



VICTORIA ESPLANADE

MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

Prepared for
Palmerston North City Council
July 2018





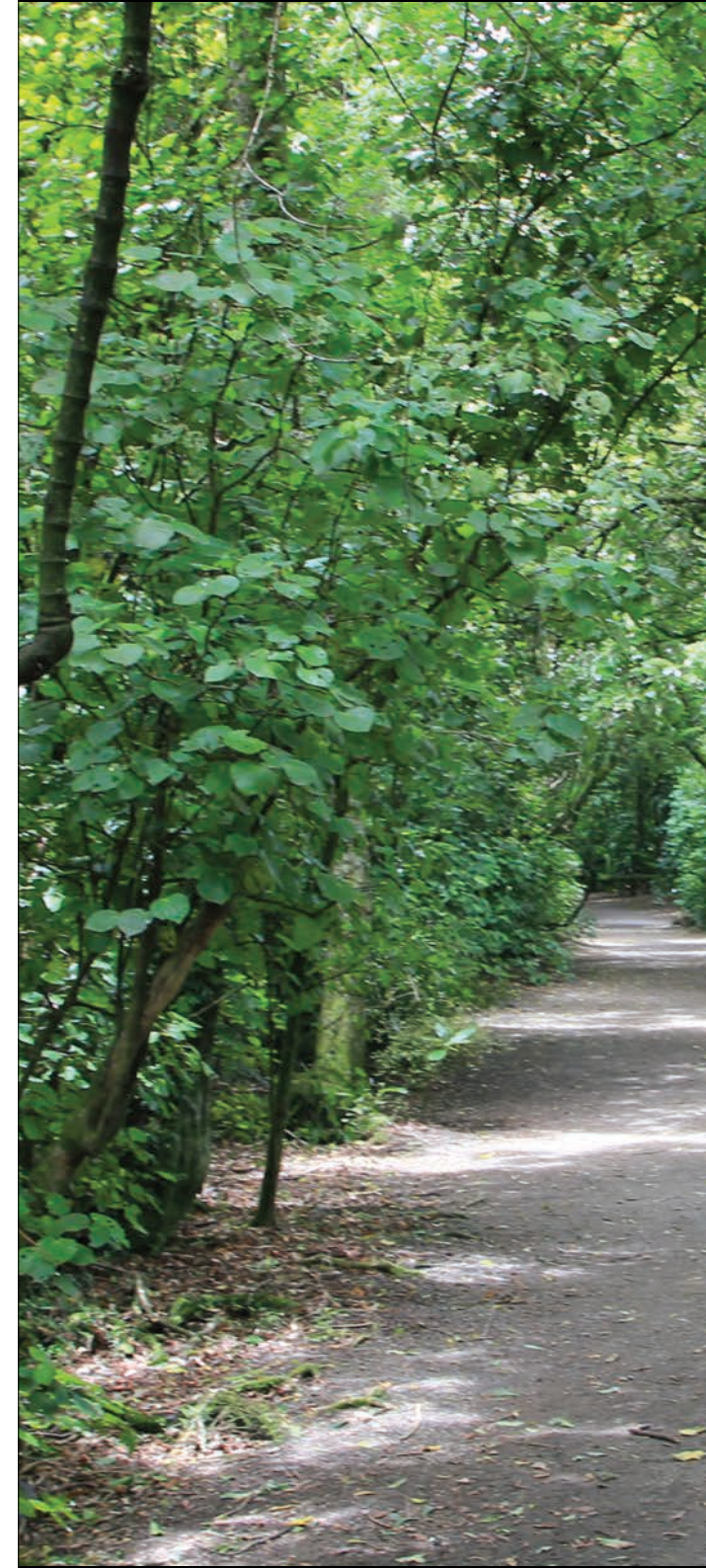
Title: Victoria Esplanade Reserve
Masterplan Framework

Prepared for: Palmerston North City Council
Date: July 2018 - Revision 1

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Cover photograph: Esplanade Scenic Railway by Shannon Bray





VICTORIA ESPLANADE



Masterplan Framework

July 2018

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Introduction

Victoria Esplanade is one of Palmerston North's largest and most popular recreation reserves.

The park's size and the diversity of its features lend it to providing for a wide range of activities. Whilst the extensive playground and the miniature railway are among the most popular reasons for people to visit, the rose gardens, native bush areas, and the recently completed Wildbase Recovery Centre are also key attractions. It is a place of diverse recreational activity that attracts over half a million visitors per year.

A significant and somewhat unique feature of Victoria Esplanade is the ongoing development of new facilities in response to community funded interest. Nearly every year major new features are planned or constructed, such as the recently completed Junior Road Safety Park, or planned cycling connections to the new He Ara Kotahi bridge across the Manawatū River.

As such, over the past 18 months, Palmerston North City Council has been embarking on a masterplanning process to help guide the future development and management of the park.

This document provides the framework under which detailed elements of the masterplan have been developed. It outlines the park values and the park character areas, before providing an overview of the values strategy and desired outcomes for each area.

The more detailed elements, which provide the background and context to this framework (including the Planning Toolkit which helps the process of decision making within the park), can be accessed via an online, digital portal:

www.victoriaesplanademasterplan.nz

What is a Masterplan

It is recognised that the development of an overall plan for Victoria Esplanade is crucial to provide guidance around the development and management of various facilities within the park, the types of activities that can be catered for, and how to best maintain (or enhance) the park's existing assets.

Rather than focus on specific development projects, the masterplan has been designed to be 'live' - that is, it will be continually reviewed and updated. As new development opportunities are presented, these will be incorporated into the website accordingly.

Masterplan approach

The masterplan has initially been prepared to support the Palmerston North City Council 2018-28 Long Term Plan process (LTP) with the intention to provide guidance on future development and management within the reserve.

The masterplan builds on significant work that was undertaken by the Council between 2005 and 2009. During this period, external consultants (Isthmus Group and Titchener Monzingo Aitken Ltd) undertook extensive community consultation which remains relevant today. Other historical information, contained in the Council archives library, has also been considered.

Ongoing engagement with the community, mana whenua and key stakeholders has been crucial to the recommendations that are outlined. Further information on this engagement is outlined in later sections.

Masterplan objectives

The key objective of the masterplan is to ensure that all future development and management decisions embrace the heritage and values of the park, and positively contribute to its architectural and landscape character.

It is intended the masterplan provides an open approach where any project or idea, no matter where it has come from, can be appropriately assessed to ensure that it will meaningfully contribute to the amenity, aesthetic and identity of the Esplanade in perpetuity.

Using the Masterplan

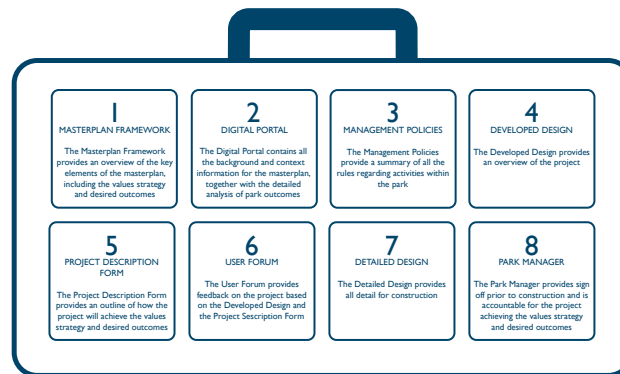
The Planning Toolkit

The Planning Toolkit describes the suite of tools that have been developed to help Park Managers with the longer term development and management of Victoria Esplanade.

The Masterplan itself is the first element of the Toolkit. It contains all of the background information about the Park and its projected future, and should be the one-stop-shop for all those involved with the management of the Park.

This document, the Masterplan Summary, is provided as a printable, quick-reference guide to the key elements of the Masterplan. It contains information about the park values and character, as well as the values strategy for each area of the park and the desired outcomes.

Also contained in the online portal are the management policies for the park, which set the rules for various activities that are encouraged, discouraged, or prohibited by the park plan.



Using the Masterplan is easy - managers simply follow the steps outlined in the Planning Toolkit.

Therefore, for a new development proposal (over \$1,000), a 'Developed Design' is prepared. This is a simple set of drawings that outlines the proposal, where it is located, and how it will integrate with the other park elements around.

At the same time, the Project Description Form is completed that asks open questions about how the project will achieve the wider values strategy and desired outcomes for the area it is proposed. The form has been designed to be easy and fast to complete - less than 5 minutes.

The Developed Design is then circulated to the User Forum for comment, and if necessary changes are made to the proposal to ensure that it delivers on the overall Masterplan objectives.

Finally, the project goes through the Detailed Design process, ready for Park Manager approval and construction. The Park Manager is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the project is consistent with the park values and will create an enhancement to the park.

Regular updates are undertaken to the Masterplan to capture development that is constructed.

5 Victoria Esplanade Masterplan Project Description Form

VICTORIA
ESPLANADE

Form Completed by:

Date:

What is the approximate development budget?
(Projects under \$1000 do not require this form to be completed)

Describe how the project will enhance the overall park values:
(Family fun, Community, Victorian History, Native Bush and Seasonal)

Describe how the project will avoid or mitigate impacts on the undesirable values of the park:
(Industrial architecture, hard lines, vast areas of asphalt and unkempt)

Does the project contravene any Management Policies contained in the Masterplan Planning Toolkit? If so, describe why this project is considered appropriate:

What Character Area is the project proposed to be located?
(If it is a project that embraces several zones (such as circulation, signage etc) then it will need to be more carefully considered as a core element of the Masterplan)

Describe how the project is consistent with the Values Strategy of the zone in which it will be located:



5 Victoria Esplanade Masterplan Project Description Form

VICTORIA
ESPLANADE



Describe how the project is consistent with the Desired Outcomes of the zone in which it will be located, or why a departure from the Desired Outcomes is appropriate:

Describe how the project will be accessed by the public:

Describe how the access that is established will enhance the Masterplan objectives for park circulation or mitigation impacts:

Describe the materials that are to be used to construct the project, and how these will enhance the architectural style of the zone (outlined in the Masterplan) in which the project is to be located:

Describe the planting that is to be used within the project (if relevant), and how this planting will enhance the planting style of the zone in which the project is located:

On completion of this form, distribute it together with the Developed Design drawings to the User Forum for feedback and discussion. Final approval for the project needs to be obtained from the Park Manager.



Values

The vision for Victoria Esplanade is to deliver on the promise of this being the best park in Palmerston North. It should be a park that continually evolves, but through the process of evolution it should strive to deliver on the core values and be a cherished asset to the people of the city.

The 2005-2009 work undertaken by the Council identified some core values within the Park. During 2017 and 2018, further engagement with the community refined these values as follows. Two groups were established, and each group was asked to identify photographs that represented the values that most resonated with them.

Interestingly, both groups identified almost identical values, which also reflected the values identified in the 2005 to 2009 work.



SEASONAL

Although the native trees are important, so too are the exotic flowering trees that provide seasonal colour and interest.



FAMILY FUN

Victoria Esplanade attracts a large number of family groups, who come for the enjoyment of the facilities as well as the open space areas.



COMMUNITY

We recognise that a key reason people visit Victoria Esplanade is because it provides an opportunity to socialise with family and friends.



VICTORIAN HISTORY

Users of the park enjoy its Victorian Heritage, displayed through architectural features such as the Rose Garden Bandstand, boundary fences & gates, and the formal layout of some garden areas.



NATIVE BUSH

The remnant and regenerating areas of native bush, together with the vast number of native trees throughout the Park, are of significant value to Park users.



Character

Victoria Esplanade contains a wide variety of activities spread across unique areas of the park. To assist with the masterplanning process, the park has been divided up into a series of character areas, as shown on the adjacent map.

For each area, a sub-masterplan has been developed, each feeding into the key recommendations that are provided in the following section of this document. Access to each of these plans can be found on the website.

It is important to note that the park values identified on page 8 extend across all character areas, and the types of activities that are undertaken in each area are not necessarily restricted by the nature of each area. For example, it is fully anticipated that children (and adults) will find places to play right throughout the park - not just within the play zone.





Park Central

Located in the centre of the park, this character area is defined by its sense of openness. It is home to a number of key features, many of which have different architectural styles, and it hosts a wide variety of activities. Of all the character areas within the park, this area is the most diverse. However it is also the key hub that serves all areas of the park.



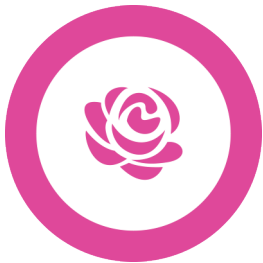
Victoria's Garden

The eastern end of the park are most reminiscent of the Victorian history of the park and its botanical beginnings. The garden areas are densely planted with a variety of native and exotic shrubs, with a number of narrow paths leading in several directions. Located around the planting are more open areas that provide a traditional park like character, providing sweeping lawns and longer vistas..



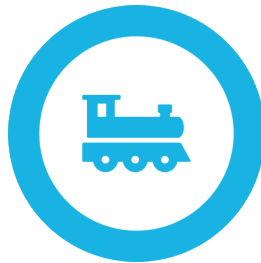
Play Zone

The playground is one of the most popular features of the park. The facilities have been extended haphazardly over the years, and as such it contains a variety of play structures that are 'of their time'. However, the seemingly random collection of equipment contributes to its uniqueness and interest. Importantly, the play zone includes areas of open space, which are used for picnics



Dugald MacKenzie Garden

The rose garden is a strongly defined space that has a dominating formal character, typical of many municipal rose gardens throughout the world. It has a spoke design, with strong avenues branching out from a central pond. One of these avenues, adorned by a pergola structure, forms the existing main entry into the garden. The Dugald McKenzie Garden also contains a range of Rhododendron and Camellia trees, and is popular for wedding photographs.



Main Park Entry

The main entry to the park from Cook Street is well known for its striking cherry avenue, particularly popular during spring months. A large carpark at this end also provides access to the main Esplanade Railway Station (and maintenance hub). This area will also provide an important connection to the soon to be completed He Ara Kotahi pedestrian bridge over the Manawātū River



Native Forest

The edge of the park that flanks the Manawātū River contains dense areas of regenerating native bush, with some taller species that are likely to have been growing since the original bush was burnt down towards the end of the 19th Century. The bush area provides a dominant backdrop to many other areas of the park, and provides an important habitat for a wide range of birds.

Desired Outcomes

The key development opportunities for the park will continually evolve as new ideas and budgets are introduced. This section provides an outline of the key pipeline opportunities - with the intention that these are regularly updated as the park develops. Each of the opportunities are detailed further in other sections of the masterplan.

Allow Flexibility

The most important recommendation resulting from the masterplanning process is that Victoria Esplanade must be allowed to continually develop and adapt. Throughout its future there will be new ideas for facilities and activities that are suggested, just as there has been throughout the history of the park's development.

For this reason, the masterplan does not present a set of development plans or drawings. Rather, it provides a set of guidelines for the ongoing development of the park that allows for flexibility in what the park will provide for in the future.

Respect the Values

Whilst flexibility in the growth of the park is sought, it is critically important that all future development respects the core values that have been identified through the masterplanning process. To assist with this approach, a set of key tests is set out for each character area (included at the end of each sub-masterplan) that will help future decision makers determine whether a proposed new facility or feature is appropriate, and how it might be incorporated into the park.

Involve the Community

Whilst there is often a desire to 'get on and build', the most effective way in which new development ideas can be assessed and considered is through involvement of the park community and stakeholders.

It is recommended that a 'Park Board' be established that retains a strategic oversight of all development within the park. The role of this group would be to ensure that new development

opportunities respect the values identified in this masterplan, and do not compromise the longer term outcomes that are sought for each character area.

Park Management

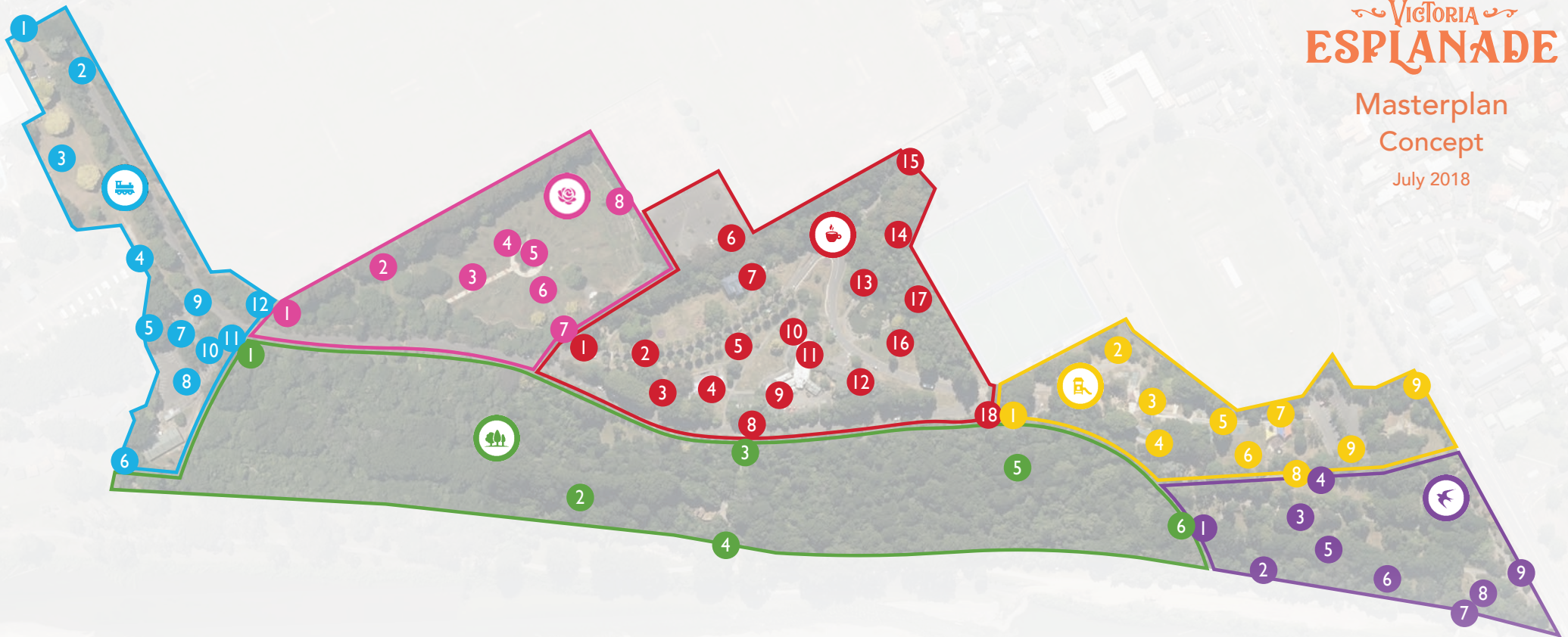
Victoria Esplanade will forever be faced with new development and new management challenges. However, by following the principles outlined above it is possible for those responsible for managing the park to adapt to new ideas, new budgets or new directions. This digital masterplan has been prepared with this approach in mind - it provides a detailed background to the masterplanning process, and focuses on a values-led approach.

However, all park plans need to have policies and procedures to assist with streamlined management. These can be found under the 'Management' link above, or by clicking the 'More Information' button below.

VICTORIA ESPLANADE

Masterplan
Concept

July 2018





Park Central

Values Strategy

The values strategy for Park Central is to develop and manage the area toward it being the active heart of the park. The space needs to be open and suited for safe and desirable use by people; it needs to be the hub that leads people to other parts of the park; it needs to be flexible to allow for a variety of different organised activities; and the activity areas need to come together to provide a unified character.

Heart

As the centre of the park, Park Central is the place where most people visit, or pass through. It is from here that all paths need to extend to other areas of the park - leading people on journeys of discovery throughout the whole park (encouraging them to visit areas they might not have been to before). It is ideally placed to be the main focus of circulation and wayfinding throughout the park.

Diversity

Park Central is also a destination in its own right, ideally placed amongst a variety of activity centres including Wildbase Recovery, Peter Black Conservatory, Esplanade Cafe, the Birdcages, and the Paddling Pond. In addition, Park Central is an appropriate place to hold larger organised events (such as small concerts, picnic days or sports events).

Family

The nature of the activities that happen at Park Central suggests that it should be highly focussed on people. The activity centres need to be well connected (and safe), and there needs to be an open character (free from vehicles) that allows for good visibility across the area, and into the depths of other areas in the park.



“We always end up in Park Central for an Icecream”

Park Central Desired Outcomes

1. Enhanced pedestrian connection to Dugald MacKenzie Garden
2. Pedestrianise Palm Drive
3. Retain toilet facilities
4. Upgrade paddling pool and integrate with open space
5. Create central open space area
6. Enhance entry from 'Café Carpark'
7. Retain Café in key location
8. Enhance connection to river
9. Establish a new small feature garden
10. Create a central plaza for sitting / picnics / education
11. Upgrade conservatory
12. Integrate Wildbase Recovery as key activity centre in the heart of the park
13. Establish new large feature garden
14. Relocate Victoria Esplanade Drive away from pedestrian open space
15. Enhance Manawaroa Street entry as secondary entrance to park
16. Establish new aviaries
17. Relocate ESR train station closer to activity centres
18. Realign paths to Play Zone





Main Park Entry

Values Strategy

Whilst the future focus of Main Park Entry is to be a gateway and ultimately a large car park, it is important that these functional activities do not detract from the aesthetics of this area of the park. The values strategy for this area is to create a sense of arrival that typifies what people will experience once they step out of the car and enter the park.

Cherry Avenue

The avenue of cherries extending from Park Road is perhaps one of the most well known botanical features of the park. People come from all over the city to admire the trees, especially when in blossom. Main Park Entry needs to be the showcase of seasonal - where people arriving to the park feel the immediate transition from the urban surroundings into the park setting.

Park and Walk

There is already extensive parking in this area of the park, much of which is under utilised, and there is space for even more. Largely this results from a perceived lack of pedestrian connectivity to other areas of the park - particularly Park Central. Ideally, through changes to circulation throughout the park, this area could become the key place to leave the car and walk.

Park and Ride

The new ESR railway station (to be opened in 2018) will become the key hub for the railway, and the station will dominate this area of the park. The train is also destined to become a key transportation mode through the park - ferrying people from Main Park Entry to Park Central (to engage in the activity centres there) or to the Playground. This area of the park needs to celebrate the close connection of the ESR with Victoria Esplanade.



“Main Park Entry is the key gateway into Victoria Esplanade.”



Main Park Entry Desired Outcomes

1. Align vehicle entry with Cook Street
2. Pedestrianise Cherry Avenue
3. Create new car park (100-120 spaces)
4. Soften boundary fence
5. Create commuter cyclist access to He Ara Kōtahi bridge
6. Enhance pedestrian connection to river
7. Enhance amenity of existing car park, and re-align parking to increase parking capacity
8. New ESR station and surrounding pedestrian precinct
9. Retain toilet facility but integrate with planting
10. New focal feature such as artwork
11. Enhance existing pathway visibility
12. New enhanced connection to Dugald MacKenzie Garden



Play Zone

Values Strategy

The Play Zone area of the park is all about play on traditional (and less traditional) built play structures. The space needs to be innovative, interesting, and challenging, and everything in the playground should promote principles of sharing and looking out for each other. The Play Zone is all about community fun.

Activity

Play Zone is all about active play, and to deliver this the playground needs the best facilities. The playground equipment needs to be interesting, engaging, challenging, safe, and fun! In addition, the facilities need to work together, promoting active use across the whole area, and cater for a wide range of users - in terms of age and ability.

Community

Playgrounds are important places for social development. They encourage strangers to talk to each other, and are places where respect and patience are learned. The Play Zone area of the park should promote social interactions and engagement amongst all users of the park, no matter what their background.

Family

The Play Zone is regularly used for families. Space is needed to provide for rugs to be laid out for picnics, and seats are required for those less able to participate. The whole playground area needs to encourage family involvement - not just attendance!



"The playground in Victoria Esplanade is the best playground in Palmerston North."



Play Zone Desired Outcomes

1. Enhance connection to park Central
2. Integrate mini golf
3. Develop play equipment
4. Retain train station/enhance connection
5. Upgrade surface materials
6. Retain and expand open space
7. Retain toilet facilities
8. Enhance connection to Victoria's Garden
9. Strengthen connection to the Junior Road safety
10. Enhance connection to Fitzherbert Ave



Victoria's Garden

Values Strategy

Victoria's Garden is the botanical centre of the park. A place that reflects the park's history, encouraging people to explore and learn. It needs to provide places for quiet contemplation, yet connect to wider open community spaces. It should have a style and character that reminds people of its history and importance as one of the earliest parks in the city.

Victorian History

As other parts of the park have been progressively developed over the years, the Victorian History has become somewhat eroded. Yet, in this area of the park, subtle references hint at this important past. It has the potential to remind people of the park's early development, a process that started just as the city was being established.

Exploration

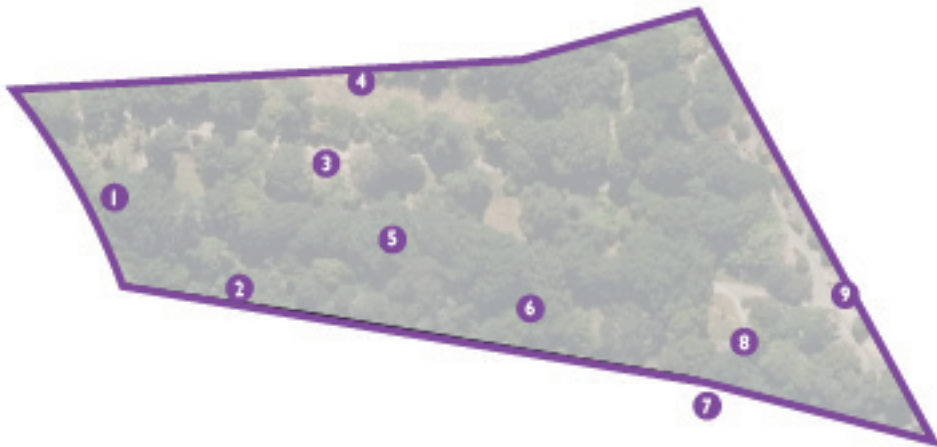
Early English gardens were about exploration and discovery. Informal grass paths led explorers to interesting spaces, taking them on a journey from private enclaves to open shared spaces. However, there was always a strong avenue that guided people home, often anchored by an architectural folly that inspired fun.

Botanical Discovery

From Rhododendrons to Ribbonwoods, Maples to Magnolias, Victoria's Garden is a botanical wonderland. Indeed - it's really Palmerston North's only true botanic garden. A place where the plants take centre stage. Variety is key, yet the plants need to come together in a carefully orchestrated harmony.



“Victoria’s Garden is Palmerston North’s most significant botanical interest garden”



Victoria’s Garden Desired Outcomes

1. Establish an architectural focal point
2. Retain and enhance vegetation
3. Enhance botanical garden
4. Strengthen connection to Play Zone
5. Enhance Primary Axis
6. Enhance visual connection to the river
7. Strengthen access to the river
8. Retain toilet facilities
9. Enhance connection to Fitzherbert Ave



Dugald MacKenzie Garden

Values Strategy

This area of the park is all about the rose and camellia collections, laid out in a classical spoke format. Everything in the garden needs to reinforce this formality, and promote its romantic, seasonal attributes.

Seasonal

Whilst roses don't display attributes of all the seasons, they are undoubtedly a seasonal attraction for many. The spring blooms of the Dugald MacKenzie rose beds attract people from all over the country, and the flowers of the camellia garden backdrop are the perfect counterbalance.

Formal

The very nature of this garden means its layout has to be formal. The extensive variety of rose species demands mass planting in distinctive beds, further reinforced by structured pathways and well placed seating.

Romantic

It's not surprising that the Dugald MacKenzie garden is the photographic setting for a significant number of Palmerston North weddings, and often the gardens are used for informal events such as birthday parties. The garden exudes romantic charm.



"The Dugald MacKenzie Garden could quite possibly be the best rose and camellia garden in the country."



Dugald MacKenzie Garden Desired Outcomes

1. Enhance connection to Main Park Entry
2. Enhance Perimeter path
3. Consider tree location
4. Relocate Gazebo
5. Enhance aesthetics of the pond
6. Strengthen entrance axis
7. Enhance connection from Park central
8. Enhance Camellia gardens



Native Forest

Values Strategy

The native forest is Palmerston North's urban forest. Ongoing planting of a variety of native species will help it become ever more resilient and abundant, whilst helping people to understand and learn about nature. The bush needs to provide a balance between good native habitat and human engagement.

Biodiversity

The native forest includes trees that have been growing since the very first clearance fires were halted. Although a relatively small stand of vegetation, its importance as an urban biodiversity hub cannot be underestimated. Over time, greater species need to be established so that the bush becomes more and more resilient.

Abundant

Unfortunately some areas of the native forest have been thinned out, or suffer from a lack of lower forest tiers. The native forest needs to be lush - abundant with plants and nature. Plants should be eco-sourced from the Manawatuū Ecological Region, so that it reflects the habitat of this area of the country.

Accessible

Although seemingly contradictory to the other values, the native forest needs to remain accessible. It is a place where people can engage with nature, experience the greenery and birdlife, and learn about the ecosystems around them. People should be encouraged to get involved - to help plant and maintain the bush





"The native forest area of Victoria Esplanade is Palmerston North City's greatest biodiversity asset."

Native Forest Desired Outcomes

1. Enhance connection to Main Park Entry
2. Rationalise paths
3. Develop key paths
4. Enhance connection to Park Central
5. Strengthen connection to the river
6. Create area of adventure trails
7. Enhance connection to Victoria's Garden



Strategic Overlays

In addition to the character areas, there are several 'Strategic Overlays' that relate to the park as a whole. Understanding these overlays is important, as they impact the Desired Outcomes for each area.

Circulation

Threading together each of the character areas are roads, footpaths, cycle networks, and the Esplanade Scenic Railway. Analysis of the circulation patterns throughout the whole park has been considered during the masterplanning process, providing strategic moves that can then be considered in each individual area.

Planting

Trees and shrubs throughout the park provide an overall backdrop to the activities that are undertaken, and help to link together each of the character areas. There is currently no overall planting strategy or planting design for the park, other than in specific areas such as the bedding

plants or rose garden.

Signage

Wayfinding and Interpretative signage are important aspects of the park, helping explain where and how to use facilities in the park, as well as strengthen the park values outlined in this masterplan. Existing signage throughout the park is in varying states of maintenance, and there are numerous signs that are out of date.

Architecture

The architecture throughout the park strongly influences the park's character, and how it is valued by the community. This includes the various buildings throughout the park, such as the cafe and birdhouses, but also includes park furniture items such as seats, fences and paving.

Further information on all of the Strategic Overlays can be found by accessing the Masterplan through the digital portal.





Conclusion

This document provides a framework of key information in the Victoria Esplanade Masterplan. The detailed masterplan can be accessed through a digital portal at:

www.victoriaesplanademasterplan.nz

The document provides an overview of the Values and Character of the park, together with a Values Strategy and Desired Outcomes for each park area.

The Planning Toolkit contains information on how to interpret the Masterplan, and deliver enhancement projects within the park that not only are in themselves engaging, but also help with the longer term improvement of key features of the park.

All park managers and decision makers are encouraged to utilise the planning toolkit in the delivery of new projects, and in the day to day management of the park.



Landscape Planning & Strategy

www.wayfinder.nz