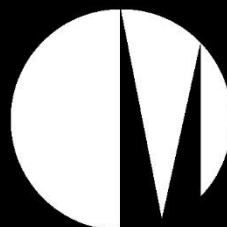


Park Close to Home: A Framework to Fill Open Space Gaps

December 2017



Moreland City Council

Acknowledgements:

Moreland City Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live, work and play – the Wurundjeri people. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and community. We pay our respect to the Wurundjeri people, and to their Elders past, present and future.

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1.0 Executive Summary

The *Park Close to Home: A Framework to Fill Open Space Gaps* (the Framework) has been prepared to assist Council to provide a 'park close to home' – a key goal of the Moreland Open Space Strategy (MOSS). This Framework guides the proactive expenditure of Council's open space fund to create open space in the areas that have the least access to open space, to remove or reduce gaps in open space provision before land prices and population further rise.

The MOSS seeks to provide quality open space within 500m of all residential properties, and 300m to all activity centre properties. Those areas that do not have access to open space within these distances are *open space gap areas* (gap areas). Residents within these gap areas have no suitable walking access to open space of any size, type or kind. As Moreland's population is growing and housing density is increasing, open space gap areas will be further exacerbated.

Council collects the Public Open Space Contribution pursuant to the *Subdivisions Act 1988* (The Act), and this contribution is held in the open space fund. The Act provides direction on how this fund can be spent, that is, to either purchase or improve land used for open space.

This Framework establishes a methodology to identify the open space gap areas that require the most urgent attention. High and medium priority gap areas are those that have the highest population and density, highest population growth and lowest amount of open space in the surrounding suburb. The Framework establishes a process to ensure land purchase to address high and medium priority gap areas occurs proactively, rather than waiting for appropriate land to come on the market for sale. Once land is purchased, it will be converted into open space in accordance with findings of a design and consultation phase to service both the gap area and surrounds. Ongoing monitoring and review of fund expenditure and income will ensure effective implementation of this Framework, and improved decision making around open space fund expenditure.

This document commences with an overview of Moreland's Open Space policy, and then provides a rationale for prioritising open space fund expenditure within open space gap areas. It then sets out the steps in the Framework established to guide gap area closure, and identifies the high and medium priority gap areas identified as a result of these steps. A separate Background Report provides the background research and detail to support the Framework.

2.0 Open Space Policy in Moreland

The Moreland Council Plan 2017-2021

The Council Plan 2017-2021, adopted 24 July 2017, recognises that Council's services must respond to the cities changing form while maintaining and enhancing our transport and open space networks, community facilities and services, and the wellbeing and connectedness of our people.

In response, the Council Plan contains the Key Priority 4, under the Progressive City Strategic Objective 2, to:

- Increase tree canopy cover, enhance existing open space and create at least two new parks, in areas with the lowest access to open space.

The Moreland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) 2017-2021

The MPHWP 2017-2021 is a whole-of-Council plan that outlines the strategic health and wellbeing priorities for the municipality. The vision of the MPHWP 2017-2021 is that Moreland is a healthy, liveable and sustainable city. The plan contains 15 outcomes, one of which under the Liveable Cities Focus Area is Outcome 6 – *That Moreland's residents have access to open spaces close to where they live.*

Council will work towards this outcome by focusing on the following 4-year priorities:

1. Council will ensure that every household has safe and convenient access to parkland for passive recreation, quiet contemplation, sport and access to nature.
2. Council will provide and protect quality open space that provides a range of experiences and accessible recreational opportunities, natural and cultural heritage features, and high quality park facilities and landscape settings.
3. Council will identify, acquire and develop open spaces in areas where there is a lack of open space.
4. Council will encourage participation and recreational use of open spaces.

The Moreland Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)

The Moreland MSS seeks to provide Moreland with sustainable neighbourhoods, and it recognizes that adequate open space provision is a key component in achieving this aim. The MSS includes directions to protect and enhance the open space network in Moreland.

The MSS Clause 21.02 Vision, recognizes that specific areas in Moreland have been assessed as deficient in the provision of open space. These are identified on the Strategic Framework Plan in the MSS at Clause 21.02 (*note, the areas identified are based on the priority areas shown at within the MOSS 2012 – Map 5, which are based on crow flies distances not walking distances*). The MSS states that these areas will be prioritised for the provision of new open space as opportunities arise. In particular, any rezoning proposals within these areas will be reviewed for the potential to create new open space.

The Moreland Open Space Strategy

The Moreland Open Space Strategy 2012-2022 (MOSS) was prepared to provide the overarching framework and strategic direction for open space planning in the City of Moreland for 10 years. The MOSS has been in operation since 2012, and is therefore due for full review by 2022.

The MOSS sets the Council direction for the future provision, planning, design and management of publicly owned open space that is set aside for leisure, recreation and nature conservation purposes.

MOSS provides recommendations for maintaining Moreland's liveability in the context of steady population growth, by adding to the open space in the municipality and improving existing open space. The key issues effecting the provision of open space into the future addressed in the MOSS include population growth, protecting and enhancing environmental values, climate change and increasing urban temperatures.

Other policies and plans relevant to open space

There are multiple more specific strategies, structure plans and action plans that provide direction on open space improvements within Moreland and surrounds. These documents are set out below:

- Merri Creek and Environs Strategy 2009-2014
- Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Action Plan
- Activity Centre Structure Plans and Place Action Plans for Coburg, Brunswick and Glenroy Activity Centres
- The Neighbourhood Centres Strategy 2016 (relates to the 12 Neighbourhood Activity Centres across Moreland)
- Moreland Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-2018
- Moreland Play Strategy 2016-2026
- Moreland Urban Forest Strategy 2017-2027
- Moonee Ponds Creek Action Plan 2011-2016
- Edgars Creek Conservation and Development Plan 2013-2023
- Westbreen Creek Parklands – An Environmental Park
- Moonee Ponds and Merri Creek Resting Places Strategy 2002
- Merri Creek Trail Review 2007
- Merri Creek Trail Signage Strategy 2007
- Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan 2016

There are multiple open space projects identified in the above plans and strategies that will contribute to improving open space across Moreland.

3.0 Proactive use of the Open Space Fund to increase open space

The need for a proactive approach to improving open space

Moreland is undergoing a period of rapid growth and it is important that Council's investment in a high quality open space network keeps pace with this growth. Population projections for the City of Moreland prepared by i.d Consulting (May 2017) indicate that Moreland is projected to have a total population of 228,807 by 2036. This represents an increase of 48.3% between 2011 and 2036, or an additional 74,562 residents.

In this context of strong and continued population growth across all suburbs (with the exception of Gowanbrae), it is appropriate that Council's policies and strategies seek to proactively create new open space in areas that have the least access to open space.

The focus on open space gap areas

Providing for appropriate access to open space is a key tenant of Moreland's open space policy framework. Developing additional parks within open space gap areas will ensure that as Moreland's population increases, access to parks will improve and keep pace with development.

The MOSS contains the goal (Goal 1) to *Provide parks close to home*, and seeks to achieve this through a strategy to *improve the provision and access to functional open space, within designated principal, major, neighbourhood and local activity centres, by providing high quality open space within 300m safe walking distance of the activity centre*. Further to this strategy, the MOSS recommends *that open space is provided within 500m of all residential properties, and 300m to all activity centres*. In response to the fact that Activity Centres will see the most dense forms of development and highest population growth, the MOSS requires a *greater provision* of open space within walking distance to Activity Centres (under MOSS policy, more parks will be provided in and around Activity Centres as properties within Activity Centres must be within 300m of a park, rather than 500m for the rest of Moreland).

These gap areas will become a greater issue as population continues to grow and housing densities continue to increase. Gap areas identified in accordance with MOSS policy are a priority for open space fund expenditure as these locations currently do not have walkable access to open space, of any size or type within the distance that the MOSS identifies to be appropriate. This is a particular concern for Council due to the high rate of growth in the residential population right across Moreland, particularly within activity centres.

Creation and improvement of open space in open space gap areas improves the open space provision not just for existing residents, but also for future residents. Additional population growth where there is a gap in open space already, will exacerbate an existing shortfall in open space, and therefore must be a priority for Council to address and a priority for open space fund expenditure.

The MOSS recognises that there are social, environmental and economic benefits of open space, especially when provided in close proximity to residential dwellings. The MOSS notes that the Municipal Health Survey conducted in 2010 revealed that 'inconvenient or not close to home' was the second highest reason why survey respondents don't use Moreland's open space. As such, although access is not the only determinate in ensuring open space meets Moreland's needs (the MOSS recognises that quality and diversity in open space provision is also integral to ensuring the

open space needs of Moreland's diverse population are being met) proximity is a very important and influential determinant, and one that is expressed as a key priority in all of Moreland's policy framework.

Moreland's additional open space needs

A focus on open space fund expenditure within gap areas does not mean that Council cannot make decisions to undertake purchases or expenditure on other open space needs outside of the gap areas. However, to achieve the Council Plan Strategic Objective Progressive City – Key Priority 4 - *To Create at least two new parks, in areas with the lowest access to open space*, it may be considered necessary to prioritise gap areas at least until 2021.

Any decision to allocate funding in accordance with any strategy or policy outside of the gap areas will need to be considered against whether this will impact on achievement of the Council Plan Strategic Objective, Key Priority 4, and have regard to the findings of the monitoring of the open space fund income and expenditure established in this Framework.

The role of the Open Space Fund

The open space contribution is received as a result of new subdivisions creating increased need for open space. The Park Close to Home Background Report provides an overview of the open space fund, how and why it is collected and the requirements for its expenditure. It also includes historic information on past income and expenditure, and future predicted income.

Moreland's open space fund can be spent on all eligible open space projects that either create or improve open space within Moreland.

Projects identified within the multiple policies and strategies relevant to open space within Moreland are eligible for funding through the open space fund. There is no requirement to spend the fund within the suburb or area from which it was collected. There is also no requirement to allocate the fund to solely new open space that would service the 'future' population or be needed only as a result of increased population.

The priority established in Council Policy to address the open space gap areas and provide open space that is accessible, and in areas that have the lowest access to open space, is suitable justification for the open space fund to be prioritised on addressing gaps in open space provision. This Framework provides the methodology to assist Council to undertake expenditure of the open space fund in a strategic and proactive manner, to ensure the open space gap areas are addressed as a matter of urgency, as land prices and population continue to rise.

4.0 The Park Close to Home – A Framework to Fill Open Space Gaps

Framework Purpose

The 'Park Close to Home: A Framework to fill open space gaps' has been prepared to assist Council to improve access to open space across the City and provide at least two new parks in the areas that have the lowest access to open space.

This Framework will assist Council to make more strategic and informed decisions about expenditure of the open space fund in order to achieve this objective.

The Framework establishes a methodology to identify the high and medium priority gap areas. By focusing purchase of land for open space within these areas, Council will be making more strategic and informed decisions about expending the fund to provide open space to those areas that have the lowest access.

The open space fund, as of October 2017, contains \$41 million. Now is the time to undertake proactive expenditure of this fund, as land prices are continuing to rise and Moreland's population continues to grow. The Framework seeks to ensure that income to the fund and expenditure is generally aligned, and that this expenditure is prioritised towards acquisition of open space within those gap areas identified to have the highest need.

The Framework

The Park Close to Home Framework will guide Fund expenditure to provide new open space to address open space gap areas.

Figure 1: The Framework



Following the seven steps of the Framework will ensure that Council is identifying its areas of highest need for open space and proactively identifying appropriate land to address the gap areas. The process for the future conversion of acquired land to open space is also set out within the Framework. Significant monitoring and reporting requirements for the Framework will ensure its successful implementation.

Framework Overview

This section provides an overview of the 7 steps within the Framework. See the Park Close to Home Background Report for a detailed explanation of each step.

Step 1: Identify and quantify open space gaps

Step 1 of the Framework is undertaken in two parts, they are Part 1: Identify Open Space Gaps, and Part 2: Quantify Open Space Gaps.

Part 1 is to identify the open space gap areas, the areas within an Activity Centre (Neighbourhood and Major Activity Centres) that are more than 300m from any open space (any type, size, use), and the areas outside of an Activity Centre that are more than 500m from open space. This is based on a walkable distance, and the standards for open space access set out in the MOSS.

Part 2 is then to quantify the gap areas by identifying the number of properties within them. Each gap area can then be given a label, to enable Step 2 to be undertaken.

Step 2: Identify medium and high priority open space gap areas

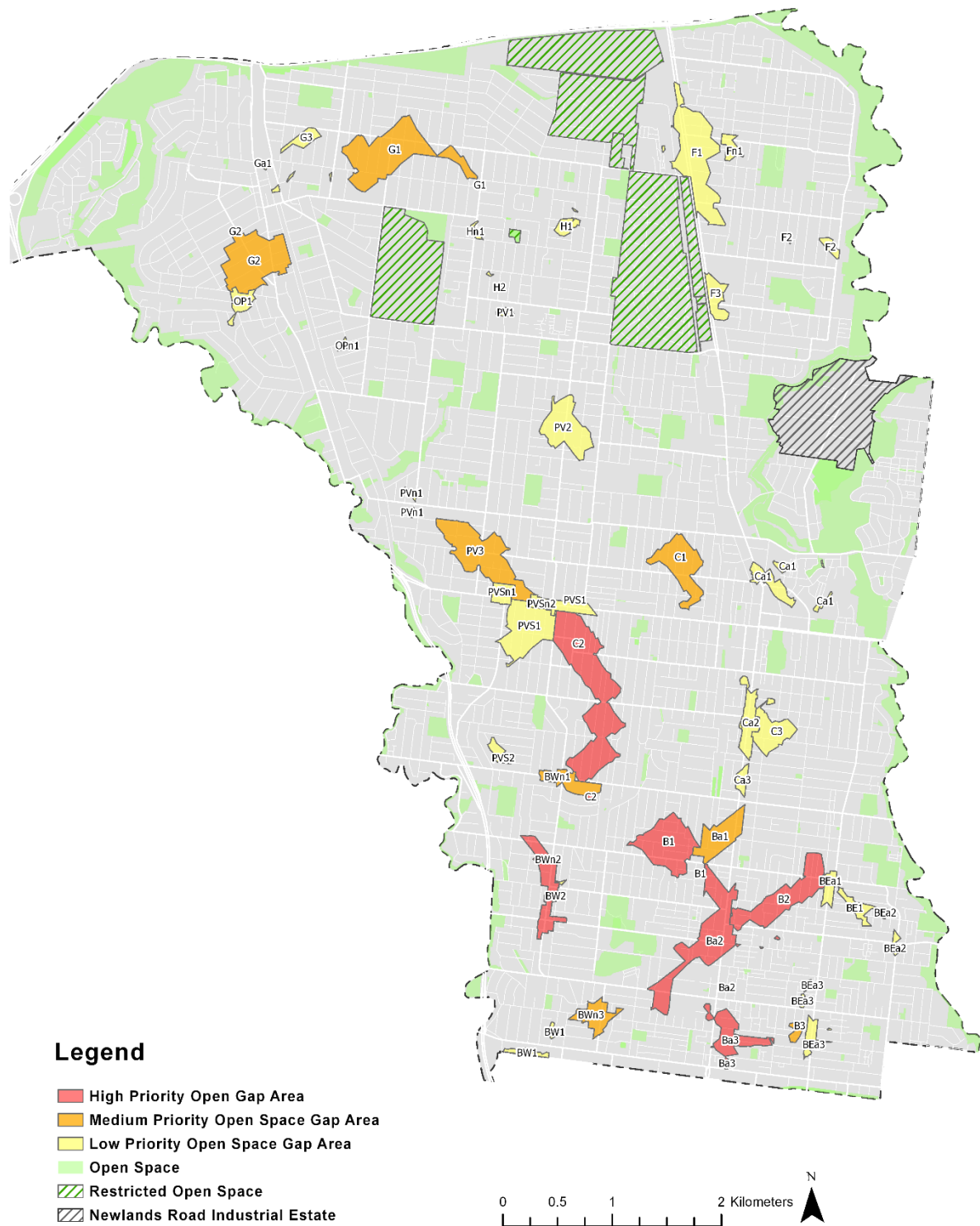
This step ensures an informed and strategic approach to the purchase of land, as it identifies the gap areas most in need of being addressed.

The gap areas have been prioritised with a scoring system that has regard to the number of properties within the gap area, estimated population within the gap area, population forecasts, existing open space service levels, and dwelling densities within and around the gap areas. A high, medium and low priority category is given to all gap areas based on a weighted scoring system.

The highest priority gap areas are those that are the largest (in terms of population and number of properties), have the least access to open space within the suburb, have the highest population growth forecast and have the highest density of development. The Background Report provides the data for all gap areas across Moreland and identifies their score and priority.

Map 1 illustrates the gap areas across Moreland identified in November 2017 in accordance with Step 1 and Step 2.

Map 1: Open Space Gap Areas (including priority)



Step 3: Identify ways to address the gap area and potential land for purchase

This step provides an assessment of each gap area to identify opportunities to address the gap area, with a focus on identifying land to purchase for future conversion into open space.

The focus of this Framework is the proactive purchasing of land to create new open space to address a gap area. Other means of addressing gap areas will also be explored where purchasing is not the most appropriate option. Other options include shared use agreements, conversion of other existing Council/State agency owned land, improving access of existing open space, and others.

A set of criteria has been established to identify potential sites to convert for open space within or adjacent to each gap area, and this criteria will inform the identification of appropriate sites to pursue for a negotiated purchase. Other avenues of acquisition, such as purchasing land on the open market or seeking a land rather than cash contribution as part of a redevelopment of a large site will also be pursued where appropriate.

It is necessary for the output of this step in the Framework to remain an internal working document. Public release of preferred site details may effect property values and unnecessarily cause concern to current landowners. Although preferred sites for acquisition will be identified through this framework, and their purchase will be pursued, it is a key tenant of this framework that any land acquisition would be through a negotiated process. There will be multiple sites identified within each gap area, to ensure there are options available to Council. If the potential sites were not kept confidential, it may unnecessarily burden land with some uncertainty. Furthermore, ongoing review of potential sites will occur to ensure that as land appropriate for open space is identified within gap areas it can be considered for negotiated purchase.

Step 4: Negotiate purchase of land

Focusing on high and medium priority gap areas, the purchase of the land identified at Step 3 of the Framework will be pursued.

Step 5: Consider how and when acquired land will be developed

Following the acquisition of land, existing parks surrounding the gap areas will be reviewed to identify the best open space outcome for the area, and identify how the land acquired should be developed to serve the needs of the gap area and wider population.

Step 6: Plan, design consult and then convert land to open space

The open space fund will be utilised where eligible to fund the planning, design and consultation on the new open space proposed. Following this process, the land will be converted to open space.

Land will be rezoned into a Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) where appropriate and processes to ensure the land is appropriately reserved on title as an open space (Reserve) or appropriate determination will also be pursued.

Step 7: Budget for new open space maintenance

Appropriate maintenance funding will be established by ensuring the yearly budget review cycle includes funding to maintain newly created open space areas, with funding to be obtained from rates base, aligned so that it is available at the practical completion of the project.

5.0 Framework Implementation

A whole of council approach to implementation

The implementation of the Framework will be led by Councils Property and Open Space Units in accordance with the governance structure to be established (see Action Plan Item 1). A new position may be created and funded through the open space fund, to ensure appropriate resources are available to facilitate the purchase of sites across the high and medium priority gap areas.

An integrated 'whole of Council' approach will be taken to decision making processes on open space acquisition and creation. Those involved will include the Manager Open Space and Street Cleansing, Manager Property and Governance, Property Coordinator and Unit Manager Open Space Design and Development. Senior Executive Management, including the CEO, will be engaged in decision making as required.

Officers across Council within the Transport, Property, Open Space, Finance, Urban Design, Planning and Places units will also be involved to undertake the background work and research in relation to either land purchase or conversion to open space as required.

Monitoring the Open Space Fund and Framework Outcomes

Establishing ongoing monitoring of the income and expenditure of the open space fund will inform an understanding of whether the Framework is being implemented successfully. Monitoring will inform future updates and review of the Framework to ensure that the Framework is responsive to how successful council has been in acquiring land and closing gap areas. The Background Report at Part 3 sets out in detail the items that will be monitored in relation to the income and expenditure of fund.

Annual Reporting and Action Planning

The results of the monitoring detailed above will be collated and reported to Council on an annual basis. Where the information is not appropriate to be reported publicly (in accordance with either legislative requirements or to ensure a confidential process for land acquisition) reporting of these items will remain confidential.

Along with the annual report, an annual Action Plan will also be prepared, to be adopted by Council as part of the annual report. Annual action planning allows for flexible implementation of the Framework that will respond to how successful Council has been in acquiring land, and the current balance of the open space fund. The 2018 Action Plan is adopted as part of the Park Close to Home adoption and is included at Section 6.

Reviewing the Framework

The Annual Report prepared on the Framework will make a recommendation on whether the Framework should be updated or reviewed. A review may be recommended to ensure a more effective process for closure of gap areas, or to ensure that gap areas are re-prioritised when gaps are closed.

Consideration will be given to how the community can be involved in any review.

There will be milestones that do not conform with the annual framework Reporting that may also trigger the need for the Framework to be reviewed, such as a review after first two land acquisitions

and first two open space developments (when realistic costing and timeframes will be known) and after gap areas have been closed.

Concurrent to the purchase of land and conversion of land in accordance with this Framework, Council's Open Space Design and Development Unit, along with Council's Recreation Unit, will undertake a holistic review of Moreland's open space needs. The outcomes of this work may inform revisions to the priorities for open space creation and land acquisition and as such may trigger the need to review and update the Framework.

This work will include a review of matters such as:

- The quality of existing open spaces across Moreland, and identification of improvements to existing open spaces to increase their use/value.
- Identification of particular types of open space (e.g. Sport, Access way /Trail, Social/Family) that are currently existing within Moreland, and any gaps in provision of certain types.
- Identification of any existing open space within Moreland that does not serve an area well and is located in an area with excellent access to open space, that could potentially be used for an alternate Council purpose or considered for disposal with funds being allocated to open space purchase or improvements.
- Identification of improved pedestrian links that could be developed to improve access to existing open space (including consideration of how laneways could be made more accessible).
- Revisiting the open space typologies included in the MOSS, to consider creation of new typologies in addition to the existing Regional/District/Local typologies (e.g. create new types to cover smaller open space, such as Neighbourhood, Small Local and Local Linkage types).
- The role of shared use agreements, Section 173 agreements, lease agreements, committees of management in open space creation to fill gap areas and meet other open space goals.
- Potential identification of areas across Moreland where a land open space contribution is preferred over a cash contribution.
- Prioritisation and determination of whether the PRRLF will be called upon to fund open space projects within Activity Centres, and the cost and timing of these projects.
- Review of the total PRRLF income received from land within industrial zones, and whether the Framework should be reviewed to consider prioritising open space gap areas located within industrially zoned areas based on an assessment of open space needs in these areas.

6.0 The Park Close to Home Action Plan 2018

Action Planning is integral to ensuring the goals and outcomes of the Framework will be achieved. Action Plans will be prepared for each calendar year, rather than for multiple years, so that action planning can take into account the monitoring and reporting outcomes of the previous year, and the current balance of the open space fund. This will ensure actions are established that are realistic, based on available resourcing and the purchasing success rate achieved in the previous year.

This Action Plan identifies the key tasks, responsibilities and timeframes for the first year of this exciting and ambitious program to close Moreland's open space gaps.

Park Close to Home – Action Plan – Year 1 – January to December 2018

No.	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Output
1	Establish ongoing governance structure for implementation of the Framework	December 2017	Lead: Strategy Unit	Governance structure established
2	Confirm resource requirements to implement the Framework	Early 2018	Lead: Property Unit	Resources confirmed
3	Update the Strategic Framework Plan at Clause 21.02 Vision of the Municipal Strategic Statement to remove the 'priority areas for park provision' and replace with the high and medium priority gap areas	Planning Scheme Review Report to be completed in 2018, (Report to identify timeframe for Amendments to implement Review)	Lead: Amendments Unit	Incorporate into Planning Scheme Review
4	Establish and implement a monitoring and reporting process, including Annual Report and Action Plan preparation	Early 2018	Confirmed following completion of Action 1 and 2	Reporting process for income and expenditure of the fund
5	Complete identification of preferred sites for purchase or other action to address gap areas. Undertake purchase of land.	Early 2018	Lead: Property Unit Support: Open Space Unit	List of sites to pursue proactive purchase within high and medium priority gap areas, and purchase and negotiations underway
6	Convert land to parks	Ongoing	Lead: Open Space Unit/Urban Design Unit	Design, consult and construct as opportunities arise.

No.	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Output
7	Undertake further strategic work to understand open space needs (As identified in Section 5 – Reviewing the Framework)	Ongoing	Lead: Open Space Unit Support: Recreation Unit	Strategic work ongoing