

# Heidelberg Activity Centre and Medical Precinct Public Realm Strategy

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Prepared for  
City of Banyule

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# Introduction

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## Introduction

### 1.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of the Heidelberg Public Realm Strategy is to create an enduring vision for the Heidelberg Activity Centre and Medical Precinct (HACMP), a significant area undergoing change within the suburb of Heidelberg and Heidelberg Heights in the City of Banyule. The project seeks to progress the work of the Banyule Public Open Space Plan and to provide direction to the review of the Heidelberg Structure Plan. The HACMP is under considerable pressure to provide accessible public open space within a medical, residential, commercial and retail precinct. The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) predicts that the area will see a 260% increase in population by 2030. Whilst public realm planning and open space improvements are underway, this plan will provide an integrated and coordinated approach to further the provision of public open space within the Precinct.

This Strategy extends the typical open space strategy, which includes green spaces such as gardens and parks, to the broader understanding of the public realm, which includes all external space that is available for public use.

This Strategy identifies not only green spaces as fundamental to the character and significance of Heidelberg, but also additional areas that contribute significantly to the quality of the spaces within the public realm. These areas include pedestrian links, transport reserves and streetscapes.

A significant tool to shift thinking is the use of terminology which can have a profound effect on how elements within the public realm are perceived and understood. Traditionally, public open space (POS) has suffered under the limited definition and perception of simply being green parkland. Broadening the definition of POS can allow the public and Council to engage with the urban public landscape in more diverse ways. This is particularly relevant for the HACMP, an area where opportunities to extend parkland are extremely limited. Considering the Precincts forecasted population growth, important public space opportunities must be included. These areas encompass commercial zones, hard landscapes, plazas and the borrowed landscape of distant views.

The Heidelberg Activity Centre and Medical Precinct is unique in being established on the hills overlooking the Yarra Valley. The Precinct has an elevated position which is immersed in the green landscape. This strategy builds upon this character identifying opportunities to protect, enhance and deliver a network of high-quality open spaces for future growth of the area.



Figure 01: HACMP Vistas

Introduction

1.2 Strategic Location

The HACMP is located approximately 10 km to the north east of the Melbourne CBD in the City of Banyule. The Precinct is well serviced by road and rail infrastructure and benefits from being within the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC). The combination of medical facilities, bustling retail and high-quality regional parks makes the Precinct a strategic area for the future growth of Melbourne.



Figure 02: Strategic Location Map

**Introduction**

**1.3 The Evolution of Heidelberg**

Overlooking the Yarra Valley, Heidelberg has always been a prominent settlement area of Melbourne. From the long period of Aboriginal history to the current population boom, the landscape of the suburb has changed dramatically over time.

**Pre-contact**

Aboriginal people lived in what later become known as the Heidelberg District for over 40,000 years. The many rivers and creeks in the vicinity created a valuable and rich landscape. The Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woiworung language group and greater Kulin nation inhabited this land.

**Post-contact**

Shortly after 1838 this district took on the name of Heidelberg. It was one of the first in the Melbourne region to be subdivided, and hosted prestige properties of some of the colony's prominent citizens. The village was known as Warringal up until the 1860s, and the fertility of the land made it ideal for grazing and farming. Over this period native vegetation started being replaced with crops and European vegetation.

**Current**

Heidelberg is a majority detached dwelling residential area with a period of rapid densification occurring. It maintains high-quality landscapes and open spaces, particularly along the Yarra River.

**Future**

Employment and residential growth will create a bustling and densely populated district of Melbourne. With the arrival of a stronger employment sector and additional residents, the current open space provision will be under pressure. New strategies need to be implemented to improve and protect Heidelberg's valuable green landscapes

**Pre-contact**



**Post-contact**



**Current**



**Future**



Figure 03: The Evolution of Heidelberg Time Line

Introduction

1.4 Population Growth Forecast

The HACMP is 222 ha and sits across four suburbs in Banyule: Heidelberg, Heidelberg Heights, Ivanhoe and Eaglemont. Since the HACMP is primarily located within Heidelberg and this is the suburb that is undergoing the greatest urban growth, this strategy has used Heidelberg’s figures to calculate the current population of the Precinct. At present the population sits at 4,706 people with a density of 21.2 people/ha.

According to ID Consulting’s projections, by 2036 the Precinct’s population will increase by 103% to approximately 9,551 people with a density of 43.02 people/ha.

These projections are relatively conservative when compared to those predicted by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA). The VPA predicts that by 2030 the Precinct will ultimately grow by up to 260%, to a total of approximately 16,941 people with a density of 76.31 people/ha.

Locality	Area (ha)	2016		2036		Growth
		Population	People/ha	Population	People/ha	Population
Eaglemont	221	3,873	17.5	4,597	20.8	19%
Ivanhoe	554	11,390	20.6	17,238	21.1	51%
Heidelberg Heights	209	6,087	29.1	8,590	41.1	41%
Heidelberg	293	6,265	21.2	12,622	43.02	103%
HACMP	222	4,706	21.2	9,551	43.02	103%

Figure 04: Demographic Analysis Table (source: ABS and ID, 2017)



Figure 05: Precinct Location Map

Introduction

1.5 Changes in the Provision of Publicly Accessible Open Spaces

Located adjacent to the Yarra Valley Parklands, one of Melbourne’s premier open and recreation spaces, the HACMP has a significant amount of publicly accessible open spaces within and close to its boundaries and much of it is of a high quality. Overall the HACMP has a total of 19.7 ha of publicly accessible open spaces which, given its current population of approximately 4,706 people, equates to 4.19 ha per 1,000 people. This compares very favourably with the Metropolitan Planning Authority’s benchmark figure of 2.5 ha for every 1,000 people.

Given the retention of the current area of open spaces and the conservative population growth forecast of 103% by 2036, the Precinct’s population will increase to 9,551 people, equating to a decrease in public open space per 1,000 people from 4.19 ha to 2.06 ha. This is considerably lower than the current figure, but close to the MPA’s benchmark.

However, the VPA’s predictions are that the Precinct’s population will increase by 260% to a total of 16,941 people by 2030. This equates to a decrease in the provision of open space per 1,000 people from 4.19 ha to 1.16 ha.

Irrespective of either scenario, given the retention of the current amount of open space, the future provision of open space per capita in this Precinct will be under pressure. Distribution and performance of and access to publicly available open spaces within the Precinct are the major concerns that must be addressed and planned for to ensure the future population can enjoy high-quality open spaces.

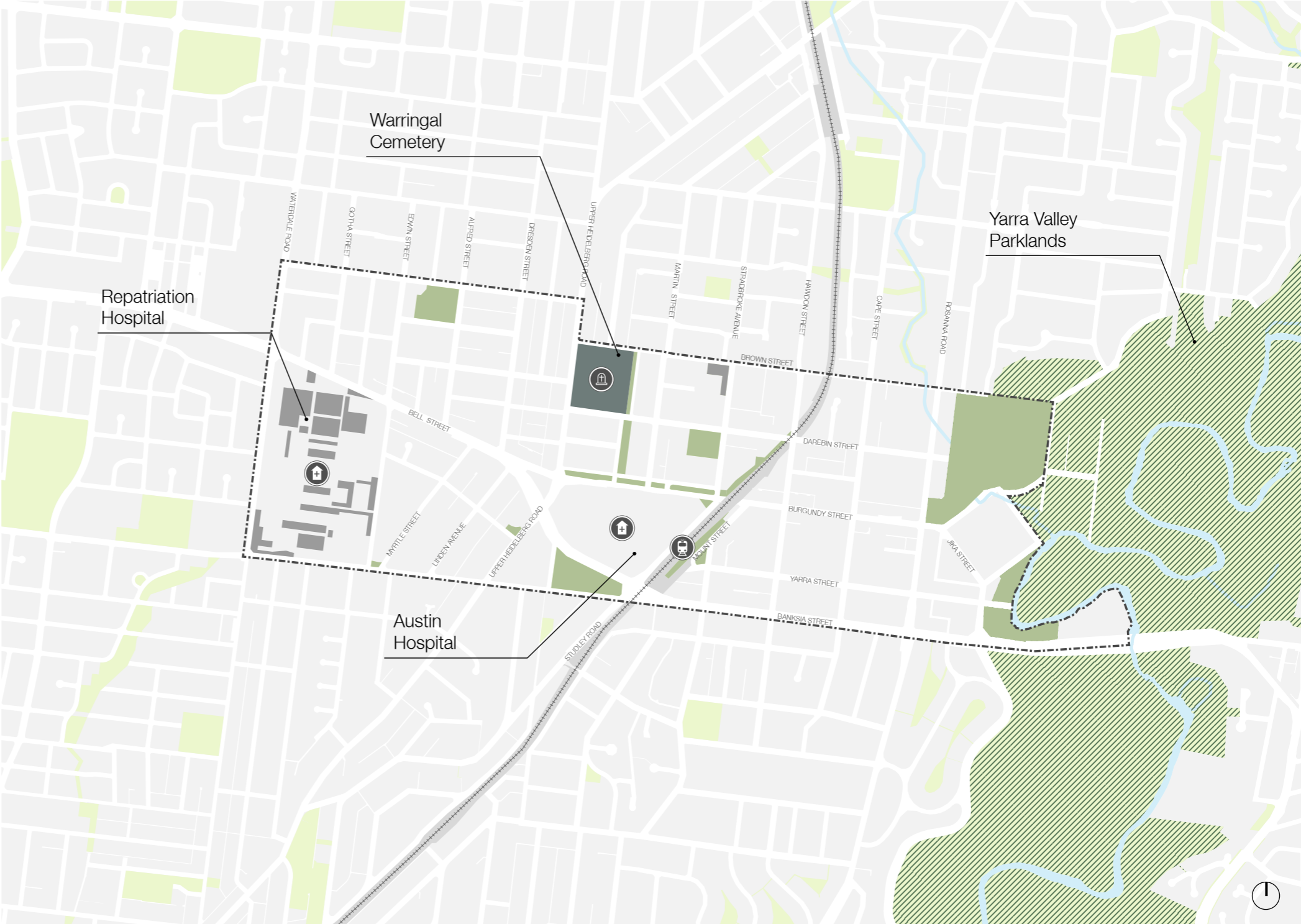


Figure 06: Current Provision of Publicly Accessible Open Spaces Map



## Background and Research

### 2.1 The Importance of Public Open Spaces

There are numerous benefits associated with adequate access to green and public open spaces. From improving ecological networks to community wellbeing, open spaces have become increasingly important in the making of our cities.

Current research demonstrates that access to green open spaces, whether it be for experiencing the natural environment, for community based activities, or for structured or unstructured physical activity, all these activities enhance physical and mental health and help reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases. A substantial body of evidence indicates that people who use public open spaces are three times more likely to achieve recommended levels of physical activity than those who do not use these spaces.

Beyond mental and health benefits open spaces also contribute to social and environmental outcomes. In areas of increased population density like Heidelberg, a network of parks and open spaces is critical to provide healthy habitats for wildlife and plants and to provide platforms for people to interact and connect.

#### Challenges Facing Public Open Spaces

- Growing population placing pressure upon open space provision.
- Significant loss of private open space due to high-density development.
- Changing demographics requiring diversity of open space.
- Minimal open space contribution from developers.
- Difficulty acquiring new open space in developed areas.
- Lack of communication between respective public and private entities.
- Lack of equitable distribution of open space.
- Access to and movement within open spaces.
- Lack of partnerships with private sector organisations towards developing future open space provision, whether it be in public or private ownership.

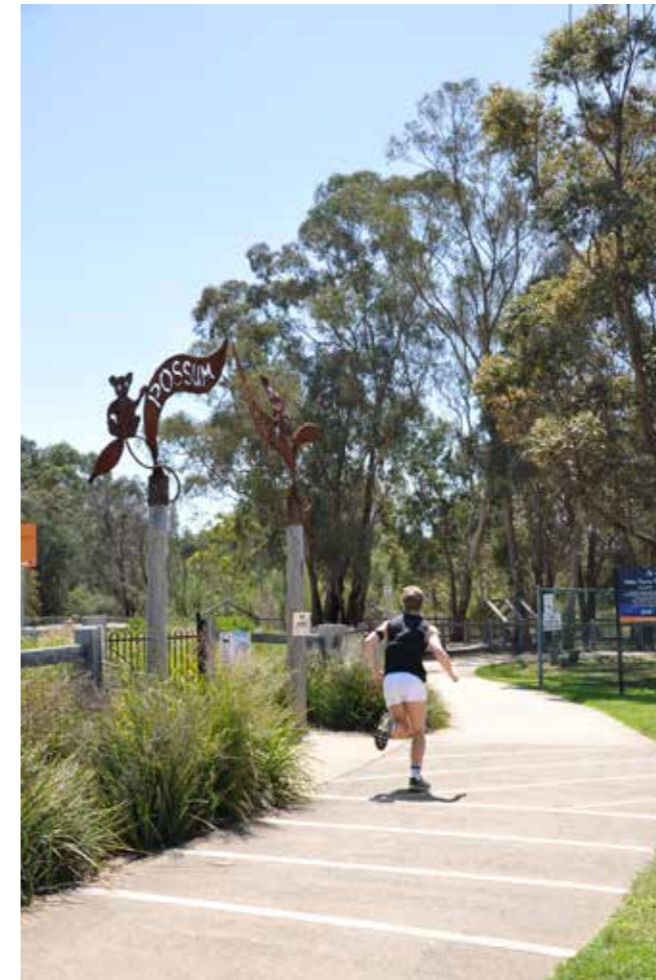


Figure 07: HACMP Current Situation

**Background and Research**

**Social Benefits**

- Social contact.
- Meeting places, particularly located within higher density living areas.
- Enjoyment of community events and festivals.

“Benefits of community gardens include improved social activity and connections through the sharing of produce with neighbours, and stress relief and relaxation.”

- Heart Foundation

**Aesthetic Value**

- Preservation of nature's natural beauty.
- Provision of buffers or relief between conflicting land uses.
- Provision of visual relief to urban areas.

“Perceived park aesthetics, condition and safety have been associated with park visitation and physical activity levels within.”

- Heart Foundation

**Physical Health Benefits**

- Informal exercise.
- Participation in organised sporting events.
- Contact with nature.
- Sunlight and fresh air.

“There is evidence indicating that living in closer proximity to large, attractive public open spaces, is associated with being physically active in young people and adults.”

- Heart Foundation

**Mental Health Benefits**

- Spaces to relax.
- Spaces to maintain emotional well-being.
- Social development for children.

“There is evidence associating the presence of attractive public open space with enhanced mental health in adults and children. The provision of playgrounds provides for children to engage in play activities which promotes learning about vital social skills.”

- Heart Foundation



Figure 08: Illustration of Benefits of Open Spaces

**Background and Research**

**Biodiversity Values**

- Adequate and carefully located spaces are important for local natural ecologies.
- Habitat for flora and fauna with the protection of indigenous species.
- Promotion of species diversity.
- Integration with waterways.
- Mitigation of urban heat using canopy trees, permeable spaces, increase of albedo reflection.
- Improved water quality and stormwater management.



**Cultural and Character Values**

- Protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander natural cultural heritage.
- Protection of spaces with local or State significance.
- Protection of views to Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges.



**Economic and Tourism Benefits**

- Spatial quality is connected to economic success.
- Spaces can be locally productive spaces.
- Visitor destinations enhance open space quality through maintenance and protection.
- Increase real estate values.



**Arts and Events Benefits**

- Provision of temporary or permanent art installations.
- Use of space for gatherings, performances and events.



Figure 09: Illustration of Benefits of Open Spaces

**Background and Research**

**2.2 Defining Public Open Spaces**

For the purpose of integrating this strategy with the existing planning framework, the definition of public open spaces used is aligned with the Banyule Open Space Plan 2016-2031, and includes:

**Green Spaces**

- Publicly owned or managed land used as public parks and reserves and usually zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone, Public Conservation and Resource Zone, or Public Use Zone, and small parcels of unzoned land that already function as public open space which are available to the general public for recreational purposes.

Green spaces are those that substantially consist of green infrastructure such as trees, plants, garden beds and grassed areas.

**Urban Spaces**

- Publicly owned or managed community urban spaces in and around shopping centres and community hubs.
- Streetscapes.
- Publicly and privately owned spaces that are freely available to the community as informal gathering spaces and for community activities.

Urban spaces are spaces that are accessible to the community and that substantially consist of hard surfaces and infrastructure such as concrete, pavers, and asphalt, but include green infrastructure where possible.

**Semi-Public Spaces**

- Public and privately owned spaces where public access is permitted but restricted. Places that are conditionally available to the community as gathering spaces and for community activities and sports.

**2.3 Hierarchy of Open Spaces**

**Metropolitan Open Space**

This description is applied to the very large open spaces within the municipality that are owned by the State Government and managed by Parks Victoria and aimed at attracting patronage from across Melbourne, particularly from the Northern and Eastern Regions. The expectation is that users would be prepared to drive for 15 minutes or more to these parks and/or playspaces and could potentially spend up to four hours there in any one visit.

**Regional Open Space**

*Open Space*

The term regional open space is applied to municipal owned parkland which has a catchment well beyond the suburb it is located in and often draws users from other municipalities.

*Playspace*

Large, individually designed playgrounds servicing the whole municipality where there is a full range of supporting amenities provided such as toilets, drinking fountains, shelter, seating, bins, off street parking, tables and seats which cater for all abilities.

The expectation is that users would be prepared to drive for 15 minutes or more to these parks and/or playspaces and could potentially spend up to four hours there in any one visit.

**Neighbourhood Open Space**

*Open Space*

This applies to open spaces that are large enough to service the residents of a suburb or at least several large neighbourhoods within a suburb.

*Playspace*

Neighbourhood playspaces will generally include medium to substantial sized playgrounds catering for a range of age groups and abilities.

The expectation is that users would be prepared to travel for up to 15 minutes to these parks and/or playspaces and could potentially spend up to two hours there in any one visit.

**Urban Plaza**

Applies to public space in and around high use areas such as shopping centres, or civic precincts. Generally, hard surfaces predominate in these spaces and they are often most suited for low-key social gatherings and some informal recreation activities. Greater urban spaces maybe suited to larger organised activities such as community markets, promotional displays, outdoor movies, theatre performances.

The expectation is that users would be prepared to travel for up to 15 minutes to these urban spaces and could potentially spend up to two hours there in any one visit.

**Local Open Space**

*Open Space*

This describes small open spaces that local residents would use.

*Playspace:*

Small playgrounds designed to service residents living within 400 metres with one or two items of play equipment for a limited number of age groups. Local playgrounds are usually only used by residents from nearby streets who normally get there by walking or cycling.

The expectation is that users would be prepared to walk to these spaces and on average are only likely spend up to 30 minutes there on any one visit.

**Pocket Park**

*Open Space*

Pocket parks are very small parcels of public open space, with limited facilities. Many such parks often play an important community role where they connect two or more streets or court bowls thus greatly enhancing the opportunity for residents to circulate more easily through their communities.

*Playspace*

Very small playgrounds with only one or two pieces of play equipment. Usually only used by children in the immediate vicinity and reached by walking.

The expectation is that people within walking distance are likely to use these spaces for short periods of time or as connectivity within their community.

**Pop Up Park**

Generally temporary, pop up parks are usually created for a specific activity or for an agreed limited period of time, or as trial. In some instances, pop up parks may eventually become permanent public open space.

Background and Research

2.4 Types of Activities in Open Spaces

Formal Sporting and Active Recreation

Provided by open spaces with facilities for formal sporting competition and training, including sports playing surfaces, pavilions and clubrooms, sports field and lighting.

Informal and Passive Recreation

Provided by open spaces with facilities that encourage informal and passive recreation, including items such as paths, seating, shelter, picnic tables, barbecues, drinking fountains and public toilets.

Environmental Recreation

Provided by open spaces which have a distinctive bushland, wetland or vegetational character, and includes areas along river and creek corridors which enable users to experience nature, see and hear native birds and animals and have the feeling they are away from suburbia.

Play

Provided by formal and informal play infrastructure. Many open spaces have formal play infrastructure. There are also informal play opportunities in every green and urban space, regardless of whether there is a traditional playground.

Hierarchy of Open Spaces	Catchment Area	Catchment Time	Average Time Spent on Open Space
Metropolitan Open Space	20km	30-minute drive	Up to 4 hours
Regional Open Space	10km	15-minute drive	Up to 4 hours
Neighbourhood Open Space	1200m	15-minute walk	Up to 2 hours
Urban Plaza	1200m	15-minute walk	Up to 2 hours
Local Open Space	400m	5-minute walk	Up to 30 minutes
Pocket Park	400m	5-minute walk	Up to 15 minutes
Pop-Up Park	400m	5-minute walk	Up to 15 minutes

Figure 10: Hierarchy of Open Spaces Table

Background and Research

2.5 Metropolitan and Regional Open Spaces



Figure 11: Illustration of Metropolitan and Regional Open Spaces

2.6 Neighbourhood Open Spaces



Figure 12: Illustration of Neighbourhood Open Spaces

Background and Research

2.7 Urban Plazas



Figure 13: Illustration of Urban Plazas

2.8 Local Open Spaces



Figure 14: Illustration of Local Open Spaces

Background and Research

2.9 Pocket Parks



2.10 Pop Up Parks



Figure 15: Illustration of Pocket Parks

Figure 16: Illustration of Pop Up Parks