

Melbourne City

Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan





Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan

City of Melbourne December 2000



Foreword

The Flagstaff Gardens are treasured by the people of Melbourne for the open space they provide, their history and ambience, and the way they evoke a 'sense of time and place'. Today they contain many features of historical significance, some of which date back to Melbourne's early European settlement. A perfect spot to relax, eat lunch, or walk around and take in the views, the Gardens offer a green respite from the hustle of the abutting CBD. This Master Plan ensures that future generations of Melbourne's citizens and visitors are able to enjoy the special qualities of the Flagstaff Gardens.

Councillor Martin Brennan

Chair – Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan Advisory Committee
December 2000

Acknowledgments

The Council would like to thank the many people who contributed to development of the Plan including the members of the **Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan Advisory Committee**, other members of the public and the project team for their enthusiastic contributions to the development of this Master Plan. The Advisory Committee was comprised of representatives of user groups and organisations with a special interest in the Flagstaff Gardens:

Councillor Martin Brennan (Chair)

North & West Melbourne Association: Kaye Oddie & Ray Cowling

City of Melbourne Bowls Club: Madeleine Scully

Victoria Bowling Club: Richard Tisher

National Trust: Pamela Jellie

Heritage Victoria: David Wixted & Diahnn McIntosh Sullivan

Royal Historical Society of Victoria: Susan Priestley

Australian Garden History Society: Helen Page

Queen Victoria Market Traders: Michael Presser

William Angliss Institute of TAFE: Don Ruddick

Department of Natural Resources & Environment:

Jill Garvey & David Gabriel-Jones

(Other groups invited to participate included Residents 3000 Inc., Westend Precinct Association, Errol Street Traders Association, and Wurundjeri Council.)

Project team

Parks & Recreation Group: Susan Shaw, Ian Harris, Carmen Dart

City Projects Division: Ron Jones, Jenny Rayment, Fiona Harrisson

Marketing & Communications Division: Joanne Taylor

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Context

Purpose of the Master Plan

The Flagstaff Gardens are a key component of inner Melbourne's network of parks and contain one of the city's most historic sites, Flagstaff Hill. They are also, on an area basis, the most intensively used public garden in the City of Melbourne.

The site is Crown Land permanently reserved for public gardens. Although developed as ornamental gardens in the 1860s, their formal reservation did not occur until 1873. The City of Melbourne became responsible as committee of management for managing the 7.17-hectare reserve in 1917.

At no time has there been a published plan guiding its development. The quality of the landscape has always depended on the changing input of individual administrators, managers and gardeners. These circumstances produced remarkably good results – when Melbourne was a smaller city, the community less complex, and gardeners resident for life – but are less satisfactory today as the basis for management of one of the city's major public open spaces.

In an effort to provide a strong and consistent direction to the Gardens' care and improvement, the City of Melbourne has undertaken the development of this Master Plan. This is intended to take account of the purpose of the reserve, public expectations, the existing character and cultural significance of the landscape, and maintenance issues. Given the history of ad hoc development of the Gardens, a particular challenge is to establish a clear concept that will provide a framework for the future, integrating the conservation of existing features with the development of new ones.

Context

Process

The major components of the research supporting development of the master plan have been:

A History of the Flagstaff Gardens by Georgina Whitehead, October 1990.

This was based on research of primary documentary sources and addresses the Gardens' physical development as well as their social, recreational and cultural roles.

The Flagstaff Gardens Recreation and Tourism Assessment by the Recreation and Tourism Development Branch, City of Melbourne, August 1990, and the Parks & Recreation Customer Satisfaction Survey, by Milward Brown for the City of Melbourne, 2000.

Flagstaff Gardens Conservation Analysis by John Patrick Pty Ltd in association with Allom Lovell & Associates and Hansen Partnership, April 1999. This assessed the cultural heritage significance of features of the landscape and of the Flagstaff Gardens as a whole.

Extensive observation and analysis of the site undertaken by the Master Plan team.

In the interest of brevity, this Master Plan does not reproduce the detailed information contained in the previous reports. Please refer to the original documents as required for these matters.

Public consultation was an important element in the development of the Master Plan to ensure that community views were sought and considered. Over 160 written submissions and 140 attendances at forums and public meetings were made during the development of this Master Plan. In addition, an advisory committee, representing interest groups associated with the Gardens and chaired by Councillor Martin Brennan, was established in September 1999 to oversee a consultative process for preparation of the Master Plan. This consultation was undertaken in three stages, including:

General advertisement of the project and requests for comment.

Publication of the *Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan Issues Paper* in November 1999 to prompt further and more detailed comment on issues relevant to a Master Plan.

Publication of the *Flagstaff Gardens Draft Master Plan* in May 2000 for comment.

Public contribution to the latter two stages was encouraged through advertisement, publication and extensive distribution of the Issues Paper and Draft Master Plan, public meetings, and discussions between various branches of the City of Melbourne and the open space contractors for the Gardens. The submissions and comments were analysed and summarised by Collaborations Pty Ltd in December 1999 to support preparation of the draft plan, and in July 2000 to support preparation of the final plan.

Approval

This Master Plan was approved by Melbourne City Council as committee of management on 31 October 2000.

Issues



Lunchtime on Flagstaff lawns



Increasing use by younger families



Avenue of Elms remnant from the hilltop path

The most recurring and pertinent issues arising from public feedback throughout the master planning process related to community use and activities, and to conservation and management.

Community use and activities

The mixed and intense activity at Flagstaff Gardens raised a range of issues, especially the challenge of maintaining an attractive landscape setting while providing enough facilities to support community use.

Activities and usage patterns: The most common theme arising from community feedback was that the Gardens should be attractive and accessible to everyone, both visitors and the local community. Throughout the comments was an emphasis upon balancing passive and active use. This involves catering for the high usage by office workers on a casual basis at lunchtime as a 'peaceful interlude', commuter walking and jogging, as well as the formal activities associated with the sports courts and bowling greens. The changing demographics of the area, with an increasing (and younger) residential population, also account for the desire for green space and play areas for families in the inner city. Refer further to 'Visitation and Customer Satisfaction' below.

Identity and sense of place: Overall support was expressed for a refinement of that which exists, rather than introducing radical change, yet allowing for contemporary values as a basis for reinterpreting the past. The hill was regarded as especially significant, demanding a design that would highlight this area. The community in general was in favour of retaining the current mix of indigenous and exotic trees, there was frequent support for a water feature, and for greater acknowledgment of indigenous cultural heritage.

Access and connections: Unlike many of Melbourne's larger and more formal gardens, little of the pathway layout resembles the original (1865) design, and in this respect there was significant support for reinstatement of a path to the crest of the hill. At grade parking associated with the bowling club was seen to be very intrusive, as was the vent structure and landscape treatment at Flagstaff Station. A recurrent observation was the lack of promotion and access from Queen Victoria Market. The external link of most concern was the difficult pedestrian access across William Street at the roundabout. Issues also included the difficulty of crossing King, Dudley and Peel Streets to the stairway entrances and accessibility of the northern stairs.

Context

Amenity and safety: There was general recognition that the toilet facility and works depot compromise the significance of the hilltop and prevent public access to this important site. The caretaker's residence, which could be adapted to provide a new focus for the Gardens, was seen as under-utilised. Concerns were expressed about a variety of features that have an impact on safety, ranging from lighting to hidden areas used for 'antisocial activities' that have been created by planting and structures.

The Bowling Club: The Bowling Club was seen as one of the most pressing issues in resolving the plan for the Gardens. While there was some call for removal of the facility entirely, bowling in the Gardens has generally been strongly supported by the community. Opinion ranged from supporting a club that provides a strong base for pennant and social bowling (and is also open to the broader public on a casual basis) to a very modest facility that provides access to bowling greens and support to directly-related uses. This was matched by the desire to open up the greens to become more visible to park visitors, against seeking screening from sight by judicious planting.

Surrounding precincts: Considered planning for the Gardens was seen to offer an opportunity to contribute to the amenity and sustainability of the surrounding city, directly through conservation of energy and resources in the Gardens, and indirectly by supporting a more sustainable urban environment and community lifestyles. While the Master Plan applies to the Gardens and not the broader area, it still provides an opportunity to identify ways in which nearby development might contribute to, or detract from, the Gardens' values and amenity. Particular issues of concern included the loss of historic views from the Gardens to the port, the difficulty of pedestrian access across busy streets to reach the Gardens, and the fact that Flagstaff Station is closed on weekends.



The caretaker's cottage (rear) and its garden setting



Existing lawn bowling greens



Pioneers' Memorial erected in 1871



Elm trees in part beginning to age



Lawn areas giving pride of place

Conservation and Management

A *balanced approach* to treatment of the landscape is vital to ensure the ongoing viability of the Flagstaff Gardens. Therefore some wishes expressed by members of the public, while valuable suggestions, face inherent conflict with practical landscape management requirements.

Heritage and conservation: Public perceptions vary widely about heritage and conservation practice, while there was widespread support for retaining the features of heritage significance. Some expectations for treatment of the landscape selectively looked at a singular aspect of its history despite being couched under general heritage terms. One of the most obvious issues in planning for the Gardens is therefore to balance demands on the one hand for minimal change for reasons of heritage conservation and public attachment to the existing landscape; and on the other, providing an effective guide for inevitable change, especially of vegetation.

Senescence of trees and shrubs: The population of trees in the Gardens include old and young trees, but a large proportion of the canopy is made up of trees planted in the nineteenth century. As a result, many are showing signs of decline, and it is likely that the mature and over mature trees will die out at an increasing rate. Decisions are now required to set in place strategies for perpetuation of the tree canopy in the long term. However there was considerable public support for the current species mix and stands of trees. There was also support for retaining the shrub beds but they are similarly in need of rejuvenation because they are overgrown or because of poor horticultural planning, as with the scented garden where sun-loving species have been planted in the shade. There was broad appeal in retaining the tree avenues, however the implications of this are that proper arboricultural practice will require a program of tree replacement en masse in order to maintain rows of uniform trees.

Environmental sustainability: Generally the community recognises that the design for the Gardens should place priority on environmental sustainability. Water supplies and irrigation systems, however, have generally become taken for granted, making water conservation one of the most obvious issues of sustainability. The expansive lawns and garden bed areas are amongst the most cherished assets of the gardens. Similarly, while security and safety were identified as a key priority for implementation, lighting proposals need to be carefully considered in relation to power consumption.

Condition of infrastructure: Although community feedback indicated minimum change, much of the infrastructure of the Flagstaff Gardens is in need of restoration. Many of the path surfaces are in poor condition, the toilets are sub-standard, the lights outdated, and the manual irrigation system is antiquated. While works to upgrade these assets need not alter the general plan or character of the Gardens, such restoration projects are obviously the ideal time to implement any desired changes.

Gardens maintenance: Maintenance is not the focus of a Master Plan, but various features may affect the labour, resources or energy required to keep the Gardens in good condition. Key issues which have been identified include the constant requirements for replacing beds of annuals, and the accumulated debris which blows into the gardens on market days, particularly on weekends.

Visualisation and Customer Satisfaction

A third category of issues informing the Master Plan related specifically to the impacts and outcomes of visitation.

Visitation patterns: The Flagstaff Gardens receives an average of between 4,300 and 4,700 visits each day. While actual numbers vary according to season, with higher usage over the summer months, most visits occur on weekdays, with an average of 5,300 visits in comparison with an average of 2,600 visits on each weekend day. (Estimates of visitor number monitoring conducted by Information Management Systems, June 1998 – January 2000)

Customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction surveys conducted in and near the Flagstaff Gardens reveal that the Gardens are valued for their variety of plants, flowers and trees. People expressed a high level of satisfaction with the length of the grass and the level of litter control, and did not list any features or facilities which required critical improvement. Apart from its special garden qualities, one of the key attractions of the Flagstaff Gardens is its close proximity to the CBD.

A survey conducted in May 2000 showed that most visitors to the Gardens were regulars attending either daily, 2 – 3 times a week, or once a week. Most people came to the Gardens alone or with one other person and the two most popular reasons for visiting the Flagstaff Gardens were relaxation, and to eat lunch.

(Source: May 2000, Millward Brown Australia, Customer Satisfaction Survey 2000)



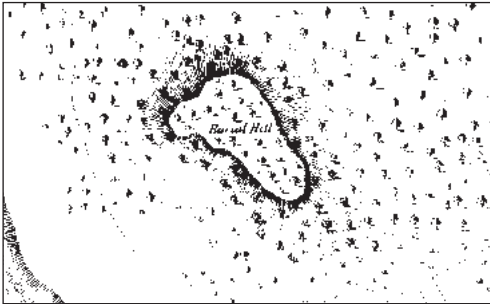
Example of well-maintained pathways and lawn edging



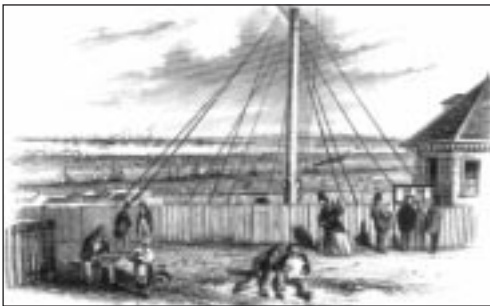
The barbecues are highly prized and used both day and evening

Site

Flagstaff Hill



The burial ground as shown in 1837



The signal station established in 1840



The observatory established in 1857

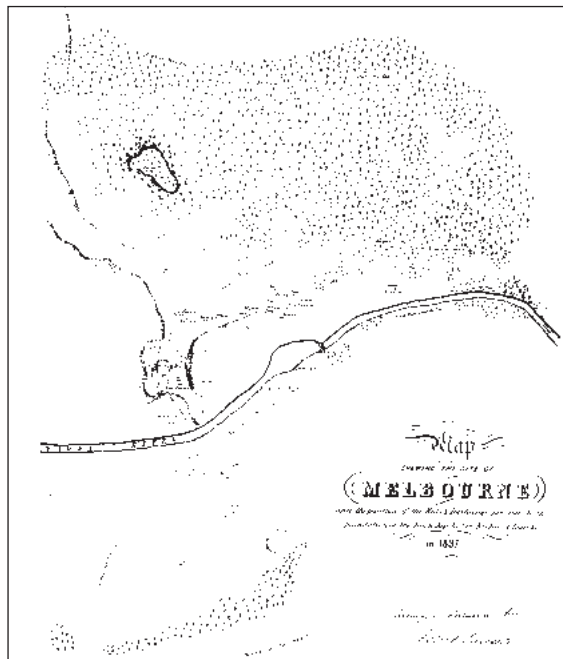


The gardens viewed from the hilltop in 1866

Prospect Hill, Burial Hill, Flag Staff, Observatory, Gardens. The varied story of human use of the site is contingent on one thing: the hill. The strength of its influence might suggest more pronounced terrain; from lowest corner to hilltop the rise is only 15 metres. Yet this elevation has been enough to create particular relationships of view and communication, proximity and separation between the City and Gardens that are the basis of its history. One cannot reflect upon the history of the site without first engaging with its topography.

Indeed, the hill itself is the most substantial physical reminder of the Gardens' history. Apart from archival documentation and fragmentary physical remains, the burial ground, signal station, observatory and 19th century landscape have disappeared, as have the Aboriginal uses of the site. Evolving uses, differing management priorities and incremental change have steadily altered its character. However, in contrast to what is often regarded as damaging to the designs of more formal gardens, the idiosyncrasies of change offer scope for a fresh approach at Flagstaff Gardens. The Gardens are not a changeless historic monument. It is a historic place, valued especially because of its changes and the story these reflect.

The result of that story is a landscape with layers of fragmented patterns. This is the text in which visitors read the history of the Gardens. For most, the story is implicit rather than explicit, but richer than the stilted text of historical plaques. Many features have disappeared, but it is possible to continue to respond to their alignments and boundaries with new features, and thereby restore parts of the story without artificial reconstructions.



1837 plan of Melbourne showing the lightly wooded character of the land to the north of the Yarra River. The area labelled Burial Hill is now the site of the Flagstaff Gardens.

Site

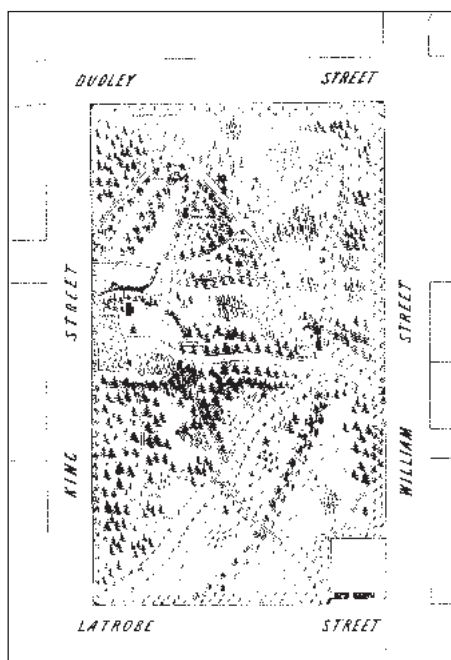
The city's 'kitchen'

Early this century, the Fitzroy Gardens were likened to the city's drawing room, and the Flagstaff Gardens to its kitchen. This reflects the prestige of the Parliamentary precinct and East Melbourne, but also suggests the more homely and convivial character of the Flagstaff Gardens. They give the city a public pleasure ground, providing a landscape setting for active and passive recreation, and are notably popular as a lunchtime venue. While the Gardens provide respite from the city streets and buildings, they are also a busy and people-oriented place.

The congenial character still exists, with an unpretentious blend of recreational facilities and ornamental features. Things are mixed together in ways that may seem odd in the context of conventional garden styles: a fine bronze sculpture graces multipurpose sports courts, lavish floral displays adjoin bowling greens, groves of sugar gums are juxtaposed with elms. Footpaths are used for casual strolls, pedestrian commuters, and as parts of jogging routes through the city. Ornamental green lawns are used for sightseeing, sunbaking, picnics, kicking balls, and tai chi.

One of the distinguishing features of Flagstaff Gardens is the opportunity for participation in communal activities. Bowling, which has been part of the gardens since the 1870s, has a strong social aspect, and the tennis courts established in the 1930s are now mostly used for team sports (netball and volleyball). In addition to the formal performances of music and theatre that occur sporadically during the warmer months, the ability to watch other people using the gardens is important to the social experience of the place.

The original landscape design for Flagstaff Gardens by Hodgkinson in 1862



The bowling club was established in 1878



The boys' playground (and girls' playground nearby) opened in 1918



Dense planting was enclosed by picket fences at the turn of the century

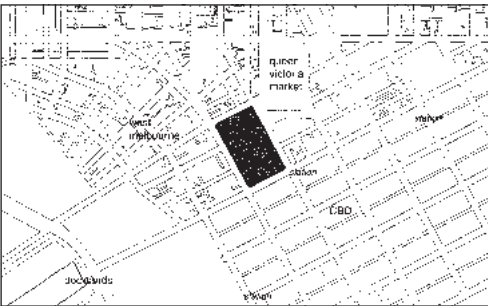


The gardens began to take on a more open character by the 1930s

A garden in the city



The Gardens embedded in the city in 1929



Proximities, access and linkages

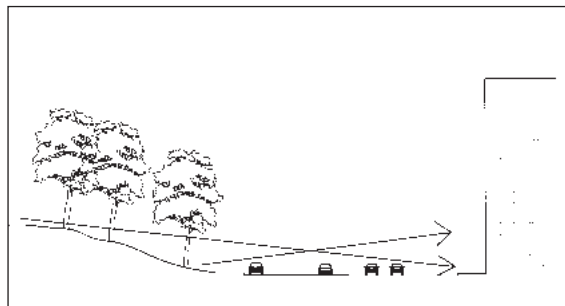
The Gardens are an open space, a block of green, distinct within the urban fabric. Their character has changed remarkably over time, yet it has consistently stood in contrast with its surroundings. The contrast is heightened by divergence from the finer grain of the CBD, as the early proposal to cut A'Beckett and Franklin Streets through the hill was abandoned, leaving a site consolidating three city blocks.

Because the hill was forced into the street grid, the south-east and north-west edges of the Gardens vary in their character and relate quite differently to their neighbouring precincts. The Gardens' edges are at grade with Latrobe and William Street, enclosed by the opposing wall of city buildings, exposed to traffic and easily entered from the footpaths, thereby creating a strong connection between the CBD and the Gardens. Along King and Dudley Streets where the hillside was cut away to build the roads, the Gardens are elevated and separated from the adjoining streets. While the embankments block views into the Gardens, from within they allow a broader outlook over the nearby buildings to the open sky. The historical relationship the Gardens had with the port area has been lost in recent times, as the view has become blocked by tall buildings.

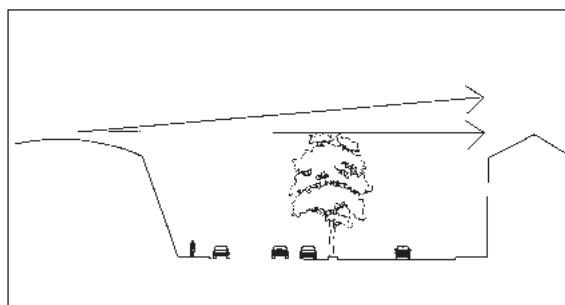
From a local to wider scale, many links exist between the Gardens and other areas. Most obvious is the nearby Queen Victoria Market, although the poor amenity and difficult crossing of Peel Street detract from this connection. At the next level, use of the Gardens is linked to commercial areas of the CBD and residential areas of West Melbourne. Flagstaff Station reinforces the Gardens' roles both as a metropolitan resource and as a pedestrian route from local areas. Each of these relationships brings different people, at different times and seeking different experiences, making the nature of the Gardens as a shared space for public interaction especially important.



The William and LaTrobe Street frontages enclosed by the urban wall of the city buildings



The elevated King Street frontage offering a broad outlook over West Melbourne and toward West Gate Bridge



Design

The Master Plan is the vision for the future use and development of the Flagstaff Gardens. The design has as its origin a deep understanding of the site's history and present character, and superimposes onto this an amalgam of the community's aims and aspirations for the gardens. The landscape itself, in different ways for different people, suggests a story of change and the passage of time. It is like a tapestry: draped, woven, embroidered, embossed and creased. The story is shown through overlaid patterns, imprints and textures.

The established garden setting, which includes patterns of activity as well as landscape character, suggests two key objectives for the Master Plan:

- To enhance the Gardens as a setting for a complementary mixture of public recreational activities.

- To acknowledge and manage the layered history of the gardens, using the character and patterns of its landscape.

People's general desire is to maintain the Gardens' existing character rather than aiming for marked change. However, the Master Plan must deal with change as well as preservation, including significant short-term change such as relocation of the depot, and gradual natural change in the vegetation. The Master Plan therefore derives from an interpretation of the existing landscape, and uses this interpretation as a design concept to guide future management and development.

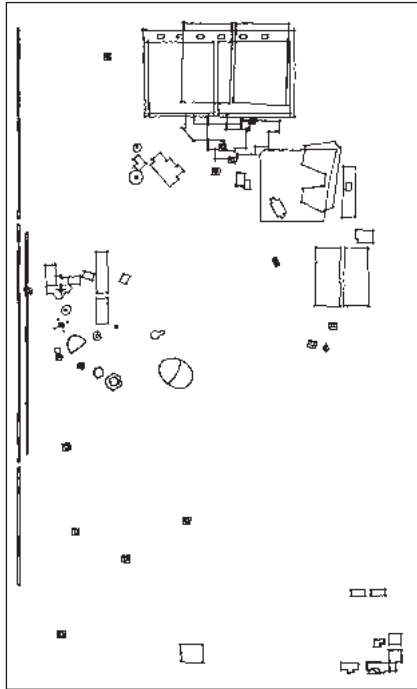
This concept combines two complementary principles:

- Defining and patterning landscape elements using boundaries and shapes of existing and previous features. This will continue the characteristic, untidied, juxtaposition of features in the Gardens and help to suggest the layered and varied history of the site.

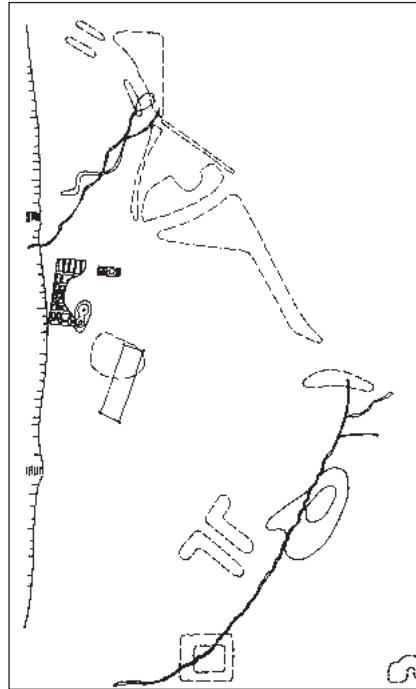
- Using materials that have been used historically in the Gardens but in new ways and for new purposes. This also will maintain a sense of continuity, while allowing for change and creative transformation over time, and will suggest the history of the site as an unfolding process of change.

The plan also aims to maximise the flexibility in uses of spaces and facilities, to support access by broad spectrum of the community using the Gardens as a place of recreation.

Cumulative histories of the site (1840–present)

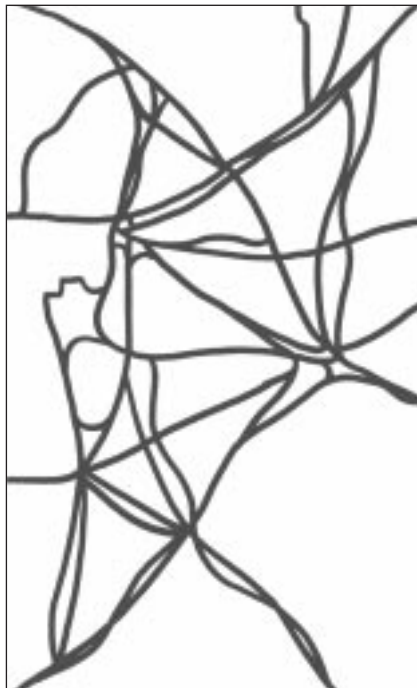


Built features and artefacts

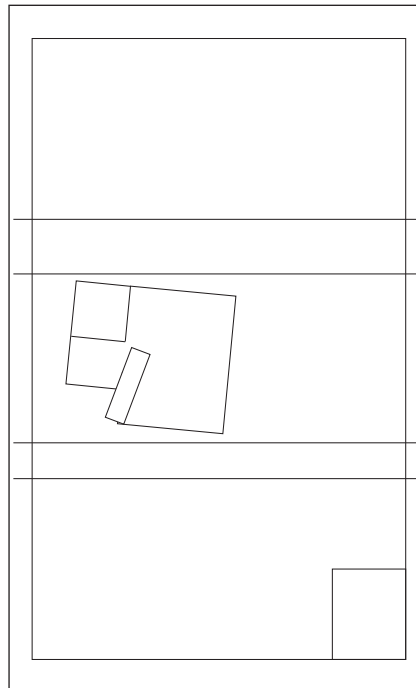


Garden beds and water features

Cumulative histories of the site
(1840 – present)



Changing path alignments



Surveys and reservations

Design

Landscape

Landform

As the hill is the basis of the site's significance, it is the starting point for the design. The shapely character of the terrain should be maintained. Where any regrading is required, it should accentuate the landform (by filling in high areas and cutting in low) and blend smoothly with the surrounding slopes.

A unique opportunity exists to dramatise the hilltop by adopting the original boundaries of the observatory's enclosure for a slightly elevated earthen podium. The depot and toilets should be removed and the ground surface – which now forms a level platform for the buildings – should be slightly filled, shaped and replanted with grass. The resulting architectural landform, draped with lawn, will recall the history of the hilltop dominated by structures yet avoid dominating the entire hill as a new flagstaff, viewing tower or other structure would. By filling rather than excavating, any archaeological remains that may exist in the area will be protected.

In the low-lying south-eastern lawn, a new water element should be designed to recall the former pond, to add interest and diversity to this area of the Gardens, and to act as a focal point for visitors.

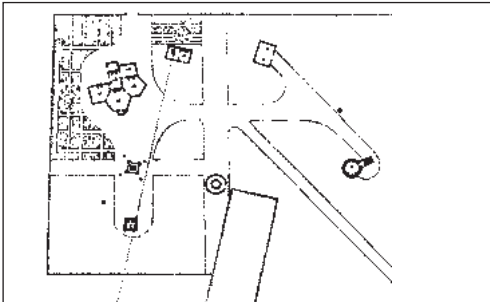
The shape of the hill has been changed most along King Street. The area along the top of the cut-away western face offers glimpses of the historic vista to the west as well as a fine prospect down through the Gardens to the east. This should be one of the highlights of the Gardens. It should be treated as a more positive feature with a sinuous, low, carefully crafted stone wall marking the cut edge of the hilltop and offering extensive seating. This structure could also be used as a place to concentrate interpretive information about the Gardens, forming a 'storyline' along the escarpment.



Lawn drapes the hill like satin



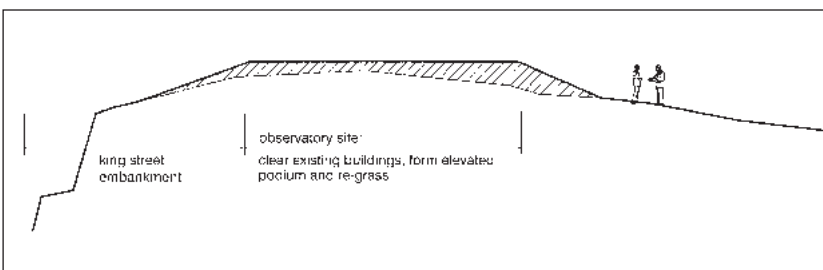
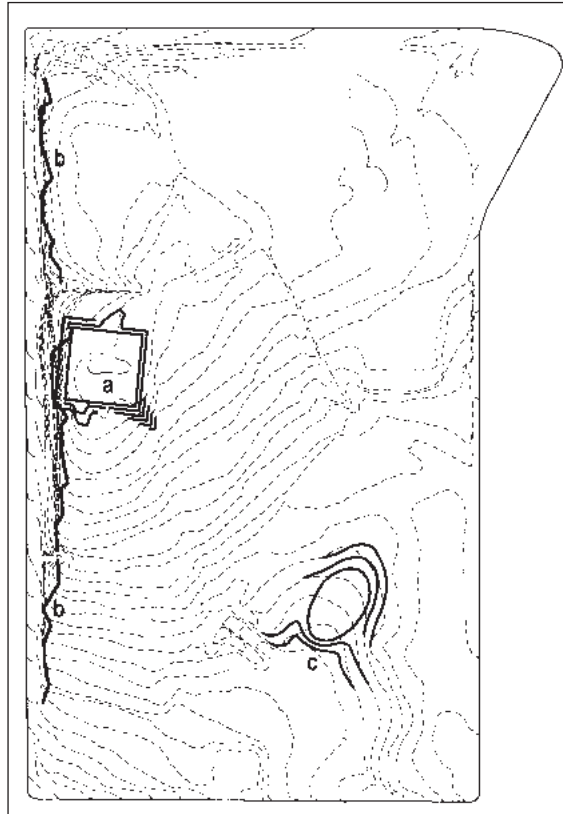
Landform visible as an undulating surface, with light and shade creating a sense of space and depth



Plan of the observatory enclosure



Low wall forming a sinuous edge profile



- a Site of observatory enclosure graded to form grassed platform
- b Low stone wall along escarpment
- c New pond/water element



Natural depression formed the original gully and pond

Design



Artist's impression of the hilltop



Artist's impression of the cafe terrace

Design

Ground surface

The plants and other features of the landscape should ensure that the ground form is visible as a continuous, undulating surface that extends through the Gardens.

The lawns are like a fabric spread across this surface, unifying the Gardens' spaces and features. The absence of an understorey to interrupt ground level views, particularly within the south-east lawns, allows the overall landform to be seen and to dominate the landscape character. The intensive use of the lawns for recreation gives them functional as well as aesthetic value. The lawns should therefore be maintained throughout the Gardens and the turf improved to a consistent, hardy and drought-resistant standard.

Upon this green mantle, beds of flowers and low ground covers create effects like embroidery, embossing or watermarks. Taller shrubs congest some key areas, foreshorten internal views, block vistas from the hilltop, obscure the landform, and add to problems of security and personal safety. The shrub beds should be retained, but need to be progressively renovated using plants that in most cases remain below eye level, and are more robust, drought-tolerant species. The effect of varied spaces, or 'rooms', that shrubs now provide would be better created with trees, forming some areas with a continuous canopy and framing other spaces that remain open to the sky.

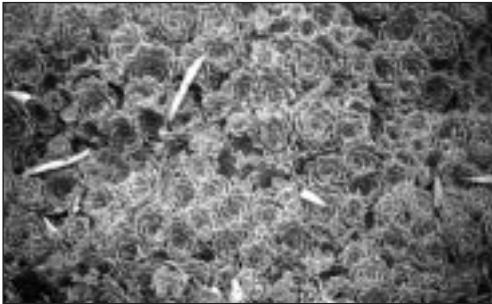
The shrub beds near Flagstaff Station do not fit with the character of the older beds, and fail to make a positive feature of the entrance. The beds around the railway vent near Latrobe Street also create hidden spaces with significant security problems. These beds should be removed, and the walls of the vent structure clad in creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*). Treatments of the station entry structure are discussed below under 'Edges and Links'.

A new garden bed should be formed near the top of the northern King Street stairs to create a stronger ornamental effect at this major confluence of pathways near the hilltop, and to prevent goat-tracks developing across the lawn.

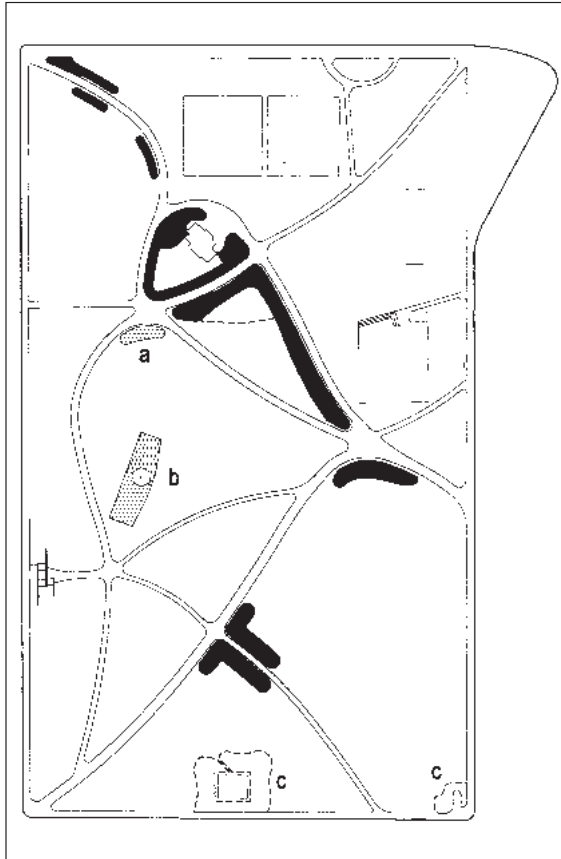
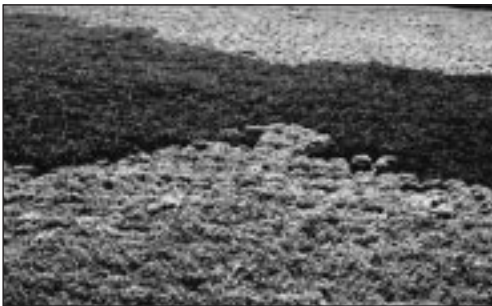
The garden beds should be planted with patterns of mixed species or swathes of single types to create colourful or textural effects. The annual floral displays have always provided a palette that allows for interest and change from season to season and year to year, using contemporary hybrids and patterns within a historic garden tradition. Various ways of adding interest should be pursued, using colour, pattern, texture and scent. Design input should be sought to ensure the highest standard of presentation and impact. Past events can also be evoked with particular materials and landscape effects sitting gently upon the ground plane. For example, a carpet of black mondo could cover the site of the burial ground.



Delicate patterns and colours embroidered onto the ground surface



Textural ground planes – coarser and finer grained



- a New garden bed at Batman Street top of stair
- b Mondo grass setting to Pioneers' Memorial
- c Garden area redesigned, with lawn surrounds increased



Colourful swathes to enrich the lawn fabric



Carpet of black mondo grass over the burial ground

Design

Pathways

As with the floral displays, the pathways make only a gentle imprint on the ground, facilitating access without determining the design of other landscape features.

Over time, the path layout has been extensively altered, responding to changing needs for access. Most notably, the original focus on the hilltop has disappeared, recalled only by the Elm avenue crossing a lawn in the south-western side of the Gardens. It therefore remains disconnected from primary circulation due to the path alignments. Upon demolition of the depot, some realignment of paths will be desirable to provide access to the hilltop: the former path leading up from the south-west corner should be reinstated, and the nearby path to the east of the Pioneer Memorial removed to allow continuity of the central lawns. This will also restore the appropriate significance to the remnant Elm avenue.

Changes to paths should otherwise be minimal. A realignment at the main entry from William Street will help to eliminate a wear track and the need for additional pavements. The minor paths approaching the Jeffcott Street stairway should also be slightly realigned to fall clear of trees that they now interfere with, and to make a better connection with the reinstated hill path.

The path widths should also vary to reflect the movement hierarchy and the character of different spaces. To minimise the impact upon the ground plane, paths should be reconstructed with a crowned surface and without kerbs.

All paths should allow service vehicle access. However, as a general policy, traffic should be minimised. No private vehicles or parking should be permitted in the Gardens.



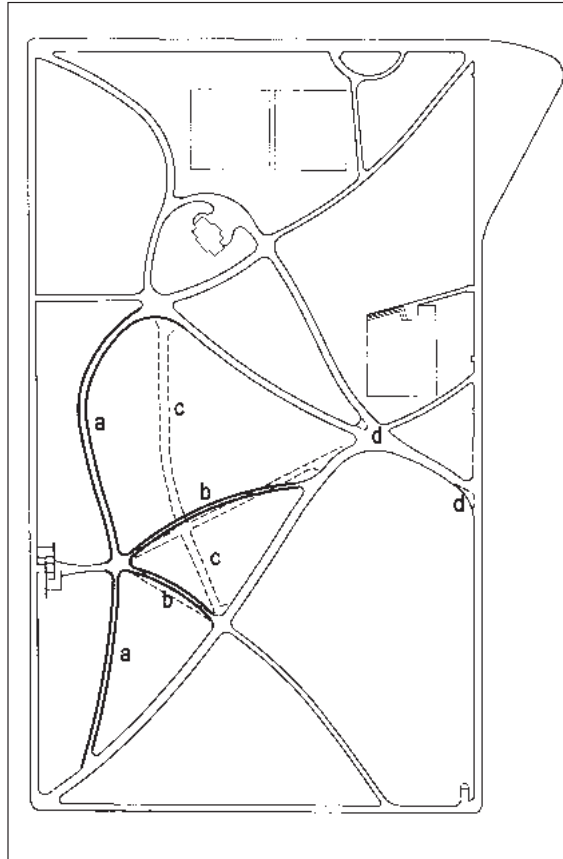
Pathways forming an intricate web on the ground surface, like quilting



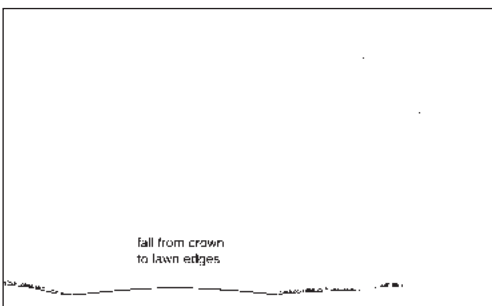
Location for reinstatement of hilltop pathway



Pathways throughout generally maintained on their current alignment



- a Reinstatement original pathway for access to hilltop
- b Minor path alignments to enhance pedestrian flow
- c Pathway removed
- d Splay of paths increased



Typical section for pathways

Design

Tree canopy

Trees provide enclosure while retaining views at ground level, thus defining intimate spaces while preserving the impact of the topography. The trees are among the Gardens' most important features, and many have heritage significance. Yet this is also the aspect of the landscape that has most changed over time, and will inevitably continue to change, requiring a clear concept to direct that change.

There are three key objectives to this concept:

- to maintain the avenues in perpetuity
- to introduce a long-term tree planting program which will create a subtle differentiation between different areas of the gardens that recall various eras of planting
- to maintain species diversity in line with community expectations and good horticultural practice.

Maintenance of the formal effect of the avenues will require replanting en masse after a substantial proportion of the trees die. (To replace trees within the avenues on an incremental basis, as each dies naturally, would be poor horticultural practice as the trees are too close together for saplings to thrive between them.) This requires removal of the remaining mature trees so that a uniform avenue can be established. While this will foreshorten the lifespan of some of the trees, implementation will be linked to an established growing-on program in order to provide a well-advanced planting source.

Of the extensive remaining tree population, various species including the Holm Oaks, Ginkgo and Moreton Bay Figs are significant because of their age, their associations with past events, or because of their individual size or form.

These should all be managed to prolong their life in good condition and their historical connection retained for as long as possible.

While several of the earliest trees will survive for many more decades, once they die their significance will be lost. Conservation values do not call for existing trees to be replaced with the same species or arrangements.

Recognising the strong community support to retain a mix of species, further planting should introduce a more cohesive design, using hardy species that minimise requirements for irrigation, that help distinguish Flagstaff Gardens from other Melbourne parks, and that reflect the history of the site. Distinct types of trees should be planted to respond to the stronger elements within the existing plantings, each representing different eras of the Gardens' development. A sense of form would be given to this passage through time by creating a three adjoining areas of influence, with permeable boundaries that subtly recall the subdivision scheme that was surrendered in order to create the gardens (and therefore forms a key element in the Gardens' foundation). While not restricted to the following species, the themes would be conveyed through:



Strong textural variations in foliage are suspended above the ground plane



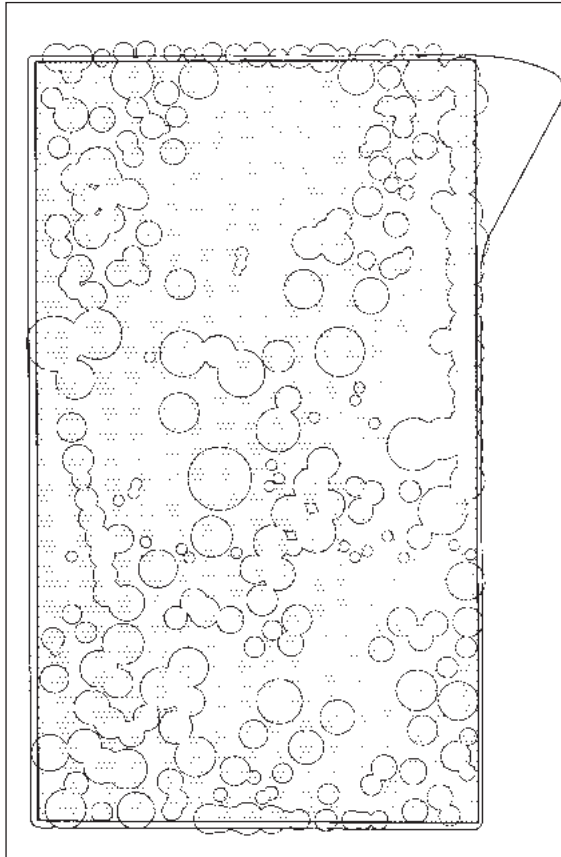
New plantings in the northern sector of the Gardens to include Red Gums and Yellow Gums



New plantings in the central sector of the Gardens to include Murray Pines and Italian Cypressess



New plantings in the southern sector of the Gardens to include Ginkgo, Lindens and Liquidambar



Sclerophyll trees such as Red Gums and Yellow Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *E. blakelyi* and *E. leucoxylon*) in the northern sector to reflect the indigenous quality of the site, for floristic interest and to attract birds. The density of trees should be like the stand of sugar gums in the north-west corner.

Deciduous trees in the south, such as Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) in well-drained areas, and Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and Big-leaf Linden (*Tilia platyphylla*) in damper areas. This will reflect the 20th century style of the Gardens, ensure sun penetration to the lawns in winter, and provide autumn foliage colour. The density should be similar to the existing trees near the south-west corner.

Between the above two, conifers such as Murray Pine (*Callitris columellaris*) or Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) should be carefully inserted between existing mature trees to reflect the 19th century use of evergreens and the history of the burial ground. Within this area, an open area should be retained on the site of the observatory and burial ground; therefore few new trees need be planted for many years.

Within the above concept, a range of species should be planted, in line with good horticulture practice to ensure that the risk to tree stock from disease affecting individual species is minimised. Planting should follow a process of careful insertion. Only trees in poor condition or hazardous should be removed. New trees should be arranged randomly among existing ones, and the planting density should vary subtly to emphasise the edges of open spaces.

Design

Sports courts and play surfaces

By contrast with the more “superficial” imprints of the garden beds and paths, the bowling greens, sports courts and playground require level surfaces that break the natural grade. Two key qualities affect how these relate to the rest of the gardens: their obtrusiveness as structures, and the potential for people to watch and enjoy the activity in them. Both of these are best where the playing surfaces are cut into the grade, not raised, and are otherwise kept relatively open. The break between lawn and playing surface should be direct and simple – as if the weight of the facilities has pressed them down to the lowest adjoining level.

Therefore:

The bowling greens should be maintained at their existing level, and views opened up to them from the surrounding gardens.

The multi-use courts should be rebuilt at a lower level, with their south edge at ground level. The lighting and fencing should also be improved.

The terraced playground area should be altered to a simpler cutout in the ground. Its outline could recall the footprint of the former wading pool.

Within these areas, the facilities should be designed and maintained at a high contemporary standard to support their use.

The bowling club should be redeveloped to a high-standard facility, although without expansion of its size. The overall area of the greens should not increase, with one being competition standard grass surface with 8 north-south rinks, and the other converted to a synthetic surface with 6 north-south rinks to allow more extensive year-round and after working-hours use. Redevelopment of the existing fire-damaged clubhouse is addressed under ‘Infrastructure’, below.

The tennis courts have already been adapted with line markings to support a variety of other games and this practice should continue.

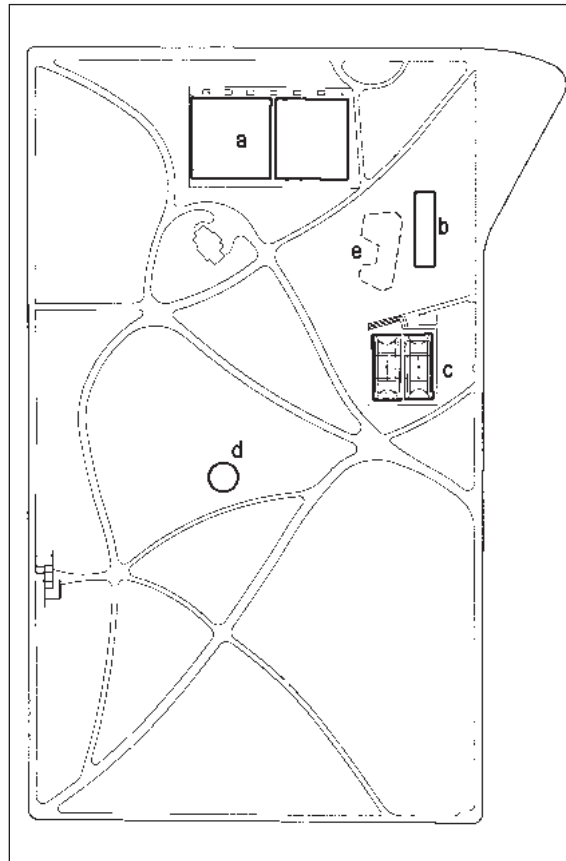
The current unimaginative play structures should be improved. Play area should be considered as a complement to visits to the Gardens, not a major attractor in its own right, yet the setting within one of the City’s premier gardens suggests that the playground should be something more sophisticated than off-the-shelf equipment. The age group target should be assessed as part of development of a concept for the facility.



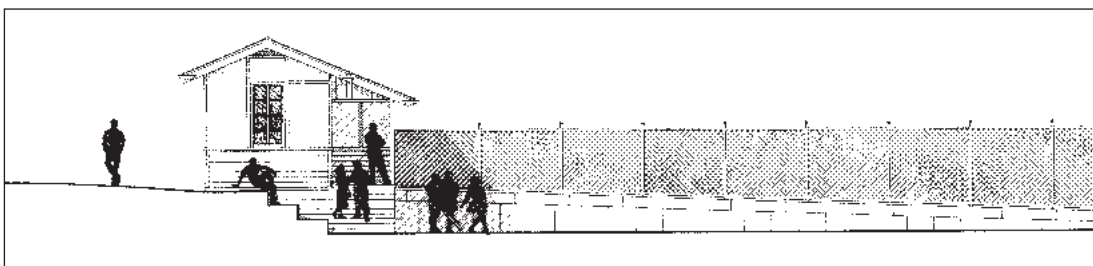
Bowling greens and playing courts retained, with views of activity available from all surrounds



Contemporary playground design integrating art and play, and placing emphasis on childhood development



- a Bowling green maintained at existing level
- b New playground
- c Tennis courts recessed into natural glade
- d Redesigned stage
- e Existing playground removed



Playing courts recessed into the ground surface

Design

Artefacts

Features in the Gardens range from fine art to simply functional. The 19th century emphasis on sculptures as great works of culture has shifted and the Gardens now accommodate only a few key artefacts of cultural significance. The most significant represent major civic events and are of collective importance to the people of the city. Of these it is recommended to:

Retain the Pioneers' Memorial and plant a ground cover to mark the area of the burial ground.

Retain the Separation Monument in situ, with its flagpole which marks the approximate site of the former flagstaff.

Retain *The Court Favorite* and the sundial and improve their settings, by lowering the tennis courts and installing a more attractive fence, and creating a slightly increased splay in paths adjoining the sundial to eliminate the need for special paved surrounds.

It is inappropriate to introduce new features that would trivialise or detract from the significance of those that have withstood the passage of time – particularly period-style sculptures or structures. Different values may result in different views towards heritage conservation. The overwhelming community support for the design to reinforce the significance of Flagstaff Hill, for example, has informed the concept of creating a landform feature as the signifying place for the hilltop. Speculative reconstruction of past features such as the flagstaff, however, is not proposed, as this would be incompatible with the values of good heritage conservation.

No new monuments should be introduced into the Gardens, and any plaques or memorials should only be permitted in line with Council's plaques and memorials policy.

There is considerable interest in interpretation of the site and this should be a priority. *Another View*, near the Pioneers' Memorial, is a good example of an element that broadens the historical understanding of the site. Opportunities for temporary installations could be developed, making connections with the story of the site and reflecting contemporary values and ideas. Discussions could also be held with the Queen Victoria Market with a view to developing a visual link or other appropriate reference to the historical relationship between the sites of Melbourne's first two cemeteries.

Information and interpretation of the site can also be provided by other means. Leaflets, other publications and guided tours should be considered as they can address particular audiences when required; these could deal with the aboriginal history of the area, significant trees, the social history of the Gardens, etc. Tours of the Gardens could also capitalise on the relationship with nearby William Angliss College, giving students practical experience in planning and leading tours.

Interpretation should also occur within the cafe, the bowling club, along the proposed King Street stone edge and at Flagstaff Station. Indoor oriented materials could comprise simple displays of historical photographs, paintings or maps, whilst other more imaginative reflections of historical meanings should be developed in consultation with visual artists.



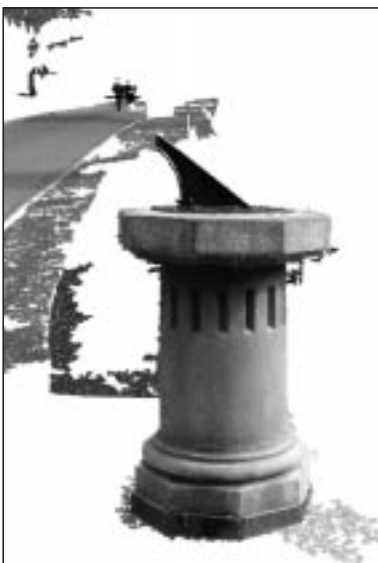
Court Favorite



Separation Monument



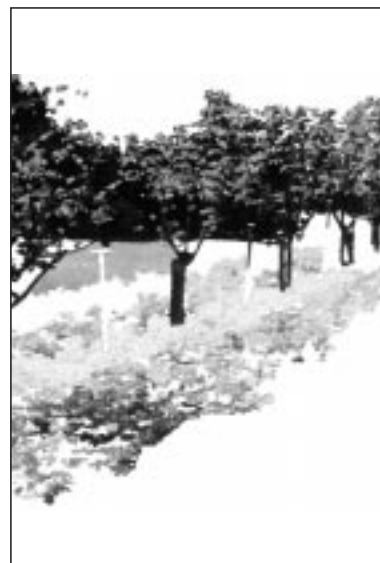
Pioneers' Memorial



Sundial



'Another View'



Standard Roses

Design

Edges and links

Views into and out of the Gardens contribute to its sense of place in quite different ways, resulting from the relationship between ground levels in the Gardens and adjoining streets. The smooth transition between the Gardens and Latrobe and William Streets should be maintained, with lawn and canopy trees extending to the street. At no point should shrubs, fences or other barriers impede this connection.

Conversely, the King and Dudley Street edges should emphasise the elevation of the Gardens and retain views over the streets and buildings to the west. Although the historic view line to the time ball in Williamstown has been lost, the vista across to the west (taking in Appleton Dock, Swanston Docks and Coode Island) is still significant. Planning provisions under the Melbourne Planning Scheme should be investigated to determine whether these views can be protected from future building development.

The King Street embankment should be covered with simpler and more dramatic massed plants. These should be robust species such as banksia rose that will drape over the crib walls, hiding their exposed upper edges. The King Street stairs are particularly important entries, as the embankment otherwise precludes access from the west. Both of these are steep and unattractive, although completely rebuilt in the 1980s. The stairs should be redesigned to be more attractive and to provide a more comfortable profile and intermittent landings. The flanking walls could also incorporate subtle water features or artworks. The stair to Dudley Street, opposite Milton Street, should similarly be improved.

The area by the corner of William and Dudley Streets is an important link to the Queen Victoria Market, but should not be confused as an extension of the Gardens. One of the pair of tram tracks, which are used only occasionally for shunting, should be removed if this can be negotiated with the PTC. The area should be paved rather than grassed to facilitate access and make the tramway less obtrusive and sheltered with new trees to create an inviting 'foyer' to the Gardens. This is also a potential site for a fountain. Holm oaks (*Quercus illex*) should be used here to continue their presence near the Gardens; the dense shade from these trees prevents good growth of turf, and is therefore be an appropriate complement to the treatment of this as a paved area.

The roundabout at Peel and Dudley Streets creates a serious impediment to pedestrians and its replacement with traffic signals to ensure access as in other CBD intersections should be investigated. Signalised crossings of King Street at Jeffcott Street and Batman Street should also be investigated. Disabled parking spaces should be provided on street adjacent to ramped kerbs and accessible entries into Gardens.

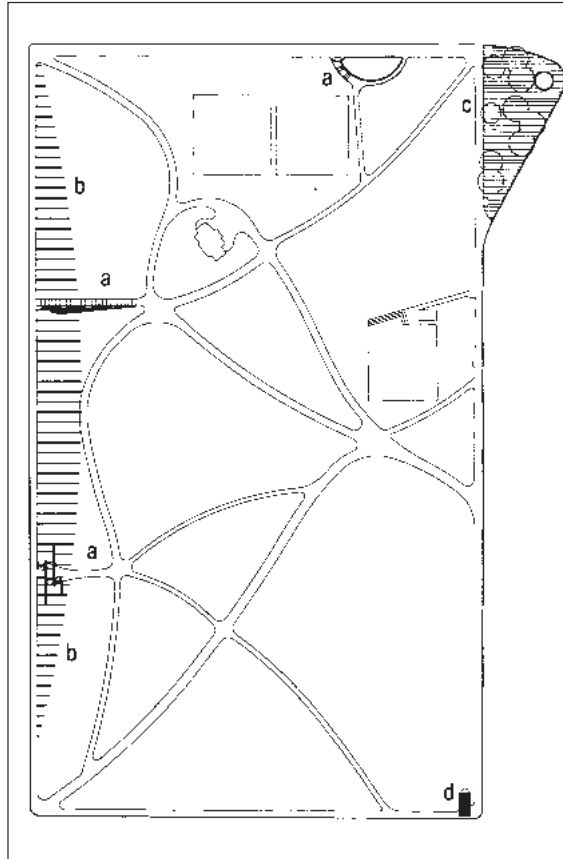
The transport company should be approached to achieve a redesign of the Flagstaff Station entry with a new canopy. Ideally, the architectural style and quality of materials would link to the Law Courts building south of Latrobe Street. The structure could also incorporate the adjacent tram shelter on William Street, and include an upgrade of the signage and balustrade.



Development of a more 'urban' pocket park to link the Garden and markets



Distinctive staircase designs to create formal entrances



- a Reconstruct stairs to King and Dudley Streets
- b Replant King Street embankment
- c Plaza with trees and possible fountain
- d New canopy to Flagstaff Station entry



Embankment treatment along King Street

Design

Infrastructure

The depot and toilets should be demolished, and the hilltop reinstated as open space.

The caretaker's cottage dominates the central and northern parts of the Gardens. This historically significant building should be recycled as a cafe so as to include, rather than exclude, public participation in this area. The surroundings should be enhanced with a north-facing outdoor dining terrace overlooking the bowling greens and a garden space protecting the Ginkgo tree to the rear. This would support longer stays, encourage greater visitation, and should also provide a focus for interpretation of the Gardens.

Bowling has a historic role at Flagstaff Gardens and offers a valuable social activity. However, the fire-damaged clubhouse is of a poor standard and located so that it intrudes into the Gardens' northern area, isolates bowlers from viewing audiences, isolates the north-western corner of the Gardens, and increases the need for service vehicles to enter the Gardens. The existing building should be demolished and replaced with a new one, planned and designed to:

- accommodate local pennant, social and corporate bowls.

- provide facilities supporting bowling (including lockers and change rooms and grounds maintenance store), and directly-related social activities (including a bar/lounge and meeting area) but not public 'reception centre'.

- be located on the southern side of the greens to take advantage of shared terrace space with the café.

- provide only for limited access to delivery vehicles and people with special needs, if these requirements can not be accommodated within the dedicated (such as disabled) spaces in Dudley Street

- be sympathetic, sensitive and responsive in design, of low building profile and employing contemporary materials and passive solar design. (The option of constructing portions of this facility below surface level should be explored).

Treatment of the bowling greens has been previously discussed in 'Sports Courts and Play Surfaces'.

The tennis pavilion requires only renovation. The interior should be converted to provide a storage facility for gardeners (replacing the depot) as well as storage for nets and other equipment used at the multi-purpose courts.

New public toilets should be provided at a streetside location, near the tram spur in William Street.



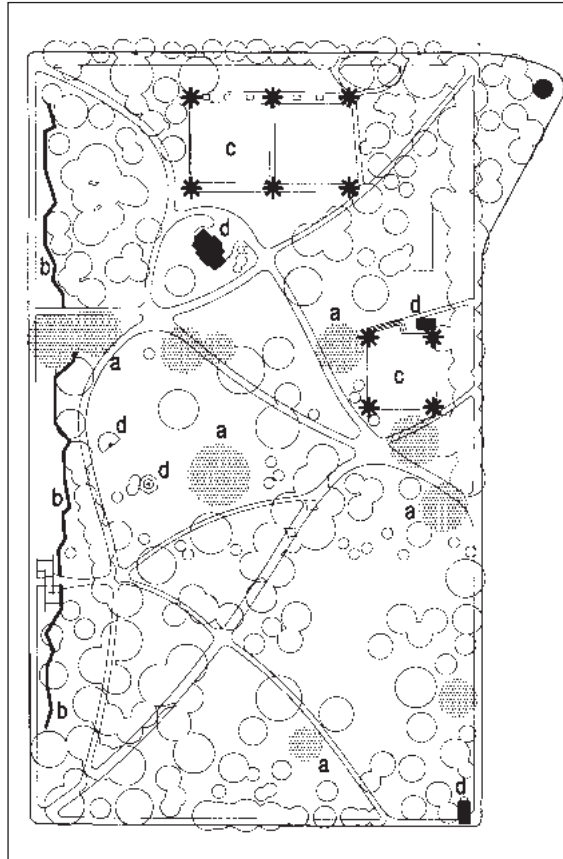
Pavillion converted to gardeners' store



Unique lighting effects to Moreton Bay Figs



Modification of the stage will improve the setting for the twin trunk form of the tree



- a Uplighting of Moreton Bay Figs and Holm Oaks
- b Lights along new stone seating wall
- c Lights at tennis courts and bowling greens
- d Lighting of buildings and monuments

Outdoor theatre and music are intimately associated with the history of the Gardens, but performances do not depend on the existing stage (which is mostly used as a seat). Cultural activities in the Flagstaff Gardens can occur on the hilltop, among the sugar gums in the north-west corner and within the amphitheatre-like lawn toward the south-east. These areas should be provided with convenient power supply points. The existing stage should be redesigned (including lowering and resurfacing) to alleviate its visual impact within the sloping lawn. In particular, this will highlight the exceptional trunk formation of the Moreton Bay Fig.

Design

Lighting and furniture

A lighting scheme should be developed following Council's park lighting strategy to ensure amenity and safety while giving the Gardens a distinct night-time character. This strategy emphasises illumination of pathways. Supplementary lighting in open areas should be used to enhance perception of safety and for visual interest, without necessarily meeting lighting standards for access and activity in all spaces away from paths. Use of more efficient light fittings will also help to reduce power consumption and light spill.

Key lighting components should include:

- Uplighting of the trunks, limbs and canopies of the Moreton Bay Figs and Holm Oaks. This will highlight their form and illuminate otherwise dark areas below their dense canopies (which will also prevent overspill from uplights).

- Lights within the proposed seat-wall along the cut edge of the hilltop, creating a running line of light along this side of the Gardens.

- Poles associated with the bowling greens and playing courts to also illuminate the adjacent parkland, to minimise the number of light poles.

- Lighting for the cafe, other facilities and structures to contribute to amenity lighting.

- Pole mounted lights along major paths to illuminate pathway areas between other lighting features.

Standardised park furniture and signs will establish a theme that is attractive but unobtrusive, and should be installed according to Council's park and street furniture policies. Nevertheless, furniture should only be replaced as it becomes obsolete (for example, the draughts table) or exceeds its reasonable life and poses a maintenance problem. As much as possible, furniture (except for seats, tables and barbecues) should be placed along the Gardens' street edges to minimise clutter and to facilitate maintenance. This should apply to litter bins in particular; the number of bins should also be rationalised and recycling bins introduced. More seats should be provided, in locations that offer seating in sun and shade and a variety of attractive views, and with some seats in groups to allow social interaction. Additional barbecues should also be provided in the north-east corner of the Gardens.

Irrigation and drainage

Water usage is the most significant factor relating to the environmental sustainability of this type of landscape, as it represents the greatest consumption of resources and energy on an ongoing basis. In particular, green lawns capable of withstanding heavy use demand regular irrigation.

Lawns should be retained as an important recreational feature, so any possible reduction in water use for their maintenance should be considered. Improvement of the turf with more drought tolerant varieties should be investigated. Soil aeration or other treatments to increase the penetration of water should be considered. The existing manually operated sprinkler system should be replaced with an automatic system designed and operated to achieve maximum efficiency in water use. The design of the irrigation system should also take into account variations in water requirements from north to south in response to intensity of use, as more heavily used lawns require more irrigation to resist wear.

The ornamental fountains should use minimal quantities of water and energy.

Implementation

Implementation Plan

An Implementation Plan will be developed, based on the following indicative priorities. This plan will form the basis for staging and prioritising works over a number of years and funding the proposals contained in this Master Plan through Council's annual capital works program.

Heritage Listing

Discussions will be held with Heritage Victoria regarding the possibility of listing part (such as the Flagstaff Hill) or all the Gardens on the State Heritage Register. As the Master Plan reflects the heritage significance of the Gardens it is anticipated that the conditions of listing will be compatible with this plan, should this occur.

Major works packages

The works required to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan can be grouped into logically associated projects, as set out below:

1. General implementation planning and Stage 1 design and approvals
2. Convert pavilion to store, install new toilet, redesign stage
3. Demolish toilets and depot, construct new path alignments, build new garden bed (*must follow 1*)
4. Redevelop bowling club, convert cottage to cafe and redevelop associated spaces
5. Re-level tennis courts, upgrade playground, improve barbecue area, loop station entry, develop water element in south-eastern lawn
6. Install new irrigation system throughout (*should follow 2, 3 and 4*)
7. Install new lighting throughout (*should follow 2, 3 and 4*)
8. Alter Peel/Dudley Street intersection and redevelop north-east plaza corner, and negotiate new pedestrian crossing to give access to the Gardens.
9. Reconstruct stairs to King Street, construct wall-seat along hilltop edge
10. Reconstruct all paths on existing alignments.

Ongoing works and management

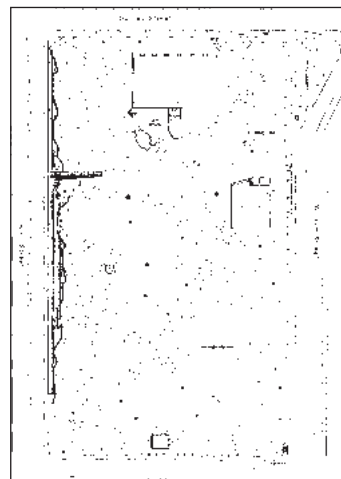
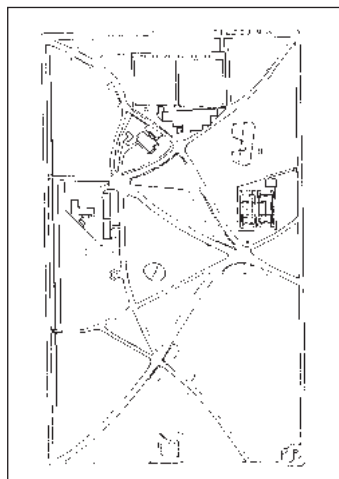
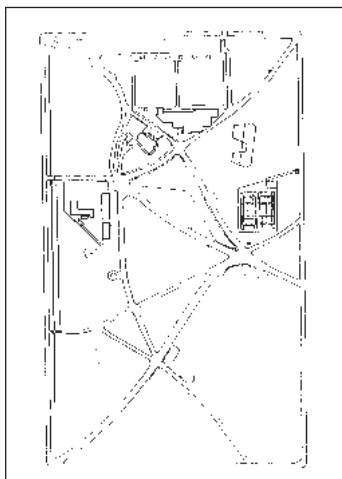
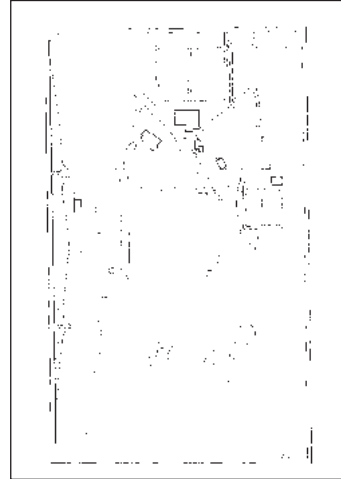
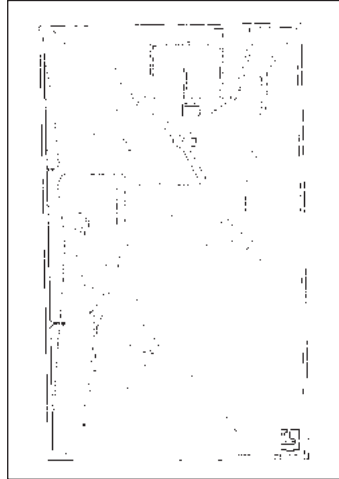
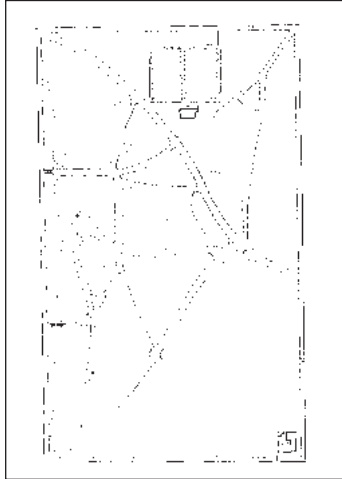
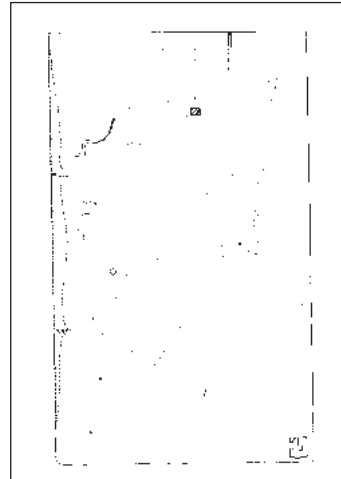
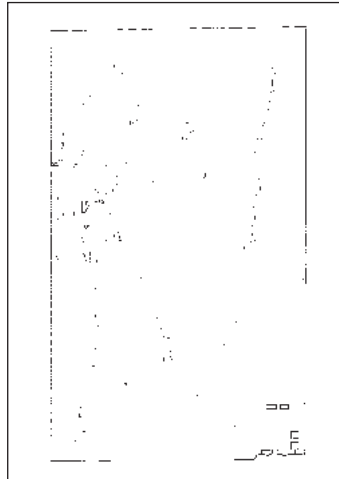
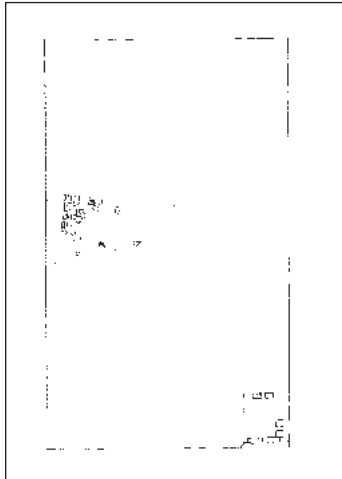
A range of other works should be implemented on an ongoing, incremental basis, including:

- A. Tree management and planting
- B. Garden bed management and renovation
- C. Furniture upgrade
- D. Turf improvement.

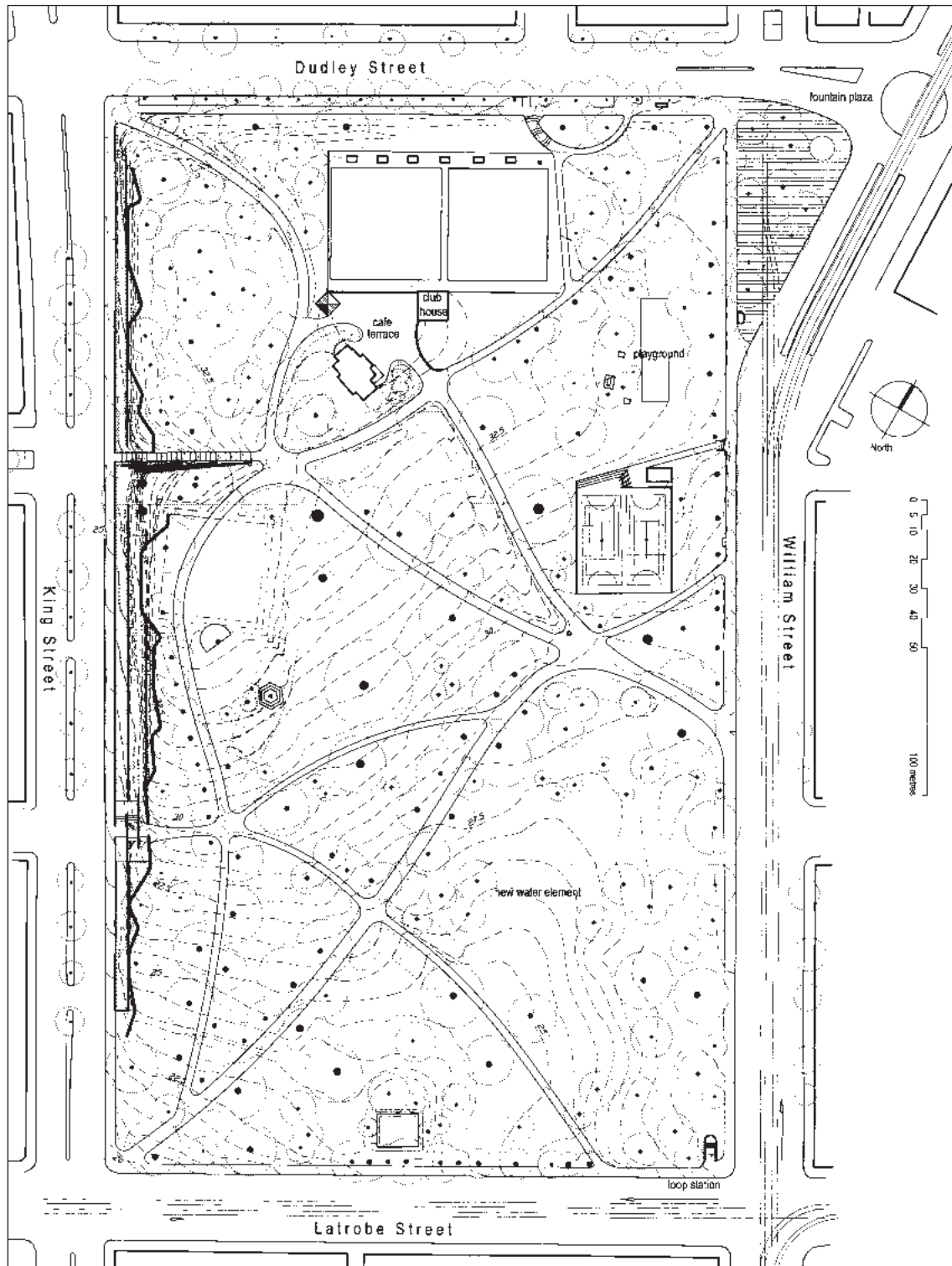
Feature and Building Plans

In line with the recommendations of the Master Plan and Implementation Plan, and as funds become available, detailed feature or building plans will be proposed. Many of the proposals (other than planting) will require planning permits under the City of Melbourne Planning Scheme. They also may require permits from Heritage Victoria, should the Gardens be listed on the State Heritage Register. During consideration of these planning permits, the community will again be consulted, giving stakeholders and members of the public the opportunity to comment on the detailed design proposals.

A passage through time: The evolution of Flagstaff Gardens from 1840 to the present day, and vision for the future
Source: *Flagstaff Gardens Conservation Analysis* (1999)



Illustrative Plan





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