

## 2019 Healthy Melville Plan

**Goal 1:** increase physical activity –(In the period 2007-2011 , 3,188 City of Melville residents were hospitalised from a fall – an average of 10 deaths per year. (Data source: WA Dept. of Health). Achieve this goal by:

- 1)planning and provision of fit for purpose infrastructure to support an active community
- 2)delivery of products, services and programs to increase physical activity.

**Goal 3:** Create a mentally healthy community (in 2015, 10,169 C of M residents were diagnosed by a doctor with depression, anxiety, or other stress-related or mental health conditions. One of the ways we could work towards achieving this goal was to provide views and access to natural spaces, green spaces and public art within City of Melville.

**Goal 5** – Create a safe and healthy urban environment. It was stated that we know we are succeeding if we increase the number of C o M residents over 16 yrs of age that feel their local area is clean and green.



should be a minimum, and cities should strive for even higher canopy cover when possible. Where it is difficult for trees to grow and thrive, e.g., in arid climates, the target should be 30% of vegetation.

### 300 Metres from the Nearest Park or Green Space

Many studies have highlighted the importance of proximity and easy access to high-quality green space that can be used for recreation. A safe 5-minute walk or 10-minute stroll is often mentioned. The European Regional Office of the World Health Organization recommends a maximum distance of 300 metres to the nearest green space (of at least 1 hectare). This encourages the recreational use of green space with positive impacts for both physical and mental health. Of course, it will be important to work within the local context. For example, the needs in lower-density suburban areas will be different from those in denser urban areas. But, in all locales efforts need to be made to provide access to high-quality urban green space, such as in the form of linear green spaces that double as cycle corridors and walking paths. It could be difficult to create new public green spaces of 1 ha in size, especially in existing neighbourhoods where "retrofitting" is needed. In these cases, a decent size of 0.5 ha should be a minimum. Moreover, we don't have to always think of park-like green spaces. Linear spaces like green avenues have substantial vegetation, seating, and areas to play and exercise.

Spanish cities offer some really good examples of this type of integration of public space and mobility.

### Implementing the 3-30-300 Rule

There has been some initial interest in the rule from cities and organisations in different countries. Using the 3-30-300 rule will allow for benchmarking (nationally and internationally) as well as easy monitoring of progress. The rule is also easy to communicate and can generate interest and support among residents, politicians, businesses, and other key stakeholders. Applying the 3-30-300 rule will help improve and expand the local urban forest in many cities, and with that promote health, wellbeing, and resilience. It will help us create greener, better, and more biophilic cities.

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# the 3-30-300 rule:





Barcelona Building Block  
Image Credit: Erwan Berys on Unsplash

## The 3-30-300 Rule for Urban Forestry and Greener Cities

By Cecil Konijnendijk

### Crucial Urban Forests

Urban forests provide a wide range of essential benefits. Current global challenges, such as climate change, environmental degradation, and the COVID-19 pandemic, have resulted in increased awareness of the importance of urban trees and green spaces. We have all experienced the importance of our local trees and green

spaces during times of restricted movements, and when lock-down restrictions were eased in Spain, many people flocked to parks and other green spaces. Many studies from across the world have demonstrated the importance and increased use of urban nature during the pandemic. Even indoor plants have become more appreciated, as preliminary findings from a study at the University of British Columbia

show.

When working with cities, national governments, and international organisations, experts like me are often asked for specific guidelines for developing successful urban forestry programs. We have mostly declined, because every city is different, which makes it difficult to set transferable targets (such as tree canopy

cover) across various contexts and settings. The situation in Barcelona, for example, is very different from that in Vancouver, and Beijing is a world away from Lagos, even though these are both megacities.

### Introducing a New Guiding Rule of Thumb

Although it is difficult to generalise, there are arguments for developing simplified, easy-to-remember rules and guidelines, especially when these are grounded in evidence. Many of us working in this field are familiar with [Frank Santamour's 10-20-30](#) rule for ensuring species diversity in the urban forest. The rule states that no tree species should make up more than 10% of a municipality's urban forest, no genus should have a share larger than 20%, and no single family should make up more than 30% of the urban forest. Although this rule has been debated, it has become widely known and adopted, most likely having a positive effect on urban forest structure and diversity.

The 10-20-30 rule, however, does not have a specific focus on the benefits provided by urban forests. Given the current climate and public health urgencies, as well as a range of other challenges we face, it would be useful to introduce a guiding principle for urban forest programmes, and city greening across the world, that ensures that all residents have access to trees and green – and the benefits these provide.

Based on some of the most up-to-date research on the links between urban forests and health, wellbeing, and climate change, and the work of influential global organisations like the World Health Organization, we would like to introduce a new (guiding) rule for urban forestry: the 3-30-300 rule. We'll explain this rule below and are of course aware that its application will be more challenging – and perhaps less relevant – in some contexts. The rule recognises that we need to bring trees and nature all the way into people's neighbourhoods, streets, and on their doorsteps in order to capitalise on their many benefits. It is not sufficient to strive for a city-wide tree canopy cover of 30%, because typically the urban forestry will not be evenly distributed and more marginalised populations usually will have less trees and green in their neighbourhoods. Also, putting most efforts into developing and managing large, high-profile city parks is only one part of the story, as we really have to integrate green infrastructure into all places where we live and work, so that nature is always within sight and easy access.

### 3 Trees from Every Home

The first element of the rule is that every citizen should be able to see at least three trees (of a decent size) from their home. [Recent research](#) demonstrates the importance of nearby, especially [visible](#), green for mental health and wellbeing. During the COVID-19

pandemic, people have often been bound to their homes or direct neighbourhoods, placing even greater importance on nearby trees and other green in gardens and along streets. Seeing green from our windows helps us keep in touch with nature and its rhythms. It provides important breaks from our work and can inspire us and make us more creative. The Danish municipality of Frederiksberg has a [tree policy](#) that calls for every citizen to see at least one tree from their house or apartment. We should take this one step further and ensure that everybody has multiple trees in sight.

### 30 Percent Tree Canopy Cover in Every Neighbourhood

Recent studies have shown an association between urban forest canopy and [cooling](#), [better microclimates](#), [mental and physical health](#) and possibly also [reducing air pollution and noise](#). The work of Prof. Thomas Astell-Burt and his team in Australia has repeatedly found that 30% is an important threshold – a minimum canopy cover percentage that ensures that residents benefit in terms of their health and wellbeing. By creating more leafy neighbourhoods, we also encourage people to spend more time outdoors and to interact with their neighbourhoods (which in turn promotes social health). Many of the most ambitious cities in the world in terms of greening, including [Barcelona](#), [Bristol](#), [Canberra](#), [Seattle](#) and [Vancouver](#) have set a target of achieving 30% canopy cover. At the neighbourhood level, 30 percent



Scott Shafer and John Jacob\*

# URBAN PARKS: The Value of Small Urban Parks, Plazas and Other Outdoor Spaces

*It is wonderfully encouraging that the places people like the best of all, find least crowded, and most restful, are small places marked by a high density of people and a very efficient use of space.*

—William Holly Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

*Parks strengthen communities. They increase community cohesion by providing a place for people to get together.*

—Peter Harnik, Director, Center for City Park Excellence, Trust for Public Land

People need parks. Good parks provide a place for rest and relaxation, but more importantly they are places for spontaneous social interaction. Social interaction is the basic building block for “social capital”—the network of relationships that define the nature of civic engagement and cohesion in a place. Places with good social capital are stable, prosperous places where people want to live and work. They are the “great” cities and towns of America. Places with little social capital are places where people have little pride in their community.

It is not particularly easy to build social capital, but it is easy to build the spaces where social capital can form, and small, urban parks are some of the very best spaces for this. The most urgent need in most cities

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is for spaces to which everyone has access. Ideally, no one should be farther than 1/4 mile from an urban park.

A great urban park can be as small as a single house lot. Some of the very best urban parks in America are smaller than 100 x 100 feet. The best size depends on the location of the park and its design. Design is what makes a park great. A well-designed park attracts people, makes them want to stay, and encourages spontaneous interactions between them.

*Lowly, unpurposful and random as they appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public life must grow*  
 — Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Small urban parks can occur in hyper-urban downtown areas as well as in suburban neighborhoods. There are important physical characteristics that should be considered when planning and designing a small park, plaza or other public space.

**1. Places to sit.** Good seating is the most basic characteristic of a successful public park. Seating can be provided on grass-covered slopes, benches, chairs, walls, ledges, planters and steps.

- Seating should be oriented so that it is both physically and socially comfortable. The best locations for seating are near pedestrian corridors, playing fields or other places "where the action is." People like to sit where they can see other people.
- People should be able to choose where they want to sit, whether in the sun, in the shade, in groups or alone. This is what makes a park attractive to many types of people.
- Seating height can vary. The useful height of sit-table ledges or walls varies from 1 to 3 feet. The depth of seating may be more important. A bench or ledge that is at least 30 to 36 inches wide allows people to sit back to back, which adds capacity in a small space.



- Seating can be complementary to other uses. For example a grass-covered slope facing a playground gives parents a place to sit while supervising children and a place for kids to slide and roll.
- Seating doesn't have to be fixed. Movable seating gives users choices and options and is a feature of many well-used urban parks.
- The linear feet of seating space in a park should at least equal the perimeter (in feet) of the park. At least 10 percent of the total open space should be devoted to seating. The more seating there is the better.

*The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make a place attractive to everyone else. Places designed for mistrust will get what they were looking for*  
 — William H Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

**2. Safety issues.** A park should have good visual access. If people feel cut off from their surroundings they may feel unsafe. Public spaces should be designed and maintained so that they are visibly "connected" to their surroundings. This encourages observation, and the more "eyes on the park" the more comfortable it will feel to users and the safer it will be.

- Making a park feel safe to users can be tricky, especially if it is also intended to provide habitat for wildlife. For example, clearing understory vegetation so people can see into a park might be critical to making the park a success, but the vegetation may be what attracts birds and other wildlife.





- While providing wildlife habitat can be one of the objectives of small urban parks, it is important to remember that serving human needs is the primary purpose of these places.
- People prefer places that allow them to see and “read” the area while also creating some mystery—provoking the question, “I wonder what’s over there.”
- Neighborhood parks are best if centrally located with houses facing onto them. Parks become more connected to a neighborhood when given “front yard” status.

- 3. **Water.** Water is interesting to look at and listen to. It is calming and refreshing. Some of the most impressive public spaces in America—from New York City’s Central Park to San Antonio’s River Walk—include water features. Water is just as important in small public spaces.
- Water is especially useful when people can touch it. Being able to wade, splash or soak in water features adds greatly to their value.
- The sounds water makes when falling, gurgling and splashing can help mask undesirable background noise and make people feel separated from busy surroundings.



- 4. **Sun and wind.** The weather can affect people’s enjoyment of outdoor spaces. A city’s parks and public spaces can be designed so that the effects of sun and wind help warm or cool a space.
- Parks dominated by grass and trees are much cooler in summer than parks dominated by paved surfaces. In fact, such parks act like air conditioning units and may stay 5 to 10 degrees cooler than the surrounding city.



- Even a small water feature such as a pond or fountain can be a focal point and help create a restorative environment.

- Shade trees and awnings in spaces dominated by concrete can greatly reduce glare and keep surface temperatures down.



- Deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter and allow sunlight through to warm an area. In summer they give shade. They are helpful when planted near places where people sit or gather.
- Conifers stay green all year and often have dense lower branches that make them good for blocking cold winter winds.
- A seating area can be oriented in the direction of prevailing winds to take advantage of cool summer breezes.
- Both wind and vegetation can be used to help block noise from a nearby street or other area.



**5. Trees.** Trees are a key feature of any park or outdoor space. They help control temperature and block wind. They also soften the environment and add color, texture and sound to open spaces. A tree canopy can provide a sense of shelter and human scale in an outdoor space.

- Deciduous trees change throughout the year. Some flower in the spring and show bright colors in the fall. These special characteristics can create focal points for park visitors.



- Native trees (and other vegetation) are often the best choices because they usually require less maintenance and attract more wildlife than non-native species. Consult with local experts to learn about the native trees in your region.

- Trees don't always have to go into the ground. In a mostly paved area they can be placed in planters. Trees are a nice addition even to small parks dominated by pavement.

**6. Surrounding streets.** The relationship to surrounding streets may be the most important design feature for small urban parks. In commercial districts, parks should

Much of the material for this publication was taken from *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte, originally published in 1980. It was republished in 2001 by the Project for Public Spaces in New York, New York.

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**7. Special activities and features.** Features such as art and street performers can help connect people and often lead to friendly interaction. The critic in all of us entices people to stop and talk about a piece of art. A street performer or a game can bring people together and spark conversations. Urban parks can be places that encourage such activities and interactions.

be planned so that stores with windows face the park. Nothing hurts an urban park more than being surrounded by office buildings without ground-floor retail. One of the most important controls planners have for ensuring park success, and the success of urban space in general, is the ability to require that there be a certain percentage of ground floor retail in buildings. In relatively dense urban residential neighborhoods, the same basic principle applies. Houses should front the park. Neighborhood parks should never be adjacent to fenced back yards.