OPEN SPACE DIRECTIONS 2026

Our strategy to connect people, nature and place



THE RURAL CITY OF MURRAY BRIDGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS



Image Credit: Rural City of Murray Bridge

We acknowledge the Ngarrindjeri people as the traditional owners of this land on which we meet and work. We respect and acknowledge their spiritual connection as the custodians of this land and that their cultural heritage beliefs are still important to the living people today.

We recognise the living culture and combined energies of the Ngarrindjeri people, our global pioneers and community members today for their unique contribution to the life of our region.



Avoca Dell Reserve
Image credit: Glenn Power

Avoca Dell Reserve is one of Murray Bridge's most distinctive natural landscapes, where towering river red gums, wetlands and open floodplain environments provide opportunities for recreation, nature appreciation and connection to the River Murray.

It forms part of a network of connected open space along the riverfront on the eastern side of the river and links into the Riverglades Walking Trail, enhancing access and connectivity for walkers and nature enthusiasts.

OPEN SPACE FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS



Image Credit: Jacob Jennngs Photography

Open space plays a vital role in shaping the liveability, wellbeing, and the identity of our community. Across the Rural City of Murray Bridge our parks, reserves, trails, and natural landscapes provide places for people to connect, be active, experience nature, and enjoy the unique landscapes and culture of the region.

Open Space Directions (the Strategy) reflects Council's commitment to creating welcoming spaces that support physical activity, mental wellbeing, social connection and community participation. It also recognises the importance of celebrating local identity and strengthening connections to culture and Country through inclusive and thoughtful design.

Importantly, the Strategy will guide future decision-making and investment priorities, ensuring improvements are well planned, equitable and aligned with community needs and expectations. It sets a shared direction to ensure our open space network is connected, high quality, inclusive and resilient, while also supporting the long-term growth and sustainability of our region.

We thank the community, stakeholders and partners who contributed their ideas and feedback to help shape this work. Together, we will continue to enhance, protect, and celebrate our open spaces as valued community assets for current and future generations.

Wayne Thorley
Mayor

Heather Barclay
Chief Executive Officer

OUR VISION

A connected network of high-quality open spaces that support community wellbeing, biodiversity, and the unique identity of Murray Bridge and our outer townships.

WHY THIS STRATEGY MATTERS

·Murray Bridge and our outer townships are experiencing sustained population growth and change
·Open spaces play a critical role in supporting health, wellbeing, tourism and liveability
·Strategic planning ensures parks, trails and natural areas are connected, accessible and environmentally sustainable

OUR OPEN SPACE OBJECTIVES

1. A connected and accessible open space network that links people to key destinations.
2. High-quality parks, trails and recreation spaces that enhance liveability.
3. Nature-positive landscapes and biodiversity corridors that help restore natural systems and expand tree coverage.
4. Open spaces supporting and strengthening tourism, culture and local identity through enhancements, activities and wayfinding.
5. A clear framework to guide open space decisions and encourage collaboration across projects.



Image Credit: Commshake

MURRAY BRIDGE TODAY

POPULATION
23,257

COUNCIL-MANAGED OPEN SPACE: 554HA

COUNCIL-OWNED: 295HA (APPROX.)

OPEN SPACE PROVISION

5.9HA PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

BASED ON FUNCTIONAL (ACTIVE AND COMMUNITY ACCESSIBLE) OPEN SPACE ONLY (~135-140 HA). EXCLUDES CONSERVATION, DRAINAGE, AND NON-RECREATIONAL LAND. POPULATION: 23,257.

PROJECTED POPULATION BY 2041
~39,000

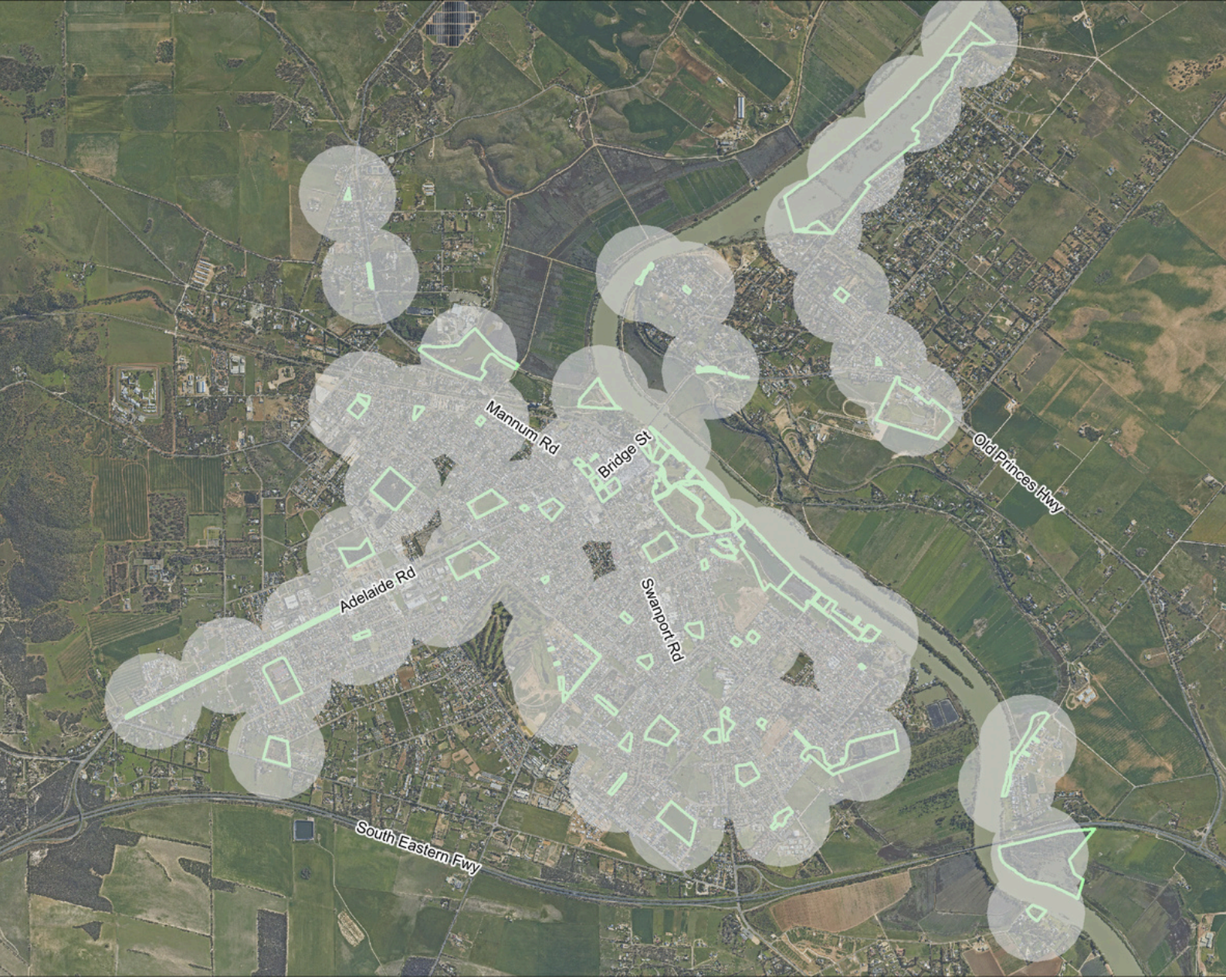
(COUNCIL GROWTH SCENARIO)

WALKING & SHARED USE TRAILS
~20-25KMS

HIGH PARTICIPATION ACTIVE & PASSIVE RECREATION
~60-70% OF RESIDENTS

(ERASS 2001-2010 BENCHMARK)

Data sources: REMPLAN; SA Government (Planning/Housing, Recreation and Park datasets as applicable)



Distribution of existing public open space in the Murray Bridge township. Shading indicates areas within 400m of a park.



Callington township



Mypolonga township



Wellington township

Most people in built up townships and settlements live within 400m of public open space. Open space provision in rural areas and riverfront settlements is sporadic and has generally evolved to meet the needs of particular communities. The provision of open space outside of the Murray Bridge urban areas will be reviewed in response to future growth and development.

CONTEXT, TRENDS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Landscape Character

The open space network within our Council area is shaped by distinctive natural and cultural landscapes, including:

- The River Murray and Bremer River corridors
- Wetlands, floodplains and conservation areas, and
- A growing network of trails, parks and green links connecting urban and rural areas.

Open Space Provision

The Rural City of Murray Bridge currently manages 554 hectares of open space, including parks, reserves, trails, bushland, wetlands, play spaces and recreation facilities across a diverse landscape of 1,828 km².
Of this, there is 137 hectares of usable quality public open space, giving a provision of around 5.9 hectares per 1,000 residents, which is above the State planning benchmark of 3–4 hectares per 1,000 residents. This is a strong baseline provision, but continued population growth will see the need for additional and higher-quality open space over time.

In addition, the public open space areas in the Murray Bridge urban areas are somewhat concentrated in the central areas and the riverfront. Gaps in provision of open space exist:

- Within the developing residential area between Adelaide Road and the South-Eastern Freeway
- In parts of Murray Bridge East
- On the northern and western fringes of the urban area.

The outer localities of Mypolonga, Callington, Wellington and Jervois each have at least one public park or recreation ground within their built-up residential areas.

Rural farming areas and riverfront settlements typically have minimal public open space areas, reflecting the particular needs and lifestyles of those communities.

Open space needs in larger new land divisions, like the one proposed for Gifford Hill, are likely to be well catered for due to mandatory open space provision requirements. It is however important to ensure appropriate proximity and connection to the broader open space network when planning these spaces.

What We Heard

Community engagement highlighted strong support for a place-based approach to planning and delivering open space and infrastructure in Murray Bridge. The following key themes emerged:

- Identity – how culture, heritage and land use shape local character
- Attachment – the connection people feel to place and community
- Experience – the quality, accessibility, safety and connectivity of public spaces
- Management (governance) – planning, investment and partnership frameworks

These themes reinforce the importance of place-based planning, recognising that different parts of Murray Bridge have distinct characteristics, needs and opportunities. A 'one size fits all' approach will not work in the Rural City of Murray Bridge.

A place-based approach considers social, cultural, economic and environmental factors to support placemaking, inclusion and community wellbeing. It relies on collaboration between Council, community and partners to deliver shared outcomes and build long-term resilience.

Demographics, Culture and Environment

Key drivers of change requiring ongoing monitoring and consideration include:

- Growth pressures
- Climate change impacts
- Increasing expectations for inclusive and accessible design
- The importance of protecting and enhancing natural systems within the urban environment.

While Murray Bridge has a reasonable level of open space provision overall, future population growth and an ageing population will increase demand for both active and passive recreation spaces. This reinforces the need to focus on quality, accessibility and network connectivity, rather than expansion alone.

The Rural City of Murray Bridge has a proud history of inclusion and welcoming people from all walks of life, meaning there are diverse and changing community uses for open space. It also has a strong and proud indigenous community, and more opportunities exist to recognise and reflect the enduring connection to land and the significance of public open space to First Nations culture.

Much of the land in current and future residential areas was cleared long ago for farming and other development. This means there is an opportunity to achieve a net vegetation gain and positive ecological outomes through carefully planned development, rather than the usual expectation of vegetation loss and degradation when broadscale development occurs.

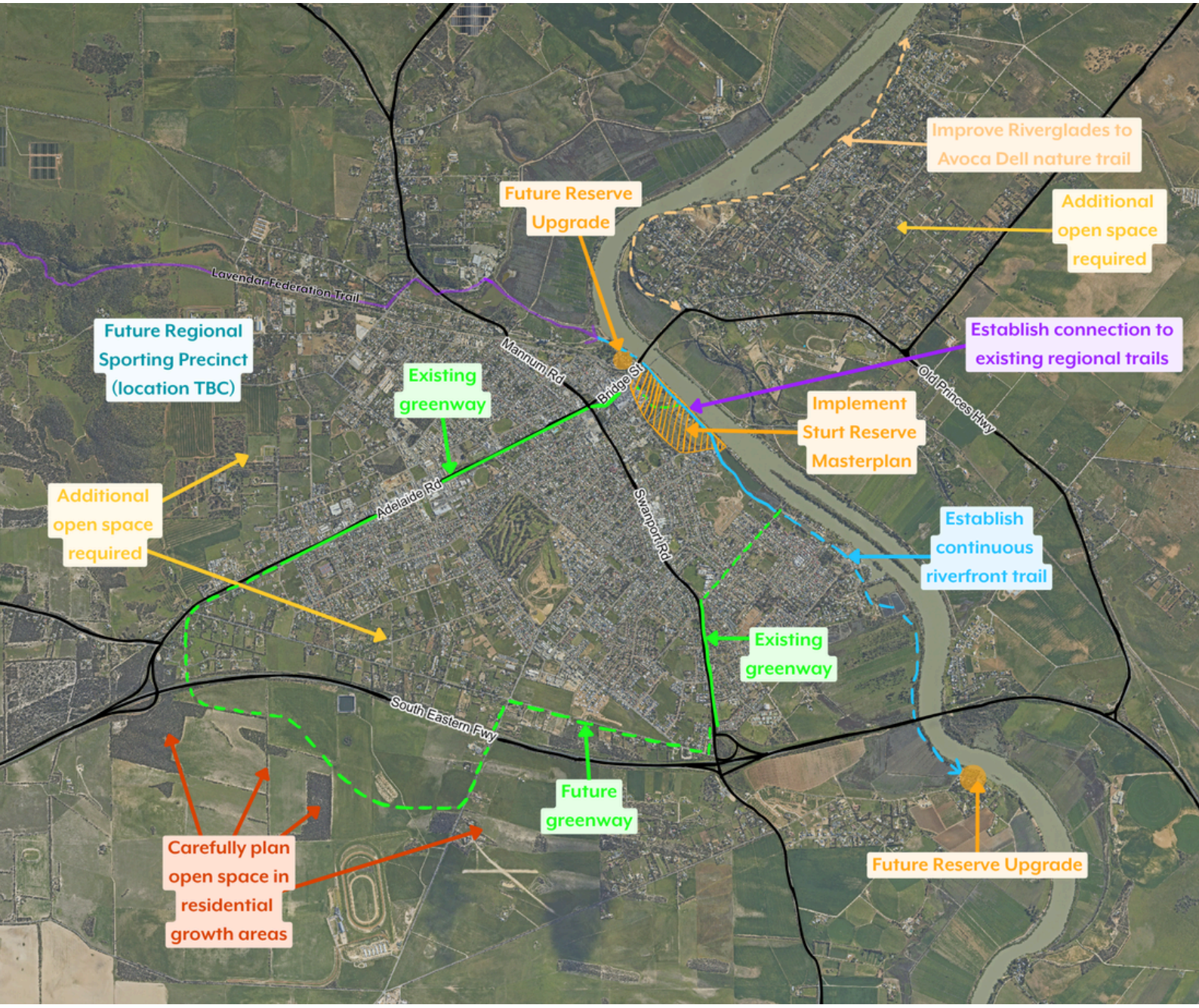
Further Information

Additional context, analysis, trends and considerations informed the development of this Strategy and are documented in the Open Space Strategy (OSS) Project Outcomes Report. The report provides further detail on the research, community engagement and analysis that support the strategic directions and priorities outlined in this Strategy.

OPEN SPACE KEY DIRECTIONS

To realise our vision and objectives, we will:

1. Strengthen the River Murray corridor as Murray Bridge's defining open space and primary recreation destination.
2. Connect parks, trails and neighbourhoods through a network of greenways and shared paths.
3. Prioritise investment in the quality, functionality and accessibility of open space before expanding the network where appropriate.
4. Plan and deliver open space early in growth areas to support new communities.
5. Enhance biodiversity, tree canopy and climate resilience across the open space network.
6. Ensure equitable access to quality open space across existing and emerging residential areas.



Note: Image is indicative only and provided for illustrative purposes. It is not to scale and does not depict exact locations.



Image credit: Commshake

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Guided by our key directions, we will pursue a number of outcomes by focusing on achievable and meaningful priorities.

Outcome 1 – Connected and Accessible Open Space Network

Develop an integrated network of parks, trails, greenways and public open spaces that connects neighbourhoods, townships, community destinations and natural environments, supporting active lifestyles and sustainable movement.

Key priorities:

1.1 Develop a Greenways and Active Travel Framework to guide the planning and delivery of connected walking, cycling and recreation corridors.
1.2 Strengthen connectivity between parks, reserves, trails and community facilities to improve access and network continuity.
1.3 Prioritise equitable access to open space by ensuring residents can reach quality parks and recreation opportunities within convenient walking distance.
1.4 Identify and secure land for a future regional sporting precinct.

Outcome 2 – High Quality, Inclusive and Functional Open Spaces

Provide a diverse network of well-designed, accessible and sustainable parks and recreation spaces that meet the needs of current and future communities.

Key priorities:

2.1 Review and refine the open space hierarchy and service level framework to guide future investment and management.
2.2 Develop a policy guideline for the investment of funds received through open space developer contributions.
2.3 Upgrade priority parks, playgrounds and recreation spaces using universal design principles to support accessibility and inclusion for all users.
2.4 Improve the quality and functionality of open spaces through the provision of shade, seating, amenities, toilets and other supporting infrastructure.

Outcome 3 – Resilient and Nature-Positive Landscapes

Enhance the ecological value, biodiversity and climate resilience of open spaces to support healthy environments and communities.

Key priorities:

3.1 Establish and strengthen biodiversity corridors through habitat restoration, native vegetation planting and ecological connectivity initiatives.
3.2 Increase urban tree canopy and shade across parks, reserves and streetscapes to support biodiversity, urban cooling and climate resilience, including through pocket forests, and other urban greening initiatives.
3.3 Expand integrated water management practices, including stormwater harvesting and Water Sensitive Urban Design, to improve landscape resilience and resource efficiency.

Outcome 4 – Open Spaces Supporting Identity, Culture and Tourism

Use open spaces to strengthen Murray Bridge's identity, celebrate local culture and heritage, and contribute to a vibrant visitor economy.

Key priorities:
4.1 Enhance riverfront open spaces, trails and recreation destinations to strengthen connections to the River Murray and improve visitor experiences.
4.2 Support the development of nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities that showcase Murray Bridge's environmental and landscape assets.
4.3 Embed cultural recognition, heritage interpretation and storytelling within open spaces to celebrate local history, identity and First Nations connections to Country.

Pondi Playspace – A culturally-led playspace project designed in partnership with Ngarrindjeri Ruwe Empowered Communities (NREC), creating a play experience grounded in culture and connection to Country.

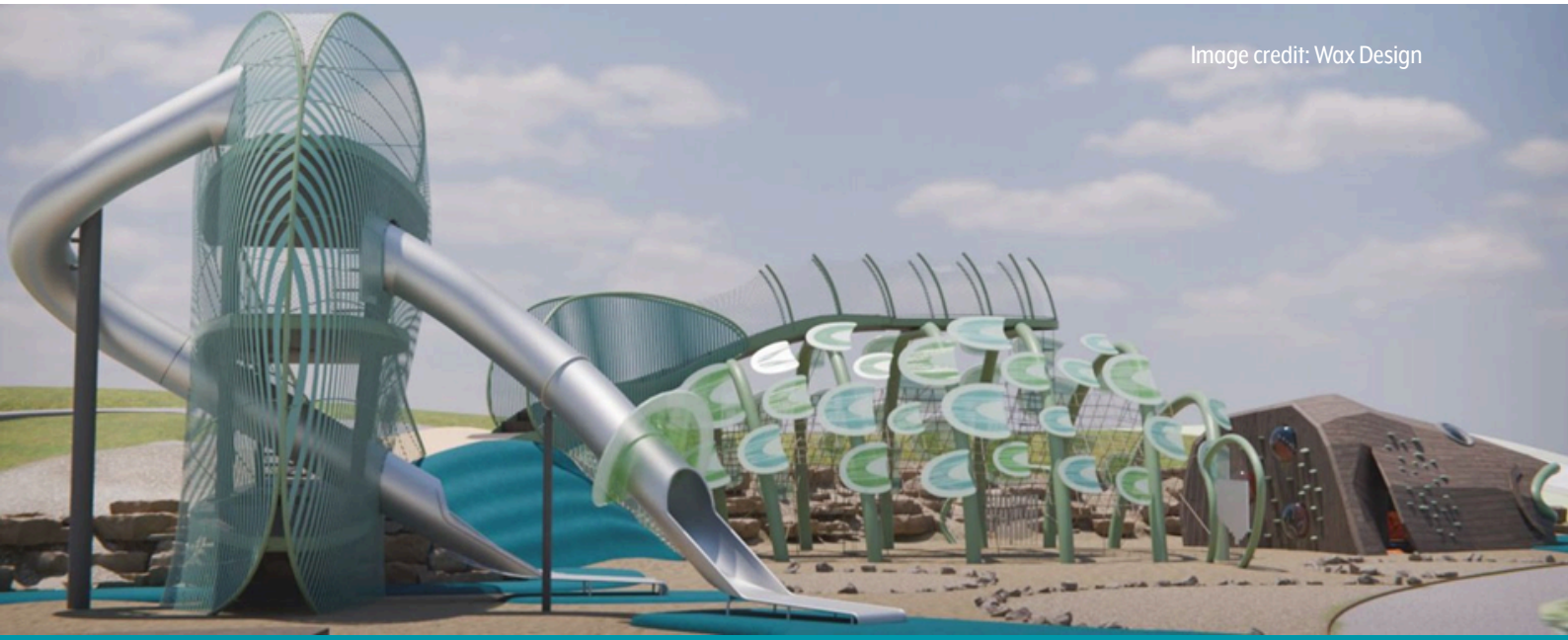


Image credit: Wax Design



Baker's Reserve
Image credit: Rural City of Murray Bridge

Baker's Reserve in Wellington is a key riverfront open space along the River Murray, framed by mature river red gums and open grassed areas that support informal recreation and community gathering.

It provides opportunities for picnicking, play and water-based recreation, including river access and a boat ramp, contributing to Wellington's role as a township destination within the river corridor network.

Baker's Reserve forms part of the broader network of connected riverfront open spaces within the Rural City of Murray Bridge open space hierarchy.

OPEN SPACE HIERARCHY

The Open Space Hierarchy is used to categorise public open spaces according to their function, size and geographic catchment. It promotes equitable access to leisure opportunities and guides the allocation of park maintenance and development resources.

Category	Purpose and function	Guiding principles	Examples
Local Providing services that attract residents within a short walking distance.	• Small-scale open space (<0.5ha) for adjacent residential areas • Supports short visits and informal recreation • Encourages local social interaction and neighbourhood amenity • May contribute to stormwater management	• Within a 5-minute walk of most homes • Accessible, inclusive, and connected to active transport/greenways • Supports crime prevention through environmental design principles and passive surveillance • Simple, flexible infrastructure (paths, seating, landscaping)	• McNamara Park • Newbridge Drive Reserve • Oak Ave Reserve • Raymond Rd Reserve • Rolond Reserve
Neighbourhood Providing a small range of services that attract residents from across a suburb or locality.	• Medium-scale spaces (0.5–2ha) serving a broader catchment • Supports longer visits and diverse activities • Includes informal sport, social use, and nature experiences • Contributes to local identity and sense of place	• Within a 15-minute walk and linked to greenway networks • Applies universal design principles • Integrates stormwater and smart infrastructure • Co-locates with community facilities where appropriate • Protects biodiversity and supports regenerative landscapes	• Christian Reserve • Hume Reserve • LeMessurier Oval • Magpie Drive Reserve • Pathways Reserve • Thiele Reserve • Torrens Road Reserve
District Providing a moderate range of services that attract visitors from across a district.	• Large-scale open space (<10ha) serving district populations • Supports organised sport, events, and diverse uses • Combines active and passive recreation • Includes substantial built infrastructure	• Connected to wider open space and transport networks • High-quality shared facilities (amenities, parking, event spaces) • Sustainable and integrated urban design • Strong park edges and activation of surrounding areas • Coordinated planning and governance	• Adelaide Road Linear Park • Avoca Dell Reserve • Homburg Park • Johnstone Park • Long Island Reserve • War Memorial Playground
Township Open space that provides a range of recreation and amenity functions primarily serving township residents and nearby rural communities.	• Combined neighbourhood and district function in smaller towns • Acts as a central community hub • Supports identity, belonging, and social cohesion • Enables multi-functional use	• Centrally located and highly accessible • Flexible and inclusive design • Supports community-led and partnership delivery models	• Baker Reserve • Irene Hughes Park • Monarto Recreation Centre • Schubert Street Reserve • Woodlane Reserve
Regional Providing a large range of services that attract visitors from across the region and beyond.	• Large, diverse open space assets for regional populations • Supports recreation, tourism, and conservation • Includes trails and nature-based experiences • Contributes to economic development	• Integrated within a regional open space network • Supports resilience (e.g. disaster risk management) • Enhances tourism and economic outcomes	• Sturt Reserve
State Open space of state significance.	• Focus on conservation, environmental protection, and education • Includes reserves, wetlands, buffers, and trail networks	• Managed through state and local frameworks • Requires environmental assessment for development • Protects environmental values and avoids incompatible land uses	• Kinchina Conservation Park

Note: This hierarchy table is subject to regular review.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Open Space Directions aligns with Council's strategic planning framework and relevant State Government policies to support coordinated delivery of community wellbeing, liveability, growth and environmental outcomes.

Council Strategic Framework

The Strategy aligns with:

- Community Plan – supporting accessible, inclusive and high-quality open spaces that enhance health, wellbeing and liveability.
- Strategic Plan – contributing to Council's long-term vision for a vibrant and sustainable community.
- Wellbeing Strategy – supporting physical activity, mental health and social connection through quality open space.
- Economic Development and Growth Strategy – enhancing liveability, place identity and visitor appeal.
- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – embedding Aboriginal culture, heritage and connection to Country in the planning and design of open spaces.
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) – ensuring open spaces are inclusive and accessible through universal design principles.
- Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans – guiding investment, renewal and lifecycle management.

State Planning Frameworks

The Strategy aligns with:

- Greater Adelaide Regional Plan
- Murraylands and Riverland Regional Plan
- The Planning and Design Code
- State Planning Policies on liveability, climate resilience and environmental sustainability
- Regional growth and infrastructure priorities for the Murraylands and Riverland region
- Water sensitive urban design and River Murray environmental objectives

Supporting Material

Behind this strategy is a Project Outcomes Report produced through research, engagement and reflection on existing strategies and plans. This work provides important context and rationale for the objectives, directions and priorities outlined in this plan, and will be an ongoing point of reference in its delivery.



Image credit:
Rural City of Murray Bridge

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Through clear priorities, delivery of this strategy will focus on achieving better outcomes for open space across the community.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Delivering the Strategy

The Strategy will be implemented through a coordinated program of planning, investment, asset management and partnership initiatives. Delivery will be guided by Council's strategic planning and budgeting processes, ensuring that priorities are responsive to community needs, growth, environmental outcomes and available resources.

Implementation actions will be progressively incorporated into Council's operational and capital works programs and reviewed regularly to align with emerging opportunities and changing priorities.

Delivery Mechanisms

Key mechanisms for implementing the Strategy include:

- Annual Business Plan and Budget processes
- Long-Term Financial Planning
- Asset Management Plans and Portfolio Plans
- Capital Works Programs
- Development and growth-related open space contributions
- Master plans and precinct planning initiatives
- Grant funding opportunities
- Partnerships with government agencies, Traditional Owners, sporting clubs, community organisations and volunteers.

Monitoring and Reporting

Council will monitor progress against the Strategy through regular business planning and reporting processes. Implementation actions will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain relevant, achievable and aligned with Council's strategic objectives.

Indicative Implementation Plan

Action	Timeframe
Review the open space hierarchy and service level framework	Short Term (1–2 years)
Develop a Greenways and Active Travel Framework	Short Term (1–2 years)
Secure a site for a future Regional Sporting Facility	Short Term (1–2 years)
Determine future use opportunities for key open spaces	Short Term (1-2 years)
Develop a policy guideline for the investment of open space developer contributions	Short Term (1-2 years)
Upgrade identified open spaces	Medium Term (3–5 years)
Enhance riverfront open spaces and trail connections (including Sturt Reserve Masterplan)	Medium – Long Term (3–10 years)
Establish and enhance biodiversity corridors	Ongoing
Investigate nature-based tourism opportunities	Ongoing
Integrate Water Sensitive Urban Design initiatives into open spaces	Ongoing

The implementation plan is indicative and will be refined through Council's annual planning, budgeting and asset management processes.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Progress towards implementing the Strategy will be monitored through indicators such as completion of priority actions, improvements to park quality and accessibility, environmental enhancements, community satisfaction, utilisation of open spaces where monitored, and the successful attraction of external funding and partnerships.

Key Indicators

- Percentage of residents in urban areas within convenient walking distance of a public open space
- Tree canopy coverage across the Council area
- Extent and connectivity of the shared trail and greenway network
- Community satisfaction with parks, playgrounds and open spaces
- Number and scale of open space upgrades delivered
- Area of natural habitat restored or enhanced through biodiversity initiatives
- Uptake and use of key parks, trails and recreation spaces (where data is available)

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Active travel
Travel by walking, wheeling, cycling or other forms of human-powered or low-speed personal transport.

Biodiversity corridor
Connected areas of vegetation and habitat that support wildlife movement and improve ecological connectivity.

Convenient walking distance
A generally accepted walking distance from a residence to a public open space, measured using Council planning standards or recognised planning benchmarks (400m).

Greenways and shared trail network
A connected network of trails, paths and green corridors linking parks, neighbourhoods, waterways and key destinations.

Open space/s
Includes parks, reserves and recreation spaces.

Place-based planning
An approach to planning and decision-making that responds to the unique social, cultural, environmental and economic characteristics of a place.

Tree canopy coverage
The proportion of land covered by the canopy of trees, contributing to shade, biodiversity and urban cooling.

Universal design
The design of places and facilities so they are accessible, inclusive and usable by people of all ages and abilities.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)
An approach to planning and designing urban areas that integrates stormwater management with landscape outcomes to improve environmental resilience.



Image credit: Commshake

2 SEVENTH STREET
PO BOX 421
MURRAY BRIDGE, SA 5253

T 08 8539 1100
W MURRAYBRIDGE.SA.GOV.AU
E COUNCIL@MURRAYBRIDGE.SA.GOV.AU