



Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

2022 - 2031

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2031 has been developed to achieve Council's vision to enhance the Shire's liveability and visual appeal, and to encourage active communities and economic development (Mareeba Shire Council, 2021). The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that public spaces are planned and managed for a growing community in a financially sustainable way, using sound asset management principles.

The Strategy was developed using a structured community engagement and internal consultation process, and a summary of the outcomes of this engagement are included within this document. A set of guiding principles has been developed after a review of the known opportunities and constraints and stakeholder feedback. These are:

1. Connectivity and Utilisation
2. Focused use of Resources
3. Sound Asset Management
4. Environment and Wellbeing

This Strategy considers all parks and open spaces within Mareeba Shire: parks, open spaces, trails, and pathways. Public toilet facilities are considered only where they relate to a formal existing or proposed park. Sports and recreation facilities such as dedicated aquatic facilities, football ovals, netball courts and tennis courts are not included but have linkages with open space, with the pathways and trail that form these linkages included in the Strategy. Cemeteries are not considered in this Strategy as they require special planning considerations. Community halls and other buildings within parks are out of scope of this management strategy but are intended to have the potential for linkage with open space.

Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. INTRODUCTION	4
3. BACKGROUND	5
4. STRATEGY OBJECTIVES	6
5. METHODOLOGY	7
6. ENGAGEMENT	8
6.1 Community Engagement	8
6.2 Internal Engagement.....	8
7. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DRIVERS.....	9
7.1 Active and safe communities	9
7.2 Partnerships	9
7.3 Financial Sustainability.....	10
7.3.1 Maintenance Funding	10
7.3.2 General Rates.....	10
7.3.3 Developer Contributions.....	10
7.4 Competing Priorities	11
7.4.1 Existing Proposals and Strategies.....	11
7.4.2 Kuranda Infrastructure Agreement.....	11
7.4.3 Project Prioritisation Tool	11
7.5 Legislation	12
8. PRINCIPLES OF OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT.....	13
9. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	14
10. REFERENCES	15

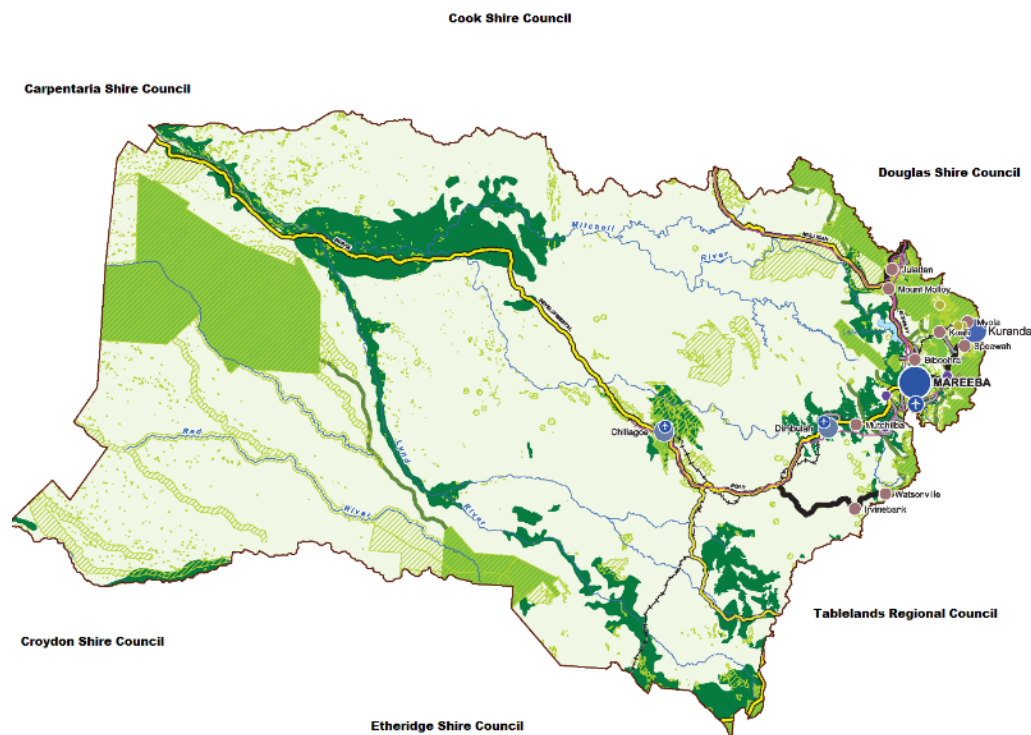
2. INTRODUCTION

Mareeba Shire is a growing, confident and sustainable Shire on the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland. A Shire of diversity with a vibrant, multicultural population and landscapes that vary from World Heritage Rainforest and breathtaking waterfalls to productive agricultural farms and cattle properties. The Shire's estimated population of just over 22,000 is dispersed across 53,457km². Most of the Shire's population resides in the Mareeba and Kuranda townships with the remaining 6,000 people in the many small, rural and remote communities including Chillagoe, Almaden, Petford, Dimbulah, Mutchilba, Koah, Speewah, Bibbohra, Mt Molloy, Julatten, Mt Carbine, Irvinebank and Watsonville.

Council's corporate vision is for a growing, confident and sustainable Shire and Council recognises the strategic importance of providing quality, cost effective public spaces and facilities that continue to enhance the liveability and visual appeal within the Shire, encourages active communities and economic development (Mareeba Shire Council, 2021). To support this vision, Council has developed the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2031 to ensure public spaces are planned and managed for a growing community in a financially sustainable way, using sound asset management principles.

Mareeba Shire Council Parks and Open Spaces Vision 2021 - 2031

To provide quality, cost effective public spaces and facilities that continue to enhance the liveability and visual appeal within the Shire, encourages active communities and economic development.



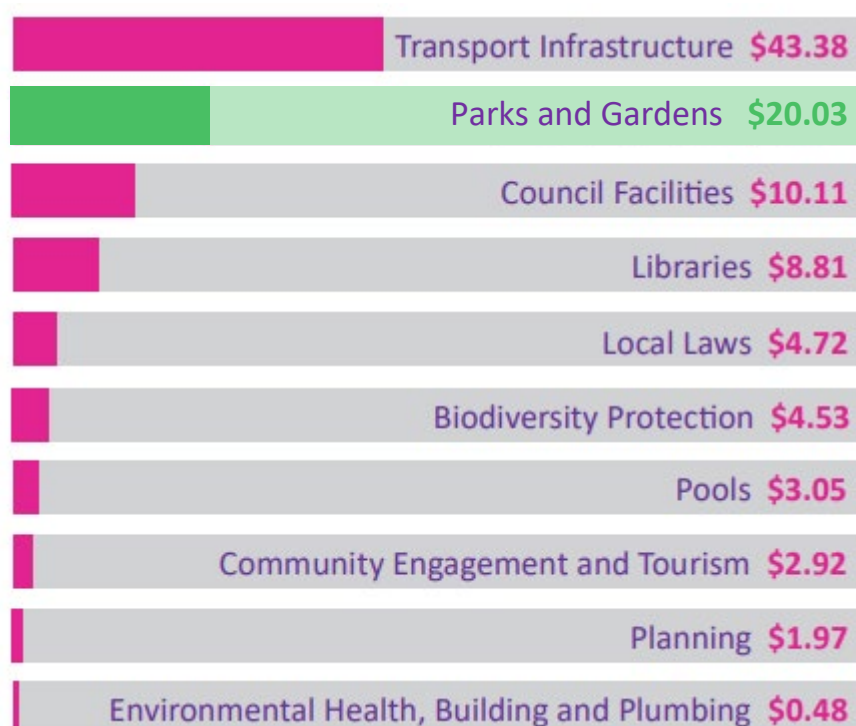
Mareeba Shire Local Government Area

3. BACKGROUND

Mareeba Shire Council is responsible for managing for around 250 parks and open spaces across the Shire with a total area of approximately 247 hectares. This is made up of various publicly accessible open spaces, including recreational parks, reserves, playgrounds, exercise stations, off-road trails, streetscapes and esplanades.

In the 2021/22 financial year, Council allocated approximately 20% of annual general rates income towards operation and maintenance of parks and open spaces throughout the Shire, at a cost of approximately \$2.7 million per annum. The balance is allocated across various other assets and services, including roads and drainage, facilities, libraries, local laws, biosecurity and tourism.

how every \$100 in
general rates is spent



Extract from 2021/22 Annual Budget Snapshot showing allocation of general rates income



River Walk along Barron River Esplanade, Kuranda

4. STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

This Strategy sets out the following objectives to achieve Council's Parks and Open Spaces Vision, *"To provide quality, cost effective public spaces and facilities that continue to enhance the liveability and visual appeal within the Shire, encourages active communities and economic development"*:

- Meet the specific land use strategic outcomes and infrastructure planning standards detailed in the Mareeba Shire Council Planning Scheme (Mareeba Shire Council, 2016)
- Identify key connectivity issues and routes for walkers and cyclists;
- Provide a coordinated approach for Council to manage existing open spaces that optimises the limited operational and maintenance funding available;
- Develop a prioritisation tool for parks and trails based on key features such as existing locations, functions, emerging communities, established pedestrian and cycle networks to enable prioritisation and customer service standards;
- Integrate community aspirations into the development of Council priorities to provide clear direction for parks and open spaces;
- Increase the appeal for utilisation of parks and open spaces;
- Provide evidence-based planning that can be used by Council and community groups to support grant applications;
- Consider significant cultural heritage sites and issues;
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate future population growth and to provide a foundation for future open space planning decisions;
- Integrate legislative requirements for parks and open spaces;
- Inform future revisions of the Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP);
- Inform asset management sub plans and long-term financial planning.
- Support economic development in the Shire.



Expansion of residential development on eastern outskirts of Mareeba

5. METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was used to expand the context of the vision and objectives and to devise meaningful and measurable actions.

- A review of existing parks and open spaces was undertaken encompassing:
 - Local Government Infrastructure Plan desired standards;
 - Current service levels;
 - Existing use, intended renewals and the growth areas of towns and localities;
 - Purpose and target age, ability and intended use for each space;
 - Identified opportunity and constraints; and
 - Literature review of existing proposals, masterplans and strategies.
- Site inspections were undertaken of parks and trails to consolidate and extend existing knowledge and documentation.
- Stakeholders were engaged to understand values, expectations and aspirations, opportunities and constraints through:
 - Invitation for public feedback via a community survey;
 - Internal consultation with Council staff.
- The drivers for strategic parks and open spaces planning were identified and informed action planning.
- Opportunities were identified to:
 - Rationalise existing open spaces to realise the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy vision and provide a cohesive network;
 - Define appropriate levels of service;
 - Manage parks through community partnerships.
- Guiding principles were established to guide parks and open space management into the future.
- Finally, key recommended actions from the Strategy have been identified, which include development of 3-year and 10-year action plans to inform the asset management sub plan for Parks and Open Spaces and future revisions of the LGIP.

6. ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Community Engagement

Mareeba Shire Council conducted a community survey over two months from 1 December 2020 to 1 February 2021 to gain a better understanding of who is using the parks and open spaces throughout the Shire, identify those which are most used and how they are used (frequency, for what purpose and with whom) as well as community views on the most important aspects of parks and open spaces.

The survey results have informed the development of this Strategy and will inform future planning for affordable parks and open spaces in the Shire (Mareeba Shire Council, 2021). The community feedback indicates:

1. It is important to consider the primary type and age of the users in each town and how these change over time, the most important features, and the specific upgrades and new facilities identified by residents.
2. The current level of maintenance for parks and open spaces was seen as adequate, except for the Bicentennial Lakes Mareeba.
3. The most common type of comment was about improving parks and open spaces, especially for the Bicentennial Lakes in Mareeba and unspecified playgrounds in Mareeba.
4. There is support for the development of the Mareeba Rail Trail and other new paths, trails and footpaths for exercise and recreation in the Shire especially in Mareeba, a new water park, and a new park with a playground to support the expansion of residential development on the eastern side of Mareeba.

6.2 Internal Engagement

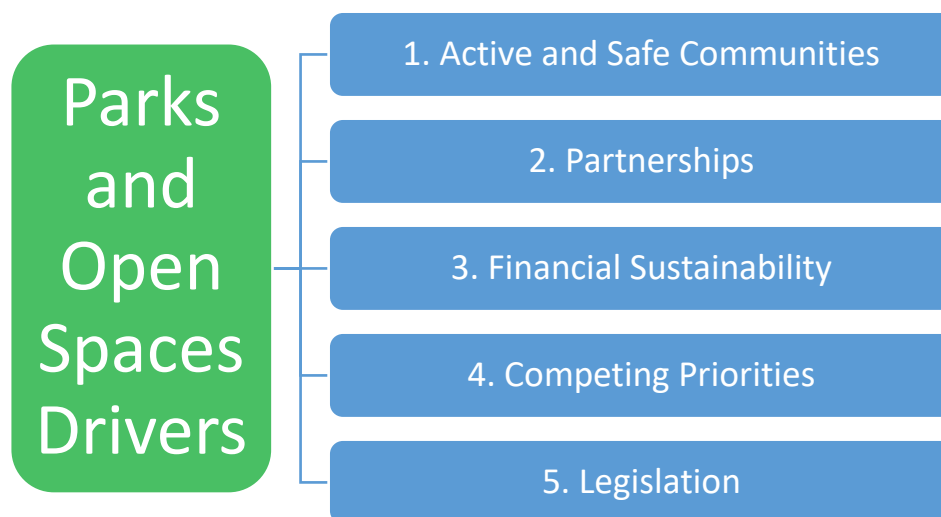
Council staff were engaged to identify operational issues, opportunities, efficiencies and constraints on the way parks and open spaces are built, operated and maintained.



Disused Railway Corridor, Mareeba to be developed and promoted as a Rail Trail

7. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DRIVERS

The desire to provide quality Parks and Open Spaces that are well planned and managed have been driven by community aspirations, partnerships, the need to prioritise existing proposals and concepts for Parks and Open Spaces and the need to comply with various legislation.



Parks and Open Spaces Service Drivers

7.1 Active and safe communities

Council maintains a variety of parks and open spaces such as recreational areas, water esplanades, streetscapes, footpaths, and cycleways.

Council endeavours to:

- Provide safe, accessible, resilient and fit-for-purpose public spaces to improve the health and wellbeing of the community;
- Advocate and promote community initiatives that support an active and healthy lifestyle;
- Advocate and promote community safety and other community services;
- Facilitate partnerships to improve public safety and amenity.

7.2 Partnerships

Council values and encourages effective community partnerships to deliver better community, liveability and wellbeing outcomes.

Council has previously partnered with and supported community organisations to enhance open spaces, for example to assist community groups to seek grant funding to build trails and develop playgrounds at community run halls. Council will continue to explore partnerships with organisations and residents that offer the potential for mutually beneficially arrangements that provide sound community outcomes.

7.3 Financial Sustainability

Council has many parks and reserves spread out through a large Shire and limited resources to maintain these. It is therefore imperative that the limited funds and resources that Council has available to allocate are focused effectively and efficiently in the right place at the right time for maximum community benefit.

7.3.1 Maintenance Funding

Funding for Parks and Open Spaces maintenance comes from general rates; upgrades and new facilities comes from reserves, developer contributions, non-recurrent grants and indirectly through partnerships with government, the business sector and community organisations.

7.3.2 General Rates

At the time of authoring this strategy, the 2021-2022 budget allocated \$2.7 million to parks, gardens and reserve maintenance. For every \$100 in general rates, \$20.03 is allocated to be spent on parks and gardens throughout Mareeba Shire. The balance is allocated to the provision, operation and maintenance of other infrastructure and services for the community, including roads, facilities, public health, libraries, etc.

7.3.3 Developer Contributions

Council charges Infrastructure Charges (developer contributions) to developers to contribute towards expansion and upgrade of trunk infrastructure to provide for growth of the region, including public parks and land for community facilities. The Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) directs the expenditure of these funds, with developer contributions only able to be used for capital expenditure (not operation or maintenance) of trunk infrastructure as identified in the LGIP. This Strategy will be used to inform the next revision of the LGIP.



New playground at Centenary Park, Mareeba

7.4 Competing Priorities

In recent years, Council has developed many stand-alone proposals, plans and studies for various parks and open spaces, such as the proposed Rail Trail and the revitalisation of the Bicentennial Lakes. Whilst all ideas and plans have merit in their own right, it is important that these plans and ideas are prioritised against all projects across the Shire to ensure best value for money outcomes for the community are delivered while ensuring Council remains financially sustainable.

7.4.1 Existing Proposals and Strategies

The existing documents considered as part of development of this Strategy include:

- Priority Route Maps, FNQ Addendum Principal Cycle Network Plan (draft) (Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2020)
- Mareeba To Walkamin Rail Trail (Otium Planning Group, 2019)
- Mareeba Town Cycling Loop (Mareeba Mountain Goats Inc)
- Kuranda Pedestrian, Traffic and Parking Study (Bitzios Consulting, 2019)
- Bicentennial Lakes Masterplan (Mareeba Shire Council, 2018)
- Mareeba Shire Street Tree Master Plan (Landplan landscape Architecture, 2017);
- Mareeba Anzac Avenue Embankment Soft Landscape Plan (LA3 Pty Ltd, 2016)
- Mapping Our Anzac History (Mareeba Shire Council, 2015)
- Kuranda Infrastructure Program (ARUP, 2011)
- Barron River Esplanade Walking Track (Mareeba Shire Council, 2005)
- Kuranda Village Plant Palette (Siteplan Cairn Pty Ltd, 2000);
- Mareeba Shire Council Bikeway Planning Report for Mareeba Township (Mareeba Shire Council, 1999)

7.4.2 Kuranda Infrastructure Agreement

Concurrent to the development of this Strategy, a review of the Kuranda Infrastructure Agreement (KIA) was being completed to inform the development of the new Kuranda Township Infrastructure Master Plan. The review incorporated a review of existing tourism-related public infrastructure in Kuranda and results from targeted stakeholder engagement into a new 10-year forecast of upgrade and renewal projects, many of which are relevant to this Strategy.

7.4.3 Project Prioritisation Tool

Council utilises a Project Prioritisation Tool (PPT) which applies multi-criteria analysis to inform decision-making on prioritisation of projects for council annual capital budgets for renewal, replacement and upgrades. The PPT hosts a list of actions for asset classes including parks and open spaces, footpaths and cycleways. The PPT criteria and weightings are reviewed annually and adopted by Council. This Strategy will be used to inform the next revision of the PPT.

7.5 Legislation

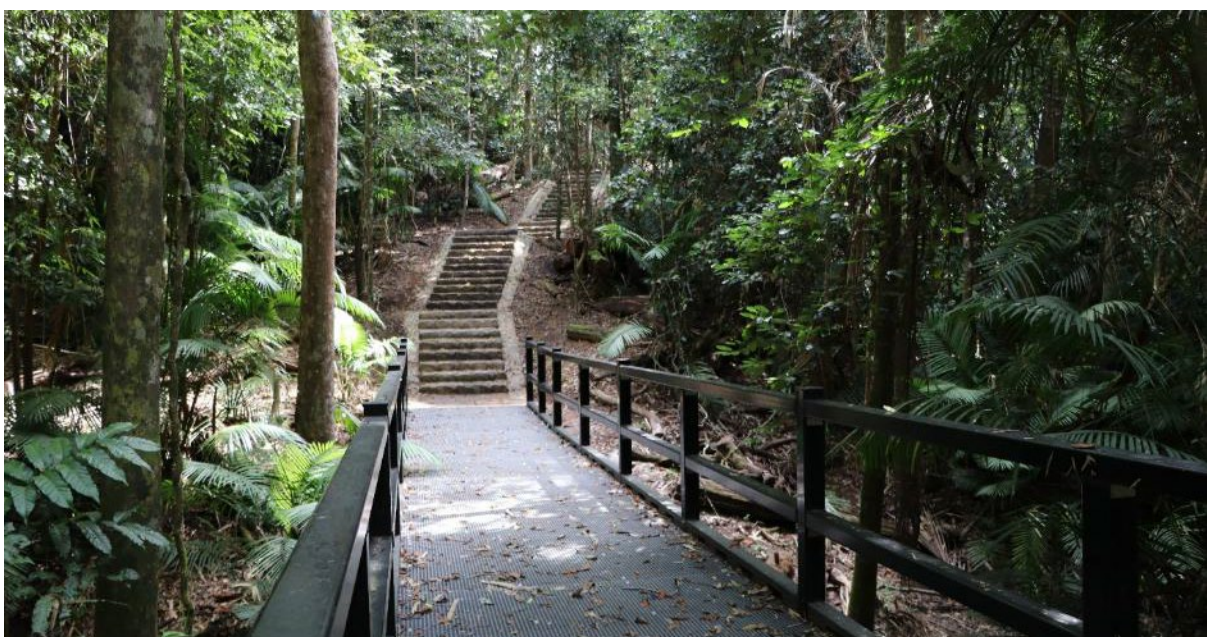
The management of parks and open spaces has evolved over years from providing simple playgrounds and gardens through to providing well-connected, accessible green space, trails, parks and open spaces. These assets now have specific legislative requirements in terms of future development and day-to-day operation.

Mareeba Shire has positive population growth and future developments will need to comply with the State Government's new mandatory provisions for neighbourhood design which have come into effect through amendments to the *Planning Regulation 2017*.

Council also has obligations under various other legislation to manage public health, environmental and biosecurity issues in its public spaces in accordance with various legislation.



Existing Playground in Pat Kinnear Park behind Chillagoe Hall



Barron Falls Walking Trail, Kuranda

8. PRINCIPLES OF OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT

To deliver parks and open spaces services that are flexible and responsive to community needs and to be consistent with the Council's corporate objectives, a set of guiding principles has been developed.

These principles have been developed after a review of the known opportunities and constraints, and stakeholder feedback. Broad comments about upgrading and maintenance of park and open spaces, the need for more paths and trails, and the planting of trees all featured highly in the comments received back in the community survey.

The principles will guide Council decision making in day-to-day operational decisions and for future capital investment planning over the next 10 years.

Principle	Key Considerations
Connectivity & Utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An action for a nominated park appropriate for the park's priority. • An action for a nominated trail network to provide alternative transport connection and promote an active lifestyle. • Additional trail or cycleway that is highly utilised. • Does the action target gap in functionality or economic development outcome for open space e.g. demographic / increases visitors?
Focused use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it a financially sustainable action? • Is there an annual cost reduction by proceeding with the action? • Whole of Life Cost - renew existing assets before improving service levels to reduce impact on annual budget.
Sound asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it provide a critical safety feature? • Does it fulfill a statutory obligation? • Consistent with service levels?
Environment & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space providing aesthetic appeal for the community's and visitor's enjoyment. • Connection to nature for community wellbeing and provides a green corridor. • Builds climate change resilience eg heat island mitigation through the use of shade. • Improves environmental health outcome.

9. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following table presents a list of the Strategy's key recommendations and actions to achieve Council's vision for parks and open spaces.

Key Recommendation	Details	Timeframe
3-year action plan	Develop an action plan for priority works (subject to funding availability) for park and open space upgrades and efficiencies to be delivered over the next three (3) years based on findings from the Strategy and commence delivery of projects.	Immediate
10-year action plan	Develop an action plan for park and open space upgrades and efficiencies works (subject to funding availability) to be delivered over the next 10 years based on findings from the Strategy.	Short Term
Asset Management Sub Plan	Develop an Asset Management Sub Plan based on the 10-year action plan for parks and open spaces that aligns with Council's Long Term Financial Plan.	Short Term
Local Government Infrastructure Plan	Update the Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) based on findings from the Strategy for trunk infrastructure upgrades to parks and open spaces.	Short Term
Project Prioritisation Tool	Update the Project Prioritisation Tool (PPT) for the parks and open spaces asset class based on findings from the Strategy.	Short Term



Mareeba Aquatic Facility and Bicentennial Lakes, Mareeba

10. REFERENCES

ARUP. (2011). *Kuranda Infrastructure Program*.

Bitzios Consulting. (2019). *Kuranda Pedestrian, Traffic and Parking Study Situation Analysis and Action Plan Report*.

Jacobs. (2018). *Mareeba Shire Council Local Government Infrastructure Plan*.

LA3 Pty Ltd. (2016). *Landscape Design Anzac Avenue, Mareeba*.

Landplan landscape Architecture. (2017). *Mareeba Shire Street Tree Master Plan*.

Mareeba Mountain Goats Inc. (n.d.). 2015.

Mareeba Shire Council. (1999). *Bikeway Planning Report for Mareeba Township*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2005). *Barron River Esplanade Walkign Track Tenure*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2015). *Mapping Our Anzac History, Mareeba Shire War Memorial Heritage Asset List 2015*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2016). *Mareeba Shire Council Planning Scheme, 2016*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2018). *Bicentennial Lakes Masterplan*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2021). *Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025*.

Mareeba Shire Council. (2021). *Parks and Open Spaces Survey Report*.

Otium Planning Group. (2019). *Mareeba to Walkamin Rail Trail, Feasibility Study - Final Report*.

Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads. (2020). *Priority Route Maps Far North Queensland Addendum to Principal Cycle Network Plan 2020 (draft)*.

Siteplan Cairn Pty Ltd. (2000). *Kuranda Village Plant Palette*.