

Urban design guidelines

for Victoria



The urban design guidelines history and context

An earlier suite of three stand-alone guideline documents, were developed between 2004 and 2005. Their purpose was to assist in delivering functional, attractive and sustainable activity centres, higher density residential development and safer public spaces, and to contribute to better place making.

The Victoria Planning Provisions were amended to require consideration of these guidelines where applicable in the design and assessment of new development proposals. The earlier documents were:

Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development, 2004

Set out objectives and provided suggestions for designing and assessing higher density residential development. They were developed to promote well-designed higher density housing in activity centres and other strategic development sites located close to public transport.

Activity Centre Design Guidelines, 2005

Set out objectives and provided suggestions for designing activity centres to create exciting places where people want to live, work, shop and play. They were developed to support councils and developers in creating well-designed activity centres.

Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria, 2005

Set out principles, objectives and provided suggestions for designing safer urban environments. They were developed to facilitate the planning of safer urban environments for all Victorian communities. They provided practical design suggestions for achieving development that is safer and feels safer for the community using it.

The Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria that follow have condensed the original suite of three guideline documents into a single compendium with a highly accessible structure. The new guidelines have improved usability and they feature a flexible format that can be added to over time. The new guidelines replace the earlier guidelines as reference documents in the Victoria Planning Provisions.

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Introduction

0.1 What are the Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria?

The Victorian State Government developed the Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria to support state agencies, local government and the urban development sector to deliver, functional and enjoyable places for people to live, work, and spend leisure time. The guidelines aim to create neighbourhoods that foster community interaction and make it easy for people of all ages and abilities to live healthy lifestyles and engage in regular physical activity. These places may be urban areas in metropolitan Melbourne and in regional cities and towns.

0.2 What do the guidelines aim to achieve?

The Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria assist in creating places that are:

- accessible, safe, diverse and provide choice
- enjoyable, engaging and comfortable to be in and move around
- conducive to people being more physically active
- accommodating of people of all abilities, ages and cultures
- distinctive and celebrate their social, cultural and natural heritage.

0.3 Why we need urban design guidelines

High quality places support the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of our communities, and are critical to the development of competitive and efficient cities and towns. New development and changes in land uses should respond to their context and enhance places of value to the community. Good urban design delivers places that are safe, healthy, functional and enjoyable.

0.4 What is urban design?

In these guidelines, urban design focuses on the design of the public realm, its public spaces, streets, parks and paths. Urban design informs the design of infrastructure and buildings in as far as they affect the function and amenity of the public realm.

0.5 What is the scope and statutory role of the Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria?

The Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria are policy guidelines within the State Planning Policy Framework of the Victoria Planning Provisions. The guidelines must be considered when assessing the design and built form of new development where relevant.

The guidelines use best practice knowledge and advice underpinned by sound evidence.

0.6 When to use the guidelines

Decisions affecting the public realm

The guidelines assist decision making and are intended for use by those initiating urban development and public realm works, by those assessing or reviewing development proposals for planning in so far as they affect the public realm, and by members of the public who have an interest in urban development and public realm design.

Investing in the public realm

The guidelines may be used to inform strategic investment in community infrastructure and public realm assets. The guidelines may also be used to develop area specific urban design policies and frameworks.

Applying the guidelines in context

In applying the guidelines, designers and decision-makers need to determine the relevance of the specific guideline in the context of the proposed development.

However, there may be ways to achieve the objectives other than through the responses described in these guidelines.

Where designers believe that a guideline should not apply, they should be able to express clear reasons why this is so and put forward an alternative way to meet the objective.

0.7 How the guidelines are arranged

The guidelines are presented in a compendium.

The flexible format will enable future additions and updates.

The guidelines are ordered within urban elements:

1. **Urban structure – the overall topography and land division pattern**
2. **The movement network – the roads, streets, and paths**
3. **Public spaces – areas for public recreation**
4. **Public transport environs – the spaces and buildings around stations, bus and tram interchanges**
5. **Buildings – and their contribution to their setting**
6. **Objects in the public realm – facilities located in streets and public spaces.**

Guideline example

Element 1 Urban structure

1.1 Urban structure principles

Objective 1.1.1 To provide a permeable and functional urban structure of blocks and streets

Permeability refers to the extent to which the urban structure permits the movement of people or vehicles through an area.

1.1.1a Create an interconnected street layout with regular block sizes.

→ **TIP** An interconnected street layout provides a choice of routes, allowing people to move about and goods be transported with ease and efficiency.

Explanation

An element is a major component of the urban fabric

The element's name

The objective states outcomes to be achieved for the elements:

- form and function
- detailed design
- interfaces and integration with context
- management and maintenance.

A group of specific guidelines follow each objective.

In some instances, an explanatory note provides information relating to an objective

The guideline describes an action to achieve the objective for that element

A tip provides useful information relating to the guideline

0.8 How to access the guidelines

The guidelines are available in:

Web based interactive format

- On the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website www.delwp.vic.gov.au/planning/urban-design-and-development and follow the link to Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria.

Print-formatted compendium

- As a PDF and Word document suitable for creating a customised loose leaf folder
- Download from the website as the full guidelines or a guideline section. www.delwp.vic.gov.au/planning/urban-design-and-development and follow the link to Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria.

The guidelines can be accessed and used in three ways:

Elements list

Sets out the guidelines, which are grouped within urban elements and their element parts, ordered from the broad urban structure and arrangement to the detailed level of urban furniture type and placement. See the table of contents for a full list of elements and element parts.

Use this when you are browsing and getting familiar with the scope and content of the guidelines.

Topic search

The index or the keyword search function allows guideline users to search and select a specific topic. For example, search 'car parking' to deliver information on this specific subject. The index can be found the end of the print version. The web format uses a keyword search function.

Use this search function when you have an inquiry for a specific topic.

Preselect groups

Provides a number of preselected groups of guidelines relevant to specific urban conditions. The selected guideline groups correspond to topics in the former suite of guidelines, with the addition of some new guideline groups related to other urban conditions.

Use this function when you have an urban context related inquiry.

See Section 0.9 **Preselect groups** below.

Urban design toolbox

To support the guidelines, an urban design toolbox will be developed which contains a collection of useful information on common urban design processes as well as technical specifications and terminology.

This information can be found on the website:

www.delwp.vic.gov.au/planning/urban-design-and-development

0.9 Preselect groups

Activity areas design

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- 1.2 Activity centre structure
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- 1.4 Higher density residential precinct structure
- 1.5 Public realm structure
- 2.2 Pedestrian priority streets
- 2.3 Pedestrian and bicycle paths
- 2.4 Pedestrian and bicycle crossings
- 2.6 Public transport on roads
- 2.7 On-street car parking
- 2.8 Car parking lots
- 3.1 Public spaces principles
- 3.2 Street spaces and plazas
- 3.3 Local parks
- 4.1 Public transport environs principles
- 4.2 Rail station precincts
- 4.3 Public transport interchanges
- 4.4 Rail corridor environs
- 5.1 Buildings in activity centres
- 5.2 Higher density residential buildings
- 5.3 Large format retail premises
- 5.4 Car parking structures
- 6.1 Principles for objects in the public realm
- 6.2 Street furniture
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- 6.4 Barriers and fences
- 6.5 Lighting
- 6.6 Signs and way-finding
- 6.7 Small public buildings and structures

Higher density residential development

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- 1.5 Public realm structure
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- 2.3 Pedestrian and bicycle paths
- 2.4 Pedestrian and bicycle crossings
- 2.5 Major roads
- 2.7 On-street car parking
- 3.1 Public spaces principles
- 3.2 Street spaces and plazas
- 3.3 Local parks
- 5.1 Buildings in activity centres
- 5.2 Higher density residential buildings
- 5.4 Car parking structures
- 6.1 Principles for objects in the public realm
- 6.3 Trees and planting
- 6.4 Barriers and fencing
- 6.5 Lighting
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Large format retail premises

- 1.1 Urban structure principles
- 1.2 Activity centres structure
- 1.3 Large development site structure
- 1.5 Public realm structure
- 2.1 Movement network principles
- 2.2 Pedestrian priority streets
- 2.3 Pedestrian and bicycle paths
- 2.4 Pedestrian and bicycle crossings
- 2.5 Major roads
- 2.8 Car parking lots
- 3.1 Public spaces principles
- 3.2 Street spaces and plazas
- 5.1 Buildings in activity centres
- 5.3 Large format retail premises
- 5.4 Car parking structures
- 6.1 Principles for objects in the public realm
- 6.2 Street furniture
- 6.3 Trees and planting
- 6.4 Barriers and fences
- 6.5 Lighting
- 6.6 Signs and way-finding

Urban development design

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- 5.3 Large format retail premises
- 5.4 Car parking structures
- 6.1 Principles for objects in the public realm

Physical activity design

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Public spaces design

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0.10 Legislation, policies and other guidance

The Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria support and complement the objectives set out in relevant Victorian legislation, provisions and advisory documents including:

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987* – to secure a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria
- *Local Government Act 1989* – sets out objectives for councils to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community and to ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable
- *Subdivision Act 1988* – sets out objectives for provision of public open space during the land subdivision process
- *Victoria Planning Provisions* – to create urban environments that are safe, functional and provide good quality environments with a sense of place and cultural identity
- *Urban Design Charter for Victoria 2009* – provides overarching principles for urban design to apply to cities and towns in Victoria to make places that are valued and significant for those who use them.

Related planning guidance

Victoria Planning Provisions: Practice Notes and Advisory Notes.

Other departments and agencies guidance

The Victorian Planning Authority, VicRoads, Victorian Public Transport Development Authority (PTV), VicTrack and Community Crime Prevention Victoria provide guidance documents that are relevant to certain urban design decisions.

A full list of, and links to, these design guidance documents is located in Guideline sources and references.