

CM13.5. AlburyCity Open Space Strategy Project Scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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CONFIDENTIAL	No		
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Purpose of Report

To present the proposed scope, timeframes and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the AlburyCity Open Space Strategy and seek Council endorsement prior to commencing the project.

Background

Significant population growth is expected in Albury over the next 20 years, increasing from 55,000 people in 2021 to more than 76,000 people by 2041. This growth is creating many opportunities for new and diverse housing, jobs and built and green infrastructure for a liveable City. An important component of this infrastructure provision is the network of green open spaces, natural systems and semi-natural systems including parks, rivers, bushland, and reserves that support an enhanced quality of life in an urban environment.

Open space is essential for promoting access to recreational space, nature, culture, and sport. For the purpose of planning, open space typically falls into three categories:

1. Open Space for passive and active recreation;
2. Natural Areas including bushland and waterways; and
3. Streetscapes with urban tree canopy.

In addition, some open space areas have a secondary function such as provision of easements (electrical), storm water retention basins and road reserves.

As we plan for future urban growth and development, access to high quality open space for both passive and active recreation will become increasingly important. These areas will be important places for the community to relax, exercise, and play, which provides improved health and wellbeing outcomes for the community.

Planning, designing, managing, and maintaining public open space is an essential responsibility of Council. A key challenge facing Council is ensuring the distribution, type and quantum of open space provides equitable and inclusive access within reasonable distances of homes and workplaces, and creates a city-wide identity catering to an increasing number of tourists to the region.

Issues

There is growing pressure on Albury's extensive network of public open space to support an increasing diversity of activities ranging from passive enjoyment to formal sport and active recreation. As the population grows, public open space can become degraded from overuse, and conflict between informal and formal users can occur if spaces are not clearly delineated. This places pressure on Council to allocate more resources on developing and maintaining open space and sporting facilities.

There is also tension between an increasing population, urban development pressure and access to usable public open space. Land in our established and urban fringe areas is finite, with open space just one land use 'competing' with housing, commercial areas, transport, and other land uses. Usable public open space is at risk of gradually being eroded by provision of other types of infrastructure, for example asset protection zones and sediment/detention drainage assets associated with residential housing, transport corridors, parking, substations, and drainage systems. The combined effect of rising land values and the limited availability of land for open space has the potential to act as a constraint on the ability of local government to provide adequate open space for a growing population.

Most of Albury's forecast population growth will occur in the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct. High quality open space provision will play a positive role by enabling places for people to gather for nature-based activities, passive and active recreation, sport, and physical activity. Development assessment and approval processes do not always deliver sufficient suitable land for open space to service the incoming population. The undersupply results in additional pressures on Council to find additional land for open space and to fund increased capital works to make land suitable for passive and active recreational use and meet the needs of the community.

All of this means that Council is having to rethink the best approach for the provision of future open space and identify better open space connections, improved quality, flexible design and planning that considers life cycle costs of management and maintenance. With limited land supply and increasing housing demand and community expectations, preparation of an Open Space Strategy will help explore innovative ways of providing usable open space to support the health and wellbeing of our community into the future.

Development of an Open Space Strategy will assist Council to meet a range of existing policy commitments, as well as provide findings that can help inform the upcoming Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review project, and Albury Social Infrastructure Strategy.

Proposed Project Scope

There is no consistent definition of open space, but the Open Space Strategy will adopt a broad definition, being *"open space land which accommodates recreation or provides relief from the built environment"*. The Open Space Strategy will focus on spaces that provide for the following types of recreation:

- places for accessible and inclusive play;
- places for passive enjoyment of the outdoors and nature;
- places for active social recreation;
- places for organised sport and recreation; and
- trail and path-based recreation.

The Open Space Strategy will outline Council's long-term direction for open space provision and use across the Albury Local Government Area.

The Open Space Strategy aims to investigate (but will not be limited to) the following:

- determine AlburyCity's current and future provision of open space in terms of type, scale, location, and extent;
- identify areas or types of open space that are currently either undersupplied or oversupplied;
- establish how AlburyCity can reconfigure or reorganise its open space provision to better meet the needs of the existing and projected population for all types of recreation;
- set minimum provisions and types of open space that can be incorporated into the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Structure Plan; and
- provide a proposed implementation plan to identify priorities, including sufficient information to enable these priorities to be incorporated into developer contributions planning.

The Open Space Strategy will identify top-level priorities by assessing and providing commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of the overall open space network and associated uses. To enable this holistic consideration, where applicable, the Strategy may also consider the role played by provision of non-Council owned open space such as Crown Lands, school fields, golf clubs and other reserves or sporting venues.

The Open Space Strategy will set up a framework with options to improve Albury's network of Council-owned open space by providing recommendations relating to the number, quantum, location and types of open space required (including models of delivery) that may then inform subsequent projects, as required, related to implementation plans, business cases or economic feasibility studies for individual open space areas to be upgraded, enhanced, consolidated or divested. For example, the Strategy will make recommendations for the number, quantum, location and type of passive and active open spaces areas required in the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan.

The scope excludes detailed studies such as providing site or facility Master Plans but will make general recommendations.

Stages and Timing

The aim is to prepare the draft Open Space Strategy in the 2023 calendar year, whilst providing suitable opportunity for community and stakeholder input. The proposed timing seeks to ensure appropriate consideration of the timing and scope of anticipated concurrent projects including the Albury Social Infrastructure Strategy and the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review. Where possible, common tasks such as community consultation for these projects will be aligned.

The Open Space Strategy is proposed to be delivered in three parts:

1. Open Space Availability Assessment (establish how many and what types of open space our community has access to);
2. Growth and Change Analysis (understand how well our open spaces are performing and if they are meeting community needs); and
3. Recommendations and Reporting (discuss future options for open space planning and make recommendations for Council provision and management).

The proposed timeframes for each project part are as follows:

Preliminary: Consultant appointment (early 2023):

- Request for Quotation (RFQ) advertised, assessed, awarded and commencement meeting.

Part 1: Open Space Availability Assessment (early 2023):

- LGA-wide assessment of the availability of current, committed and proposed open space;
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Have Your Say #1);
- Mapping overview of open space attributes (size, shape, distribution, quality, accessibility);
- Conduct desktop review of existing relevant strategies (eg. Albury Wodonga Sport and Recreation Strategy, and Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan); and
- Councillor Pre-meeting Briefing Session.

Part 2: Capacity and Needs Analysis (mid-2023):

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Have Your Say #2); and
- Prepare Consultation Outcomes Report.

Part 3: Recommendations and Reporting (end 2023):

- Draft Open Space Strategy;
- Councillor Pre-meeting Briefing Session;
- Council meeting seeking endorsement to exhibit draft;
- Public exhibition;
- Consideration of submissions;
- Finalise Open Space Strategy; and
- Council meeting for adoption.

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan

The development of an Open Space Strategy aligns with the following outcomes:

- 2.4.3 Acknowledge our connection to the natural environment by providing opportunities for the community to connect and respectfully enjoy our natural surroundings.
- 3.2.2 Support initiatives and facilities that encourage social inclusion and community connections to achieve better mental health outcomes.
- 3.3.3 Our Spaces will provide a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for our community to enjoy.
- 4.2.1 The community is consulted and engaged on important decisions in two-way conversation that results in informed decision making and shared leadership.
- 3.6.1 AlburyCity will create vibrant and interesting public and cultural spaces and places that support and encourage the development of and participation in and celebration of arts and culture.

Related Strategies

The development of an Open Space Strategy also relates to other Council strategies including:

- Local Strategic Planning Statement.
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
- Asset Management Strategy (in development).
- Social Infrastructure Strategy (commencing early 2023).
- Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan (Review commencing 2023).
- Murray River Experience Master Plan (under Review).
- Albury & Lavington CBD Master Plans (under Review).
- Albury Cultural Precinct Master Plan.
- Albury Wodonga Sport and Recreation Strategy (Draft).
- Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan.
- Draft Urban Forest Strategy (In development).
- Regional Natural Environment Strategy.
- Albury City-Wide Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.
- Plan of Management (due for completion early 2023).

Developing an Open Space Strategy for Albury provides the opportunity for a detailed planning framework to assist in the delivery of active and passive open space that better meets the needs and preferences of our growing population. This project will also align closely with the NSW Public Spaces Charter and associated 10 Charter Principles, for which Council has recently become a signatory.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – it is proposed to appoint an external consultant to assist with preparing the Open Space Strategy. Community consultation and oversight of the project will be carried out by AlburyCity. The proposed Open Space Strategy is a key strategic document that will allow AlburyCity to plan for future community access and use. There is a significant need for this Strategy to be developed and implemented in line with other key strategic documents to improve the liveability of the City.
- **Corporate Risk** – the project is anticipated to invite considerable public interest. It will be guided by a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (attachment 1) which includes managing community expectations as the Strategy is developed.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – this project will include an availability audit of existing and proposed open space. For Council-owned open space this will include performance criteria that examines open space accessibility from a physical and visual perspective. This includes looking at structural impediments such as road corridors and drainage that can make it difficult for people to physically access open space, as well as perceptions of safety such as levels of casual surveillance. This Strategy will ensure open space remains usable to the community and has a defined land purpose to avoid passive and active user conflict.
- **Environmental Risk** – this project will include an availability audit of existing and proposed open space and will include performance criteria that examines the diversity of recreation opportunities available including access to waterways, bushland reserves and natural areas. All Council-owned open space will include an assessment of site quality, ensuring land used as open space is suitable for community use. The Open Space Strategy will also consider how open space can be adequately buffered from incompatible uses through the planning of vegetation corridors, planted mounds or fencing. Another core issue to be investigated is the suitability of land for open space provision that is impacted by constructed drains or flooding. The provision of a secondary functional use of open space in these encumbered areas (eg. retarding basins) is encouraged and provides positive community outcomes. Where applicable, the Open Space Strategy will also provide high level context in relation to any specific cultural heritage values and biodiversity values associated with the open space network.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – the proposed timeframe aims to complete key elements of the project so that findings and recommendations can align with and directly inform the review of open space provision within the Thurgoona Wirringa Precinct Structure Plan Review. The project seeks to align community engagement sessions and strategy development where possible. Any changes to the scope or additional stakeholder and community engagement phases may require an extension to the project delivery timeframe.

Community Engagement

Access to and use of open space is an issue that affects most residents, so it is likely that there will be considerable community and stakeholder interest in the project. Effective engagement will be key to the success of the Open Space Strategy.

Importantly, the Open Space Strategy will align with and inform the Social Infrastructure Strategy, and the review of the Thurgoona Wirringa Precinct Structure Plan, both of which are being prepared

concurrently. Where possible, alignment of community engagement activities will be implemented, and will be formulated to include questions that are relevant for all three Strategies during the engagement process.

It is proposed that key stakeholder groups include:

1. Our community, representing a range of demographics, ages, and suburbs, who may be current or potential users of open space;
2. Government representatives, including Crown Lands, Local Land Services, Office of Sport and the Albury and District Local Aboriginal Land Council; and
3. Open space owners and managers (including community and sporting groups).

A more detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared and is included in attachment 1. This proposes three key stages of consultation summarised as follows:

Stage 1: Have Your Say #1:

- Opportunity to raise awareness of the project and enable early input into open space guiding principles; and
- Initial meetings and interviews with open space owners and managers for input into availability audit, issues, and aspirations.

Stage 2: Have Your Say #2:

- Listen to people's values, preferences, issues, and concerns about current levels of open space provision; and
- Gain insights and ideas on open space improvement priorities.

Stage 3: Exhibition:

- Public exhibition opportunity for formal feedback on the draft Open Space Strategy.

Refinements may be made to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan as the project progresses to maximise input from stakeholders and our community, and encourage continuous improvement of consultation techniques.

Options

1. Endorse the Open Space Strategy project scope, timeframes, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. **Recommended.**

This option includes a focus on a range of open space types within the scope and will develop a considered and evidence-based framework for Council's future planning and decision making about active and passive open space.

2. Amend the Open Space Strategy project scope, timeframes, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
Not recommended.

This option could include changes to the project scope or timeframes.

3. Not proceed with an Open Space Strategy project. **Not Recommended.**

This option relies on future decisions on open space provision being made on an ad-hoc basis as issues or opportunities arise.

Conclusion

Planning, designing, managing, and maintaining public open space is an essential responsibility of Council. A key challenge facing Council is ensuring the distribution, type and quantum of open space provides equitable and inclusive access within reasonable distances of homes and workplaces and creates a city-wide identity catering to an increasing number of tourists to the region.

This report outlines the proposed scope, timeframes, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for undertaking the development of an Open Space Strategy for AlburyCity. The development of an Open Space Strategy will provide Council with an evidence-based approach to assess the needs, expectations, and existing capacity of open space, which can be used to inform future provision of open space across the Albury Local Government Area.

The development of an Open Space Strategy will provide guidance to help achieve objectives contained in Towards Albury 2050 and our Local Strategic Planning Statement. The project will respond to growing community interest in the provision of contemporary open space across the Albury Local Government Area, particularly in the future growth area of Thurgoona Wirlinga.

The aim is to prepare the draft Open Space Strategy in the 2023 calendar year, whilst providing suitable opportunity for community and stakeholder input. The proposed timing seeks to ensure appropriate consideration of the timing and scope of anticipated concurrent projects especially the Albury Social Infrastructure Strategy and the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review.

Developing an Open Space Strategy for Albury will provide a detailed planning framework to assist in the delivery of active and passive open space that better meets the needs of our growing population and contributes positively to the health and wellbeing of the community.

Recommendation

That Council endorses the proposed scope, timeframes, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the AlburyCity Open Space Strategy.

Attachments

1. AlburyCity Open Space Strategy Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC22/98976).

AlburyCity Stakeholder Engagement Plan

STEP 1. The required detail for your plan. Complete the information below:

Project Name	Albury City Open Space Strategy (FIL22/01177)
Engagement Plan Author	Mel Gillespie, Open Space Coordinator
Date of Engagement Plan	May 2022
TRIM Number	DOC22/98976
Project Overview	<p>The project will develop an Open Space Strategy for the Albury LGA. The Strategy will provide AlburyCity with a framework to appropriately plan for the future provision of active and passive open space across the city.</p> <p>The overarching aim of the AlburyCity Open Space Strategy is to ensure that public open spaces are sustainably developed and managed, providing integrated, connected, and accessible open spaces that can contribute to the community's health, wellbeing and enjoyment.</p> <p>The Open Space Strategy is closely aligned with other significant Council strategies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Social Infrastructure Strategy; and the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan (Review). <p>Each of these strategies are being prepared concurrently, with a view to aligning some of the community engagement activities and integrating outcomes.</p>
Overarching project goal or objective (s)	<p>The Open Space Strategy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quantify how much open space (active and passive) is in the LGA. Produce a consolidated availability assessment of the entire public open space network (Council and non-Council owned) to quantify any existing or future needs of the community; set standard provisions for different categories of open space across the City and identify areas of over or under supply; investigate how well our open space is meeting the community's needs; engage with key stakeholders (both external and internal) and the wider community to inform the Strategy; determine how can we improve the quality of our open space; deliver a strategic plan presenting a holistic vision of preferred options for future open space that best supports a connected

	<p>community;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for Council-owned open space, identify and recommend the short, medium and long term options to meet the future needs and preferences of the community; and • identify opportunities for expanding the open space network in areas where there may be existing gaps, or in future growth areas.
Stakeholder Engagement Objective	<p>Meaningful input provided by stakeholders in the development of the Open Space Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise community awareness that AlburyCity is developing an Open Space Strategy and reviewing the issues and opportunities associated with the provision of open space; • listen to a range of stakeholder views on existing open space, including the current state, function and governance, and aspirations to improve their future purpose; • provide interested community members and internal stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to identification and prioritisation of principles that will guide and drive the future delivery of open space; and • use a variety of engagement techniques to gather a wide variety of ideas and feedback on possible solutions and initiatives to enhance Albury's open space. <p>Where possible and appropriate, engagement activities will be coordinated with other relevant Council projects, notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Social Infrastructure Strategy, and • the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan, <p>effectively managing the engagement process to minimise duplication and engagement fatigue in the community.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>It is expected that a broad range of people will have an interest in the project, particularly with the importance of open space within our community. Engagement will be designed to gather a representative sample of views (as much as possible) based on the following groupings.</p> <p>Internal stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and Recreation Team (project leaders); • Natural Areas Team; • Environment Team; • Strategic Planning Team; • Communications and Engagement Team;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albury City Councillors; and Youth Council. <p>Government representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Departments including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Industry and Environment; Regional NSW; Office of Sport; Infrastructure NSW; Crown Lands; and Local Land Services. Wodonga Council (for collaborative planning, especially of regional level facilities). <p>Other key stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Access Committee; Local Aboriginal Land Council; General Community – both within Albury and the surrounding regions; and Sporting associations.
Timeline	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee – scoping document (mid 2022). Open Space Audit (early 2023). Capacity and Needs Assessment (mid 2023). Draft and Final Open Space Strategy (end 2023).
Level of Engagement (IAP2 Spectrum)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping Document Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consult and involve key internal stakeholders in scoping document development phase; and consult with internal stakeholders with key elements of the plan. Open Space Audit- Inform and Consult During the Open Space availability assessment, there will be awareness raising efforts of the project. This stage will allow people to find out about the project via the 'Have Your Say' platform and register their interest in being involved. It will also enable some early input on guiding principles for provision, such as via online polls or a short survey. More in-depth data gathering efforts through meetings and interviews will be made with targeted stakeholders to confirm the accuracy of the data being collected on the existing network of open space.

	<p>3. Capacity and Needs Assessment – Involve During the growth and change analysis, we will listen to people’s values, preferences, issues, and concerns about the current levels of open space provision. This will include asking them about their current usage of different types of open space to understand what factors would improve their usage. We will gain insights and ideas in facility improvement priorities and possible future models of delivery.</p> <p>4. Draft and Final Open Space Strategy – Consult and Inform After feedback from the two stages of initial engagement, gathered information will be integrated into the draft Open Space Strategy. We will consult with key stakeholders and the wider community through the public exhibition process.</p> <p>This stage will check that the Strategy has accurately captured and reflected community views and allow the opportunity to provide for further feedback and input.</p> <p>If formally adopted by Council, we will ‘close the loop’ by informing all stakeholders and wider community that the Open Space Strategy has been finalised and endorsed.</p>
Media interest	<p>Some media interest is anticipated for this project, particularly in the Thurgoona Wirlinga area.</p> <p>The project team will work closely with the Communications and Engagement Team to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactively provide media releases promoting the project objectives; and monitor and respond to requests for comment. <p>A project risk is potential confusion arising from any concurrent consultation with other internal projects relating to facilities in the study area (eg. Social Infrastructure Strategy and Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review). Regular coordination of these projects, potential consultation alignment and clear communication/messaging is proposed to minimise this risk.</p> <p>The project will make clear that any auditing of non-Council owned or managed open space will be drawn from publicly available, open source, desktop-based analysis.</p>

Budget	<p>Part of the overall Open Space Strategy project budget is available for consultation costs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • newspaper advertising; • printing; • mail outs; • park parties; and • boosted social media posts.
Evaluation	<p>Post project review will be undertaken, examining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of people registering their interest (eg. website 'hits', downloads, social media traction); • number of media articles (positive/neutral/negative); • number of survey responses/submissions; and • participation in interviews/workshops/drop in sessions.
Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Engagement Plan approved by: <p>David Costello 6/12/2022</p>

STEP 2. Add details of Stakeholder Engagement Plan to the register

Register this draft plan by listing under the relevant year in FIL22/01177.

STEP 3. Consult with the Communications Team and / or Corporate Planner

Discuss the different techniques to engage with stakeholders (internal or external) and your anticipated deliverables. Consider the implementation timeframe for your Engagement Plan. Add information to Step 4. Refer to AlburyCity Corporate Communications Strategy for methods to best communicate.

STEP 4. Deliverables and techniques.

When you have determined the techniques and timing for your engagement process, please list below:

Engagement Techniques and Timeframe	
TECHNIQUES/DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED DATES FOR ENGAGEMENT DELIVERY
1. Steering Committee	2022
Meeting with Steering Committee	May – June
Scoping Document	Nov

2. Open Space Audit	2023
Develop and open online 'Have Your Say' website with online polls or short survey	February
Social Media posts and media release (if required)	
One on one meetings (in person on site or via phone interview) with targeted stakeholders to alert them to the project and invite feedback.	February to March
3. Capacity and needs assessment	2023
Electronic Direct Mail (eDM) to notify community engagement participants of consulting opportunities	April – July
'Have your say' website updated with long form surveys targeted at user groups and other interested individuals	
Social media posts, website homepage slider, media release, AlburyCity News, posters in key Council facilities (if required)	
Councillor Workshop	
Facilitate community workshops, Pop-ups, Park Parties and/or 'drop in' information sessions	
One on one small group meetings or phone interviews with key stakeholders	
4. Recommendations and Reporting	2023
Councillor Workshop	August - November
Social media posts and media release (if required)	
Electronic Direct Mail (eDM) to notify community engagement participants of stage 4 consultation opportunities	
Public Exhibition (minimum 28 days) via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Have your Say' website; Public Notice (Border Mail); and Online feedback/written submission form. Hard Copies available at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Offices; LibraryMuseum; Lavington Library; and Possibly at other Council facilities - Thurgoona Community Centre. 	
Social media posts and media release (if required) (pending Council adoption)	
Electronic Direct Mail (eDM) to all community engagement participants of previous stages to inform of final Strategic Plan adoption	
Communications Approval	
Service Leader Approval	Jacqueline Owens 05/12/2022
	David Costello 6/12/2022

