Wodonga Physical Activity Strategy
Background report
Wodonga’s demographic profile

Population characteristics

Current population

The Census population of Wodonga in 2011 was 36,025, while the estimated resident population in 2013 was 37,345.

Wodonga experienced its greatest population growth of 2.1 per cent in 2013.

Table 1: Estimated resident population (Wodonga)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (ending June 30)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Change in number</th>
<th>Change in percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>33,528</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>33,597</td>
<td>+69</td>
<td>+0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>33,595</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>33,837</td>
<td>+242</td>
<td>+0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>34,157</td>
<td>+320</td>
<td>+0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>34,654</td>
<td>+497</td>
<td>+1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>35,287</td>
<td>+633</td>
<td>+1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36,025</td>
<td>+738</td>
<td>+2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>36,576</td>
<td>+601</td>
<td>+1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>37,345</td>
<td>+769</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0)

From 2008 to 2013 Wodonga grew by 9.3 per cent, the second highest of the Regional Cities Victoria Group (and Albury).
There are a higher proportion of people aged between zero and 17 in Wodonga (26.1 per cent) than regional Victoria (23.5 per cent), and a lower proportion of people aged 60 years and over (17.5 per cent compared with 24.2 per cent).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
**Ethnicity**

Wodonga has a higher proportion of residents born in Australia (86.5 per cent) than regional Victoria (84.3 per cent).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

Almost 6 per cent of people in Wodonga come from countries where English is not the first language.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
Social characteristics

Households

Wodonga has a higher proportion of families with children (as couples or one-parent families) (42.5 per cent) than regional Victoria (37.4 per cent). It also has a lower proportion of lone person households (24.9 per cent) and couples without children (25.3 per cent) than regional Victoria (26.8 per cent and 27.8 per cent respectively).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

A total of 26 per cent of households in Wodonga contain only one person, compared with 28 per cent in regional Victoria.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
**Housing tenure**

In Wodonga, 61 per cent of households are purchasing or fully own their home, 26.1 per cent are renting privately and 7.8 per cent are in social housing.

![Figure 7: Housing tenure (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

Of those households in Wodonga with a mortgage, 8.8 per cent are making high loan repayments of $2600 or more per month.

![Figure 8: Monthly housing loan repayments (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
In Wodonga, 2.8 per cent of renting households are paying more than $400 per week in rent.

![Weekly housing rental payments (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

**Dwellings**

In Wodonga, 18 per cent of dwellings are medium or high density, compared with 11 per cent in regional Victoria.

![Dwelling structure (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
**Education**

Wodonga has a higher proportion of people with formal qualifications (43.3 per cent) than regional Victoria (40.5 per cent) and a lower proportion of people with no qualifications (47.4 per cent compared with 48.4 per cent).

![Figure 11: Highest qualification achieved (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

Wodonga has a higher proportion of people who left school at an early level (Year 10 or less) (40 per cent) than regional Victoria (39 per cent), however it also has a higher proportion of people who completed Year 12 or equivalent (39 per cent compared with 35.6 per cent).

![Figure 12: Highest level of secondary schooling completed (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
Wodonga has a higher proportion of people attending all forms of educational institutions than regional Victoria, except secondary institutions which is the same. Major differences are those attending TAFE (Wodonga has 4.1 per cent compared with 2.2 per cent in regional Victoria) and primary school (9.2 per cent compared with 8.1 per cent).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

**Income**

There is a similar proportion of high income households (those earning $2500 per week or more) in Wodonga (9.2 per cent) as regional Victoria (9.2 per cent), and a lower proportion of low income households (those earning less than $600 per week) (23.1 per cent compared with 27.2 percent).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
Wodonga has the highest median weekly household income of the Regional Cities Victoria group (and Albury), with $1075.

Figure 15: Median weekly household income (comparison)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>$878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>$913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrobe</td>
<td>$942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsham</td>
<td>$946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Shepparton</td>
<td>$980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat</td>
<td>$988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Bendigo</td>
<td>$991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albury</td>
<td>$1,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrnambool</td>
<td>$1,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Geelong</td>
<td>$1,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
<td>$1,075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

**Employment characteristics**

**Labour force**

Wodonga has the largest labour force in North East Victoria (20,361). The Albury-Wodonga combined labour force is 48,906.

Figure 16: Labour force (North East Victoria)

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Wodonga’s labour force has grown significantly since 2011, from 18,813 to 20,553.

**Figure 17: Labour force (Wodonga)**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

**Unemployment rate**

Wodonga’s unemployment rate has remained relatively steady since 2010 (currently 5.8 per cent), slightly higher than regional Victoria but significantly lower than Albury.

**Figure 18: Unemployment rate (comparison)**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
**Employment type**

The manufacturing industry is Wodonga's highest employer (16.5 per cent). Manufacturing, health care and social assistance, public administration and safety and retail trade make up more than half of Wodonga's total employment.

![Figure 19: Employment by sector (Wodonga)](image)

Source: REMPLAN

Technicians and trade workers are the most common occupations (17 per cent), ranking a higher percentage compared to regional Victoria (15.4 per cent).

![Figure 20: Employment by occupation (comparison)](image)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011
Forecasts

Projected population

Wodonga’s population is expected to be more than 50,000 by 2026.

![Population forecast graph](image)

Source: Forecast.id

The largest increase in persons between 2011 and 2021 is forecast to be in the 30 to 34-year age group, which is expected to increase by 355 and account for 2.4 per cent of the total persons.

![Population forecast age structure graph](image)

Source: Forecast.id
Physical activity rates

On average, residents of Wodonga are slightly more active than Victorians, with just over 30 per cent not meeting the current recommended physical activity guidelines.

Table 3: Percentage of population not meeting recommended physical activity guidelines, Wodonga and Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wodonga</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Department of Health - Victorian Population Health Survey 2011, preliminary results

Wodonga residents are less active than those in neighbouring local government areas.

Table 4: Physical activity rates, Wodonga and neighbouring local government areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local government area (LGA)</th>
<th>Sedentary (zero minutes per week)</th>
<th>Insufficient (less than 150 minutes and/or less than five sessions per week)</th>
<th>Sufficient (150 minutes or more over at least five sessions per week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towong</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Department of Health - Victorian Population Health Survey 2011, preliminary results

Wodonga Recreation Participation Survey

The Wodonga Recreation Participation Survey was aimed at gathering information on the range of exercise, recreation and/or sport activities people are currently involved in. The survey was conducted in July 2013. A total of 562 responses were received, with 407 of the responses from Wodonga residents.

Results of the survey provide participation data for Wodonga residents only, however all responses and feedback on specific facilities has been included for consideration.

Major findings

The following major findings were identified from the survey:

- 92.4 per cent of respondents had participated in some form of sport, recreation or physical activity in Wodonga over the past 12 months.

- Of the respondents who did participate in physical activity, 20.8 per cent were not meeting the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian Adults minimum recommendation of 30 minutes of exercise per day.

- The four top reasons why people were participating in activity were for fitness (78.2 per cent), fun/enjoyment (51.2 per cent), relaxation/stress relief (39.4 per cent) and to lose or maintain their weight (37.7 per cent).
- Of the 7.6 per cent of survey respondents who did not participate in any physical activity, the top three reasons for not participating were lack of time (46.9 per cent), lack of motivation (34.4 per cent), and need childcare/babysitter (34.4 per cent).

- The top 10 activities which Wodonga residents participate in are walking, swimming, aerobics/fitness/gym/weights, running, cycling, netball, hiking, ten pin bowling, athletics (track) and fishing.

- 69.6 per cent of Wodonga residents were involved in some form of organised activities.

- Organised games and sport, water sports and cycling were the most identified activities that respondents would like to participate in.

- 43.3 per cent of Wodonga respondents volunteer in a recreation organisation or club. The top two reasons why people did not volunteer was lack of time (69.5 per cent) and they don't know what is available (30 per cent).

- Wodonga Sports and Leisure Centre and WAVES were the most appealing sporting facilities to respondents.

- Respondents identified access to specific infrastructure, and facilities catering for a specific interest or need as their top two reasons for their choice in most appealing facilities.

- Wodonga BMX track and Wodonga Racecourse were the two least appealing facilities. The respondents selected their least appealing facility based on no interest or need for the facility, aesthetically unappealing and distance.

- 86.7 per cent of Wodonga respondents have used a Wodonga walking or cycling path/trail in the last 12 months. For those that have not used a walking or cycling path/trail, the top three reasons were don't know where they are located (38 per cent), none near my home (32 per cent) and don't have a bike (28 per cent).

- The top three reasons why respondents used Wodonga's paths and trails was fitness (57.1 per cent), social (46.6 per cent) and for travel between home and work/shops/school.

- 83.2 per cent of respondents rated Wodonga's cycle paths and trails as good or very good. The top three reasons including clean and well maintained pathways, lots of options available and good condition. Improvements in poor maintenance, safety issues and options not known were the top three issues associated with the paths and trails.

- The most appealing paths and trails in Wodonga included the High Country Rail Trail, Willow Park, Gateway Island/Belvoir Park and Sumson Gardens. Aesthetics, catering for a specific use, close proximity to residency/work/activity centre and connectivity were identified as the main reasons for the path and trails that were most appealing.

- The least appealing paths and trails in Wodonga included Willow Park, the rail trail, the Lincoln Causeway and paths in the area of West Wodonga.

- 62.6 per cent of respondents were female and 37.4 per cent were male.

- The highest response rate was from people aged 12 to 17 years and 35 to 49 years. The least responses came from ages four to 11 years and 75 years plus.

- 18 per cent of respondents were not residents of Wodonga.
The levels of informal physical activity in Wodonga are:

### Table 6: Top physical activities undertaken by Wodonga residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Cycling (including mountain bike riding)</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aerobics/fitness/gym/weights</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Running/jogging</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Hiking/bushwalking</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ten pin bowling</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Athletics (track)</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In terms of organised sports and activities, official club participation levels are:

### Table 7: Top organised sports and activities undertaken by Wodonga residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Sport/ activity</th>
<th>Club participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>2240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Australian Rules Football</td>
<td>1371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Cricket (outdoor)</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Athletics (track)</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Motor sports (motorcycling)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Rugby (juniors only)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Baseball/softball</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Dragon boat racing</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Rowing</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Water skiing</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2014 Super Tuesday Bike Count

The key findings from the 2014 Super Tuesday Bike Count, which was conducted between 7am and 9am on Tuesday, March 4 at 34 sites in Wodonga, were:

- The busiest commuter site was the Lincoln Causeway (site 5256), with a total of 109 riders;
- Wodonga recorded an average of 55 riders per hour at the busiest site which ranked 31st among survey areas;
- Lincoln Causeway was the most popular bicycle commuter route;
- The site that shows the most significant increase in percentage (228.6 per cent) and number (16 riders) is the intersection of Murray Valley Highway and Whytes Rd (site 5254);
- The site that shows the most significant decrease in percentage (34.8 per cent) and number (16 riders) is the intersection of Bandiana Link, Anzac Parade and Victoria Cross Parade (site 6045); and,
- Overall the number of riders in Wodonga has increased by 31.9 per cent compared with previous count.
Barriers to physical activity

There is a broad range of social and economic determinants that influence whether or not people participate in physical activity. Based on the VicHealth Be Active Framework, research and community feedback, it is recognised that barriers exist at individual, organisational and club, community and societal levels, as outlined below.

Individual level

- Lack of time
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of child care

Organisational and club level

- Lack of information about opportunities available.
- Few formal/organised clubs and organisations supporting informal physical activity, compared to the more highly-known and better resourced traditional sporting clubs and organisations.
- Inadequate resources, funding and facilities for informal physical activity clubs and organisations.
- Lack of members, resulting in a few members carrying a higher volunteer burden.
- Increased legal obligations relating to public liability.
- Lack of public profile, recognition, skills to apply for funding and resources.

Community level

- Inadequate facilities and connected areas of open space as a result of poor planning.
- Communities that are based around cars as the major form of transport.
- Lack of public transportation.
- Communities where people do not feel connected to each other.

Society level

- People don't feel that facilities and areas of open space are safe.
- People feel that it is more enjoyable to spend leisure time using technology.
- Concern that participation may lead to liability or litigation.
- Decrease in commitment to volunteer.
- Lack of supporting infrastructure, public open space and facilities to accommodate the growing trends in informal physical activity.
Opportunities to increase physical activity

Physical inactivity is a whole of community issue and can affect anyone. However, members of the Wodonga community who are less likely to be active are women, older adults, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with a disability, Indigenous Australians and people with a low socio-economic status.

The barriers discussed previously are more likely to affect these members of the community and they are consequently less likely to be active than other groups within the community.

Research undertaken by VicHealth indicates that specific initiatives need to be implemented to take into consideration the needs of these communities and to address their barriers to participation.

The most effective approach is to implement several different strategies at once, in partnership with a broad range of organisations such as local government authorities, schools, workplaces, sports clubs, primary health care settings, transport agencies, media, in a broad range of settings and involving a variety of stakeholders.

There is a need for policies that support physical activity at a high level, through to actions which increase social support for physical activity to occur in a range of different settings such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Strategic planning and urban design that is supportive of safe and supportive environments for physical activity are key priorities.

The ability of stakeholders (community, groups and the council) to work in successful partnership with each other is essential to support increased physical activity.

To increase people's awareness of the physical activity opportunities available, there is a need for effective public communication initiatives and the provision of information.

In response to Wodonga's demographic data, participation and barrier identification, it is recommended that the following issues be considered to support increased physical activity:

- Provide a mix of opportunities to cater for physical activity for different age groups across the population;
- The high proportion of youth and young adults will require appropriate provision to support and encourage participation;
- Growth rates of seniors and frail aged service groups will result in greater demand for a range of services to support healthy and active ageing;
- There is likely to be a strong demand for informal physical activity opportunities by adults aged 35 to 59 years old;
- Young women, aged between 15 and 24 years, are less likely to participate in sufficient physical activity to achieve health benefits, compared with young men in the same age group;
- People living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas are more likely to be sedentary, compared with people who live in the least socio-economically disadvantaged areas; and,
- The significance of cycling as a highly popular participation activity for adults and the highest participation activity for children (with other wheeled activity, such as scooters, rollerblading, skate boarding being the second highest participation for children), supports a focus on pathways to support walking/jogging, cycling and other ‘wheel-based’ non-motorised physical activity.
Research and the work of Healthy Together Wodonga (HTW) indicates the best investments for physical activity are:\(^1\)

- School programs (such as the HTW Achievement Program and Active Travel to School Program);

- Transport policies and systems that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport (as suggested in Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy, for example, active travel, Principal Pedestrian Network and Principal Bike Network);

- Planning and urban design (through the Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy, Wodonga CBA Revitalisation Plan, and Wodonga Planning Scheme Review) for equitable and safe access and environments for all physical activity, including incidental, recreational and transport-related physical activity (particularly walking and cycling) for all users;

- Promotion in primary healthcare systems of physical activity and non-communicable disease prevention;

- Public education and marketing, including mass media to raise awareness and change in social norms of physical activity (for example, encouraging stair use over escalator use), and inform of physical activity options (such as current pathways in the tracks and trails hierarchy); and,

- Community-wide programs involving multiple settings and sectors that mobilise and integrate community engagement and resources.

Central Business Area Revitalisation Plan 2014 to 2034

This plan has the goal of strengthening Wodonga's CBA as a highly attractive and functional centre for existing and new businesses, property investors, residents and visitors. Wodonga's new heart will be unlike any other regional capital in Australia. In keeping with its status as the northern gateway to Victoria, the new CBA will have a contemporary look and feel that will set Wodonga apart from all other regional centres. Existing precincts will be enhanced by new urban design, better access and place activation strategies. The council will guide this work through the provision of infrastructure and the development of new planning controls that are designed to encourage future investment. There will be improvements in the public domain to help link the various precincts and to provide new and improved areas for community events and activities.

Child Friendly City Framework 2012 to 2016

This framework provides a guiding document to lead the way in how the council works with, provides for and supports children of Wodonga between zero and 12 years. The framework aims to meaningfully consider and engage children in community life. The document identifies the environment as such an important factor in children's lives in relation to how they grow into independent adults. The framework will be implemented primarily through the Municipal Early Years Plan, identifying key actions to direct the work and partnerships needed.

Cultural Services Plan 2012 to 2017

This plan provides an approach to cultural activities for the city. The strategic priorities are spaces and places, activation and celebration, creative capacity and participation and engagement. It includes an objective to promote business and sporting relationships that will assist Wodonga to increase sporting visitation. Acknowledgement of event approaches and consideration of infrastructure needs to maintain and build event attraction in the city. The plan has a strong emphasis on partnerships, relationships, social connections, integration and sustainability throughout. The link is made to having diversity of arts and cultural opportunities available, is a strong contributor to health and wellbeing and happiness of the community. The plan identifies a variety of opportunities the council provides the community with, including creative arts programming, event delivery, contemporary cultural venues, capacity building programs and integrated public art initiatives.

Play Environments in Wodonga 2014

This strategy and plan focus on the provision of infrastructure in council parks to support children's play and adult/youth informal physical activity. Traditional playground equipment, as well as the provision of more adult equipment (such as informal gym equipment and half tennis courts or basketball rings), all support informal physical activity.

Sustainable Wodonga Strategy 2014 to 2020

This strategy provides the broad framework of what the council will do about environmental issues and why it has adopted its chosen approach. The strategy includes six broad environmental management themes. These are ecosystems, energy, food, infrastructure, waste and water. For each theme, a set of regionally relevant drivers of change has also been identified. The strategy considers population growth, climate change (mitigation and adaptation), education and land use planning as key drivers relevant to all environmental themes.
Wodonga Destination Plan 2014 to 2019

This plan has been developed to guide the tourism activities of Wodonga Council through what is a unique and exciting time in the city's history. Recent major developments, such as the Quest Serviced Apartments, The Cube Wodonga and WAVES swim centre, have had a significant impact on visitation to the city and are shaping Wodonga's future as a major player in tourism in North East Victoria and the Murray region. The revitalisation of the city's central business area and the growth this will bring to the retail, hospitality and entertainment offerings will give further strength to Wodonga's ability to attract visitors.

The plan identifies the following tourism vision for the city:

To be a well-known and desired destination in North East Victoria where visitors can enjoy unique and layered quality experiences centred around five key product pillars:

- Arts, culture and history;
- Major sporting, business and cultural events;
- Food and wine;
- Nature-based recreational activities; and,
- Recreational cycling.

Wodonga Economic Development Strategy 2014 to 2019

This strategy has been developed to guide the economic development and investment attraction activities of Wodonga Council through what is a unique and exciting time in the city's history. Wodonga continues to be one of Victoria's fastest growing regional cities and has enjoyed a sustained population growth rate, as well as ongoing residential, commercial and industrial development. Wodonga's residential population is fast approaching 40,000 and the city services a catchment of 180,000 people, making it the largest city in North East Victoria.

The strategy identifies the following vision for Wodonga's economy:

In 2019, Wodonga is a city with a vibrant and diverse economy, driven by innovative and sustainable businesses.

The city's central business area has emerged as a premier retail, entertainment and service destination for the North East Victoria region, where the offerings are sophisticated and reflect the community's active and creative lifestyle.

The completion of the intermodal terminal and attraction of significant new private investment at Logic has strengthened its reputation as a leading industrial precinct.

Wodonga businesses feel engaged, supported and encouraged to grow, while new businesses and industries are attracted to Wodonga because of its location, stable workforce and high-quality infrastructure.

Public and private investment has continued around the city, with clear and consistent council strategies, policies and plans in place to ensure certainty for investors and developers.
Wodonga Growth Strategy (draft)

The background report for the *Wodonga Growth Strategy*, which was finalised in December 2014, highlights a number of elements of community infrastructure including recreation. Specifically it states that, “The principle of improving the health of their local communities has been embraced by Wodonga and they have recently completed a draft *Physical Activity Strategy (2014)* which supports physical activity as part of everyday living”. This is underpinned by a report by ASR which has undertaken an audit of community facilities in Wodonga and concluded that the council has a good array of facilities, both formal and informal.

Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy (draft)

The *Transport Integration Act 2010* requires the council to ensure that land use and development decisions are integrated with transport decisions. The draft Wodonga *Integrated Transport Strategy (GTA 2014)*, addressed the council’s obligations under this Act. Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy (WITS) includes recommendations regarding active travel (for example, walking and cycling) for ‘transport’ purposes. However, the information is also directly relevant to support all informal physical exercise (not just for ‘transport’ purposes). The Principal Pedestrian Network and Principle Bicycle Network recommended in the WITS can be equally used for transport or recreation purposes. Links from the outer areas of Wodonga into the CBA are a critical component of the WITS.

Wodonga Planning Scheme and Municipal Strategic Statement

The planning scheme and Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) make several specific references to physical activity, including:

- 21.01 - Refers to “comprehensively planned residential areas including community facilities, open space, bicycle and pedestrian links will aim at achieving a healthy city”;
- 21.05-2 – Refers to “Gateway Island presents an opportunity to link the cities providing a cultural and recreational heart for Albury-Wodonga”; and,
- 21.13-02 – Is a recreation sub section dealing with active and passive recreation and refers to, “Wodonga Council recognises the importance of sport, recreation and other forms of physical activity on the quality of life of all members of the community. The provision and development of land for passive and active recreational purposes is an important element of urban development and should be provided in walkable locations to all residential neighbourhoods”.

Wodonga Sport and Recreation Plan 2014 to 2040

This plan covers physical activity needs associated with organised sport. Through its sports precinct planning, the plan also provides some environments for informal and non-organised physical activity (for example, informal gym sessions at the leisure centre or casual swimming at WAVES). In some sports precincts (such as Diamond Park fronting Wodonga Creek) there is also an opportunity to support informal physical activity, such as swimming and fishing.
Wodonga Youth Strategy 2014 to 2017

This strategy is Wodonga’s plan for its young people, outlining the council’s priorities over the next three years. The strategy has been developed to address the growing concerns and feedback received from more than 800 young people in 2013 during the council’s youth consultations. The strategy is strongly linked with the Council Plan under the strategic area of Our People: Providing a great lifestyle. The youth services team works closely with the various departments across the council to ensure that young people’s needs are being met and their voices are heard through all council strategies, including the cultural services plan, the sport and recreation strategy and the playground strategy.
As stated in the State Planning Policy Framework, Planning Schemes in Victoria must seek to achieve the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in Section 4(1) of the Planning & Environment Act 1987. These objectives are:

- To provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land.
- To provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity.
- To secure a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria.
- To conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value.
- To protect public utilities and other assets and enable the orderly provision and coordination of public utilities and other facilities for the benefit of the community.
- To facilitate development in accordance with the objectives set out in the points above.
- To balance the present and future interests of all Victorians.

This strategy considers and supports the state planning objectives, relating to the built and physical environment, to support all types of physical activity. These are outlined in the following clauses:

**Clause 15.01-4 Design for safety**

**Objective** - To improve community safety and encourage neighbourhood design that makes people feel safe.

**Related Strategies**

- Ensure the design of buildings, public spaces and the mix of activities contribute to safety and perceptions of safety.
- Support initiatives that provide safer walking and cycling routes and improved safety for people using public transport.

**Clause 18.02-1 Sustainable personal transport**

**Objective** - To promote the use of sustainable personal transport.

**Related Strategies**

- Encourage the use of walking and cycling by creating environments that are safe and attractive.
- Develop high quality pedestrian environments that are accessible to footpath-bound vehicles such as wheelchairs, prams and scooters.
- Ensure development provides opportunities to create more sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
• Ensure cycling routes and infrastructure are constructed early in new developments.

Clause 18.02-2 Cycling

Objective - To integrate planning for cycling with land use and development planning and encourage as alternative modes of travel.

Related Strategies

• Direct and connected bicycle infrastructure should be provided to and between key destinations including activity centres, public transport nodes and major attractions.

• Cycling infrastructure (on-road bicycle lands off-road bicycle paths) should be planned to:
  • Separate cyclists from other road users, particularly motor vehicles.
  • Provide the most direct route practical.
  • Require the provision of adequate bicycle parking and related facilities to meet demand at education, recreation, shopping and community facilities and other major attractions when issuing planning approvals.
  • Provide improved facilities, particularly storage, for cyclists at public transport interchanges, rail stations and major attractions.
  • Ensure provision of bicycle end of trip facilities in commercial buildings.

Clause 19 Infrastructure

Planning for development of social and physical infrastructure should enable it to be provided in a way that is efficient, equitable, accessible and timely.

Planning is to recognise social needs by providing land for a range of accessible community resources, such as education, cultural, health and community support (mental health, aged care, disability, youth and family services) facilities.

Growth and redevelopment of settlements should be planned in a manner that allows for the logical and efficient provision and maintenance of infrastructure, including the setting aside of land for the construction of future transport routes.

Strategic planning should facilitate efficient use of existing infrastructure and human services. Providers of infrastructure, whether public or private bodies, are to be guided by planning policies and should assist strategic land use planning.
Planning authorities are to consider the use of development contributions (levies) in the funding of infrastructure.

Clause 19.02-4 Distribution of social and cultural infrastructure

Objective - To provide fairer distribution of and access to social and cultural infrastructure.

Related Strategies

- Identify and address gaps and deficiencies in social and cultural infrastructure.
- Encourage the location of social and cultural infrastructure in activity centres, especially those identified as Principal Activity Centres.
Current environment assessment

A preliminary assessment of a variety of environments within the Wodonga municipality has been undertaken to identify and consider opportunities to encourage increased physical activity in Wodonga.

The environments identified include the city's variety of waterways, hilltops and walking and cycling pathways.

The environments have been assessed using criteria developed by the council (and also used for facility assessments in the sports plan), which address the following issues:

- The current assets (or strengths) in the environment (or current environment condition);
- The current challenges (or weaknesses) relating to the support of physical activity in that environment;
- The capacity of the environment (opportunities) to accommodate future physical activity; and,
- The existing strategic context and considerations for the environment.

Common issues for all environments are:

- Both access and safety are critical issues to be considered in the council's plans to support increased physical activity; and,
- By linking physical activity environments with active travel options, through public transport, walking and cycling, additional physical activity is encouraged.

Safe vehicle access is also important to accommodate the widest possible range of users, including people who may have to drive to environmental lands or waterways.

Waterways assessment

In Wodonga, swimming is the second most popular physical activity after walking. With trends supporting increased informal physical activity and costs for formal recreation options rising, the provision of cheap or free, water-related physical activity options needs to be considered through the activation of local waterways.

As stated in the Wodonga Destination Plan 2014 to 2019 (WDP), there is enormous potential for Wodonga's waterways to be used for sustainable nature-based recreational activities. The plan also identifies that Wodonga has the potential to provide greater access to a number of waterways including Lake Hume, the Murray River, the Kiewa River and Wodonga Creek.

This extensive waterway network provides the Wodonga community with an opportunity to participate in swimming, canoeing, water sports, bird watching, bushwalking and fishing with minimal travel and cost. In addition, pathways along the waterways offers the potential to support cycling and walking through providing attractive and visual spaces for physical activity to occur.

There is potential to develop community opportunities to access these waterways and support increased physical activity associated with these waterways. Lake Hume and the Murray River offer incredible untapped tourism opportunities and recreation potential, not only to Wodonga residents but also to a national audience. As identified in the WDP, Wodonga is not capitalising on the growing international tourism market and work is required in the marketing of existing offerings (especially nature-based) and the development of new products.
The WDP also includes a key theme to develop products and experiences with a goal of providing unique and interesting quality products and experiences that capitalise on Wodonga’s key strengths. The destination plan includes a strategy to develop nature-based experiences with the aim of enhancing access to rivers and identifies the development of a Waterways Activation Plan as a key outcome to support this strategy.

A waterways environment assessment (which is shown on the following pages) has been conducted for the main waterways throughout the municipality to assess their potential to support increased physical activity, including:

- Lake Hume;
- Murray River;
- Kiewa River; and,
- Wodonga Creek.

The waterways assessment will inform this strategy and support its ability to increase physical activity through the local waterways.
Lake Hume

Background

- Lake Hume is a large body of water which is major water storage in Australia servicing the Murray River water system. There are four foreshore public reserves and the Albury Wodonga Yacht Club in the Wodonga municipality. The public foreshores include Kookaburra Point, and Jacksons, Ebden and Ludlows reserves.

- The potential of Lake Hume to support recreation and tourism, and consequent physical activity, in the region is well recognised and supported by the Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan. As the delegated manager of selected reserves fronting the lake, the council has a unique opportunity to activate the lake and increase physical activity associated with the lake.

- This is particularly relevant for physical activity pursuits such as swimming, which is the second most popular activity after walking, as well as water-skiing, canoeing, fishing, sailing and other passive recreation activities.

- Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) is responsible for implementing the Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan.

- The Lake Hume Community Reference Group, including councillors from Wodonga and the surrounding councils, guides the implementation of the Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan.

- The Lake Hume Local Councils Reference Group was established in 2014 to enable local councils to advise on, and be involved with, the implementation of the Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan.

- Parklands Albury Wodonga (PAW) manages the High Country Rail Trail along the southern shore of the lake, including trail construction, maintenance and signage.
### Key findings

| Asset (strengths) current environment condition | • Lake Hume is the largest body of water between Sydney and Melbourne and is three times bigger than Sydney Harbor. It is one of Australia's most significant and important water storages.4  
• Lake Hume is popular for swimming, waterskiing, camping, picnicking, sailing, rowing, canoeing, fishing and sightseeing. Without the fast river currents, Lake Hume is a potentially safer swimming choice then the natural waterways.  
• The foreshore reserves (Kookaburra Point, Jacksons, Ebden and Ludlows) maintained by the council, include boat ramps, picnic areas, barbecues and toilet facilities. New public toilet facilities have been installed at Ludlows and Ebden reserves.  
• The Albury Wodonga Yacht Club leases foreshore land from G-MW and offers coaching, sail training and regattas.  
• The High Country Rail Trail, which is located along the foreshore of Lake Hume from Tallangatta to Wodonga (including the iconic Sandy Creek Bridge), has been identified as one of the Hume Region's Significant Tracks and Trails. |
| Challenges (weaknesses) relating to the support of physical activity | • There are numerous stakeholders involved in the management of Lake Hume and its foreshore.5 G-MW is the Victorian public land manager and has delegated management of selected public foreshore reserves to the council.  
• As an active water storage facility, the level of the water varies, making accessibility to the lake and to amenities difficult to provide and develop. Planning and infrastructure investment in the council-managed foreshore reserves has been limited, with the last comprehensive assessment completed in 2004 (Wodonga Council Lake Hume Activity Nodes). |
| Capacity (opportunity) to accommodate future physical activity | The *Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan* is a comprehensive plan to provide a coordinated approach to planning and development at the lake. The plan identifies the following opportunities to support increased physical activity at the lake:  
1. Develop foreshore master plans for the council reserves to support physical activity; and,  
2. Improve public access via pathways linking the High Country Rail Trail with the lake wall and the Murray River Adventure Trail. |
| Strategic context and considerations | Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) is responsible for implementing the *Lake Hume Land and On Water Management Plan*, through the Lake Hume Community Reference Group. The council can continue its role as a member of the Lake Hume Local Councils Reference Group in supporting the delivery of the plan. The plan includes an action to conduct a study to evaluate the economic benefits of recreation and tourism, and evaluate development opportunities to offset costs of recreational management. Consideration of the outcomes of this recreation and tourism study is recommended to support increased physical activity. State Planning Policy supports maintaining public accessibility on public land immediately adjoining waterways and also supports links along waterways to connect places of natural and cultural interest.8

- The WDP supports strategies to develop nature-based experiences and enhance access to waterways. The council has the ability to achieve this through the planning and management of the council-managed reserves at Lake Hume.

- The *Wodonga Council Public Toilet Strategy 2013*, recommends replacement of facilities at Jacksons Point, while Kookaburra Point and Ebden and Ludlows reserves only require ongoing maintenance work.

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6 Victorian land commences at the top of the southern bank of the original Murray River course, (which is submerged), with the Victorian lake bed and foreshore land being public land. For boating, all water north of Bethanga Bridge is NSW water and south of the bridge is Victorian water, (GM Water 2011).


8 State Planning Policy 11.01 Public Open Space
### Murray River

**Background**

- The Murray River is a key waterway of Victoria and New South Wales, providing the water needs of a number of communities. In Wodonga, the Murray River defines the state and municipal boundary.

- The Murray River is not considered safe for swimming due to the fast flow of the current and the temperature of the water.

- A potential way for the council to implement the council plan and to increase physical activity associated with local waterways is to work with the community and PAW and facilitate easier pedestrian, vehicle and footbridge public access to the Murray.

- PAW manage the crown land along the Murray River (refer to the Murray River Access Map) and has developed the Implementation Plan, Closed Road Reserves along the Murray River, which seeks to improve access to the Murray River through identified closed road reserves.

**Key findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset (strengths) current environment condition</th>
<th>As indicated in the WDP, the Murray River offers incredible untapped tourism opportunities and recreation potential not only to Wodonga residents, but also to a national audience. The plan also identifies that Wodonga is not capitalising on the growing international tourism market and work is required in the marketing of existing offerings (especially nature-based) and the development of new products. As an Australian iconic river, the Murray River offers great potential to provide an environment for physical activity for both visitors to Wodonga and residents.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Although maintained to a basic standard (gravel or buckshot pathways in a natural low maintenance environment) these waterway pathways have the potential to be sub-regional facilities accessed by various users (such as swimmers, anglers, cyclists, walkers and horse riders) from across Wodonga and the wider region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The proposed development of the Murray River Adventure Trail also has the potential to elevate the waterway pathways along the Murray to the regional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The current work of PAW along the waterways also aims to promote biodiversity and conservation and protect the Indigenous cultural heritage and encourage the involvement of the local Indigenous community in community projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Capacity (opportunity) to accommodate future physical activity.

- Pathways along the Murray River (waterway pathways) are referenced in the pathway hierarchy and have been classified in the hierarchy as sub-regional.

- Although the council does not directly manage land on the banks of the Murray and Kiewa rivers, the council does have the opportunity to provide access to the Crown land adjoining the rivers by opening up specific road reserves.

- PAW manages the crown land providing pathways along the Kiewa and Murray rivers and Wodonga Creek. Therefore, in this regard, the council’s role and influence in supporting physical activity through these pathways lies in developing its relationship and support for PAW and providing potential access to these pathways through unused council road reserves.

- PAW has prepared an implementation plan\(^9\) relating to potential access options through closed road reserves.

- PAW has also identified the possibility of future summer camping on the Crown land at the end of Sheathers Road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges (weaknesses) relating to the support of physical activity.</th>
<th><strong>Opening up closed road reserves</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • The road reserves noted on the Murray River Access Map are currently closed road reserves.  
  
• PAW has requested, “unformed bush track-style pedestrian access tracks,” through the road reserves and for the access to be “included on the road register as a pedestrian track”.  
  
• It is recommended that the council clarify its position under the *Local Government Act 1989* and *Road Management Act 2004*, to determine if public use as a ‘pedestrian track’ (only), is an option under these acts.  
  
• Alternatively, the roads may need to be included in the public road register for wider public access. Opening the roads and including them on the road register will require the council to meet the minimum required standard of care for public access through these roads.  
  
**Risk management and public/legal liability** |
<p>| • As a water environment, with potential hazards and a fast flowing river, the council is motivated to support water safety associated with physical activity on the Murray. Although the council does not provide direct public access to the Murray, the proposals to provide public access to land near the river (through closed road reserves) will need to satisfy the council's risk management and legal liability requirements concerning community safety. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic context and considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The <em>Local Government Act 1989</em> and <em>Road Management Act 2004</em> govern the council’s responsibilities in relation to public access through road reserves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under Section 204 (2) of the <em>Local Government Act 1989</em>, the council may declare a road (that is reasonably required for public use) to be open to public traffic. Section 205 provides that the council has the care and management of all roads that are declared under Section 204(2). The council’s obligations under the <em>Road Management Act</em> will also need to be accommodated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State Planning Policy supports maintaining public accessibility on public land immediately adjoining waterways and also supports links along waterways to connect places of natural and cultural interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The WDP supports strategies to develop nature-based experiences and enhance access to waterways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The <em>Hume Regional Growth Plan</em> (integrated into the <em>Wodonga Planning Scheme</em>) also supports tourism and the promotion of nature-based recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PAW priority action plan has been developed to support delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For a summary of the national, state and regional strategic context and considerations associated with providing access to the Murray, refer to <em>The Murray Parkways Corryong to Wodonga to Wahgunyah Implementation Plan</em>, Closed Road Reserves along the Murray River, PAW 2014-2017. pg. 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 State Planning Policy 11.01 Public Open Space
Kiewa River

Background

- Like the Murray, the Kiewa River offers similar strengths, opportunities and challenges in relation to supporting physical activity in Wodonga. The items listed above in relation to the Murray River are also directly relevant to the Kiewa River. In addition, some specific issues, which are particularly relevant to the Kiewa River, are noted below.

Key findings

| Asset (strengths) current environment condition | • While not as well known nationally as the Murray, the Kiewa River is still a regionally well-recognised major local river, offering similar strengths to the Murray in regard to physical activity. |
| • The Kiewa River is recognised for fishing and for local river swimming. It also provides potential linkages to Middle Creek and Yackandandah Creek (and potential regional trails such as the Yackandandah-Beechworth Trail, identified as regionally significant in the Hume Region\(^\text{11}\)). The Kiewa River also offers links to the High Country Rail Trail (which crosses the Kiewa River) and potential links to Maher's Hill (via closed road reserves). |
| • The Kiewa River is also the closest major natural waterway to the Baranduda community, the potential Leneva/Baranduda Growth Area and the new community at the Riverside Estate. |
| • The Kiewa River is also accessible to the Baranduda community which has an active Landcare association and environmentally-aware schools that are already supportive of the council's work to encourage physical activity, particularly through increased pathways. |
| • The existing waterway pathways along the Kiewa River to Wodonga Creek and the Murray already support the highly successful Fishy Trail Run and Half Marathon organised by PAW and sponsored by the council. |
| • Like the Murray, the crown land adjoining the Kiewa River is also managed by PAW which provides various pathways and some access along the riverbanks. Similarly to the Murray waterway pathways, the pathways along the Kiewa River are covered in this strategy in the tracks and trails hierarchy and have been classified in the hierarchy as sub-regional. The Kiewa River pathways have not received the same level of resources and funding as the Murray pathways and are maintained at a more basic level. Development of the pathways has been restricted due to limited parking and access through closed road reserves. |

\(^\text{11}\) Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy 2013-202
| Capacity (opportunity) to accommodate future physical activity | The council has the opportunity to improve direct access to the Kiewa River through the existing council reserve at Killara. Subject to community demand, water levels, safety issues and risk and public/legal liability assessment, this is one of the few council-managed reserves providing the potential for free direct access to a river in Wodonga.  
- The majority of other land along the Kiewa River is managed by PAW and like the Murray, the council has the opportunity to provide access to the Crown land adjoining the rivers by opening up specific road reserves.  
- In addition to improving access through closed road reserves, the council has the opportunity to work with PAW and adjoining developers and the community (for example at Riverside) to support the waterway pathways along the Kiewa River to a sub-regional level and link Killara to Gateway Island with an off-road, physically separated, cycle and walking pathway. |
| Challenges (weaknesses) relating to the support of physical activity | The challenges identified for the Murray in relation to opening up and managing road reserves, assessing various pedestrian access options and risk management and public liability, all apply to the Kiewa River.  
- Unlike the Murray, the council also manages council reserves that provide direct access to the Kiewa River (for example, the Killara Reserve). In this regard, the council must ensure that all risk management and public/legal liability issues are managed and addressed, when providing access to the water.  
- In addition, the flows of the Kiewa River vary greatly and may produce some unanticipated flooding. In this regard management of access to the Kiewa River must take into account varying flood levels, for example, pathways and trails should be surfaced and located to minimise maintenance costs resulting from flood damage (these issues are particularly relevant for potential pathways from Killara to Gateway Island).  
- Along the Murray and Kiewa rivers, most land on the riverbanks is Crown land and managed by PAW, providing public access to the rivers. However, along the Kiewa River, a section of land is held in private ownership (near Pollards Rd) so access along this section of the Kiewa River may need to divert through closed road reserves. |
| Strategic context and considerations                  | • Similar strategic and context considerations apply for the Kiewa River as noted for the Murray. |
|                                                    | • In addition, refer to *The Murray Parkways Corryong to Wodonga to Wahgunyah Implementation Plan, Closed Road Reserves along the Kiewa River, PAW 2014-2017* for a summary of the strategic context and considerations associated with providing access to the Kiewa River. |

**Wodonga Creek**

Like the Murray and Kiewa rivers, Wodonga Creek offers similar strengths, opportunities and challenges in relation to supporting physical activity in Wodonga. The items listed above for the Murray and the Kiewa rivers are also directly relevant to Wodonga Creek.

While the majority of Wodonga Creek is managed by PAW, a council-owned reserve on Gateway Island (at Diamond Park), and another reserve off Bandiana Link, both offer opportunities for the council to provide direct access to waterways for physical activity.

In this regard the council (as direct manager of the land and providing direct access to the water) must ensure that all risk management and public/legal liability issues are managed and addressed when providing access to the water.
Wodonga hilltops assessment

As stated in the Wodonga Destination Plan, there is enormous potential for Wodonga's environmental lands and hills, with their stunning views, to be used for sustainable nature-based recreational activities.

For the purposes of this strategy the environmental lands will focus on council-managed hilltops. Although it is acknowledged that the council does manage a wider range of environmental lands, including other Wodonga Retained Environment Network (WREN) land, the separate actions in the Council Plan to:

- Develop management plans to ensure the WRENs land is maintained and managed; and,
- Develop a Greening Wodonga Strategy when combined with future planning for Leneva/Baranduda

should accommodate any other environmental lands.

In addition, the provision of pathways through the environmental lands also offers the potential to support cycling and walking at a sub-regional level (refer to the pathways hierarchy).

Wodonga has the potential to provide increased access to a number of hills under council management, including Federation Hill, Huon Hill, Klings Hill and Bears Hill. Maher's Hill\(^\text{12}\) is also part of the Wodonga environmental lands hilltops under council management and offers a wonderful opportunity for the council to encourage physical activity for both residents and visitors to Wodonga.

There is potential to further develop community opportunities to access these environmental lands and support increased physical activity. Bears Hill, in particular, is located in a strategic location accessible to Wodonga's potential growth areas (and defence community) and may offer strategic public open space linkages through to Baranduda Fields and also link Wodonga with Leneva/Baranduda.

Some of Wodonga's hillsides have varied management arrangements, with PAW managing some of the hillsides (McFarlane's Hill, Baranduda Range and parts of Huon Hill).

The Council Plan includes priority actions to work with community organisations to increase volunteerism in the city. The plan also includes key actions to partner with the community to care for Wodonga's natural resources. A potential way for the council to implement the Council Plan and to increase physical activity associated with Wodonga's hilltops, is to work with the community and facilitate easier pedestrian and cycle access to the hilltops and improve amenities and parking.

Walking is the most popular physical activity in Wodonga, followed by cycling. With increasing economic pressures of living and costs for formal recreation options increasing, the provision of free physical activity options needs to be considered through the activation of environmental lands.

An initial, high-level analysis of council-managed environmental hilltop lands is provided below, as many of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats are common across the hilltop environmental lands. It is recommended that a more detailed analysis for specific council-managed environmental lands (including Bears Hill, Huon Hill, Federation Hill and Klings Hill) also be conducted.

\(^{12}\) Refer to Maher's Hill walk on Walking Maps http://walkingmaps.com.au/walk/1159
## Key findings

| Asset (strengths) current environment condition | - Will allow the council to offer additional services and facilities to support high participation needs.  
- Provision of appropriate facilities will support the WDP strategies to develop nature-based tourism experiences with the aim of enhancing access to hilltops and trails and to develop recreational cycling as a stand-alone experience.  
- Provision of appropriate facilities will support the *Sporting Event Attraction Strategy* to continually improve and promote Wodonga’s many assets to attract recreation events to the city, and identify and support new recreation event opportunities.  
- Any new facility development or renewal project needs to consider incorporating environmental sustainability principles, universal design principles, and crime preventions through environmental design principles to ensure that all facilities are safe, accessible and sustainable.  
- There are current vegetation management plans for specific areas of environmental lands, such as designated offset areas.  
- Integration of walking and cycling needs with conservation and biodiversity management.  
- Planned approach will provide clear direction to all stakeholders, such as council staff, clubs, community organisations, developers and the Victorian Government regarding future development and management of environmental lands. |
|---|---|
| Capacity (opportunity) to accommodate future physical activity. | • The council has the opportunity to increase physical activity through improved access to, and activation of, the environmental lands through the council-managed hilltops of Federation Hill, Huon Hill, Maher's Hill and Klings Hill.  

• There is an opportunity to partner with PAW (on Huon and McFarlane's hills and Baranduda Range) and the Commonwealth Department of Defence (on Bears Hill) to support the community and the city's defence population as required under the council plan.  

• Investigate the opportunity to activate the environmental lands to meet the high participation needs for walking, cycling, mountain bike pathways, bird watching, bushwalking, equestrian and running.  

• Opportunities for the council to work with community organisations, such as PAW and mountain bike associations to plan appropriate activation of environmental lands and possibly develop a high class regional mountain bike facility with appropriate amenities to a high standard (and possibly attract major events of state and national significance).  

• Investigate commercial investment opportunities through development of appropriate vegetation offset areas to offset capital development and on-going maintenance costs.  

• Provide programs and services to support the community to live active, healthy lifestyles.  

• Improve amenities (for example toilets as required), pedestrian and cyclist access, and car parking provision and access to environmental lands.  

• Identify and manage risks and legal liabilities associated with activation of environmental lands.  

• Allow the council to collaborate with external stakeholders to involve the community and also reduce the operational burden on council (for example, through the Albury Wodonga Mountain Bike Club). |

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- Integrate public open space with current and future community needs, for example, integrate and link Wodonga with Baranduda and Baranduda Fields (investigate potential links through Bears Hill, tributary N1 which connects to Middle Creek and the landfill site).
- Support improved traffic management and car parking provision to improve access to environmental lands and pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Will support the long-term sustainability of walking and cycling (mountain biking) into the future.
- Community organisations, such as the Albury Wodonga Mountain Bike Club, and council would like to offer additional events if facilities were available to support this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges (weaknesses) relating to the support of physical activity</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • There is no current master plan for any of the hill top environmental lands (although there are some specific management plans for some native vegetation offset sites).
• Isolation of the environmental lands has resulted in some vandalism and disregard for the environment (for example, rubbish dumping).
• Activation of the environmental lands and infrastructure development and improvements may increase the annual maintenance costs for the environmental lands (activation will also require higher levels of service and management).
• Expansion and development of the environmental lands, including increased traffic flow and car parking provision may affect the surrounding amenity (for example, near Federation Hill).
• Many sites have restricted car parking capacity and safety access issues for pedestrians, cyclists and cars, as they have not been planned and managed for high activation rates.
• Current risk assessment and legal liability management for environmental lands may not be up to date.
• Existing vegetation offsets and conservation and biodiversity priorities will restrict use and development in some areas.
• Potential for existing unacceptable use of some environmental land areas (in response to easy access), in preference to analysis and master planned appropriate use, prioritising conservation and biodiversity while still accommodating physical activity.
Cycling and walking environment assessment

The Australian and Victorian governments and non-government organisations (such as the Heart Foundation, Bicycle Victoria and Vic Walks) all recognise the importance of creating environments for cycling and walking. Consequently there is a vast amount of research, strategies and plans to assist the council to create these supportive environments.

In relation to current planning policies to support active living, the council is preparing or has prepared various strategies and plans which support environments for cycling and walking, such as:

- CBA Revitalisation Plan;
- Wodonga Growth Strategy (draft);
- CBA Public Domain Plan;
- Draft Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy; and,
- Review of local policy (as part of Planning Scheme Review) to incorporate existing content from the numerous existing council strategies and other sources (such as the Heart Foundation's Healthy by Design) to support environments for physical activity.

For Wodonga, reviewing these strategies and plans supports the implementation of the Wodonga Integrated Transport Strategy as the single most effective strategy to create environments to support cycling and walking in Wodonga.

Pathways hierarchy

Adequate provision of pathways has the potential to support the highest participation activities in Wodonga (for example, walking, running/jogging and cycling).

Currently in Wodonga there is no formal hierarchy for cycling and walking pathways. A basic planning distinction exists between cycling and walking pathways used for transport13 (captured under the Principal Pedestrian Network and the Principal Bicycle Network in the WITS) and all other pathways used for informal physical activity. However, the same infrastructure can be used for both active transport and informal physical activity.

There has not been a distinction between different pathways for varying physical activities, such as mountain bike riding, BMX, walking and informal family riding. There has also not been a distinction between different pathways provided for walking or cycling in relation to surface quality, surrounding amenity, landscaping, maintenance or supporting facilities such as car parking, lighting, toilets, or access by active travel.

As the population grows, and the trend toward informal physical activity continues, it is expected that the number of participants will increase with different grades and standards of pathways emerging. The different pathway requirements and standards will change as well.

With walking expected to remain the most popular activity, and growing support for informal physical activity resulting in increased demand for running and cycling pathways, Wodonga has an opportunity to encourage and manage these activities through a pathways hierarchy.

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13 Integrated Transport Strategy complying with Transport Integration Act and Principal Pedestrian Network, (PPN) and Principal Bicycle Network, (PBN) included in proposed State Planning Policy Framework.
Mountain bikers may ride on dirt trails, with minimal maintenance, while visitors riding along the rail trail may support a higher standard of rail trail leading into the central business area.

Future provision of pathways in Wodonga should be supported by a hierarchy structure, as a hierarchy will help delineate between standards of pathways for cycling, jogging, and walking.

A pathway is defined as an established trail, route or track which may traverse natural areas and is used by people for non-motorised recreation, such as walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding. In this report the reference to pathways includes all pathways, tracks and trails, with the proposed hierarchy providing guidance on the difference standards of pathways.

An initial draft pathways hierarchy is suggested to support the integration of the WITS Principal Pedestrian Network and Principal Bicycle Network with other pathways in and around the municipality.

The pathway hierarchy structure will assist in the planning for pathways to support physical activity in Wodonga.

**Proposed pathways hierarchy**

Proposed hierarchy of Wodonga tracks/trails/pathways including both recreational and transport cycling and walking use.

14 Adapted from the Victorian Trails Strategy 2014 trail definition
Local level

Local level facilities primarily cater for cycling and walking for transport and are therefore covered in detail in the WITS. For detailed network maps, refer to the Principal Pedestrian Network and the Principle Bicycle Network in the WITS and also the interactive WITS overlay on the council website.

Although the local pathways are covered by the WITS (under a transport focus) they are still a vital supporting base to the pathway hierarchy as they are also highly significant for recreational cycling, running and walking. Local pathway infrastructure in these principal networks can support both transport and recreational use. The issues raised by both uses are similar, with safety and connectivity to major destinations being the main concerns.

Local pathways are predominately council-owned and council-managed and the WITS provides recommended priority actions to develop and manage both the Principal Pedestrian Network and the Principal Bicycle Network. The main recommended actions are:

- Prioritise off-road connection to the CBA;
- Complete identified gaps in both the Principal Pedestrian Network and Principle Bicycle Network;
- Address safety concerns of users, particularly in relation to safe crossings at intersections (especially regarding roundabouts), and regarding active surveillance and lighting;
- Support physical separation of cyclists from cars and preferably pedestrians, (where possible); and,
- Develop safe active travel routes to education destinations.

Being mainly in urban environments, local pathways on the PPN and PBN generally have a good surface being either sealed or concrete and are usually maintained to a premier or standard surface and maintenance standard (see surface and maintenance standards). The pathway standard may vary dependent on the location, level of use and connection to major destinations.

The WITS key finding was that Wodonga already has adequate planning for vehicles (which will be maintained) and that Wodonga has a unique opportunity to strategically plan for active travel (including public transport, cycling and walking).

Consequently, the actions recommended in WITS to support the high participation activities of cycling and walking are also highly relevant for increasing physical activity in Wodonga and are supported by this strategy. When consulted, the community was very supportive of cycling and walking and the WITS. The WITS will play a key role in increasing the major forms of physical activity in urban Wodonga.

Sub regional level

In addition to local pathways for transport (and recreation) that are covered in WITS (through the PPN and PBN), there is an increased demand for pathways for recreation purposes such as hiking, walking, cycling and running, and to provide access to the hilltops and waterways.
Murray and Kiewa rivers and Wodonga Creek pathways (managed by PAW)

Although maintained to a basic standard (gravel or buckshot pathways in a natural low maintenance environment), these waterway pathways have the potential to be sub-regional facilities accessed by various users (such as swimmers, anglers, cyclists, walkers and horse riders) from across Wodonga and the wider region.

The proposed development of the Murray River Adventure Trail also has the potential to elevate the pathways along the Murray to the regional level.

PAW manages the Crown land providing pathways along the Kiewa and Murray rivers and Wodonga Creek. Therefore, the council’s role in supporting physical activity through these pathways lies in developing its relationship and support for PAW, and providing potential access to these pathways through unused council road reserves. These options are discussed in more detail in the Waterways Environments Assessment.

Pedestrian access to the Murray and Kiewa rivers through road reserves (management to be determined)

As discussed in the Waterways Environment Assessment, PAW has requested the council consents to pedestrian access through specified road reserves to provide access to the Murray and Kiewa rivers. If provided, these pedestrian pathways will also be included with the other waterway pathways at the sub regional level.

Environmental land pathways (managed by the council)

Although maintained to a basic standard (dirt pathways in a low impact conservation environment), these environmental land pathways have the potential to be sub-regional facilities accessed by various users (such as mountain bikers, cyclists, walkers and hikers) from across Wodonga and the wider region.

The WDP identified the need to support environment-based tourism and cycling as a stand-alone activity. Appropriate development (that is sensitive to the primary obligation of conservation) of the pathways in the environmental lands will support cycling and nature-based tourism. These options are discussed in more detail under environmental lands.

The location of Block 19 and Bonegilla, adjacent to Kookaburra Point, offers the potential to link these significant assets with the High Country Rail Trail and increase physical activity associated with all these regional attractions.

Regional level

The Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Plan identified two trails of Hume regional significance for Wodonga:

1. Linking the High Country Rail Trail to the CBA; and,
2. Sealing the existing rail trail.

These suggested actions have the potential to cater for state and regional users, as well as serving the wider Wodonga area.

While currently maintained at a basic surface level (gravel), the Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Plan recommends that with sealing there is potential to maintain the rail trail at a higher premier level of service.

Like the waterway pathways, the rail trail is managed by PAW and a committee of management. The council’s potential role remains one of support and provision of
resources and assistance as required by PAW and the community, and potential support to lobby for funding for development.

The council’s key aim, to provide a great lifestyle so the people of Wodonga enjoy an excellent quality of life, supports a key priority activity in the Council Plan to “implement future cycling and pathway improvements promoting linkages to the central business area”. In addition, the strategy to promote community health and wellbeing supports a key priority activity to, “work with community organisations to increase volunteerism in the city”.

It is recommended that the council actively take advantage of the unique opportunity to encourage physical activity into the CBA, and support the community and PAW to develop the regional rail trail, as well as implement these Council Plan strategies, while making a key contribution to increasing physical activity in Wodonga.

Surface and maintenance standards

In a similar manner to the surface and maintenance standards for sports facilities in the sports plan, it is suggested that a classification and grading system be developed to manage pathway surfaces and maintenance standards.

Such a system would assist to manage stakeholder expectations, including the community, the council and other pathway managers (and standards should also be agreed if a memorandum of understanding is to be effective).

Agreed surface and maintenance standards would also support costing for initial pathway development and allow planning for ongoing maintenance while also assisting to meet risk and legal liability requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Surface standards and maintenance services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premier</td>
<td>• Hot sealed surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Specify width minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Landscape maintenance and mowing (for example, minimum one maintenance visit per week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>• Spray seal or concrete surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Specify width minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Landscape maintenance and mowing (for example, specify minimum visit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>• Buckshot or gravel surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Specify minimum width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Landscape maintenance and mowing (for example, specify minimum visit).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trail grading systems

Wodonga's hilltops have a range of trails which encourage physical activity. These are often not promoted and vary in distance, difficulty, accessibility and quality. Grading systems have been established and endorsed at a state and national level to encourage consistent standards for trails to encourage promotion and safety, and therefore increasing the opportunity for physical activity.

Walking Trails - The Australian Walking Track Grading System

The Australian Walking Track Grading System was created by the Victorian Government and aimed at developing stronger, healthier communities through increased participation in physical activity.

The system has also been endorsed in the Victorian Trails Strategy 2014 and it is recommended that the council apply the system to all walking trails outside of the Principal Pedestrian Network to promote consistent signage and guide consistent trail standards.
### Australian Walking Track Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbol</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance</strong></td>
<td>Distance to complete walk.</td>
<td>Distance to complete walk.</td>
<td>Distance to complete walk.</td>
<td>Distance to complete walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x km</td>
<td>xx km</td>
<td>xx km</td>
<td>xx km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gradient</strong></td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Gentle hills</td>
<td>Short steep hills</td>
<td>Very steep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of pathway</strong></td>
<td>Well formed track</td>
<td>Formed track</td>
<td>Formed track, some obstacles</td>
<td>Rough track, many obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of markings</strong></td>
<td>Clearly sign posted</td>
<td>Clearly sign posted</td>
<td>Sign posted</td>
<td>Limited signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience required</strong></td>
<td>No experience required</td>
<td>No experience required</td>
<td>Some bushwalking experience recommended</td>
<td>Experienced bushwalkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>High and low estimate of time needed to complete track (e.g. 1.5-2hrs).</td>
<td>High and low estimate of time needed to complete track (e.g. 1.5-2hrs).</td>
<td>Timed needed to complete track (hours/days).</td>
<td>Timed needed to complete track (hours/days).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps</strong></td>
<td>No steps</td>
<td>Occasional steps</td>
<td>Many steps</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cycling Trails - The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Australian Trail Difficulty Rating System

The IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System grades the technical difficulty of cycling trails. The system aims to help users make informed decisions, provide information to match skill levels, assist to manage risk, minimise injuries and guide trail planning and provide consistent trail standards.

The system has also been endorsed in the Victorian Trails Strategy 2014 and it is recommended that the council apply the system to all cycling trails outside of the Principal Bicycle Network, to promote consistent signage and guide consistent trail standards.

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**IMBA Trail Rating System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail Difficulty Rating System</th>
<th>Easiest White Circle</th>
<th>Easy Green Circle</th>
<th>More Difficult Blue Square</th>
<th>Very Difficult Black Diamond</th>
<th>Extremely Difficult Dbl Black Diamond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trail Width</strong></td>
<td>72” or more</td>
<td>36” or more</td>
<td>24” or more</td>
<td>12” or more</td>
<td>6” or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tread Surface</strong></td>
<td>Hardened or surfaced</td>
<td>Firm and stable</td>
<td>Mostly stable with some variability</td>
<td>Widely variable</td>
<td>Widely variable and unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Trail Grade</strong></td>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>5% or less</td>
<td>10% or less</td>
<td>15% or less</td>
<td>20% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Trail Grade</strong></td>
<td>Max 10%</td>
<td>Max 15%</td>
<td>Max 15% or greater</td>
<td>Max 15% or greater</td>
<td>Max 15% or greater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Obstacles and Technical Trail Features (TTF)</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unavoidable obstacles 2” tall or less</td>
<td>Unavoidable obstacles 8” tall or less</td>
<td>Unavoidable obstacles 15” tall or less</td>
<td>Unavoidable obstacles 15” tall or greater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidable obstacles may be present</td>
<td>Avoidable obstacles may be present</td>
<td>Avoidable obstacles may be present</td>
<td>Avoidable obstacles may be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unavoidable bridges 36” or wider</td>
<td>Unavoidable bridges 24” of wider</td>
<td>Unavoidable bridges 24” or wider</td>
<td>Unavoidable bridges 24” or narrower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TTF’s 2’ high or less, width or desk is greater than 1/2 the height</td>
<td>TTF’s 2’ high or less, width of deck is less than 1/2 height</td>
<td>TTF’s 4’ high or less, width of deck is unpredictable</td>
<td>Many sections may exceed criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 https://www.imba.com/resources/maps/trail-difficulty-ratings