

Draft

Ashburton District Open Spaces Strategy

2026

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From the Mayor

Note

This document uses the Kāi Tahu dialect where sometimes “k” replaces the use of “ng” in words, for example “kaitiakitanga” becomes “kaitiakitaka”.

Part 1: The Strategy

Introduction

Ashburton District's open spaces are central to the district's wellbeing and future. From parks and playgrounds to cemeteries, sports fields, and natural reserves, these spaces enrich daily life by providing places to connect, reflect, and play. They are vital for recreation, cultural expression, and environmental resilience.

Council's current strategic direction is to be "the district of choice for lifestyle and opportunity – Hakatere: te rohe ka whiria mō te āhua noho, me te hapori." This revised Open Spaces Strategy builds on that vision, setting a clear direction for the next ten years to ensure our open spaces are inclusive, accessible, and resilient.

The strategy reflects the diverse roles open spaces play—from enhancing community wellbeing through parks, gardens, and recreational areas to preserving social history through cemeteries.

The provision and management of open spaces must respond to community feedback, demographic change, climate pressures, and evolving expectations. With over 130 parks and reserves, including 16 cemeteries, number (tbc) public conveniences, and playgrounds plus a growing district population, the strategy outlines how this will be achieved through guiding principles, strategic goals, and priority actions.

What are Open Spaces?

For the purpose of this strategy Open Spaces are defined as:

"Council managed or owned areas of land or water that is accessible to the public and set aside primarily for amenity, recreation, nature conservation, reflection, or enjoyment for people in the district."¹

Council manages 429 hectares of open spaces include parks, reserves, sports fields, lakes, walkways, cycleways, and civic spaces². These places support both active activities like sports and walking, and passive uses such as sitting, reflecting, or enjoying the natural environment. In the context of this strategy, open spaces also includes both public conveniences and cemeteries.

¹ For the purpose of this strategy, it excludes buildings and, swimming pools, but includes cemeteries, public conveniences and playgrounds located in open spaces.

² Parks & Open Spaces Activity Management Plan 2024-34.

Why are Open Spaces important?

Open spaces contribute to our wellbeing, protect heritage and biodiversity, enhance the character of our towns, and offer spaces where people can meet, move through, and feel connected.

These areas make a significant contribution to our quality of life by:

- Supporting active lifestyles by providing spaces for sport, recreation, and connection with nature
- Enhancing the amenity, character, and identity of neighbourhoods and townships
- Offering welcoming places for people to meet, play, and socialise within their communities
- Celebrating heritage and culture by protecting historical and culturally significant sites
- Improving the visual appeal of urban and rural environments
- Contributing to ecological health through the protection and enhancement of natural systems
- Boosting local economies by attracting visitors and supporting liveability
- Promoting mental and spiritual wellbeing through access to peaceful, restorative environments
- Providing dignified and peaceful spaces for remembrance and reflection through well-maintained cemeteries
- Ensuring comfort and accessibility for all by offering clean, safe, and well-located public conveniences

Open Spaces in the Ashburton District

Ashburton District has 137 open spaces that offer a wide range of leisure and recreational opportunities. Most of these spaces are owned and managed by Ashburton District Council, which is responsible for their provision, maintenance, and overall management.

Council maintains the Ashburton Domain, while the other domains are largely overseen by the Reserve Boards on behalf of the Council. Although Council has minimal involvement in their day-to-day upkeep, it does develop and maintain the children's playgrounds and public conveniences located within these domains.

Council also manages and maintains a variety of other areas that, while not classified as parks or recreation spaces, still require considerable upkeep and contribute meaningfully to the district's environment and profile. These include garden beds in roundabouts, median strips, street gardens, Central Business District spaces, town entrances, roadsides, and stormwater detention ponds. Covering approximately 116 hectares across more than 200 sites, these spaces play an important role in beautifying urban and rural landscapes, supporting biodiversity, managing stormwater and nourishing the natural environment.

Other providers

In addition to council owned and managed open spaces, other land providers are;

- The Department of Conservation (DoC)
- Land information New Zealand (LINZ)

- Education provider (e.g. schools and colleges)
- Environment Canterbury (ECan)
- Private sports clubs with sports fields provision like Hampstead, Allenton, and Collegiate
- Community groups/landowners managing land providing significant recreational and ecological linkages e.g. Mt Hutt Bike Park.

Ashburton District Council does not own, manage, fund, or deliver open spaces that are under the responsibility of these other providers. However, the Council maintains close partnerships with all providers to ensure and enable a consistent, district-wide approach to open spaces planning and management.

Progress so far – Open Spaces achievements by the Council

Since the adoption of the Open Spaces Strategy in 2016, Council has made significant progress in improving the provision, management, and quality of open spaces across the district. Key achievements include completing Reserve Management Plan 2024 for all Recreational Reserves, developing and implementing various actions under the Ashburton Domain Development Plan, and completion of the Recreation Facility Utilisation Study in 2023. A large number of the special projects in the 2016 Open Spaces Strategy have been largely implemented such as the Ng King Brothers Market Garden Settlement and pedestrian connections along Mill Creek.

In recent years, some Reserves such as Taylors Stream and Bowyers Stream reserves, have been planted with indigenous vegetation to boost ecological connectivity and enhance the natural character of the rural areas.

A review of the last ten years of Annual Reports shows consistently high satisfaction, with 95% of residents happy with Council-provided parks and open spaces, 97% satisfied with cemeteries, 97% satisfied with the Ashburton Domain, and 93% satisfied with playgrounds.

In December 2025, Ashburton Domain was recognised as a Four-Star Garden of Significance by the New Zealand Gardens Trust and will now be promoted to garden tourists nationally and internationally. This recognition indicates a high quality of service delivery for communities to enjoy.

Why do we need a strategy?

The purpose of the Open Spaces Strategy is to set the direction for the provision of an open space network that responds to demographic changes and urban growth and support community wellbeing. It ensures that open spaces remain welcoming, functional, and resilient for current and future generations.

It is a roadmap for how we will protect, enhance, and invest in our open spaces to meet the needs of current and future generations, support a balanced and sustainable environment, provide vibrant public places, and enable a connected community

Ashburton District is changing; these shifts will influence the demand for open spaces.

Population growth³: From 36,100 (2023) to 44,800 by 2053.

Household increase⁴: From 14,300 (2023) to 16,300 (2043).

Age⁵: Median age 40.1 years, slightly older than the national median of 38.1 years.

Diversity: Percentage of population that identify with ethnic group European (81.1%) Māori (8.6%), Pacific People (6%), Asian (9.4%), Middle Eastern/Latin America/African (1.9%), Other Ethnicity (1.1%)

Urban development: More subdivisions and higher residential density require new open spaces.

These trends highlight the need for a strategic approach to ensure delivery that meets demand, equitable access, cultural inclusivity, and environmental sustainability across the district's open spaces network.

How has this strategy been prepared?

The strategy builds on the Open Spaces Strategy 2016.

It has been informed by public consultation on related plans and strategies, including the:

- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2025
- Reserve Management Plan 2024,
- Biodiversity Strategy 2024,
- Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy 2022,
- Ashburton Domain Development Plan 2020,
- Walking and Cycling Strategy 2020, and
- Long Term and Annual Plans since 2016

Verbatim responses from the last five years of the Annual Resident Survey were also analysed to identify key themes.

A workshop with Council's Open Spaces Team was held on 30th October 2025, where open spaces were grouped into eight categories to explore issues, challenges, and opportunities across the district. During the workshop the team provided feedback on each category and suggested areas of improvement or further work.

It has also been informed by the 2025 Yardsticks Report. It is a benchmarking survey for Open Spaces that the Ashburton District Council participates in annually. It allows us to compare our performance against other Councils across New Zealand.

What has the analysis informed us?

Analysis of community responses and workshop discussion highlights the following themes:

³ <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stats.govt.nz%2Fassets%2FUploads%2FSubnational-population-projections%2FSubnational-population-projections-2023base-2053%2FDownload-data%2Fsubnational-population-projections-2023base-20>

⁴ [Ashburton District Council Long Term Plan 2024 - 34 \(Vol 1 - Page 38-40\)](#)

⁵ <https://tools.summaries.stats.govt.nz/places/TA/ashburton-district#families-and-households>

Accessibility and Inclusion

- Embed accessibility and inclusion in all open spaces design and upgrades
- Address distribution gaps to ensure equitable access across all townships and demographics

Ecological and Environmental Value

- Restore and enhance biodiversity through native planting, habitat creation, and green infrastructure
- Create biodiversity corridors and blue-green networks using parks, reserves, and waterways
- Support pest and weed control in reserves and domains through community outreach
- Promote sustainability in funding, maintenance, and design

Community and Cultural Connection

- Celebrate heritage and culture through trails, signage, and design

Connectivity and Linkages

- Map and prioritise existing recreational trails for inclusion in the strategy
- Ensure well established linkages between towns, schools, rivers, and trails
- Improve walking and cycling infrastructure to support active transport

Youth and Play

- Provide diverse play options for toddlers, children, and teens
- Upgrade outdated playgrounds and improve shade, seating, and safety

Safety and Infrastructure

- Improve lighting, sealed paths, and crossings for safer access
- Address maintenance issues in parks, cemeteries, and public toilets
- Ensure clear signage and fit for purpose parks furniture.

Equity and Investment

- Ensure equitable provision of open spaces across the district appropriate to the relevant communities.

What does this strategy include?

The document is divided into two sections: Part 1 provides the background information on strategy, its scope, and the strategy development process, while Part 2 outlines the strategy vision, goals, objectives and the action plan.

The strategy contains a 10-year action plan setting out how goals and associated objectives will be achieved, who will be involved in achieving them.

The strategy covers Ashburton District's parks and open spaces, which are grouped into eight categories⁶, as outlined below. This categorisation helps clarify the primary purpose, characteristics, and significance of each type of open space. It also enables us to plan more for different types of open spaces under each category in the future.

All provision targets, development standards, and levels of service for all open space types — such as playgrounds, sports fields, neighbourhood parks, public conveniences, and cemeteries—are set through Activity Management Plans (AMP) and reviewed every three years.

The strategy covers the following categories are:

1. *Civic Space*

Civic spaces are located within or near central business districts and serve as vibrant hubs for social interaction, community gatherings, relaxation, and enjoyment. These areas typically feature a mix of hard paving and soft landscaping, complemented by seating and maintained to a high standard of presentation. Civic spaces often adjoin key council facilities such as civic centres, libraries, and swimming pools, reinforcing their role as accessible and welcoming destinations for residents and visitors.

Ashburton District currently has eight civic spaces covering a total area of 3.45 hectares, and future planning will focus on enhancing their significance within the district by creating inclusive, functional, and visually appealing environments that reflect community identity and support civic life. Examples include:

- Baring Square East & West
- East Street Green – Central Business District (CBD)
- Mona Square

2. *Cultural Heritage*

Cultural heritage spaces are dedicated to protecting and celebrating the district's built cultural environment, providing opportunities for heritage conservation, education, commemoration, and remembrance. These areas include features such as historic sites, buildings, memorials, cemeteries, and culturally important locations like pā sites.

⁶ NZRA Parks Categories Framework August 2017

Ashburton District currently has 19 cultural heritage sites covering 42.35 hectares, forming an essential part of our social history and preserving heritage values. Examples include:

- Tinwald Domain
- Mount Somers Domain
- All Cemeteries
- Ng King Bros Market Garden Settlement, Ashburton

This strategy intends to help strengthen the visibility and accessibility of these spaces, enhance interpretation and storytelling, and ensure their ongoing protection in partnership with mana whenua and the community, so they remain meaningful and relevant for future generations.

3. Nature

Nature spaces provide opportunities to experience and protect the district's natural environment, including native bush, coastal margins, wetlands, riparian areas, and water bodies. These areas often include facilities for walking, horse riding, camping, picnicking, bird watching, and scenic viewing, creating spaces for recreation while preserving ecological integrity.

Ashburton District currently has 14 nature sites covering 211.43 hectares, contributing significantly to biodiversity and community wellbeing. Examples include:

- Awa Awa Rata Reserve
- Lake Camp (Ōtautari)
- Wakanui Beach
- Harris Scientific Reserve
- Ashton Beach

Through this strategy, we aim to protect biodiversity and ecological corridors, enhance visitor experiences by ensuring nature spaces remain resilient and accessible for future generations.

4. Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood spaces provide accessible areas for informal sporting activities, recreation, play, and family-based activities for residents. These spaces typically include playgrounds, picnic facilities such as barbecues and shelters, and recreation amenities like skate parks, bike tracks, and half courts. They may also feature dog exercise areas, junior sports fields such as soccer fields at the Ashburton Domain, and community buildings such as toilets or halls. Usually small in size (3 – 5000m²), neighbourhood spaces are designed to foster social interaction, active lifestyles, and community wellbeing.

Ashburton District currently has 34 neighbourhood spaces covering 20.19 hectares. Examples include:

- Huntingdon Ave Playground Reserve
- Rakaia Salmon Site
- Methven Dog Park
- Digby Park Ashburton

Through this strategy, we aim to enhance these spaces by improving facilities, ensuring inclusivity, and creating safe, welcoming environments that meet the needs of growing and diverse communities.

5. Outdoor Adventure

Outdoor adventure spaces provide opportunities for recreation and sporting activities that require large-scale, forested, rural, or peri-urban environments. These areas are designed to accommodate a wide range of nature-based activities such as hiking, horse riding, biking, camping, and other outdoor pursuits, offering both challenge and connection with the natural landscape. Typically located in rural or peri-urban settings, they support multiple activities and contribute to community wellbeing and tourism.

Ashburton District currently has three outdoor adventure spaces covering 35.80 hectares. Examples include:

- Lake Hood Middle
- Lake Hood South
- Ashburton Motorcycle Park

Through this strategy, we aim to enhance these spaces by improving access, diversifying recreational opportunities, and ensuring sustainable management practices that protect environmental values while meeting future demand.

6. Public Gardens

Public gardens are highly curated spaces that showcase horticultural excellence and provide opportunities for relaxation, contemplation, education, and community events. These areas feature botanical displays, ornamental plantings, and high-quality landscaping, often complemented by interpretation such as plant names, historic or horticultural information, and visitor facilities. Public gardens may also serve as venues for events and functions, including weddings and seasonal light displays.

Ashburton Domain and Gardens is the district's only public garden covering 12.39 hectares, offering significant amenity and recreational value.

Through this strategy, we aim to enhance its role as a destination for learning and leisure, strengthen its capacity to host community events, and maintain its high standard of presentation to ensure it remains a treasured space for future generations.

7. Recreational and Ecological Linkage

These spaces form green corridors and trail networks that connect neighbourhoods, town centres, waterways, and rural areas. They support walking, cycling, active transport, and ecological connectivity, often following waterways or transport corridors.

Ashburton District has 30 linkage spaces covering 13.86 hectares. Examples include:

- Smallbone Drive Reserve
- Thyme Stream Walkway
- Archibald Street Reserve, Main South Road
- Riverstone Park

Through this strategy, we aim to strengthen these linkages by improving connectivity, enhancing ecological corridors, and ensuring safe, accessible routes that promote recreation and environmental resilience.

8. Sport and Recreation

Sport and recreation spaces provide facilities for organised sports, training, and active play. They include sports fields, courts, and associated amenities that cater to a wide range of age groups and abilities.

Ashburton District has 17 sport and recreation spaces covering 121.75 hectares. Examples include:

- Argyle Park & Ashburton Domain
- Methven Domain
- Chertsey Domain
- Mayfield Domain
- Robilliard Park

Through this strategy, we aim to maintain and upgrade facilities to meet community needs, support participation in physical activity, and ensure adaptability for future sporting trends.

Alignment with other Strategies and Plans

The Open Spaces Strategy aligns with national legislation and regional and local strategies, plans, and policies. These policies, strategies, and legislation include:

Legislative Framework (National):

- Burial and Cremations Act 1964
- Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
- Local Government Act 2002
- Reserves Act 1977
- Resource Management Act 1991

Regional

- Canterbury Regional Policy Statement
- Canterbury Regional Pest Management Plan
- Canterbury Land and Water Plan

Ashburton District Council Strategies

- Biodiversity Strategy 2024

- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2025
- Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy 2022
- Walking and Cycling Strategy 2020-30

Ashburton District Council Bylaws

- Advertising and Signage in Public Places Bylaw 2017
- Cemeteries Bylaw 2017
- Open Spaces Bylaw 2016
- Public Place Bylaw 2017
- Trading in Public Place 2022

Plans

- Activity Management Plans
- District Plan
- Domain Development Plans
- Lake Camp and Lake Clearwater Plan
- Long Term Plan
- Reserve Management Plans

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Part 2: Our Vision, Principles, Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

Our vision:

“Resilient, inclusive open spaces that support community wellbeing, protect nature and heritage, and connect people across the Ashburton District.”

This vision links to all four Community outcomes as included in our current Long-Term Plan:

			
Residents are included and have a voice Ka whai wāhi, ka whakaputa kōrero kā kainoho	A district of great spaces and places He tiriwā pai, he wāhi pai i tēnei takiwā	A balanced & sustainable environment He taiao toitū	A prosperous economy based on innovation and opportunity He ōhaka whai rawa i ruka i te aroka hou me te whai āheika

Do we add Principles in here as well?

Our Principles

Following principles will guide us as we work to achieve the objectives and actions set out in this strategy.

1. **People first:** Design for everyday use—comfortable, welcoming, accessible.
2. **Nature positive:** Protect and restore habitats, waterways, and biodiversity.
3. **Partnership & Kaitiakitaka:** Work with others to enhance our open spaces, and care for place with mana whenua, respecting mātauraka Māori.

4. **Access for all:** Remove barriers; provide equitable, inclusive experiences where practicable.
5. **Safety by design:** Safe routes, visibility, and upkeep.
6. **Local identity & heritage:** Reflect our stories, landscapes, and cultural values.
7. **Climate resilience:** Plan for floods, heat, and drought; use resilience planting.
8. **Connected network:** Link towns, schools, parks, rivers, and trails.
9. **Value over time:** Look after our assets well and replace them at the right time so we get the best value for money over their whole life.
10. **Evidence-led & adaptive:** Use data, monitor outcomes, improve continuously.

Our GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal One:

Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces

Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.

Goal Two:

Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcomes

Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

Goal Three:

A Connected and Functional Open Spaces Network

Open spaces form a well-connected, and functional network across the district.

Goal Four:

Community Wellbeing, Resilience and Partnership

Open spaces support long-term community wellbeing and resilience through adaptable design, sustainable management, and strong partnerships.

Goal One: Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces

Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe for everyone, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.

Goal one means we will provide inclusive environments for play, recreation, gathering, and cultural expression that remove barriers to access, support everyday use, and are designed with safety and comfort in mind.

Principles Supporting Goal One:

- People first
- Access for all
- Safety by design
- Partnership & Kaitiakitaka

We intend to achieve our first goal by setting following objectives:

- 1.1 Shortfalls and surpluses in open spaces across the district are identified and remedied where it is practical
- 1.2 Ensure open space provision responds to demographic changes, population growth, and increased residential density
- 1.3 Where practicable design and upgrade open spaces to be inclusive, accessible, and safe for all users, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities
- 1.4 Enable mana whenua and diverse community groups involvement in planning, design, and care of open spaces
- 1.5 Promote public awareness and encourage community use of open spaces through events, education, signage, and digital tools
- 1.6 Ensure cemeteries are maintained as respectful, safe, and accessible spaces that support remembrance, cultural practices, and connection to local heritage, while meeting all legal and regulatory requirements including the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.
- 1.7 Ensure public conveniences and playgrounds are provided and maintained to a high standard across open spaces, supporting accessibility, safety, and comfort for all users

Goal 2: Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcomes

Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

Goal two means we will strengthen ecological resilience and cultural outcomes through native planting, biodiversity corridors, nature-based infrastructure, and interpretive elements that reflect local heritage, mātauraka Māori, and the stories of place.

Principles Supporting Goal Two:

- Nature positive
- Partnership & Kaitiakitaka
- Local identity & heritage
- Climate resilience

We intend to achieve our second goal by setting following objectives:

- 2.1 Protect and promote heritage, cultural, and natural features in open spaces through design, signage, and interpretation to help people understand and value the stories of place
- 2.2 Enhance biodiversity through native plantings, habitat creation, and the development of ecological corridors across open spaces to support plants and healthy ecosystem
- 2.3 Enhance access to scenic, heritage, and natural open spaces in ways that are appropriate and do not compromise biodiversity
- 2.4 Ensure pest and weed control through partnerships and outreach
- 2.5 Enhance walking connections and visual amenity by developing blue-green networks that link open spaces and neighbourhoods across the Ashburton District

Goal 3: A Connected and Functional Open Space Network

Open spaces form a well-connected and functional network across the district.

Goal three means we will link neighbourhoods, town centres, schools, waterways, and natural areas through safe, accessible trails, green corridors, and open space connections that support walking, cycling, and everyday movement.

Principles Supporting Goal Three:

- Connected network
- Safety by design
- Value over time

We intend to achieve our third goal by setting the following objectives:

- 3.1 Build partnerships with Reserve Boards, community groups and other organisations and to create efficiencies in the provision and management of open spaces
- 3.2 Build collaboration with land management agencies (e.g. DOC, LINZ, Ministry of Education) to maximise open space use
- 3.3 Where appropriate, support district wide connectivity by maintaining, improving, and developing walking and cycling trails/networks in open spaces
- 3.4 Assess and prioritise land acquisitions and vested land that contribute to network connectivity and strategic value

Goal 4: Community Wellbeing, Resilience, and Partnership

Open spaces support long-term community wellbeing and resilience through adaptable design, sustainable management, and strong partnerships.

Goal four means we will invest in flexible, multi-use spaces, sustainable management practices, and collaborative partnerships with mana whenua, community groups, and service providers to respond to changing community needs and environmental pressures.

Principles Supporting Goal Four:

- Community wellbeing
- Climate resilience
- Partnership & kaitiakitaka
- Evidence-led and adaptive

We intend to achieve our fourth goal by setting following objectives:

- 4.1 Ensure funding mechanisms are fit for purpose to meet community needs
- 4.2 Ensure Council is compensated when open spaces are used or affected by infrastructure and utilities
- 4.3 Open Spaces Team is committed to practices that help build climate resilient environment in the district
- 4.4 Continue to promote sustainable land use and soil conservation within open spaces to support land stability, and long-term functioning of landscaping

The lifespan for the strategy is expected to be 10 years. However, some actions may be achieved sooner. Achievement is also dependent on financial availability, legislative changes and commitment. As a guide, we have split the timeframes into the four categories below.

- Short-term (ST)** : 1-3 years
- Medium-term (MT)** : 3-10 years
- Long-term (LT)** : 10+ years
- Ongoing (O)** : Actions that are already happening and that will run throughout the life of the strategy.

Reporting and review

We will report annually on progress in implementing the Action Plan. These reports will show which actions have been completed and whether they were delivered on time.

A full review will be undertaken every three years to ensure the Action Plan remains current and meets the needs of our community.

The entire Strategy will be fully reviewed every five years.

How are we going to know the strategy is working?

Reporting on the strategy will show which actions have been accomplished, if we did it on time and within the provided budget. Specific measures and data sources (for example from ADC performance reports, Yardsticks reports and the Annual Resident Survey) will be used in the first instance to monitor progress against the strategy.

Role of Ashburton District Council

The role of Council in the Strategy and Action Plan is defined in broad terms below:

- **No role** – not an issue, role of other agencies and organisations.
- **Advocate** – collecting and sharing community views with government, agencies or organisations to help improve the district. This can be active or passive.
- **Influence** – educate and work to change people’s perceptions or behaviour to provide positive community outcomes.
- **Support** – support agencies leading the work (e.g. research, funding or bringing stakeholders together).
- **Plan and Resource** – take direct lead and involvement to achieve specific outcomes (e.g. developing plans, consultation, funding, resourcing).

Partners and organisations involved

The “Who” column in the Action plan table indicates the Council’s teams and external organisations involved in the action with the first named team or organisation being the lead agency.

Resource and Funding

Open spaces are mainly funded through a mix of rates, including the General Rate and Targeted Capital Value Rate, which funds activities such as parks, playgrounds, sport fields, rural and urban beautification including Ashburton Domain and Lake Hood.

Cemeteries are funded partly through General Rate and partly through fees and charges.

Public conveniences are funded primarily through the Uniform Annual General Charge and the Targeted Capital Value Rate.

Financial contributions are collected under the Ashburton District Plan for new developments and subdivisions. These contributions (e.g. cash or land) are then used for the provision and management of open spaces across the district.

There is also potential to seek external grants or funding from agencies involved in tourism, biodiversity, and conservation, when such programmes are available.

If a new project arises from this Action Plan and funding has not already been allocated/available in approved budget, a separate request will be made through a business case during the Long-Term and Annual Plan process.

The Action Plan

Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces

Goal One: *Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.*

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
1.1	Shortfalls ⁷ and surpluses in open spaces across the district are identified and remedied where it is practical	A. Maintain updated database by creating GIS layer on number, location, and nature of open spaces provided by council and other providers.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Arowhenua/AECL	Short Term
		B. Mapping analysis is undertaken to identify shortfalls in the provision of open spaces	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Short Term
1.2	Ensure open space provision responds to demographic changes, population growth, and increased residential density	A. Monitor significant changes in either zoning provisions or proposed developments that may place additional demands on open spaces	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Planning Teams)	Ongoing
		B. Open Spaces Team regularly monitor the district's demographics	Plan & Resource	ADC (Strategy & Policy, Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		C. Review all RMPs and AMPs and treat as living documents	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
		D. Continue to support ongoing development of open spaces across the district	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Planning, Assets Teams), Site Developers	Ongoing
		D. Continue to develop and operate Lake Hood to ensure it	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Planning, Assets Teams)	Ongoing

⁷ Shortfalls are identified using best practice guidelines and national benchmarking surveys

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
		is a high-quality recreational asset for the community		Site Developers, Arowhenua/AECL	
1.3	Where practicable design and upgrade open spaces to be inclusive, accessible, and safe, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities	A. Continue to regularly review playgrounds provisions for adequacy, accessibility, and potential efficiencies in maintenance and provision	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		B. Review open spaces and their facilities for accessibility, parking, and other standards as required	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
1.4	Enable mana whenua and diverse community groups involvement in planning, design, and care of open spaces	A. Continue to collaborate with Hakatere River Trail Group and Ashburton Domain User Group	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Community Groups, Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
		B. Enable diverse groups and manawhenua to participate in future endeavours/initiatives	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Relevant Stakeholders, Community Groups, Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
1.5	Promote public awareness and encourage community use of open spaces through events, education, signage, and digital	A. Review open space signage to improve visibility and understanding	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Short Term
		B. Implement new signage strategy based on Council's signage guidelines across the district's parks, reserves, heritage sites and cemeteries over time	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Communications Teams)	Short Term

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
	tools	C. Develop promotional materials (e.g. maps, proximity guides) for the district's open spaces	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Communications, Economic Development Teams)	Ongoing
		D. Continue to expand Bookable (website for venue booking) to include other open spaces and reserves	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Information Systems, Communications, Economic Development Teams)	Ongoing
		E. Be open to new recreational and technological opportunities that provide recreational benefits in open spaces areas	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		F. Update Council's Utilisation Study to reflect community needs on a regular basis	Support	ADC (Sport and Recreation Team, Open Spaces Teams)	Ongoing
		G. Continue to work with Regional Sports Trust (i.e. Sport Canterbury) and sports clubs and community organisations to understand their future needs	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Sports Clubs, and Community organisations	Ongoing
1.6	Ensure cemeteries are maintained as respectful, safe, and accessible spaces that support remembrance, cultural practices, and connection to local heritage, while meeting all legal and	A. Maintain and update the Cemeteries asset register	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		B. Ensure that funding reflects the cost of providing cemeteries and is regularly reviewed	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		C. Develop Cemetery development plans for all district cemeteries to understand cemetery capacity	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Short Term

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
	regulatory requirements including the Burial and Cremation Act 1964	and guide cemetery development.			
		D. Make cemetery records more publicly accessible	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team), other agency/community groups	Medium
		E. Review and update the Cemetery bylaw	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Strategy & Policy Teams)	Medium Term
1.7	Ensure public conveniences and playgrounds are provided and maintained to a high standard across open spaces, supporting accessibility, safety, and comfort for all users	<p>A. Implement a continual programme to upgrade, replace, or renew public conveniences so they are well maintained and designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the results of regular condition assessments • be environmentally friendly for the environment where they are located • meet sanitary, safety, accessibility, and customer service standards • align with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles 	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing

Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcomes

Goal Two: Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
2.1	Protect and promote heritage, cultural, and natural features in open spaces through design, signage, and interpretation to help people understand and value the stories of place	A. Ensure existing and potential heritage features are managed and enhanced to promote both open spaces and heritage values.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Community Groups, Arowhenua/AECL, Heritage NZ	Ongoing
		B. Continue to identify and record known heritage and cultural features (including cemeteries) within open spaces, and add new sites discovered through routine investigations.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
		C. Engage and partner with local iwi to identify culturally significant open spaces, consult on their management, and involve them in decisions regarding acquisition of new areas.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Property, Legal Teams), Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
		D. Prioritise acquisition of open spaces with recognised heritage values.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Property, Legal Teams), Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
		E. Review interpretive open space signage to identify potential improvements to promote a local sense of place and heritage values.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Communications Teams), Arowhenua/AECL	Short Term

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
2.2	Enhance biodiversity through native plantings, habitat creation, and the development of ecological corridors across open spaces to support plants and healthy ecosystem	A. Where appropriate, undertake revegetation and restoration plantings in reserves with ecological linkage opportunities.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		B. Continue to support the restoration of Harris Scientific Reserve to provide a representative indigenous kānuka forest within the open spaces.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		C. Integrate biodiversity principles across open spaces activities. For example, increasing the percentage of native planting used in Council reserves, street trees and road berms. (BS 4.2D)	Advocate	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
2.3	Enhance access to scenic, heritage, and natural open spaces in ways that are appropriate and do not compromise biodiversity	A. Undertake consultation with other organisations, including the Department of Conservation and Environment Canterbury, to enhance access to those areas of specific interest.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Department of Conservation, ECan, Arowhenua/AECL	Ongoing
2.4	Ensure pest and weed control through	A. Continue pest management program in all Council reserves and Open Spaces.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
	partnerships and outreach	(BS – 1.3B)			
		B. Promote weed prevention by utilising non-invasive plant species in open spaces planting.	Advocate	ADC (Open Spaces Team), ECan, Relevant Stakeholders, Volunteers	Long Term Ongoing
2.5	Enhance walking connections and visual amenity by developing blue-green networks that link open spaces and neighbourhoods across the Ashburton District	A. Continue to work with developers and community organisations for the inclusion of blue green networks and pursue future opportunities.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces, Planning, & Engineering Development Teams), Arowhenua/AECL, Developers, Hut communities	Ongoing

A Connected and Functional Open Spaces Network

Goal Three: Open spaces form a well-connected and functional network across the district.

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
3.1	Build partnerships with Reserve Boards, community groups and other organisations and to create efficiencies in the provision and management of open space	A. Council facilitates ongoing relationship with the Reserve Boards that enables clear communication and response to the issues/concerns	Plan & Resource	ADC (Community Liaison Officer, Open Spaces Teams)	Ongoing
		B. Work with the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, and Ministry of Education to maximise the connections between areas of open space, to ensure open space activities are coordinated and not unnecessarily duplicated.	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Department of Conservation, ECan, Ministry of Education	Ongoing
3.2	Build collaboration with land management agencies (e.g. DOC, LINZ, Ministry of Education) to maximise open space use	A. Maintain spatial awareness of open spaces provision by other agencies (e.g. schools) to identify gaps and help plan accordingly.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
3.3	Where appropriate, support district-wide connectivity by	A. Identify opportunities in open spaces to connect urban and rural areas.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
	maintaining, improving, and developing walking and cycling trails/networks in open spaces.	B. Develop opportunities within existing reserves for walking and cycling.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		C. Investigate using open spaces to improve connections around town	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
3.4	Assess and prioritise land acquisitions and vested land that contribute to network connectivity	A. Incorporate the Strategy's goals in the Design and Constructions Standards for Open Spaces and Streetscapes	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Short Term

Community Wellbeing, Resilience and Partnership

Goal Four: *Open spaces support long-term community wellbeing and resilience through adaptable design, sustainable management, and strong partnerships.*

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
4.1	Ensure funding mechanisms are fit for purpose to meet community needs	A. Review the adequacy of current funding mechanisms, in particular, whether they adequately support the demands on open space	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Medium Term
		B. Lease unused open space land on a short-term basis and, reinvest the revenue into maintaining and enhancing open space areas	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Property Teams), Reserve Boards	Ongoing
4.2	Ensure Council is compensated when open spaces are used or affected by infrastructure and utilities	A. Explore opportunities to require compensation for the use of open spaces by infrastructure and utility providers, from existing and historically established infrastructure	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Property Teams) Reserve Boards	Ongoing
		B. Require compensation for the use of open spaces for future development of	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces, Property Teams)	Ongoing

	Objectives	Actions	Role of ADC	Who	When
		infrastructure and utility providers			
4.3	Open Spaces team is committed to practices that help build climate resilient environments in the district	A. Where practical, decisions about new planting will enable resilience to climate events such as flooding	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
		B. Open Spaces team will ensure efficient water use in their operations	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces Team)	Ongoing
4.4	Continue to promote sustainable land use and soil conservation within open spaces to support land stability	A. Continue to investigate and apply sustainable land-use methods to manage land such as mulching grass clippings to improve soil health and maintaining vegetation cover in open spaces.	Plan & Resource	ADC (Open Spaces team)	Ongoing
4.5	Engage with Arowhenua/ AECL to enable their participation in development and operation of open spaces across the district	A. Engage, support and where practicable resource Arowhenua / AECL to contribute to the delivery of the strategy	Support	ADC (Open Spaces Team), Arowhenua/ AECL	Ongoing

Glossary:

ADC: Ashburton District Council

AECL: Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Limited, is mandated to support Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua in its environmental aspirations and enable it to undertake rangatirataka and kaitiakitaka within its rohe.

Biodiversity: is a short term for “biological diversity”. Biodiversity describes the level of diversity in natural life. This includes the variety of different species (micro-organisms and fungi, trees, plants and animals), the genes they comprise, and the ecosystems they are a part of

Blue Green Networks (BNG): Blue-green networks are a planning approach that focuses on creating a network of interconnected waterways, wetlands, parks, greenways, and other natural areas to provide multiple benefits, including flood management, stormwater management, climate change resilience, improved water quality, protection of biodiversity, and opportunities for recreation, tourism and community engagement.

Climate Change: a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

ECan - Environment Canterbury, our regional council

Ecological values: level of benefits that biotic or abiotic components that make up natural ecosystems provides for the maintenance of organisms or to support native life forms.

Ecosystem: a community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment.

Kaitiakitaka: The exercise of customary custodianship, in a manner that incorporates spiritual matters, by takata whenua who hold Manawhenua status for particular area or resource.

Manawhenua: Those who exercise customary authority or Rakatirataka (Chieftainship, decision making rights

Reserve Boards: there are 16 Reserve Boards that manage rural domains across the district on behalf of the Ashburton District Council.