Final
Whiteman Park
Strategic Plan
2017 – 2021

January 2017

Provide interconnected meeting places for communities to meet, recreate in and enjoy.

Provide improved community access to the Park’s activities.

Provide a destination of significance for local and international visitors.

Conserve the environment and Whiteman Park’s heritage for future generations.
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© Western Australian Planning Commission
Published by the Western Australian Planning Commission
Gordon Stephenson House
140 William Street
Perth WA 6000
Locked Bag 2506
Perth WA 6001
Published January 2017

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This document is available in alternative formats on application to Communication Services.
Whiteman Park is located 20 kilometres north-east of Perth and is bounded by Gnangara Road to the north, Marshall Road to the south, Hepburn Avenue to the west and Lord Street to the east. At almost 4,000 hectares, Whiteman Park is one of the largest metropolitan recreation and tourism reserves in the world.

Whiteman Park will continue to fill a vitally important role as the population of Perth and Peel grows to a projected 3.5 million people by 2050. The Park will be surrounded by a direct projected population of over 105,000 people and will continue to protect the precious Gnangara Water Mound. The Park also needs to continuously evolve to meet the conservation, recreation and education needs of the region.

The Whiteman Park Strategic Plan documents the site planning options following two meetings in July and August 2013, to explore long-term opportunities for Whiteman Park that align to its strategic position in the Swan Valley.

Invited representatives at the meetings included:

- Noongar families and indigenous metropolitan stakeholder groups culturally associated with Whiteman Park
- City of Swan
- Western Australian Planning Commission
- Department of Planning
- Department of Finance – Building Management and Works
- Department of Parks and Wildlife
- Tourism Commission

This plan identifies the need for the development of a structure plan that recognises the importance of Whiteman Park as:

- providing interconnected meeting places for communities to meet, recreate in and enjoy
- providing improved access for the community to the Park’s activities
- a destination of significance for local and international visitors
- conserving the environment and its heritage for future generations.
During the 1970s, the Western Australian Planning Commission (formerly known as the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority) purchased most of the lands that now constitute the Park. The Department of Planning is responsible for the operational management of the Park on behalf of the Western Australian Planning Commission.

The Park takes its name from Mr Lew Whiteman (1903-1994) who bought land in the area in 1939 for the purpose of grazing cattle, before developing the popular picnic spot of Mussel Pool in the 1960s. The Park was officially opened in 1986 and named in recognition of Mr Whiteman.

Today the Park offers the public a variety of attractions, special events and facilities that include:

- Caversham Wildlife Park
- Woodland Reserve
- Revolutions Transport Museum
- Vintage bus, train and tram rides
- the Motor and Tractor Museums of WA
- 14 kilometres of cycle paths and walking trails
- Barbeque facilities and picnic grounds
- Mussel Pool.

The Park is located within the boundaries of the City of Swan which has a blend of residential, commercial, industrial and rural land. The Park is one of the largest metropolitan conservation, recreation and tourism reserves in the world. It contains almost 4,000 hectares reserved for parks and recreation in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, creating a space for the community while also protecting a major underground drinking water source, the Gnangara Water Mound, which supplies a large proportion of Perth’s drinking water.
Whiteman Park is one of Perth’s most visited attractions, with more than one million visitors each year. It is also the most visited attraction in the Swan Valley. Recently the Park earned a place among the very best attractions in the world for consistently achieving top ratings from industry and travellers. Whiteman Park has been a finalist in both the WA Environment Awards and the WA Tourism Awards for the past four years culminating in being awarded the Gold Medal for Major Tourist Attraction at the 2016 Perth Airport WA Tourism Awards in November 2016. The online travel site tripadvisor.com.au has also awarded it a Certificate of Excellence based on the 4.5 out of five rating it received from visitors who chose to share their experience on the website.
The strategic plan is framed by the vision:

“Internationally and locally recognised as the ‘place to meet’”

Whiteman Park is an ideal place to meet and relax, comprising numerous meeting places for visitors of all ages to enjoy.

Whiteman Park’s meeting places are connected by a unique and rich history. The lands from the southern reaches of the Bennett Brook are centrally connected to Wadjuk Noongar ‘Country’, while the agricultural and transport heritage established at Whiteman Village provide a window into the period of European settlement.

The natural environment is home to a wide range of flora and fauna, lending itself to providing outdoor meeting places for camping, trekking, sport, and relaxation. Trails and pathways lead visitors to meeting places throughout the Park – linking places to meet, recreate and stay within a natural bushland setting.

The Park’s location as a nexus to the Swan Valley offers further opportunities to developing an awareness of the Park’s heritage.
The foundation of the strategic plan requires the identification of key areas within the Park that are to be reserved and/or developed and which will become the enablers for Whiteman Park to achieve its vision.

The key drivers that will assist in defining the land requirements necessary to achieve the Park’s vision include:

- Noongar connection to country - preserving and promoting Noongar culture and the opportunity to provide a positive future by maintaining continuous Indigenous connection to the land and environment, providing a connecting theme throughout the Park;
- conservation of agricultural and transport heritage collections with nationally recognised agricultural and transport and motor sport related events;
- environmental heritage and conservation of endangered fauna by returning identified areas of the site to an environment that provides a linkage from the past into the future;
- protecting the underground Gnangara Water Mound that makes a significant contribution to metropolitan Perth’s public drinking water supply;
- encouraging tourism and eco tourist-based enterprises throughout the Park with strong linkages to the Swan Valley;
- promoting opportunities for health and wellbeing such as sporting, camping and relaxation; and
- improving accessibility for local and international visitors of all ages to the Park.

While some of the existing functions in Whiteman Park have already been defined and developed, such as Whiteman Village as the centre for the conservation of agriculture and transport heritage, further work is required to review the linkages within the Park in order to meet the agreed vision, cultural and historical connections.
Whiteman Park is composed of a number of distinct land use areas, which collectively define the Park. To achieve a successful structure plan for the Park, it is necessary to identify the primary functions of these areas, and consider how they can be more effectively utilised and integrated.

Six distinct land use areas have been identified:

1. *Whiteman Bushland* - an area of diverse habitat and includes long-term revegetation, habitat creation and environmental enhancement.

2. *Whiteman Village* - consists of the current village with a mix of retail and commercial areas, together with the agriculture and transport heritage collections.

3. Bennett Brook Reserve Linear Park - an area that has significant Noongar cultural and heritage significance and part of a larger conservation corridor.

4. Marshall Road lands - land sections on the southern section of the Park that provide both a buffer and integration with suburban developments to the south of the Park.

5. Lord Street lands - land sections on the eastern boundaries of the Park that provide both a buffer and integration with suburban developments to the east of the Park and an entry point to the Swan Valley.

6. Old Caversham Airfield - Bush Forever area which includes the extant former Australian Grand Prix racing circuit.

* Areas one and two form the ‘core’ of Whiteman Park.
Current Whiteman Park boundary inset

Legend

Marshall Road Lands
Bennett Brook Reserve Linear Park
Lord Street lands
Caversham
Whiteman Park boundary
Priority 1 public drinking water source area (PDWSA)
Vegetated areas
Waterways and lakes
Local government boundary
Proposed Perth to Darwin Highway

Whiteman Park boundaries and land use areas
Key outcomes

The following outcomes have been agreed in relation to Whiteman Park. In formulating the outcomes it is recognised that the structure plan (which will flow out of this Strategic Plan), will identify areas within Whiteman Park that would be appropriate for these activities to be based.

Outcome 1 – Provide interconnected meeting places for communities to meet, recreate in and enjoy

This outcome recognises the need to develop new meeting places within the Park. It supports opportunities to encourage tourism and promotes opportunities for health and wellbeing. A key component of this outcome is the upgrading and changes to road and service infrastructure.

A structure plan will assist with identifying potential areas within the Park that could meet these spatial requirements and the connectivity flows.

Key land uses that have been identified (and provisional land use areas) under this outcome include:

- development of sporting fields in partnership with the City of Swan – Marshall Road lands
- land for outdoor events and concerts – Whiteman bushlands
- short-term tourist accommodation including camping – Whiteman bushlands
- designated areas for weekend markets and/or ‘pop-up’ stores – Lord Street lands
- cemetery – Marshall Road lands
- areas designated for youth attractions – Marshall Road lands.
Outcome 2 – Provide improved community access to the Park’s activities

This outcome recognises that for the Park to achieve a sustainable position, it is necessary to encourage complementary and linked activities within the Park, supported by improved access to the facilities, with the appropriate communication and signage to assist visitors. It is also designed to achieve enhanced educational experiences for students and the public.

Key considerations include:

• increasing the number of Park facilities with universal access
• enhancing visitor information and signage
• increasing physical and interpretive connections to the Park’s Noongar heritage
• enhancing access to Whiteman Park’s environmental assets
• increasing the hours the Park is accessible to visitors
• enhancing educational experiences for students and other visitors to the Park.

The following actions have been considered to help facilitate this outcome:

• Continue to improve disability access within the Park
• Develop customer information bays within Whiteman Park that also cater for other nationalities
• Develop customer information cards in multiple languages for major attractions within the Revolutions Transport Museum
• In consultation with the Wadjuk People, the City of Swan and other Government agencies, plan for trails and linkages between the Southern region of the Bennett Brook (and Swan River) to Mussel Pool, the Park’s Village and across to the Lord Street lands
• Develop trail connections to Gnangara Road
• Investigate opportunities for 24 hour, seven days a week access to the Park
• In collaboration with the local Wadjuk communities, develop an educational program for students and the public on their heritage and its linkage to the land and the environment
• Develop and offer educational programs to students and the public on transport, environmental conservation and Whiteman Park’s ‘window to the water table’.
Outcome 3 – A destination of significance for local and international visitors

This outcome is designed to promote Whiteman Park as a great place to meet, and is underpinned by the recognition that Whiteman Park offers visitors unique opportunities to experience a wide range of experiences including the local Noongar culture and heritage, transport and agriculture heritage and access to environmental assets.

Key considerations that have been identified include:

- increasing the number of visitors to the Park
- improving visitor satisfaction
- increasing visitor awareness of the Park’s heritage aspects, such as:
  - Noongar culture
  - agriculture and transport
  - environmental assets and conservation programs
  - value of protecting its underlying ground water.

The following actions have been identified to help facilitate this outcome:

- In partnership with the private sector, promote Whiteman Park as a unique destination and a ‘gateway’ for tourism in the Swan Valley
- Continue to enhance the services provided by the Visitor Information Centre
- Assess the Park’s existing Wadjuk heritage interpretive experiences and identify specific areas for improvement
- Develop plans for the delivery and promotion of exhibitions in the Revolutions Transport Museum
- Upgrade and extend the Park’s facilities to expand visitor opportunities and experiences including active and passive recreation and nature play
- Promote the Park for other not-for-profit groups to display and run events that showcase their transport and/or rural heritage collections
- Provide opportunities for the private sector to develop commercial enterprises consistent with the key land use areas
- Promote the environmental and conservation activities undertaken by the Park.
Outcome 4 – Conserving the environment and Whiteman Park’s heritage for future generations

This outcome recognises the importance of Whiteman Park as a venue to promote the environment and conservation. It recognises that in order for this to occur, it will be necessary to improve the ecological health of the Park’s natural assets and engage the broader community in the Park’s planning and operations.

In conserving the environment and its heritage for future generations, it is believed that this will in turn improve the financial sustainability of the Park by increasing visitor numbers and create non-government revenue opportunities.

Key considerations for this outcome include:

• improved ecological health of the Park’s natural assets
• improved knowledge of conservation requirements
• increased resources dedicated to conservation of the environmental assets
• increased community participation in planning for the future of Whiteman Park
• improved financial management.

The following actions will assist in meeting this outcome:

• Develop a five-year environmental management plan for the Park
• Design and implement a revegetation program for the Park
• Continue to implement the Tammar Wallaby and Woylie Breeding Program in Woodland Reserve while expanding the protected area of the banksia woodland
• Investigate opportunities to establish environmental research and conservation programs in partnership with other organisations such as universities and conservation groups
• Seek public comment on Whiteman Park’s structure plan
• Develop a community engagement strategy for the spatial plan
• Develop a five-year financial plan for the Park that secures its financial future including increasing the Park’s non-government financial future and participation of the private sector, including sponsorship opportunities.
A high-level preliminary structure plan is presented on page 18 and incorporates the key discussions and agreed outcomes. This plan is subject to further refining as more detailed planning is undertaken.

In the first instance, the structure plan is designed to identify areas within the Park that can be ‘reserved’ to meet specific identified requirements. Further work is required to consider interconnectivity and transition of usage between these areas in order to finalise the structure plan. This will also include policy development to consider such issues as a tenancy framework to incorporate public, not-for-profit and private enterprises and how they will impact on the Park.

Identified components of the structure plan are further explained below.

**Lands to be retained within the core Park envelope**

These are areas currently within the Whiteman Park envelope and are zoned parks and recreation under the Metropolitan Region Scheme. These areas are to be retained within the Park envelope and are considered integral to the ongoing functioning and development of the Park.

The areas identified are highly interconnected and provide a strong nexus linking places to meet, recreate and stay within the natural bushland setting.
Whiteman Village

Whiteman Park is reserved ‘Parks and Recreation’ under the Metropolitan Region Scheme. This restricts the range of uses that the Village can accommodate. However, it does allow for the Village to support a range of activities which include the conservation of agricultural and transport heritage collections, wildlife park (Caversham), tram line and various retail and commercial outlets.

The Village is intended to remain within the overall Whiteman Park boundary and will be used to support the growth and development of the Park as a key tourism location and recreation precinct that serves both the local community and the broader market.

The masterplan recognises the importance of the expansive bush and the visitor’s experience of leaving an urban environment to visit a village destination.

The Village is seen as the hub that will introduce visitors to the many attractions within the greater area and encourage interest and interaction with all aspects of the Park. Key to this is the design of the Village and the character developed, to be conducive to social gatherings and encouraging public interaction.

Coupled with the Mussel Pool picnic area and the opportunity to develop additional sites for music and open air events, the Village is considered a prime location to promote the interconnected meeting places for communities to meet, recreate in and enjoy, while also conserving the Park’s heritage for future generations.

The viability of the Village depends primarily on enhanced access and is anchored on the internal road, tram, train, bus and pedestrian routes that already exist.

Woodland Reserve and conservation area

The Woodland Reserve and conservation area are key areas of the Park and are to remain within the Park envelope. The expansive area of old pasture and bushland can be considered a large haven within an expanding suburban Perth.

Encompassing more than 200 hectares of natural and rehabilitated woodlands, Woodland Reserve is Whiteman Park’s premier conservation program and a world-class breeding facility for rare and endangered Western Australian fauna.

The area comprises a diverse cross-section of native bush, semi-agricultural lands, wetlands and damp lands constrained by ground water management. With a relatively flat topography and the presence of the occasional knoll, views over the surrounding bushland are permitted.

The diversity and expanse of the Park allows the user to have a true bushland experience and when coupled with glimpses into the local Noongar culture and heritage, provides the visitor with the opportunity to obtain a unique experience while remaining in close proximity to the Perth metropolitan area.
Due to surrounding development, the bushlands are under increasing pressure to provide the same type of active and passive recreation opportunities as a traditional ‘suburban’ park.

The continuing investment in the conservation program for critical and endangered species builds upon the significant successes achieved by the Park by providing a world class breeding facility for rare and endangered fauna of the State, including the critically endangered Woylie.

**Lands to be utilised for complementary uses to the core Park envelope**

Areas outside the core Park envelope are identified as non-essential to the operation of the Park and can be developed to provide a natural buffer between the core Park and the surrounding land uses.

These areas are also designed to enhance the Park’s attraction by providing complementary usage, creating multiple attractions to enhance the visitor experience of Whiteman Park and the Swan Valley.

**Marshall Road lands**

The Marshall Road lands are considered non-essential to the operation and integrity of Whiteman Park. It is proposed that this area be used to provide both a buffer and integration with suburban developments to the south of the Park. Any development on the Marshall Road lands must complement and support the core Whiteman Park land, incorporating developments that will act as an integrator as well as a buffer between the Park and the suburban development to the south. The land will not be utilised for residential purposes.

As already identified in this strategic plan, land uses include:

- development of regional sporting fields in partnership with the City of Swan
- development of a cemetery sympathetic with the environment and integrated with Whiteman Park and its facilities, designed to meet the future needs of residents in the northern suburbs to help supplement Pinnaroo Memorial Park
- development of areas for youth attractions to supplement the visitor experience to the Park by increasing the range of attractions bordering the Park.

Appropriate reservation changes will be required for the proposed cemetery to occur and it is recognised that further work will be required in respect to the planning and environmental review necessary to allow for this to be incorporated in the relevant City of Swan Town Planning Scheme (TPS) and the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) as a ‘Public Purposes – Special Use’ reservation similar to all other cemeteries.
Lord Street lands

The Lord Street lands, similar to the Marshall Road lands, are considered non-essential to the operation and integrity of the Park. However, as with the Marshall Road lands, they are an important buffer between the Park and the suburban developments to the east of the Park.

Importantly, the Lord Street lands provide an important nexus between the Park and the Swan Valley. Appropriately developed, with consideration that approximately 50 per cent of the land is the subject of the Priority 1 resource protection area, they provide an exciting opportunity to enhance the appeal of the Park and become a focal point as a gateway connection between the Park and the Swan Valley region.

Given the critical nature of the Lord Street lands, it is expected that these lands would be best developed under a leased format, providing a revenue stream for the WAPC that can be used to support the master-planning of Whiteman Park.

The allocation of this area to lettable land is proposed in the context of dramatically increasing the accessibility to the Park as a consequence of the increased population growth in the immediate area and the continuing enhanced demand for tourism facilities in the Swan Valley area.

The proposed leased areas are expected to be taken up with diverse uses including:
- eco-tourism and short-stay accommodation;
- retail and craft operations
- farmers markets
- food and festival retail
- youth recreation facilities (skate parks, BMX, Scouts and Guides etc).

The expansion of uses will require an upgrading of existing services and transport to facilitate the successful take-up of the leases by tourism organisations.

Old Caversham Airfield

The old Caversham Airfield was purchased as part of the Bush Forever policy and forms a lateral link at the south east corner of Whiteman Park. Located within the land is the remains of the Australian Grand Prix (AGP) circuit that was used in 1957 and 1962. In keeping with the transport theme of Whiteman Park, the former AGP circuit is proposed to be made available for sanctioned “vintage” motor sports. The motor sport use will be around the perimeter of the environmentally sensitive Bush Forever area which is being progressively rehabilitated.