



# VICTORIA ESPLANADE

## Masterplan Framework

November 2018







# VICTORIA ESPLANADE



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# Introduction

## Welcome to the Victoria Esplanade Reserve Masterplan

Victoria Esplanade is one of Palmerston North's largest and most popular recreation reserves. It is often called the city's 'premier park', and it attracts over half a million visitors per year.

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 Central Energy Trust Wildbase Recovery Centre are also key attractions.

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 Junior Road Safety Park (JRSP), the proposed new Lions mini-golf course, or planned cycling and walking connections to the new He Ara Kōtahi 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. The plan builds on previous proposals spanning the past 20 years.

The plan is values based, the values having been derived from engagement workshops that have been undertaken in the development of the plan, and also based on significant community consultation that has previously been undertaken as part of the long term plan processes.

This document forms Part 1 of the overall Masterplan, it being the 'Masterplan Framework'. It provides the strategic overview under which detailed elements of the Masterplan will be developed. It outlines the park values and the park character areas, before providing an overview of the values strategy and the development requirements for each area.





# Desired Outcomes

## What are the key objectives of the Masterplan?

Victoria Esplanade Reserve is expected to always be developed and improved as new ideas and budgets are introduced. The key objective of the Masterplan is to help shape those projects so that they contribute to the park's values, as well as simply providing for new activities. It is envisaged that as each project is completed, it will not only be an attraction in itself, but will also have enriched the character of the park and enhanced the enjoyment people have within it.

Previous masterplans for the park have struggled to survive beyond a few years. To ensure this plan has longevity, and is successful, the following desired outcomes are sought:

### Allow Flexibility

The most important learning from previous masterplanning exercises for the park 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 should not present a set of development plans or drawings. Rather, it must provide 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 of the park - those attributes that define why people love visiting and recreating in the park.

The Masterplan needs to be values based. That is, all decisions on the development and management of the park should stem from, and be regularly tested against, the identified values. All development needs to be undertaken in a way that underpins and enhances the values, and should seek to minimise the undesirable attributes.

### 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 including iwi.

The masterplanning process has been built on extensive historical community engagement, and has involved a series of stakeholder and Council workshops. However, such engagement shouldn't stop on the approval of this Masterplan Framework (Part 1), but must continue through the formulation of development concepts (Part 2) and in the building of new park facilities.

### Use the Masterplan

Victoria Esplanade will forever be faced with new development and new management challenges. It is imperative that park managers respect the guidance provided by the Masterplan, and follow the processes it sets out.

To achieve this, it is important that the Masterplan be presented in a manner that is logical and easy to understand. It should not include onerous or non-flexible management requirements, but rather be a tool that park managers willingly adopt and use. It should be easy to access and navigate, and be clear about what is required of park managers.



# Masterplan Overview

## What is a Masterplan and how does it work?

### 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.

The Masterplan will become the guiding document for all decisions regarding the development, maintenance and management of the park. It contains the approved long-term strategies, area development plans, management policies and budgets.

### Masterplan Approach

The Masterplan has 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. Other historical masterplan proposals have been developed during this period. External consultants (Isthmus Group and Titchener Monzingo Aitken Ltd) undertook extensive community consultation which remains relevant today. Other historical information, including earlier masterplan proposals contained in the Council archives library, have also been considered.

Ongoing engagement with the community, iwi and key stakeholders has been undertaken throughout the masterplan process, and it is envisaged that this involvement will continue.

### Masterplan Format

All parts of the Masterplan are hosted on an online portal, reached through any internet browser through the following url:

[www.victoriaesplanademasterplan.nz](http://www.victoriaesplanademasterplan.nz)

As this document sets the overall strategy approved by Council, it is also available in a separate, printable version.

### Parts of the Masterplan

The diagram on the right illustrates the masterplan structure, which contains the following parts:

#### *Part 1: Masterplan Framework*

This document provides the overall strategic framework for the Masterplan. It outlines the park values (and undesirable attributes), the values strategy, and the development requirements that have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and approved by Council. The Framework is the only part of the Masterplan that is available as a static, printable document.

#### *Part 2: Development Concepts*

This part of the Masterplan consists of several sections, each covering aspects of the park (such as circulation or signage), or specific areas within the park (such as Park Central). It interprets the Masterplan Framework 'on the ground' - setting out where and how the development requirements will be delivered so that the values strategies are achieved.

#### *Part 3: Operational Policies*

This part of the Masterplan contains management objectives and policies, the status and desirability of various activities within the park, and the current annual budgets.

#### *Part 4: Planning Toolkit*

The Planning Toolkit provides an overview and contains all of the resources necessary to make development and management decisions about the park. It sets out how the 'User Forum' will work, and the process for 'approving' new developments within the park.

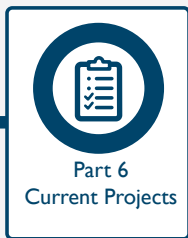
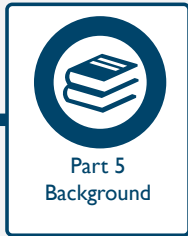
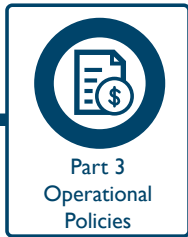
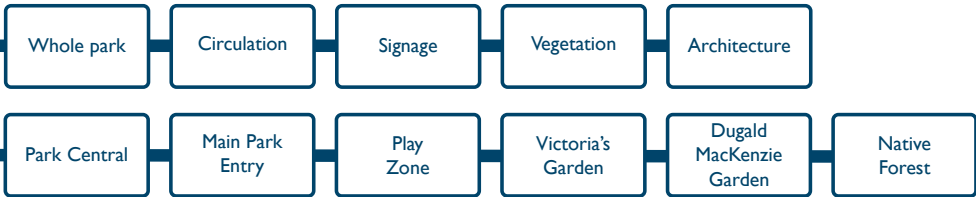
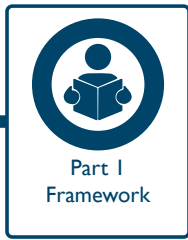
#### *Part 5: Background*

A lot of historical information about the park has been collated, and this is contained in this part of the Masterplan for future reference.

#### *Part 6: Current Projects*

This part of the Masterplan contains information about any current projects under development.

Victoria Esplanade Masterplan





# Park Values

What do people love about Victoria Esplanade?

## Park Vision

The vision for Victoria Esplanade Reserve is to deliver on the promise of 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. It should provide for a range of activities for a range of different people, and be accessible to everyone.

## Community Engagement

The 2005-2009 work undertaken by the Council involved extensive community consultation to identify what people loved about the park. This research has been reviewed in the process of developing this current masterplan.

In addition, in the preparation of this Framework, key stakeholders and interest

groups were consulted with, including (amongst many others) the Esplanade Scenic Railway, Mana Whenua, Forest & Bird, The Rose Society and Community Representatives.

Interestingly, the values identified in recent workshops with the interest groups strongly reflected the values identified in 2009. These values also strongly resonated with those people involved in the day-to-day management of the park.

## Park Values

Through a series of workshops numerous values and park attributes were discussed and refined.

The final set of five values outlined on the right have been rigorously tested, and are considered to best represent what the park is all about. In addition, the interest groups identified a set of undesirable attributes which are outlined below.

## Undesirable Attributes

During the community engagement, it was determined that where possible any development or management of the park should avoid the following undesirable attributes:



### Unslightly Rubbish

Rubbish needs to be kept under control - with effective recycling



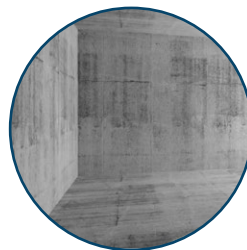
### Hard Surfaces

Too much open car parking or asphalt areas - the park should represent green, soft spaces.



### Poor Maintenance

All facilities that are created at the Park need to be able to be readily maintained and cared for.



### Stark Architecture

Too much concrete, creating stark architecture or features needs to be avoided..



### Anti-Social Behaviours

Everything at the Park should promote social interaction and activation of place.



## Park Values

Core values identified by Council and refined through engagement with the community and interest groups:



### Family

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



### Seasonal

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



### Victorian

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



### Community

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



### Native

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 Areas

What are the various areas within the Park?

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 map below.

The character areas were identified through assessment of the unique attributes of a wide number of areas throughout the park. Initially, over 20 areas of differing character were identified, but these were refined to six identifiable areas, each easily understood by all.

Whilst all of the character areas contribute to the park experience as a whole, each area has enough subtle differences that allow their future directions, and the activities they support, to be treated differently.

The following pages of this Masterplan Framework explore each of the character areas in more detail, explaining how the area contributes to a user's experience of the park. For each area, a 'values strategy' provides the longer-term strategic direction for development.

A set of 'Development Requirements' then sets out the longer-term development goals for each area, covering safety and accessibility improvements, new activities, improvements to existing facilities, etc.

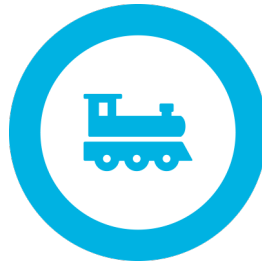
In addition to the Character Areas, a series of 'Strategic Overlays' considers those elements that connect each area of the park together, these being Circulation, Vegetation, Signage and Architecture. These overlays are further detailed later in the Framework.





### 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.



### 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 car park 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 Kōtahi pedestrian bridge over the Manawatū River



### 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.



### Victoria's Garden

The eastern end of the park is 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.



### Native Forest

The edge of the park that flanks the Manawatū 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.



# Park Central

## Strategy and Development Requirements



## 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.

*'We always end up in Park Central for an icecream.'*

### 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.

### Activity

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 focused on people. The activity centres need to be well connected (and safe), and there needs to be an open character (less vehicle orientated) that allows for good visibility across the area, and into the depths of other areas in the park.



## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure that all features and activity centres can be easily accessed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly.

### Increase Pedestrian Safety

Reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, and take measures to improve pedestrian safety.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Seek to strengthen physical and visual links to other areas of the park, especially Dugald MacKenzie Gardens and Play Zone, the Croquet car park, and to the river. Also improve pedestrian connectivity within the area.

### Improve Parking Opportunities

Enhance opportunities for parking in close proximity to key activity areas (eg Café, Wildbase, etc).

### Cater for Bicycles

Allow for commuter cycling through the area, cater for family biking, and provide bike stands.

### Upgrade and Integrate Activity Centres

Tie together the architecture and connectivity between activity centres, especially Wildbase, Paddling Pool, Conservatory entrance and any new activity centres.

### Develop New Feature Activity Centres

Build and integrate new feature activity centres such as oriental gardens, bonsai house, or other feature gardens.

### Improve Bird Cages / Aviaries

Redevelop the bird cages into aviaries that provide better habitat and a more engaging experience, while strengthening the connection to Wildbase.

### Improve ESR Train Connectivity & Safety

Promote the use of the ESR station for trips to Wildbase and other activity areas, while improving train safety for all users of the park (including improved platform, warning signals/lights, fenced off areas).

### Enhance Café as Key Destination

Build an extension to the café so that it can better cater for visitors to the park, especially during events. Work with the café tenant to ensure accessibility is maximised.

### Create More Open Space

Develop more open space for hosting functions and events, and for use by school groups. Should include large areas of open grass, and also potentially hard-surface areas for use as educational stations.

### Improve Signage, Interpretation

Replace old signage to provide better navigation and improved education/interpretation. Install new information kiosk.

### Review and Install Artworks

Review current artworks and add new art/sculpture from local artists (eg Paul Dibble).

### Cater for Alternative Vehicles

Consider how to best accommodate newer types of vehicles, such as EVs, Scooters, etc.

### Provide Quality Toilet Facilities

Ensure that there are enough toilets to meet user demand, that they are accessible, safe and clean.

### Improve Utilities

Enhance lighting and upgrade power supplies for events.

### Iwi Expression

Consider opportunities for iwi expression.



# Main Park Entry

## Strategy and Development Requirements

### 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

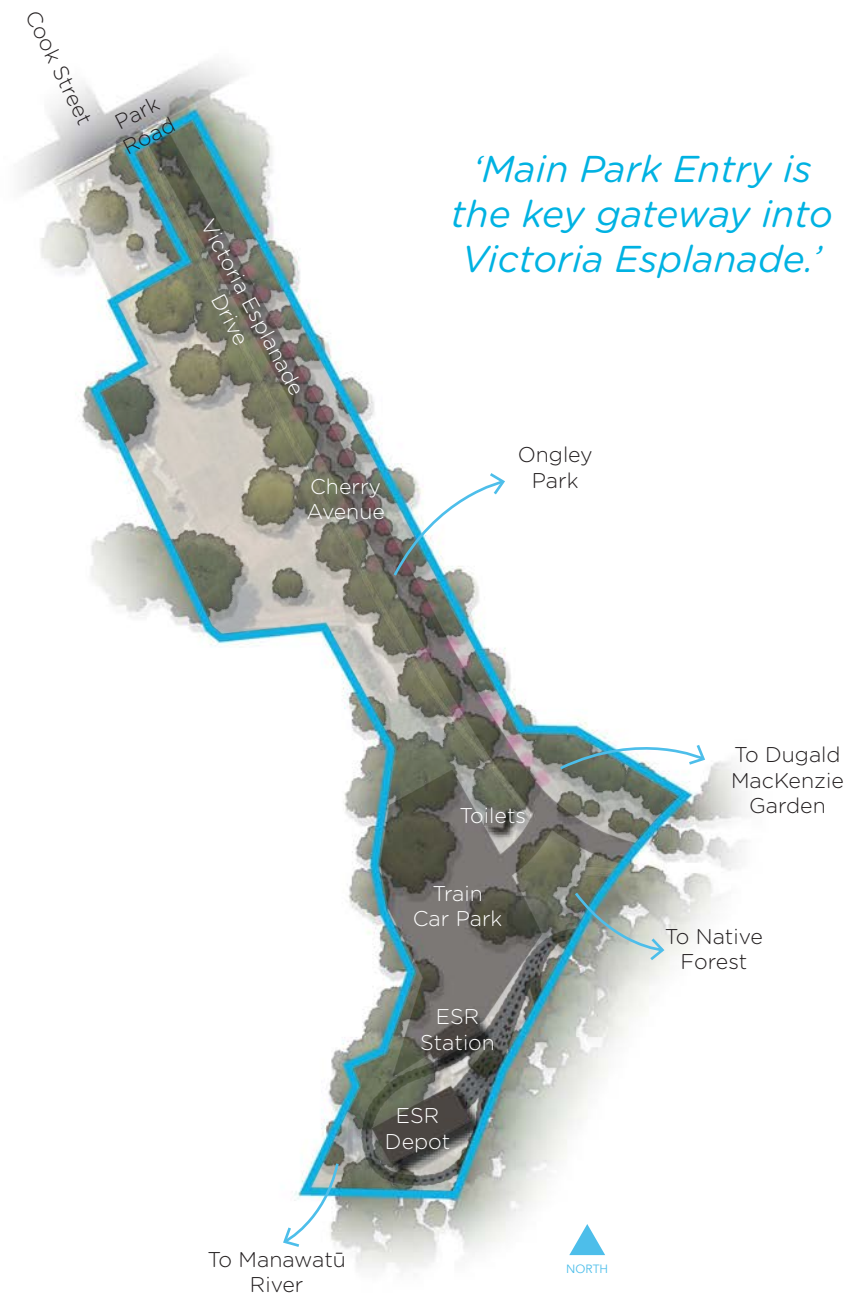
The avenue of cherries extending from Park Road is perhaps one of the most well known botanical features of the park. People come from all over the city to admire the trees, especially when in blossom. Main Park Entry needs to be the showcase of seasonal - where people arriving to the park feel the immediate 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 is the key hub for the railway, and the station dominates 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.'*



## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure that all pedestrian areas can be easily accessed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly.

### Strengthen Entry

Enhance opportunities for pedestrian and vehicle access into the park off Park Road. Realign Victoria Esplanade Drive with Cook Street to provide for safer vehicle entry and enhanced sightlines into the park.

### Enhance Cherry Avenue

Strengthen the prominence of the cherry avenue, considering opportunities for improved amenity and experience of the cherry avenue. Consider how to balance the use of the avenue as the main vehicle entry with the desire for people to photograph and enjoy it.

### Increase Pedestrian Safety

Reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, and take measures to improve pedestrian safety, particularly around the ESR station, car parks and entry into the park.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Seek to strengthen physical and visual links to other areas of the park, especially to Dugald MacKenzie Rose Gardens and Native Forest. Also improve pedestrian connectivity within the area.

### Improve Parking Opportunities

Enhance opportunities for parking in close proximity to the ESR station and consider opportunities for increased parking capacity that can cater for coach and overflow parking. Consider the impacts of Ongley Park on the overall parking capacity.

### Cater for Bicycles

Allow for different user access through Main Park Entry including access for commuter cyclists to He Ara Kōtahi bridge. Mitigate any potential conflicts between other users in the area (such as pedestrians and vehicles), particularly around the ESR station.

### Improve ESR Train Connectivity & Safety

Promote the use of the ESR station for access into the rest of the park encouraging a park and ride approach, as well as improving train safety for all users of the park.

### Improve Connection to the River

Consider how to enhance the visual and physical connections between this area of the park and the river.

### Enhance Visual Connections

Ensure key axis is enhanced through focal points to help strengthen visual connections, particularly the key entry axis into the park.

### Install Gateway Artwork

Work with iwi to develop an appropriate entry feature that also respects the Victorian Heritage of the park.

### Provide Quality Toilet Facilities

Ensure that there are enough toilets to meet user demand, that they are easily accessible from the ESR station, and are safe and clean.

### Iwi Expression

Consider opportunities for iwi expression.



# Play Zone

Strategy and Development Requirements



## 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.

*'The playground in Victoria Esplanade is the best playground in Palmerston North!'*

### 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!





## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure that all features and play areas can be easily accessed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly.

### Provide for all Ages

Ensure equipment and activities cater for all ages, including toddlers, primary and secondary aged children, young adults, adults and the elderly.

### Develop New Play Opportunities

Build and integrate new play equipment and activities that encourage play (such as the potential Lions mini golf), and ensure that they integrate with the park as a whole (rather than becoming 'fenced off').

### Increase Pedestrian Safety

Reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, particularly around the car park and Junior Road Safety Park (JRSP), and take measures to improve pedestrian safety.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Seek to strengthen physical and visual links to adjacent areas of the park, including Park Central, Victoria's Garden and Native Forest. Also improve pedestrian connectivity within the area, especially to disconnected activities such as the JRSP area.

### Cater for Bicycles

Cater for family biking to and within the area and integrate the JRSP. Mitigate any potential conflicts between different users where cycling occurs, and provide bike stands.

### Upgrade and Integrate Equipment

Tie together the style of any architecture and play equipment to strengthen connections across the area as well as any new features.

### Improve ESR Train Connectivity & Safety

Enhance the connection between play areas and the ESR station. Consider improved train safety for all users of the area, with a particular focus on children (including improved platform, warning signals/lights, fenced off areas).

### Enhance Open Space

Develop open grass spaces for family picnicking, parents sitting and watching, and to promote informal play.

### Develop consistency

Use new surfaces and materials to help update and pull together the architectural style of the playground, ensuring these are consistent with the aesthetics of play and the safety of users.

### Provide Quality Toilet Facilities

Ensure that there are enough toilets to meet user demand, that they are easily accessible from the ESR station, safe and clean.



# Dugald MacKenzie Garden

Strategy and Development Requirements



## 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 seasonal, romantic attributes.

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

### 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.



## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure that the garden can easily be enjoyed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Seek to strengthen pedestrian connections to (and between) Park Central and Main Park Entry. Also improve pedestrian connectivity within the area, considering key routes and encouraging use of under utilised areas, whilst also not losing sight of the romance of the garden layout.

### Upgrade and Integrate Architecture

Tie together the architecture and different features to strengthen connections across the area, particularly features such as the gazebo, pergola and seating.

### Enhance Existing Features

Consider opportunities to better integrate and strengthen the prominence of any existing features such as the Gazebo and pond. Remove/reduce unsightly objects such as the pump-shed rock feature.

### Develop Rose Garden

Continue to explore the development of the rose garden design so that it can continue to be a showcase for traditional and new varieties.

### Enhance Camellia Gardens

Develop the camellia garden walkway as a notable garden in the park, enhancing its romance and connectivity with the rose garden.

### Create structured spaces

Seek to strengthen spaces through structured tree planting and garden bed placement. Consider key spaces of the garden and how they are used such as catering for weddings and photos.

### Improve Signage, Interpretation

Replace old signage to provide better navigation and improved education/interpretation.

### Improve Utilities

Undertake drainage improvements to ensure amenity is maintained and paths and garden beds are accessible in all seasons/weather.

### Rationalise furniture

Consider placement and rationalisation of seats/park benches and future furniture within the area.



# Victoria's Garden

Strategy and Development Requirements



## 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.

*'Victoria's Garden is Palmerston North's most significant botanical interest garden.'*

### 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

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.



## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure there are routes that can be easily accessed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly, whilst also respecting that some paths need to retain a sense of mystery and naturalness.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Seek to strengthen physical and visual links to other areas of the park, especially Play Zone, Park Central and Native Forest, also improve pedestrian connectivity within the area.

### Reconsider Bicycle Use

Consider how the Manawatū River Path or other areas of the park could be used to take the pressure off the need for wide, fast-cycle use within the area, so that it can be enjoyed at a more leisurely pace.

### Develop Botanical Nature of the Garden

Enhance the botanic aspect of the area with new gardens and trees, using interesting or rare varieties. Tie together the collection of trees and garden beds through Victorian inspired themes.

### Improve Signage, Interpretation

Replace old signage to provide better navigation and improved education/interpretation.

### Strengthen Path Hierarchy

Develop a key axis path with a focal point, reflecting Victorian Garden styles, to enhance visual connections and direction through the area. Consider the hierarchy of paths and informal connections through the area.

### Install New Architectural Folly

Enhance the Victorian Heritage style through the addition of an historically inspired 'folly', used as a focal point to strengthen the key axis.

### Reflect English Country Garden Style

Enhance the design of the garden to reflect the themes and approaches used in traditional English Country Gardens (such as those designed by Capability Brown or Gertrude Jekyll).

### Enhance Connection to the River

Develop improved connections to the river without unnecessarily clearing riparian vegetation. Strengthen visual sightlines to the river over the long-term as the natural life-cycle of trees changes the density of the garden edge.

### Provide Quality Toilet Facilities

Ensure that there are enough toilets to meet user demand, that they are accessible, safe and clean.

### Iwi Expression

Consider opportunities for iwi expression.



# Native Bush

Strategy and Development Requirements



## 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.

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

### Biodiverse

The native forest includes trees that have been growing since the very first clearance fires were halted. Although a relatively small stand of vegetation, it's 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 Manawatū 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 bird life, and learn about the ecosystems around them. People should be encouraged to get involved - to help plant and maintain the bush.



## Development Requirements

### Improve Accessibility

Ensure all key pathways can be easily accessed by users of all abilities, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, pushchairs and the elderly.

### Enhance Pedestrian Connections

Strengthen physical and visual links to adjacent areas of the park (especially Park Central, Play Zone, Victoria's Garden and Main Park Entry). Also seek to improve connections to the river and connectivity within the area. At the same time, cater for 'self-discovery', allowing people to feel a sense of remoteness.

### Reconsider Bicycle Use

Consider how the Manawatū River Path or other areas of the park could be used to take the pressure off the need for wide, fast-cycle use within the forest.

### Develop Feature Areas

Enhance and integrate existing and new feature areas such as the fernery and educational trails.

### Enhance Biodiversity

Continue to undertake planting using species that promote biodiversity, including rare or endangered species. Also use plants that provide good habitat or food sources for native fauna. Avoid the planting of mass mono-species (such as karaka tree groves).

### Layer Planting

Use a mix of planting species that provide a range of vertical tiers, representative of native New Zealand forests.

### Respect Existing Planting

Don't unnecessarily remove existing vegetation, but rather consider the natural life-cycle of plants and use this to inform future plans for new paths and viewshafts.

### Improve Signage, Interpretation

Replace old signage to provide better navigation and promote education of species through tree identification and interpretation signage.

### Enhance ESR Train Route

Allow for potential future ESR train upgrades within the area where the mystery and quietness of the forest can be experienced.

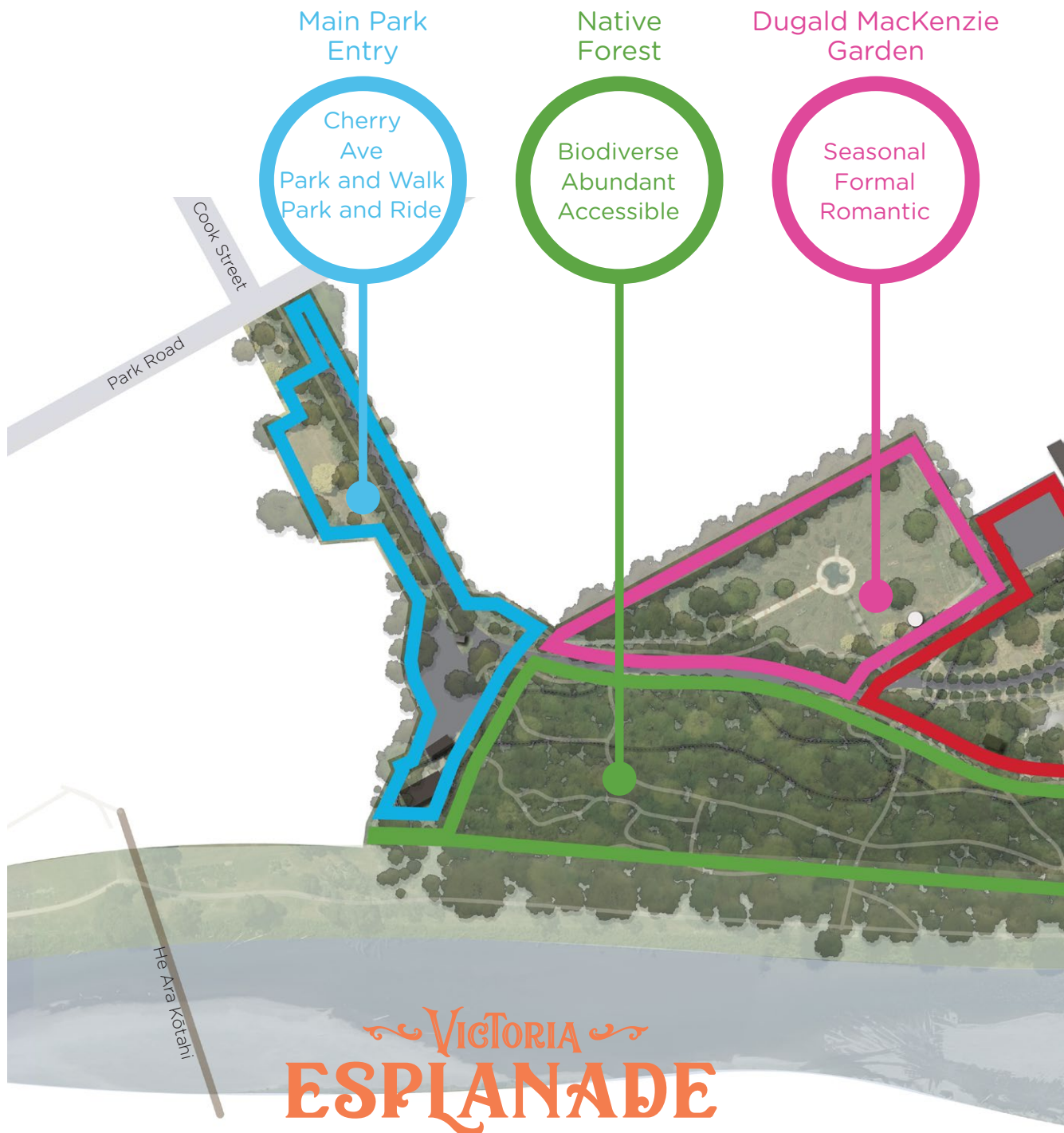
### Iwi Expression

Consider opportunities for iwi expression.



# Strategy Overview

Strategy for each Character Area



VICTORIA  
ESPLANADE



# Park Values



Seasonal



Family



Community



Victorian



Native

Park Central

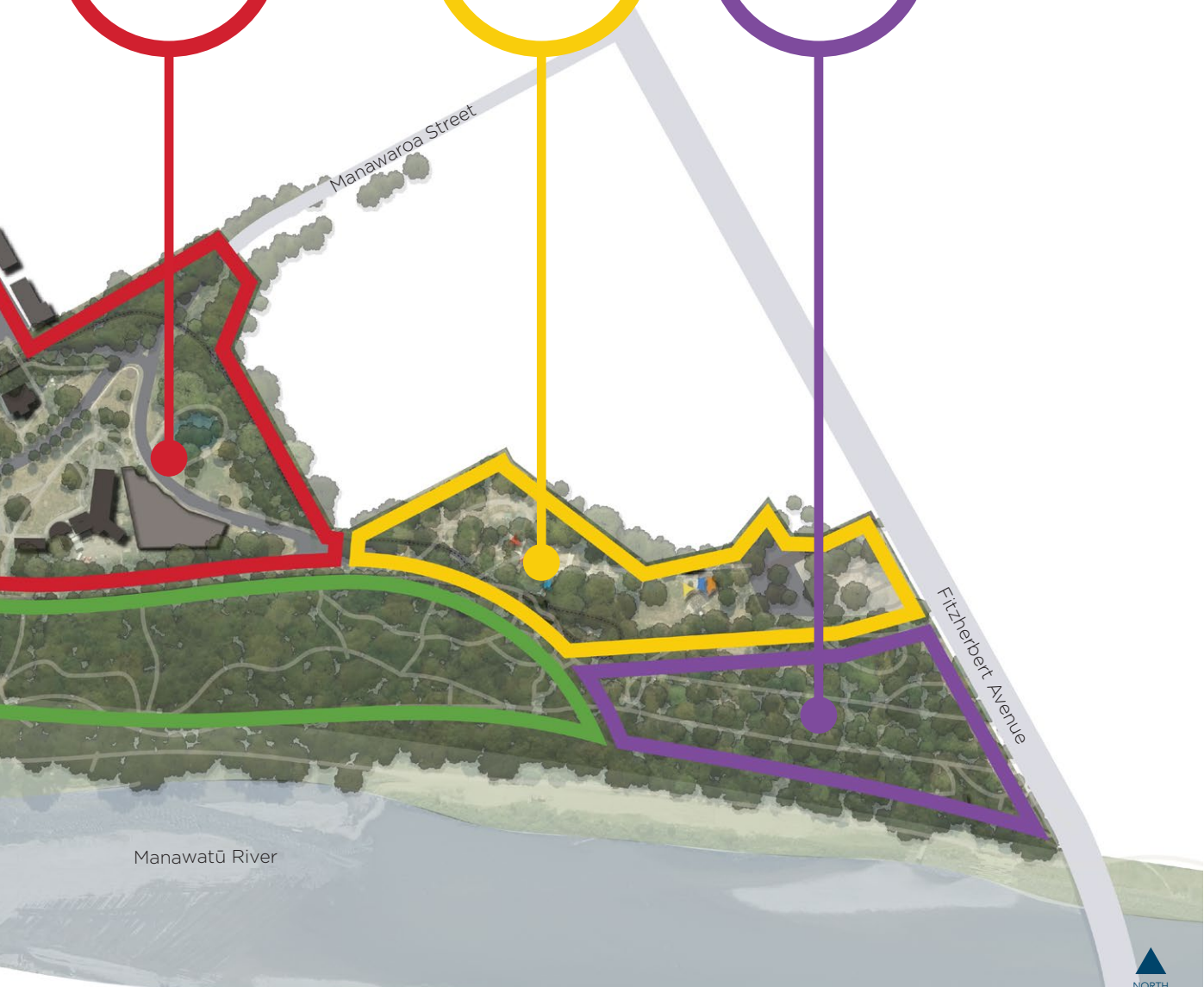
Play Zone

Victoria's Garden

Heart  
Activity  
Family

Activity  
Community  
Family

History  
Exploration  
Botanical





# Strategic Overlays

What other park elements need consideration?

## What Are Strategic Overlays?

Whilst the physical development of the park will happen within each of the Character Areas, there are attributes of the park that need to be considered more holistically. In the masterplan, these have been considered as 'Strategic Overlays', because they are park wide considerations that will influence the development outcomes in each area.

The Strategic Overlays are not to be treated as prescriptive, but rather are included to help guide any future development in a way that responds to the park as a whole, so that the wider values of the park, and its character, can be retained and enhanced.

There are four Strategic Overlays which are outlined over the following few pages.



## Circulation

Threading together each of the character areas are roads, footpaths, cycle networks, and the Esplanade Scenic Railway. It is important that any development concepts (in Part 2 of the masterplan) consider wider objectives of circulation, set out as follows:

### *Pedestrian and Casual Cyclists*

The most common method of circulation through the park is by walking. It is important that the park provides for a range of different routes, and different experiences for walkers, whilst catering for a range of different abilities and group sizes. The analysis has identified that there is scope to improve pedestrian access between character areas, but equally it is important that some routes retain a sense of mystery. Casual cyclists, particularly children on bikes (with parents walking), amble through various parts of the park. There is a need to ensure that some key routes can accommodate such cyclists.

Drive and Victoria Esplanade Drive provide for through route between these entry points, with a one way system operation around the café.

Commuter cyclists pass through the park, either on the road or on some of the dedicated cycling routes to the River path. Commuter cyclists tend to move quickly, and need routes that are clear of pedestrians.

### *Vehicles and Commuter Cyclists*

Vehicles are a common method of arriving at Victoria Esplanade via the three entry points. The internal road network, consisting of Palm

### *Esplanade Scenic Railway*

The Esplanade Scenic Railway provides an almost full loop throughout the park, with stations near the Main Park Entry car park, the café, and near to the playground. The train could be utilised for transporting school children to the new Wildbase Recovery Centre, reducing the need for buses accessing Park Central.



### Signage

Signage needs to reflect the overall park values and respond to the underlying character areas. Clear branding using Victoria Esplanade logos, colours and icons will help to reinforce the park identity and provide an understanding of how to use areas of the park, how to get around the park, as well as educational aspects of historical, cultural and biodiversity values within the park. It is considered that the development of a long term signage strategy that reflects the longer term development visions of the reserve would be beneficial.

### Wayfinding

The size and scale of Victoria Esplanade provides a large variety of spaces and activities throughout the park. Therefore it is important to provide wayfinding information to help people understand where they are, how to access different activities and encourage people to experience different areas of the park. The identity of each character area provides a basis for wayfinding across the whole park that can be reinforced through clear messages and icons.

### Interpretive

The park is not only made up of areas of different character and activities but also has a variety of historical, cultural and ecological

values that can be reinforced through interpretive signage that contains relevant and information to the area. Interpretive signage can also reinforce the park values.

### Information

Information signage is important for people to understand any rules set out for the park such as open hours or discouraged activities. Management of signs is required to ensure sign content is consistent throughout the park and reflecting the park's branding and values. Over time information and rules in the park may change, therefore signs will need to be easy to update when required.



## Planting

Trees and shrubs will always be a strong feature throughout Victoria Esplanade, providing variety in seasonal colours and indigenous habitat. Vegetation throughout the park requires ongoing maintenance and management to ensure planting is in good condition and planning for future planting is carefully considered.

### Seasonal

A value identified for the park that was reinforced through the values workshop was the element of seasonality that is evident throughout the park in exotic trees, the rose and camellia gardens as well as annual flower beds and borders. The seasonal vegetation provides diversity in colour and amenity that changes throughout the year.

### Native

Native vegetation is dominantly found in the Native Forest Character Area, this was also a characteristic that was identified as a key value of the overall park. The native vegetation is significant not only within

Victoria Esplanade but also as a native forest within the urban setting of Palmerston North. The Native planting offers amenity values that are significantly unique to other areas of the park and has biodiversity values that provide indigenous habitat and educational opportunities.

### Planned

It is inevitable that planting will be ongoing in the park, however it is important that future planting is planned for and responds to the Character Area values. Maintenance of vegetation and the quality of planting reflects the park values.



## Architecture

Overall the buildings and park furniture have an identity that is uniquely Victoria Esplanade. The architectural forms are well placed and well maintained adding value to each character area and the park as a whole.

### Identity

The architecture of buildings and park furniture has a degree of consistency throughout the park, yet also reinforces a sense of place for each park area.

the space. Architectural form needs to add value to a space and reflect the character of the area it is located as well as the park as a whole.

### Form

Architectural form provides aesthetic qualities but also amenity value. It is important that the architecture is identifiable, for example a toilet block should be easily identified as a toilet block and not disguised as something else. This also assists with wayfinding and understanding

### Function

All architectural features have a function whether that is simply to provide a barrier for safety purposes, a place to sit or a shelter. It is important that the feature is usable and functional for its intended purpose. This includes consistent quality through ongoing maintenance and replacement if necessary.

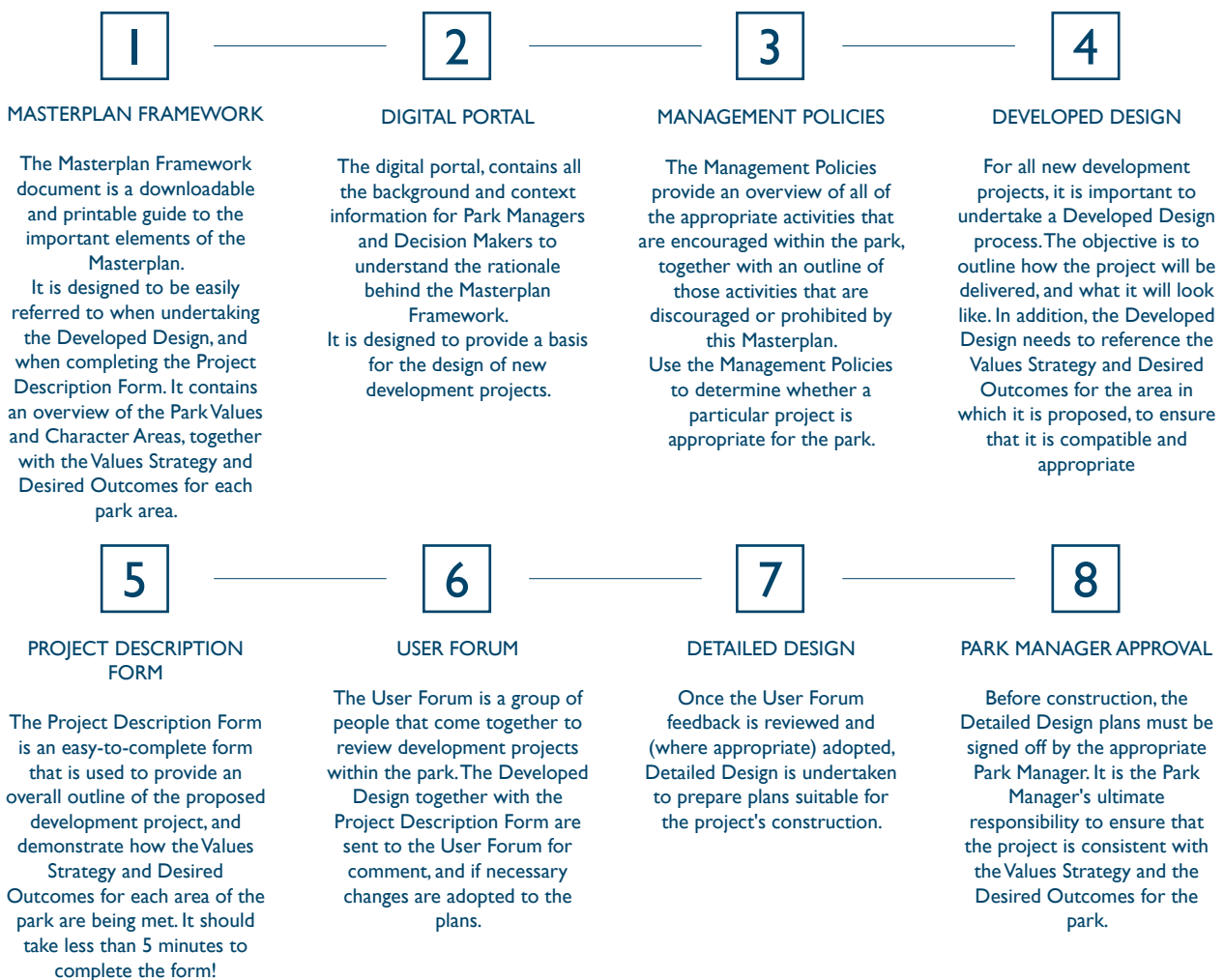


# Planning Toolkit

How to use the Masterplan - where next?

The masterplan has been developed to be easy to follow, and easy to use. For park managers, most of the information required will be within this Masterplan Framework, together with the Development Concepts contained in Part 2, accessed through the online portal. Understanding the information contained in these parts will provide the context needed to make appropriate development and management decisions.

Part 4 of the masterplan, the 'Planning Toolkit' sets out a process for the design and development of larger scale capital projects, as well as containing the necessary resources for decision making. This process is briefly outlined below:





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[www.wayfinder.nz](http://www.wayfinder.nz)

**W AY FINDER**

Landscape Planning & Strategy