

Appendix D

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

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APPENDIX D – RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

Establishing Demand for Facilities

The 1993 *Byron Council Section 94 Contributions Plan – Open Space* adopted a series of population catchment standards for the provision of various open space facilities. These standards are contained within Appendix 1 of the Open Space Plan, and specify an area standard for the provision of both passive and active open space, population sizes which result in the demand for a facility (such as playspace or sporting field) and dimensions for sporting facilities such as fields and courts.

The standard open space provision of 2.83 ha/1000 population (1.62 ha/1000 for active and 1.21 ha/1000 for passive) used in the existing Plan is one which has historically been used by planners to represent an adequate level of open space provision. The standard has been applied throughout various local government areas including both urban and rural areas. However, the use of a numerical standard to determine an adequate level of open space provision is no longer generally accepted as a satisfactory method of planning for open space.

The use of this standard gives no consideration to the condition of the land provided for open space or its physical suitability for use as open space. It does not consider whether the open space land has been developed with facilities useful to the community or what state these facilities are in, and it does not allow for differing expectations of open space provision by differing communities whether urban, rural, coastal, inland, wealthy or of lower income.

Background to ROS

There is widespread acceptance of the importance of open space in recreation. The increasing demands for quality recreation opportunities and the funding constraints within which local government must operate clearly require focussed policies if best use is to be made of this important resource.

Current approaches to open space and recreation planning recognise the need to shift focus from strictly using numeric standards (ie, exclusively using a rate per thousand population such as sports fields) to a needs based approach. Needs based planning recognises variations in a community's socio-economic characteristics, the existing level of provision of open space and sports facilities and the environmental attributes of an area. That is not to say that such basic resources as sports fields and parks should be ignored since they provide a valuable resource for all the community. Rather, contemporary approaches to open space and recreation planning seeks to balance the existing and future likely recreation needs of the community with the need to protect the fragile coastal environment including its lagoons, lakes and creeks.

Leisure, Recreation and Open Space Demand

Leisure has a wide interpretation and is often confused with recreation. As a guide, recreation can be considered as:

"... an activity, voluntarily undertaken primarily for pleasure and satisfaction during leisure time" (Pigram, 1983)

Recreation can be seen as a component of total leisure time. Outdoor recreation clearly requires the provision of time, but more importantly, of space and facilities. Therefore, determining the demand for open space facilities is a primary task of recreation planning.

Recreational preferences and activities are affected by a range of factors including age, sex, marital status, ethnicity and family composition. Age is considered to be the most important influence on recreational patterns and this, in turn, dictates the recreation experiences and settings the individual requires.

For example, 'youth' is a time for active participation in active and competitive sports which gradually changes to an emphasis on passive activities as people become older. Other influences include marriage and the raising of children. These influences then create demands for differing recreation opportunities and experiences.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a framework now commonly used as the basis for recreation and open space planning. The basis of ROS is that the varied needs, tastes and preferences of the community are most likely to be satisfied if a wide range of experiences are provided through a range of recreational settings (Clarke and Stankey, 1979).

Recreation and Open Space Planning Guidelines

In 1992 the Department of Planning prepared guidelines to assist local Councils in establishing strategies for open space and outdoor recreation planning. The Department recommends that the philosophy of the ROS be applied through the settings approach in open space and recreation planning in NSW. The ROS should be seen as a tool for the classifying, analysing and planning for the recreational and leisure needs of the community.

These guidelines discuss the merits and disadvantages of relying on population numbers as the sole method for estimating demand. They recommend that standards be used as a general guide to open space planning with needs also determined through analysis of existing open space supply, community consultation and analysis of likely population and recreation trends.

Other important issues raised by these guidelines include:

- A move from the former approach of using standards for establishment of open space provision to a needs-based approach. Previously, open space provision was based on a certain number of hectares per 1000 population (often 2.8 to around 3.0 hectares) and this was often biased towards structured facilities such as sports grounds. However, it is now recognised that by its very nature this approach fails to take into account characteristics of the local community and the environment in which it lives. For example, natural areas are as much of a recreational resource as sports fields.
- A shift towards open space classification system based on the experiences gained by the user rather than what facilities are present.
- Formulation of an inventory of all open space areas which details location, ownership, types of recreation facilities provided and usage patterns.
- Classification of each open space area according to settings which allows an assessment of the variety of open space provided.

The Department notes that the prime objective of recreation and open space planning at the local government level is to provide for local and district facilities. The difficulty of developing and maintaining regional recreational facilities (ie, used by a wider population than the local government area) is recognised by the Department and it is not recommended that heavy emphasis be placed on the provision of such facilities.

Open Space Planning

In establishing an appropriate level for the future provision of open space through Section 94 Contributions, it is important to consider the historical level and nature of open space and establish the capacity of the Shire to provide open space resources to meet the future anticipated future demand based on the ROS.

Byron Shire enjoys a high level of open space provision for its population size. The inventories indicate a high level of provision, however, the provision does not necessarily match the population nor the ROS approach.

General Definitions

The existing *Section 94 Contribution Plan – Open Space* contains a series of general definitions at the front of the document. The definitions are for the following specific types of open space:

- Local Neighbourhood Playspace
- Community Neighbourhood Playspace

- Town Park
- Sporting Ground
- Beach Coastal Foreshore
- Ancillary
- Natural
- Active Open Space
- Passive Open Space

These definitions are provided to enable easier understanding of the terms used in the document. These are expanded upon below:

- **Local Neighbourhood Playspace:** Recreation area primarily servicing the immediately surrounding residential community, providing for children's play needs within their immediate environment and within easy walking distance.
- **Community Neighbourhood Playspace:** Recreation area providing a comprehensive play and passive recreation environment servicing a wide residential community which is within quick driving and/or walking distance and which caters for all age groups including infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, school-aged children and adults.
- **Town Park:** Recreation areas within district retail/commercial centres catering for non organised recreational activities of workers, tourists and residents for a district-wide population.
- **Natural:** Undeveloped land, including areas of regrowth and remnant bushland.
- **Local Park:** A recreational area primarily serving the surrounding residential community, used for informal recreation.
- **Sports Facility** (formerly Sporting Ground): A recreation area used for active or structured formal sporting activities, usually catering for a district to regional population.

These definitions can be used for open space planning purposes, however, there is a need for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to open space planning which the ROS approach does address.

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