deliver a shared future.
- Support participation in recreation and physical activity for all ages.
- Implement the Public Open Space Strategy and manage recreation facilities, parks and open spaces to meet community expectations.
- Enhance accessibility through active transport projects that promote health and wellbeing.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to services and facilities.
- Deliver the Reconciliation Action Plan and Closing the Gap obligations.

Theme 2: Prosperity

Outcome - Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Relevant Priorities:

- Plan and develop infrastructure to support business and tourism growth, including open spaces that enhance the visitor experience.
- Advance planning for cultural and civic hubs that celebrate heritage and support community activities.
- Promote East Gippsland's landscapes and recreational assets to attract visitors, investment and a skilled workforce.

Theme 3: Making the Most of What We Have

Outcome - Natural assets are well-managed and protected, and assets meet community needs.

Relevant Priorities:

- Invest in Council's natural areas to protect biodiversity and encourage nature based recreation.
- Review aquatic and recreation facility assets to ensure safe, reliable and cost effective operation.
- Manage open space and recreation assets for long term sustainability, prioritising renewal and shared use.
- Foster community participation in environmental conservation and education.

Theme 4: Managing Council Well

Outcome - Council operates transparently and efficiently, with services that respond to community needs.

Relevant Priorities:

- Enhance engagement so the community's voice informs open space planning and delivery.
- Apply service planning and asset management frameworks to prioritise resources for the highest community benefit.
- Seek external funding for priority open space and recreation projects.

1.3 CURRENT STATE

Open Space Provision

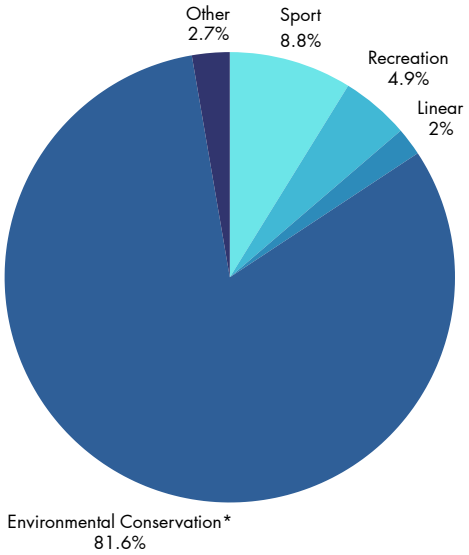
Across East Gippsland Shire residents and visitors have access to an array of open spaces, a total of more than 1.6 million hectares. Of this, 4,242 hectares (0.2%) is owned or managed by East Gippsland Shire Council. The remaining majority is Crown Land including National and State parks, managed by the Victorian Government through Parks Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

The open space owned or managed by Council equates to 93ha per 1000 people (based on a 2021 population of 48,715).

This is an extremely high level of provision, which reflects the geographic nature of the shire where open space provision is dominated by foreshore and waterway open space (as shown in Figure 3, below).

Approximately 82% of open space owned and managed by East Gippsland Shire is currently categorised as environmental conservation, which is vital for preserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, maintaining water quality, supporting cultural and recreational values, boosting the local economy through ecotourism, and enhancing resilience to natural disasters.

FIGURE 3 - Approximate proportions of open space types - East Gippsland Shire Council open space land, based on size (ha).



**includes foreshore, waterways and environmental conservation reserves.*

Definitions of these open space functional types is provided in the Service Framework (Section 4.2)

Funding Open Space

Funding for new and upgraded open space is typically achieved via a combination of Council capital works budgets, government grants and open space contributions via development of land (which is legislated through the Subdivision Act).

Grants are a key mechanism for funding open space improvements in regional areas however they are not always reliable as they are highly competitive and irregular.

The Subdivision Act requires a contribution of open space, and/or the equivalent cash contribution, when land is subdivided for development. Council are able to specify a specific contribution rate up to 5% within the Planning Scheme (clause 53.01).

Land for open space contributions should be unencumbered from uses such as drainage or landforms which are difficult to develop to ensure it is usable for the community. Open space contributions guidelines or policy can be used be Council to set these expectations.

2. Vision

"East Gippsland Shire Council will plan, provide and manage a diverse range of attractive, appealing and sustainable public open spaces that protect and enhance sensitive environments, support a range of physical activity participation opportunities and enhance the character of townships and neighbourhoods."



3. Key Directions



3.1 OPTIMISE

How we provide open space

Strengths

Abundant space and spectacular landscapes (trails, lakes, foreshores, mountains, wildlife) offer a huge variety of opportunities.

Most open spaces in East Gippsland are natural places that require minimal infrastructure to be safe and functional.

Challenges

There is a lot of open space with large distances between places, so you usually have to drive to a park or reserve, and some places are quiet and can feel isolated.

Some open space is overused and is becoming degraded. For example, foreshore open space during peak season.

The vast rural geography of the East Gippsland, with populations distributed throughout 171 localities means that provision of services throughout the shire is not equal. Travel time to and between towns must be acknowledged in the planning for provision and maintenance of open space. For example, in some localities, assets are required not because of population size, but rather because of relative isolation with the expectation that residents in surrounding rural areas will drive to them.

Key Issue

Some sport and recreation open spaces are overused, causing degradation and maintenance concerns, while others are under-utilised.
An even spread of investment in infrastructure across all spaces in the shire would not be possible, sustainable or meet community needs.

Direction #1

"Optimise open space by providing high quality, central, multifunctional open spaces which bring people together to connect and be active, along with a network of natural areas with less infrastructure, to enhance the environment and provide opportunities to get outside"

Implementation

Multifunctional open spaces in each district will resemble a central gathering place in each town with flexible, high-quality experiences for all ages. This is supported by a network of open spaces which provide recreational, physical activity and access to nature opportunities with functional, minimal infrastructure. This framework is described in the Service Objectives (in Section 4.3).
The Action Plan (Section 5.1) outlines steps to map existing provision which will support community planning in each District to fulfill the objectives.

Some spaces may not be providing value to the community and not be important from an ecological or environmental perspective. By working with the community to determine current use and options for future use for these sites we could reduce the management burden. This collaborative investigation is outlined in the Action Plan (Section 5.1)

The Service Framework (described in Section 4.2) will help communicate the primary function, uses, anticipated infrastructure, and maintenance needs, which will guide investment decisions.

Ideal Long Term Outcome

The location, design and infrastructure in open spaces is optimised to provide a variety of opportunities, activated spaces, sustainably.

3.2 ENABLE

How we fund open space projects

Strengths

Council's existing commitment to improving open space for new and renewed open space is approximately $4-5 million annually.

This investment has been further supported by state and federal government grants, enabling Council to enhance open space and recreational facilities across the municipality.

Challenges

In comparison to other regional LGAs in Victoria, Council has the second largest land area (twice the area of the 3rd largest), an extremely low population density (approximately 2.3 people per square km) and a large number of towns (over 60 not including small settlements). These demographics, place Council in a very challenging position when planning for open space infrastructure as it is impractical, unsustainable and un affordable to provide high level facilities within a short car trip (less than 30mins) for all residents. In addition, some existing masterplans for parks/reserves may exceed reasonable expenditure when taking into consideration the total budget available for open space assets across this vast area.

The effects of climate change such as increased coastal erosion, storm surges and flooding will continue to cause damage to open spaces, resulting in rising maintenance and upgrade costs.

Council must compete for grant funding, and success is not guaranteed. Identifying "grant ready" projects can improve success. Additionally, maintenance activities cannot be funded by grants so cost efficient asset management is critical.

The Asset Plan 2022-2032 provides a planned approach to asset acquisition, maintenance, upgrade and disposal of assets, however, without detailed open space asset information, this Plan can only be used as a general guide.

Key Issue

Financial burden of open space provision is growing and will become unsustainable if not managed.
Identification of clear asset/upgrade priorities that reflect community needs, a comprehensive understanding of asset condition and risk, and consolidation of some asset management programs are critical in supporting a sustainable asset management approach.

Direction #2

"Enable smart investment in open space by clarifying priorities, utilising external funding opportunities and collecting more information to inform asset planning"

Implementation

Guiding Principles reflecting community needs and expectations (described in Section 4.1) and the aligned prioritisation tool (Section 4.4) will guide investment decisions to ensure that resources are directed to where communities will benefit most.

Asset management will be improved with more accurate information about current condition, performance, and risk of damage such as via climate change impacts. This approach is outlined in the Action Plan (Section 5.2) and supported by Monitoring and Assessment Criteria (Appendix 2).

The design and delivery of new open spaces provided by developers will be facilitated by guidelines and policy which will help ensure that the needs of new residents are met. Steps to develop these guidelines are outlined in Section 5.2 and will be based on the Service Objectives (in Section 4.3).

Ideal Long Term Outcome

Open spaces are funded via a comprehensive, prioritised and sustainable model for investment.

3.3 COORDINATE

How we look after open space

Strengths

The community has strong social connections. Popular community activities include men's sheds, community markets and events.

East Gippsland has a network of volunteer committees of management who care for and manage significant areas of open space. There are also a number of community groups including Friends of Parks as well as Landcare groups who volunteer their time to protect environmental and cultural heritage qualities of East Gippsland. The Shire has the longest continuous indigenous connection to Country.

The Shire is an attractive destination for tourists and is popular for events with local community members being involved in local events such as markets and festivals. These events do engender community ownership and responsibility for reserves.

Challenges

East Gippsland services a high quantity of public open spaces and associated assets. This results in high upgrade and maintenance costs which are increasing in line with growing community expectations of park quality and asset provision.

There are many land managers throughout East Gippsland* each with their own approaches and policies. Management responsibilities and expectations

East Gippsland, is fortunate to have a very vibrant and visible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that provides a depth of cultural and community diversity and is committed to working towards improving practices and relationships with Traditional Owner groups through targeted engagement, education and collaborative projects. Open space planning provides an opportunity to take on this challenge.

Key Issue

Roles and responsibilities for different land managers can be unclear resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities to empower the local community

Lack of clarity can cause confusion amongst community groups / members and discourage proactive involvement in open space management and improvement.

**Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation & committees of management*

Direction #3

"Coordinate open space management by establishing shared values and expectations, strong relationships with land management partners and through reciprocal learning and respectful relationships with Traditional Owners"

Implementation

Clarification and communication of land manager roles, responsibilities, expectations, agreements, and policy would encourage a consistent approach to open space management.

Protection of open space for environmental outcomes to be incorporated into the planning framework with sites to be classified as 'Environmental Conservation: Protected sites to enhance biodiversity and ecological processes' in line with Natural Resource Management Plan.

This approach will be based on the Guiding Principles (Section 4.1) and Service Framework (Section 4.2).

Council recognises that Traditional Owners' skills and knowledge in managing Country are understood, actively sought and respected. Traditional Owners are equal partners in the planning of spaces. Ongoing efforts to build strong relationships to learn and share in different ways will pave the way to a better outcome for the landscape, ecosystems, and culture in the future. This approach is outlined in the Action Plan (Section 5.3).

Ideal Long Term Outcome

Local communities including Traditional Owners feel informed and empowered to advocate and participate in open space planning and management

4. Planning Tools



4.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When the opportunity of planning for, upgrading or developing public open space arises, East Gippsland Shire Council will carefully consider each of the following guiding principles.

Projects, resources and actions will be prioritised where it advances multiple priorities.

TABLE 1 - Guiding Principles and Priorities

	GUIDING PRINCIPLE	PRIORITIES
Connected and Active	All residents should have access to strategically planned network of open spaces that facilitate participation, healthy lifestyles, and adventure in nature.	Creating a network of open spaces to provide opportunities for recreational, physical activity and access to nature with functional, minimal infrastructure.
Multifunctional and Social	Investment in central, multifunctional open space should attract people from throughout the district to gather for sport, events and community connectedness. Spaces that are multifunctional are flexible to different uses and opportunities. This will ensure spaces can adapt and respond to unique and changing demographics, economies, needs and climate.	Identifying and optimising multifunctional open spaces in each district as a central gathering place in each town with flexible, high-quality experiences for all ages.
Protected and Resilient	The natural environment, habitat and landscape features of the shire should be valued and protected. Complementing and enhancing the East Gippsland uniqueness including the Gippsland Lakes, marine coastline, heritage rivers and high country.	Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem health throughout the open space network.
	Open space planning and management to recognise and reflect cultural values and sites for protection.	Engage with the cultural landscape and influence of Traditional Owners in line with the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan
Safe and Comfortable	Open spaces should feel safe and comfortable for people of all ages, genders, cultural backgrounds and abilities.	Reducing barriers to access to open space through design of open spaces.
Sustainably Managed	Effective and efficient management of open space by prioritising maintenance resources and reducing maintenance needs where possible.	Sustainable asset management approaches.
	Strong partnerships with key agencies, land managers, volunteer groups, developers and committees of management ensure coordinated, high quality outcomes.	Coordination with land management partners (key agencies, land managers, volunteer groups, developers and committees of management)

4.2 SERVICE FRAMEWORK

Open Space Classification

In order to identify gaps and plan for future open space it is first necessary to identify the types of open space and where each are provided throughout the shire.

To achieve this each space has been categorised based on the way that it is used and its physical form. Differentiating the types of open spaces allows for analysis of the services they provide, what we need more of, and how best to provide them.

Functional Types of Open Space

Function refers to the physical form and intended use of an open space. Many open spaces serve or host multiple functions.

For example, many sites within the shire have important ecological, conservation or cultural values while also serving sporting or recreation purposes. This system allows multiple uses of a open space to be described which assists in communication and management.

Hierarchy of Open Spaces (Sport and Recreation Function)

In order to provide a sustainable basis for open space provision and operational management it is appropriate to establish a hierarchical approach to open space provision.

The hierarchical approach recognises that not all reserves can, or should, be developed to the same standard and that it is desirable to provide a selection of higher quality parks and reserves that provide an enhanced level of amenity, appeal and infrastructure available for community use.

The service catchment identifies the typical distance people would be willing to travel to reach the open space. People are typically willing to travel further to a large district open space with high quality amenities than a local open space with a single playground. However, embellishing all open spaces at a high level would be a poor use of resources.

Hierarchy has been applied only to sites with a sport and recreation function in East Gippsland as these functions are most likely to need distinction between the hierarchy levels to best coordinate their design and management. In contrast, functions such as linking and drainage do not require the same level of distinction as all typically receive similar levels of embellishment and maintenance.

The 'function' of the space refers to the:

- Intended use or purpose
- Expected activities within the site
- Anticipated benefits that people may seek from the space

TABLE 2 - Functional type classifications, summary

FUNCTIONAL TYPES OF OPEN SPACE	
Sport	Sites designed for structured, organised sporting use and recreation activities
Recreation	Sites which accommodate a wide range of outdoor leisure or recreational activities including events, playgrounds, picnics, walking, fishing, hunting etc.
Environment Conservation	Protected sites to enhance biodiversity and ecological processes
Linking	Narrow sites that primarily provide a link or movement corridor for pedestrians or cyclists
Drainage	Drainage sites primarily for the retention, storage and drainage of stormwater
Other	Sites which do not fit into any of the categories above but still have aspects of open space
Restricted	Sites that are restricted to public access, permanently or at certain times. i.e. schools, golf courses

Source: adapted for East Gippsland from classifications described in Parks and Community Facilities Australia (2023). A National Hierarchy Classification Framework for Public Open Green Spaces. The Australian Urban Design Research Centre, University of Western Australia. www.pacf.com.au) and Planning Practice Note 70, DEECA

The 'hierarchy' of a open space responds to anticipated length of stay, distance travelled and 'quality' of experience.

This approach helps to describe the types, number, and quality of amenities you might expect to find at a open space.

The Service Objectives, described on the next page, utilise the hierarchy approach to guide council in open space provision and informs equitable and reasonable distribution within districts and across the shire.

The service objectives for each town, utilising the Housing and Settlement Strategy categorisation structure is provided in Table 3, below.

Appendix 1 - Improvement Service Standards provides an overview of the expected assets provided at each type and hierarchy of open space.

TABLE 3 - Summary of open space hierarchy characteristics

OPEN SPACE HIERARCHY				
	Local	Neighbourhood	District	Regional
Description	These spaces contribute aesthetically to the landscape and are typically used for daily recreational activities like walking the dog or playing on a playground after school. They are not designed to host gatherings or events, are intended for short stays (an hour or less), and to cater for low levels of use. Local parks are designed and managed to cater for residents who live within a short distance. This category of park typically has few assets, made of robust materials and simple designs which is typically therefore not as demanding for ongoing maintenance.	Neighbourhood parks provide space for social gatherings and activities and will likely have BBQs facilities and public toilets. They may offer some elements which are intended to meet the needs of a portion of a district. Recreational spaces large enough to accommodate multiple users and a variety of recreational activities that can occur simultaneously. They typically have a mix of facilities and amenities such as seats, play equipment, picnic areas, bins and space for informal play. Neighbourhood sport sites have facilities for one sport, such as one oval.	District open spaces are large spaces designed to attract a wide range of user groups for different purposes and activities from the entire district. These, generally larger spaces, provide a greater diversity of facilities to support longer stays and encourage social gatherings and visitor numbers. District sport sites are destinations with two or more sport facilities (may be for the same sport) such as two ovals, or an oval and courts for example. They typically contains significant infrastructure such as clubrooms, floodlights, pavilions, changing rooms, storage, lighting and carparking.	Regional open space are large and accommodate a wide range of sport, leisure, event and recreation activities and can accommodate simultaneous users by larger numbers of people. These spaces attract visitors from across the district and beyond. Regional sport sites are large scale sporting destinations with facilities for three or more different sports, accommodating competition play and community events.
Length of Stay	up to 1 hr	1-2 hrs	2 hrs +	2 hrs +
Service Catchment	400m	A portion of the district	Entire district	Surrounding districts
Level of Use	Low	Med-high	High	Very High
Mode of Transport	Walk	Walk or Drive	Drive	Drive

Source: adapted for East Gippsland from classifications described in Parks and Community Facilities Australia (2023). A National Hierarchy Classification Framework for Public Open Green Spaces. The Australian Urban Design Research Centre, University of Western Australia. www.pacf.com.au) and Planning Practice Note 70, DEECA

4.3 SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The Open Space Strategy sets service objectives for how and where the different types of open space will be managed and improved throughout the shire.

The objectives reflect the three strategy directions:

- Optimise - seeking to create a high quality, central, multifunctional open spaces which bring people together to connect and be active, along with a network of natural areas with less infrastructure, to enhance the environment and provide opportunities to get outside
- Enable - recommending a service level which is sustainable to ensure ongoing resourcing for maintenance and renewal of infrastructure
- Coordinate - identifying the role of open spaces as a part of the wider district network to allow for coordinated communication and management

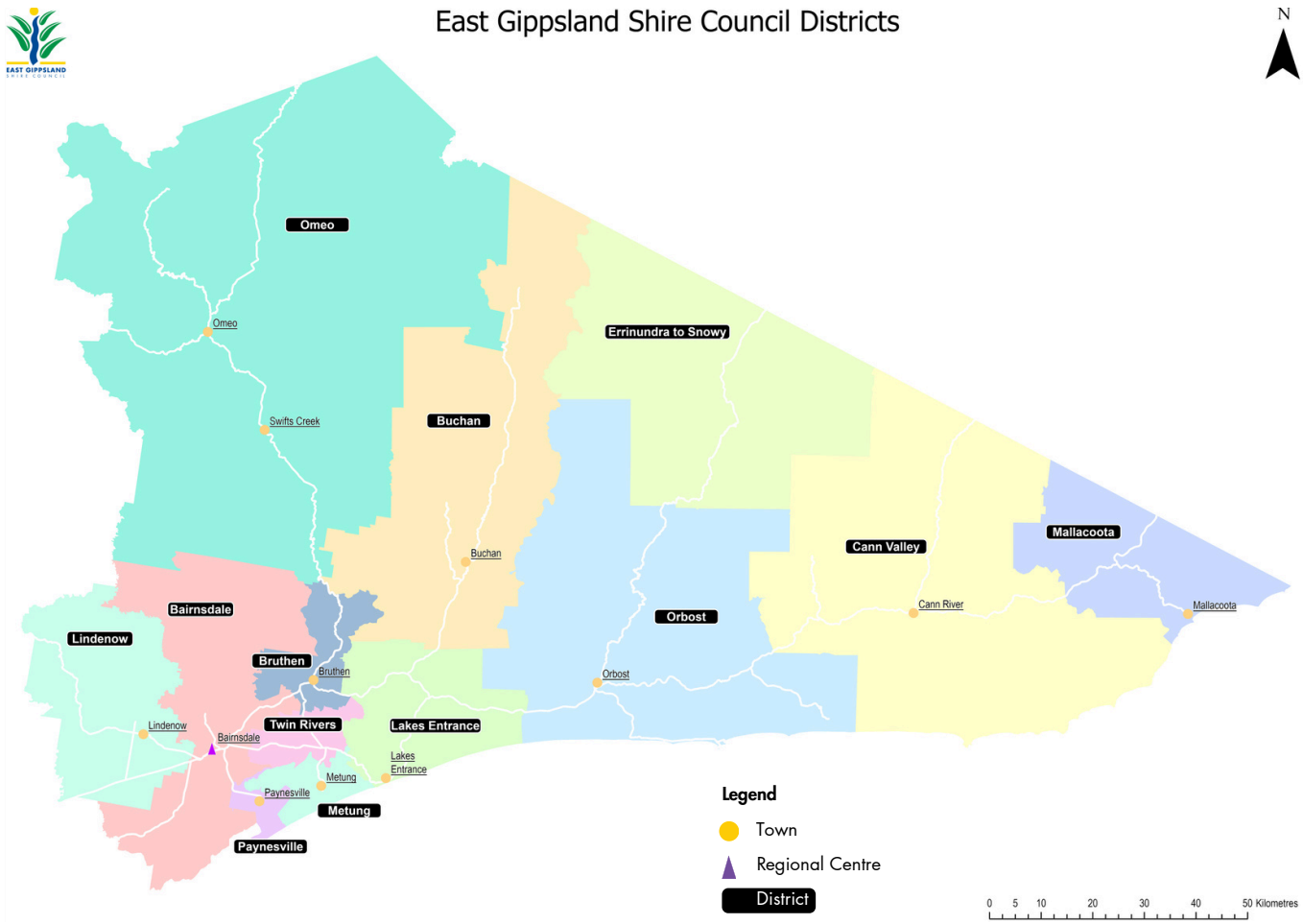
As described in the Council Plan, place based planning and working with our local communities is a key Council focus, with the Shire reflected as 13 separate districts, with many localities within each place (see Figure 4 below).

The desired distribution for open space within each district is as follows:

- Urbanised residential areas should have access to open space within a short walk (approx. 400-500 metres) which is a part of a network of spaces offering a variety of functions.
- Each district should have a large, high quality, multifunctional open space, with a sport or recreation primary function, which serves the entire district
- Regional centres should provide a regional multifunctional open space, with a sport or recreation primary function, to serve the district and surrounding district

Each of the Shire's 13 districts has unique open space needs, the service objectives below are intended to provide a consistent approach throughout the Shire for detailed application via community planning processes.

FIGURE 4 - East Gippsland Shire Council Districts (Source: Council Plan 2021-2025)



Service Objectives

TABLE 4 - Open Space Strategy Service Objectives

HOUSING AND SETTLEMENT STRATEGY TOWN CATEGORIES 2023		PROVISION SERVICE OBJECTVE
Regional Centre	Bairnsdale including Eastwood, Lucknow, Wy Yung and East Bairnsdale)	• One multifunctional (sport or recreation primary function) regional open space • One multifunctional neighborhood open space and a network of local open space per area (to be determined by Bairnsdale 2050) • Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible
Service Towns - *Coastal*	Lakes Entrance Paynesville	• One regional recreation function, foreshore open space • One multifunctional district open space (with sport or recreation primary function) • A network of local open spaces • Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible
Service Towns - *Inland*	Orbost Omeo	• One multifunctional district open space (with sport or recreation primary function) • A network of local open spaces • Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible

Towns	Eagle Point, Buchan, Metung, Lindenow, Bruthen, Swan Reach, Johnsonville, Nicholson, Newmerella, Marlo, Cann River, Mallacoota.	• One multifunctional district open space with sport or recreation primary function (refer page 19 for definition) where the town is the highest category in the district and the district population is over 1000. These include:
		  ◦ Metung
		  ◦ Lindenow
		  ◦ Bruthen
		  ◦ Mallacoota
		  ◦ Swan Reach / Nicholson*
		• A network of local open spaces
		• Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible
		**District open space shared across both towns in Twin Rivers District*

Rural Towns	Raymond Island, Newlands Arm, Nungurner, Swifts Creek, Bemm River, Ensay, Nowa Nowa, Lake Tyers Beach	• One multifunctional neighborhood open space (with sport or recreation primary function) • A network of local open spaces • Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible
Remote Settlements and Rural Districts	Including places such as: Club Terrace Bonang Bendoc Cabbage Tree Creek Tambo Upper	• Open spaces along waterways and to support protection of cultural and/or environmentally sensitive/significant areas where possible

5. Action Plan



5.1 OPTIMISE ACTIONS

Short Term (0-5 Years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
1.1	Strategic Open Space Provision in Key Towns	Recognise the importance of well-designed, multifunctional open spaces in strategically located towns to maximise community benefit, acknowledging East Gippsland's dispersed population and resource constraints. • Identify key open spaces that require upgrades or planning to fulfil this role, prioritising those already highlighted in existing masterplans. • Continue to implement priority projects from the Bairnsdale Sporting Infrastructure Plan, the East Gippsland Sporting Infrastructure Plan, and associated Masterplans for key reserves and townships. • Identify key sporting reserves not identified in existing sporting infrastructure plans and prepare detailed masterplans that align with the Sporting Infrastructure Plan and this Open Space Strategy to guide future use, upgrades, and community benefit. • Where other open space and recreation gaps exist, develop new masterplans or management plans, particularly for primary open spaces with conflicting uses or competing demands, to guide future improvements, respond to local needs, and ensure equitable, sustainable and coordinated use of open space assets. • All plans to include implementation priorities, maintenance responsibilities, and funding requirements over the full life-cycle.	Open Space Planning Framework, Sporting Infrastructure Plans & Masterplans
1.2	Communicate strategic priorities to the community	Develop a communication strategy that clearly explains the open space hierarchy, service levels, and provision expectations, aligned with the service framework and East Gippsland's Settlement Strategy. The strategy should communicate that settlement size influences the level of provision, and that service standards are necessary to ensure a sustainable and equitable approach to open space planning and ongoing management.	Open Space Planning Framework
1.3	Improve the design of open space	Create clear design guidelines that show what different types of open spaces should look like and include. These will help make sure open spaces meet local community needs, reflect local character, and are developed in a consistent and sustainable way.	Design Guidelines*
1.4	Rationalise Open Space	Develop a clear and transparent process to assess underused open spaces and explore options to improve them, combine them with other spaces, use them differently, or consider disposal ensuring decisions reflect community needs and Council priorities and follow the Guiding Principles outlined in this Strategy (Refer 4.1).	Open Space Planning Framework
1.5	Off-Leash Dog Park Provision Framework	Develop and adopt a clear position supporting the Domestic Animal Management Plan that guides the provision and distribution of off-leash dog parks across the municipality, taking into account community demand, proximity to residential areas, potential conflicts with other open space users, and alignment with broader open space and animal management objectives.	Domestic Animal Management Plan
1.6	Outdoor Fitness Equipment Provision Guidelines	Establish a consistent position on the location, purpose, and design of outdoor fitness equipment in open spaces, considering community health outcomes, user demand, demographic suitability, and maintenance implications. Refer to Improvement Service Standards (Refer Appendix 1) and incorporate into Design Guidelines.	Improvement Service Standards & Design Guidelines

**Not yet developed*

5.1 OPTIMISE ACTIONS

Medium Term (5-10years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
1.7	Improve Biodiversity in Open Space	Support the development and implementation of the Bushland and Environmental Reserves Management Strategy by recognising these reserves as vital components of East Gippsland's open space network. Ensure open space planning reflects their biodiversity, habitat, and passive recreation values, and prioritise protection, access management, and investment in line with the reserve hierarchy established through the strategy.	Bushland and Environmental Reserves Management Strategy

Ongoing

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
1.8	Improve Existing Open Spaces	Enhance the appeal and functionality of existing open spaces for all age groups and user needs by developing design guidelines and masterplans that identify and implement opportunities for improvement. These may include multi-use half courts, seating, drinking fountains, shade and shelter, accessible public toilets, and informal gathering spaces, tailored to the context and needs of each location to better serve children, young people, families, older adults, and people with disabilities.	Design Guidelines* & masterplans*
1.9	Universal Design for Inclusive Open Spaces	Apply Universal Design checklists to guide the planning, design and renewal of open spaces and supporting infrastructure such as paths, seating, play spaces and amenities, in alignment with the Victorian Government Universal Design Policy to ensure accessibility and inclusion for all users	Victorian Government Universal Design Policy

**Not yet developed*

5.2 ENABLE ACTIONS

Short Term (0-5 Years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
2.1	Open Space Mapping and Classification	Undertake a comprehensive review and mapping of all Council-managed open space, categorising each site based on its function, community value, and required service standard. Align this categorisation with the Natural Resource Management (NRM) values identified in the East Gippsland Shire Council–Managed Lands Prioritisation Plan and the open space service framework to support consistent planning, prioritisation, and resource allocation.	East Gippsland Shire Council–Managed Lands Prioritisation Plan & Open Space Service Framework
2.2	Open Space Condition and Performance Assessment & Date Collection	Create a complete and up-to-date dataset capturing the condition and performance of all open spaces across the municipality. Assess each open space against defined performance criteria (as per Appendix 2) and integrate performance scores to inform evidence-based asset management, prioritisation of upgrades, and long-term investment planning. • Build on the Performance Assessment dataset by collecting and analysing information on open space usage (e.g., levels of visitation), environmental values (e.g., tree canopy, biodiversity). Use these insights to establish a performance monitoring framework to continuously evaluate open space outcomes.	Performance Assessment Criteria
2.3	Establish Capital Works Priorities	Integrate high-priority projects into the Capital Works Plan, Annual Budget, and Work Plans: • Compile previous open space recommendations from masterplans and strategies, identify top priorities, and assess them for inclusion in the capital works program. • Establish transparent decision-making processes to support this prioritisation using the Planning Tools as a guide (Refer Section 4)	Capital Works Plan, Annual Budget & Open Space Planning Tools
2.4	Streamline and improve effectiveness of Public Open Space Contributions	Develop a Public Open Space Contributions Policy and supporting Developer Contributions Guidelines to provide consistent and transparent guidance for the design, delivery, and funding of open space in new development areas. The policy will implement service standards, including hierarchy and function, clarify the treatment of encumbered land, and establish criteria for assessing land contributions, determining when cash or land is preferred, and guiding the strategic use of collected funds in line with the Open Space Strategy. • Undertake a review of historical open space contributions and project future income to the Open Space Reserve Fund. Use this analysis to assist in the development of the Public Open Space Contributions Policy (Refer Action)	Public Open Space Contributions Policy*& East Gippsland Planning Scheme

Medium Term (5 -10years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
2.5	Improved Asset Management	Update Open Space Asset Management Plan with comprehensive data on spaces and assets to support lifecycle planning, maintenance, and long-term investment decisions.	Asset Management Plan

Ongoing

	ACTION			DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
	2.6		Funding Priorities and External Grant Opportunities	Identify and promote funding priorities. This is to include identification of a series of 'grant ready' projects ready for potential external funding opportunities • Actively pursue external funding opportunities that may support physical activity programming and activation of open spaces (e.g. Vic Health, Sport Recreation Victoria).	State and Federal Government Funding Guidelines

*Not yet developed

5.3 COORDINATE ACTIONS

Short Term (0-5 Years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
3.1	Incorporate Open Space Strategy into the Planning Scheme	Recognise the Open Space Strategy within the East Gippsland Shire Council Planning Scheme as a Background Document to incorporate its vision and guide decision-making on matters such as open space contributions, the protection of open space land, vegetation and assets, and responses to a changing climate.	East Gippsland Planning Scheme
3.2	Transparent Land Management Information on Council Website	Provide clear and accessible information on Council's website identifying land management responsibilities for all open space areas. Include maps, descriptions, and contact points to help the community understand who manages specific sites and how to direct open space-related enquiries or maintenance requests.	Council's Website
3.3	Implement Marine and Coastal Management Plan to Protect Coastal Open Spaces	Support the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Management Plan (2024) to protect environmentally sensitive coastal areas, manage the impacts of coastal erosion and sea level rise, and enhance the resilience of adjacent open space and parkland. Prioritise actions that safeguard ecological values, maintain public access where appropriate, and support climate-adaptive land management practices.	Marine and Coastal Management Plan (2024)
3.4	Finalise strategies supporting infrastructure in open space	Finalise Draft Playground Strategy and Draft Toilet Strategy to prioritise infrastructure improvements in open spaces in line with Improvement Service Standards.	East Gippsland Draft Playground Strategy & Draft Toilet Strategy*
3.5	Review and Update Pathways, Tracks and Trails Strategy	Review the municipal-wide Pathways, Tracks and Trails Strategy to guide investment in local and regional trail networks, with a focus on improving access to and through open spaces. The updated strategy will identify infrastructure requirements, gaps and opportunities, and support advocacy for funding and implementation.	East Gippsland Pathways, Tracks and Trails Strategy
3.6	Develop Active Transport Strategy to Connect Open Spaces and Communities	Develop an Active Transport Strategy to improve connections between open spaces, residential areas, schools, and activity centres. The strategy should prioritise safe, accessible walking and cycling routes and identify opportunities to enhance the active transport network through future open space planning.	East Gippsland Active Transport Strategy*

Medium Term (5-10years)

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
3.7	Sustainable Event and Commercial Use of Open Space	Incorporate open space access, protection, and restoration principles into the review of the Event Planning Guide to ensure events are managed sustainably across all open space types. The updated guide should clearly outline expectations, approval processes, site-specific conditions, and post-event requirements to minimise impacts and maintain the quality and function of open spaces. • Develop guidelines to manage commercial activities on public land, ensuring such use enhances public access, enjoyment, and aligns with community values.	Event Planning Guide & Commercial Activities in Open Space Guidelines*
3.8	Reduce Encroachment to Protect Community Use of Open Space	Develop and implement a policy to address encroachments such as private structures, gardens, storage, and rubbish on public open space. The policy should: • Define encroachment types and their impacts. • Establish a consistent, risk-based approach to identifying and responding to encroachments. • Promote responsible community use and awareness. • Prioritise enforcement where impacts on access, amenity, or environmental values are significant.	Encroachment Management Policy*

**Not yet developed*

5.3 COORDINATE ACTIONS

Ongoing

ACTION		DESCRIPTION	PARTNER STRATEGY OR PLANNING TOOL
3.9	Update Management and Master Plans to Align with Strategic Priorities	Review and update existing Management / Master Plans to ensure alignment with current strategic directions, service agreements, and Council priorities. Coordinate with Committees of Management where applicable.	Management Plans, Masterplans and MOUs
3.10	Partner with Traditional Owners for Culturally-Informed Open Space Management	Establish and sustain collaborative partnerships with Traditional Owners to ensure cultural heritage, knowledge systems, and land management practices are meaningfully integrated into all aspects of open space planning, design, and management. This approach recognises the cultural significance of the landscape and aligns with the Gunaikurnai Country Plan, supporting shared stewardship and respectful engagement.	Gunaikurnai Country Plan
3.11	Protect Open Space with accurate planning zones	Review existing Planning Scheme zones for all sites identified as public open space and rezone as appropriate to reflect their primary role/purpose (i.e. PPRZ or PCRZ)	East Gippsland Planning Scheme
3.12	Proactively manage conflicting activities in open space	Proactively manage activities in open space that have potential for conflict and environmental harm (such as MTB, motor cross, horse riding) via management plans and utilising the Open Space Strategy Service Framework (Section 4.2)	Open Space Strategy Service Framework (Section 4.2)
3.13	Align Open Space Improvements with Council Strategies and Plans	Ensure open space network improvement priorities align with related Council strategies and plans including the Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP), Stormwater Management Plan, and other infrastructure and environmental frameworks.	Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP), Stormwater Management Plan, and other infrastructure and environmental frameworks.
3.14	Continue to Undertake Place-Based Engagement to Inform Open Space Planning	Continue to build on the dataset and analysis by undertaking place-based community engagement, in line with Council's engagement policy, engaging with local communities at township or neighbourhood levels to understand their unique needs, priorities, and opportunities for open space provision, access, and improvements.	East Gippsland Engagement Policy



emerge ASSOCIATES

This strategy was developed by Emerge Associates on behalf of East Gippsland Shire Council.

East Gippsland Open Space Strategy: Appendix 1 - Improvement Service Standards



INTRODUCTION

The amenities provided at an open space should match the expected level of use, mode of transport, and length of stay of its typical visitors. For example, if most people drive then car parking is required and if picnic facilities are provided to accommodate people staying for more than two hours, then bathrooms are required.

What are Improvement Standards?

Improvement standards set out the assets expected, required or considered not appropriate in open space, depending on the hierarchy and primary function of the site. This terminology is described in the Service Framework (Section 4.2).

They provide clarity regarding the expected infrastructure, minimise unnecessary investment, support equity across the shire, and ensure a sustainable asset management approach.

They are designed to help implement the Service Objectives in Section 4.3 of the Open Space Strategy, describing ideal open space hierarchy distribution.

The following symbols are used in the standards to denote the level of provision expected:

KEY	
OO	Must Have
O	Might have (consider if there is a space of a higher hierarchy available to provide these assets)
X	Shouldn't have
XX	Must not have

How are the Improvement Standards used?

Development standards are helpful in communicating what is reasonable to expect at an open space. They are particularly useful in conversation with the community when requests for new amenities are received.

Council should utilise these standards when commencing park master planning projects to ensure that amenities considered are appropriate for the site.

New amenities proposed on parks may have the effect of lifting a site up in the hierarchy, for example BBQs are not permitted at local recreation sites so if they are installed the site will become a neighbourhood park and will therefore require all the other standard amenities as shown.
This is an important consideration from an equity perspective. If all open spaces of a similar type are provided with the same scale of amenities then communities will feel more equally serviced.

New parks in growth areas provided by developers should be in alignment with these standards. It is not acceptable for parks to have amenities which are not permitted in similar parks in other Shire areas. Not only does this impact equitable service provision throughout the Shire, it also results in ongoing maintenance costs beyond what is planned by Council.

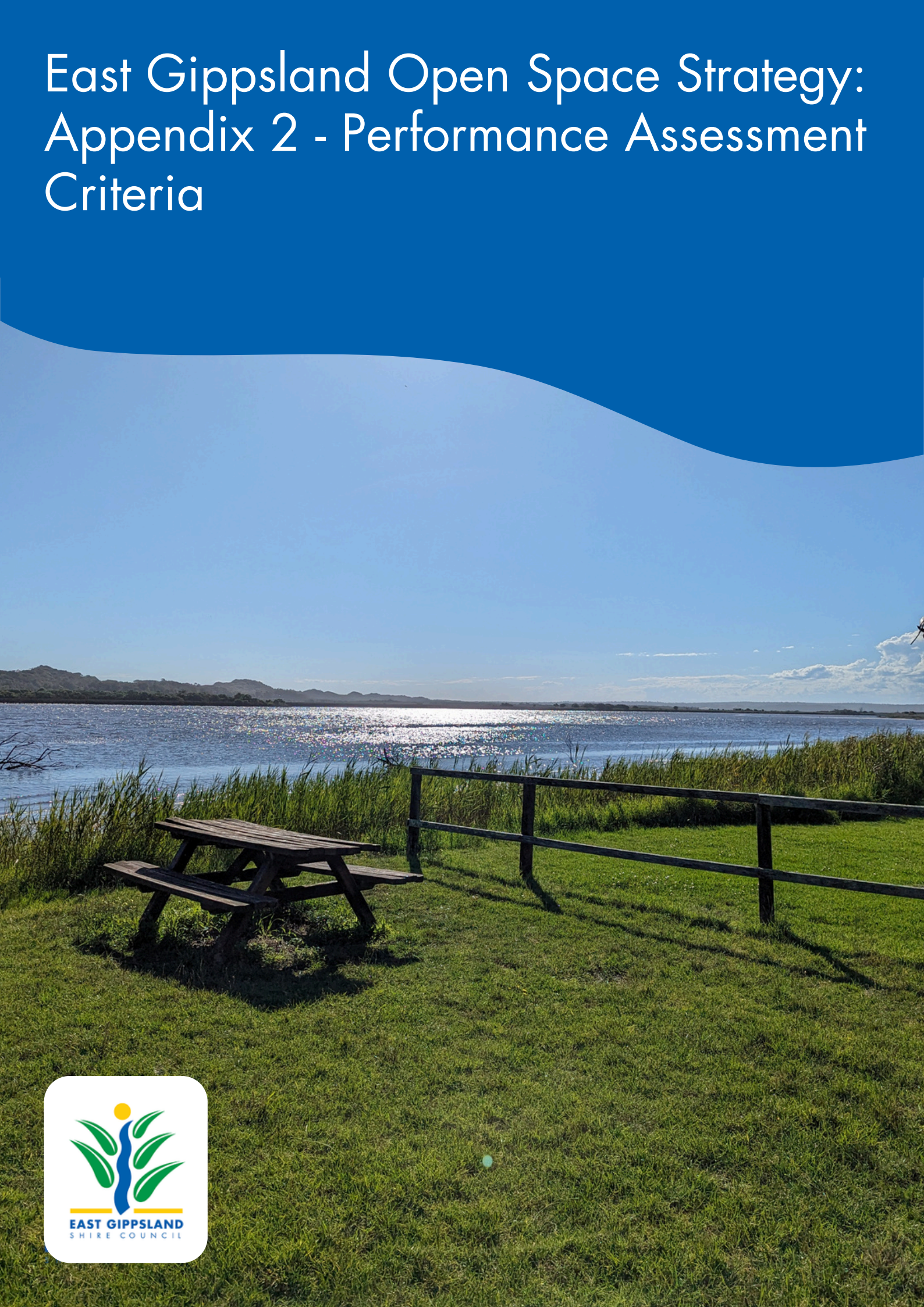
These standards should be implemented in alignment with topic specific policy and strategy where possible and utilised in development of new strategy, policy and guidelines.

OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

Primary Function >	Sport			Recreation					Environmental Conservation
	Neigh.	District	Regional	Local	Neigh.	District	Regional		
Shade planting/ shade structure/ natural shade	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Landscape/ formal planting (including garden beds)	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Fencing - reserve/ boundary/ safety	X	O	OO	XX	X	O	O		O
Play equipment	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Open turf areas (informal play)	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Basketball ring/ hitting wall	X	O	O	O	O	OO	OO		XX
Skate park/ pump track	X	O	O	X	O	O	O		XX
Fitness equipment	X	O	O	X	O	O	O		X
Turf sports playing area (1,2, 3+)	1	1-2	3+	-	-	-	-		XX
Cricket wicket (T:turf; S:synthetic)	S	S/T	T	-	-	-	-		XX
Training fields/ cricket nets	O	O	O	-	-	-	-		XX
Sports field lighting	O	OO	OO	-	-	-	-		XX
Playing field fencing	O	OO	OO	-	-	-	-		XX
Scoreboard/ time keepers box	O	OO	OO	-	-	-	-		XX
Coaches box	O	OO	OO	-	-	-	-		XX
Spectator seating/shelter	O	OO	OO	-	-	-	-		XX
Courts - tennis/netball/multi-use	O	O	O	-	-	-	-		XX
Pathways - possible circuit	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Car parking (S:sealed; U:unsealed)	O	OO	OO	X	O(U)	OO(S)	OO(S)		O
Accessible car parking for people with disabilities*	OO	OO	OO	X	O	OO	OO		O
Seating	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Picnic tables	X	O	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Rubbish bin	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Bike racks	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Barbecues	X	O	OO	X	O	O	OO		X
Drinking fountain	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		X
Information signage	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Directional signage	O	OO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO		O
Pavilion/change rooms	O	OO	OO	XX	XX	O	O		XX
Water feature - informal/formal	X	X	O	X	X	O	O		XX
Public toilets	O	OO	OO	X	O	OO	OO		O
Lighting - security/amenity	X	O	OO	X	O	O	OO		X
Artwork/sculpture	O	O	OO	X	O	O	OO		XX

*NB: If a dedicated car park is constructed for a park of any hierarchy, compliance with DDA requirements, including the provision of accessible parking, would be required.

East Gippsland Open Space Strategy: Appendix 2 - Performance Assessment Criteria



INTRODUCTION

This assessment is designed to collect information about the quality of recreation and sport type open spaces.

Assessment of the quality of experience provided at an open space is subjective, however this information is important to understand performance of existing open spaces and the demand for changes or upgrades.

Objectives:

- Establish a consistent data set regarding the quality of open spaces by undertaking assessment against a set of established criteria.
- Create a process which can be replicated on an ongoing basis.
- To help identify opportunities to improve the quality of an open space, or to measure the impact of upgrades on overall performance.
- Calculate an overall performance score by combining individual scores, to compare sites across the Shire, and to determine averages across districts, towns and suburbs.

This document describes rationale, process and guidance to support undertaking performance assessments.

How to Conduct a Performance Assessment

1. Read through all of the criteria and considerations (contained in this document).
2. Visit the park site and walk around it, observing thoroughly. You may need to walk around multiple times as you answer the questions and work through the considerations for each.
3. Assign a score against each criterion, take notes and photos to illustrate your findings.

Scores should be chosen using your best possible understanding of the situation based on what you can see on the day you are there. Consider evidence of use and make assumptions as a member of the public would. The scale is intended to allow some flexibility and show "in a general sense" how the site is performing. It is not intended to be a precise measurement.

Score Calculation

Overall Performance Score - combine all 5 numbered criteria (2-6) and express as % of 25.

Comfort Score - combine scores for criteria 5 and 6, express as a % of 10.

CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS

Criteria 1 - Opportunities

Check all of the “experiences” offered or available at the site:

- Small playground (2-3 pieces of equipment)
- Medium playground (5-10 pieces of equipment)
- Large playground (10+ pieces of equipment)
- Natural area (bushland, beach or creek line without a fence around it)
- Grass area (mown, "kick about space")
- Casual sport/physical activity amenities (e.g. half court, hit up wall, climbing wall, track, outdoor exercise equipment (nothing that could host competitive sport))
- BBQ or picnic area (minimum 3 picnic tables in the same general area)
- Path or trail that is connected, forms a loop or links elements of the park
- Sport (fields, courts, ovals of a size which hosts organised games)
- Off-leash dog areas

This question will identify the predominant experiences at the park. The outcomes can be used to map access to these experiences and identify gaps in availability, or to sort performance scores by interest area (e.g. parks with playgrounds).

Criteria 2 - Play

This section considers the playable elements of the park. It is not anticipated that this only relates to built playgrounds, rather it is intended to address all landscape features which could provide a place to play.

Play elements to look for:

- Nature: Can you access any bushland or creek lines to play in? Are there climbing trees? Look for: where the landscape contributes heavily to playfulness and comfort i.e. climbing trees / rolling hills / shade trees.
- Social: Features that allows multiple children/people to use it simultaneously. e.g. basket swing, climbing nets, courts, kick about spaces.
- All ages: Are there options for older kids (12 plus) and/or adults? Look for: Basketball hoop, climbing, parkour, hang out spaces, skate amenities (not necessarily an entire skate park - skateable elements), kick about space etc.
- Developmental play activities: Equipment that supports children to explore new movements or abilities (e.g. sliding, swinging, balancing)

	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
VERY GOOD	All four elements and/or particularly interesting, fun, well designed.	5
GOOD	Multiple elements represented, 1 or 2 done particularly well	4
AVERAGE	Multiple elements represented	3
POOR	At least one of the play elements	2
VERY POOR	None of the play elements represented	1

Criteria 3 - Sense of Place

Does the site respond to the local geography, features, cultural heritage, townships, and community?

Consider
- Is the site interesting, different, or fun in a way that makes it a unique experience?
- Does the design integrate existing mature trees?
- Does the park make the most of its location?
- Is there anything unique or informative that represents the local community or environment? – Community art? Local heritage or history?
- Does the site demonstrate good design? E.g., are sloped sites designed to make the most of level changes?

	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
VERY GOOD	The site is unique and has many features that connect the site to the local environment and the community	5
GOOD	The site has a couple of features that connect the site to the local environment and the community	4
AVERAGE	The site has a minor connection to the local environment and the community ie local indigenous plants	3
POOR	The site feels generic and with no obvious connection to the local environment and the community	2
VERY POOR	The site is boring and bland with no distinguishing features at all	1

Criteria 4 - Design

Are appropriate park assets/infrastructure provided that are functional and well located?

Score the functionality of the design and assets provided at the site, considering:
- Design and material choices as well as provision of furniture, equipment, paths, carparking, shade etc.
- Is the embellishment of the site appropriate for its capacity and utilisation?
- Does the layout make sense and seem functional?

	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
VERY GOOD	Assets are ideal for the site and provided in sufficient quantity. The quality, type, layout and design of assets is excellent. The layout and design encourage and inspire an appropriate level of use	5
GOOD	Assets are appropriate for the site and provided in sufficient quantity. The quality, type, layout and/or design of assets is good. The layout and design encourage and inspire an appropriate level of use	4
AVERAGE	Assets are ok and are appropriately sited however the quality, type, layout and/or design could be improved to inspire an appropriate level of use	3
POOR	Assets are inappropriate, insufficient, or poorly sited. The type, quality, layout, and design of assets does not encourage or inspire an appropriate level of use	2
VERY POOR	Assets are inappropriate, insufficient, and/or very poorly sited. The type, quality, layout, and design or assets is very poor and does not encourage or inspire an appropriate level of use	1

Criteria 5 - Accessibility

Is the site and supporting infrastructure (e.g. gates, paths, playground, toilet and picnic facilities) accessible by all through design and inclusive of people with impaired mobility?

Consider
- Do pathways provide an unobstructed route through the site and to all major features?
- Accessible car parking
- Accessible entry/exit points
- Access into and through playgrounds
- Access to seating
- Accessible seating (with back and arm rests)
- Accessible picnic facilities

	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
VERY GOOD	3+ examples of tactile surfaces, disabled toilets, car parking or accessible picnic table or bbq	5
GOOD	2 examples of tactile surfaces, disabled toilets, car parking or accessible picnic table or bbq	4
AVERAGE	1 examples of tactile surfaces, disabled toilets, car parking or accessible picnic table or bbq	3
POOR	Pathways are sealed (semi accessible), no other amenities specifically for people with mobility challenges	2
VERY POOR	None of assets are accessible, no sealed pathways	1

Criteria 6 - Comfort

Does the site present as a safe and comfortable place to recreate, safety hazards are mitigated through design and maintenance?

Consider
- Does the site look cared for?
- Are there clear sightlines?
- Are there dark corners or areas that feel unsafe?
- Are there places to sit comfortably with shade?
- Does the site feel exposed or windy?
- Does the site cater equally to a diverse cross section of the community?
- Does the park attract people from diverse backgrounds?
- Do you feel safe at the site as a female? (Could older children visit on their own?)

	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
VERY GOOD	Site feels very comfortable, safe and welcoming	5
GOOD	Site feels comfortable, safe and/or welcoming	4
AVERAGE	Site has a couple of inviting features or areas	3
POOR	This site is not inviting, safe and/or comfortable	2
VERY POOR	The site does not feel inviting, safe or comfortable	1

East Gippsland Open Space Strategy: Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary



EAST GIPPSLAND
SHIRE COUNCIL

HOW DID WE ENGAGE?

Previous engagement for the open space strategy involved broad and targeted engagement around open space preferences and issues for East Gippsland residents in line with the development of the first draft of the strategy This included:

- Community drop in sessions
- Online survey
- Workshops with key stakeholders

In addition, a number of engagement activities have been undertaken in the past few years which consulted on issues around open space for strategies and plans such as:

- Coastal and Marine Management Plan, 2023
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy, 2021
- Making Bairnsdale City Oval Female Friendly, 2022
- Eagle Point Shared Trail, 2023
- Various playground and park upgrades

With the information from these engagement activities and research on open space provision over the past 5 years some draft key issues were developed which this round of engagement has consulted on in the form of a survey.

Discussion Paper

A discussion paper supported the community engagement by outlining the key issues, challenges opportunities facing the future of open space in East Gippsland.



Who did we hear from?

The survey received 74 responses. Only one of these respondents was a registered respondent, therefore information is unavailable about demographics.

What did we ask?

For each key issue the survey asked:
"Do you agree that this issue is reflective of open spaces in East Gippsland at the moment?"

For each key direction the survey asked:
"Do you agree with the key direction proposed in response to Issue #1?"

For each of the proposed actions the survey asked:
"Please select the actions below which you believe Council should explore to respond to issue..."

For the proposed principles the survey asked:
*When **prioritising** open space upgrades, which **principles** do you value most? (pick top 3)*

Finally, on the draft vision the survey asked:
Do you support this draft vision for the future of open space in East Gippsland?







How we provide open space

KEY ISSUE #1

Some parks and reserves are overused, causing degradation and maintenance concerns, while others are under-utilised and can feel isolated. An even spread of investment across all spaces in the shire would not be sustainable or meet community needs.

43% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that issue 1 reflected open space in the Shire. The main underlying sentiment being that underutilised parks would be better used if they were better maintained and had more basic infrastructure. Other respondents suggested that looking at the value of parks only through human use neglected the natural and biodiversity value of these spaces.

Proposed Strategy Direction #1

<u>Optimise</u> open space by providing high quality, central, multifunctional open spaces which bring people together to connect and be active along with a network of less developed parks and reserves providing low key, quieter places to get outside.

The proposed key direction was viewed more favourably by respondents with 65% agreeing with the direction as a response to Issue #1.

Figure 2: Survey responses to "Do you agree with the key direction proposed in response to Issue #1?"

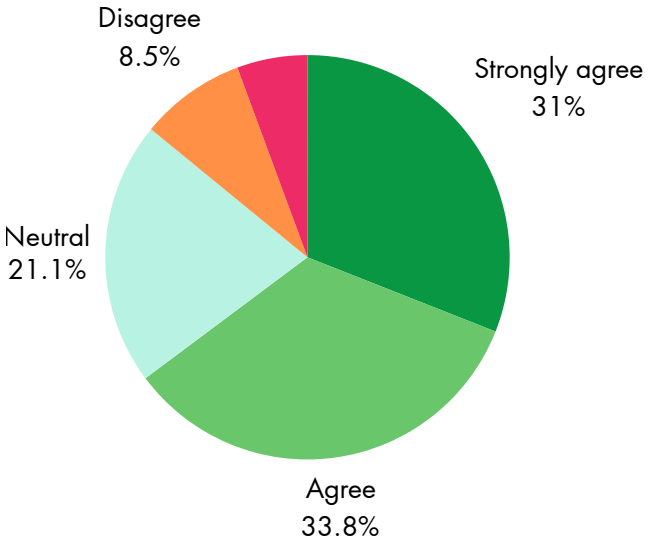
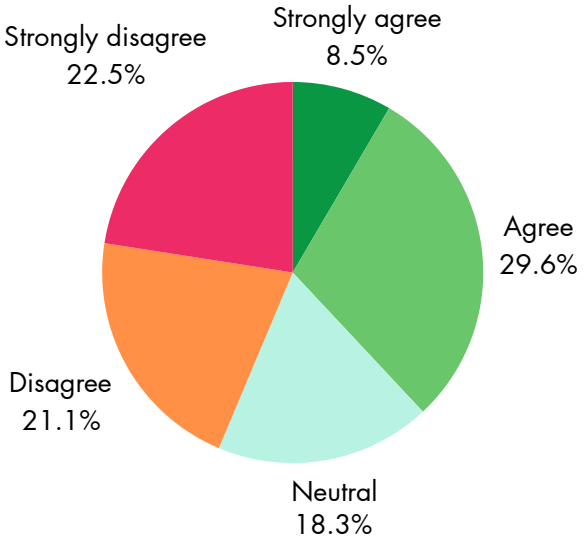


Figure 1: Survey responses to "Do you agree that this issue is reflective of open spaces in East Gippsland at the moment?"



Proposed Opportunities in Response to Issue #1

Of the three proposed actions for Council to explore in response to Issue #1, the a network approach to open space was the most popular. Identification of spaces not providing community value was the least popular opportunity.
The community suggested actions to improve quality and maintenance of existing open space (this is explored further in Issue #3).

Figure 3: Actions proposed in order of most identified by respondents as actions that Council should explore to respond to Issue #1

1	Provide a network of open spaces which provide recreation/physical activity opportunities with functional, minimal infrastructure. (72% said Council should explore)
2	Identify a central high-use, park per township to provide a multi-use, high quality gathering place for the community. (44% said Council should explore)
3	Identify open space parcels that are not providing value to the community or environment and work with the community to determine disposal options. (25% said Council should explore)

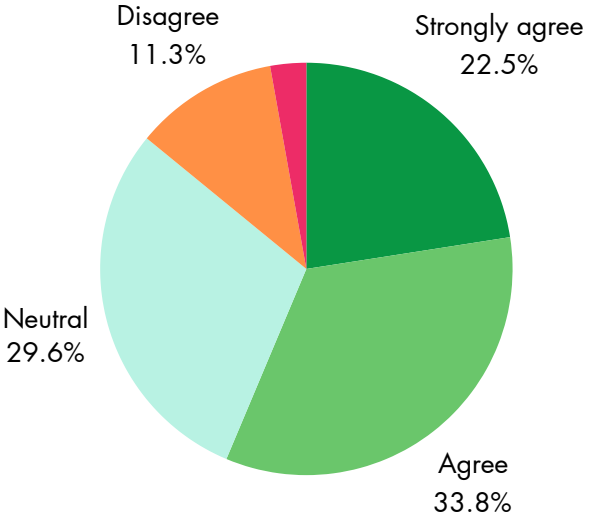
How we fund open space projects

KEY ISSUE #2

Investment in open space could be better aligned with clear priorities that reflect community needs along with a sustainable asset management approach.

56% of respondents agreed that the issue reflected open space in East Gippsland. An above average (30%) percentage of respondents selected 'neutral' which may reflect that the issue and direction were difficult to appreciate.

Figure 4: Survey responses to "Do you agree that this issue is reflective of open spaces in East Gippsland at the moment?"

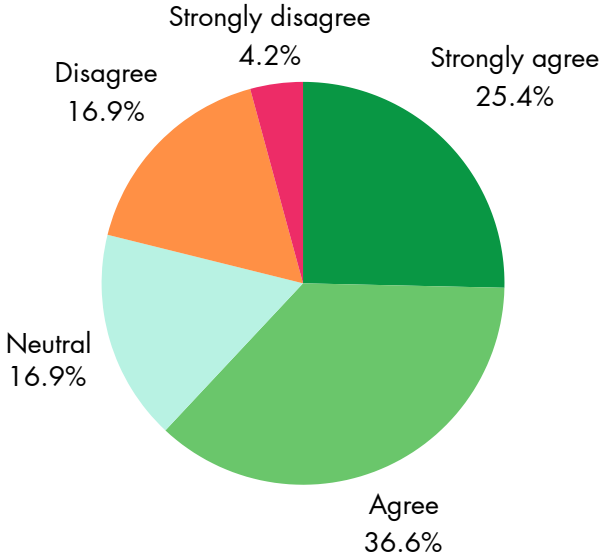


Proposed Strategy Direction #2

<u>Enable</u> smart investment in open space by clarifying priorities, utilising external funding opportunities and collecting more information to inform asset planning.

62% of respondents agreed with the proposed direction in response to Issue #2.

Figure 5: Survey responses to "Do you agree with the key direction proposed in response to Issue #2?"



Proposed Opportunities in Response to Issue #2

The response to the proposed opportunities was mostly strong except for investment in data collection which only received support from 14% of respondents.

Figure 6: Actions proposed in order of most identified by respondents as actions that Council should explore to respond to Issue #2

1	Identify a series of "grant ready" projects to be prepared for potential external funding opportunities (65% said Council should explore)
2	Provide policy and guidelines for the design and delivery of open spaces in new development areas. (59% said Council should explore)
3	Set clear priorities which are used to make decisions about asset replacement priorities and other investments. (57% said Council should explore)
4	Invest in data collection to inform asset management. (14% said Council should explore)

How we look after open space

KEY ISSUE #3

Open space management processes and coordination could be improved so that parks and reserves are more consistently cared for and maintained to a similar level across the Shire.

Over 70% of respondents agree that Issue 3 is reflective of Open Space in East Gippsland.

Proposed Strategy Direction #3

<u>Coordinate</u> open space management by establishing shared values and expectations, strong relationships with land management partners and through reciprocal learning and respectful relationships with Traditional Owners.

66% of respondents agreed that the strategy direction responds to issue #3.

Figure 8: Survey responses to "Do you agree with the key direction proposed in response to Issue #3?"

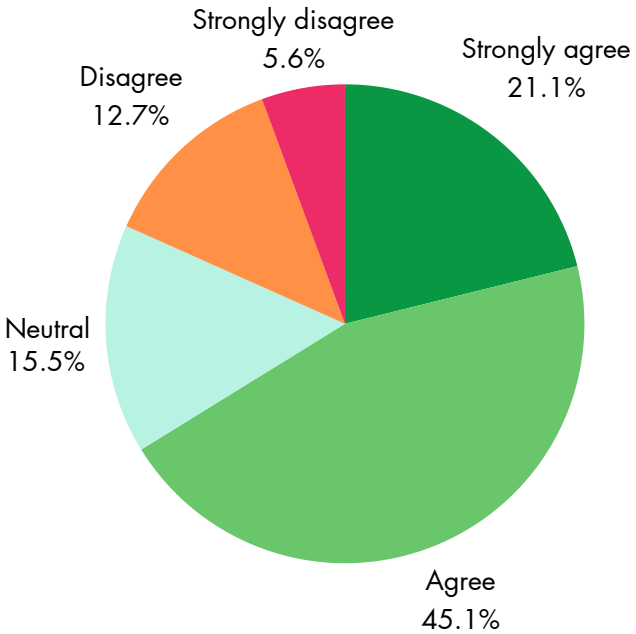
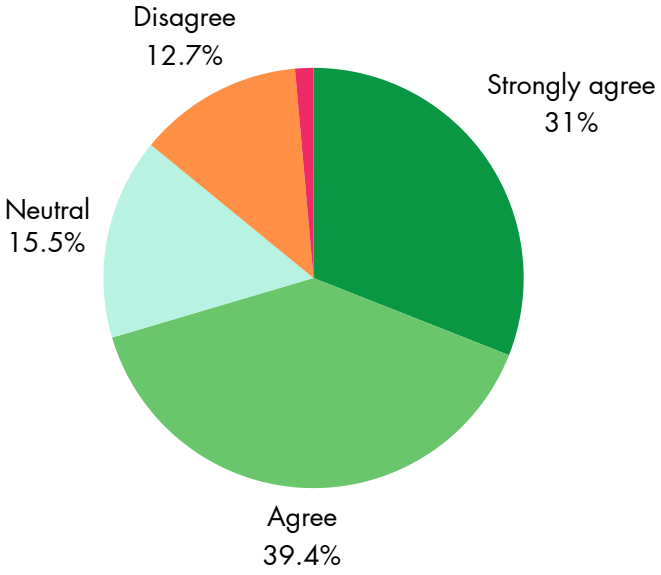


Figure 7: Survey responses to "Do you agree that this issue is reflective of open spaces in East Gippsland at the moment?"



Proposed Opportunities in Response to Issue #3

All proposed opportunities to respond to Issue 3 where identified as worth considering by respondents. Additional suggestions were closely related to the proposed opportunities.

Figure 9: Actions proposed in order of most identified by respondents as actions that Council should explore to respond to Issue #3

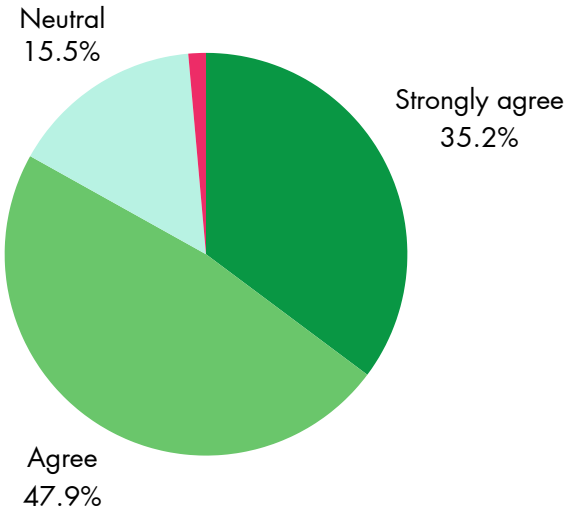
1	Utilise standards that set the expected quality, facilities, amenities, and maintenance levels of parks depending on their size and use levels (86% said Council should explore)
2	Proactive management of activities that have potential for conflict and environmental harm (such as MTB, motor cross, horse riding) (54% said Council should explore)
3	Actively recognise the importance of the cultural landscape and influence of Traditional Owners (53% said Council should explore)

DRAFT VISION

"East Gippsland Shire Council will plan, provide and manage a diverse range of attractive, appealing and sustainable public open spaces that protect and enhance sensitive environments, support a range of physical activity participation opportunities and enhance the character of townships and neighbourhoods."

The draft vision for the future of open space received 83.1% support.

Figure 10: Survey responses to "Do you support this draft vision for the future of open space in East Gippsland?"



PRIORITISATION PRINCIPLES

Figure 11: Actions proposed in order of most identified by respondents in response to "When prioritising open space upgrades, which principles do you value most? (pick top 3)"

52 people selected	**Accessible and equitable:** all residents should have equal access to strategically planned, appropriately designed and located open space that facilitate participation, healthy lifestyles, community connectedness and social inclusion.
42 people selected	**Environmental Protection and Sustainability/Climate Resilience:** open space will complement and enhance the East Gippsland uniqueness including the Gippsland Lakes, marine coastline, heritage rivers and high country.
33 people selected	**High Quality and Amenity:** Open space will be designed and maintained to a quality that encourages maximum use and increases value by the community.
28 people selected	**Multifunctional and Adaptable:** Council will ensure a provision of open space that offers a diversity of appropriateness of use and a fit for purpose primary function.
14 people selected	**Cultural Landscape:** Open space design to complement and include cultural references and protection.
13 people selected	**Supply:** The provision of an appropriate range of open space outcomes consistent with a hierarchical approach that recognises different standards may be required to support various levels of participation and/or catchments.
10 people selected	**Management:** Council will manage the open space network effectively and efficiently with resources being allocated in a hierarchal manner

SUGGESTED OPPORTUNITIES

Survey respondents where asked to identify any other opportunities that Council could consider in response to the key issues raised. The ideas did not neatly align to each of the three focus areas so have been compiled here for ease of review.

The most common responses related to improve maintenance and quality.
Each of the suggested opportunities are provided on the next page.

Figure 12: Suggestions for actions which Council could consider in response to the key issues, in order of frequency (all three focus areas combined).

5 people want	Improve the maintenance of existing open space
5 people want	Improve the quality of existing open space
4 people want	Better play opportunities including traditional playgrounds, skate infrastructure and multipurpose courts
4 people want	Protect and recognise natural areas for their environmental value beyond level of human use
3 people want	Maintain existing open space without consolidation of the existing network
2 people want	Better coordination with committees of management to look after open space
2 people want	More focus on climate change mitigation and adaption

Suggested Opportunity	Council Reponse
Provide more family friendly options that family's are screaming for, eg. splash water zone, kids pump track - especially In lakes entrance where people with young kids desperately need	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - community hubs can accommodate high quality, destination type play spaces such as this.
Investigate further development of these spaces including improved maintenance regime, outdoor performance spaces	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 and for development of maintenance standards (identified opportunity/action)
Swan Reach , riverside, near bridge. Swan Reach area opposite general store.	Comment unclear
Council should meet with people living in said areas and discuss what their needs are regarding vacant land and listen to suggestions rather than just disposing of said land. Sometimes park land needs some development of pathways, seating or playground equipment for people to be able to use. Also the land needs to be maintained regularly ie grass cut more than once a year. These discussion need to happen. Often the land is left un mowed for a year, the grass grows long and snake infested making it a danger to use. The land has not been levelled so is full of ditches and holes also making it accident prone when you can't see what is beneath the grass. When land like this is set aside for a park it should be developed as a park not left as a paddock!	Noted. Will ensure that proposed opportunity in response to Direction #1 emphasizes involvement of community.
Maintain what you already have. Upgrade and improve as you can. Do not allow self serving lobby groups and elected council to downgrade or sell off community treasures. Avoid short term thinking.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - sustainable and balanced approach is expected to achieve this outcome.
Habitat areas for wildlife should be included with track (if necessary) for people to quietly pass through. Open space with bushland protection should be left for wildlife in every municipality. Community groups would be more than able to protect from weed invasion and revegetate where necessary. From a person who lives in the suburbs in Melbourne I can't begin to explain how important it is to hear and see a variety of birds and native animals going about their business. Please please protect natural areas of importance.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - network of open spaces.
Need to easily identify who is owner/manager of open space.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 - Identifying sites with management contention will be a key action of the strategy.
I would like to see a seat and rocks similar to what has been done at Shaving point for plaques to be put on when you scatter loved ones' ashes on Tambo Bay Foreshore	Noted. This is beyond the scope of the OSS but could be considered in future work.
In Metung we have some great open space areas in the village but do not have a multifunctional hub - like a hall where we can have public meetings, under cover activities, events etc. This is a huge need for Metung. The council land on cnr Stirling & Park Rd would suit for this facility.	Indoor spaces are not within the scope of this strategy.

Suggested Opportunity	Council Reponse
Enhance existing spaces. The botanical gardens in Bairnsdale are under used and not well looked after by council. Would also love to see a sound shell for events and public use. Next to the skate would be a great place	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - This is a key direction of the strategy to focus on improving community hub type open spaces.
Explore the current and future uses of the open spaces in terms of climate change impacts, environmental support and re-greening. NOT just facitlties and human use!!!! NO such thing as unused open space - consider other uses by flora and fauna, flood mitigation, food production for the future (community gardens , individual or group allotments, Consider this - once sold never recovered. My personal experience of other open space planning by other councils who disposed ie sold their land assets. Much regretted now.	The protection of the natural environment is the key purpose of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. The OSS will be designed to support and work in conjunction with this strategy but focus more on the use of open space from a recreational standpoint. Any developed procedure for identifying land for disposal would take into account its environmental value.
Summertime water Park.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - community hubs can accommodate high quality, destination type play spaces such as this.
Beware the multi-functional concept leading to conflict of use types and leading to dissuading of potential users. e.g. Omeo free camping and parking for MTB Park users and endangering MTB riders by traffic of large RV's & caravans along Creek Street	Noted. This is an important consideration.
Increase maintenance budget on existing facilities to maintain them,to current standards ,ensure and encourage committee of management are meeting obligations and talk directly to them to get a understanding of current needs and improvements	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 - better coordination with partner land managers (such as committees of management)
Ensure the open space strategy utilises the place based approach, understands social capital at place for each community, uses data to inform the social problem with open spaces through surveys, interviews etc, then bring this all together with the Community Vision, community plans (and community planning processes), with the Council Plan and strategic planning position to address the issue in a planned and efffective manner.	Noted. Development of the OSS has adopted this approach. The draft OSS will include strategic and policy context.
When land is put aside on plan for a park to be developed within an estate, it should be developed when the roads and lots are developed. It should not be left as a paddock unusable for people. This gives an excuse for the council to dispose of the land because it is 'not being used'. People on an estate need park land as a place to go for kids to run, and for dogs to be walked. People need park land for mental health. Earmarking park land and then doing nothing with it, is frustrating for residents. Maybe if the land is going to be an ongoing cost of maintenance to the council, there should be discussion with the residents as to how this can be achieved. Like allowing residents to have a community garden of which they maintain themselves.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #2 - ensuring new open spaces provided in development areas are built to defined standards.
Clear thinking, clear communication and honest dealing are important attributes of a governing body. Do your job properly. Avoid spin, gobbledegook and misinformation.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #2 - clarity of priorities, and evidence/data collection to support decision making.

Suggested Opportunity	Council Reponse
Language used here seems confusing what are you trying to say!!!	Noted. The engagement discussion document might provide some clarification if it was not read in conjunction with the survey. Will seek to clarify within the draft OSS.
Need a SWOT analysis of what is out there and what is missing for each town.	Anticipated action in response to Direction #1. Draft levels of service delivered as part of the strategy will help to provide a framework for comparing what should be available across the Shire compared to what already exists.
I reject the idea that Open spaces Not used BY 'LARGE NUMBERS" (DEFINE PLEASE!) of the public are disposable. This agenda is not looking at the use of open spaces for environmental reasons - habitat, climate change, future use in climate change impacted events and disasters - flood mitigation, food production. Open space as defined by parks and sports facilities is a narrow focus and needs to be widened on the specifications for assessments. e.g. playing areas/parks as flood mitigation water retainment. Other public space e.g. verges need to be included in this assessment as they provide a huge potential for regreening the cities and providing habitat.	Intention of Direction #1 appears misunderstood. The proposed issue, direction and opportunity does not indicate this sentiment. Environmental uses and benefits of open space are well established and covered in existing strategies, the OSS aims to provide guidance on areas which are not as well. However, this important role of open space will be made clearer in the draft OSS.
'Open spaces' include roadside vegetation. Include nature strips in this management Especially verge gardens and community supported open spaces (e.g. volunteer replanting and re greening of parks, small space areas , linked with the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (work actively with community groups) and 6.2 Environmental Strategy Aspiration. *The response of this open spaces planning exercise ignores climate change dictates around the reduction of fossil fuels as a basis of future actions., which maintains local facilities promote neighbourhood connection and resilience.* *I cannot support the idea of grant ready projects without seeing the full details of each project. I suspect the grants will be directed to building or renovating existing facilities which may not be fully community approved or wanted, and do not have details about their position in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022-2023 e.g. opportunities to reduce fossil fuel use by ensuring all building are using alternative fuels, their overall carbon footprint (removing trees and other vegetation habitat_ sustainable design.*	Anticipated outcome of Direction #2 - clarifying community priorities and values, and identifying project for potential grant funding which align with these. Environmental priorities for projects within open space are well established and covered in existing strategies, the OSS aims to provide guidance on areas which are not as well.
Outdoor basketball court.	Noted. Play and sport needs to be considered as part of the strategy implmentation.
Monitor existing open space infrastructure to ensure adequate maintenance to reduce longer term replacement/maintenance costs, e.g leaking roofs, weathering weatherboards blocked drains. Ask the local clubs that are users of the infrastructure of maintenance issues on a regular basis.	Indoor spaces are not within the scope of this strategy.
All facilities have a committee of management council needs to engage these councils and discuss items of need and priorities budgets	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 - better coordination with partner land managers (such as committees of management)
Citizen Assembly gathered from the community to make these decisions not Local Government Officers	Noted. Deliberative engagement and community panels can be considered as part planning individual projects.

Suggested Opportunity	Council Reponse
Sorry, but this is all bureaucratic gobble d gook. Unless Council has the means and the intention to maintain to a VERY high level the infrastructure it already has, don't build new things ! Nothing more depressing than seeing run down public infrastructure because bureaucrats have moved on to the next shiny new thing.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1- focus on providing centralised, high quality open spaces which already exist supported by a network of less developed parks and reserves. The aim of this direction is to put less strain on Council to maintain the entire open space network to the same level. This is supported by anticipated outcomes of Direction #2 - seeking funding to maintain and renew infrastructure in a sustainable, prioritised manner.
Explore internally. What have you already got that could be repurposed.	Noted.
Same as last suggestion	Noted.
“Land Management Partners”? I wonder who they would be. Would you give some examples?	These include Parks Victoria, Committees of Management and community stewardship groups. Please see the community engagement discussion paper on the "Have Your Say" page for some examples.
Create a Reference Group of representatives of all land managers in East Gippsland. Land management priorities is very fragmented!	Noted. Potential action to implement Direction #3.
Base all decisions on the inclusion of climate change impacts in all actions. This should be basic criteria of all Council actions.	Noted. This is a potential priority/value for implementation of Direction #3.
I'd like to see massacre sites across East Gippsland formally recognised. Some of these are in/near our public spaces. For example, Boxes (Butchers) Creek.	Noted. This is beyond the scope of the OSS but could be considered in future work.
Basing maintenance levels on levels of use will negatively affect smaller communities with lower populations therefore cannot determine the standard. An equitable approach to the provision of open spaces must be based on geography rather than number of users.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #1 - equitable distribution of quality, central spaces.
Plus include community residents at a locals, include verges as open space especially with the view of verge gardens as part of the potential to create huge habitat corridors and have climate change impacts in every town and locality. Recognize and engage with residents and land managers in this context of future planning for our cities environment. Recognise the economic, community and health benefits of this engagement. e.g. low economic areas and areas for low education standards have low numbers of street trees compared to more affluent areas . Research shows there is a direct correlation here between positive management of verge spaces and health and neigbourhood connections, So much to say about this important topic. Can't confine the open space planning to buildings and facilities.	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 - coordinated and consistent approach throughout the shire.
Beach volleyball court	Noted. Play and sport needs to be considered as part of the strategy implmentation.
Restrict and police use of open areas for dog walking and commercial activities	Anticipated outcome of Direction #3 - coordinated and consistent approach throughout the shire.

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT UNDERTAKEN

What we did

The draft directions in the Strategy respond to community priorities and perspectives gathered recently, including initial engagement for the open space strategy and engagement for other strategies and masterplans such as:

- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Coastal and Marine Management Plan
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Sporting Facilities Plan
- Sporting Reserve upgrades and masterplans
- Park upgrades upgrades and masterplans
- Playspace upgrades and concept plans
- Trail improvements and plans

Engagement for the initial strategy included the following in :

- Government agency workshop with Department of Sustainability and Environment (now DEECA), Gippsland Ports, Department of Environment and Primary Industries (now DEECA), Sport & Recreation Victoria, Parks Victoria and East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
- 4 Community drop in sessions in Bairnsdale, Orbost, Mallacoota and Lakes Entrance
- Online community survey

The 2013 online survey asked the following questions:

- Do you currently use or visit open space parks or reserves in East Gippsland Shire?
- If you do not currently use or visit open space parks or reserves in East Gippsland Shire, why not?
- What type of open spaces do you usually use?
- What activities do you usually do when visiting parks and reserves in East Gippsland Shire?
- How often do you usually visit parks and reserves in East Gippsland Shire?

What we heard

Previous engagement undertaken for the draft strategy has been gathered into similar topics and includes the results from all previous engagement efforts.

Working Well

- The community highly value the existing public open space. Elements that are considered to be working well include:
  - Overall distribution of open space.
  - Informal recreation opportunities and open spaces associated with water ways and foreshore areas.
  - Good quality boat ramps and access to waterways.
  - Rest stops and picnic areas in smaller settlements.
  - Cross-agency collaboration to deliver a range of infrastructure improvements and asset developments.
  - The development of landscape concept plans up-front as part of subdivision planning process to agree on development requirements and vision for new sites.
  - The contribution of open space to the character and livability of the region.

What we heard (continued)

Planning

- The importance of strategic open space planning was recognised by the community and stakeholders alike. Future planning outcomes should be driven by a desire to:
  - Preserve / protect what we already have.
  - Enhance what we have.
  - Establish clear guidelines for open space acquisition and development.
  - Address site /topic specific planning gaps (e.g. regional equestrian facility, synthetic hockey, soccer, park Master Plans, Tracks and Trails Strategy, MTB activities, etc).
- There is a need to establish detailed Asset Management Plans for various classes of open space assets and infrastructure to guide resource allocation and operational management.
- Seek to enhance integrated planning and coordination between land based open space, water based infrastructure and high use coastal/waterway reserves.
- Climate change responses, coastal inundation and flood impacts may require relocation of selected activities, uses, or infrastructure, including car parking, from sensitive foreshore areas.
- Future development of public assets within designated floodplains will need to be carefully considered, including Developer Contributions.

Enhance what we already have

- A key theme represented in the consultation was a desire to improve and enhance what we already have, specifically in relation to:
  - Improve the appeal of existing sites.
  - Upgrade / replace ageing infrastructure (Asset Mgt Plans).
  - Increase the diversity in options for formal sport (i.e. playing fields).
  - Limit the duplication of facilities within individual reserves (e.g. Club rooms) i.e. maximise opportunities for multi-use community hubs.
  - Address inadequate footpaths, linkages and connections to/from points of interest and open spaces.
  - Limited variety in playgrounds and limited play value/appeal.
  - Lack of site specific Master Plans or precinct (place-based) planning (e.g. Mallacoota).
  - Lack of consistency in asset classes e.g. park furniture.
  - Need for removal of disused or redundant infrastructure throughout reserves.
  - Need to review quality, standard, appeal and functionality of fencing in/around recreation reserves. Rationalise fencing where possible.
  - Significant differences in facility standards between Council and DSE controlled reserves (a key issue for Council is the inability to capitalise asset investment on DSE/DEPI controlled land).
  - Dominance of single oval sites, which limits overall usage flexibility.
  - Underutilised skate and BMX facilities offering limited appeal.
- There is also a strong desire to encourage more use and appreciation of what we already have. This relates to marketing, promotion and community pride, however it also relates to activation of spaces through:
  - Enhanced design (walkability, landscaping, maintenance, appeal, visibility, safety, etc),
  - Core infrastructure including paths, seating, drinking taps, fitness stations, way finding signage, interpretive information etc.
  - Facilitation of physical activity programming and activation of open spaces for community events, markets and activities.

What we heard (continued)

Community use and benefits

- Open spaces are recognised as vital in facilitating community interaction, social inclusion and community health and well being.
- Facilities and settings used most frequently by the community include (in order):
  - Walking tracks and trails.
  - Lakes, waterways and coastal areas.
  - Local parks and playgrounds.
  - Sports grounds and sport venues.
  - State and National parks.
- Community access to foreshore open space is often constrained/restricted during peak tourism seasons. Options to reduce impacts and enhance the legacy from tourism activities conducted on public open space may need to be explored.
- Improve information and material promoting existing sport, recreation and open space opportunities.
- Increase support for community recreation programs and encouraging physical activity participation in parks.

Linkages and connections

- Maximising linkages and connections has emerged as a major theme. This relates not only to paths and trails within reserves, but more importantly the capacity to utilise open space corridors to connect neighborhoods, suburbs, points of interests and common destinations.
- The appeal, safety and usability of a number of existing open space corridors could be enhanced.
- There are gaps in open space connections and linkages.
- There may be a need to establish a Tracks, Trail and Pathway Strategy for the Shire (including consideration of trails available in State and National Parks) in order to confirm network gaps, priorities and scope indicative implementation costs.

Open space settings and functions

- Consultation results highlighted the importance of ensuing variety in open space settings and functions, ranging from bush/conservation areas through to active sport reserves.
- Whilst formal sports clubs and recreation activities were acknowledged as significant users of open space, it was stressed that the majority of users are individuals and families participating in informal, non-organised activities.
- Future open space acquisition and enhancement activities must reflect the need for a variety of functions, settings and development standards for open space across the Shire.