

PECAN Public Space Strategy Submission

Councillors and officers,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft of the City of Port Phillip's Public Space Strategy (PSS). And thank you for the opportunity to discuss the strategy with Councillor Brand and Council officers from the Sustainability department. We appreciate the officers' willingness to engage on specific issues that will improve access to public space across the City of Port Phillip (CoPP).

Due to time constraints, we are unable to address the full range of issues across the municipality, so we have limited our comments to issues raised in the meeting and which we can usefully address.

Overview

Areas of particular concern regarding the draft PSS are:

- While the PSS identifies the areas of St Kilda to the east of Brighton Rd as having the least open space, the draft report does not provide solutions to this inequity.
- The Report does not identify the full range of tools required to meet public space needs according to the historic development of the area and its underlying topography. For example, the PSS overlooks opportunities to fully use the existing rail corridor, other informal open spaces and does not seek to use additional tools such as Public Acquisition Overlays (PAOs).
- The proposals in the draft PSS seem arbitrary and trivial, and do not comprise a strategic response to tackle the areas of highest need.
- The PSS focuses State Government first round funding for public open space on areas of least need: the Forecourt of the Palais and the proposed improvements to Kings Way Reserve.
- We are concerned that the applications for funding and proposals in the draft PSS improve areas of abundance rather than addressing areas of deficiency.
- The draft report fails to identify best practice standards and benchmarks that measure access to public open space, and generally relies on using existing streets to increase walkability rather than employing the full range of tools that could be utilised in the CoPP.

We are particularly mindful of the key findings outlined under 4.3 of the officers' report to Council which identifies the issues raised by the community (PSS, Officers Report, December 4th 2019, p359). The concerns raised by the community underpin our submission.

PECAN and its member organisations are separately working on a comprehensive review of the CoPP's response to climate change issues which includes best practice response to public spaces issues. We will present this review to Council as soon as it is complete.

Main recommendations:

- **We propose that the final PSS provides a Landscape Strategy as its overarching framework**
The PSS is an opportunity to deliver an overarching Landscape Strategy that combines blue and green infrastructure planning, as recommended by DELWP. This strategy should address public space and park rehabilitation while integrating with strategies that underpin it, including the Greening Port Phillip Strategy, Integrated Transport Strategy 2018 - 2028 and Integrated Water Management, etc.
- **The PSS commits to targets for access to open space across CoPP**
The City of Port Phillip has no overall target for the amount of public space available to each resident, or the proximity of that space. We recommend that the CoPP commits to a target of 30m² per person, with public open space within 300 metres of all residents. We also recommend that

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access to this space should preferably not require residents to cross major roads (such as Hotham St, Chapel St, Inkerman St, Alma Rd, etc).

- **The PSS must equitably allocate resources to address public space deficiencies**

The PSS clearly identifies that the areas east of Brighton Road has only 5% public open space, compared to 27% and 17% in the other areas of CoPP. This area comprises the suburbs of St Kilda (part), St Kilda East, Balaclava, Ripponlea, which have the highest population density and lowest percentage of open space. Even though the area east of Brighton Rd has minimal public space, the vast majority of funding for public open space is directed towards areas that are already privileged with an abundance of high quality public space. CoPP is fortunate to have large areas of public open space along the foreshore. These areas have seen significant investment and rejuvenation over the past decades, and have reached a high standard, serving both community infrastructure needs and broader recreational demands. The PSS must direct funding and effort to tackle the real inequities in access to open space across the areas east of Brighton Rd. To this end, the PSS should set a long-term goal of reaching 10% public open space in the area east of Brighton Rd by 2028 (including formal and informal open space, such as the St Kilda Cemetery and St Kilda Primary School).

The remaining part of our submission relates to the areas east of Brighton Rd, and refers to it as 'east St Kilda'.

The draft PSS does not meaningfully tackle the relative and absolute lack of open space in east St Kilda, nor does it identify the range of opportunities that could be embraced, limiting its proposals to 2-3 pocket parks and some areas where street plantings may be improved. This does not accord with the full range of possibilities usually required to meet open space opportunities including railway track enhancement etc.

We encourage CoPP to revise the strategy to take actions that address this long standing inequity. We detail the recommended actions below. The actions fall into several overall categories:

1. Increased public space in east St Kilda by expanding existing parks and creating new parks.
2. Improved walking access in east St Kilda by formalising and expanding walking routes including railway line enhancement and other informal walking tracks.
3. Improved biodiversity and tree canopy cover across east St Kilda by planting more street trees and increased planting in green spaces to create urban forest areas.

The current draft of the Public Space Strategy includes only one small new park in east St Kilda. This proposed park is sorely needed in St Kilda East, but it is not planned until the end of this decade nor will it have a meaningful impact on the inequity of access to public space in wider east St Kilda.

We propose the following actions to address the lack of open public space in east St Kilda.

St Kilda Primary School area, Balaclava

The area around St Kilda Primary School provides a significant opportunity to increase access to public open space in the east St Kilda area. We encourage CoPP to work with the Department of Education, the St Kilda Primary School and the Anglican Parish of Balaclava and Elwood to:

- Ensure access to the school's open space for CoPP residents
- Further close Dickens Street adjacent to the school to increase public space
- Manage the future use of the land to the south of the school to ensure public value

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Rail-Line Walk from Alma Park to Elsternwick Station

The area from Alma Park to Elsternwick Station represents a significant opportunity for CoPP to improve walking and increase public open space:requiring the following

Use PAOs to connect and improve the walking path adjacent to the rail line where necessary:

- Install a controlled crossing across Alma Rd at the Raglan St intersection
- Establish a linear park and urban forest along Raglan St adjacent to the rail line (similar to VicTrack land along Canterbury Rd, St Kilda West)
- Widen the footpath and remove impediments for walkability along Nelson St between Inkerman St and Carlisle St.
- Link the walking route with the Civil Square (the Coles car park area) proposed in the draft PSS.
- Link the walking route through the recently-upgraded area around Carlisle Street and Balaclava Station.
- Finalize the Balaclava station Upgrade Plan 2008 to include pedestrian crossing across Carlisle St.
- Install pedestrian crossings on either side of the rail bridge across Nightingale St.
- Encourage and support community planting on the embankment from Nightingale St to Grosvenor St.
- Diverge along Gibbs Street south with a widened footpath.
- Diverge to Railway line/end Brunning Street to Albion Street requiring PAO on 45 Brunning Street to provide a navigable walkway.
- Formalise the walking path between Ripponlea station and Elsternwick station, via the Rippon Lea Estate heritage precinct and adjacent walking path alongside the rail line.

Lansdowne Rd Park, St Kilda East

The proposed new park in Lansdowne Rd is commended. To improve equity in the east St Kilda area, we propose:

- Bring forward the establishment of the new park to the 2020-2025 timeframe
- Place a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) over the property at 44 Lansdowne Rd for future incorporation into the park

Ripponlea Train Station, Ripponlea

The open space to the east of Ripponlea station is underutilised, and should be improved:

- Activate the space to the east of Ripponlea station as a public open space.

Te-Arai Reserve, St Kilda East

Te-Arai Reserve is a small pocket park behind the community building at 200 Alma Rd, St Kilda East. We propose that CoPP expands this park as the only formal public open space east of Hotham Street:

- Acquire the property or place a PAO over 206a Alma Rd.
- Once acquired, demolish the existing building at 206a and incorporate its land into the Te-Arai Reserve.
- Or redevelop 206a into a replacement community building and demolish the existing community building at 200 Alma Rd to incorporate its land into Te-Arai Reserve (assuming compliance with heritage controls).

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Alma Park, St Kilda East

Alma Park represents the vast majority of the public open space in east St Kilda. CoPP should investigate opportunities to improve west-east traversal and general amenity of this asset:

- Create an additional access opportunity to Alma Park from Westbury St, either via a PAO or lease arrangement over 35 Westbury St or through the adjacent CBC owned properties.
- Investigate opportunities to open access to Alma Park from Chapel St, either via a PAO over the Defense property at 8 Chapel St, or through one of the adjacent properties.

Alma Rd, St Kilda East

While most of the historical buildings along Alma Rd have been demolished or redeveloped, Alma House is notable in its original condition and likelihood of future redevelopment. We encourage council to:

- Consider acquiring Alma House for future community use.
- Consider acquiring the open space at 7 Fulton St to protect this asset for community use.

Pakington Street Reserve, Balaclava

The small park in Pakington St, the Pakington Street Reserve, is a vital north-south link between Inkerman St and Carlisle Street.

- Negotiate with the owners of the property at 43 Pakington St to accelerate the acquisition of the property, enabling the expansion of the park, and improvement of the north-south walking link.

St Kilda Cemetery, St Kilda East

St Kilda Cemetery is used informally as an open space by many residents of St Kilda East: Work with the cemetery trust to:

- Identify all unused open space for plantings to improve biodiversity.
- Open entrances into the cemetery from the west and east to improve access and open west-east walking paths through St Kilda East.(urgent as work underway on renewing the heritage fence)

Glenfern National Trust St Kilda East

The Glenfern National Trust property on the corner of Inkerman St and Hotham St, while in Glen Eira, offers an opportunity for local access to public open space for residents of the St Kilda East region. We ask CoPP to:

- Work with the City of Glen Eira, the National Trust, and Writers Victoria to make available the property's grounds for public open space.

Alexandra St, St Kilda East

Alexandra St runs alongside the St Kilda cemetery and connects Dandenong Rd to Carlisle St. There are several opportunities here to improve public amenity and increase public space:

- Realign parking along Alexandra St adjacent to the cemetery to create a linear park between Dandenong Rd and Alma Rd.
- Place a PAO over the property at 63 Alexandra St to further protect the heritage building and ensure its existing open space is available in the future to increase public open space in east St Kilda. This property can also give access between Alexandra St and Mooltan Av.

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Grosvenor St, Balaclava

The area adjacent to the Grosvenor St underpass (beside 63 Grosvenor St) is used informally for recreational activities. Council should formally activate this area by:

- Building a basketball half-court and a rock-climbing wall in this area

Carlisle St Activity Precinct, Balaclava

The Carlisle St precinct, from Brighton Rd to Hotham St, is the main activity zone in east St Kilda. The current COVID-19 pandemic means that historical demand for commercial space and housing cannot be assumed into the future. PECAN encourages CoPP to:

- Ensure redevelopment of the St Kilda Library opens a pathway between Duke St and Carlisle St.
- Ensure the redevelopment of the Coles supermarket and rear car park creates an open civic plaza connecting the car park to Carlisle St.
- Protect the established trees in the car park behind Coles during any redevelopment.

St Kilda Town Hall, St Kilda

The forecourt area in front of the St Kilda Town hall has been used successfully for community events, including Halloween events. CoPP should:

- Redevelop the Town Hall forecourt to encourage community use.

Hotham St, St Kilda East

Hotham St has already seen significant redevelopment, and is likely to see further redevelopment of medium density housing. This main north-south link offers several opportunities to improve public amenity:

- Work with the relevant electricity distributor to place a PAO over the electrical substation at 49 Hotham St so that any future redevelopment or usage change allows public access from Hotham St through to Westbury Grove.

Inkerman Street Public Housing (inc Jim Duggan Reserve), Balaclava

The public housing in Inkerman St offers opportunities to increase public space and public access. We encourage the city to work with DHHS and the State Government to:

- Use the potential future redevelopment of the housing at 114 Inkerman St to expand the Jim Duggan Reserve
- Incorporate the Bath St Carpark into the Jim Duggan Reserve
- Place a PAO over the flats at 116 Inkerman St to ensure future redevelopment allows expansion of Jim Duggan reserve.
- Use the potential future redevelopment of the high-rise public housing flats at 150 Inkerman St to formalize/increase public open space and open public access between Henryville St and Kipling St.

Lyndon St, Ripponlea

The Ripponlea area south of Glen Eira has no public open space, with the only access across busy roads (Glen Eira Rd or Hotham St). We recommend that CoPP:

- Place a PAO over the property at 20 Lyndon St and/or the properties at 1, 3, and 5 Bell St, to create a small accessible park in this area.

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- Remove parking alongside the rail line along Lyndon St and create a linear park to improve the walking route between Ripponlea Station and Elsternwick Station.

Brighton Rd Tree Planting, St Kilda

The median strips along Brighton Rd are sparsely treed, and offer a significant opportunity to reimagine the road as a tree-lined avenue. This could transform this part of the street and acknowledge its history as part of an Avenue of Honour to Brighton.

The tree planting has proved inadequate and /or inappropriate to the task with many trees failing and many now terminal decline.

- Increase tree plantings along the Brighton Rd median strips in accordance with an agreed plan.
- Recognize the historical importance of this area with considered planting.
- Consider a pedestrian overpass to the School here.

St Kilda Road Junction to Carlisle Street St Kilda

This area was rezoned under Amendment 122 with a resolution by the CoPP to provide an accompanying landscape/public spaces plan. There are a series of small publicly owned land which could/should be repurposed into a comprehensive landscaping plan in this area.

- Implement such a plan to revitalize the western alignment.

West-East Walking Access, St Kilda/St Kilda East/Balaclava

While east St Kilda has good north-south walking access, west-east walking access is poor due to inhospitable main roads, and disconnected west-east links. We recommend that CoPP:

- Identify properties that can be acquired to open west-east walking routes, such as properties with frontages and rear access to disconnected roads. For example, opening Westbury Grove to the west and east to connect Jervois St through to Hotham St, and the property at 2 Fiona Court to open access between Henryville St and Fiona Court.
- Re-design footpaths on major west-east roads to promote walkability (Alma Rd, Inkerman St, Carlisle St).

Additional new Pocket Parks

Similar to the proposed pocket park in Lansdowne St, St Kilda East, we recommend that CoPP investigates other similar opportunities to increase public open space:

- Murchison St dogleg in St Kilda East.
- Other doglegs or closable streets.

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This map shows:

- Green: Proposed new public open space
- Light Green: Existing public open space
- Yellow: Contributory public open space
- Blue Circle: Activation areas

