

# Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature

A framework for the future of Auckland's  
open spaces

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# Introduction

"... a city yet destined to be one of the fairest in the world, for what shores more beautiful than hers as they meet the glancing waters of her lake-like harbour?"

Sir John Logan Campbell, 1891

Our Collective Taonga, Places for People, Places for Nature provides a clear framework for the council's role in the future of Auckland's open spaces. It sets the direction we need to ensure the city's open spaces positively contribute to the council's future vision of Auckland.

## Why do we need a framework for the future?

Many cities around the world have received far-reaching social, environmental, economic and cultural benefits from making the best of their open spaces.<sup>1</sup> The provision and upkeep of high quality open space is vital to the long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability of cities and regions – helping to improve the quality of people's lives and the strength of communities.<sup>2</sup>

In Auckland, the quality of the city's natural and urban environment contributes significantly to a quality of life ranked as one of the best in the world.<sup>3</sup> People choose to live, work and play here amid an amazing natural landscape of volcanoes, harbours, coastlines and islands, with the city's parks and beaches offering a wide range of recreation, lifestyle and outdoor experiences.

The qualities of the city's open spaces reinforce Auckland's desirability as a place where people want to live, work, visit and invest. From the popular destination of Tamaki Drive to the neighbourhood parks on the corner of our streets, Auckland's open spaces define the city's identity, and celebrate our cultural heritage. They are the places where our communities can come together, be active and spend leisure time. They are important to the quality of our everyday lives and the sustainable management of our natural environment.

Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature represents Auckland City Council's continued commitment to the future improvement, protection and management of our city's open spaces. As Auckland grows and changes, and the way in which we care for our local environment becomes of global significance, Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature sets the overarching framework for ensuring we make the best of our city's open spaces.

## What does the open space framework cover?

The framework reflects the diversity and distinctiveness of Auckland's open spaces across the isthmus and the islands, whether in public or private ownership. It covers the open spaces of our amazing natural landscape (the volcanic features, the Hauraki Gulf islands, the beaches, coasts and native habitats) and the network of open spaces that make up our everyday environment (the city's parks, streets, sports fields, cemeteries and playgrounds).

While the framework primarily provides strategic direction for open space owned and managed by Auckland City Council, it also champions an integrated approach to the future improvement, protection and management of our city's open spaces. We will continue to work closely with tangata whenua, our neighbouring authorities, the regional council and private landowners to take forward the principles and strategic directions set out in this document.

## How will the framework be implemented?

A series of six action plans support Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature and implement the principles and strategic directions it sets out. Each plan relates to a key component of the city's open space network – parks and green spaces; streets and town centres; the urban forest; the open spaces of the Hauraki Gulf islands; the coasts and beaches around the isthmus; and the open spaces of the city's volcanic landscape.

The plans are action orientated, establishing an integrated approach to open space policy and planning. Collectively, they bring together how we want to develop and manage Auckland's open space network over the next 10 years and the steps to get us there. The plans are not mutually exclusive; they each interrelate, guided by the strategic direction of Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature.

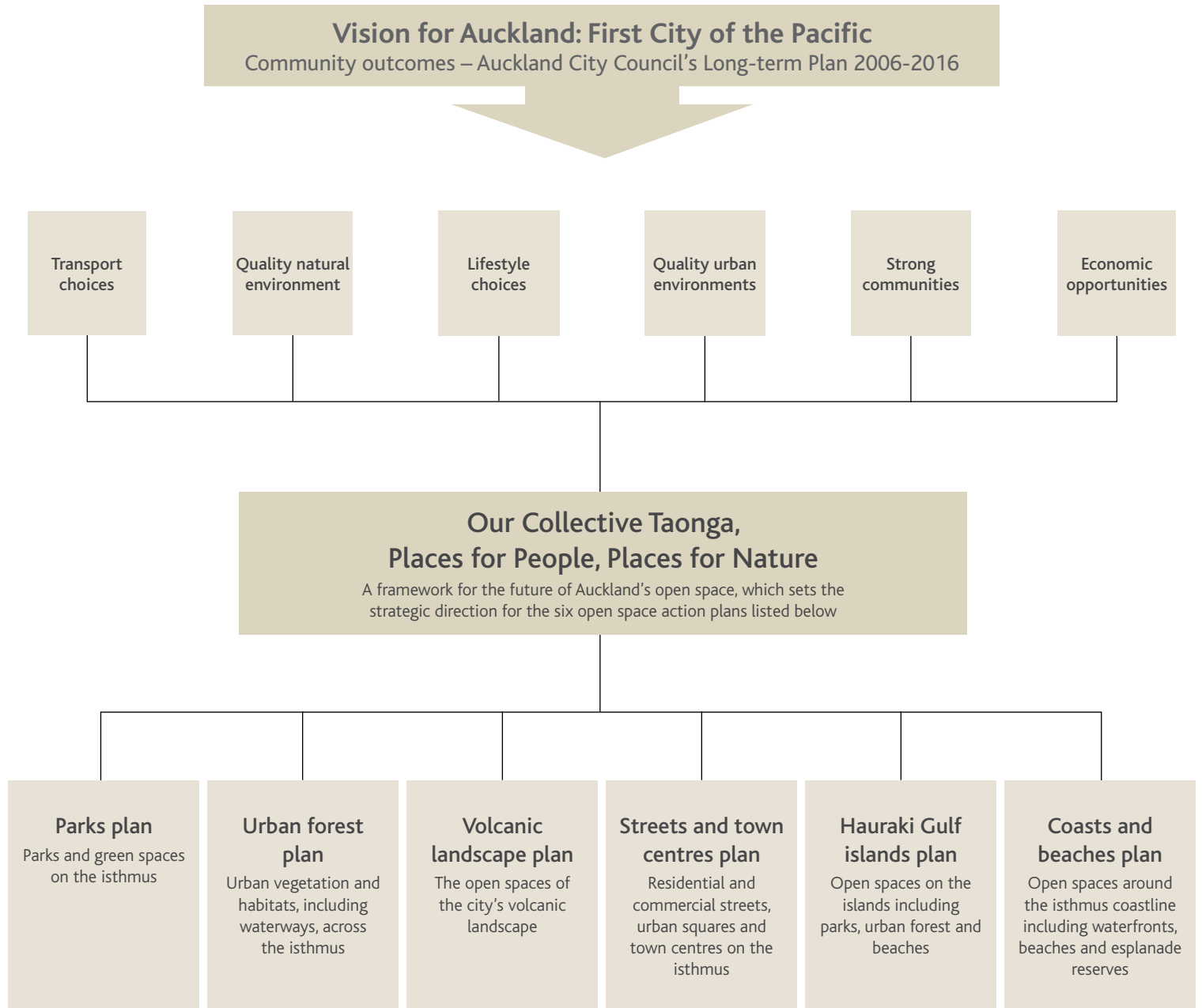


<sup>1</sup> *The Value of Public Space*, CABE Space (UK), 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *City Parks Forum Briefing Papers*, American Planning Association, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Auckland ranked fifth out of over 350 cities in the *Mercer Worldwide Quality of Living Survey 2006*.

# Open space framework and six action plans



## Outcomes for the city

Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature aims to deliver a series of outcomes. These outcomes clearly set out what we want to achieve and help to articulate how open space will contribute and support the council's long-term vision of Auckland as First City of the Pacific.

Having a series of outcomes specific to open space enables us to monitor and review the implementation of the principles and strategic directions set out in this framework document.

They will also guide the development of SMART<sup>4</sup> objectives, which will be incorporated in the open space action plans.

### Outcomes for the city

An integrated network of open spaces across the city that:

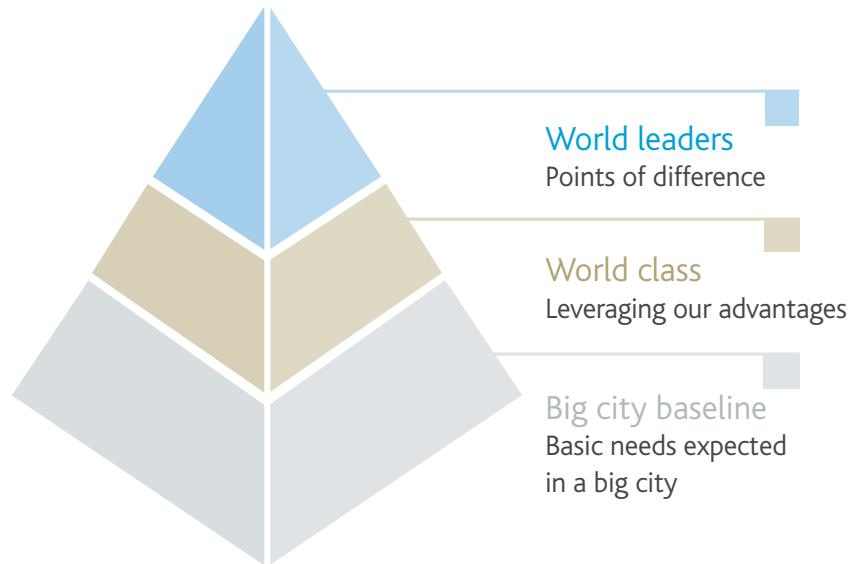
- are of world class quality and celebrate Auckland's amazing natural landscape, unique identity and cultural heritage
- offer a diverse range of recreation and lifestyle experiences and activities, which provide a visitor experience second-to-none
- meet local needs, are accessible to all, create pride in Auckland and foster a sense of belonging to the city
- are safe, clean, green and highly valued for their contribution to the city's sustainability, green infrastructure and environmental systems.

<sup>4</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-specific

## The council's vision of Auckland as First City of the Pacific

The outcomes we are seeking for the city establish what we need to do to align the contribution of the city's open spaces to the council's vision of Auckland as First City of the Pacific. The outcomes also respond to how our city's open spaces can best support and implement the strategic themes of the organisation – economic opportunities, quality natural environment, quality urban environment, strong communities, transport choices and an efficient and capable council.

By setting clear outcomes for the future improvement, protection and management of our city's open spaces, Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature will help to achieve the council's strategic vision in the following areas:



### World leaders

#### Amazing natural landscape

- Auckland has a unique landscape with twin harbours, the Hauraki Gulf islands and volcanic cones. We are renowned for the sustainable way we keep our environment clean and green. This gives us a great lifestyle, attracts business and provides a visitor experience that is second to none.

### World class

#### Lifestyle

- Every Aucklander can enjoy the benefits and lifestyle opportunities provided by our location, and feel safe throughout the city.

#### Pride

- Auckland has a distinct identity. We identify with, and celebrate our city.

#### Vibrant local centres

- We have vibrant, distinctive and connected local centres that reflect all our communities. These attract people because of their distinct characteristics.

### Big city baseline

Auckland is sustainably managed to provide:

- a protected unique ecology, quality natural and built environment, and protected heritage throughout the city
- the infrastructure and networks that make the city work for people, visitors and businesses
- access for everyone to the community and social facilities, networks and services that we need throughout our lives.

# What are the challenges facing Auckland's open spaces?

To achieve the outcomes for the city, we need to understand the challenges and issues facing our open spaces. This will help us to successfully plan for their future protection, improvement and management. Primarily, we need to understand and respond to the impact of Auckland's growth and intensification on our city's open spaces.

## Population growth

Auckland city's population is growing. In the 2006 census, 404,658 people called the city "home", compared to just over 367,000 in the 2001 census. This is almost a third of the Auckland region's population. It is estimated that around half a million people will live in the city by 2016. Ninety-eight per cent of these residents live on the isthmus, just 26 per cent of the city's land area. The rest live on the Hauraki Gulf islands.

We need to have a clear understanding of how population growth could affect Auckland's open spaces. Our communities have told us that Auckland's harbours, coasts, beaches, volcanic landscape and islands are intrinsic to Auckland's identity and sense of place, and that easy access to and enjoyment of these special environments is an important part of living in Auckland. There is concern that increased growth will place pressure on the city's natural landscape, because our open spaces will be used more intensely and be subjected to increasing, often competing demands.

The challenge is to establish how we can conserve and enhance our natural environment and open spaces as the population grows, without compromising enjoyment and use.

## A changing population

The population is also changing. There are more working age (25 to 49) people and fewer people over 65. The city's population is becoming more ethnically diverse. We cannot assume that the open spaces and places enjoyed today will meet the open space needs of Aucklanders in the future.

Recent Auckland City Council research<sup>5</sup> has shown people feel Auckland's open spaces do not express the city's cultural diversity, the city's place in the wider context of the Pacific or the values of tangata whenua.

The challenge is how to develop our open space to cater for the needs and values of an increasingly diverse community and encourage broader community participation.



<sup>5</sup> *Intercultural City Study*, Brecknock Consulting, 2005

## Our changing urban form

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Auckland city is intensifying as it grows. Intensification is changing our urban form as we cater for increasing housing densities and more intense use of land. More people are living in medium and high-density developments, often with limited access to private outdoor space. As a result, residents are increasingly using public open space (including streets and local parks) for leisure and social activities and people are looking to neighbourhood parks for the activities and equipment that were once part of the Kiwi backyard.

“Doorstep” access to high quality green space is becoming increasingly important to people and the desirability of neighbourhoods.

International research highlights the benefits of an interconnected system of parks, streets and trees as opposed to open spaces in isolation.<sup>6</sup> A well-established, well-connected open space network provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife and helps to conserve natural ecosystem values and functions such as water and air quality, erosion and stormwater management.

As Auckland continues to intensify, we need to plan strategically for the future sub-division of our city – ensuring our open spaces are well connected and environmental values are conserved and maximised. Currently, busy roads often present barriers to easy and safe pedestrian access to open space and discourage people from taking part in street life. Streets once used by people as neighbourhood spaces are increasingly used by vehicles.

The intensification of urban form places increased pressure on the environmental values of Auckland’s open space as land (both public and private) becomes more intensely used, developed and subjected to competing demands and values.

The challenge will be to ensure suitable provision of well-connected, publicly accessible open space across the city, while conserving and maximising the local and global environmental benefits our open spaces can offer.

## Our changing lifestyles

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The way we live and our changing lifestyle choices set challenges for the way we plan and manage open space in the future. Outlined below are some of these challenges.

### Increased environmental awareness

People are more aware than ever before that the way in which we care for our local environment is of global significance. The potential impact of climate change and the need to cut global carbon emissions is likely to affect how our open space network is valued, used and managed in the future. The environmental value of high quality open space is intrinsic to the sustainability of our cities infrastructure and environmental systems and there is concern that our city’s natural landscape is under increased pressure.

The way in which we care for our open spaces in the future will need to contribute to the ability of the city to address major environmental trends of climate change and increased carbon dioxide emissions.

### More transport choices

The increasing provision and use of public transport systems will improve people’s ability to get around the city and their neighbourhood, and this will affect how our open spaces are accessed and used. The ways in which we continue to address the city’s transport issues may affect the kinds of open space required, how they are used, and the kinds of facilities needed to support them.

A high quality public open space network can play an important role in providing more sustainable transport choices, for example, by providing high quality links for walking and cycling around our city.

### Changing leisure choices

Aucklanders may be working longer and more flexible hours, but leisure time is more important to them as people become more “time poor”. For example, interest in some sports is changing as the popularity of some forms of formal recreation (such as summer soccer and touch rugby) increase.

There is a growing demand for less formal forms of recreation, as proven by the popularity of walking as a leisure activity. In addition, people want to be entertained in their leisure time (by events and festivals for example) and often seek an accessible “packaged” experience.

There are concerns about increasing obesity and inactivity, particularly among children, as people’s lifestyles become more sedentary. Welcoming and safe open spaces are beneficial to physical, mental and spiritual health<sup>7</sup>, and life-long learning. Understanding barriers to the use of the city’s open spaces (including concerns about safety and connectivity) is a key challenge in planning and improving the quality of Auckland’s open space network.

<sup>6</sup> *City Parks Forum Briefing Papers*, American Planning Association, 2003

<sup>7</sup> *Improving Health and Wellbeing: A Public Health Perspective for Local Authorities in the Auckland Region 2006*

# Principles for the future

Three overarching principles form the basis of the open space framework. They respond to the challenges facing Auckland's open spaces and set out how we intend to achieve the outcomes we are seeking for the city.

They also provide the strategic context and direction for the future development of the corresponding action plans.

## Principles for the future

### Respect our amazing natural landscape

We will celebrate, protect and enhance the unique landscapes and features of Auckland's open spaces.

### Link people to places

We will increase the use and enjoyment of Auckland's open spaces.

### Create and maintain sustainable places

We will plan, design, manage and maintain Auckland's open spaces for today and the future.

The council cannot achieve the outcomes we are seeking for the city alone. This concept of working together underpins the three key principles of Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature and the strategic directions it sets out. The council will need to work closely with many other organisations, stakeholders, all members of the community (including tangata whenua), private and public sector organisations and other open space providers across the city.

### We will particularly focus on:

- working with Auckland Regional Council and neighbouring local authorities to address issues of regional significance, and develop regional initiatives like the Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS)
- the development, co-management and ownership of public spaces in partnership with Department of Conservation, tangata whenua, community groups, plus volunteer community and other social enterprise initiatives
- improving access to open space across the city that is not in Auckland City Council's ownership by working with other public and private agencies and organisations, including Auckland Regional Transport Authority, Housing New Zealand, schools, educational and sporting institutions
- working with members of the creative and recreation initiatives, including the national urban design agenda, to encourage innovation in the development and use of open space
- working with private landowners, developers, Transit and Ontrack to achieve high quality open space outcomes.



## Respect our amazing natural landscape

We will celebrate, protect and enhance the unique landscapes and features of Auckland's open spaces

### What do we mean?

Many of the elements of Auckland's amazing natural landscape – the harbours, parks, beaches and the volcanic landscape – contribute to the quality of the city's open space network. Such features and their cultural heritage, values and meanings are intrinsic to the identity of Auckland and represent mauri (the life-force of the landscape). These special environments are an important part of living in Auckland.

The preservation of the city's amazing natural landscape through the protection and improvement of open space is a core responsibility for Auckland City Council. As Auckland grows, we need to focus on how to protect and enhance the open spaces that make Auckland so special, without compromising enjoyment and use.

### Areas of focus

Volcanic landscape, coastal environment, beaches, Hauraki Gulf islands, indigenous species, habitats, biodiversity, waahi tapu, urban forest and waterway environments.

### Key strategic directions

- **Mauri:** integrate and celebrate the relationship of Maori culture and traditions with the open space of ancestral lands and water, including waahi tapu (sacred sites) and other taonga (treasures).
- **Volcanic landscape:** conserve the values of the city's volcanic landscape and enhance people's ability to understand and experience their significance within the wider Auckland landscape.
- **Coastal environment and Hauraki Gulf islands:** protect and enhance the distinctive natural character, indigenous biodiversity and value of the city's coastal and islands environment and habitats, without compromising its use and enjoyment.
- **Culture and heritage:** develop the open space network to celebrate and reflect Auckland's unique sense of place, cultural identity and heritage – past to present and present to future.
- **Indigenous species and habitats:** preserve, restore and nurture a diverse and representative range of indigenous ecosystems and flora and fauna habitats – including those of Auckland's urban forest, wetlands, streams, remnant bush and biodiversity.



## Link people to places

We will increase the use and enjoyment of Auckland's open spaces

### What do we mean?

As Auckland grows, more people will use our open spaces and need to have easy and safe access to them. This will put increasing pressure on the currently higher quality elements of our open space network, including our favourite beaches and coastlines. There is a need to spread the demand and use of high quality open space across the city and to consider the role of underdeveloped parks and public spaces that currently have limited value to the community.

We need to ensure people have access to a diverse range of high quality open spaces across the city that they will want to visit and use.

### Areas of focus

Streets, town centres, neighbourhood parks and play spaces, community programmes, volunteering activities, active and passive recreation facilities, coastal access, walkways and cycleways.

### Key strategic directions

- **Integrated network:** improve the quality of our open spaces, streets, walkways and cycleways to provide a network of easily accessible, sustainable transport routes and recreational experiences across the city and along the coast.
- **lifestyle choices:** provide a diverse and relevant range of open space experiences in an equitable way across the city, to reflect use and demand both now and in the future, and increase the number of spaces capable of holding a range of events across the city.
- **Interpretation, promotion and education:** provide opportunities to experience the city's natural environment and landscapes; protect and promote cultural heritage and tangata whenua values within our open spaces; use our open spaces and features within them (such as art and design) to celebrate the city's sense of place and define local neighbourhood identity.
- **Broaden participation:** reduce barriers that restrict participation and engagement; involve communities in the design and management of the open space network – actively involving under-represented groups such as young and older persons and those with disabilities.
- **Accessibility and safety:** address issues of easy and welcoming access for all, including the need for public transport access to open spaces; increase the feeling of safety and security throughout the open space network by undertaking measures to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.



## Create and maintain sustainable places

We will plan, design, manage and maintain Auckland's open spaces for today and the future

### What do we mean?

It is vital that we are able to create and maintain places that can respond to growth in a sustainable manner, without compromising the protection and enhancement of the city's natural environment. We need to proactively encourage biodiversity across the open space network and ensure our practices enhance our natural environment.

It is particularly important that we work to reduce the ecological footprint of our open space service and provide a clean, green local environment.

### Areas of focus

Stormwater management, natural processes (such as soil and sand erosion), wetland, streams, natural water systems, urban vegetation, biodiversity, significant ecological areas and habitats, open space management and maintenance practices including weed and pest management.

### Key strategic directions

- **Green infrastructure:** develop a linked network of multi-functional green spaces that enhance environmental values, including advocating sustainable approaches to drainage systems across the open space network.
- **Biological diversity:** protect and enhance biodiversity by increasing the amount and variety of trees, plants and wildlife across the city's open spaces, thereby enhancing our natural environment and open space habitats and ecosystems.
- **Ecological corridors:** strengthen and connect significant ecological areas and fragmented habitats to provide regional corridors for wildlife across the city, focusing on the enhancement of waterways, wetlands, drainage and transport corridors.
- **Ways of working:** use resources wisely, be cost effective and trial an innovative sustainable approach to the planning, design, management and maintenance of the city's open space network – establishing an integrated approach to the long-term management of natural ecosystems.

## Implementation and review



Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature will be implemented through the six open space action plans and the targets and key performance indicators these plans establish.

A forum of stakeholders, including members of the community and community interest groups, will regularly monitor and review the implementation of Our Collective Taonga: Places for People, Places for Nature.

This forum will look at progress, review our outcomes and determine further action. There will also be regular reporting to the community on achievements and progress against the outcomes we want to achieve.



