Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.1

Draft Royal Park Master Plan

10 September 2024

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Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Future Melbourne Committee to release the draft Royal Park Master Plan (refer Attachment 2) for community engagement.
2. Developing a new contemporary master plan for Royal Park is a Council Plan action under Major Initiative 16 in the 2021-2025 Council Plan. This master plan will guide future management of Royal Park over the next 20 years.
3. The draft master plan elevates the voice and role of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owners and embeds contemporary Council policy and strategy outcomes to respond to the challenges of population growth and climate change and to meet the needs of existing and future generations.
4. Extensive community and stakeholder consultation has been conducted, along with detailed research and analysis. The analysis examined heritage and Traditional Owner cultural values, ecology, traffic and parking, recreation needs and social values including community safety. A discussion paper released in November 2023 received feedback from approximately 1900 participants.
5. The master plan will build on the legacy of the previous master plans but will stand alone as a new master plan with a new framework, creating a new legacy of its own by focusing on City of Melbourne's commitment to walking together with Traditional Owners.

Key issues

6. The master plan delivers a new planning framework for Royal Park – with a draft vision, principles, themes and actions. Each of these elements will help to guide future management of the park.
7. Each of the six themes propose actions that respond to the opportunities and challenges and address community expectations:
    - 7.1. Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination – sets the framework for the whole park and the importance of walking together with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung in Caring for Country.
    - 7.2. Caring for nature – elevates the important work of nurturing biodiversity and supporting research.
    - 7.3. Recreation and community wellbeing – supports the ongoing and improved delivery of infrastructure and facilities for informal recreation, play and sport to support physical activity, health, and wellbeing.
    - 7.4. Visitor experience – supports visitor use through enhancing amenities and infrastructure, including picnic areas and lighting.
    - 7.5. Movement to and through the park – identifies improvements to the walking and wheeling experience to and through the park, prioritising pedestrian movement and connections.
    - 7.6. Parking, roads and transport – identifies opportunities to simplify a complex and land-hungry arrangement of parking areas support safe and equitable access for all transport modes.
8. An implementation plan will be developed when the master plan is approved, including costs and timing.
9. A community engagement period for the draft master plan is proposed from November 2024 to January 2025. It will include a survey and interactive features on Participate Melbourne, workshops with key stakeholders, pop ups in the park and targeted engagement with children and young people.
10. The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is considering a Woi Wurrung language name for the master plan. The final master plan will be named accordingly.

11. The final master plan will be informed by this feedback and will be presented to the Future Melbourne Committee for adoption in mid–2025.

Recommendation from management

12. That the Future Melbourne Committee:

    12.1. Approves release of the draft Royal Park Master Plan (Attachment 2 of the report from management) for community engagement.

    12.2. Authorises the General Manager Strategy Planning and Climate Change to make any further minor editorial changes to the draft Royal Park Master Plan prior to community engagement.

Attachments:
1. Supporting Attachment (page 3 of 74)
2. Royal Park Master Plan Draft (page 5 of 74)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. The Council is:

   1.1. the committee of management for most of Royal Park under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*

   1.2. the responsible road authority for the through roads within Royal Park

   1.3. the freehold owner of part of the wetlands.

2. Zoos Victoria is responsible for the Melbourne Zoo under the *Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995.* The Zoo is within but not part of Royal Park. The State Netball and Hockey Centre is part of Royal Park but administered by the State Sport Centres Trust under the *State Sport Centres Act 1994.* Rail and tram tracks through Royal Park are vested in VicTrack.

Finance

3. Release of the draft master plan for public comment is included in the operational budget for Parks and City Greening under Major Initiative 16. Funding for any recommended future projects will be submitted for consideration through Council's capital works or renewal programs.

Conflict of interest

4. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a general or material interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

5. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

6. Parks play a key role in contributing to the overall health and wellbeing of the community through providing opportunities for relaxation, physical activity, play, human interaction and connection to the natural world. The recommendations in the draft master plan to upgrade or improve garden assets will have a positive effect on both access to and the use and enjoyment of Royal Park.

Stakeholder consultation

7. The community engagement period is proposed to run for 10 weeks from November 2024 to January 2025. This will provide the community and stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the draft master plan. Consultation will include online engagement on the Participate Melbourne website. Separate consultation with children and young people will be undertaken. Pop ups in the park as well as targeted stakeholder sessions will be facilitated over this period.

8. Ongoing engagement with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation will occur.

9. The draft master plan was prepared following extensive stakeholder and community engagement. A discussion paper was released for community consultation from 6 November to 10 December 2023. The consultation resulted in feedback from approximately 1900 participants. Feedback was received through 1432 survey responses, 375 participants at five on-site pop ups, 42 contributors to an online map, 75 stakeholders at targeted workshops and 10 detailed written submissions from key stakeholders and groups.

10. Regular engagement with key Royal Park land managers Melbourne Zoo and the State Sports Centre Trust (which manages the State Netball and Hockey Centre) has occurred during the development of the

draft master plan, including on draft recommendations relating to car parking. Their feedback has been considered and incorporated where appropriate.

11. The City of Melbourne Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee gave extensive assistance to develop this draft master plan.

Relation to Council policy

12. The draft master plan is consistent with Council's policy objectives particularly those aimed at enhancing the current urban environment, preparing for the major challenges of climate change and supporting all people to visit the park. Major strategies include the Urban Forest Strategy (2012), Open Space Strategy (2012), Nature in the City Strategy (2017) and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2017).

Environmental sustainability

13. This draft master plan provides the framework to strengthen the environmental service function of Royal Park.

14. Three of the six master plan themes relate to environmental sustainability and include actions that will improve the environmental performance, biodiversity, and resilience of Royal Park. Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination speaks to Caring for Country principles. Caring for nature seeks to improve ecological health and promote research. Movement to and through the park supports active transport.

CITY OF MELBOURNE

Royal Park Master Plan

Draft

September 2024

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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Message from the Lord Mayor

Placeholder. To be included in final master plan.

Message from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Placeholder. To be included in final master plan.

Figure 1 Royal Park (over page)

Map of the master plan area with key features and facilities identified.



ROYAL PARK

Key

1. Western Oval
2. Western Pavilion
3. Ransford Oval
4. McAlister Oval
5. Ryder Pavilion
6. Ryder Oval
7. Mcpherson Field
8. Royal Park Tennis Club
9. Poplar Oval
10. Women's Dressing Pavilion
11. Royal Park Golf Club
12. Walker Oval
13. Brens Pavilion
14. Brens Oval
15. H.G. Smith Oval
16. Royal Park Creek
17. Trin Warren Tam-Boore Wetland
18. Storage Wetland
19. White's Skink Habitat
20. Ross Straw Field and Pavilion
21. Manningham Reserve and Playground
22. Urban Camp, Anzac Hall
23. Southgate Lodge
24. Lawn 7
25. North Park Tennis Club
26. The Billabong
27. Flemington Road Oval and Pavilion
28. Burke and Wills Memorial
29. The Walmsley House
30. The Lodge
31. Australian Native Garden
32. Royal Park Nature Play Playground

- Upfield train line
- Tram route
- Tram stop
- Bus route
- Bus stop
- Bike trail
- Sports fields
- Royal Park Golf Course
- Remnant vegetation
- Public toilets

1 Introduction

1.1 City of Melbourne commitment to Reconciliation

Royal Park is Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin have cared for this Country for thousands of generations. The land was never ceded.

Current archaeological records of the Melbourne area place human occupation at somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 years ago. The ongoing connection of Aboriginal peoples to Country, culture and knowledge is celebrated in the Royal Park Master Plan.

The master plan is being developed in the context of the Yoorrook Justice Commission truth-telling process, which is integral to the Victorian Government's journey towards treaty.

At the City of Melbourne, we view truth-telling – giving Aboriginal voices opportunities for deliberate sharing of history – as integral to our reconciliation journey. It helps our shared understanding of the past and its impacts today. Operating in a treaty environment also demands that we look to the future and reshape our relationship with Traditional Owners and other First Nations groups on the pathway to greater self-determination.

This master plan is a significant opportunity to further the City of Melbourne's reconciliation journey. The master plan aligns with the organisation's vision for reconciliation: to work alongside Sovereign First Nations, enabling true self-determination and ensuring Aboriginal peoples have the freedom to live well according to their own values and beliefs.

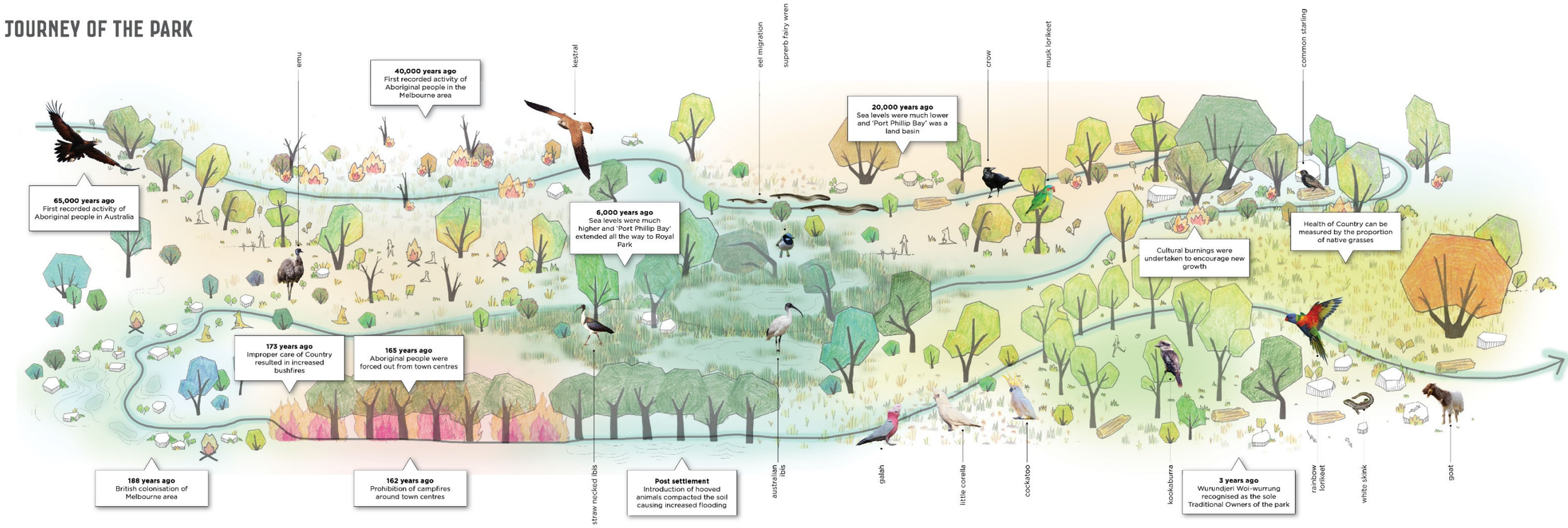
Earlier Royal Park master plans were silent on Aboriginal Traditional Ownership, their association with Country and continuing cultural practice and values. This master plan seeks to fundamentally embed Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung perspectives in guiding Royal Park's future. It creates opportunities to further self-determination and increase Traditional Owner participation in decision-making over the management and uses of the park.

The journey of the park illustration (Figure 2) seeks to communicate how long Traditional Owners have cared for this unique place.

The master plan represents our commitment to partner with the Traditional Owner of Royal Park – the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung – and to work with and alongside them for the duration of the plan to realise their aspirations and vision for this important place.

Figure 2 Journey of the park

Illustration depicting changes in Royal Park over time and thousands of generations of the Traditional Owners caring for Country



1.2 About Royal Park

Royal Park consists of 169 hectares of predominantly Crown land permanently reserved for public recreation. It is the major open space for the suburb of Parkville, occupying most the neighbourhood's land area.

Royal Park was reserved as public parkland in 1854. Melbourne City Council was appointed Committee of Management for Royal Park in 1934 and performs the role under the provisions of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

A small area near the park's western boundary adjacent to the Tullamarine Freeway is freehold land owned by Melbourne City Council.

The master plan area (Figure 1) illustrates the size and scale of Royal Park, including:

- The creek line south of Poplar Road, west of the Orygen Youth Health facility (Royal Park Creek).
- The western pond of the Trin-Warren Tam-boore Wetland, west of Oak Street (storage wetland).
- The former railway reserve between The Avenue and Royal Parade (now the Capital City Trail that connects through to Princes Park).
- The small reserves adjacent to Royal Park along The Avenue at Park Street, Macarthur Road and Royal Parade.

The master plan does not include the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens (Melbourne Zoo) or Royal Children's Hospital, which have different reservations and are separate entities to Royal Park. The State Netball and Hockey Centre is within the Royal Park reservation but controlled by a different Committee of Management.

While the master plan focuses on the areas managed by City of Melbourne, it also makes recommendations for the areas of common interest for all land managers, such as park landscape, connectivity, wayfinding and car parking.

1.2.1 Park history and context

Royal Park has a rich and layered history. While previous master plans celebrated the park's post-settlement heritage, they failed to acknowledge the Traditional Owners who have been custodians of the land since time immemorial.

This foundation is crucial to appreciating and understanding Royal Park and informing future decision-making. The master plan provides an opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and amplify Aboriginal history, voices and culture fully, deliberately and accurately.

Key to this, is recognising that the creation of Royal Park was an act of dispossession. It disrupted the important custodial, cultural and other practices associated with the land, and had a catastrophic impact on the wellbeing of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Acknowledging and addressing the impacts of colonisation on Traditional Owner rights and obligations to care for Country may enable healing – an important step towards reconciliation and treaty (Appendix 1.1 Caring for Country).

Settlement story

The settlement that became the City of Melbourne was a landscape cared for and adapted by Aboriginal peoples for many thousands of years.

The landscape appealed to colonial settlers who imagined a large park-like estate. The notion of the land appearing as a vast gentleman's park continued to shape settlers' early descriptions of the Melbourne area.

According to early chronicles ‘the whole [of Melbourne was] situated, as it were, on the verge of a beautiful park’ (George Arden, 1840).

The park-like landscape was a reference to the royal domains of Europe, which comprised extensive estates that were set out as lightly timbered parklands rather than as a dense forest. The open country surrounding Melbourne with its scattering of fine trees had been shaped this way because Aboriginal peoples had practised fire stick cultural burns for an untold period before the arrival of settlers.

The reservation of Royal Park is a legacy of Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe (C.J. La Trobe), who was appointed Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in 1839 and became the first Governor of Victoria in 1851. C.J. La Trobe ensured that large areas of public land surrounding Melbourne on the north, east and south were set aside for public recreation and established Royal Park – one of Melbourne’s earliest parks – in the mid-1840s (Appendix 2.1 Settlement story).

Royal Park was the starting point for Burke and Wills’ expedition in 1860 and served a military purpose from the 1860s until 1945, including hosting camps and training grounds during both world wars. In 1946, the World War II camp, named Camp Pell, became home to approximately 3000 people affected by the post-war housing shortage. By 1956, due to mounting pressure related to the Olympic Games, Camp Pell was closed.

Important scientific institutions such as the Experimental Farm and the Acclimatisation Society, which later became the Melbourne Zoo, were in Royal Park. Several buildings within the park hold individual heritage significance, including the Walmsley House, Women’s Sport Pavilion and Anzac Hall.

State significance

Royal Park is identified as a ‘state open space’ in the City of Melbourne’s Open Space Strategy 2012. The extensive parkland is used by the local community as well as intrastate, interstate and international visitors, with many drawn to the Melbourne Zoo and the State Netball and Hockey Centre.

State open spaces are iconic and synonymous with the character and identity of Melbourne and are often used to stage activities and events of metropolitan, state, national or international importance.

Royal Park was included on the Victorian Heritage Register (reference H2337) in 2014. It is subject to the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017*, regulated by Heritage Victoria.

The heritage registration recognises Royal Park as a place of state significance for:

- Its importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria’s cultural history (Criterion A: historical).
- Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria’s cultural history (Criterion B: rarity).
- Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (Criterion E: aesthetic).

Any proposed changes to Royal Park are subject to assessment against the Victorian Heritage Register statement of significance and the Heritage Act.

A social and healthy place

Royal Park’s distinctive landscape seamlessly integrates sport and recreation with nature.

Sport has a long and proud history in Royal Park, which became home to Victoria’s earliest public golf course (1903), Australia’s first dedicated baseball field (1967), and some of Melbourne’s first recorded spaces for cricket and AFL.

Sport and recreation have been significant to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, including a long history and enduring connection with football (marngrook).

The park supported the advancement of women’s competitive sport, having been pivotal in women’s cricket provision from the early 1900s, netball from the late 1920s, and amateur athletics at Poplar Oval from the mid-1930s.The Women’s Pavilion was the first-ever dressing pavilion created specifically for women by a local government in Australia.

While most sporting activities required expansive spaces that retained the parks open character, the tennis courts introduced in 1925 were an exception.

Royal Park continues to host many sporting clubs today, with grounds and facilities attracting participants from across Melbourne. It also supports all types of informal recreation, including walking, running, cycling and nature therapy.

The Nature Play playground was completed in 2015 after land was returned to the park following the redevelopment of the Royal Children's Hospital.

Landscape and habitat

The iconic Australian landscape character of Royal Park underpins the City of Melbourne's reputation for enhancing urban biodiversity.

Working in partnership with Traditional Owners, Royal Park serves as an important location for ongoing studies and experimentation in landscape design, horticulture and ecology, to better understand and preserve threatened ecosystems, such as native grassland.

City of Melbourne is also working to implement best-practice urban environment management techniques, including traditional cultural practices.

Celebrating yesterday, today and tomorrow

Royal Park is a unique hidden treasure in narrm – Melbourne. It is a flourishing oasis on the edge of the city centre, distinct from other inner-city parks in terms of its size, uses, landscape character and history.

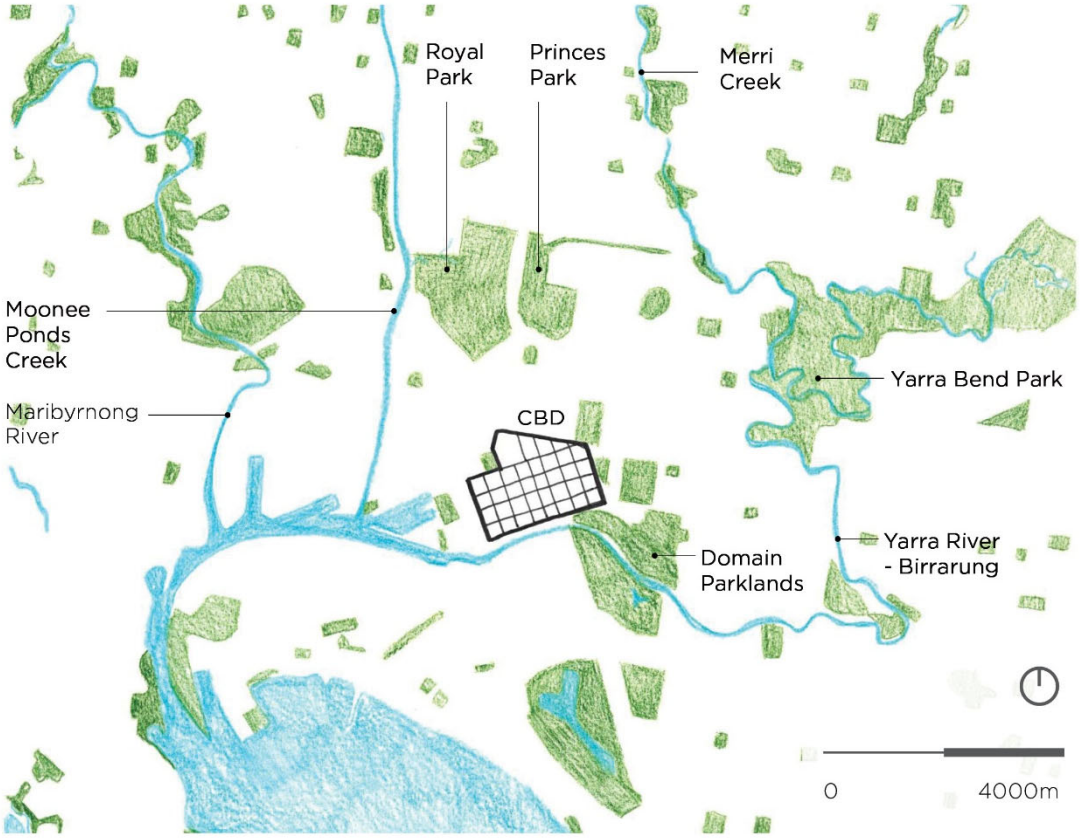
The park has strong visual connections to the city and surrounding neighbourhoods and contains many of Melbourne's historic and iconic spaces and places. It is the municipality's largest open space, akin to parklands along the Yarra and Maribyrnong River valleys, which service local neighbourhoods as well as the wider region, providing significant spaces for recreation (Figure 3).

History, culture, nature, sport and community connect and coexist in Royal Park, providing an experience like no other within the City of Melbourne municipality.

Like many open spaces in urban environments, Royal Park faces pressure from population growth and climate change. This master plan seeks to address these challenges to support and promote the health of the landscape, ecology and community into the future.

Figure 3 Overview of Melbourne's open space network

Illustrative map of the open space network and waterways of inner Melbourne in relation to the city



1.3 About this master plan

Master plans are created for all major parks and gardens for which City of Melbourne has planning, management, improvement and maintenance responsibility.

A master plan guides decision-making, management and funding priorities in line with community needs.

1.3.1 Purpose of the master plan

The draft Royal Park Master Plan sets the vision for Royal Park for the next 20 years and guides its future management. It celebrates and protects its underpinning community values. These include:

- Enabling a connection to and expression of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung heritage and culture.
- Providing a place of significance for the state of Victoria.
- Providing a biodiverse sanctuary for native flora and fauna.
- Providing a major destination for sporting and general recreation experiences.

The master plan will help City of Melbourne ensure the park's unique characteristics are contemporary, inclusive and welcoming – connecting history, nature, recreation and sport.

The first Royal Park Master Plan was developed from a design competition in 1984 (Appendix 2.2 Landscape architecture). The second master plan was endorsed by the Melbourne City Council in 1997. This is the City of Melbourne's third master plan, building upon and superseding the previous two.

Changes and trends since the 1997 master plan include:

- Commonwealth Games village development in 2006, near the park's western boundary.
- State Netball and Hockey Centre development.
- Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland (also known as Bellbird Waterhole) and storage development.
- The Millennium Drought and impacts of climate change.
- The proposed and subsequently cancelled East-West Link.
- Victorian Heritage registration for Royal Park in 2014.
- Registered Aboriginal Party confirmation for the whole of Royal Park in 2021
- Increasing municipal residential population and density, resulting in increased use and pressure on recreation facilities.
- Significant growth in visitation to Melbourne Zoo (1.4 million visitors in 2023–24 financial year – a 100 per cent increase compared with 2007).

Royal Park's size, location, existing infrastructure and available natural spaces provide significant community health and wellbeing benefits, including combatting extreme urban heat. With Greater Melbourne forecast to reach 9 million people by 2056, the master plan embeds city strategies and policy directions to prepare the parklands for the major challenges presented by significant population growth and climate change.

1.3.2 Planning guidance and frameworks

The draft Royal Park Master Plan has been developed within an existing policy and legislative framework. There is no scope to change these policies within the master plan itself (Appendix 3.1 Policy and strategy context).

Several pieces of legislation guide City of Melbourne planning.

The *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* establishes the statutory basis for the protection, use and management of Victoria's system of parks not owned by other statutory bodies. Royal Park is permanently reserved for public recreation. Council is the Committee of Management for Royal Park under the Act.

The Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Aboriginal peoples as the 'primary guardians, keepers and knowledge-holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage'. At a local level, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are the voice of Aboriginal peoples in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

City of Melbourne is obligated to uphold the rights of Traditional Owners under several pieces of legislation including the *Local Government Act 2020*, the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2006* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. Specifically, the *Local Government Act 2020* amended the definition of 'municipal community' to include Traditional Owners in a way that is consistent with definitions in the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2006*. It acknowledges that Traditional Owners have a unique role in their municipal communities and obliges local councils to engage with Traditional Owners on matters related to their responsibilities.

The *Heritage Act 2017* provides a modern framework for the protection and conservation of places and objects of cultural heritage significance. Royal Park is listed as a heritage place under this legislation. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* protects native vegetation, and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) protect threatened species.

The following elements are non-negotiable and cannot be changed through the master plan:

- The tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage of the park.
- The cultural heritage significance and individual features as described in Victorian Heritage registrations.

- The historical significance associated with sport in Victoria, especially women's sport.
- The possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history, including stands (excluding individual specimens) of remnant indigenous vegetation and the commitment to planting native and indigenous vegetation.
- The importance of exhibiting aesthetic characteristics, such as the notable use of native vegetation, views to the central city and development associated with the 1984 master plan.
- The principle of 'no net reduction in usable area of open space' in accordance with the City of Melbourne Parks Policy.
- The protection and enhancement of remnant vegetation areas of the park.
- The retention and protection of trees in accordance with the City of Melbourne Tree Policy.

1.3.3 Developing the master plan

The directions in this master plan have been informed by extensive research, data collection and analysis (Strategies, background studies and engagement).

The plan is also informed by community and stakeholder feedback (Appendix 3.2 Community engagement). Community consultation occurs in two distinct stages; the first stage sought feedback on a discussion paper, while the second stage focuses on the draft master plan itself (this document). The phases of development are described in Figure 4**Error! Reference source not found.**.

Figure 4 Master plan development timeline

Diagram of the master plan development timeline over five phases from October 2023 to mid–2025. The current phase is Phase 3.

Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3 (we are here)**	**Phase 4**	**Phase 5**
Oct 2023	**Nov 2023 to Dec 2023**	**Jan 2024 to Sep 2024**	**Nov 2024 to Jan 2025**	**Mid–2025**
Discussion paper	**Community engagement 1**	**Draft master plan (this document)**	**Community engagement 2**	**Final master plan**
The discussion paper was a baseline to reflect on where the park is today. It raised key themes based on professional recommendations to shape the future of the park.	Community engagement on the discussion paper took place from 6 November to 10 December 2023. Over 1900 comments were received. These comments were used to help inform the development of the draft master plan. From this, we	The draft master plan is supported by research and community feedback. It sets a vision for 20 years and guiding principles that will steer recommended actions for deliver.	Community engagement on the draft master plan will seek to confirm the directions in the draft plan. Engagement will seek comments from the community on the draft vision, principles and actions. It will ask for community input on the priorities to help guide the	The final master plan will be informed by the engagement findings on the draft. It will clearly communicate Council's position and plans for the care and management of Royal Park into the future.

	understood community appetite for changes to the park.		implementation of the plan.	

1.3.4 How to use the master plan

The master plan provides a framework for park planning, direction and decision-making over time.

It is made up of four elements:

1. Vision: providing a long-term aspirational statement for how Royal Park could grow, improve and evolve over time.
2. Principles: providing high-level planning and design directions for issues of major significance.
3. Themes: considering the park's unique history, landscape and location, community needs, environmental imperatives and opportunities.
4. Recommendations: outlining whole-of-park and area actions to help deliver the master plan vision, principles and themes and enable City of Melbourne to holistically plan and implement changes in stages, based on budgets and priorities. An area approach also enables location-specific histories and stories to be shared.

1.4 Key stakeholders

1.4.1 Traditional Owners

Royal Park is an important place for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and the master plan outlines how this ongoing connection to Country might be further acknowledged and celebrated.

The master plan provides a framework for Traditional Owners and City of Melbourne to walk together to heal and care for Country and improve the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

While the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) was the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the northern half of Royal Park from 2008, prior to July 2021 there was no RAP for the area south of Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue. The RAP boundary of the WWCHAC was extended to include the whole of Royal Park on 1 July 2021.

1.4.2 State and local government

As Committee of Management, Melbourne City Council is the land manager of Royal Park. City of Melbourne therefore has responsibility and authority to manage, improve, maintain and control Royal Park on behalf of the Victorian Government.

Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action

Melbourne City Council is legally accountable to the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA). Authority is delegated to DEECA by the responsible minister who acts on behalf of the Victorian Government as Crown landowner. Landowner consent is required for a variety of park-specific processes, such as new works and developments.

Department of Transport and Planning

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) manages key transport, planning, land and policy functions. City of Melbourne works with DTP on a range of projects in Royal Park, including but not limited to changes to roads in and around the area.

Adjoining councils

Merri-bek Council is the adjoining municipality to the north of the park. Royal Park is the largest park available to residents and workers based in the southern part of Merri-bek. The Merri-bek Open Space Strategy notes that its growing community benefits from significant open spaces in adjoining municipalities, including Royal Park.

Residents of the Yarra and Moonee Valley council areas also benefit from proximity to Royal Park.

1.4.3 Land managers

City of Melbourne regularly liaises with other park land managers about issues and opportunities, such as the Melbourne Zoo and State Netball and Hockey Centre shared park boundaries, and Yarra Trams and Vic Track public transport corridors.

1.4.4 Industry partners

Royal Park is celebrated across a variety of industries including education, landscape architecture, parks and leisure, heritage, ecology and horticulture. City of Melbourne has a range of research partnerships and working relationships across academia and industry.

The master plan sets the framework for continued collaboration to ensure the park is resilient into the future and informed by best practice planning and management.

1.4.5 Community groups

There are several community groups active within Royal Park and committed to protecting, preserving and enhancing its natural integrity.

Royal Park is also home to multiple community sporting clubs which support participation, community connection and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

1.4.6 Residents and visitors

Future investment opportunities generally align with priorities identified by the community.

The master plan is designed to inform visitors about Royal Park's features, permitted activities, and events, ensuring the enjoyment of nature, sport and recreation for all.

1.5 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung connection to Country

Following engagement with Elders from WWCHAC, GML Heritage developed a Conservation Management Plan (CMP).

The CMP involved in-depth historical research, detailed site investigation and analysis, and enabled greater understanding of the park's historical and physical context.

While this list is not exhaustive and does not describe all potentially significant Aboriginal sites in Royal Park, the following locations were identified in the CMP as significant to the Traditional Owners:

- the park as a whole
- railway cutting
- the billabong
- Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland
- Australian Native Garden

- Grassland Circle
- high ground (near Anzac Hall)
- Burke and Wills memorial cairn
- The Walmsley House.
- Anzac Hall and environs

1.5.1 Cultural values assessment

The CMP included a cultural values assessment (CVA). The CVA is a thorough review of the park's landscape, heritage and historical sites by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people – providing context, cultural significance and perspective, and reflecting Traditional Owner connections to place.

The following excerpts were crucial in shaping the master plan principles:

> 'The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are the custodians of Royal Park. They care for the cultural landscape. They do so to maintain the right ecology, habitats for totemic and creation ancestors, and the landscape managed by Woi-wurrung people.'
>
> 'Royal Park and the surrounding area is a significant living cultural heritage site. The land provides valuable habitat for many native animals and plants. These are central to Wurundjeri cosmology.'
>
> 'The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have a duty and a right to care for Country and hold that healthy Country is linked to healthy people.'

Landscape and heritage

Historical use of Royal Park by Aboriginal peoples can be understood through topographical and geological factors, such as proximity to fresh water sources, the presence of a scar tree and clays.

The railway cutting offers a clear view of the layers of the landscape and orange clays, which indicated that ochre was previously quarried from the area. There are opportunities to explore interpretation of the use of this clay.

The Traditional Owners celebrate the vast open spaces of Royal Park and the sense of it feeling like the bush in the city. However, while understory plants are prevalent across the park, including saltbush and kangaroo apple, and native grasses are present in many areas, there is no sign of murrnong, which was historically prolific along the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Growing more indigenous plants throughout the park and making timber available for cultural practices is recommended.

The Traditional Owners celebrate the stillness of the billabong and describe the area as 'peaceful' and 'inviting' (Aunty Alice Kolasa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder). There is considerable bird activity in and around the billabong and indigenous plants are present. Female Traditional Owners note the reeds and their association with traditional basket-making.

The decision to remove rock from another location in Victoria and use it at the billabong has been questioned by Traditional Owners, as it is not from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. It is recommended for future projects to use more locally sourced materials.

At the time when Aboriginal people camped and gathered in the area around what is now the Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland, it would have been resource-rich with kangaroos, wallabies, possums, fish, eels, frogs, ducks and other waterbirds. A Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder said ducks from the area would have been an important food source. Eels might have also been captured in traps set up on the banks (Aunty Alice Kolasa). Reeds and swamp herbs would have grown in the area, along with melaleuca, eucalyptus and tea trees.

The Traditional Owners celebrate the she-oak and wattles planted thickly at the wetland and note the traditional uses of these plants. She-oak was used for brooms or carpet to lie on. Wattle branches were favoured for making boomerangs because they have ‘good elbows’ (Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).

A Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder said the wetland was healthy Country that could be improved by planting more appropriate reeds and other traditional plants. The Traditional Owners believe many weeds can be removed and note the lack of lomandra reeds used for basket-making.

> ‘This area was developed with no input from us … [it needs] more traditional plants’ (Aunty Alice Kolasa).
>
> ‘Planting native plants and the correct local species will make Royal Park feel more welcoming. Plants like waterlilies and the right species of reeds should be reinstated’ (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).
>
> ‘The outside temperature is much cooler in the replanted native area on a hot day, showing how important the correct vegetation is for Australian weather’ (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).

The Traditional Owners consider the Australian Native Garden to be a pleasant place with some impressive old trees and a variety of plants. However, there are concerns about the concrete lining of the garden’s pond, preventing the ground from breathing and natural processes from occurring.

The Traditional Owners celebrate Grassland Circle as a large, peaceful and natural space evoking a sense of the pre-colonial landscape of the area. Expressing a connection to the location, they appreciate its sense of openness and the views to the south.

The importance of open spaces and sky to Aboriginal peoples cannot be overstated. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people believe their creator, Bunjil, lived in the sky, in a land referred to as tharangalk-bek or tharangalk, which could only be accessed by the murrups (spirits) of those who had passed away (Appendix 1.2 Tharangalk-bek).

The large unbroken expanses of sky at Grassland Circle provide an opportunity for the area to be used as a gathering place. Possibilities also exist for practising culture in this area, such as carrying out cultural burning to regenerate the grasses and nourish the Country. It could also be a place in Melbourne where this method of land management could be practised and taught.

With a clear view to the west, the area of high ground near Anzac Hall would have provided a natural vantage point for Aboriginal people where the camps of others would have been visible.

> ‘Our Country has beautiful views; this serves as a good vantage point… We need vantage points here and there, to look out to Melbourne. To see where you are’ (Aunty Alice Kolasa).

Historical sites

Aboriginal people, culture, heritage and history are completely excluded from Royal Park today. A lack of recognition is also notable at the park’s historical sites.

Aboriginal peoples are central to the story of Burke and Wills, but Aboriginal perspectives are missing from accounts of colonial exploration, including at the Burke and Wills memorial cairn.

> ‘There is nothing in Royal Park to recognise Aboriginal people, but there is a monument to Burke and Wills’ (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).
>
> ‘A memorial can be put up for white guys. But there’s nothing there to recognise Aboriginal people, or annual gatherings, or recognition of Aboriginal history’ (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).

There is an opportunity to acknowledge new perspectives – to tell the Aboriginal story of the Burke and Wills expedition and recognise the role of Aboriginal guides and the Yandruwandha people of South Australia. There is also an opportunity to contrast the skills, perceptions and knowledge of Aboriginal people and those of the expedition party, and to reflect on how this discrepancy affected the outcome of the expedition.

The Walmsley House symbolises the displacement of Aboriginal people – dispossessed of their Country, denied access to traditional resources and compelled to source food from the Crown lands bailiff.

Royal Park's connection with military history also raises issues among Traditional Owners regarding the recognition and treatment of Aboriginal servicemen and women.

> 'Once Aboriginal servicemen returned from World War I and World War II they could not return to their homes and missions, and some were escorted by police off their homes' (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder).

More respectful and inclusive recognition of the role Aboriginal people played in war is recommended.

1.5.2 Next steps in assessing Aboriginal cultural values and cultural heritage

Given the size and scale of Royal Park, some areas are yet to be assessed for their cultural values.

To inform the next phases of implementation, cultural values assessments will be undertaken in the areas of Royal Park North and Royal Park East.

1.6 Coexisting values and managing change

The scale of Royal Park and its significant landscape character means there should be ample opportunity for identified values to respectfully coexist.

However, it is acknowledged that in some circumstances consideration will need to be given to the complex or competing values represented in the park, such as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage and significance, biodiversity and sport. There are also considerations associated with population growth, climate change, state and local policies and changing use and activity.

For Royal Park to endure as a public parkland that is relevant to current and future communities of users, it must evolve as a living landscape. To retain it as a static place would be out of step with the principles underpinning the design concept for Royal Park, as articulated in the 1984 and 1997 master plans:

> 'The Park should be an established structure, but it cannot become a design which is completed and fixed in detail – to do so is to create a museum not a landscape.'

Nonetheless, change at Royal Park must be managed closely and undertaken thoughtfully to ensure any adverse impacts on its cultural heritage and other values are avoided or minimised.

2 Vision, principles and themes

2.1 Vision

The 20-year vision establishes a shared aspiration for Royal Park, representing the collective goals of the City of Melbourne, stakeholders and the community. It will guide future decision-making.

The vision is to:

Protect Royal Park as a natural, expansive place where all people feel safe and welcome to experience its unique history and distinctive Australian landscape.

Preserve Royal Park as a place for nature, sport, recreation and storytelling.

Invite Melburnians to embrace its rich and living Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung history and cultural values.

2.2 Principles

Eight principles support the delivery of the Royal Park vision. These principles have shaped the detailed recommendations and actions (Chapter 3).

- Walk together with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to reconnect with Royal Park as an Aboriginal Place.
- Understand and protect the cultural heritage values of the park.
- Protect and grow the park for future generations.
- Ensure the park is a welcoming, safe and inclusive place for everyone.
- Plan for increased use and ongoing enjoyment though the provision of sport and recreation spaces and activities across the park.
- Plan for the diverse needs of park users.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity values in the park.
- Use landscape characters present in the park to guide future planning and design.

All recommendations are evaluated on their ability to effectively deliver against the master plan's vision and principles.

2.3 Landscape characters

The landscape of Royal Park comprises several distinct characters. These characters were an integral part of the 1984 master plan and identified in the Victorian Heritage Register for its design philosophy and focus on natural landscape aesthetic.

This master plan keeps the intent of the original images but allows them to evolve to guide the park’s landscape form over the next 20 years.

The six landscape character images reflect the unique experience of Royal Park’s Australian landscape within an urban context. The images seek to forefront new aspirations of Caring for Country, the significant role of water and the park as a haven for wildlife. Glimpses of human activity are embedded in the iconic landscape, in recognition of the park’s changing urban environment and changing pressures from population growth and climate change.

Landscape characters contribute to the experiences people have and value when visiting Royal Park. Figure 5 illustrates the range of overlapping characters across the park.

Figure 5 Landscape characters

Six updated or new landscape character sketches of (clockwise from top left): expansive grassland; tree form and silhouette; fire and smoke; wind and sky; landform and horizon; water.

Expansive grassland



Soft grass at your fingertips
Following a trail left by thousands of footsteps before

Tree form and silhouette



The soft thud of a football soaring towards the posts
Nestled between the iconic silhouette of eucalypts

Fire and smoke



The wind brings with it a haze of smoke
the smell of ash
The promise of new growth

Water



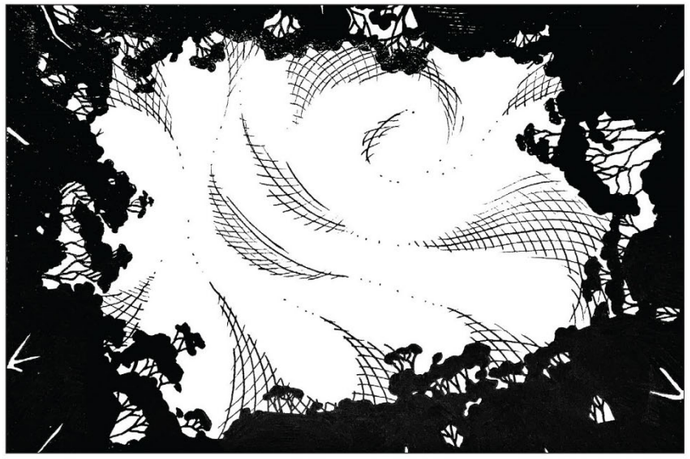
The reflection of the sky upon the water's surface
A sudden splash and the ripple of the water
Who is there?

Landform and horizon



The earth and the sky pressed upon your view
Glimpses of the distant city in the horizon
The sound of the birds soaring overhead

Wind and sky



The clouds slowly floating away
A gentle breeze and the rustling of leaves
As the skies darken and the stars appear

2.4 Themes

Six themes guide management and decision-making over the next 20 years. These are:

1. Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination
2. Caring for nature
3. Recreation and community wellbeing
4. Visitor experience
5. Movement to and through the park
6. Parking, roads and transport.

These themes are drawn from extensive consultation and technical assessments. In the below section, each theme and its related aspirations are described. The actions in Chapter 3 are organized by theme and all work together to achieve the vision.

2.4.1 Theme 1: Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination

There is significant potential for the acknowledgement, expression and celebration of Aboriginal history, knowledge and cultural values within Royal Park.

Restoring the presence of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, history and culture would help to make the park a more welcoming place for Aboriginal people.

This theme underpins the new master plan. All recommendations and actions must consider the Aboriginal cultural values of the place, and City of Melbourne must walk together with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to deliver on actions to achieve the shared long-term aspirations for the park.

Community engagement revealed support for acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal culture, knowledge, history and connection to Country, recognising that this could enrich and enhance everyone's wellbeing (Appendix 3.2 Community engagement).

Aspirations

Walk together with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to manage the park for the long-term by:

- Acknowledging Country and First Peoples.
- Investing in ongoing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung relationships through improved partnership and joint management approaches leading to shared decision-making.
- Embedding Traditional Owner knowledge and practice into policy, planning and management.
- Establishing an Aboriginal meeting place.
- Conducting research and developing interpretation materials about the Aboriginal history and heritage of Royal Park.
- Incorporating Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language into signage and place-naming to provide information about local plants, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language names and traditional uses.
- Continuing existing land management partnerships at Royal Park Creek for shared decision-making and exploring the extension of this approach to other locations.

Enable cultural landscape planning by:

- Applying Traditional Owner cultural objectives, knowledge and practices in the management of the park.

Enable cultural practices, including:

- The collection of fallen timber for cultural practice and to allow tree scarring.
- The gathering of reeds for cultural practice.
- Cultural burning.
- Planting native vegetation.

The list of aspirations is not exhaustive. Other aspirations may emerge through future consultation, engagement and collaboration with the Registered Aboriginal Party.

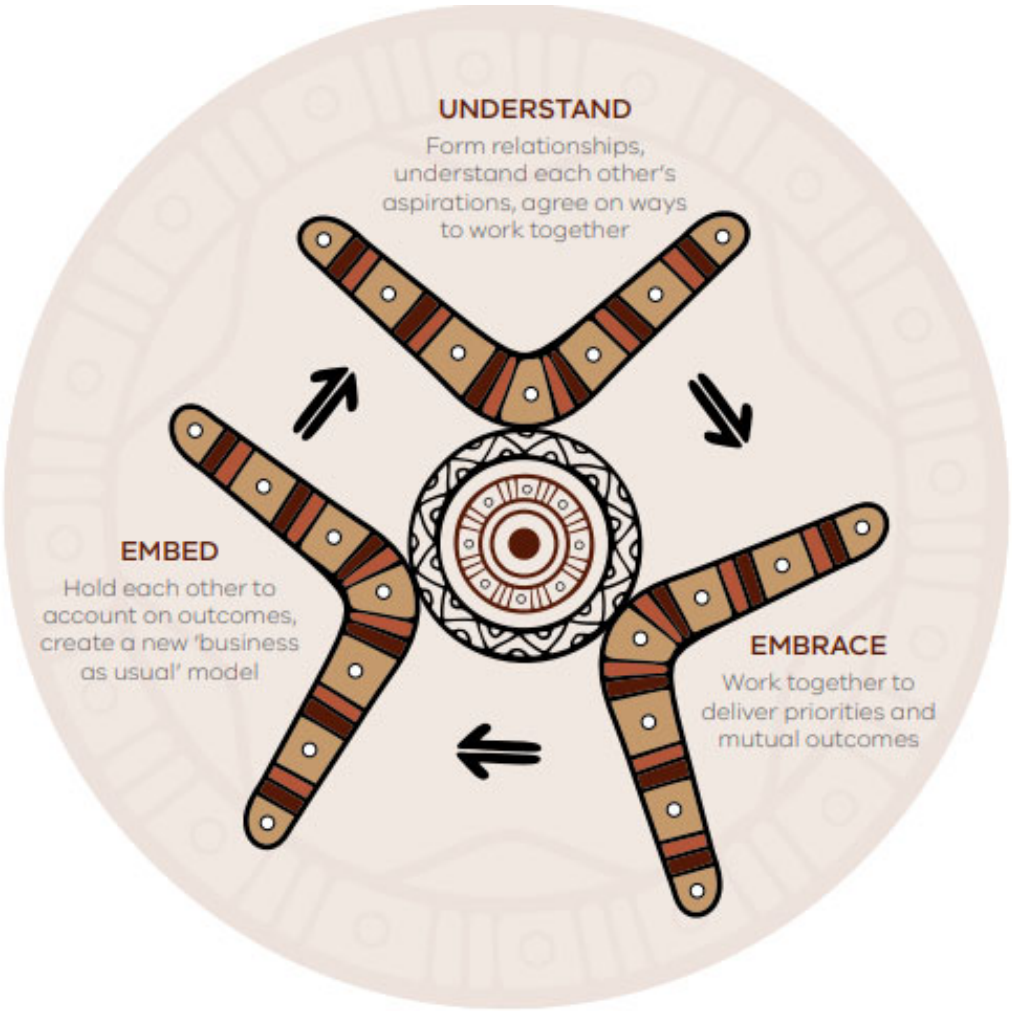
The aspirations fall within a spectrum of self-determination, as outlined in the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021–26: Pathway to Stronger Partnerships. City of Melbourne and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people will walk together to deliver on these aspirations for the life of the master plan, guided by an 'understand, embed and embrace' pathway to self-determination as outlined in the strategy (Figure 6).

1. **Understand**: setting the intent through the master plan to understand the park's Aboriginal history and establish agreed ways of working – enabling City of Melbourne and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to walk together to deliver the plan and park aspirations.
2. **Embrace**: embracing the use of traditional land management techniques within Royal Park, and the creation of a co-designed cultural meeting place.
3. **Embed**: working together with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to implement Traditional Owner aspirations for the governance and management of the park.

The pathway to self-determination is a cycle. Once all three elements within the master plan are complete, we would return to stage one (understand), to continue the journey together.

Figure 6 Pathway to self-determination

Diagram of the pathway to self-determination as a cycle (source: Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021–26: Pathway to Stronger Partnerships)



2.4.2 Theme 2: Caring for nature

Supporting biodiversity within urban environments is critical. Biodiversity supports healthy, stable and resilient ecosystems, provides essential ecosystem services and contributes to positive human health and wellbeing outcomes.

Due to its size and native vegetation character, Royal Park has higher biodiversity value than other parks within the municipality. It is the most ecologically diverse park, containing remnant indigenous vegetation, and many species living within it cannot be found elsewhere in the municipality.

Significant plant diversity has been restored through previous master plan actions, creating a park that balances amenity planting with open woodland, grassland and pockets of wetland. The unique landscape provides opportunities for future biodiversity projects that can benefit the entire community. Grassland is an increasingly rare landscape in Victorian urban areas, so protecting and enhancing 10 hectares of grassland is important for cultural and biodiversity reasons.

The priority action for this master plan is creating a habitat biodiversity corridor (biolink) across the park, from the Grassland Circle in the south, across to the remnant vegetation in the central and west areas and through the railway cuttings (Figure 7). This connects isolated pockets of remnant vegetation across the park. Ecological connectivity enables the safe movement of animals across the park to access food, water and shelter, for reproductive opportunities and after breeding to establish new territories.

To support the proposed biolink, vegetation in other areas of the park must be managed holistically. A coordinated plan that addresses the design, planting and management of all vegetation is required, including in and around sporting facilities. This will ensure the park's pre-European landscapes are celebrated and biodiversity values are maximised, while preserving heritage plantings, mitigating future climate and biosecurity risks, and improving resilience.

During consultation, participants said they valued the natural landscapes of Royal Park, including plants, animals, and the large trees providing shade. These landscape elements were noted as important more than 1700 times across multiple themes.

When considering the next 20 years, participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire for the park to be a beautiful, green, protected, natural space that provides an oasis and urban forest for people, plants and animals.

Aspirations

- Plan for a biolink corridor across the park to guide ecological management and research.
- Explore the active restoration of locally extinct species within the biolink corridor.
- Increase the quality of biodiversity areas in the park.
- Protect the biolink corridor from incompatible park uses.

Figure 7 Proposed biolink across Royal Park

Map of Royal Park illustrating the proposed priority biodiversity areas and ecology initiatives locations.



2.4.3 Theme 3: Recreation and community wellbeing

Royal Park is unique in its ability to foster play, exploration, spontaneity and moments of quiet reflection. It is a vibrant place offering a variety of tree-lined trails, circuits and open spaces with views of nature, sport and the impressive central city skyline.

Sport and recreation play critical roles in community wellbeing – supporting physical and mental health and creating opportunities for personal connection. The park has a rich history as a hub for sport and recreation, providing spaces and places for informal leisure activities and organised sport. As a location for sporting competition, it provides a distinctive experience like that of sport played in regional Victoria, surrounded by bushland.

Play in parks is important for the healthy development of children and young people. Children's play is formally supported with two play spaces in Royal Park – at Nature Play and Manningham Reserve.

Nature Play is a regional play space, drawing families from across Melbourne as well as serving patients and families visiting the nearby Royal Children's Hospital. It was designed to reflect the seven seasons into which the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung divide the year and to support children to develop a relationship with nature and care for Country. Manningham Reserve is a neighbourhood level playground primarily serving young children and toddlers within walking distance.

Feedback from consultation emphasised the diverse range of activities park visitors engage in, including walking, running, formal sports, cycling, and nature therapy (Appendix 3.2 Community engagement). As most visitors use the park for walking, creating a diverse range of walking experiences is important.

In line with projected population growth and increased participation, particularly from women and girls, pavilions and sporting grounds must be equipped to support and accommodate greater demand.

Feedback from community and sporting clubs has noted the need for:

- Spaces and places that enable participation in organised sport and other unstructured sport and recreation activities.
- Greater access for groups across the day to improve and extend hours of play.
- Lighting improvements to increase use during the darker winter months.
- Safety, facility and field-of-play improvements to foster inclusion and encourage greater participation from women and girls.
- Reduced barriers to access and use for certain groups – particularly older visitors, women, people with disability, from diverse cultural backgrounds and identifying as LGBTIQA+.

Actions relating to this theme seek to create a welcoming and safe park for all ages, abilities, backgrounds and identities.

Aspirations

- Support inclusive and diverse play experiences.
- Respond to changing sport and recreation needs, including by increasing capacity of existing facilities.
- Develop programs and activities to support a diverse range of participants to be active in the park.

2.4.4 Theme 4: Visitor experience

Royal Park offers a diverse visitor experience, with sporting fields, public and active transport corridors, unique activities such as Urban Camp, and destinations including the Melbourne Zoo, State Netball and Hockey Centre and Royal Children's Hospital, all within easy reach.

The park is rich in history and culture. It has a unique, relaxing landscape. Many places invite quiet reflection, learning, and exploration. Visitors benefit from a range of amenities available within the park, including:

- seats
- drinking fountains
- bins
- public toilets
- lighting
- shelters
- picnic areas
- barbecue facilities.

While specific usage and visitation numbers are difficult to accurately determine for all facilities and spaces, community consultation has shown the park is valued by a range of visitors, including residents, workers and tourists who enjoy the park in diverse ways.

Consultation also highlighted safety concerns preventing some people from feeling comfortable visiting certain areas and accessing the park at certain times, particularly in the early morning and evening when the park is dark. A community safety audit identified a number of opportunities to improve the experience for all current and future park visitors, with particular focus on women and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These opportunities related generally to pedestrian safety on shared paths, road crossings, navigation and lighting. Many ideas generated from the audit are incorporated into the actions that follow.

It is important to take a balanced approach to ensure a positive experience can be created for all park visitors.

Aspirations

- Ensure park entries are inviting, distinctive and communicate a connection to place.
- Ensure amenities meet the needs of a diverse range of visitors.
- Explore ways to ensure the visitor experience is enhanced by education and interpretation facilities, events and activities that complement the park's sensitive landscape.
- Ensure pavilions and park structures are fit for purpose, safe, welcoming and inclusive.
- Ensure all venues and facilities are designed to meet relevant standards and demonstrate design excellence.
- Continually improve data collection to understand visitation and usage.

Lighting

Lighting enhances the park experience by attracting and guiding visitors. It draws people in, leads them through, and can be seen from afar. Well-lit areas also signal that a park is well-maintained and cared for, while helping visitors feel safe by improving visibility.

To enhance the Royal Park visitor experience, lighting improvements must be considered, while acknowledging the complex relationship between light and dark.

Most of Royal Park is free from artificial lighting and, due to its significant size, there are areas of darkness where ambient light from streets, sports fields and paths does not reach. In an urban environment this is rare, and it benefits species that are sensitive to artificial light.

The environmental impacts of artificial lighting must be taken into careful consideration. A darkness strategy may ensure light pollution is minimised for environmental, ecological and experiential benefits without compromising safety.

The design of public lighting has the potential to enhance the experience of a space. Different styles and levels of lighting are appropriate for different environments, and can provide cues to park users about the types of spaces they're entering. Lighting technology is becoming more sophisticated and solutions are now available to customise and adjust levels and colours of lights depending on the priorities.

The four levels of lighting described below and shown in Figure 8 are proposed to:

- maintain the park's unique character
- increase community usage
- improve safety
- enhance accessibility
- mitigate environmental impacts.

1. Strategic movement corridors

The major shared paths, the Capital City Trail and Upfield Trail should be illuminated to a standard that supports their roles as active transport corridors while minimising environmental impact. Other corridors, including the shared path along the tram line, and east-west corridors along Poplar Road, Elliott Avenue and Macarthur Road, provide key connections between public transport and park facilities. Lighting along these corridors will be tailored to the minimum for specific locational need rather than applied uniformly throughout the park.

2. Destination lighting

Sufficient lighting must be provided during hours of use to enable safe navigation to, from and around destinations where evening use occurs, including Urban Camp, the State Netball and Hockey Centre, Melbourne Zoo and sporting pavilions.

3. Sport lighting

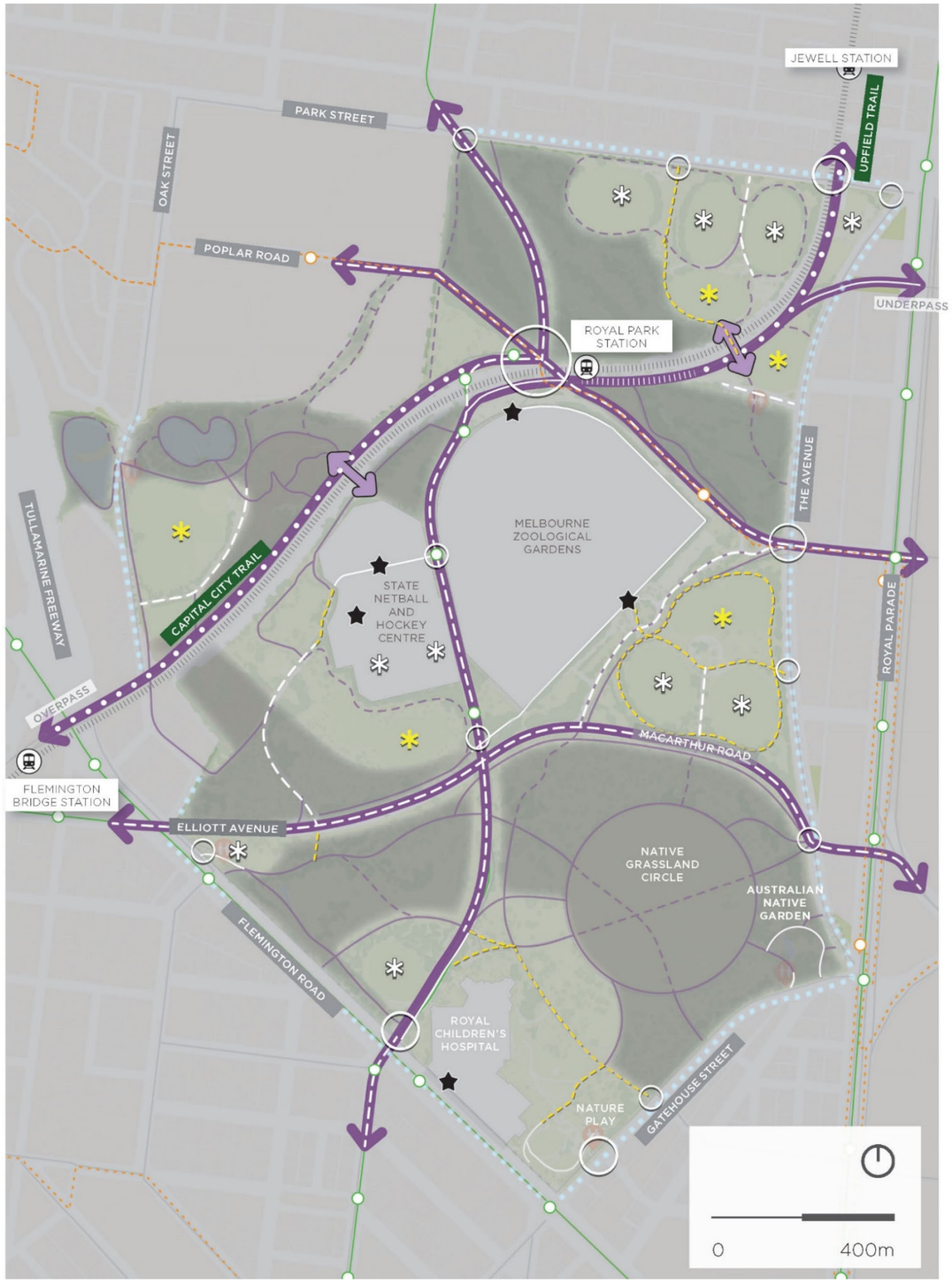
Outdoor lighting for sporting fields and ovals enables increased participation after dark and during the winter months. Lighting must comply with all Australian standards and include control features such as automation and sensors to ensure lights are off outside official hours of operation.

4. Key connections

Lighting must provide a level of comfort and safety for thoroughfare between park entries, car parks, public transport and destinations.

Figure 8 Proposed lighting

Map of Royal Park illustrating the proposed structure of lit paths and dark areas across the park



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Key

- Lit entry for wayfinding
- Existing path sensor lighting
- Potential path sensor lighting
- Optimise existing road and tram line lighting to support pedestrians and biodiversity
- Existing path lighting
- Proposed path lighting
- Existing sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Proposed sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Strategic movement corridors
- Existing unlit path
- Proposed unlit path
- Indicative areas of darkness to protect wildlife and biodiversity
- Existing road lighting outside of Royal Park
- Upfield train line
- Tram route and tram stop
- Bus route and bus stop
- Bike route
- Destination entry

2.4.5 Theme 5: Movement to and through the park

The expansive size and scale of Royal Park make it an ideal location for discovery and exploration.

Community engagement confirmed that Royal Park South is the most visited area in the park – featuring Nature Play, the Australian Native Garden and Grassland Circle. The least visited area is Royal Park West – home to the Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland and Manningham Play Space (Appendix 3.2 Community engagement).

These visitation differences indicate that locations with few cross-roads or public transport options are harder to reach and therefore used less. Sub-optimal pedestrian infrastructure and busy traffic conditions, particularly around the Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue corridor, also pose challenges to pedestrian accessibility and safety.

The benefits of active transport and exercise are well-known and there is an urgent need to prioritise access improvements, particularly in relation to walkability. Recommendations are informed by the detailed examination of existing active transport routes.

Millions of people visit the park each year, and this is expected to increase over the next two decades due to projected population growth. Improving access to and through the park is paramount to ensure it is a welcoming, safe and enjoyable space for all park visitors.

Aspirations

- Support safe and equitable access for all transport modes.
- Prioritise active and sustainable modes of transport.
- Improve the experience of walking and wheeling across the park.
- Improve pedestrian access across significant movement barriers.
- Ensure intuitive wayfinding throughout the park.
- Expand the network of paths to improve circulation.

Path types

A range of interconnected paths allow visitors to experience and move freely through the park. Building upon the existing path network, a clearly articulated path hierarchy is proposed to prioritise the walking and wheeling experience over driving.

Four path types are designed to cater to different user and environmental needs (Figure 10). Paths will be connected to a formal or informal park entry. A formal entry is carefully designed to accommodate all abilities and equipped with comprehensive amenities. An informal entry consists of a narrow opening in the park's fence or vegetation, providing pedestrian access along a narrow path.

1. Strategic movement corridors

Strategic movement corridors form the east-west and north-south structure of the path network. These corridors include key entries and commuter routes through the park including the Capital City Trail, Upfield bike path and tram corridors.

These paths will be a minimum width of three metres. However, where there are congestion issues, consideration must be given to separate pedestrians from other modes of active transport such as bicycles and scooters.

Proposed strategic movement corridors and lighting will be consistent with the guidance outlined in the lighting section of Theme 4, above.

2. Connector paths

Connector paths guide park visitors from entrances to destinations and are based on the existing 2.5-metre-wide asphalt paths. These paths branch off from strategic movement corridors and should be used in high-traffic areas. There are missing connector paths in the current network.

Figure 9 Proposed circuit paths

Map of Royal Park illustrating the proposed circuits including distances in each area.



3. Circuits

Circuits are paths designed specifically for uninterrupted exercise. Each area will have a minimum of one circuit, connecting key destinations and community infrastructure within the area (Figure 9).

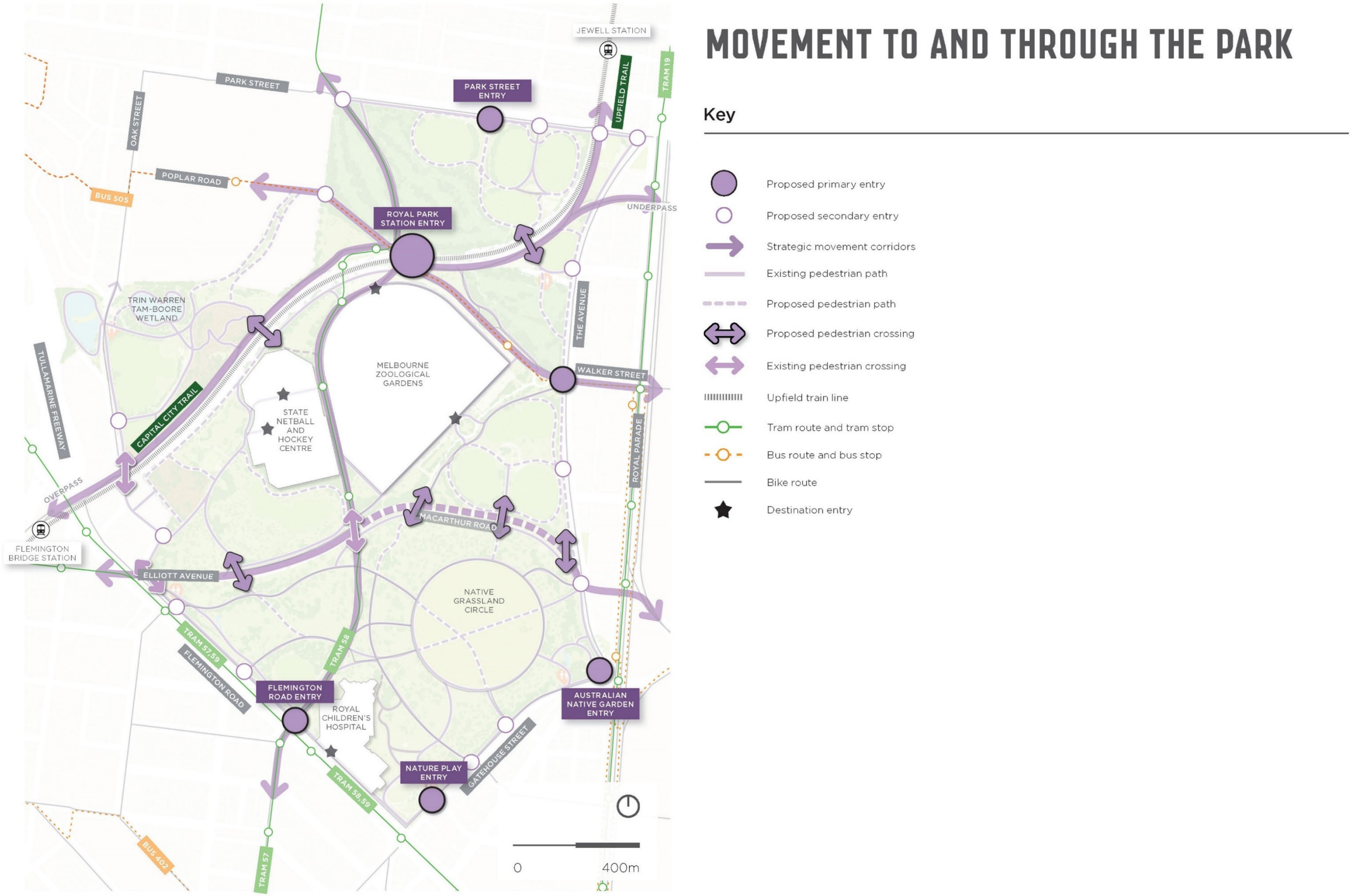
Circuits will have a generous 2.5-metre width. While they can be made from a variety of materials, the majority will be granitic sand. They will generally be on a gentle grade to improve accessibility, and have areas of shade, passing through woodland, grassland and some areas of open lawn.

4. Exploration trails

Exploration trails are informal paths, providing opportunities for park visitors to connect to different landscape experiences. These ‘light touch’ paths can be made with a wide variety of materials, while considering the ecological values and tree protection zones of the surrounding landscape.

Figure 10 Proposed path types

Map of Royal Park illustrating the proposed paths, connections and crossings within, into and out of the park.



2.4.6 Theme 6: Parking, roads and transport

Multiple transport options influence the physical form of Royal Park, with land allocated towards paths, roads, car parking, and public transport corridors.

People travel to and through Royal Park via a range of transport modes, including:

- active transport (walking, running or wheeling)
- driving
- public transport (tram, train or bus).

To ensure Royal Park is accessible to the entire community a balance between the different transport options must be found.

Community consultation identified mixed feedback in relation to car parking. While most locals visit the park by walking, cycling or public transport, eight hectares is used for car parking. A review of parking and parking management could enable a more holistic and effective approach to be taken towards current and future space and movement needs.

A centrally managed car park system is one option to assist City of Melbourne – in partnership with stakeholders – to ensure the park has sufficient available car parking. A centrally managed parking system could be complemented with improved parking along the park's edge to help balance the car parking footprint within the park while protecting the natural environment. Parking bays also need to be available at pavilions for disabled access, maintenance work, and equipment deliveries.

Any proposals relating to changes in parking footprints will need to consider how parking controls can increase carpark turnover so more people use each bay across the day, while improving the parking experience. Parking controls should also encourage more active and public transport use to support the long-term visitation goals of key destinations such as the Melbourne Zoo and State Netball and Hockey Centre.

Roads occupy a significant area within the park, impacting pedestrian circulation, visitor experience and environmental function. Parking and road-related recommendations seek to prevent increased numbers of cars using park roads as thoroughfares (excluding the Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue corridor).

Feedback gathered through consultation showed strong community sentiment against an east-west tunnel, or any future transport projects and designs that may impact the current form and function of the park.

Train and tram infrastructure play an important role, but renewal works and upgrades can also have a major impact on the park. Known future works include the level-crossing removal at Park Street. In addition, during the life of this master plan, transport authorities are likely to propose changes or upgrades to transport infrastructure that are not currently known.

The impact of any works should be contained to their existing corridors and must provide benefits to the park's form or function. Non-park-related infrastructure must not overwhelm or encumber the park or its ability to provide for public recreation and enjoyment. The Parks Policy that requires no net reduction in open space and the principle to 'protect and grow the park for future generations' are particularly relevant to transport infrastructure proposals.

Aspirations

- Ensure transport will provide a net benefit to the park.
- Support safe and equitable access for all transport modes.
- Increase use of public transport to and from the park.
- Minimise the impact of transport infrastructure within the park.
- Ensure car parking provision and management will support the principles of the master plan.

- Ensure transport infrastructure construction works will not take space from ovals, occupy recreation facilities or detrimentally impact everyday park use.

3 Recommendations

Proposed actions are organised in categories: whole-of-park, area-specific, governance and management.

- **Whole-of-park** actions are not place-specific; they apply throughout the park. Actions are organized into the themes described in Chapter 2.
- **Area-specific** actions relate to each area's unique features and activities. Actions are illustrated on a map. Actions are organized into the themes described in Chapter 2.
- **Governance** actions relate to land management arrangements and partnerships.
- **Management** actions guide how City of Melbourne will manage and maintain the park and program activities.

Proposed priority actions are identified with **bold** type. Definitions of each of the action types can be found at Appendix 4: Glossary.

3.1 Whole-of-park

The below actions apply across the park and are not limited to a specific location.

Proposed whole-of-park actions

Theme	**Action**	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	1	Celebrate Royal Park as Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Prioritise identification at main entries, pavilions and significant landscape elements in partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
	2	Understand Aboriginal cultural values in line with the CMP in partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
	3	Support cultural practices within the park in partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
	4	Celebrate Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language by exploring ways it can be used within the park, in partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
Caring for nature	5	Plan for an ecological biolink across the park to guide future restoration and research.
	6	Continue ongoing assessment and landscape planning for enhancement of all trees to ensure a resilient landscape.
	7	Explore additional opportunities to use alternative water sources to help keep the park cool, green and growing.
	8	Explore opportunities to bring water to the surface to establish and support healthy ecosystems.

Theme	Action	
	9	Support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in developing and implementing a cultural burn program.
	10	Celebrate key destinations and pedestrian paths with feature planting.
	11	Develop ecological and design guidelines for future developments, including buildings delivered by City of Melbourne or others.
	12	Develop a comprehensive vegetation management plan for the park.
	13	Review dog off leash areas to protect the proposed biolink areas.
	14	Explore extending 'fingers' of park landscape characters into surrounding streets.
Recreation and community wellbeing	15	Upgrade sporting amenities to support greater diversity and participation.
Visitor experience	16	Develop a tool for sharing information and promoting events and activities in the park.
	17	Upgrade amenities as required to support community use while respecting cultural heritage significance.
	18	Develop a lighting scheme to apply to the four proposed lighting typologies – strategic movement corridors, destination lighting, sport lighting and key connections.
	19	Design and construct all park pedestrian entrances to be welcoming, accessible and safe fitting the context and role of each entrance (formal or informal).
	20	Investigate the location and distribution of additional facilities to support the visitor experience, such as seats, drinking fountains and bins.
	21	Design and construct shade structures over barbecue and picnic areas where trees are not projected to provide insufficient shade within 10 years of planting.
	22	Continue to ensure pavilions are publicly accessible and can be booked for community use and events.
	23	Continue to manage events in accordance with City of Melbourne guidelines for holding events in open space.

Theme	Action	
	24	Continue to measure and report on park visitation.
Movement through and within the park	25	Implement the proposed path hierarchy – strategic movement corridors, connector paths, circuits and exploration trails.
	26	Explore the lighting of strategic movement corridors in the north-south route and the east-west route to encourage active transport along preferred paths.
	27	Implement walking, wheeling and running circuits that connect key features and destinations within the park.
	28	Develop and implement a wayfinding strategy.
Parking, roads and transport	29	Investigate converting existing car parking areas to a centrally managed car parking system with an efficient and organised footprint. If appropriate, develop a transition plan for changes.*
	30	Explore a 30-kilometre-per-hour speed zone for all streets through and around the park.
	31	Reduce the extent of roads and car parking in the park where possible to recover land for park purposes.
	32	Support key destinations to develop plans that encourage and increase visitor public transport use.
	33	Explore the introduction of a loop bus to service the whole park.
	34	Support transport authorities to achieve design excellence with any new plant and equipment associated with transport infrastructure in or adjacent to the park.
	35	Reduce road widths where possible and incorporate them into the park. *
	36	Apply the Parks Policy of no net reduction in area of parkland for any transport projects in Royal Park.
	37	When the final design for the rail crossing removal at Park Street is available, seek provision of a number of recreational facilities including multi-use games areas in this location.

Priority actions are **bold**

* Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

3.2 Area specific

Organising the park into smaller areas enables detailed management and planning. It also ensures the unique features of each area are appropriately acknowledged, celebrated and maintained. The areas are naturally distinct from one another and are generally separated by transport corridors.

The areas are:

1. Royal Park North
2. Royal Park East
3. Royal Park Central
4. Royal Park South
5. Royal Park West.

Consideration is given to each area's unique landscape, cultural and development history, users and the key strategic moves required to support evolving community needs into the future.

These considerations ensure any adverse impacts on Aboriginal culture and heritage, biodiversity, use and visitation from isolated or cumulative change are avoided or minimised.

3.2.1 Royal Park North

Draft vision

A vibrant sporting area under a canopy of healthy and diverse shade trees, providing local and regional sport and recreation experiences.

About Royal Park North

Royal Park North is bordered by Park Street to the north, the Upfield train line to the east and south, and the Royal Melbourne Hospital Royal Park Campus to the west.

The layout of the area is significant for its longstanding and continuous sporting use. Sport has a rich tradition in this area, with cricket and Australian Rules Football each boasting over 100 years of play. Unlike other areas of Royal Park, sporting grounds in Royal Park North were not lost during military occupation. McAlister Oval is the oldest sporting ground in the park.

The three elevated scoreboards in the area underscore Royal Park's ongoing historical significance as a hub for active recreation and sports promotion in Victoria, and the open access the community has to these facilities.

The area is serviced by two pavilions that support four ovals used for sports, including:

- Australian Rules Football
- cricket
- soccer
- lacrosse
- live action role play
- golf (seven out of the nine golf course holes).

Western Pavilion was upgraded in 2021 and supports a range of community activities. It services Western Oval and three sporting clubs. Ryder Pavilion, currently under construction and due for completion in 2025, serves three ovals and two sporting clubs.

Three of the four sporting ovals in the area have sport lighting, operating until 10pm on most nights and there are some small heritage-listed scoring sheds.

Significant sugar gum trees adjoin the train corridor to the east and are included in the heritage listing for Royal Park. Recent understory plantings along Park Street and the train corridor create a grassy woodland environment around the ovals.

The area is aesthetically significant and expresses many important visual qualities of the 1984 master plan, including:

- tree form and silhouette around the ovals and some fairways.
- expansive grassland around oval edges, particularly towards Park Street.
- landform and sky, enhanced by the higher ground in some areas.

Deposits of red ochre and clay, identified at the railway cutting, are significant to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Proposed Royal Park North actions (Figure 11)

Theme	**Action**	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	1	Undertake Aboriginal cultural values assessments with Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Elders prior to any major works.
	2	**Design a significant entrance statement at Park Street.**
	3	Extend landscape character of understorey planting into Park Street.
Caring for nature	4	Continue the understorey planting along Park Street and the train corridor.
	5	Explore stormwater capture off Park Street.
Recreation and community wellbeing	**6**	**Design a neighbourhood scale nature-based play space between Western Oval and Ransford Oval.**
	7	Reconfigure the area adjacent to the cricket nets at Western oval to accommodate a multi-use games area including cricket nets, basketball and netball rings and other activities.
	8	Design and construct lighting to service Ryder Oval.
	9	Explore design of golf course subject to the location of a pedestrian bridge crossing.
	10	Explore the use of Western Oval as a dog off-leash area.

Theme	Action	
	11	Develop an accessible entry into the park, aligning with the pedestrian crossing over Park Street.
Visitor experience	12	Design and construct a public toilet accessible from the golf course and proposed new play space.
	13	Design and construct improved amenities such as seats, line markings and signage along the Park Street shared path.
Movement to and through the park	**14**	**Investigate a network of exploration paths and circuits that allow walking, running and birdwatching, and access to pavilions and facilities linking with the golf course, where safe.**
	15	Investigate conversion of existing Ryder Pavilion driveway to a shared path with occasional vehicle access (limited to maintenance vehicles, disability access and deliveries).
	16	**Investigate a pedestrian connection across the train corridor from Royal Park North to Royal Park East, providing a connection for maintenance vehicles, golfers, walkers, runners and cyclists.***
Parking, roads and transport	17	Investigate downgrading the traffic function of Park Street and improve parking, walking and wheeling movements in collaboration with Merri-bek City Council.
	18	Remove car parking under trees around Ransford Oval to facilitate the new play space.
	19	**Support transport authorities to design any works within transport corridors to be consistent with the recommendations for this area. This includes the proposed Level Crossing Removal Project at Park Street in Parkville.**

Priority actions are **bold**

* Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

Figure 11 Royal Park North map



ROYAL PARK NORTH

Key

Entrances

- Proposed primary entry
- Proposed secondary entry
- Destination entry
- Community pavilion

Opportunities

- Proposed recreation
- Existing sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Proposed sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Existing path sensor lighting
- Potential path sensor lighting
- Optimise existing road and tram line lighting to support pedestrians and biodiversity
- Existing path lighting
- Proposed path lighting
- Proposed biolink
- Proposed wildlife crossing
- Potential connections to areas of ecological value

Movement and transport

- Strategic movement corridor (shared path)
- Existing pedestrian path
- Proposed pedestrian path
- Existing pedestrian crossing
- Proposed pedestrian crossing
- Upfield train line
- Level Crossing Removal Project
- Tram route and tram stop
- Bus route and bus stop
- Bike route

3.2.2 Royal Park East

Draft vision

An urban sporting area, connected to public transport and providing recreation experiences for all ages and abilities, with a historical focus on women's sport.

About Royal Park East

Royal Park East is bordered by Park Street to the north, the Upfield train line, part of the Upfield bike path and the Capital City Trail to the west, The Avenue to the east and Macarthur Road to the south.

The area is significant for formal, active and passive recreation. The Royal Park Golf Course clubhouse and two golf holes are in this area, separated from the remaining seven holes by the Upfield train line. Royal Park Tennis Club is also located in this area – a significant regional tennis facility with three pavilions and 14 tennis courts.

The golf course, tennis courts, Poplar Oval and Women's Dressing Pavilion are among the earliest organised post-colonisation sporting features of Royal Park. The Women's Dressing Pavilion is a significant heritage feature as one of Victoria's earliest sporting facilities specifically designed for use by women.

There are three ovals south of Walker Street, with two named after former City of Melbourne Councillors – William J Brens and H.G. Smith. These ovals are supported by the recently updated Brens Pavilion.

The Brick Lodge, located at the corner of The Avenue and Park Street, was built in 1889 as a caretaker's lodge. It continues to be used for this purpose today.

Perimeter plantings along The Avenue and mature eucalypt specimens including river red gum, sugar gum and mahogany gum make an important contribution to the historic identity and defining Australian landscape character of Royal Park.

A defining feature in the area's south is the avenue of Moreton Bay figs lining the former route of the horse-drawn tram to Melbourne Zoo.

Proposed Royal Park East actions (Figure 12)

Theme	**Action**	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	1	Undertake Aboriginal cultural values assessments with Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Elders prior to any major works.
Caring for nature	2	Create small gaps in understorey planting along The Avenue frontage to encourage informal pedestrian entry into the park.
	3	Explore landscape connections to Princes Park by extending green 'fingers' along the Capital City Trail underpass, and Ievers, Walker and Leonard streets.
	4	Explore increasing indigenous understorey within the golf course.
Recreation and community wellbeing	**5**	**Upgrade the heritage listed Women's Dressing Pavilion to current sporting code standards.**

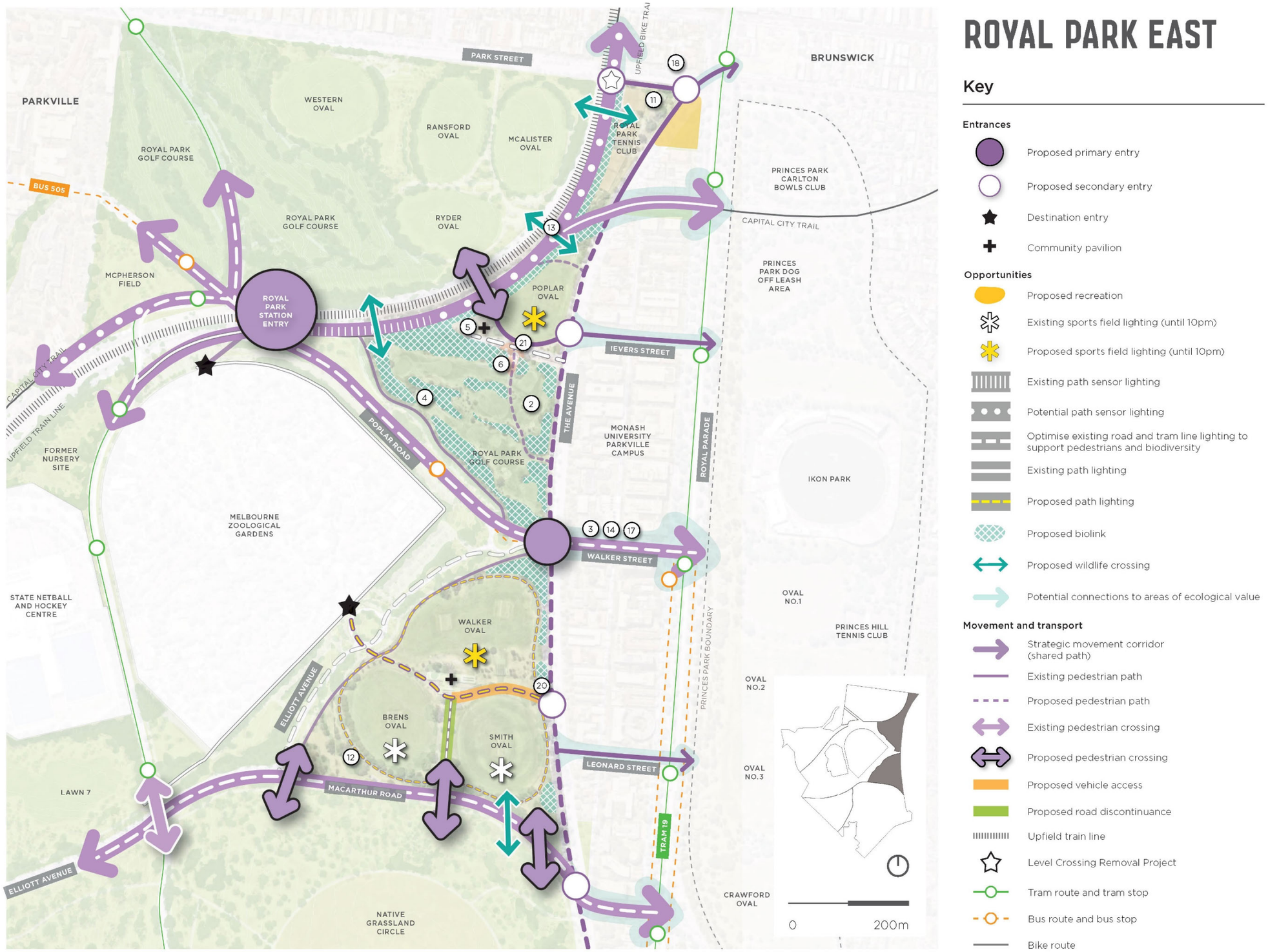
Theme	Action	
	6	Investigate the optimum location for a replacement golf clubhouse to better service course users and park visitors.
	7	Explore additional community access and complementary activities at Royal Park Golf Course.
	8	**Investigate detailed design of the golf course to ensure it meets modern golf needs.** This could include a mini golf course and practice nets. The design should also integrate with a proposed pedestrian crossing over the train line and consider its unique biodiversity profile.
	9	Design and construct sports lighting at Poplar Oval and Walker Oval for winter sport and casual use when it is not booked. Lights are to be limited to 10pm.
	10	Investigate the installation of a multi-use games area along the proposed reclaimed road space on The Avenue.
Visitor experience	11	Explore compatible activation and commercial opportunities for the caretaker dwelling on the corner of Park Street and The Avenue.
	12	Explore interpretation and path connection along the significant Moreton Bay fig corridor that follows the former horse-drawn tram route.
Movement to and through the park	13	Design and construct improvements to the intersection of the Capital City Trail and Upfield trail.
	14	Explore signage and pedestrian path connections from Royal Park East to Route 19 tram stops located on Royal Parade.
	15	**Design and construct a network of paths that enable active transport, and access to nature, pavilions and facilities.**
	16	**In partnership with the Department of Transport and Planning explore pedestrian and cycling connectivity improvements across Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue.**

Theme	Action	
	17	Design path connections and wayfinding signage to support pedestrian movement between Royal Park and Princes Park.
Parking, roads and transport	18	Investigate closing two sections of The Avenue to traffic (at Park Street and Macarthur Road) and converting the reclaimed area to parkland with a new entrance to the park at the intersection of Park Street and Royal Parade.*
	19	Investigate discontinuing the driveway access to Brens Pavilion from Macarthur Road and creating a new driveway access from The Avenue.*

Priority actions are **bold**

* Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

Figure 12 Royal Park East map



3.2.3 Royal Park Central

Draft vision

A regional tourist destination, supported by public transport and picnic amenities to encourage people to stay and explore Royal Park.

About Royal Park Central

Royal Park Central is accessible from The Avenue at Walker Street to the east, Elliott Avenue and Brens Drive to the south, and Poplar Road to the west.

The proposed strategic movement corridors connect throughout this area, including the Capital City Trail and the shared path along the route 58 tram line to the Royal Children's Hospital. The area contains four tram stops on route 58 – Elliott Avenue, State Netball and Hockey Centre, Melbourne Zoo and Royal Park Station interchange.

The area is unique as it contains large spaces that are not managed by City of Melbourne, including the Melbourne Zoo and State Netball and Hockey Centre. Visitation to Melbourne Zoo accounts for over 1 million of the visits to Royal Park. While the zoo is the drawcard there is an opportunity to better represent the park as another destination to be explored before or after a visit to the zoo.

The zoo and State Netball and Hockey Centre have shared boundaries with Royal Park including pedestrian paths, car parking and landscaping. While these spaces reflect the Australian landscape aesthetic with a dominant presence of she-oak and eucalypts, minimal understorey planting currently exists due to largely asphalt and granitic sand ground surface cover – a reflection of its use for parking.

A former nursery area located between the tram and train corridors contains densely planted perimeter beds lined with bluestone. It is filled with Australian native grasses, shrubs, mid-storey and small-to-medium canopy trees, and it transitions at its inner edges to open woodland. This area also contains picnic areas and is used for informal recreation activities.

In the south-western part of the area, the dominant landscape character is open woodland and urban parkland with mown exotic grass. It is known as 'Lawn 7' and used for hot air balloon landings and informal sporting use, including soccer and ultimate frisbee.

Anzac Hall and its surrounds on Brens Drive are historically significant. Anzac Hall is one of the last vestiges of the extensive military occupation of Royal Park during World War II. It is now part of Urban Camp, which has been located in the area for more than 40 years and hosts about 10,000 students every year. It continues to play a unique and important role in activating and introducing the park to new users.

The higher ground behind Anzac Hall, now overlooking the rail corridor and out to the north and west, are significant to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as a historical vantage point and lookout for arriving Aboriginal groups.

The area also contains one of the park's important remnant vegetation areas, the Brens Drive remnant. It is approximately two hectares in size, with grassy woodland vegetation, a natural scattered canopy of red gum, and an estimated 10 other woody species and 13 species of grasses. Stands of vegetation like this are critical to support biodiversity in an urban environment. The current condition of this area is testament to ongoing and effective management by volunteers, including weed control and indigenous species plantings.

City of Melbourne and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung are collaborating to design and implement a place of knowledge exchange within this area.

Proposed Royal Park Central actions (Figure 13)

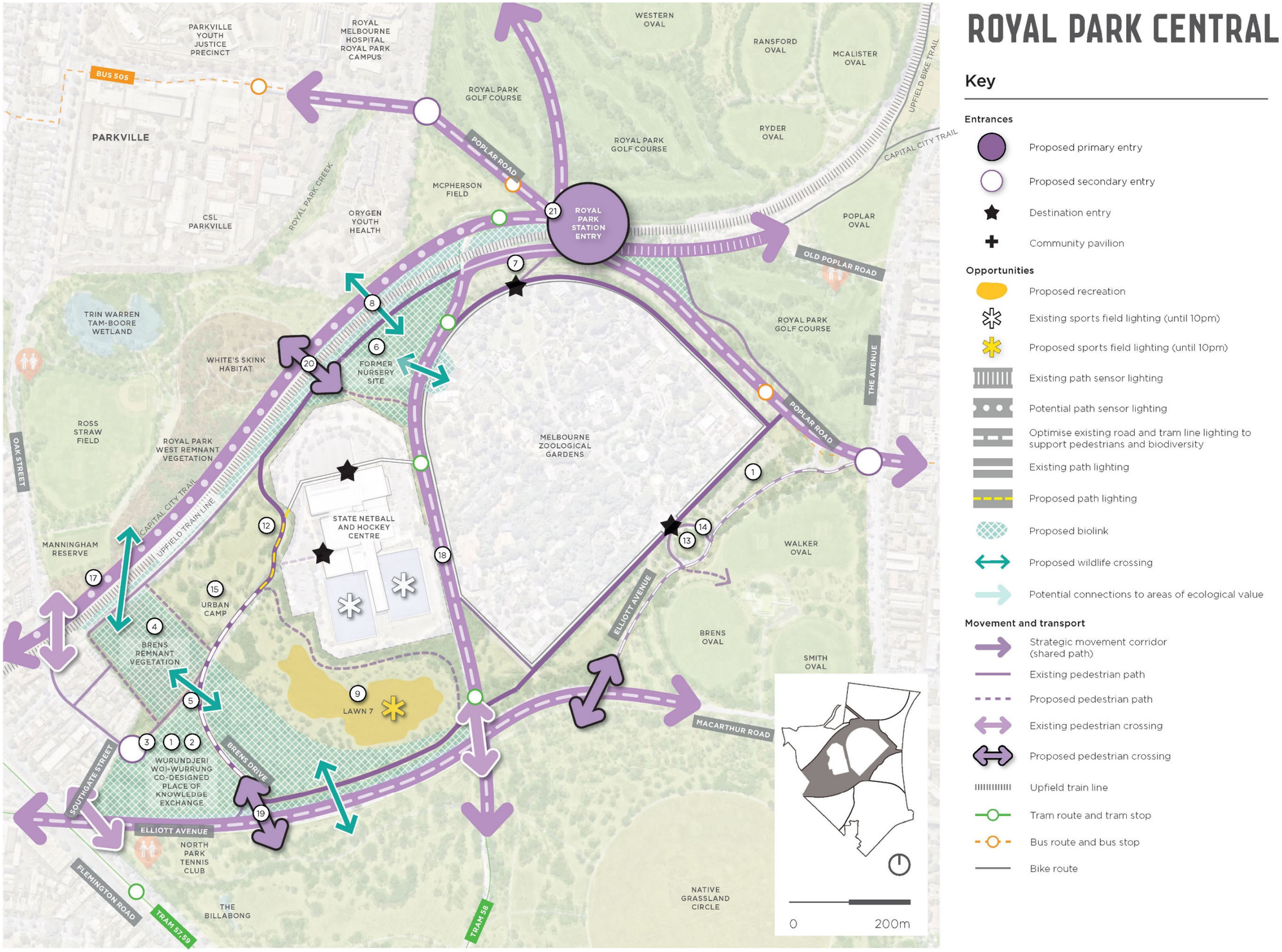
Theme	Action	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	**1**	**Design and construct the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung co-designed place of knowledge exchange.**
	2	Activate the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung co-designed place of knowledge exchange.
	3	Explore the use of Southgate Lodge for projects with Traditional Owners and other education providers.
Caring for nature	4	Retain and enhance remnant bushland with enhanced interpretive signage and vegetation protection.
	5	Explore bringing the stormwater drain to the surface to establish an ephemeral waterway to support manna gum planting.
	6	Investigate bringing the State Netball and Hockey Centre outfall drain to the surface to create swales and waterbodies within the former nursery site for increased habitat creation
	7	Investigate additional tree planting around the zoo's northern entrance.
	8	**Investigate opportunities to improve wildlife crossings across roads, rail and tram corridors.**
Recreation and community wellbeing	**9**	**Investigate upgrading the existing informal sports fields and developing associated support facilities at Lawn 7 to include two rectangular fields, one oval and sports lighting**. Sharing of support infrastructure with the State Netball and Hockey Centre is to be explored.
	10	**Explore opportunities for informal play. This may include a multi-use games area and a public toilet.**
	11	Explore areas for the establishment of informal recreation activities such as disc golf and orienteering where impacts can be managed.
Visitor experience	12	Investigate improved picnic facilities.
	13	Investigate developing an improved public plaza outside the zoo's southern entrance, in partnership with Melbourne Zoo.

Theme	Action	
	14	Explore a new picnic area and public toilet opposite the zoo.
	15	Support the redevelopment needs of Urban Camp to meet modern accommodation and education requirements.
	16	Explore path lighting from Urban Camp to existing lit paths within the State Netball and Hockey Centre grounds to provide a safe evening route for visitors to access public transport.
	17	Design and construct additional infrastructure along the Capital City Trail, including environmentally sensitive lighting, seating, drinking fountains and bike repair stations.
Movement to and through the park	18	Design lighting along the tram line to support year-round walking, running, cycling and public transport access.
	19	Explore improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity across Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue in partnership with the Department of Transport and Planning.*
	20	Investigate a pedestrian connection across the train corridor from Royal Park Central to Royal Park West, providing a connection for maintenance vehicles, golfers, walkers, runners and cyclists.*
Parking, roads and transport	**21**	**Continue to work with the Department of Transport and Planning to improve the Poplar Road vehicle, train, tram and shared path intersection in the short term.**
	22	Design and construct parking improvements, ensuring improved walkability, safety, tree canopy coverage and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD).
	23	Implement replacement of the *Royal Park (Parking) Regulation 1985*, which caps parking fees around the zoo at $2, to deliver a contemporary parking fee arrangement.
	24	Explore a centrally managed car park system where parking provides a benefit to all park users.

Theme	Action	
	25	Continue work to remove car park 'overflow areas' in conjunction with car park changes designed to improve efficiency. Areas where car parks are removed will be used for park purposes.

Priority actions are **bold** * Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

Figure 13 Royal Park Central map



3.2.4 Royal Park South

Draft vision

A natural area to support flora, fauna and passive recreation, framed by a distinctive tree line and city skyline.

About Royal Park South

Royal Park South is bounded by Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue to the west and north, Gatehouse Street to the east, and Flemington Road to the south. It also borders the Royal Children's Hospital. The area is split by the tram line, and while there are east-west pedestrian crossings, there are no tram stops in this part of the park.

The area is home to key destinations including Nature Play, Grassland Circle and the Australian Native Garden.

Nature Play was created after the area occupied by the former Royal Children's Hospital on the corner of Flemington Road and Gatehouse Street was returned to parkland. It is an award-winning accessible regional play space that integrates play equipment with native vegetation and landscape to encourage creative, nature-based play. It features a grassy hilltop that offers views to the city in one direction and the Grassland Circle in the other, encouraging exploration further into the park.

Grassland Circle is a wide, open space with distinctive visual qualities and prominent sky, horizon and landform. It is historically significant and used for informal recreational. A one mile (1.6 kilometre) circular pedestrian and cycle path around its perimeter links to the wider path network. The imperial measurement (mile) relates to the fact that this area was used by American troops during World War II.

The grassland features a mix of native and exotic grasses, surrounded by a woodland buffer which screens surrounding development. The groves that frame the Grassland Circle, create important habitat and cultural connections.

Grassland Circle is aesthetically significant due to its strong expression of an 'original Australian landscape character'. This was central to the 1984 design concept for Royal Park of 'land and space' and a core component of the distinctively Australian landscape design ethos in the 1984 master plan.

The Australian Native Garden gives a sense of enclosure and landscape character which, despite consisting of all Australian native plants, is distinct from other areas. The gardens were designed by landscape architect, Grace Fraser, in 1977 and consist of:

- lawns
- garden beds
- densely planted and layered garden beds with rich species diversity
- a pond
- a serpentine loop path
- specimen trees
- boulders and natural stone edging.

The Walmsley House is a significant heritage feature of this area. Historically significant as one of the earliest buildings in Royal Park, it has functioned continuously as accommodation or storage since 1862 and is currently used by community groups.

The Lodge is a caretaker dwelling located in the area on the corner of Gatehouse Street and The Avenue, to the immediate north of Walmsley House.

Proposed Royal Park South actions (Figure 14)

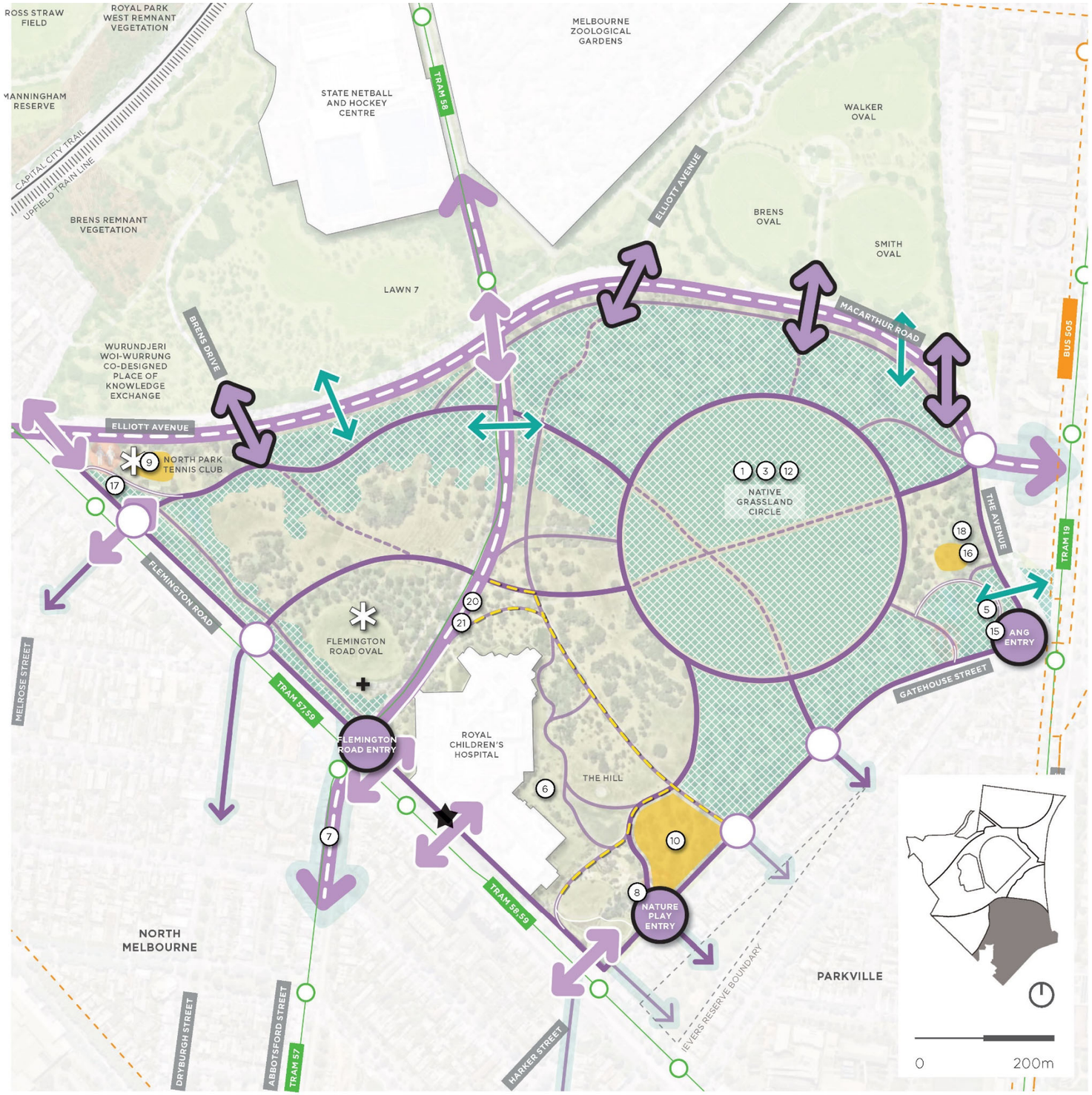
Theme	Action	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	**1**	**Celebrate the cultural significance of the Grassland Circle with activities and education.**
	2	Explore education and events in this area that can highlight Aboriginal stories and connection to Country.
Caring for nature	**3**	**Enhance the ecological performance of the Grassland Circle.**
	4	Develop interpretation that highlights the importance of grasslands for biodiversity and protects the expansive central city views.
	5	Investigate enhancing the Australian Native Garden pond with wetland features to improve water quality.
	6	Explore redesigning the landscape interface to the Royal Children's Hospital to enhance health and wellbeing.*
	7	Design and construct improved landscape connections into North Melbourne by extending landscape 'fingers' south along Abbotsford, Dryburgh, Errol and Melrose streets.
Recreation and community wellbeing	8	Improve the play value of Nature Play for older children and teenagers by increasing prompts for play and accessible exploration further into Royal Park to the north of the play space.
	9	Explore additional tennis court for North Park Tennis Club.
	10	Explore additional play opportunities along the Gatehouse Street frontage as an expansion of Nature Play.
	11	Investigate the installation of a multi-use games area at Flemington Road oval.
Visitor experience	12	Explore opportunities for the community to engage with the Grassland Circle and learn about the importance of grassland habitats.
	13	Upgrade entrances to be more accessible and welcoming, including at Flemington Road adjacent the tram corridor, Nature Play, Australian Native Garden and the Elliot and Flemington corner.

Theme	Action	
	14	Design and construct shelters over the two existing barbecue areas in Nature Play.
	15	Explore conversion of The Lodge and the Walmsley House for public-facing use to support park purposes, such as a cafe and visitor centre that align with the Royal Park vision.
	16	Investigate locating a picnic and barbecue area off The Avenue near the Australian Native Garden.*
	17	Upgrade the existing toilet on Flemington Road.
	18	Investigate demand for an additional public toilet at the proposed new shelter and barbecue area off The Avenue near the Australian Native Garden.
Movement to and through the park	19	Create a sense of arrival at key area road frontages, especially at crossing points from North Melbourne.
	20	Investigate widening the shared path along the tram line from Flemington Road to Macarthur Road and the installation of lighting to Macarthur Road.
	21	Design a strategic movement corridor along the tram line to support safe public transport access and encourage walking and cycling, particularly during winter and after dark.
Parking, roads and transport	22	Investigate changes to kerbside parking to ensure it prioritises park users.
	23	Investigate improvements to pedestrian safety across tram crossings.
	24	Investigate improved pedestrian crossings across Flemington Road.

Priority actions are **bold**

* Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

Figure 14 Royal Park South map



ROYAL PARK SOUTH

Key

Entrances

- Proposed primary entry
- Proposed secondary entry
- Destination entry
- Community pavilion

Opportunities

- Proposed recreation
- Existing sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Proposed sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Existing path sensor lighting
- Potential path sensor lighting
- Optimise existing road and tram line lighting to support pedestrians and biodiversity
- Existing path lighting
- Proposed path lighting
- Proposed biolink
- Proposed wildlife crossing
- Potential connections to areas of ecological value

Movement and transport

- Strategic movement corridor (shared path)
- Existing pedestrian path
- Proposed pedestrian path
- Existing pedestrian crossing
- Proposed pedestrian crossing
- Upfield train line
- Tram route and tram stop
- Bus route and bus stop
- Bike route

3.2.5 Royal Park West

Draft vision

An area of ecological significance complemented by sports and recreation.

About Royal Park West

Royal Park West is bounded by Oak Street and Manningham Street to the west, the Upfield train line to the south, Poplar Road to the north and east, and adjoining the former CSL site on Poplar Road. It includes the Royal Park Creek.

This area is separated from much of the park by the train corridor. The Capital City Trail runs along the eastern edge of the area, connecting to the central, north and east areas.

Royal Park West is used for active and informal recreation, cycling, social activities and picnics. It also has potential Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural value, as it includes elevated, sloping land, north and west-facing aspects and proximity to water and natural drainage.

The former rubble landfill has been partially rehabilitated to support and enhance the habitat for the regionally significant White's Skink – one of the last surviving populations in central Melbourne.

Popular with birdwatchers, Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland features a variety of water plants and provides food and shelter for local fauna. The wetland was designed to treat water runoff through natural biological processes. It also provides water for irrigation systems in the park, including the golf course and sports ovals.

The area contains 2.5 hectares of remnant indigenous vegetation on an elevated, sloping site, known as Royal Park West Remnant.

The remnant area runs parallel to and above part of the Capital City Trail and contains:

- grassy woodland
- ecological vegetation class 175
- woody indigenous species, including red gum, black wattle and golden wattle
- indigenous plantings including yellow box, hedge wattle, she-oak and sticky hop bush.

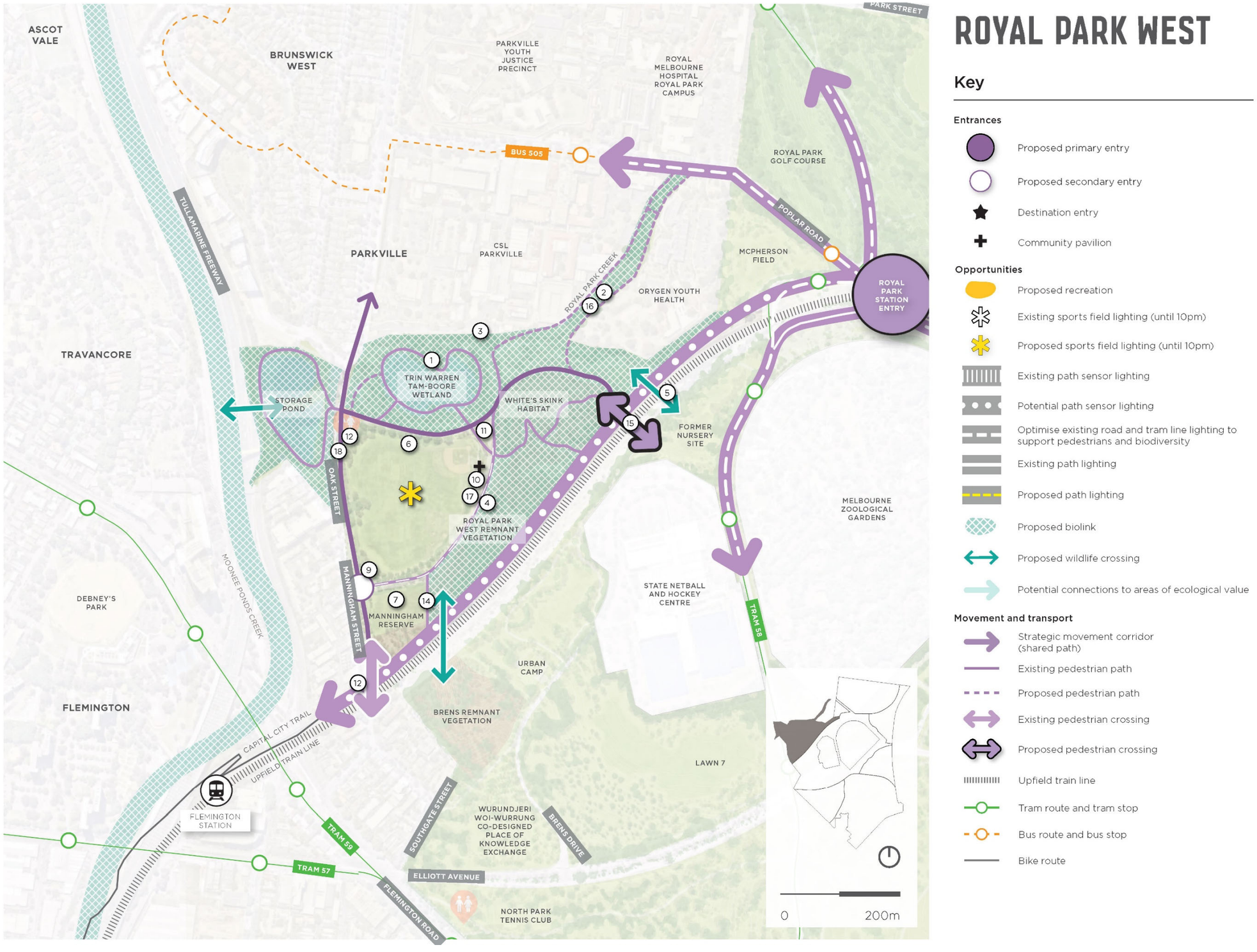
Proposed Royal Park West actions (Figure 15)

Theme	**Action**	
Celebrating Aboriginal culture and furthering self-determination	1	Retain and enhance the wetland, with increased reed plantings, consistent with cultural advice from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
	2	Support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap land management unit in the continued restoration of Royal Park Creek.
Caring for nature	**3**	**Advocate for a minimum 15-20 metre setback to Royal Park Creek from adjoining development sites, with walking paths and plantings consistent with the Royal Park Planting Palette.**

Theme	Action	
	4	**Continue to enhance Royal Park West remnant bushland with enhanced interpretive signage and vegetation protection.**
	5	Explore opportunities to connect wetland characteristics between the west and central areas. *
	6	Retain the character of exotic trees around sports fields to create a protective zone for the wetland. *
Recreation and community wellbeing	7	Investigate irrigating the Manningham Street rectangular field to enable regular sporting use. Sport lighting may be considered subject to detailed lighting studies.
	8	Explore the installation of a multi-use games area to support casual sport activities.
	9	**Explore improving the Manningham local play space with shelter and a picnic area.**
	10	Investigate potential relocation of the Ross Straw Pavilion to improve functionality, safety and access, viewing areas and car parking.
Visitor experience	11	Update existing picnic area with accessible seating, tables, barbecues and planting.
	12	Upgrade existing toilet at Oak Street.
Movement to and through the park	13	Enhance Capital City Trail with wildlife-friendly lighting, regular seating, wayfinding signage and, at minimum, one bike repair station.
	14	Explore exit paths off the Capital City Trail to assist with safe navigation.
	15	Investigate a pedestrian connection from Royal Park West to Royal Park Central. *
	16	Explore opportunities to connect the Orygen boardwalk to the existing path network.
Parking, roads and transport	17	Reconfigure the driveway parking area in line with detailed review of Ross Straw Pavilion.
	18	Create a single entry and exit to the Oak Street parking area to increase capacity.

Priority actions are **bold** * Carried forward from Royal Park Master Plan 1997

Figure 15 Royal Park West map



ROYAL PARK WEST

Key

Entrances

- Proposed primary entry
- Proposed secondary entry
- Destination entry
- Community pavilion

Opportunities

- Proposed recreation
- Existing sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Proposed sports field lighting (until 10pm)
- Existing path sensor lighting
- Potential path sensor lighting
- Optimise existing road and tram line lighting to support pedestrians and biodiversity
- Existing path lighting
- Proposed path lighting
- Proposed biolink
- Proposed wildlife crossing
- Potential connections to areas of ecological value

Movement and transport

- Strategic movement corridor (shared path)
- Existing pedestrian path
- Proposed pedestrian path
- Existing pedestrian crossing
- Proposed pedestrian crossing
- Upfield train line
- Tram route and tram stop
- Bus route and bus stop
- Bike route

3.3 Governance

A governance framework will support the delivery of the master plan vision, principles and actions.

Working alongside Traditional Owners to build shared knowledge, respect and understanding is fundamental to this framework and aligns with the City of Melbourne vision for reconciliation. City of Melbourne will continue to explore future governance and management models for the park, in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, and other First Nations representatives.

Public land managers are also responsible for different parts of Royal Park and contribute to its ongoing function and success. Their role and purpose are set by legislation. Land managers have the opportunity to connect and collaborate to deliver the master plan vision and actions.

Benefits of collaboration may include:

- cultural connectivity
- enhanced visitor experiences through connected information and journey infrastructure
- integrated approaches to park resource management
- coordinated event management.

Proposed governance actions

1 Establish a framework for prioritisation and decision-making and to inform the development of an implementation plan for the master plan.

2 Invest in the ongoing relationship with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Traditional Owners, with regular meetings to progress projects and initiatives identified in this master plan.

3 Commit to future management and collaboration, including initiation of regular land manager executive meetings for improved communication and coordination of activities.

4 Continue regular engagement with external entities whose activities impact and influence the park, such as Metro Trains Melbourne and the Department of Transport.

5 Develop terms of reference for the Royal Park stakeholders' network to clarify its role as a forum for networking, information sharing and discussing collaboration opportunities.

6 Continue and improve (as required) City of Melbourne management practices in partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to assess any current or proposed uses that are inconsistent with the Crown land reservations.

7 Explore whether land parcels within the park currently not used for park purposes, such as surplus land within public transport corridors, can be reserved and improved for park purposes.

3.4 Management

City of Melbourne's responsibilities as park managers include managing the land, managing the uses and activities, maintaining the park and planning for the future. The tools to help us manage the park include regulation and enforcement such as for dog leashing and parking, education and the park ranger service and partnerships with other land managers and stakeholders.

Park activities managed by City of Melbourne are guided by existing policies and processes.

The following management actions include activities that are currently undertaken and will continue, and suggested new or modified initiatives. They are grouped into categories that reflect City of Melbourne's structure and practices, rather than in themes.

Proposed priority actions are identified with **bold** type.

Proposed management actions

Walking with Traditional Owners

1 Develop opportunities for self-determination with Traditional Owners that align with their aspirations for Royal Park.

Heritage assets and planning

2 Update the Royal Park Statement of Significance in the Victorian Heritage Register to reflect the additional information uncovered in the Conservation Management Plan.

3 Develop a rolling program to prepare or update Conservation Management Plans for all individually listed buildings on the Victorian Heritage Register over time.

4 Continue to ensure all projects are developed in line with Conservation Management Plan policies.

5 Continue to ensure heritage asset renewal and planning meet current regulations and guidelines.

Science and Conservation

Science and conservation activities will be locally and globally relevant to the protection of Royal Park and species conservation.

6 Secure funding and partnerships to expand science and conservation programs.

7 Develop a five-year research program for Royal Park that aligns with the master plan priorities.

8 Communicate the science and outcomes of research projects within the park with the wider community.

9 Continue to support citizen science and other data-capturing tools to monitor science and conservation projects within Royal Park.

Landscape and horticultural management

Royal Park demonstrates excellence in landscape and horticultural management.

10 Continue to ensure horticulture and tree management is consistent with the master plan.

11 Continue to develop and harness local, national and international industry partnerships.

Visitor experience

Royal Park will deliver outstanding visitor experiences and build enduring visitor relationships.

12 Centre gender and intersectionality in future discussions of safety and inclusion in Royal Park.

13 Finalise the Royal Park Community Safety Audit Tool that was developed and trialled in 2023. Implement a program of community safety audits relating to specific projects or broadly across the park on a schedule.

14 Continue to support visitation throughout the day, on weekends and at night for selected activities.

15 Continue to review and permit events consistent with relevant event planning guidelines.

16 Develop digital capability to communicate with Royal Park visitors.

17 Develop a comprehensive marketing, communications and visitor program which enhances and promotes all venues and facilities within Royal Park.

18 Support sustainable events and experiences that enhance and promote cultural enrichment, creativity, sport, health and wellbeing while protecting park assets and the natural environment.

Education and knowledge

Education capability to support the delivery of year-round programs.

19 Develop and grow a suite of education, community and knowledge programs to reach local, national and global audiences.

20 Develop unique experiences in cultural education, digital learning and sustainable outdoor education.

21 Continue to work with park advocates to nurture a new generation of Royal Park supporters.

Sport, recreation and wellbeing

Royal Park is part of Melbourne's comprehensive network of recreation, leisure and sporting facilities catering to active and passive users as well as elite sportspeople.

22 Continue to support sporting clubs to maximise participation.

23 Continue to develop world-class, sustainable sporting and leisure facilities.

24 Continue to provide opportunities within the park for the community to improve their physical and mental health.

25 Develop a communication plan around seasonal sporting facility uses.

26 Develop opportunities for the wider community to access park facilities.

Assets and facilities

Royal Park's assets are efficiently and effectively managed.

27 Continue to ensure facilities are safe, efficient and environmentally sustainable.

28 Continue to ensure facilities have the appropriate lease or license agreement consistent with their use and activity.

29 Continue to deliver asset management strategies.

30 Develop the planning frameworks to support the efficient delivery of capital works projects outlined in the master plan.

4 Implementation and next steps

4.1 Implementation

The draft Royal Park Master Plan outlines the actions needed to deliver the overarching vision.

While the master plan has a 20-year lifespan, the vision and principles extend beyond this to ensure longer term aspirations can be achieved.

A review should occur after 10 years to consider any updates to technology, planning policy, urban development, and population context and to update implementation schedules associated with completed works. The review may also consider how shifts in tourism, community and visitor expectations may influence the master plan. Practical updates and amendments will ensure the plan remains relevant and contemporary.

Implementing a plan of this scale and complexity cannot occur all at once. The implementation plan to be developed after the master plan is approved will set out a sustainable program of delivery over time. Projects will be prioritised according to need and City of Melbourne's capacity to deliver.

For the capital works actions ultimately identified for priority delivery, individual project proposals will be developed for consideration during Council's annual planning and budget process. A series of management documents will also be developed to address the whole-of-park actions where operational plans and documents require updating and review.

4.2 Next steps

Community consultation on the draft master plan will occur from late 2024 to early 2025. This will provide the community with the opportunity to influence master plan actions and priorities.

A consultation findings report will be completed in early 2025.

The final master plan will be provided for endorsement at a Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) meeting by June 2025.

City of Melbourne will then continue to work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, other key stakeholders and the local community to implement the Royal Park Master Plan.

Appendix 1 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country

Appendix 1.1 Caring for Country

Caring for Country is a cultural obligation that Aboriginal people undertake with a deep sense of responsibility and stewardship. Caring for Country includes caring for the wellbeing of Country's interconnected systems now and in the future.

The State of New South Wales developed the useful and applicable Connecting with Country Framework, which has helped to inform the below information.

The term 'Caring for Country' is associated with a complex web of Aboriginal shared authority and management, and therefore we need to ensure we do not misappropriate it. Reciprocity is critical to achieve mutually beneficial relationships between project and Country. If built environment projects can help Aboriginal people to fulfil their obligation and responsibility to care for Country, then Country will care for us all (source: Connecting with Country Framework. State of New South Wales (Department of Planning and Environment) 2023).

Country is the literal place of origin for Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples' deep and personal relationships with Country are expressed in multiple ways. The lore of Country is expressed through songlines, stories, art and ceremony.

Language, including the names of Aboriginal groups and placenames, are another means of expressing relationships with Country. There is no universal way of defining Country. Descriptions of Country, particularly traditional associations, will differ from individual to individual, depending on the associations passed down through the family and community (source: Connecting with Country Framework).

The City of Melbourne partnered with the Monash Sustainability Institute at Monash University to identify the possibilities for Melbourne of an enhanced understanding and application of Caring for Country principles. They found that the principles underpinning Caring for Country can provide a blueprint for dealing with the challenges of climate change. If we understand and embed the Caring for Country principles and philosophy in an urban environment, it may help us reshape our approach to maintaining a liveable and sustainable Melbourne as the climate becomes hotter and drier (source: Caring for Country: An Urban Application. City of Melbourne and Monash Sustainability Institute, 2023).

Appendix 1.2 Tharangalk-bek

In the Woi-wurrung language, tharangalk-bek means 'wooded country in the sky', with tharangalk meaning wood or tree. Tharangalk-bek could be accessed through sunrays when the sun set. During the night, murrup would descend and wander the earth before returning to tharangalk-bek.

A member of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung who became a wirrarap, also known as a traditional doctor, might find their own murrup – which leaves their body while they are sleeping – being guided up a cord rope where they would enter tharangalk-bek and get taken to Bunjil who would grant the powers of a traditional doctor before returning them back to the earthly realm to reunite with their bodies.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung ceremonies would be held on nights during a full or new moon, and when they were in mourning. Those grieving might light a small fire and watch the sunrise in the east in the morning, through the smoke and repeat the process while facing the west at sunset to help guide a lost loved one's murrup to tharangalk-bek.

This demonstrates the connection between spiritual beliefs held by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and the environmental elements that surround them, connecting spiritual landscape and Country. In contemporary times, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people maintain their connections to this spiritual landscape in much the same

way as their ancestors, maintaining the songlines and connecting to tharangalk by gazing up at the durt (stars) (CMP volume 1, page 146).

The authors of Wurundjeri-al Narrm-u (Wurundjeri's Melbourne), Mandy Nicholson and David Jones, said the physical landscape of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, referred to as biik-dui, has many landforms and intangible elements that connect directly to wurru-wurru biik (sky country). This connection to celestial beings and celestial Country is even further strengthened by Woi-wurrung language which connects, animals, Country and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people through songlines and memories of food availability, through trade routes, the breeding patterns of animals and birds, and seasonal changes (source: Mandy Nicholson and David Jones. 'Wurundjeri-al Narrm-u (Wurundjeri's Melbourne)'. The Routledge Handbook on Historic Urban Landscapes in the Asia-Pacific, Routledge, 2019).

Appendix 2 Post-colonisation history

Appendix 2.1 Settlement story

The elevated area of bushland north of the Melbourne settlement, noted for its timber and fine views, was initially grazed by sheep and cattle. However, by the mid-1840s, as the settlement began to extend beyond the initial central Melbourne area, there were concerns about ensuring there was sufficient public parkland close to the centre of the city for recreation and enjoyment, so a large area of land to the north, noted for its fine timber, was earmarked for a public reserve.

The Crown initially reserved 2560 acres of bushland north of the central city for ‘public advantage and recreation’ in 1850. The provision of public land for recreation is a tradition that can be traced back to ancient times, but the direct impetus for creating such reservations in early Melbourne was a direct colonial inheritance of a British model.

For the remainder of the 19th century, Royal Park maintained its open bushland character, but parts of the original reserve were removed for housing, hospitals and other facilities to support the needs of a growing colony.

During World War II, the park was used as an army camp and the abandoned huts later became Camp Pell – a housing settlement for thousands of Victorians impacted by the post-war housing shortage.

Appendix 2.2 Landscape architecture

The development of Royal Park did not follow the pattern of other parks as it was created without a clear plan.

The City of Melbourne has held Committee of Management for Royal Park since 1934. The first master plan was developed in 1984. It was developed from a design competition facilitated by the City of Melbourne and Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

The competition was won by Brian Stafford and Ron Jones, who described their intent ‘to preserve and enhance the existing valued character of the park and to not impose alien styles or objects.’ Their final report said: ‘the designers’ hand will not seem apparent in the form of the park, which should seem spontaneous and casual.’

Their winning entry was described by judges as having a philosophical design approach that dealt effectively with generous spaces, the hilltop image, broad vistas and the remaining traces of indigenous vegetation. Industry continues to celebrate this design approach today, with the park’s shape and form aligned to the existing landscape, in partnership with good design.

While the Stafford and Jones master plan was updated in 1997 to address emerging issues, such as visitor movement and car parking, the bulk of the 1984 plan was implemented. Many view this as a testament to City of Melbourne holding firm to the principles embedded within it for 40 years.

Royal Park today demonstrates the important role that landscape architecture plays in enabling strong ecological, environmental, health and wellbeing, and community outcomes – generating genuine, nostalgic excitement among local landscape architects.

Appendix 3 Strategies, background studies and engagement

Appendix 3.1 Policy and strategy context

3.1.1 Future Melbourne 2026 Plan

The Future Melbourne 2026 Plan sets out the vision and goals for the City of Melbourne and provides a foundation for individuals and institutions to work towards common goals. The vision is that in 2026, Melbourne will be a sustainable, inventive and inclusive city that is vibrant and flourishing.

3.1.2 Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan is City of Melbourne's key strategic document. It describes the vision for the future, how the Council will strive towards that vision during its four-year term, where it will focus its efforts, and how it will measure progress.

The Royal Park Master Plan was included as a key deliverable as part of Major Initiative 16. It is due for completion in June 2025.

3.1.3 Open Space Strategy 2012 (reviewed 2024)

The Open Space Strategy provides the overarching framework and strategic direction for open space planning in the City of Melbourne municipality. The Open Space Strategy identifies Royal Park as a state open space, which is an open space set aside and managed for the whole state of Victoria. While it is a regional destination, it also provides a local function for the surrounding neighbourhoods of Parkville, Parkville Gardens, Carlton and North Melbourne.

3.1.4 Urban Forest Strategy 2012

The Urban Forest Strategy provides the vision, principles, strategies and targets for the City of Melbourne urban forest. The strategy's vision is to make the municipality greener and to create resilient landscapes, community health and wellbeing and a liveable sustainable city.

All precinct plans – including the Parkville Precinct Plan that encompasses Royal Park – are tied to the Urban Forest Strategy. The Parkville plan provides implementation direction, including a long-term planting strategy, 10-year planting and greening plan and a guide to species change.

3.1.5 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The overarching framework for global sustainable development, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals to achieve economic progress, social inclusion and environmental sustainability by the year 2030.

The goals are used as a guiding framework for City of Melbourne initiatives.

3.1.6 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-27

The Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-27 states City of Melbourne's vision for reconciliation is to work alongside Sovereign First Nations, enabling true self-determination and ensuring Aboriginal peoples have the freedom to live well according to their own values

Appendix 3.2 Background studies

City of Melbourne undertook a range of background activities to support and enable the development of the Royal Park Master Plan, including:

- a community safety audit
- a Conservation Management Plan, including cultural values
- data in the park and intercept surveys
- ecological studies
- recreation needs assessment
- transport studies.

3.2.1 Community safety audit

In response to concerns raised by community members regarding safety, a community safety audit program was designed and implemented in early 2023. The goal of this audit was to understand how safe the park feels from a range of perspectives, the outcomes of which have been used to inform elements of the master plan, including lighting.

3.2.2 Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

The CMP was a key reference source for the development of the master plan and incorporates Aboriginal cultural values for Royal Park.

The CMP includes rich and detailed information about the history and cultural heritage of Royal Park, including an Aboriginal cultural values assessment. Aboriginal cultural values were identified through engagement with the Traditional Owners and have been reviewed and approved by the WWCHAC.

Volume 1 outlines the history of the park and recommends conservation policies. It also proposes revisions to the Victorian Heritage Register Statement of Significance for Royal Park. Volume 2 describes and analyses each landscape area and the elements within them.

3.2.3 Data in the park and intercept surveys

City of Melbourne has been collecting data on use and activity within Royal Park on an ongoing basis, alongside yearly intercept surveys to better understand park visitor experiences.

3.2.4 Ecological studies

Ecological studies were undertaken with the University of Melbourne to assess the function of the landscape to meet City of Melbourne’s proposed ecological goals and to ensure changes proposed will have a net positive ecological outcome.

3.2.5 Recreation needs assessment

Demand for recreation and sport infrastructure in the park was reviewed as part of a recreation needs assessment. It was a key reference source in developing the master plan.

3.2.6 Transport and parking studies

Transport and parking investigations have been undertaken over several years and include a destination management transport assessment, a transport discussion paper, and a parking management plan. Each has provided data and insights and made recommendations that have been considered in the development of the draft master plan.

Appendix 3.2 Community engagement

Community consultation on a discussion paper was undertaken in late 2023 to explore the opinions and perspectives of Royal Park stakeholders, neighbours and visitors.

Consultation included workshops, one-on-one stakeholder meetings and online surveys, and resulted in more than 1900 comments.

The most frequently reported park activities included:

- walking – 65 per cent
- running – 35 per cent
- formal sport, including AFL, soccer, cricket, golf, tennis, lacrosse, baseball and rugby union – 34 per cent
- cycling – 33 per cent
- nature therapy – 30 per cent.

The park locations noted as ‘used most’ included:

- Royal Park South (Nature Play, Australian Native Garden and Grassland Circle) – 55 per cent
- Pathways – 48 per cent
- Royal Park North (four ovals, Ryder and Western Pavilions) – 30 per cent
- Royal Park Central (Melbourne Zoo, State Netball and Hockey Centre and Urban Camp) – 25 per cent
- Royal Park East (golf course, four ovals, Brens Pavilion and Women’s Pavilion) – 24 per cent
- Royal Park West (Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetland and Manningham Play Space – 18 per cent.

A survey of 1355 people indicated support for acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal culture and connection to country at Royal Park via:

- native planting – 77 per cent
- educational and interpretive signage – 59 per cent
- celebrating sites of cultural and historical significance – 56 per cent
- public art – 55 per cent.

Consultation comments were used to inform the master plan and associated actions, in line with City of Melbourne current policies and priorities. The consultation report is available on the Participate Melbourne website.

Regular meetings with individual land managers and key stakeholders were undertaken over a period of two years, exploring the relationships between various parts of Royal Park. These sessions informed master plan actions designed to improve the park environs and interfaces – particularly with Melbourne Zoo and the State Netball and Hockey Centre.

Appendix 4 Glossary

Actions: the below list defines each of the master plan action types:

- Celebrate – Communicating a key feature or element within the park.
- Understand – Requires further research and engagement around specific project issues
- Continue – An existing activity or program that is proposed to continue under this master plan
- Design and construct – A known project that is ready to commence to detailed design.
- Develop – This relates to the need to develop a detailed policy or program within the park that is beyond the scope of the master plan.
- Explore – A good idea at a strategic level but needs more information before it can be a specific project
- Implement – Enacting an existing endorsed policy or project
- Support – Where City of Melbourne is not the lead on a project but may assist other stakeholders
- Investigate – Continue to feasibility studies
- Upgrade – A known activity required to upgrade an existing asset in the park, based on existing asset condition assessments.

Catchment: A catchment is an area of land where water collects when it rains. As the water flows over the landscape, it finds its way into streams and down into the soil, eventually feeding the river. Some of this water stays underground and continues to slowly feed the river in times of low rainfall.

Council: Indicates the City of Melbourne geographical area, as well as the entity which has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Melbourne municipal community.

Country: Country is the term often used by Aboriginal people to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.

Master plan: A long-term guide to the future development of a site and to ensure appropriate planning and allocation of resources. They are often a means of implementing the objectives, strategies and outcomes identified in a structure planning process. Master plans are also undertaken when there are issues or opportunities within a place that need to be resolved to meet the changing needs of the community. Master plans ensure that the short and long-term interests and needs of the community are appropriately addressed. Master plans do not represent a commitment to implement all components of the plan, which will be reviewed at regular intervals and may be subject to change. Implementation of master plan recommendations are considered annually as part of the City of Melbourne budget process, in conjunction with all plan and budget priorities.

Multi-use games area: A Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) is an outdoor area with built-in goal post units for various types of sports games, such as football, basketball or tennis. A MUGA can encourage people to explore the potential of different sports in a safe environment, built solely for that purpose. It also supports the increasing casualisation of sport.

Municipality: Indicates the City of Melbourne geographical area.

Open space: ‘Open Space’ is defined as ‘the publicly owned land that is set aside primarily for recreation, nature conservation, passive outdoor enjoyment and public gatherings. This includes public parks, gardens, reserves, waterways, publicly owned forecourts and squares’ as per Council’s Open Space Strategy 2012.

RAP: Acronym for Registered Aboriginal Party. The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 recognises Registered Aboriginal Parties as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. The RAP for Royal Park is the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

RAP is also the acronym for a Reconciliation Action Plan. This is the City of Melbourne framework for reconciliation – delivering tangible and substantive benefits for First Nations peoples.

Self-determination: Self-determination is an ongoing process of ensuring that Aboriginal peoples can make decisions about matters that affect their lives. Essential to the exercise of self-determination is choice, participation and control.

WSUD: Acronym for Water Sensitive Urban Design. Water Sensitive Urban Design is the integration of urban planning with the management, protection and conservation of the urban water cycle that ensures urban water management is sensitive to natural hydrological and ecological cycles.