

OPEN SPACE STRATEGY FOR  
METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE 2021

# Open space

FOR EVERYONE







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The photos in this document were taken prior to March 2020 before physical distancing and masks were required

- Above** Melbourne’s many cycling and walking trails offer commuters and day-trippers alike convenient, scenic routes through the city, courtesy Parks Victoria
- Front cover** Young couples enjoy the leafy surrounds and abundant wildlife of Yarra Bend Park, a large natural bushland in inner Melbourne, courtesy Parks Victoria’
- Back cover** The Melbourne CBD and the iconic Yarra River, courtesy Parks Victoria

### Aboriginal acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victoria’s Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the state’s land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present, whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner and meaningfully engage with Victoria’s Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.





# Open space

FOR EVERYONE

## Minister's foreword

For many thousands of years, the *Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Boon Wurrung, Wadawurrung and Taungurung* people have cared for the area that we now know as Metropolitan Melbourne. This special place is now home to one-fifth of the nation's population and is renowned as being one of the world's most liveable cities.



As our community grows and changes, *Open Space for Everyone* will help us understand the strategic approach needed to plan open space and examine how existing open space can be managed more effectively. Quality open space is at the heart of Melbourne's identity; from the iconic laneways and public squares to the curated gardens, winding trails, waterways and bayside promenades, and urban parklands large and small. These areas are central to the lives of our communities, and provide opportunities for exercise and play, social experiences, major events and quiet reflection. They also embed nature in our increasingly urban landscape by supporting greenery and our local wildlife.

The Victorian Government identifies connectedness, immersion in nature and access for all as the defining characteristics of the city's open space network over the next 30 years. And we understand how important it is for Melburnians to have access to quality open spaces in their local community.

We will actively prioritise open space for a more liveable Melbourne and make meaningful and sustainable changes to the way we plan our open spaces, how we manage them and how we ensure they grow and adapt to our community and environmental needs.

*Open Space for Everyone* is the overarching framework and strategic direction for effective open space planning throughout Melbourne's 32 local government areas. Implementation of the strategy will deliver key actions to produce a more resilient and sustainable open space network as Melbourne grows.

We look forward to partnering and collaborating with Traditional Owners, the community, and our colleagues and partners across the city to deliver this plan, united in our vision for thriving environments and communities now and into the future.

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, reading 'Lily D'Ambrosio'.

**The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP**  
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change  
Minister for Solar Homes







# Executive summary

Melbourne is known as one of the most liveable cities in the world. Integral to this international reputation is an extensive public open space network of regional and local parks, gardens, laneways, civic areas, promenades, bays, waterways and trails across the 32 local government areas that make up the greater metropolitan area.

The land and water of this region, cared for by the *Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Boon Wurrung, Wadawurrung* and *Taungurung* people and now dramatically modified by urbanisation, include an open space network that is critical green and blue infrastructure (blue referring to waterways and green referring to land) and a fundamental platform for quality of life within the city. This network has strongly influenced the distinctive urban design, cultural identity and vibrancy that makes Melbourne a world-renowned city where more people want to live and work.

But people's access to quality open space across the metropolitan network is not equal. And as Melbourne faces its third and largest wave of population growth, a growing burden of ill health and increasing climate change impacts, this inequity will be further exacerbated unless we act.

State and local government agencies, Traditional Owners, other open space managers, researchers, businesses and communities – including our fundamentally important volunteers – need to work together to address gaps and adapt the open space network to this changing context. In doing so, we will all continue to enjoy the numerous social, environmental and economic benefits open space delivers.

*Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* and many other state government plans and strategies outline in detail the drivers and holistic changes needed to create liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities. There is one theme common to all these plans and strategies: the need to strengthen the integrated metropolitan open space network.

*Open Space for Everyone* puts in place the strategic framework to guide the planning, acquisition, design, management, use and maintenance of the Melbourne metropolitan open space network. It also proposes how to put that framework into action.

**Top** A family picnics along the banks of the Yarra River at Studley Park, Kew, courtesy Parks Victoria

**Left** A couple and a guide survey the city skyline on an Aboriginal Heritage Walk at the Royal Botanic Gardens, courtesy Parks Victoria

**Right** Melbourne's iconic laneways, such as Hosier Lane (pictured) are an integral part of our open space network, courtesy City of Melbourne



The framework has the following elements.

## Vision

The vision to guide those who implement the framework is:

**Melbourne is a city in nature with a flourishing and valued network of public open space that is shared and accessible by everyone.**

## Goals

The framework's four, integrated goals sum up why it is so important to achieve the vision: for improved community health and wellbeing; healthier biodiversity; enhanced climate change resilience; and economic and social benefits.

## Directions

The framework intends to strengthen the open space network by connecting it at the local and landscape scales to enhance its ability to provide immersive experiences and to ensure the network is shared equitably by everyone as a community asset. Access to open space is central to meeting most of our everyday needs in a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods. This requires all open space landowners and managers to protect, optimise and grow the network.

## Principles

The framework includes principles to guide investment and the planning and delivery of actions: innovation and creativity, fairness and equity, the community at the centre of everything we do, resilience and sustainability, and working together to deliver best public value.

## Actions

Implementing the framework will rely on actions that aim to protect, optimise and/or grow the existing open space network, many of which are already underway. This includes more than \$230 million of state government investment in the open space network including major investments in the next three years.

It also requires us to plan and start delivering the enabling actions in this strategy to address the structural barriers to working efficiently and effectively together and with communities to plan, finance and deliver open space improvements. These enabling actions set out a program to clarify governance and the roles of public landowners and managers; communicate and engage with partners and community; modernise legislation, standards and guidelines; update funding and financing models; better integrate information and research into planning; develop an evidence-based, 30-year investment opportunities framework; and develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Underpinning this reform agenda is the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning commitment to work in partnership with Traditional Owners and support their right to self determination and participation in all aspects of this program, from policy to practice.

The vision is ambitious, and will require all of us to challenge long-held practices and expectations. The solutions lie in working with Traditional Owner knowledge, culture and connection to Country, from the legacy that created our distinctive metropolis, and in the leadership required to explore new ways of creating a sustainable, liveable Melbourne with open space for everyone.

Figure 1 shows the strategic framework diagrammatically.



FIGURE 1 Melbourne metropolitan open space strategic framework









# 1 Introduction

## Our city's open space legacy

Melbourne's reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities has been shaped by the extensive network of parks, gardens, laneways, civic areas, promenades, bays, waterways and trails across the 32 local government areas that make up the greater metropolitan area.

The land and waters of the greater Melbourne area have been lived on and cared for by the *Wurundjeri*, *Bunurong*, *Boon Wurrung*, *Wadawurrung* and *Tuangurung* people for more than 40,000 years. Country is central to Aboriginal people's sense of identity and culture.

Although these lands have been greatly modified by urbanisation since European settlement, today's Melburnians are fortunate to still enjoy a magnificent open space legacy. This blue and green network is central to the distinctive urban design, culture and vibrancy of our suburbs and neighbourhoods.

A *Destination Melbourne* report released in 2018 revealed tourists to Melbourne consider our parks and gardens as the number one 'must do' attraction and green spaces and gardens the city's most 'unique' feature.



Above The 1929 Plan for Melbourne identifies key blue and green corridors as essential open space in a burgeoning city, from Plan for General Development – Melbourne 1929 (Metropolitan Town Planning Commission)

**Top** Programs such as Summer By The Sea offer people with disabilities the chance to equally experience Melbourne's open spaces, courtesy City of Port Phillip

**Left** Melbourne's waterways support recreation and biodiversity in our city, courtesy Melbourne Water

**Right** Small parks and reserves in the suburbs offer locals the opportunity to exercise, unwind and socialise, courtesy DELWP



The city's parks, gardens and waterways provide opportunities for Melburnians to stay active, connect with nature and have time out from urban life. The city's streets, laneways and public spaces are the backdrop to much of our daily lives.

Open spaces connect Melburnians with our native plants and animals, and they provide us with an extraordinary diversity of landscapes – from the grasslands in the west to the coastal mangroves in the south-east – which provide valuable ecosystem services to the city. They provide a public stage for major events, tourist attractions and recreation, which support jobs and economic growth.

However, the distribution of open space is not equal across the metropolitan area. This inequity reduces access for some to the benefits that communities derive from such critical green and blue infrastructure. Unless we act, this will only become worse.

At the same time, our open space network faces unprecedented challenges. Melbourne is experiencing its third great wave of population growth.

We are living longer with a greater burden of chronic health conditions. Climate change is making Melbourne hotter and drier, increasing the number and intensity of extreme rainfall events, causing sea levels to rise and worsening fire weather.

Many cities around the world face the same issues and are grappling with the challenges of sustaining healthy, liveable landscapes. In response, nature-based planning and design are increasingly guiding city development. The provision of high-quality, safe, green and blue open space – equitably available to all – is part of the solution to these challenges.

The open space legacy we enjoy today is the result of bold vision and many small, incremental initiatives. The social, environmental and economic challenges the city and its people face mean we cannot continue to plan for open space as we have in the past. The challenges are unprecedented in scale and complexity, and they present us with both the need and the opportunity to make the necessary changes so we preserve and extend our existing open space legacy for all future Melburnians.

**Below** Exploring the natural environment helps children connect with nature in our suburbs, courtesy Melbourne Water





## About public open space

‘Public open space’ in this strategy means public land and waters that provide for one or more of these purposes:

- Outdoor recreation
- Leisure
- Environmental and cultural benefits
- Visual amenity and off-road active transport

Public open space can be categorised as one of three types:

- Accessible public land and waters, for which the primary purpose is open space for one or more of the purposes above
- Restricted public land and waters, for which the primary purpose is open space for one or more of the purposes above, but that has limited accessibility or uses due to leases, agreements, specialised sporting infrastructure or conservation protection overlays
- Encumbered or restricted public land and waters, for which the primary purpose is not open space for one or more of the purposes defined above but which could potentially have use for one or more of the purposes above as a secondary, complementary purpose(s). Primary purposes include transport, health, education and utilities.

For the purpose of this strategy, ‘public open space’ has been abbreviated to ‘open space’.

While *Open Space for Everyone* recognises the crucial need to protect, optimise and grow the network of accessible unencumbered open space,

it also promotes the increasingly important role that encumbered or restricted open space plays in the network.

The strategy seeks to complement and improve access to open space across Melbourne by working more collaboratively and creatively to utilise encumbered or restricted public lands and waterways for open space and recreation purposes, as far as is possible.

In 2016, the Victorian Planning Authority (formerly the Metropolitan Planning Authority) estimated there were over 9,000 ha of restricted public land within Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary, a substantial amount of which could more fully contribute to the open space network.

This opportunity reinforces the directions of *Plan Melbourne* and the 2017 Victorian Infrastructure Plan, to meet growing demand by delivering multiple benefits from publicly owned and managed lands.

Table 1 shows the three categories of open space.

The Victorian Planning Authority also classified open space according to its size and catchment. This will be reviewed during the implementation phase of this strategy to ensure it is current.

This will ensure consideration of linear parklands, trails and emerging regional-scale planning to establish and protect interconnected blue (waterways) and green (land) corridors and the diverse landscape, cultural, biodiversity and community values they provide.

**TABLE 1** Categories of open space

CATEGORY	Accessible	Restricted	Encumbered or restricted
<b>PRIMARY PURPOSE</b>	Open space	Open space	Not open space
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Coastal foreshores, bays and waterways</li> <li>Pathways and promenades</li> <li>Community sports fields</li> <li>Off-road recreation trails</li> <li>Lakes and wetlands</li> <li>Gardens</li> <li>Civic squares</li> <li>Public forecourts</li> <li>Piers and jetties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Botanical and zoological gardens</li> <li>Conservation reserves</li> <li>Golf courses</li> <li>Racecourses</li> <li>Community farms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government schools</li> <li>Retarding basins</li> <li>Pipe tracks</li> <li>Utility easements</li> <li>Reservoirs</li> <li>Cemeteries</li> <li>Boulevards</li> <li>Road reserves</li> <li>Airspace over and space under transport corridors</li> <li>Streets and transport corridors</li> <li>Publicly accessible rooftops</li> <li>Disused quarries in public ownership</li> </ul>





Above Artist's imagining of a memorial park, courtesy Greater Melbourne Cemeteries Trust

## Reimagining a memorial park

In Melton West, the Greater Melbourne Cemeteries Trust is creating a new vision for a world-class memorial park. The 130ha Harkness Cemetery will challenge and inspire communities to reimagine resting places as also community parks.

The design approach will look for solutions that allow for memory and loss, life and celebration to intertwine in shared open spaces. Tradition and innovation will combine built form and gardens with remnant grey-box woodlands adjacent to the Gilgai Woodland Reserve to respectfully connect the cemetery and parkland.

The vision revives past uses and reflects present uses in some cities of cemeteries as large, valued, green spaces for picnics, recreation, gardens, iconic architecture and respite.

The cemeteries trust has been inspired by the UNESCO world-heritage-listed Skogskyrkogården Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, created through a design competition in 1920, and by other overseas examples.

This long-term legacy project demonstrates how we can optimise and creatively design open space to maximise its value for broader community wellbeing and environmental resilience, without compromising its primary purpose.

Achieving the vision also calls for a sustainable business model, which recognises the economic value of multiple benefits to the community.



## About this strategy

*Open Space for Everyone* sets out a strategic framework for agencies and partners - state and local governments and their agencies, Traditional Owners, non-government and community organisations, researchers, businesses and the general public - to work together collaboratively, efficiently and effectively. This will realise Melbourne's potential as a city in nature with a flourishing and valued network of open space that is shared and accessible to all.

Recognising that the liveability of urban environments is a global issue, all member states of the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals address the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing the world, and four of them are directly relevant to this strategy: Good health and wellbeing, Sustainable cities and communities, Life on land and Climate action. *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*, the Victorian government's long-term plan to guide Melbourne's growth as a world-renowned city of opportunity and choice, is evidence of the Victorian government's commitment to these goals.

Australia is also a signatory to the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* outlining their rights to self-determination. DELWP has developed its own response to embody this commitment in Pupangarli Marnmarnepu "Owning Our Future" *Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025*, which seeks to support DELWP and encourage our partners to focus on transformational reform to enable self-determination.

The preparation of *Open Space for Everyone* is being taken in line with *Plan Melbourne's* Policy 6.4.2 Strengthen the integrated metropolitan open space network of Outcome 6 – Melbourne is a sustainable and resilient city.

Action 93 is to prepare a metropolitan open space strategy that enhances recreation, amenity, health and wellbeing, species diversity, sustainable water management and urban cooling. The strategy will include measures to:

- Protect and enhance existing open space, underpinned by improved and accessible spatial data
- Plan for an increase in open space, particularly in areas identified as lacking access to open space, areas undergoing substantial population growth, and areas where the network of green spaces could be expanded or improved
- Enhance the role, function and overall community value of currently underutilised public land assets (e.g. utility easements, school grounds) in contributing to the open space network
- Better coordinate the delivery and management of open space across state and local government including identifying management objectives for different parts of the network and developing standard agreements to manage land
- Provide improved network planning and provision guidance for both the state and local government.

**Below** Friends enjoy some time together along the banks of the Yarra River, courtesy Melbourne Water



*Open Space for Everyone* provides the strategic framework and identifies actions to address Action 93. It also supports and contributes to the delivery of Outcome 4 (Melbourne is a distinctive and liveable city with quality design and amenity), Outcome 5 (Melbourne is a city of inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods) and to:

<b>Action 60</b>	Improved streetscapes
<b>Action 61</b>	Great Yarra Parklands
<b>Action 62</b>	Planning provisions for the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers and other major waterways
<b>Action 63</b>	Waterway corridor master plans
<b>Action 75</b>	Whole-of-government approach to 20-minute neighbourhoods (Figure 4)
<b>Action 80</b>	Review planning and building systems to support environmentally sustainable development outcomes
<b>Action 91</b>	Whole-of-government approach to cooling and greening Melbourne

The strategy continues the Metropolitan Planning Authority’s 2016 open space planning and analysis process, which engaged with Melbourne’s 32 councils, state government agencies, peak bodies and interest groups.

The strategy is the successor to Parks Victoria’s 2002 *Linking People and Spaces*.

## Developing the strategy

The process of developing *Open Space for Everyone* included a review of the global, state, city and local policies, strategies and literature. Local government open space strategies provided valuable information on community feedback about the importance of open space, and the leadership and innovation already in practice to respond to the community’s needs. The strategy development process also included engagement with local councils, state departments, Traditional Owners, agencies and key stakeholders and use of their feedback to refine the strategic framework.

**Below** A young boy in inner-west Melbourne enjoys playing and being active at his local outdoor basketball courts, courtesy Portable





## BOORAN RESERVE, GLEN HUNTLY



Above Booran Reserve

## Award-winning land repurposing

The award-winning Booran Reserve is an excellent example of an innovative way to repurpose decommissioned public land to grow Melbourne's open space network.

Booran Reserve was created from the decommissioned Caulfield Service Reservoir and opened in 2014. The \$10.8 million Glen Eira City Council project provides high-quality open space in a local government area that lacks it; as Figure 2 shows.

The project has received numerous awards including the Institute of Management's 2017 Sustainable Project Award, Parks and Leisure Australia's Victorian / Tasmanian Park of the Year 2018, and the 2018 Playspace Award for projects over \$500,000.

The reserve offers stimulating, multi-use environments for all ages and abilities.

The reserve has retained many unique elements of the old reservoir including the perimeter walls, bluestone plinths and central sluice gate.

Educational panels tell a story of water in a local context including the history of Aboriginal people's connection to Country at the site.

There is a major play space, interactive games and artwork, water-play areas and recreation facilities, as well as basketball hoops and a tennis wall.

The reserve includes a people-free zone for the conservation and protection of native plants and local wildlife, and the reserve's sustainability include features such as solar panels, low-energy LED lighting and a 500,000-litre stormwater harvesting system.







# 2 Melbourne's open space network

## A legacy of visionary open space planning

'It is to the distinctive features of their natural environments that many cities owe their location, their historic growth and population distribution, and even the character of their buildings, streets and parks.'<sup>1</sup>

The Traditional Owners of the land now known as Melbourne – the *Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Boon Wurrung, Wadawurrung* and *Tuangurung* people – descend from people who have lived on and managed the land and waters for more than 40,000 years. The land that Melbourne now occupies was and continues to be of social, educational, sporting and cultural significance to Aboriginal people and, despite great obstacles, their connection to Country has continued since the arrival of Europeans in many traditional and contemporary ways. This connection is an intrinsic part of identity and wellbeing in all its forms, reflective of a culture of reciprocity between the health of Country and its people.

With the arrival of Europeans in 1835, attracted by its rich surrounding pastures and the fresh water of Birrarung – also known as the Yarra River – Melbourne soon became dominated by settlers and their interests, and Aboriginal people were steadily dispossessed of Country. The European settlers asserted their utilitarian ethos and dominion over the land, clearing vegetation and altering rivers and wetlands to support their growing numbers.

<sup>1</sup> Anne Whiston Spirn, cited in Presland, 2009

- Top** Traditional smoking ceremonies are part of the Aboriginal Heritage Walks at Royal Botanic Gardens, courtesy Royal Botanic Gardens  
**Left** Melbourne's annual Moomba festival is a great example of how open space provides the stage for vibrant cultural festivals and major tourism events, courtesy City of Melbourne  
**Right** Degraeves Street is one of Melbourne's popular laneways that offers unique open space opportunities in the CBD, courtesy City of Melbourne



Nonetheless, parks and gardens became increasingly important in the Victorian era. Urban parks were the response to concern about overcrowding and the condition of the poor, and huge public gardens displayed wealth, power and triumph over nature. The people of Melbourne agitated for the government to set aside land for recreation and social connectedness. Charles Latrobe reserved from sale land that is now Royal Park, Princes Park, Albert Park Reserve, Fawkner Park, Yarra Park and the Royal Botanic Gardens. Such long-term, strategic land-acquisition programs continue today.

The success in the 1850s of the eight-hour day movement resulted in the rapid expansion of land reserved for sports and recreation along the Yarra River. The Melbourne Sports and Entertainment Precinct is now the jewel in the crown of 'the sporting capital of the world', and there are regularly major events and festivals along the Yarra River – called Birrarung – and its banks.

The Gold Rush transformed Melbourne. As it expanded from a rambling colonial town to a modern metropolis, it struggled to keep up with its newfound wealth. In what are now its middle-ring suburbs, there was no integrated urban planning, and little open space was set aside. This legacy reminds us to ensure adequate provision of open space is planned for as our suburbs grow.

In 1891, responding to demand for a reliable and clean supply of water for Melbourne's steadily increasing population, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was established. It adopted a closed-water catchment policy – now managed by Melbourne Water as protected water catchments – and was one of only five cities in the world to do so at that time. This visionary policy left Melbourne a legacy of a secure supply of high-quality water, and it also later compensated the public loss of open space with reservoir parklands (such as Maroondah Reservoir, opened in 1927).

By the early 1900s, concerns about the slums and industrial facilities of Melbourne's inner suburbs coalesced into a town planning movement. Eventually, the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission was formed and in 1929 it released a *Plan of General Development – Melbourne*. This was Melbourne's first whole-of-city plan, the latest being *Plan Melbourne*.

The 1929 plan laid out an extraordinary vision for a radial open space network, with large parklands along the waterways. It proposed the first comprehensive zoning scheme for an Australian metropolis, with a focus on ensuring public health and wellbeing as the population grew and the city developed.

**Below** St Kilda foreshore is a multiuse open space supporting local businesses and attracting locals and tourists, courtesy Parks Victoria





It planned for many outcomes that are as important today as they were then: equity of access, an expansive network of blue-green corridors along waterways, cost-effective land acquisition, distinctive suburban responses, shared use of state-school grounds, sustainable funding models and reserving open space in peri-urban areas to provide for future population growth.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression disrupted the implementation of the 1929 plan. The network was rolled out unequally, and some gaps have never been filled. The *Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme 1954* created a public utilities funding source: the forerunner of the Parks and Reserves Trust Account, also known as the Parks Charge. In the 1970s, our planners and government had the foresight to reserve 12 green wedge zones, to preserve Melbourne's non-urban areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary as the 'lungs of the city'.

Rapid population growth in the 1980s onwards led to large areas of new urban development on the fringes of the city. In response, Melbourne began establishing a citywide shared-use trail network and a major metropolitan parklands program, reserving parks such as Maribyrnong Park, Dandenong Park, Yarra Valley Parklands, Point Cook Coastal Park, the Sandbelt Parklands (between Moorabbin and Dingley Village) and Plenty Gorge Park.

In the 1980s, Melbourne also turned to the Yarra River with confidence, with the Give the Yarra a Go campaign to restore the river and its reputation and connect the trails along its bank.

The urban renewal of the lower Yarra – now known as Southbank – began during the 1991–92 recession as the industrial area was rejuvenated as a sophisticated open space and public realm. As the 'city by the bay' idea gained traction, several open space plans secured more land, developed more trails and embraced our safe harbours, piers and jetties to support recreation, tourism and maritime activities.

As Melbourne began to dominate Australia's population growth, *Linking People and Spaces* in 2002 proposed improving equity of access by designating six new parks in Melbourne's growth corridors; extending new, off-road, shared-use trails; revitalising our piers and safe harbours; improving access to the bays and foreshore and prioritising vegetation protection.

The legacy of this history of leadership and foresight is an extraordinary network of open space which has shaped Melbourne and which visitors recognise as one of its most distinctive and unique qualities.





# Toward a resilient, sustainable open space network

## Inequities in the open space legacy

Melburnians are beneficiaries of the magnificent legacy that is the city's open space, but they do not share and benefit from it equitably.

In 2011, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) completed a metropolitan Melbourne investigation study. Among other things, the study identified open space as a key contributor to Melbourne's liveability, but it highlighted its uneven distribution across the investigation area. This means a person's location (as well as their age, gender, ability or other attributes) can limit their access to our open space network and the benefit they enjoy from its ability to sustain healthy communities, economies and landscapes.

The Victorian government responded to the VEAC findings by seeking to protect and enhance open space and improve the efficiency and efficacy of open space planning to meet the needs of our growing population.

The Victorian Planning Authority's Metropolitan Open Space Network portal shows there is about 23,700 ha of open space within Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary. While the mapping provides a start to understanding differences in the open space available to different neighbourhoods, it does not indicate differences in the function or quality of the open space or in the ease of access to it. These things greatly influence the extent to which current and future communities can use their local open space. Melbourne's growth over time has created differences in the quality, type and mix of open space across inner, middle and outer suburbs that also need to be considered in future funding decisions based on equity.

Figure 2, based on the portal's dataset, shows there are big differences in the quantity of open space provision across local government areas. For example, Glen Eira City has the least open space per person – 12m<sup>2</sup> – and Hobsons Bay City the most – 107m<sup>2</sup>. While this is important, quantity is not the only aspect that influences equity of access and additional ways to measure this outcome need to be considered.

The data used for Figure 2 includes restricted open space (such as golf courses and some schools) and publicly accessible open space (such as parks, gardens and beaches). A map of the provision of publicly accessible open space is likely to show a different pattern across the city.

**Below** A young boy joins a planting day at Darebin Creek. Volunteers play a critical role in managing, protecting and improving our natural environment, courtesy Parks Victoria

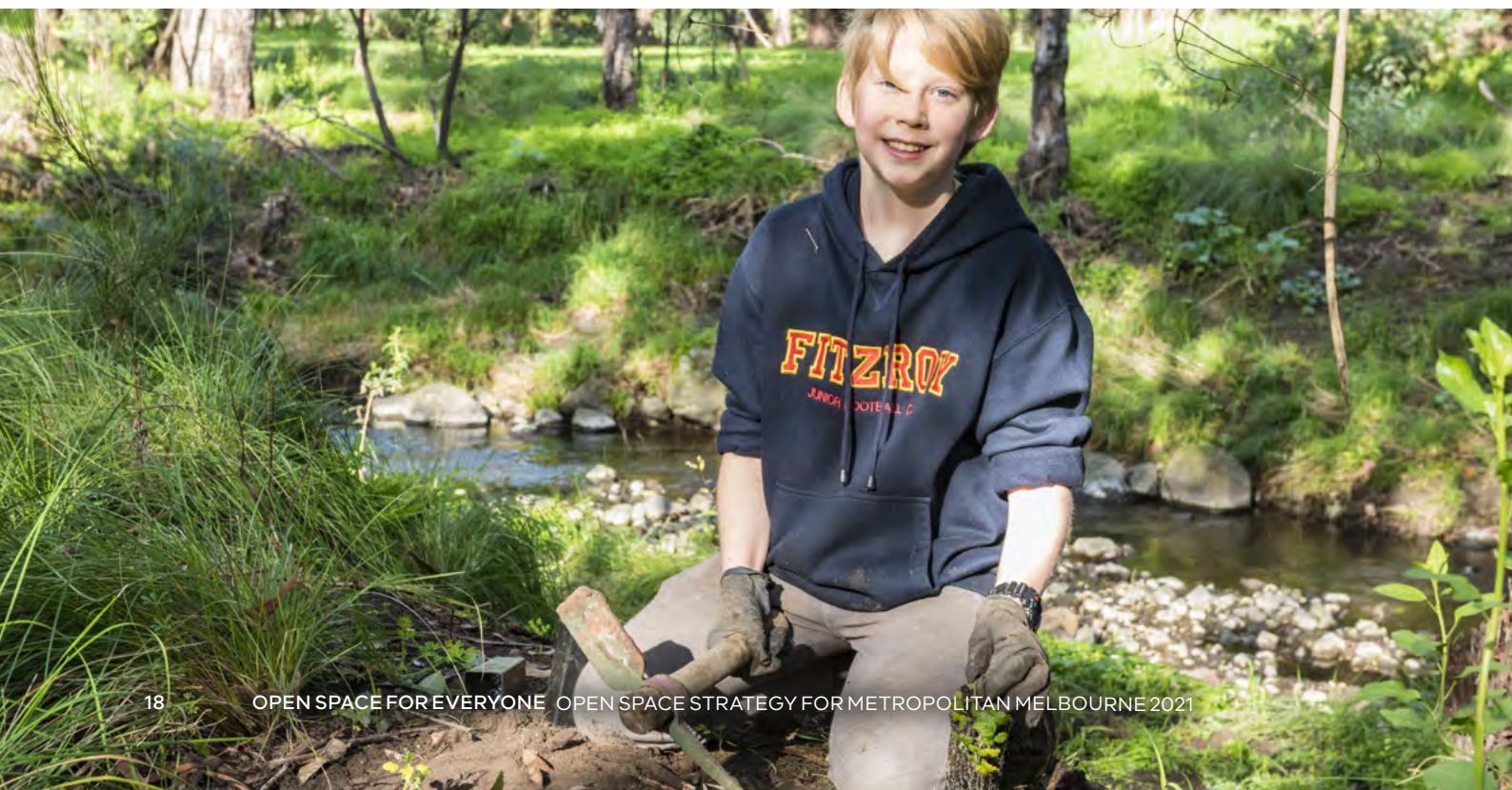
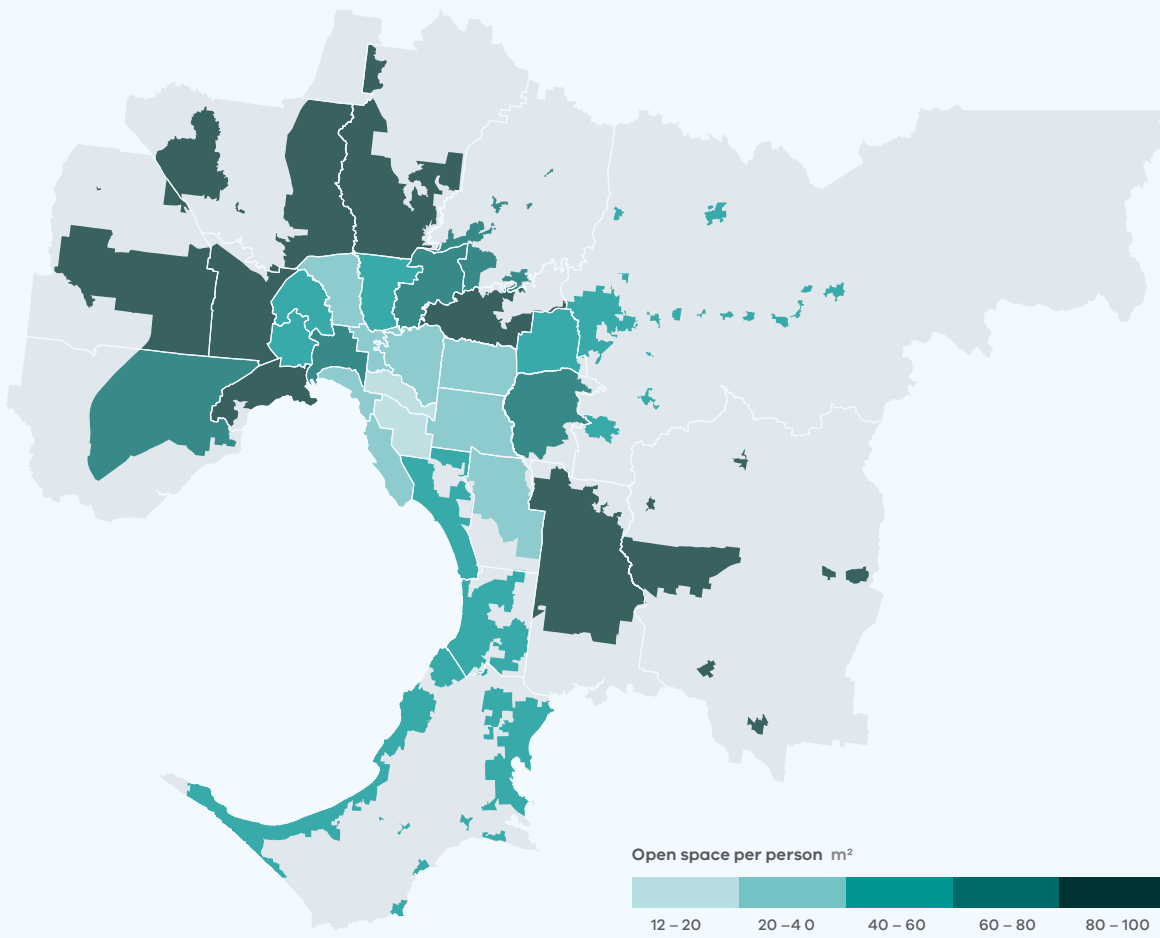




FIGURE 2 Open space per person, by local government area, 2016



Below The Williams Landing Pilot Park (pictured) is the first project of Greening the Pipeline. A section of the heritage-listed Main Outfall Sewer (MOS) reserve has been transformed into local parkland, connecting the community and providing urban cooling. Courtesy Melbourne Water. See page 33 for more details.





## Population growth and housing density

Melbourne is experiencing the third and largest wave of population growth since its settlement, which is creating great demand for open space.

*Victoria in Future 2019* shows that the population of greater Melbourne is increasing rapidly and that it is projected to grow to 9 million by 2056, and it will need almost 1.9 million new dwellings between 2016 and then. This growth will also create a lot more demand for open space.

Demand for open space will be unequal across the city. Figure 3 shows that forecast population growth from 2018 to 2036 is uneven: it is unprecedented for Melbourne's growth areas, but it's also significant in established areas. The greatest growth will be in the cities of Wyndham (204,000 people), Casey (182,000 people), Melton (175,500 people) and Whittlesea (141,100 people). The City of Melbourne is currently expected to have the strongest growth (122,700 people) in the established areas, mainly in the Central Business District, Docklands and Southbank. In some areas (such as the Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley), tourism will drive population pressures on open space. The population of activity centres (such as Box Hill) is forecast to grow strongly.

As Melbourne's population is growing, housing density is increasing. Melbourne's housing stock is mostly detached housing with private open space, but recent years have seen a shift to medium- and higher-density housing, notably in middle-ring suburbs, and high-rise apartment development in inner Melbourne continues.

*Plan Melbourne* aims to achieve a more-consolidated, sustainable city and 20-minute neighbourhoods, both of which will increase population density. The plan envisages accommodating 70 per cent of the city's growth in established areas.

With more people living in higher-density housing with no private open space, our existing open space will see more people using it, more often and for longer. There is often little opportunity to create large tracts of new open space in established areas.

Creative thinking will be needed about local pocket parks, high-quality maintenance of existing parks, how best to share spaces and how to innovatively repurpose surplus public land to meet growing demand.

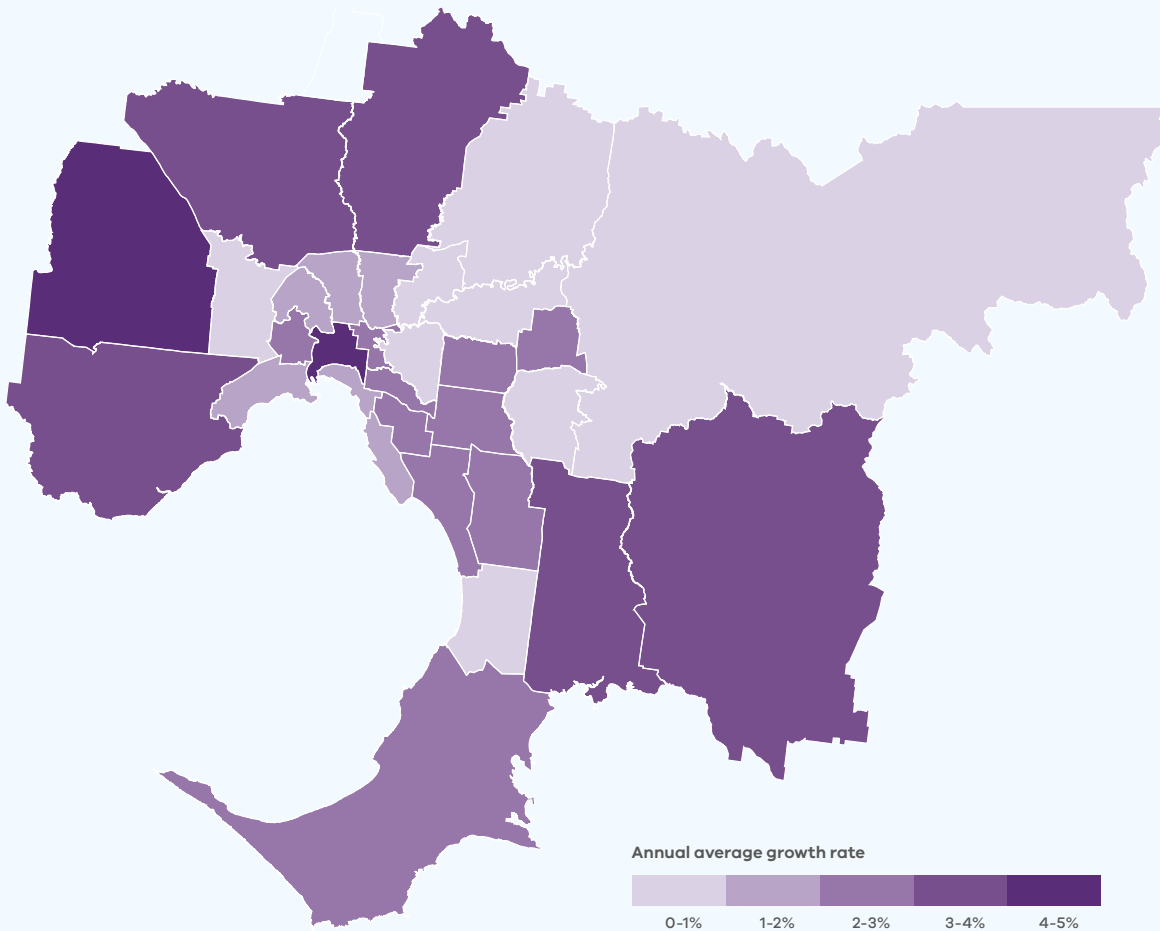
The '20-minute neighbourhoods' concept is an increasingly important response to maintaining liveability in the face of population growth, higher-density living, health trends and the impacts of climate change. Figure 4 shows key features of a 20-minute neighbourhood: a neighbourhood where people can meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from their home, with access to safe cycling and local transport options. The figure, from *Plan Melbourne*, shows the centrality of open space to the concept, and *20-minute Neighbourhood Pilot Program* projects are improving streetscapes, connecting up open space, creating pop-up parks and supporting public art installations and 'creative spaces'.

**Below** A young girl enjoys the water feature at City of Glen Eira's award-winning Booran Reserve, courtesy City of Glen Eira





FIGURE 3 Annual average rate of population change, metropolitan municipalities, 2018–36



Source Adapted from Victoria in Future 2019

FIGURE 4 Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood (*Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*)





## Community health and wellbeing

As our health challenges continue, people need equitable access to a diversity of high-quality, safe and connected open space for their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The 1929 *Plan of General Development – Melbourne* noted that, 'Abundant evidence is available to substantiate the views of city planners, the medical profession, and psychologists that proper outdoor recreation has a most beneficial effect on the health, morals, and business efficiency of communities, and consequently on the national life'.<sup>2</sup> That is as true today as it was then.

Overall, the quality of life, health and wellbeing in Victoria is very good by national and international standards, but the health status of groups and areas in Victoria varies markedly: an unacceptable inequality. Open space can help lessen inequality; its health benefits are equally accessible to all, and access to open space does not rely on a person's ability to pay.

Parks Victoria's *Healthy Parks Healthy People: the state of the evidence 2015* documents the growing body of international research that shows that open space in cities improves the mental and physical health of the people who live in them. Parks and open spaces create awe, delight, and inspiration for people living in urban places. They provide places for children to play, and they help connect us to each other and to nature. Agencies and partners recognise this. For example, the Waterways of the West Ministerial Advisory Committee and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) integrated water management (IWM) forums have emphasised how important open spaces (and particularly blue-green corridors) are for community health and wellbeing.

The *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019 – 2023* explains the importance of open space to increasing active living, tackling climate change and improving mental and physical health and mental wellbeing. The plan prioritises making access easier to parks, open spaces and public spaces that support active living; increasing active transport; and increasing participation in sport and active recreation activities to help achieve these priorities.

Many uses of open space improve physical health. Activity improves fitness which improves immune function, blood pressure and respiratory health, and it reduces the risk of serious and chronic health issues.

The need to reduce the risk of serious and chronic health issues is increasing. The *Australian Burden of Disease Study* reports that in 2015, Australians lost 2.4 million years of healthy life due to the impact of living with disease and injury. For the first time ever, this was more than the years lost due to premature death: that is, dying before the ideal lifespan. This reinforces the importance of a strong preventative health approach, an important element of which is providing people with open space.

The burden of disease is the total of the two measures quantified above: years living with disability plus years of life lost. The categories of illness and disease – cancer, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, mental health conditions and substance use, and injuries – accounted for 65 per cent of the burden. The study found that about 40 per cent of the burden could be prevented by reducing exposure to modifiable risk factors, particularly the two leading causes of the burden: obesity and smoking. Obesity causes cardiovascular disease and is a cause of the state's increasing rate of diabetes. Open space provides opportunities to relax, set aside everyday problems, exercise and learn skills, all of which can help reduce the burden of disease.

Access to open space improves mental health. Parks and open spaces delight and inspire people, particularly city-dwellers. They are places for children to play, and they connect us to nature and each other. Well-designed, accessible and safe open spaces are places where individuals, families and communities can interact and build relationships. Natural environments in cities have a calming effect, and they can reduce depression, anxiety and stress.

At the time of finalising the strategy, Victoria was in the Coronavirus (Covid-19) State of Emergency, which has further highlighted the crucial importance of access to safe, green and blue open space as part of a broader public health response and the 20-minute neighbourhood urban planning concept.

2 Metropolitan Town Planning Commission 1929. *Plan of General Development – Melbourne*. Government Printer, Melbourne. p187.



## Healthy biodiversity

A healthy environment is fundamental to a healthy society. And our diverse ecosystems and plants and animals – especially those that are threatened and endangered – also need high-quality, connected open space: landscapes, coastlines and waterway corridors.

*Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* explains how a healthy environment is fundamental to a healthy society. Biodiversity – the plants, animals and microorganisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form – is society's 'natural capital', and we have a duty to protect it. It is part of Melbourne's cultural identity and sustains the quality of our lives, as it has in this place for thousands of years. In a city where only fragments of native vegetation and natural habitat remain, our parks, gardens, waterways and urban forests support our remnant biodiversity, particularly if we can keep fragments connected with wildlife links and blue-green corridors.

Biodiversity also supports stormwater filtration, pollination, nutrient cycling, pest regulation, soil health, seed dispersal and carbon sequestration. Sydney's 2013 *Urban Forest Strategy* explained the value of a single tree: over 12 months, one mature tree can absorb as much as 3400L of stormwater, filter 27kg of pollutants from the air and provide a cooling effect equivalent to running 10 air conditioners continuously.

As greenfield urban development expands, we lose biodiversity and fragment the remaining native vegetation. Without careful stormwater management, we can also increase the pollution of our waterways and their aquatic ecosystems.

## Climate change resilience and sustainability

To be more resilient to the impacts of climate change, Melbourne must plan to be cooler, greener and more water-sensitive.

*Greater Melbourne Climate Projections 2019* forecast that Melbourne's climate will become hotter and drier and that extreme rainfall events will become more intense. By the 2050s, Melbourne's climate could be more like Wangaratta's current climate.

The 2020 *Long-Term Water Resource Assessment* for Southern Victoria found that water availability since 1975 has decreased by 16–18 per cent in three of Melbourne's river basins and by 7 per cent in the fourth. Average rainfall is forecast to continue to decline, particularly in winter and spring. There is no life without water. The Victorian government's 2016 *Water for Victoria* is a plan for a future with less water as Victoria responds to the impacts of climate change and a growing population. The plan put integrated water management (IWM) into practice, leading to the 2017 *Integrated Water Management Framework for Victoria*. Open space provides opportunities to reduce demand for and more efficiently use our scarce water resources by retaining and using rainwater and by harvesting, treating and reusing stormwater.

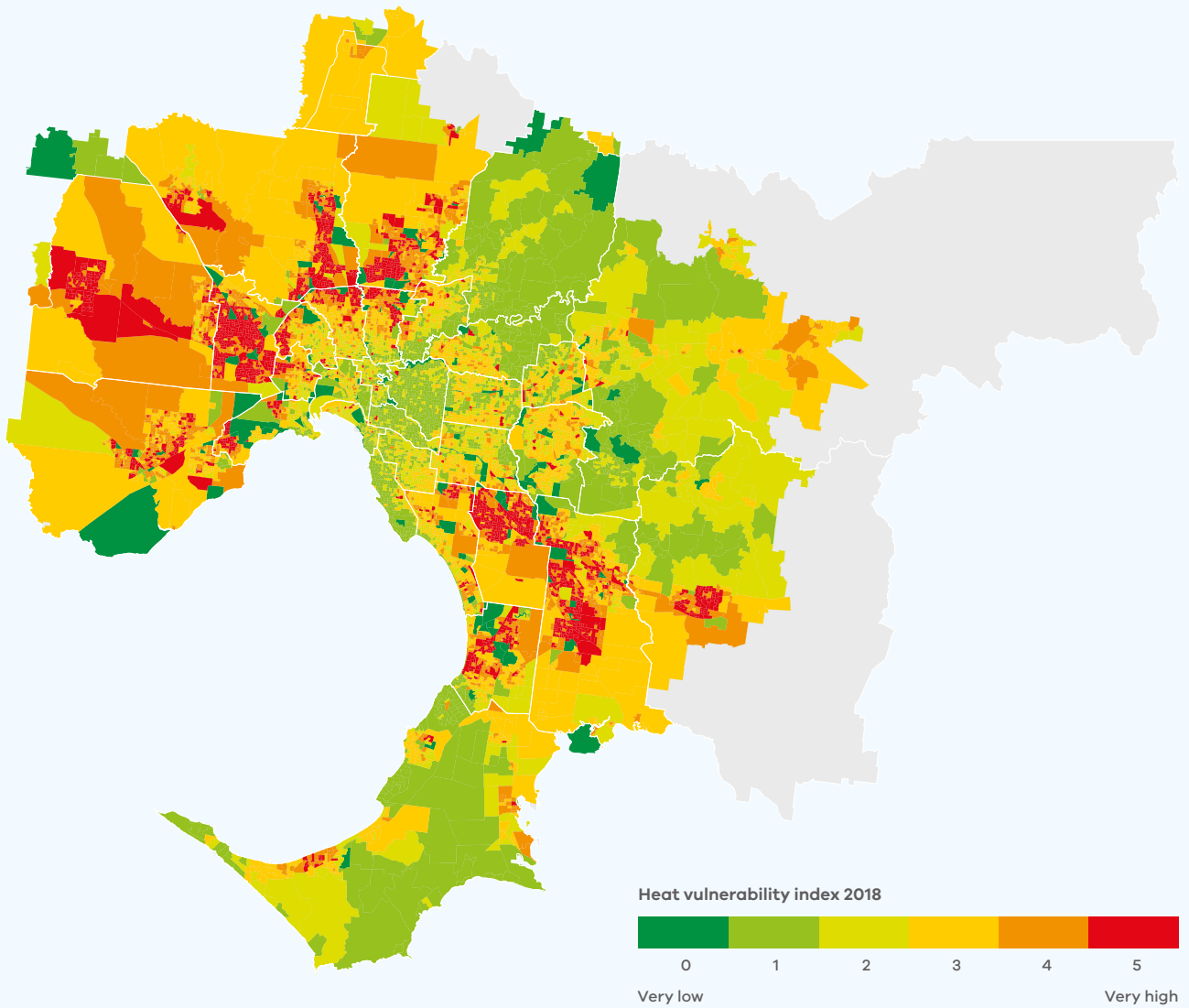
Figure 5 shows the 2018 heat vulnerability index for Melbourne: the greater or lesser extent to which areas are vulnerable to heat. It shows that areas in the north, west and south-east of metropolitan Melbourne have very high vulnerability to heat. More frequent, and more intense, heatwaves particularly affect the hotter, drier western suburbs, and they will be at higher risk of heat stress and heat-related illness.

**Below** A young girl delights in a close encounter with a Dusky Moorhen, courtesy Melbourne Water





FIGURE 5 Heat vulnerability, metropolitan Melbourne, 2018



Below Parks such as Green Gully Reserve, Brimbank (pictured) offer much-needed, locally accessible open spaces in our growth suburbs, courtesy Brimbank City Council



Open space – including our urban forest, large parks and irrigated fields and waterways – increase thermal comfort and reduce heat stress on vulnerable people. Open space reduces the urban heat island effect by having trees to provide shade and evapotranspiration from trees, plants and grasses, irrigation and waterways that cool the air.

On the other hand, more-common periods of prolonged heat also increase heat stress for vegetation, particularly for trees on which we rely to counter the urban heat island effect. A heating climate will threaten the survival of many of our exotic and indigenous trees, and we will need to consider planting species that can adapt to changing climate conditions. Extreme, prolonged heat and longer droughts will mean we will need to regularly irrigate sports fields and parks to maintain the grass, otherwise, we will need to rotate using these facilities or use synthetic turf.

Although forecasts are for fewer rainy days, there will be more extreme rain events; it is an increasing pattern of droughts and flooding. Flooding and the debris it carries damage trees, buildings and bridges; erode riverbeds and banks; pollute waterway and beaches; harm biodiversity; and reduce amenity and opportunities for recreation. In recent years, flooding causing rivers to inundate surrounding low-lying land has done much damage in Australian cities. Multi-purpose open spaces can reduce the impacts of moderate flooding by retaining floodwaters during heavy rain, while being used for recreation or biodiversity purposes at other times.

Climate change is making extreme bushfire weather and elevated fire-danger days more frequent. It is extending the bushfire season – bushfires are more often starting in spring rather than summer – and it is making bushfires more severe, larger and more frequent. *Greater Melbourne Climate Projections 2019* forecasts that the number of Melbourne’s dangerous fire weather days will increase by 42 per cent by the mid-21st century. This will increase bushfire risk to open space, particularly in peri-urban areas.

Rising sea levels will increasingly threaten open space near and along the iconic Port Phillip Bay and Western Port coastlines with flooding and erosion.

## Economic benefits

Increased expenditure by visitors, rising property values, job creation and transport and health savings are among the direct and indirect economic benefits of open space.

Melbourne’s internationally acclaimed parks, gardens and waterways aren’t just picturesque, soothing and cooling. *Destination Melbourne* sees them as central to efforts to attract visitors to Melbourne, who will spend an estimated \$25 billion by 2027. Open space creates and sustains jobs through a variety of industries: environment and land management, tourism, recreation, creative arts, urban and landscape design, boating, services and facilities management and maintenance, and asset construction to name just a few.

Being close to appealing open spaces also increases the value of property; a 2017 study found that improving Sydney urban waterways increased the value of properties close to the waterways by 4–6 per cent.<sup>3</sup> In Melbourne, the amenity value for some 12,000 residents immediately adjacent to metropolitan parks alone is estimated at \$21–28 million a year.

A connected open space network that allows for walking and cycling reduces congestion and spending on infrastructure and vehicle operating costs, while improving people’s health. *Victoria Walks’ 2018 The economic case for investment in walking* estimated that if 50 per cent of short (less than 900 metre) trips by vehicle were instead made by walking (such as may occur if we improved trail networks), Victorians would save about \$166.4 million a year.

A 2019 study conservatively estimated the economic benefits of just four benefits of open space in the City of Moreland would equate to nearly \$100 million a year (Natural Capital Economics, 2019). Naturally, the extent of benefits in different local government areas would vary, but the study indicates the substantive economic benefits of increased provision of open space.







# 3 Strategic framework

It is clear the open space legacy we enjoy today provides many benefits and is essential to Melbourne’s liveability. But the many social, environmental and economic changes facing metropolitan Melbourne and our community mean we cannot continue to plan for open space as we have in the past and expect to create an equivalent legacy.

These changes are unprecedented in scale, interrelated and present us with both a need and an opportunity to work together to achieve the benefits of implementing the strategic framework.

This reform requires consideration of all the factors that determine successful policy, as Figure 6 shows. As the lead agency for promoting and delivering sustainable development in Victoria, DELWP is accountable for providing leadership across metropolitan Melbourne and is committed to working with Traditional Owners, multiple partners and the community to implement the strategic framework.

Figure 7 shows the strategic framework for everyone – state and local government agencies, Traditional Owners, other open space managers, researchers, businesses and communities including our fundamentally important volunteers – to work together to manage, create, plan, design, use and maintain the metropolis’ open space.

**FIGURE 6** Policy success factors



Source: adapted from Bush, 2020

- Top** Many of Melbourne’s reservoirs such as Toorourrong Reservoir Park provide important amenities for our communities to socialise, play and relax, courtesy Parks Victoria
- Left** Creating small ‘pocket’ parks offer locally accessible open space to residents in highly urbanised areas, courtesy DELWP
- Right** The city’s events, such as the Night Noodle Market are an important part of night economies and the character of the city, courtesy City of Melbourne



FIGURE 7 Melbourne metropolitan open space strategic framework





## Vision

The vision to guide those who implement the strategic framework is:

**Melbourne is a city in nature with a flourishing and valued network of public open space that is that is shared and accessible by everyone.**

This is what we strive for. It spotlights the necessity of living in harmony with our natural environment, of protecting and enhancing this essential component of Melbourne's liveability.

## Goals

Those who aspire to this vision are motivated by the benefits of achieving it, summarised by four interrelated goals.



### Improved community health and wellbeing

People need equitable access to a diversity of high-quality, safe and connected open spaces for their mental, cultural and physical health and wellbeing.



### Healthier biodiversity

A healthy environment is fundamental to a healthy society. And our diverse ecosystems and plants and animals – especially those that are threatened and endangered – also need high-quality, connected open space: landscapes, coastlines and waterway corridors.



### Enhanced climate change resilience

Climate change resilience requires Melbourne to plan for the impacts of extreme weather and to be cooler, greener and more water-sensitive.



### Maximised economic and social benefits

Increased expenditure by visitors, increased property values and transport savings are among the direct economic benefits of open space.

## Directions

To achieve these goals, we will strengthen the open space network by creating:

- A network connected at the local and landscape scales to better protect biodiversity, reduce the fragmentation of habitat and enable people to enjoy a more expansive and richer open space experience
- Open space that enables an immersive experience: open space that creates a city in nature and that enhances the enjoyment of nature, connections with others, appreciation of quality design and amenity of a cooler greener city as part of everyday life: in our laneways, streets, local and regional parks, bays and waterways
- An equitably accessible network shared by everyone as a community asset we can all access, enjoy and benefit from, regardless of age, gender, ability or location.

This requires all open space landowners and managers to plan and invest to:

### Protect our inherited open space legacy

- Legislation and regulation that values open space as essential to liveability
- Actions to mitigate, adapt to and recover from the impacts of climate change including with integrated water management
- Increased investment to cater for increased demand for open space for recreational use arising from population growth and higher population density

### Optimise the open space network

- Better connecting important ecological and blue-green corridors along waterways
- Revitalising the quality, safety, amenity, shared use, accessibility and programming of existing open space, including by repurposing underutilised existing and surplus public land and by ensuring open space planning is fully integrated into urban precinct planning

### Grow the network

- Identifying new, high-quality open space in city-fringe, greenfield growth areas, infill development and precinct and city development projects
- Identifying parks, trails and waterway corridors that improve radial and cross-radial connectivity
- Strategically and proactively acquiring land and applying public acquisition overlays that anticipate future needs.

## Principles

These principles will guide how agencies and partners approach the work of planning, funding, acquiring, designing, managing and maintaining open space to protect, optimise and grow the network (although not every principle will be relevant for every action).

## Innovation and creativity

This principle is to be innovative and creative in how we look at open space.

It starts with a commitment to operate to current best-practice standards, set new standards, take the best from successful international models and not be afraid to trial innovative designs and social programs to meet the needs of a growing population and changing climate.

This strategy prioritises unencumbered, accessible open space, but we also need to innovate and think creatively about how currently restricted or encumbered public land such as government schools and golf courses, can be shared, repurposed or made more accessible.

This principle calls on us to:

- find new ways to plan and manage open space for multiple outcomes, including community benefits. High-quality open space can create delight, support multiple activities and encourage social connectedness
- revive past practices such as using cemeteries as open space and more-innovative use of public rooftops, the airspace above and spaces below transport infrastructure, streetscapes designed for people, government school grounds, roads, transport corridors/precincts and linear links
- program use of spaces for different activities by time and area, to increase multipurpose use
- encourage programs that activate underutilised sites and connect new types of users with open space.

**Below** The Cheetham Wetlands at Point Cook provide 420 hectares of artificial and natural lagoons supporting migratory birds from the northern hemisphere venturing southward between July and November each year Parks Victoria





## Fairness and equity

This principle is to make diverse types of high-quality open spaces equitably accessible to everyone.

Everybody should have appropriate access to and use of a wide range of high-quality open spaces: from small laneways through streetscapes and small neighbourhood parks to regional parklands. Not every open space can meet every need, but the diversity of people and communities means planners, landowners and managers must provide for a broad range of interests, needs, preferences and abilities. Unless we act now, we risk inequity of access and use increasing as Melbourne experiences the third and largest wave of population growth since its settlement, the burden of ill health steadily increases and climate change makes our city hotter, drier and more subject to extreme weather.

This principle calls on us to:

- Increase the quality and quantity of open space in undersupplied areas, current and expected high-population-growth and high-density areas, and areas of social disadvantage
- Promote inclusion in immersive open space experiences with universal design and by considering culturally and gender-diverse perspectives and safety
- Remove other barriers to experiences by providing high-quality information, services and programs.

## Community at the centre of what we do

This principle is to inform, educate and engage communities and make them part of the decision-making process.

Open space is for everyone. It is the common ground upon which we gather and share experiences and civic responsibilities. The community must be at the centre of our actions. This principle calls on us to:

- Ensure we are clear about our purpose and audience, so we engage all relevant communities including Traditional Owners, residents, workers, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, visitors and tourists
- Embed Traditional Owner goals into decision making, planning and management (i.e. through recognising, referencing and giving effect to the priorities, aims and aspirations of applicable Joint Management Plans and Country plans).
- Work with and respect Traditional Owners knowledge in land management by engaging with people and community groups with a long-standing affinity to the area and management experience of Country
- Enable self-determination and opportunities for Traditional Owners to directly or jointly manage open spaces
- Support volunteering programs as opportunities to learn in nature and be active stewards of public land. By motivating people to volunteer and removing barriers to doing so, we can increase volunteering as a way to value nature and likewise value volunteers for their contributions.

**Below left** A young family plays together at Braeside Park, a 295-hectare environmental park in Melbourne's south, courtesy Parks Victoria

**Below right** Conservation and reforestation or replanting are important ways to protect and enrich our open spaces, courtesy Parks Victoria



## Resilience and sustainability

This principle is to consider how actions can make Melbourne more resilient and sustainable.

Climate change impacts are an existential threat to Melbourne, and as the climate becomes drier and hotter, we must work hard to make the metropolis cooler, greener and more resilient. We will need to manage land, and locate and design built infrastructure to increase resilience to storms, rising sea levels and bushfires. That means having well-managed and well-designed open space that adapts to and protects against the impacts of climate change.

This principle calls on us to:

- Protect and strengthen our urban forest canopy and the connectivity of habitat corridors
- Adopt integrated water management approaches that sustain green spaces, cool local environments and provide people with natural places of refuge and with amenity
- Ensure that built assets on open space are energy-efficient, minimise pollutants and carbon emissions and where possible are carbon-positive
- Deliver open space that retains and uses rainwater and harvests, treats and reuses stormwater
- Deliver multi-purpose open space that retains floodwaters during heavy rain but is used for recreation or biodiversity purposes at other times
- Manage recreational demand on all open space which includes sustainable management, the use and design of built assets on land and coastal fringes and the protection of water quality and waterway health.

## Working together to deliver best public value

This principle is for agencies and partners to work together and with communities to implement the strategic framework at the local and metropolitan scales.

The complex governance arrangements for planning, managing and delivering Melbourne's open space call for strategic oversight at a metropolitan scale and flexible, innovative partnerships and governance arrangements at the local scale. There are many ways of working together, from legislative arrangements (such as is occurring with the *Yarra Strategic Plan*) to collaborative groupings (such as the six Metropolitan Partnerships, the regional Greening the West initiative, the Living Links collaborative urban nature program, or the five integrated water management forums across metropolitan Melbourne).

This principle calls on us to:

- Embed Traditional Owner involvement that is supported and self-determined within new projects
- Assess, fund and manage programs and projects using partnership models appropriate to their geographic scale and community of interest
- Ensure appropriate funding models are in place to support Traditional Owners as partners in caring for the landscapes, places and heritage that make Melbourne a special place for all.
- Ensure agencies and partners understand and account for the entire range of open space beneficiaries – from overseas visitors to local residents – when making decisions
- Ensure place-based approaches require all partners and communities to be clear about their role and responsibilities
- Support Traditional Owners to achieve Caring for Country and actions within their Country Plans
- Review the governance and resourcing of partnerships between local government, state government and non-government agencies to ensure policies align with practices
- Recognise that many projects are best managed locally by councils or site-specific land managers, so they respond to neighbourhood character and local needs.





**Above** The Greening the Pipeline initiative is transforming the heritage-listed Main Outfall Sewer (MOS) reserve and the Federation Trail bike path into a parkland. The Pilot Park at Williams Landing (pictured) is the first stage connecting communities and providing shade and cooling, courtesy GHD.

## A creatively-designed green corridor

The Victorian government is working with Melbourne Water, Wyndham City Council, City West Water, Greening the West and the Department of Transport to transform the heritage-listed Main Outfall Sewer pipeline reserve along the Federation Trail bike path in the western suburbs into a community parkland.

The Greening the Pipeline project will repurpose 27km of the reserve to connect communities, improve cycling and walking options for the area, celebrate its heritage and provide a creatively designed green corridor where water is managed sensitively.

In 2017, Melbourne Water completed the first-stage pilot park at Williams Landing, to demonstrate the potential of the project as a green linear parkland.

This 100m section was designed in collaboration with the local community and project partners.

The park incorporates water-sensitive urban design principles and harvests stormwater to green the reserve and reduce stormwater impacts on local waterways and surrounding areas.

The state government has contributed \$9 million to be delivered over three years. This will fund the construction of the next 3.8km section of the parkland project, to improve community connectivity and provide new, high-quality open space between Williams Landing and Hoppers Crossing.

For more information about Greening the pipeline, visit [greeningthepipeline.com.au](http://greeningthepipeline.com.au)







# 4 Actions underway

Table 2 shows many actions currently being undertaken by state and local governments and other land managers to protect, optimise and grow Melbourne’s open space network. The table also shows the alignment of each initiative with these three strategic framework directions.

The table includes initiatives in which the Victorian government is investing more than \$230 million to reinforce Melbourne’s status as the parks capital of Australia. This includes \$154 million to deliver the Suburban Parks Program, which Figure 8 shows. While the lead agency is listed for these actions, most projects will involve many partners, including Traditional owners, and engage a wide variety of stakeholders.














- Above** The St Kilda Pier is a much-loved promenade enjoyed all year by Melburnians and tourists for walking, sightseeing, boating and fishing, courtesy Parks Victoria
- Far left** The waterways of Melbourne offer opportunities to take in our city in nature from a different viewpoint, such as kayaking under the majestic River Red gums along the Maribyrnong River, courtesy Parks Victoria
- Left** Open spaces are great places for kids to learn about the importance of plants, animals and waterways on our environment, courtesy Parks Victoria

TABLE 2 Actions underway

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTIONS	LEAD
Yarra Strategic Plan	Complete the plan and work collaboratively to achieve the community vision for the iconic Yarra River.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE  GROW	Melbourne Water
Draft Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan	This plan provides a draft integrated planning and land use vision that identifies areas to grow the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands between Bulleen and Heidelberg.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP
Waterways of the West Action Plan	A plan to protect the waterways of the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn), Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) and Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) catchments and their parklands. It will include a community-developed vision, promote the waterways' amenity and significance and ensure the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Wadawarrung Traditional Owners are included in management and planning.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP
Reimagining Your Creek program	Transform stormwater drains and creeks at priority sites into accessible waterways and open space by working with partners and local communities.	 OPTIMISE	Melbourne Water
Metro Parks PAO Program (ongoing)	Progressively acquire parcels of priority Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) land – land reserved for public use – for the Sandbelt Parklands and for Warrandyte, Yarra Valley, Lower Yarra, Plenty Gorge, Cardinia Creek and Dandenong Valley parklands to revegetate them, protect riparian areas and connect trails.	 GROW	DELWP
Integrated water management (IWM) forums	Link IWM and open space planning to ensure the best use and sustainability of parks, waterways, wetlands and areas of urban vegetation. Identify, prioritise and oversee implementation of collaborative water opportunities from the Maribyrnong, Werribee, Dandenong, Western Port and Yarra IWM forums.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE	DELWP
Port Phillip Region Coastal Infrastructure Program	Upgrade coastal infrastructure to protect values and support community access to foreshores and the bay.	 PROTECT	DELWP
Western Grassland Reserve	Continue to acquire land as it becomes available to create a 15,000 ha parkland to protect and manage the largest remnant of volcanic plains grasslands in Australia and other habitat types including ephemeral wetlands, waterways, red gum swamps, rocky knolls and open grassy woodlands.	 PROTECT  GROW	DELWP
Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area	Create the 3000 ha Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area by combining existing parks and Crown land water frontage to ensure biodiversity is conserved and there are improved landscapes, healthy rivers and active and passive recreation opportunities.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE	DELWP
Healesville Freeway Reserve linear park	Finish creating a new park in Vermont that uses the Healesville Freeway road reserve.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP
20-Minute Neighbourhood Pilot Program	Test delivery of Plan Melbourne's 20-minute neighbourhood initiative in existing neighbourhoods.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP



INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTIONS	LEAD
St Kilda Pier	Build a new pier with a penguin viewing area, tiered seating, toilets and sheltered areas.	 OPTIMISE	Parks Victoria
Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest	Work collaboratively with public land managers to protect, restore and improve the connectivity of a Melbourne-wide urban forest for a cooler, greener city and healthy communities.	 OPTIMISE	Resilient Melbourne/ The Nature Conservancy/ State and local governments
Catchment-scale integrated water management plans	Define key water challenges and opportunities across the five metropolitan Melbourne catchments to enable coordinated planning, actions and strategic investment by multiple partners.	 OPTIMISE	State and local governments
Caulfield Racecourse Reserve	Develop and start implementing a 15-year staged Land Management Plan for the reserve to support better community access and recreational use.	 OPTIMISE	Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust
Use of school grounds	Investigate opportunities to work with the Department of Education and training, local governments, schools and communities to increase access and encourage co-investment to improve facilities, allowing greater community use without jeopardising primary use and with consideration of amenity and local surrounds.	 OPTIMISE	DELWP working with Department of Education and Training, schools and local governments
Shared use of cemeteries	Review opportunities and challenges to make cemeteries and memorial parks more-accessible, user-friendly community spaces. Where possible, improve interface and connectivity with open space beyond their boundaries. Model innovative possibilities through the new Harkness Cemetery design project.	 OPTIMISE	Greater Melbourne Cemeteries Trust (Harkness)
Air Space Over Railways Project	Review the use of air rights over railway culverts and opportunities for low-scale development of those spaces with complementary public outcomes. Consider railway corridors for the potential to create or enhance linear parks and trails.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP, VicTrack
Strategic review of underutilised government land	Complete the review ensuring local government and community needs are understood. The review includes open space reserved for transport or utilities and how to optimise the use of the space to maximise public benefit.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP
Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project	Create a mountain bike hub in the Yarra Ranges to provide recreation, tourism and economic benefits. Complete an Environmental Effects Statement as part of the planning process.	 OPTIMISE	Yarra Ranges Council/DELWP/PV

## Suburban Parks Program

















INITIATIVE	DIRECTIONS	DIRECTIONS	LEAD / SUPPORT
29 new pocket parks	Create 29 pocket parks in established areas to improve recreation opportunities and green suburbs.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP/local government
New off-leash dog parks	Build new dog parks in underutilised parks and reserves suitable for an enclosed dog park.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP/local government
Revitalise existing suburban parks	Invest \$10 million to upgrade visitor facilities – playgrounds, barbecues, shelters, landscaping and other amenities – in suburban parks.	 PROTECT  OPTIMISE	DELWP/local government
1 Better access to Cardinia Creek, Jacksons Creek, Quarry Hills, Upper Merri and Frankston to Mornington Parklands	Develop plans, upgrade the Seaford Wetlands, and fund park infrastructure to create better facilities, linkages and access to five parks connecting stretches of mostly existing public land.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP/ local governments, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and local water authorities
2 Deliver the Sandbelt Parklands	Progress the next stages of land acquisition for a chain of parks connecting the existing Karkarook and Braeside parks.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP
3 New Wallan Regional Park feasibility study	Complete a feasibility study to assess the proposal for a new regional park for Wallan.	 GROW	DELWP / Mitchell Shire Council, Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, Department of Transport & VicRoads
4 Kororoit Creek, Werribee Township and Clyde Regional Parklands	Acquire land, plan and provide infrastructure for the new 260ha Kororoit Creek Park, 340ha Werribee Township Regional Park and 120ha Clyde Regional Park.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	DELWP / Parks Victoria
5 Toolern and Werribee River Regional Parklands	Complete planning and initial infrastructure for the new 110ha Toolern Regional Park at Melton and the 276ha Werribee River Park at Wyndham.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	Parks Victoria / DELWP
6 Plenty River Trail	Complete the Plenty River Trail by building an extra 17km of walking and cycling trail from Mernda to the Western Ring Road at Greensborough, to increase parklands access, connectivity and the visitor experience.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	Parks Victoria
7 Northern metropolitan trails	Complete planning and construction of new cycling and walking trails in municipalities including Nillumbik, Moreland, Banyule, Darebin, Hume and Whittlesea.	 GROW	DELWP/local government
8 Wattle Park upgrades	Construct a new playground and a 3.5km walking / running track around the perimeter of Wattle Park.	 OPTIMISE	Parks Victoria
9 Greening the Pipeline project Zone 5 on-ground works	Build a 3.8km section of a new 27km parkland along the heritage-listed Main Outfall Sewer between Lawrie Emmins Reserve and Skeleton Creek in Wyndham.	 OPTIMISE  GROW	Melbourne Water/City of Wyndham, DELWP, City West Water, Department of Transport



FIGURE 8 Suburban Parks Program initiatives

New regional parks and trails in outer growth areas, and local parks, dog parks and revitalised parks in established suburbs

**\$154 million investment**



- 29 new pocket parks
- New off-leash dog parks
- \$10 million to revitalise existing suburban parks
- 1 Better access to Cardinia Creek Parklands, Jacksons Creek Parklands, Quarry Hills, Upper Merri and Frankston to Mornington Parklands
- 2 Deliver the Sandbelt Parklands
- 3 New Wallan Regional Park feasibility study
- 4 Kororoit Creek, Werribee Township and Clyde Regional Parklands
- 5 Toolern Regional Park and Werribee River Regional Park
- 6 Plenty River Trail
- 7 Northern metropolitan trails (encompassing the Banyule, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Hume and Darebin municipal areas)
- 8 Wattle Park upgrades
- 9 Greening the Pipeline Zone 5







# 5 Enabling actions

The main purpose of the framework, as well as providing a strategic context to actions underway, is to provide a strategic framework for delivering a far more extensive program of activity by all partners to overcome our mounting challenges and so achieve the vision for Melbourne’s open space network.

‘Reform’ is an overused term in government policy, yet if we are to successfully plan and deliver a far more extensive program, we must take actions – enabling actions – to address the structural barriers to working efficiently and effectively together and with communities to plan, finance and deliver open space improvements. We must:

- Clarify governance arrangements and the responsibilities of landowners and managers
- Effectively communicate and engage with partners and communities
- Modernise legislation, standards and guidelines
- Update funding and financing models
- Integrate information and research into planning
- Develop an evidence-based, 30-year investment opportunities framework
- Develop and implement a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.

The expansiveness of this program will require integration with separate but related review processes to avoid duplication and ensure clarity in accountabilities between lead agencies.



## 1 Clarify governance and responsibilities

STRATEGIC TACTICAL

Governance arrangements for the planning, management and delivery of Melbourne’s open space are complex, and many agencies and other bodies have responsibilities. Metropolitan Melbourne’s 32 local governments own and manage about 50 per cent of the open space network. The remainder is managed by state government agencies, statutory authorities, committees of management and volunteer groups.

The existing governance arrangements need to be reviewed to account for changing times; there have been bold changes in recent years. The landmark *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* recognised Traditional Owners’ custodianship of the river and their unique connection to the lands through which it flows.

**Top** Recent railway crossing removals around Melbourne have created shared-use paths such as Djerring Trail, which connects 13 rail stations from Caulfield to Oakleigh, courtesy Level Crossing Removal Project

**Left** Healthy open space offers Melburnians the chance to enjoy several recreational activities, such as fishing, courtesy Melbourne Water

**Right** Urban greening, such as green roofs or vertical greening, are innovative ways to provide cooling, improve amenities and reduce operating costs in dense urban environments, courtesy City of Melbourne

It was a Victorian and Australian first in legally identifying a large river and its corridor, which transverse many boundaries, as a single living and integrated natural entity for protection. Place-based approaches to precinct planning and progress toward Traditional Owner self-determination and a Victorian Treaty could change the way public land and Country is managed.

Arrangements also need to reflect increasingly collaborative approaches. For example, *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest*, led by Resilient Melbourne and The Nature Conservancy, exemplifies a collaborative approach to a citywide strategy to increase the urban forest canopy to cool and green Melbourne, with 41 organisations endorsing the strategy.



## 2 Communicate and engage with partners and community

STRATEGIC TACTICAL

To successfully deliver the new strategic framework, agencies and partners must communicate and engage with each other and the broader public about proposals and why and how to implement them. Many voices must understand and champion the legacy story of Melbourne's open space network and inspire current and future generations to protect, optimise and grow it. Working with creative industries and new partners to expand and explore innovative possibilities is key to success in this approach. To advocate for investment in the network, people must also know of the many benefits accessible open space provides.



## 3 Modernise legislation, standards and guidelines

TACTICAL OPERATIONAL

In 2017, the Victorian government accepted the recommendations in the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Statewide Assessment of Public Land: Final Report. The report made 30 recommendations to improve the current, complex public land management framework so public land is better managed to meet contemporary needs. Consequently, DELWP is modernising Victoria's public land legislation including by developing a new public land act that consolidates the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, the *Forests Act 1978* and the *Land Act 1958*. It is modernising the *National Parks Act 1975* to continue to protect national parks and other areas of high environmental significance, which may be relevant for open space on the urban fringes. As well, the *Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Act 2019* provides legal protection to recreational and Aboriginal water values for the first time in Victoria.

*Plan Melbourne* highlights the need to optimise the use of existing public assets and public land (such as service utilities land, transport corridors, government school grounds and cemeteries) for recreation, sport and the enjoyment of nature. Melbourne Water owns and manages large areas of public land including pipelines, retarding basins and Melbourne's iconic network of waterways, wetlands and estuaries. If Melbourne Water and other public land managers are to optimise the liveability and amenity of public land as well as deliver on their core responsibilities, they need the regulatory environment and funding to do so.

The strategy aims to complement the unencumbered open space network by improving access to and use of restricted or encumbered open space where possible. Doing so would help achieve the objectives of *Plan Melbourne* and of the *2017 Victorian Infrastructure Plan*, which aim to increase the amount and quality of green infrastructure in urban settings over the next 30 years.

Public land managers also need design standards, practice notes and guidelines for open space to be contemporary and best practice, so open spaces are inclusive, safe and well-designed and they reflect the character and diversity of their neighbourhoods.





## 4 Update funding and financing models

TACTICAL

OPERATIONAL

The variety of owners and managers of open space means the financing of those spaces and funding sources for them are inevitably complex. Funding might be a matter for any of the environment, health, water, recreation, tourism, transport, heritage, arts, ports and maritime sectors, among others. Funding streams include general revenues, council rates, trusts, levies, the Parks and Reserve Trust Account (the 'parks charge'), local open space contributions, developers' contributions, fees, charges and grants.

Existing funding arrangements need to be reviewed to determine if they are delivering the best public value. For example, the *Yarra River Action Plan* and past Victorian Planning Authority work have noted the need to review the parks charge, to better define its goals and the services it provides. Similarly, Melbourne may need more-flexible open space contributions arrangements as population growth and high-density development increase demand for and the need to invest in unencumbered open space. Reviews of current and future arrangements will also need to find ways to fund the adequate provision of open space in areas where its quality, quantity or both is insufficient; funding arrangements must result in equitable access to quality open space for all Melburnians. Funding models also need to recognise and support Traditional Owner rights and cultural responsibilities to manage Country and build capacity within their communities.



## 5 Integrate information and research into planning

TACTICAL

OPERATIONAL

REFLEXIVE

There are gaps in the data and information we need to understand the open space network and the pressures on it. These gaps make us less able to improve the provision, quality, design and maintenance of open space. To inform and improve decisions about investment priorities, we need up-to-date and accessible qualitative and quantitative spatial data and information.

We also need to improve the methods by which we quantify and value ecosystem services provided by green-blue assets to better inform business cases for investment.

The planning and provision of open space are multidisciplinary, so we need to bring together a variety of existing and emerging research (including through research partnerships) and its ethical integration with Traditional Owners' knowledge and expertise. Doing so will empower policymakers, urban planners and public land managers with data and analysis about benefits, access and the effectiveness of strategies and actions. Decision-making will be better for it.

Industry forums (such as World Urban Parks Association and Parks and Leisure Australia) provide networks and other opportunities to share innovation, research and best-practice information. The Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise and the Victorian Active Living Alliance are examples of new ways to bring diverse sectors together to better integrate research, policy and practice.

In a rapidly changing world, we must keep research evidence-based and up-to-date, so the ways we protect, optimise and grow the network can adapt to the changing social, cultural, environmental and economic context.



## 6 Develop 30-year investment opportunities framework

OPERATIONAL

REFLEXIVE

The Victoria Planning Provisions' Planning Practice Note 70 *Open Space Strategies* guides how councils prepare their open space strategies. While councils regularly update their strategies, Melbourne doesn't have an integrated, metropolitan-wide investment plan that identifies regional- and landscape-scale gaps in the network across municipal boundaries.

*Plan Melbourne* sets DELWP as accountable for preparing such a plan in conjunction with all partners: state and local government agencies, Traditional Owners, researchers, businesses, non-government organisations and the community. The plan would identify gaps in the network and would guide priorities, funding and responsibilities for initiatives to fill the gaps. The process to assess options and determine priorities would need to clearly link to monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements, so decision-making processes are transparent.



## 7 Develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework

REFLEXIVE



Earlier in this strategy, Figure 2 showed significant differences in open space provision (and therefore access to open space) across the metropolitan area. Most assessments of whether access to open space is fair and equitable depend on quantitative data on which the figure is based and on other quantitative measures (such as public space as a percentage of a local government area, the area of open space per head of population, or the percentage of the population within a walkable distance of open space).

While quantitative data is important, an improved method to assess equitable access to open space would also consider factors such as quality and connectivity to it; its accessibility, type and diversity; and visitor use profiles. And it would also consider social indicators (such as vulnerability to heat, health indicators and socio-economic status) because these measures relate to equitable access. Melbourne needs a cost-effective, practical benchmarking system so the long-term success of the strategic framework can be measured. Such a system would build on the indicators currently used in Melbourne and across Australia to agree on a set of indicators that would best measure the degree of success of the framework.


Table 3 sets out the seven enabling actions and generally indicates their scope. It also indicates the lead agency and partners for the implementation stage during 2020–23 for each action. Some actions will require an ongoing review program.





TABLE 3 Enabling actions

ACTIONS	WE WILL:	LEAD AGENCY / PARTNERS
 <p>Clarify governance arrangements and the responsibilities of landowners and managers</p>	<p>Ensure roles and responsibilities for all open space are clear and match the contemporary context and needs</p> <p>Ensure public landowners/managers have access to accurate and consistent mapping systems</p> <p>Investigate new governance models, institutional arrangements and approaches to support place-based, integrated land management and community participation in planning and decision-making</p> <p>Include any changes to roles and responsibilities in relevant legislated powers and responsibilities</p> <p>Ask Traditional Owners to determine how they want to be involved in the planning of open space.</p>	<p>DELWP</p> <p>Local governments</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <p>Traditional Owners</p>
 <p>Communicate and engage with partners and community</p>	<p>Work with partners to communicate the directions and the rationale for them to stakeholders and the community</p> <p>Actively promote the value, benefits and importance of open space for health and liveability</p> <p>Help increase the community's appreciation of, pride in and respect for Aboriginal history, living culture and land management expertise and cultural practices</p> <p>Encourage more people to use the open space network</p> <p>Engage widely with the community to share and celebrate Melbourne's stories about open space, including about how connecting with nature is a key part of the history, diverse culture and identity of the city</p> <p>Work with creative industries and non traditional partners to explore new ways of engaging with community and designing and using open space</p> <p>Encourage ambassadors for and advocates of the investment required to protect, optimise and grow our open space</p> <p>Encourage the community to learn in nature and to volunteer, both to contribute to and enjoy the open space network.</p>	<p>DELWP</p> <p>Local governments</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <p>Traditional Owners</p>
 <p>Modernise legislation, standards and guidelines*</p>	<p>Review and progressively update legislation, standards and guidelines related to open space, to maximise the benefits and sustainable use of open space and other public land</p> <p>Ensure any proposed updates integrate and are informed by related review processes that support open space directions and standards</p> <p>Review and ensure the effectiveness of current open space contribution guidelines in addressing legacy issues and differing needs in established suburbs, growth areas and areas of entrenched disadvantage</p> <p>Promote guidance about place-based planning approaches and ensure open space and blue-green infrastructure are integral to the planning and delivery of precincts and major projects</p> <p>Work with government departments and agencies to develop tools (such as agreement templates) to support safe (and where appropriate, shared) use of state-owned public space</p> <p>Ensure the availability of contemporary design standards for high-quality open space that is safe, inclusive and accessible to all</p> <p>Review and, where needed, update relevant sections of the Victoria Planning Provisions and local planning schemes to align with the strategic framework</p> <p>Incorporate the outcomes of the Victorian Treaty process into relevant planning and management frameworks and practices</p> <p>Ensure policy and guidelines for disposing of surplus government land optimise net community benefits, particularly in areas without sufficient open space</p> <p>Implement the requirements of the <i>Climate Change Act 2017</i>, and develop practical science-based tools to plan, manage and restore resilient urban habitat</p> <p>Develop and promote urban waterway corridor guidelines to maximise useable open space for recreation, health and biodiversity.</p>	<p>DELWP</p> <p>Department of Premier and Cabinet</p> <p>Local governments</p> <p>Victorian Planning Authority</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <p>Department of Health and Human Services</p> <p>Office of the Victorian Government Architect</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <p>Traditional Owners</p> <p>Australian Institute of Landscape Architects</p> <p>Greening Australia</p> <p>Planning Institute of Australia</p> <p>Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions</p> <p>Department of Employment and Training</p>

\*The reviews of standards, guidelines, contributions frameworks and associated tools do not apply to the directions and standards in the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines in Melbourne's greenfields or infrastructure contributions plans (ICPs) framework that are subject to their separate review processes. However, the guidelines and ICP framework (current or as updated) may be useful resources to inform the reviews proposed by this strategy and as far as practical they should also align.

ACTIONS	WE WILL:	LEAD AGENCY / PARTNERS
 <p>Update funding and financing models</p>	<p>Review current models to ensure they help deliver the strategic framework and optimise open space benefits to the community</p> <p>Explore potential funding sources to protect, optimise and grow the open space network (for example, for land acquisition, planning, establishment, revitalisation, maintenance and programming of services)</p> <p>Develop funding models to ensure meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners and support Traditional Owners to achieve Caring for Country and actions within the Country Plan</p> <p>Increase the transparency of arrangements to raise and spend money on open space across all levels of government</p> <p>Explore new funding and financing models to better support integrated management models (for example, the management of blue-green corridors by more than one agency)</p> <p>Ensure funding arrangements recognise that open space with large numbers of visitors costs more to establish and maintain</p> <p>Identify incentives for public landowners and managers to design and deliver extra community benefits from public land, the primary purpose of which is not to provide open space.</p>	<p>DELWP/ Local governments</p> <p>Victorian Planning Authority</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <p>Planning Institute of Australia</p> <p>Parks and Leisure Australia</p> <p>Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions</p> <p>Traditional Owners</p>
 <p>Integrate information and research into planning</p>	<p>Update and maintain a portal to make spatial data and network mapping accessible</p> <p>Identify other qualitative and quantitative data needed to inform the extent of equity of access to open space, and use the data for setting priorities about the retention or acquisition of strategic public land</p> <p>Better integrate Aboriginal land management knowledge and expertise, open space data, analytics and research to improve evidence-based decision-making</p> <p>Work across disciplines to better integrate research and knowledge about open space to inform relevant legislation, policy, guidelines and management</p> <p>Prioritise research into adaptation to climate change impacts and the sustainable management, design and maintenance of open space, for recreation, biodiversity and amenity outcomes</p> <p>Increase understanding of the profiles of open space users and non-users, to plan for safer, fairer access and ways open space can help increase social connection and cohesion</p> <p>Quantify the economic benefits of open space to liveability, to better understand the value proposition of investing in it in the long term.</p>	<p>DELWP / Local governments</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <p>Traditional Owners</p> <p>RMIT Centre for Urban Design</p> <p>Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Research Hub</p> <p>World Urban Parks Association</p>



ACTIONS	WE WILL:	LEAD AGENCY / PARTNERS
 <p>Develop an evidence-based, 30-year investment opportunities framework</p>	<p>Prepare a metropolitan-wide investment plan to guide the investment priorities of agencies and partners</p> <hr/> <p>Review and, where necessary, update the open space hierarchy categories</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure decision-making criteria consider among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in the quantity, quality, mix and type of open space network at the local, regional and metropolitan scales</li> <li>• Opportunities to enhance connectivity with and the amenity and water quality of blue-green corridors</li> <li>• Future population and demographic projections</li> <li>• The need to protect Aboriginal and European cultural heritage and cultural practices</li> <li>• The aspirations and needs of communities, visitors and tourists</li> <li>• Modelling of walkability</li> <li>• Socio-economic index for areas data, which ranks areas according to their relative advantage and disadvantage</li> <li>• Conservation and biodiversity priorities, based on vulnerable vegetation classes and species</li> <li>• Current vegetation and tree canopy coverage and targets for these</li> <li>• Heat vulnerability index data</li> <li>• Water balance and indexes related to flooding and rising sea levels</li> <li>• Greenfield and brownfield priorities and opportunities</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Include in the plan mechanisms to revise it, so it responds to emerging needs, new research, better data and innovations.</p>	<p>DELWP/ Local governments</p> <hr/> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <hr/> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <hr/> <p>Victorian Planning Authority</p> <hr/> <p>Department of Transport</p> <hr/> <p>Department of Health and Human Services</p> <hr/> <p>Tourism Victoria</p> <hr/> <p>Traditional Owners</p> <hr/> <p>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority</p> <hr/> <p>Greening the West and Living Links</p>
 <p>Develop and implement a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework</p>	<p>Review and assess the costs and effectiveness of methods that major national and international cities use to achieve open space goals</p> <hr/> <p>Develop a pragmatic, cost-effective benchmarking approach for Melbourne's open space network to measure its performance over time against the vision, goals and principles</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure the benchmarking approach considers qualitative and quantitative measures of equitable access for everyone.</p>	<p>DELWP/ Local governments</p> <hr/> <p>Parks Victoria</p> <hr/> <p>World Urban Parks Association</p> <hr/> <p>RMIT Centre for Urban Design</p> <hr/> <p>Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Research Hub</p> <hr/> <p>Parks and Leisure Australia</p> <hr/> <p>Traditional Owners</p>







# 6 Implementation

In 2019, the Suburban Parks Program Project Control Board was established to oversee the preparation of this strategy and the delivery of more than \$154 million in state funding allocated to delivering key priorities. DELWP led the board, which included representatives of local governments, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, the Victorian Planning Authority, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transport.

New governance arrangements will be developed to guide the scoping and early planning of the more detailed implementation phase. This will include continued state and local government representation, partnering with Traditional Owners, as well as opportunities to ensure wider independent research and sector engagement.

Implementation of the strategy is already underway with dedicated project teams focusing on delivery of many of the actions in Table 2. A new team will be formed to plan and commence delivery of the enabling actions in Table 3. This phased approach to fulfilling *Plan Melbourne's* Policy 6.4.2 "Strengthen the integrated metropolitan open space network" recognises the need to provide a strategic context to projects currently underway, as well as a framework to guide the delivery of the larger, more-complex suite of enabling actions.

DELWP is the lead state government agency for sustainable development in Victoria. The department will work with representatives of agencies, partners, relevant disciplines, key stakeholders and the community to scope, plan and progress delivery of the enabling actions over the next few years.

DELWP will look for innovative ways to promptly plan and deliver the enabling actions, drawing on feedback about the draft strategy and work already done by local governments, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council and the Victorian Planning Authority.

As already noted, governance arrangements for the planning, management and delivery of Melbourne's open space are complex, and many agencies and other bodies have responsibilities. Successfully implementing this strategy calls for leadership, courage and collective and collaborative action — just as the creation of the open space legacy we have inherited did.

**Top** Locals enjoy the outdoor play and exercise area at Craigieburn Gardens at Craigieburn, courtesy City of Hume

**Left** Trails and paths like the ones at Albert Park provide easy access for everyone to relax and exercise in beautiful settings, courtesy Parks Victoria

**Right** Federation Square is a multipurpose open space in the heart of Melbourne's CBD, offering live performance space, art galleries, museums and restaurants, courtesy City of Melbourne



Above Let's Make a Park people in front of their mural opposite the Strathmore pop-up park

## A network of 20-minute neighbourhoods

Moonee Valley City Council's long-term strategy – *Mooney Valley in 2040 (MV2040)* – is a strategy for a city that celebrates its identity, heritage and open spaces.

The strategy's vision is that, 'In 2040 Moonee Valley is a great place to live, work and visit, strengthened by a network of 20-minute neighbourhoods'. Under the strategy, the council is now preparing Mooney Valley Outdoors, which will be the municipality's open space strategy. Mapping for the strategy found that only small areas of the municipality have substantial access within a 20-minute walk to open space with high-quality facilities and amenities.

Through the state government's *20-Minute Neighbourhood Pilot Program*, the council delivered a community-led pilot project that developed strategies and identified opportunities to create a more socially cohesive, vibrant and healthy Strathmore.

Through place-making activities and online engagement, the project mapped people's favourite places, recorded their design ideas, identified areas where they feel unsafe, and identified walking and cycling issues. The feedback received indicated people of Strathmore are proud of their local parks,

open spaces and green spaces, and they use them for many purposes.

A community-partnership approach underpinned the pilot project, which involved council engaging with (among others) the Let's Make a Park project, a local youth group working to activate underused public space. The project report documents the Strathmore pop-up park the group created on an underutilised pocket of green space on a road reservation opposite Strathmore Railway Station. With council support, the group installed seating, planter boxes and a little library on the site.

The project was led by CoDesign Studio, a consultancy, implementing 'tactical urbanism', which it defines as 'a city and/or citizen-led approach to neighbourhood building using short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions, intended to catalyse long-term change'.

The site was launched in March 2018 and was intended to remain in place for six months, but the council will now maintain the park as a permanent feature of the Strathmore neighbourhood.



# Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
ICP	Infrastructure contributions plan
IWM	Integrated water management
PAO	Public Acquisition Overlay
VEAC	Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

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