

# Playspaces Network Supporting Plan Summary

2025-2035

## Community Infrastructure Strategy

The Community Infrastructure Strategy (CIS) provides a pragmatic, feasible, achievable roadmap for the equitable long-term provision (20 years) of community infrastructure over which council has primary responsibility, plays a role in delivering, or seeks to advocate for on behalf of the community.

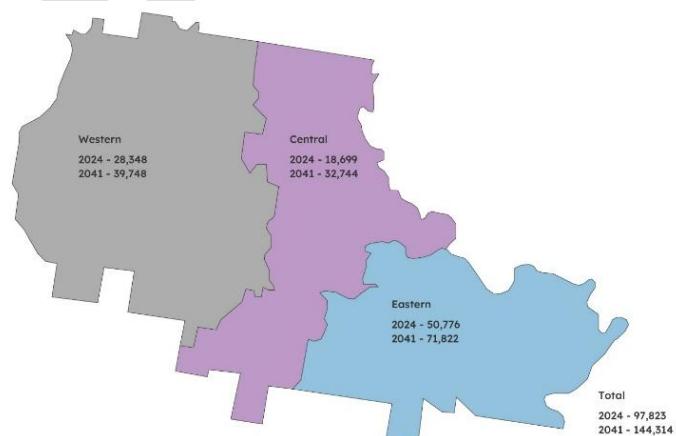
The CIS guides a holistic, integrated and evidence-based approach to the prioritisation, planning, design and provision of community infrastructure to meet the changing needs of a growing population efficiently, effectively and responsibly, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The five strategic priorities from the CIS are community identity, thriving communities, partnerships, shaping a shared future and delivering quality services.

## Planning precincts

To plan and manage future growth within the city, three distinct local planning precincts have been identified and used across all supporting plans. These are the central, eastern and western precincts.

The local precinct approach will be guided by walkable neighbourhood principles where our residents can access most of their daily needs locally, without using a car. This approach aims to gradually shift away from a continuously expanding urban footprint to a focus on revitalising our existing centres and neighbourhoods.



## Maitland population profile

PLANNING PRECINCT	2024	2041	DIFFERENCE	COMPOUNDING ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Central	18,699	32,744	14,045	3.4%
Eastern	50,776	71,822	21,046	2.1%
Western	28,348	39,748	11,400	2.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97,823</b>	<b>144,314</b>	<b>46,491</b>	<b>2.3%</b>

## Provisioning hierarchy

Hierarchy based planning guides where and what type and scale of community infrastructure is most needed. The hierarchy typically involves levels such as Local, District, Citywide and Regional. It is used alongside industry standards and guidelines, as well as service catchment and demand analysis.

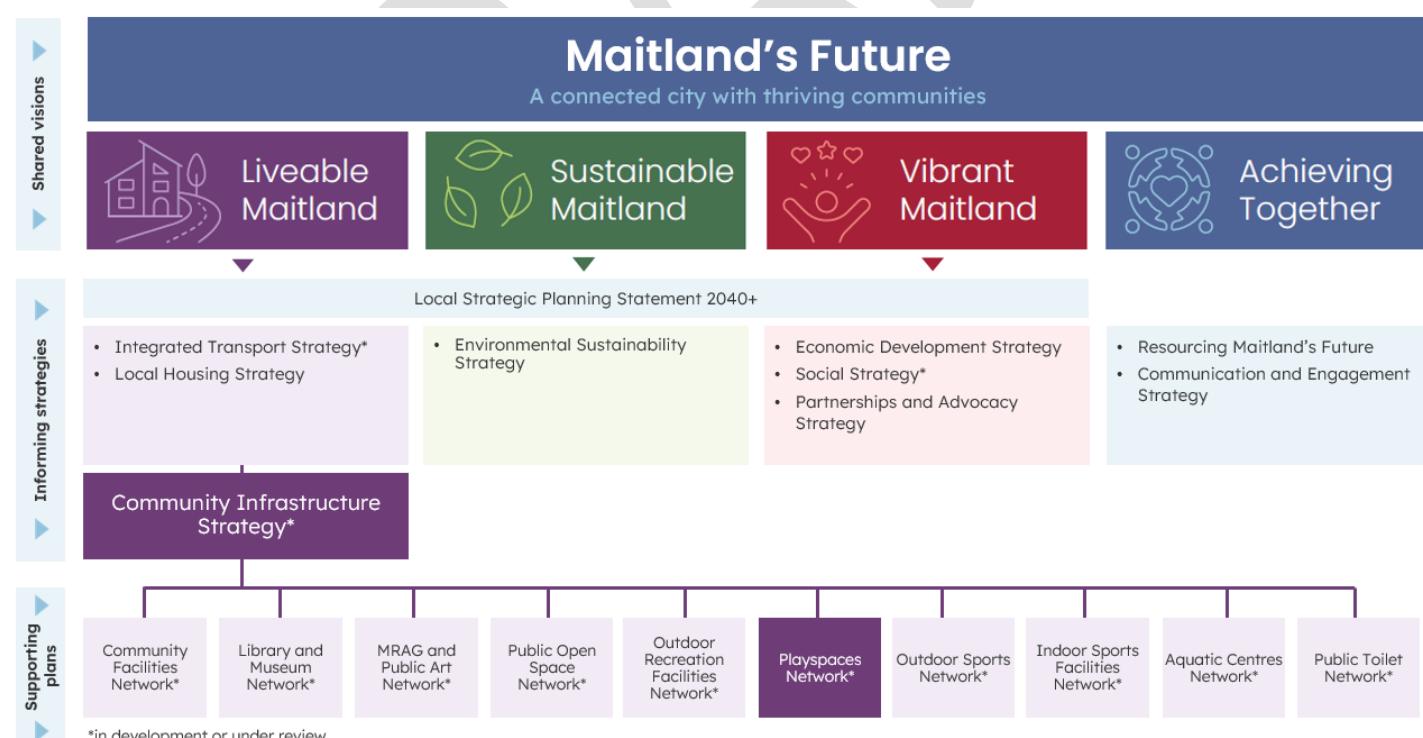
This approach ensures local facilities remain accessible whilst higher order facilities are strategically placed to meet evolving community needs. Most importantly, the hierarchy supports transparent and effective planning and serves our communities by:

- Distributing community infrastructure equitably
- Aligning provision with sound planning principles
- Meeting community expectations and demand
- Aligning current trends and guidelines
- Allowing consolidation and upgrades
- Reducing long-term asset maintenance by addressing oversupply
- Ensuring community infrastructure is sustainable and resilient long-term.

HIERARCHY LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Located within a 5-15-minute walk of residences</li></ul>
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Located within a 3-kilometre radius or a 10-15-minute drive of most residences</li></ul>
Citywide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serves the whole Maitland Local Government Area and is a 30-45-minute drive of most residences</li></ul>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key destination spaces that serve our communities and attract visitors from outside the Maitland Local Government Area</li></ul>

## Strategic alignment

The Playspaces Network Supporting Plan underpins Council's Community Infrastructure Strategy. Its relationship within the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework and with Maitland's Future, the Community Strategic Plan, is depicted below.





## Playspaces Supporting Plan purpose

To provide an evidence-based approach to planning, prioritising, designing, delivering and managing Maitland City Council's network of playspaces to ensure it contributes to our shared vision of a connected city with thriving communities.

Playspaces play an important role in shaping our neighbourhoods, offering adventure, discovery, learning, development and community connection. They provide opportunity for intergenerational cooperation, social interaction and co-existence. This assists with counteracting age stereotypes, developing emotional and social skills and supporting social integration.

## Council's role

Council's role is to provide an accessible and inclusive network of playspaces that promotes:

- Learning and cognitive development
- Physical, mental, and functional health and wellbeing
- Social connection and cohesion
- Discovery, fun and memory making.

## Supporting documents

The supporting documents listed below serve to verify the information in the supporting plan and provide evidence to support the frameworks and recommendations throughout the document.

Community Park (Play) and Playspace Equipment Quality Review Audit by Tredwell Management Services 2023.

[NSW Government Everyone Can Play Guidelines](#)

[NSW Government Greener Places Guidelines](#)

[NSW Public Spaces Charter and Engagement Report](#)

## Current state – where we are now

Maitland City Council currently owns 82 playspaces that vary in condition, distribution of equipment by age and play-type elements. The table below shows the number of local, district and citywide playspaces within the LGA and each planning precinct.

PLANNING PRECINCT	CENTRAL	EASTERN	WESTERN	TOTAL
Local	15	45	18	<b>78</b>
District	1	2	0	<b>3</b>
Citywide	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>82</b>

Strategic planning for playspaces considers not only distance to residents to meet community needs but other important planning considerations such as demographics, landform, road frontage, visibility, vegetation, land use and transport corridors that may present access constraints.

Council has established a hierarchy to serve residential catchments and the benefits allow for:

- equitable distribution
- aligning open space planning principles
- meeting community expectations and demand
- aligning current trends and state guidelines
- allowing consolidation and upgrades
- reducing long-term asset maintenance by addressing oversupply.

Distribution is determined by the availability, size and quality of existing open space, demographic data and the category of the playspace facility proposed. Council has informed the future planning for playspaces by undertaking additional desk-top analysis, site investigation and internal consultation.



The hierarchy reflects state guidelines for local, district and regional open space networks and is as follows:

	LOCAL	DISTRICT	CITYWIDE	REGIONAL/ DESTINATION
Size (land size)	Located within local parks (minimum 0.5 to 2ha of open space)	Larger size with greater capacity (minimum 2 to 5ha of open space) supporting a range of informal play and family uses	Larger size with greater capacity (more than 5ha) supporting multiple informal play and family uses	Larger size with greater capacity
Catchment	Within 400m to 600m radius or a five to 15-minute walk of residences	Within a three-kilometre radius or a 10 to 15-minute drive of most residences	Service across the LGA – or a 30 to 45-minute drive	Key destination spaces – that attract visitors from outside the LGA
Play value	Contains traditional play equipment	Greater variety of play elements and activities for different age groups, accessible, inclusive, all abilities and a wider range of informal play activities	Large variety and type of play elements and supporting informal play areas/activities for all ages and abilities	Includes iconic items or unique experiences not found in the local region
Play age	For ages up to 12 years	Provide play opportunities for all ages and abilities where practical	Provide play opportunities for all ages and abilities and intergenerational	Provide play opportunities for all ages and abilities and intergenerational
Length of stay	Short stay - one to two hours	Stay over two hours	Longer stay – four hours to a day	Allows for a full day stay
Supporting infrastructure	Accessible seating, paths, shade structure, natural shade, signage and bins	Includes toilets and parking as well as accessible seating, paths, shade structure, natural shade, signage and bins	Includes toilets, parking and a kiosk to support families and a longer stay, as well as seating, paths, shade structure, natural shade, signage and bins	Accessible facilities and supporting infrastructure including toilets, parking and a kiosk to support families for a long stay

## Audit findings

An independent Community Park (Play) and Playspace Equipment Quality Review Audit was completed in 2022 in accordance with Australian Standards AS4685 Playground Equipment and AS4422:2016 Playground Surfacing, to ensure Maitland City Council was providing sufficient and safe playspace infrastructure that is up to date with today's current trends and caters to the city's future expected population growth.

A final desktop analysis and report was completed in January 2023 which assessed land quality, asset condition and compliance, play value and made recommendations for sustainable management. Auditing included an assessment of the percentage of shade coverage at each playspace between 10am and 2pm.

The audit rated playspace conditions in the LGA as 13.1% excellent, 31.5% good, 54% fair and 1.3% poor.

It is difficult to quantify facility usage without site-specific surveys and observation, but facility performance can be based on criteria from the NSW Government's 'Everyone Can Play' guidelines.

The criteria used in the audit included:

- location
- layout
- signage and wayfinding
- access
- play experience
- equipment
- surfacing
- safety
- facilities
- landscape.

## Community engagement - what we heard

Not all of Maitland's playspaces can offer all things to all people, so provision across the playspace network will help achieve play opportunities for all. To do this, playspaces are generally targeted at younger children aged three to five years, school-aged children from six to twelve and teenagers thirteen and over.

Survey results from over 850 people in 2024 indicated that the community values playspaces and supports travelling further to access playspaces with more variety and other facilities. Local parks within walking distance will remain as valuable recreation facilities in addition to larger recreational multi-use open space destinations. Key areas that affect a person's ability to physically visit a playspace are lack of parking and no footpaths.

The survey also demonstrated that some 70.9 percent of people travel outside the Maitland LGA to access playspaces. These results suggest that people are prepared to travel for more variety of play, better facilities i.e. toilets, café, water-play elements, accessible play for people living with a disability, spaces for children of all ages and better parking.

The survey results showed that the under-five age group are the most frequent users of playspaces within the LGA. The survey explored whether residents would support reducing the number of local playspaces to increase the number of district playspaces. Fifty percent of survey respondents supported the creation of more district playspaces, understanding that this would decrease the number of local playspaces.

Some other key findings include:

- 62.6% of people travel by car while 31.7% walk
- 60.8% travel 5-10 minutes while 54.5% travel 10-30 minutes
- 43.5% stay on average 30-60 minutes while 44.7% stay 1-2 hours.

KEY INFLUENCES FOR PREFERRED PLAYSPACE	PERCENTAGE
Good variety of play	61.4%
Ample shade	57%
Easy to park	52.6%
Toilets	50.6%

KEY INFLUENCES FOR TIME SPENT AT PLAYSPACE	PERCENTAGE
Variety of play	82.9%
Ample shade	82.8%
Access to toilets	72.9%
Available park furniture (seating)	47.7%

## Industry standards and trends – what we know

Playspace construction and maintenance requirements and frequencies are guided by national standards for equipment, surfacing, and outdoor fitness safety. Planning and development also considers national standards for fire safety and shade fabric standards, alongside legislation such as the *Companion Animals Act 1998*, which restricts dogs near play areas.

Council uses the NSW Government's Everyone Can Play guidelines to promote inclusive design, with new standards being developed to ensure playspaces are well-located, appropriately scaled, and meet community needs. Key design principles include variety, safety, inclusion, intergenerational use, collaboration, and sustainability.

These design standards will include the following principles:

1. Variety of play – more opportunities and types of play
2. Safety – meet current standards and comply with national and state legislation and guidelines
3. Inclusive – universal design principles
4. Intergenerational – focus on creating spaces that provide common activities for both the young and old to support informal physical activity throughout a lifetime
5. Community needs and collaboration
6. Robust and sustainable - e.g. materials.

Emerging trends highlight the challenge of balancing safety, quality, and maintenance with rising community expectations. Destination playspaces are becoming increasingly popular and require careful planning to ensure long-term value.

## Future state – where we want to be

There is a growing expectation in the community that playspaces provide high-quality and diverse play experiences. People are willing to drive to playspaces that provide high-play value and supporting features such as car parking, seating, shelter, shade, pedestrian pathways and toilets that improve the overall play experience and encourage people to stay longer.

Not all of Maitland's playspaces can offer all things to all people, so provision across the playspace network will help achieve play opportunities for all. To do this, playspaces are generally targeted at younger children aged three to five years, school-aged children from six to twelve and teenagers thirteen and over.

Future provision of playspaces across the LGA is also guided by Section 7.11 Development Contribution Plans which identify the future provision of facilities as part of new development and urban release areas (URAs).

It is proposed to increase the provision of playspaces creating greater distribution across the LGA in line with our growing population. A focus should be on the district scale facilities which provide a broader experience for a wider range of users and cater to a greater catchment area. The one citywide playspace has been retained in the Central Precinct.

## Indicative costs

Cost estimates, excluding escalation, contained within this supporting plan are based on IPART costs, actual budget costs, and staff expertise and experience.

### Key points relating to costs include:

- estimated investment required over 10 years: \$50,160,000
- average annual investment required: \$5,016,000 per year
- a range of external funding programs provided by NSW and Australian Government agencies are likely to be required.

## Funding

Funding for the delivery of future Maitland playspaces will include:

- council revenue
- development contributions
- voluntary planning agreements
- Australian Government grants
- NSW Government grants
- sale of surplus Council land or assets
- establishment of a Community Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

## How we get there

To achieve the planning objectives in the supporting plan, a staged approach will be applied over a 10-year period. An indicative schedule of works for the short (one to four years), medium (five to eight years) and long-term (nine to ten years) will be developed. It is anticipated that a number of actions or activities will be simultaneously undertaken, subject to resourcing.



The planned actions will be published in our [Delivery Program and Operational Plan](#) each year. The timeframe of actions being completed will depend on resourcing and funding availability.

