

In cities with a strong national policy context, the development of open space policy usually links back to spatial planning policies established through national statutory planning regimes, such as those in Sweden. This link can bring with it distinct advantages. One is long-term certainty: in Groningen, the city's municipal structure plan has included policies on hard and soft landscaping from the late 1980s onwards, and now outlines ambitions for open space development and management in the city for the next ten years. Another is a higher level of protection for open spaces: the Danish Planning Act 1970 makes open space a formal land use category and as a result there are few changes from open space to developable land use categories, because changing land use designation is a time-consuming process that includes public consultation.

Elsewhere, other broader environmental legislation establishes a similar framework. In New Zealand, there are three main statutory mechanisms defining the aspirations for open spaces and their transformation into policy. The Reserves Act 1977 sets out powers and responsibilities for creating and managing specific reserves and imposes management obligations on the reserve administrator. The Resource Management Act 1991, which aims to achieve the sustainable development of New Zealand's land and physical resources, is applied at local level through regional and district land use plans (tree listing and protection is part of this process). Finally, the Local Government Act 2002 empowers local government to use various statutory and non-statutory tools for fund raising, spending, managing the environment and providing services and facilities for the community.

For a number of the cities, an open space policy hierarchy began at the national or state level but cascaded down to lower tiers of government, and sometimes vice versa in a two-way process. In Melbourne, Parks Victoria works within a number of state government policies and strategies, from the overall vision for Victoria ('fair, sustainable and prosperous'), through environmental policies, and to a public sector management reform programme addressing resources management practices to achieve improvements in service delivery. In 2002, after two years of public consultation, Parks Victoria produced its own strategy for Melbourne's open space network, focused on six principles: equity, sustainability, diversity, flexibility, responsiveness and partnerships. These principles were later incorporated into the state's overall metropolitan strategy around the vision statement of 'a linked network of open space for all to enjoy as part of everyday life, preserved and enhanced into the future'. Parks Victoria is also required by statute to produce a corporate plan each year that includes a ten-year vision, three-year strategies for progressively achieving the vision, and a one-year business plan detailing programmes and activities.

## OPEN SPACE PLANS

Significantly, many of the study cities have open space plans of some form to articulate their open space policies; plans that varied in their spatial scale and level of detail. Collectively, the eleven cities demonstrate the function and value of open space planning. It has been instrumental in securing an adequate provision and protection of open space in urban areas, establishing coherent approaches to balance recreational, ecological, and heritage concerns, and in setting guidelines for day-to-day open space management. It has also helped to facilitate indirect but equally important outcomes such as a shared strategic vision for open spaces between city government departments, residents and politicians, or more visible connections to other policy frameworks and responsibilities.

In Denmark, municipal green structure plans are requested under the Planning Act, and are used in Århus as tools for planning and to enable public debate on their strategic urban open spaces policy. In Groningen, the municipal structure plan serves as a framework for sectoral plans and the zoning plan (the only physical planning instrument directly binding on citizens). The former include the 1990 policy plan 'Giving Colour to Green', which formulated a vision for each park. Three municipal structure plans dealing respectively with trees, ecology and the linkage between the overall open spaces vision and the Groningen public spaces management system have also been prepared. To add to this already comprehensive policy framework, the municipal council has been working on a green spaces structure plan, linking the various instruments to the structure plan and thereby creating greater coherence.

Green plans have also helped in assisting in decision-making priorities about land acquisition for open space and disposal for other purposes. This was particularly important in the development of Zürich's 1999 'Open Space Concept', which established the broad aims for open space planning and urban development within the city, following discussions between different municipal departments and external experts. The document establishes a range of quantitative standards which should guide the implementation of new open spaces, from targets for overall amounts of open space per person and per workplace, to catchment areas for different types of open spaces, to amounts of undeveloped land that should be acquired for new open space per square metre of new development.

Only in Minneapolis was there no comprehensive planning with which to marshal resources and provide a vision for the future of the city's open spaces. Short-term overarching goals for the park system are instead set by the nine elected commissioners of the MPRB (Box 7.2). Their ideas are subsequently distilled into four or five narrowly focused goals that are used for evaluating the board's performance. Recently, however, the lack of planning has impaired the agency's ability to react to changing user