



# Wyndham City Council

## Play Space Strategy 2030

*“We dont stop  
playing because we  
grow old; we grow  
old because we stop  
playing.”*

*George Bernard Shaw*

## About this document

The Wyndham Play Space Strategy will guide policy, priorities and future capital works projects related to play space provision and upgrade.

This strategy commenced in 2016.

Four other supporting documents were prepared for this Strategy:

- Demand and Consultation Findings
- Analysis of Play Spaces by Planning District.
- Discussion Paper (content integrated into this Strategy)
- Implementation Plan

The distribution analysis and implementation plan have considered all the known play spaces at the time.

Acknowledgments:

@leisure Planners and Jeavons Landscape Architects prepared this strategy with the contribution, support and assistance provided by Council Officers, Community Members, groups and stakeholders.



# PLAY SPACE STRATEGY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People of all ages play and benefit from play. Parks that are; well positioned, welcoming, attractive, leafy green spaces, suitable for social and physical activity for the whole family, make the best play environments and provide the best return on Council's investment in play.

Wyndham City Council supports the objectives of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative, which aims to recognise children's rights in decision-making and to achieve safe environments where children and young people can play without active adult supervision.

## Definitions and terms used in this strategy

This strategy concerns play spaces: public open spaces with purpose-built play elements designed and positioned to encourage play. These elements may be equipment, natural or sculptural elements or social infrastructure that provides play opportunities. Play spaces should also include seats, tables and other furniture, landscape features, paths and open areas designed for games and activities.

Any area of open space can accommodate play. However, not every open space is classified here as a play space and Council will not provide purpose-built play elements in every park. Fitness stations or sports courts suitable for competition, on their own, are not considered play elements. However, fitness equipment and sports courts may be present in association with purpose-built play elements in a play space.

Nature play spaces are a type of play space focusing on playing in nature. These are designed predominantly using natural features, such as trees, shrubs, grass, rocks, etc, to facilitate play.

This strategy does not concern play spaces provided in conjunction with community facilities, such as children's centres, that are not considered as public open space or are not always accessible to the public.

## Strategic justification for this Strategy

This strategy responds to the Wyndham Open Space Strategy 2045 (WOSS), that recommends “Prepare a Play Space Strategy to address the location, provision, design, management, upgrade and maintenance of Council’s playground portfolio and other dedicated play spaces for children, young people and their families.”<sup>1</sup>

The WOSS classifies open space into “Passive” and “Active” categories and indicates some of these are required to have “play spaces”.

This document builds on the Wyndham Open Space Strategy. It adds to the hierarchy of spaces by further classifying play spaces (areas with purpose-built play elements) as either local, district or regional.

## What has been done

As an input into this strategy an assessment of demand was conducted. This included an analysis of population projections, the demographic profile, a community survey and other consultation with residents, community organisations and staff. State and local policy documents and plans were also reviewed.

Site visits to all existing play equipment areas were made, and an agreed site assessment criteria applied to each. Each play element was counted and findings assessed by play space and planning district.

The play value and quality of each site were assessed and compared with others in the planning district. All planning districts were divided into sub-districts to assess the likely accessibility of play spaces to surrounding residential areas.

All other “Passive” and “Active” parks were also reviewed for their potential to provide play elements. Detailed comments on each play space and a summary by planning district are provided in the separate report: Analysis of Existing Play Spaces, by Planning District.

Areas of deficiency and potential sites for district level play spaces were identified and probable costs of upgrades and priorities are provided, by space and planning district.

An overall assessment of the likely long term financial implications of upgrading and managing play infrastructure by planning district has been prepared with upgrades and new play spaces estimated at \$32m, excluding where noted on the Implementation Plan.

1. Action No. 33 Wyndham Open Space Strategy 2045

## The existing network

There are more than 270 play spaces in Wyndham. Maps showing the distribution of spaces by catchment hierarchy and for each planning district are included in the volume: Analysis of Existing Play Spaces, by Planning District. Note: A number of additional spaces have been constructed or transferred to Council since site inspections and the maps were prepared.

Overall the distribution of play spaces is relatively good. There are developing areas that will require further play space provision. Small areas of Hoppers Crossing, Werribee, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, and Truganina don't have play spaces within easy walking distance. See chapter 3.3 "An equitable distribution of play space for everyone" for a list of these areas.

The subdivision design of some residential areas in parts of Point Cook and Wyndham Vale make access to some existing play spaces more difficult. The number of future residential areas will require play spaces to meet the requirements of the WOSS.

The standard of play space infrastructure and play opportunities varies significantly across the City. In some cases, infrastructure is very high quality and beyond what Council can afford to maintain in the long term. Other areas would benefit from additional embellishments to enhance play and amenity value.

The WOSS provides a standard for the distribution of District level open spaces. An analysis of the quality and distribution of district play spaces indicates sites across Hoppers Crossing, Werribee, Tarneit and Wyndham Vale planning districts could be embellished to meet a District standard.



## Demographics and demand

The overall population of Wyndham is projected to grow by over 109,000 residents (51%) between 2016 and 2026. Significant population growth is projected in Mount Cottrell – Quandong, Mambourin, Werribee South and Wyndham Vale - Manor Lakes. Hoppers Crossing is the only suburb where the population is likely to decrease during this period (1.5% reduction) 2 .

Based on 2016 population projections, the demand for play opportunities will increase significantly in the next ten years, with growth in the number of 0-4, 5-7 and 8-11 year old children. Each of these age groups is projected to grow by some 5000 children. There are differences in the age structure across suburbs. Point Cook, Tarneit, Truganina, Werribee, and Wyndham Vale are likely to have the largest increases in children who will seek play opportunities.

The diversity in residents of Wyndham provides a challenge for play provision. In some areas the population has relatively high affluence and education qualifications and in other areas there are relatively low levels of income and education. These influence the likely value placed on play and overall opportunities. The ancestry of residents is also diverse, and this will influence perceptions of play, independent mobility, spatial behaviour, activity preferences and cultural responses to public/social situations. Ancestry may also be a major influence on perceived sense of place and territoriality and hence may affect the use of local parks and play spaces.

The amount and quality of public and private open space for play will also be influenced by the form and density of housing, the era of subdivision and the nature of the local physical environment. As children's living environments change to include higher density and mixed use settings, public play provision will need to respond.

## What the community said

Community survey results suggest proximity to a park is the main reason for the majority of residents choosing to use a specific play space.

The community engagement process highlighted the most important features in play spaces, as:

- Swings / hammocks and rotating items;
- Seats in sheltered / shaded areas;
- Monkey bars / climbing equipment;
- Nature areas / garden area to play in;
- Large shady trees;
- Grassy areas for ball games / kick to kick;
- Shade;
- Paths for wheeled toys, prams and wheelchairs;
- Track glides;
- Cubbies / pretend shop / social and role play;
- Shelters from weather / wind;
- Green lawns; and
- Areas where kids can dig holes or build things.

The largest gaps between the importance of features in play spaces and how well these are provided, were:

- Grassy areas for ball games / kick to kick;
- Paths for wheeled toys, prams and wheelchairs;
- Green lawns;
- Monkey bars / climbing equipment;
- Swings / hammocks and rotating items;
- Shade;
- Play equipment with elevated decks;
- Nature areas / garden area to play in; and
- Seats in sheltered / shaded areas

When asked what improvements there should be to play spaces, the most respondents said: “Planning local parks better”, so they are “bigger” “more diverse”, “welcoming” and “designed better for play”, followed by “additional park landscaping and tree planting, paths and seats”. Many comments also included the need for water play, trees and grass, and toilets.

## Key issues and opportunities

The main issues and opportunities arising from the analysis of play space provision in Wyndham can be summarised as:

- Urban development impacting on space and opportunities for children to play;
- Residents understanding of the value of play and opportunities available;
- Delivering an equitable distribution of play space for everyone;
- The need for enhanced quality and play value in play spaces;
- The importance of inclusive play opportunities;
- Providing a diversity of play opportunities, to enhance the range of experiences and child development potential and serve an increasingly diverse population;
- Play spaces in higher density residential developments;
- Providing more canopy trees and nature play elements valued by the community; and
- Sustainability of infrastructure and renewal of play spaces

These issues form the basis of the nine goals in this Strategy and subsequent actions in the Implementation Plan.

## Implementation plan

The Implementation Plan provides probable costs of improvements and priorities overall and by planning district. The implementation plan is included as a separate section within this report.





# INTRODUCTION

**This strategy** This Play Space Strategy provides strategic direction for purpose-designed play space developments and the programming of capital works to 2029, in line with the Wyndham Open Space Strategy (WOSS) 2045.

This strategy follows:

- A review of background information, policies and plans;
- Preparation of an outline about “what is play”;
- Community consultation and an assessment of demand for and demo graphic influences on play opportunities;
- An assessment of all open spaces with play equipment and “Passive” and “Active” parks with potential for purpose-designed play elements, by site, sub-district and planning district;
- Mapping of each play space by classification, the age groups catered for and likely walkable catchment around each;
- Preparation of a demand and locality analysis document, with comments and recommendations by site and planning district. Probable costs for suggested actions are also provided;
- Preparation of core service levels for play spaces;
- Identification of key issues and opportunities and key goals addressing these;
- Preparation of a discussion paper addressing each key issue / opportunity and following community exhibition of this, analysis of feedback; and
- Provision of feedback on all mapping and documents by staff.

## What is a play space?

In this strategy play spaces are public open spaces with purpose-built play elements designed and positioned to encourage play and use by the whole community, with an emphasis on children. These elements may be of a social, physical, or environmental nature and include equipment, natural or sculptural elements as well as social infrastructure that provides play opportunities.

Fitness stations on their own, for example, are not considered play elements, as they do not target children or play. However, fitness equipment may be present in association with purpose-built play elements in a play space.

The WOSS doesn't provide for “Active” open spaces at the local catchment hierarchy and therefore where possible local “Passive” parks, should include “active areas” for games and social sports. Hit-up walls and half-court basketball courts and combination basketball/soccer sports courts that are suitable for children and used for social play (not competition) are considered play elements. Sports facilities that can be used for competition - such as



tennis courts (if on their own) - are not considered play elements. However, these may be provided in, or in association with, play places. Social sports elements are identified separately as they provide for the play of older children. Exercise sites, skate facilities, and water play areas were identified in parks across Wyndham. Giant chess and other games areas that are purpose-designed, such as kick and throw areas with mini or portable goals or wickets and suitable for children's play, are considered play elements. These may require different spatial arrangements to other play elements.

Nature play spaces are play spaces that focus on playing in nature and are designed predominantly using natural features, such as trees, shrubs, grass, rocks, logs and land formation etc, specifically to facilitate play.

This strategy does not concern play spaces provided in conjunction with community facilities such as children's centres that are not considered as public open space and not always accessible to the public.

This document assumes that if a public open space does not provide purpose-built play elements, it is not a play space. This does not imply that children don't play everywhere and that local parks cannot encourage older people to play. In fact, people of all ages play and benefit from play. Council does not provide purpose-built play elements in every park.

## Why Council provides play spaces

The value of play is widely understood. Play can significantly enhance the development potential of a child and it is necessary for healthy and happy individuals and communities.

Council provides dedicated play spaces to encourage children and other people to play. The reason why these need to be designed specifically for children is that play is essential for developing social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills and it will aid their growth into happy, healthy and resilient adults.

Having dedicated public play spaces and purpose-built play elements also legitimises play as an activity. These spaces act as a "flagpole" for local families.

### Why do we need designed spaces?

Consciously designed play spaces are needed to facilitate access to essential learning and fun experiences for the whole family, as these experiences may no longer be available to children at home or in their local neighbourhood. Public play spaces, therefore seek to compensate for the loss of opportunities for learning in private open space as well as those previously facilitated by family.

The careful choice of play elements can create a diverse range of play opportunities and make it more likely that every child can find some way to participate and that all family members feel welcome and included. The inclusion of residents of all ages and abilities in play demands attention to a high level of detail and multiple options and combinations of elements that require specialist design skills.

The design and selection of play elements (See definitions - Appendix 1) seeks to facilitate specific development opportunities for children – such as fine motor skills, vestibular development and cognitive development. The degree of challenge, learning, and danger (see risk and challenge - Appendix 3) that a child is exposed to, relates to specific types of play elements provided and age appropriateness.

How play and other elements are sited in parks will have a significant impact on how well the park functions. Parks that are well positioned, welcoming, attractive, leafy green spaces suitable for social and physical activity for the whole family, make the best play environments and provide the highest return on Council's investment in play.

**Local parks are the most important hierarchy to serve Wyndham residents play needs.**

Local parks are the most critical in the hierarchy of open space for play, because:

- They are the parks that less mobile people will depend on for their everyday play needs;
- They provide an alternative to indoor environments, such as the home and shops;
- They complement opportunities children have at home and in community facilities; and
- They provide for social interaction.

Play spaces can play a vital role in introducing new residents to their neighbours and their surroundings. Studies have shown that limited independent mobility is partly due to the lack of familiarity with neighbours and the immediate neighbourhood. New residents born overseas have told Council they don't always know that they can use the open spaces available in their neighbourhood. For this reason, local parks and play spaces need to be welcoming, and attention should be given to planning and design that ensures use by people of all ages and abilities and cultural backgrounds is encouraged, without dissuading others.

The WOSS requires the provision of an equitable distribution of district play spaces. Typically, these will be co-located on district "Active" reserves. The WOSS describes these as for "sporting facilities suitable for municipal level competition"). Co-locating district play and district "Active" spaces will minimise the duplication of facilities including car parking, toilets and social sports facilities that can also be used for practice. In this way, these district play facilities provide opportunities for the whole family who use the sports reserves.

Where district “Active” spaces are not available, selective play spaces will be developed to meet the WOSS distribution standards of district “Passive” parks.

Parks with the potential to be upgraded to a district level are listed in Goal 3: An equitable distribution of play space for everyone.

### **Who is the target audience for play spaces?**

Children are more dependent on designated play places than adults, who may be more mobile and have access to a wide range of recreation and entertainment facilities that they may use for play. However, play space design seeks to involve all those accompanying children in their play, so that both benefit. In addition, adult residents may come to the space for recreation or relaxation. Recreation activities are distinguished from play as they typically have a defined purpose or goal, such as social outcomes, relaxation, contemplation, fitness or health prevention, etc., whereas play is intrinsically motivated, but can be stimulated by a conducive environment with a range of stimuli.

People of all ages and abilities and cultural backgrounds need to play, and local parks and play spaces should be designed to include everyone.

As a baseline, all play spaces that have purpose-built play elements, should welcome people relying on mobility devices and prams for example. All play spaces can be designed to provide a central social space, where everyone can be included in play without specialised equipment. Such a social space should enable:

- Everyone to be seen and interact with playmates, siblings, family members, or carers; and
- All users to engage in some form of activity that may be table based, path based, or nature based, or interactive equipment based

This strategy does not propose separate specialised play facilities for people with a disability but assumes that district or regional facilities will have higher levels of support facilities, inclusiveness and way-finding, than a local play space. A regional-level play space that serves the whole Council area and beyond, will include play equipment and support facilities for people who have high support needs.

Council proposes at least one destination “all-abilities play space” as part of its play space offer. See the separate volume: Analysis of Existing Play Spaces, by Planning District (Appendix 1) for site selection criteria and suggested sites for an all-abilities play space.

The **Wyndham Open Space Strategy 2045** recommended a Play Space Strategy be prepared to address the location, provision, design, management, upgrade, and maintenance of Council’s playground portfolio and other dedicated play spaces for children, young people and their families.” 3

## Where play spaces fit within the Wyndham open space hierarchy

The planning standards for each type of open space in the WOSS determine the types of open space that may have play spaces, and their appropriate distribution.

This strategy classifies each play space as either local, district, or regional and determines whether the catchment is compatible with the open space classification. This strategy's implementation plan identifies some gaps in the distribution of local and district play spaces.

### The Wyndham open space hierarchy

The WOSS classifies open space into "Passive", "Active", "Encumbered", "Conservation", and "Landscape Amenity" open spaces. "Passive", "Active", and "Encumbered" open space may have play spaces.

The following image provides the WOSS classification of open spaces (WOSS, table 3.2, pg 19) and the high level benchmarks that apply to each.

Function/Hierarchy	Quantity (ha/1000 pop)	Size/Purpose	Catchment (distance from houses)	Coverage (%available area)	Scale for Standard
<b>Passive Recreation</b>					
Pocket Park	1.5ha/1000 (20ha/20000)	<=0.5ha	300m*	NA	WCC
Local Park		0.5 - 1.5ha	400m	80%	WPS, PSPGs
District Park		1.6 - 2.5ha	1000m	80%	WCC
Municipal Park		2.5ha +	No standard	NA	NA
Regional Park		As designated	No standard	NA	NA
Local Park (Employment)	2% NSAE	0.5 - 1.5ha	400m	80%	PSPGs
<b>Active Recreation</b>					
Local Reserve**	1.2ha/1000 people	District competition and training	1000m	NA	NA
District Reserve		District competition (see 5.4.3.1)	1000m	80%	WPS, PSPGs
Municipal Reserve	0.3ha/1000 people	District competition (recreational)	No standard	NA	NA
Regional Reserve		Regional competition	No standard	NA	NA
<b>Other</b>					
Conservation	NA / As identified	NA	No standard	NA	NA
Linear Parks/Trails #	NA / As identified		1000m	80%	WPS, PSPGs
Encumbered	NA		No standard	NA	NA
Landscape Amenity	NA / As identified		No standard	NA	NA

\* A 200m catchment for pocket park is only applicable in open centres and medium to high density residential areas.

\*\*Local active open spaces is not a park hierarchy Council supports, but will acquire through the PSP development.

# This standard also applies to trails/shared paths not in open space

WPS = Wyndham Planning Scheme  
PSPGs = Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines

The WOSS provides the following overview of where play spaces fit into the open space planning framework.

### Passive open space

Passive open spaces are for informal and unstructured recreation. There are also subtypes of passive open space. These are:

- Linear Park (may have a trail, "play opportunity", or multi-courts for informal sport use, skate and scooter facilities); 4
- Town Square (may include skate and scooter facilities and kick and throw activities and but not "play spaces" or multi-courts);
- Urban Park (may include skate and scooter facilities and kick and throw activities, and but not "play spaces" or multi-courts); and
- Nodes (include skate and scooter facilities, but not multi-courts for informal use, however, they may have a play opportunity)

“Passive” open spaces may have Pocket, Local, District, Municipal, or Regional catchments. “Passive” open spaces at a Local, District, Municipal, or Regional catchments, and greater than .5 ha in size may include a “play opportunity”.

“Passive Pocket Parks” may be provided in town centres and/or medium to high-density residential areas in Wyndham. “Passive Pocket Parks which are <0.5ha in size have limited support facilities and mostly do not have play spaces in them (except Nodes).”

Town Squares and Urban Parks are less than .5 ha in size. These may include skate and scooter facilities and kick and throw activities (Urban Parks only), but not multi-courts for informal use, or play opportunities. <sup>5</sup>

Nodes are for informal use. They are attached to encumbered land that is suitable for recreation. <sup>6</sup> These may have skate and scooter facilities, but not multi-courts for informal use. However, they may have a play opportunity. <sup>7</sup>

Linear Parks are open spaces “provided as part of the open space provision requirement of subdivision and may have a trail in them. They may also have “a play opportunity”, multi-courts for informal sport use, skate and scooter facilities.” <sup>8</sup>

Local parks in Wyndham are to be .5ha- 1ha, within 400m of 95% of all residents.

District parks are to be 1-2.5ha and be within 1000m walkable catchment of 95% of all residences.

These are for:

- Use over a moderate length of time;
- “Passive” recreation, suitable for suburb-level recreation/social activities;
- Provision of appropriate play settings;
- Basic support facilities (such as shelters, BBQ etc.); and
- Path/cycleway links. <sup>9</sup>

### **Active open space**

The WOSS identifies that “Active” open space is usually only provided to serve a District, Municipal, and Regional catchment. Local “Active” open space is not a park hierarchy Council supports, but will acquire through the Precinct Structure Plan developments. <sup>10</sup>

“Active” open space is open space that is intentionally set aside for formal outdoor sports. “Active” open space “may contain a playground”. <sup>11</sup>

### **Encumbered open spaces**

The WOSS identifies Encumbered open spaces are generally flood affected land adjacent to waterways or utility corridors. These may incorporate linear open spaces (pathways, cycle ways and trails) and may also have play spaces subject to appropriate siting considerations.

5. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 166.

6. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 168.

7. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 168.

8. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 168.

9. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 164

10. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Page 19.

11. Wyndham Open Space Strategy Appendix 3. Page 162



## Lifestyle influences on children – the importance of this strategy

Planning for play and open space provision is a complex task because planning processes provide constraints on the diversity of opportunities and availability of suitable land for play.

In future, the design of play spaces will have more of an impact on the wellbeing of generations of children than ever before. The reasons for this include increasing land values that means smaller private spaces, fewer trees, increasing uniformity of residential areas, and the limited resources other than the land development process to provide open space for play. Local government has a key role in representing the needs of future generations of children especially in the development approval process, as the design of open spaces in the subdivision process is heavily influenced by commercial decisions.

Many factors in contemporary society are contributing to drastic changes in children's play opportunities and behaviour, which are considered detrimental to their healthy development. Apart from the availability of space, the most significant changes are the adoption of sedentary, indoor lifestyles and the restriction of children's independent mobility around their neighbourhoods.

There are many well-documented benefits derived from children's outdoor play, their mastery of risky situations and challenges and children's exposure to the natural world. These include resilience, mental health, social and physical activity benefits.

Open space, woodlands, creeks and leftover spaces, trees, vegetation, structures, and found objects within the neighbourhood and backyards, as well as large crown allotments, once contributed to a rich tapestry of environments that children discovered for themselves. These comprised the settings for their play. Adults now typically take children to parks to play. Parents tend to be less involved in their children's play and have less of a role in coaching and teaching children skills and activities. Play has become a largely curated experience.

Many residential subdivisions and play spaces don't leave scope for future change, manipulation or interventions by children. They are relatively uniform and lack a diversity of elements that stimulate play.

Children growing up in urban areas have less access and attachment to nature and are therefore less likely to protect it. Access to nature has been associated in literature with the development of healthy immune systems and providing an essential source of inspiration, environmental education and creative play. Urban residential areas provide limited opportunities for children to interact with nature and there is a strong movement and policy platform to bring nature back to play spaces.



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# VISION AND GOALS

## Vision

Wyndham will provide a good distribution of diverse play opportunities that:

- Welcome and include people of all ages, genders, cultures, and abilities;
- Enhance child development and independent mobility;
- Create a connection with community and nature; and
- Are sustainable for Council to manage.

## Goals

This strategy identifies nine Goals, each with guiding principles:

- Goal 1. Provide more opportunities for children to play
- Goal 2. Provide a better understanding of the value of play and opportunities available
- Goal 3. Provide an equitable distribution of play space for everyone
- Goal 4. Enhance the quality and play value of local parks
- Goal 5. Provide inclusive play opportunities
- Goal 6. Provide a planned diversity of play opportunities, for an increasingly diverse population to enhance the range of experiences and child development
- Goal 7. Design better connectivity between play spaces and residential developments
- Goal 8. Establish more canopy trees and nature play elements
- Goal 9. Ensure sustainable infrastructure planning, development and renewal of play spaces

Guiding principles that support each goal are provided in the following chapter, along with key discussion points about the issues and recommendations.





# GOALS, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, ISSUES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Goals and Guiding Principles contained within this strategy have been developed following feedback from the initial stages of stakeholder and community consultation.

This section of the strategy applies the Goals and Guiding Principles and presents Issues and Recommended Actions to inform Council's approach to the development of Council's play spaces to 2030.





# GOAL 1: PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY

## Guiding Principles

1. Outdoor play is vital to the healthy development of all children.
2. All the community will benefit from well designed and equitably distributed play spaces that include people of all ages and abilities.
3. Very small parks and play spaces are not, on their own, adequate to meet the play needs of the community because they will not be able to serve residents of multiple ages and abilities and the different types of play needed for child development. Areas with play equipment need to be supplemented by other incidental or non-manicured areas or corridors of open space, that offer access to nature and loose materials. These additional spaces may need to be provided where they are not delivered in the subdivision process, or do not occur naturally.
4. Many of the play activities that are beneficial to children and adolescents are ideally creative, messy and noisy. To provide for these, larger spaces are desirable to minimise conflicts between activities or adjacent land use.
5. The minimum sized park with play elements in accordance with the WOSS is .5ha. Where possible, larger parks where play spaces will be provided, such as those between .75 ha and 1ha, should be sought to facilitate a greater diversity of play elements that include nature, kick and throw space and social sports, and so play can be supported by inclusive social and natural elements and suitable tree planting.
6. Fitness equipment does not need to be provided in conjunction with play spaces and should be accommodated in association with trails.
7. Not all parks can accommodate facilities for games and social sports because of size and potential conflicts between activities.
8. There are other land managers – especially state government agencies, who provide or can facilitate the provision for play. Wherever possible, Council will work closely with partners to deliver play opportunities to the community.

### **Open space for everyone to play and choice of more than one park**

There is limited open space provided in new residential developments to cater adequately for play, as well as sports, conservation, storm water management, utilities and a range of other functions that provide the benefits communities seek from open space. State government directives and processes have limited Council achieving local policy. Current residential areas have limited flexibility and capacity in open space to deliver a diversity of reasonable sized parks.

Private open space is reducing and public play spaces are becoming overly curated and less complex and available to children than ever before. Residents are now increasingly reliant on one play space they can reach on foot for all local play needs and social, physical and environmental opportunities.

### **Size and configuration of parks**

Where play spaces can be provided in larger parks, it is more likely that physical, social and environmental activities can be provided and people of all ages, abilities, genders, and cultural backgrounds can experience play and the outdoors. Large spaces mean play spaces are less likely to be uniform and can provide a diversity of opportunities.

Size affects the configuration of parks. The narrower the park, the less suitable it is for children's play. If there is a road close by, or if the park is small and not surrounded by roads, the greater the potential conflicts between play and neighbouring land use.

The smaller parks with play spaces are more likely to be single-purpose or age specific in their design and hence will be less inclusive.

Small spaces are less likely than larger ones to provide for social, physical, and environmental activities, accommodate canopy trees and open areas for kick and throw activities, provide for social sports or dog socialisation and exercise opportunities, or include a perimeter path circuit.

With additional smaller spaces, limited green space and fewer canopy trees possible, smaller public spaces will become more important for restorative values and planting, as well as potential for nature play. Play infrastructure may need to be located more strategically at larger sites such as in "Active" reserves and on the fringes of drainage corridors.

### **Play spaces, fitness equipment, and social games and sports**

The size of open spaces restricts opportunities to have all types of recreation equipment in all types of parks ("Active" and "Passive") and parks of all hierarchies (Local, District, and Regional).

Fitness equipment is not a priority to provide in conjunction with play spaces, especially local spaces. This is because the priority for play space is to meet children's and their carer's and family's needs. Few children use fitness equipment. Other vegetation, and natural and social elements will be more

important to include in a play space.

In line with other Council policies, fitness equipment is to be provided in conjunction with “Active” open space or with running circuits/off-road trail corridors.

Due to size, not all parks, and those with play spaces, can accommodate facilities for games and social sports. Guidelines about the size of spaces to include social games and sports will be provided in the Wyndham Landscape Development Levels of Service document, which is under development.

### **Partners in provision for play**

There are some other government authorities that can and do contribute significantly to the provision of play opportunities for Wyndham residents. In particular, these include: Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the Department of Education and Training. Further opportunities exist to jointly develop play spaces on public land.

### **Recommended Actions**

1. Consider working with other land owners to address gaps in provision.
2. Where possible, seek to provide play spaces in larger parks that can provide a diversity of play elements and cater for a wider range of users.
3. Consider fitness equipment as non-essential for inclusion in a play space. Consider including other vegetation and natural and social elements, in preference to fitness equipment in play spaces.
4. Work closely with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the Department of Education and Training to develop play opportunities in other government land to serve Wyndham residents.
5. Consider selective acquisition of land to: a) address gaps in the distribution of play spaces, and b) to enlarge or open up poorly configured parks that have play elements to enhance community surveillance and their useability and value to the whole community.
6. Consider requiring developers to provide communal open space (for play) in apartments (multi-storey medium and high-density housing) as required by the Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria, August 2017.







## GOAL 2: PROVIDE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLAY OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

### Guiding Principles

1. Residents' familiarity with neighbours and the immediate neighbourhood, especially play spaces, will enhance independent mobility and choice of play options and hence encourage more children to play.
2. Council's role in providing for play includes promoting the use and value of play and the location of play spaces.
3. As residential densities and population increases, so will the demands placed on public open space and potential conflicts in use. Information will be provided to park users about the responsible and respectful use of play spaces, including about dog use, for owners, and families not wanting to play near dogs.
4. Council will engage openly with residents about play, the value of nature and trees, the costs of play provision and any opportunities for involvement by residents in the development of local parks for play.

## Issues

Council has a role not only in providing, but also in promoting the use and value of play and play spaces. This is because without marketing or promotion, use of play spaces won't be maximised and families will not have knowledge of the available choices.

Some families need to plan a trip to the park well ahead of time because in order support a child or older person with a disability extra effort may be required to get to the park or to ensure that the space, equipment and suitable supports are available for all family members.

Potential users may wish to know more about the play spaces offered in Wyndham, for example: Which play spaces have accessible paths, shade, or are suitable for a grandparent to sit nearby? Which parks have suitable equipment? Which parks have water, sunny areas, large shady trees, sand play, or suit toddlers or older children? Which parks are fenced, or have a basketball court? More information online about all play spaces would be beneficial. Especially information about:

- Getting to the park;
- Access into the park;
- Access to social spaces and amenities and any specialised accessible elements;
- Play activities once you are there (participation opportunities); and
- Availability of fencing, any shelter and shade.

Park information and signage should be integrated with Council's way-finding and community engagement strategies.

In line with open space and child care policies, (Early Years Framework and National Law) and current early years programs, such as Bush Kindergartens, this strategy recommends more natural elements in public play spaces. In response to this direction, promotional information should encourage parents to let their children get dirty, dig, climb on logs, and use the loose material in parks. Information could answer common questions such as: "Are children allowed to pick the flowers or are children allowed to play here?"

There is value in more people being encouraged to connect with nature and be invited to use local parks, to meet neighbours and friends. Greater connection with parks will help encourage greater familiarity with the neighbourhood and children's independent mobility. Many people born overseas may benefit from information about the value of the natural environment and the Australian landscape, as well as the value of play and what they can do in local parks. More information for residents could include how to be involved in their local play spaces and how to provide feedback to Council about local spaces or their condition.

As residential densities and the population increases, more conflicts in public open space are likely to occur. For example, conflicts due to music, between children and dogs, play and social sport and between boisterous and quiet play. Therefore, it will become more important to provide information about the responsible and respectful use of parks, play spaces and trails and areas suitable and unsuitable for dogs.

## Recommended Actions

7. Consider investing in education about the value of play, nature play and trees, the promotion of local parks and what they offer. Better align resident's expectations with what Council can afford to provide in local parks for play.
8. Provide specific information about play spaces and play in a public place for new residents, especially people born overseas, families who have a child with a disability and for parent groups.
9. Consider inviting users to comment on and alert Council to damage and issues observed in play spaces.
10. Provide more detailed information about all play spaces in Wyndham on Council's website. Include in this, information about:
  - Accessible elements (especially parks with accessible paths and toilets and specialised items of equipment), play spaces with shelters, water and car parks and a large number of seats and tables suitable for parent's groups etc;
  - What is acceptable in a public place for children to do and why play is good for children;
  - How it is beneficial to play with the children you accompany to the park, and how this can be facilitated;
  - How to encourage children to interact with natural elements;
  - How to help care for your local park; and
  - Respectful use of parks (codes of conduct for activities such as dog exercise and trail use, turn taking on free access hard courts and sports practice facilities, etc.).



# GOAL 3: PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PLAY SPACES FOR EVERYONE

## Guiding Principles

1. The availability and accessibility of parks and play spaces within the residential neighbourhood have a substantial impact on patterns of use.
2. Parks and play spaces need to be in reasonable proximity to all residences to provide equitable access to play for all families and to encourage independent mobility.
3. Parks specifically designed for play will be distributed in accordance with the WOSS guidelines and the core service levels provided in this strategy.
4. Play spaces will encourage people of all ages and abilities to play.



### Distribution of play spaces and independent mobility

Parks need to be close by to where people live to ensure equitable access to play for all families, to encourage independent mobility, develop a perception of play spaces as meeting spaces for all the community and be welcoming and pleasant places for all age groups.

Local parks can play a significant role in encouraging people to meet others in the neighbourhood as well as enticing people to walk there. In turn, higher independent mobility will increase social connectedness and physical activity levels in the general population.

The WOSS outlines provision standards for parks with play spaces. See the open space planning framework that play spaces fit into. Refer to Table 3.2 in the WOSS.

Additionally the Wyndham Family Friendly City Charter (2018) under the Family Friendly Places & Spaces principle states that families in Wyndham should have equitable access to and experiences of well-designed and safe places and spaces that meet their needs.

### Gaps in the existing network of play spaces

The Council area has been divided into planning districts and each into sub-districts that reflect localised catchments around play spaces. These were mapped and opportunities to address any gaps identified. The following table provides a summary of gaps in the distribution of play spaces across Wyndham by planning district.

Point Cook	Point Cook sub-district 4: Provision gap in the north and south of Sanctuary Lakes. Look to place play spaces within Times Square & Oysterbay Chase Park.
Williams Landing	Williams Landing district 1: Provision gap to the north west. Play space development in Loon Drive Park . As the residential area develops to the south and northeast, additional play spaces will be required.
Hoppers Crossing	Hoppers Crossing sub-district 1: Has no play space in the northeast, however the development of Virgilia Reserve could serve play space needs in this area if the large residential lots are subdivided.  Hoppers Crossing sub-district 2: Investigate opportunities for a small scale /nature play area at Erskin Square Park.  Hoppers Crossing sub-district 3: Consider acquiring additional open space west of Morris Rd for a play space. If large housing blocks were to ever redevelop, look to plan no less than 2 additional play spaces.

Hoppers Crossing sub-district 5: Further embellish the waterway corridor and sports reserve to address the gap southwest of the schools.

Hoppers Crossing sub-district 6: Investigate the provision of an additional space east of Morris Rd and northwest of Maple Cres.

Werribee

Werribee sub-district 1: As the southwest is redeveloped to include residential uses, additional play provision may be required.

Werribee sub-district 2: Is under provided around Coventry Dr Reserve and in the southwest of the sub-catchment. Presidents and Coventry Drive Parks upgrades will address the northern gap. If racecourse were to be redeveloped, explore provision of additional play spaces.

Werribee sub-district 3: Investigate the provision of a new park/play space in the southwest corner. The area northwest of Heaths Road has no formal play spaces however, the lots are large and the River offers considerable open space opportunities. The Werribee Township Regional Park is planned adjacent this area. Redevelopment in this area will be dependant on the outcome of this regional park master plan.

Tarneit

Tarneit sub-district 3: Provision gap in the north. Embellish Willandra Drive Reserve for play opportunities.

Tarneit sub-district 4: Has a substantial area currently not provided with play opportunities. Parks are still being delivered by developers. Ensure play spaces are included in park designs.

Tarneit sub-district 5: New parks are being planned for in the west of this area.

Wyndham Vale/  
Manor Lakes

Wyndham Vale sub-district 1: There is a gap in provision in the northeast of the current residential area. This gap could be filled when the proposed future active park is developed. Alternatively, create a new local play space on between Compass Lane and Lady Penrhyn Drive.

Wyndham Vale sub-district 2: South of Manor Lakes Boulevard and west of Armstrong Rd lacks a play space. Ensure with new parks being developed that a play space is included.

Wyndham Vale sub-district 3C: Area west of the train line is within the Black Forest Road North Precinct Structure Plan and additional parks with play spaces are being developed.

Wyndham Vale sub-districts 4B and 4C: Two small housing areas due south of Presidents Park do not have a play space but there is a large amount of open space in the adjacent drainage reserve that should to be investigated to deliver a small play space.

Wyndham Vale sub-district 5: Part of Westbrook and Ballan Road Precinct Structure Plan areas. Ensure play spaces are strategically located to ensure the future community has adequate access to a play space.

Truganina

Truganina sub-district 2: area is under the Truganina South Precinct Structure Plan. New parks with play spaces are to be developed in the area.

Truganina sub-district 3: has a gap in the north western corner. Investigate a new play space located along the creek corridor.

### **Distribution of District Spaces**

The WOSS recommends a more equitable distribution of district-level open spaces and play spaces. The assessment of the quality and standard of existing play spaces against the proposed core service levels identified spaces that could be upgraded to a district level. These are outlined below, by planning district and sub-district.

### **Recommendations related to the upgrade of spaces to District Play Spaces**

Point Cook                      No additional District play spaces are required in Point Cook at this time.

Williams Landing/  
Laverton North                With the undertaking of the masterplanning of Lawrie Emmins Reserve, install a district level play space.

Hoppers Crossing              Hoppers Crossing sub-district 2: Upgrade Cambridge Reserve to district level.

Hoppers Crossing sub-district 4: Consider upgrading Fraser Park to district level. District play space is being installed with new works within Mossfiel Reserve.

Hoppers Crossing sub-district 5: Consider upgrading Woodville Park to district level.

	Hoppers Crossing sub-district 6: Consider upgrading Rosslare Cres. Reserve into a district play space.
Werribee	<p>Werribee sub-district 3: Upgrade Galvin Park to district level.</p> <p>Werribee sub-district 4: Consolidate play spaces within Heathdale Glen Orden Reserve and upgrade to district level. Conquest Drive Park could be upgraded to a district level play space if additional amenities and car parking are feasible.</p>
Tarneit	<p>Tarneit sub-district 2: Upgrade Goddard Street Reserve and Moondara Street Park to district level.</p> <p>Tarneit sub-district 3: Consider reclassifying Edmund Drive Park play space to district.</p> <p>Tarneit sub-district 5: lacks a suitable space for a District play space. Site 62A is the most suitable to serve this area at present. Area will include the future Werribee Township Regional Park.</p>
Wyndham Vale / Manor Lakes	<p>Wyndham Vale sub-district 2: Upgrade either Manor Lakes Boulevard Drainage Reserve or Spearmint Boulevard Park to district level.</p> <p>Wyndham Vale sub-district 5: District level parks will be delivered by developers within the Ballan Rd, Westbrook &amp; Quandong PSP areas.</p>
Werribee South	JD Bellin Reserve is classified as Regional due to its location and function. However, the play space is more appropriately classified as district. Upgrade the park (incl play space) to ensure park meets the district standards of service.
Little River	Upgrade Possy Newland Reserve to ensure it meets district standard.

### **Colocation of play areas with community facilities**

Most play spaces with a social focus are best located adjacent to other community hubs or community facilities in publicly visible sites, where people go to, or pass in their daily lives. It makes sense that play spaces are co-located adjacent to community and children's centres, schools, and sports facilities.

Planning should encourage developments of play spaces adjacent to or in conjunction with schools and where possible, provide community access to playing fields and sports courts. If social use by the community of school

sports courts is possible after hours, this can free up space for other types of play in adjacent play spaces. If such partnerships can be negotiated, Council play spaces could include more nature and vegetation elements. Play equipment areas however, need to be accessible for families with young children during the day.

## **Recommended Actions**

11. Seek to address the gaps in distribution identified in this strategy and work with developers and other land owners and management agencies to make play spaces more accessible for everyone.
12. Where possible, encourage shared use arrangements with schools to provide community access to sports fields and sports courts. Where this is possible, focus elements in any adjacent play space on a diversity of components other than courts.





# GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE QUALITY AND PLAY VALUE OF LOCAL PARKS

## Guiding Principles

1. Provision for play is much broader than the provision of play equipment and requires attention to the design and planting of the whole of parks, especially local parks.
2. Adults need to be attracted to open space for children to be taken outside to play. Hence the design of play spaces should provide a level of amenity and design that encourages adults to use these spaces and support children in their play.
3. Quality means fit-for-purpose. To be fit-for-purpose play spaces will include:
  - Opportunities for social interaction, and inclusion of children with a disability;
  - Options for physical activity, climbing, risk-taking, swinging and either rotating or rocking;
  - Elements that promote creative/sensory play, imagination, fantasy and/or role play;
  - Areas with natural elements and loose materials;
  - Path access;
  - Features which assist interaction and active engagement by people of all ages;
  - Canopy trees; and
  - Play elements that are integrated into the whole park design.
4. All play spaces must have play elements other than play equipment.
5. Fencing will be provided in all play spaces designated as all-abilities play spaces. Investigate providing one fenced play space per planning district. Partial fencing of a play space may be required for safety, eg adjacent water body or major road.
6. Play spaces will include shade. A combination of permanent shade from shelters and canopy trees is the preferred way of providing shade.

### **Play value and types of play**

For healthy brain development, children need environments that can enable them to experience different things, challenge and motivate themselves to learn and develop specific competencies.

The design and the placement of different play elements in public spaces can facilitate different types of play and therefore increase the development potential of children. Public play spaces should include creative/cognitive and sensory play, social and co-operative play, physical play elements including swinging and rotating items, imaginative play and environmental play opportunities. See Appendix 3.

### **Design for open-ended play**

Many local parks designed by developers have a focus on aesthetic qualities, equipment and social infrastructure. A challenge for the future is to introduce more loose materials and natural elements into these ornamental or highly manicured sites. This will allow more manipulation by children, contact with nature and creative play, exploration and physical activity.

In older areas, many play spaces have less manicured or elaborate infrastructure and hence these may provide more opportunities for children to interact with natural elements. However, these older sites typically have few embellishments other than play equipment.

Significant benefits could accrue if play spaces in Wyndham had a mix of social, physical and environmental play elements. These should be consciously designed to promote play value and respond to the context of local children's home environments. Smaller more local areas that focus on nature play can supplement the more developed larger sites.

### **Provision of risk and challenge in play spaces**

Children and young people need to experience risk and challenge in their play (without being exposed to danger). Danger is where the risk cannot be overcome by learning through experimentation, because it is beyond the physical and perceptual abilities of the child. Traffic or deep water, for example, are dangers to young children.

Eliminating all forms of risk in a play space is unrealistic and counter-productive and may result in children being unable to recognise or deal with serious dangers when they do arise. It is preferable that children have opportunities to learn to take graduated risks in play settings where the result of failure is not life-threatening or serious injury.

The benefits of providing challenge and learning must be considered when assessing the risks in a play space.

Play spaces should be designed to:

- Offer children the chance to acquire skills at their own pace;
- Allow children to opt in or out of a challenge by choice;
- Provide support in learning new skills - to climb for example, to develop self-confidence and autonomy, balance, co-ordination and strength, decision-making, and persistence;
- Enable children to get down unaided, once they have climbed an item of some height;
- Test children's skills and judgment; and
- Encourage children to interact with natural elements. Design and marketing of these elements may be required to invite children and their parents to play, because they may not be familiar with nature play elements, or nature based opportunities may not be identifiable as for play.

### **Fencing of play spaces**

Fencing contributes to the range of features that some families seek in a play space. Some families may seek fenced play spaces if they have a toddler, a large number of children, a child with a hearing impairment or on the autism spectrum.

Fencing may be required to protect children from a hazard such as a water body, wetland, or busy road and to keep dogs out of a play space.

Internal fences or barriers may also be required to prevent children running in front of heavy equipment, such as a swing.

Not all play spaces should be fenced, or are suitable to fence. A selection of carefully chosen sites with play spaces may be fenced and these areas should be well promoted.

The design and careful positioning of any fence is vital.

Appendix 3 provides further guidance about fencing.

### **Obtaining better shade in play space design**

The lack of shade in play spaces is a major concern in Wyndham and it affects the use of parks.

A combination of shade from shelters, shade sails and canopy trees is the preferred way of providing shade.

Some sites have very large, elaborate and over-designed shelters designed for landmarks and signature features. However, some of these elaborate shelters are located well away from play spaces and don't provide effective shade or cover for seating and tables.

## Recommended Actions

13. Ensure play spaces are fit-for-purpose by providing:
  - Opportunities for social interaction and the inclusion of children with a disability;
  - Options for physical activity, climbing, risk taking, swinging and either rotating or rocking;
  - Elements that encourage creative/sensory play;
  - Elements that encourage imagination, fantasy and or role play;
  - Areas with natural elements and loose materials;
  - Path access;
  - Features which encourage interaction and active engagement by people of all ages;
  - Canopy trees; and
  - Play elements that are integrated into the whole park design.
14. Investigate play spaces across Wyndham that are suitable to fence, and where possible provide one fenced play space per planning district.
15. In any site to be fenced ensure fencing does not: alienate landscape elements from other play elements, tightly enclose equipment or obstruct views into the park. Where possible utilise other natural barriers to perform the role of a fence.
16. Inform residents about where fenced play spaces are, so people who need them can easily find these.
17. Consider integrating playful, sensory and landscape elements into fencing.
18. If play equipment items require internal fencing, ensure design and signage is welcoming and siting does not alienate or exclude people or impede social interaction, while the equipment is in use.
19. Plant additional canopy trees in play spaces across Wyndham for shade.
20. Utilise a combination of trees and well-designed permanent shelters / sails for shade.
21. Where a shelter or shade sail is proposed in a play space, the design should:
  - Be wheelchair accessible;
  - Provide shade where it will be useful for seating and social gatherings;
  - Be central to, or close to the core play elements;
  - Allows for winter sun and provides summer shade; and
  - Allow for good sight lines into the shelter.





# GOAL 5: PROVIDE INCLUSIVE PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

## Guiding Principles

1. All play spaces must welcome and include people of all abilities, ages, genders and cultural backgrounds.
2. All play spaces will provide a social space for people using a mobility device, so they may interact with friends and family.
3. Universal design principles will be applied to the planning and design of all play spaces and associated infrastructure.
4. The higher the catchment hierarchy of the park, the more accessible and inclusive the park and play space will be.
5. Tables will be provided in play spaces to facilitate more social interaction than one seat, enable play to be extended by other activities, encourage other companions or family members to be outdoors and allow them to feel comfortable and included.

### **Access and inclusion in play**

All children need to play and benefit from the enjoyment and experiences play brings. Children with a disability may need more supportive spaces to enable them to access play opportunities and be included in friend's and family's play.

A greater consciousness about universal design and spatial arrangements can encourage children with low vision or those using a wheelchair, to play. Children on the autism spectrum may benefit from challenging interactive play away from highly social spaces and a contained space for parents if children seek to abscond.

The priority is for all children to be able to get to the social spaces in a local play space that encourages interaction with other children, carers and family members and friends.

Attention to detail in the design and siting of equipment, paths and associated play elements can significantly enhance the opportunities for a child with a disability. Specialised equipment is not essential for children with a disability to play.

More tables could be incorporated into play spaces. Tables can facilitate more social interaction than one seat and allow people to sit facing each other in conversation. Tables enable play to be extended by other activities, to be easily supplemented with food and drink and for other companions to feel included. Tables may make a space more inviting or comfortable for an older adult. They can invite older children or siblings outdoors, even if they are not engaged in active play.

The degree of accessibility should reflect the play space's hierarchy. Specialised pieces of equipment for people with a disability are not needed even in district spaces. In fact, many of these specialised items are not inclusive.

The higher the catchment hierarchy of the play space, the more elements should be made accessible to people with a disability and those using a mobility device and the more specific requirements and supports are appropriate.

Wyndham currently has no all-abilities play space. Council should investigate the provision of dedicated regional/municipal all-abilities play spaces. A preliminary site analysis has been undertaken which includes an assessment of multiple locations, it is located in the appendix of the 'Analysis of Play Spaces by Planning District' report.

### **Paths as a design and inclusive element**

Paths are central to making play spaces accessible to everyone.

Paths can encourage additional use of a park and hence create passive surveillance.

Paths can encourage walkers through parks. Paths can draw people to areas

that provide restorative values, or views of wildlife, across the city or of other people or interesting landscape elements.

A path network should connect with furniture and any footpath in adjacent streets.

Where parks with play spaces are large (over one hectare in size) consider providing an exercise circuit (for running, etc.) around the perimeter of the park to encourage physical activity and allow children to learn to ride a bike. These exercise circuits should be distinguishable from other paths and have minimal crossing points.

Adults using wheelchairs and mobility devices should be able to access facilities such as BBQs and picnic areas, and these should be provided directly off a path.

Paths can be used in small spaces as long as they:

- Are designed as a play element
- Are embellished to indicate playfulness or cues to play and use different textures or gradients
- Don't unnecessarily alienate parts of the park that are left without activity
- Have a surface that can be used by everyone, i.e. not with large particles, slippery, or boggy

To be attractive to people of all ages and abilities, play spaces should provide internal paths as well as paths connecting them to other community facilities and residential areas.

### **Designing for multiple age groups**

The design of parks should seek to include play elements and something for all age groups to do. For example, things for early, middle and senior school children, as well as young adults, carers, and older adults.

Some areas have a good range of play spaces with associated hard courts or sports practice areas that enable activities for small-wheeled toys, scooters and ball games for teenagers and older residents. Only 12% of equipment areas inspected had play elements suitable for a full spectrum of children (under 4 years of age and over 12 years).

Play spaces need to cater to carers or older people, grandparents provide the most common form of childcare in Australia today.

Some additional design features and considerations will be required if the widest possible range of age groups are to be included in a play space. Additional separation between activities may also be required, to minimise conflict between people of different ages. These considerations are outlined in Appendix 3.



## Recommended Actions

22. As a priority, seek to enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness of local parks on which many families depend for their everyday play needs.
23. Design all play spaces, paths and support facilities utilising the principles of universal design.
24. Design all play spaces with a central accessible and social heart that encourages social interaction between people using different parts of the space, and accommodates a person with a disability. This space should be attractive for gathering, with seats and tables to facilitate interaction with others involved in a range of other play elements and connect other elements of the park and the street via an accessible path.
25. Include BBQs and picnic areas in District play spaces that are accessible to people using wheelchairs and mobility devices.
26. In district and regional play spaces:
  - Include way-finding that helps people with low vision move around parks and use equipment safely; and
  - Provide parking for small buses and accessible vans, accessible toilets and include people with a wide range of needs in regional play spaces.
27. Fence a selection of parks with play spaces to assist carers of people on the autism spectrum. (Refer to action #14)
28. Provide more detailed park information online that identifies which parks have accessible features.
29. Consider retrofitting existing regional and district level play spaces that are not inclusive to match the access requirements for this level of park.
30. Encourage intergenerational play and promote opportunities for parents and carers to play with children.
31. Provide opportunities to encourage older children to use play spaces.
32. Consider the needs of older adults in the design of play spaces to be able to include the whole family, as well as support older people, and carers.
33. Provide annual training opportunities for staff and Council contractors about play, social inclusion and designing for accessibility.
34. Ensure the surfaces of paths are stable, primary paths in parks are to be concrete and secondary paths may use compacted materials to enable safe walking and wheeling.



# GOAL 6: Provide a planned diversity of play opportunities, for an increasingly diverse population to enhance the range of experiences and child development

## Guiding Principles

1. Play spaces should include elements that provide for a balance of social, physical, and environmental activities.
2. The quality of open space needs to be rich and varied to provide the diverse settings for play that are required for healthy human development.

Therefore, it is desirable that:

- Parks of the same classification should not all be the same, especially when they are in the same district;
  - A diversity of different types of play spaces should be available across each planning district and these should be located in parks with different functions (“Active” and “Passive”); and
  - Where there are multiple play spaces in the same planning district, they should be located in parks with different landscape settings: i.e. open grass areas, bushland/forest, cultivated garden, hard surfaces/plaza, waterway and beach foreshore’s, etc.
3. The design of play spaces should integrate more open-ended play elements (such as landscape/vegetation and other natural elements that provide higher play value) in a cost-effective way.

### A diversity of play elements

Provision for play is much broader than play equipment alone, and the principal focus of Council's play provision strategy should be the design of the whole of a park to facilitate play.

The size of reserves tends to dictate the quality of experiences and diversity of opportunities available. Very small parks are therefore not, on their own, adequate to meet the demands of the community and facilitate child development.

To provide a balance of play opportunities all play spaces should encourage:

- Social interaction;
- Movement, physical activity, and risk taking;
- Creative/sensory play;
- Imagination/fantasy/role play; and
- Areas with natural elements and loose materials.

Many older parks have a limited play offer, other than play equipment. Many newer parks have a high focus on built form but may have a limited diversity of experiences and play value.

### The need for choice

A family should be able to choose a play space in their area that is shady and green or open and sunny, a paved landscape setting conducive to wheeled toys and skateable elements or one with predominantly natural elements. In all cases, the function of the space is the same, but the diversity of opportunities and experiences is created by design and a different landscape setting type.

A diversity of opportunities available in play spaces will also mean that more people of different ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and interests are likely to find spaces that they enjoy seeing and using.

A diversity of landscape elements in a space generally means a higher aesthetic and play value, and the ability of the space to offer restorative qualities to those who can see and enjoy it.

A diversity of environmental stimuli in open space will promote interaction with, psychological interest in, and attachment to a resident's surroundings.

Some play equipment provides such a narrow set of opportunities and sustains very short duration of play activity that it is quite possible that many users will obtain limited value from it at all. A path circuit, open space area of grass for kick to kick, things to climb or use as props for games, seats and tables, and vegetation as design elements, loose materials and areas of paving for ball play, skating/scooting or courts, can extend play and the range of people attracted to a space.

The relationship between play elements within a design that can create strong connections between particular spaces will provide better play value.

A key strategy to enhance diversity in play spaces is to add nature elements to existing parks and play spaces. See Goal 8: Establish more canopy trees and nature play elements

It is also desirable that:

- A minimum range of physical, social and environmental opportunities are required in each space;
- Parks of the same classification should have variation in design; and
- A diversity of different types of play spaces should be available across each planning district – in terms of facilities and landscape settings.

## Recommended Actions

35. Ensure all play spaces provide for choice, different types of play experiences, and physical, social and environmental activities (See recommendations of Goal 4.)
36. Seek to increase the diversity of play elements in all parks – including plant material, natural elements and loose materials - which children can use as play props.
37. Ensure an appropriately qualified designer experienced in early childhood development is used to design play spaces – especially in the play space renewal process, so that play equipment areas are not replaced “like with like”.
38. Ensure that a diversity of opportunities and play elements are provided in each play space and across the open space network, so that more people of different ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds and interests are likely to find spaces for play that they enjoy seeing and using.
39. Incrementally retrofit existing play spaces by adding environmental and nature play elements, path access and circuits, loose materials, canopy trees and tables and sitting areas, to equipment areas.
40. If a site is fenced, ensure a diversity of play elements - not just equipment - is provided inside that fence, including furniture.
41. Rather than focusing on play equipment early in a park’s development, the priority should be well-sited parks with a good framework of suitable canopy trees, vegetation, a path system and getting the design of the whole park right (so it is attractive, welcoming, and offers variety). Equipment could be then added as a secondary stage.
42. Investigate partnering with Parks Victoria to develop a regional nature play space at the Point Cook Coastal Park.
43. Consider the implications of introducing nature play elements on the management of play spaces; the acquisition of skills in relation to design, and training for Council staff who make input into play space planning, design and management.



44. Seek to provide play spaces with different landscape setting and character types, across each precinct and Wyndham as a whole.
45. Ensure that any new play space complements the nature and landscape setting of any existing park / play space nearby, rather than duplicates it.



Bushlark  
Crescent Park

# GOAL 7: Design better connectivity between play spaces and residential developments

## Guiding Principles

1. Play spaces should be located in public open space that is identifiable as public and separated from private or communal space by a roadway or transitional space.
2. When locating public play spaces, the availability of play elements in gated residential communities and communal open spaces, as well as other public sites will be assessed.
3. Sufficient buffers will be provided between play spaces and multi-storey dwellings to protect play and landscape amenity and minimise overshadowing, and conflict between users and adjacent residents.
4. Some consideration may need to be given to the provision of public play opportunities in park types other than those identified in the WOSS, if play opportunities are not provided in communal open space in mixed-use and high-density residential development, or if they can't be provided in adjacent Nodes.

### **Increasing density affects available private space**

With increasing residential densities there will be smaller and fewer private yards and more apartment style living for families: This will limit:

- “Door-stop play”, opportunities for children’s games, to play with a dog/keep pets, to make things outside, to grow things, dig in dirt, etc.;
- The amount of incidental open space for play; and
- The quality of open space in multi-storey dwellings, due to lack of deep soil, car park structures underneath, limited solar access, noise and more prevalent wind

### **Location of medium density housing abutting parks**

It is common practice to locate areas of medium and high-density housing abutting parks. This proximity may exacerbate conflict between adjacent residents and children playing due to noise, or occupation by immediate residents, that may discourage other public use.

Close proximity of parks for play and multi storey dwellings may also provide overshadowing and wind tunneling.

Sufficient buffers are required between play spaces and multi storey dwellings to protect play, minimise conflict between users, and protect landscape amenity.

In some higher density or mixed areas, Council may wish to consider providing play elements or encouraging others to provide these as pop up spaces and landscape features that also facilitate play.

### **Position, permeability, and prominence of play spaces**

Many communities are not able to obtain the best value from existing local play spaces for the following reasons:

- An impermeable street layout makes journeys on foot much longer than necessary; and
- Spaces that are too closely associated with a few nearby houses (the ‘dress circle’) intimidate users from outside, and discourage playful activity.

Grid-like street patterns tend to facilitate easy legible access for walking in circuit routes and provide more direct access to community facilities and parks. Grid-like street patterns also provide for better configured parks in more prominent locations, that have improved passive surveillance. Small walkways required to facilitate way-finding for pedestrians are limited in grid like street patterns.

In some suburbs, especially older suburbs, parks with play spaces may be “battle-axe” blocks with narrow entries, surrounded by the backs of houses. These offer poor or no public surveillance and low prominence. This is a bigger problem where the park is the only one available for play (i.e. where there is a high level of dependency on that park). Park locations behind housing with very narrow street frontage are not good locations for play spaces.

The street patterns in several areas in Point Cook and Wyndham Vale make access to local play spaces challenging.

## **Recommended Actions**

46. Seek to deliver parks for play that have dwellings overlooking the park from across a road on at least three sides and limit the area where parks with play spaces adjoin private property.
47. Continue to scrutinise development applications to encourage street layouts that are permeable to facilitate walkability and independent mobility and create better access to play spaces.
48. Where play spaces are located in non-permeable subdivisions and have narrow entries, Council could:
  - Consider purchasing a property at the entry to the open space to open the play park up to the street;
  - Emphasise the presence of a play space or park;
  - Provide a formed wheelchair accessible path into the space from the street; and
  - Resite play equipment in view of the street entry, to draw people in.
49. Seek to provide alternative spaces or elements that encourage play in higher density developments. This may include, for example: pop up play spots, children's gardens, play sculptures or play elements in pocket parks and plazas.
50. Ensure that the design of local open spaces responds to the density of development. Seek to compensate for elements missing in that location (i.e. canopy trees and loose materials).
51. Ensure play spaces in medium density dwellings are outdoor and have adequate access to sunlight, canopy trees and natural features.
52. Consider introducing some additional planning guidelines for open space in higher densities to complement guidance in the WOSS. These should promote the provision of quality play environments, address likely capacity of the site, and minimise potential conflicts between activities and people of different age groups.
53. Where parks for play abut multistorey housing development:
  - Ensure there is adequate transitional space such as a road between the public and private dwelling to prevent overshadowing and occupation by adjacent residents;
  - Provide an adequate buffer to minimise the impact of noise for park users and stray balls; and
  - Ensure a clear delineation between public and private land.





# GOAL 8: ESTABLISH MORE CANOPY TREES AND NATURE PLAY ELEMENTS

## Guiding Principles

1. Access to open-ended and natural settings is critically important to children.
2. Canopy trees enhance play value and visual/user amenity.
3. Trees and nature play can significantly improve the diversity and quality of experiences in existing play equipment areas.
4. Trees selected specifically for play purposes need to be explicitly identified on plans, and the design rationale explained (such as for amenity, shade and as a source of play materials), so that an appropriate maintenance regime and other safety considerations can be planned.
5. For young children especially, natural elements encourage experimentation and provide a source of inspiration, diversity, loose parts, collectables and many sensory experiences. Exposure to nature is also fundamental to children understanding and protecting the natural world.
6. Tree planting and natural elements will be provided in association with all play equipment areas and are a higher priority to provide in play spaces than play equipment. In future, some nature play spaces will be provided.

### Need for greater tree canopy

Public parks comprise the main opportunity to grow large canopy trees in newer and higher density suburbs.

Large shady trees are a feature consistently sought after by park and play space users.

Some newer parks do have understorey and complex vegetation that offers play value as well as environmental benefits and amenity. However, many parks rely entirely on play equipment to provide play experiences. Use of more open-ended elements such as landscape/vegetation and other natural elements could expand the value of play equipment areas, in a cost-effective way.

There is a need to increase the proportion of park area under tree canopy and ensure the survival of trees. Much of Wyndham has heavy basalt clay soils, which can be a challenging environment to establish vegetation and enable it to thrive.

Additional tree canopy in play spaces can increase:

- Shade and useability of the space in summer and reduce the need for water;
- Play stimuli and provide a source of loose materials and props for games;
- Visual, landscape and user amenity- especially for older people;
- Restorative values and a sense of well being;
- Habitat and environmental integrity;
- Landscape character; and
- The potential for children to explore the landscape and connect with nature through play.

Additional tree planting in parks needs to be balanced against provision of open areas for games and ball sports.

Not all cultures share the same sense of the value of trees - especially Australian native trees. Hence education may be required (as in other Victorian municipalities) to ensure the value of trees is understood, they are protected and the presence of trees does not dissuade use of public space by some populations.

Trees selected specifically for play purposes need to be explicitly identified on plans, and the design rationale should be explained in the site management plan (such as for climbing, amenity, shade, and source of play materials) so that an appropriate maintenance regime and other safety considerations can be planned.

Council's *City Forest and Habitat Strategy 2017* includes tree canopy cover targets and strategies to encourage nature in the urban area through BOBITS (bits of bush in the suburbs) that can act as wild play space and habitat havens.

See also design considerations in Appendix 3.

## Nature play

Natural elements including flowering plants, other vegetation and plant materials; sand, boulders, logs, rocks, branches and soil, provide considerable interest and play value to children. For young children especially, nature encourages experimentation and provides a source of inspiration, it provides diversity, loose parts, collectibles, and many sensory experiences. Exposure to nature is also fundamental to children understanding and protecting the natural world. All children should experience direct, intimate knowledge of natural elements.

Nature play means designing and placing natural elements in such a way so as to enhance play value in an urban environment. By adding natural elements these types of spaces enable better value to be derived from existing play equipment areas, as the loose materials can be used by children in conjunction with play shops and cubbies for example.

Provision for nature play should be a key objective of design and play space upgrades initially to extend the range of play opportunities currently available. However specialised design and maintenance advice will be required by Council to deliver nature play well, in the first instance.

Wyndham Council has some significant natural landscape in land managed by others, for example Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water, along rivers and the coast, and access to these for nature play should be encouraged. Council could partner with Parks Victoria, for example and develop a regional nature play space at the Point Cook Coastal Park.

### Recommended Actions

54. Place a higher priority on tree planting in parks with play spaces, than on play equipment or other design elements.
55. Select specimen trees for their character and play value and to create diversity and character across play spaces.
56. Explicitly identify trees selected specifically for play purposes and explain the rationale for these in site management plans, so that an appropriate maintenance regime and other safety considerations can be planned.
57. Prior to construction, ensure planting plans for play spaces provided by developers, are signed off by Council.
58. Ensure strategies for soil remediation and improvement conducive to tree health are implemented prior to the construction of play spaces.
59. Develop a suitable tree planting palette for new play spaces - in line with play value, risk management (re. limb and nut shedding), shade, local soil and microclimate and ability to withstand inadvertent damage during play.
60. Consider introducing longer maintenance periods to provide higher rates of survival for trees and plants.

61. Use vegetation as a key design element in more play spaces, and ensure a good distribution of areas for nature play across each locality.
62. Prioritise additional canopy trees as the play elements to be developed first in play spaces, then provide pockets of shade around social areas and boundary planting. Protect locations for kick and throw activities in parks (where there are large open areas).





# GOAL 9: ENSURE SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL OF PLAY SPACES

## Guiding Principles

1. Not all public open space will have play spaces.
2. Proposed play space provision will consider the availability of existing play spaces and their catchment hierarchy, to ensure the quantity and quality of infrastructure in each planning district, is sustainable in the long term.
3. The catchment hierarchy of a play space will not exceed that of the open space containing them.
4. Renewal processes for park assets provided for play will not focus on replacing “like with like” but on assessing the opportunities for enhancing play value and creating a diversity of experiences.
5. Developers will be required to provide a detailed maintenance schedule and costing for any play space embellishment over and above Council’s core service levels, or where parks are to be developed to a higher catchment hierarchy than specified by the WOSS.
6. Council may request contributions from a developer to cover the cost of this “uplift” in service.
7. Council will communicate with residents about the costs of play space provision and asset management.

### Key funding issues

There are several key issues related to the ongoing funding of play spaces in Wyndham. These are:

- Available funds to maintain play elements are derived from the rate base serving each play space. Some spaces are being developed over and above the level intended or sustainable, creating inequities and a mismatch between the rate base and costs to maintain these spaces across planning districts;
- Some play assets are not lasting their anticipated asset life and therefore there is a need to replace them before planned renewal;
- There are increasing expectations regarding the quality of play spaces required to service a growing population and a need to increase play value. This will require additional funds to what have been previously provided;
- When play spaces are renewed they need to be redesigned, not replaced “like with like”. As many older spaces had limited play value and served different densities and numbers of residents the cost of renewal is likely to be initially more than budgeted for; and
- As more children are likely to live in mixed use and other higher density area in future, play spaces may need to be provided in areas not previously planned.

### Costing of purpose designed play works

Desirable upgrades for play spaces are recommended in the separate volume to this strategy. Notional costs of improvements are included in the Implementation Plan, along with priorities. These works are classified based on order of costs and how these upgrades would be progressed.

When play assets require renewal, it will be important to reassess the provision and design of these to respond to changing demand, rather than replace “like with like”.

### Play spaces in different types of parks

It is likely that there will be an increasing number of dependent children living in medium and high-density housing or mixed-use areas in future years. Families in these areas may need play spaces more than those in other areas.

Therefore, it may be desirable for open spaces in medium and high-density and mixed use areas or Urban Parks and Town Squares to include an “appropriate play setting” where play is not provided in private or communal open space.

In future, it is desirable that sports reserves include a play space as hubs for social and physical activity, to support families spectating at sports activities, and (where space allows) compensate for local parks that may not be able to include purpose-designed play elements. Colocating play spaces adjacent to schools and on sports reserves will minimise the duplication of facilities.

Locating play spaces in sports reserves can increase walkability to play opportunities and provide greater diversity in offer. It will also allow some very small parks to be focused on more environmental experiences and focus infrastructure in other areas.

### **Embellishment of parks over and above that appropriate to their hierarchy**

Many parks are over-embellished in the subdivision process to sell properties. Some oversized play equipment areas are located in local parks (that are without car parking, toilets and other services) and that would be typically provided at District parks.

Servicing requirements are much higher in parks where the play spaces are attractive to a wider catchment, including visitors. More rubbish and wear and tear is generated in these sites than what the current service level can address.

Over-servicing affects the equity of provision – as some areas have more complex and expensive infrastructure (such as water play facilities) than others. Council will not be able to easily service these in future when it takes these assets over - especially water play features.

Also, these over-developed spaces often lack flexibility to change and the ability to expand because of the large-scale facilities in them.

Major shelters may not be very functional and large ornamental garden beds may not be able to be maintained to the level originally provided. Over development and over-design may impact on play value and accessibility and may limit children's access to loose materials, for example.

Examples of core services that will need to be agreed are provided in Appendix 2.

### **Addressing the gap between maintenance schedules and availability of funds**

There are several ways of reducing Council's recurrent costs associated with play spaces. These include, for example, reducing the regularity of maintenance, extending the period before renewal, or reducing the distribution of spaces. Most of these will reduce play opportunities and the quality of service and therefore are not supported.

Council could limit its maintenance expenditure on play spaces by further strategic planning measures, including:

- Limiting the level of development of infrastructure in the first instance;
- Ensuring the hierarchy of infrastructure is consistent with the planned hierarchy of the park;
- Ensure that all play infrastructure meets core service levels for consistency;
- Encourage colocation with sports infrastructure or schools for example;

- Strategically replace some lower order play facilities with more nature based play spaces; and
- Require a developer to fund the gap between what is desirable and what is sustainable for Council.

Where there may be gaps between what a developer wishes to provide and core service levels, negotiation with the developer will be needed to ensure Council isn't required to pay this gap.

Council will also need to ensure developer's designs and maintenance schedules for park and play infrastructure meets quality, accessibility, safety and construction standards and the agreed asset's life, prior to construction, so Council does not need to upgrade facilities to meet code compliance on hand over, or replace an asset prior to its anticipated design life.

Developers will need to provide a detailed maintenance schedule and costings for any over-embellishment beyond Council's core service levels, or where a park is developed to a higher standard than the agreed open space catchment hierarchy. In some cases, over embellishment may result in increased maintenance periods for the entire park.

### **Water play**

Water features are typically very popular. Water is a highly changeable and sensory medium and a construction agent for children, it can be aesthetically appealing, attract wildlife, and be cooling in summer. However, water features are very expensive to provide, operate and maintain and can present a major danger if they are not zero-depth.

Water play spaces may be one or more simple items in a play space or they may be major water play areas in parks such as at Riverwalk and Salt Water Coast, or water-only components provided in association with an aquatic centre. Council has several water play spaces designed and constructed by a developer.

Any substantial water play facilities should be provided in regional parks. Anything other than small water play components are not likely to be affordable or sustainable to provide, other than in association with an aquatic centre.

## **Recommended Actions**

63. Provide play spaces in district "Active" reserves, to support these as cost effective hubs for social and physical activity and to support families spectating at sports activities. Allow some local "Passive" parks, to include more environmentally based or "wild" play settings close to home.
64. Ensure developers provide play elements and support facilities in accordance with core service levels included in this strategy, the hierarchy of the open space and the standard which Council can afford to maintain.



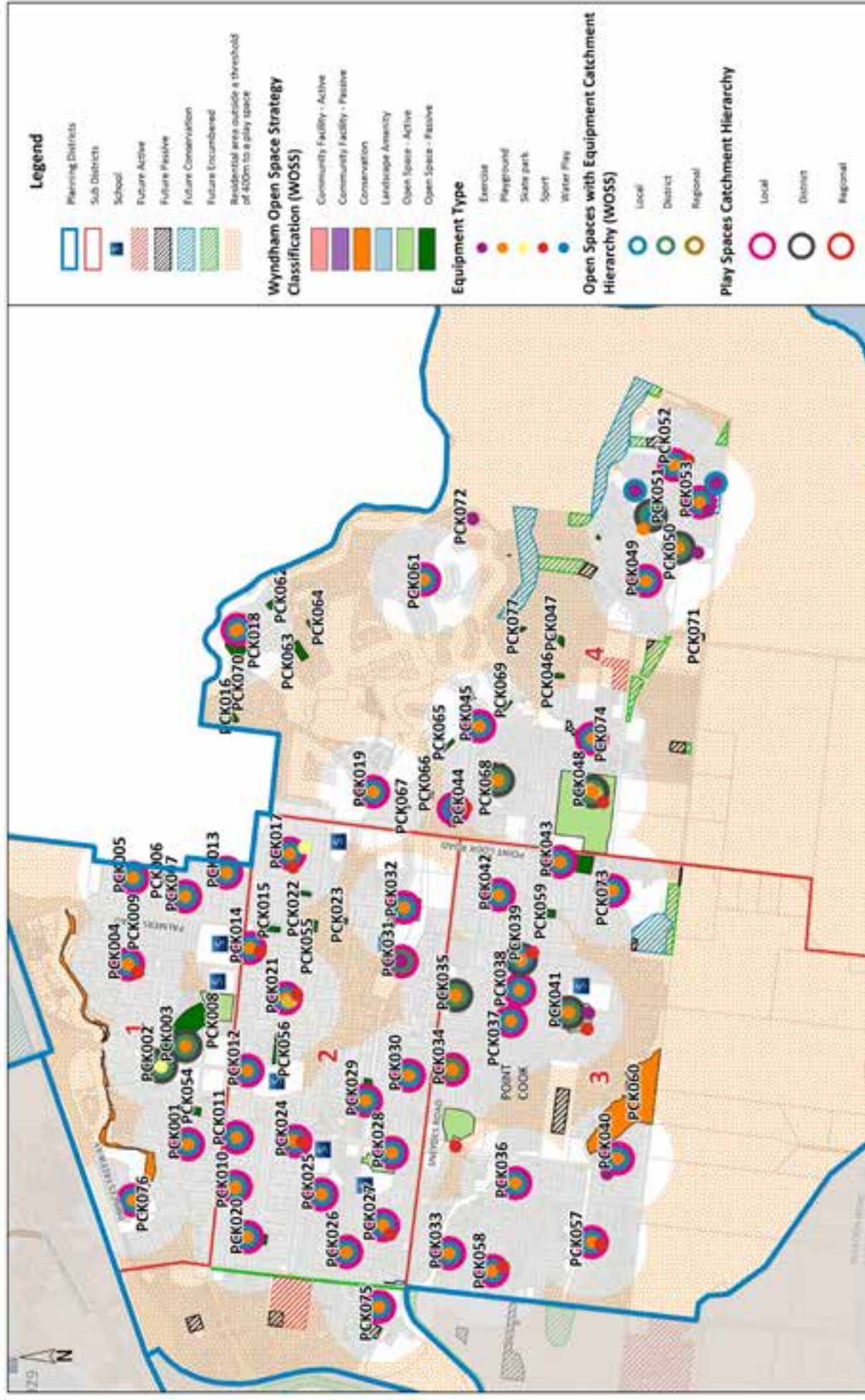
65. Require developers to provide a detailed maintenance schedule and costings for proposed play spaces embellished beyond Council's core service levels, and for those with a higher than agreed open space catchment hierarchy. Request a contribution from developers to cover the cost of this uplift in service and or implement an increased maintenance period.
66. Consider providing play elements in "Pocket" level open spaces in medium- and high-density and mixed-use areas, other than skateable elements (if and when required).
67. It is not a priority to provide water play in parks in the short term.
68. Seek additional funds from external sources for the development of play spaces.
69. Undertake further assessment of costs, for example to maintain nature play elements, and consider focusing some upgrades on nature play elements that will have a longer asset life and may require less renewal and maintenance costs.
70. Include in costings of play spaces, the costs of management and depreciation of trees and other natural elements.
71. Through the planning and approvals process ensure that:
  - Developer play spaces include play elements and infrastructure that is appropriate to Wyndham and can be cost effectively maintained;
  - The scale of new developments is what Council can afford to maintain in the long term, or that additional compensation or maintenance terms are negotiated to offset ongoing costs; and
  - The quality or distribution of local open spaces is not sacrificed to reduce recurrent costs.





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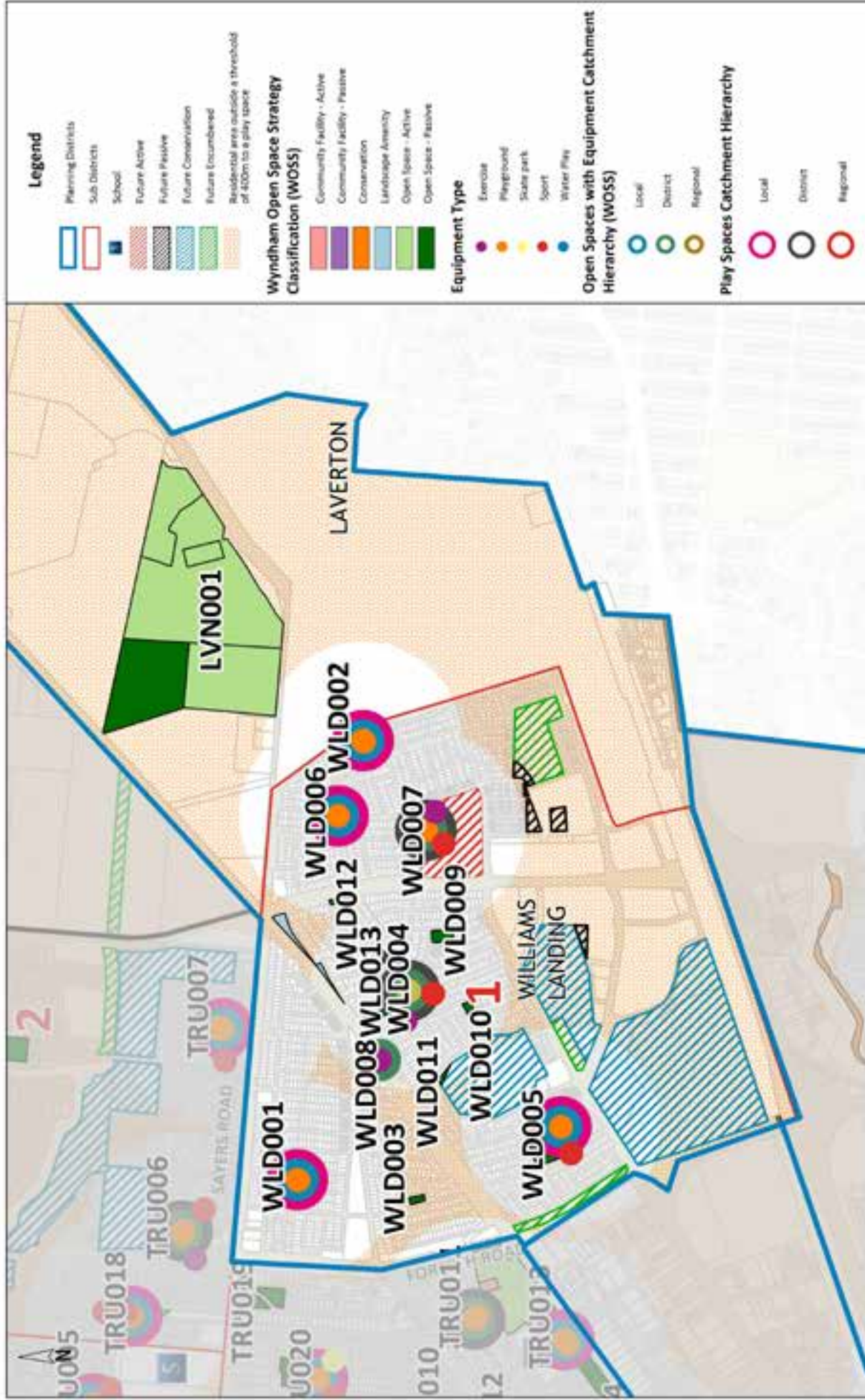


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Wyndham Play Space Strategy  
**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
**Point Cook**





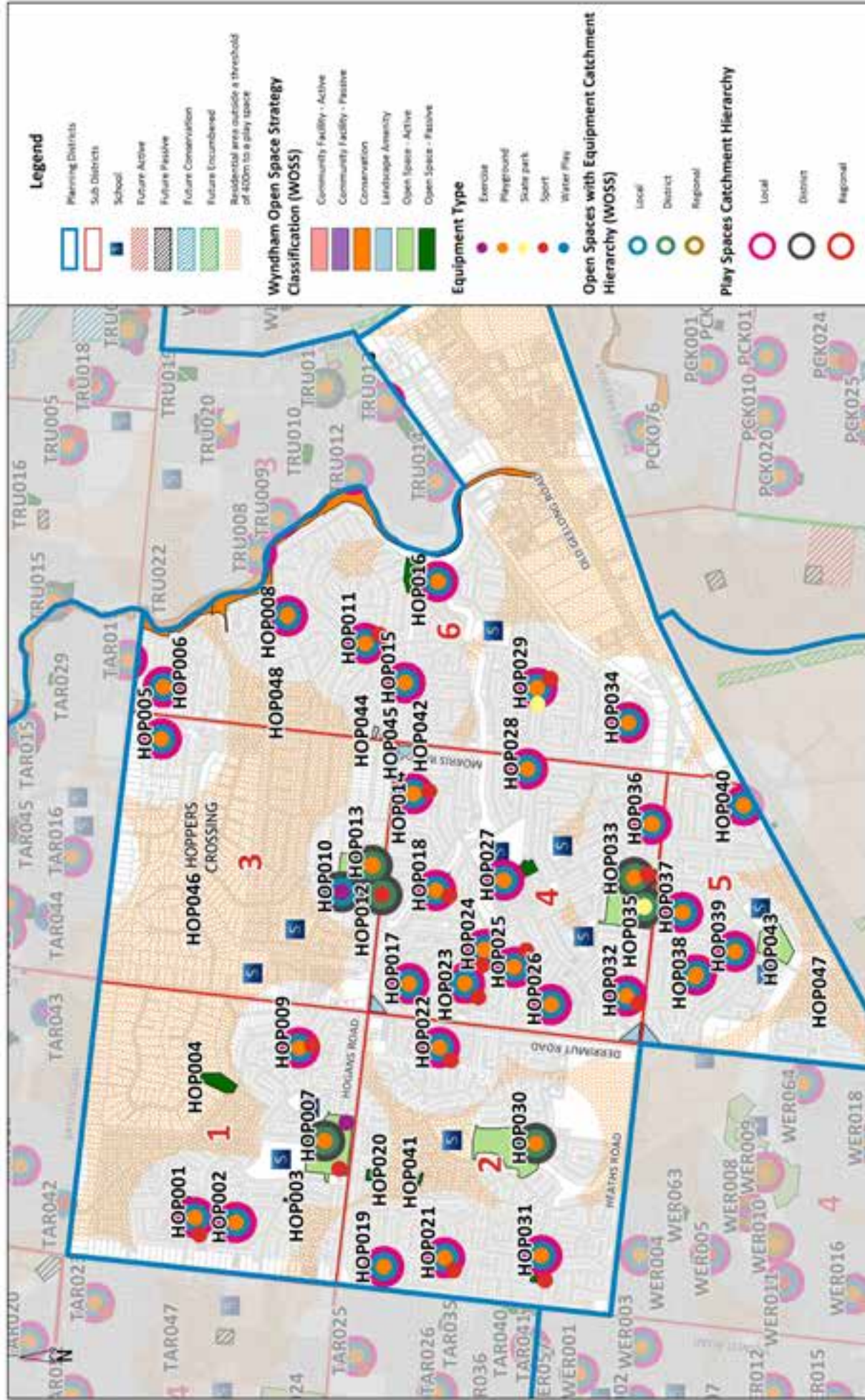


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**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
 Williams Landing





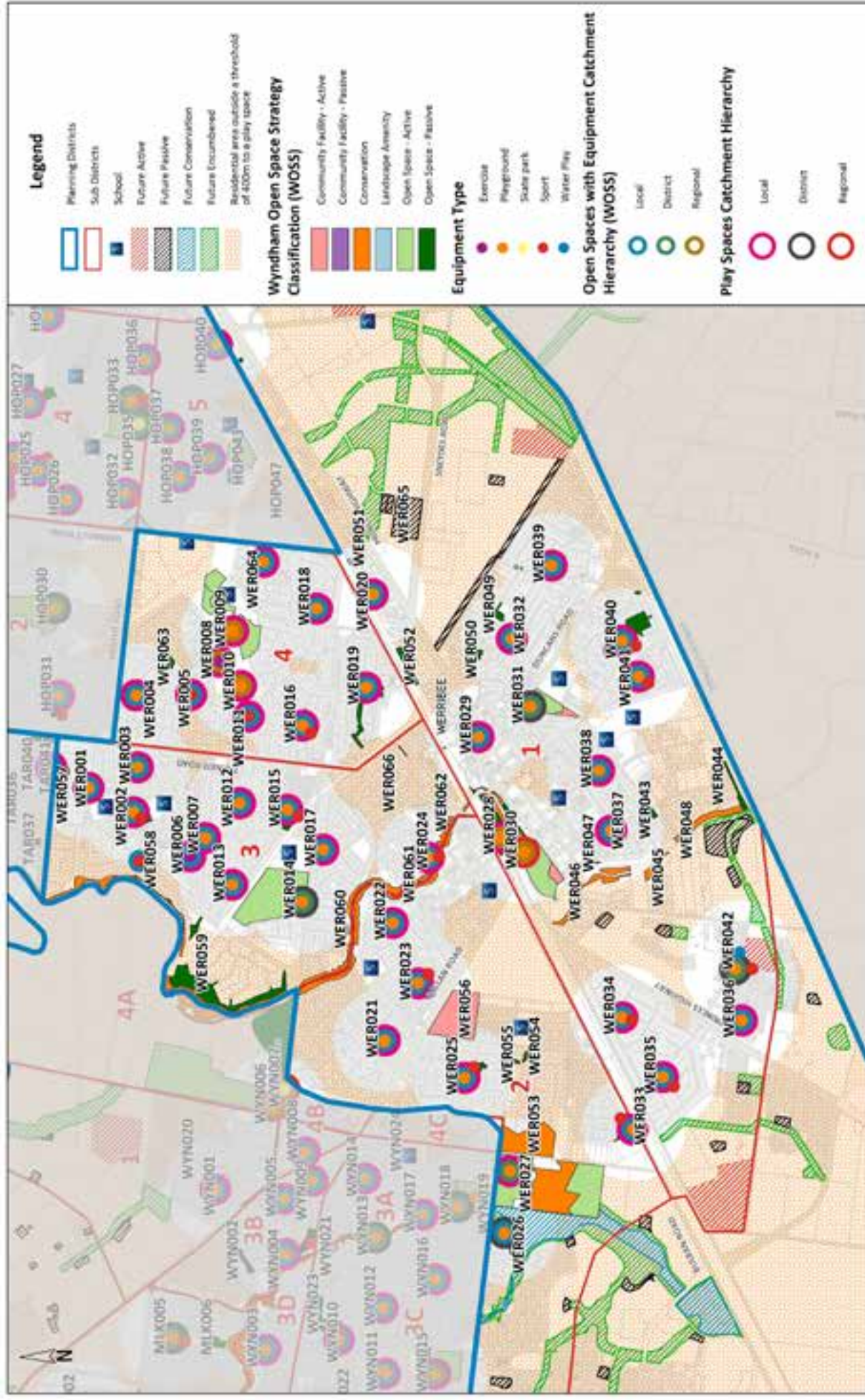


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**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
**Hoppers Crossing**





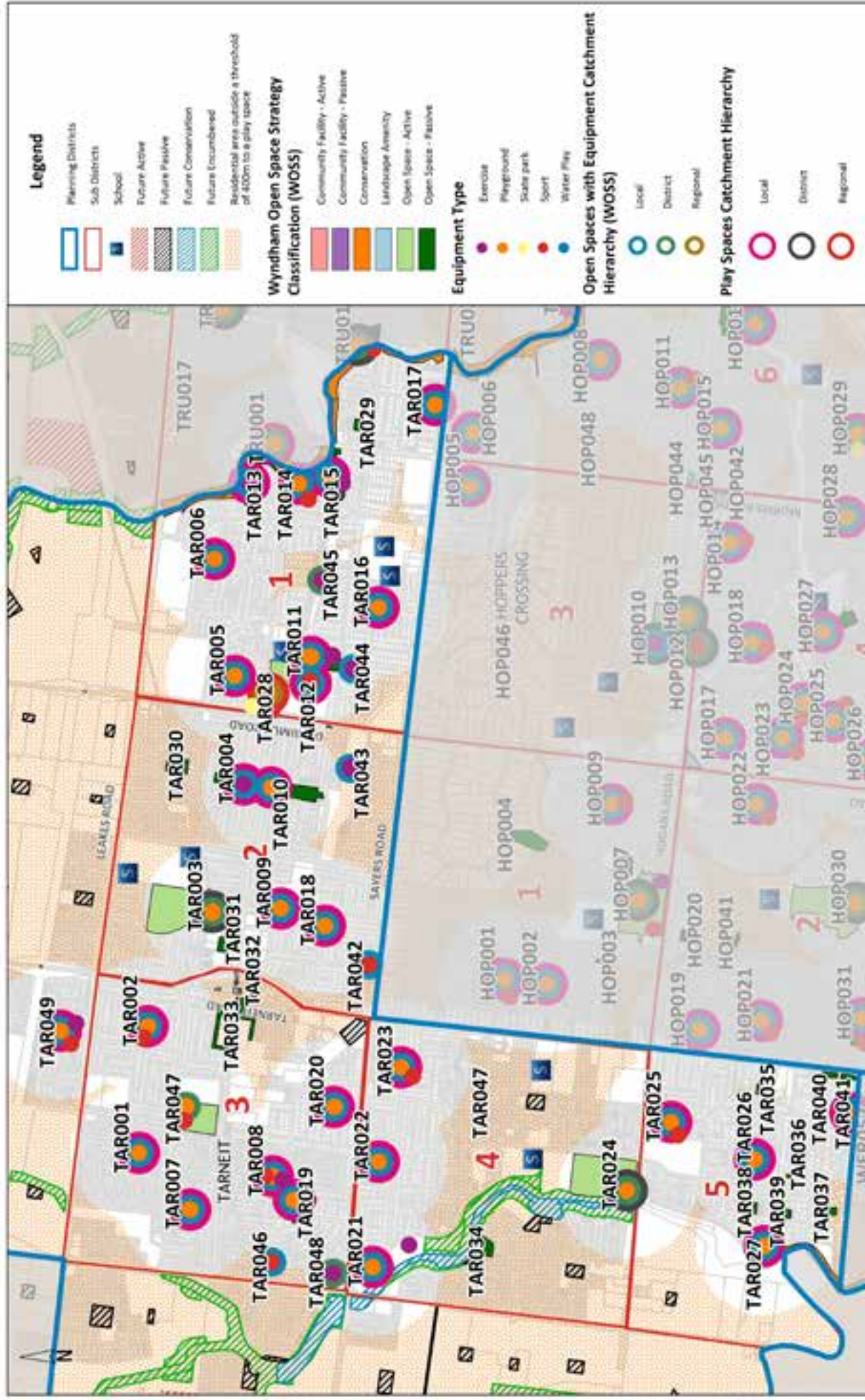


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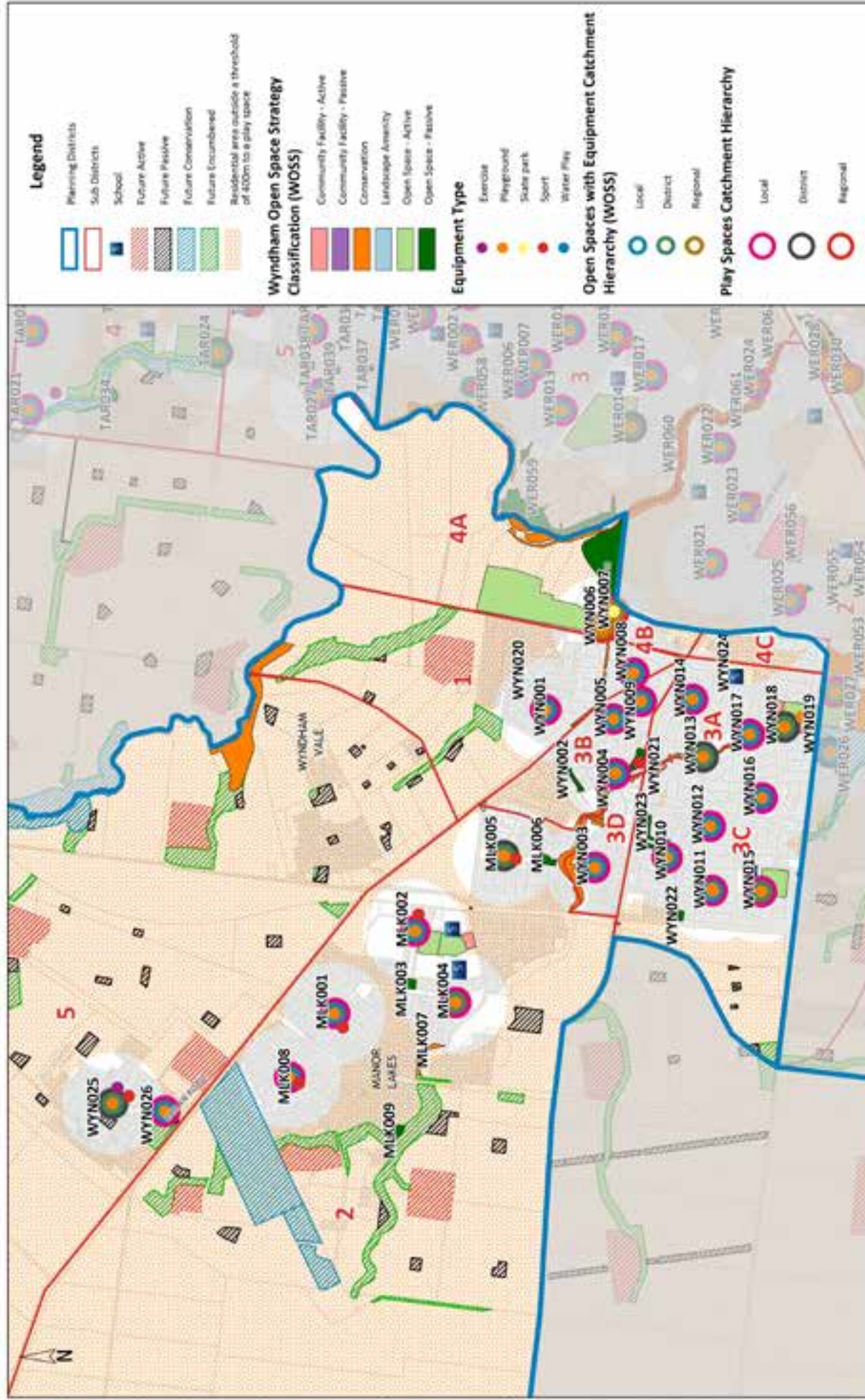


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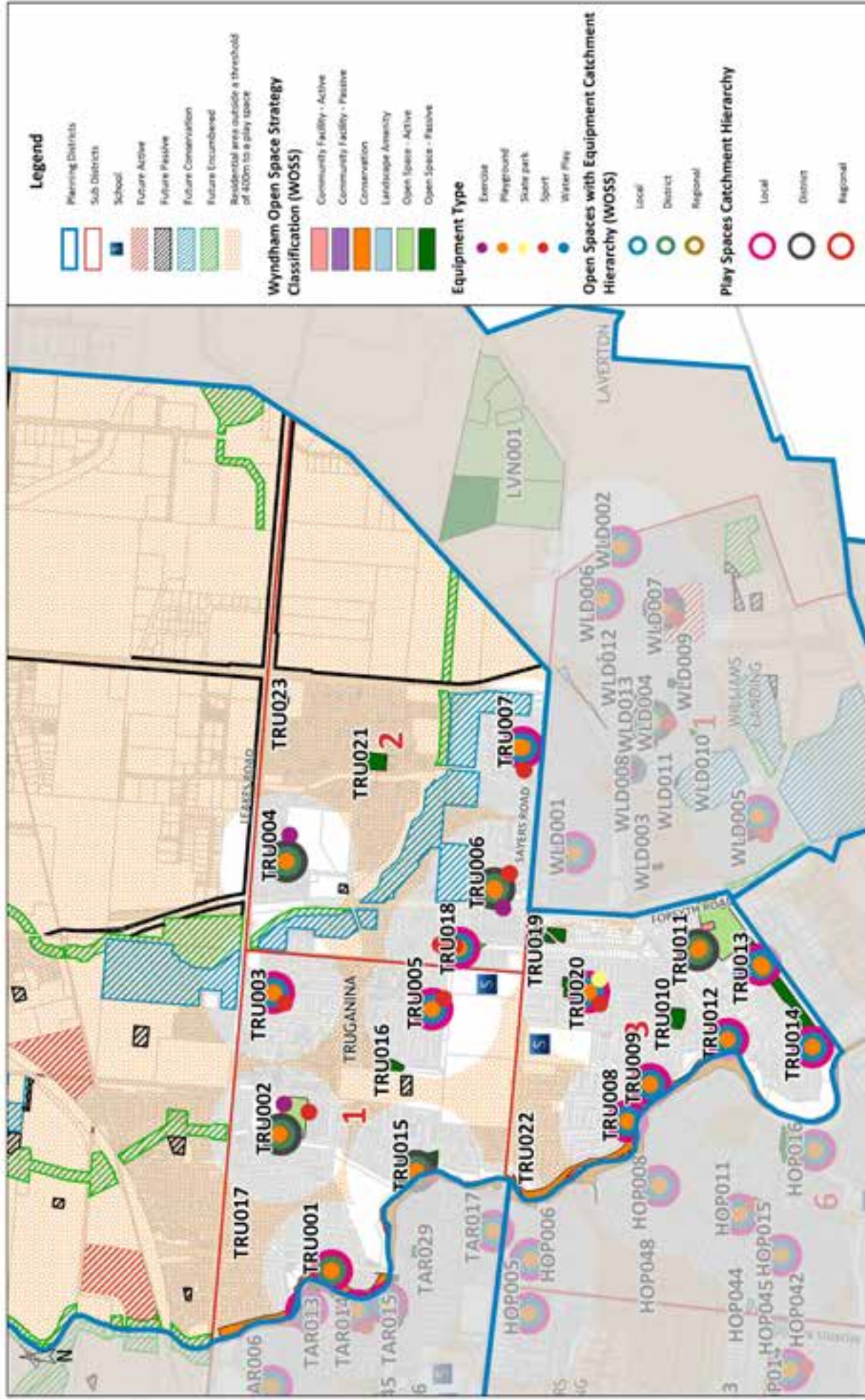


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**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
 Wyndham Vale - Manor Lakes





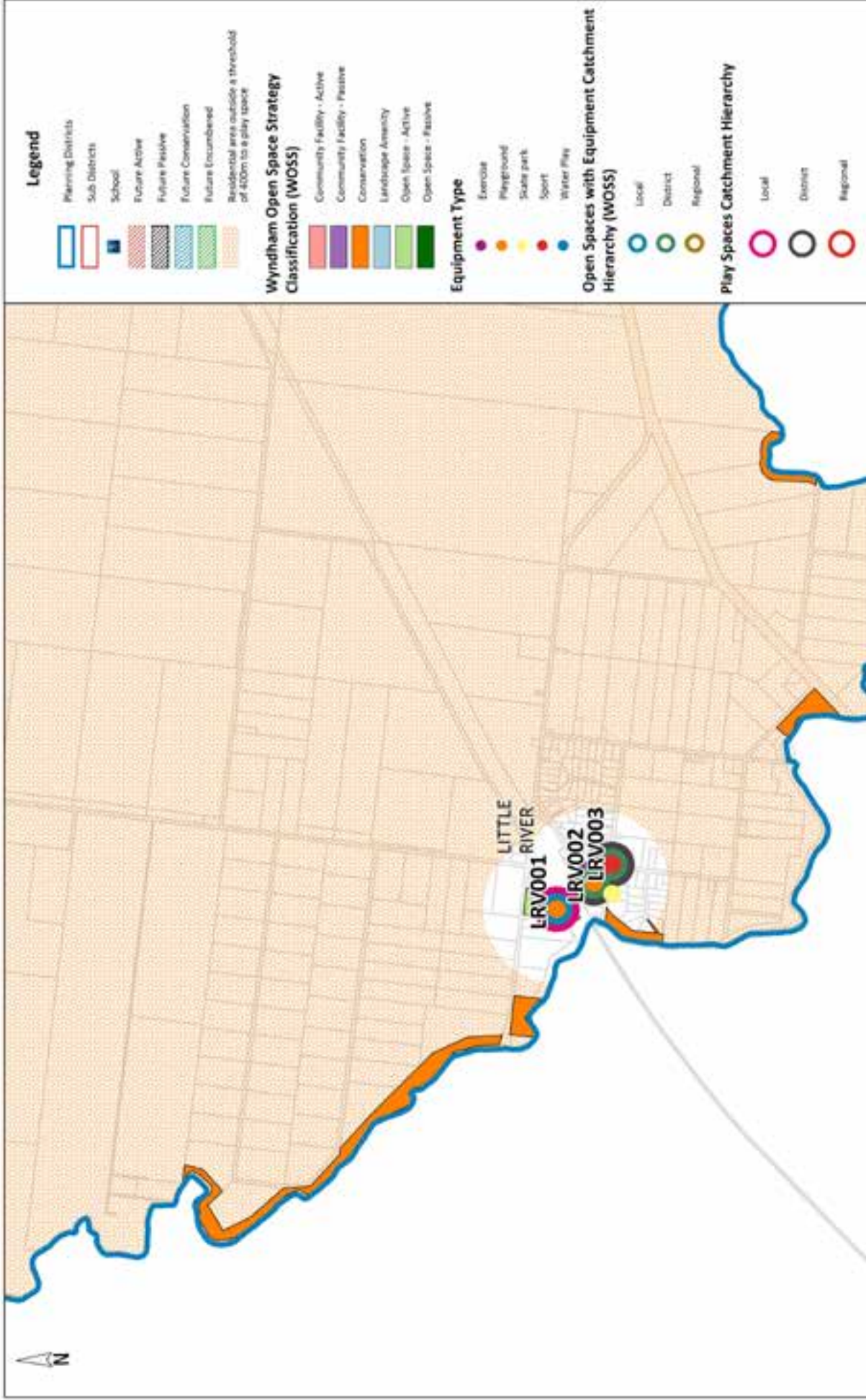


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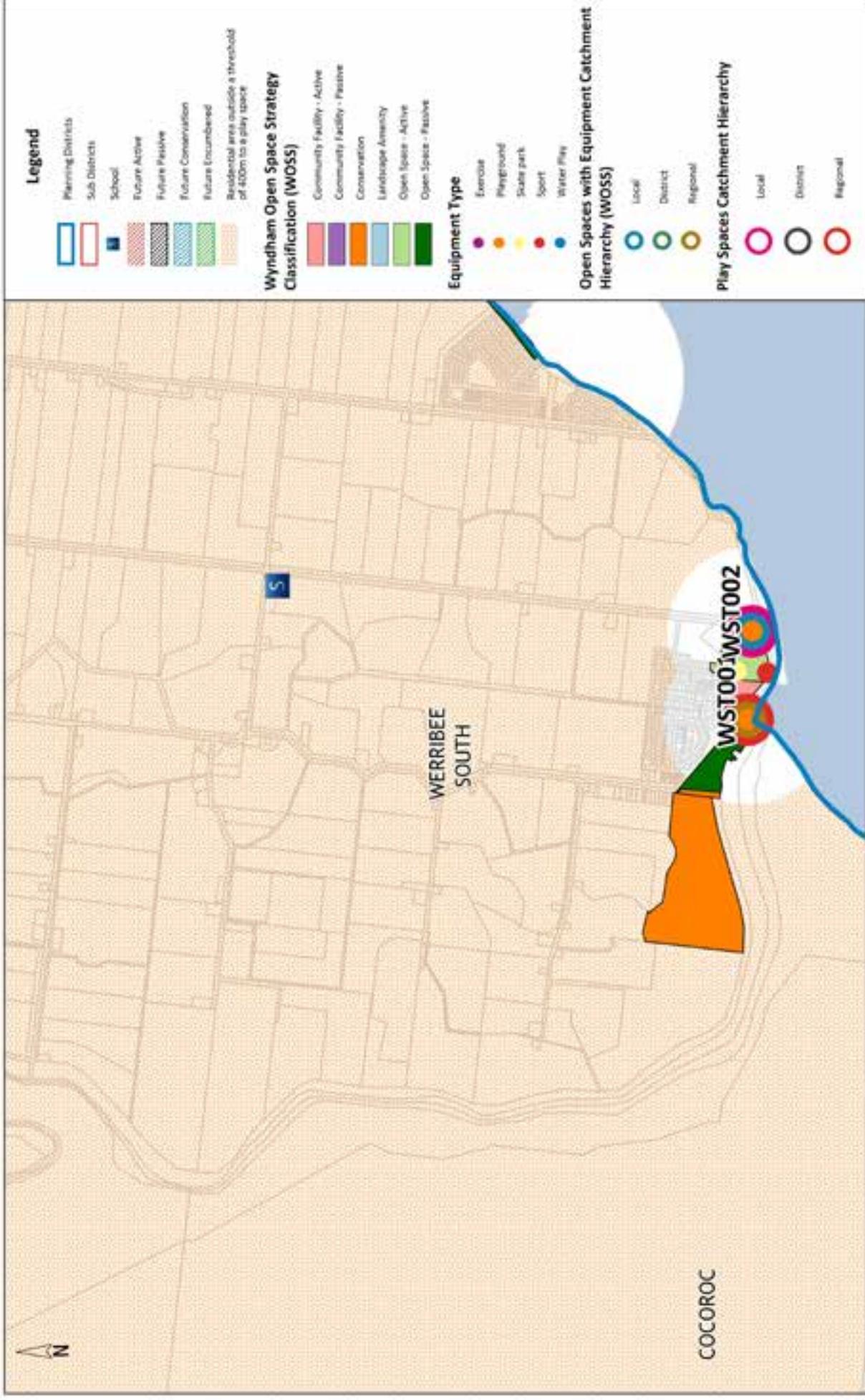


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Wyndham Play Space Strategy  
**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
 Little River - Rural West







Wyndham Play Space Strategy  
**Distribution and Classification of Play Spaces**  
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