

POCKET PARK DESIGN

Solutions for the Regeneration
of Public Space
in High-Density Cities

Edited by Angus Bruce



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Publishing



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CONTENTS

Preface	4
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Chapter 1	What is a Pocket Park?	6
Chapter 2	Design of Pocket Parks	11
Chapter 3	Pocket Parks and the Regeneration of Public Space	26
Chapter 4	Maintenance of Pocket Parks	30
References		31

Project Case Studies

Regeneration of streetscapes	Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct	32
	Birketinget, Pocket Park on Amager	38
	Gammel Strand	42
	Morgan Court	46
	Noriega Parklet	52
	Potgieterstraat	56

Regeneration of unused land	888 Brannan Street	62
	Flashcode Garden	66
	Unpacked Garden	70
	Public Space in Góra Puławska	74
	Sunken Garden	80

Temporary activation of public space	Queen's Walk Window Gardens	86
	Instant City Life	92

	Great Land	96
	Los Trompos	100
	Highpoint Pop-Up Park	106
	Crosswalk—Crossing the Pond	110
	Huellas Artes	116
	Ourcadia	120
Regeneration of historic sites	Garden of Remembrance	124
	Bulwark Saint John Rooftop Park	130
	Play on the Ramparts	136
	Square Des Frères-Charon	142
Regeneration of existing parks	Walla Mulla Park	146
	Napier Street Reserve	150
	Reynolds Park	154
Improving residential, business, commercial, and education environments	Formosa 1140	160
	Line Condominium Sales Gallery	164
	University of Miami Life Science and Technology Park	170
	Chum Research Center	174
	Slussplan	180
	X-Scape	186

PREFACE

Great experiences can be created in the smallest of city spaces

A seemingly insignificant void or awkward and underused space in the urban landscape can turn out to be the perfect spot to create a truly valuable public place. A place for people to gather, relax, reflect, enjoy, and wander through.

For designers tasked with the challenge of transforming these odd spaces into thriving city places, the trick is harnessing the vital ingredients that will likely combine to create a meaningful impact in the local community. What is it that people are needing or craving? How can we enhance connection and function in these small sections of the urban landscape? Ultimately, how do we best design these petite public spaces—the urban pocket parks—that people use and grow to love?

This collection of pocket parks from around the world celebrates the delight and inspiration that comes from the considered, and at times artful, design of such small spaces.

It features projects created by talented design firms and landscape architects that have successfully distilled the essence of a place and the needs of the people it serves to deliver diminutive urban gardens, streetscapes, plazas, monuments, playscapes, and rooftop parks. Urban refuges that manipulate the confines of small spaces to unlock the potential for immensely positive public experiences in our ever-expanding cities.

The book comprises five sections. The first section is a guide to the variety of pocket parks and their characteristics and functions. The second section elaborates on the planning and design of pocket parks, the third section presents six categories of pocket parks, and the fourth discusses maintenance. The final section, Project Case Studies, features 32 pocket parks supported by text, photographs, plans, and drawings to illustrate the designers' conceptual and practical intentions.

Maintaining a human scale and sensibility in our growing cities

With increased urbanization our cities have become taller and denser, placing greater importance on open public space and green interventions of all types and sizes.

Well-designed parks, squares, and open green spaces linked by streets, cycle paths, and laneways contribute to the character and liveability of a place. Green spaces cool the urban environment, improve air and water quality, mitigate flooding, and support biodiversity, providing sanctuary for people and sustaining urban ecosystems.

In urban centers where land comes at a premium, open green space is often sidelined for commercial and residential developments. But by creating outdoor spaces that serve multiple purposes, designers and other stakeholders can bring more nature and restorative spaces into even the most cramped urban environments, enhancing living and working conditions. And by taking an inventive and considered approach to integrating public and private spaces, designers can create more accessible green spaces in new and existing developments.

Residential projects such as Formosa 1140 (page 160) demonstrate how an urban space can blur the boundaries between private and public land uses, investment, and stewardship with the subsequent benefits of increased amenity and land value, helping to catalyze further revitalization.

Formosa 1140 is a residential development that addresses Los Angeles' lack of public urban green space by sharing a third of its privately owned land as the site of a publicly managed pocket park in the West Hollywood. As the designer explains, "Formosa 1140 simultaneously creates density and green space and models a replicable prototype for incremental community-driven city development."

Pocket parks are commonly situated on the land between buildings: unused corners of developments; small laneways and corner lots; residual spaces at junctions of planning boundaries; and rundown places that have missed development booms of better economic times. If planned open space has not been created during urban development, leftover and forgotten spaces can be later transformed into permanent and temporary pockets of nature and refuge for city workers, residents, and visitors.

By respecting the existing city form, the retrofitted pocket park can offer a rich new layer of public urban space. Through careful integration with the built-up surrounds, pocket parks can contribute to a city experience that is distinctly human with a people-friendly environment and atmosphere. Planting and urban elements such as paving, seating, and lighting can be used to improve the microclimate, amenity, and safety of a precinct, making it a more desirable place to live, work, and explore.

This thoughtful scaling of public space also plays an integral role in a city's activation. Through clever spatial planning of these small connecting spaces, we can facilitate legibility and movement within a wider precinct, and provide more intimate spaces for people to stop and linger.

Creating small places people love

A vibrant, healthy, and connected city offers a variety of public spaces for collective experiences. Be it for respite, connection with nature, play, community gathering, exercise, contemplation, or morning prayer, the significance and desire for these spaces are increasing as city planners increasingly recognize their ability to foster a greater sense of civic pride and community.

What is obvious is that no two pocket parks are the same in appearance, configuration, value, or program. They each function in their own way to connect with the surrounding environment, offer the community relief, and provide a community hub for relaxation, play, conversation, gathering, local engagement and connection. Some have a historical narrative or cultural expression, while others help to heal the urban landscape, waterways, and communities. Some are planned, designed, and highly detailed, while others are accidental, organic, or temporary.

Designers of the urban realm aim to unlock the full potential of these public spaces for people to use and enjoy. They tease out the story of each site, undertaking detailed research and analysis to identify distinctive qualities, community needs, and development opportunities. This knowledge guides the design response and the site's evolution into an engaging and enduring public place.

The design of the Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct (page 32) in Melbourne, Australia, recognizes the role that public cultural and artistic expression play in defining the visual identity and liveability of a community. The City of Greater Dandenong and Office of Multicultural Affairs aimed to better represent the area's unique Afghan identity by creating an engaging cultural destination the local community could enjoy and be proud of.

The emblematic pocket streetscape is inspired by Islamic design. It enlivens the street, encouraging community gathering and supporting social unity. Intensive community consultation enabled the design team to understand the way people used the existing small space and how it could better accommodate specific cultural requirements. Custom seating reinterprets the traditional Arabic *suffah* (or dais) for the urban Australian context, allowing the community to socialize in familiar ways. An integrated artwork by an Afghan-Australian artist provides a captivating centerpiece that is "a symbol of friendship and respect between communities and within cultures in multicultural Australia." The project celebrates the street as an important space, not just for movement and commercial exchange, but also for social and cultural encounters that are so important to daily life.

Public art, interpretation, and programming are used widely in pocket parks to playfully engage passersby and draw them into a space. By introducing permanent focal points and spectacles, or establishing small, flexible, event-based destinations that support temporary pop-up vendors and installations, designers can deliver unexpected and evolving urban landscapes for people discover and return to.

The temporary Queen's Walk Window Gardens (page 86), is an intriguing combination of art and plant life in an otherwise hard, concrete landscape in London, England. The window gardens were visited by an estimated eight million people over the course of three months. The project is a great example of how a pocket-sized intervention can invite people, en masse, to reimagine their city in a greener and more creative light. Temporary interventions such as this can also be used to test the validity and demand for a more permanent parkland development in a vacant or underused space.

Ultimately, pocket parks provide a small but essential connection between our urban and natural environments, making space available for community uses and a link between people, place, and nature. They are an opportunity for placemaking, and for injecting commercial and dense residential landscapes with fun and intriguing spaces for engagement and interaction, or simple serene spaces for quiet completion. Importantly, they offer the ability for a city to strengthen its green infrastructure, which is essential in managing heating effects, providing cleaner air, and sheltering people from the elements in densely constructed spaces.

Pocket parks are fundamentally about providing people with safe and comfortable space for them to spend time outdoors. A shared and strategic approach to the development of pocket parks—with landscape architects and urban designers collaborating closely with clients, community members, and stakeholders—will increase the opportunity and ability to create a more inclusive and sustainable urban future.

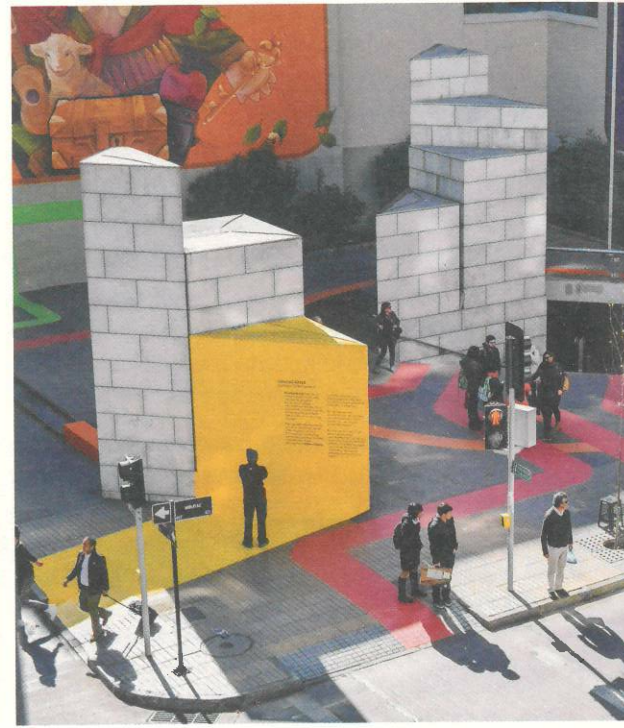
Chapter 1

What is a Pocket Park?

Description and characteristics

A pocket park is a small-scale open space accessible to the general public, which is often established on a vacant site or irregular lot of land in urban areas. Pocket parks are developed to serve local residents and visitors, providing a place for people to sit, socialize, play, eat, and relax outdoors.

Pocket parks have become an increasingly visible feature of the landscape ever since designer Robert Zion (1921–2000) proposed the concept of the “vest-pocket park” in 1963. Zion conceived the new type of public space for an exhibition at the Architectural League of New York organized by his landscape architectural firm Zion & Breen Associates, and as a New Yorker, he believed such spaces could provide a refuge for workers and shoppers in the city. Zion’s pocket park was a 50-by-100-foot (15-by-300-meter) space located between skyscraper buildings, which he envisaged as part of a network of parks—a “pocket park system”—dotted across Manhattan’s high-density urban center. Zion’s vision was first realized in 1967 when Paley Park, a small, privately maintained square designed by Zion, formally opened to the public in Midtown Manhattan.



The term “vest-pocket park” is derived from the pocket on a vest. Japanese professor Nobuyoshi Fujimoto relates the pockets on clothing, such as a vest, to pockets of space. Both can be warm, safe, and private, yet most people seldom pay attention to either in daily life.

Characteristics of pocket parks

Size

In the broadest sense, pocket parks are defined by their small scale. Pocket parks can range in size from approximately 130 square feet (12 square meters) to 22,000 square feet (2044 square meters).

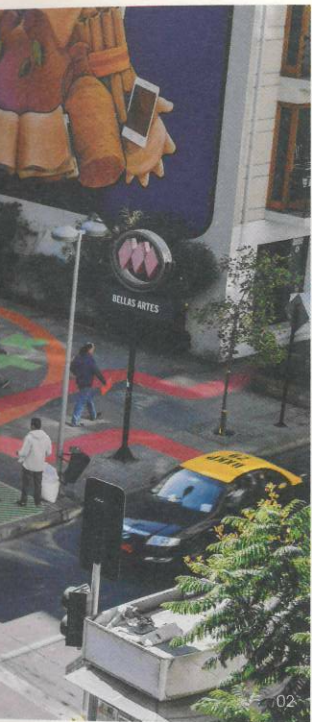
Location

Pocket parks originated in high-density urban areas, however they can also be found in other urban and suburban locations. Accessibility is one of the main priorities of a pocket park so that local residents and visitors can conveniently use the park. As people will often reach the park by walking or cycling, a pocket park does not need to provide car parking. However being located close to a public transport route or station can increase visitation and use.

Form

Pocket parks have a strong connection to their neighborhood and can take many forms as small gardens, greenbelts, linear parks, courtyards, playgrounds, town squares, historic landmarks, waterfront spaces, and custom-designed structures. Many pocket parks make use of vacant or unused land, such as parking lots, or are created to provide a small area of green space adjacent to a residential, business, or commercial building.

Pocket parks can also be temporary, such as a pop-up park or installation, to provide local residents and users with a new experience of the neighborhood or encourage them to reassess how a space can be used. Instant City Life (page 92) in Copenhagen was a temporary pocket park that provided an example and examination of how a non-place, such as a parking space, could be transformed into a place of substance. Instant City Life was positioned in a Copenhagen parking space for one month and provided a range of opportunities for visitors to interact with plants and neighbors (Fig. 03).



- 01- Garden of Remembrance, by scape Landschaftsarchitekten
- 02- Huellas Artes, by 100architects
- 03- Instant City Life, by Aarstiderne, VEGA Landskab

Facilities

Pocket parks are designed to provide a safe and comfortable environment for visitors and typically provide a less comprehensive range of facilities than larger, more traditional parks. Although they have some similar characteristics, the amenities of a pocket park are more suitable for a small-scale open space.

Two predominant features of a pocket park are seating with exposure to sun or shade, and greenery that brings an element of nature to the space. Many parks will also satisfy other functional needs, such as providing equipment for children's entertainment, or serving as meeting and gathering points.

Development history

The need for parks and green space achieved greater importance during industrialization in the nineteenth century. As urban areas rapidly developed with buildings and infrastructure, natural spaces diminished. Recognizing the need to provide open space to citizens, governments began to develop city parks, with some of the earliest modern examples being Birkenhead Park in Liverpool, England, which opened in 1847, and Central Park in New York, United States, which opened in 1858. Such parks were created to provide city residents with access to open space, nature, and fresh air.

A greater desire for public parks swept through Europe and North America in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, springing from the need to improve the over-crowded conditions of industrial cities and towns. Governments and citizens valued parks for their benefits to public health, moral spirit, and work efficiency. These green spaces also expressed a sense of romanticism and contributed to increased land values.

In Japan, small green spaces provided places for shelter. In 1919 the Japanese government stipulated that three percent of urban land must be designated for parks and when Kanto Earthquake hit in 1923, they provided spaces for citizens to shelter. During the reconstruction of Tokyo, a large number of small parks were again established in residential districts.

As urban spaces developed in the twentieth century with increasingly taller and denser building, green space became even more limited, having a negative impact on the environment and people's health. In the post-World War II era, city planners again recognized the great need for open space in residential and business districts and progressive urban planners and landscape designers began to incorporate parks, where possible, into city plans and urban areas. In the early 1960s, Professor Ian McHarg, with teachers and students in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, surveyed abandoned



sites and courtyards in the city of Philadelphia in order to create community-owned and managed gardens, parks, and activity areas for low-income families with amenities for children and elderly users. More than 60 of these parks were developed from 1961 to 1967, predating Zion's Paley Park. Furthermore, in Japan in the late 1970s, the Japanese government stipulated that small parks must be built among high-rise buildings to provide public outdoor space and to improve the quality of living for residents.

In recent decades a variety of land has been repurposed as pocket parks near train or bus stations, in front of high-rise buildings, beside large shopping centers, and nestled on street corners. Pocket parks have increased in popularity and number and have become vital outdoor spaces in cities and suburbs around the world.

Variety of pocket parks

Pocket parks can be publicly or privately owned; built by city councils, community groups, private entities, public institutions, non-profit organizations, and foundations; and be a permanent part of an urban or suburban landscape or a temporary or pop-up installation.

Pocket parks are designed to have a close connection to the neighborhood in which they are located. Whether that is a residential area, business district, near a transport hub, or in a commercial area, pocket parks are designed to attract and cater for local residents, workers, shoppers, pedestrians, and passersby.

Residential area

Pocket parks in medium and high-density residential areas provide open space for residents who don't have their own private outdoor space. Some modern new residential buildings, such as Formosa 1140 (page 160) in Los Angeles, are designed with their own pocket park for residents and locals alike. Formosa 1140 addresses the lack of open public space in West Hollywood by attributing a third of the privately owned building site to a publicly managed pocket park. The architects situated the housing volume to one side of the site in order to create a shared open green space on the other side of the site for residents and the broader community to use (Fig. 04).

Business district

Pocket parks in business districts predominantly cater to workers, providing them with an outdoor space to have lunch or coffee in, take a break from work, or meet with friends and colleagues.



04-
Formosa 1140, by
Lorcan O'Herlihy
Architects
05-
Highpoint Pop-Up Park,
by ASPECT Studios

Transport hub

Pocket parks located near transport hubs provide an open space for users to pass through, or to wait or meet people in before or after their travel journey.

Commercial area

Pocket parks in commercial areas provide a rest and enjoyment space for pedestrians, shoppers, museum-goers, workers, and other visitors. They have seating and facilities that cater for all ages and often include activity areas for children to play. Highpoint Pop-Up Park (page 106) in Melbourne activated an otherwise dull entry to the Highpoint Shopping Center and provided colorful and interactive equipment for children to play with (Fig. 05).

Functions and benefits

Pocket parks not only provide functional outdoor space for users but also have ecological and recreational functions and benefits, as well as enhancing the identity and amenities of a neighborhood. The following are some of the functions and benefits of pocket parks.

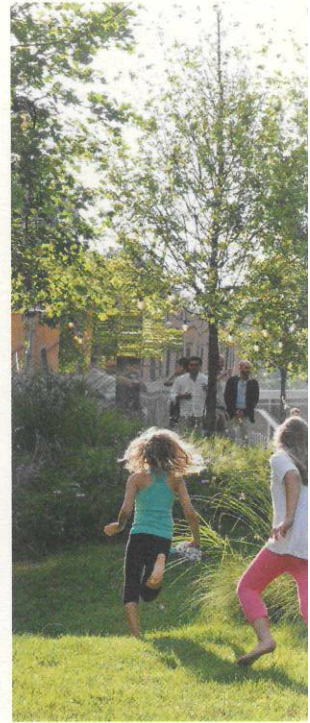
Provide usable outdoor space

One of the primary functions of a pocket park is to provide outdoor space where visitors can sit, socialize, eat, play, and relax. This enables and encourages people to spend more time outside, which has physical, mental, social, and emotional benefits for users, as well as bringing them into closer contact with nature, if even very limited. The new pocket park in Góra Puławska (page 74) saw a small, undeveloped piece of land transformed into a recreational space and meeting point for local residents. The designers created several zones for leisure purposes, and different seating arrangements enable groups of people to spend time together outdoors (Fig. 06).

Foster a sense of community

Pocket parks can serve as visible neighborhood hubs that help to foster a sense of community in an area. These meeting, socializing, and play areas improve communication, and with purposeful design can create and reinforce the identity of a neighborhood and community.

- 06—
Public space in Góra
Puławska, by 3XA
- 07—
Great Land, by Studio
Corte
- 08—
Los Trompos, by Esrawe
+ Cadena



Revitalize unused land

Pocket parks can be a quick and sometimes inexpensive way to revitalize an unused area, whether it's an historic space, vacant lot, abandoned site, or irregular plot of land. This can add new vitality to a neighborhood, transforming an unutilized void into a vibrant and flexible area. This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, Pocket Parks and the Regeneration of Public Space.

Improve local ecology

A green space has benefits for the local ecology of an area, including helping to reduce pollution, improving the microclimate, providing more permeable surfaces, and offering green areas for animals and birds to make their habitat. While a pocket park is small and therefore plays a lesser role in local ecology than a large area of green space, a network of pocket parks can enhance the continuity of urban green space and with sufficient green cover and plantings can still make a positive contribution to the ecological environment.

Pocket parks help to absorb the noises of a large population and busy traffic. They also reduce the need for visitors to drive or take public transportation to reach outdoor space thereby decreasing vehicle exhaust emissions, traffic, and consumption of resources such as oil.

Chapter 2

Design of Pocket Parks

Considerations

Urban planners have paid more attention to the concept of the pocket park as modern cities have become denser and buildings taller. This chapter explores functional requirements for the design of pocket parks.

Park users

The primary design principle of a pocket park is that it must be targeted to its users and provide a convenient, comfortable, and pleasant environment for visitors to enjoy time outdoors. The planning of a pocket park therefore begins with ascertaining the demographic of potential park users. Identifying their needs and requirements will help ensure the developed park is highly functional and usable. The following categories are a variety of different park users and their needs or requirements for a pocket park.



Children

Entertainment: Play is a primary component of entertainment for children, therefore a pocket park in an area that attracts children should provide suitable recreation facilities and equipment.

Security: Pocket parks should provide a safe environment for children with spaces for adults to supervise their children at play. Playgrounds and play features should be safe and well maintained.

Education: Pocket parks can be a way of introducing children to nature and communicating information about the environment.

Sociability: Children can play with other children in pocket parks to develop their social skills.

Teenagers

Activity: Access to open space encourages and enables teenagers to spend time doing outdoor activities, whether passive, such as reading, or more active, such as playing with a ball, which can help to relieve academic pressure and excess energy.

Sociability: Teenagers often like to gather with groups of friends and pocket parks can provide them with an easily accessible space in their neighborhood.

Adults

Activity: Adults use open outdoor space for a wide variety of activities, including exercise, relaxation, meeting friends, working, playing with children, eating outdoors, and generally making use of time spent outside. With even minimal design, pocket parks can cater to a range of these activities.

Health: Pocket parks provide spaces where adults can breathe fresh air, relax, and relieve stress, which can positively contribute to health and productivity.

Family: Parents often bring their young children to nearby parks, and safe, well-maintained pocket parks can provide a convenient space for children to play with adult supervision and interaction.

Elderly people

Activity: Pocket parks provide open space for elderly people to do mild exercise outdoors or engage in other activities such as reading and playing cards or board games with friends.



Sociability: Elderly people can use pocket parks as a community space to be around or interact with other people, and varied and comfortable seating and table arrangements can facilitate these social opportunities.

Workers

Eating: Pocket parks in business districts and commercial areas provide workers with spaces to eat lunch or have a break outdoors.

Health: Fresh air, nature, and open space can improve productivity and help to improve mood and energy levels and relieve stress.

Sociability: Pocket parks provide alternative spaces for colleagues and friends to spend time together, whether it is social or work related.

Public transport users

Passing time and meeting people: Pocket parks near transport hubs provide a place for public transport users to pass time or meet people before or after their travel journey.

Shoppers

Rest: Pocket parks near shopping centers or commercial areas can provide a place for shoppers to rest.

Sociability: Shoppers may use a pocket park as a gathering point to meet friends or family, in which case it can serve as an easily locatable and comfortable, accessible place to wait and spend time.

Family: A pocket park can serve as a place of entertainment for children while shopping with their parents.

Accessibility

Pocket parks are not only easily accessible spaces within a neighborhood, but they are also free for the public to use. Many people will access a pocket park by foot, but planners may also consider accommodating cyclists by providing cycle paths or places to safely store bicycles.

The area of a pocket park is often defined by the building or landscape features that surround it, and if somewhat concealed from view, such as a courtyard, then entrances should be clearly marked.



09–
Ourcadia, by Ogrydziak
Prillinger Architects,
Reynolds-Sebastiani
10–
University of Miami Life
Science and Technology
Park, by Arquitectonica
GEO
11, 12–
Bulwark Saint John
Rooftop Park, by OSLO
Bureau, Van Roosmalen
van Gessel Architecten

Environment

Despite their small size, pocket parks are still part of a broader environment and should be designed with respect to the surrounding buildings and landscape. It is the responsibility of designers to take the culture, aesthetics, history, and natural and built environment of the area into consideration so as to integrate the pocket park into the neighborhood.

Proportion, scale, and color are also very important in the design of a pocket park so as not to visually overwhelm the space or reduce its functionality. This can be seen in Bulwark Saint John Rooftop Park (page 130), which is located on a new subterranean building alongside the Dommel river in the Netherlands. The park is integrated with the cultural history and natural landscape of the site and carefully designed in accord with the angular form of the building (Figs. 11, 12).

Safety

Pocket parks and their facilities should be safe and comfortable spaces for all users, especially children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. This includes providing flat and well-maintained ground surfaces; maintaining the safety standards of facilities and equipment; having open sight lines through the park for security; installing ample and functional lighting; and creating areas where adults can easily supervise their children.

As pocket parks are sometimes located adjacent to busy streets or transport hubs, designers should consider how to separate these spaces from traffic to prevent potential accidents.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance of a pocket park will help ensure it is used and will not fall into disrepair. Some parks are purposefully designed to be low maintenance with careful selection of materials and plants. However, for all pocket parks, the owners or managers need to implement a regular maintenance schedule to keep it clean, safe, and attractive.

The design of a pocket park can help reduce the level of necessary maintenance. Accessible bins will encourage visitors to dispose of their garbage; the strategic and convenient placement of paths can reduce the need for visitors to walk over green areas; and robust and durable materials can extend the lifespan of seats and tables.

13-15-
Afghan Bazaar Cultural
Precinct, by HASSELL



Aesthetics

Pocket parks are a functional feature of the urban and suburban landscape, but can also serve as an aesthetic feature when care and attention is given to design. Themes, colors, patterns, and artworks can be used to create a pocket park that is attractive to visitors and contributes to the identity of a neighborhood. In Dandenong, Melbourne, the Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct (page 32) provides an urban streetscape that reflects the diverse cultures of the local and broader Afghan community. Its distinct visual character with colorful and intricately detailed paving engages and enlivens the street and encourages community gathering (Figs. 13–15).

Green space

Incorporating green spaces in pocket parks can help improve the quality of the ecological environment and is one method being used in high-density cities to address climate change. Native plants have the strongest adaptability to the local climate and soil conditions, and can attract animals, especially birds, butterflies, and small mammals, to make their habitat in the space.

Site analysis

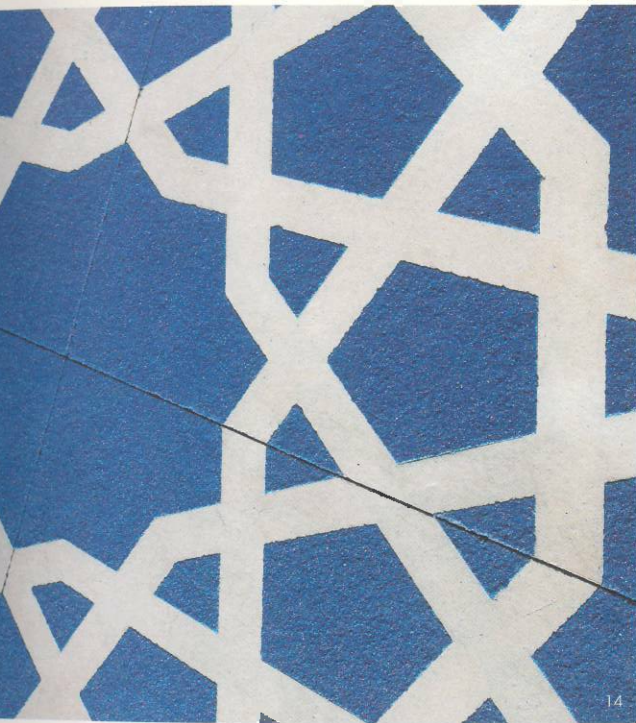
Landscape architects and designers of pocket parks should analyze the site of the proposed pocket park prior to carrying out any design work. The following elements are a variety of aspects that should be carefully assessed.

Location

A pocket park should be designed as an integrated part of its surrounding environment. Therefore the site analysis should consider the surrounding streets and buildings in order to create a unified whole. Designers may consider using aerial photographs for this assessment and to determine routes of access for potential users. The broader context of the location should also be considered to ensure the pocket park is a secure space for users and that the route to the park is safe.

Environment

The surrounding architecture and landscape may influence the planning of a pocket park. Designers should consider the architectural style of nearby buildings so as to create a park that is integrated within its surrounds, as in many cases the external walls of neighboring buildings will also serve as the walls of the pocket park. The orientation and exposure to natural light may influence where park amenities are positioned so as to provide places of sun and shade, as well as informing the lighting required



during the day and evening. Safety provisions should be made if the pocket park is located near water, traffic, industrial buildings, or similar.

A site visit will help designers to envisage the development of the park and to consider factors such as noise, smell, smoke, pollution, and visual surroundings. The design of the park can then seek to enhance the positive factors and counteract the negative factors.

Ecology

Plants or green cover should be in harmony with natural local conditions as much as possible. Therefore the ground cover should be analyzed, including opportunities for irrigation and exposure to light, to determine the best plants for the site.

Climate

The climate of the area will influence when and how the park is most used as well as the selection of plants and facilities. Park amenities should be appropriate for the climate, such as providing areas of shade and sun, as well as using materials that endure weather conditions, such as rainfall and snowfall.

Planning of pocket parks

Pocket parks should be located and planned where they are safe and convenient to access, as well as providing open spaces within them that are comfortable, functional, and pleasant for park visitors. While the areas of a pocket park will generally cater to a variety of demographics, specific spaces or activity areas may be provided for dominant user groups, such as children, workers, or elderly people. The following categories should be considered in the planning of a pocket park.

Site

Pocket parks can be located on a variety of sites. For example, a pocket park on the street corner is bounded by two streets and may have an entrance from each street. A pocket park set within a street block will have access along one side that may be open or through a gate or laneway, while a pocket park across a block connects two streets and presents a shortcut for pedestrians.

The boundaries of a pocket park may be defined by railings, greenery, parapets, pavements, or building façades. Designers may consider some of the following strategies:



Railings: The style of railings can be complex or simple and depending on their style and height, park visitors can use them as auxiliary facilities to lean against or sit on. Railings should not obstruct sight lines in a park and can foster a feeling of openness.

Greenery: Greenery, such as bamboo, hedgerow, lawn, or a rich plant landscape, can be used to create a border around the park, but should be carefully maintained so as not to deter visitors.

Parapet: A parapet or wall gives a stronger sense of enclosure and security, effectively separating the park from surrounding space. It can also help prevent children or pets from leaving the park.

Pavement: Pavement or open space typically surrounds pocket parks in business and commercial districts creating a greater sense of openness and access in more dense urban landscapes.

Building façades: Pocket parks in business and commercial districts may also be surrounded by other buildings, which provide an already existing boundary to the open space. Gammel Strand (page 42) in Copenhagen is a courtyard bounded by buildings and a busy shopping street. As such, the buildings define three sides of the pocket park, while the fourth has an entrance gate from the street (Fig. 16).

Access and circulation

Entrance

Pocket parks will have different entry points depending on their location. The entrance or entrances should be clearly marked and feel inviting so that visitors know it is a public park and feel welcome to use the space. Designers may consider some of the following design strategies:

- Place seating at or near the entrance to attract pedestrians.
- Install signage at the entrance to communicate it is a public park.
- Keep gates open during park hours.
- Apply visuals to the pavement to guide pedestrians inside the park.
- Plant low bushes or vegetation near the entrance.
- Incorporate multiple entrances if the park can be accessed from more than one side.
- Define the borders of the park by setting them at a higher or lower level than the surrounding terrain.



- 16- Gammel Strand, by VEGA Landskab, JAJA Architects
- 17- Flashcode Garden, by Studio Basta, Wagon Landscaping
- 18- Bulwark Saint John Rooftop Park, by OSLO Bureau, Van Roosmalen van Gessel Architecten

Pavements

The layout of pavements is closely related to the location of entrance points to the pocket park, as well as activities and circulation through the park. In many cases, pocket parks have open concrete, timber, or asphalt surfaces so that visitors can walk throughout the park without being directed by a footpath. However if the park has a lot of green cover or lawn, then footpaths can be used to guide visitors through the park and to help reduce foot traffic on green cover. Designers may refer to the following recommendations:

- Ensure all surfaces are maintained to reduce the potential of falls; provide footpaths wide enough for pushchairs and wheelchairs.
- Plan circulation routes in harmony with the terrain and to take advantage of the scenery.
- Provide provide rest spaces along the footpath to encourage people to stay in the park longer.
- Design pavements to encourage or deter cyclists or skateboarders, depending on park policy. If bicycles are not allowed, provide bicycle racks or other facilities for safe storage.

Stairs and ramps

Stairs and ramps provide pathways for users to access and move through a park, particularly if it is set across varied terrain. Ramps help ensure that a park is accessible to people with disabilities, and stairs can also provide additional seating.

Functional areas

Since a pocket park is small in scale, functionality is very important. To make the most of the size and usability of the pocket park, designers should plan activity spaces carefully and consider incorporating features that have a dual function. Stairs can be used to provide seating for individuals, casual interactions, or events; tall trees provide greenery and shade; lawns can be used for sitting or lying on and offer ecological benefits; and benches with interesting design can be used as both seats and play areas for children.

Activity spaces and equipment for children

Activity spaces for children provide entertainment and encourage physical activity. This may include playgrounds, moveable toys, water features, and climbable structures or surfaces. Designers may refer to the following design recommendations for activity spaces and equipment for children:

- All activity spaces and equipment must be safe, durable, and meet the necessary standards for children to play on or around.
- Different play facilities and zones can help maintain children's attention and interest.

19–
Public space in Góra
Puławska, by 3XA
20, 21–
Queen's Walk Windows
Gardens, by Wayward
London Ltd.



- Depending on the size of the pocket park, play areas can be zoned for different age groups of children to ensure suitable equipment and the safety of younger children.
- If the park is very small, activity spaces may be targeted at one particular age group rather than catering to a broad range of age groups.
- Consider the choice of plants around activity spaces so children don't get hurt by thorns or bee stings.
- Seating around the edge of activity spaces will enable adults to supervise their children. Do not plant trees or bushes in places that will obstruct their view.
- Carefully consider the choice of material for the surfaces of activity spaces so as to reduce the potential of children hurting themselves if they fall.
- Activity spaces and equipment should be positioned where children's noise will not disturb neighbors.
- Incorporating seats that are specifically designed for children will help them to feel welcome and comfortable.

Activity spaces for elderly people

Activity spaces for elderly people can cater to relaxation, activity, games, or similar. Designers may refer to the following recommendations:

- Passive activity spaces provide areas for older people to sit alone or with others to read, chat, and play cards, chess, or other games. These spaces should be provided in both sunny and shaded areas for comfort.

- Active activity spaces provide areas where people can undertake mild exercise, or movement and should also be furnished with facilities, such as benches, pavilions, and water fountains.

Design features of pocket parks

Pocket parks are primarily designed as a space for park users to spend time outdoors, and amenities can help define the function and identity of a space. The following categories are a variety of facilities that can be considered in the design of a pocket park.

Greenery

Vegetation coverage of pocket parks can vary from very little to more than 50 percent. Greenery in pocket parks provides a connection to nature and visual relief from the built environment and can enhance the functionality and comfort of a park. Lawns can provide seating areas, grassy slopes can be used for play, and trees offer shade. Designers may refer to the following recommendations for greenery and plant selection in pocket parks:



- A theme for the planting should be considered as part of the landscaping concept to enhance the aesthetics and experience of the park.
- Green landscapes can define or connect different zones within a pocket park.
- Greenery and flowers can be used to provide color and decoration in the design of the park, while leaves and tree trunks provide texture.
- Plants can be used to define the boundaries of a pocket park or conceal unsightly structures. However, they should not disrupt sight lines, which can consequently compromise safety.
- Raised borders around lawn and plants can help protect these areas from children, cyclists, and similar.
- The location and climate of the site will influence plant selection. Native plants are highly adaptable to the surrounding environment; drought-tolerant and cold-tolerant plants may be a necessary choice in specific climates; and plants that are more resistant to disease and insects will stay healthier and more attractive with less maintenance.
- Plants can be used to communicate information about the natural environment to visitors. Queen's Walk Window Gardens (page 86) was a temporary installation in Southbank, London, and designed to introduce visitors to various forms and scales of gardens to demonstrate the potential of urban growing (Figs. 20, 21).
- Deciduous trees can provide shade in summer and greater exposure to sunshine in winter.

- Choose plants that are hardy, low maintenance, and grow rapidly.
- Irrigation systems can help reduce maintenance.
- Necessary space should be left between plants to avoid overcrowding once they have grown.
- Mulch can be used to maintain soil moisture and prevent weeds.

Ground surfaces

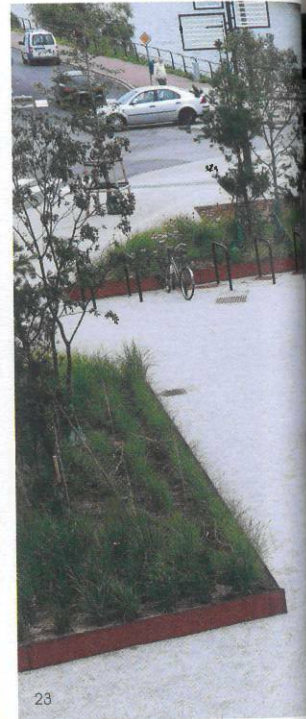
The ground surface of pocket parks can be hardscape, such as concrete, stone, granite, tiles, pebbles, and other hard materials, or softscape, such as grass, flowers, and water. As greenery has been discussed in the previous section, this section will predominantly address hardscaped surfaces.

Hard surface materials make it more convenient for people to walk and do activities in pocket parks, as well as being non-slip and wear-resistant with the potential for a strong decorative effect. Designers may refer to the following recommendations regarding hardscaping:

- 22—Reynolds Park, by Dyrvik Arkitekter, Grindaker
- 23—Slussplan, by Mandaworks
- 24—Crosswalk—Crossing the Pond, by GPY Arquitectos, Rafael Escobedo de la Riva



22



23

- The selection of paving materials should be related to the site, environment, and design of pocket parks so that it serves the aesthetic and function of the park and is integrated within its natural and built surroundings.
- Pavement design can be used to enhance the atmosphere of a pocket park, enrich the community identity or local characteristics of the space, and have a psychological effect as well as altering people's depth perception of the park.
- Different paving materials and patterns can be used to create distinct zones or activity spaces within a pocket park.
- Concrete should be used with caution in areas exposed to intense sunlight as it can create glare, which may affect some park users such as elderly people.

Various surface materials

Protective paving materials should be used where games, play, or other physical activities occur to reduce the potential impact of accidents. The following materials may be considered:

- Turf is a low-cost and permeable option that has positive benefits for the environment, but requires regular maintenance.
- Safety-protection bark is moderately priced. It helps absorb impact around children's recreational facilities but is inconvenient for wheelchairs.
- Small wood blocks are low cost and similar to safety protection bark, but more accessible for wheelchairs.

- Fine sand has good absorptive effect around children's playgrounds. Sand is easy to drain but its rough surface means recreation facilities wear more quickly.
- Coarse gravel is low cost and has strong sustainability and good absorptive effect. Coarse gravel has a different texture than sand but they can be used together.
- Pea gravel is low cost and its small stones reduce potential damage from falls. It drains easily, but is inconvenient for wheelchairs.
- Porous rubber flooring is a high-cost option designed to withstand wear and tear. It is convenient for wheelchairs, has a long life, and is available with colorful graphics and patterns.
- Rubber mats are also high cost and can withstand wear and tear. They can be used to add color elements into a park and are easy to lift off the ground.
- Grass mats are moderate cost and easy to drain. They have a harmony with the natural landscape and are suitable for flat surfaces or slopes. Grass mats are easy to maintain and protect the turf underneath from being damaged in high-wear areas.
- Game mats can be laid over existing hard surfaces. They are rich in color and can be replaced or moved.
- Artificial turf can be used to create a green environment in places without plants.



Water features

Water, such as a river or canal, can define the boundaries of a pocket park, as in Slussplan in Sweden (page 180). Water can also be used within the boundaries of a park as a visual, atmospheric, or activity feature.

There are two types of water features inside a pocket park. Static water features are natural occurring rivers or lakes, which are less common in pocket parks since they are usually located in urban areas. Dynamic water features are man-made and include ponds, waterfalls, fountains, or similar that can bring both tranquility and vitality to the environment. Designers may refer to the following recommendations regarding water features:

- Climate conditions, such as temperature, wind direction, and water resources, should be considered in selection, choice, and placement of water features in the park. Water features in parks with extreme winters will become ice or unusable for this period of the year; and fountains and waterfalls should be avoided in windy regions so that water doesn't effect the surrounding landscape.
- Designers should consider installing infrastructure to recycle rainwater in regions that experience rainfall. It can be collected through water features and surface drainage and stored in water tanks.
- Special attention should be paid to the scale and complexity of water features. They shouldn't overwhelm the space or reduce the functionality of the park, and forms and features should be kept simple.

- Water features should not be located in the main activity areas unless it is the central theme of the pocket park.
- The design theme of the pocket park should apply to the water feature.
- Water features should be long lasting, low-maintenance, and meet the necessary safety standards for people, especially children, to play in or around.

Seating

Providing spaces for visitors to sit is one of the elemental requirements of a pocket park, and therefore the design and placement of seating is particularly important. Designers may refer to the following recommendations regarding seating:

- The amount of seating provided should sufficiently cater for expected numbers of visitors. Seats and seating configurations should suit individuals, pairs, and small groups of people.
- The function of the park will influence the amount of seating. A pocket park in a business district where workers have lunch will have ample and varied seating, whereas a park that provides a pedestrian channel between two streets may have limited seating.

25-
Walla Mulla Park, by
Terragram Landscape
Architects
26-
Los Trompos, by Esrawe
+ Cadena



- Seating should be conveniently located around main activity areas or alongside footpaths or water features, and should not block entrance points or circulation paths through the park.
- Seating placed under deciduous trees will receive shade in summer and sunshine in winter. Pavilions over seating can also provide shade.
- Seating should be positioned so that people feel comfortable and can sit alone or interact with others. For example, seats placed at right angles can promote communication between people. Seats in a pocket park in a commercial area or business district may be placed closer to each other due to the nature of the site, while seats in a residential pocket park may be placed further away from each other for greater privacy. In Walla Mulla Park (page 146) in an inner-city neighborhood in Sydney, seats and tables have been designed and configured in response to an observation of how people used the park and their preference to sit in small, scattered groups. The seats are oriented around tables to cater for groups, but the width of the seats and their varying forms also allow people to face either direction and to keep a comfortable personal space (Fig. 25).
- Seating can be made with various materials, including wood, metal, stone, and concrete, but should be resistant to weather, age, and use.
- Ergonomic requirements should be taken into account in the design of seating, paying attention to the height, depth, and width of seats, armrests, and backrests.

- Designers can take advantage of other facilities and features in pocket parks that can also serve as seating, such as steps, low walls, railings, lawns, and pool edges.
- Movable seats can increase the amount and flexibility of seating, however it requires greater supervision and park maintenance.

Recreation facilities for children

Recreation facilities in pocket parks are predominantly aimed at children to provide them with play and entertainment opportunities. Swings, slides, playgrounds, sandpits, and many other facilities and equipment can appeal to different age groups and interests of children. Designers may refer to the following recommendations regarding recreation facilities for children:

Recreation facilities

- Climbing structures provide a challenge for children's physical strength, and may offer ladders, parallel bars, sliding poles, swings, steps, ropes, and so on. The difficulty levels of climbing structures vary and should be suitable for a range of age groups, or targeted at a particular age group.



- Rolling logs can help children master balance and coordination skills and increase physical strength.
- Seesaws help teach children how to control their power and action.
- Slides are a fun way for children to become comfortable with heights and they can experiment with the direction in which they travel down the slide. Slides may be straight, curved, or helical, and tubular or open. It can be freestanding or combined with other recreational facilities. There should be sufficient space and cushioning at the end of the slide to allow for children's momentum.
- Spring-loaded rides are more dynamic amenities and challenge children's physical strength and balance. They should be equipped with handles and pedals for children to hold on to.
- Swings of various sizes can cater for children of all ages. They should be positioned where walls, trees, or other park features do not obstruct them.
- Designers can also be inventive about the recreation facilities they provide for children. At Los Trompos (page 100) in Atlanta, Georgia, children could play with large interactive installations inspired by the popular spinning top. Created by contemporary Mexican designers Héctor Esrawe and Ignacio Cadena, the 30 three-dimensional, larger-than-life "spinning tops" came in a variety of colors and shapes, and children could work together to spin the tops on their bases while interacting with their woven-fabric structures to bring each work to life (Fig. 26).