

15 Open Space

15.1 Significant Issues

Insufficient open space, especially in the coastal environment, to provide for recreational opportunities, preservation of natural character and to provide for people's health and well-being.

Insufficient linkages between open spaces to enhance biodiversity and to provide recreational opportunities.

Current open space provision lacks strategic location and design.

Activities within, and adjacent to, open space can have adverse effects on the environment and adjoining sites.

15.2 Overview

Open space is important for both community well-being and environmental health. Recreational open space provides for a wide range of social and recreational opportunities, while open space for conservation purposes preserves and protects landscape and ecological values.

Open space serves an increasingly important function as population density and the demand for public places increases. Open space can generally be classed as either active or passive, although many areas, especially on the coast, serve both functions.

Active open space is used for recreational pursuits, and includes walkways, local reserves, sports parks and beach reserves. People use such places to interact socially with others, relax or carry out recreational pursuits. As such, their primary function is to serve the recreational needs of the community. Active open space therefore requires facilities and structures to support and promote this use, such as toilets, seating, tables, playgrounds and sports fields. There is also a need for such areas to be located and designed to meet the needs of the community.

Passive open space is often the land that surrounds or adjoins areas of active open space. This includes native bush, coastal landforms and gardens. These areas are important not only for their landscape and aesthetic qualities, but also for their ecological values. Such areas require careful management to ensure that they are not adversely affected by their use, or by the effects of activities on adjoining sites. It is important that linkages are provided between such areas, where possible, to provide for physical connections between ecosystems, and therefore increase biodiversity.

15.3 Objectives

15.3.1

Provide open space that meets community, recreational and conservation needs.

15.3.2

Where appropriate, create open space linkages that provide physical connections between ecosystems, and enhance biodiversity and recreational opportunities.

15.3.3

Provide open space and manage activities within open space in a manner that avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on the environment.

15.3.4

Protection of open space from subdivision, use and development inconsistent with their purpose.

Explanation and Reasons: Open space plays an important function in providing recreational and social opportunities for the public. For open space to serve this function, it is necessary that it is located, designed and equipped in a manner that promotes its use and meets the needs of the community. Open space can provide important linkages between significant ecological sites. Such linkages serve to enhance ecosystem connectivity and the biodiversity of an area by providing wildlife corridors that encourage movement of plants and animals between ecological sites. Such linkages need to be carefully managed and of a sufficient width to serve their purpose. Activities on open space areas can potentially result in adverse effects on the environmental qualities of the site and adjoining properties. It is therefore important that such activities are managed in such a way that avoids, remedies or mitigates these effects.

15.4 Policies

15.4.1 Financial Contributions

To obtain financial contributions at the time of subdivision:

- In land, where there is a need for open space to be provided within the land being subdivided: or
- In money, to fund acquisition of, or improvement to, open space outside the land being subdivided.

Explanation and Reasons: Many areas of the District do not have sufficient areas of open space to meet the recreational and other needs of the community. Sometimes it is necessary that such open space is provided within an area of land being subdivided. Where there is insufficient open space within the area of land being subdivided, or the land is not suitable for use as open space, then financial contributions should be taken in money, to help acquire suitable open space or improve existing areas.

15.4.2 New Reserves

To provide for open spaces areas and reserves in strategic locations to meet the needs of the community, through mechanisms such as land acquisition, land exchange, reserves contributions, easements and covenants.

Explanation and Reasons: It is important that future open space and reserves are located and designed to ensure the adequate provision of recreation and conservation land, to meet the needs of the community. In order to achieve this it will be necessary for the Council to monitor changes in demographics and social trends.

15.4.3 Coastal Environment and Outstanding Landscape Areas

To create open space in areas of the coastal environment and Outstanding Landscape Areas in order to preserve the qualities of these areas, and where appropriate, provide public access.

Explanation and Reasons: It is a matter of national importance that the natural character of the coastal environment is preserved and outstanding landscapes are protected. Public management of such land through reserves, provides for the protection and enhancement of such areas as well as ensuring that access is provided to the public, where appropriate.

15.4.4 Open Space Linkages

To establish open space linkages between significant ecological sites and between public recreation areas in order to enhance biodiversity, physical ecosystem connections and recreational opportunities.

Explanation and Reasons: Corridors linking sites of indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna help to increase the biodiversity of the environment by providing ecosystem connections, and also enhance recreational opportunities for the public. Such linkages will be established on public lands, or through the creation of esplanade reserves as the result of subdivision. Where land is sought for the creation of open space linkages, which is not public land and is not obtainable through the esplanade reserve requirement process on subdivisions, negotiation and agreement with private landowner(s) will be carried out.

15.4.5 Effects

To manage activities within open space in a manner that avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects, to the extent practicable, on the environment both within and outside those areas.

Explanation and Reasons: Activities carried out on open space land can result in adverse effects on both this land and adjoining sites, if the effects of such activities are not minimised.

15.4.6 Open Space Values

To ensure that the values of the Open Space Environment are not compromised by subdivision, use or development of it, or of adjoining land.

Explanation and Reasons: Open space has a variety of values, depending upon its purpose and location. These values are important to both the community and for general environmental health. Subdivision, use and development of both

open space, and land that adjoins open space, should not adversely affect the values that these areas have.

15.5 Methods

15.5.1 Regulatory Methods

- Identification of an Open Space Environment on the Planning Maps (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).
- Environment rules relating to buildings and amenity effects (Policies 15.4.5 to 15.4.6).
- Resource consent conditions (Policies 15.4.5 to 15.4.6).
- Designations of specific areas of open space for reserves under the Reserves Act 1977 (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).
- Resource Area rules relating to provision of esplanade reserves (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4 & 15.4.6).

15.5.2 Other Plans and Legislation

- Production, implementation and review of Reserve Management Plans under the Reserves Act 1977 (Policies 15.4.5 to 15.4.6).
- Gazetting and classification of protected areas owned by the Council under the Reserves Act 1977 (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).

15.5.3 Information, Education and Advocacy

- Liaison with the Department of Conservation, Northland Regional Council and adjoining territorial authorities (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).
- Develop registers and databases on location and types of open space in relation to population (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).
- Promote voluntary protection of open space areas through the use of protective covenants under the following statutes: (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4 and 15.4.6)
 - The Conservation Act 1987;
 - The Queen Elizabeth II National Trust Act 1977;
 - The Reserves Act 1977;
 - The Wildlife Act 1953;
 - The Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014;
 - The Maori Land Act 1993 (Te Ture Whenua Act).
- Negotiate with private landowners where land can not be legally taken.

15.5.4 Economic Instruments

- Financial contributions to acquire land or cash for future acquisition of land, or for maintenance of reserve land for reserve purposes (Policies 15.4.1 to 15.4.4).
- Annual Plan allocation to fund Council purchase of land (Policies 15.4.2 to 15.4.4).

15.5.5 Council Works and Services

- Works and services relating to maintaining public open space areas (Policies 15.4.5-6).

15.6 Anticipated Environmental Results

The following results are expected to be achieved by the foregoing Objectives, Policies and Methods. The means of monitoring whether the Plan achieves the expected outcomes are set out in the Whangarei District Council Monitoring Strategy.

- The adequate provision of open space (both active and passive) that meets community, recreational and conservation needs, particularly in the coastal environment and outstanding landscape areas.
- The natural, cultural, historic, recreational and amenity values of open space are maintained and/or enhanced.
- The creation, where appropriate, of open space linkages that enhance community, recreational and conservation functions of open space.
- The adverse effects of activities on, or proximate to, open space are avoided, remedied or mitigated. This includes effects on natural character, cultural/historic heritage, and recreational and amenity values.

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