

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE *in* **ESTABLISHED AREAS** **– MINIMUM STANDARDS**

AUGUST 2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We proudly acknowledge the First Peoples of Victoria. We acknowledge their ongoing strength in practicing the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners' lands, waters and skies on which we live and work. We also pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



Description of artwork ▲

Aaron Duggan (Gunaikurnai) 'Movements Between the Five Clans' 2019, acrylic on canvas.

'The tracks are going between the five clans of the Gunaikurnai and the hands are the symbols of my spirit traveling around the campsites.'

This artwork was created through programs provided by the Torch. The Torch provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria. The Torch aims to reduce the rate of re-offending by encouraging the exploration of identity and culture through art programs to define new pathways upon release.

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne

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▲ Bulleke-bek Park, Brunswick

1. INTRODUCTION

This document contains minimum standards for public open space in established urban areas.

Public open space is at the heart of our communities across Victoria and shapes the distinctive character, culture and vibrancy of the places we call home. It is a key element of the People's Panel's vision outlined in [Plan for Victoria](#) (*Department of Transport and Planning, 2025*) (see Page 5).

Public open space directly advances the objectives of planning in Victoria under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, demonstrating its fundamental role in delivering liveable, sustainable, healthy and resilient communities for current and future generations.

The public open space network should be planned to:

- Provide recreational opportunities while conserving natural and cultural environments.
- Reflect Aboriginal cultural and environmental values and support caring for Country, as determined by Traditional Owners of Country.
- Provide fair and equitable access to public open space that meets the diverse needs of all community members regardless of their location, age, gender, ability or cultural background.
- Include spaces for play, social interaction, formal and informal sport, connection with nature and quiet reflection.
- Facilitate a hierarchy of open spaces comprised of:
 - Pocket parks in areas where residential development of five or more storeys is permitted
 - Local open spaces
 - District open spaces
 - Linear open spaces.
- Include active transport links within and between settlements, including along waterways and biodiversity corridors, between major parks, activity centres, community facilities and schools.
- Integrate with public open spaces from abutting subdivisions.
- Integrate public land assets such as utility easements and flood storage basins.

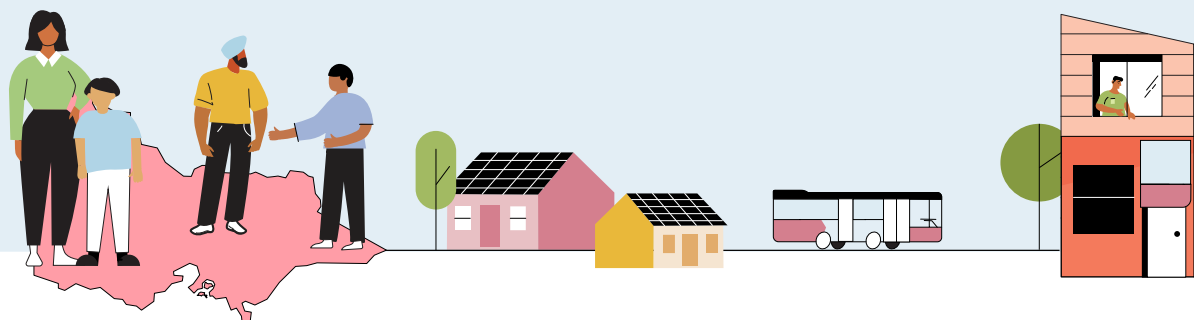


The People's Panel vision for Victoria

By 2050, Victoria will be a vibrant, accessible and connected community, valued for its diverse cultures, sustainable environmental practices and respect for the First Peoples of Victoria.

Building a state that provides choices and opportunities for current and future generations of Victorians in quality housing, transport, employment, environment and connectivity will require input from the community, government, local businesses and industry alike.

We will create a society that caters to the unique needs of all Victorians, nurturing individual health through physical and cultural recreation.



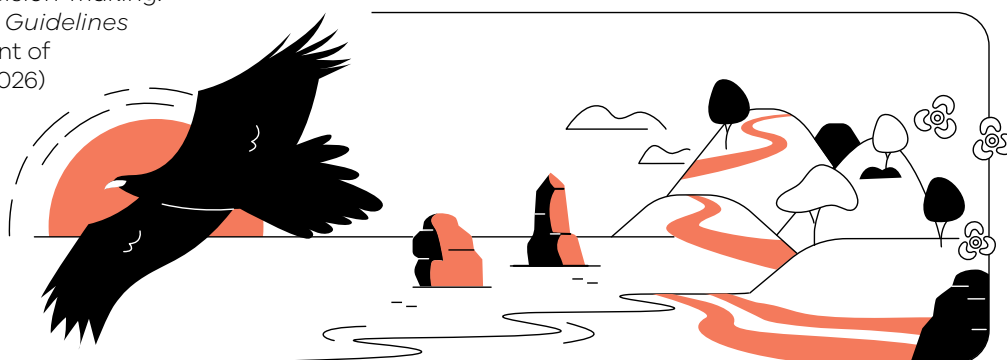
Aboriginal cultural values

Every open space is part of Country and may hold Aboriginal cultural values. Public open space planning should foster Aboriginal self-determination through partnerships with Traditional Owners to protect, promote and celebrate Aboriginal culture and Country.

Traditional Owners should be engaged as early as possible in identifying, planning and designing Aboriginal cultural places, to support co-design and shared decision-making.

Refer to the *Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria 2.0* (Department of Transport and Planning, 2026) for further guidance.

Some public open spaces may have specific legislation, management or co-management agreements in place to determine the consideration of Aboriginal cultural values, for example the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*; *Recognition and Settlement Agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*; the World Heritage listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.



2. APPLICATION OF THE STANDARDS

Where do the minimum standards apply?

The minimum standards apply to established urban areas within:

- The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) of Melbourne
- Any Strategic Settlement Boundary (SSB) of a major regional city.

The UGB and SSB's are spatially defined in [planning schemes](#) and can also be accessed using the online [VicPlan map](#).

When do the minimum standards apply?

The minimum standards apply:

- To a planning scheme amendment.
- As relevant when implementing a:
 - **Strategic plan** for public open space in an established urban area, such as in a municipal or local open space strategy.
 - **Structure plan** in an established urban area, priority precincts or activity centre (excluding greenfield Precinct Structure Plans).

Public open space provision in greenfield areas is guided by the [Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines: New Communities in Victoria \(Victorian Planning Authority, 2021\)](#) and is not subject to the standards in this document.

What are the minimum standards?

Three standards apply to the provision of public open space in established urban areas:

1. **Size and dimension**
The size and dimension of different public open space types.
2. **Access**
The proximity of public open space relative to residential locations.
3. **Function**
The activity (or activities) for which public open space is developed and managed.

How are the minimum standards applied?

Each standard contains:

- An **objective** describing the outcome to be achieved.
- A **standard** containing the requirements to meet the corresponding objective.

All the standards outlined in this document should be met unless expressed using 'must'.



3. WHAT IS PUBLIC OPEN SPACE?

For the purpose of this document, land forming part of the public open space network includes:

- **Accessible public open space:** Public land that is zoned or reserved for public open space purposes, whether or not it has been *substantially and appropriately developed* for open space use.
- **Ancillary public open space:** Public land that is not zoned or reserved for public open space, such as drainage reserves, flood storage, utility easements, land under elevated rail lines and school grounds, but that has been *substantially and appropriately developed* for open space.

The following types of open space should not be counted as public open space:

- **Private open space:** An outdoor area of a dwelling, small second dwelling or residential building or land for the exclusive use of the occupants.
- **Communal open space:** Private open space shared by a number of dwellings.
- **Restricted open space:** Land and open space with restricted or limited public access (such as land that is privately owned, membership-based, gated, or under lease/commercial agreement), regardless of whether it has been developed for recreational purposes.
- **Complementary open space:** Other civic or institutionally owned land, (such as university grounds or a cemetery) that are open to the community for recreational purposes for all or part of the day as a supplement to other open space but are not secured by a shared use agreement.

Substantially and appropriately developed public open space

Land is *substantially and appropriately developed* for public open space, when it meets all of the following:

- It is developed or landscaped to support at least one of the functions in Table 2.
- It is free from physical or environmental constraints that limit its use or safety for recreation except for other activities relating to the public purpose for which the land is reserved such as intermittent stormwater retention, conservation management, or other activity relating to the public purpose for which the land is reserved.
- It is capable of cost-effective maintenance, as determined by the Planning Authority.
- It receives appropriate levels of sunlight and daylight.
- It is capable of ongoing public access and management, including by means of a shared use agreement, as required.
- In the case of school grounds, it has a shared use agreement in place.
- It integrates into the broader public open space network to provide neighbourhood amenity, connectivity, climate resilience and landscape-scale environmental benefits.

Photographic examples of public open space and public land



Accessible public open space (Image: Frontier Park, Aintree)



Ancillary public open space (credit: Level Crossing Removal Project, Carnegie. 2019)



Public land not substantially and appropriately developed for public open space

4. THE STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 – SIZE AND DIMENSION

Objective

To facilitate public open spaces that are each of a size that will ensure a variety of functions are accommodated across an integrated network of public open spaces.

Standard 1.1 – Size

The public open space network should include a mix of open spaces of the size specified in Table 1.

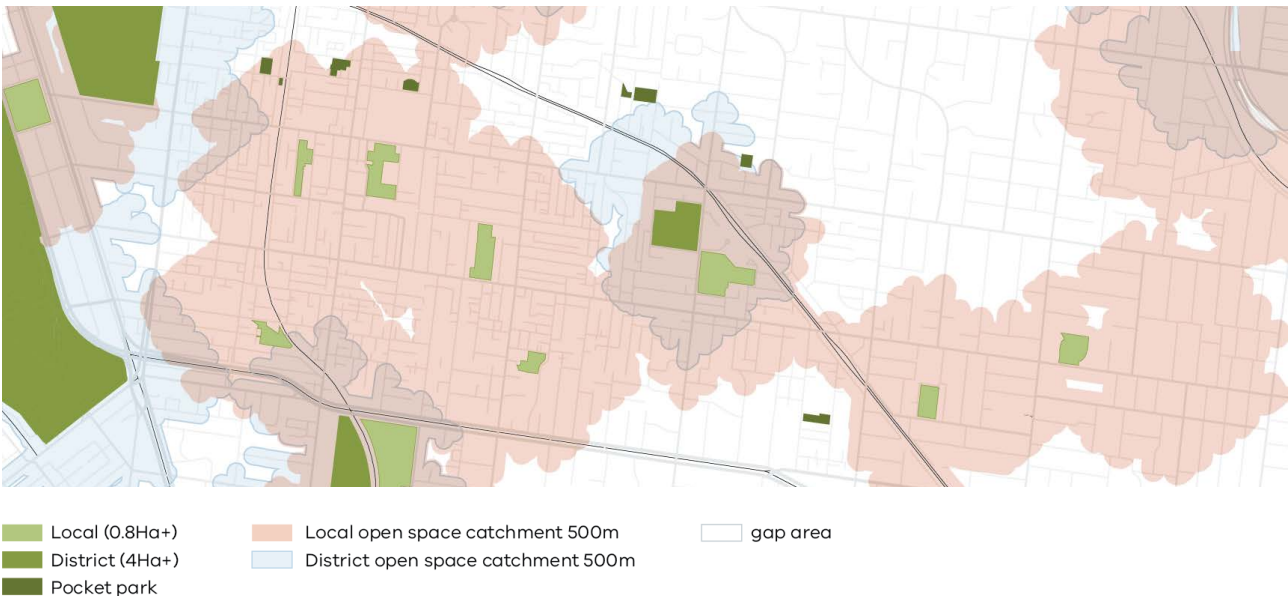
Standard 1.2 – Dimension

All types of public open space must have a minimum dimension of 10 metres.

Table 1 – Public open space size classifications

Public Open Space Type	Public Open space size
Pocket park	0.05ha – 0.25ha Parcels smaller than 0.05ha (500sqm) are not considered viable as public open space.
Local open space	At least 0.8ha Parcels smaller than 0.8ha are not considered large enough to accommodate a necessary variety of open space functions.
District open space	At least 4ha
Linear open space	2km or longer

▼ Figure 1: Example mapping of POS network with size classifications and 500m catchment in established urban areas (refer Standard 2.1)



Note: Access catchments should be measured using the pedestrian network (pedestrian shed), based on the actual street and pedestrian network, rather than straight-line ('as the crow flies') distance.

STANDARD 2 – ACCESS

Objective

To facilitate a network of public open space that provides for equitable access to quality open spaces including through access to:

- Pocket parks in areas where residential buildings of 5 or more storeys are permitted
- Local open spaces
- District open spaces
- Linear open spaces.

Standard 2.1 – Local and district open spaces in all established urban areas

In established urban areas, 95 per cent of dwellings should have safe, walking or cycling access to a public open space of:

- at least 0.8 hectares (local or district) within 500 metres.
- at least 4.0 hectares (district) within 2 kilometres.

The location of local and district open spaces should be identified as part of structure planning processes to ensure minimum standards can be met.

Standard 2.2 – Linear open spaces in all established urban areas

In established urban areas, 95 per cent of dwellings should have safe, walking or cycling access to a linear open space longer than 2 kilometres within 1.6 kilometres.

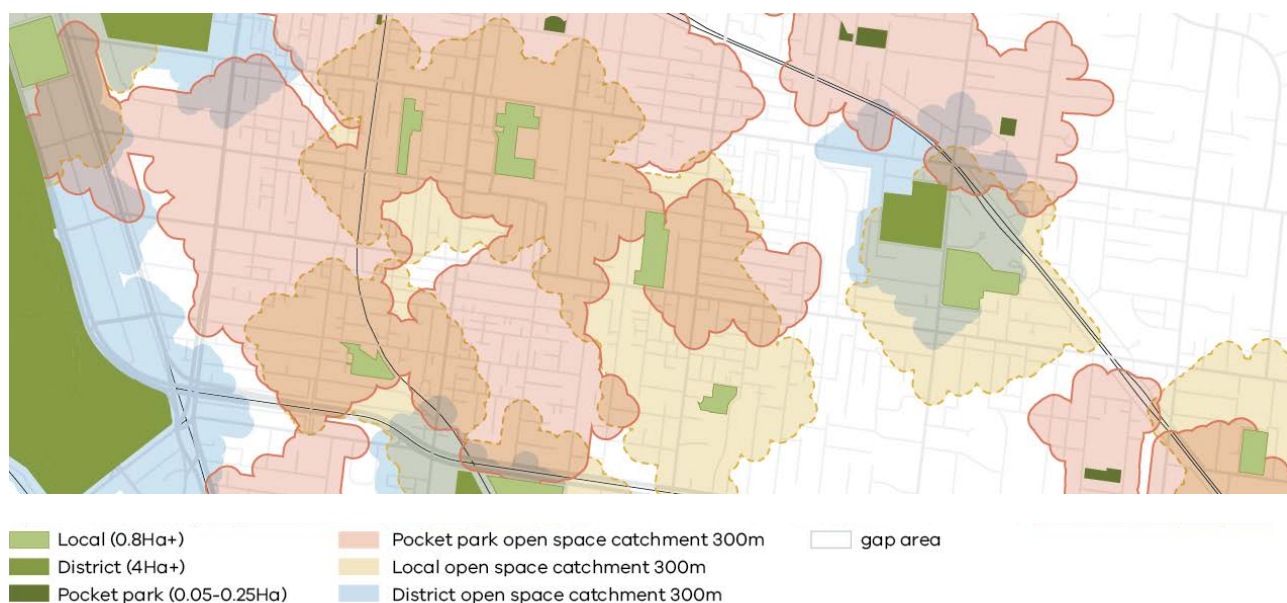
Standard 2.3 – Pocket parks in established urban areas where residential development of 5 or more storeys is permitted (higher-density areas)

In established urban areas where residential development of 5 or more storeys is permitted, 95 per cent of dwellings should also have safe, walking or cycling access to a public open space of at least 0.05ha (pocket park) within 300 metres.

A pocket park is not required where a local or district park is accessible within 300m.

The precise location of pocket parks does not need to be identified in structure plans and can be identified and implemented as development progresses.

▼ Figure 2: Example mapping of POS network with size classifications and 300m catchment in high-density urban areas (refer Standard 2.3)



Note: Access catchments should be measured using the pedestrian network (pedestrian shed), based on the actual street and pedestrian network, rather than straight-line ('as the crow flies') distance.

STANDARD 3 – FUNCTION

Objective

To facilitate a network of public open space that includes spaces for play, social interaction, formal and informal sport, connection with nature and quiet reflection.

Standard 3 – Function

Dwellings in established urban areas should have access to public open spaces serving each of the following three functions:

- **Social recreation** – May be provided in any public open space type identified in Table 1.
- **Nature-based recreation** – May be provided in any public open space type identified in Table 1.
- **Sports and structured recreation** – Typically provided within district open spaces identified in Table 1, but may also be provided in local open spaces.

Table 2: Public open space function classifications defines these functions.

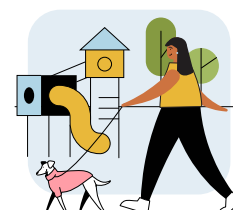


Table 2: Public open space function classifications

Social recreation

Spaces with visitor facilities supporting a range of recreational activities and experiences including picnicking, play, walking and riding, informal physical activity, relaxation, gatherings and socialising, dog parks and events.

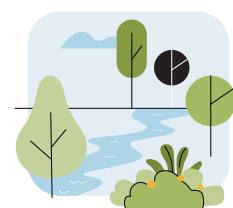
- May vary from maintained, irrigated, mown lawn areas and formal gardens with flowerbeds, plantings and trees to a mix of landscaped with some semi-natural areas. May include formal and informal trail networks, community gardens and water bodies.
- May include children's play equipment, fitness stations, facilities or areas for skate parks and varied riding activities.



Nature-based recreation

Spaces characterised by semi-natural and natural vegetation or bushland supporting nature-based recreation, biodiversity protection and ecosystem services.

- May include open areas of native or natural grasslands or rough grass that is not cultivated or irrigated.
- Likely to have trails and tracks for walking or riding, while enjoying and appreciating a natural setting.
- May include **waterways:**
The land edge/embankment adjacent to and including waters of rivers, creeks, wetlands, billabongs and streams supporting limited nature-based recreation that may include water-based access and activities. Managed also for cultural values and practices, biodiversity, water quality and aquatic health.
- May include **coastal foreshores:**
Coastal lands and waters along inlets, bays and oceans for waterside and water-based recreation activities, and protection of remnant vegetation. Typically, linear strips of sandy/mudflat land with beach, rock pools and/or vegetation. May have tracks and trails through coastal grass or bushland used for walking, riding and beach access.



Sports and structured recreation

Public open spaces managed and maintained with quality playing surfaces for organised sport and structured recreation. The space is typically available for informal and public use when organised sporting events or training are not programmed.

The space may be irrigated and mown lawn, hybrid or synthetic turf, or hard surfaced courts typically with formal markings to indicate playing fields or pitches for active recreation, competitive sports or physical skill development and training.

Typically provided in a district open space.



