

Parks on Track for People 2025



Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Overview of Parkland	5
3	Past Studies	7
4	Purpose of the masterplan	8
5	Overview of the current position	8
6	Open Space Strategy Review	9
7	Demographic review.....	12
8	Need For Open Space	22
9	Management Issues	28
10	Discussion of Issues	30
11	Uses.....	48
12	Management Plan Development.....	49
13	Tree management.....	50
14	Safety.....	51
15	Resourcing.....	52
16	Management capabilities	54
17	Major issues.....	55
	Action Plan.....	59
	Literature Review.....	66

1 Introduction

The City of Ryde is bound to the north, east and south by two rivers. The Parramatta River to the south is the most definitive boundary, and the Lane Cove River along with Terry's Creek running through Lane Cove National Park separating Ryde from Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby. The two rivers with their littoral vegetation and high local conservation values give background to a suburban environment with recognised environmental and lifestyle values.

The traditional owners of the land are the Wallumedegal clan of the Dharug tribe. The NSW Department of Environment and Conservation has identified 59 known Aboriginal sites in the National Parks and Wildlife's Aboriginal Sites Register database for the City of Ryde. There are 107 sites featured within the 59 sites.

Residents use the rivers and water for aesthetic rather than recreational pursuits, with limited boat ramp access to the waterways by vessels without permanent mooring. Water quality and pollution has affected recreational fishing. Heavy metal and other pollution of the Parramatta River has been an issue for many years. Commercial fishing has been discontinued in the local waterways with no recommencement likely.

Major roadways define the western boundary with the City of Parramatta. Similarly major roads divide the City of Ryde into a dozen sectors.

The City of Ryde is well serviced by a network of bus routes, generally focused on commuter transport to Sydney. A new rail link between Chatswood and Epping will provide residents with three new stations, with the new line running from east to west across the north side of the city.

The resident population of approximately 105,000 is serviced by thirty-four schools, three Technical Colleges (including the Horticulture School), and a University. There are five main commercial areas, three of which have or will have train stations. The employment centres at North Ryde, Macquarie Park and the Macquarie University are situated towards the north of the city between the residential area and Lane Cove National Park.

Ryde is well placed when compared to the greater Sydney region in terms of social advantage as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Relative to greater Sydney, Ryde has fewer families of low income and fewer people with little training and in unskilled occupations. Ryde has quality services in a well-established area. It is an area of significant diversity, however, with the average social advantage less than neighbouring areas such as Hunter's Hill and Ku-ring-gai.

The residents of the City of Ryde have expressed values that reflect concerns about the environment and there is appreciation for the value that waterways provide. The National Park gives rise to an appreciation of native fauna and flora. The number of bushland areas under the care, control and management of Council confirm that appreciation.

The established suburban areas feature detached bungalows, and have gardens with maturing trees, flowering shrubs and lawns. In the main they are well maintained and attractive. There is more intensive high-density development close to the Parramatta River and to transport nodes. The Meadowbank and Shepherd's Bay areas are sites of urban renewal, as industrial sites are abandoned and redeveloped into high-density residential areas.

Recreation and leisure are also important to the well-being and lifestyle of the residents of the City of Ryde. The City has an important role to play in the delivery of recreation and leisure to the community. There are significant numbers of small park areas throughout the City, many with playground equipment, that provide space for casual recreation. This paper discusses the worth of the existing investment in recreation facilities and attempts to project this into the future through the examination of trends in physical activity, sports and anticipated demographic change.

1.1 Vision

The parks and open spaces of Ryde will be multi-purpose facilities providing sustainable leisure and recreational opportunities to meet the changing needs of the community.

Environmental protection and sustainability principles will be observed in relation to the management and administration of parks and open spaces, thus ensuring that natural resources (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) are conserved.

1.2 Community Values

The values that the community puts on parks and open spaces have been established through survey and are expressed in the Management Plan. They are:

- recreation and leisure spaces should be well designed allowing multiple use or functionality of facilities;
- assets are managed and maintained so that they are safe, provided at optimum lifetime cost and meet community needs;
- recreation and leisure facilities are available and accessible to provide an environment that facilitates play, learning and personal development;
- the natural environment, native flora and fauna, are valued and will have priority in open space design, development and maintenance;

- volunteers will be actively encouraged to assist in the delivery of quality parks and open spaces;
- use of spaces by community and charitable groups will be encouraged; and
- continuing engagement between people and parks including enhanced opportunities for all to visit, participate in, learn, respect, enjoy and conserve is a fundamental purpose of management.

In addition, those areas that are under the care, control and management of Council have the following principles that apply:

- environmental protection principles be observed in relation to the management and administration of Crown land;
- natural resources (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) be conserved wherever possible;
- public use and enjoyment of appropriate land be encouraged;
- where appropriate, multiple use of land be encouraged; and
- land should be used and managed in such a way that both the land and its resources are sustained in perpetuity.

2 Overview of Parkland

The open space system has a diverse mix of sporting facilities, passive open space, foreshore reserve and bushland. Bushland areas include Lane Cove National Park, which plays an important role in the provision of open space for both local residents and the wider Sydney community.

The Buffalo Creek Corridor is also a valuable part of the open space system stretching from Ryde Park, through the Field of Mars Reserve and Wildlife Refuge to Lane Cove River. The City has 355 hectares of parkland divided into 207 parks. This gives an average size of 1.72 hectares; in reality venues vary in size from the smallest, which is less than a single house block to the largest, the Field of Mars Reserve, an area of 51 hectares. The City has 7.85 kilometres of cycleway and 1.58 kilometres of walking tracks, however this is expanding at a rapid rate with Council directing funding towards the development of regional and local cycle/walkways.

Ninety-eight playground areas have play equipment, varying from one or two pieces of equipment at many of the small pocket parks, to the large and elaborate play opportunities at Putney Park. Sports provided for include athletics, baseball, basketball, softball, netball, tennis, cricket, soccer, hockey, lawn bowls, croquet, Australian Rules football, rugby, volleyball, as well as dog training at various locations.

Thirty-seven parks in the City of Ryde are either all or partially Crown land. These include Ryde Park, Anzac Park, Magdala Park, Brush Farm Park and Putney Park. Council is responsible for all maintenance, development and use of these parks.

The foreshore reserve areas such as Meadowbank Park, Shepherd's Bay, Putney Park and Morrison's Bay Park provide visual and boat ramp access to the Parramatta River and are ideal settings for passive recreation activities such as sailing, sculling, walking, picnics and barbecues. The development of a shared walk/bike path along the Parramatta River is an existing project.

A highlight of the open space system is Putney Park, where in recent years Council has undertaken extensive improvement works including large scale play opportunities for children such as water play and a climbing net, picnic and barbecue facilities, landscaping and new amenities. The park is located on the shores of the Parramatta River and is a popular destination for families and social gatherings.

The newly refurbished Blenheim Park provides a fenced off-leash dog area. Yamble Reserve on Quarry Road, Ryde, is another recently redeveloped passive reserve that offers a modern interpretation of the formal reserve with pathways and lawns and views across the surrounding suburbs and has a playground for disabled children.

At both Blenheim Park and Yamble Reserve, new and creative play opportunities have been provided for children (including sand play and a junior cycling track) with new picnic, barbecue and shade facilities nearby. Pioneer Park combines these with a circular walking track, fitness stations, remnant bushland and sporting facilities.

Future plans to improve the open space system include a five-year redevelopment program for Ryde Park. A recently completed Masterplan and Plan of Management clearly recognise that the park has an enormous capacity to provide outstanding leisure and recreation opportunities for the community, and to develop better physical relationships with the surrounding residences, school and commercial areas of the Ryde Town Centre. Landscaping works which will assist in achieving these goals include upgrading the park entrances, providing better linkages between the park and the Ryde Town Centre, establishing improved pedestrian pathways in the park, provision of landscaped passive recreation areas (including barbecues and picnic facilities), and new playground facilities.

The City's overall open space has potential to be developed to a higher standard. Where redevelopment works have been completed such as at Putney Park and Blenheim Park, the facilities and leisure opportunities available are excellent. In parks where improvement works have not occurred, maintenance is more basic and weed infestation is more common. Generally landscaping is lacking, signage and paths are poor, and there are few facilities to attract use. There are also few facilities in the public domain for unorganised leisure activity for teenage and young adults.

The City of Ryde's open space system shows no evidence of hierarchies of standard or scale of development. As a result there is significant duplication in the types of open space and leisure opportunities available. To illustrate using the example of playgrounds: most have the same or similar types of aged equipment, are often

within close proximity to each other, and provide little variation in play experiences for local residents.

3 Past Studies

Ryde has been active with studies into the Leisure and Recreation needs of the community, completed from the early 1990's.

Manidis Roberts Consultants completed the Ryde Leisure Needs Survey in 1991. The Manidis Roberts Survey identified the following principles that were adopted by Council in its acceptance of the report:

- Council resources should be allocated in proportion to their relative popularity among the residents;
- in the design and provision of facilities and activities, Council should take account of the most frequently-mentioned motivations for visiting public places, ie family focus, stress relief, fitness;
- Council should place a priority on allocating its resources to the provision of leisure settings or facilities, including making venues suitable to satisfy needs for use by various groups. Council should encourage the provision of activities by other organisations, whether commercial or not;
- Council should investigate further the nature of barriers to participation by adults and children (ie cost and access);
- Council should generally allocate its resources to supporting the establishment of venues (settings) that are available to the general public. For those venues where access is restricted, Council should only contribute indirectly in facilitating their establishment; and
- Council should investigate further the leisure needs of youth and children's recreation patterns.

Following the adoption of the Ryde Leisure Needs Survey, Council considered and adopted a report "Parks & Recreational Services Program – Future Directions". An outcome was the "Open Space and Recreation Facilities Plan" that was completed in April 1993. The plan outlined a number of strategies that have, so far, been the basis for the development of parks and open space. The benefit of hindsight allows us to see that some of the conclusions of the plan have not been addressed and some actions might have been better directed. The success in achieving strategies and the completeness of strategies to meet the 'Adopted Principles' is well worth consideration and explains the neglect of some demographic groupings in the Ryde community, particularly youth. The foreseeable growth in the popularity of some sports was overlooked in the report despite the multicultural make up of the City and advice of staff.

4 Purpose of this Masterplan

The Masterplan gives direction to management of Ryde's parks and reserves over the next twenty years. It should be used in the context of and in conjunction with 'Plans of Management', documents that have been prepared under the Crown Lands Act (1989) or the Local Government Act (1993).

The plan is a strategic document with implementation plan and strategies based on community consultation providing guidance to Council on the preparation of the City Management Plan and the associated Capital Works program for the City and Parks operational budget. It quantifies community values guiding maintenance standards and functionality.

The plan looks at current demographics, trends in recreation and physical activity, funding arrangements and paradigms in service delivery across the major park types. It reviews distribution and size of parks. Projections are based on anticipated population trends, extension of current trends and, through change interventions, redistribution of the current provision of services to enable sustainable delivery of more interesting recreation and park resources equitably to a wide cross section of the community. It reviews current studies that raise issues of health and well-being in the community.

5 Overview of the current position

Current demographics, asset condition, funding and management complete the set of environmental factors which define the current position

An industry (IOSS -2006) survey of eleven Local Government areas, found the City of Ryde was ranked in the mid range, indicating a moderate level of visitor satisfaction. The area where Ryde was well regarded was turf. All other areas considered were around the Sydney Region mean score. The survey targeted the larger more prominent parks and there is a need to obtain data regarding the use of smaller local parks to enhance knowledge of the overall open space system.

Australian planners have followed English standards for the provision of appropriate locations to enable people of all ages to participate in outdoor play, games, sport and other physical recreation. The standard is 2.4 Ha per 1000 people by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and supported by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management. Space is ideally made up as 1.6 Ha for outdoor sport (1.2 Ha of playing fields and 0.4 Ha of other facilities) and 0.8 Ha for play. This standard, however, takes no account of the demographic makeup of a community, cultures that make up the community, housing styles or embellishment standard and carrying capacity of that area.

The City of Ryde, with a population of approximately 105,000, has 65 Ha of sports fields (0.60 Ha per 1000), half of the English standard. The City of Ryde Council

mowing program includes 54 Ha of passive parkland (0.5 Ha per 1000), which when combined with paved areas, garden area and Lane Cove National Park, it meets the accepted standard. In addition, Ryde has 30 Ha of other types of open space such as parking areas, gardens, amenity blocks, paths and bike trails. The remaining 206 Ha are bushland, creek lines and woodlands.

There is insufficient active open space to meet NFPA standard requirements*. It may be argued that Australian conditions and culture are different to those of England where the standard applies, however the difference in percentage terms is significant, and even considered qualitatively, there should be recognition that there is a deficiency.

Per 1,000 members of the community	National Playing Fields Association Standard	City of Ryde
Total outdoor sports area	1.6 Ha	0.64 Ha
As Playing fields	1.2 Ha	0.62 Ha
Area for Children's play	0.8 ha	0.51 Ha

6 Open Space Strategy Review

6.1 Interface with National Parks

Lane Cove National Park is approximately 375 Ha adjoining the Lane Cove River. The park protects important remnant bushland within the Sydney basin. It is surrounded by an urban area and is a valuable nature conservation area. The park also has an important recreation function and through this function, awareness of the natural environment is raised in the community. The park links to other bush areas providing a continuous conservation corridor between Sydney Harbour and the Hawkesbury River.

The park protects and conserves a variety of vegetation communities, with closed and tall forests containing *Acmena smithii*, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Eucalyptus pilularis*, *E. saligna*, as well as heath and mangrove communities. There are also a number of threatened species of smaller plants. The National Park is easily accessible from Ryde and is an important recreational asset. It is also linked to other corridors of bushland that multiply its conservation capacity and values.

6.2 Interface with other major parklands

To the south of the City is Bicentennial Park which offers passive recreation and walk experiences, particularly those through the Parramatta River mangrove communities. At East Ryde, Wallumatta Nature Reserve is an area managed by the National Parks administration.

The Sydney Olympics 2000 site at Homebush offers recreational facilities of a high and elite standard as well as venues for International and National competitions for numerous sports. Access to most of the facilities, excepting the aquatic facilities and skatepark, for the average resident of Ryde would be as a spectator to a sporting event.

Homebush also offers residents of Ryde access to events and exhibitions of world standard, such as the Royal Agricultural Show.

6.3 Interface with other local government areas

The City of Ryde is located in the central northern part of the Sydney Metropolitan area, approximately 12 km from the centre of Sydney. The City is bounded by the local government areas of Hunter's Hill, Willoughby, Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and Parramatta.

The Cities of Ryde, Parramatta and Hornsby service communities with similar needs and demands. Sporting associations, such as the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Association overlap all three local government areas. An association of the three Parks/Recreation sections to strategically develop facilities will benefit sporting communities in the three Local Government Areas (LGA's). For example, the development of a single high quality synthetic athletics track at a central location, such as Dunbar Park, would increase the capacity of Dunbar, provide benefits to the schools in the region and result in a higher and greater level of competition.

Similarly the development of a further synthetic Hockey facility in the northern part of the City would encourage growth of this sport. Investigations are required to ascertain if demand is above the availability of the current facilities: the synthetic field in Ryde at Peter Board High School, and the two fields in Hornsby. Parramatta currently has no facilities for hockey.

6.4 Sustainability

In terms of environmental sustainability, Council will continue to work towards minimising the impact of parks, recreation and leisure on the environment. Measures to conserve and reuse water will be investigated and constructed wherever feasible. Similarly electricity infrastructure and use will be investigated and considered with options such as co-generation implemented where feasible.

In terms of economic sustainability, parks and recreation in Ryde compete with other functions and roles that Council provides to its residents and ratepayers. In addition there are many other demands on the resources of local government. Various papers such as “Are Councils Sustainable” discuss the implications of rate-pegging, cost shifting, increasing community expectations and the problem of Asset Management and the infrastructure crisis.

It can be assumed therefore that unless there are changes to the budgetary environment and other sources of funding found, there will be an increased need for the City to source funds from its established user groups in order to provide services and facilities beyond basic standards. Sports clubs and associations must investigate opportunities to source funds from sponsorship and other private arrangements, as clearly Local Government cannot meet their expectations.

Clubs can raise revenue from sale of refreshments at fixtures. In this instance however, the transfer of costs to Council by not having in place and implementing Waste Management Plans, or not complying with work cover or public safety laws, for example, must be resisted. It is the responsibility of the user group to ensure that a professional approach is undertaken and that no liability falls onto Council.

Sharing of resources between clubs and codes can reduce demands on Council budget. Joint fundraising for lights or the multiple use of fields and facilities, for example, is where a code or clubs can co-operate to obtain infrastructure that Council may struggle to provide.

Council recognises its role in meeting recreation needs of residents and ratepayers. However, it seeks assistance in meeting costs of providing facilities that are beyond a basic standard. Examples of these facilities are:

- lighting and electricity;
- amenities and water use;
- sport specific requirements, such as discus cages, goals or a standard of finish to hold State or National events, and
- labour and plant hire charges associated with turf wickets or ground set up.

The City of Ryde Sports Council was established in September 2005 to provide:

- a single voice representing all users of Council’s playing fields providing advice on a range of issues to assist Council’s decision making in respect to playing fields.
- advice on allocation of resources where trends that are already noted, such as increasing popularity of one sport over another, require the reallocation of resources and facilities over time.
- a forum to provide valuable statistical data on memberships. Player numbers will enable local trends to be noted rather than using data from other local government areas (LGAs), State or National figures. The demographic make up of Ryde is different from neighbouring LGAs and comparisons are not always valuable.

- a mechanism by which change interventions can be initiated. For example, currently Council supplies labour to manage litter and garbage at playing fields at some cost. Responsibility for this should become the responsibility of the user groups through the development and initiation of waste management plans. The Sports Council is a consultative mechanism to assist Council in developing such initiatives. Where there are multiple users of a facility, the Sports Council provides a forum for positive ways to manage the issue; and
- a forum to initiate and maintain relationships between the customers and the administrators and service providers.

It is anticipated that the Sports Council, operating as a positive force in the promotion of wellness and physical activity, will be a powerful change engine to enable the sustainable availability of playing fields, amenities and facilities. This document, once adopted, will become the major strategy guiding the Sports Council in their deliberations and discussions.

Council can allow leases of facilities such as areas for the establishment of cafes, kiosks or buildings for their operation. Plans of Management need to be able to reflect this where it is appropriate. Ryde Park and Blenheim Park are examples where such use is appropriate. Council should use such facilities to enhance the leisure experience, being conscious not to compete with nearby businesses.

7 Demographic review

Understanding the demographic make-up of a community will assist considerably in identifying particular needs of that community. The demographic characteristic of the City of Ryde is one important indicator of the likely demand for open space and related facilities.

For the purpose of this report, the following demographic analysis examines the City of Ryde as a whole and in some instances examines the demographics of particular suburbs.

The information has been drawn from the 2001 Census data that has been refined by Council officers in conjunction with Macquarie University. Population projection data has been drawn from the NSW Department of Planning (DOP) - Transport and Population Data Centre and examines population projections to 2026.

It should be noted that population projection information prepared by DOP was released in 2004, however the projection data commences from 2001. 2001 population projections are not consistent with the 2001 Census data, creating some discrepancies in population material.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has undertaken the 2006 Census and the City of Ryde is expected to have 100,000 – 105,000 residents. Projections by the

DOP suggest that the population will grow consistently by 0.2 – 0.5 percent per annum between 2001 and 2026.

The projected population increase up until 2026 is significant and is likely to result in an increased demand for community facilities and services, open space and leisure and recreation opportunities.

7.1 Age distribution

Table 1 identifies the actual and projected population by age between 2006 and 2026. These figures are sourced from the 2001 Census data and population projections from 2006 – 2026 from the NSW DOP. The key changes expected to occur in the age structure of the City of Ryde between 2006 and 2026 are:

- decrease in the population aged 0 – 19 years. The total number of people aged 0 – 19 years is expected to decrease by 4.4 percent between 2006 and 2026. This suggests that there will be an initial increase in population size for this age group between 2006 and 2011, but drops to approximately the 2006 numbers by 2026.
- substantial growth in those aged 50 – 69 years. The total number of people in this age category is expected to increase by 39.4 percent.
- substantial growth in those aged 70 years or more. The total number of people in this age category is expected to increase by 36.2 percent.

Research shows that there are significant declines in participation rates for sport and physical activity as people age. Whilst a definitive increase in the number of people aged 50 years and over is projected, there will still be a substantial proportion of the population aged 0 – 49 years. For example, 19.6 percent or one fifth of the population will be aged 0 – 19 years and the highest proportion of residents will remain in the age category 30 – 39 years until 2026.

Overall, projected changes in age structure of the City of Ryde suggest that the community is ageing, a characteristic common across many local government areas in Australia. Analysis of this trend over time will inform periodic review of the use of open space after data is available from Census statistics, every five years.

The open space and leisure needs of younger age categories are significantly different from those of people aged 50 years and over. For example playgrounds and junior sporting facilities are important for people aged 0 – 19 years, people aged 30 – 39 years are more likely to retain some involvement in active sport and therefore need access to sports grounds, whereas for those aged 50 years and over, walking and cycling trails, and informal passive open space will be in higher demand.

Age Group	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
0 - 4	5,740	5,560	5,410	5,420	5,460
5 - 9	5,520	5,450	5,210	5,100	5,120
10 - 14	5,330	5,330	5,180	4,970	4,880
15 -19	5,890	6,020	5,920	5,760	5,540
20 - 24	7,890	8,130	8,100	7,970	7,750
25 - 29	7,630	7,960	7,980	8,000	7,900
30 - 34	8,650	8,350	8,420	8,470	8,500
35 - 39	8,430	8,720	8,330	8,420	8,470
40 - 44	7,990	8,070	8,210	7,880	7,980
45 - 49	7,090	7,430	7,480	7,580	7,310
50 - 54	6,270	6,650	6,910	6,970	7,060
55 - 59	5,730	5,780	6,110	6,340	6,400
60 - 64	4,230	5,140	5,190	5,490	5,710
65 - 69	3,590	3,910	4,720	4,780	5,090
70 - 74	3,110	3,240	3,580	4,330	4,430
75 - 79	3,040	2,670	2,820	3,180	3,890
80 - 84	2,430	2,410	2,180	2,390	2,740
85 +	1,980	2,350	2,610	2,650	2,900
Total	100,540**	103,170**	104,360	105,700	107,130**

Table 1: *Age Structure for City of Ryde 2001 – 2026

**Note: Total figure does not include overseas visitors and therefore the total population figure is higher from that provided in Table 1 above. In particular, the number of overseas students attending Macquarie University are not accounted for.*

*** Note: Total population projection figures in 2006, 2011 and 2026 differ slightly from those provided in Table 1 above due to rounding.*

Table 2 provides information about the age structure of the City of Ryde population by suburb based on the 2001 Census. Projection information (ie 2002 – 2026) by suburb is unavailable, therefore the 2001 Census data combined with further information from the City of Ryde Section 94 Contributions Plan and the Meadowbank Section 94 Contributions Plan have been examined to provide some indication of how the population is likely to change in particular suburbs. This table will be updated when the figures for the 2006 Census become available.

Key characteristics evident from the 2001 Census data in Table 2 below include:

- the largest number of people reside in the suburbs of Ryde (20,403 – 21.3%), Eastwood (11,470 – 12.3%), Marsfield (11,527 – 12.0%), West Ryde (10,884 – 11.4%) and North Ryde (9,940 – 10.4%);

- Meadowbank, Ryde and Marsfield have the highest concentration of people aged 20 – 44 years;
- the largest age group in Macquarie Park is people aged 20 – 34 years;
- the largest age group in North Ryde is people aged 30 – 49 years and
- the highest proportion of 0 – 19 year olds live in the suburbs of Ryde (21.5%), Eastwood (14.5%), West Ryde (11.4%), North Ryde (10.9%) and Marsfield (10%)

Council's 2003 Section 94 Contributions Plan indicates that the vast majority of residential growth has occurred in the suburbs of Meadowbank and Macquarie Park over recent years where large numbers of semi-detached housing, town houses and residential flats have been constructed. Further, the Section 94 Plan indicates that Council's Residential Development Policies are designed to focus on new dwellings in the City's traditional town centres including Ryde, West Ryde, Meadowbank, Gladesville and Eastwood. Confirming expected growth in residential development is the Section 94 Contributions Plan specifically developed for Meadowbank in 2001. It is anticipated the population in Meadowbank will grow by 2,600 people between 2001 and 2011. Further, Council officers have indicated that additional growth will occur in Macquarie Park where the population is expected to grow by up to 2000 people over the next 10 years.

Whilst the information above does not provide specific data about possible changes to age structure for individual suburbs, it provides an indication of the suburbs in which population growth is most likely. If the age structure continues to evolve in the same way it has in recent years, then it is reasonable to assume that:

- Meadowbank will see an increased number of people aged 20 – 44 years;
- Macquarie Park will see an increased number of people aged 20 – 34 years; and
- Ryde, West Ryde and Eastwood are likely to retain the highest proportion of people aged 0 – 19 years.

These characteristics have a number of implications for the provision of open space in the City of Ryde:

- an increased number of people aged 20 – 44 years in the suburb of Meadowbank is likely to see increased demand for formal sporting facilities to meet the needs of residents aged between 20 – 30 years;
- an increased demand for linked, informal open space to provide cycling and walking trails to meet the needs of residents aged 30 years and over, including the need to establish "destinations" and
- given the prevalence of people aged 0 – 19 years in the suburbs of Ryde, West Ryde and Eastwood, there is likely to be continued demand for playgrounds and formal sporting facilities in these suburbs; and
- by 2026, 50% of the population will be 40 years or over, to meet the requirement for physical activity for this age group, opportunities for establishing walking trails with established destinations in either parks or significant civic locations, is reinforced.

SUBURBS	0 -4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20 -24	25 -29	30 -34	35 -39	40 -44	45 -49	50 -54	55 -59	60 -64	65 -69	70 -74	75 -79	80 +	OS Vis	Total
Denistone	225	238	238	220	232	172	215	265	308	265	255	178	145	109	109	118	191	25	3,508
Denistone East	104	146	140	141	108	82	120	157	178	164	129	92	81	53	90	68	79	19	1,951
Denistone West	53	49	50	66	42	28	40	68	50	53	69	36	19	19	33	25	85	3	788
East Ryde	128	130	158	149	132	115	149	172	150	164	144	141	146	128	116	72	48	14	2,256
Eastwood	694	835	816	841	805	704	760	1,023	949	913	689	505	401	362	429	412	411	191	11,740
Gladesville	538	463	429	403	564	872	864	779	642	553	558	438	336	290	323	281	313	64	8,710
Macquarie Park	259	197	167	435	882	751	662	475	419	350	276	216	158	142	109	129	386	478	6,491
Marsfield	542	514	506	644	1,167	1,215	1,116	947	832	714	747	543	456	342	320	257	396	269	11,527
Meadowbank	111	77	55	96	207	281	286	216	177	126	109	78	54	54	44	34	59	24	2,088
Melrose Park	113	92	97	111	65	80	127	127	126	102	98	70	58	41	37	36	45	7	1,432
North Ryde	652	644	550	551	572	584	681	876	782	692	619	483	473	457	493	422	329	80	9,940
Putney	219	195	199	166	153	155	195	232	243	210	224	166	121	113	108	88	90	18	2,895
Ryde	1,224	1,179	1,118	1,207	1,398	1,553	1,691	1,659	1,549	1,356	1,235	945	778	825	880	728	925	153	20,403
Tennyson	67	78	61	70	88	86	85	78	84	79	104	74	63	52	46	24	32	7	1,178
West Ryde	663	636	585	622	765	868	1,031	1,033	870	730	669	472	400	367	344	312	376	141	10,884
Ryde LGA	5,592	5,473	5,169	5,722	7,180	7,546	8,022	8,107	7,359	6,471	5,925	4,437	3,689	3,354	3,481	3,006	3,765	1,493	95,791

Table 2: Population Age Structure by Suburb for City of Ryde (2001 Census)

7.2 Cultural background

Examining the cultural background of the City of Ryde is important in understanding open space needs of the community. Bureau of Statistics research reports show that there are dramatic differences in participation in 'mainstream' Australian recreation activities on the basis of cultural background. In general, Anglo-Saxon groups use 'mainstream' Australian recreation venues at about nine times the rate of non Anglo-Saxon Australians. These differences reflect the differing cultural traditions, experiences and values of non Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups in the community, and the often limited relevance of what is offered by way of traditional Australian recreation activities.

The City of Ryde had a slightly higher proportion of people born overseas at the 2001 Census in comparison to the 1996 Census (1996 Census – 36%, 2001 Census – 37%). The proportion of people born overseas in the City of Ryde is also higher than metropolitan Sydney as a whole at 33 percent.

There is a difference between metropolitan Sydney and the City of Ryde for people who speak a language other than English at home. For the City of Ryde it is 34 percent, and Sydney as a whole, 29 percent. However, in the City of Ryde this has increased by 18 percent since 1996 with the languages that have experienced the greatest increases being Mandarin, Cantonese and Indonesian.

Cultural Background	% Ryde	% Sydney
Born Overseas	37.0	33.0
Language other than English spoken at home	34.0	29.0

Table 3: Cultural Background City for City of Ryde and Sydney 2001

The most common foreign birthplaces of residents in the City of Ryde were China, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Korea and Italy as outlined in Table 4. The largest increase in the most common birthplaces since the 1996 Census has been China, from 2.8 percent to 4.1 percent. Korea was not identified separately in 1996, but in 2001 totalled 2.3 percent. Hong Kong up from 2.8 to 3 percent. In contrast the United Kingdom and Italy both declined from 4.5 to 3.9 percent and 2.5 to 2.2 percent respectively.

Birthplace	%	%
	Ryde	Sydney
China	4.1	2.2
United Kingdom	3.9	5.0
Hong Kong	3.0	1.0
Korea	2.3	0.7
Italy	2.2	1.3

Table 4: Most Common Overseas Birthplaces for City of Ryde and Sydney 2001

The information above indicates that the cultural diversity of the City of Ryde is increasing and is likely to continue to increase over time. The proportion of people born overseas (37%) is significant, as is the change in countries where people are born. For example at the 1996 Census the highest proportion of people born overseas came from the United Kingdom. At the 2001 Census the highest proportion of people born overseas came from China. The open space and leisure interests and needs of these communities are likely to be vastly different.

Council will be undertaking more detailed research into the leisure interests and needs of multicultural groups and amongst other things should specifically explore the need for:

- culturally relevant outdoor food preparation and eating areas; and
- relevant unstructured leisure options such as bocce, petanque, volleyball and tai chi.

7.3 Residential form

People living in flats, units or apartments make wider use of public and commercial leisure venues than do residents in separate houses or semi detached row or terrace houses, due to the fact these properties do not have their own outdoor areas.

At the 2001 Census the City of Ryde had 38,833 “residential dwellings” representing an increase of 1,636 since the 1996 Census. The largest proportion of these was “separate dwellings” (56%), which is notably less than Sydney at 63 percent. This was followed by “semi-detached”, “terrace houses” (13%) and “walk-up flats/units” and “units in 4 storey plus buildings” that combined, accounted for 29 percent of all dwellings. This indicates that a significant percentage of the City of Ryde population live in medium to high density housing and are more likely to be reliant on public open space for recreation and leisure.

Dwelling Type	Ryde %	Sydney %
Separate dwellings	56.0	63.0
Semi detached, terrace houses	13.0	11.0
Walk-up flats/units	21.0	15.0
Units in 4+ storey buildings	8.0	8.0
Other	1.6	2.2

Table 5: Residential Form for City of Ryde and Sydney 2001

The most significant change between 1996 and 2001 occurred in “walk up flats/units” with a 51 percent increase in the number of this type of dwelling. Continued growth in this type of housing is expected with Council’s Local Environment Plan encouraging this type of medium density development, rather than dual occupancy development. Further, Council has formulated policies to encourage more residential flat developments in and around the City’s traditional retail centres such as Ryde, West Ryde, Meadowbank, Gladesville and Eastwood. It is estimated that 60 percent of all new dwelling growth up to 2013 will be residential flat buildings, with the suburbs of Macquarie Park, West Ryde, Eastwood and Meadowbank likely to experience the vast majority of this growth.

Growth in this type of housing has significant implications for the provision of open space in the City of Ryde. As outlined above, people living in units and apartments are more reliant on public open space for walking/cycling, social gatherings with family and friends, and children’s play spaces than those with accessible private open space. The provision of both a sufficient amount and variety of open space and the provision of high quality open space becomes increasingly important where medium to high-density housing developments occur.

7.4 Education, occupation, employment and income

Council wishes to place a greater focus on opportunities at its Parks that improve health and well-being, environmentally responsible pursuits, and on small group or individual, rather than team activities.

Both occupation and education levels in the Ryde community were higher at the 2001 Census than the metropolitan Sydney population as a whole. Exactly half of Ryde adults (up by 2.7% since 1996) had completed tertiary qualifications in 2001 in comparison to metropolitan Sydney at 42 percent. The proportion of men with tertiary qualifications was significantly higher than women – 52 percent for men and 41 percent for women.

The 2001 Census data shows the most common occupation for Ryde residents was professionals making up 26 percent of the workforce. The next most common occupations were intermediate clerical sales and service (17%), associate professionals (13%) and managers/administrators (10%). All these categories had increased since the 1996 Census.

Unemployment levels were low in the City of Ryde (4.5%) at the 2001 Census and had decreased from 5.2 percent at the 1996 Census. This is consistent with a national decline in unemployment levels.

There are significantly more women working part time than men, 39 percent of women compared to 19 percent of men.

At the 2001 Census, income levels for the City of Ryde were slightly higher than metropolitan Sydney. For example average household income in Ryde was \$69,000 per annum whereas in Sydney it was \$64,000 per annum. In general terms, the greater the household income the greater the uptake of recreation services and programs.

Income	Ryde %
Less than \$300	10.7
\$300 - \$699	20.5
\$700 - \$1,499	29.3
\$1,500 and over	28.9
Not stated	10.4

Table 6: Weekly Household Income for City of Ryde 2001

7.5 Vehicle ownership

Car ownership impacts on the ability of a community to access recreation facilities. Unless there is good public transport, families and individuals without cars can be seriously disadvantaged. In Ryde, car ownership levels are comparable with metropolitan Sydney. The Integrated Open Space Services (IOSS) survey of park users identified that 52% of park visitors to the eight nominated parks travelled in a private car compared to 46% who walked. However, the growing aged demographic in the community will be increasingly less mobile in the future and Council will need to respond to this emerging issue.

Accessibility to a local park for all is a major goal of Council. Council considers that 95% of the community should be within 400m of a local park.

Table 7 outlines the Bureau of Statistics data on car ownership in both the City of Ryde and metropolitan Sydney. The proportion of households with no car was the same in Ryde and Sydney. Ryde has slightly more households with one car and slightly fewer households with three or more cars; however these figures correlate to the quality of public transport in the area, with some families not needing a car for transport to work where there is an excellent public transport system.

The average number of cars per household is 1.4 in Ryde and 1.45 in Sydney. In both these categories, there was a small increase in the average number of cars per household from 1996 to 2001.

No. of Vehicles	Ryde	Sydney
	%	%
0 Vehicles	13.0	13.0
1 Vehicle	43.0	39.0
2 Vehicles	29.0	29.0
3+ Vehicles	9.0	11.0

Table 7: Car Ownership for City of Ryde and Sydney 2001

In summary, the population of the City Of Ryde is:

- Increasing at a relatively stable rate, however the State Government proposed redevelopment of town centres under the Metropolitan Strategy has the potential to increase the population significantly.
- Ageing, with numbers in the under 19 category remaining static while there will be significant increases in the over 50 category.
- There is a trend towards higher density dwelling types such as apartments and multiple occupancies.
- Education and employment statistics for Ryde are higher than the rest of Sydney with ABS indicators confirming this relative advantage.
- Mobility is moderately high with car ownership and public transport more available than the rest of Sydney
- The population is culturally diverse, and increasingly the trends show this will increase.

8 Need For Open Space

8.1 Need for active recreation spaces

Physical recreation and fitness contributes to a full and meaningful life. Recent studies highlight an increase in the adolescent and adult obesity rate in Australia. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) reports that there are an estimated 1,500,000 people under the age of 18 considered overweight or obese (20-25% of children and adolescents). The trend is accelerating and has done since the mid 1980's so that by 2025, over 80% of adults and 33% of children will be overweight or obese.

Further research by the University of South Australia on behalf of the ASC has analysed the health status of young people, trends in sport and distractions that exist as part of growing up in present society. The University of South Australia study recognises competition for physical activity, noting that there is no reason to suggest that physical activity is any less enjoyable for today's children; there is simply a wider choice of things to do than in the 1980's. This indicates that one of the things that Council can do to encourage the use of its playspaces is to make them more attractive and interesting. Further conclusions of the study were that the major determinant of a child's involvement in physical activity was the home environment, especially the number of parents in the home. The involvement of children from single parent families was significantly lower than for dual parent families.

Since 1996, over 40,000 women have participated in 'The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health', a study of three age cohorts, each cohort entering major turning points in their lives. The study has identified many policy issues, several of which are reflective of other studies such as the University of South Australia study mentioned above. These policy issues are:

- younger women are gaining weight rapidly, and the health problems associated with being overweight will start to appear much earlier than in previous generations;
- as health problems caused by excess weight accumulate over time, the large numbers of 'baby-boomer' (mid-age) women who are already overweight or obese, and the continuing weight gain of this group, pose an escalating health threat for the future. Major efforts to control weight gain among middle-aged people are needed if Australia is to avoid substantial increases in chronic disease, loss of productivity and declining well-being in the next 10-20 years;
- younger women, particularly in the cities, want to combine motherhood with paid work. The challenge is to create situations to allow them to manage this;
- the high rate of relationship breakdown among mid-aged women suggests that around a quarter will reach retirement age without partners. The

- implications of this for finances and lifestyle in older age have important implications;
- there is widespread social disapproval of smoking in pregnancy and around children. Women are strongly motivated to quit smoking when they become (or plan to become) pregnant. Promotion of tobacco control in health care (and recreational) settings as well as the general community can help women and their families to create and maintain smoke free environments for children;
 - women who are quitting smoking, going through menopause, have sedentary jobs or live in rural areas, should be targeted by efforts to increase energy expenditure and decrease energy intake. Small but consistent changes in physical activity and diet are needed to reverse the energy imbalance and halt the weight gain which underlies the current obesity epidemic; and
 - women with a partner and children are more likely to feel time-pressured than women living alone, or living only with a partner.

In planning for the recreation and leisure needs of the Ryde community the issues with regard to youth, women and over 40's should be noted in considerations. In the main the existing facilities are focused on children's playspaces, active organised sports and males. The action plan identifies the need to engage the community to increase the opportunities available to youth and women.

Demographic trends that continue to affect sport and recreation planning at Ryde are:

- the anticipated growth in the population, albeit in the higher age groups;
- increase in the numbers of single parent families;
- the ageing of the population in the City of Ryde;
- the change in the major activities undertaken;
- a reduced ability to maintain sporting and recreation assets; and
- change in numbers of juniors that may reverse the current increasing trend in junior sport participation.

Statistics reported by clubs and associations booking Council's fields almost universally report growth in registrations. Demand is increasing for sports fields, confirmed by the number of requests for bookings on a seasonal basis. However, only recently, data has started to be collected on how many or what percentage of registrants are from Ryde. This data has been requested for the 2006 season, with indications that about half the registrants playing in Ryde are from other Local Government Areas.

The trends as outlined above describe a leisure and recreation environment that is complex and fluid in nature. The more information and statistics that can be gathered, the better analysis can be done of trends in leisure and recreation. Local Government Areas manage an asset base that is more rigid and

structured, within a political environment that has established interests. This situation translates into a lack of responsiveness and flexibility in the allocation process.

Community recreation promotes ethnic and cultural harmony and Ryde has a diverse range of cultures and blend of people. In more recent years there has been a trend of girls and women taking up traditional male sports, eg; soccer. Women's soccer is a non-traditional sport in Australia with the dominant sport for females being netball. Soccer's popularity has grown with increasing diversity in the cultural background of Australia. The acceptance of this game by girls and women is reflective of increasing gender equality.

There may be limited opportunity for Council to acquire additional land to meet the needs of the community for open space for active or organised physical activity due to the value of land in Sydney. Therefore Council must use the existing open space more effectively through the following actions:

- As suggested by Manidis Roberts in 1991, the allocation of playing fields must be done on a 'use it or lose it' basis;
- Facility and ground maintenance be undertaken by the sporting club who is the user;
- Acquisition of land on Kent Road be completed to enable construction of additional sporting facilities and parking at ELS Hall reserve;
- Give priority to our limited open space to clubs whose members are predominantly City of Ryde residents;
- Lobby the State Government to open up School grounds for use by Sporting Clubs and local residents; and
- Long-term leases of fields not be renewed and instead offer seasonal performance based Licences.

It is proposed that Council investigate opportunities to intensify use of some existing sports fields. This is required to meet increasing demand arising as a result of the State Governments Metropolitan Strategy.

8.2 Need for passive recreation spaces

Relaxation, rest and revitalisation through leisure is essential for all people to ensure a healthy life. Council is redeveloping Ryde Park to become a well-designed and attractive urban park, vastly improved from one that suffered from over planting and inadequate focus of resources for maintenance and capitalisation. The revitalised park (in combination with a revitalised Ryde Town Centre), will increase visitation and use of the park. Revitalisation and renewal will facilitate additional passive recreation activities. Active recreation in Ryde Park is at capacity with dedicated sports areas occupied by Rugby Union and Sydney Grade Cricket and as such cannot be increased.

With the demographic make up of Ryde trending for people becoming older and needing low impact physical activity, there is opportunity to utilise new attractive open spaces to develop semi-organised activities for physical activity and leisure. Several models exist, such as delivery of Tai Chi and walking groups, and Council has the existing infrastructure to deliver these services.

The 1991 Manidis Roberts report notes that “Council should place a priority on allocating its resources to the provision of leisure settings or facilities, including making venues suitable to satisfy needs for use by various groups. Council should encourage the provision of activities by other organisations, whether commercial or not.” This has been found not to be appropriate, as lifestyles have changed since it was written. The evidence in Ryde over many years is activities will not be established without an active role being taken by Council in supporting/subsidising groups with land and facilities. This arrangement is not expected to change in the next 20 years.

Activities such as Tai Chi, which require an attractive environment to be successful, could be promoted and managed through a Recreation and Leisure Program. Walking groups for seniors and young mothers could be similarly organised to provide socialising opportunities, physical activity and community construction. Other parks that have been renewed, such as Yamble and Blenheim, provide similar opportunities as will the new parkland at Ryde Riverside Reserve when complete.

Meaningful leisure activity also has the potential to be a vehicle to help persons have positive self-esteem and self-image. It is scientifically proven that undertaking basic physical activity for half an hour per day will reduce the likelihood of developing chronic disease associated with ageing such as Diabetes Type 2, and heart disease.

Council acknowledges that leisure activities in which people participate change as they grow older and we need to adjust our facilities accordingly. The top four recreational activities for the different age groups, according to the ABS Census undertaken in 2001 are:

Age Group	First Activity	Second	Third	Fourth
15 to 24	Aerobics*	Swimming	Walking	Soccer
25 to 34	Walking	Aerobics*	Swim	Cycling
35 to 44	Walking	Swimming	Aerobics*	Cycling
45 to 54	Walking	Swimming	Aerobics*	Cycling
55 to 64	Walking	Aerobics*	Golf	Swimming
65 and over	Walking	Aerobics*	Bowls	Golf

Table 8: ABS Census 2001 – Top Four Recreational Activities by Age Group

**Note: Aerobics is Aerobics/Fitness*

To encourage play and provide effective competition for alternatives to physical activity that did not exist a few years ago, playspace providers must display imagination and flair in the design process. Introduction of interest beyond traditional playground equipment is important and there are many good examples of this in Ryde, at Putney, and surrounding areas of Sydney (Winnererremy Bay at Pittwater and Wyong Extreme Adventure Park for example). Variety at individual locations is important as is the introduction of public art and other traditional and non-traditional items to challenge the imagination. Design can overcome the loss of the wild, open and unstructured playspaces that earlier generations experienced and appreciated. The introduction of controlled risk by play space designers is paramount. It would be disappointing if a superior challenge were available in a computer game rather than overtaking the challenge of the giant slide at Putney Park.

As mentioned above in the analysis of car ownership, the level of mobility is moderately high for the families with young children in Ryde. However the need to provide a quality playspace within walking distance is also important, as is having variety and interest in a park setting further away. The walk is part of the experience and involves contact and socialising with the local community. Playspaces should be embellished with seating and shade from trees or artificial shade structures to increase comfort and allow a longer stay. A local playspace no more than 400m from each residence is an appropriate target that has been set by the City of Ryde, given the distance between State Primary Schools is 1200m in the City of Ryde.

Council has 98 Parks with one or more play items. The total number of items is 435 at a value of \$1,333,053. However, if more modern equipment was chosen and compliance to current Australian Standards for softfall was made, the replacement cost would be in the region of \$4,000,000. Ten parks have one item and six have 10 pieces or more, Yamble having 40. As the South Australian University study found, play equipment competes for children's attention and time with a variety of other pastimes. Not all of the alternative pastimes provide the same benefits (for example development of hand/eye coordination) that play on challenging and interesting playground equipment offers. In the longer term, Council should consider that, in light of asset management requirements, with ever more stringent safety requirements for playground equipment, coupled with an increasing demand for interesting and challenging equipment, a program for renewal and replacement of playgrounds, as part of an overall playspace strategy is needed urgently.

People are more willing to travel some distance to access larger and more varied play facilities and services. The IOSS 2006 survey at Putney Park revealed that the mean average distance travelled to the park was a significant 7.7 km. An area where an increase in the variety of playspace is needed is close to Meadowbank and Ryde, where there is a predominance of apartments and it is proposed for more residential development in the future.

Leisure opportunities for youth provide positive lifestyle choices and alternatives to self-destructive behaviour. Leisure and recreation studies quoted previously identify youth (12 to 25) as a critical period for establishing healthy lifestyle choices, a time when compulsory physical activity at school becomes voluntary. There are conflicting opportunities for available time with physical activity, study, screen time and social mixing being demands. There are lifestyle choices to be made regarding relationships, friends and family that influence emotions and well-being. Council cannot make lifestyle and time choices for youth, however local government has a responsibility to offer opportunities for the development of positive lifestyle choices.

The City of Ryde needs to investigate and report on ways to engage teenagers in passive or non-organised physical activity. Female youth is the most difficult group to engage in physical activity, and specific attention should be given to the provision of environments and activities for this group. This issue needs to be addressed with some intensity and a workshop to discuss and identify possible solutions that could be offered at our Parks would be a positive intervention.

Combinations of picnic and a variety and quantity of play facilities provide an entertainment destination that is popular, particularly at weekends. Such developments and facilities have the potential to reduce destructive behaviour. There are examples where anti social behaviour and vandalism have been reduced in communities where significant recreation spaces have been developed, for example, the Umina Recreation Area. It is important the Community has a significant input into the development and design of facilities. There may also be the opportunity for physical input by the Community to get a degree of community ownership.

Integrated and accessible leisure services are critical to quality of life for people with a disability and disadvantaged individuals. It is important that the design and construction of new facilities comply with the Disability and Discrimination Legislation.

8.3 Need for environmental spaces

Leisure opportunities, facilities and quality of local environment are foundations of community pride. Council has an obligation to maintain, care for and manage areas of natural significance, maintaining and favouring native species, especially those species that are threatened by an encroaching urban environment.

There are nine endangered species in Ryde:

- three shrub species; *Melaleuca deanei*, *Epacris purpurascens* and *Darwinea biflora*.

- four birds; *Osprey, Black-tailed godwit, Cotton pygmy goose and Powerful Owl and*
- two amphibians; *the green and golden bell frog and Red crowned toadlet*
- in addition there are the threatened communities, Blue Gum High forest, Turpentine/Ironbark forest and salt marsh vegetation at the Field of Mars.

The sensitive management and improvement of habitat where these species are, or are likely to occur, to ensure their preservation is a high priority for Council. Strategic management of weed control is needed to ensure the maintenance of habitat. The progressive removal of weed and the resultant replacement regeneration of the native under-story will retain habitat for many species. The wholesale and total removal of all weeds from an area at one instance is not an appropriate process; it should be planned and staged over an appropriate time frame.

The main threat to urban bushland is weed invasion with the major ones being privet, wandering jew, asthma weed, and lantana. Other threats to urban bushland, such as urban development pressure, arson, vandalism, feral and uncontrolled domestic animals can be managed by education and appropriate zoning of land. The education program at Ryde can be best delivered through Council in partnership with stakeholder organisations and volunteers.

Volunteer Bushcare Groups are Council's best assets in management of bushland parks and reserves. Maintenance and increase of volunteer numbers is critical and investigation of ways to achieve this should be further investigated. Facilitation of Bushcare through one or more dedicated staff, working at weekends when the volunteers are available, is a common model with Local Government Areas throughout the country. Bushcare staff at Ryde should always be well-qualified and experienced, and well regarded by the volunteer community.

Investing in the environment through parks and provision of open space in residential areas leads to an increase in neighbourhood property values through accessibility to environmentally friendly green spaces and associated recreation opportunities (Crompton 2004).

9 Management Issues

9.1 Ownership and categorisation issues

Ownership arrangements at many reserves are complex and confusing. For example Anzac Park is made up of 23 parcels of land of which nine are community land classified under the Local Government Act (1993); the remaining 14 are Crown Land Reserves with the appropriate Act, the Crown Lands Act (1989). There are several examples including Ryde Park and Putney Park where

there are complex and confusing land arrangements that could be simplified through agreement with the State Government.

A complex combination of ownership along the Parramatta River has been resolved with the open space being combined in one parcel as a Crown Reserve, with the City of Ryde as Trustee.

9.2 Use of reserves

With the parks and reserves under a combination of ownerships, decisions are more complex for leasing and licensing. The Crown Land Regulation (2000) 32 allows the following Temporary Licence for use of an area;

“Advertising, Camping using a tent, caravan or otherwise; Catering, Entertainments, Equestrian events, Exhibitions, Filming (within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1993), Functions, Hiring of equipment, Holiday accommodation, Markets, Meetings, Mooring of boats to wharves or other structures, Sales, Shows, Sporting and organised recreational activities, Stabling of horses; providing the relationship of landlord and tenant is not created between the parties, and for less than one year.”

While this is a list of all possible uses for a variety of reserves including camping grounds and showgrounds, a selection of these uses and the guidelines for approval are appropriate for extension to all reserves. Therefore it is reasonable to allow:

- Catering; where that catering is associated with an approved function;
- Entertainments; where the entertainment is open to the community;
- Exhibitions; of community or cultural interest;
- Filming; for an appropriate return to Council where it is commercial;
- Functions; where the event is for an organised group of 40 or more and may require the erection of marquees or other infrastructure;
- Markets; where the markets are promoted by Council or an approved community group;
- Meetings; of community based groups; and
- Sporting and organised recreational activities.

Where appropriate, these uses should be specified in the Plan of Management for the Land.

Management and administration of events and temporary licence are administrative functions that have been given authorisation through the Plan of Management process. In other local government areas such as Sydney, Sutherland, Hornsby, Wyong and Gosford, there are ‘special event’ processes where proposals for events are considered on their individual merit. . Requirements for waste management, insurance, hours, possible service of alcohol and other matters can then be addressed accordingly. If there is

compliance with the Plan of Management for a park, permission can be granted, for an appropriate fee. Fees are established in the Management Plan. The use of appropriate delegated powers to Council Officers allows a responsive system of management.

10 Discussion of Issues

10.1 Natural areas

Natural areas should be accessible and attractive, allowing easy visitor access. Trails should enable walking, disabled access, where appropriate bike access, and be sign posted (including interpretive signage).

Ryde has two natural areas of quality. Brush Farm Park/Lambert Park and Field of Mars. The Field of Mars is strategically important as a reserve of some size and importantly, as a linkage to Lane Cove National Park. The more substantial of the two buildings within the Field of Mars is run by the Department of School Education within the reserve on an area of land over which Council is not Trustee. Educational programs for schools are run from this facility. The programs attract students from the entire Sydney area, introducing the environmental values of and challenges to the preservation of urban bushland.

The history of the Field of Mars Reserve starts in 1804, when it was proclaimed a Reserve for Public Recreation in 1887 with Ryde Municipal Council made Trustees in 1889. It remained a bushland area adjacent to the cemetery. In the 1950's, the banks of the lower Buffalo Creek were used as a garbage tip. In the 1960's the threat of further garbage fill was made, involving the filling of the creek valley with garbage to a depth of 15 metres. This proposal led to the formation of the Ryde Hunters Hill Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (RHHFFPS), initially to successfully ensure the preservation of the reserve. The formation of this conservation group, and their successful campaign, was a forerunner to the Kelly's Brush movement that was the trigger for the famous "Green Bans" of the late 60s and early 70s.

A building, known as the Visitors' Centre, is located near the Pittwater Road entry to the Field of Mars Reserve. RHHFFPS have been custodians of the Visitors' Centre for some time. This building has further capacity as a Visitors', Education and Interpretation venue, with further potential to raise funds for the embellishment of the fabric and values of the reserve. The Centre operates at weekends and public holidays through a volunteer roster. Regular and frequent opening times can assist in increasing visitation to the reserve.

Trails have been developed to encourage bush walking, and the Kunzea Walk from Ryde joining with the Great North Walk goes through the reserve. This walk represents an opportunity to develop a trail with high conservation and

recreational values if it is developed and maintained to an accessible standard (ensuring there is no damage or influence on any of the conservation values).

Further development of picnic areas and a focus on interpretative signage will have a positive effect on the community's awareness of environmental and conservation values. The reserves' role of education, interpretation, and as a corridor linked with Lane Cove National Park is critical to the stated values of the Ryde community.

Brush Farm and the adjoining Lambert Park provide another seven hectares of quality bushland. These reserves have bushland where there is near complete control over weed invasion (with an accessible walk), thanks to work done by volunteers over many years. Around 50% of this open space system is classified as natural area. The space requires continuing good management and maintenance to limit weeds, fire risks and meet community needs. There are historic values, described in several documents and studies, associated with the establishment of the property by pioneer Gregory Blaxland (1771-1852) and his role in the development of agriculture and his exploration of Australia.

Both Field of Mars and Brush Farm Park have been assessed through a Plan of Management process. The process has been in consultation with stakeholders and the community. The outcome of the process has been the identification of action plans that will improve the reserves when implemented.

Currently, Council's Bushland areas are generally not well maintained, with reliance on Volunteer Bushcare workers and some contractors working in a scattered and non-strategic way over the whole system. This is in conflict with the expressed community wish that natural areas are important and should be well looked after.

Issues that are being addressed are:

- weed infestation is being quantified with aerial photography in 2007. This will assist with management plan formulation to control noxious weed species. The aerial photography will also assist in defining the location of remnant bluegum and turpentine forests and woodland;
- there are plans to improve the main trail between the Field of Mars and Ryde Park through a combination of funding sources. After this is complete, other priorities will be for Kitty's Creek and Terry's Creek along the series of parks;
- Natural Areas expenditure is being reviewed to address, more strategically, the eradication and control of weeds; and
- Biodiversity through the Fauna and Flora studies and surveys.

Many areas have shared values with some of the area of the reserve being a passive park and/or a sportsground. The value of these areas as 'the lungs of the

City' should not be overlooked, nor their value as the home of native fauna and flora.

There is no doubt that residents of Ryde share a passion for native trees. There are recognised and identified areas of Turpentine/Ironbark and Blue Gum High Forest that are significant to the area and listed by State and National Authorities. Preservation of these areas demonstrates community interest in native vegetation. In some open spaces, trees are in a senescent condition. Many trees are cavities, and though good environmental or habitat specimens; are dangerous in a passive style of reserve where families are encouraged through playground equipment or picnic facilities. Risk management must be considered with good management of trees around these facilities.

Because there is pressure to retain and improve the health of the tree population, there is a requirement to generate a tree management plan that will enable a regeneration of the natural tree canopy while retaining useful passive open space, some habitat for native fauna, and management of safety issues.

10.2 Passive parks

The City of Ryde appears to have a large amount of open space, exceeding the widely used industry benchmark of 2.83 hectares per 1000 people. NPFA standard is that for every 1,000 people there should be 0.2 Ha of children's playspace and 0.6 Ha of informal parkland. The City of Ryde has approximately 3.5 hectares per 1000 people, however as stated above, some 50% is inaccessible natural area. The area available that might be described as passive open space is 54 Ha or 0.51 Ha per 1000 residents, 0.21 Ha below the accepted standard. Further, open space resources are characterized by a large number of small sites (which consequently have very limited use capacities) and a number of protected wetlands and drainage easements, which are of limited value with steeply sloping land and limited community development capacity.

Table 9 provides information about the size of the City's open space system. It identifies a series of categories for the size and usability of land and provides data on:

- how many of the City's parks fall within each category;
- the total hectares of land in each category;
- the percentage of sites in each category; and
- the average number of hectares per site in each category.

The table also provides a description of types of possible use and capacity of land within each category. It should be noted that these descriptions do not take into account the land characteristics. For example, a site which is largely bushland may have little capacity to provide sporting facilities. Similarly, drainage easements or protected wetlands seriously minimize how the land can be used for recreational purposes.

The City of Ryde Public Space and Recreation Facilities Plan was developed in 1993. The Plan was Council's principle strategy document to guide future investment into the City of Ryde's existing and proposed open space network.

There are a number of issues identifiable from Table 9 which are of relevance to the City of Ryde Public Space and Recreation Facilities Plan including:

- A total of 44, or 21%, of all parks are less than 0.1 of a hectare in size, with the smallest being only 0.0183 hectares – Sindel Reserve in Cobhan Avenue, Melrose Park. In many instances, the potential of these parks is limited with their size, design and location often inappropriate and/or insufficient to encourage use, unless of course, they have some very local amenity or buffering value. Many of these small Parks are generally in poor condition, with limited amenities and leisure opportunities and are not linked to each other in any way.
- A total of 70, or 33%, of all parks are between 0.1 and 0.5 hectares in size. This means that over half of the City's parks are less than 0.5 of a hectare, suggesting that there is a strong reliance on small parks to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the community. As detailed in the table below, parks between 0.1 and 0.5 hectares are of sufficient size to be useful for reasonable formal or informal play opportunities which may include picnic, barbecue, linear linkage (dependent on proximity to other sites) and social gathering areas.
- Of the 14 parks between 5 and 10 Ha, 5 are classified as predominantly natural areas with a large proportion being bushland. The remaining nine parks all have sporting facilities, however five of these nine have a significant percentage of the park designated as natural areas, resulting in a maximum of three sports grounds in any of the parks. The predominance of natural areas in these larger parks limits the City's capacity to provide sporting facilities.
- The City has only two parks between 10 and 20 hectares. Pembroke Park which is almost 13 hectares in size and is classified as bushland / natural area and ELS Hall Park that provides the largest number of sporting facilities not located on the Parramatta River. It is an excellent example of a larger park which effectively combines sporting facilities, bushland, walking / cycling trails, picnic and barbecue facilities and informal passive open space. It is the only park of its type in the City and should be used as a benchmark for sites where sporting facilities are the predominant use, such as Meadowbank Park and Morrison Bay Park.
- The City has two parks which are 20 hectares or greater. Field of Mars Reserve, by far the largest tract of open space in the City with 51.53 hectares. This site is predominantly bushland / natural areas with walking trails, interpretive signage and small picnic areas. The other large Park is Meadowbank Park which is 26 hectares, located on the Parramatta River, as part of the Ryde Riverside Reserve. Sporting facilities are the dominant feature of this park with secondary elements including several

playgrounds, walking trails, informal passive open space and some picnic and barbecue facilities. It would seem appropriate for the passive and unstructured open space to be substantially expanded and improved in this park for several reasons. These include:

- a) the park's positioning as a foreshore reserve, that it is probably the most valuable regional open space site in the City; and
- b) large components of the community use playgrounds, passive open space, picnic and barbecue facilities and walking / cycling trails at far greater rates than sporting facilities.

Size Category (Hectares)	No. of Parks	Total Area (Hectares)	% of Total No. of Sites	Description of possible use and capacity
0 – 0.1	44	2.57	21.0	Generally useful for amenity and the provision of narrow linkages and small play opportunities.
0.101 – 0.5	70	15.90	33.3	Generally useful for modest to reasonable play opportunities OR 2 – 3 tennis courts AND/OR informal play areas.
0.501 – 1.0	22	15.97	10.5	Useful for reasonable sized play opportunities, good-sized informal play and picnic opportunities.
1.01 – 2.0	28	35.35	14.8	May be suitable for single purpose sporting facility. Eg: at least 1 – 1 1/2 hectares required for a soccer field.
2.01 – 5.0	25	82.87	11.9	Suitable for local / sub municipal sports facilities which might include up to 2 sports grounds (depending on the size of the land), combined with landscaping, walking paths, social / picnic facilities and play opportunities.
5.01 – 10.0	14	98.98	6.7	Suitable for municipal level sports facilities which include between 2 and 5 sports grounds (depending on the size of the land) combined with landscaping, walking paths, social / picnic facilities and play opportunities.
10.01 – 20.0	2	25.96	1.0	This size of reserve could be described as a regional site depending on how the land is used. For example if the site is a centre for activity such as a significant local netball competition, accommodates regional linear cycling or walking trails and/or provides a regional scale playground, it may be appropriate for it to be considered a regional site. Alternatively it may be considered a municipal level site.
20.01 plus	2	77.53	1.0	This size of land will generally be considered regional and can consist of a range of sporting, play, social, bushland and informal facilities. In the City of Ryde, the Field of Mars Reserve, a bushland reserve accounts for 51.5 hectares
TOTAL	207	355.03	100%	

Table 9: Number, Size and Use Capacity of Parks in City of Ryde 2005

10.2.1 Playgrounds

Playgrounds may have some landscaping but are generally embellished with two to four items of playground equipment. This type of park has an important role in providing a casual meeting place and social environment. The role of the park is maximised where there is limited private recreation space such as where the local housing stock is made up of apartment, terrace or semi-detached style buildings.

As mentioned above, the City has 98 playgrounds, of the 435 pieces of equipment, 64 pieces are classified as new and the remaining 371 are classified as satisfactory. The equipment classified as satisfactory is old and neither interesting nor challenging, but is well maintained. It may be freestanding or located with one or two pieces of a similar age, for example a galvanised steel swing located with a spring animal.

Table 11 provides information about play equipment in the City. Several issues relevant to the City of Ryde Public Space and Recreation Facilities Plan include:

- only 15.9 % of all parks between 0 and 0.1 hectares have play equipment. This is to be expected given that generally parks of this size are limited in their ability to accommodate play opportunities;
- parks between 0.101 and 0.5 hectares have the largest number of sites with play equipment. This is to be expected given that parks of this size are best positioned to accommodate moderate play opportunities and
- the average number of pieces of play equipment is generally higher in larger parks, with the exception of parks between 5 and 10 hectares. This is however, not an accurate reflection of the scale and size of play equipment. Council's asset management system records the number of pieces of play equipment, but does not distinguish between a small stand alone swing and a large multipurpose piece of play equipment which may incorporate slides, tunnels, climbing nets etc. However there is a centralised pictorial record of all play equipment.

Park Size	No. of Parks	No. which have play equipment	Avg. No. of pieces of equipment	% of Total Sites
0 – 0.1	44	7	2.70	15.9
0.101 – 0.5	70	36	3.24	51.4
0.501 – 1.0	22	11	3.45	50.0
1.01 – 2.0	28	14	5.06	50.0
2.01 – 5.0	25	18	7.39	72.0
5.01 – 10.0	14	8	4.25	57.1
10.01 – 20.0	2	1	22.0	50.0
20.01 plus	2	1	22.0	50.0
TOTAL	207	98	-	-

Table 10: Parks with Play Equipment by Park Size in City of Ryde 2005

The distribution of playgrounds across the City is similar to the distribution of open space in general. In the Central ward, 25 parks have play equipment; this ward also has the smallest amount of open space. In the East ward 37 parks have play equipment, the West ward has 36. Given that the East ward has 46.6% of all open space, and the West ward has 32.4%, the West ward appears to have an overly large proportion of play sites. However, the West ward has a high proportion of parks between 0.101 and 1 hectare and as noted earlier this size of park is most likely to accommodate reasonably sized play opportunities. The East Ward percentage is also weighted by the large Field of Mars Reserve. Therefore the distribution by Ward Boundary is reasonable.

Access to good quality play experiences is limited in the City. Where redevelopment work has occurred such as at Putney and Blenheim Parks, play opportunities are excellent. However, in many instances there is duplication of play experiences from one park to the next, the play equipment is old, in fair condition and only caters for a narrow age range.

Further, lack of play experiences for teenagers is noticeable. City of Ryde does not offer an abundance of facilities for unstructured leisure and recreation for teenagers and young adults. Park infrastructure suitable for teenagers which is challenging and provide health outcomes such as half courts (basketball), volleyball courts and hit up walls need to be considered.

The role and use of the local playground space is diminished where the following conditions exist:

- equipment is unattractive with little or no seating for carers;
- there is no shading and sunlight to allow grass to grow;
- maintenance is infrequent;
- in areas where there is plenty of private recreation space;
- where there are alternatives, such as other nearby playgrounds;
- where there are few children in the 3 to 10 age group;
- where roads or other boundaries restrict the drawing area for the park; and
- where parents' time is limited by work or family make up.

“Intention to be active” is a psychological attribute reported as associated with youth physical activity. It is likely that an individual’s intention to be physically active will be higher if an active behaviour pattern is already established. The existence of the local park as the initial venue for an active lifestyle learnt early, will increase the likelihood of an active healthy lifestyle at a minimal cost.

Opportunity for change, prioritisation and community contribution to this type of park can have an outcome where visitation and functionality of the neighbourhood park is improved through adoption of policy guidelines around minimum and maximum distances (400m is suggested), recognition of contribution and asset management planning. It is proposed to engage communities in discussion around the above-mentioned issues to develop

playspaces across a neighbourhood area defined by significant boundaries. The engagement process proposed is to initiate a “Playground Expo” to initiate interest and to form stakeholder groups around children’s play, gardens and play space providers.

There is a decline in physical activity over a lifetime. The greatest decline is at adolescence, typically between 13 and 18 years of age. This is true for males and females. The lack of facilities for casual or unstructured recreation for youth and young adults is an unusual omission in the recreation spectrum in the City of Ryde. The issue is important, as declining representation in organised sport activity marks this age group particularly when there is competition for time by other activities. Leisure time is beginning to become unstructured with limited compulsory exercise included in the school, TAFE or University curriculum. What exercise is taken is because of choice. There is an increasing need for youth and young adults to spend time with their peers to ensure a strong sense of identity.

The requirement to address the issue of provision of publicly available recreation and leisure facilities is not that of local government alone. If the issue is not addressed there are long term health and welfare outcomes that impact at both State and National levels. However, in the spirit of ‘thinking globally and acting locally’ the City of Ryde needs to intervene and involve youth of the City to identify and provide recreation and leisure facilities for young women and men.

Given the over abundance of small to medium sized passive parks and knowledge of the change in demographic characteristics that will occur over the next two decades, a review of the process to determine what replaces a playground in a park needs to be considered. The process was recently completed in the consideration of Blenheim Park, most recently, stage 3. Consideration must be given to the resident’s demographic make up, neighbour’s considerations, proximity of nearby areas and special needs identified by a community survey.

Prioritisation of parks and reserves is necessary for a number of reasons. Allocation of resources for asset management, maintenance and capitalisation should be directed to spaces where they will give best return to the community. However it is unfair to compare playgrounds with bushland and playing fields, as the value systems associated with the different types of parks are different. A hierarchy or level of park, within different categories of parks is proposed. The effect of maintenance can be enhanced by ensuring staff have a commitment to the provision of quality open space. Staff will be encouraged to gain relevant qualifications to ensure commitment and skills are matched to the outcome required.

Because of the divisive nature of major roads, natural features and the City’s boundaries, which ultimately limits access, the City has been divided into eleven neighbourhoods with boundaries of the Parramatta River, LGA boundaries, the railway, Buffalo Creek, and Victoria, Twin, Epping, Blaxland, North and Lane Cove Roads (see map on page 56). It is proposed that each

neighbourhood should be self sufficient with regard to basic play and leisure opportunities. This will establish an infrastructure standard which will guide asset acquisition and renewal.

Neighbourhoods

- Area 1 is bounded by Lane Cove Road, Epping Road and the northern boundary.
- Area 2 is bounded by Lane Cove Road, Epping Road, North Road and Terry's Creek.
- Area 3 is bounded by Terry's Creek, North Road and Blaxland Road.
- Area 4 is bounded by Blaxland Road, Devlin Street and the rail line.
- Area 5 is bounded by the rail line, the western LGA boundary and Victoria Road.
- Area 6 is bounded by the LGA western LGA boundary, Parramatta River and the rail line.
- Area 7 is bounded by Parramatta River, rail line, Church St and Victoria Road.
- Area 8 is bounded by Victoria Road, Church St, Parramatta River and the eastern LGA boundary.
- Area 9 is bounded by the eastern LGA boundary, Victoria Road and Buffalo Creek.
- Area 10 is bounded by Buffalo Creek, Twin Road and Lane Cove Road.
- Area 11 is bounded by Lane Cove Road, Epping Road, the eastern LGA boundary and Twin Road.

Playgrounds will be provided under three categories;

- lowest in the playground hierarchy are the Local Playgrounds. They will have four pieces of playground equipment to suit one of the following age groups, 0 to 4, 5 to 8, 8 to 12 and 12+. The playground will have two seats and shade planting. There may be two to five Local Playgrounds in each 'Area':
- Neighbourhood Playgrounds will have ten pieces of equipment, suitable for all four age clusters. The playground will have shade shelters, BBQ's, picnic tables and toilets. There will be directional signage to the Playgrounds at strategic locations around the neighbourhood. There may be one Neighbourhood Playground per 'Area';
- highest in the hierarchy are District Playgrounds which will have twenty pieces of equipment, shelters, toilets, picnic tables, paths and usually other facilities. These playgrounds will be at Meadowbank, Putney, Yamble, Ryde, Fontenoy, Blenheim, ELS Hall and Pioneer Parks.

Parks without playgrounds will be reviewed through a community consultation process to determine what embellishments and planting they should have. They may have alternative design solutions offering a play space without equipment. The decision process to decide which parks are developed for

renewed playgrounds, will involve analysis and consideration of demographic data and extensive consultation and involvement by the community. Local playgrounds in the future should have a minimum size to allow for some diversity in activity. All renewed playgrounds should be accessible. Given community support, Council could also look to establish more off-leash areas for dog exercise with the increase in companion animal ownership.

10.2.2 Lineal parks, waterway and drainage reserves

There are significant and attractive waterway and drainage reserves in the City of Ryde. There is a focus on acquisition of properties in overland floodways and these are dedicated to becoming Parks assets.

Many of these parks provide valuable linkages to environmental spaces. For example, Buffalo Creek flows through five bushland parks as it links Ryde Park to Lane Cove National Park. Darvall Park provides an environmental link between Eastwood and West Ryde. Pembroke Park links with Lane Cove National Park along Terry's Creek, complemented by bushland in Hornsby Shire.

The Shrimpton's Creek trail runs from the Macquarie Centre to Bridge Road through the parks ELS Hall, Wilga, Booth, Tindarra, Flinders and Santa Rosa. The possibility of extending this trail through to Beattie Park is being addressed. The attraction of these direct off road trails and cycleways is demonstrated by their popularity, particularly with a major destination such as a shopping centre.

High participation rates for walking in Australia and NSW (particularly for women in NSW), indicates high demand for walking trails and paths in parks and open space, and between people's homes, work, travel routes to shops, schools and through open space. Paths need to provide aesthetically pleasant and safe environments especially for women, children, carers and the aged. It is reasonable to assume that demand for walking paths and trails will grow as the population ages and as walking continues to be the highest participation physical activity in Australia.

Linkages sometimes exist, or are planned, with potential for the development of interesting walking tracks. As mentioned above the recent Sydney Metropolitan–Regional Recreation Trails Framework identifies the development of two regionally significant trails in the City of Ryde. One trail is the link between established paths along the north side of the Parramatta River, currently awaiting funding assistance from the State Government with funding. The other is an existing trail that approximates the course of Buffalo Creek from Ryde Park to the Lane Cove River through a sequence of existing reserves.

With casual walking being the most important source of physical activity for the population, focus on making walks more picturesque, accessible and attractive as a leisure activity, needs to be made by Council and funding authorities, such as the State and Federal Departments of Health and the

State Department of Sport and Recreation. Expenditure to encourage walking will directly reduce expenditure in the Health area as walking maintains physical fitness reducing such diseases as Diabetes Type 2. It is therefore highly appropriate that funding be provided from State and Federal sources. Walks through attractive drainage reserves away from roads and traffic will need to be developed and other levels of government lobbied. Importantly, the development of destinations for the walks will also be required, for example to shopping centres, parks, foreshore nodes and the like.

In 1993, a series of properties was identified for acquisition from Section 94 funds. The route of acquisition follows the overland drainage route between West Ryde and Top Ryde. It is known as the Charity Creek overland flow. Some additional properties still need to be acquired to complete the link. When completed it will form a network from the Great North Walk, along Buffalo Creek to Ryde, then West Ryde and the north along Shrimpton's Creek. Further work is required as part of the Section 94 Plan to identify significant land to enhance our open space system.

10.2.3 Ornamental gardens and grounds

As shown in demographic analysis, there will be an ageing of the population over the next twenty years and beyond. Analysis of visitors to Australian Botanic Gardens notes the following:

- about 60 per cent of all visitors are female;
- 55% are over 40 years of age;
- Excluding those attending on formal educational excursions, only 17% per cent are under 25 years of age;
- about 30% stay for between 30 minutes and one hour; and
- 44% stay between one and two hours.

The most common visitor activities are:

- relaxing in pleasant surroundings;
- walking, showing visitors around;
- having a picnic;
- eating at the kiosk;
- watching birds;
- seeing what can be grown in home gardens;
- attending special recreational events such as musical performances; and
- attending weddings.

These visitor statistics indicate that formal gardens are enjoyed by, and satisfy the cultural and recreational needs of older people in the community. As the population ages it will be important to meet this community need.

It is suggested that at least one formal garden style of park be established in each of the neighbourhood areas described above in the Playground section. The establishment of a formal garden would complement the playgrounds and ensure diversity of experiences. Ideally the formal garden would be located near retail centres, thus enhancing the amenity of our business centres.

10.2.4 Visual parks

Visual Parks are those that are on major roads or at significant junctions. Examples of such parks are Millwood Park at Willoughby, the Ryde Road frontage of Ku-ring-gai's Bicentennial Park, Observatory Park at Beecroft, the magnificent Azalea planting on Lane Cove Road, and Ryde's Gateway on Church Street. The landscape and features of these Parks can be reflective of the City in which they are. For example Millwood has garden and sculpture aspects on a domestic scale, Bicentennial and Observatory Parks reflect the value these cities place on the natural environment, particularly mature native trees, and Gateway reflects the historical significance of Ryde.

To traditional users, these parks may be unattractive for pedestrian visits because of traffic noise and exhaust fumes. The areas are unsafe for use by families whose children may run onto roads. However the parks are attractive landscaped or native areas for motorists and relax the eye.

A good example of this type of park is Moore Park. It is situated on a busy intersection near Blaxland Road. The Park could be more attractive with an increase in the number of Turpentine trees and habitat for native animals; it also has two items of playground equipment that could be moved to a more appropriate location. The safety issue is that the playground equipment invites children and there are busy roads adjacent. Moore Park has nearby Sommerville Park (Hornsby) and Forrester Park. The surrounding housing style is traditional with many homes having swimming pools in substantial back yards. As such, the demand for public open space is not as great and there are also other parklands close where you do not need to cross multiple lanes of traffic.

These Parks are valuable to meet amenity outcomes for drivers and passengers and as islands for native birds. They have limited recreational value and can be dangerous as neighbourhood parks through poor design. Because of their visibility, however, they are excellent sites for promoting the City or special events.

Directional signage is required to direct people to neighbourhood, district and sports facilities.

10.2.5 Foreshore reserves

Council's foreshore reserves are generally concentrated on the Parramatta River. The exception to this is at the Field of Mars Reserve where there is locally rare littoral and salt marsh vegetation along the line of Buffalo Creek before it enters the Lane Cove River, and Magdala Reserve.

Along the Parramatta River there are fifteen reserves, some being contiguous. The dominant feature of the riverbank is the Mangroves that are establishing. There is an argument that urbanisation and consequent siltation has allowed growth of Mangroves beyond the extent that existed prior to European colonisation of the area.

Meadowbank, Morrison Bay and Bill Mitchell Parks have a sporting field focus while the remainder have passive park values. There is minimal remaining legitimate foreshore vegetation that has not been disturbed. Nevertheless, these areas are sought after as vistas and walking/cycling trails where there is access.

Development of the foreshore trail along the Parramatta River must remain a high priority of Council and appropriate State Government authorities. In recognition of the costs to City of Ryde in gathering the area together and maintaining it in the public domain, the State Government should allow the establishment of low impact commercial activity such as café/kiosk facilities to allow funding of this valuable public asset. Recent arrangements between the City of Ryde and the State Government have enabled consolidation of foreshore reserves, parks and walkways between Meadowbank Park and the Ryde Bridge, known as the Ryde Riverside Reserve. A single Plan of Management for this area is a high priority.

10.3 Playing fields

NFPA standards are that each 1000 people in the community require 1.2Ha of playing fields. The City of Ryde provides 0.62Ha.

Statistics available indicate male soccer is the most popular sport undertaken in Ryde. Exact numbers cannot be determined as there is some double counting between Clubs and the Association, however the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Association supplies a total figure for the City of Ryde at some 4300 players for the 2006 winter season. The City of Ryde makes available and subsidises the home ground for the elite State League team at Christie Park.

There are other teams not associated with Gladesville-Hornsby Football Association in the Ryde area that also play in the State League. Other teams provide lower standards and should be encouraged to capture a wider group. However, teams in the State League from 2007 will be required to have grounds without concrete cricket wickets on them. Because of the need for preparation of turf wickets, and the overlap of the seasons it is not feasible to utilise Eastwood Upper for State League Soccer teams from August each year. There will need to be a reallocation of grounds in the short term.

Preliminary data indicates that the number of players registered with teams in Ryde utilising Ryde's playing fields, but reside outside the Local Government Area, are well above 50% in some sports. This statistic is based on limited data that will become more reliable over time. Given the extent of use by players from outside the LGA and hence non-contribution towards the gap

between pay for use and the actual cost of provision of playing fields and facilities, it would be appropriate for a contribution to this funding gap by sporting clubs based upon the percentage of non-Ryde residents.

Soccer is approaching the popularity of netball as the major girls and women's sport. Both North West Women's' Soccer and Eastwood-Ryde Netball Association report steady increases in membership, however soccer is currently growing at the faster rate.

Another trend that is evident is the increase in summer sports codes. Ryde has summer soccer, touch football and baseball, where in the past, cricket had been the traditional dominant summer sport. The requirement for space for these sports sometimes leads to conflicts of use. Some local government authorities have managed the situation with strict definitions of what are summer, and what are winter sports, restricting use of fields to in-season users. This practice is easier in areas where cultural diversity is not as great and cricket is dominant. However, at Ryde where there is wide cultural diversity, sports such as casual soccer are played throughout the year.

Conflict also occurs in winter with codes using other codes grounds for training. This practice leads to overuse of the ground and no code taking responsibility for that overuse. This practice should cease as quickly as possible with single code use of allocated fields.

Information about City of Ryde participation rates for sport and physical activity is limited to the data provided by sporting clubs that use our sports grounds or courts. Table 12 provides data about club and association membership numbers from 2003 to 2005. Clubs are only required to provide total membership numbers, therefore information about age distribution and the number of male and female participants is not available.

Data provided to 2005 by clubs and associations does not distinguish between City of Ryde residents and those living outside the Local Government Area. Further, participation figures provided by many of the clubs and associations include both summer and winter participants and do not identify where individuals participate in both seasons. This may provide inflated results about the number of participants in each sport. For example people participating in both summer and winter soccer seasons are included twice in the figures below.

Even with the limitations outlined above, the data in Table 12 can assist in broadly identifying whether demand for sports grounds and facilities is increasing or decreasing in the City of Ryde and whether these local trends are consistent with state and national participation patterns.

A number of relevant issues can be identified from the information in Table 12:

- all sports experienced an increase in membership numbers between 2003 and 2005 with the smallest proportional increase being 10.8 percent for cricket;

- the most significant proportional increase appears to have occurred in Frisbee, however it should be noted that the NSW Frisbee Association did not commence using City of Ryde sports grounds until 2003. This was not a newly established association but rather an existing association that relocated from elsewhere; and
- proportionately Netball (60%), Rugby (38.6%), Australian Rules Football (33.3%) and Touch Football (30.1%) saw the greatest increase in membership numbers between 2003 and 2005. The soccer statistic is for the whole of the Gladesville – Hornsby competition area, not just Ryde.

The sporting clubs and associations membership data in Table 12 is largely inconsistent with participation trends for organised sport in both Australia and NSW.

Sport	2003	2004	2005	Change	% Change
Frisbee	0	690	790	790	790.0
Netball	2,125	2,300	3,400	1,275	60.0
Rugby	482	608	668	186	38.6
AFL	72	90	96	24	33.3
Touch Footy	730	835	950	220	30.1
Rugby League	342	375	410	68	19.9
Soccer	11,329	12,422	12,847	1,518	13.4
Baseball	890	970	1020	130	14.6
Hockey	142	150	160	18	12.7
Athletics	255	270	284	29	11.4
Cricket	4,740	4,960	5,250	510	10.8
TOTAL	21,107	23,670	25,875	4,768	22.5

Table 12: City of Ryde Sporting Clubs and Associations Membership 2003-2005

The foregoing material examining sport and physical activity participation rates has a number of important implications for open space in the City of Ryde. Nationally, statistics show participation in sport and physical activity declining with age and the City of Ryde has an ageing population. This suggests that demand for sport and physical activity options may decline. However, whilst there is a significant drop in participation rates over time, it is important to note that generally participation rates remain stable between 25 and 54 years of age in NSW and between 25 and 64 years of age Australia-wide. In addition, overall membership rates in Ryde have increased between 2003 and 2005. It is therefore not reasonable to assume that demand for sport and physical activity options will decline, rather the data perhaps indicates that people are recognizing the importance of staying active and so will be looking for increased physical activity opportunities in parks and open space. A declining rate of involvement by the City's ageing population is being offset by higher rates of involvement across all ages.

Membership enrolment numbers provided by Sporting Clubs in the City of Ryde suggests that the City of Ryde is not following the state and national trends. Membership numbers have increased for all sports between 2003 and 2005. All sports experienced an increase of between 10.8% and 60.0%. This

local trend suggests that demand for sports grounds will increase, particularly for soccer, across the Gladesville – Hornsby Football Association area, where the number of additional players between 2003 and 2005 was 2,713, cricket with 510 additional players, netball 1,275 and touch football 220. However, the need for further membership details from the clubs and associations in the City of Ryde including details about the number of male, female, junior, senior members and residential address will provide a clearer indication of the specific requirements of the increased demand.

Nevertheless, the position is that there are a limited number of playing fields available. Council will require the development of policy to manage the interaction and prioritisation between sports.

A wide range of issues are apparent through this study in relation to open space and sporting facilities. Of particular note is the variable condition of playing fields and the apparent lack of structure or hierarchy to determine why one playing field is better developed and maintained than another.

Several issues have been identified in relation to particular sports including:

- the City appears to have a very high number of baseball diamonds and baseball players in comparison to state and national participation averages, suggesting that Ryde may be providing baseball facilities for most of Sydney's northern suburbs;
- currently the local netball association wants additional courts at Meadowbank and is using the rising local participation data as evidence to support their claim. However, state and national trends indicate that netball participation rates are declining. Data on registrations for netball indicate that more than 50% of players come from outside Ryde. Netball court numbers in Parramatta are 13, Hornsby 26 and Hunter's Hill 3, compared with Ryde's 38 with 22 at Meadowbank and 16 at Brush Farm Park;
- should the City of Ryde continue to provide hockey facilities? Use of the natural grass hockey facilities is low and has been for some time. However, participation data from the hockey club based at the venue suggests there has been a slight increase in participation between 2003 and 2005. State participation trends support this, however national data indicates there has been a decline in hockey participation nationally. However, if the synthetic field at Peter Board High School becomes unavailable there will be a need to find alternative accommodation for Hockey currently using that facility; and
- the level of total net expenditure by Council by Sport and the development of an equitable and transparent decision making model.

One outcome sought is to identify the number of additional or different sporting facilities that may be required over the next twenty years to cater for the City's increasing and changing population. The City of Ryde population will increase steadily over the next twenty years and will age over that time. Participation rates for sport and physical activity generally decline as the population ages. However, there will be a significant proportion of the community aged between 0 – 19 years, traditionally one of the highest users of sporting and play facilities.

Participation in activities that can be undertaken alone or in small groups is increasing, while national statistics show participation in organised sport is generally decreasing.

The above points indicate that the City will experience increased demand for sporting facilities over the next twenty years. Further, the United Kingdom industry benchmark for playing fields, which we have been using, suggests that the City has low provision levels for playing fields. Despite this, there will be little opportunity and it would be too costly to purchase additional land for the purpose of sporting facilities. Therefore we need to:

- determine what proportion of demand is generated by players from outside the Local Government Area;
- pursue partnership opportunities with other organizations such as other Local Government Area's, schools and universities to obtain access to their sporting facilities outside school hours;
- review provision levels for all sports on a regular basis and specifically review provision levels for baseball, netball and hockey;
- review scheduling of playing fields, which may allow increased use of playing fields;
- where appropriate and financially viable, purchase land that will add to existing sporting facilities;
- support sporting clubs in their endeavours in acquiring their own facilities;
- offer only a standard of sports field or infrastructure that is suitable for local usage by the sporting body. Any higher standard should be at the full cost of provision. For example, the preparation of turf pitches to a District standard should be funded by the sport; and
- investigate the possible partnering with Macquarie University to provide sporting and other recreational facilities to Sporting Clubs and the Community.

Other outcomes which should be pursued include:

- developing a hierarchy to guide the development, management and maintenance of sporting facilities. This should include preparing minimum standards for the quality of playing fields and the services and amenities which should accompany them;
- consider developing a set of principles to guide the use of sporting facilities by different sports. Council needs to consider whether it wants to encourage a diversity of sporting experiences and opportunities for its community. For example, no one sport can have more than 50% use of playing fields. Alternatively, Council may decide upon the amount of access allowed for each sport and review it every three years based upon performance outcomes. Further, Council may wish to ensure the principles are flexible enough to support the development of new sports; and
- codify an "agreement for use" so that standards of behaviour, responsibilities, conditions and obligations, particularly to nearby residents, can be documented and clearly communicated.

11 Uses

11.1 Income opportunities

Provision of quality facilities is dependent on availability of resources and funds. As described above, rate pegging and shifting of responsibilities from other tiers of government to local government makes it difficult, in particular, for asset maintenance and removal. Council must look to non-traditional funding sources to be able to provide services and facilities to the standard demanded by the Community. Councils have had to prove their competitiveness in the private market, so there is no reason why they should not compete in non-traditional business activities.

The development of destinations and desirable settings provides opportunities for catering and delivery of programs for leisure and fitness. The services and programs already delivered at the Ryde Aquatic and Leisure Centre need to be supplemented through other Council leisure facilities such as parks and reserves.

It is inevitable that access through a park will be required by neighbours to undertake works on their properties. Often houses are developed without vehicular access to rear yards and construction of, for example, a pool is desired. More responsible trades will approach Council for permission to utilise the reserve, but there are many that do not. Damage to the park often results from this access. Signage prohibiting vehicles is sufficient to enable the penalisation of recalcitrants, but there will always be a difficulty apprehending the individuals when outside of normal hours.

11.2 Licences and leases

Leases should be used only where there is a genuine and identified benefit to the community. Such examples are at Christie, where extraordinary infrastructure has been put in place and is maintained by a Club or Association for the overall benefit of the community. Otherwise, the appropriate mechanism for playing field allocations is through a 3-5 year Licence.

If sports retain their popularity and participation remains high from residents of Ryde, the retention and enhancement of playing fields should be guaranteed. The only mechanism to guarantee allocation of fields should be on the basis of participation from residents of the City of Ryde and the level of contribution from the Sporting Club. If there is no demonstration of this, then the field should be reallocated to a code that is performing in accordance with these principles.

12 Management Plan Development

12.1 Plans of Management

Plans of Management are required for land classified as community land under the Local Government Act and if the park is Crown Land, the Minister may request that a Plan of Management be completed for the park. A Plan of Management for an area of Crown Land may be prepared under the guidelines of the Local Government Act.

Relevant Sections of the Local Government Act (1993) are Sections 35 to 47 and Regulations 101 to 117. The relevant Sections of the Crown Lands Act (1989) are 112 to 116 and Regulation 32 (see above).

Plans of Management have a process for their completion that is built around the following steps;

- using community values as a basis for management;
- adopting a consultative approach, incorporating input from stakeholders, including Council Officers, government authorities and the local community to ensure the plan reflects the vision and the values of all;
- providing site-specific analysis where applicable to add value;
- providing practical recommendations which are achievable in the short term;
- incorporating masterplans; and
- incorporating findings of other studies.

Plans of Management, completed under the Local Government Act, can be generic in nature, however, this is not best practice. In the past, the City of Ryde took this approach but is now working through individual Plans of Management for a number of Parks. It is appropriate where parks have a congruent set of values that apply and where there are no specific site analyses that add value, that a generic plan is used. Where parks are unique, individual Plans are appropriate.

12.2 Review of current position

The Ryde Park Plan of Management was adopted by Council on 28 February 2006. There is one Plan of Management for the Field of Mars, adopted in 1978. This Plan was completed under Section 72 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974). All other Crown Land Reserves and Council's Community Land are included in the Generic Plan of Management completed pursuant to Section 36 of the Local Government Act (1993) adopted by Council in 2001.

In 2005, three Plans of Management were being drafted; Field of Mars, Brush Farm Park and Ryde Park. All of these Plans were being completed pursuant to the Local Government Act. In 2006, a Masterplan for Eastwood was commissioned, exhibited and is due for completion in 2007. In all, a total of 20 Plans of Management are required.

Individual Plans of Management are required for;

- Ryde Park (Completed) District level Park
- Yamble Reserve District level Park
- Putney Park District level Park
- Blenheim Park District level Park
- ELS Hall District level Park
- Pioneer Park District level Park
- Field of Mars (In progress) Significant Natural Area
- Brush Farm/Lambert Parks (In progress) Significant Natural Area
- Morrison Bay Park District level playing field
- Eastwood Park (In progress) District level playing field
- Ryde Riverside Reserve (In progress) Walking trail and recreation

A generic Plan of Management is required for each of the City's;

- Neighbourhood level parks (Jim Walsh, North Ryde, Fontenoy etc) and
- Playing fields not included above

Separate generic Plans of Management are appropriate for the residual groups of parks:

- Neighbourhood gardens;
- Local playgrounds;
- Natural areas;
- Visual parks; and
- Local parks.

These works will be completed over the next 20 years.

13 Tree management

Council has demonstrated over many years that trees are valued in streetscapes, in parks, reserves and on private property, through its' responsibilities pursuant to Section 26 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Further, Council has in its establishment a position of Senior Tree Preservation Officer with primary responsibility for policy formulation and tree management issues over the city, in addition to the Tree Management Officer with primary responsibility for implementation of the Tree Preservation Order.

On 13 December 2005, Council delegated to Council Officers, the following arrangement for trees in the public domain, "that Council approval for such pruning or removal is required, except where the tree:

- has become diseased, dying or badly distorted
- represents a danger to life or a threat of significant property damage
- is required to be removed for Council works and the removal has been noted in Council's approval for those works
- is of a species that is recognised by Council as a weed."

It is recognised that trees have become more valued as community assets in recent years. The role of a tree in the urban environment is for landscaping amenity, bird and small mammal habitat, shade, weather break and air filter. This role is compromised if the tree is unattractive, a weed, unsafe or damages essential infrastructure. Council's resolution reinforces that value.

The delegation to Council Officers differentiates the regulatory role of Council from the Operational role, so that operational staff are not delegated to make decisions without consultation, at least to another area of Council. This split of roles is a normal management framework. However it is required that all staff working on trees are qualified appropriately and are aware of relevant tree pruning standards.

Similarly, planting of trees should be with a view to them becoming a fixed asset for a given time. As with other assets, a plan is required to allocate management, maintenance and end of life processes with replacement. (The need to do a tree audit at Ryde Park with the outcome that there were significant numbers of dead and dying trees attests to lack of planning in the planting of the trees.)

The tree audit found there were no trees that were good examples of their species at Ryde Park. Ground truthing process identified that trees were over planted with insufficient space allowed for development. Trees had been left beyond senescence and left to decline in a hazardous state. Hard paving had changed ground water availability. Trees had been planted without strategic or landscape thought.

An Urban Tree Management Policy is proposed, documenting and standardising process and procedures to ensure consistency in the management of trees in the City in the following key areas;

- Tree protection
- Tree planting and selection
- Tree asset management including risk management
- Tree replacement and removal, and
- Community consultation and involvement.

The operational plans supporting this policy include a reviewed Tree Preservation Order, Street Tree Masterplan, Significant Tree Register and Tree Management Plans.

14 Safety

A report on the process to ensure playgrounds are inspected to appropriate standards has been received and noted by Council. A similar system will be introduced for street trees and other important elements of the open space system as resources allow.

15 Resourcing

Fees and charges for use of Council's parks and reserves are an important source of funds for most Councils. The justification is that large tracts of land are specifically reserved and maintained for specific use by a part of the population and there is a degree of exclusion from the space while it is being used. An example of this is the requirement of a sporting club to have exclusive use of a field with a prepared turf/field. The turf/field is prepared and marked by Council. Further costs include pre-season preparation of the area involving extensive renovation and top-dressing. This analysis does not include asset management strategies to replace buildings, fences, paths, irrigation systems and water costs.

The fee that is paid for the provision of the field in 2005/6 was approximately 5% of the cost of providing the facility. It could be argued that part of the cost would not have been attributable directly to the use of the field by the Sporting Club but this argument is reduced when countered by the fact that not all of the players are ratepayers of the City of Ryde.

In 2005/6 the total collected from fees and charges for hire of the playing fields in the City of Ryde was less than one third of the real cost, inclusive of electricity, water and building lease fees.

Concerns should be that subsidisation is for players from beyond the City of Ryde recognising the unique nature of Meadowbank and Morrison's Bay playing fields. For example, the use of Morrison Bay by the University of NSW for 'Frisbee Footy' should be at the full cost of provision. The policy to be developed around setting of fees and charges should offer concessions to residents of Ryde and to collect as close to full recovery from non-residents as possible, bearing in mind the home and away nature of many of the sports. Similarly commercial sports, such as Oztag, should be charged at a full cost recovery rate.

Council should aim to provide facilities that are required and paid for by its residents. To meet this need, Clubs and Associations need to provide accurate registrations data so that allocation of resources can reflect the requirements of the community.

Local schools have traditionally used Council's playing fields for their sports. The children and youth who attend local public schools are generally residents of City of Ryde and should be supported.

Extension of this argument is that parents of children and youth who attend public schools pay for these facilities through their taxes. Therefore grounds and playing fields, located within schools, should be available for those same children and youth at weekends. Some other Councils coordinate use of school playing fields, eg Sutherland and Pittwater, and soon at Erina High School.

If arrangements can be made with the Department of School Education, then additional fields can be made available at Epping Boys High and the old Ryde High School on Small's Road. Traditionally, the arrangement has been that in return for maintenance the school makes the field available for allocation by Council for after school training and weekend use. Small's Road is zoned as a school; currently the Department is using it as Departmental Offices.

Private schools often have pupils from other local government areas. The use of Council's fields by private schools therefore, similar to weekend users of Council's fields, represents some level of subsidy to non-residents of Ryde. This may be acceptable as many pupils from Ryde attend private schools in other local government areas. It should be noted that many private schools have and maintain their own sporting facilities and as such, do not have significant impact on our sportsgrounds.

Currently Council makes a percentage cost recovery charge to schools that demand a higher level of service, however it is not across services and never covers all costs. Council, for example, would provide a concrete cricket wicket free of charge, but charges for a turf wicket (except for Alan Davidson Shield competition). Similarly, schools use of an established rugby ground for rugby would be free of charge, but if alternate goals were required the cost of replacement would be charged, similarly Council would charge a cost for marking an athletics track or various sportsgrounds, yet one is provided at Dunbar Park for no charge.

Fees and charges for passive open space should be made when there is exclusion of the community for the benefit of only a few. The imposition might be when an area is alienated from public use for a function or an event. Community use by bona fide local community groups should not attract a charge, but should recover direct expenses. Use of an area for functions or 'Marquee Events' should attract a full cost recovery charge.

Developer contributions should focus on the extension of the existing open space to meet the additional need of newcomers to the community, based on the increase in numbers, not natural churn as people move into and out of a community. Some alteration to the existing resource mix can be justified on the basis of changes to demographic cross section or anticipated change in recreation habit. In Ryde, additional membership of the community will be from day visitation by workers or urban change because of change in purpose of former industrial areas or urban infill. Currently, approximately 105,000 residents contribute to;

Playing fields Maintenance & Operation	65 Ha
Developed Passive Parks	54 Ha are regularly mown
Natural Areas and woodland management	205 Ha
Value of Assets	\$36,413,189 (at cost) and does not include the value of land, trees, etc

Development of parks and reserves as destinations for recreation and leisure involves a great deal of investment of public money. Redevelopment of Ryde Park into an attractive and quality open space for the community and sporting groups is a prime example. This redevelopment will take 3-5 years and cost up to \$5 million. When creating such an attractive space, Council needs to become more entrepreneurial in redevelopment and how this can enhance the experience and create a return or cash flow to Council.

Council has facilities at playing fields where clubs and associations operate kiosks to raise funds to offset costs of playing sport. This represents a further subsidy to clubs and associations already receiving, on average, a subsidy of 73% of the cost of playing fields they utilise.

16 Management capabilities

Capacity to implement change processes, risk management and asset management are identified as requirements of Park Management. To manage assets where environmental and conservation values conflict with community use needs is also an area that needs sophisticated and sensitive management. Skill is needed to utilise scarce financial and volunteer resources to maximise results. To anticipate growth of leisure and recreation trends over time, with reference to trends in sports and activities and the use of fields by people from outside the LGA, specialist education in recreation is needed.

Managing use of facilities that have limited resilience and maximising use and availability of parks and reserves is another management issue. Provision of physical activity opportunities to increase the community's fitness and health is a prime concern.

To meet these challenges a structure based on experience and expertise in the following areas follows.

16.1 Asset management.

Recording assets value, location and condition to project their longevity. Asset management awareness is required not only for assets such as buildings and furniture but also for living assets such as trees and garden beds.

16.2 Risk management.

Recommending a level of service or maintenance that is affordable and keeps the risk of failure or accident within an acceptable limit. Management of volunteers in Bushcare is a significant role in itself.

16.3 Change management.

Communicating to stakeholders changes that must occur to existing paradigms to enable a satisfactory level of service and asset/facility provision in the face of declining real funding. Apart from funding issues; expectations, demographics, community ageing and trends in sports participation are always changing. In addition, there is the historical use of sports fields which has led Sporting Groups to believe they “own” these areas. The strength and capacity of Council to explain and implement change is a challenge and may result in tension and conflict.

16.4 Natural areas management.

Management in this area is gaining maximum benefit from volunteers and the limited resources available to manage a reduction of weeds, and maximisation of environmental conditions to supply values of conservation, multiple use and resource management to natural areas.

16.5 Recreation.

To provide physical activity opportunities to residents and community of Ryde through organised and unorganised active and passive recreation and leisure.

16.6 Environment and Trees.

Ensure that the boundary between urban environment and natural environment is continuous rather than distinct, through exceptional landscaping and the integration of trees and vegetation through the public open space network and private gardens and landscape. However, at the interface, care must be taken to guard against the introduction of environmental weeds into natural areas.

17 Major issues

The information in this paper presents some important implications for provision of open space in the City of Ryde. Outlined below is a summary of the major issues identified:

- there is a relatively large area of bushland which reflects the values of the community
- there is a shortage of useable open space given the large number of small sites and number of protected wetlands and drainage sites;

- the large number of parks which are less than 0.1 hectares and in their current form are unable to offer significant value to a multitude of people;
- the high cost of purchasing land and developed properties limits Council's ability to expand its open space network significantly. However this avenue is one which should be pursued to achieve specific outcomes, including the creation of larger parks, to provide access from 'back' streets and to create linear trails through residential areas;
- attracting, developing and retaining staff with the skills and competencies to maximise the value of our open space network;
- the need to improve the quality and range of leisure opportunities available in local and municipal level parks where there is little open space;
- improvements needed to the amenity facilities provided in the city's open space including improved signage, increased number and quality of public toilet facilities and the installation of amenity facilities which are complimentary and appropriate to the sites in which they are located;
- poor quality play options despite the large number of parks with play equipment. Further, the lack of play options for teenagers;
- creation of more appropriate passive and unstructured open space options;
- need to improve the range and quality of passive or unstructured recreation options within parks;
- apparent high levels of weed infestation and low maintenance levels in the City's bushland areas;
- appropriateness of provision levels for some sports, and the ability to change sportsground use as the community need changes;
- the need for a consistent, fair and equitable pricing strategy, which promotes the use of our parks, but supports the protection and enhancement of the assets;
- the need for a set of hierarchies for playgrounds, sports grounds and parks that reflect the different levels of activity; and
- how the City of Ryde's open space network, and how it is used, fits into the wider metropolitan Sydney context.

Action Plan

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Planning and Research	Maximise the value of open space	➤ Develop a set of planning principles to guide the management, development and use of open space.	1
		➤ Develop a set of hierarchies that reflect the different levels of activity, differing roles of open space and take a citywide view about open space. Hierarchies should be developed for playgrounds, sports grounds and parks and should assist the organisation in making decisions about the future development, management and use of open space.	1
		➤ Develop a system which can more accurately record and monitor the different components of the open space system including the amount of passive open space, the amount of active / sporting open space and the amount of natural areas.	1
		➤ Review the open space asset management system including determining whether information is current and identifying how it can be used more effectively to assist in maintenance, capital works planning and identifying priorities for the future development of open space.	1
		➤ Complete a Plan of Management for foreshore parkland from Meadowbank Park to the Ryde Bridge including Meadowbank Park, Memorial Park and the Shepherd's Bay Park (Ryde Riverside Reserve).	1
		➤ Improve the collection of information from sports clubs to better understand current use of sporting facilities and what the future need for sporting facilities is likely to be. At a minimum the information to be collected should identify whether players are local City of Ryde residents and the number of men, women, junior and senior players.	1
		➤ Access more detailed demographic research to assist in determining more clearly the future open space needs of the Ryde community including: Age distribution projections for between 10 and 20 years by suburb The likely future multicultural mix of the community Profiling the likely make up of the new communities in high development areas such as Meadowbank and Macquarie Park.	2
		➤ Research the leisure interests and needs of the multicultural communities in the City of Ryde, to identify the types of leisure opportunities that should be provided in parks for Ryde's multicultural communities. This research should also examine the sites where these opportunities might be best located.	2

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Planning and Research	Maximise the value of open space	➤ Research the leisure interests and needs of young women in the City of Ryde, to identify the types of leisure opportunities that should be provided in parks for them. This research should also examine the sites where these opportunities might be best located.	2
		➤ Encourage staff development to ensure technical skills, commitment and ability is available to improve the quality of the open spaces to that required. All parks maintenance staff are to be qualified as gardeners and in bushland regeneration within a timeframe of five years.	1
		➤ Prepare a Tree Management Plan that will enable a regeneration of the natural tree canopy while retaining useful passive open space, some habitat for native fauna and management of safety issues.	1
		➤ Redevelopment of parks and open spaces should be done through the principles of sustainable development with consideration of recycling possibilities, water sourcing and use, power options and carbon issues.	1
Amenities	<p>Improve the quality and provision of amenities</p> <p>Ensure amenities are relevant to the parks in which they are located</p>	➤ Develop a checklist of the amenities and services which should be provided to compliment parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities. The checklist should identify the quality of these items and the type of facilities to be provided in different park settings ie: picnic facilities in bushland settings will be different to those in foreshore reserve areas. Ensure the checklist is consistent with set of hierarchies developed for playgrounds, sports grounds and parks.	1
		➤ Develop and implement a strategy to improve signage directing people to the location of parks to assist visitors in understanding the uses and facilities available in each park.	2
		➤ Develop and implement a strategy to improve signage in parks to provide guidance about park safety and use.	1
		➤ Develop a maintenance strategy for public toilet facilities in open space that focuses on a high level of maintenance in an effort to extend the lifespan of these facilities.	1
		➤ Develop a refurbishment program for amenity facilities in open space. The program should aim to refurbish all amenity facilities every 15 years.	2
Natural Areas	Address high levels of weed infestation and low levels of maintenance in natural areas	➤ Using aerial vegetation mapping identify the condition and quality of natural areas. From this information develop an action plan that will identify the priorities for bush regeneration and review maintenance requirements. This is to be done in conjunction with the Threatened Species Conservation Act, Council's Environment Section and considers best practice in fire management.	1

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Natural Areas	Address high levels of weed infestation and low levels of maintenance in natural areas	➤ Target annual bush care funding to identify priority areas for bush regeneration and ensure funding is focussed more effectively ie that funds are not spread too thinly across a large number of sites	1
		➤ Develop management plans as required by the NSW State Government for the management of noxious weed species.	1
		➤ Investigate ways to increase and maintain Bushcare volunteer numbers.	1
		➤ Review and promote bushland trails including accurately mapping the trails, identifying the standard and condition of the trails and categorizing the trails in terms of accessibility and condition through brochure and the web site.	2
	Improve the quality and usability of natural areas	➤ Review the action in the City wide Section 94 Developer Contributions Plan to identify and purchase remnant bushland.	2
		➤ Extend and improve access to bushland trails including signage (interpretive and directional) and picnic and rest areas along the following trails: <i>Shrimptons Creek Trail - Wilga Park, ELS Hall Park and Santa Rosa Park</i>	1
		<i>Buffalo Creek Trail – Field of Mars Reserve, Burrows Park and Ryde Park</i>	2
		<i>Terry's Creek Trail – Pembroke Park, Wood Street Reserve and Forrester Park.</i> <i>Kitty's Creek Trail in Portius Park, East Ryde,</i>	3 4
Sporting Facilities	Improve the management, development and maintenance of sporting facilities	➤ Develop a hierarchy to guide the development, management, maintenance and use of sporting facilities. This should include City of Ryde standards for the quality of playing fields and the services and amenities that should accompany them. For standards and quality requested to be of a higher standard, then it should be fully funded by the sport concerned.	1
		➤ Review maintenance schedules and standards annually, to confirm whether maintenance standards are appropriate and consistent with the standard established by Council (being a level that supports local level sport) for the sport played at each venue, to confirm whether the operating funds provided are sufficient to maintain the facilities to this established standard and revenue sources, and to ensure future maintenance standards reflect this hierarchy proposed above.	1

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Sporting Facilities	Improve the management, development and maintenance of sporting facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review grounds standards required by various levels of sports offering only a standard for local use. Standards above this are to be fully funded by the sport or organising body requiring any higher standard. ➤ Investigate opportunities to intensify the use of playing fields within their sustainable capacity ➤ Review the tenure of clubs and associations at grounds to optimise use within the capacity limits and facilities of the ground, ensuring only 5 year non-exclusive licences are offered in the future. ➤ Develop a program for the regular rehabilitation of sports grounds constructed on fill sites. It is intended that all grounds constructed on fill sites will be rehabilitated approximately every 15 years including resurfacing, drainage and levelling and as such certain areas will not be available for use while this work is being done. ➤ Address the poor condition of sporting facilities at the following parks in the context of the hierarchy for sports grounds proposed above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>North Ryde Park:</i> Including redevelopment of the playing field and redevelopment of the playground and passive open space areas surrounding the playing field <i>Santa Rosa Park:</i> Including redevelopment of the playing fields and car park, addressing the weed infestation along Shrimptons Creek and improving the pathways. 	<p style="text-align: right;">1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2 & 3</p>
	Address the anticipated increased demand for sporting facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop a set of principles to guide the use of sporting facilities by different sports, ensuring a diversity of sporting opportunities are available for local residents, that no one sport dominates access to sporting facilities and that opportunities exist to support emerging sports. ➤ In light of the principles proposed above, review the provision levels periodically for all sports and specifically review the provision levels for baseball, women's hockey and netball. ➤ Identify and pursue partnership opportunities with other organizations such as schools and universities to obtain access to their sporting facilities outside school hours. Council should specifically explore opportunities to access the Epping Boys High School site, the former Ryde High School site and the Macquarie University grounds. 	<p style="text-align: right;">2</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p>

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Sporting Facilities	Address the anticipated increased demand for sporting facilities	➤ Ensure that when leases/licences are considered for renewal for Sporting Clubs/Community Groups, that they become non-exclusive licences for a maximum of 5 years. In addition, the licences should ensure a plan of management is developed to guarantee use by other clubs and community groups.	1
		➤ Review the scheduling of playing fields to identify whether rescheduling by clubs and associations will allow greater use of the fields. For example can some clubs be encouraged to play at alternate time such as Sunday.	1
		➤ Where appropriate and in line with the Section 94 Plan, purchase land that will add to the existing open space network.	2
		➤ Develop and codify an “Agreement for use of playing fields by sporting groups” including performance targets, and for this to form part of any 5 year non-exclusive licence.	1
		➤ Develop a pricing strategy that promotes and provides recognition to sporting clubs that have their clubs and majority membership based in the City of Ryde.	1
Passive / Unstructured Open Space	Improve the range and quality of playgrounds	➤ Implement a playground management plan to increase the variety and quality of playgrounds while making sure there is good utilisation by the Community. The plan will take into account the barriers that exist across the City. The plan will have three tiers in the hierarchy at local, neighbourhood and district level.	1
		➤ Investigate the conversion of areas perhaps previously used as playgrounds for other uses such as formal/community gardens or passive open space through the community consultation framework.	1
	Improve the range and quality of passive and unstructured open space	➤ Investigate and report on the need for additional off-leash exercise areas for dogs.	2
		➤ Investigate decommissioning a playing field at Morrison Bay Park and returning it to passive / unstructured open space. ➤ Redevelop and expand the existing passive and unstructured open space at Meadowbank Park including:	2

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Passive / Unstructured Open Space	Improve the range and quality of passive and unstructured open space	An extension of the picnic and playground facilities at the Western end of the park closest to Andrew Street	2
		Improving the picnic and play opportunities on the corner of Ross Street and Constitution Road.	2
		These areas should include as a minimum, picnic and barbecue facilities, playgrounds, shade and lawn areas. Council should also investigate including unstructured play opportunities.	
		➤ Redevelop the passive and unstructured open space at the following parks to include seating, picnic areas, shade, pathways:	
		<i>Putney Park, Putney:</i> The Northern and Southern ends of the park which have not been redeveloped	2
<i>Fontenoy Park, Macquarie Park:</i> This may include decommissioning the existing playing field and returning the land to passive open space.	1		
These redevelopments should incorporate unstructured play opportunities such as handball, volleyball, half courts, hit out walls, big chess sets, hopscotch, petanque or bocce sites.			
➤ Investigate the creation of culturally relevant outdoor eating, food preparation and meeting places in the following parks:	2		
<i>Anzac Park, West Ryde</i>			
<i>Yamble Reserve, Ryde</i>			
<i>Putney Park, Putney</i>			
<i>Fontenoy Park, Macquarie Park</i>			
<i>Glen Park, Eastwood</i>			

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Links and Trails	Expand walking and cycling trails to improve linkages between parks, town centres and residential areas	➤ Extend the Buffalo Creek Trail from Ryde Park to connect through to West Ryde Station.	1
		➤ Develop a 10 year strategy linking open space, significant public domain features and community facilities with walking trails, to create a system of corridors and destinations.	1
		➤ Extend the trail from Darvall Park to Brush Farm Park through West Denistone.	1
		➤ Extend the Shrimptons Creek Trail from Santa Rosa Park through Beattie Reserve and across to West Ryde Station.	1
		➤ Extend the Terrys Creek Trail from Forrester Park through to Darvall Park.	1
		➤ Extend the trail from Morrison Bay Park to the Buffalo Creek Trail.	1
		➤ Provide a trail from Meadowbank Park to Darvall Park.	1
Playgrounds	Improve the quality and range of play opportunities in the City of Ryde	➤ Initiate a “Playground Expo” to engage the community and form stakeholder groups for the development of playspaces across the City.	2
		➤ Through community consultation, develop a hierarchy to guide the development, management, maintenance and use of playgrounds. This should include a checklist of complimentary facilities to accompany each type of playground such as seating, barbecues, toilets, shade and footpaths.	1
		➤ Through community consultation, develop a “Playspace and Open Space Strategy” in defined neighbourhood areas with a focus on providing play opportunities which are of the highest quality, minimizing duplication and catering for a variety of age groups.	2

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Playgrounds	Improve the quality and range of play opportunities in the City of Ryde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specifically develop play opportunities for teenagers and young adults including climbing spires, hit up walls, half courts etc. These play opportunities should have complimentary amenities including shade, seating, water and toilets. Issues such as passive surveillance, landscaping, shading and socialization opportunities should also be considered. The following parks are recommended as possible sites for youth play opportunities: <i>ELS Hall Park, North Ryde</i> <i>Fontenoy Park Macquarie Park</i> 	1 2
Small Parks	Improve the value and usability of small parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Redesign the following parcels of open space to ensure the key focus is on pedestrian pathways and creating linkages between open space, residential areas and local shopping precincts. These parks should be aesthetically pleasant for people to walk through and / or stay for short periods of time: <i>Griffiths, Linton, Bowden, Shepherd and Forsyth Streets in West Ryde (Charity Creek line)</i> <i>Salter, Colvin, Doig, Richmond and Jackson Streets in Denistone East</i> <i>Sluman, Perkins and Bergin Streets plus West Denistone Park and Lynn Park in Denistone</i> ➤ Where possible, add to existing parcels of open space ie make a park bigger and therefore more usable, and/or allow for the extension or creation of a linear trail. This should be specifically pursued in the following parks or suburbs: <i>Blamey Park, Morshead Park and Kathleen Reserve at North Ryde:</i> Additional land required making the park more usable and increasing access to local open space. Very limited local open space currently available. <i>West Denistone between Darvall Park and Brush Farm Park:</i> Add to the existing parcels of open space in this precinct, to extend the walking trail from Darvall Park to Brush Farm Park. 	1 1 1 Ongoing

Category	Strategies	Actions	Priority
Trees	Improve and protect the tree canopy and associated habitat values of Urban Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop an Urban Tree Management Policy that documents and standardises process and procedure to ensure consistency in the management of trees in the City in the five key areas of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Tree protection</i> 2. <i>Tree planting and selection</i> 3. <i>Tree asset management including risk management</i> 4. <i>Tree replacement and removal</i> 5. <i>Community consultation and involvement</i> 	1

Literature Review

Recreation Studies

Hornsby Shire Council	Sports Facility Strategy 2005 Leisure Strategic Plan 2003
Parramatta City Council	Sport and Recreation Plan 2005
Hobson's Bay	Sport and Recreation Strategy Plan 2003
City of Ballarat	Recreation Strategy 2005
Redcliffe, Pine Rivers and Caboolture	Regional Sport and Recreation Facility Plan 2003
Burnie City Council	Recreation Plan and Aquatic Facility Feasibility Study 2003
Ryde City Council	Ryde Leisure Needs Survey 1991 Open Space and Recreation Facilities Plan 1993
South Sydney City Council	Recreation and Open Space Needs Study 2004
Brisbane City Council	District Open Space Studies 1993
University of South Australia	Children and Sport 2004
Australian Sports Commission	The Numbers Game 2000
Singleton Council	Playground Management Strategy
Federation of Ontario	The Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Public Domain Studies

City of Sydney	Open Space, Public Domain and Community Facilities 2004
Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources	Sydney Metropolitan – Regional Recreation Trails Framework 2005
Ryde City Council	Properties considered suitable for Future Acquisition under Section 94 for Open Space Purposes Social Plan 2000 Public Space and Recreation Facilities Plan
Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government	Are Councils Sustainable? Final Report 2006
Ryde Hunters Hill Fauna and Flora Society	100 Years of Field of Mars Reserve
Queensland Government	Masterplan for Queensland's Parks System

Statistics and Data

Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission	Participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport, Annual Reports 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 Sports Profiles
Integrated Open Space Services (IOSS)	Park User Satisfaction Benchmark Survey 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006
Mid Sussex District Council City of Ryde	Provision and Location of Outdoor Play Space City Vision 2022 2003 Demographic Study 2003
Women's Health Australia	The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health 2005
Crompton John	The proximate principle: The impact of parks, open space and water features on residential property values and the property tax base. (2004)
Standards Australia	Guidelines for Managing Risk in Sport and Recreation

The assistance and input of Ms Michelle Read and HM Leisure Planning is acknowledged.