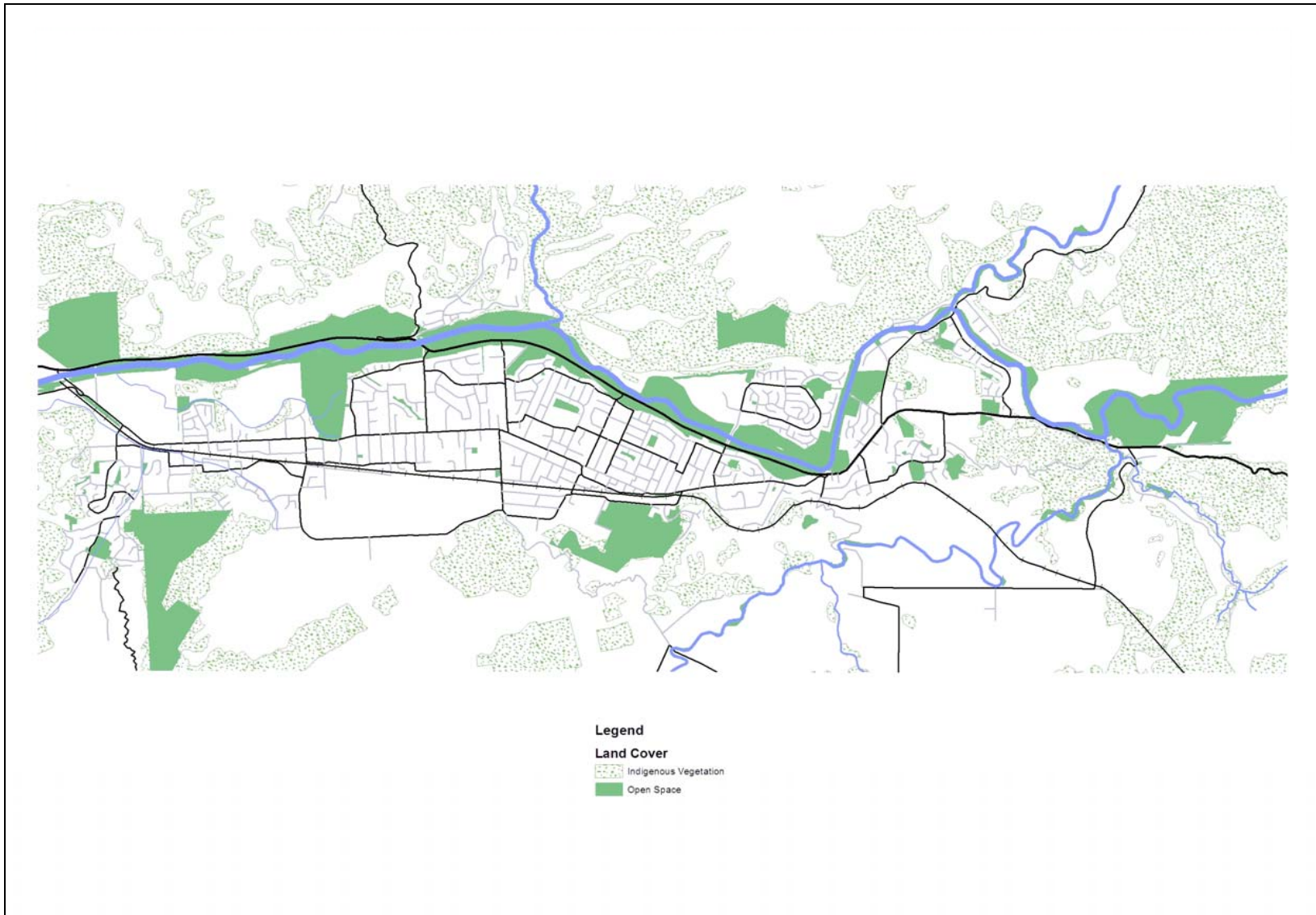




Upper Hutt Urban Growth Strategy

**An Outstanding Open Space Network**

# Open Space, Rivers and Bush Cover



# An Outstanding Open Space Network

## Overview

Quality open spaces are fundamental to world class cities and regions. Upper Hutt's open spaces are stunning, featuring areas of outstanding natural beauty alongside top quality sporting facilities. The Hutt River forms the spine to a network of reserves of regional and local significance. The surrounding hills create the visual backdrop to the city, and offer the opportunity for different outdoor experiences.

Access to the natural environment for recreation and leisure activities is generally excellent. As the city develops, the priorities will be to not only maintain those natural areas and open spaces that we do have, but to enhance them by providing for improved facilities and access, and by extending the network of open spaces and off-road linkages to best reflect the characteristics of each locality.

## Current Provision of Open Space

Over 400 hectares of open space are owned by Council, and more than 100 hectares are managed by Council on behalf of the Greater Wellington Regional Council [GWRC] or the Department of Conservation [DOC]. Reserves within and near the urban area are summarised in the following table and shown on page 66.

In addition, a number of tracts of privately owned land contribute to the overall open and natural character of the city. These include the Trentham Racecourse, the Hutt Riding for the Disabled land at the entrance to Silverstream, the Royal Wellington, Trentham and Te Marua Golf Clubs and the undeveloped hillsides of the upper valley.

### SUMMARY OF RESERVES IN UPPER HUTT

SIGNIFICANCE	OPEN SPACE	AREA
<b>Regional</b>	Hutt River, and adjoining open spaces [GWRC/UHCC]	443.96 ha
	Trentham Memorial Park	47.61 ha
	Maidstone Park	54.58 ha
	Harcourt Park	15.22 ha
<b>Sportsfields</b>	Awakairangi Park [GWRC/UHCC]	35.20 ha
	Whakatiki Park	5.66 ha
	Maoribank Park [GWRC/UHCC]	6.52 ha
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	26 parks feature playgrounds	97.26 ha
<b>Scenic</b>	Silverstream Scenic Reserve	69.09 ha
	Trentham Scenic Reserve [DOC]	40.06 ha
	Witako Scenic Reserve [DOC]	59.21 ha
<b>Other</b>	This includes esplanades, community buildings, and utility reserves	247.14 ha
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>OPEN SPACE ZONE</b>	<b>1121.51 ha</b>

### Supply of Reserve Land

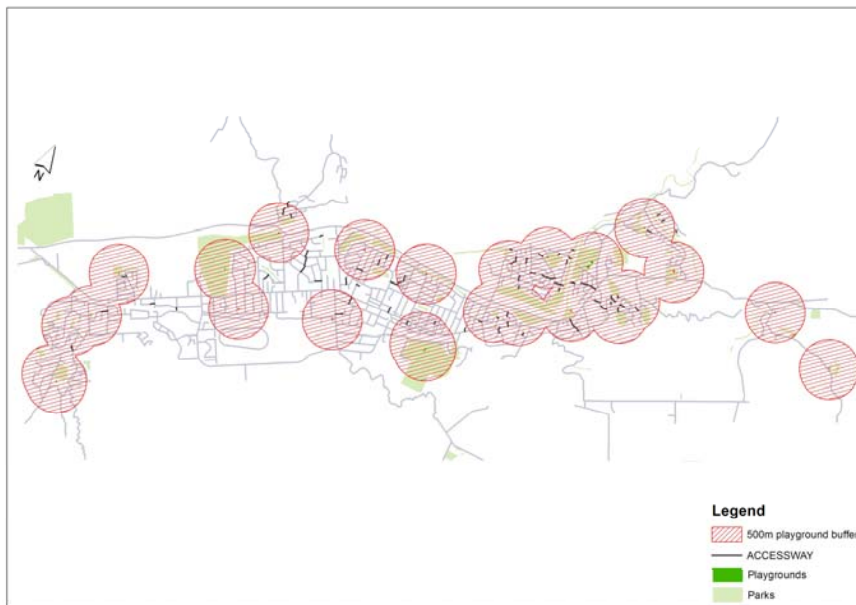
Clearly, the overall supply of reserve land is generous, with nearly 11.4 hectares of reserve land per 1,000 people under the City Council's ownership.

A more detailed analysis reveals that 194 ha of reserve is bush clad, of which 12.65 ha is fenced for conservation purposes. This reduces the amount of available reserve land for many activities down to 244 ha, or 6.35 ha per 1,000 people. A low density residential environment would typically require up to 6ha per 1,000 residents, with high density development needing as little as 3 ha per 1,000 people [*Property Economics, 2005*].

# An Outstanding Open Space Network

## Neighbourhood Parks

Those areas of the city that have been developed from the 1960s to 2000 are endowed with excellent access to neighbourhood parks with playground facilities. Within the older central valley core there is noticeably less accessibility to such parks. Local primary schools [i.e. St Brendans, Trentham, Fraser Crescent, Upper Hutt Central and Oxford Crescent] may be providing for local demands for play facilities, but this relationship has never been formalised with Council.



500 Metres Around Playgrounds

## Active Recreation

The 2005 Upper Hutt Active Recreation Plan [UHARP] report, 'Current Situation', describes the physical infrastructure and facilities for sports and active recreation throughout Upper Hutt. The companion document, 'Implementation Plan', identifies the following needs:

- *There is no immediate need to invest in new large facilities, as there is still capacity in existing facilities. The outcome of the schools network review could have a significant impact on the facilities required by the school/s and therefore available to the community.*
- *There is however potential for considerable increases in demand caused by increased participation resulting from this plan's implementation. Maintenance of existing facilities will be required.*
- *There needs to be a well planned capital works programme developed as part of the City Growth Strategy that builds on the existing parks and open spaces network, and takes account of any increase in population.*
- *A commitment to the establishment of active transport networks will also require a strategy for the development of walking and cycling infrastructure.*

The 'Implementation Plan' also identified the following opportunity:

- *Work with new housing developers in the region to build walking and cycling pathways and provide for open spaces*

## Pedestrian and Cycle Links within the City

Pedestrian links across the urban valley floor are generally well developed. Riverstone, though isolated from the main city, is being progressively developed with a local network of walkways.

The city is well suited to cycling but the standards for marked cycleways are stringent, even for roads with wide carriageways like Fergusson Drive.

# An Outstanding Open Space Network

The railway line bisects the city, though there are a number of illegal crossing points and informal tracks along the rail corridor. A new crossing has been constructed at Camp Street, and opportunities exist to further enhance crossing points.

## Access to the Hutt River

Accessibility to the Hutt River is also important, as the river is such an integral part of the city for informal recreation. To the north of Moonshine Park, access to the river is limited over State Highway 2. Even at Totara Park Bridge, there is no formed walking or cycle link to the Hutt River Trail. At the Silverstream entrance to the city, access along Fergusson Drive is also limited as there is no formed pathway linking Silverstream with County Lane. Informal access is available from Heretaunga Park, through the St Patrick's College estate.

## Esplanades

Over recent years, Council has acquired esplanade reserves or strips along key waterways at the time of subdivision. Esplanades are important ecologically and for public access. Part or all of the following rivers and streams are covered by these provisions:

### ESPLANADE REQUIREMENTS IN DISTRICT PLAN

ESPLANADE RESERVES	ESPLANADE STRIPS
Hutt River	Hulls Creek
Whakatiki River	Cooleys Creek
Akatarawa River	Huia Stream
Mangaroa River	Narrow Neck Stream
Mawaihakona Stream	Akatarawa River
Collins Creek	Mangaroa River
	Mawaihakona Stream
	Pakuratahi River

Council has now secured public access to significant stretches of the lower Mangaroa River, though no paths have yet been signposted.

There is a significant opportunity to link these areas with the urban valley network of reserves, the Hutt River Trail [which also links to Lower Hutt and the Wairarapa] and with other reserves under the control of the Greater Wellington Regional Council, such as Tunnel Gully and Kaitoke.

## Natural and Amenity Values

Indigenous vegetation, or regenerating bush, forms an important part of the visual backdrop to the city and is important for biodiversity. The tree clad hills of the city are consistently identified by residents as being important. The map on page 72 shows the location of these tracts of bush.

Under the District Plan, the ridgelines are partly protected from development, and a proposed amenity reserve is designated from Mt Marua through to the Blue Mountains, as well as at the top of Emerald Hill. None of this land has been acquired yet by the Council. Council has protected some specific trees and areas of bush at the time of subdivision, both on the hillsides and on the valley floor.

## Community and Club Buildings

A number of community organisations and clubs have placed their own club buildings and storage facilities on Council reserve land. Generally the building sites are leased for a modest amount, and the groups maintain their own facilities.

# An Outstanding Open Space Network

## Strategy: An Outstanding Open Space Network

Council proposes to continue to improve its already excellent network of open spaces, parks and reserves, and to work with the community to create an outstanding open space network in the following ways:

1. Improve public facilities to make better use of existing open spaces.
2. Improve connections between open spaces and community focal points, including schools, city and suburban retail centres and areas of work.
3. Improve the safety of parks, reserves and linkages.
4. Protect important natural, amenity, cultural and heritage features using a range of techniques.
5. Plan for open space networks, improving existing linkages and creating new networks in new areas of urban development.
6. Facilitate opportunities for businesses and other organisations to open up new leisure experiences.
7. Take financial contributions in cash unless there is an important reason to take the land.

This strategy is explained in more detail over the following pages.

### 1. Improve Public Facilities

Over the next three years, Council will identify what, if any, additional physical infrastructure is needed to encourage residents to lead healthier and more active lives as part of the Upper Hutt Active Recreation (UHARP) project. This project involves a partnership with community and governmental organisations.

A blueprint for the development of Trentham Memorial Park has been adopted by Council, and will be implemented over the next few years, in partnership with a number of community organisations.

The next focus will be Maidstone Park, with the view to developing this major park as an active community hub for sports and recreation. The Council owned housing on the edge of the park could be sold for more intensive housing development to help fund any park facility upgrade.

Council's LTCCP identifies capital and asset management works proposed for the next 10 years. This work programme will be reviewed annually, to ensure that capital expenditure is reflecting where additional demands arising from development are being placed. It includes projects to upgrade playgrounds, seal access roads, upgrade paths, provide good toilet facilities and provide other park amenities such as seating and bins.

### 2. Improve Connections

Walking and cycling linkages will be improved between open spaces and community focal points, including schools, city and suburban retail centres and areas of work.

Within the urban area, Council will look to secure new walkway links and to formalise informal 'short cuts', either by negotiation with land owners or at the time of development of an area. Areas already identified include:

# An Outstanding Open Space Network

- CBD to Maidstone Park, making a much more attractive link under the railway and right through to Maidstone Park.
- Camp St – the creation of a new formal rail crossing.
- Emerald Hill and Birchville – improving walkway linkages from the Hutt River to the Emerald Hill summit.
- Timberlea to Mt Marua – improving linkages between Gentian St and Snowberry Grove and up to the lower Mt Marua reservoir; creating new links within the 'Mok' land;
- Brown Owl to Timberlea/Mt Marua – improving the underpass link to the Brown Owl shops.
- Kingsley Heights – improving links to the city, the ridgeline and Maidstone Park.

Some popular existing links will be upgraded. For example parts of the Hutt River Trail will be sealed to enable more people to enjoy the river experience. People of all abilities will be able to enjoy the river environment, and access will be much easier over the winter months.

Access to the Hutt River will also be improved, either at the time of development or in negotiation with land owners, at:

- Silverstream [near County Lane]
- Heretaunga Park [through the St Patricks estate]
- Totara Park Bridge [from the highway intersection to the Trail]
- Te Marua [Twin Bridge underpass]
- Riverstone [including access to the Whakatiki River and across to Totara Park]
- Gillespies Road

### 3. Improve Safety

Council is committed to ensuring that its open spaces are as safe as possible for everyone.

It will follow best practice in designing open spaces and walkways for safety. A substantial amount of work has now been done internationally on how to prevent crime through the design of the environment, and

Council has recently completed a safety audit of the central city area. Some of the simple things that are being done to improve safety include:

- Layouts which enable people to easily find their way around
- Walkways with good visibility
- Multiple exit and entry points
- Clear information and signage
- Good maintenance, showing that the spaces are used and cared for.

Community involvement is important in creating safe places. Council will facilitate local community initiatives to care for local reserves and walkways, in collaboration with the Police and in response to identified community needs.

Council will encourage home owners to orient their homes towards open spaces, enabling informal surveillance of these areas. It will make information available on how the community can help create and protect safe and attractive open spaces.

### 4. Protect Important Features

Council is committed to protecting important natural, amenity, cultural and heritage features when land is subdivided and/or developed.

Council will prepare separate strategies for each of these features over the forthcoming years, with the view to updating the various schedules of notable features, preparing any required plan changes and working co-operatively with feature owners and the wider community to protect and enhance them.

In the meantime, Council will continue to require that any potentially significant natural, amenity, cultural or heritage feature be investigated as part of the Assessment of Environmental Effects where any development proposal requires a resource consent. Any adverse

## An Outstanding Open Space Network

effects of development on the feature will be mitigated as part of the consent conditions.

### 5. Plan for New Open Space Networks

As part of the structure and concept planning processes for significant new areas of residential development, critical areas of land for open space will be identified in consultation with property owners, developers and the wider community.

Council will acquire those features and tracts of land which have the most benefit to the community, as identified through the structure or concept plan process. Typically, these will include:

- Flat, well drained land for any required sports facilities and neighbourhood parks.
- Walkway and cycleway links between the existing area of urban development and the new areas, as well as within the new areas.
- Esplanade reserves of between 5 and 20 metres width adjoining any rivers and streams.
- Significant tracts of native vegetation may be included within reserves where this or adjoining land has value for other open space activities [e.g sports, walking tracks, river protection] or has exceptionally high ecological, cultural or amenity values.

Other mechanisms to protect features often associated with public open spaces include:

- Private bush covenants
- Proposed new provisions for development on or near protected ridgelines as part of reviewing development along the southern hills.
- Resource consents for subdivisions that include conditions to protect specific trees.

Each of the areas of land identified for potential future development has quite different physical characteristics, lending the area to unique open space solutions:

- The AgResearch Wallaceville site is flat and features an important stand of native trees to the west of the main buildings which warrant formal protection. It is likely that stormwater will be managed through a system of swales and ponds which could include a walking and cycle network. No land for sportsfields will be required here.
- The Teasdale land adjoins the Hutt River, and is bounded to the north by tree clad hills that include a ridgeline protected from development. The river floodplain and terraces suggest obvious places for open space. A walkway and cycleway could be extended through this land, towards Kaitoke Regional Park. No land for sportsfields will be required here.
- The Maymorn area is bound on the eastern side of the valley by the Mangaroa River and on the west by the hills that climb towards Mt Climie. The main ridgelines are protected from development. The rail corridor bisects the lower valley, as do a number of streams. These features could create the skeleton of a network of open spaces for walking, cycling and horse riding. Council also considers it is worthwhile investigating the possibility of using the former rail tunnel between the city and Maymorn to provide direct off-road access into the main urban area. It is highly likely that land suitable for sportsfields would be required, possibly in association with the school.
- The Guildford land at Pinehaven offers quite different open space opportunities. With clustering of housing, it is likely there will be more emphasis on walkway connections within the development and connecting through to the Blue Mountains, Pinehaven valley, and Silverstream.



# An Outstanding Open Space Network

Council will have regard to the principles of good urban design and crime prevention through environmental design when planning for these new open spaces.

Council will also look beyond the immediate areas of new development to consider strategic walking and cycling links to open spaces in the surrounding countryside. More work is required on this matter, though the following links and potential links merit consideration:

- Hutt River, linking through to the Kaitoke Regional Park.
- Akatarawa River, linking through to the Kapiti Coast.
- Moonshine, linking through to Porirua City
- Whitemans Valley, linking through to Hutt City
- Eastern Hills, linking along the hills from Blue Mountains to Mt Marua and into the Mangaroa Valley

## 6. Facilitate New Leisure Experiences

Council will facilitate the creation of new leisure opportunities by businesses and other sports and leisure organisations which showcase Upper Hutt's outstanding outdoor environment.

This may involve granting concessions to enable the use of open spaces, or facilitating and supporting businesses or other organisations in gaining approval where control is vested with others [e.g Greater Wellington Regional Council, Department of Conservation].

It would also involve changing the District Plan, to make tourism facilities, visitor accommodation and restaurants and licensed premises discretionary activities within the Open Space zone. This would ensure that any proposal is closely scrutinised for its effect on the natural and physical environment, and would not automatically guarantee the right to develop.

Rates relief may also be considered for developments costing \$200,000 or more [GST exclusive]. Council's Rates Relief Policy already identifies

tourism, including recreational, cultural and conference facilities, as being one of the sectors it wishes to foster.

## 7. Take Financial Contributions

Council will continue to require a Financial Contribution from developments which create additional lots for homes and businesses, reflecting the need to provide reserves and community facilities for an increasing population.

The cash contribution requirement of 4% of the market value [GST exclusive] of each additional allotment created will be continued.

Council will amend its Financial Contributions policy in the District Plan that relates to taking land in lieu of money, where land is required. Currently the land requirement is 130m<sup>2</sup> of land for each additional lot created. When Council requires land, it proposes to take any land at its market value, as assessed by an independent property valuer. Where the value of land required is less than the standard cash contribution, then the balance shall be paid to Council in cash. Conversely, if the land required is valued more highly than the standard cash contribution, then Council will pay the landowner the additional value.

# An Outstanding Open Space Network

## Implementation Summary

ACTION	AGENCY	PRIORITY
Improvement of public facilities	UHCC	Ongoing
Plan for new open space networks as part of structure or concept plans for new developments	UHCC	Ongoing
Protection of natural features	UHCC	Ongoing
Improvement of connections between open space areas	UHCC	Ongoing
Amendment to reserve fund contributions policy concerning the taking of land in lieu of a financial contribution	UHCC	Low
Facilitate the creation of new leisure experiences – including as required changes to the District Plan	UHCC	Low/ Ongoing

