

Public spaces for a water sensitive City

We need to design our public spaces differently to cope with the impacts of climate change, the demands of a growing population and to meet our commitment to being a water sensitive City.

What we want to achieve

Water is a key feature of Port Phillip, with Port Phillip Bay, Albert Park Lake, Elwood Canal and the Yarra River all playing an important part in creating the identity of our City and how we use our public spaces. This also means a significant part of our City is vulnerable to rising seas and intense storms, increasing the risk of flooding and erosion of our foreshore. Two thirds of our City is made up of hard surfaces that further contribute to flooding, increased heat, and more pollution, nutrients and sediments being washed into the bay.



Managing flooding

Flooding in our City has traditionally been managed through a drainage system of underground pits and pipes; however, this system does not cater well for intense storms. Public spaces can be designed to act like sponges during severe storm events, accommodating additional water to help minimise flood impacts in surrounding areas.



Irrigation of parks

The cost to irrigate our parks is rising due to lower rainfall, rising temperatures and increased use from a growing population. We know people value high amenity green spaces, but water is scarce, and Council has committed to reducing potable water use. Alternative water sources through water harvesting and water reuse, and creating water-efficient public space environments will be part of the solution. We will also need to make choices about which spaces we keep green, to achieve sustainable water use while responding to community needs.



Incorporating water features

Public space (including opportunities for water play) can contribute to a sense of tranquility or playfulness, and can help define the identity of a space. Water can also contribute valuable habitat, support biodiversity and have a cooling effect on spaces - see the 'Public spaces for a cooler, greener City' snapshot for further information.

What Council is already doing

- **Investing in irrigation infrastructure** to reduce water use in open space.
- **Increasing permeability of public spaces** by removing unnecessary hard surfaces.
- **Installing raingardens in our streets and parks** to reduce pollution and sediments entering the bay.
- **Harvesting stormwater to irrigate our parks**, such as Alma Park.
- **Elster Creek Action Plan - working with our partners** to reduce flooding in Elwood, including through the way public spaces are designed.

What are the opportunities?

Ways we can use public space to improve water quality and reduce impacts of flooding include:



Water harvesting projects can help irrigate public spaces without using potable water.



Designing public spaces to reduce the impacts of flooding - parks, sports fields and roads that retain water during severe storms.



Raingardens capture and clean stormwater, are self-watering and enhance the amenity of our street spaces.



Using surface water to cool our City and celebrate water - such as through providing opportunities for water play.



How should we balance the desire for green parks and reduce our water use?

Would you be prepared for Council to spend more on alternative water sources, such as water harvesting, to keep our parks green?

Do you have other ideas?

