
Neighbourhood Parks

Introduction

Open space within a neighbourhood provides opportunities for individuals to interact with other people, increase their levels of physical activity and participate in sport and recreation activities. Open space can also contribute to improved mental health as the provision of natural, green spaces where people can rest and relax can help alleviate stress.

This fact sheet details the design and planning considerations specific to neighbourhood and pocket parks (small parks). Neighbourhood and pocket parks, as outlined in the Parks and Open Space fact sheet, are parks that serve the needs of the residents within their neighbourhood. Typically, they range in size from 1000m² up to around 5000 m² and are designed to accommodate a range of age groups. Neighbourhood parks may also include lineal parks connecting other parks or forming part of the broader network of open space and the movement network.



Neighbourhood parks can contribute to young children being more physically active
Source: Pamela Miller Photographer

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Neighbourhood parks are an integral part of the neighbourhood structure and need to be planned strategically to encourage social interaction, recreation and leisure activities. Neighbourhood and pocket parks should be appropriately sized to cater for their intended role within the neighbourhood.

There are various spatial planning factors that if addressed as part of neighbourhood planning will assist in promoting maximum use of these spaces. Parks need to be appropriately distributed to ensure all residents can easily walk to a park. Ideally, other community facilities should be co-located to encourage dual use and parks should form part of an overall broader open space and movement network to encourage walking and cycling throughout the neighbourhood (Sunjara, 2008).

Neighbourhood parks should be designed to reflect the local character and need to be welcoming and attractive to encourage people to linger and enjoy the space. Facilities that are included such as children's play equipment, shade, drinking fountains, seating and public art will enhance the parks useability (see Supportive Infrastructure).

Regular maintenance of neighbourhood parks will ensure the spaces are used regularly and will engender a sense of community pride.

Surveillance of the park from adjoining residences, streets or other activities will assist with making the space safer.

Health & Planning Fact

People who use public open spaces are three times more likely to achieve recommended levels of physical activity than those who do not use the spaces. Users and potential users prefer nearby, attractive, and larger parks and open spaces (Wolf, 2008).

Children with greater proximity to parks and playgrounds located near their home are likely to be more active (Davison et al, 2006). Neighbourhoods with a greater proportion of park area are associated with greater physical activity in young children (Roemich et al, 2006).

Within parks, the presence of playgrounds, trees providing shade and signage regarding dogs has been shown to be associated with greater physical activity among children and adolescents (Timperio et al, 2008).

Children would like the opportunity to play at local parks that are within walking distance of their home, with their friends. Older children would like to be able to play at parks without needing adult supervision. They would like interesting and physically challenging play equipment and the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities such as bike riding, ball sports and skate boarding (Veitch et al, 2007).

Children (more than 8 years) are often discouraged from going to the park as the play equipment is primarily designed for young children. The presence of groups of teenagers in parks may be another deterrent to children and families visiting parks (Veitch et al, 2006)

Spatial Location

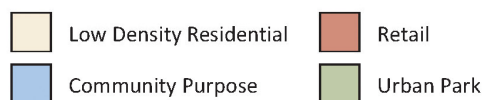
- Provide a number of parks throughout a neighbourhood (based on the population catchment) and cater to a range of uses.
- Ensure all dwellings have access to neighbourhood parks within 400m or a 5 minute walk for a pocket park and up to 800m or a 10 minute walk for playing fields (Sunjara, 2008).
- Where appropriate, locate in distinctive parts of the landscape such as riparian corridors and hilltops.
- Ensure the walking and cycling network connects the park to the broader open space network as the network of parks may form a key component of a journey through a neighbourhood.
- Co-locate with other community facilities to enable dual use of the space and multi-use destinations such as children's play equipment located adjacent to a community hall.

Transport Network and Design

- Locate on the walking and cycling network.
- Provide safe access to parks such as lights and crossings.
- Enable recreational walking and cycling around the park, where size and function permits.
- Ensure surrounding development overlooks open space.
- Maximise opportunities for children and youth to safely access and play at parks without needing to be accompanied by an adult.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

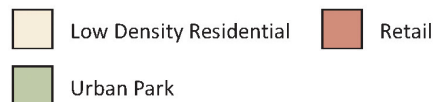
Example of a neighbourhood park that is located to retain natural vegetation, that links with the neighbourhood centre. Development fronts the park to ensure good surveillance.



Source: TPG Town Planning and Urban Design

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

Example of a neighbourhood park that is poorly located in relation to local shops, with development backing onto the park and poor pedestrian connections to the local areas.



Source: TPG Town Planning and Urban Design

Amenity

- Enhance the comfort and attractiveness of parks through the provision of facilities such as a water feature, public art, natural landscape features, trees and gardens, shade, paths and accessible areas for dogs.
- Ensure ancillary buildings are of a scale that maintains the visual dominance of the open space setting.
- Ensure parks are welcoming, attractive and well maintained.
- Reflect the character of the land and the neighbourhood by incorporating features and characteristics of the area such as hill tops, remnant bushland for children to play games such as hide and seek, trees for children to climb and natural water features.
- Provide appropriate irrigation and drainage of grassed areas (Sunjarra, 2008).

Useability

- Ensure the location, shape, size and design of open space caters for the intended use of the site for passive or active recreation.
- Provide different play spaces for children of different ages.

PRACTICE ADVICE

Good Practice

- Provide a range of amenities (depending on the role of the park and its size) such as children's play equipment, open space, toilets, seating, rubbish bins, drinking fountains, and easily accessible car parking.
- Provide play equipment and recreation facilities that are challenging and appealing to older children and adolescents as well as younger children.

Optimum practice

- For new residential areas and redevelopment areas, ensure an adequate amount of open space is provided, and that it is well located and maintained and has appropriate infrastructure available.
- Involve children of varying ages in the planning process when developing new parks and playgrounds (Veitch et al, 2006).

Avoid

- Parks that are physically isolated as they may not be used due to poor accessibility and lack of safety and surveillance.
- Poorly embellished and maintained spaces as this may lead to lack of use.

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