

# RECREATION FACILITIES PROVISION FRAMEWORK

2024-2041



CITY OF MELBOURNE

## **Acknowledgement the Traditional Owners**

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

## Council Plan 2021-25

The Council Plan 2021-25 sets out our strategic direction and commitment to the community for the next four years. Based on six strategic objectives for our city, this is our detailed plan for our city's revitalisation and considers the needs of all people who access and experience the City of Melbourne municipality. For more information visit [melbourne.vic.gov.au/council-plan](https://melbourne.vic.gov.au/council-plan)



### Economy of the future

Driving economic recovery is one of our chief objectives, to ensure the central city maintains a strong reputation as a destination to do business, visit, study and live. We will support a diverse mix of industries and jobs by creating conditions for a sustainable and thriving future economy.

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# INTRODUCTION

As a major capital city in Australia, the City of Melbourne provides facilities for people to live, work, visit and play. The City of Melbourne is responsible for planning and delivering a range of infrastructure and services to support existing and future communities. This includes community sport and recreation.

A comprehensive review was undertaken in 2022 to understand the provision and condition of existing recreation facilities, what the future population may require, and strategic approaches to address the gap.

It was informed by a large number of studies, forecast timing of population growth, capacity and condition of existing facilities, and participation trends.

Local government is the largest provider of accessible places for active recreation participation. These places include facilities (recreation and aquatic centres, stadiums, clubrooms), sports fields, multi-purpose courts, skate facilities, parks and gardens. Well-designed, multi-purpose facilities support a diversity of activities. These facilities are essential civic infrastructure that support physical and mental health and community connection.

## Our vision is:

***“To provide a network of adaptable recreation spaces that supports the health and wellbeing of the communities that live, work, visit and play in the City of Melbourne.”***

### Challenge

Without strategic planning and investment, the current suite of recreation facilities will not meet the challenges arising in the next 20 years. The review confirmed that upgrading and increasing capacity of existing facilities alone will not meet future population demand.

### Response

Three approaches will address the challenges of future provision.

- Increasing capacity of existing facilities.
- Upgrading existing facilities.
- Providing new facilities.

## Recreation Facilities Provision Framework

Sport and recreation play a critical role in the health and wellbeing of communities, supporting physical and mental health, and creating opportunities for community connection. The City of Melbourne continues to experience significant growth in residential population, visitors and workers. Strategic planning is required to ensure targeted infrastructure investment provides optimal community outcomes.

In this context, the purpose of the Recreation Facilities Provision Framework is to provide a high-level framework to inform short, medium and long-term planning and budget allocations, and guide decision-making for recreation facility needs through to 2041.

The Recreation Facilities Provision Framework provides a vision, objective and guiding principles for the provision, enhancement and use of recreation facilities.

This framework will guide Council's decision-making to enhance recreation opportunities and outcomes for the City of Melbourne residents, workers and visitors.



# VISION, OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## Vision

To provide a network of adaptable recreation spaces that supports the health and wellbeing of the communities that live, work, visit and play in the City of Melbourne.

## Objective

To increase the number of residents meeting recommended physical activity guidelines.

People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds participate in community sport and recreation. There is sound evidence of the many social, physical, mental and economic benefits of participation in community sport and recreation.

## Guiding Principles

The vision and objective will be achieved through the following guiding principles. We will be bold and inspirational in the way we address the challenges of significant future population growth, playing our part in the solution to the health crisis and climate crisis.

### Accessible participation

Recreation facilities will foster maximum participation from the diverse communities of the City of Melbourne, with a focus on equity. Facilities will increase diversity in participation, particularly for women and girls, Aboriginal people and other underrepresented groups.

### Demonstrated need and targeted investment

Planning and investment in sport and recreation facilities will respond to a demonstrated need for the local community to participate in physical activity. Our investment strategy will be financially sustainable and achievable.

### Distribution

Recreation facilities will be well distributed throughout the municipality.

### Capacity and multi-use

In the context of limited land supply and growing demand, recreation facilities are to be fit for purpose and support optimal capacity and multi-use. Facilities will strive to meet the principles of Universal Design.

### Resilient and sustainable facilities

Recreation facilities will be adaptable to respond to changing demands and trends. Sustainable asset and operation management will ensure they can be upgraded and renewed within the financial parameters of the City of Melbourne.

### Innovation and partnerships

The City of Melbourne will seek to provide recreation infrastructure through partnerships and innovation.

### Environment

Planning, design and delivery of new, expanded or modified recreation facilities will respond to climate change, biodiversity, sustainability and natural amenity considerations both for their location and operation. All facility redevelopments will aim to incorporate best practice in environmentally sustainable design.

# PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

A framework has been developed to prioritise proposed actions across the recreation network. This framework is summarised below.

## Recreation Facility Prioritisation Framework

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING	RATIONALE
Strategic Alignment	YES/NO	Only assess projects with alignment to Council's existing strategic plans and policy directions and which are consistent with Planning and Heritage controls.
<b>Participation Outcomes</b>		
Participation Growth Potential	30%	Prioritises works that have a high potential for increasing participation in sport / active recreation.
Social Equity	10%	Prioritises projects in areas with higher social disadvantage.
Accessible Participation	10%	Prioritises projects where there is a high level of participation or potential for growth for women and girls, Aboriginal people and other underrepresented groups.
<b>Facility Outcomes</b>		
Asset condition OR Identified gap in recreation facility provision	30%	Prioritises works to replace assets nearing the end of useful life.  Prioritises projects where there is a demonstrated gap in provision.
Multi-sport or adaptable	10%	Prioritises works that benefits multiple codes and adaptability of infrastructure.
Deliverability & readiness	10%	Prioritises projects that are within Council's ownership or management.

## How will this framework be applied?

There are a number of ways projects are identified, which range from a practical need for replacement of existing facilities, through to detailed research on sport and recreation needs to inform the need for a future facility. An example would be substantial population growth highlighting the need for places to learn to swim.

Some of the ways projects are identified can include:

- Asset management, where a facility is at or near end of life or needing major renewal.
- Facility assessments, such as audits on disability compliance.
- Building failure, where repairs will not resolve a problem and a broader solution is required.
- Specific building works such as conversion from gas to electric to meet Council endorsed targets (Emissions Reduction Plan by 2030).
- Audits of sports field condition, which can identify where ground renovation is required to stay in good condition for the hours of use.
- Analysis of use, where opportunities to increase capacity or hours of use emerge. This could include rearranging bookings to create more availability.
- Planning processes, such as developing a park master plan, where the need for a specific facility might be identified and agreed.
- Recreation planning, where population growth, trends in participation, and analysis of the distribution of facilities can identify gaps.
- Analysis of use of facilities to determine if change of use could provide more equitable distribution of opportunities.

With more potential projects than budget, a decision-making framework can assist with making recommendations about which projects should have priority.

The priority recreation projects will then be assessed along with all the priority capital works projects across the municipality. There is huge diversity of projects in Council's capital works portfolio. They include (but are not limited to) engineering (roads, footpaths, traffic management, drainage, wharfs), streetscapes, park and garden improvements, property (asset improvements, furniture), major projects, public art, urban renewal, signage, parking infrastructure, and libraries.

The diversity of the Council capital works portfolio reinforces the need for a sound decision-making framework when recommending community sport and recreation projects for consideration.

This framework applies to projects prior to their adoption as formal projects. So, while preliminary investigations will be made, actual planning approvals, community consultation and design do not occur until a later stage, when funding is provided to proceed to the next level of investigation.

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



# CITY OF MELBOURNE POLICY AND CONTEXT

## Where does this plan fit?

The Recreation Facilities Provision Framework is a document aligned with Council’s 10-year Community Vision, four-year Council Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It is informed by several strategic documents that have benefited from extensive consultation.

The framework is one among many endorsed council plans, policies and strategies, and where relevant should be read alongside them. These may include the Inclusive Melbourne Strategy, Fair Access Policy, Open Space Strategy, Parks Policy, Lighting Strategy, Nature in the City Strategy, Urban Forest Strategy and each of the various Parks and Gardens Master Plans including:

- Royal Park Master Plan
- Fawkner Park Master Plan
- Carlton Gardens Master Plan
- Domain Parklands Master Plan
- Princes Park Master Plan
- Fitzroy Gardens Master Plan
- Newmarket Reserve Master Plan
- JJ Holland Concept Plan
- Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan
- University Square Master Plan

## The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 globally recognised ambitions to progress sustainable development and track performance.

The SDGs seek to ‘leave no one behind’ by ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The City of Melbourne has taken the lead and is the first Council in Australia to conduct an SDG Voluntary Local Review (VLR) on the city’s progress towards holistic, sustainable development.

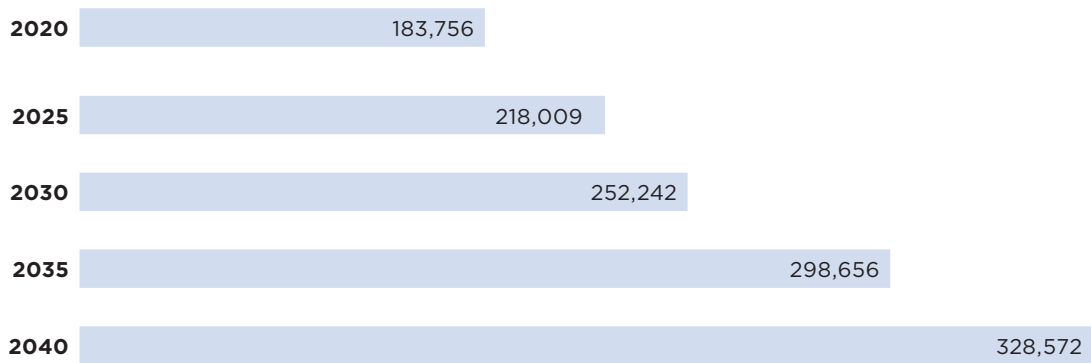
This Recreation Facilities Provision Framework aligns to the following Goals.

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	
Goal 1 - No Poverty	To end poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being	Helping people to live long and healthy lives
Goal 5 - Gender Equality	Ending violence and discrimination against women and girls and making sure they have equal opportunities in all areas of life
Goal 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	Making sure everyone has affordable access to green energy
Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities	Reducing the gap between the richest and the poorest
Goal 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities	Putting cities at the Heart of sustainable development in an urbanising world
Goal 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Keeping people safe and making sure that government works effectively and fairly

## About the City of Melbourne - Who are we planning for?

The City of Melbourne is home to 183,756 people, with a median age of 29 years. By 2040, the population in the City of Melbourne is expected to reach over 328,000 as indicated in the figure below:

### Population



Source: <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/forecasts-2020-2040-infographic-2021.pdf>

	2020	2040	GROWTH
Residents	183,756	328,572	+79%
Average Age	33 years	35 years	+2.3 years
Under 35 years	123,434	178,537	+45%
35 years and over	64,459	156,745	+143%

Eleven (11) planning catchments have been established across the City of Melbourne Area. The figure below summarises the forecast population growth of these areas.

All planning catchments are expecting to experience strong population growth over the next 20 years.

The Melbourne CBD planning area will experience the most significant population growth with an additional 43,307 forecast between 2020 and 2040.

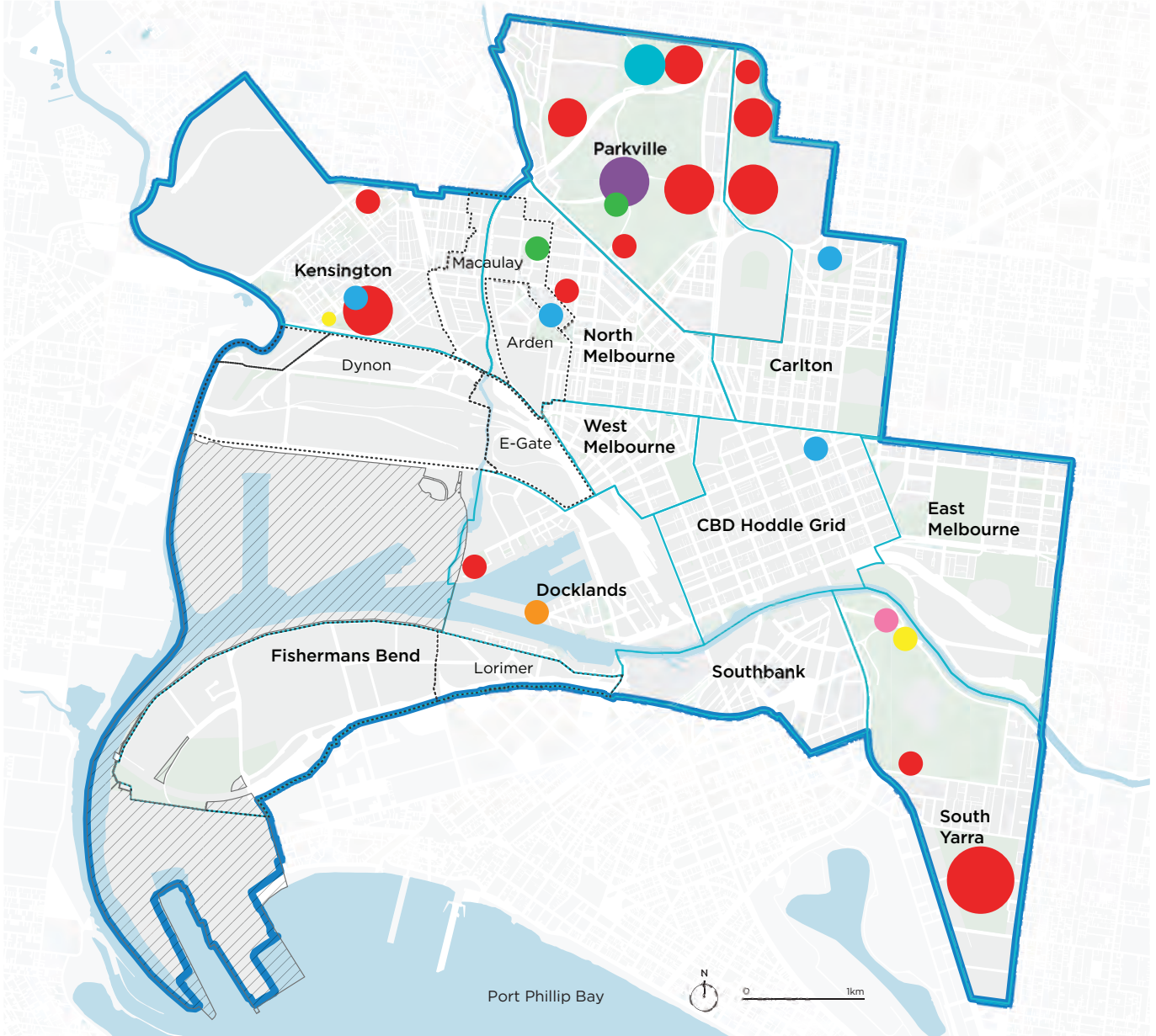
Southbank, North Melbourne and Carlton are also expected to grow substantially over this period.

Neighbourhood	2020	2030	2040	GROWTH
Kensington	11304	16195	19466	+8164 (+72%)
North Melbourne	17927	27790	36504	+18577 (+104%)
West Melbourne	8263	13857	17004	+8741 (+106%)
CBD	54737	78981	98044	+43307 (+79%)
Docklands	16056	22518	28897	+12841 (+80%)
Fishermans Bend	0	1558	5906	+5906
Southbank	27847	40536	48996	+21149 (+76%)
South Yarra	8284	9820	10614	+2330 (+28%)
Parkville	10593	13182	15312	+16895 (75%)
Carlton	22532	29976	39427	+16895 (75%)
East Melbourne	6201	7823	8407	+2206 (+36%)

## Existing Recreation Network

The City of Melbourne provides a diverse network of recreation facilities including:

Facility	Quantity
Open space	555 ha
Ovals	45
Lawn bowls facilities	3
Rowing facilities	7
Community boating hub	1
Tennis facilities	8
Aquatic and recreation facilities	4
Indoor recreation facilities	3
Skate parks	2
Golf course (9 holes)	1



**Key**

- |  |                   |                       |                              |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Urban Renewal Areas                    | Port of Melbourne | Municipal boundary    | Indoor Recreation Facilities |
| Neighbourhoods                         | Parks             | Community boating hub | State Hockey Netball Centre  |
| Aquatic facilities                     | Rowing clubs      | Golf Course           | Skate parks                  |
| Sports fields and organised recreation |                   |                       |                              |

# CURRENT AND FUTURE DEMAND

Our current recreation facilities and services will not meet future needs.

A strategic approach is required to respond to:

- significant population growth being forecast for the City of Melbourne over the next 20-30 years
- finite land supply in the municipality
- constrained resourcing.

This challenge will require partnerships across multiple sectors and levels of government to address.

City of Melbourne will use three approaches:

1. Increasing capacity of existing facilities
2. Upgrading existing facilities
3. Providing new facilities.

It is important that land be secured now, even if the anticipated population growth is in 20 to 30 years.

We have categorised our facilities into two types:

1. Outdoor sport and public open space
2. Aquatic and recreation centres, and indoor sport and Community recreation facilities.

In both categories there is already a shortfall relative to demand.



## Outdoor sport and public open space

### Current Situation

**Public Open Space is critical to liveability.** It's the publicly-owned land that is set aside primarily for recreation, nature conservation, and passive outdoor enjoyment. This includes public parks, gardens, and reserves. Open space encourages the community outdoors to participate in organised sport, unstructured recreational activities and informal uses that promote social connectedness and community health and wellbeing. Royal Park, Princes Park, Fawkner Park and JJ Holland Park are some of the key open spaces that provide these community benefits.

Various studies including the Council's Open Space Strategy identify that several planning catchment areas have a low level of public open space. As population growth continues through to 2040, the public open space provision per capita will continue to decline. The strategy provides strategic direction for open space planning in the City of Melbourne. It provides direction on:

- Providing and adapting open spaces to differing needs and uses
- Providing people with the opportunity to connect with nature.

In relation to outdoor recreation facilities which support physical activity, by 2041 there will be a shortfall of playing fields (including ovals and rectangular fields) netball courts, and tennis courts. The Open Space Strategy does not directly specify these outdoor recreation facilities, which is why research has been undertaken to better understand future demand and the predicted shortfall. Research also shows there is a need for outdoor multi-sports courts and skate facilities throughout the municipality for casual, unstructured use, free of charge for informal, casual use.

Land must be set aside now for outdoor sport and public open spaces in order to support growing levels of participation.

### Response

Parkland in the City of Melbourne is highly valued for recreation, nature conservation and passive outdoor enjoyment. All participation is valued. It is important that adequate land is allocated when planning for growth, to cater for the variety of activities that support the health and wellbeing of all the community.

It is important to increase the capacity of existing playing fields and courts to ensure their optimum use. This can be achieved by improving ground condition, different approaches to management (including new booking systems) and introducing sports lighting that enables more hours of use. A further way to meet demand is to create or upgrade multi-use activity spaces.

Partnerships with schools and other institutions is a further approach, however many of these agencies are also challenged to meet demand.

# Aquatic and recreation facilities, and indoor sport and recreation facilities

## Current situation

The City of Melbourne provides four aquatic and recreation facilities in the municipality, and a further three indoor sport and recreation facilities with multi-purpose courts. While there is a good geographic distribution of aquatic facilities, not all are open all year and there are areas that are not well served. There is need for additional health and wellness space, multi-purpose rooms, Learn to Swim pools, dedicated warm water pools to support rehabilitation and free water play for water familiarisation.

There are currently three indoor recreation facilities providing three indoor courts. With the completion of Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre, this will rise to six courts, with a demand for a further 14 courts. These courts support a range of sport and community recreation activities.

A further 11 indoor courts are provided at the Melbourne Sports Centre - Parkville and private schools, however not all are fully accessible for community use.

Various studies commissioned by the City of Melbourne indicate that by 2041, there will be a greater shortfall of indoor sports courts and multi-purpose program rooms. These facilities are important as they are spaces to play many different sports including netball, basketball, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, futsal, and handball. Many of these sports have high participation by women and girls.

## Response

1. Aquatic facilities - The need to upgrade the Melbourne City Baths and to provide improved year-round aquatic facilities in North Melbourne have been identified as the most pressing.

A city-wide approach to planning for aquatic and recreation facilities is required to ensure optimal outcomes within the context of limited land-supply and constrained financial resourcing.

Aquatic facilities are major civic infrastructure requiring detailed planning. Finding land that aligns with identified need is a key early step in the process.

2. Indoor sport facilities - Provision of indoor sports courts is particularly sought in North Melbourne and Docklands. It is likely that most other opportunities will need to be realised in urban renewal areas.

When planning indoor sports courts, it is important that multiple courts are provided together for maximum efficiency. The facilities will be more sustainable to manage, and there will be efficiencies in provision of amenities.

These facilities often include multi-purpose program rooms for recreation activities and community meetings. There will continue to be a high demand for these spaces.

Partnerships and shared-use agreements with public and private schools is an option to address shortfalls in provision. While opportunities for shared use will be explored, preliminary investigations indicate that community access to privately-owned sports courts may be limited.

## Multiple approaches will be used to meet future needs.

- Increasing capacity of existing facilities through asset renewal, maintenance, installation of features such as sport lighting to increase hours of use, and management practices such as booking systems, policies and procedures.
- Upgrading existing facilities in current locations to be more multi-purpose, fit for purpose, and increase capacity. This will include major facility redevelopments.
- Providing new facilities where new communities are establishing such as urban renewal and population growth areas and exploring different solutions such as vertical facilities.

Most new facilities, particularly those required in urban renewal areas, will rely on a multi-agency approach to delivery and set aside land for this purpose. Partnerships, innovation and collaboration with a range of stakeholders will be required to ensure optimal and sustainable community sport and recreation outcomes. Opportunities for informal participation in non-traditional spaces will also be explored.

Funding opportunities to be explored will include:

- Council funding contribution. City of Melbourne capital works funding within the long-term financial plan.
- Development contributions. Development contributions are payments or in-kind works, facilities or services provided by developers towards the supply of infrastructure required to meet the future needs of the community.

- State and Federal Government grant programs. Grants administered by State and Federal Government agencies may be specific to sporting facilities or other community infrastructure.
- Joint-use agreements. Collaboration with other agencies including government and non-government schools and universities can assist with access to non-Council owned facilities or joint funding of facilities on the basis of school use during school hours.
- Partnerships and funding with State Sporting Organisations. Some state and national sporting organisations provide funding that supports facility projects.
- Mixed-use developments potential to provide recreation facilities within residential and commercial developments, especially in high-density areas.
- Private Public partnerships. Some proposed facility developments would be of interest to possible partnership opportunities with private enterprises, including leisure service managers.

# EVIDENCE FOR ACTION

## Benefits

Sport and active recreation are a valuable part of life in the City of Melbourne. Benefits of community sport and recreation infrastructure include:

### Physical Health

- Improved physical fitness
- Decreased risk of chronic conditions including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- Decreased obesity
- Decreased premature death and disability including drowning and falls.

### Community

- Increased connectedness and inclusion
- Increased community pride
- Decreased anti-social behaviour
- Increased volunteering.

### Economic

- Increased economic spend and productivity
- Decreased healthcare, disability and aged care costs.

### Mental Health

- Improved social and mental health
- Improved cognitive performance
- Improved academic performance
- Decreased depression and anxiety.

## Participation

As outlined in Council's Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020, more than half of City of Melbourne residents (52.7 per cent) do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity and around one-fifth (22 per cent) spend more than eight hours sitting on an average weekday, highlighting a significant health issue for the City.

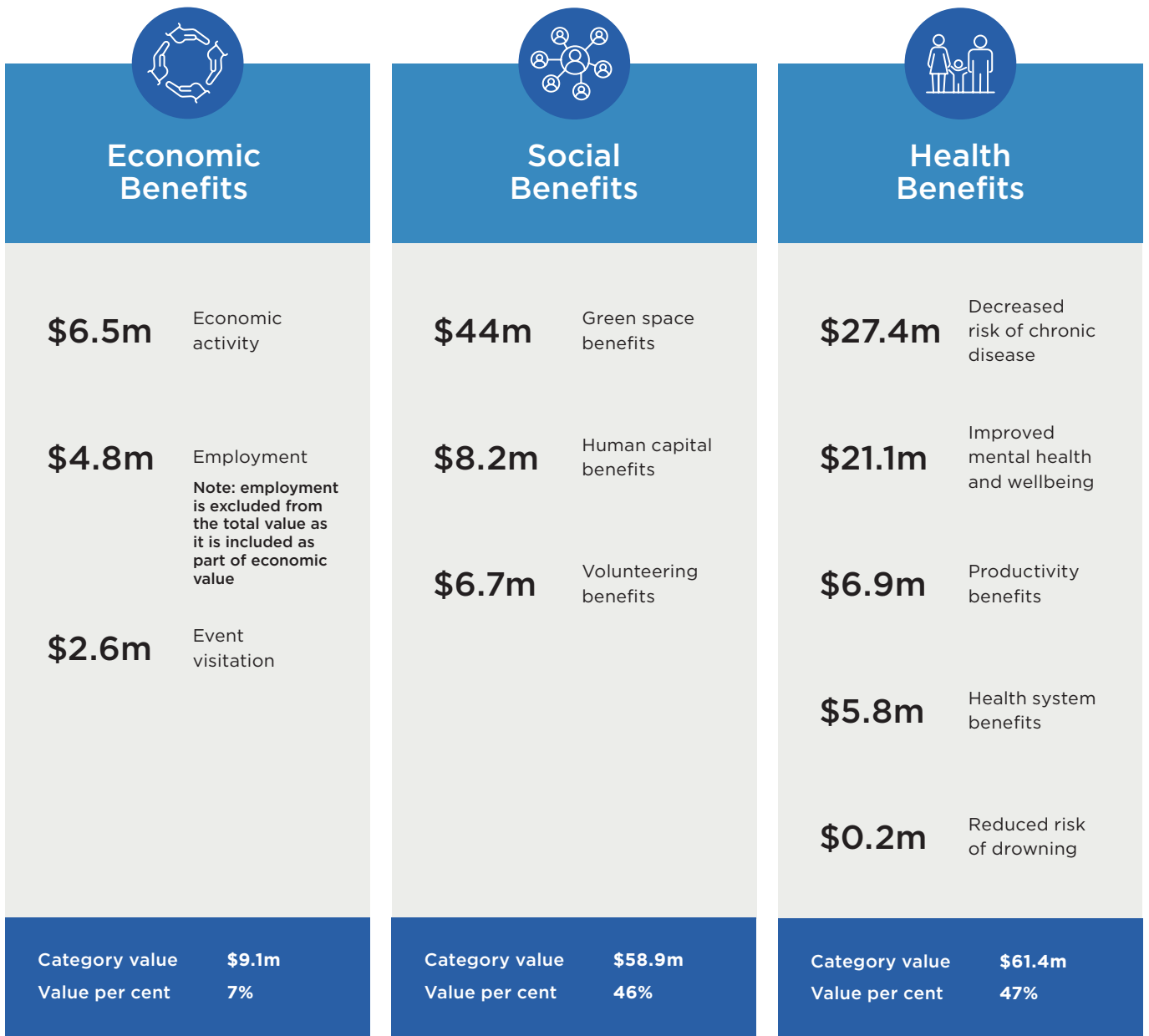
Resident participation in sport and recreation is captured below (according to the City of Melbourne Liveability and Social Indicators of 2021):

- 61.1 per cent of residents participated in sports and exercise activities in the last three months.
- 54.5 per cent of residents did so within the City of Melbourne.
- 15.3 per cent of residents participated in organised physical activity in the last three months.
- 7.7 per cent of residents participated in physical activity organised by a fitness, leisure or indoor sport centre in the last three months.
- 6.6 per cent of residents participated in physical activity organised by a sport club or association over the last three months.



## Value

KPMG was commissioned by Council to quantify the social value of community sport and recreation in the City of Melbourne. Community sport and recreation in the City of Melbourne equates to an annual benefit of \$129.39m



## Glossary

### Melbourne City Council

The local government body responsible for the geographic area of the City of Melbourne municipality as outlined on page 15.

### Community sport and recreation facilities

Refer to City of Melbourne-owned or managed sport and recreation infrastructure operated and maintained primarily to facilitate community sport and recreation activities. These facilities include sporting grounds and pavilions, aquatic and recreation centres, and other sports and recreation locations.

### Fair Access

Refers to making community sports and recreation facilities more equitable and inclusive to increase the participation of women and girls. Opportunities to improve participation for other underrepresented groups will also be considered.

### The community

Includes Traditional Owners, people who work, live, study, visit, pay rates or own a business in the municipality.

### Underrepresented groups

Groups that have lower participation rates in community sport and recreation, including women and girls, Aboriginal people, people with disability, multicultural communities, LGBTIQ+ and gender diverse communities.

### Universal Design

“Universal Design is a design philosophy that ensures that products, buildings, environments and experiences are innately accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of their age, level of ability, cultural background, or any other differentiating factors that contribute to the diversity of our communities.

Universal Design can be applied to all fields of design, including but not limited to product design, interactive design, architecture and urban planning”. (Sport and Recreation Victoria Fact Sheet).

### User groups

Organisations, including sporting clubs, associations, community groups, schools, commercial operators and others.

## How to contact us

### Online:

[melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au)

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### Interpreter services

We cater for people of all backgrounds  
Please call 03 9280 0726

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### National Relay Service:

If you are deaf, hearing impaired or speech-impaired,  
call us via the National Relay Service: Teletypewriter (TTY)  
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9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (Public holidays excluded)



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