

Workplaces

in Open Spaces

A 'how to' guide to corporate volunteering and sponsorship in Wodonga's open spaces



**parks, gardens, reserves,
waterways, environmental lands**



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This initiative has been created in partnership with the following organisations:

- Wodonga Urban Landcare Network;
- Parklands Albury Wodonga;
- Wodonga Council;
- Healthy Together Wodonga (Wodonga Council and Gateway Health); and,
- Be Active (VicHealth).

This initiative is a community led venture which aims to engage workplaces to improve Wodonga's open spaces and encourage employee health and wellbeing. By engaging Workplaces in Open Spaces, we aim to create friendly, usable spaces that enhance civic pride and community ownership.

For more information contact Wodonga Council's volunteer co-ordinator on (02) 6022 9300.



Healthy Together Wodonga, supported by the Victorian Government and partners, is improving the health of our community.



What is Workplaces in Open Spaces?

Workplaces in Open Spaces is an initiative that has been created in a partnership between:

- Wodonga Urban Landcare Network;
- Parklands Albury Wodonga;
- Wodonga Council;
- Healthy Together Wodonga (Wodonga Council and Gateway Health); and,
- Be Active (VicHealth).

It is an initiative which is led by the community and engages workplaces to improve Wodonga's open spaces and encourage employee health and well-being.

By doing this, the partners believe they can help to create friendly, usable spaces that enhance civic pride and community ownership.

What can workplaces do?

- The activities that workplaces can participate in range from tree planting and landscaping to installing small infrastructure and equipment.
- They can be undertaken in a timeframe to suit the workplace and its employees.
- Projects can either be a short-term or long-term arrangement where a company might build a relationship with a particular open space over a period of time.
- Workplaces can select the open space they would like to volunteer in, or one can be matched to them depending on their needs and requirements.

When would corporate volunteering fit with your workplace?

- Part of a team building day.
- Part of an ongoing, regular corporate volunteering workplace program.

How do I find out more?

For more information contact Wodonga Council's volunteer co-ordinator on (02) 6022 9300.

What does corporate volunteering and sponsorship in open spaces mean?

Corporate volunteering in open spaces involves workplaces providing opportunities for employees to volunteer for projects and activities in the community as part of their normal working day.

In 'Workplaces in Open Spaces', employees can participate in a range of activities designed to improve open spaces across Wodonga.

Corporate sponsorship in open spaces involves workplaces making a financial contribution to assist with the provision of infrastructure, services and plantings in parks and gardens.

In 2014 this will be focused on facilitating tree planting across Wodonga.

What are the benefits of corporate volunteering and sponsorship?

Corporate volunteering and sponsorship in open spaces helps employees to get active and connect with their community.

Having active and engaged employees has many benefits, including:

For workplaces

- A positive corporate image built through co-ordinated media opportunities and case study promotion;
- Increased employee and employer engagement, motivation and relationships;
- More successful recruitment and retention of employees;
- Reduced absenteeism and sick leave;
- Decreased frequency and cost of workers' compensation; and,
- Increased return on training and development investment.

For employees

- Greater capacity to enjoy life both in and outside of the workplace;
- Increased morale, job satisfaction and motivation;
- Improved physical health and mental wellbeing; and,
- Connections with community.

For the community

- Improved amenity of parks and gardens;
- Maintained and increased levels of civic pride; and,
- Greater use of local open spaces which gives an improved perception of safety.

For not-for-profit community groups

- Partnerships formed to achieve projects and activities;
- More people engaged with parks and gardens; and,
- Enhanced sense of ownership by the community.

Why are open spaces important?

For our community:

Improving physical health

Wodonga's parks and gardens host a variety of organised and casual sport and exercise, ranging from soccer and personal training sessions to Tai Chi and yoga.

Walking and cycling tracks, playgrounds and skate facilities are enjoyed by all members of our community.

These free and low-cost opportunities for exercise and activity help to combat health issues such as obesity and high blood pressure.

They also build our community's connection with parks and gardens and contribute to them developing lifelong healthy exercise habits.

Bringing people together

Open space provides the spaces and places for community to meet, enjoy and connect.

Organised and informal sports, activities, events and programs in parks, gardens and open spaces help our community build friendships and create a sense of civic pride.

Sporting clubs support team-building and give our young people in particular a sense of belonging to our community. Parks and gardens are used to celebrate important occasions, like birthdays and holidays, while many use them to take time and relax.

Enhancing mental health and wellbeing

Regular exercise can have significant benefits for the mental health of our community members.

The range of psychological benefits for people who visit green, open spaces is vast and includes improved mood, lower levels of anxiety, lower stress levels and lower levels of depression.

For children, research shows that close proximity to green spaces is clearly associated with reduced prevalence of depression, anxiety and other health problems.¹

For our environment:

Storing carbon

Parks and gardens can have a significant impact in the fight against climate change.

Trees remove carbon dioxide (the most abundant greenhouse gas) from the atmosphere and store it for decades.

Maintaining clean air and water

Vegetation cleans and filters water, traps sediment, recycles nutrients and slows run-off to improve the quality of water for human consumption and agriculture.

The leaves of trees naturally filter the air by stabilising dust and absorbing pollutants.

¹ Townsend, M, Weerasuriya, R, Beyond Blue to Green: *The Health Benefits of Contact with Nature in a Park Context - Literature Review*, 2010, Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University.

Supporting local ecological systems

Park and creek corridors throughout Wodonga form a network allowing native wildlife to find food and shelter and move between patches.

Maintaining natural bush areas and planting local native plants in parks and gardens supports a whole food and habitat web essential for unique local bird and animal species.

For our economy:

Helping our tourism industry

Walking and cycling tracks, playgrounds and parks are some of the key attractions for visitors to Wodonga.

These spaces are also used for events that bring thousands of people to the city each year.

Enhancing property values

The proximity of houses to parks and gardens has been shown to add to the value of a property.

Neighbouring an urban park is estimated to add 20 per cent to a house value.²

Varied and maintained open spaces can enhance civic pride and prevent crime.

² Parks Forum, *The Value of Parks*, Fitzroy, Australia, 2008



Corporate volunteering

Corporate volunteering opportunities are available at a variety of open spaces around Wodonga.

The activities that workplaces can participate in range from tree planting and landscaping to installing small infrastructure and equipment.

Activities can be undertaken in a timeframe to suit the workplace (half or full day) and can be a short-term (one-off) or long-term arrangement (building a relationship with a particular open space over a number of volunteering days).

Workplaces can select the open space they would like to volunteer in, or one can be matched to them depending on their needs and requirements.

Some key considerations when deciding which volunteering opportunity suits a workplace include:

- Number of participating employees;
- Physical capability of participating employees;
- Availability of employees (half or full day);

- Longevity of arrangement (short-term or long-term);
- Aligning the right activity with the workplace's needs or interests; and,
- Transport for employees.

Participants in corporate volunteering activities will be covered by the existing insurance policies of the program partners.

Workplaces should check their own public liability cover, their own OH&S, and risk & relevant policies for the type of volunteering activities engaged in.

If your workplace is interested in corporate volunteering, or you would like to find out more contact Wodonga Council's volunteering co-ordinator on (02) 6022 9300.

Corporate sponsorship

The 2014 'Workplaces in Open Spaces' corporate sponsorship program is focused on essential tree planting in open spaces around Wodonga.

Sponsorships from workplaces will be put towards purchasing tubestock, equipment and labour.

Some of the open spaces that will be planted in 2014 include:

- Willow Park (House Creek)
- Lake Hume foreshores
- Hunter's Reserve (House Creek)
- Kiewa River at Killara; and;
- Murray River at Bonegilla.



Frequently asked questions

What if my workplace can't volunteer during normal working hours?

If your workplace is unable to volunteer from Monday to Friday then there are other options to explore. Contact Wodonga Council's volunteer co-ordinator on (02) 6022 9300 to discuss your needs.

How does this initiative fit with the Healthy Together Achievement Program?

Workplaces that are members of Healthy Together Achievement Program are able to use their participation in 'Workplaces in Open Spaces' as evidence toward the employee health and wellbeing benchmarks of physical activity and mental health. For more information contact the Health Promotion team at Gateway Health on (02) 6022 8888.

Will my workplace be covered by insurance?

It is important you refer to the enclosed risk analysis checklist to make sure your company and your employees will be covered.

What if I want to volunteer as an individual?

Wodonga Council's volunteer co-ordinator can assist you to find a volunteering opportunity that matches your interests and needs. They can be contacted on (02) 6022 9300.

How can I get my local community or sporting group involved?

Many community and sporting groups seek opportunities to assist with community projects and there are a number of projects across Wodonga where this assistance would be welcomed. Contact Wodonga Council's volunteer co-ordinator on (02) 6022 9300 to find out more.



Notes



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petcare
in the
Community



Workplaces in Open Spaces Partners:

Parklands Albury Wodonga

www.parklands-alburywodonga.org.au

Wodonga Urban Landcare Network

www.wodongaurbanlandcarenetwork.org.au

Wodonga Council

www.wodonga.vic.gov.au