



HUME CITY COUNCIL LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

Play space design

Play space hierarchy

The following hierarchy is applied to Council's open space, in accordance with the Open Space Strategy:

- Local park
- Neighbourhood
- Sub-district & district
- Regional

Play provision is to broadly follow the open space hierarchy.

Neighbourhood

- A range of diverse play opportunities is to be provided in each precinct, which will include several Neighbourhood reserves.
- Parks with a high level of use, due to increased housing density, require a greater number of play elements.

Sub-district/district

- Sub-district and district play spaces are to provide activities for a wide range of age groups.
- An accessible path system to all social spaces and the play space is required
- A choice of accessible/inclusive play opportunities must be provided.
- Parks with a high level of use, due to increased housing density, require a greater number of play elements.
- The play opportunities extend beyond the playground, and may include hard courts, grassed ball play areas, bike play and skate elements

Regional

- Design of a Regional play space requires master planning for the whole site. Consideration is to be given to the general amenity and function to guide design components, including site levels, accessibility, materials, edging, surfacing, paths, garden beds, shade and seating.
- Custom design of some elements is encouraged to create a distinctive space.
- Play spaces are to provide a good range of physical, creative, social, and imaginative play settings for children of all ages and their families.
- Play areas are to cater for all age groups.
- A range of accessible and inclusive play opportunities is to be provided, including access to height and to natural areas.
- An accessible path system to all social spaces and the play space is required.

Locating the play space within the park

Play spaces are to be designed in consideration of the whole park.

- Incorporate existing site features such as trees, rock formations and natural topography into the design.
- Play spaces are to be located on prominent sites to encompass views into and across the park, and to provide for passive surveillance.
- Playground equipment, towers and platforms are to be located to maintain the privacy of neighbouring properties.
- Play spaces which are intended specifically for older children and teenagers are to be in prominent locations, providing passive surveillance for security and to reduce vandalism and graffiti.
- Play spaces are to be located a minimum 25m from roads, unless a physical barrier is provided.

- Play equipment is to be located where it also allows useful space for other activities in the park, such as ball games, seating and picnic areas.
- Elevated play equipment is to be suitably located to avoid overlooking private property.
- Activities which may generate noise (eg. basketball courts), are to be located away from residences. Noise attenuating backboards should be used.
- Design of park surface levels needs to include the play area. Direct surface water away from playgrounds, and ensure placement of garden beds and paths do not cause undue damming of water in the play spaces.
- All play spaces are to include subsurface drainage, connected to the existing stormwater street pits and drains, and drainage infrastructure is to be shown on as-constructed drawings for ongoing maintenance.



Design guidelines

Major design considerations

- **Demographics:** play spaces are to accommodate the current and projected demographics for the area, providing a range of play elements for children from 0-16 years.
- **Cultural context:** play space themes may reflect natural and cultural heritage, landform and geology, previous land use or cultural place.
- **Sustainable and durable play spaces:** play elements are to be designed with long term maintenance in mind. Preference is given to replaceable components, high vandal-resistant design and long-term durability of materials.
- **Age ranges:** Each play space is to include elements which cater for a range of ages, including a broad age range of carers/supervisors. All ages are to be provided for across the District catchment. Play spaces may be zoned to cater for specific age groups (junior, intermediate, senior and youth).
- **Positive risk:** the provision of play spaces must address a balance between safety and risk management, and children's natural desire to be adventurous and creative. Play spaces are to provide children with a choice of challenges to suit their level of skill and confidence.
- **Play value:** Play elements that provide a combination of physical play, social interaction and imaginative/or creative play.
- **Impact absorbing surfaces** are to be provided in accordance with Australian standards.
- **Accessibility:** each catchment will provide for children or adults with a disability.
- **Shade:** location of playgrounds should take advantage of existing trees to provide shade and reduce the effects of heat on playground users.

Detailed design considerations

Consider all the following elements when designing a play space:

- Elements to encourage **social inclusion:** counters, tables, seating areas, activity viewing areas, imagination promoting settings, two and four-way rockers, carousels, basket swings etc.
- **Cognitive elements:** mazes, trace panels, games, puzzles, quizzes, and interpretive elements, which cater for a broad range of ages and cognitive abilities
- **Sensory play:** drums, bells, chimes, textural and perfumed plants, contrasting and complementary colours, variation in surface textures
- **Agility:** jumping, horizontal and vertical climbing, swinging, hanging, running, reaching, pulling, sliding, spinning, balancing, rolling
- **Natural play elements:** sticks, stones, mulch, leaves, flowers, seed pods, branches, water, trees, rocks, dirt, including the landscape extending beyond the soft fall area
- **Spatial complexity:** level changes (platforms, mounds, rocks, walls), surface changes (gravel or mulch paths, grass, stepping-stones, rubber, rocks), sub-spaces (under-deck spaces, tunnels, mazes, vegetation)
- **Informal sport:** kickabout space, half or full court basketball or netball, soccer goal, tennis rebound wall, small skate elements, table tennis, line markings for four-square, hopscotch, disc golf
- **Seats or perches** are to be incorporated immediately adjacent to the play space for carers to supervise children and assist in play if required.
- **Playground surfaces:** preference is for soft fall mulch, but rubber is to be used for all accessible elements and pathways, under swings and at the end

of slides. Excessive soft fall is to be avoided e.g. large unused spaces outside fall zones. Preference is for rubber surface under exercise stations.

- **Trees** are to be planted around the outside of the playspace, and can be planted inside the mulched zone, as long as they are outside of all fall zones.
- **Shade** is to be provided by trees, shelters, and playground roof structures. Shade sails are not to be provided in open space.
- **Fences and barriers:** Fences and barriers are only to be used in locations abutting a hazard such as a busy road, water body or steep areas. Dense vegetation, rocks, boulders or logs can be used to form barriers. Fencing may be partial and can be obscured by planting. Fences and barriers must not create hidden areas which encourage anti-social behaviour.
- **Artworks in play environments:** Art pieces may be included in play spaces for their visual effect, as a functional or sensory element. The production of art for play spaces is to be in accordance with the Art in Public Places Policy. Art works are to be structurally sound, durable and comply with the Australian Standards for playgrounds.

Council requirements

The following are some of the more common requirements under AS4685.0:2017, along with some specific Council requirements. This list is not meant to be definitive, and designers should refer to the Australian Standard for the full set of guidelines.

- Rocks in nature play areas are to be less than 600mm in height; they are to be spaced at less than 300mm apart or greater than 1500mm apart
- To avoid finger entrapment all gaps/spaces should be less than 8mm or more than 25mm
- To avoid head entrapment all gaps/spaces should be less than 89mm or more than 230mm
- Orient slides and swings so they are facing south
- Towers are to be a maximum of 3m tall
- Clear access to all towers is required to allow for maintenance and repairs
- Concrete edge is required to playground softfall
- Concrete edge is required where soft fall rubber meets grass
- Plexipave finish is required for all court surfaces



Swings

Swings are one of the most sought-after play elements. Swings are to be provided in every play space, in accordance with the play space hierarchy:

- Local/small recreation nodes (eg along linear path systems) - at least 1 x double swing frame with standard seats.
- Neighbourhood - at least 1 x triple swing frame with x 2 standard seats and a toddler seat.
- Sub-district - at least 4 swings, with at least one toddler seat;
- AND Basket swing (with 360° rotation);
- District/Regional - at least 4 swings, with at least one toddler seat;
- AND Basket swing (with 360° rotation);

Please note that parent/child swings are encouraged.

Designing for accessibility

When designing playgrounds to be accessible to all, a range of modifications to the standard playground design should be considered. Provision of some elements is likely to reduce the play value of others, so careful consideration of the elements and their placement is required.

- A universal approach to path access from the car park and park entry to the play space, with no barriers to movement for all.
- Include ramps allowing wheelchair access to elevated areas
- Provide turning spaces large enough for wheelchair/walking aids, particularly within cubbies or on decks, path intersections, picnic and seating areas
- Incorporate surfaces that make wheeled-play accessible, interesting and fun
- Provide rubber impact-absorbing surfaces to allow access to play structures, especially large elements such as a birds-nest swings
- Provide wheelchair access to at least some play elements, and to the social or focal points of the playground
- Include a range of accessible options including cubbies, imaginative role play areas, mazes and activity panels for social inclusion
- Design activities that allow a person in a wheelchair to get close to the activity, providing clearance for their knees
- Avoid barriers such as log borders, steps or stairs
- Define pathways, edges and level changes through the play space using contrasting surface textures and/or colours
- Provide simple back support structures on seats, swings and rockers

Materials

- Materials are to be selected for strength, durability, longevity, and resistance to vandalism
- Steps and decks are to be designed to be non-slip.
- No flat steel materials unless coated to prevent excessive heat to prevent burns
- All uprights and structural supports are to be steel.
- Powder-coated or galvanised elements are acceptable.
- The use of steel surfaces for slides and decks should be avoided. Where used steel slides will need to face south or shaded by existing trees to prevent heating up and causing burns.
- Plastic elements are to be UV stabilised and/or High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)
- Rubber under-surfacing to be UV stabilised Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer (EPDM)
- Natural materials are encouraged, especially when recycled from site (eg rocks and logs). Placement and finish is to minimise injury from splinters etc.

Design drawings

The following drawings are required as part of the play space design package:

- Plan of play space showing fall zones in colour
- Edging, surface materials and drainage
- Manufacturer's specifications for each component
- Detailed drawings of any custom components
- Schedule of colours
- An audit of the play space by a suitably qualified playground auditor, against the Australian Standards, is required at the completion of installation works prior to use of the play space
- For District and Regional play spaces, an audit of the play space design against the Australian Standards by a suitably qualified playground auditor is required prior to approval of designs

References

Hume City Council Open Space Strategy 2010-2015

Hume City Council Play Space Planning Framework and Reference Guide, April 2012

Hume City Council Art in Public Places Policy

Hume City Council Signage Style Guide 2019

Australian Standards including but not limited to:

- AS/NSZ 4685,4422 and 4486
- AS 4685.0:2017 Playground equipment and surfacing

