

The City of Newcastle Parkland and Recreation Strategy





Production
Parkland and Recreation Strategy –
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Executive Summary

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* has been developed to guide the sustainable provision of parkland and recreation facilities for current and future communities. It brings together a body of work that included an examination of existing and projected demographic data; an assessment of current supply and future demand; and the identification of opportunities and initiatives for future parkland and recreational facilities and services.

Consultation with the community and key stakeholders identified the importance and value the community places on access to open spaces, parkland, beaches and other active and passive recreation opportunities. Parkland, the beach foreshore, bicycle and walking trails were extremely popular whilst local parks were the most used recreation facility within suburbs. As residential growth continues, the provision of a range of recreation spaces and facilities to meet community needs will become increasingly important.

Council invests significant resources annually into the provision, development and management of parkland and recreation facilities and services. This is evident by the wide range of opportunities available within the Local Government Area (LGA). However, a number of gaps exist that impact on both passive and active recreation participation within Newcastle.

Not all of these gaps can be addressed by Council alone, given significant budgetary constraints and the wide ranging responsibilities that devolve onto local government. The establishment of greater partnerships with the community and private sector will be essential.

The key initiatives to address the identified challenges and gaps are:

Planning and development of facilities

- The development of quality district parks containing a range of active and passive infrastructure as key focus areas to mitigate against the limited opportunities within many local parks.
- Improved connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland.
- The upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional uses and changing needs.
- The adoption of new technologies to increase capacity of existing sports fields whilst providing opportunities for commercial use and revenue streams.
- The continued provision of pathways, bicycle lanes, fitness equipment, sports fields, bicycle paths and swimming pools to cater for population changes and community demand.
- The development of a regional aquatic centre.
- The continued planning of parkland and recreation facilities, particularly within the western planning corridor, to maximise opportunities, partnerships and funding.
- The development of clear criteria to prioritise the development/upgrade of facilities.
- The review of small parks and their role in the open space network.

Management of facilities

- The development of clear service levels which are aligned with facility roles.
- The investigation of opportunities for partnerships and the external management of parkland and sporting facilities as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure.
- The development of clear responsibilities and financial requirements for the external management of recreation facilities to improve the sustainability and performance of recreation facilities.
- The provision of support and training to community organisations managing recreation facilities on behalf of Council.
- The investigation of opportunities for greater commercial use, activities and advertising within parkland, recreation facilities and services as a method of generating revenue.

Partnership Development

- The development of formal partnerships with the NSW Department of Education for increased community access and usage of sportsgrounds by sporting clubs.
- The development of a formal partnership with Xstrata Coal for the dedication of land in Wallsend for a future district sporting complex.
- The inclusion of key stakeholders in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of parkland and recreation projects.
- The development of strategic partnerships and financial investment with sporting associations, clubs and key stakeholders.
- Supporting the initiatives of other recreation facility and program providers through providing access to council managed land.
- The establishment of a trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent acts to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives which benefit residents within the Newcastle LGA.

Promotion of facilities and opportunities

- The development of promotion and marketing strategies to highlight existing recreation opportunities, encourage participation and attract people to the city of Newcastle.
- The development of a comprehensive parkland and recreation directory on Council's website.
- Supporting the initiatives of other recreation facility and program providers through inclusion within relevant recreation promotion and marketing activities.
- The continued support and attraction of state, national and international events to the city of Newcastle.

The key initiatives are articulated within this strategies action plan which identifies short, medium and long term planning actions and priorities. The actions are proposed to be delivered over a ten year time frame and included within Council's four year delivery program.

“Public places which enable and encourage people to get out and do things in public are a good thing. These add to people’s pride in a community: in their desire to take care of it and to show it off to visitors.”

Glossary

Amenity reserves	Small parks, gardens that provide physical and visual relief from the built form.
Beach and dunal systems	Beaches and reserves for coastal conservation and dune management, beach access and foreshore recreation.
Community garden	An area of shared land in which members of a community participate in the cultivation of food and other plants.
Community Land	Land vested in Council that has been classified, under a local environmental plan or a resolution of Council, as “Community Land” because it that has been identified that it should be kept for the use of the general public (the community).
District facilities	Well developed spaces of substantial size that offer a broad range of quality recreation opportunities. They attract visitors from across a number of suburbs, however they do not have the level of infrastructure that a regional facility has.
Dog exercise area	Spaces where dogs are permitted to exercise. Categories include on lead areas, off lead areas and restricted off leash areas.
Dual use reserves	Land reserved for service infrastructure but supports passive community recreation.
Drainage reserves	Reserves used for the treatment of surface and subsurface water. These reserves can sometimes have secondary amenity or parkland functions.
Environment reserves	Reserves for the long term protection and conservation of our ecosystems and biodiversity.
Linear and linkage corridors	Reserves created to enhance habitat movement, the continuity of ecological processes and/or for providing connectivity.
Local facilities	Defined spaces which primarily serve a local population. They provide a limited range of facilities to support recreational pursuits.
Open space	Space which includes natural areas such as National Parks, wetlands, riparian corridors, bushland and environmental reserves to the more developed spaces such as parks and sportsgrounds.
Park Committee	A group of people appointed by Council to assist in the care, maintenance, management and development of a specific Council park or reserve, as outlined in Section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993.
Parkland	Lands which have had their physical character and/or vegetation modified to support community recreation. Used by the community for social, recreational and cultural activities which provide complementary landscape and amenity values including civic spaces.
Plan of Management	A planning document prepared in accordance with Section 36 of the <i>Local Government Act</i> 1993, or the <i>Crown Lands Act</i> 1989, that, together with any relevant law, governs the use and management of community land.
Recreation facility	Infrastructure specifically provided to facilitate social and physical activities.
Regional facilities	Attract visitors from across the LGA and beyond. They tend to cater for large numbers of people or teams due to their uniqueness, opportunity offered or the scale of events that may be staged.
Riparian corridors	Linear areas provided and managed for the protection and conservation of the waterways and adjoining land, biodiversity, provision of access and recreational activity.
Shared pathway	Off-road widened footpaths which can be shared by pedestrians and cyclists. Often located in parks, sportsgrounds and along foreshore areas.
Sports fields	Facilities for sporting and active recreation activities, includes playing fields, ovals, courts and circuits.
Specific purpose sportsgrounds	Spaces for specialised activities that, by their nature, preclude other uses (e.g. rifle range, motocross).
Urban public space/Public domain	Street and road reserves, lanes and town plazas and squares which accommodate walking, cycling, social gatherings and outdoor dining.
Waterways	Rivers, creeks, lakes, dams and canals that support biodiversity, water quality, transportation, recreation and/or visual amenity.



1. Introduction

The City of Newcastle (TCoN) is responsible for managing a range of parkland and recreation facilities, including recreation parks, sportsgrounds, swimming pools, ocean baths, beaches, bicycle and shared pathways, netball, tennis and basketball courts, skate parks, playgrounds, dog exercise areas and community gardens. Our culture and lifestyle are inextricably linked to and revolve around these community assets.

As the City continues to grow, an integrated approach to the implementation of the strategies within the *Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan* and the sustainable management of recreation spaces and facilities to meet community needs is required.

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* has been developed to guide the provision of parkland and recreation facilities for current and future communities.

The Strategy:

- outlines the current supply of parkland and recreation facilities in the Newcastle LGA;
- outlines the current and future demand of parkland and recreation facilities in the Newcastle LGA;
- describes the key challenges and opportunities that impact on Council's provision of parkland and recreation facilities;
- defines Council's desired levels of provision of parkland and recreation facilities; and
- provides a ten year management action plan for Council's parkland and recreation facilities.

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* contains two components.

The Strategy is focused on providing a clear statement of the issues, objectives and actions required to achieve the vision for parkland and recreation in Newcastle. The strategy is the key component of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* and can be read as a stand alone document.

The Background and Appendices contains the supporting information that was used to prepare the strategy and includes:

- population and demographic data for the Newcastle LGA;
- methodology and results of community input into the strategy's development;
- benchmarking against other Council's and comparisons of provision rates with industry standards; and
- maps of geographical distribution of parkland and recreation facilities.

2. Background

2.1 What are parkland and recreation facilities and why are they important?

Open space incorporates all space of public value that has a social, recreational, cultural, nature conservation, environmental, scenic, health or economic benefit for a community. Open space in Newcastle is widespread and diverse, ranging from large natural areas such as National Parks, wetlands, riparian corridors, bushland and environmental reserves to the more developed spaces within urban settings such as parks, sportsgrounds and shared pathways.

For the purposes of this strategy, parkland refers to land that has been reserved for the purpose of formal and informal recreation activities. It is commonly referred to as 'parks' or 'reserves' and is one type of setting that falls under the broader category of open space.

Recreation facilities refers to spaces specifically developed for active and passive recreation activities and includes infrastructure such as sportsgrounds, courts, skate parks, swimming pools, indoor recreation centres, playgrounds, shared pathways and fitness stations.

The focus of the strategy is parkland, recreation facilities, dual use and drainage reserves.

Other open space, such as wetlands, riparian corridors, bushland and environmental reserves, waterways, drainage reserves and education facilities are highly valued and contribute to the spectrum of open space within our community. These areas are managed by multiple local, state and federal government agencies primarily for the purpose of water management, environmental protection and education.

The strategy does not specifically plan for these other open spaces, but recognises their valuable contribution to broader recreation experiences available within the city. The planning, development and management of those spaces is addressed in other council documents.

The focus of this strategy is council managed parkland and recreation facilities. The strategy does not address privately owned open space or open space managed by the State or Federal Governments. However, these spaces have been considered in the development of this strategy.

2.2 Council managed parkland and recreation facilities

Across the local government area, Council is responsible for maintaining the following parkland and recreational assets:

- 27km of coastline and river foreshore;
- 250 recreation parks;
- 124 sports fields;
- 5 inland swimming pools;
- 2 ocean baths;
- 206 playgrounds;
- 70 tennis courts;
- 51 netball courts;
- 10 skate parks;
- 9 basketball courts;
- 17 off leash dog exercise area;
- 1 golf course; and
- 60 kilometres of shared pathways.

Parkland and recreation services undertaken by Council include:

- maintenance of 260 hectares of sports turf, parks and gardens;
- lifeguard patrols, water safety and beach education;
- bookings of parks, reserves and sportsgrounds;
- facility and events management;
- capital development and project management;
- strategic planning; and
- asset maintenance, replacement and renewal.

In 2012/13, the budget for the operation and maintenance of all parks, reserves, sport and recreation facilities, ocean baths and inland aquatic facilities was \$19.5 million. In 2013/14 this budget will be reduced by approximately 10% in line with Council's debt reduction plans.

2.3 The importance of recreation

The benefits attributed to the provision of recreational spaces and facilities and their contribution to community wellbeing are well documented.

Figure 1: The benefits of recreational spaces



2.4 Why plan for parkland and recreational facilities?

Given the importance of parkland and recreational facilities to the Newcastle community and the significant pressures anticipated by residential growth, visitor use and financial constraints, it is a priority for Council that a strategic and integrated approach to recreation planning is undertaken. Evidence based recreation planning provides a policy direction and framework that reflects community values and legislative requirements. In this way, Council will respond to key challenges and opportunities, determine suitable standards and improve financial viability.

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* provides a long term approach, enabling Council to plan for ongoing and adequate provision of parkland and recreation facilities. It will also be used as a decision making tool for Council to dispose of land and to negotiate and acquire suitable open space for future communities.

Effective long term strategic planning will enable Council to develop open and collaborative leadership, enabling accountable planning decisions to be undertaken. Without this planning there is a risk that decisions and allocation of resources will be made in an ad hoc and ineffective manner.

2.5 Council’s parkland and recreational facility responsibilities

Under the terms of the *Local Government Act* (1993) Council is responsible for the management of a significant amount of land and infrastructure, both owned directly by Council and/or land that has been placed in Council’s care and control by the State.

Land owned by Council can be classified as either operational or community land. **Operational Land** ordinarily comprises of land held as an investment or which facilitates Council carrying out its functions e.g. works depot or a council garage. Operational land is generally not available for community use.

Community Land is intended for public benefit and must be managed in accordance to the requirements of the *Local Government Act* (1993). Council is required to prepare and maintain Plans of Management for community land under its management control.

Master plans are often developed as part of a site specific Plans of Management (e.g. Foreshore Park, Blackbutt Reserve) and provide detailed guidance for the use and development of community land.

Community land can be further divided into a number of categories that focus on the essential intent of the land. These categories include natural areas, sportsgrounds, parks, areas of cultural significance and general community use. All community land is managed through a Plan of Management that describes the purpose of the land, designated activities, maintenance levels and actions.

In addition to Council owned land, Council is also responsible for managing certain parcels of Crown Land in accordance to the *Crown Lands Act 1989*. Crown land commonly incorporates but is not limited to sportsgrounds, foreshore parks, bushland reserves and areas of ‘cultural significance’.

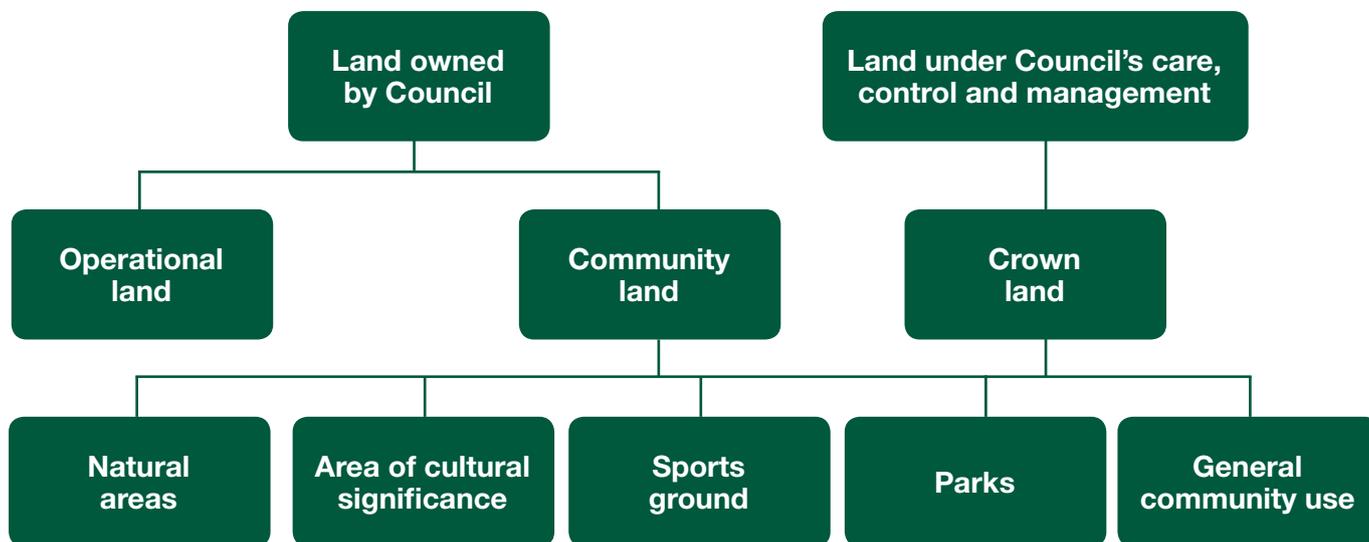


Figure 2: Land use classification categories within Council’s care and control



3. Strategic Context

3.1 State

The NSW State Plan

NSW 2021: *A Plan to make NSW Number One* is the principal strategic plan for delivering the vision for NSW. Relevant goals for recreation facilities include:

- **Goal 24** Make it easier for people to be involved in their communities;
- **Goal 27** Enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities.

3.2 Regional

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The *Lower Hunter Regional Strategy: 2006-2031* (LHRS) is the strategic land use planning framework to guide the sustainable growth of the Lower Hunter over the next 25 years. This strategy is currently being reviewed by the NSW State Government. The LHRS Discussion Paper (2013) identifies Newcastle as Australia's seventh largest urban settlement and will guide future planning decisions covering, housing; economic development and jobs; open space; transport, jobs; education; and recreation facilities.

The Lower Hunter has seen growth of 22,500 people over the past Census period (2006-2011). It should be noted that a third of this growth was in Newcastle (an increase of 6,778 persons from 141,753 to 148,531). Key population trends for the Lower Hunter include significant overall population growth and an ageing population with 24% to be 65 years or older by 2031.

3.3 Local

Integrated planning and reporting

Under changes to the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* in 2010, Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) was implemented in NSW. This aims to provide a quadruple bottom line framework (across economic, social, environmental and governance areas) for longer term strategic planning by councils in collaboration with their communities, by encouraging consultation regarding funding, service levels and overall sustainability for their local government area.

Key council documents required to be developed and maintained within the IP&R framework include:

- Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan;
- A four year Delivery and one year Operational Plan;
- A long term Financial Plan;
- Asset Management Strategy; and
- A Workforce Management Plan.

The aforementioned planning documents have been considered in the preparation of this strategy.

Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Newcastle 2030 is Council's key strategic planning document under the *Integrated Planning and Reporting Legislation* (2009). It was first developed by the community in 2011 and reviewed in 2013, as a guide to inform policies and actions throughout the city for the next 20 years. This vision sets the direction for the growth of the city and represents what the community values and what they want improved.

The community's vision for Newcastle is for a '*smart, liveable and sustainable city*'. The *Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan* (revised 2013) contains seven strategic directions. Supporting these directions are 23 objectives to be achieved over the next 10 years and strategies to achieve them (Table 1).

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* is one of eight core strategic documents being prepared by council to align its actions with the strategic directions of the *Community Strategic Plan* (CSP). The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* will be instrumental in achieving the following strategic objectives identified within the CSP.

- **Objective 3.1** Public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections.
- **Objective 3.3** Safe and activated places that are used by people day and night.
- **Objective 4.1** A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other, and
- **Objective 4.2** Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

Council has responsibility for actioning a number of strategies identified within the Community Strategic Plan. These include:

Objective 3.1 Public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections

- 3.1a Encourage community engagement with public space through place making projects and local initiatives that bring individuals and groups together.
- 3.1b Increase opportunities for active and passive recreational use of the city’s parks, inland pools and Blackbutt Reserve through the provision of attractive, safe and accessible spaces and amenities.
- 3.1c Work collaboratively to improve and revitalise our beaches, coastal areas and foreshores for everyone to enjoy.
- 3.1d Create welcoming and accessible community facilities that support opportunities for people to meet and connect with one another.

Objective 3.3 Safe and activated places that are used by people day and night

- 3.3a Plan for and appropriately regulate the night time economy to encourage a more diverse mix of activities in the city centre and other commercial centres.
- 3.3b Support the renewal of the city centre and the strengthening of other commercial and urban centres.
- 3.3c Create streetscapes and public places that are clean and attractive, where people feel safe.
- 3.3d Create streetscapes and public places that are clean and attractive, where people feel safe.
- 3.3e Provide welcoming facilities and open space that provide for a range of ages and combination of uses and can be easily adapted to suit the changing need of community over time.

Objective 4.1 A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other

- 4.1b Support local community initiatives that encourage citizens to engage collectively for the benefit of their communities, builds community capacity and fosters connectedness.

Objective 4.2 Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing

- 4.2e Provide events to encourage use of open space and facilities and participation in activities.
- 4.2f Upgrade the city’s library services to better meet community needs and incorporate new technologies to support community learning, leisure and knowledge.

Initiatives identified in section 11.0 Action Plan contribute to achieving the aforementioned strategic objectives.

Figure 3: Council’s integrated planning and reporting framework

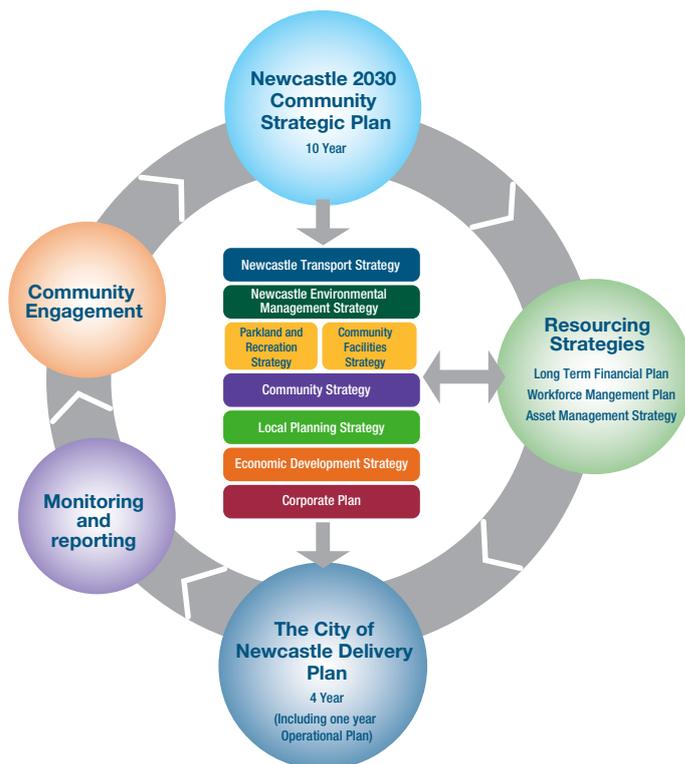


Table 1: Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan: Direction and Objectives

Strategic direction for Newcastle	CSP Strategic objectives
<p>Connected City Transport networks and services will be well connected and convenient. Walking, cycling and public transport will be viable options for the majority of our trips.</p>	<p>1.1 Effective and integrated public transport. 1.2 Linked networks of cycle and pedestrian paths. 1.3 A transport network that encourages energy and resource efficiency.</p>
<p>Protected and Enhanced Environment Our unique environment will be understood, maintained and protected.</p>	<p>2.1 Greater efficiency in the use of resources. 2.2 Our unique natural environment is maintained, enhanced and connected. 2.3 Environment and climate change risks and impacts are understood and managed.</p>
<p>Vibrant and Activated Public Places A city of great public places and neighbourhoods promoting people's health, happiness and wellbeing.</p>	<p>3.1 Public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections. 3.2 Culture, heritage and place are valued, shared and celebrated. 3.3 Safe and activated places that are used by people day and night.</p>
<p>A Caring and Inclusive Community A thriving community where diversity is embraced, everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute and belong.</p>	<p>4.1 A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other. 4.2 Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. 4.3 A creative, culturally rich and vibrant community.</p>
<p>Liveable and Distinctive Built Environment An attractive city that is built around people and reflects our sense of identity.</p>	<p>5.1 A built environment that maintains and enhances our sense of identity. 5.2 Mixed-use urban villages supported by integrated transport networks. 5.3 Greater diversity of quality housing for current and future community needs. 5.4 Best practice energy and water efficient buildings and infrastructure.</p>
<p>Smart and Innovative City A leader in smart innovations with a healthy, diverse and resilient economy.</p>	<p>6.1 A vibrant diverse and resilient green economy built on educational excellence and research. 6.2 A culture that supports and encourages innovation and creativity at all levels. 6.3 A thriving city that attracts people to live, work, invest and visit.</p>
<p>Open and Collaborative Leadership A strong local democracy with an actively engaged community and effective partnerships.</p>	<p>7.1 Integrated, sustainable long-term planning for Newcastle and the Region. 7.2 Considered decision-making based on collaborative, transparent and accountable leadership. 7.3 Active citizen engagement in local planning and decision-making processes and a shared responsibility for achieving our goals. 7.4 The City of Newcastle: a local government organisation of excellence.</p>

Previous studies and other council plans

A number of other Council studies and reports have already identified a range of challenges for The City of Newcastle and have implications for the provision and development of Parkland and Recreation facilities. These include:

- The *Newcastle Report – Issues for Sustainability (2007)* undertaken by Percy Allan noted that significant funding needed to be invested in infrastructure renewal over the next 20 years, that the total infrastructure stock would need expanding to adequately to meet residential and business growth, and that services be developed in line with population growth and changing community needs.
- The *Newcastle Sustainability Review (Part 1) 2009* identified that Council will struggle to provide quality services to ratepayers out of buildings and facilities that are rundown, poorly designed or inaccessible and recommended fewer but new multipurpose and well located facilities. This would require the sale of assets where appropriate and the sale of land surplus to requirements to be a key component of this funding.
- The *Newcastle Open Space Review (2010)* was an outcome of the TCoN Sustainability Review (2009) to undertake an audit of local parks. This study audited a selection of Council's open space assets and included a number of key recommendations:
 - The need to develop principles to guide the provision, development, management and maintenance of open space.
Status: commenced via the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy; Community Asset and Open Space Policy* - adopted December (2012).
 - The need to clarify the role and responsibility of open space planning with Council.
Status: commenced via the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*.
 - The need to explore partnerships with State Government for the development and maintenance of school sporting facilities and with the private sector for the provision of ancillary commercial facilities (e.g. cafes) within recreation spaces.

Status: commenced via the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*, and

- The need to prepare an Asset Rationalisation and Redevelopment Strategy for non-required open space.

Status: Pocket parks review completed. Land parcels identified for potential rationalisation referred to ARIP.

- The *Newcastle Recreation Plan 2006-2016* was adopted by Council in 2006. The Plan identifies a number of actions, informed by community consultation, for the future direction of parks and other Council managed recreation facilities. Many of the key recommendations of that Strategy have now been implemented, or are out of date, hence the need for an updated strategy. A summary of the key outcomes that have been achieved are identified in the Background and Appendices, Appendix D.
- Council's *Community Asset and Open Space Policy (CAOS)*, adopted by Council in 2012, outlines principles of provision for community and recreation assets that include:
 - accessibility and connectedness;
 - equity and opportunity;
 - safety and security; and
 - sense of place and well being.

The CAOS Policy introduces a hierarchy of community, parkland and recreation facilities which are further developed within the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*.

- The *Newcastle Pool Services Delivery Model (PSDM)* was adopted by Council in 2007. It provides a strategic framework for the development of Council managed swimming pools located within the Newcastle LGA. The PSDM identifies the redevelopment of the Lambton Swimming Centre into a regional aquatic facility as the priority aquatic project. Future development proposals for other swimming centres are identified and will be reviewed and subjected to detailed feasibility analysis following the completion of the aquatic and leisure centre development at Lambton.
- The *Newcastle Bicycle Strategy*, adopted in 2012, establishes a network of cycle routes linking beaches, shopping centres, recreation and other facilities throughout Newcastle LGA through bicycle lanes, as well as shared pathways.

- *Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Strategy (2010)* provides a strategic framework for the use and development of the 11km coastline located within the Newcastle LGA. A number of broad strategies aimed at enhancing access, safety and vibrancy within key activity nodes are identified in addition to design principles for master plan concepts for each activity precinct. Enhancing open space opportunities and facilities within the precincts is a key objective of this strategy.
- *The Western Corridor Section 94 Plan Background Paper (2013)* provides a strategic context for the levying of developer contributions for the provision of community and recreation facilities for future residential development within the Western Planning Corridor.
- In accordance with the *Local Government Act (1993)*, Council has developed a number of Plans of Management for community land under its management control. These generic Plans of Management (Bushland, Playgrounds, Sportslands, Neighbourhood Parks) in addition to a number of site specific plans (e.g. Foreshore Park, Blackbutt Reserve, National Park, Fort Scratchy). These plans provide detailed guidance for the use and development of community land and often include detailed master plans.

“Effective long term strategic planning will enable Council to develop open and collaborative leadership, enabling accountable planning decisions to be undertaken.”

4. Vision, Strategic Objectives and Outcomes

4.1 Vision

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* is an integral component of Council's strategic approach in achieving the community's vision of a '*smart, liveable and sustainable city*'.

A proposed vision for parkland and recreation, which represents the culmination of consultation with sports groups, management committees, council staff, industry experts and the wider community is:

The City of Newcastle will provide, promote and support a range of facilities, events and programs aimed at:

- Meeting the diverse parkland and recreational needs and interests of residents, visitors, students and workers;
- Creating vibrant, activated and sustainable public places; and
- Promoting health, happiness, community connections and wellbeing.

4.2 Strategic objectives and outcomes

To guide Council in the achievement of the vision, strategic directions and outcomes for parkland and recreation have been developed. These objectives and outcomes align with the strategic actions and outcomes within the *Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan (revised 2013)*.

The strategic actions and outcomes of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* incorporate the principles and outcomes of: accessibility and connectedness; equity and opportunity; safety and security and sense of place and wellbeing articulated within Council's *Community and Open Space Policy (2012)*.

“The top priorities for future development were cycle paths/ walking trails/foreshore promenade, local parks, beach/ foreshore and playgrounds.”

Table 2: Strategic objectives and outcomes

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Outcomes
<p>Equitable Provision and Development of Facilities</p> <p>Quality parkland and recreation facilities that are diverse, accessible and responsive to changing needs and will provide positive experiences for current and future residents and visitors. A clear decision making framework is essential to guide development and sustainable provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of parkland and recreational facilities which are available, accessible and distributed equitably across Newcastle; • Recreation facilities which provide opportunities for the full range of age groups and abilities; • Public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections; • Multi-functional recreation facilities that are adaptable to changing needs; • Recreation facilities which are utilised to their maximal potential.
<p>Efficient Management of Facilities</p> <p>Parkland and recreational facilities are sound investment for our community, playing a major role in improving human health, both mental and physical. Ensuring recreation facilities are well governed, financially sustainable and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities are fundamental to efficient management and positive community experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkland and recreation facilities which are managed and maintained at a level suitable to sustain high usage; • Improved financial performance and viability of recreation facilities; • Sustainable public and private sector partnerships which maximise recreation opportunities.
<p>Partnership Development</p> <p>Actively encouraging and fostering strategic partnerships with community organisations, other levels of government and the private sector to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community is vital.</p> <p>Supporting the initiatives of other stakeholders and engaging the community in decision making fosters inclusion, strengthens partnerships and is instrumental in the provision of opportunities and the creation of active and vibrant places.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active engagement with other providers of parkland and recreation facilities and services within the city; • Safe and activated places that are used by people day and night; • Partnerships for the provision of parkland, recreation facilities, programs and events; • Support and encouragement for the provision of recreation programs and events by community groups, not for profit and other private providers; • External funding for the provision and management of parkland and recreation facilities, in line with priorities; • Increased corporate involvement in parkland and recreation facility improvement; • A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other; • Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.
<p>Promotion of Facilities</p> <p>Initiatives which inform residents and visitors on the range of opportunities for people to recreate and spend their leisure time is essential to support healthy lifestyles and attracting people to the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible information on the range of parkland and recreation opportunities to residents and visitors which facilitates participation in healthy lifestyle activities; • High levels of use of parkland and recreation facilities.



5. Desired Levels of Provision

5.1 Ensuring equitable provision of recreation facilities

Ensuring equitable levels and standard of provision for recreation facilities across the LGA is a key objective of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*. Setting desired standards of provision can help achieve a fair and equitable approach and guide infrastructure development, allocation and prioritisation of funding.

The concept of desired standards of provision and service has been used for many years as a recreation planning tool and communicates to the community the range, proximity and type of infrastructure Council will aim to provide in association with community, business and government partners throughout Newcastle's LGA.

The provision of adequate levels of parkland and recreation facilities is a challenge faced by local governments Australia – wide. The questions of “how much?”, “how big”, “how should it be distributed” and “what type of facilities and where” do not have simple answers. Needs and expectations vary with different communities, with households and with individuals throughout each LGA.

A range of approaches have been formulated over many years as a basis for assessment of the adequacy of existing provision and to guide levels of provision. These include:

- area or number of facilities per head of population;
- allocation of a percentage of development area to recreation;
- distance from residents to open space/recreation facilities; and
- expressed community demand.

In NSW there are no specific guidelines for the standard of provision for specific types of recreation facilities. Most standards have been developed by individual councils as part of Developer Contribution Plans and Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPA), or through comparison of similar local government authorities through benchmarking exercises.

Parks and Leisure Australia, the peak industry body, in association with government and industry partners, has developed draft benchmarks for the provision of community and recreation infrastructure within existing and new development areas. Whilst not prescriptive, the provision rates aim to provide an indication of the extent of community infrastructure which will need to be considered and potentially provided, irrespective of population density. Further details are provided in Section 16.0 of the Background and Appendices.

5.2 How does this strategy measure desired levels of provision?

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* proposes desired standards of provision for both parkland and recreation facilities within the Newcastle LGA. These desired standards have been developed following an assessment of current level of infrastructure provision, expressed community demand, comparison with other similar sized local government areas and a comparison with draft leisure industry benchmarks.

Best practice in recreation planning supports the provision of parkland and recreation infrastructure based on both quantitative and qualitative criteria including; industry benchmarks, minimum sizes, distance and accessibility by residents, proximity of other recreation opportunities, local demand, profile of local community and various design criteria. Thus ensuring a quantitative standard of provision unique to each locality can be developed.

Table 3 and 4 identifies proposed standards of provision for existing and future sport and recreation facilities within the LGA.

These standards are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to act as a tool to guide equitable provision whilst providing for diversity and the meeting of specific needs within local communities. The desired standards aim to guide the type facilities and the triggers for future sport and recreation facility development within the LGA.

To ensure the sustainable provision of sport and recreation facilities, partnerships with community, the business sector and/or government bodies will be essential. Opportunities to attract external funding and develop partnerships will be important in the delivery of higher quality district and regional standard facilities.

The adoption of desired standards of provision will allow for the definition of parkland roles, preparation of service levels and the ongoing capital development of these valuable spaces in line with their intended role within the community.

Table 3: Proposed parkland standards of provision

Park Category	Role	Accessibility	Desirable Size	Characteristics likely to find	Desired Provision
Regional	Defined spaces that attract visitors from across the city and beyond due to their uniqueness, opportunity offered or the scale of events that may be staged.	Expectation is that people will drive to these spaces.	10 + hectares. Size will reflect location, natural setting and special features of individual sites.	Quality landscaping, public art, interpretative signage, appropriate supporting amenities and user facilities. Excellent access for people of all ages and abilities and excellent vehicles access with a substantial frontage to a major road. Highly visible and preferably adjacent to a local town centre.	One per 250,000 people.
District	A park area of substantial size, well developed, offering a broad range of quality recreation opportunities. Central to populations of approximately 15,000 – 25,000.	Not necessarily within walking distance. Expectation is that people will drive to these spaces	1.5 -10 hectares. It should be generally regular in shape, preferably not less than 50m wide.	A range of facilities to cater for a variety of users and recreational activities, including: quality landscaping, signage, playground equipment for toddlers, juniors and older children, seating, shade, paths, toilets, BBQ facilities, and lighting. May support community gardens and/or off leash dog exercise areas in larger sized parks.	One per 15,000 – 25,000 people.
Local	Defined spaces primarily serving a local population. Positioned in a visible location for safety.	300- 500 m/5-10 minutes walking time to majority of households. No busy road crossings to access.	0.5 – 1.5 hectares. Recommended minimum of 0.2 ha for existing parkland unless it adjoins other open space.	A limited range of facilities to support recreational activities including: minor landscaping reflecting existing vegetation, signage, some playground equipment, limited seating, shade and limited paths to enhance play opportunities. May support community gardens and/or off leash dog exercise areas in larger sized parks.	Ideally within 500 meters of residents.

Table 4: Proposed recreation standards of provision

Recreation Infrastructure	Regional Facility	District Facility	Local Facility
Playgrounds	One per 150,000 people	One per 15,000 - 25,000 people	One per 1,500 people
Sports fields	In partnership with and in accordance with local and state sporting association facility guidelines.		One per 1,250 people
Specialised sports fields	In partnership with and in accordance with local and state sporting association facility guidelines.		-
Outdoor netball courts	In partnership with and in accordance with local and state sporting association facility guidelines.		One per 3,000 - 4,000 people
Outdoor basketball courts	-	-	One per 5,000 people
Tennis courts	One per 60,000 people	-	One per 3,000 - 4,000 people
Skate/BMX facilities	One per 150,000 people	One per 25,000 people	One per 10,000 - 15,000 people
Swimming pools	One per 150,000 people	One per 35,000 – 75,000 people	-
Indoor multi – purpose sport centres	One per 250,000 people	One per 50,000 – 100,000 people	-
Community gardens	-	-	In partnership with community and expressed demand.
Dog exercise areas	-	-	One per 5,000 - 10,000 people
Golf course	One per 30,000 people In partnership with commercial sector.		-
Service levels	Highest level of service	Second level of service	Third level of service



6. Parkland and Recreation Supply

6.1 Existing supply of parkland and recreation facilities

There are a range of a sport, leisure and recreation facilities within Newcastle's LGA. *The Parkland and Recreation Strategy* broadly considers the provision of parkland and recreation facilities including sportsgrounds, parks, courts, indoor recreation centre and swimming pools. Ancillary items supporting recreational use of parks and sportsgrounds such as lighting, toilets, shelters, seating, bins, BBQs and signage, although very important and contribute greatly to the community's enjoyment of these spaces, have not been included in this analysis.

The strategy includes a detailed inventory of parkland and recreation facilities within the LGA. The inventory includes land owned by Council, land managed by Council on behalf of the NSW Department of Primary Industries (Crown land) in addition to land parcels considered to perform a parkland function, but not formally zoned as public open space or proposed public open space. Private and educational recreation facilities not managed by Council are also included, as they contribute to recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors in the LGA.

Information was drawn from Council records, sporting and recreational groups and from various websites. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the inventory is accurate and complete, there will inevitably be some facilities that have not been listed in the inventory. They can be added as implementation of the strategies moves forward.

To assist in the identification and assessment of parkland and recreation facilities, it is common practice to define facilities under a facility classification hierarchy. A commonly used hierarchy is to classify facilities in one of the following three classes: Regional, District and Local. The definitions of these classifications are provided below:

Regional facilities attract visitors from across the LGA and beyond. They tend to cater for large numbers of people or teams due to their uniqueness, opportunity offered or the scale of events that may be staged. They are of a high standard and receive the highest levels of service. Foreshore Park is an example of a regional park. Newcastle No. 1 and No.2 sportsgrounds are an example of a regional recreation facility.

District facilities are well developed spaces of substantial size that offer a broad range of quality recreation opportunities. They attract visitors from across a number of suburbs, however they do not have the level of infrastructure that a regional facility has. These spaces receive the second highest level of service. Dixon Park is an example of a district park. Adamstown Sportsground No. 1 is an example of a district recreation facility.

Local facilities are defined spaces which primarily serve a local population. They provide a limited range of facilities to support recreational pursuits and receive the third highest level of service. Vera Wilson Park is an example of a local park. Lindsay Memorial sportsground is an example of a local recreation facility.

It is important to note that a facility may cross over several classifications, in this instance it will be considered as the higher classification, for example if a sporting complex is capable of hosting district competitions but is also used for regular local sporting fixtures then it will be classified as District not Local.

The large majority of facilities provided within the Newcastle LGA are of a local standard.

6.2 Parkland inventory

Parkland General

There are approximately 250 parks and reserves throughout Newcastle's LGA. Parkland range in size from 0.1 hectares (ha) (pocket parks) through to regionally significant parks such as Foreshore Park which are in excess of 10ha and cater to local residents, students and overseas visitors.

Approximately 132 parks (53%) are smaller than the industry benchmark of 0.5 ha for a local park. Approximately 58 parks (23%) are 0.2 ha or smaller in size.

The majority of parks are categorised as 'community' land and are included in the *Local Parks Plan of Management*. Other categories include sportsground, bushland, general community use, natural areas and cultural significance.

Local Parks

Approximately 240 parks within the Newcastle LGA are considered local parks. Local parks range in size from 0.1 ha to 2.0ha. Approximately 53% (132 parks) are smaller than the industry benchmark of 0.5 ha for a local park. The type, quality and quantity of infrastructure located within local parks vary significantly.

District Parks

Eight parks are generally considered as Districts Parks within the Newcastle LGA:

- Centennial Park, Cooks Hill;
- Civic Park - Newcastle;
- Gregson Park - Hamilton;
- Islington Park - Islington;
- Jesmond Park - Lambton;
- Lambton Park - Lambton;
- King Edward Park - Newcastle; and
- Empire Park - Bar Beach.

These Parks are 1.5ha or larger in size, contain higher quality infrastructure than local parks and receive higher levels of maintenance. Whilst not all of these parks contain the same level of infrastructure, they have been developed to the standards which are in excess of local parkland.

Regional Parks

Foreshore Park and Blackbutt Reserve are considered regional parks within the Newcastle LGA.

Foreshore Park is 11ha parkland linking the city centre, Honeysuckle precinct, the harbour, Nobby's Beach and a number of historically significant sites. The quality of facilities and location make Foreshore Park a popular destination for local residents and international visitors alike.

Blackbutt Reserve is a 170 hectare bushland reserve located within the heart of Newcastle. Carnley and Richley recreation reserve areas, located within Blackbutt reserve, provide high quality infrastructure and experiences and caters to local residents, students and overseas visitors.

Glenrock State Recreation Area and Blue Gum Hills Regional Parks (owned and managed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service) are considered regional bushland reserves.

National Park sportsgrounds No. 1 and No.2 are regional level sportsgrounds.

6.3 Recreation facilities inventory

Playground facilities

There are 117 playground facilities in the Newcastle LGA. 106 playground facilities are situated in publicly accessible localities throughout the City. A further 11 are located within inland swimming pools and childcare centres.

Sports fields

There are 124 Council sports fields located throughout the Newcastle's LGA. These consist of:

- 120 senior sized fields;
- 5 junior sized fields.

Sports fields have been developed to a range of standards including:

- 130 local standard;
- 9 district standard; and
- 2 of regional standard.

Sports fields are allocated and used as per the following:

- Soccer – 77 fields;
- Cricket – 74 ovals;
- Rugby League – 19 fields;
- Touch Football/Oztag – 12 fields;
- Rugby Union - 10 fields;
- Athletics – 6 fields;
- Softball – 2 fields;
- AFL – 2 ovals;
- Baseball – 1 field.

61(49%) of sports fields are managed by Community Park Committee's on behalf of Council.

Other provider of sports fields include:

- Department of Education – 15 senior fields;
- University of Newcastle – 5 senior fields;
- TAFE NSW – 2 senior fields;
- Xstrata Coal – 2 senior fields (Bill Potts Oval).

Specialised sports fields

Baseball

Two specialised baseball diamonds are provided at Stephenson Park. This facility accommodates three baseball clubs and is utilised twelve months of the year. All baseball competition within Newcastle is conducted from this facility.

Hockey

Three water based synthetic fields are located at the Newcastle International Hockey Complex, which is leased and managed by Newcastle Hockey Inc. The Newcastle International Hockey Complex is a regional level facility. All hockey competition within Newcastle is conducted from this facility. The quality of this hockey facility is high.

Softball

Two specialised softball diamonds are provided at Stephenson Park. Five additional temporary diamonds are provided on the outer fields, which are utilised by other codes during the winter season.

One specialised softball diamond is provided at The University of Newcastle.

Netball courts

There are 51 Council operated outdoor netball courts located throughout Newcastle.

They are located within nine facilities, including:

- Dalby Oval, Stockton;
- Grange Ave Oval, Maryland;
- Kentish Park, New Lambton;
- National Park, Newcastle West;
- Nesbit Park, Kotara;
- Sanctuary Oval, Fletcher;
- Tarro Oval, Tarro;
- Tuxford Park, Shortland;
- Upper Reserve, Wallsend.

All facilities contain two asphalt courts, except for Upper Reserve (3) Kentish (6) and National Park (32).

National Park is a regional level facility. All competition within Newcastle is conducted from this facility.

There are approximately 22 netball courts located within primary and secondary schools throughout Newcastle.

Basketball courts

There are nine Council managed outdoor basketball courts located throughout the City. They consist of four full sized courts and five half courts. These facilities include:

- Beresfield (full court);
- Fletcher (full court);
- Maryland (full court);
- Stockton (full court);
- Islington (half court);
- Kotara (half court);
- Maryland (half court);
- New Lambton (half court); and
- Warabrook (half court).

Tennis courts

Seventeen tennis facilities are located throughout Newcastle. These include:

- Adamstown Tennis Courts;
- Beresfield Tennis Court;
- Carrington Tennis Courts;
- Centennial Park Tennis Courts;
- District Park Tennis Centre;
- Empire Park Tennis Courts;
- Hamilton Park Tennis;
- Hillcrest Tennis Courts;
- Kotara Park Tennis Courts;
- Lambton Park Tennis;
- Learmonth Park Tennis Courts;
- Merewether High School Courts;
- Minmi Tennis Court;
- Newcastle City Tennis Centre;
- Newcastle Hill Tennis Courts;
- Sanctuary Tennis Courts;, and
- Stockton Tennis Courts.

Thirteen tennis courts are council owned facilities. The largest tennis complex within the LGA is District Park, Broadmeadow. It contains 29 courts and is managed by Broadmeadow Tennis Club under a lease with NSW Department of Lands. Broadmeadow is a regional level facility.

Merewether High School has four synthetic tennis courts.

These seventeen facilities contain 79 courts; 68 are synthetic, 9 are asphalt and 2 are grass.

Bat ball courts

There are three Bat Ball courts in the Newcastle LGA. They are located at Empire Park, Bar Beach.

Skate/BMX facilities

There are 10 skate/BMX facilities in the Newcastle LGA. These include:

- Bar Beach/Empire Park;
- Birmingham Gardens;
- Islington;
- Elernmore Vale;
- Mayfield;
- Maryland;

- New Lambton;
- South Newcastle Beach;
- Stockton; and
- Wallsend.

These facilities accommodate BMX, skate and in-line activities. Bar Beach and Wallsend are district level facilities. All other facilities are classified as local.

Golf courses

There are three golf courses in Newcastle. These include:

- Beresfield Golf Club (11 holes);
- Merewether Golf Club (18 holes); and
- Shortland Waters Golf Club (18 holes).

The Beresfield golf facility is owned and operated by Council. Merewether and Shortland are privately owned and managed. Two other 18 hole golf courses border the Newcastle LGA, located at Fern Bay (Newcastle Golf Course) and West Wallsend (Sugar Valley). A golf driving range is located at Shortland.

Swimming pools

Outdoor Pools

There are five public outdoor swimming complexes in Newcastle. These include:

- Beresfield - 50m, learners and toddlers pool, spectator grandstand, playground, giant inflatable, BBQ;
- Stockton - 50m and learners pool, playground, giant inflatable, BBQ;
- Mayfield - 50m and learners, playground, giant inflatable, BBQ;
- Lambton - 50m, learners + toddlers pool, aquatic playground, water slide, water polo, diving pool and tower, spectator grandstand.
- Wallsend - 50m, learners + toddlers pool, spectator grandstand, playground, giant inflatable, beach volleyball court, BBQ.

A 30m private pool is located at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Honeysuckle. Limited public access is available via membership.

Ocean Baths

There are two ocean baths located at Newcastle and Merewether.

Indoor Pools

There are three privately owned and operated indoor swimming pools.

These include:

- The Forum University of Newcastle (Callahan), 50m heated;
- Viking Health Club, Elmore Vale, 25m indoor heated; and
- Arnolds swim centre, The Junction, 25m indoor heated.

Indoor sport centres

Howzat Newcastle Indoor Sports

This facility contains eight synthetic multi-use courts. It accommodates a variety of indoor sports such as indoor cricket, soccer, netball, beach volleyball and futsal.

Broadmeadow PCYC

The facility contains one basketball court, gymnastics area, weight room and offers a range of sporting, cultural and youth orientated activities.

Newcastle Basketball Stadium

The facility contains a six-court complex and is the home of basketball in the Hunter region. The facility accommodates a variety of indoor sports such as basketball, volleyball, floor ball, netball and futsal.

The Forum, Newcastle University (Callaghan Campus)

The facility contains two multi-purpose courts, indoor climbing wall, 50m indoor heated pool, cardio studio and gym. The multi-purpose courts accommodate activities such as basketball, volleyball, netball and badminton.

Sport stadiums

Hunter Stadium is an international standard facility, managed by the state government through Venues NSW. This facility provides a home venue for the National Rugby League's Newcastle Knights and Football Federation League's Newcastle Jets teams. The facility also accommodates other national and international sporting events, concerts and functions.

Trails, footpaths, shared paths and bicycle lanes

There is approximately 260km of footpaths and 60km of dedicated shared pathway/bicycle trails throughout Newcastle's LGA. An extensive network of mountain bike and walking trails is located in Glenrock State Conservation Area. Blackbutt Reserve contains over 10km of dedicated walking nature trails.

Other sport specific facilities

The Newcastle LGA contains other sport and recreation facilities which provide a range of opportunities, including gyms, fitness centres, squash courts etc. A number of recreational activities such as dance, martial arts, gymnastics, yoga, tai chi etc are staged within community halls, surf clubs and other spaces which have not been catalogued in this strategy. Sport specific facilities include:

- Petanque & Croquet courts (Cooks Hill, Elmore Vale, Newcastle)
- Pistol, Rifle and Archery range (Waratah West)
- Lawn bowling greens (17 facilities / 41 greens)

Dog exercise areas

There are 17 dog off the leash areas throughout Newcastle. These include:

- West End Park, Adamstown;
- Elizabeth St Reserve, Carrington;
- Elmore Vale Park, Elmore Vale;
- Islington Park, Islington;
- Michael Street Reserve, Lambton;
- Maryland Drive Reserve, Maryland;
- Purdue Park, Mayfield;
- Dixon Park Reserve, Merewether;
- Nesca Park, Newcastle;
- King Edward Park, Newcastle;
- Horseshoe Beach, Newcastle East;
- Acacia Ave Reserve, Lambton;
- Ballast Ground, Stockton;
- Pitt Street Reserve, Stockton;
- Tarro Recreation Area, Tarro;
- Upper Reserve, Wallsend; and
- Braye Park, Waratah.

Community gardens

There are eight community gardens located throughout Newcastle.

These include:

- Ernie Hughes Memorial Garden, Mayfield;
- Figtree Garden, Wickham;
- Hamilton Garden, Hamilton South;
- Kooragang City Farm, Ash Island;
- Lambton Multicultural Garden;
- Silsoe Street Garden, Mayfield;
- March Street Gardens, Kotara; and
- Sandhill Garden, Newcastle.

7. Parkland and Recreation Demand

7.1 Drivers of demand

Population increases and demographic change

Future population growth will result in an additional 14,000 residents by 2026. By 2036, the population is forecast to be 180,643, an increase of 25,760 persons (16.6%).

The proportion of children and older adults residing in Newcastle is projected to significantly increase over the coming years. Whilst this will affect certain suburbs more than others, there will be significantly different patterns of use and demand for recreation facilities and services.

Increases in the number of children and young people will progressively place pressure on active recreation facilities. For example, demand for sportsgrounds, specialised recreation facilities such as skate parks, netball courts, pools and activity opportunities including parks and playgrounds is likely to be high in these areas.

Conversely, increasing numbers of older people will progressively place pressure on passive recreation spaces and facilities. The demand for non-contact activities such as walking, golf, lawn bowls, swimming, group exercise and contemplative pursuits in parkland areas is likely to be sustained or increased.

The provision of additional facilities and/or increasing the capacity of existing parkland and recreation facilities for future residents will be required, and will be a significant challenge for Council.

Section 13.0 within the Background and Appendices provides more information on demographic trends and forecasts.

Density increases

The development of medium to high density dwelling areas within urban renewal corridors represents a major component of projected population growth within the city. Private open space within medium to high density dwellings is often limited to smaller yards, decks and balconies. Accordingly, population intensification is likely to increase pressure on existing parkland and recreation facilities, particularly where existing space is already limited.

Sporting pursuits and healthy lifestyles

Sport and recreation is an important feature of the Australian lifestyle and plays a large part in the lives of many Australians. Successful performances on the international stage, the fun of participation, increased awareness of the benefits of physical activity in preventing many chronic diseases and treating mental health disorders, providing opportunities for social interaction, developing healthy bodies and assisting older people in maintaining quality of life and independence continues to generate demand for a range of facilities.

7.2 Demand for parkland, sport and recreation facilities

To gain a broad understanding of potential demand for parkland, recreation and sporting related facilities, a number of factors were considered, including:

- National and NSW participation figures;
- Local participation figures and growth rates;
- Facility allocations and utilisation rates; and
- Expressed community demand and preferences.

The following section provides a summary of national and local factors affecting community demand for parkland, sport and recreation facilities in the Newcastle LGA. A more detailed analysis is provided in Section 14.0 of the Background and Appendices.

National recreation trends and demand

- Walking, aerobics/fitness, swimming, cycling and running continue to experience the highest rates of participation for people aged 15 years+ throughout Australia.
- Aerobics/fitness, golf, outdoor soccer, netball, and Australian rules football are the most popular organised sports and physical activities.
- Of non-organised sports and physical activities, participation is highest in walking, aerobics/fitness activities, swimming, cycling and running.
- Walking experiences the highest total participation rate for both females and males. Almost all participation in walking is non-organised.
- For children aged 5 to 14 years, swimming/diving, netball, Australian Rules football and dancing are the most participated in organised physical activity outside of school hours.
- The three most popular sports for girls are dancing, swimming/diving and netball, whilst for boys outdoor soccer, swimming/diving and Australian rules football are the most participated in organised physical activity.
- Data identifies the continued shift towards unorganised and unstructured recreation pursuits for adults.

Local recreation trends and demand

- Running/jogging/walking, visiting parks/gardens/community gardens, enjoying picnics and BBQs, swimming and cycling were the most participated in leisure or recreation activities.
- The beach foreshore, cycle/walking trails and local parks are the most regularly used leisure and recreation areas/facilities.
- Local parks were the most used recreation facility within suburbs.
- The parks most visited include Foreshore Park, King Edward Park, Blackbutt Reserve, Jesmond Park and Islington Park.
- The convenient location/proximity to home/work are the most popular reason a park or reserve is used.
- The provision of more personal time was identified as the most important factor that would encourage people to undertake more recreational activities.
- The top priorities for future development were cycle paths/walking trails/foreshore promenade, local parks, beach/foreshore and playgrounds.
- Increased/better/cheaper parking, additional cycle ways/bike paths and increase/better facilities were identified as the key actions that would make recreation or leisure experiences more enjoyable.
- Use of sportsgrounds for organised sporting competition is high. Demand for access to sportsgrounds is high.
- Participation rates for organised sporting activities have increased over the past 5 years.
- Participation growth is forecast to continue due to a range of factors including; increased residential population, popularity of code and the development of new sport formats e.g. midweek competitions.
- Sporting codes have restricted membership due to the inability to access additional and/or adequately developed sportsgrounds.
- Access to and the use of school facilities by community sporting groups for training/competition is limited.

Local sporting trends and demand

As part of the development of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*, sporting associations, tennis clubs and park committees responsible for managing Council sport grounds provided information regarding participation and growth rates of each sporting user. Current participation numbers, past and forecast growth rates and expected driver of future participation growth are discussed in Section 15.0 of the Background and Appendices.

The key findings in relation to participation and growth for organised sports included:

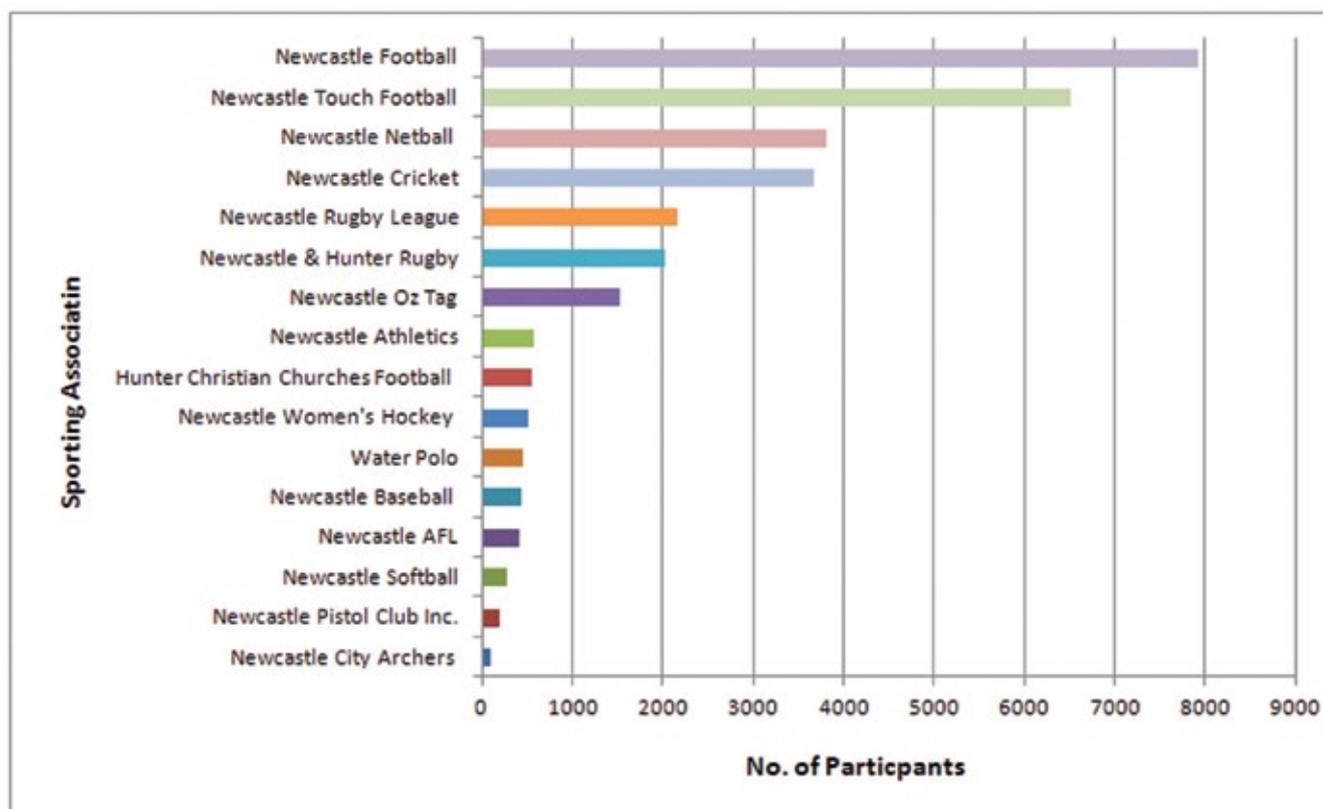
- 78% of Newcastle sporting associations experienced increased growth in participation over the previous 5 years;

- 68% of Newcastle sporting associations projected increased growth in participation over the forthcoming 5 years; and
- Only 21% of Newcastle sporting associations projected slight increase in growth in participation over the forthcoming 5 years.

Figure 4 identifies the number of participants registered with each major Newcastle Sports Association throughout the 2011/ 2012 summer and 2012 winter season. This data highlights the following:

- The numbers of participants involved in outdoor football (soccer) is almost double that of any other sport;
- The increasing popularity of touch football and Oz Tag; and
- The continued popularity of netball as the major winter sport for females.

Figure 4: Newcastle Sports Association 2011/ 2012 participation numbers



Source: Newcastle Sports Associations survey, 2013

Note: Not all sports have a central governing association. In those instances, participation numbers from a number of individual clubs have been combined. 'Newcastle Athletics' includes participation numbers from Adamstown - New Lambton, Wallsend and Newcastle Veteran's Athletics club. 'Newcastle Water Polo' includes Newcastle and Central Newcastle Water Polo clubs. 'Newcastle Cricket' includes Newcastle Junior Cricket, Newcastle District Cricket and Newcastle City and Suburban Cricket. 'Newcastle Touch Football' includes Wallsend, District Park, Beresfield and Newcastle competitions.

A number of factors identified Newcastle Sports Association as likely drivers of future participation growth.

These included:

- Increased residential population growth throughout LGA;
- Popularity of sporting code; and
- Increased attraction and access to the sport through the development of new sport formats e.g. women’s competitions in traditionally male only sports, mid-week competitions, short duration and social competitions (8 weeks) etc.

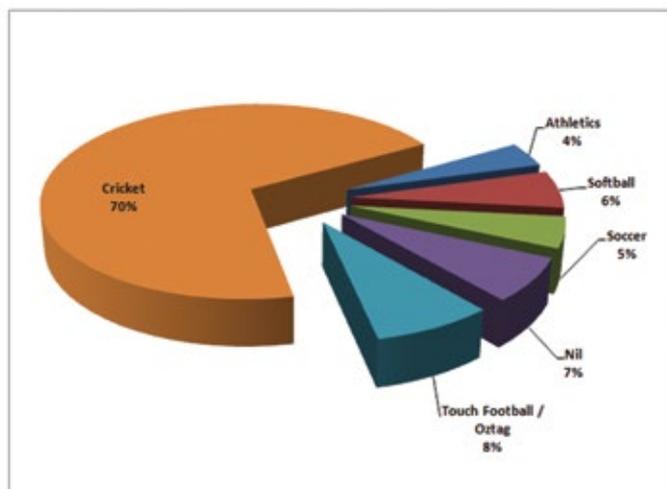
Local sports field allocations

A further indication of local demand is the annual allocation and use of sportsgrounds by local Newcastle sporting associations. Appendix C of the

Background and Appendices provides a detailed account of sportsground allocations for the 20011/12 summer season and 2012 winter season. Figures 5 and 6 provide the following key insights:

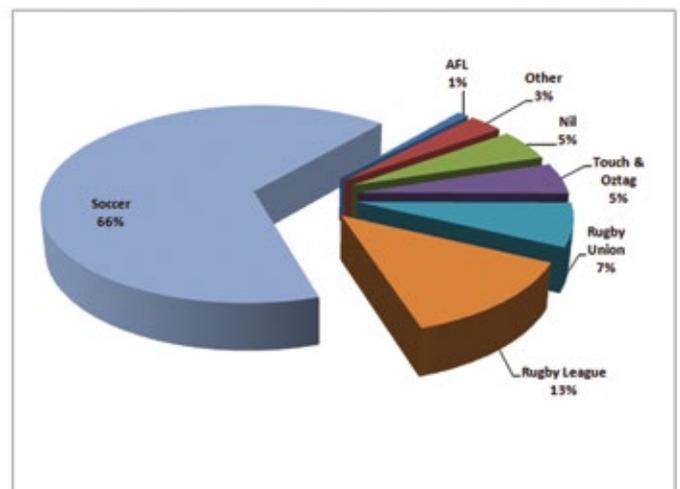
- Cricket (70%) and Football (66%) utilise the highest number of turf sports fields annually.
- For many codes, the traditional 6 month winter/ summer season is evolving into 12 month operations. This has increased demand for facilities and the pressure for the re-allocation of sportsgrounds to non – traditional seasonal users e.g. from cricket to football during the summer season.
- A number of sportsgrounds are not utilised throughout the summer and winter seasons annually. With appropriate infrastructure, they may have the potential to meet the high level of demand that exists for sports grounds.

Figure 5: Summer 2011/12 sportsground allocation



Source: The City of Newcastle, 2013

Figure 6: Winter 2012 sportsground allocations



Source: The City of Newcastle, 2013

8. Challenges and Opportunities

8.1 Challenges

Financial sustainability

Council's throughout NSW are facing significant challenges in terms of providing financially sustainable services to the community. Council has responded to these challenges by delivering a series of strategic documents to identify clear priorities and efficiency improvements.

Tighter council budgets challenged by a significant asset portfolio, infrastructure backlog and increasing costs associated with the provision and maintenance of the range of services requested by the community will continue to be a significant challenge.

The allocation of Federal and State government grants, improved financial performance of community assets, in addition to partnerships with business and the wider community, will be essential in delivering quality and sustainable parkland and recreation facilities.

Sustainable facility management and community organisations

Over the past decade, the coordination of sporting clubs and the management of recreation facilities by community organisations has become increasingly complex.

Additional Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislative requirements, increasing operational and maintenance costs, greater financial accountability, increasing expectations from participants and parents, changing patterns of sport participation, the decrease in volunteers and the need for facilities to become more financially sustainable have all contributed to this challenge.

To ensure the efficient management of recreation facilities within the community, it will be essential that facility managers/committees have clear governance structures, business planning, financial management skills and adequate training and support from Council.

Ensuring sporting clubs have appropriate support will be vital to the ongoing sustainability of these volunteer organisations and continuing the important service they provide to the community.

Managing community expectations

The Newcastle community is socially diverse with residents expressing high expectations for quality facilities and services. Balancing the desired standard of service and maintenance expected by the community and visitors with the need to be financially responsible, affordable, and sustainable will be a critical issue for Council in managing recreation infrastructure. A clear framework to guide investment, development and management is important.

Biodiversity protection

Parkland protects and support a number of significant biodiversity values including natural landscapes, significant flora and fauna and various ecosystems. Population growth, urban development, habitat loss and fragmentation, conflicting use and unsustainable land management practices are placing significant pressure on the city's biodiversity reserves. The protection and enhancement of these biodiversity values within parkland will be critical for the sustainability of the Newcastle ecology.

8.2 Opportunities

Partnerships with education sector

Public and private schools contain varying levels of recreational facilities. Expanding and improving access to these existing facilities for community use outside of school hours, particularly sports field, has the potential to meet the significant demand that exists within the community.

Improved capacity of facilities

Council provides a range of a sport, leisure and recreation facilities. Whilst this portfolio contains a number of quality facilities, most recreation facilities have only been developed to a local standard.

Improving the quality of infrastructure through upgrades and the adoption of new technologies, such as synthetic playing surfaces, will increase facility capacity, allow for increased levels of use, the generation of new revenue streams and may contribute to lower operational costs.

Reduction of service levels

Decreasing the mowing and maintenance of parkland and recreation facilities provides an opportunity to achieve costs savings. Furthermore, through defining the function of each open space parcel more clearly and aligning the maintenance level to the role, potential service levels can be reduced for parcels whose main function is not recreation e.g. stormwater management.

Disposal of excess parkland

The disposal of un-required parkland, has the ability to reduce operational costs and create a capital development funding source.

Leasing of parkland and recreation facilities

The leasing or licensing of parkland and recreation facilities may allow Council to transfer a proportion of the maintenance responsibilities to external providers and subsequently reduce maintenance costs. In return external providers benefit from a higher level of autonomy in the management and operation of the facility.

Recreation facilities that have been developed for a specific use (e.g. tennis court) and/or have a limited number of users as compared to a facility which is utilised by multiple groups (winter and summer sporting codes etc) provides opportunities for potential costs savings through leasing and licensing.

While this management approach can minimise Council's management costs, it must not be considered a method of reducing council's responsibility.

Increase awareness of facilities

Comprehensive and accessible information on what is available within Newcastle's LGA would assist to connect both residents and visitors to facilities. Ongoing promotion and marketing of parkland and recreation facilities and the many benefits of healthy lifestyles would also help to raise awareness of these opportunities and encourage participation.

Sponsorship

Opportunities exist for Council to attract external revenue through sponsorship. Signage at parkland and recreation facilities, on uniforms and recreation equipment, in addition, to sponsorship of grant programs and events may generate new revenue streams.

Community trusts

The establishment of a trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent acts from community members and business to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives provides opportunities for the generation of new revenue streams. Donations to the Trusts provide an opportunity for people to give something back to their community, with tax deductions also possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act.

9. Parkland and Recreation Assessment

This section provides a summary of parkland and recreation facility supply, demand, trends, participation data, community consultation and feedback received throughout the development of the strategy. The analysis identifies the key issues discovered and provides recommendations aimed at informing actions and priorities for the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*. See Section 18.0 within the Background and Appendices for more details.



Table 5: Parkland and Recreation Assessment

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Parkland	<p>There are approximately 250 parks in the Newcastle LGA. The size of parks range from 0.1 ha to over 170ha. Foreshore Park and Blackbutt Reserve are considered regional parks.</p> <p>Glenrock State Recreation Area and Blue Gum Hills Regional Parks are considered regional bushland reserves.</p> <p>Eight parks are generally considered as district parks. These parks are 1.5 ha or larger in size, contain higher quality infrastructure.</p> <p>Most parks are generally considered local parks.</p> <p>Parks are located in a variety of spaces including; dedicated public reserves, sports fields, road reserves and drainage reserves.</p> <p>Approximately 132 parks (53%) are smaller than the industry benchmark of 0.5 ha for a local park.</p> <p>Approximately 58 parks (23%) are 0.2 ha or smaller in size.</p>	<p>Use of parkland is high. Community survey results indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency of use and value for local parks, • high frequency of use and popularity of district and regional parks. <p>There is high demand for access to quality parkland which contains a wide range and standard of facilities to allow for variety of use e.g. playgrounds, seating, shade and exercise equipment.</p> <p>Research identified the most popular and utilised parks were district parks, which are larger in size, contain a range of recreational infrastructure and provide for a greater range of experiences.</p>	<p>Parkland is generally well distributed throughout the LGA. Most residents are within 500m of some form of parkland, however there are some areas within the LGA where this distance is considerably greater.</p> <p>A number of factors such as gradient, railway lines, major roads, creeks and storm water channels provide barriers to parkland access.</p> <p>The amount of parkland provided varies significantly throughout each planning areas. Many planning areas have low level of parkland per person.</p> <p>The size of local parkland within the LGA is generally small. Over 50% of parks are smaller than the recommended industry benchmark for a local park (0.5 ha). Open space planning suggests that parkland should be at least 0.2ha in size to be able to provide sufficient space for a range of recreational activities.</p> <p>The quality of local parkland, including the amount and level of infrastructure provided varies significantly. This appears to be affected by a number of constraints including topography, gradient, flooding, and size.</p> <p>To support needs of the community, continued improvements to existing parkland is required.</p> <p>Opportunities for the upgrading and development of a number of local parks are limited in many areas due to physical constraints.</p> <p>The development of higher quality district parks which provide a range of active and passive infrastructure will be necessary to meet community needs and mitigate local deficiencies.</p> <p>Improving connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland will be essential to minimise access barriers.</p>	<p>Develop new and review existing master plans to guide the upgrade of local and district parks into quality district parks to meet changing needs.</p> <p>Identify a site for the development of a district park within Maryland, Shortland and Wallsend planning areas.</p> <p>Continue to plan for the provision of a range of parkland recreation facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor.</p> <p>Improve connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland.</p> <p>Review the future role of local parks less than 0.2 hectares in size and refer to Council's Asset Review and Implementation Plan (ARIP).</p> <p>Develop parkland and recreation facility service levels which are aligned with facility roles and provide operational efficiencies.</p> <p>Where Council choses not to sell un-required parkland, undertake an expression of interest for the external management of undersized parkland by community groups for community gardens as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging Place Making initiatives.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities for greater commercial use and advertising within parkland, recreation facilities and services.</p> <p>Review and amend the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 and Newcastle Development Control Plan 2012 to allow for greater commercial use and advertising within parkland and recreation facilities.</p> <p>Develop a commercial fitness operators policy and licence to manage and facilitate commercial use of public space.</p> <p>Review the TCoN Sports, Parks Booking and Foreshore Usage Policies.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with resident groups and community organisations that support volunteer involvement in parkland maintenance.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to encourage private sector/commercial operators to provide low cost fitness activities in public spaces.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive promotion and marketing plan aimed at promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles and the availability of recreation facilities and opportunities within community.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive parkland and recreation directory on councils website to improve access and awareness of opportunities.</p> <p>Continue to support and attract the staging of State, National and International events within Newcastle LGA.</p> <p>Establish a Trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent donations from community and business to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with community organisations managing specialised sporting facilities to support the ongoing provision of these facilities.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Playground facilities	<p>There are 117 playground facilities in the Newcastle LGA.</p> <p>106 playground facilities are situated in publicly accessible localities throughout the City. A further 11 are located within inland swimming pools and childcare centres.</p> <p>Play equipment can consist of 1, 2 or 3 pieces of individual pieces of equipment, one playground unit or a combination of the two.</p> <p>Many facilities are similar in design.</p> <p>There are few playgrounds that cater for people with a disability and older children.</p> <p>Playground provision represents one playground per 1,469 people.</p>	<p>Use of playgrounds is high.</p> <p>Community survey results indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency of use and value of local playgrounds, • high frequency of use and popularity of district and regional parks. <p>There is high demand for improvements to playground facilities to allow for diversity and greater levels of challenge and stimulation.</p> <p>Demand for playground facilities is protected to remain high as the population of young children continues to increase within new and existing residential areas.</p>	<p>Play equipment is reasonably well distributed throughout the LGA.</p> <p>The quality and size of play equipment varies throughout planning areas. Some locations have been provided with playground units while others have a number of small and separate pieces of play equipment. There does not appear to be a current hierarchy guiding the consistent level of provision or standard of playground development.</p> <p>Many facilities are similar in design and there are few that cater for people with a disability and children older than 10 years.</p> <p>The existing district level playgrounds are very small in comparison to other councils.</p> <p>Whilst the playgrounds located with district and regional parks are of higher standard than local playgrounds, these playgrounds, with the exception of Blackbutt Reserve, have not been developed to a district or regional standard.</p> <p>The development of a regional playground to serve the LGA, in addition to district playgrounds within each planning area, which incorporate opportunities for people with a disability, will be important to providing quality play experiences and meeting community demand.</p> <p>Comparison to industry benchmarks suggests the current provision rate for the population is low.</p>	<p>Develop a regional playground at Foreshore Park.</p> <p>Upgrade playgrounds within identified district parks to a district standard. Incorporate opportunities for people of all abilities.</p> <p>Develop a local playground action plan to guide planning and provision of local play equipment.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Sports fields	<p>There are 124 Council sports fields located throughout the City of Newcastle.</p> <p>61 (49%) of sports fields are managed by Community Park Committee's on behalf of Council.</p> <p>Other provider of sports fields include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education • University of Newcastle • TAFE NSW • Xstrata Coal (Bill Potts Oval). <p>Sportsground provision, excluding education and private facilities represents one field per 1,256 people.</p> <p>Sportsground provision, including education and private facilities represents one field per 1,066 people.</p>	<p>Participation in organised sports continues to increase. A number of sportsgrounds experience high levels of use, potentially over-use. The poor quality of a number of local sports fields limits their level of use, especially during wet weather.</p> <p>There is demand for improved facilities to allow for maximum use of grounds e.g. drainage, floodlights, amenities. There is a backlog of infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>There is a demand for the development of district – level facilities from a number of sports e.g. rugby league, netball, AFL.</p> <p>Demand is likely to remain strong as population continues to increase, both within new residential estates and urban growth corridors.</p> <p>Greater participation in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of sports field improvement projects was requested by sporting codes.</p> <p>The distribution of keys, wet weather policy and the requirements guiding the upgrading of Council facilities by community groups were identified as key issues that need to be reviewed.</p> <p>Increased communication between Council and the sporting community was requested by sporting codes.</p>	<p>Demand for use of sports fields is high. Participation has increased and majority of codes project continued growth in membership.</p> <p>Growth will generate further pressure to improve the quality of existing sports fields and the development of new facilities to accommodate new clubs.</p> <p>The establishment of partnerships with the NSW Education Department and local schools will be essential in meeting future demand. The utilisation of new technologies which increase capacity of existing sports fields will also be a key strategic approach to meeting active sports needs</p> <p>The development of criteria for the prioritisation of capital projects would significantly improve decision making transparency.</p> <p>Including key stakeholders in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of sports field improvement projects may encourage partnerships and potentially increase the level of funding from sporting organisations and government.</p> <p>There are a number of differences in Council managed and community managed fields. This has created confusion and inequities amongst sporting codes. The alignment of management procedures is necessary to remove inconsistencies and confusion.</p> <p>Councils Recreation Facilities Program which provides dollar for dollar funding to sporting groups for minor capital projects is a good example of successful partnerships.</p>	<p>Continue to plan for the provision of a range of parkland recreation facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor</p> <p>Develop a district sports facility plan to guide the coordinated planning and development of district sporting facilities.</p> <p>Establish a partnership with Xstrata Coal for land at Creek Road, Maryland for the development of district recreation complex to serve the future population.</p> <p>Commence detailed design of a district recreation complex at Creek Road, Wallsend.</p> <p>Investigate the utilisation of new technologies to increase capacity of existing sports fields.</p> <p>Review and update TCoN sportsground hierarchy to reflect the changing needs of the sporting community.</p> <p>Develop an assessment criteria to guide the prioritisation of proposed capital projects, in particular sports field improvement projects</p> <p>Review guidelines for the management of recreation facilities by community park committees. Update guidelines to reflect the objectives of greater financial sustainability, utilisation and performance of Council facilities.</p> <p>Establish formal partnerships the NSW Education Department/local schools to increase community access to recreation facilities to meet future demand.</p> <p>Establish a formal network/ forum with Newcastle sporting associations to strengthen relationships and partnership development.</p> <p>Include key stakeholders in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of projects.</p> <p>Enter into financial partnerships with regional and state sporting organisations, the business community and government for recreation facility development.</p> <p>Identify recreation facilities that have the potential to be externally managed as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging additional private investment.</p> <p>Develop a facility leasing policy and guidelines to facilitate the leasing of district sporting facilities, which are enclosed or where there is a predominant use or single user.</p> <p>Review and update Council's Sports Policy, Parks Booking Policy and Foreshore Usage Policy.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive promotion and marketing plan aimed at promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles and the availability of recreation facilities and opportunities within community. Identify opportunities offered by all recreation providers within promotional initiatives.</p> <p>Expand Council's <i>Place Making Program</i> to promote grants for the provision of physical exercise programs to the community.</p> <p>Establish a Trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent donations from community and business to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Specialised sports fields	<p>Baseball</p> <p>2 specialised baseball diamonds are provided at Stephenson Park.</p> <p>This facility accommodates 3 baseball clubs and is utilised 12 months of the year.</p>	<p>Participation has increased in recent years.</p> <p>There is demand for improvements to the facility to allow for maximum use.</p> <p>There is demand for the allocation of a sportsground for a 'homeless' club which is currently utilising Stephenson Park. The club was previously utilising a private sportsground which has subsequently been sold and redeveloped.</p> <p>The quality of the facilities is low.</p> <p>Diamonds contain back nets and outer-field fencing, but are not floodlight to permit competition matches.</p>	<p>There is a reasonable level of baseball facility provision within the LGA.</p> <p>The baseball diamonds located at Stephenson Park are of a good standard.</p> <p>To support the needs of baseball within the region, continued improvements of existing facility is required. The installation of floodlights at this venue allowing night competition matches and the provision of a sportsground for a 'homeless club" are the key improvements that would benefit the sport.</p>	<p>Develop a sports facility improvement plan which identifies opportunities for the upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional codes, users and the changing needs of the community.</p>
	<p>Hockey</p> <p>3 water – based synthetic fields are located at Newcastle International Hockey Complex.</p> <p>Newcastle International Hockey Complex is a regional level facility. All hockey competition within Newcastle is conducted from this facility.</p> <p>The quality of the hockey facility is high.</p>	<p>Participation in Hockey has continued to increase in recent years.</p> <p>The facility experience high levels of use, and accommodated a range of competition including local, regional and state.</p> <p>Demand is likely to remain strong due to an increasing population, and increases in the popularity of hockey as a result of Hockey NSW initiatives.</p>	<p>There is a good level of provision of hockey fields within the LGA.</p> <p>This facility has been developed on Crown land by Newcastle Hockey Inc. a community organisation, whom are responsible for the management, maintenance and capital improvements.</p> <p>This facility has the capacity to accommodate additional use however this will generate additional wear reducing longevity of synthetic surfaces. The impact of short – term growth will need to be carefully monitored.</p> <p>Capital improvements are undertaken and funded by hockey members. The costs to replace synthetic surfaces are high. No financial or in-kind support is provided by Council.</p> <p>Financial support from Council to assist with the ongoing provision of this facility is the key improvement that would benefit the sport.</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities to provide greater support to other community recreation facility providers within the LGA to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community.</p>
	<p>Softball</p> <p>2 specialised Softball diamonds are provided at Stephenson Park.</p> <p>5 additional temporary diamonds are provided on the outer fields, which are utilised by other codes during the winter season.</p>	<p>Participation has increased moderately in recent years.</p> <p>There is demand for Stephenson Park to be accessible to Softball 12 months of the year.</p> <p>There is demand for improved facilities to allow for maximum use of facility, especially floodlights.</p> <p>Future demand is projected to remain stable.</p>	<p>Stephenson Pak serves as a district / regional level facility, but the softball infrastructure has not been developed to this standard.</p> <p>To support the needs of softball within the region, the installation of floodlights allowing night competition matches, an upgrade of backstop nets and greater access to outside fields for matches is required. These capital improvements are projected to meet future demand.</p>	<p>Develop a sports facility improvement plan which identifies opportunities for the upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional codes, users and the changing needs of the community.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Netball courts	<p>There are 51 Council operated outdoor netball courts located throughout Newcastle.</p> <p>They are located within 9 facilities.</p> <p>All facilities contain 2 asphalt courts, except for Upper Reserve (3) Kentish (6) and National Park (32).</p> <p>National Park is a regional level facility. All competition within Newcastle is conducted from this facility.</p> <p>There are approximately 22 netball courts located within Primary and Secondary schools throughout Newcastle.</p> <p>Netball court provision represents one court per 3,053 people.</p>	<p>Participation has increased in recent years.</p> <p>There is demand for improvements to the existing facility to allow for maximum use.</p> <p>The National Park Plan of Management allows the development of an additional 3 courts to meet future growth.</p> <p>There is demand for a district level netball facility to be developed in the western growth corridor to meet the needs of the future population.</p> <p>There is demand for the provision of a no -interest loan for the development an indoor netball facility to accommodate higher level competition and wet weather training needs.</p> <p>Demand for netball courts is likely to remain strong as population continues to increase, both within new residential estates and urban growth corridors.</p>	<p>The concentration of courts at National Park to facilitate weekend competition has resulted in inequitable distribution of local courts throughout the LGA.</p> <p>As a result recreational netball does not appear to be adequately provided for throughout the LGA.</p> <p>Comparison to industry benchmarks suggests the total provision rate for the population is adequate.</p> <p>The quality of the netball facilities at National Park is high, but considered generally poor in the other locations.</p> <p>The location of some courts do not encourage community use due to lack of passive surveillance, peripheral lighting.</p> <p>There is some community use of school courts.</p> <p>The provision of hard courts to allow for recreational netball opportunities within new residential estates and urban growth corridors in addition to the existing communities will be necessary to meet the needs of the population.</p>	<p>Provide pathways, bicycle lanes, fitness equipment and courts to encourage informal and unstructured recreation participation.</p> <p>Develop a sports facility improvement plan which identifies opportunities for the upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional codes, users and the changing needs of the community.</p> <p>Develop a district sports facility plan to guide the coordinated approach, planning and development of district sporting facilities.</p> <p>Develop assessment criteria to guide the prioritisation of proposed capital projects, in particular sports field improvement projects.</p>
Basketball courts	<p>There are nine Council managed outdoor basketball courts located throughout Newcastle's LGA.</p> <p>They consist of four full-sized courts and five half-courts.</p> <p>Basketball court provision represents one court per 28,310 people.</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence suggests social use of basketball facilities is relatively high.</p> <p>There is likely to be a demand for local recreational level basketball courts to meet the needs of the increasing future population, particularly young people.</p>	<p>Comparison to industry benchmarks suggests the total provision rate for the population is inadequate. The location of some courts do not encourage community use due to lack of passive surveillance and/or peripheral lighting.</p> <p>The provision of hard courts to allow for recreational basketball opportunities within new residential estates and urban growth corridors in addition to the existing communities will be necessary.</p> <p>The development of courts within district parks and other high use recreation precincts provide an opportunity to co-locate with other youth orientated facilities.</p> <p>Retrofitting existing recreational netball courts with dual-use basketball/netball goal posts and line marking may provide a relatively inexpensive way of filling existing gaps in provision.</p>	<p>Continue to plan for the provision of a range of parkland recreation facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor.</p> <p>Provide pathways, bicycle lanes, fitness equipment and courts to encourage informal and unstructured recreation participation.</p> <p>Develop a sports facility improvement plan which identifies opportunities for the upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional codes, users and the changing needs of the community.</p> <p>Prepare a youth facilities strategy, which provides strategic direction on the development of youth facilities, including courts.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Tennis courts	<p>17 tennis facilities are located throughout Newcastle.</p> <p>13 tennis courts are Council owned facilities.</p> <p>The largest tennis complex is District Park, Broadmeadow. Broadmeadow is a regional level facility.</p> <p>These 17 facilities contain 79 courts, 68 are synthetic, 9 are asphalt and 2 are grass.</p> <p>Total tennis court provision represents one court per 1,971 people.</p>	<p>Specific visitation/use statistics on court use and hire is not currently collected and membership of a club or with Tennis NSW is not required to hire courts. Anecdotal information from management committee indicates use of tennis courts is high.</p> <p>Nationally, participation has steadily declined over the past 10 years, but tennis still attracts high levels of participation in children and adults when compared to other sports.</p> <p>There is demand for improved facilities to allow for maximum use.</p> <p>There is a backlog of infrastructure improvements.</p>	<p>The quality of tennis facilities varies throughout the LGA.</p> <p>All Council tennis facilities are managed by 355 committees or via direct leases. A number of facility leases are expired. Feedback indicates inconsistencies in annual lease fees, hire fees and maintenance responsibilities. Concern has been raised that delays in lease renewals are holding up potential investment and upgrades to tennis facilities.</p> <p>Capital improvement and maintenance are delegated to lessees in lieu of hire rental fees, however no specific schedule of works appear to have been developed.</p> <p>Financial performance of facilities, patronage of courts and the level of investment required or proposed for tennis facilities is unknown.</p> <p>The provision of tennis courts is considered adequate. The provision rate is one court per 1,971 people, similar to the industry benchmark of one per 1,875 people.</p> <p>There is a need to review the leasing arrangements, responsibilities and reporting requirements of organisations managing Council owned tennis facilities. Such action is necessary to ensure maximum public use, performance and the ongoing financial sustainability of these community assets.</p>	<p>Develop a tennis delivery plan to guide the development and provision of tennis facilities.</p> <p>Review guidelines for the management of organisation leasing/managing tennis courts on behalf of Council. Develop clear guidelines to improve sustainability and performance.</p>
Bat ball courts	<p>There are three bat ball courts within Newcastle's LGA. They are located at Empire Park, Bar Beach.</p>	<p>Anecdotal information indicates high levels of demand for bat ball courts with people travelling from outside the region to access the courts.</p> <p>There is likely to be a demand for facilities that cater to multiple users and abilities in addition to the needs of the increasing future population, particularly young people.</p>	<p>Bat ball courts provide inexpensive opportunities for a range of ages and abilities.</p> <p>The provision of additional facilities to allow for unstructured recreational opportunities within new residential estates and urban growth corridors in addition to the existing communities will be necessary.</p>	<p>Provide pathways, bicycle lanes, courts and fitness equipment to encourage informal and unstructured recreation participation.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Skate/BMX facilities	<p>There are 10 skate/BMX facilities in the Newcastle LGA. These facilities accommodate BMX, skate and in-line activities.</p> <p>Bar Beach and Wallsend are district level facilities. All other facilities are classified as local.</p> <p>Local skate/BMX provision represents one facility per 22,698 people.</p>	<p>There is continued high demand for access to skate facilities. Research undertaken by Council during 2009 identified high levels of use, especially the Bar Beach skate park which is regarded as a one of Australia's premier bowls, attracting people from outside the region.</p> <p>There is strong demand for higher quality facilities that cater for multiple users and abilities.</p> <p>It is projected the demand for skate/BMX facilities to meet the needs of the increasing future population, particularly young people, will be strong.</p> <p>Accordingly, the provision of additional facilities to allow for recreational opportunities within new residential estates and urban growth corridors in addition to the existing communities will be necessary.</p>	<p>The quality of skate/BMX facilities varies significantly throughout the LGA. District facilities are of a high quality whilst the local facilities are basic.</p> <p>The current provision rate is approximately one per 20,000 people, considerably under the industry provision rates of one per 10,000 people.</p> <p>Ancillary facilities including shelter and water and seating are lacking at many locations.</p> <p>The development of a regional skate/BMX facility to serve the LGA, in addition to facilities to service the growing community within the western growth corridor will be required.</p> <p>The development of skate/BMX facilities within district parks and other high use recreation precincts provide an opportunity to co-locate with other youth orientated facilities.</p> <p>The development of fewer quality district standard facilities as compared to a larger number of smaller local skate parks should be considered. District parks have the capacity to provide for a number of styles (street, ramp, transition), abilities and ages ranges are provide greater opportunities for skill development.</p>	<p>Continue to plan for the provision of a range of skate/BMX facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor</p> <p>Review and update Council's strategic approach to skate/BMX facilities development.</p>
Golf courses	<p>There are three golf courses in Newcastle.</p> <p>The Beresfield Golf Course is owned and operated by Council. Merewether and Shortland are privately owned and managed.</p> <p>Two other 18-hole golf course boards the Newcastle LGA, located at Fern Bay and West Wallsend and are privately managed.</p> <p>A golf driving range is located at Shortland.</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence suggests use of golf facilities is relatively high.</p> <p>Nationally, participation has remained high over the past 10 years, and still attracts high levels of participation in adults when compared to other sports.</p> <p>Beresfield Golf Club, owned and managed by Council, received approximately 30,000 visits per annum during 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 respectively.</p>	<p>Comparison of existing supply to industry benchmarks suggests the current provision rate for the population is inadequate. However, based on the proximity of the Newcastle and West Wallsend facilities, this 'shortfall' is considered to have been met.</p> <p>The annual costs of managing Beresfield Golf Course are significant. The facility incurs an operating deficit of approximately \$200,000 pa.</p> <p>The financial performance of the facility is considered unsustainable. Council has recently resolved to seek expressions of interest for the external management of the facility as a method to reduce the cost of provision.</p> <p>Beresfield Golf Course provides an important recreation and social role within the local community. Its ongoing provision is considered important to providing a range of affordable and accessible recreation opportunities for this socially disadvantaged and isolated community.</p>	<p>Examine opportunities to improve the financial sustainability of the golf course whilst maintaining this important community facility.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Swimming pools	<p>There are five public 50m outdoor swimming complexes in Newcastle.</p> <p>There are three privately owned and operated indoor swimming pools.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum University of Newcastle - 50m heated; Viking Health Club - 25 m indoor heated; Arnolds swim centre- 25m indoor heated; Crown Plaza Hotel - 30m outdoor. <p>There are 2 ocean baths located at Newcastle and Merewether.</p>	<p>Demand for aquatic facilities is high and is projected to continue in to the future.</p> <p>Community survey results undertaken during 2011 identified high frequency of use and value of swimming pools.</p> <p>Swimming was identified as one of the most popular recreational activities undertaken on a regular basis within Newcastle.</p> <p>Visitation has fluctuated over the past 15 years. Factors impacting on attendance include cool/wet summer and increasing entry fee.</p> <p>Nationally, participation has remained high over the past 10 years, and still attracts high levels of participation in adults and children when compared to other sports. ABS data identifies swimming amongst the activities that experience the highest rates of participation, both organised and unorganised, for children and adults throughout Australia.</p> <p>Demand is expected to continue as the population ages and increasing numbers of older people seek access to non-contact recreation activities. Other drivers of demand include the increasing number of children within the LGA and the desire for unstructured activities to accommodate decreased leisure time, changing patterns of participation and recreation trends.</p>	<p>Swimming pools are well provided for in Newcastle. Facilities are well distributed with most residents located within 5km of a pool.</p> <p>There is approximately one 50m pool per 26,000 people. Industry provision rates for 50m pools vary considerably, from one per 35,000 people to one per 75,000 people, suggesting Newcastle may be oversupplied.</p> <p>The geographic isolation of Stockton and Beresfield and the popularity of swimming may explain the reason behind the existing higher provision rate.</p> <p>The Forum is the only indoor heated aquatic facility available 12 months of the year.</p> <p>Council's Pool Service Delivery Model (PSDM) identifies the redevelopment of Lambton Pool into a regional aquatic and leisure centre as a priority. Funding for this project has been secured through a special rate variation.</p> <p>The redevelopment of Lambton Pool is anticipated to have an impact on the operations of the other four centres. The need and viability of the remaining four swimming centres identified will need to be reviewed following the Lambton redevelopment.</p> <p>Management of the inland pools is becoming increasingly complex due to declining patronage, the significant subsidies and the age of the facilities.</p> <p>The cost to provide inland pools is significant and opportunities to reduce costs whilst continuing to provide this service require investigation.</p>	<p>Develop a regional aquatic centre at Lambton.</p> <p>Upon completion of the Lambton redevelopment, undertake a review of the PSDM and the strategic direction for aquatic provision within Newcastle.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to improve the financial sustainability of inland swimming pools.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Indoor Sport Centres	<p>There are 4 indoor sport centre complexes in Newcastle.</p> <p>Howzat Indoor Sports Centre is a 9 court indoor multi - purpose facility providing programs and competitions across a range of sports.</p> <p>Newcastle Basketball Stadium, a 6 court facility, currently accommodates basketball, volleyball and futsal activities.</p> <p>The Forum, (The University of Newcastle Callahan Campus) is a two court facility which organises indoor sport competitions primarily targeting its students.</p> <p>Broadmeadow PCYC is a 1 court facility, containing gymnastic and weight training areas, which delivers a number of programs focused mostly towards youth.</p> <p>Each of the facilities are privately owned, developed and operated.</p>	<p>Use of indoor recreation facilities is high.</p> <p>Nationally, participation in basketball, netball, gymnastics, dance and other indoor sports remains steady.</p> <p>Demand for indoor space is projected to increase inline with population growth within the western corridor</p>	<p>An examination of existing Indoor Sport Center's suggests the supply of existing facilities may not be adequate to meet future needs of the community.</p> <p>Newcastle Basketball Stadium has been developed specifically for basketball competition. Other recreation activities are only accommodated during the off-season. The continued development of basketball within the region may further limit the ability of this facility in accommodating other activities and serving a multi – purpose facility role.</p> <p>Howzat Indoor Sports Centre is the only known indoor multi - purpose indoor sport centre with the LGA that provides programs and competitions across a range of sports. Whilst this facility currently has the capacity to accommodate additional members, its ability to accommodate the demands of the growing population within both the inner city and western growth corridors is unlikely.</p> <p>The ability of The Forum and PCYC (which contain less than three multi-purpose courts) to cater to the broader multi purpose recreational needs of the growing Newcastle community will be limited.</p> <p>All existing indoor sport centre complexes are privately owned. The ongoing use of this land for recreational purposes is subject to change.</p> <p>Existing facilities are concentrated predominately in the east and centre of the LGA. Future demand is likely to increase predominately within the western growth corridor.</p>	<p>Undertake further investigation into the need of a multi – purpose indoor sport facility, particularly to service the future population within the western planning corridor.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to provide greater support to other recreation program providers within the LGA to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Footpaths, shared paths and bicycle lanes	<p>There is approximately 260km of footpaths, 60km of dedicated shared pathway/bicycle trails throughout the Newcastle LGA.</p> <p>An extensive network of mountain bike and walking trails is located in Glenrock State Conservation Area.</p> <p>Blackbutt Reserve contains over 10km of dedicated walking nature trails.</p>	<p>Demand and use of shared paths, bicycle lanes, footpaths and trails is high and also projected to continue in to the future.</p> <p>Community survey results indicate, high frequency of use and value of trails. The beach foreshore and cycle/walking trails were identified as two of the three most regularly used leisure and recreation areas/facilities within Newcastle.</p> <p>High demand for additional pathways/trails, especially along coastal areas and connecting open spaces.</p> <p>ABS data identifies walking, cycling and running are amongst the activities that experience the highest rates of participation for people aged 15 years+ throughout Australia.</p> <p>Strong demand for additional mountain bike trails was expressed throughout the development of the Cycling Strategy.</p> <p>Demand is expected to continue as the population ages and the community wish to lead active and healthy lifestyles, the modal shift from cars and the requirement for activities that can be undertake individually, at any time of the day.</p>	<p>The quality and diversity of trails within Newcastle is considerable.</p> <p>The Fernleigh Track, Central Coast cycleway route and Great North Walk are well utilised regional level trails.</p> <p>Council has secured \$50M through a special rate to develop a number of trails identified in the Newcastle Bicycle Strategy and Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Strategy variation over the next 10 years.</p> <p>This includes the Bathers Way project which will provide a continuous foreshore pathway from Merewether to Nobby's beach. This will greatly enhance access, safety and opportunities for walking and cycling.</p> <p>The continued development a network trails linking beaches, shopping centres, recreation and other facilities throughout the local government will be important to improve access and support incidental exercise and healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>Provide pathways, bicycle lanes and fitness equipment to encourage informal and unstructured recreation participation.</p> <p>Improve connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland.</p>
Other sport specific facilities	<p>Archery Newcastle contains one specialist Archery complex, located in Waratah West.</p> <p>Pistol Shooting Newcastle contains one specialist Pistol Shooting complex, located in Waratah West.</p>	<p>Participation in Archery and Pistol shooting is high.</p> <p>Sports survey results indicate;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of use of facilities • Significant growth in membership • Inability to accommodate new members • Waiting lists for membership <p>There is demand for improved and expanded facilities to allow for additional use.</p>	<p>The Waratah Archery and Pistol facilities serve as regional level facilities.</p> <p>The two facilities have been developed on Crown land by a community organisations, whom are responsible for the management, maintenance and capital improvements</p> <p>No financial or in-kind support s provided by Council.</p> <p>Without further development, these facilities will be unable to meet future demand.</p> <p>Financial support from Council to assist with the ongoing provision of these facility is the key improvement that would benefit the sport.</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities to provide greater support to other community recreation facility providers within the LGA to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community.</p> <p>Consider cheaper access to council managed land.</p>

Facility	Supply	Demand	Analysis	Recommendation
Dog Exercise Areas	<p>There are numerous dog exercise facilities located throughout the LGA.</p> <p>There are 17 specific dogs off the leash areas throughout Newcastle in addition to the balance of public areas, where dogs are permitted when on a lead.</p> <p>Four off the leash areas have time restrictions.</p>	<p>There are over 25,000 registered dogs in Newcastle. In 2003, there were almost 25,000 dogs registered with Council which equates to approximately one in three households across the local government area. This number is estimated to have increased over the past decade.</p> <p>Community survey results undertaken during 2011 identified, high frequency of use and value of dog exercise areas, demand for additional leash – free areas especially along coastal areas/waterways, strong demand for improvements to current facilities, and demand for education campaigns to increase awareness of dog owner's responsibilities.</p> <p>The most popular/visited leash free areas were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horseshoe Beach, Newcastle East • King Edward Park, Newcastle • Dixon Park Reserve, Merewether <p>The increasing proportion of older adults and higher density dwellings is expected to significantly increase the number of companion animals, demand for fenced /controlled areas and additional off the leash areas over the coming years.</p>	<p>Dog exercise areas are reasonably well provided for throughout the LGA.</p> <p>Designated off leash areas reduce the potential for conflict between owners, pets and other park users.</p> <p>Horseshoe Beach, which is managed by Newcastle Port Corporation, is currently the only coastal leash free area.</p> <p>A number of existing leash free areas appear to experience minimal use.</p> <p>None of the existing facilities are fenced.</p> <p>Most facilities lack seating, shade and water.</p> <p>Existing leash free areas are not evenly distributed throughout the LGA, with a number of planning areas without a facility.</p> <p>The provision of such areas within new residential estates and existing urban areas will be necessary.</p>	<p>Undertake a review of existing leash free areas in addition to further analysis into the need for additional locations, including supporting facilities and educational programs.</p>
Community gardens	<p>There are eight community gardens located throughout Newcastle.</p>	<p>Use of community gardens appears high.</p> <p>Community survey results indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency of visitation and use of local parks/community gardens, • high level of value of local parks/community gardens. <p>Council continues to receive requests for access to public land for community gardens.</p>	<p>Community gardens provide opportunities for local communities to engage collectively for the benefit of the whole community build capacity and participate in community life.</p> <p>Undersized parkland may provide an opportunity for the development and management of new community gardens by community groups.</p>	<p>Implement and support the Community Gardens Toolkit</p> <p>Undertake an expression of interest (EOI) for the external management of undersized parkland by community groups for community gardens as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging Place Making initiatives.</p>



10. Key Directions

The key directions provide strategic context for the future parkland and recreation initiatives to be undertaken by Council.

They provide a summary of the:

- key findings;
- consultations;
- investigations; and
- assessments undertaken throughout the development of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy*.

The key directions provide broad recommendations on how identified challenges and gaps can be addressed and will inform the strategic actions identified in the action plan.

10.1 Planning and development of facilities

Council needs to plan strategically to ensure provision is equitable, accessible and relevant to the needs of the current and future population.

Opportunities for the upgrading and development of a number of local parks are limited in many areas due to physical constraints. The development of higher quality district parks which provide a range of active and passive infrastructure will be key in meeting parkland needs and helping to mitigate local deficiencies. Similarly, improving connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland will be essential to minimise access barriers. The development of regional and district playground facilities, which also incorporate opportunities for people with a disability, will be important to providing quality play experiences.

The provision of recreation facilities including pathways, bicycle lanes, fitness equipment, bicycle paths and swimming pools will be important to cater for the aging population, the continued increase in unstructured recreation participation and broader community demand.

The development of the proposed regional aquatic centre at Lambton will provide an important recreation facility and meet a longstanding community need.

The continued planning of parkland and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the growing population is required. To ensure the provision of meaningful parkland and recreation facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor, planning will need to carefully address the spatial constraints whilst maximising funding provided by developers. An opportunity exist for the development of district recreation complex in Wallsend to serve this future population, however a partnerships with private land owners, such as Xstrata Coal will be essential to realise this. A further investigation into the need for an indoor sports complex for this future population is also required.

A coordinated approach to the planning and development of district sporting facilities is needed. A number of sporting associations have expressed a desire to develop sport specific facilities and a strategic approach is required to maximise opportunities, funding and to ensure ongoing sustainable provision.

The adoption and utilisation of new technologies such as synthetic grass, which increase capacity of existing sports fields whilst providing opportunities for commercial use and the generation of new revenue streams, will be a key strategic approach to meeting active sports needs. The upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional uses and changing needs provides similar opportunities.

The development of criteria for the prioritisation of capital projects, in particular sports field projects, is key to improve decision making transparency, relationships with community stakeholders and to attract funding from sporting organisations and government.

10.2 Management of facilities

Improving the management and financial performance of parkland and recreation facilities and services is essential to support sustainable provision.

Developing clear service levels which are aligned with facility roles will assist with maintenance programming and budget management.

The investigation of opportunities for partnerships allowing the external management of sporting facilities, particularly district sporting complexes where there is a predominant use or single user, may reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging additional private investment. Furthermore, the management of undersized parkland by community groups for community gardens may further reduce costs.

The development of clear responsibilities and financial requirements whilst providing necessary support, training and oversight to private and community organisations managing recreation facilities on behalf of Council will be key in improving the sustainability and performance of recreation facilities.

Providing opportunities for greater commercial use, activities and advertising within parkland, recreation facilities and services and the generation of new revenue will be key to improving the sustainability of recreation facilities. Opportunities including the development of cafes, the temporary installation of recreation facilities in parkland on weekend/school holidays such as rock climbing walls, ice skating rinks and corporate sponsorship of facilities and specific capital projects should be explored.

District and regional facilities, which attract high levels of use and visitation, should be examined as priority sites.

10.3 Partnership development

To meet community demand for parkland and recreation facilities, strategic partnerships with community organisations, other levels of government and the private sector will be essential.

The establishment of formal partnerships between Council, the NSW Education Department and local schools for community access to sports fields will be essential in meeting future demand. Whilst upgrading Council sports fields will increase capacity, the number of existing and future sports fields is not expected to be sufficient to meet the growing demand for organised sport.

The limited amount of flat, unencumbered land within the Western Planning Corridor is expected to significantly affect the provision of future sports fields. Partnerships with large land owners, such as Coal and Allied and Xstrata, will be important to ensure the provision of accessible sports fields, particularly district sports fields which require larger footprints.

Including key stakeholders in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of parkland and recreation projects is essential to developing strategic partnerships. Furthermore, this coordinated approach has the potential to attract financial investment from regional and state sporting organisations, the business community and governments for facility development.

Supporting the initiatives of recreation program providers such as the NSW Office of Sport and Recreation, personal trainers, gyms and other community groups through providing access to council managed land and promotions will be instrumental in strengthening the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community.

Similarly, developing partnerships and supporting community organisations managing specialised sporting facilities will be essential to maintain the provision and viability of these facilities.

The establishment of a trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent acts from community members and business to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives provides opportunities for the generation of new revenue streams. Donations to the Trusts provide an opportunity for people to give something back to their community, with tax deductions also possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act.

10.4 Promotion of facilities and opportunities

An extensive range of parkland and recreation facilities are available within the Newcastle LGA. While there are a number of sources of information about recreation opportunities, obtaining comprehensive and easily accessible information on what is available within Newcastle can be challenging.

The need for more information about parkland and recreation opportunities was a key issue raised during community consultations. Details on what is available, locations, opportunities offered and contact details for greater information is required to better connect residents and visitors to facilities. The development of a comprehensive parkland and recreation directory on council's website will be key in improving awareness of these opportunities.

The ongoing promotion and marketing of parkland and recreation facilities and the many benefits of healthy lifestyles will also be important in raising awareness of existing opportunities. Identifying the opportunities offered by all recreation providers within these promotional and marketing activities will be important in meeting the varying needs and interests of the community.

The continued support and attraction of state, national and international events will be a key strategy in promoting recreation opportunities and healthy lifestyles within the city of Newcastle.

“The Council is currently doing a good job in maintaining the parklands throughout most of Newcastle but more efficient and cost effective thought needs to be put into changes before they are made.”



11. Action Plan

11.1 Strategic objectives and priorities

To achieve the policy direction identified in *The Parkland and Recreation* vision, a range of actions have been identified. These actions build upon the current initiatives and projects and will guide future priorities and actions in recreation planning and management.

The actions are presented under four strategic directions and objectives, although a number of actions will meet more than one strategic objective. The four strategic directions include:

- Equitable Provision and Development of Facilities;
- Efficient Management of Facilities;
- Partnership Development; and
- Promotion of Facilities.

Each action contains a timeframe for implementation, based on priority and achievability. The actions are proposed to be delivered over a ten year time frame and included within Council's four year delivery program. The time frames are:

- High - within 2 years (June 2014 - 2016);
- Medium - within 6 years (June 2014 June 2020);
- Long - within 10 years (June 2014 - 2024); and

The *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* will be a key document in delivering the vision identified in the CSP. Accordingly, each action identifies the specific CSP strategic direction and objective it will implement.

Table 6: Action Plan

Strategic Direction 1 – Equitable Provision and Development of Facilities

Quality parkland and recreation facilities that are diverse, accessible and responsive to changing needs and will provide positive experiences for current and future residents and visitors. A clear decision making framework is essential to guide development and sustainable provision.

Strategic Objectives

- To ensure that a variety of parkland and recreational facilities are provided, accessible and distributed equitably across Newcastle.
- To ensure that recreation facilities provide opportunities for the full range of age groups and abilities.
- To ensure spaces and facilities are multi-functional and adaptable to changing needs.
- To maximise use of existing facilities.

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
1.1	<p>Review relevant Plans of Management (POM) and Master plans.</p> <p>Develop new POM and Master plans to guide the upgrade of local and district parks into quality district parks to meet the changing need of the community.</p> <p>Priority sites include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gregson Park, • Jesmond Park, • Lambton Park, • Warabrook Wetlands Reserve, • Centennial Park, • King Edward Park, • Taro Recreation Area • Griffith Reserve. 	<p>Facilities & Recreation Services</p> <p>Strategic Land Use</p> <p>Infrastructure Planning</p>	Medium	Detailed and costed master plans which provide for a range of active and passive recreational opportunities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.2	<p>Identify a site for the development of a district park within the following planning areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adamstown - Kotara; • Shortland - Jesmond; • Maryland - Fletcher - Minmi; • Wallsend - Elernmore Vale; • Lambton - North Lambton. <p>Consider Wallsend Brickworks Park, Wal Heard Oval, Wallsend Park, Waratah Park and Braye Park as potential sites.</p> <p>Develop master plans for each site.</p>	<p>Facilities & Recreation Services</p> <p>Strategic Land Use</p> <p>Infrastructure Planning</p>	Medium	<p>Identify a site within each planning area capable of being developed into a district park.</p> <p>Detailed and costed master plans which provide for a range of active and passive recreational opportunities.</p>	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.3	<p>Continue to plan for the provision of a range of parkland recreation facilities for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor.</p>	<p>Facilities & Recreation Services</p> <p>Strategic Land Use</p> <p>Infrastructure Planning</p>	Medium	A range of parkland recreation facilities within the Western Planning Corridor.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
1.4	Establish a partnership with Xstrata Coal for land at Creek Road, Maryland for the development of district recreation complex to serve the future population.	Facilities & Recreation Services Commercial Property Parks and Recreation Services	High	A signed agreement.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.5	Commence detailed design of a district recreation complex at Creek Road, Wallsend.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	Detailed design plans and estimates.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.6	Undertake further investigation into the need for an indoor sports complex for the future population within the Western Planning Corridor.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Long	Investigation report.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.7	Develop a regional aquatic centre at Lambton. Upon completion of the Lambton redevelopment, undertake a review of the PSDM.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A regional aquatic centre.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.8	Upgrade playgrounds within identified district parks to a district standard. Incorporate opportunities for people with a disability.	Facilities & Recreation Services Infrastructure Planning	Medium	A district playground within each planning area.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.9	Develop a regional playground at Foreshore Park.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Medium	A regional playground.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.10	Develop a district sports facility plan to guide the coordinated approach, planning and development of district sporting facilities.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Newcastle Sporting Associations	Medium	A development proposal articulating opportunities, benefits, cost and proposed investment strategy.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.11	Investigate the utilisation of new technologies to increase capacity of existing sports fields to meet sporting needs of the community. Consider benefits including multi – code use, reduced maintenance, commercial use and income generation.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	An investigation report which details the benefits of new technologies in addressing sports fields needs.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.12	Develop a sports facility improvement plan which identifies opportunities for the upgrade and adaptation of existing recreational facilities to accommodate additional codes, users and the changing needs of the community.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Infrastructure Planning	Medium	A development proposal articulating opportunities, benefits, cost and proposed investment strategy.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
1.13	Review and update TCoN sportsground hierarchy to reflect the changing needs of the sporting community.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	An update hierarchy which reflect the needs of the sporting community.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.14	Develop assessment criteria to guide the prioritisation of proposed capital projects, in particular sports field improvement projects.	Facilities & Recreation Services Newcastle Sporting Associations	High	A clear and transparent assessment and investment framework. A 4 year prioritised capital works program.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3 Open and Collaborative Leadership Objective 7.2
1.15	Develop a local playground action plan to guide planning and provision of local play equipment.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	Improved equitable provision of parkland throughout LGA.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.16	Provide pathways, bicycle lanes, courts and fitness equipment to encourage informal and unstructured recreation participation.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Infrastructure Planning	Medium	A range of accessible opportunities catering to various age groups and abilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.17	Improve connections to other open space opportunities for residents living further than 500m from local parkland.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Infrastructure Planning	Medium	A range of accessible opportunities catering to various age groups and abilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.18	Review existing and investigate the establishment of additional dog leash-free areas.	Facilities & Recreation Services Regulatory Services	Long	A development proposal articulating opportunities, benefits, cost and proposed investment strategy.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
1.19	Review the future role of local parks less than 0.2 hectares in size and refer to Council's Asset Review and Implementation Plan (ARIP).	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Commercial Property	High	Clearly defined roles for small sized parks.	A Caring and Inclusive Community Objectives 3.1
1.20	Review and update Council's strategic approach to skate/BMX facility development.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A Skate/BMX strategy.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3



Strategic Direction 2 – Efficient Management of Facilities

Parkland and recreational facilities are sound investment for our community, playing a major role in improving human health, both mental and physical. Ensuring recreation facilities are well governed, financially sustainable and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities are fundamental to efficient management and positive community experiences.

Strategic Objectives

- To ensure recreation and sport facilities managed by Council are maintained at a level suitable to sustain high usage.
- To improve the long-term financial viability of community and recreation facilities.
- To develop and sustain public and private sector partnerships to maximise delivery opportunities

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
2.1	Develop parkland and recreation facility service levels which are aligned with facility roles and provide operational efficiencies.	Facilities & Recreation Services	High	Clearly defined service levels.	A Caring and Inclusive Community Objectives 3.1
2.2	Investigate opportunities to improve the financial sustainability of swimming pools and golf courses.	Facilities & Recreation Services	High	A report identifying opportunities, benefits, costs and proposed implementation plan.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objective 3.1
2.3	Identify recreation facilities that have the potential to be externally managed as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging additional private investment.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A prioritised list of facilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objective 3.1
2.4	Develop a facility leasing policy and guidelines to facilitate the leasing of district sporting facilities, which are enclosed or where there is a predominant use or single user.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Long	A policy and guidelines which facilitates the external management and investment of district facilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
2.5	Where Council choses not to sell un-required parkland, undertake an expression of interest for the external management of undersized parkland by community groups for community gardens as a method to reduce Council's maintenance expenditure whilst encouraging Place Making initiatives.	Facilities & Recreation Services Commercial Property	Medium	A report identifying the results of a EOI process.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
2.6	Review guidelines for the management of recreation facilities by community park committees. Updated guidelines to reflect the objectives of greater financial sustainability, utilisation and performance of Council facilities.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Medium	Updated guidelines.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
2.7	Review guidelines for the management of organisation leasing / managing tennis courts on behalf of Council. Develop clear guidelines to improve sustainability and performance.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Council Services Tennis NSW Newcastle Tennis Lessees	Medium	Updated guidelines/ tennis facility leasing policy.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
2.8	Investigate opportunities for greater commercial use and advertising within parkland, recreation facilities and services. Consider the development of cafes, temporary use of spaces, corporate sponsorship of facilities and capital projects. District and regional facilities, which attract high levels of use and visitation, should be examined as priority sites.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Long	A prioritised list of opportunities for greater commercial use, activities and advertising within parkland, recreation facilities and services.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
2.9	Review and amend the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 and Newcastle Development Control Plan 2012 to allow for greater commercial use and advertising within parkland and recreation facilities.	Strategic Land Use Facilities & Recreation Services	Long	An amended LEP and DCP which provides for greater commercial use within parkland and recreation facilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
2.10	Develop a commercial fitness operators policy and licence to manage and facilitate commercial use of public space.	Facilities & Recreation Services Council Services	Medium	A commercial fitness operators policy and licence.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3 Caring and Inclusive Community Objective 4.2
2.11	Review and update the TCoN Sports Policy, Parks Booking Policy and Foreshore Usage Policy.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	Updated policies which provide accurate guidance for the management and use of facilities	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

Strategic Direction 3 - Partnership Development

While Council is a major driver for the advancement of recreation in the city, actively encouraging and fostering strategic partnerships with community organisations, other levels of government and the private sector to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community is vital. Supporting the initiatives of other stakeholders and engaging the community in decision making fosters inclusion, strengthens partnerships and is instrumental in the provision of opportunities and the creation of active and vibrant places.

Strategic Objectives

- To actively engage with other providers of sports and recreation facilities and services within the city.
- To forge partnerships for the provision of parkland, recreation and sport facilities, programs and events.
- To support and encourage the provision of recreation programs and events by community groups, not for profit and other private providers
- To maximise external funding opportunities for the provision and management of parkland, recreation and sport facilities, in line with priorities.
- Increase corporate involvement in parkland and recreation facility improvement.

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
3.1	Establish formal partnerships the NSW Education Department, local schools and sporting associations to increase community access to recreation facilities to meet future demand.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Medium	Partnerships which facilitates the community use of facilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
3.2	Strengthen partnerships and develop opportunities with Newcastle sporting associations for information sharing and participation in the planning, decision making and prioritisation of recreation projects.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use Hunter Academy of Sport NSW Communities - Sport and Recreation Newcastle Sporting Associations	High	A sporting association network.	Caring and Inclusive Community Objective 4.1 Open and Collaborative Leadership Objective 7.3
3.3	Develop partnerships with local resident groups and community organisations that support volunteer involvement in parkland maintenance. Eg. 'Adopt a Park' program.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Long	Partnerships which facilitates greater community use and management of facilities.	Caring and inclusive community Objective 4.2
3.4	Expand Council's <i>Place Making Program</i> to promote grants for the provision of physical exercise programs to the community.	Strategic Land Use Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A range of physical exercise programs within public spaces provided by other key stakeholders.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3 Caring and Inclusive Community Objective 4.2
3.5	Establish a Trust which encourages and facilitates benevolent donations from community and business to finance and/or subsidise recreational initiatives.	Facilities & Recreation Services Council Services	Long	A Recreation Trust.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
3.6	Enter into financial partnerships with regional and state sporting organisations, the business community and government for recreation facility development.	Facilities & Recreation Services Council Services	High	Increased external funding for recreation facility development.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
3.7	Develop partnerships with community organisations managing specialised sporting facilities to support the ongoing provision and viability of these facilities.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	The sustainable provision of specialised sporting facilities.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
3.8	Investigate opportunities to provide greater support to other recreation program providers within the LGA to strengthen the range of opportunities available to the Newcastle community.	Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A range of recreation opportunities available to the Newcastle community.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
3.9	Investigate opportunities to encourage private sector/ commercial operators to provide low cost fitness activities in public spaces targeting at risk community groups.	Facilities & Recreation Services Strategic Land Use	Medium	Low cost fitness activities in public spaces targeting at risk community groups.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
3.10	Implement and support the Community Gardens Toolkit.	Strategic Land Use Facilities & Recreation Services	High	Community Gardens Toolkit	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

Strategic Direction 4 – Promotion of Facilities and Opportunities

The City of Newcastle provides an array of venues for people to recreate and play sport. The Parkland and Recreation Strategy proposes a range of promotion and marketing strategies to capitalise on its unique features and maximise the benefits of attracting people to the city to spend their leisure time.

Strategic Objectives

- To provide residents and visitors with information on the range of existing recreation and sport opportunities within the City to enable participation in healthy lifestyle activities.
- To support and encourage use of recreation and sport opportunities.

No.	Action	Responsible Unit and Key Partners	Priority	Deliverables	CSP link
4.1	Develop a comprehensive promotion and marketing plan aimed at promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles and the availability of recreation facilities and opportunities within community. Identify opportunities offered by all recreation providers within promotional initiatives.	Customer Service Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A marketing plan.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
4.2	Develop a comprehensive parkland and recreation directory on council's website to improve access and awareness of opportunities.	Customer Service Facilities & Recreation Services	High	A parkland and recreation directory on council's website.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3
4.3	Continue to support and attract the staging of State, National and International events within Newcastle's LGA.	Strategic Land Use Facilities & Recreation Services	Medium	A range of high quality events held annually within Newcastle which positively contributes socially, culturally and economically.	Vibrant and Activated Public Places Objectives 3.1 & 3.3

12. Monitoring

Monitoring of the strategy's implementation will be crucial to its success. An annual review of the progress of implementation will provide advice on the achievements to date, changes in Council's strategic direction and barriers to implementing the actions. In order to review the progress of the implementation of the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* actions, a number of community indicators and measures have been adopted (Table 7).

The actions within the *Parkland and Recreation Strategy* are proposed to be delivered over a ten year time frame and included within Council's four year delivery program. The implementation of the actions within the identified timeframes will be subject to budget allocation, resource availability and Council priorities. It is recommended that a full review of strategic actions be undertaken by 2017.

Table 7: Parkland and Recreation Strategy performance assessment criteria

Measuring our progress towards equitable provision and development of facilities		
Community Indicator	Measure	Source
Adequacy of good quality parks and recreation areas	Percentage of residents who agree there are enough good quality parks and recreation areas.	Council's Community Survey
Adequacy of natural areas for pursuit of leisure time activities	Percentage of residents who agree there are adequate natural environments to pursue leisure time activities.	Hunter Valley Research Foundation Wellbeing Research Program
Measuring our progress towards the efficient management of facilities		
Financial performance of parkland and recreation facilities	Percentage of parkland and recreation facilities operating within allocated budgets / meeting financial designated targets.	Council
External funding	Amount of external funding received for recreation programs and capital development.	Council
Measuring our progress towards partnership development		
Partnerships with residents, community groups, sporting associations and business sector. recreation.	Percentage of residents and stakeholders who are satisfied with level of involvement, partnerships and communication with Council on recreation projects/issues.	Council's Community Survey
Measuring our progress towards the promotion of facilities		
Increased awareness of parkland and recreation opportunities.	Number of visits to Council parkland and recreation directory website.	Council
Attraction of large sporting and cultural events.	Number of state, national and international events held annually within Newcastle.	Council Livesites

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