

Attachment A1

**Draft Open Space, Sport and Recreation
Needs Strategy 2026 – Volume 1, p1-61**

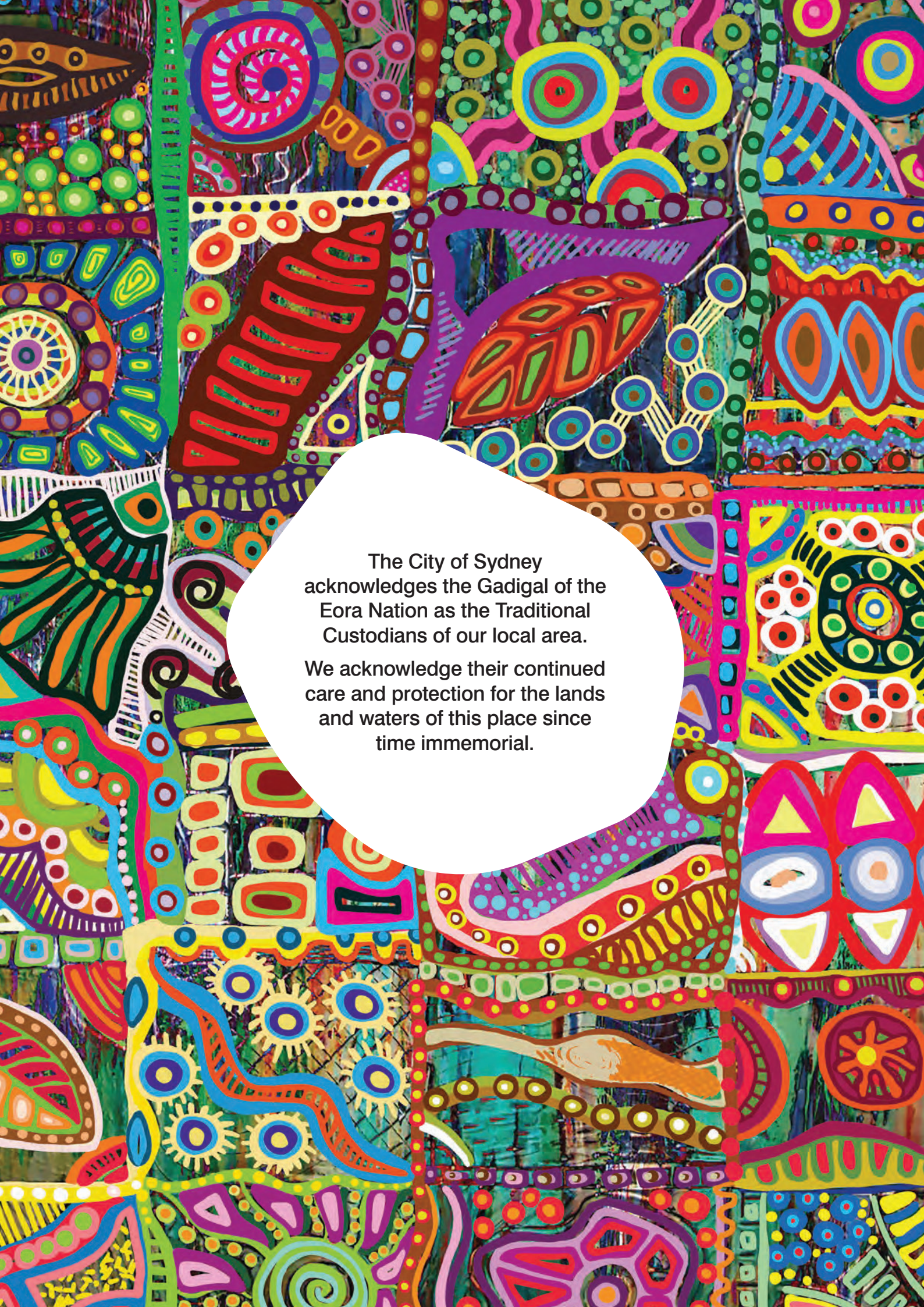
VOLUME 1 |

CITY OF SYDNEY 

Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Strategy 2026

DRAFT





The City of Sydney acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of our local area. We acknowledge their continued care and protection for the lands and waters of this place since time immemorial.

We acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of our local area.

Images on the front cover (left to right):

Two women looking out at Sydney Park wetlands

Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Volleyball players at Perry Park

Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

DRAFT

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Message from the Lord Mayor



Sydney is a city that takes great pride in its open spaces – the parks, gardens, playing fields, recreation facilities and waterfront places that give our city its unique character and provide opportunities for people to come together, play, relax and enjoy the outdoors.

Since 2004, we have transformed Sydney's public spaces and delivered an extraordinary program of investment in our parks, open spaces, sport and recreation facilities. We have created new parks, revitalised existing spaces, expanded opportunities for sport and play, and opened up more of our city for people to enjoy. These achievements have helped make Sydney a greener, healthier and more liveable city, and we should be proud of what we have accomplished together.

But our work does not stop here.

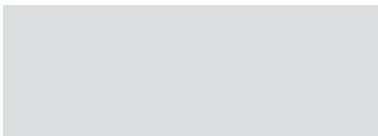
As Sydney continues to grow and change, we need to make sure our open spaces and recreation facilities keep pace with the needs of our residents, workers and visitors. Our *Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Strategy* sets out our vision for the next decade – ensuring that everyone can access high-quality places to play sport, exercise, connect with nature, spend time with family and friends, and enjoy Sydney's wonderful outdoor lifestyle.

Over the next 10 years, we are excited about the opportunities ahead. We will continue to invest in new and improved open spaces and recreation facilities, make better use of the spaces we already have, and explore innovative ways to create more opportunities for people to be active and enjoy the outdoors in a growing global city.

This Strategy is about more than providing parks and sporting facilities. It is about creating a city where people can thrive – where children can play, communities can connect, people can be active and everyone can enjoy the extraordinary natural and public spaces that make Sydney such a special place to live, work and visit.

We have achieved so much since 2004. Now, with this Strategy, we have an exciting opportunity to build on that legacy and deliver an even better open space, sport and recreation offering for Sydney over the next 10 years.

I look forward to seeing our city continue to grow, play and flourish.



Clover Moore AO
Lord Mayor of Sydney



Sydney Park
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney



Glebe Foreshore Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Executive summary

The City of Sydney’s open space, sport and recreation network provides essential infrastructure by supporting health, wellbeing, social connection, environmental sustainability and quality of life.

Population growth, increasing density and changing recreation patterns and climate change are placing greater pressure on the network, while opportunities for new open space are becoming increasingly scarce. This strategy provides a framework to respond to these challenges and meet the needs of current and future communities.

Purpose

This Strategy updates the City’s 2016 *Open Space and Recreation Needs Study* and builds on more than 20 years of investment in parks, public spaces and recreation facilities.

It is intended to guide the future planning, provision and management of the City’s open space, sport and recreation network.

The Strategy sets out the directions, priorities and actions required to respond to a growing, denser and more diverse city, addressing identified gaps and ensuring public spaces continue to support community wellbeing, liveability and environmental resilience.

Volume 2 presents the research, analysis and technical assessment that informs the strategic directions and recommendations contained in Volume 1.

The challenge

The City’s open space and recreation network is under increasing pressure:

Growing demand

The residential population is projected to exceed 300,000 people by 2046. More residents, workers and visitors will increase demand for parks, recreation facilities and public spaces for a diverse range of recreational activities.

Limited space

Opportunities to acquire land for new parks are increasingly scarce in a dense urban environment. Most existing parks are relatively small, limiting their capacity to accommodate diverse activities and increasing levels of use.

Climate pressures

Rising temperatures, extreme heat and changing weather patterns are affecting how parks and recreation facilities are designed, managed and used. Parks play a critical role in cooling the city, supporting biodiversity and improving environmental resilience.

Equity and inclusion

Parks and facilities must be inclusive, accessible and welcoming for all people.

The City's response

Strategic directions



1 Resilience

Deliver climate-ready parks that support cooling, biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

- increase tree canopy and shade.
- Improve environmental performance and biodiversity.
- Deliver climate responsive park design.
- Support cooling and recreation in a warmer climate including extended park use into the evening.



2 Equity and inclusion

Provide parks, sport and recreation opportunities that enable all people to participate with dignity, inclusion and accessibility.

- First Nations recognition and community involvement
- Accessible and inclusive spaces for people with disability
- Safe and welcoming spaces
- Free and affordable recreation opportunities



3 Quality

Grow, improve and connect the network to meet the needs of a growing city.

- Deliver new parks and public spaces.
- Expand recreation infrastructure and facilities.
- Upgrade existing parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities
- Improve connections between parks, neighbourhoods and key destinations



4 Flexibility

Create adaptable and multi-functional spaces that respond to changing recreation trends and community needs.

- Provide multi-purpose spaces that support a range of activities.
- Increase opportunities for informal and social recreation
- Recognise streets as a recreation resource for walking, running and cycling.
- Support changing participation patterns and emerging recreation trends.

Service levels

We will work towards a consistent level of access across the network for open space and recreation facilities. This includes:

Access to open space

- A park close to home within 5-minute walk (300–400m)
- Neighbourhood parks within 10-minute walk (600–800m)
- District parks and sports fields within 15-minute walk (900–1,200m)

Access to recreation facilities

- Outdoor fitness and recreation within 10-minute walk (600–800m) of most residents
- Multi purpose courts within 10-minute walk (600–800m walk) of most residents
- Sportsfields within a 900–1,200m walk
- Playgrounds - at least one playground with 5minute walk (300–400m) of most residents
- Dog off-leash areas within 10-minute walk, (600–800m walk) including access to larger spaces
- Evening parks - 10-minute walk, (600–800m) of most residents.

These service levels will be used to guide planning, identify gaps and support equitable provision across the City.

The Sydney Plan

The Sydney Plan introduces new metropolitan benchmarks for access to open space and establishes the Blue-Green Grid as a strategic framework for a connected network of parks, waterways and active recreation corridors across Sydney. The City will continue to assess the accessibility, distribution and adequacy of open space and recreation infrastructure to identify gaps and inform future planning and investment priorities. The Plan also foreshadows the development of local government area-specific provision benchmarks, which the City will help shape and apply in collaboration with the NSW Government.

Outcomes

This strategy will deliver:

- More parks and public spaces;
- Increased recreation capacity across the network;
- More equitable access to open space and recreation opportunities;
- Climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable parks;
- Better connections to improve access;
- Inclusive and welcoming public spaces; and
- An adaptable network that responds to changing community needs.

How this strategy will be delivered

Delivery will be achieved through:

- Targeted capital investment and renewal programs;
- Planning controls and developer contributions;
- Partnerships with State Government, institutions and private providers;
- Improved asset management and defined service levels; and
- Ongoing advocacy and collaboration.

Supporting evidence

This strategy is informed by detailed analysis of:

- population growth and demographics;
- open space and recreation facility provision, utilisation and distribution;
- recreation trends;
- community feedback and priorities.

Detailed evidence, data and technical analysis are provided in Volume 2.

The City's response

Key projects and initiatives

- 22.7ha to be added to the open space network that will include 21 new parks and spaces*.
- A new Town Hall square;
- Transformation of Wentworth Park;
- A new sports precinct in Alexandria;
- Huntley Street indoor recreation centre - 4 indoor courts; (completed);
- Renewal of 10 existing large parks including Belmore Park;
- ongoing renewal program of small local and neighbourhood parks with over 30 parks currently listed with more to be added in coming years
- new tennis courts and amenities at Alexandria Park;
- Develop an inclusive playground network;
- Progress delivery of new mountain bike facility at St Peters;
- Establish an evening park network;
- Deliver stage 2 City Farm;
- Continue environmental initiatives for climate resilient parks; and
- More seating and amenities across the network;

Increase sports facility provision including:

- 3 additional sportsfields*;
- 7 indoor courts;
- 9 outdoor courts
- 8 additional playgrounds;
- 4 additional outdoor fitness stations;
- Aquatic facilities renewal program;
- Sportsfield amenity building upgrades at Jubilee Oval, Waterloo Oval, Alexandria Park; and
- Continue rolling out the cycle network and street pedestrian improvements to support walking, running and cycling.

* includes other providers



Artist impression of the new square at Town Hall showing everyday activity - indicative only subject design development and approval.
Image: Artist / City of Sydney



Artist impression of Wentworth Park - indicative only subject to design development and approval.
Image: Artist / City of Sydney



Building on 20 years of transformation

The City of Sydney has transformed its open space and recreation network over the past two decades but continued population growth means further investment is needed to meet future community needs.

A strong foundation

For more than two decades we have worked alongside its community to transform the open space and recreation network, responding to the needs of a growing and diverse population.

Through capital works, park management, and advocacy, we've delivered new parks, transformed streets, upgraded existing facilities, and embedded sustainability measures that provide lasting environmental and social benefits.

Key transformation areas

- More open space
- Existing park renewals and improvements
- More recreation and sport facilities
- More support facilities
- Streets for recreation
- Environmental initiatives
- Community involvement
- Park management

Continuing the transformation

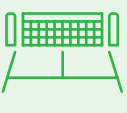
This Strategy builds on these achievements and provides a framework for the next phase of investment. Its focus is not only on creating new parks and recreation facilities, but also on protecting what has been achieved, improving existing assets, increasing capacity, and ensuring the network continues to meet the needs of future communities.

Image (previous page): **Sydney Park water re-use**
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

What has been delivered since 2004

	New open space • 42.6ha added to the open space network over 70 new parks and spaces* • Open space area increased from 14.8% (2016) to 15.4 % of our area
	Existing parks and spaces • over 200 park renewals and improvement projects
	Aquatics • 2 new facilities – Gunyama Park and Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre • Full replacement Prince Alfred Park pool • Renewal of Andrew Boy Charlton Pool
	Indoor recreation • 2 new indoor recreation centres providing 8 indoor multi purpose courts • Gym facilities at Juanita Nielsen Centre and Pymont Community Centre
	Sportsfields • 4 new sportsfields
	Playgrounds • 16 additional playgrounds • ongoing renewal of existing playgrounds
	Skate • 2 destination facilities • Sydney Park childrens bike track

* includes other providers

	Outdoor gyms • 13 outdoor gyms
	Outdoor courts • 7 outdoor courts
	Streets for recreation • cycle network rollout • streets improvements for better walking and running
	Environmental • increase in tree canopy • increase in habitat • park lighting converted to LED • water and energy saving infrastructure • City farm established at Sydney Park
	Support facilities • new public toilets and amenties • more seating, shelters, bbqs and picnic facilities
	Park management • ongoing delivery of a comprehensive park and recreation facility management and maintenance program that supports safe, accessible and welcoming environments for community use.

New open space

Selected delivered projects include:



The Drying Green
Photo: Abril Felman / City of Sydney



North Rosebery Park
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney



Harold Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney



Wimbo Park
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney

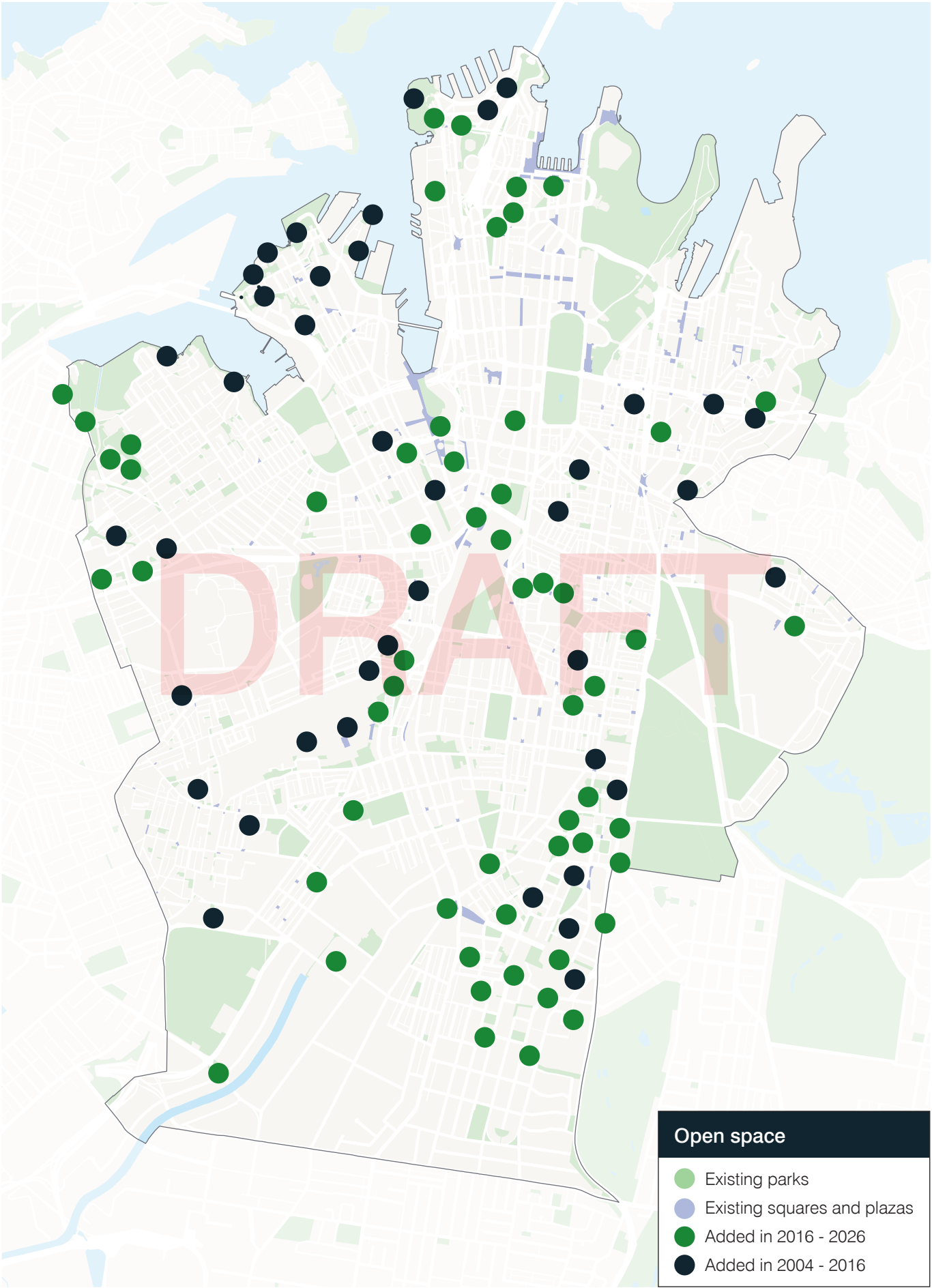


Wulaba Park
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney



Pirrama Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Figure 1: New open space added between 2004 and 2026



Existing park renewals

Selected delivered projects include:



Sydney Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney



Glebe Foreshore
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney



Prince Alfred Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney



Victoria Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

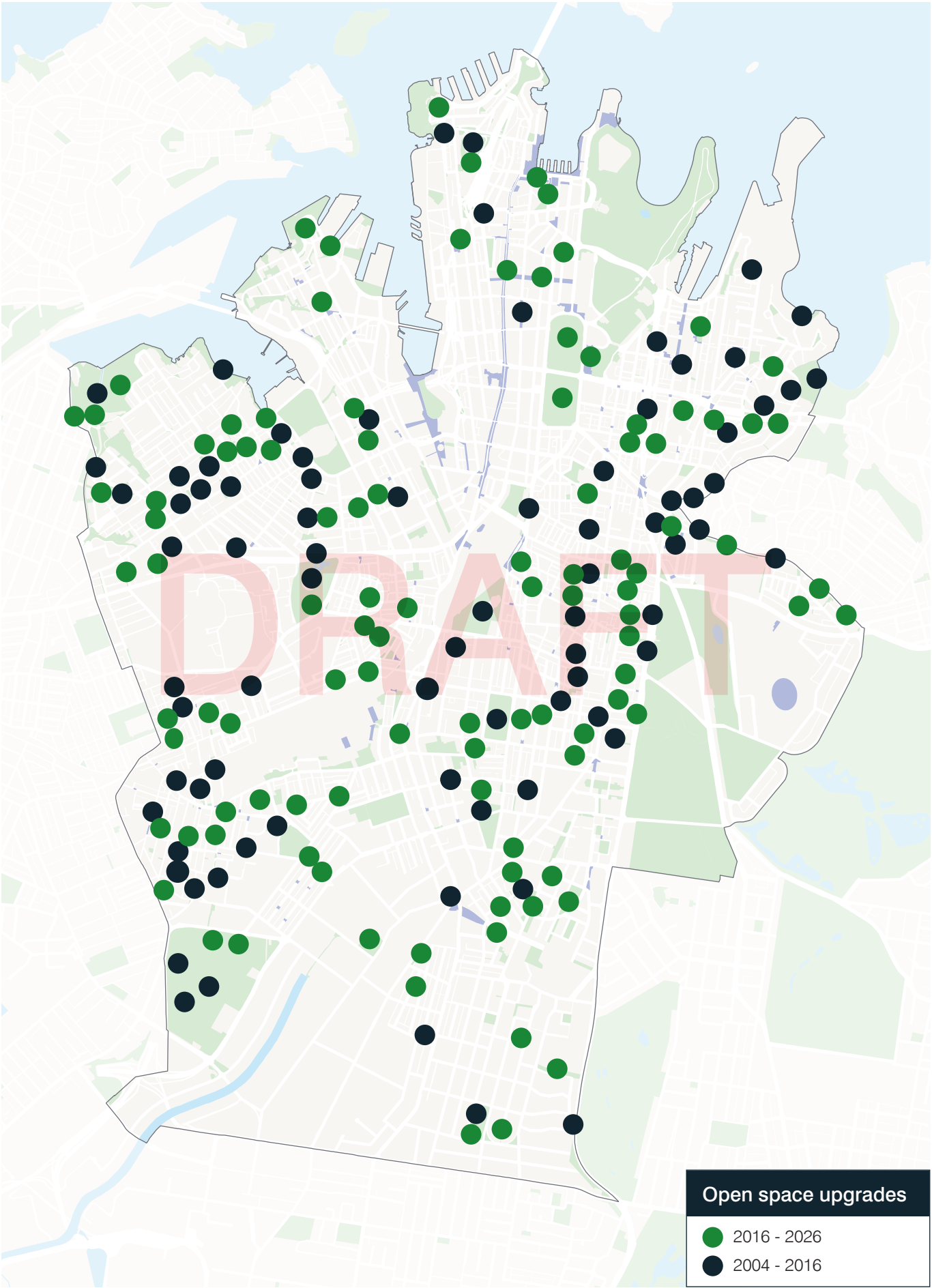


Rushcutters Bay Park
Photo: ??? / City of Sydney



Clyne Reserve
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Figure 2: Open space renewals between 2004 and 2026



New sport and recreation facilities

Selected delivered projects include:



Gunyama Park Aquatic Centre
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney



Perry Park Indoor Recreation Centre
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney



Sydney Park Skate Facility
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney



Observatory Park outdoor gym
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney

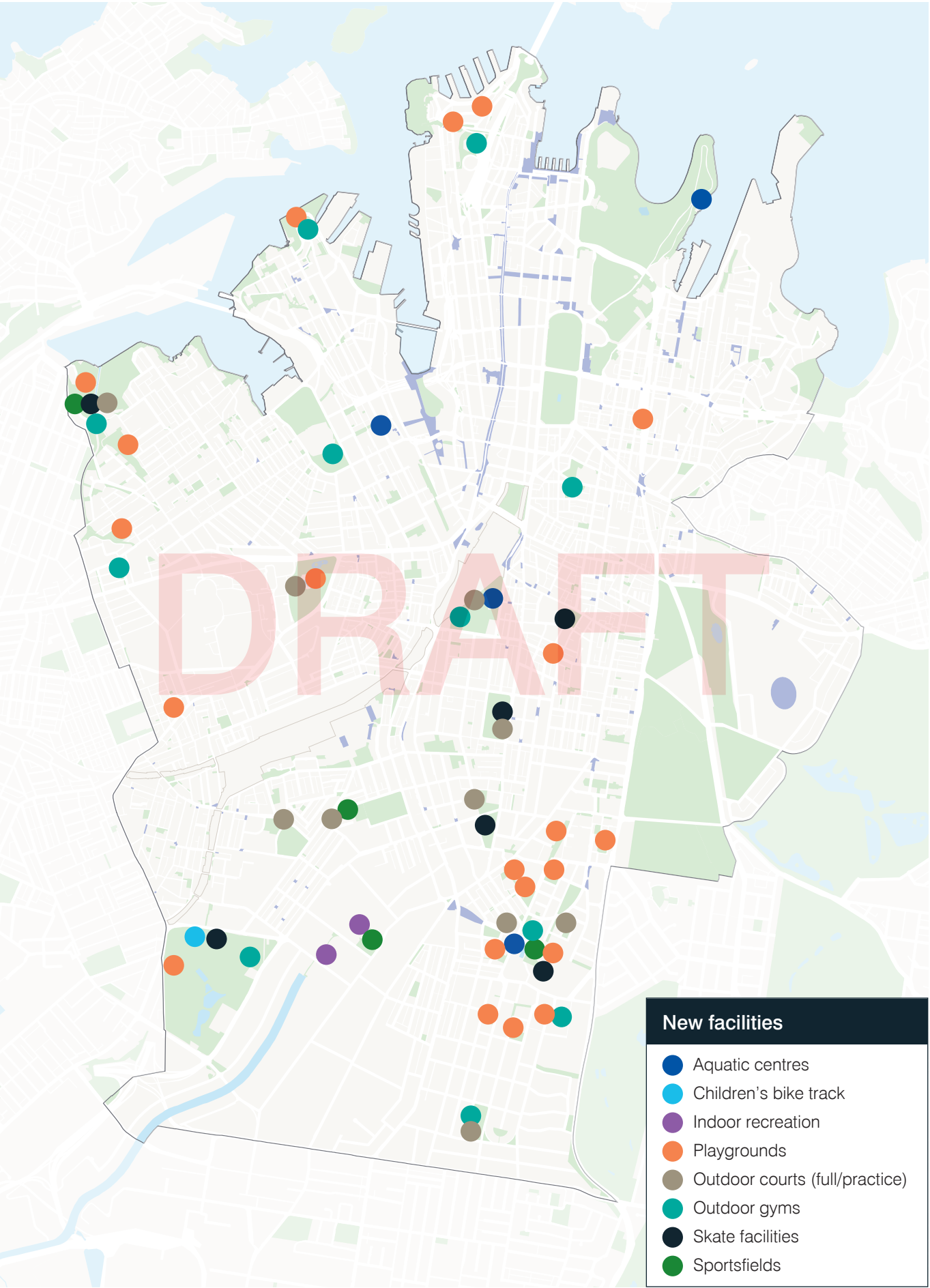


Gunyama Park playground
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney



Perry Park synthetic field
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

Figure 3: New sport and recreation facilities added between 2004 and 2026



Green Square

Green Square is one of Australia’s largest urban renewal projects and is planned to accommodate around 60,000 residents within a high-density urban environment.

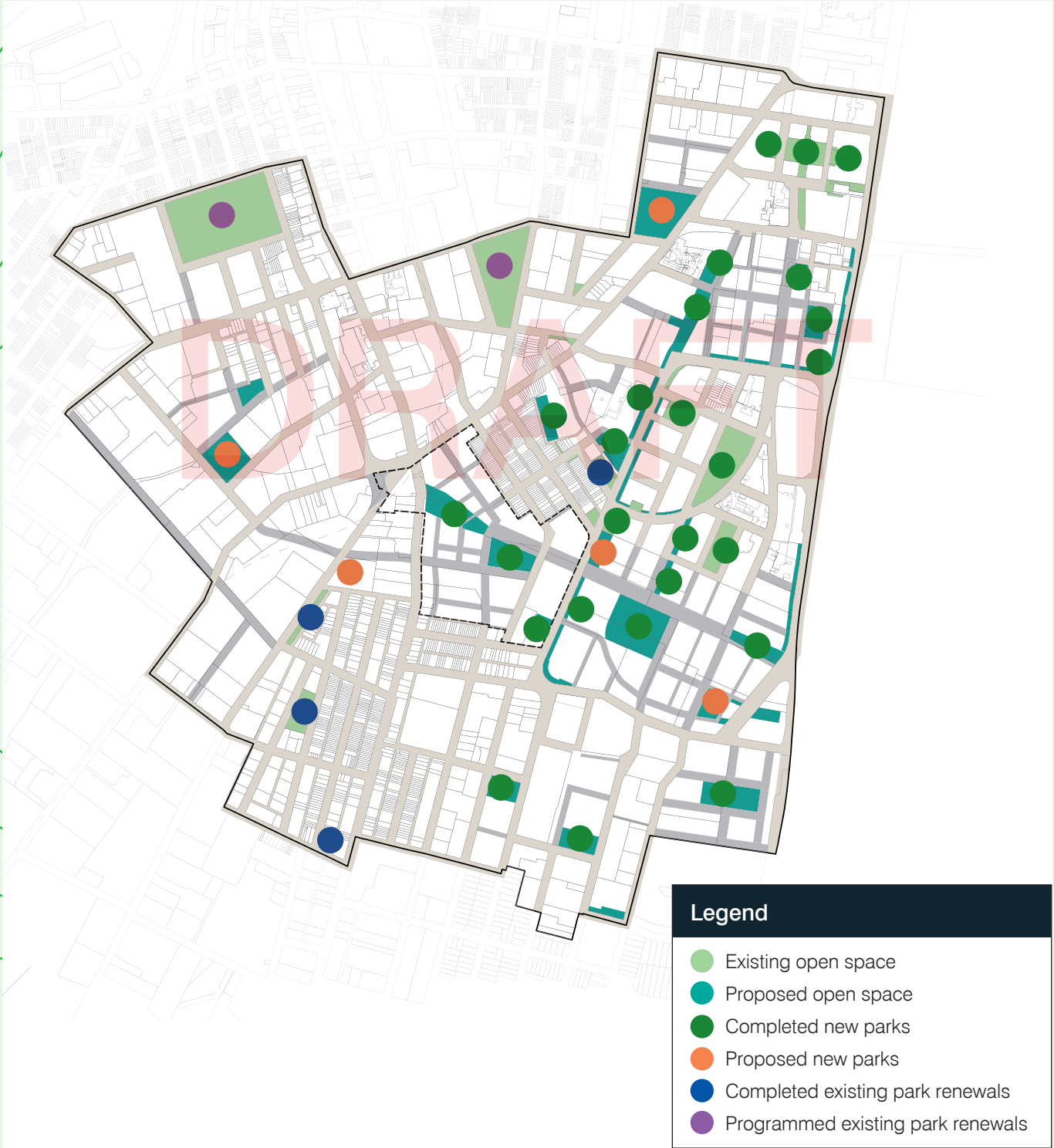


In response to population growth, the City has adopted a dual approach of delivering new parks and public spaces and renewing existing parks and recreation facilities across Green Square. As a result, more than 30 of the 40 parks and public spaces have been delivered, supported by major community infrastructure such as Gunyama Park Aquatic and Recreation Centre and Green Square Library and Plaza.

Together, these investments provide the essential social, recreational and environmental infrastructure needed to support healthy, liveable and connected high-density neighbourhoods. The delivery parks and recreation facilities has been critical in ensuring residents have access to places for recreation, play, social connection and everyday wellbeing, despite limited private open space associated with apartment living.

Green Square
Photo: Adam Hollingworth / City of Sydney

Figure 4: Green Square renewals



Introduction

This open space sport and recreation needs strategy builds on *Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision* by providing a framework to guide the planning, delivery and enhancement of open space, sport and recreation opportunities for current and future communities.

Why update?

Since the previous study was completed in 2016, the City of Sydney has continued to grow and change. We need to consider and respond to those changes.

Population growth and demographic change

Growth, increasing density and changing community characteristics will influence future demand for parks and recreation facilities

An evolving strategic context

New City and State planning strategies require review to ensure future provision aligns with policy directions.

Climate change

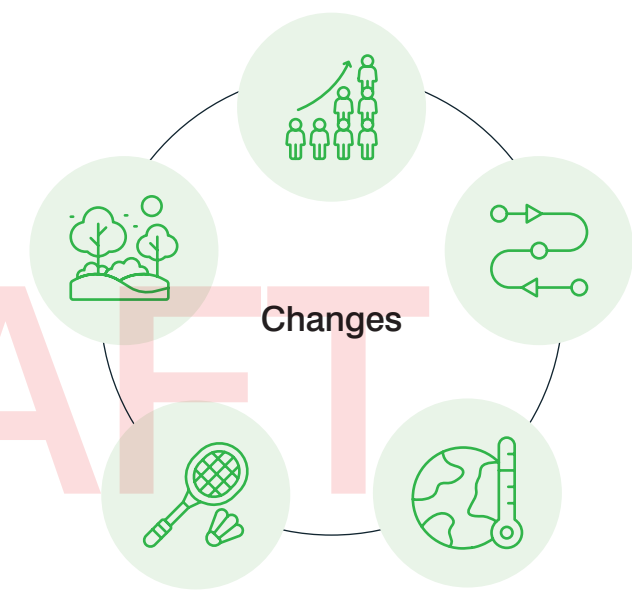
Increasing temperatures and climate risks are influencing how parks and recreation facilities are planned, designed and managed.

Changing recreation trends

Participation is becoming more diverse, with growing demand for informal, flexible and social recreation opportunities.

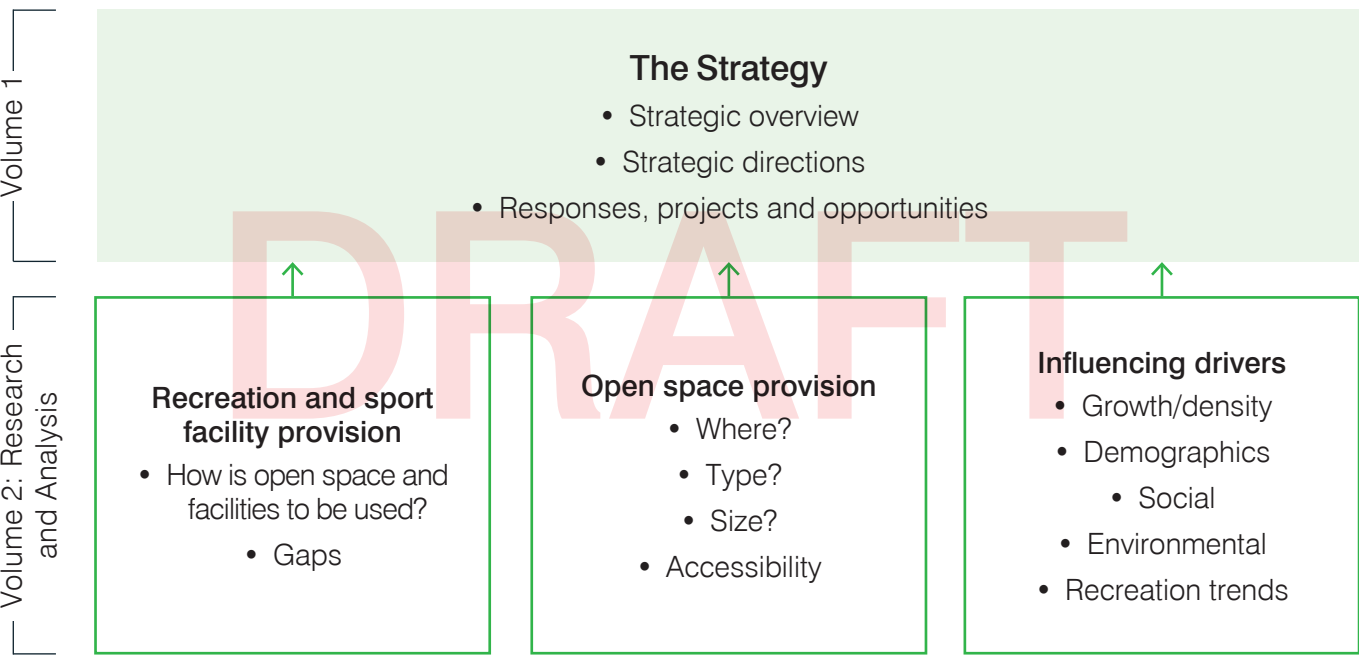
Investment in the network

Significant new parks, public spaces and recreation facilities have been delivered since 2016 and require consideration as part of future planning.



This Strategy responds to the changes that have occurred since 2016 and provides a framework for the next 20 years to guide future planning, investment and decision-making for open space, sport and recreation across the City of Sydney.

Methodology



Objectives

- 1 Protect and enhance the City’s open space and recreation network.
- 2 Respond to population growth, urban density and changing community needs.
- 3 Improve equitable access to open space and recreation opportunities.
- 4 Strengthen climate resilience, biodiversity and environmental outcomes.
- 5 Increase the capacity, quality and flexibility of parks and recreation facilities.
- 6 Guide future planning, investment, advocacy and partnerships.

Strategic context

Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050



Our vision and community strategic plan *Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision* was shaped following extensive consultation with residents, workers, and visitors. It reflects a shared ambition to be green, global and connected

Our vision, supporting policies, strategies and plans all recognise the essential role open space, parks, sport and recreation infrastructure plays in dense urban areas. Our environmental, social planning, and land-use planning strategies and policies have been instrumental in guiding the long-term development and enhancement of our parks and facility networks to ensure Sydney liveability.

By aligning with these broader strategic frameworks, the strategy provides a coordinated approach to protecting, improving and expanding our open space and recreation network for current and future communities.

State Government



At a State level, the *Sydney Plan* is the NSW Government's new 20-year regional land-use strategy guiding housing, jobs, infrastructure, sustainability and liveability across 33 local government areas.

The Sydney Plan treats open space as essential social and environmental infrastructure and it introduces an access-based approach focused on ensuring most residents can walk to usable public open space, while also retaining quantitative requirements for major redevelopment sites. It advances a regional blue-green grid to connect parks, ecological corridors and active-transport links.



The NSW Government has also stated 'well-planned green infrastructure is fundamental in fostering healthy, happy communities that are sustainable now and into the future' (*Greener Places*, 2020).



It has also reinforced the critical role parks and recreation play through its 50-year *Open Space vision* and *Greener Places* framework as well as the establishment of the Greater Sydney Parklands.



The NSW Office of Sport Strategic Plan 2024-2028 focuses on increasing participation in sport and active recreation for all people through inclusive, accessible opportunities across the life course. It emphasises fit-for-purpose and sustainable facilities, sector capability and resilience, and strong partnerships and investment to maximise social, health and economic outcomes across NSW.

Social sustainability and public space

Well designed inclusive and accessible public spaces play a critical role in social sustainability by fostering everyday interactions, supporting community connection, and helping reduce loneliness and isolation.



Free, safe, and inclusive public spaces are vital social infrastructure. They bring people together, supporting everyday interaction, community life, and a sense of belonging. Parks act as urban “living rooms”—welcoming environments for socialising, recreation, and cultural exchange.

As loneliness becomes a growing public health concern parks and public spaces are increasingly important to facilitate social connections.

In the City of Sydney, where nearly 40% of residents live alone and many reside in high-density housing, social isolation is intensified by factors such as a transient population, linguistic diversity, and single-person households. Despite living in close proximity, many residents lack meaningful connection.

Both the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness

(2024) and the NSW Mental Health Commission's *Loneliness in Focus* report (2023) highlight the importance of parks as key social infrastructure. They call for expanded access to quality green spaces as a protective factor against loneliness and a means to foster community cohesion.

The City's *Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan (2018-2028)* and *Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Vision* offer a comprehensive framework to address these pressures.

Targets include increasing community cohesion and social interaction will have increased in the local area. This is based on at least 75% of the local resident population feeling part of the community, 65% agreeing most people can be trusted and 90% saying they can get help from their neighbours.

People enjoying Hyde Park by sitting and walking
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney

Our City

In a high-density city, public open space functions as a shared backyard for residents, workers and visitors.

A growing city

The residential population is projected to exceed 300,000 people by 2046, with significant growth occurring in Green Square, Redfern-Waterloo, Pyrmont and other urban renewal areas. Growth in employment, education and tourism will also increase pressure on the City’s open space and recreation network.

A high-density city

Almost all residents live in medium or high-density housing. For many people, parks, playgrounds, sports fields, recreation centres and public spaces function as an extension of the home—providing places to exercise, relax, socialise and connect with nature.

Diverse communities

The City is home to people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, household types and life stages. Nearly half of residents were born overseas and more than one-third speak a language other than English at home. Recreation preferences and patterns of participation reflect this diversity and continue to evolve.

A city for all ages

While young adults remain the largest age group, growth is forecast across all age groups, including children, families and older residents. This creates demand for parks, recreation opportunities and facilities that are inclusive, accessible and adaptable throughout different stages of life.

More than a residential population

The City’s open space and recreation network serves more than residents alone. Workers, students and visitors contribute significantly to daily demand for parks, public spaces and recreation facilities, particularly in the city centre and major employment precincts.

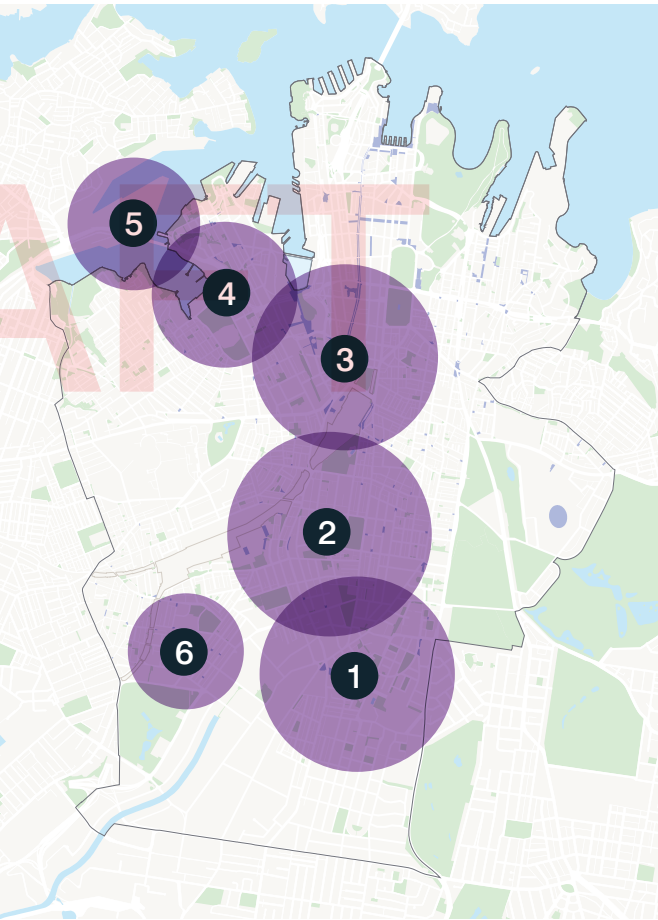
As Sydney grows and becomes more diverse, the demand for high-quality parks, public spaces and recreation facilities will continue to increase. Future planning will need to balance population growth, changing recreation trends, environmental sustainability and equitable access to ensure the network continues to meet the needs of current and future communities.

The City of Sydney is one of Australia’s most densely populated local government areas and a major centre for employment, education, tourism and culture.

Over the next two decades, the city will continue to grow and change. More residents, workers and visitors will increase demand for parks, public spaces, sport and recreation facilities. At the same time, high-density living means many people rely on public open space for recreation, exercise, social connection and everyday wellbeing.

Our communities are diverse, active and increasingly reliant on shared public spaces. These characteristics shape how parks and recreation facilities are used today and influence the types of spaces and experiences that will be needed in the future.

Figure 5: Major urban renewal areas of increased population density



- 1 Green Square Urban Renewal
- 2 Redfern-Waterloo Renewal (Central to Eveleigh)
- 3 Central Sydney and Central Station Precinct
- 4 Pyrmont and Blackwattle Bay
- 5 Bays Precinct
- 6 Ashmore Estate

The role of large parks in a growing city

Large parks are fundamental to a well-connected open space network.

The City's network of local and neighbourhood parks provides many residents with convenient access to open space close to home, supporting everyday recreation and relaxation.

Large parks are essential to the liveability of a dense city. While smaller local parks provide convenient places for everyday recreation and relaxation, larger parks offer something different: space to escape the intensity of urban life, stride out for a long walk or ride, and reconnect with nature.

These parks accommodate a wide range of activities and experiences in a single setting, from walking and cycling loops, sports fields and playgrounds, to picnic areas, quiet gardens and natural habitats. They provide opportunities for exercise, social connection, relaxation and wellbeing that cannot be replicated in smaller spaces.

Large parks are particularly important for residents living in apartments and higher-

density neighbourhoods, where private outdoor space is limited. They serve as the community's shared backyard and provide access to nature, fresh air and open landscapes that support both physical and mental health.

As the city continues to grow, the City will remain focused on improving and enhancing the large parks we already have, including Sydney Park and the Glebe Foreshore Parklands. The cessation of greyhound racing will allow transformation of Wentworth Park into a unified 14ha park, creating a significant new destination for recreation, wellbeing and connection with nature.

With Moore Park South now established, we will continue advocating to the NSW Government for the delivery of high-quality facilities, amenities and landscape improvements that enable people to play, exercise, picnic and enjoy nature, ensuring this significant park fulfils its role as a place to escape the city and connect with the outdoors.



Various visitors walking through Sydney Park
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Communities at a glance

As the City’s population continues to grow, demand on the open space and recreation network will intensify, placing greater capacity pressures across all facilities especially larger parks that provide greater opportunities for active recreation.

	Our residential population will increase by 30.81% from 241,797 in 2025 to 304,049 in 2046.
	Almost half of our residents were born overseas .
	The majority of our residents are young with 56.5% aged between 25 and 49 years of age.
	Around 1 in 5 Australians are living with a disability . Increasing to 50% for people aged over 65. (Australian Bureau of Statistics)
	Our local area is home to one of Sydney’s largest communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples .
	97% of residents of residents live in medium or high-density housing .

	The City’s 2023 Community Wellbeing Survey showed: 25% of young people aged 16–29 years, 21% of people aged 30–39 years, and 22% of people aged 40–49 years, unwillingly limited spending on sports and recreation due to their household financial situation in the past 12 months.
	38% of households are lone-households and 28% are couples without children .
	The number of older residents (65 years and over) will grow by 34.68% from 31,089 in 2025 to 41,807 in 2046.
	The number of children (14 years and under) will grow by 30.35% from 21,477 in 2025 to 27,995 in 2046.

Priority communities

The City identifies several priority groups whose needs must be addressed in open space and recreation planning:

Children and families

Inclusive play spaces, nature-based recreation, shaded seating, picnic facilities and amenities

Older adults

Gentle walking paths, seating, shaded rest areas, low-impact fitness equipment

People with disability

Universal design principles that support accessible and inclusive public spaces

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Culturally inclusive spaces and recreation offer.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Recognition of community and cultural heritage, places to gather and play.

Women and girls

Safe, welcoming spaces with good lighting, visibility, amenities and opportunities for active and social recreation.

Low-income and social housing residents

Free or low-cost recreation, close proximity to facilities.

Young adults and students

As a high proportion of our community young adults will drive demand for active recreation, fitness and social use of parks.

People of diverse sexualities and genders

Safe, inclusive public spaces for social connection.

People experiencing homelessness

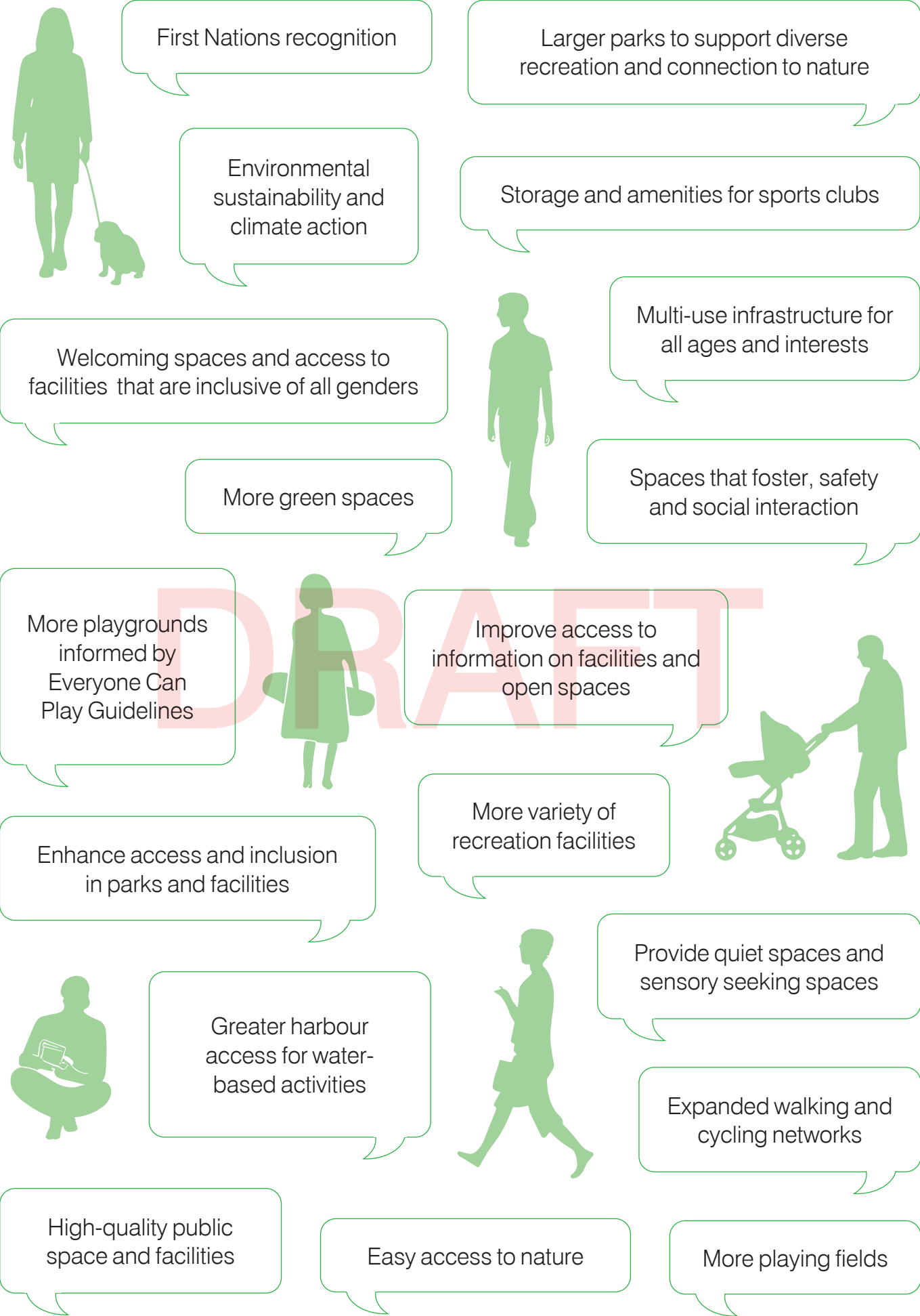
Access to welcoming public spaces with seating, shade, drinking water, and amenities

Key values

Our communities appreciate and understand the value of our open space, sport and recreation networks.

- Community priorities remain focussed on a liveable sustainable and inclusive city that supports diverse communities, offers accessible public spaces and actively addresses the issues of climate change.
- Feedback gathered through major strategic initiatives—including *Sustainable Sydney 2030 - 2050 Continuing the Vision, Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan, Resilient Sydney Synthesis Report 2024, Greater Sydney Outdoors Study, Committee for Sydney Life in Sydney* report and insights from the COVID-19 period, consistently highlights the deep value residents place on parks and public spaces.

Opposite: Feedback from major strategic initiatives including *Sustainable Sydney 2030 - 2050 Continuing the Vision* and other sources



Our open space and recreation network

A diverse network of parks, public spaces and recreation facilities supports health, wellbeing and community life across the city.

The open space network

The City of Sydney is supported by a diverse network of parks, public spaces that contribute to health, wellbeing, social connection, biodiversity and climate resilience.

The network includes parks, sports fields, civic spaces, street closures, ancillary/ links, habitat, and public space associated with the light rail corridor. Together, these spaces support a wide range of organised and informal recreation activities, social interaction, environmental education for residents, workers and visitors.

- 411.4ha or 15.4% of our LGA is open space.
- 50.4% of open space area in 456 spaces are managed by the City, and 49.6% in 62 spaces are managed by other agencies and other institutions.

Ancillary/links



Bushland

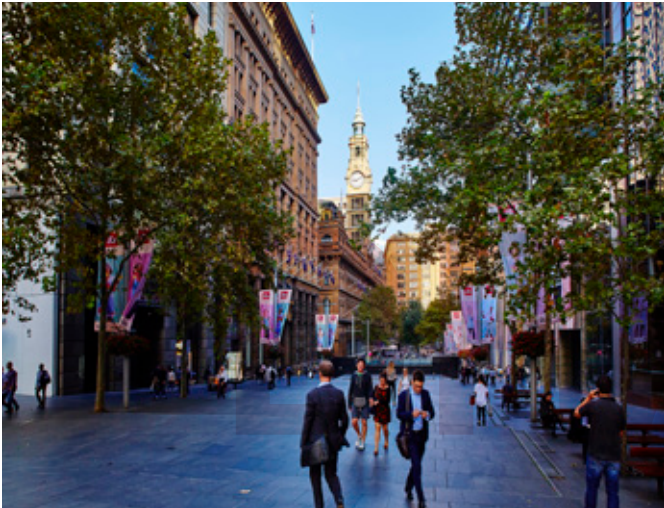


Types of open space (left to right)

Bamel Way Link
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Bushcare
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Civic squares and spaces



Foreshore parkland



Parks



Street closures



Martin Place
Photo: Tyrone Branigan / City of Sydney
Bicentennial Park
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Hyde Park
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney
Arthur Street closure
Photo: ??? / City of Sydney

Recreation facility provision

The City provides facilities in parks and recreation and community centre buildings to support a wide range of recreational activities for residents, workers, and visitors.

In addition, other agencies such as Greater Sydney Parklands and Place NSW play a key role in providing recreation facilities. These include:

Facility	City	Others	Total
Aquatic facilities	6	4	10
Cricket pitches	5	8	13
Outdoor courts (full size)	16	17	33
Outdoor fitness	15	7	22
Playgrounds	107	7	114
Indoor courts	13	12	25
Skate park	5	1	6
Sports fields and ovals	17	19	36
Tennis courts	18	35	53

Refer to Volume 2 Part 4 for further details on facility provision refer to Volume 2.

Types of sport and recreation facilities (left to right)

Andrew Boy Charlton Pool
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney

Wentworth Park cricket nets
Photo: Abril Felman / City of Sydney

Perry Park Recreation Centre
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Perry Park basketball court
Photo: Paul Patterson / City of Sydney

Observatory Park outdoor gym
Photo: Will Jones / City of Sydney

Redfern Community Centre playground
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

Sydney Park skatepark
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

Gunyama Park synthetic field
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

Inclusive Tennis Festival
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

A family bicycle ride
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Whether simply walking for exercise or playing a team sport the demands for recreation is many and varied.

Aquatic facilities



Cricket and baseball



Outdoor courts



Outdoor fitness



Playgrounds



Indoor courts



Skate park



Sportsfields and ovals



Tennis courts



Cycling and street network



Some of the sports and recreation activities our residents, workers and visitors participate in



includes City of Sydney, other agencies and private sector providers.

Private providers

Whether it's the rise of high-intensity interval training (HIIT), the growing popularity of pickleball, badminton or wellness programs, private businesses are well-positioned to adapt quickly and tailor their services to meet evolving consumer demand.

Private providers deliver a broad array of sport and recreation activities across the City's local government area and neighbouring suburbs. Their services complement public provision, expanding access and offering communities a wider and more diverse range of opportunities.

Facilities include gyms, courts, wellness centres, or more niche offerings, such as indoor climbing walls, indoor golf driving ranges, indoor ski simulators and trampoline parks.

	Over 200 gyms
	Pickle and paddle ball
	Martial arts
	Badminton
	Pilates
	Yoga
	Indoor rock climbing
	Virtual golf
	Billiards



ProPickle courts , Alexandria Photo: Photographer / City of Sydney

Streets as recreation spaces

The City's largest recreation network.

Streets are one of the largest and most accessible recreation resources in our area, supporting walking, running, cycling, social connection as well as access to parks, recreation facilities and the Harbour Foreshore.

Well-designed streets do more than move people between destinations. They provide spaces for exercise, recreation, social interaction and everyday wellbeing, while connecting residents to the broader open space network.

For many people, recreation does not begin at the park entrance. The street network is where everyday recreation happens through:

- recreational cycling
- dog walking
- walking and running circuits
- family bike rides
- access to the Harbour Foreshore
- access to parks and open spaces
- active recreation as part of daily life

Walking, running and cycling are among Australia's most popular recreation pursuits, highlighting the importance of safe, attractive and accessible streets that support everyday movement and recreation.

Research demonstrates that connected movement networks encourage higher levels of walking and cycling, while dedicated cycling infrastructure increases participation by making riding safer and more attractive for people of all ages and abilities.

What we are doing

Through the *Cycling Strategy and Action Plan*, *A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan*, and ongoing greening and public domain improvement initiatives, the City is creating safer, greener and more attractive environments for walking, running and cycling.

Together, these initiatives recognise streets, parks and public spaces as integral components of the City's recreation network and support the objectives of the *Sydney Plan's Blue-Green Grid*, which seeks to create a connected network of open spaces, waterways, active transport corridors and green infrastructure across Sydney.

Recreation should begin at people's front doors. By investing in walkable neighbourhoods, cycling infrastructure, greener streets and improved public spaces, we are creating a network of everyday recreation opportunities that connect residents to parks, destinations and the broader Blue-Green Grid.



Cyclists on a guided bike ride
Photo: Adam Hollingworth / City of Sydney

Recreation trends

Changing lifestyles and participation patterns are reshaping how people use parks, public spaces and recreation facilities.

Becoming more informal

Walking, running, fitness training, cycling and swimming are now among the most popular recreation activities. People increasingly seek recreation opportunities that are flexible, convenient, free or low cost and close to home. Public spaces, trails, parks and waterways are becoming as important as traditional sporting facilities.

Becoming more social

While organised sport remains important particular at junior level, many people are choosing social and modified versions of sport that emphasise fun, flexibility and connection. Running clubs, social competitions and activities such as pickleball are attracting new participants and broadening recreation opportunities.

Climate is influencing how people recreate

Hotter conditions are changing when and where people recreate. Demand for shade, cooling, evening recreation opportunities and climate-resilient facilities will continue to increase.

Demand for adaptive spaces is increasing

Communities increasingly value multi-purpose facilities that can support a range of activities rather than infrastructure designed for a single use. Flexible courts, shared spaces and adaptable public spaces can respond more effectively to changing community needs.

Becoming more inclusive

Participation by women and girls continues to grow and there is increasing demand for recreation opportunities that support older adults, young people, people with disabilities and culturally diversity.

Nature and water-based recreation are growing

Harbour swimming, paddle sports, outdoor fitness and nature-based recreation are increasingly popular. Access to waterways, green space and shady outdoor environments is becoming more important as Sydney's climate changes.

Future recreation planning should:

- Support both organised sport, informal and passive recreation.
- Prioritise adaptable and multi-purpose facilities.
- Improve access to recreation opportunities for all communities.
- Respond to changing participation trends.
- Provide climate-resilient recreation spaces.
- Expand partnerships to maximise increase availability.



A picnic at Hyde Park
Photo: Mark Metcalfe / City of Sydney

For further detail recreation participation and trends refer to Volume 2 Part 2

Growing and emerging activities



Pickleball and paddle



Swimming in the harbour



Oz-tag, flag gridiron and ultimate frisbee



Running clubs



BMX and mountain biking



Martial arts



Urban sports



Dog exercise



Futsal



Roller derby



Badminton and volleyball



Basketball



Exer-gaming and technology



Gym



Watercraft sports and recreation



Pilates/yoga

AusPlay data

Top 5 activities (sport and recreation combined)		
Adults	Men	Women
1. Walking	1. Walking	1. Walking
2. Fitness/gym	2. Fitness/gym	2. Fitness/gym
3. Swimming	3. Running/jogging	3. Swimming
4. Running/jogging	4. Swimming	4. Running/jogging
5. Cycling	5. Cycling	5. Yoga
Children	Boys	Girls
1. Swimming	1. Football/soccer	1. Swimming
2. Football/soccer	2. Swimming	2. Dancing
3. Gymnastics	3. Basketball	3. Gymnastics
4. Dancing	4. Cricket	4. Football/soccer
5. Basketball	5. Rugby league	5. Netball

Top 5 organised sport and recreation activities		
Adults	Men	Women
1. Fitness gym	1. Fitness/gym	1. Fitness/gym
2. Running/jogging	2. Football/soccer	2. Pilates
3. Football/soccer	3. Running	3. Walking
4. Pilates	4. Golf	4. Yoga
5. Walking	5. Walking	5. Running
Children	Boys	Girls
1. Swimming	1. Football/soccer	1. Swimming
2. Football/soccer	2. Swimming	2. Dancing
3. Gymnastics	3. Basketball	3. Gymnastics
4. Dancing	4. Cricket	4. Football/soccer
5. Netball	5. Rugby league	5. Netball

Challenges

A growing population, changing recreation needs and climate pressures are creating new demands on the City’s open space and recreation network.

The City’s open space and recreation network is performing well and has benefited from significant investment over the past two decades. However, population growth, increasing density, changing recreation patterns and climate change will further increase pressures that require a strategic response.

Five key challenges will shape the future of open space, sport and recreation planning.

A growing city with limited space

Demand for open space and recreation opportunities is increasing as the city grows. At the same time, opportunities to acquire new land are becoming increasingly limited. Existing parks and facilities will need to accommodate more users while continuing to provide a high-quality experience.

Key implications

- Increasing demand on parks and recreation facilities.
- Declining open space provision per resident.
- Limited opportunities for new large parks.
- Greater need to increase network capacity.

A changing climate

We face increased risks to our parks, recreation facilities from the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures, increased extreme weather events, and shifting rainfall patterns threaten habitats, damage infrastructure and reduce the availability of sports fields.

Key implications

- Greater demand for shade and cooling.
- Increased importance of tree canopy and biodiversity.
- Need for climate-resilient facilities and landscapes.
- Growing demand for evening and all-season recreation.

Changing recreation needs

Participation is becoming more diverse, flexible and informal. Walking, running, cycling, fitness activities and social recreation are increasingly important alongside traditional organised sport.

Key implications

- Increased use of parks for informal recreation.
- Growing participation in emerging recreation activities.
- Need for adaptable spaces that can respond to future trends.

Equity inclusion and access

Not everyone experiences the same access to parks and recreation opportunities. As the community becomes more diverse, public spaces and facilities must better respond to different ages, abilities, cultures, income and recreation preferences.

Key implications

- Uneven access to some parks and facilities.
- Barriers to participation for some communities.
- Growing expectation for inclusive and accessible design.
- Need to ensure benefits are shared across the city.
- Many young people experience social isolation and limited opportunities for meaningful community connection, highlighting the need for recreation spaces that foster belonging, inclusion and positive social networks.

Declining youth participation

Increasing screen-based recreation and a decline in participation is contributing to more sedentary lifestyles among young people.

Key implications

- Provide flexible and informal recreation opportunities that appeal to young people beyond organised sport.
- Improve access to outdoor social spaces that support gathering, connection and active lifestyles
- Design parks and recreation spaces that are safe, welcoming and inclusive for women and girls and gender diverse young people.

Social cohesion and community connection

Why this matters

Social cohesion and connection are fundamental to community wellbeing, resilience and quality of life. Communities with strong social networks are more likely to foster belonging, trust, inclusion and mutual support. However, barriers such as racism, sexism, homophobia, loneliness and social isolation continue to affect participation and community life for some people.

Sport and recreation can play an important role in addressing these challenges by creating opportunities for shared experiences, friendships, confidence-building and community connection. Participation in sport and recreation can strengthen social bonds across different ages, cultures and backgrounds, helping people feel connected to their local community.

At the same time, participation patterns are evolving. More people are choosing flexible and informal forms of recreation alongside traditional club-based sport. While this shift can make participation more accessible and appealing to a broader range of people, it may not always provide the same depth of social connection, mentoring and support networks often associated with organised activities.

What we will do

Sport and recreation infrastructure should be planned, designed and activated as a community asset that supports both physical activity and social connection.

By fostering welcoming and inclusive environments, recreation settings can strengthen community cohesion, reduce social isolation and create positive pathways for young people through role modelling, mentoring and leadership opportunities.

While we cannot directly influence every sport, recreation and fitness provider across the municipality, we can play an important leadership role.

This includes setting expectations for the facilities it manages, supporting partners who create inclusive and welcoming environments, and working collaboratively with clubs, schools, businesses and community organisations through advocacy, partnerships to advance shared community outcomes.

Through inclusive and accessible recreation spaces and programs, Council can help more people participate, connect and belong.



Gym facilities at Victoria Park
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Considering gender in parks and recreation

Research consistently shows that girls’ participation in public space drops sharply in early adolescence.

Why this matters

From around ages 8–14, many teenage girls feel they do not belong in parks, with facilities perceived as catering primarily to boys.

In 2022, research commissioned by the Yorkshire Sport Foundation found that only 34% of teenage girls enjoy exercising in their local park, compared with 63% of boys. 73% of girls reported that feeling watched discourages them from exercising in parks and makes them feel vulnerable. Participation in organised sport also differs significantly, with four times as many boys as girls using parks for organised activity (29% compared to 7%).

Many park environments are dominated by facilities that favour boys and young men—such as sports pitches, skateparks, and basketball courts—and these spaces are often socially occupied by male users. In Australia, 95% of skate park users are male, with females more likely to attend as spectators or parents. Teenage girls also report feeling “aged out” of traditional play spaces, including equipment such as swings that they would still like to use.

Research highlights that improving park use by teenage girls requires

intentional design that both caters to their preferences and gives them clear “permission” to occupy space.

Key findings from international studies and projects show that teenage girls tend to prefer:

- Places to sit together face to face, with shelter from wind and weather
- Spaces that feel intimate and safe, with the ability to see out without being the focus of attention
- Visually engaging environments they can adapt or personalise
- Informal, fun based physical activity (e.g. dancing, swinging, trampolines) rather than formal sport
- Spaces to sit, lie, hang, jump, or swing together

What we will do

Co designing with teenage girls

Engaging teenage girls directly in the design process is critical to rebalancing how parks are experienced and used. Less formal engagement methods—such as walk and talk sessions or creative workshops—are particularly effective in surfacing insights about safety, comfort, and social dynamics.



Co-ed netball players at Perry Park
Photo: Abril Felman / City of Sydney

Future recreation and open space needs

This strategy is informed by an assessment of current and future open space and recreation needs across the City. While the key findings are summarised below, Volume 2 provides a detailed assessment of open space provision, recreation facilities, demand, accessibility and future infrastructure requirements.

Assessing future demand

Population-based benchmarks are a useful indicator of future need, but provision cannot be assessed by quantity alone. Accessibility, distribution, quality, functionality, connectivity and local context are equally important.

Reflecting this approach, the value of open space is determined not only by how much exists, but by how easily people can access and use it.

Despite their limitations, population growth and participation trends indicate a need for additional recreation infrastructure. Applying the 2016 recreation facility benchmarks suggests a future requirement for up to 19 turf sports fields, 7 indoor courts and 26 outdoor multi-purpose courts.

The Sydney Plan complements this approach with access benchmarks, including a 400m walk to a park of at least 3,000m² and, in medium and high-density areas, a 200m walk to open space of at least 1,500m².

Open space distribution

Using the Sydney Plan access benchmarks (Figure XX and XX) most residents have access to a park within a short walk of home, with the majority living within 200-400 metres of a public open space. While overall accessibility is high, some gaps remain with high priority area being south-western residential area around Botany Road.

Open space per resident

As population growth continues, the amount of open space available per resident will decline. However, the total area of public open space is also expected to increase, reaching approximately 15.8% of the local government area.

This highlights the importance of maximising the quality, functionality and carrying capacity of existing open spaces, alongside opportunities to secure additional open space where feasible.

Year	Open space per resident (m ²)
2016	18.5m ²
2026	17.34m ²
2046	14.35m ²

Park size

Parks smaller than 3,000m² account for around 67% of all parks by number, but collectively comprise only 7% of the City's total open space area.

Smaller parks are an important local amenity, helping to distribute open space throughout the City and ensuring most residents can access a park within a short walk, consistent with Sydney Plan objectives. However larger parks offer the scale needed for diverse recreation experiences, organised sport and connection with nature, making them increasingly important as population and density increase.

What this means

We have made significant investments in new parks, recreation facilities, open space upgrades and environmental sustainability initiatives across the network. As the community continues to grow, changing needs and environmental pressures will place increasing demands on our facilities.

Continued planning and investment will be needed to ensure the network remains accessible, high quality, resilient and able to meet future community needs.

To build on the strong foundation already established and ensure the network continues to meet future needs, this Strategy is guided by four strategic directions:

Resilience, Equity, Quality, Flexibility.

Figure 6: 400m catchment area served by parks 3,000m² or greater

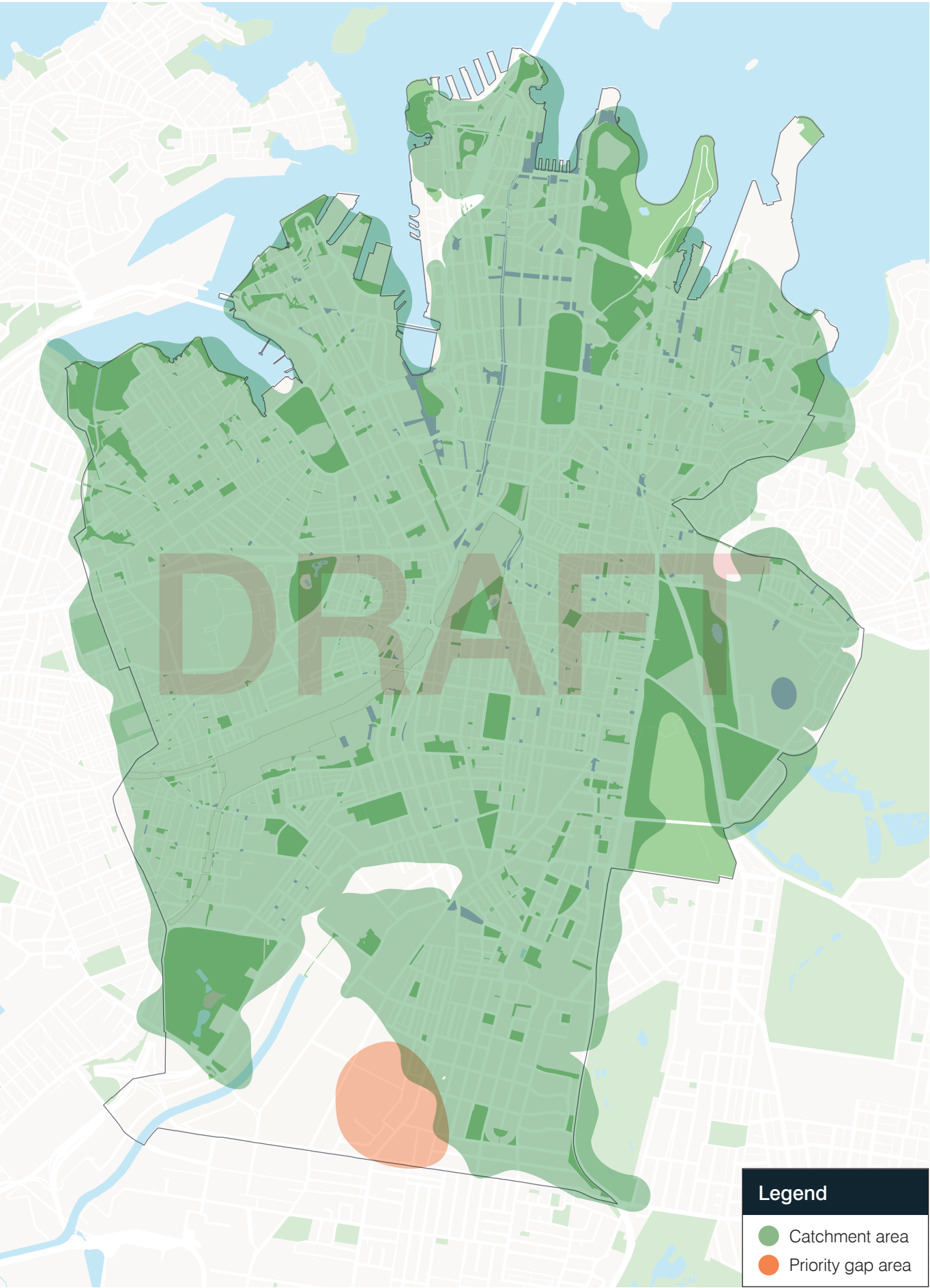
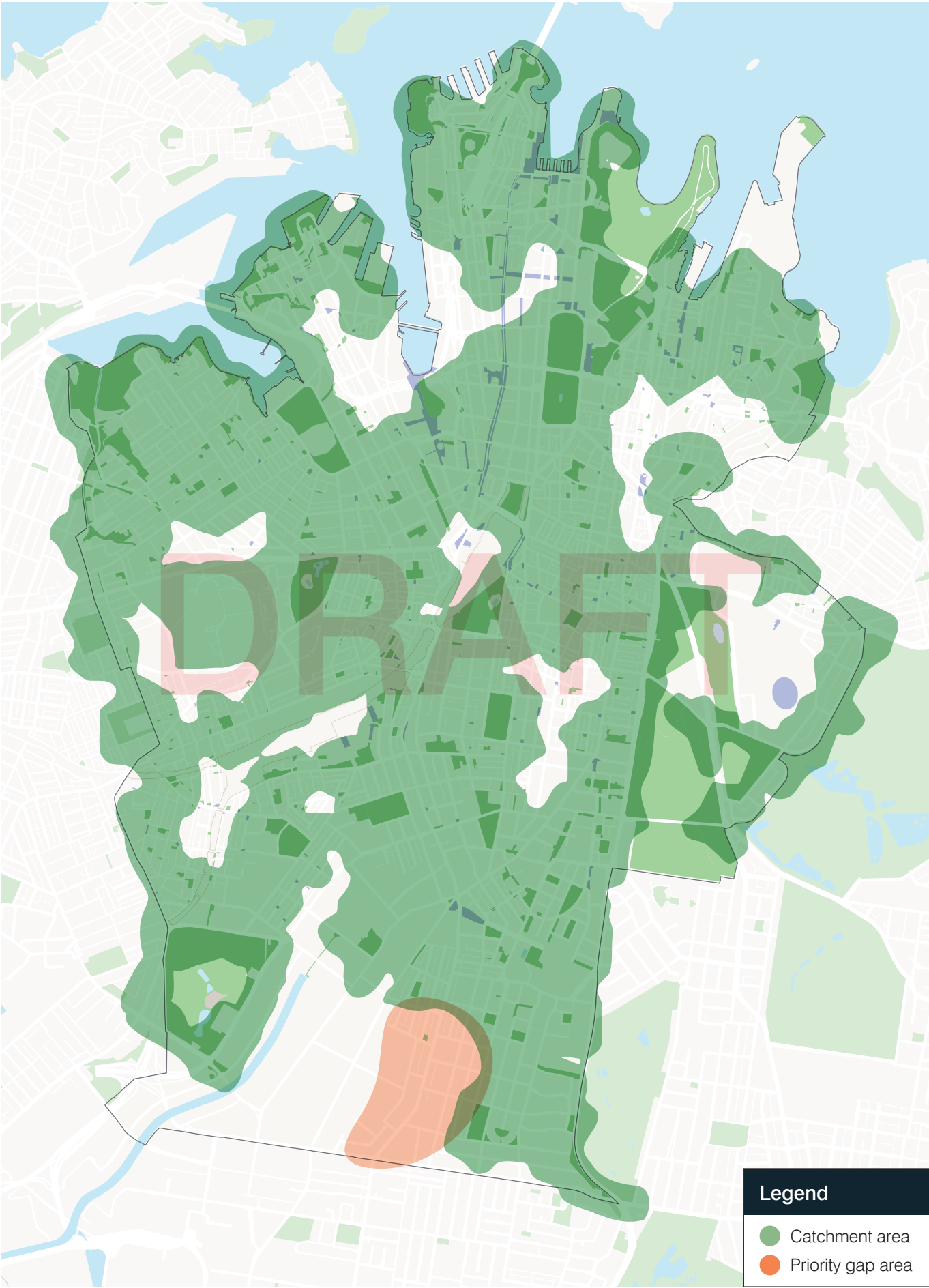


Figure 7: 200m catchment area served by parks 1,500m² or greater



Strategic framework

The strategic framework provides a clear and coordinated response to the challenges facing the City’s open space and recreation network.



A framework for action

The City’s approach to open space, sport and recreation is guided by four integrated strategic directions.

Together, these directions respond to the challenges of population growth, increasing density, changing recreation patterns, climate change and the need for more inclusive, equitable access to open space and recreation opportunities.

They provide a framework for future planning, investment and delivery, guiding how the network will grow, improve and adapt over time.

The directions work together to:

- Strengthen climate resilience and environmental outcomes.
- Improve inclusive access and equity across communities.
- Expand and improve the open space network.
- Increase capacity for sport and recreation.
- Deliver flexible and adaptable spaces that respond to changing needs.

The following sections outline the outcomes, guiding principles and actions for each strategic direction.

Image (opposite page):
A family enjoying Joynton Avenue Creative Centre
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

