



Public spaces COVID-19 recovery



The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us all of the important role public space plays in our lives. Our parks, beaches and gardens are central to our sense of self, safety and social identity, our local economy and in our connection to nature.

Throughout this time, demand on and interest in our public spaces has increased. The way our community is engaging with them is changing too. Our City's social and economic recovery is inextricably linked to public space. Council will work in partnership with our community, local businesses and other levels of government to ensure our public spaces promote the following outcomes:

					
Health and wellbeing	Local amenity and experience	Community connection	Economic vitality	Creative expression	Climate change responsiveness

What Council is doing

To address increased demand, Council is proposing the following projects to activate public spaces, reevaluate our streets and trial new initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increasing cleaning 2 Changing services in our parks, foreshore and sports facilities 3 Providing rates relief and assistance for those hardest hit during the pandemic.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Widening footpaths to make it easier to get around and be socially distant 2 Creating parklets to support local businesses to open and operate safely 3 Creating play spaces closer to home 4 Trial street closures and new cycling routes (shimmy routes) 5 Creating safe spaces when venues are closed and for vulnerable members of our community 6 Supporting creative organisations to activate public spaces 7 Developing local responses to contaminated soil 8 Low cost, temporary initiatives to activate public spaces.

Pop-ups, pop-outs and parklets

With many of our social and recreational activities on hold, park use has risen sharply, creating the demand for more space.



We are creating space to improve social distancing, making it easier for people to walk and cycle, and to create additional, temporary green spaces so people can exercise, relax and connect to nature at all times of the day, rather than at peak times only.



We are trialling street closures and widening footpaths in areas like South Melbourne Market and looking at our other centres with narrow footpaths like Carlisle Street and Elwood to temporarily activate spaces and create additional public space.



Supporting the local economy is important for our community in these difficult times and we are looking at ways we can continue to do this.



We are identifying new routes, wayfinding and safety improvements to make it easier to walk and cycle. And, we are looking to activate public space by providing temporary parklets and play spaces.

Transforming our streets



Cities around the world are moving to reclaim public space for a post-COVID-19 world. Most people don't realise, but streets form the largest public asset or space of most councils. With less traffic and emptier streets during the pandemic, now is the time to reimagine them as more active, pedestrian and cyclist friendly spaces.

We must act quickly so that after the current crisis subsides, we've made permanent gains in public space and amenity for everyone.

What's next

Keeping our public spaces safe, well loved and well maintained is part of Council's role as custodian of our public space. Recent events have shown that we need a more flexible approach to public space, especially when faced with unexpected disruptors.

Council will draw lessons from these changes and integrate them into the following policy and projects:

- ✓ Public Space Strategy
- ✓ Sport and Recreation Strategy
- ✓ Health and Wellbeing Implementation strategy
- ✓ Act and Adapt
- ✓ Move, Connect, Live
- ✓ Art and Soul
- ✓ Don't Waste It
- ✓ Greening Port Phillip

Council is already planning improvements to our community facilities in key locations by upgrading existing playspaces, exercise equipment, sports grounds, public lighting and public gardens.

Our experience of COVID-19 will strengthen the final version of the document and its action plan.



Our short-term goals

Be smarter and more flexible about the use of public space to support:

- wellbeing and economic recovery
- support the use of our public spaces at all hours, rather than peak times only.

Evaluate the success of public space changes and trials, using them as opportunities to accelerate change and embed a 'new normal'.

Our medium-term goal

Council will look to deliver more projects and improvements through the actions outlined in the Public Space Strategy.

Our long-term goal

The Public Space Strategy is a long-term plan (11 year) to manage and improve public space and transform our streets.

For more information

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