Rotorua District Council

Open Space Strategy
Papa Atea
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Open Space

Open space greatly influences everyone's daily lives, it contributes to the health of the Rotorua District's community directly and indirectly. The benefits that can be associated with quality of life come under the headings of amenity, education, cultural and spiritual well being, economic gain, environmental awareness, community relations, and recreation provision, as well as physical and psychological health of the community. Frequently overlooked until it is lost, Rotorua can learn much from others experience and plan for change in the provision of open space, which future growth will undoubtedly bring.

Open spaces can be broadly grouped into four categories. Many of the open spaces in Rotorua could be described as having more than one of these broad descriptions:

- Ecological - plants, animals, insects and the habitat they live in.
- Recreational - active or passive, formal or informal recreation.
- Landscape - amenity value, sense of place and landform.
- Heritage - historic or cultural significance.
Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose of this Open Space Strategy is to:

- Provide a strategic direction for the future planning of open space in the Rotorua District.
- Set out broad Council policy on the provision of open space under the guardianship of Rotorua District Council.
- Provide a solid foundation for the implementation of the community’s and Council’s desired network of open spaces that will enhance the experience for all users.
- Strengthen the linkage between the Open Space Strategy and other RDC strategies and policies.

The Open Space Strategy will serve as a key reference source for parks and recreation officers, planners, engineers, politicians, as well as external relevant parties such as land owners, developers, community and sporting groups, other authorities and local Iwi.

It will lay the foundation for the provision of open space in relation to:

- A sustainable open space network.
- Land development and subdivision proposals - working in partnership with landowners and developers.
- Parks and Recreation facilities and budgets.
- Roading and other engineering projects.
- Strategic purchase/disposal of land and points of access by RDC.
- Funding applications to regional and national authorities for open space projects.
- Retention of view shafts.

Open space is an integral element in the character of the Rotorua District, especially as increasing development pressure is placed upon the urban and lake environments. Without this recognition Rotorua District Council will continue to inherit leftover and problematic public open spaces that restrict the use they can be put to, and ultimately their value to the community.
Guiding Principles

**Sustainable Development**
Providing a sustainable open space network, now and in the future by balancing social, cultural, economic and environmental priorities will increasingly become important to the sustainable development of the Rotorua district as its population increases and urban intensification occurs. Open space provision must be central in planning for a sustainable development instead of the present day practice of being added onto the end of the development process as a reluctant green fix.

**Managing the City’s Urban Form**
Rotorua City’s form is naturally contained by the surrounding iconic topography and Lake Rotorua. Open space therefore plays a crucial role in creating the identity and form of the city. The established urban boundary within the caldera, concentrates the accelerating growth. In doing so the urban defines the rural forms and visa versa, thus strengthening the city character.

**Better Networks and Corridors**
Connecting communities through physical and visual linkages [between town and country, city and suburbs, land and water, natural and man-made environments, home and work, east and west, private and public open space etc] provides community identity, transport routes, access, and ecological linkages. These safe, sustainable green corridors [generally following waterways] can enhance existing open space qualities by linking with adjacent open spaces, and in doing so expand choice for the community alongside the benefit of habitat creation. With the expansion of the roading network in Rotorua from suburban to an urban scale, the disassociated islands that these 4 lane barriers create will require safe, environmentally friendly linkages to the outside community.
Innovative Solutions
There is a need for flexibility in catering for changing trends and demands placed upon Rotorua District's existing open space. Such an approach can only succeed if innovative solutions are investigated with individuals and organizations thinking outside the comfort zone of traditional solutions. This will be required particularly at the open space pressure points of the lake margins and urban areas, as the resource becomes increasingly limited and therefore more valuable and desirable. Land can also have a multi-purpose function, e.g. sportsfields acting as retention basins during flood events slowly releasing water into waterways.

Community Involvement
It is imperative that Rotorua's open space is matched against the needs of the community it serves - an ethnically diverse community. 'Experts' do not always anticipate all the community's desired outcomes or make the mistake of underestimating the community's ability to understand the wider issues involved.

There needs to be an increased community awareness and involvement in providing and managing open space values. Bright Future - Community Outcomes has begun this process in theory, it is now up to all parties to run with its potential.

Kaitiakitanga
Rotorua's unique environment has been under kaitiakitanga [guardianship] of the Te Arawa people for generations. Now it is managed in partnership. Few New Zealanders would fail to admit to having a sense of belonging to [and respecting] the land in a spiritual capacity irrespective of their origins. A community that respects, values and understands the needs and benefits of open space [our lakes, rivers, streams, forests and geothermal resources] likely also values other crucial aspects of community responsibility.

Sustainable Use of Resources
The Rotorua lakes water quality issues were recently likened to being 'a canary in a coal mine', acting as an early warning indicator to the Rotorua community that greater emphasis has to be placed on sustainable use of our resources. As the population expands, competition for space brought about by increasing urbanization will result in pressure being placed on Rotorua District's biodiversity. Open space [just as land] is a finite resource, becoming more valuable over time and therefore should be respected and treated as the taonga [treasure] that it is.

Encourage Recreation
A healthy community is encouraged through increasing recreational opportunities that are affordable and easily accessible. There is a need flexibility in catering for changing recreation trends, including a positive approach to acquisition and disposal of public open space. Open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, as well as in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others. Open
Open Space in Rotorua

Rotorua's unique environment has shaped the development and identity of the district and provides a widerange of social, cultural, recreational and economic resources. The landscape and its cover have been substantially altered over time by geological events and human activity. Land cover in the district is now dominated by pasture [48%] and planted forest [20%], as well as indigenous forests and lakes. There are 137 protected natural areas in the district, covering more than 30,620 ha. More than half of this area comprises scenic reserves. It must be remembered however that quantity does not always translate to quality in regard to open spaces.

The district's 14 lakes form a backdrop to an abundant variety of natural resources, recreational opportunities, visitor attractions and economic opportunities. The lakes, mountains, ranges and geothermal features of Rotorua are icons, recognized in this country and known throughout the world. Around 80% of Rotorua's residents visit the district's lakes at least a monthly basis. Lake water quality is an issue of significant community concern. In general, lake water quality has been declining over the long term due to increased nutrient levels resulting in sporadic algal blooms on a number of lakes. A collaborative approach is being taken with Environment Bay of Plenty, Te Arawa Maori Trust Board, Rotorua District Council, farming communities, and lakeside communities [initiated by the Rotorua Lakes Strategy] to better manage lake water quality and their margins. This process is being aggressively researched at present to reach a long-term sustainable outcome.

Rotorua City is located in close proximity to vast plantation forestry resources, including the extensive Kaingaroa Forest. Close to both the city centre and the community's heart is Whakarewarewa Forest along with the mature block known as the Redwoods. It serves a central role of connection with the economic, recreational and spiritual aspects of the extensive forestry blocks. With the forest walking and mountain biking tracks administered by Kaingaroa Timberlands Management Ltd for the benefit of the Rotorua community and visitors, this spectacular forest [and the Tokorangi triangle] remains a cornerstone of Rotorua's adventure tourism market, as well as benefiting local leisure pursuits.

The surrounding greenbelt of agricultural grasslands imparts a defined character
Why should we be concerned about Open Space in Rotorua?

Throughout the Rotorua District Council’s Community Outcomes consultation process, it has become clear that the people of the Rotorua District recognize the importance of the landscape (and therefore open space) in the social, economic, cultural, and environmental health of the Rotorua community.

Perhaps in the past it has been all too easy to believe that New Zealand is the timeless clean green land that drifts along in the South Pacific without encountering the ills that have befallen the more populous countries in the developed world. Beyond such myths is the reality that New Zealand’s landscape has undergone tremendous change and pressures particularly over the past 100 years of human habitation and the rate of change is only going to increase. In order to get an indication of the challenges that are already evident and in time will affect open space in our district, we only need to be familiar with the New Zealand examples of the market-led pressure of infill urban development such as in the Auckland metropolis [driven by around 41 people arriving every day to live] Rotorua’s close neighbour Tauranga has experienced a doubling of its population in the past 20 years [with an average of 50 people arriving every week] which has eaten away into their surrounding greenbelt countryside. If Rotorua fails to recognize the pitfalls of the existing ad hoc approach to the provision of open space, then by the time future generations recognize their needs, land availability and economic pressures will make a satisfactory solution virtually unaffordable.
How was the Open Space Strategy developed?

The Open Space Strategy takes its direction from legal statutes, Rotorua District Council documents, and the strategic documents of other authorities including Environment Bay of Plenty - the local regional council. It has also been strengthened by recent studies of open space areas and landscapes in the Rotorua District. However, underlying these requirements is the fundamental philosophy of Rotorua District Council, that Council serves the needs of its community, especially in taking an holistic view of the environment we live in and approaching its management in a sustainable way. Sustainable development of the land resource in Rotorua has its origins in Maori kaitiakitanga, followed by Pakeha who developed pastoral farming. However, over time intensification and development has eroded this affinity with our environment.
What do these words mean?

Open Space

Open Space is many things to many people. Some would narrowly confine its meaning to sportsfields and areas that provide active recreational opportunities to the community. This strategy uses a wider definition that includes areas that support active and passive recreation, both in public and private ownership. It also goes beyond this to encompass urban areas between built forms [such as private backyards], lakes, rivers and streams, caldera rims and mountains, farmland, forests, conservation and geothermal areas. In essence then, in this strategy ‘open space’ is the everyday surrounding landscape environment that enhances life experience.

Open Space Strategy

The document that guides the way current and future open spaces in Rotorua District [including both rural and urban areas] are to be managed.

Guiding Principles

Explains why the Rotorua District Council [and the community] need to achieve the Open Space Strategy objectives and indicates how we might create the open spaces the community desires.

Open Space Strategy Outcomes

These are the results that the Council and community want to see achieved as the strategy is given effect in the short, medium and long-term.

Active Recreation

Organised or informal recreation that occurs in open space areas that contain sports fields or facilities which are used predominantly for competitive, organized sports or other active pursuits.

Passive Recreation

Takes place across all areas of open space in an informal manner. This casual recreation can involve activity as diverse as walking the dog, fishing, picnics, or even barbeques.

Public Open Space

Parks, reserves, scenic reserves, forests, walkways, cycleways, esplanade reserves, and urban civic spaces that are acquired by Rotorua District Council and other authorities for the use of its community.

Private Open Space

Forests, backyards, golf courses, and farmland etc. not held in public ownership. Rotorua District Council attempts to influence the provision of these private spaces [through the resource consent process] while implementing the community objectives.

Caldera

The Rotorua Caldera containing Lake Rotorua, has a roughly circular fault scarp to the south, east and north. To the north-west the land is gently down-warped towards the lake. In this strategy the term ‘Caldera’ refers to the largely undeveloped green belt upper slopes and rim.
What do the residents of Rotorua think?

Bright Future Rotorua - Community Outcomes

The Local Government Act 2002 requires Rotorua District Council to carry out a process to identify community outcomes for the intermediate and long-term future of the district.

The purpose of the community outcomes process is to:

- Provide the Rotorua community with an opportunity to discuss its present situation and prioritise issues in terms of their importance for Rotorua's future.
- Influence and guide priorities in relation to the Council and other organisations' activities.
- Help the community, Council and other local organisations to work together in a more efficient and coordinated manner, to better promote well-being in the district.
- Check how we are progressing towards Rotorua's agreed outcomes by consulting with the community and adopting a pragmatic approach.

Rotorua District Council is continuing to work with other agencies and organisations, in consultation with the community, to develop a monitoring framework. Both the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act 2001 require environmental reporting. In addition, reporting of environmental trends helps to educate people about their local environment and inspire community action.

In accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Local Government Act 2002, Rotorua District Council is taking a collaborative and inclusive approach to identifying and monitoring community outcomes.

Key Focus  A Safe and Caring Community

High Priority  A Community that Respects its Environment
A Healthy Community
A Prosperous Community

Important  A Community with Excellent Facilities and Services
A Community that Values its Living Maori Culture
A Learning Community
A 'Happening' Community

The combination of the above themes can be both directly and indirectly linked to the importance that the Rotorua community places on its open space. The quality of life as well as physical and psychological health of the community is greatly enhanced by the manner in which Open Space is retained and utilized.
What legal responsibilities does RDC have for Open Space?

Rotorua District Council has undertaken this Open Space Strategy in response to its legislative requirements imposed by central government. It does have a legal obligation to identify and implement community wishes under the Local Government Act 2002.

While RDC has no legal obligation to create a document called an Open Space Strategy, it does have a legal duty to manage its open spaces. It is the role of the Open Space Strategy to act as a broad guiding document to link and streamline Council’s various policies. In essence it is a management tool that ensures consistency with central, regional and local government requirements, along with community views as might be evidenced in submissions to the annual plan.

Open Space Strategy

Consultation Process

Public Consultation

Consultation Feedback

Recommendations

Community, Parks & Recreation Sub Committee

Presentation of Draft to Council & Approval in Principle

Initial RDC

Research & Development & Review

Draft Document

The Open Space Strategy

Monitoring

Open Space Strategy

2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007
How does the Open Space Strategy link to other Council Strategies?

Open Space Strategy - Papa Atea
What do we want the open spaces to be like in the future?

Rotorua - the City

Objective
A vibrant, modern, safe, healthy provincial city that meets the demands and expectations of its community and visitors alike.

Open Space Values
With more than 80% of Rotorua’s population living in urban areas, the city and its open space relationships are a central experience to a large majority of the community. Open space provides the framework that binds together the city and defines its form and much of its character.

Issues
Suburban sprawl, ribbon, infill, and ad hoc development. Lack of a long term plan for the city form, with infrastructure overly influencing its design. Requires defined entrances and continued access to the lakes, rivers & streams.

Strengths
Rotorua has the benefit of being both a provincial and yet progressive city. At present change is taking place at a manageable pace when compared to other NZ hot spots, as a result impacts on open space have been limited and is generally isolated. We have the opportunity to plan ahead for future demands and change.

Opportunities
• Improve lake water quality and lakefront experience.
• Improve safety in the city.
• Improve quality of city open spaces.
• Improve open space linkage between city and suburbs.
Rural Communities

Objective
Productive and sustainable land use centred on villages with their own unique style and atmosphere.

Open Space Values
Outside of the Rotorua urban area, the district’s rural communities are centred on a variety of country villages. Village identity is the social glue that bonds the distinct rural communities together. Their focus is often the local primary school.

Issues
Closure of country schools, loss of the general stores and pubs, gentrification of housing stocks, changes in the production economic base through aggregation of land and changing land uses.

Strengths
By entering into partnership with the schools, RDC can reinforce the sense of local identity by assisting the funding of recreation facilities and providing opportunities for rural communities to come together. In rural communities parks and domains should be robust and reflect the needs of the community.

Opportunities
• Encourage recreation in rural locations.
• Adoption of Rotorua Entranceways Strategy principles.
• Clearly identify public open spaces.
• Improve quality of rural communities open spaces.
Lakeside Communities

Objective
Isolated distinct close sustainable communities integrated into the landscape and respecting their lakeside environment.

Open Space Values
Neither urban nor rural. Settlements tucked into discrete enclaves and niches, as sanctuaries for people, looking out across lakes, with panoramic views across to impressive mountains, hillsides, and open country. Ranging in character and scale, from highly modified landscapes to the iconic picturesque distinctive craggy mountains and cliffs above natural lakes, surrounded by groves of native bush and gentle pastoral lands. Peaceful remoteness.

Issues
Ribbon development, loss of indigenous vegetation, exotic forest harvesting, gentrification, land management & lake water quality, jetties & boatsheds, over development, and recreational access pressures.

Strengths
Land based activities affect the lake water quality and the landscape of the lake catchment, in turn, water quality and landscape affect the lakeside community’s ability to use and enjoy the lake. Residents are involved and aware of lake water quality issues, but also must take individual responsibility for the retention of landscape character, especially removal of indigenous vegetation, clearance of lake margins, importation of urban forms, and proliferation of private jetties.

Opportunities
- Improve quality of lakeside open space
- Improve access between public open space
- Protect ecological corridors.
- Control development to maintain character.
Suburbs

Objective
A concentration of people living together in a safe, healthy, distinct suburban environment.

Open Space Values
From backyards to neighbourhood reserves and even the streets themselves, the suburbs are the open spacelungs of the community. They provide an escape from the world, impart a sense of identity and therefore belonging.

Issues
As Rotorua urban area’s population intensifies, fewer citizens will have their own private space as land becomes more valuable, sections shrink in size and lifestyle demands change. With the backyard increasingly under attack, pressure on public open space will only increase.

Strengths
With a satisfaction rating of 96% it could be inferred that the Parks and Recreation Department is providing the right suburban mix of open space. This level of community satisfaction should not be taken for granted and future provision of suburban public open space should reflect the loss of private open space as housing density increases.

Opportunities
- Include provision for public open space within new developments.
- Ensure even provision of open space across urban areas.
- Improve quality of suburban open space.
- Increase safety in urban areas.
- Improve linkages between suburbs and city.
Lakes & Islands

Objective
Healthy lakes with ease of access to the community

Open Space Values
The Rotorua lakes and islands form a focus for the district by providing a very important visual landscape for both residents and visitors. They are also an important taonga of the tangata whenua, and are an important resource for tourism. Most activities on the lakes are recreational such as boating, swimming and fishing.

Issues
The quality of the lakes is affected by activities throughout their catchments. The Rotorua lakes have been overfed with nutrients for many decades. RDC, Te Arawa Maori Trust Board, Environment Bay of Plenty, Federated Farmers and key stakeholders in the community are attempting to address this issue.

Strengths
The Rotorua lakes and islands are a major resource, though often taken for granted and under-estimated. With effective environmental and statutory management these can accommodate the wider range of open space experiences that we place on them without degrading their essence.

Opportunities
- Improve water quality.
- Improve quality of lakes and islands open space.
- Encourage conservation of lake edge margins.
- Improve public access in and around lakes.
- Promote community wide use and opportunity.
Caldera

**Objective**
Protection of the greenbelt function of the Rotorua Caldera.

**Open Space Values**
Knowing what is rural, in turn allows us to know what is urban, therefore allowing one to define and contrast the other. The greater the contrast and extremes of the distinction between rural and urban, the more the community recognizes and values what each contributes. The caldera rim acts as Rotorua's greenbelt, a natural boundary that is visible from both the city and the suburbs. This role of the caldera will become more important as the density of the city increases.

**Issues**
Erosion of the rural character by importing suburban elements through development outside the 'urban fence'.

**Strengths**
An opportunity exists to blend suburban into rural margins under controlled conditions on parts of the lower slopes of the caldera where the landform allows such development, thus breaking a solid line into a scattered more organic edge.

**Opportunities**
- Improve public viewshafts from high within Caldera.
- Encourage sustainable land management.
- Improve quality of caldera open space.
- Identification and protection of greenbelt character.
Rivers and Streams

Objective
The preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural character of riparian margins alongside provision of public access and recreation use.

Open Space Values
Riparian margins provide twin benefits to the community, access and conservation. Combined these provide an important open space linkage and buffer between the land and the lakes. If the lakes are the heart of our communities then the rivers and streams can be considered as the arteries.

Issues
Residential and industrial pollution, inappropriate subdivision and development, erosion of river and stream banks thus reducing land available to esplanade strips and so affecting community access.

Strengths
The existing policy of acquisition of esplanade strips along identified waterways, as and when they become available through the resource consent process has been successful in creating access and improving the quality of these riparian margins. These should be integrated into walkway systems as well as selected lakeside strips and reserves to maximize their potential benefit to the environment and the community.

Opportunities
• Improve public access and conservation values.
• Involve the community.
• Improve quality of riparian open space.
• Increase ecological diversity.
Grassland

**Objective**
A productive and sustainable farming resource that maintains its aesthetic qualities and character while changing to meet market forces and demands.

**Open Space Values**
The pastoral backdrop that cloaks much of the Rotorua District landform contrasts and defines our urban areas, exotic forests, lakes, and provides a visual resource that our visitors strongly identify with the clean green New Zealand brand.

**Issues**
Change of production to exotic forestry due to either economic or lake water quality political pressures. Urban sprawl, importation of suburban forms, and lifestyle block proliferation.

**Strengths**
Given the extent of farmland in the district, it has a huge capacity to absorb controlled change. This should be directed at retaining the overall rural character while facilitating the economic function of the resource.

**Opportunities**
- Encourage sustainable land management.
- Involve the community.
- Improve quality of grassland open space.
- Control development to maintain character.
Geothermal

Objectives
Recognition, preservation, protection and the sustainable and appropriate use of the Rotorua geothermal resource/taonga.

Open Space Values
The sight of steam drifting up from kanuka, is as distinctive as the whiff of sulphur to the nostrils to indicate to the visitor that they have arrived in Rotorua, and to local residents that they have come home. Geothermal activity ranks alongside and compliments Maori culture and the Rotorua Lakes as the other ‘big 3’ Rotorua attractors. These iconic geothermal features are utilised for a number of cultural, recreational, and domestic purposes, forming a close association with settlement patterns.

Issues
Geothermal water extraction, geothermal activity, tourist demand and impact. Ability to use and/or manage the geothermal resource.

Strengths
While in the past the geothermal features were taken to be a unlimited resource to be exploited, now a sustainable balance is sought. Often the geothermal activity remind us that we do not dominate the land, and our tenure carries with it responsibilities. As their value to tourism is developed, physical and visual access for the Rotorua community must be retained. Redevelopment of Kuirau Park will play a large part in ensuring unrestricted public access to the dynamic geothermal landscape.

Opportunities
- Ensure continued public access.
- Improve quality of geothermal open space.
- Investigate sustainable energy use.
- Improve safety.
Mountains & Ranges

Objective
Recognition of mountains & ranges spiritual and cultural values, conservation of their environments, whilst respecting the needs and preferences of local people.

Open Space Values
Mountains are sources of spiritual inspiration, healing and renewal to many cultures around the world. To others they are physical landmarks, stating the power of nature and reminding us of man's status and tenure on this land. Such a mix can attract visitors or commercial ventures that can ultimately destroy what made the sites inspiring or undermine its cultural integrity. Many of the Rotorua mountains, ranges and hills are sacred to those who claim affiliation or linkage. Bonding hapu & iwi, they are steeped in history. To Te Arawa they not only have the traditional spiritual link and landmark role, but also a blood link as the sites of battlefields or the Tarawera eruption where people died. Beyond this they are part of history and the formation of the town. They provide the focal point for many of the lakes iconic picture postcard views and therefore the local community's identity and sense of belonging. The Rotorua mountains and ranges are also a popular recreation destination for walkers, trampers, hunters, horse trekkers and mountain bikers.

Issues
Encroaching and expanding residential and commercial development, loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, exotic forestry, logging, telecommunication stations and aerials, access tracks, adventure tourism and restriction of public access.

Strengths
With the rise in public consciousness of lakes water quality in the Rotorua District, being one of the sources of the water in our streams, rivers, and lakes, the importance of mountains and ranges will be more widely recognized and reflected in their watershed management. This in turn will highlight their roles as storehouses of genetic diversity. Growing environmental and cultural awareness alongside sustainable agriculture and rural development should ensure that they are no longer taken for granted are given the respect deserving of such taonga.
Opportunities

- Acknowledge and respect heritage values.
- Improve quality of mountains and ranges open space.
- Maintain access opportunities.
- Encourage recreation opportunities.
- Improve viewshafts from high on mountains and ranges.
Wetlands

**Objective**
Restoration, preservation and expansion of wetland areas around lake, river and stream margins.

**Open Space Values**
Wetlands combine many of the elements that people identify closely with high landscape quality values. The meeting of land and water, wetlands are increasingly identified as a rich natural resource unlike earlier colonial attitudes that thought of them as wasteland to be drained or filled.

**Issues**
Given the perspective that today surrounds wetlands in regard to lake water quality and natural qualities - they have a positive future. However, though the community may admire them from a distance they often do not want them in close proximity to their property, citing safety issues for children and large quantities of insects.

**Strengths**
The commitment by RDC and EBOP to protect existing wetland systems, as well as using them as a frontline barrier in preventing nutrients from entering the lakes, will see restoration of wetlands around the district. This, in conjunction with stock proofing streams and lake edges will raise the quality of the lake open space experience.

**Opportunities**
- Involve local community groups.
- Encourage establishment or restoration of wetlands.
- Improve access and education.
- Improve quality of wetland open space.
Indigenous Forests

Objective
Protection, preservation and enhancement of indigenous forest remnants.

Open Space Values
Native forests are central to the New Zealand landscape identity that extends for Maori, European and other cultural groups beyond their physical presence into the spiritual. Their biodiversity, subtlerichness of textures and hues contrasts against the monocultureuniformity of the exotic plantation forests.

Issues
Outside of DOC controlled land many of the forest remnants are found scattered around farmland. These are under gradual pressure from grazing and wind damage once the canopy is opened. Loss is also taking place through stealth by way of unauthorized removal in some lakeside community environments, thus eroding the very character that those people were initially attracted to.

Strengths
Increasingly native bush is being seen as an asset that adds value to property, especially on lifestyle blocks where production values are less pressing. Some Maori land is also being managed to revert back into bush. Existing remnants can be extended as part of the development process by way of revegetation and maintenance schemes.

Opportunities
- Protect indigenous forest remnants.
- Encourage revegetation.
- Improve quality of indigenous forest open space.
- Add value through education.
Exotic Forests

Objective
Sustainable production & harvesting of exotic forests

Open Space Values
Exotic forests are a dominant feature in the Rotorua landscape. The strong vertical lines of the trunks are repeated seemingly endlessly along the districts roads and highways. Older exotic forests such as Whakarewarewa have grown with the community identity and are now seen as a permanent feature. But forests also evolve and change. Harvesting imparts a sense of seasonality that is otherwise lacking in the native forests.

Issues
Exotic forest harvesting and the associated potential dramatic changes to the land cover can evoke a strong response in some sectors of the community. But it must be remembered that the life of forests is cyclical and part of a production industry. The challenge for forest managers is balancing the adverse effects through a harvest rate, scale and pattern. Return of crown land to private ownership may impact dramatically on future community access and recreation.

Strengths
The recreational opportunities provided by the exotic plantation forest [under crown forest licence] are well recognised by the community, especially within the realms of adventure sports. However, there also exist opportunities for more passive recreational use. Retirement of intensive pastoral farming may be encouraged as part of water quality initiatives, opening the door to forestry in lake catchments.

Opportunities
- Encourage recreational opportunities.
- Improve linkages and access.
- Encourage sustainable land management.
- Improve understanding through education.
- Improve quality of exotic forest open space.
Sportsfields

Objective
To provide adequate provision of land and facilities for the active recreational needs of the existing and future population of the Rotorua District.

Open Space Values
Playing and watching sports is an integral part of Rotorua’s culture. Residents take pride in the community’s sporting achievements and sporting icons. Active people help to create a healthy community. There are more than 140 sports clubs and organisations within the district, with a combined membership of over 13,000 residents.

Issues
Although the district is generally well provided for in terms of recreation facilities, the anticipated population growth within the Rotorua basin may mean that the resources will become inadequate in the medium to long term. Loss of existing sports grounds to development of the roading network is also underway [and will no doubt continue in the future], as publicly owned land is seen as an easier and cost-effective route target for development than private land. If all the Westbrook land is lost to residential development [and does not fall into Council ownership], then this will only increase pressure on the existing facilities and place a more pressing urgency for the acquisition of new sportsfield open space.

Strengths
Rotorua has a youthful population compared with many parts of New Zealand. Flexibility in the design and management of sportsfields will be required as the Rotorua population ages, with the number of people over 65 years of age forecast to almost double by the year 2021 and their resulting recreation demands also changing with time. Assumptions can be made that in the future team sport growth will be minimal, with a trend towards movement between sports, and demand for specialist surfaces that require year-round domination of facilities by codes rather than the existing seasonal multi-sport use. To meet this anticipated demand, another major sportsfields complex will ultimately be required. Land needs to be retained ahead of the suburban sprawl to mitigate or offset the effects of urban intensification. Any delay in addressing this issue could prove to be costly.
Opportunities

- Improve quality of sportfields open space.
- Improve facilities and maintenance.
- Consolidate sportsfields and user groups.
- Evenly distribute resources.
- Encourage use of school fields by the community.
Parks & Gardens

Objective
Informal, pleasant public green spaces providing a wide range of social and community purposes that are available to all members of the community.

Open Space Values
Green and relaxed, Rotorua’s parks and gardens are recognized internationally as being special and unique, especially the flagship Government Gardens and the historically important Kuirau Park. Perhaps more important locally though is the series of neighbourhood reserves and playgrounds that are scattered throughout the urban areas. These provide play areas whose primary function is to provide safe play experiences for children, close to home and under informal supervision from nearby houses. They also provide for a range of passive recreational activities across the ages, a venue for events and festivals on top of the traditional horticultural displays.

Issues
Infill development and increasing housing density. Failure to plan for future demand on large lot subdivisions, alongside vesting of poor quality land often only suitable for drainage use. After hours closure of some school grounds. Concentrated demand [including commercial] on key park locations, leading to loss of amenity and maintenance issues.

Strengths
Loss of private open space, particularly infill will place a greater burden on public open spaces. Urban parks and gardens express local character and identity. This role can have flow on implications for amenity values and therefore directly affect property values. The aim of management of these open spaces should be to maximise their potential by adding to their visual impact; this will require community investment both in responsibility and financial terms. With fewer urban areas with a treelayer, parks and gardens give the opportunity to provide specimen trees that are being gradually lost from the suburbs and thought must be given to a comprehensive council tree policy. Through the Art in Public Places Policy, Council has the opportunity to add another dimension to the visitors experience, as well as foster community artistic expression, by the development of sculpture trails and inclusion of quality artwork in the parks and gardens. As population and housing density increases it is anticipated that this will lead to higher use of the parks and bring about potential clashes between different demands and expectations. Seasonal park rangers would help control these elements whilst
Opportunities

• Improve quality of parks and garden open space.
• Encourage community involvement.
• Encourage community pride and ownership.
• Improve safety.
• Acknowledge heritage values.
• Improve linkages and access.
• Even distribution of parks and gardens across urban areas.
• Include art in public open space.
How much open space in urban areas does Rotorua District Council have now?

Central Rotorua
This area is defined as the area contained by the current urban fence from Kawaha Point in the North to the Puarenga Stream [including Whakarewarewa] to the East. The total area of land within this zone is 2670.25 hectares. Of this area, 597.5 ha or 22.4% is public reserve. The majority of reserve land is concentrated east of the Utuhina Stream and is mostly comprised of land gifted by Ngati Whakaue. In the central area, 50.2% of the total land area is zoned residential, with the ratio of reserve to residential being around 1:2. In general, the quantity of reserve land in the central area is very high due to historic factors, but much of the land is affected by thermal activity and high water tables.

Ngongotaha
This area is defined by the Ngongotaha urban fence. The total area of land within the urban fence in Ngongotaha is 409.7 hectares. Of this area 27.7 ha or 6.8% is public reserve. There are three sports field areas, with much of the remainder being stream or lake edge reserve. In Ngongotaha, 69.2% of land area is zoned residential, with the ratio of reserve to residential being 1:10. Ngongotaha has very few neighbourhood reserves. There are opportunities for further provision of esplanade reserves on the back of subdivision and development.

Eastern Suburbs
This area is defined by the Rotorua urban fence east of the Puarenga Stream, and also includes Hannah’s Bay reserve, being a large and significant area of reserve land which relates to the suburb but is outside the urban fence. The total land area within the eastern suburbs is 938.2 hectares. Of this area, 74.3 ha or 7.9% is public reserve land. Eastern suburbs has a mixture of sports fields, neighbourhood parks, and large open space areas. Relatively little reserve land in this area is stream or lake edge, and most reserve areas are flat and suitable for active recreation. In the eastern suburbs, 58% of
Comparison

Central Rotorua has by far the most reserve land in the urban area, with 22.4% being reserve. The central area contains 85.4% of all reserve land in the urban area. For every 10 hectares of residential land, there is 4.5 hectares of reserve. Central Rotorua contains three golf courses, a racecourse, and several major sportsfield areas. By comparison, Ngongotaha is the worst off with only 6.8% being reserve, and a ratio of 1:10 reserve to residential. Eastern suburbs are somewhere in between with 7.9% being reserve and a ratio of 1:7 reserve to residential. The eastern suburbs also contain a large area of rural land within the urban fence compared with both Ngongotaha and Central. This adds to the visual open space quality of the eastern suburbs, particularly along the lake edge.

Both Eastern suburbs and Ngongotaha have considerable areas of residential land that are yet not subdivided. Further lands will be needed to provide neighbourhood reserves for these areas, so the ratio of reserve land to residential will inevitably increase in these areas. However, the increase will probably not be great given that the majority of facilities are already provided, and new subdivisions will probably require more residential sections and neighbourhood reserves. Based on these figures and rationale, it would seem that a reasonable ratio between reserve and residential land would be in the vicinity of 1:6. For instance, an area of 100 hectares of town might contain 10 hectares of reserve, 60 hectares of residential land and 30 hectares of road, rural, industrial, commercial etc. This will provide 10% overall for reserves.

Access

Access to open space in the city is an indicator of residential amenity for Rotorua residents living in urban areas. All residential dwellings within the urban fence have access to a reserve area within 500 metres [straight line]. In this regard, Rotorua exceeds the median for reserve provision in a group of 31 different territorial authorities around the country. According to the 2003 Yardstick report, Rotorua has 800 Ha of parks, providing the ratio of 12.41 Ha per 1000 residents, compared to the Yardstick median of 15.17 Ha per 1000 population. On average, the 2004 Yardstick member organisations are providing 18.8 Ha of open space per 1000 residents. There are also 79 playgrounds under the control of Rotorua District Council, providing 4.76 playgrounds per 1000 children [the Yardstick national average is 4.11].
What impact will the Open Space Strategy have on you?

The Open Space Strategy is about recognising what is happening now, asking ourselves as a community, 'Does this meet our desired outcomes that we want from the environment we live in?', and planning for a sustainable future. Given Rotorua's predicted growth over the coming years, acquisition of reserve land must continue against the recognised international trend for private open space to decline. Complacency should not be allowed to overlook the future burden that will be placed on Rotorua District Council to provide quality open space 25, 50 or 100 years down the track. A balance needs to be sought between short-term financial gain by way of accepting payment of Reserve Contributions and acquisition of quality land. With expansion of the role of revegetation in relation to subdivision and Variation 12, the proposed option put forward by developers to waive their Reserve Contribution is Contentious. As the residents of those developments will demand access to and provision of Rotorua District Council reserves and their facilities, just as the wider Rotorua community rightly does having already contributed and invested in our future open space. Alternative options should be considered. A large percentage of Reserve Contribution should be reinvested back into the local community from where it was gathered.

Is there any surplus Open Space?

The way New Zealanders live their lives has fundamentally altered over the past 40 years. This in turn has altered the demands placed on the environment and open space is no exception in this lifestyle change. There may well be publicly owned open space that is no longer fully utilised or may be more valuable to the community to be recycled, disposed of and reinvested in open space that meets today's and future recreation trends. Obviously such steps will not be taken lightly and would be the exception rather than the rule.
Where to from here?

The key to the success of the Open Space Strategy will be in the ability to translate the guiding principles and objectives into practical outcomes via a range of Rotorua District Council policies and strategies [existing and proposed]. These may include the Development Contribution Fund, Recreation Facilities Plan, Lakes Strategy Plan, Lakes Action Plans, The District Plan, Reserve Management Plan, Land Acquisition and Disposal Plan, Esplanade Reserve Policy, Environment Statement, Asset Management Plans, Bylaws, and Lakes Recreation Strategy for example. In particular it will lead to the identification of financial contribution levels required for future sustainable growth. Working with landowners via incentives, consideration of alternative options and choice, today’s community needs and enjoyment need to be met as well as those of future generations.

In addition to producing in 2004 the Open Space Strategy - Papa Atea, Rotorua District Council, via the Bright Future - Community Outcomes, is continuing to work with other agencies and organisations, in consultation with the community, to develop a monitoring framework. Once a good set of indicators has been agreed, regular monitoring will take place and progress will be regularly reported back to the wider community. The monitoring programme will provide valuable information for Council and other organisations to help them ensure their activities and services are meeting the requirements of the community. Development of the monitoring framework was scheduled for completion in September 2004 with the first report back to the community in October 2005.

Much of the value of the Bright Future - Community Outcomes project will only be realised if different organizations and sectors of the community work together. Rotorua District Council is exploring ways in which all agencies and organisations can work collaboratively to ensure service delivery is consistent, effective and aligned with community expectations.

Learn more about Rotorua’s Bright Future at www.rdc.govt.nz