

Item No: C0518 Item 28

Subject: RECREATION NEEDS STUDY - A HEALTHIER INNER WEST, DRAFT FINAL REPORT FOR PUBLIC EXHIBITION.

Prepared By: Peter Montague - Coordinator Recreation, Planning and Programs

Authorised By: John Warburton - Deputy General Manager Community and Engagement

SUMMARY

Council's Recreation Needs Study has been completed and the draft Final Report, *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West*, has been delivered by the project consultants. This report seeks Council's endorsement to place the report on public exhibition for 6 weeks for community and stakeholder input, with the results presented to Council recommending further action.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

- 1. Council endorse the draft report *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* for public exhibition for 6 weeks;**
 - 2. That the public exhibition is widely promoted and all stakeholders and residents who expressed an interest are notified of the opportunity to provide further input; and**
 - 3. Following public exhibition, the feedback and amended *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* be reported back to Council.**
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BACKGROUND

The merger of three local government areas to form the Inner West Council over the past 2 years highlighted the need for Council to undertake a study on recreation user needs to inform a strategic position for the provision of recreation facilities, services and programs, that includes planning priorities, new Section 94 contributions plan, recreation programs and services, and asset management for the equitable and relevant allocation of recreation resources to meet the present and future requirements of the local community.

Project Consultants

Cred Consulting (Cred) was selected as the preferred consultancy to undertake an independent recreation needs study for Council due to their experience with recreation planning, community engagement and Section 94 planning. Cred's team comprised a consortium of consultants from Cred Consulting, Gallagher Studio and Jones Lang Lasalle.

About the Project

Cred was engaged to research a range of specific factors relating to local recreation including:

- Strategic document review and development of Engagement Plan;
- Implementation of the engagement with community and stakeholders identified in the Engagement Plan and presentation of the findings from this process in the form of a Community Engagement Report.

- Quantitative research including condition audits of current recreation and sporting facilities, recreation activity undertaken in the LGA including the streets and streetscape as a recreation resource.
- The development of an informed view of the future recreation and open space needs in the Inner West Council.
- The findings from the analysis of current and future needs including identifying areas of unmet need and the implications for recreation facilities and services.
- Bringing together the findings all project phases into a draft Final Report (see **ATTACHMENT 1**), including recommending opportunities for Council in the strategic provision of recreation programs and services for the next 10 years.

Community Engagement

A robust engagement process was an essential component of the project to provide the evidence base for future recreation planning. An extensive community engagement process was undertaken from October through December 2017 and targeted engagement with stakeholders continued in early 2018. Promotion of the engagement reached over 17,000 people through a variety of media and over 2,000 people participated in engagement activities through a range of engagement methods including:

- An online community survey;
- An online interactive map to identify locations where the community undertakes recreation activities;
- A specific survey distributed to sporting organisations operating in the Inner West;
- Council staff workshops including neighbouring Councils;
- Presentation at Sports Stakeholder Forum;
- 4 Primary and 2 High School workshops; and
- 17 'pop up' and intercept surveys distributed across the Local Government Area and stalls at two major street festivals;

The engagement process was promoted through postcards and posters at Council's facilities, Council's website, local newspapers, Council column, e-newsletter, posters and postcards, direct mail and phone calls, and staff were encouraged to promote the project through their networks. Targeted engagement with specific stakeholders and schools continued in early 2018.

A Community Engagement Report (CER see **ATTACHMENT 2**) detailed the outcomes of the engagement process. This report was published on Council's website in April 2018, notification sent to residents who had expressed an interest during the engagement process and a presentation to the Sports Forum in April 2018.

Key findings identified in the CER are:

- The most popular 5 activities reported from the engagement are: walking; walking for transport; playing in a playground / park / with children; personal / outdoor fitness; and dog walking (this is consistent with State-wide preferences);
- The most common types of facility for participants are: parks; footpaths; sporting grounds; aquatic centres; and children's playgrounds;
- There are gender and age-related variations – for example, footpaths, gym/fitness and swimming being more popular with females and cycling, playing fields and courts and the Greenway more popular with males;
- The most popular 5 facilities are: footpaths, cycle paths; Bay Run; Cooks River foreshore path and Leichhardt Park Aquatic Centre; and
- The main reported reasons for participation in recreation are fun; fitness; and health.

At the meeting of 27 March 2018, Council considered a report on the resourcing of recreation needs and specifically the potential position of an Office of Sport Coordinator. It was determined that:

1. *Council invest \$65 million in park and aquatic capital facilities over the next three years, subject to the development and adoption of the 2018/2019 Budget;*
2. *Council defer the appointment an Office of Sport Coordinator until after the completion of the Recreation Needs Study;*
3. *The Recreation & Aquatics Service Unit and Office of Sport Coordinator strategically partner with the sporting clubs and key partners to increase participation of girls, women, people from lower socio economic backgrounds and people with disabilities as informed by the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West;*
4. *Council progress the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West to investigate the need and best location for hockey and netball facilities and a hydrotherapy pool; and*
5. *Council progress the development of the Inner West Sporting Ground Allocation Policy, in consultation with the sporting clubs and that the draft Policy be reported back to Council for adoption.*

DISCUSSION

Report Structure

The draft Final Report, *Recreation Needs Study – A Healthier Inner West (RNS)*, is structured as follows:

1. Introduction - includes the scope and definition of recreation, presenting this as a spectrum of activities ranging from passive, unstructured activities through to structured and elite level organised sport;
2. Recreation benefits and participation - current recreation participation at national, state and local levels and associated benefits;
3. The Inner West community now – current community profile by suburb (including maps of the LGA identifying age profile, people with a disability, cultural diversity, population density, household income and car ownership) and key challenges and opportunities;
4. The future Inner West community – forecast population to 2036 and key challenges and opportunities;
5. Current situation – an audit of existing open space, recreation facilities and opportunities including community venues, natural spaces, parks and sporting grounds;
6. Community engagement outcomes – a summary of the outcomes from the engagement process;
7. Strategic and planning context – national, state and local planning context and the impact and opportunities of major projects in the Inner West;
8. Recreation standards – current benchmarking and hierarchy for recreation facilities and open space.

9. Recreation indicators – key information to track and measure over time to evaluate recreation in the Inner West.
10. Urban recreation best practice trends and case studies – key recreation trends in urban areas specific case studies of best practice;
11. Recreation needs and gap analysis – analysis of needs and gaps identified;
12. Strategic framework – proposed strategic framework on which to base future strategy and planning;
13. Recommended opportunities – recommendations to address the identified recreation needs and Council’s role in this; and
14. Applications and ideas for the Inner West – this section explores how the application of contemporary ideas and design treatments can be applied to address identified recreation needs in the Inner West.

Recreation Trends

The continuing change in the Inner West from a suburban to an urban area requires an innovative approach to ensure sufficient capacity to cater for the recreation needs of an increasing population. The RNS identifies trends in urban recreation and highlights a number of case studies demonstrating best practice including some from the Inner West. The trends include:

- Multipurpose and flexible – designing to maximise usage and meet a greater diversity of needs;
- Networked and connected – building a network of linked recreation facilities;
- Sharing the city for recreation – innovative approaches to recreation including sharing facilities, utilising the streets and rooftops;
- Inclusion and universality – irrespective of age, gender or ability, everyone is able to access and participate in their chosen form of recreation;
- Connection to nature and healthy built environments – realising the mental and physical health benefits reduction in temperature through making space for nature;
- Co-design – involving the community in the design of recreation spaces; and
- Risk and adventure, child-directed play – creating opportunities for formative growth and creativity through free and unstructured play.

The RNS explores these trends later in the document through the application of 10 ideas to illustrate how these can be applied in the Inner West through design and programming interventions.

Strategic Framework and Recommended Opportunities

The RNS is a significant piece of research that presents an independent analysis of the current recreation landscape in the Inner West. Cred has presented a strategic framework comprising 6 themes informed by the community engagement, best practice, changing recreation trends, and the local context. Each theme lists a series of recommended opportunities which will have planning, design and programming implications that Council may wish to consider. A selection of recommended opportunities included in the RNS are listed below under the relevant themes:

Theme 1 - Existing gaps in open space and recreation

- Increase the supply of publicly accessible open space in suburbs currently providing below LGA wide benchmark (13.3m²);

- Address the need for 1 new indoor recreation facility in the LGA's north;
- Collaborate with sporting clubs to increase sharing of sporting grounds and facilities; and
- Improve recreational amenities in parks including toilets, bbq facilities, seating and shade.

Theme 2 - Future demand for open space and recreation

- Retain the current supply of open space per person by setting a benchmark of 13.3m² per person provision of open space within future master planned development sites and major projects. Where this can't be provided onsite, a financial contribution could be required;
- Establish a proximity to quality open space benchmark as part of all future development proposals and develop best practice principles for the design and delivery of open space within future sites; and
- Collaborate with developers and major project delivery partners to deliver new recreational spaces to meet future gaps, and that are multipurpose and flexible.

Theme 3 - Capacity for sports and recreation

- Investigate the feasibility of synthetic surfaces on sports fields at appropriate locations;
- Implement a rolling program of resurfacing natural turf sports fields;
- Deliver upgraded lighting at sporting grounds to improve multipurpose use; and
- Work collaboratively within Council and the sporting community to create a transparent and equitable allocation policy that addresses priority needs including participation of women and girls, people with disability, low-income families.

Theme 4 - Inclusion and sharing

- Improve access to recreational facilities through an accessibility audit of Council's recreational spaces and promote accessible recreation spaces on Council's website;
- Increase unstructured and un-prescribed play spaces for children;
- Design and deliver biodiversity programs to promote shared space between community, wildlife and plant communities; and
- Increase the representation of women and girls through a Welcoming Women and Girls Recreation Program.

Theme 5 - Connections to Nature

- Create new nature based and adventure play spaces for children;
- Futureproof recreation spaces against climate impacts;
- Deliver existing tree strategies and increase tree planting for cooler streets and parks;
- Work in partnership to delivery identified Green Grid projects; and
- Collaborate with developers to incorporate biophilic design into new residential developments.

Theme 6 - Streets and Laneways for walking, cycling and play

- Increase walking opportunities through the creation of more walkable and playful streets that connect communities to recreational space.
- Improve connectivity to existing open space in neighbourhoods that are not within 400m easy access to 0.5ha of open space.
- Adopt a "Streets as recreational places" approach to local streets.
- Collaborate with organisations such as Play Streets to trial a play streets program.
- Identify laneways to create new recreational spaces and co-design with local communities.
- Encourage increased use of cycleways, improved safety on shared paths, and delivery of a connected cycle path network.

Recreation Policy and Strategy

Following public exhibition, the final RNS will be presented to Council. The Final Report will form the basis for the development of the Recreation Policy and Strategy that will set out a

long term plan for recreation development. The RNS will be also used to inform the development of a new section 94 Contributions Plan, recreation programs and services, parks, open space and public domain planning documents (including plans of management and master plans), planning controls, open space and asset management plans.

To provide momentum from the RNS project, short term projects which could be potentially undertaken in the next 18 months include:

- Feasibility and location study on synthetic turf sporting fields;
- Children's adventure and wild play pilot project;
- Laneways for recreation pilot project;
- Play streets pilot program;
- Welcoming women and girls program; and
- An accessibility audit of Council's recreation spaces and promotion of accessible recreation spaces.

These potential projects will be investigated while the RNS is on public exhibition and updated information provided in the next report to Council anticipated for August 2018. Throughout the public exhibition period, Officers will also consult on the optimum allocation of internal resourcing to meet identified recreation needs, noting Council's resolution of 27 March 2018 regarding the Office of Sport Coordinator role.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The draft Final Report includes a Financial Considerations report prepared by commercial property consultants, Jones Lang Lasalle (see **Confidential ATTACHMENT 3**). This report details:

- Analysis of factors which may impact on the cost of land acquisitions for potential recreation space;
- An understanding of land values in the suburbs which are undersupplied with open space;
- Cost of construction of recreation facilities to meet needs as identified in the draft Final Report; and
- Construction and cost analysis of synthetic sports fields.

In addition to the development of Section 94 plan, this report will be used in the development of the Recreation Policy and Strategy which will propose a prioritised action plan and associated costs to realise the recommended opportunities identified in the RNS and inform the 2019/20 Operational Plan and the forward capital works program.

OTHER STAFF COMMENTS

Internal engagement was a key component of the Engagement Plan and included:

- Formation of a cross organisational Project Working Group with representation from Community Services and Culture, Properties, Major Building Projects and Facilities, Strategic Planning, and Trees, Parks and Sportsfields. The group met regularly with Cred to review outcomes throughout the relevant stages of the project;
- An introductory workshop with all relevant internal Council teams;
- Individual 'speed dating' workshops with individual teams;
- Two workshops with outdoor staff responsible for the north and south precincts in the LGA;
- Distribution of the CER;

- Opportunity to comment on the draft Final Report through the Project Working Group representatives.

There will be further opportunity for input during from internal Council teams through the public exhibition process.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

As detailed in this report, an engagement plan was developed and implemented as part of the project and the methodology and outcomes of this are detailed in the Community Engagement Report attached to this report.

It is proposed that RNS report be placed on public exhibition for community feedback for 6 weeks. The public exhibition will be widely promoted and stakeholder organisations and residents who expressed an interest will be directly notified and invited to provide further input. Following the exhibition period, the feedback will inform appropriate amendments before the Final Report is reported to Council for adoption.

CONCLUSION

The RNS is a comprehensive independent research and engagement project undertaken into recreation needs, facilities and services in the Inner West. The report provides Council with a robust and comprehensive evidence base to inform effective recreation, open space, infrastructure, strategic and financial planning for the next 10 years.

The draft Final Report is now presented to Council recommending public exhibition to allow further community and stakeholder input. The feedback during public exhibition will be collated and appropriate amendments made to the draft Final Report. The Final Report and feedback will then be reported back to Council to consider adoption of the RNS.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Final Report - Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West May 2018
2. Recreation Needs Study - Community Engagement Report March 2018
3. Recreation Needs Study - Financial Considerations Report May 2018 - *Confidential*