



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



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## SOUTHERN RIVER

## LOCALITY PLAN

March 2022

Ngala kaaditj Whadjuk moort keyen kaadak nidja Boodja

We acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the original owners of this land

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## VISION

*A healthy river for all, to be enjoyed and shared, now and in the future.*

*The social benefits, environmental values and cultural significance of the river are respected.*

*Land use, design and development ensure that the river and its value to the community is protected and enhanced.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Swan Canning river system is a complex and dynamic natural landscape that extends beyond the river channel. A properly functioning river alters the position of its channels and foreshore, frequently spills over its banks and occasionally occupies its floodplain. The river should be understood as this larger natural system.

The Southern River Locality Plan guides adjacent land use, civic design, and development to ensure that the value of the river and its setting to the community is maintained. The Locality Plan brings together “on” and “off” water considerations to provide guidance for recreation, development, restoration and rehabilitation of the Swan and Canning rivers.

The Locality Plan is to be read in conjunction with *Corporate Policy XX – Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*, which establishes key development principles to direct and inform development (including use of the land and water). These principles are supported by the below series of intended locality-specific development outcomes. The development principles and outcomes are to be demonstrated as part of any proposal.

The Locality Plan is adopted as policy to support the implementation of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* and is to be given due regard in relation to strategic and statutory planning that may affect the river.

The Locality Plan is supported by an Action Plan that aims to direct strategic planning and works in the locality. The actions, while not adopted as policy, should be delivered when opportunity presents. The Action Plan will be updated as needed. Delivery of the actions is subject to funding and resources.

The extent of the Southern River locality is identified in Figure 1. The development outcomes apply to land within and affecting (including visually) the Swan Canning development control area and includes public and private land.

## POLICY AREA



*Figure 2: Southern River Locality*

The Southern River locality extends from the Canning-Southern River confluence to the Tonkin Highway crossing, where the Southern River changes to the Wungong Brook and a drainage line that connects from Forrestdale Lake discharges.

Parts of the Southern River are in a relatively natural state, with remnant vegetation present along the streamline. The river has declining water flows due to reduced rainfall and dams (e.g. Wungong Dam) in its upper reaches.

A built suburban landscape character is dominant along the Southern River, from the Southern River Road crossing to the Canning River confluence. New suburbs have been built on the flat landform, with designated public open space adjoining some wetlands and the river. These are highly landscaped zones with areas of good remnant vegetation. A road reserve separates most of the developments from the Southern River and provides public access to the foreshore reserve.

This locality has pockets of rural-residential landscape character adjacent to the river. However, this predominantly occurs in the section near Tonkin Highway. Public access to the river and foreshore in this area is restricted by livestock fencing to the edge of the embankment.

There are areas of natural and parkland landscape characters in this locality. The natural landscape character is limited to a narrow strip along the Southern River because the surrounding original woodland community was historically grazed and cleared for development. The parkland character includes areas of mowed understory or lawn for recreational purposes. The remnant riparian vegetation and woodland are an important natural landscape feature in this locality.

Access to the Southern River is restricted in some parts due to the natural landscape features of the foreshore reserve. Where dual use paths are available, they are built away from the floodplain, which allow views down to the Southern River floodplain. Public access points in the foreshore reserve are provided at the Fremantle Road Traffic Bridge, Mabel Davies Park, Richard Rushton Community Centre and footbridge, Southern Wood Park, Yilgarn Way and William Lane Park. Viewing platforms have been constructed within the Southern River channel in Gosnells, which allow access to the narrow extent of natural landscape character and the attractive flooded gum-paperbark wetlands.

# DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

## SOCIAL BENEFITS

### *Maintaining the River System and its Setting as a Community Resource*

- 10.1 Provide a road or dual use path interface between new urban lots and the foreshore reserve. In some cases, such an interface will also be required for survey strata subdivisions.

### *Securing Public Access to the River System*

- 10.2 Provide a safe and accessible public open space network. Particular attention should be given to the following:
- i. incorporating pathways under bridges or via pedestrian crossings at the roadway, which are set back on the landward edge of the foreshore reserve; and
  - ii. incorporating pathways at subdivision stage that are to be located within public open space that abuts the foreshore reserve, or the river-side of the road reserve that abuts the foreshore reserve.
- 10.3 Account for the terrain, environmental values and landscape amenity of the foreshore reserve when providing public access.
- i. The design is to respond to the site and local context;
  - ii. In some areas an informal path is preferred due to environmental sensitivities, such as areas where the foreshore is heavily vegetated or steep and would require level modifications to provide formal access; and
  - iii. Access to the water may not always be practical or ecologically appropriate.
- 10.4 Encourage the incorporation of a bicycle path or lane within road reserves adjacent to the foreshore, including as part of road pavement rehabilitation and resurfacing projects.

### *Maintaining a Sense of Place*

- 10.5 Encourage the alignment of public open space abutting the foreshore reserve.
- 10.6 Use local native vegetation species within the foreshore and within public open space and road reserves that abut the foreshore to connect and contribute to the river landscape's sense of place.
- 10.7 With permission, use Whadjuk Noongar place names across the locality.

## ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

### *Increasing Climate Resilience*

- 10.8 Where water quality is addressed and flood capacity is sufficient, direct clean stormwater runoff from the urban zone to the river through water sensitive infrastructure to address reduced flows due to climate change.
- 10.9 Retain and enhance existing vegetation, particularly large trees, and increase canopy coverage to combat the urban heat island effect. Encourage the planting of local native trees within urban areas.

### *Protecting the Natural Environment*

- 10.10 Maintain and restore natural landscape riparian elements, such as wetlands and flat floodplains, and natural hydrology, such as seasonal flooding.
- 10.11 Maintain and restore the foreshore to conserve its ecological values and protect riverbanks in their natural state. Where riverbank stabilisation is necessary in this locality, soft foreshore stabilisation approaches should be used. Any incidental rock material used for foreshore stabilisation is to be laterite.

### *Protecting Fringing Vegetation*

- 10.12 Retain and restore foreshore vegetation, particularly where weeds and extensive historical clearing have degraded the vegetation. Restore structural complexity in the vegetation to provide diverse habitat for water dependent species.

### *Creating and Maintaining Foreshore Reserves*

- 10.13 Maintain and increase the total area, and improve the environmental quality, of foreshore reserves in this locality.
- 10.14 Provide foreshore reserves of sufficient width to protect waterway landforms and processes and riparian vegetation when land uses change from rural to urban, such as in the reaches near Tonkin Highway.

### *Minimising Dredging and Channel Disturbance*

- 10.15 Filling within the floodway or redirection of waterways, including for channel crossings, is not permitted. The use of culverts for channel crossings is not permitted as they act as barriers to aquatic biota.

### *Implementing Responsible Drainage Management Practices*

- 10.16 Implement improvements to the quality of stormwater entering the foreshore. Consider the need to retrofit drainage inlets. Implement water sensitive urban design, with the aim of incorporating at-source stormwater systems and overland flow through vegetated systems within the catchment, rather than using end of pipe stormwater systems within the foreshore.

### *Applying Appropriate Water Management Practices*

- 10.17 Subdivisions are to be connected to the reticulated sewerage network.
- 10.18 Development and land use intensification in unsewered areas is to be supported by a wastewater management plan that demonstrates no new sources of nutrients to the river.
- 10.19 Ensure development and land uses adjacent to tributaries that connect to Southern River do not result in new sources of nutrient or non-nutrient contaminants to the river.
- 10.20 Implement nutrient and irrigation industry best practice for active playing surfaces in proximity to the river. Establish buffers of native vegetation between the waterway and active recreation areas, including the ovals adjacent to Richard Rushton Community Centre. New active recreation areas are to be located outside of the foreshore reserve

### *Rehabilitating the River System*

- 10.21 Restore drainage lines and tributaries that connect to Southern River, including by creating buffers of local native vegetation along the waterway edge, particularly the drainage lines that flow from Forrestdale Lake.

## **CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

### *Conserving the Cultural and Natural Heritage of the River System and its Setting*

- 10.22 Protect and maintain the heritage buildings, particularly Southern River Hall and Masjid Ibrahim Mosque.
- 10.23 Protect places of Aboriginal cultural significance, including sites that may not be listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Places register.

## **DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

### *Promoting Sensitive Design and Built Form to Complement the River Landscape*

- 10.24 Subdivisions and development should not result in abrupt topographical changes. Additional setbacks within the development area may be required to provide for a gradual transition.
- 10.25 There is a general presumption against retaining walls along the foreshore reserve interface. On constrained sites, retaining up to 900mm high may be accepted.
- 10.26 Sympathetically integrate with the river surrounds adjoining subdivisions and development. Ensure that the private-public interface has high amenity when viewed from the foreshore reserve.

*Creating Linkages and Greenways*

10.27 Maintain or create ecological linkages between natural areas, including connecting the Southern River to associated wetlands.

*Activating the Foreshores*

- 10.28 May consider small scale community and food and beverage development within existing parks adjacent to the foreshore, such as Southernwood Park and Rusthall Way Reserve, or at established community facilities, such as the Richard Rushton Community Centre or Southern River Community Hall, where it can be demonstrated to have a community focus, enhances the natural character of the foreshore, and ideally delivers multiple benefits or service.
- 10.29 Encourage enhancement of low-impact community amenities, such as nature-play and picnic facilities, within established foreshore parks, such as Cardington Way Reserve and William Lane Park. In other areas, use should be passive, such as at-grade pathways, trails and interpretation, which may also be accepted within the floodway.
- 10.30 Encourage opportunities to learn about river ecology, conservation, history and heritage, including through art, interpretation, signage and nature-based play.

## ACTION PLAN

Action	Timing (years) 0-2, 2-5, 5+	Key agencies (in addition to DBCA)	Notes
10.31 Undertake long-term planning to increase the provision and width of the foreshore Parks and Recreation reserve in this locality, particularly where the reserve is narrow or does not include the flood fringe, such as land in the vicinity of Bullfinch Street, Roscommon Vista, Leslie Street, Margaret Street, Matison Street, Chandilla Street, the area between Matison Street and Tonkin Highway and the area between Verna Street and Tonkin Highway.	5+	CoG, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning
10.32 Review the width of the Parks and Recreation reserve associated with Southern River upstream of the Tonkin Highway Bridge to encompass the floodway and sections of the flood fringe to ensure that the reserve meets the needs of the future community in the area.	5+	CoA, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning
10.33 Undertake infill sewer connection where still unavailable, preferencing lots within 100 metres of a waterway, including along Bullfinch Street, Huntingdale, and Leslie and Margaret Street, Southern River.	5+	WC	Undertake strategically and as part of related proposals
10.34 Undertake broad strategic recreation (passive and active) and public open space planning for areas proposed for increased density to ensure that the foreshore reserve remains a place for passive activities and enjoyment of nature.	2-5	CoG	To inform foreshore improvement works in these locations
10.35 Develop a foreshore walk trail for this locality that incorporates opportunities to learn about river ecology, conservation, history and heritage, including through art, interpretation and signage.	2-5	CoG, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning

10.36	Develop a restoration and protection plan for the Southern River and Wungong Brook foreshore to share resourcing and coordinate management activities across mixed land tenure.	5+	CoG, DPLH, DWER
10.37	Undertaken planning to return water flows to the Southern River and Wungong Brook, including by addressing abstraction licences and considering water releases for environmental benefit.	2-5	DWER
10.38	Work to improve water quality within the drainage lines that flow from Forrestdale Lake to Southern River.	5+	WC, CoA

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**CoA** City of Armadale  
**CoG** City of Gosnells

**DBCA** Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions  
**DPLH** Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

**DWER** Department of Water and Environmental Regulation  
**WC** Water Corporation