

City of Ryde Open Space Future Provision Strategy



“We have ample, accessible open space to meet our needs, shared and enjoyed by us all, founded on a healthy natural environment, conserving our rich history, culture and local character and managed sustainably now and for future generations”.

(Integrated Open Space Plan, adopted 2012).



Setting the scene

The places where people play sport, get together, exercise or relax are the places that make a city a great place to live. Open spaces offer respite from busy city life, while recreation and sports facilities bring the community together.

The City of Ryde local government area (LGA) is blessed with a range of open spaces and recreation facilities from Lane Cove National Park, Meadowbank Park and Field of Mars to other spaces and facilities such as Yamble Reserve and Putney Park.



These assets will be at the forefront of Council's planning as the City of Ryde's population of just over 130,000 today is expected to increase by 50,000 people between 2016 and 2036.

The ability to create new open spaces or build new recreation facilities is limited in the context of a growing city and finite space. For this reason, the City of Ryde Open Space Future Provision Strategy sets out the need for an innovative approach that:



adds to the open space system, where this is possible.



makes better use of the assets we have by improving capacity and making facilities fit-for-purpose.



allows more people to enjoy their local open space by targeting areas where accessibility is poor.

In this way, Council will use forecast population growth as a catalyst to enhance both the **capacity** and **accessibility** of open space and recreation areas across the local government area.

Capacity is about the quantum and types of open spaces and recreation facilities that can meet the sport and recreation needs of the future population to 2036.

Accessibility is about ease of access, and how far people have to travel to different types of open space and sports facilities.

A larger, more diverse and more concentrated population will provide the critical mass required to bring more activity to the City of Ryde, as well as direct investment into a broader range of recreation experiences than today.

A Strategy has been developed to guide Council decision-making around the capacity and accessibility of open space and recreation facilities within the City of Ryde. The Strategy will help Council plan for new or upgraded open space and sport facilities in a way that increases the ways and times they can be used, while making them more accessible to more people.

This summary paper is supported by *City of Ryde Open Space Future Provision Strategy: Technical report* that includes the full strategy.

Why is this important?

Open space and recreation facilities bring many benefits to individuals, communities and places.

Just as Council must plan for the type and locations of new housing, transport or shops and services that the growing community needs, it must also think about the kind of facilities and open space in the LGA today, and how the growing population will want to use these places in the future.

Changes in the way people get active reflect lifestyle changes. For example, people:



are increasingly time poor, have limited budgets and are inundated by new forms of entertainment.



increasingly favour more flexible, non-organised forms of physical activity.



are developing new tastes as the population becomes more culturally diverse.

Greater demand for open space is expected as:



more people live in higher density homes – less access to private open space will see public open spaces become key places for the community.



more women get involved in sport.



the population becomes more culturally diverse and people age.



despite trend towards unstructured activity, people will continue to participate in organised sport, and demand for facilities will increase alongside population growth.

The impacts of the **COVID19 pandemic** are still unfolding and detailed data on the long-term impacts, or the likely form of recovery, are not yet available. There is potential for COVID 19 to have medium and long term impacts on the use of recreation and open spaces. A survey conducted recently by DPIE found that 71% of people appreciated their local parks more, and 45% spent more time in public spaces than prior to COVID-19, reflecting the ongoing importance of an open space network which meets the needs of the community.

Today's open space and recreation network

The open space network today:

- Council manages 351 hectares of open space at 204 sites – around nine per cent of the LGA. This equates to 2.89 hectares for every 1,000 people, just above the traditional benchmark of 2.83 hectares for every 1,000 people.
- Of a further 288 hectares of open space (not managed by Council), 272 hectares is national park and 16 hectares are private sports fields.

The LGA's open space network provides places for the community to play organised sport, experience nature, or enjoy informal play and exercise. Each area is unique and people use these assets in different ways depending on their location, size and character.

The network of recreation facilities today:

COUNCIL OWNS:



Council's sports facilities are complemented by other public facilities (within government owned schools and Macquarie University) and private facilities (e.g. North Ryde RSL, and two privately run golf courses).

Understanding service gaps

Current best practice, when assessing the adequacy of open space supply, emphasises accessibility, capacity and quality criteria.

While the overall quantity of open space is important, it is the open space network's functional *capacity* and its distribution (i.e. *accessibility*) that primarily determine its values, benefits and usability.

Addressing service gaps, accordingly, is focused on identifying opportunities for increasing open space capacity and improving its accessibility.

Capacity analysis notes that different sports use facilities at different times of the year – for example cricket is a summer sport played on ovals, netball is a winter sport played on outdoor courts, while indoor basketball is played all year round.

Other capacity issues relate to constraints such as lighting, surfaces or times when training and competition book out a facility. Outdoor facilities are also susceptible to damage from overuse, storms and flooding.

Quality issues such as park size and shape, embellishment, connectivity and boundary/area ratios are also important aspects of capacity.

Accessibility relates to how easily people can walk or cycle to open space or recreation facilities, and whether they face connectivity barriers such as major roads and railways. The analysis considers walking distance to be the 400-metre catchment around an open space area of at least 1,500 m² (and a 200-metre catchment in higher density areas).

The analysis also considers formal and informal activity. Walking, cycling, jogging, relaxing or getting together in open space, going for a swim, visiting a playground or taking the dog for a walk are types of informal activity, whereas people play formal sports like cricket, baseball, soccer or softball between the seasons but play bowls, croquet, golf or tennis all year.

These sports need large spaces. The analysis considered the demands of these sports and how these translate to requirements for future sports space. Participation rates and other demand variables were modelled against an understanding of people's expectations and how they use open space. Details of this modelling are provided in the Technical Report.

Identified gaps

An undersupply of 13 full size fields and ovals

An undersupply of approximately 700m² of pool space by 2036 (or the equivalent of one 25m x 25m pool)

An undersupply of one golf course

An undersupply of 12 indoor courts (up from nine today)¹

Distributional gaps in meeting local demand for junior/modified outdoor fields/ovals and outdoor courts

Additionally, to retain current per capita quantities of open space, there will be a need for an additional 135 hectares of open space by 2036. Providing this, however, is not realistic given the high cost of acquiring it.

Instead, this gap will need to be addressed through capacity increases – for example, through better design, flexible use or extended hours – and by improving accessibility.

¹Service gap of 12 courts by 2036 identified in the Indoor Sports Facilities Review (Ofium Planning Group, 2020)

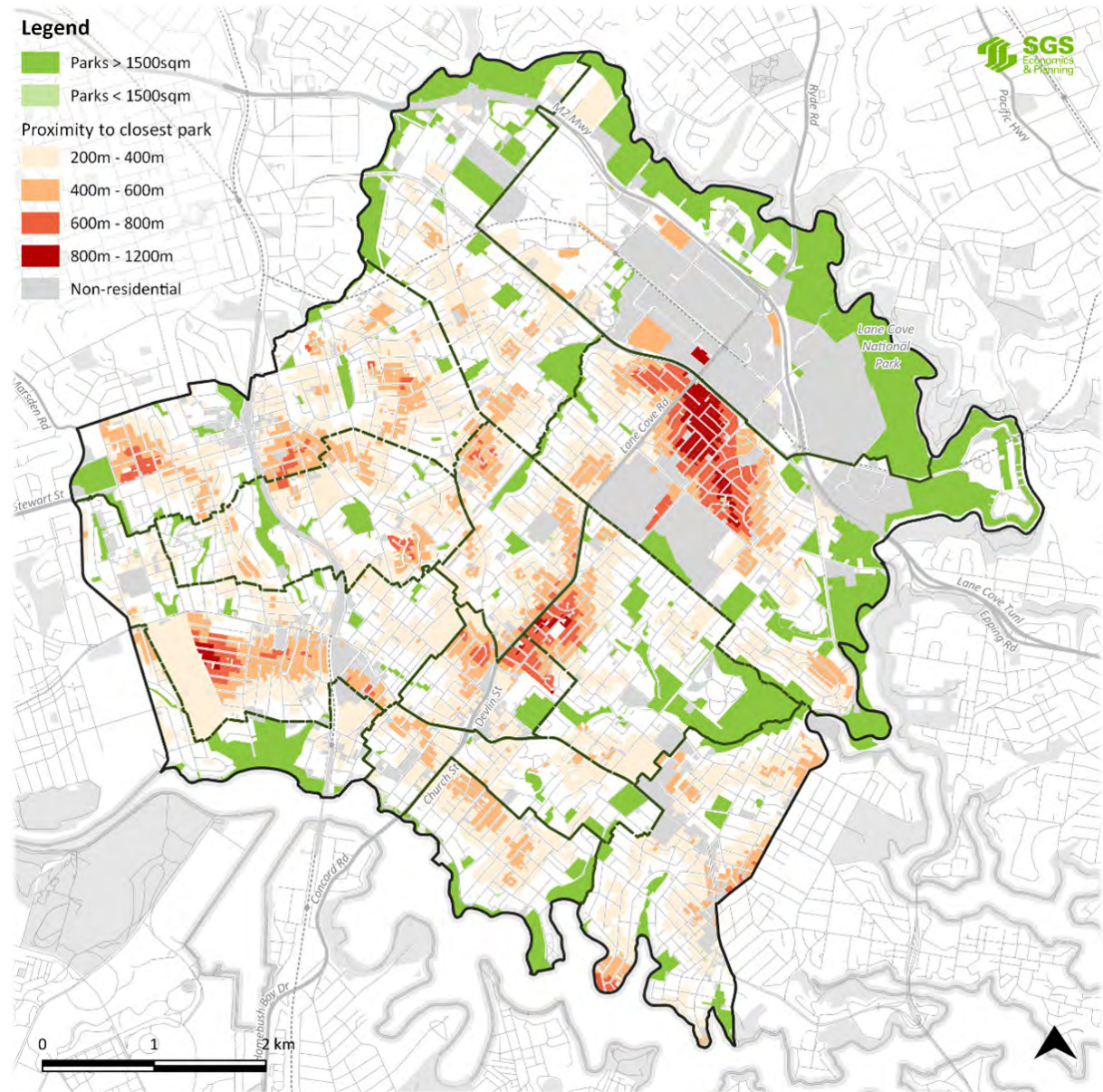
Accessibility

While there are areas in every suburb where people cannot access at least one substantial park within a 400m walk, there are several higher priority areas where walkable access to open space is particularly poor.

- West Ryde
- Denistone – Denistone East – Denistone West
- Eastwood
- North Ryde – East Ryde - Chatswood West
- Ryde (Top Ryde)
- Ryde (Santa Rosa)
- Ryde (Field of Mars).

Without action, the number of people with poor access to open space will only increase in the future.

Similarly, while today there is a decent distribution across the City of most sport and recreation facilities (except for indoor courts), access issues will increase as more people come to live in the City of Ryde in more areas.



Responding with a strategy

The Technical Report details a Strategy for open space and recreation facilities. The Strategy sets a vision for the City of Ryde's network of recreation facilities and open space to ensure that they contribute to the community's quality of life, health and wellbeing and will support the LGA's cultural heritage and enable a resilient City.

The Strategy relates to the *location, scale and role* of recreation facilities and open spaces. It addresses gaps in terms of the capacity and accessibility of the City's open space network, with the following objectives:

Ample and accessible open space and recreation

Council will plan for the right quantum of open space and recreation facilities, and the right levels of access. While working to prioritise open space in areas where access is poor, Council will also prioritise high quality public and civic spaces in high density areas, and improve connections to and between open spaces.

Shared and enjoyed by all

Council will use the design and location of open space and recreation facilities to encourage participation from diverse users and uses, including formal and informal recreation.

Founded on a healthy natural environment

Council will invest in protecting natural areas to encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors while also helping to address climate change. Council will improve connections and links with the Parramatta River foreshore and better link open spaces, regional open spaces or access paths. Council will invest in an improved tree canopy and attractive and comfortable walking and cycling paths and create more opportunities for indoor recreation. The micro climate, permeability and water required to maintain playing surfaces will be integrated into planning.

Conserving our rich history, culture and local character

Council will make history, culture and local character and the area's cultural values central to the design and development of open space and recreation facilities.

Managed sustainably now and for future generations Council will look to conserve energy and resources, optimise life cycles, aim for financial sustainability, and use innovation to design to higher standards. The community will be actively involved in planning and design and partnerships with external parties will be explored.

The focus of the Strategy is on building capacity by:

- Prioritising the upgrade of existing facilities, to increase their capacity, and providing new facilities only where upgrades are not sufficient to meet needs
- Designing new facilities to maximise future adaptability
- Leveraging non-Council owned and private spaces for community use
- Broadening the number of hours, or range of activities, in existing facilities.



Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy's objectives will apply both to Council's existing planned projects, and a list of potential projects identified in the course of this study, which, based on analysis, will help to build capacity and increase accessibility to the City's network of open space and recreation facilities.

Planned and potential projects

Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement, Local Environmental Plan, masterplans and facility strategies identify **20 planned projects** that involve the acquisition of more than 28 hectares of additional open space.

These acquisitions are located to meet the accessibility aspiration set out in the Local Strategic Planning Statement – 95 per cent of households will live within a 400 metre walk to at least a 1,500m² sized open space, and those in higher density areas will be a 200 metre walk away – or to provide greater capacity to the open space network.

Council has also identified several new, expanded and/or upgraded sport and recreation facilities including:



For **potential projects**, Council will undertake initiatives to improve capacity and/or accessibility in the areas where walkable access to parks is greater than 500m (see page 5) by:

- Improving foreshore access and links and other green corridor links
- Improving access to larger parks by creating new pedestrian connections through street blocks.
- Acquiring land to increase the size of parks
- Upgrading lighting and streetscapes
- Collaborating with schools and private sector (for example, on initiatives such as roof top gardens)

Council will also look to address gaps in sport and recreation facilities by:

- Providing 3 new full-sized fields
- Considering one or a combination of synthetic field conversions, new turf fields on public or private land, or new synthetic fields on public or private land equivalent to 4 full size fields
- Providing 3 new indoor courts
- Providing a new program pool at Ryde Aquatic and Leisure Centre.

223
sports facilities
by 2036
(including 35
planned and
potential
facilities)

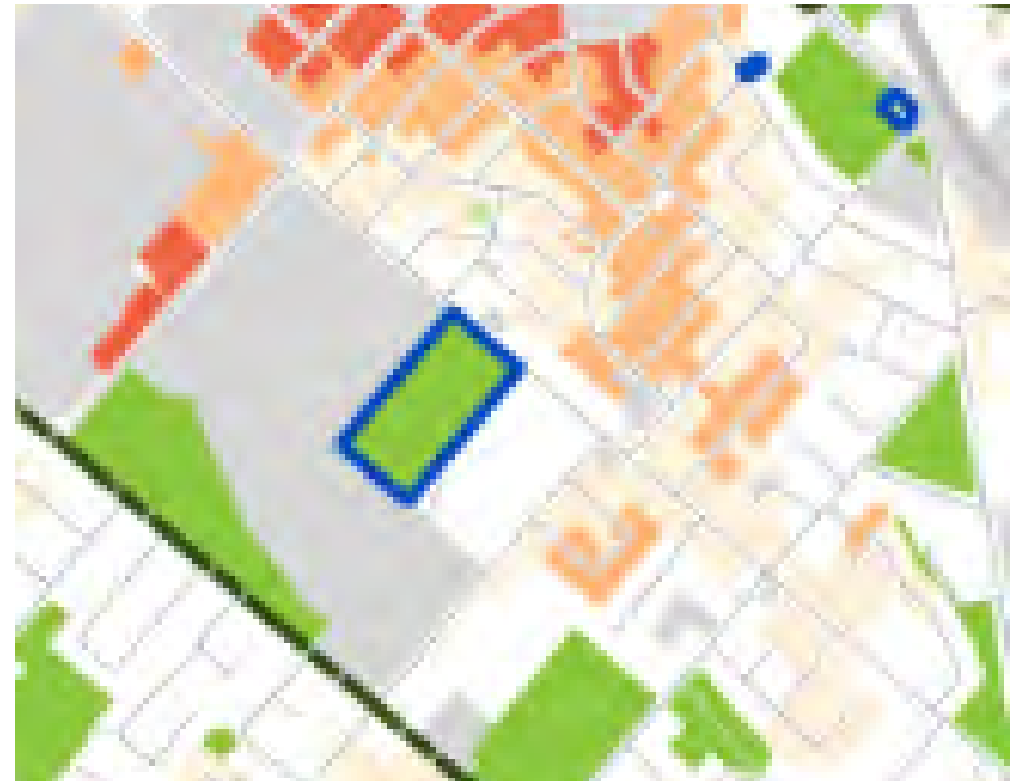
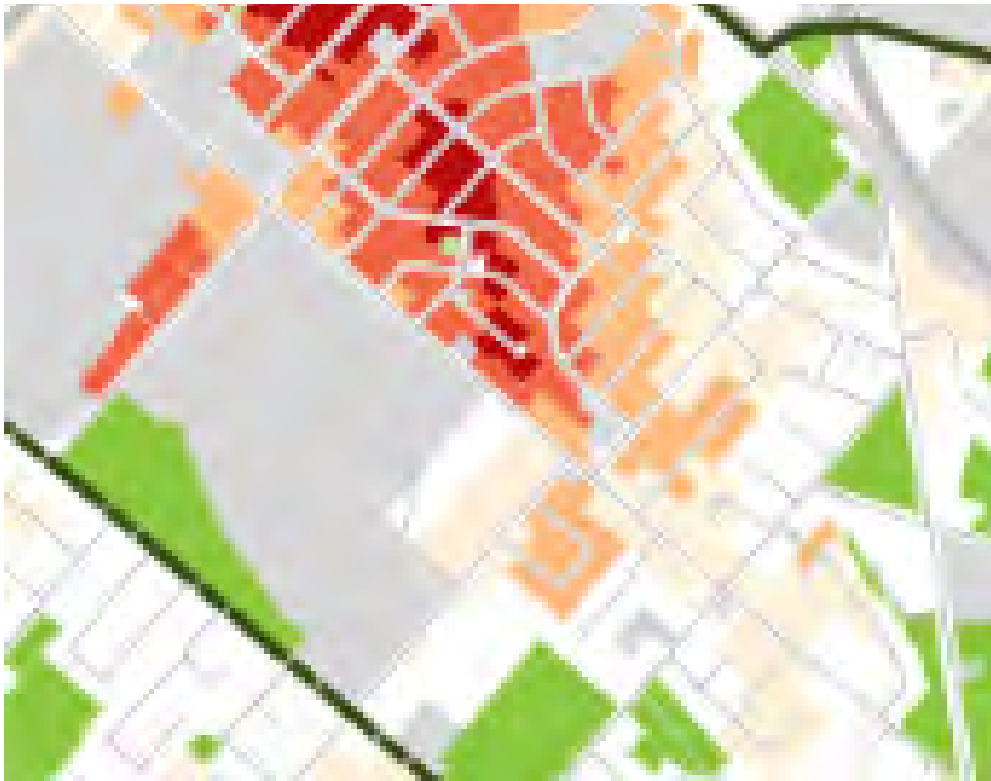
188
existing sports
facilities within
Ryde LGA



CASE STUDY: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

Through a potential partnership with the NSW Government, 10,000m² could be set aside for open space within the North Ryde Hospital precinct. The maps below show the areas today and where the new park could be located (boxed in blue).

The new park will provide new space for one of the most under-provided areas in the City – many residents live beyond 800m to an open space of more than 1,500m².



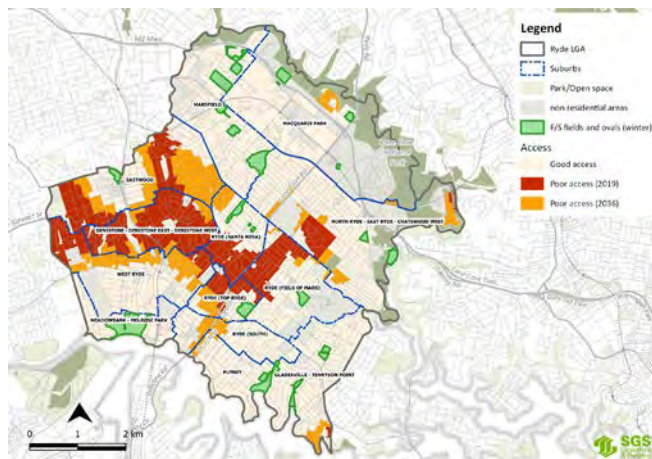
CASE STUDY: INCREASING CAPACITY

These three maps show full-sized fields/ovals during the winter season.

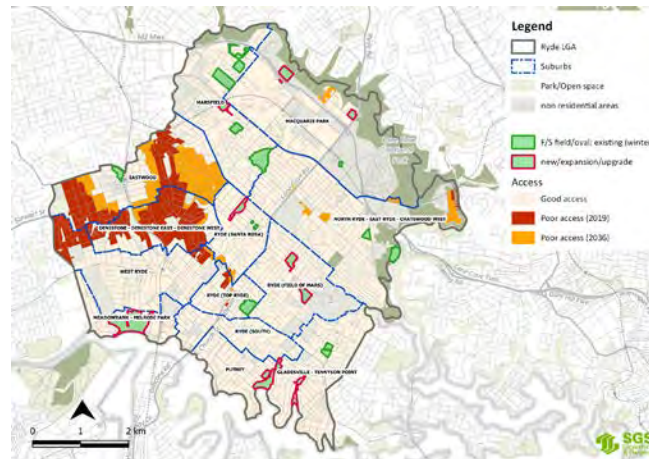
The first map illustrates the current winter season accessibility gaps (dark red shading), indicating that many residents have poor access to facilities. By 2036, this gap in the supply of accessible fields/ovals will extend into West Ryde and Putney (as shown with the orange shading).

However, as shown in the next two maps, the implementation of planned and potential future projects will balance out the forecast supply and demand by 2036; there will still be gaps, but these are limited to a smaller area in the west of the LGA.

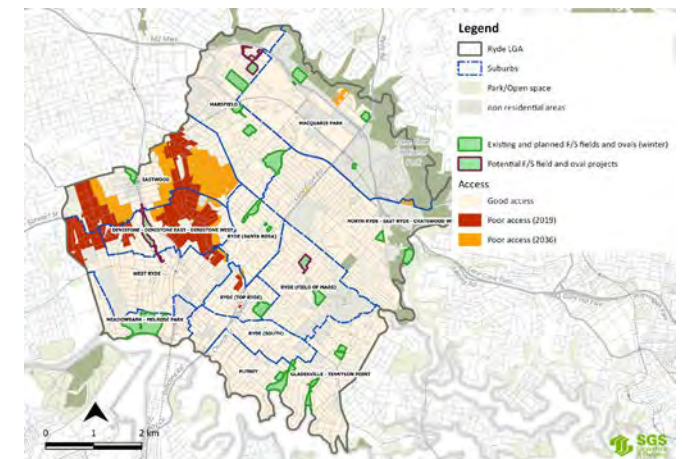
Areas with poor access to **existing** facilities:
2019 and 2036



Areas with poor access to **existing and planned** facilities:
2019 and 2036



Areas with poor access to **existing, planned and potential** future projects: 2019 and 2036



Note: the third map does not include all 'potential' projects as sites have not been determined for all projects. Therefore, the third map over-estimates the likely service Gaps.

Roles and responsibilities

Planning for open space and recreation within the City is not done by Council alone. Council collaborates with various NSW Government agencies to incorporate open space within new transport, health, school and housing projects – and also draws on NSW Government projections and strategies to understand broader population and employment projections and targets.

Council will continue to work with the community and users on the design of open space and recreation facilities, and will also work with private operators or organisations such as schools or universities to create a broader network of open space and recreation facilities that can be used by more people, more often.

The NSW Government can be a key partner, as State-owned land is often well placed to assist with building capacity and increasing accessibility. In addition to the potential new park at the North Ryde Hospital site, other projects with NSW Government agencies include:

- The continued acquisition of land for the Melrose Park connection of Ryde River Walk
- Support the delivery of the masterplan of the County Road road reserve
- A new park within the Sydney Water pumping station in West Ryde through collaboration with Sydney Water.



Next steps

The planned projects will be advanced through normal Council processes, including the identification of funding, community engagement and collaboration with the NSW Government. Projects will be included in master planning and addressed through local contributions plans and Council's integrated planning and reporting (IP&R) frameworks.

Five yearly reviews are required to make sure that open space planning reflects the population's growing and evolving needs for open space. Reviews should use the methodology described in the technical report. Where possible, the reviews should align with the release of new census data in 2022.

Works to deliver potential projects will require sourcing of funds and masterplanning. They will also require business case development and further justification (via ongoing research and monitoring) in the light of changing trends (e.g. growth patterns, participation rates) and outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. This work will be subject to regular reviews, not only of progress but also of other Council initiatives, funding requirements and broader NSW Government objectives.





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