mosaicLAB

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE CITIZENS PANEL

Open Space Strategy

What was said report

May 2024

Appendix 4

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"We are inspired to protect and enhance our distinct region that values its diverse community, environments and townships. Our community spirit thrives, with safe, accessible and inclusive spaces for all. Together we continue to create a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous future that values innovation and shared compassion."

- from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Community Vision

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Open space is an important feature of the dynamic landscape of Mornington Peninsula Shire, providing social gathering points, formal and informal sporting/recreation opportunities, places for nature to thrive, play spaces, trails, tourist destinations, sites of cultural significance and an array of healthy lifestyle experiences and opportunities.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council is currently developing an Open Space strategy to guide the future planning, provision, design, and management of existing and future open space for a 15-year period up until 2040. The strategy is being developed in three phases:

- **Phase 1 –** Council released a discussion paper on Open space and asked residents how they used their local park and open spaces. This included how often they visited and types of activities they participated in. Understanding how open space is used and overall satisfaction helps develop priorities for parks across the Peninsula. The output of this engagement contributed to the Open Space Uses and Trends report.
- **Phase 2 –** Utilize the Citizens Panel to explore what was heard in Phase 1 in more depth and invite the representative sample of the community to review the findings of the Open Space Use and Trends Report and identify key priorities for action under the 4 key themes developed on the basis of Phase 1 outputs.
- **Phase 3 –** will allow the broader community to provide feedback on the draft strategy with respect to the key directions and actions.

On the evening of 1 May, the Citizen's Panel session offered an opportunity for council to share draft priorities for the strategy based on Phase 1 research and community engagement.

The Panel was also provided with the following documents in preparation for this conversation:

- Mornington Peninsula Open Space Strategy Discussion Paper (background reading from Phase 1)
- Open Space Strategy Uses and Trends Report

This report outlines the facilitation process and the panelist outputs from this session.

SESSION PURPOSE

The purpose of the session was to give the panel the opportunity to prioritise directions for the Open Space strategy. The key question council posed to the panel was:

> *"What are the most important priorities the Open Space strategy needs to focus on to best meet the needs of our growing and diverse community?"*

In preparing for this work, the session also gave panelists an opportunity to learn about the strategy and the challenges facing Mornington Peninsula Open Spaces.

ATTENDANCE

Forty-four panel members attended.

Three representatives from the Mornington Peninsula Open Spaces team attended to support the panel with their understanding of the topic via a short presentation as well as answer their questions:

- **Rod Spivey**, Principal Recreation and Open Space Planner
- **Scott Daniel**, Coordinator Recreation & Open Space Planning
- **Todd Beavis**, i.e. consultants (observer)

Four representatives from the Mornington Peninsula engagement team attended in observer capacities:

- **Kirsty Hardt**, Acting Executive Manager, Advocacy, Communications & Engagement
- **Dawn Loh**, Community Engagement Coordinator
- **Teishyn Courtney**, Community Engagement Officer
- **Ainslie Rust**, Community Engagement Officer

WORKSHOP AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA
6:00PM	**Welcome and getting started** Acknowledgement of country, purpose of the session, agenda, introductions, reconnecting, working agreements.
6:25PM	**Introducing the Open Space strategy** Council spoke to the Open Space strategy and "what we need your help with" (the key question)
6:45PM	**Understanding the issues** Overview of Uses and Trends report and the four themes in small teams.
7:25PM	**Q&A with Open Space team** Panelists had the opportunity to ask the team questions about the strategy
7:45PM	**BREAK**
8:00PM	**Prioritising top actions for each theme** Panelist discussed and voted on their top priorities for each theme, giving rationales for their choices.
8:50PM	Final reminders and closing remarks
9:00PM	**CLOSE**

RESULTS

INSIGHTS FROM THE USES AND TRENDS REPORT

To deepen their understanding of the strategy and the Uses and Trends report, panelists were invited to read one theme of the report then discuss and share their insights with others. The insights they recorded under each of the four themes of the report are reproduced as follows:

1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

INSIGHTS

- Controlling the use of mountain bikes in areas where wildlife is present, such as Arthurs Seat where kangaroos are known to live.
- Connecting remnant bushland to create bio links for wildlife.
- Open more bushland walks in less sensitive areas.
- Connect remnant bushland through native planting.
- Protect remnant vegetation and revegetate.
- Don't ask those who know.
- Council hasn't the money to do anything but respond, not plan ahead.
- Without the environment, nothing else matters.
- The ecosystem will change in line with climate change.
- Retrofitting and improving facilities already in use to increase future use.

2. Physical Activity and Play

INSIGHTS

- The demand of informal physical activity is a trend for the future, the informal activity needs to be closer to resident locations and convenience for the local use.
- Encouraging/subsidising small businesses to operate sports teaching/lessons/etc. to our local kids.
- Not waste resources on lawns where they are not being used for sport and play.
- Costing and funds – community/council to assist in improving facilities.
- Important to focus on needs of young people for their needs. Get them off screens.
- Convenience/locality of open spaces.
- All ages – ensuring spaces can be utilised by communities and people of all ages.
- Making multifunctional spaces – if it can be multifunctional it should be!

3. Uniqueness and Sense of Place

INSIGHTS

Maintaining uniqueness is connected strongly to preserving biodiversity.

Our uniqueness is in our variety of locations and activities - bush walks, beach.

Start the trend and utilise the local connection to spread the use of indigenous names.

I like the idea of improving lesser used areas to attract crowds there and disperse damage to more used area.

Change perception of sporting ovals and add amenities that are available 24/7 at ovals and adjacent parks.

Parking impact on major events, maybe offsite parking and shuttle service provide.

Keep uniqueness, not follow Frankston with high rises.

Implication of open events, currently use area such as Mornington racecourse rather than allocating new areas.

Key priority: climate change noted as a long-term planning horizon challenge.

Parking impact during summer peak times.

Strongly agree with the use of the rap to develop the open space strategy and use of place naming – re-education in place names.

Rotating locations of big events to protect vegetation/maintain infrastructure.

4. Comfortable and Accessible

INSIGHTS

Community buses or transport across the peninsula.

Urban heat island effect – installing greenery/ canopy will help cool spaces particularly in the wake of climate change and persistent higher temperatures - and thus make them comfortable and accessible no matter what time of year.

Multiple factors to consider (social, environmental, economic) and ensure all of these things are equitable.

Changing places toilets for those less able.

Other options for watering ovals and sporting areas.

Increase in visitation during holiday periods.

Changing climate creating challenges.

Planting trees and drought-resistant gardens.

Dog park wheelchair access.

Older population which will continue to increase over the next 20 years.

Accessible entrances for wheelchair users or people with disabilities.

Q&A WITH THE OPEN SPACE TEAM

In order to clarify their understanding of the strategy and the Uses and Trends report, panelists were offered an opportunity to ask questions of Council's Open Space team. Their questions are recorded below:

PANEL QUESTIONS FOR THE OPEN SPACE TEAM

We need maps of disabled accessible beaches/dog parks/toilets etc.

Can more rubbish bins be placed at beaches on busy days? We like the idea that people will take it home but time and time again it's proven they won't.

How is council discussing funding with the community? (doesn't feel transparent)

How can we more effectively address the issue of dumping rubbish in open spaces on the Peninsula?

Has there been any discussion about opening up multi use parking spaces? trying to facilitate tourism by opening up limited parking spaces (15 min spaces) and multi-use spaces (paddocks/ green soft gutters) on days when things like the Mornington running festival or red hill market are occurring?

Has council explored user contribution to the upkeep of venues, e.g., a QR code that invited walkers to give a $1 or $2 for say walking Cape Schanck?

Can we engage more community groups to create spaces alongside council?

Are sporting clubs expected to pay fees for their grounds use?

Can the cleanliness and accessibility of toilets in public places be improved?

Can the community have access to secondary school sporting facilities such as the hockey and soccer teams use at the moment?

Will the open space strategy complement the peninsula trail strategy? How are the two linked?

Is there a way to better educate the public on the importance of protecting the unique biodiversity on the Mornington Peninsula?

What upgrades to sporting facilities are planned or have taken place recently?

Is council likely to be asking the traditional owners re: the best way to preserve the native vegetation and adapt for the future?

Could bike tracks better maintained and linked together to improve connectivity?

Can we ensure better parking and public transport to enjoy the open spaces on the Peninsula?

How does state/federal government contribute financially?

Can we make dog parks accessible?

How much input do indigenous groups have to open space planning?

Is there a substainable water plan?

Are there structured plans for how to make spaces more multiuse – both new spaces and existing?

How much does the community contribute to the creation/maintenance?

Is there a plan for rubbish removal along foreshore at peak times?

NOMINATING TOP PRIORITIES

In small groups, panelists were invited to discuss each of the four themes of the Uses and Trends report in turn. For each theme, they were presented with the four priorities under that theme. They were then invited to record two votes for the priorities they considered the most important. Panelists could record one vote for two different priorities, or two votes for the same priority. For each theme, there is a total of 88 votes possible, though for some themes, some panelists did not record votes.

This process was repeated for each of the four themes. The final voting tally is as follows:

REPORT THEME	PRIORITY	VOTES
1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health	Facilitating access to natural areas for people to experience without causing damage to sensitive ecosystems.	25
	Retaining and increasing bushland in open space.	23
	Adapting management approaches for natural areas to support resilience to changing climate conditions.	15
	Advocating for strong and meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners to support the planning, management and protection of natural areas.	14
2. Physical Activity and Play	Opportunities for walking, rolling and other informal physical activities.	25
	New and renewed play spaces with innovative options for all ages.	17
	Creating more multifunctional community hub open spaces that accommodate a wide variety of uses.	16
	Investment in new and upgraded space and facilities for organised sport, particularly in areas with young people and families.	14
3. Uniqueness and Sense of Place	Planting species that are reflective of the Mornington Peninsula landscape and resilient to changing climate.	23
	Spaces and amenities for gathering, picnicking, events and enjoying scenic settings, to respond to high levels of use in peak periods.	20
	Multifunctional spaces with suitable infrastructure and design to accommodate community events (e.g. concerts, markets).	16
	Recognition of values and protection of Aboriginal heritage sites in collaboration with Traditional Owners.	15
4. Comfortable and Accessible	Physical accessibility for older people, and those with disabilities and mobility restrictions.	38
	Recognition of the role of open spaces are green infrastructure to adapt to extreme heating and flooding.	16
	Equitable and sustainable asset provision and maintenance with greater investment areas which need it most.	16
	Flexible and multi-functional open spaces in town centres for use by people who live in apartments and townhouses.	8

Panelists also wrote their reasoning for casting their vote for a particular priority, as follows:

1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

PRIORITY

Facilitating access to natural areas for people to experience without causing damage to sensitive ecosystems.

Votes: 25

REASONING

Caring not just for the environment but the flora living in it for future generations.

People need to be aware of the environment around them and the damage they can cause, education, signage, board walks.

Accessibility for wheelchairs and walkers, but they can be damaging to ecosystems so need boardwalks, etc. to preserve the paths.

This option is the only one that makes sense to me!

Fence to protect beaches and access points to restrict damage.

Two very important connected issues.

Allowing people to experience our beautiful diverse location without destroying it and maintaining for future generations...education.

Educating the public about the importance of this fragile ecosystem.

PRIORITY

Retaining and increasing bushland in open space.

Votes: 23

REASONING

With little remaining remnant vegetation, protecting what's left is very important. Our natural spaces are what makes the Peninsula special and are crucial for our indigenous wildlife. Increasing bushland areas and connecting biolinks is also vital and very important to me and to our ecosystem.

More bushland, more shade, more mitigation for climate change.

More bushland equals shade.

Open space should be planted out with native bushland to create links for wildlife and create biodiversity.

We need to preserve the bush land for our native flora and fauna.

To increase the biodiversity.

To retain what is already in use. and maintain some level of diversity, rather than it just becoming another open space.

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1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

...continued

PRIORITY

Adapting management approaches for natural areas to support resilience to changing climate conditions.

Votes: 15

REASONING

Because we need to take care of the environment to survive – we rely on plants for oxygen.

Because I care about the environment and what we are leaving for our kids and grandkids.

If we don't support this resilience there won't be as much natural area to manage in other ways.

Adapting our environment to the meet the ever-increasing changes to our climate and region are important.

The environment is going to change anyway. We may as well be ready to adapt to it.

PRIORITY

Advocating for strong and meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners to support the planning, management and protection of natural areas.

Votes: 14

REASONING

Traditional owners should be involved throughout the process from concept to fruition as their knowledge is key.

A lot of knowledge is to be gained from traditional owners, I think bushfire preparation really shows that we can do better if we work together.

We should really listen to our traditional owners, they really need to have the loudest voice.

It isn't working at the moment. Try something proven for the last 65,000 years.

It would be a waste of a resource to not use the knowledge of the people that know the most about our native flora and fauna, and biodiversity. There is a lot learn from thousands of years of experience of this land and they have a crucial interest in protecting it.

Protecting the sensitive ecosystem is important to keeping this area environmentally strong. Having a partnership with traditional owners has they have a great knowledge of how to protect the environment.

2. Physical Activity and Play

PRIORITY

Opportunities for walking, rolling and other informal physical activities.

Votes: 25

REASONING

Disabled people already are mostly indoors, and forgotten. It would be good to see access increased to create more community.

Informal spaces are used by everyone, all the time, for many different purposes – focussing on walking/running/bicycle trails.

Places for people of all abilities to walk, run, roll is an affordable way for people to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

Not everyone is into team sports so need opportunities for things like bike jumps, walking groups, etc. in your own time and with flexibility. If Mornington Peninsula Shire considered an older area, it would need to be accessible for them too, thus informal spaces are great.

Walking is the major way the majority of the community exercises and to enhance and create walking trails is a cost-effective way council could help the community.

Easily accessible for many people.

Some people don't necessarily belong to an organised group, more relaxed groups can use these facilities.

Informal physical activities is quite common nowadays. people are more in the position to have informal physical activities compared to the traditional activities.

Someone mentioned the increase in use when there are loop tracks rather than tracks that go from point A to B. This is a great idea.

Opportunity for informal activities to encourage more physical activity in the community. There will be a need for multifunctional community hubs as space becomes more limited.

Walking and rolling is an area that is for everyone, prioritising is beneficial for the majority.

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2. Physical Activity and Play

...continued

PRIORITY

New and renewed play spaces with innovative options for all ages.

Votes: 17

REASONING

Creating spaces that give people opportunity to try new things.

Add shade trees and benches on the edge of sports fields/ovals and grounds to make them more accessible and enjoyable for all.

Probably not an idea to focus on the young, given the local demographic.

Renew and add available toilets, BBQs, seating play equipment to existing sporting ovals and their adjacent open spaces. All the adjacent club rooms are locked, for good reason.

Some playgrounds are outdated or not quite what kids are into, lacking spaces for parents around the playgrounds. Need spaces that tick all the boxes for all ages and all sports, where there is a play space for children as well as an area for adults to exercise while they are watching their child.

Must tick the box for the innovative options, wait and see how the innovation changes the world.

Having recently been in the Gold Coast, I was amazed with the amount and quality of these spaces – everyone was encouraged to be outside...together!

PRIORITY

Creating more multifunctional community hub open spaces that accommodate a wide variety of uses.

Votes: 16

REASONING

Community hub spaces are a great opportunity for people of all ages to connect.

With an ageing population, you don't want to put all your eggs in one basket.

We don't have any more land to expand out, so let's make better use out of the facilities we have and get a wider variety of people using them.

This covers quite a lot of options.

PRIORITY

Investment in new and upgraded space and facilities for organised sport, particularly in areas with young people and families.

Votes: 14

REASONING

Important for young kids to have something to do, and off screens and phones and into play

I've got kids and grandkids - noticing a lot of young families looking for things to do and areas to play in. And a lot of them don't have transport - seeing them on public transport a lot. Would be good to have a greater spread of activities for young ones.

Somerville recreation reserve has potential to combine new clubrooms for tennis football bowls netball cricket and room for more. Built in the 1960s.

Upgrade the spaces we already have for all users.

Beach Volleyball.

Make the open spaces that have been created as part of the green open areas with new developments, not everyone knows they exist.

3. Uniqueness and Sense of Place

PRIORITY

Planting species that are reflective of the Mornington Peninsula landscape and resilient to changing climate.

Votes: 23

REASONING

- We can't stop climate change (too much push-back from vested interests), so we must adapt.
- Important for biodiversity.
- It's important for the environment, for climate change.
- Indigenous species are vital for our wildlife and ecosystem.
- Appropriate plants will also reduce operating costs for the Shire in the long-run by reducing the need to replace/water plants.
- Climate change is a huge thing for the Shire and larger Australia. We need species that are resilient to change.
- I think this is crucial, this is a special place for a reason and we want to keep the uniqueness and pride.
- Our bushland needs all the help it can get, a lot of land is degraded and needs replanting.

PRIORITY

Spaces and amenities for gathering, picnicking, events and enjoying scenic settings, to respond to high levels of use in peak periods.

Votes: 20

REASONING

- This will encourage people to visit (= $$) while minimising environmental and social impact.
- Fostering community and allowing all to enjoy rather than hosting events that mean only some can.
- We need to upgrade, update, and rethink facilities along the foreshore.
- Responding to high level use in peak times is important to protect our open spaces and environment.
- Refurbish and improve grassed areas with picnic and BBQ facilities and bus parking areas inclusive of disability access.
- Westerport could be improved to take pressure off tourist area.
- In peak periods the local has more pressure from environment protection.
- Consultation with large corporations who own land to create spaces.

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3. Uniqueness and Sense of Place

...continued

PRIORITY

Multifunctional spaces with suitable infrastructure and design to accommodate community events (e.g., concerts, markets).

Votes: 16

REASONING

- This can also protect native flora/fauna if done correctly.
- Important to make facilities to cater for large numbers.
- This priority accommodates for all age groups and preferences.
- Maximise community integration and visitation while minimising environmental impact.
- Planning for spaces for larger events can only assist with protecting our community.
- Everything that can be multiuse is a far more efficient scenario – I prefer efficient use of resources.
- Utilise large areas that already exist, like the briars, racecourse, ovals, create some more specific multi-purpose areas.

PRIORITY

Recognition of values and protection of Aboriginal heritage sites in collaboration with Traditional Owners.

Votes: 15

REASONING

- This is a way to protect what we have.
- This is self-evident!
- It's the only one that appeals.
- Education would help others to understand/keep protecting local flora/fauna.
- It all ties back to this, why are we ignoring the voice that matters most and cares the most about this special land.
- Many of us probably walk past places of significance without even knowing.

4. Comfortable and Accessible

PRIORITY

Physical accessibility for older people, and those with disabilities and mobility restrictions.

Votes: 38

REASONING

Making spaces accessible to disabilities makes them more comfortable for all.

This is me

Everyone will be disabled at some point, whether permanently or temporarily, so access is super important!

It's important to make more areas where those who are less able can go.

It's huge seeing a few beaches providing beach wheelchairs...just need to keep rolling it out across the rest of them now!

I have a disability as well – there are a lot of people with disabilities and it would be nice to have more accessible disability groups so they could feel part of the community - and included. More places to go to.

More important with an ageing demographic.

Boardwalk access to beach foreshore would enable access.

Accessibility in general for all.

Could more spaces provide access mobility aids like at Arthur's seat?

Add access to the disabled – it allows access for everyone.

All people should be able to access open space.

Brings more people into the community space.

Tackle loneliness from elderly/disabled communities

Accessibility for people in wheelchairs – this is very big for me.

Accessible parks – as a wheelchair user, my spouse cannot access any dog parks alone.

Having footpaths and cut curbs/ramps etc to make access to these areas is hugely important too.

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4. Comfortable and Accessible

...continued

PRIORITY

Recognition of the role of open spaces are green infrastructure to adapt to extreme heating and flooding.

Votes: 16

REASONING

Trying to mitigate climate change. Good idea.

Power is expensive > people won't be able to afford to use cooling as much.

Water, etc.

Riding a bike out of Melbourne CBD and onto St Kilda road on a hot night is a reminder of how important open green space is. You can feel the temperature drop as soon as your cross the Yarra.

PRIORITY

Equitable and sustainable asset provision and maintenance with greater investment areas which need it most.

Votes: 16

REASONING

This covers anything and everything including natural disasters like flooding and an ageing population; there's provision for it.

Equity and fairness of asset dispersal is an imperative so that all can enjoy a maximum quality of life.

PRIORITY

Flexible and multi-functional open spaces in town centres for use by people who live in apartments and townhouses.

Votes: 8

REASONING

The housing crisis will need the open spaces for people living with little or no outdoor space.

Important to ensure green spaces are preserved and created.

Should be contributed by value capture from developments.

We need more housing – instead of cutting into green wedge we must build 'up' in higher density areas. Then we must have the green space to support this type of housing.

As housing gets more expensive, we can expect density to increase. Ensuring we have local open space is so important to people's health and connectedness.

NEXT STEPS

We trust this report offers useful guidance to inform the next Open Space Strategy for Mornington Peninsula Shire, based on what a representative sample of the broader community may be thinking and feeling is important in relation to the topic.

PLEASE NOTE: This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Mornington Peninsula Shire. The sole purpose of this report is to provide MPS with materials produced at the session on 1 May 2024.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by the MPS. In preparing this report, MosaicLab has relied upon the information provided by the panelists present during the session. MPS can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community and stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.

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