

## 6.1 Northern Undercroft and City Road Park - Concept Design

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**Executive Leader:** Rick Kwasek, General Manager Infrastructure and Amenity

### Executive Summary

1. The Northern Undercroft and City Road Park, part of the City Road Masterplan, aims to transform a neglected space beneath the Kings Way overpass into a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable urban open space area with multi-purpose courts, a bouldering wall, skateboarding elements, place spaces, seating and green plant elements.
2. In December 2024, the project successfully secured \$4.05 million through the Federal Government's Thriving Suburbs Program (TSP). The remaining funding required has been referred to the 2025-26 draft budget where an appropriate allocation has been made.

### Next Steps

3. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 3.1. Approve the Northern Undercroft and City Road Park concept design and proceed to finalise the design.
  - 3.2. Notes a report will come back to Council once a preferred principal contractor is recommended in line with our procurement policy and delegations.
  - 3.3. Authorise the General Manager Infrastructure and Amenity to make any further minor changes to the Northern Undercroft and City Road Park concept design.

**Purpose**

4. The purpose of this report is to seek Future Melbourne Committee (FMC's) endorsement of the Northern Undercroft and City Road Park concept design. It is also to inform FMC of the strategic background, grant funding, site constraints, and the statutory processes required to realise the concept design.

**Background**

5. The urban regeneration of undercrofts (spaces beneath buildings and structures) has become an increasingly popular way to revitalise neighbourhoods. These projects improve safety, maximise activation, and enhance connectivity in otherwise neglected spaces. Especially in areas with limited green space, redeveloping undercrofts with recreational facilities such as sports courts and gathering spots expands the range of uses for the community and provides much needed passive and active recreation space.
6. The Northern Undercroft and City Road Park is an initiative from the City Road Masterplan 2016-2023, a strategic framework designed to transform City Road and its adjacent spaces into a more vibrant, accessible, and sustainable urban corridor. The undercroft is located beneath the Kings Way overpass, approximately 100 meters from the Boyd Community Hub and library.
7. In response to community consultation, the project will deliver 2 multi-purpose courts, a bouldering wall, skateboarding elements, gathering and seating areas. It will also be elevated through collaboration with a creative professional, whose unique style could be applied to interactive pavement designs, furniture, or lighting to guide movement. As the City of Melbourne's first undercroft regeneration, this collaboration, which will draw from the site's history, will be a key attractor and help create a strong sense of place.

**Key considerations**

8. The site is currently managed under a 39-years and 364-days license agreement with the Victorian Government's Department of Transport and Planning and is subject to multiple referral and planning approvals. The design carefully considers flood overlays and underground services.

**Legal**

9. There are no direct legal implications resulting from the recommendation from management.

**Finance**

10. In December 2024, the project successfully secured \$4.05 million through the Federal Government's TSP. Council will need to fund the remaining half of the project cost as per conditions in the funding agreement. An appropriate allocation for the remaining funding required to complete the project has been made in the 2025-26 draft budget.

**Conflict of interest**

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

**Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities**

12. The recommendation contained in this report is compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* as it does not raise any human rights issues.

**Health and Safety**

13. The Northern Undercroft and City Road Park concept design will be an opportunity to address current access and inclusion issues which include the following aspects:
    - 13.1. Accessibility to Boyd Community Hub and library from Southbank and Crown Casino.
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- 13.2. Accessibility to the hotel and apartment development at 88 Queensbridge Street, Southbank.
14. The project will contribute to the local community's health and wellbeing whereby introducing a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable urban open space area with multi-purpose courts, a bouldering wall, skateboarding elements, place spaces, seating and green plant elements.
15. Providing usable open space and minimising the impacts of flooding are the projects highest priorities. The project focuses on a public realm upgrade that contains minimal traffic impacts to the surrounding roads.
16. The concept design will enhance safety and passive surveillance by improving lighting and activation.

### Consultation

17. The City of Melbourne conducted community engagement from 13 May to 13 June 2024 to gather support and insights on the Northern Undercroft and City Road Park proposal, focusing on flexibility, recreation, and future advocacy for funding.
18. Engagement included an online survey, community pop-ups, printed bulletins, email outreach to stakeholders, and other communication channels like newsletters and social media.
19. 76 per cent of survey respondents supported the concept design, with key reasons including the need for greening, safety, and recreation.
20. Feedback highlighted the need for both active and passive recreation, social gathering spaces, safety improvements, and environmentally friendly development. Many participants felt the area was underutilised and needed better activation.

### Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies

21. The following Council policies are applicable to this project:
- 21.1. The **Southbank Structure Plan 2010** prepares the Southbank area for future growth by outlining policy changes and recommending investments in infrastructure, open spaces, and streetscapes, particularly along transport corridors and near community centres. The project is situated in close proximity to Boyd Community Hub and library, both of which are identified as key activity nodes and community hubs.
- 21.2. Additionally, the project is part of **The City Road Masterplan's Action 2**, which envisions transforming the Kings Way Undercroft into a community space. Building on other local investments, such as the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation. The masterplan includes opportunities to repurpose underutilised spaces adjacent to City Road.
- 21.3. The **Transport Strategy 2030** focuses on improving urban mobility through a combination of infrastructure projects, policy initiatives, and urban planning. The project's location next to a major public transport interchange near Boyd Library and Community Centre further enhances its accessibility and integration with Melbourne's transport network.
- 21.4. The project also aligns with the **City of Melbourne Creative Strategy 2018-2028** by collaboration with a creative professional to enrich the recreation programming, enhancing playful possibilities while being mindful of the site's history. This collaboration supports creativity and innovation, contributing to Melbourne's position as a global creative city.

### Social and environmental impacts

#### 22. Social impacts

Recreational programming inherently supports community participation and social cohesion. The accessibility of active recreational programs invites opportunities for people from different socioeconomic backgrounds to access physical and social activities at no cost. Through informal interactions, these spaces

foster a healthier, more connected community. Additionally, this investment boosts the local economy, as people are more likely to spend money in spaces where they linger for longer.

**23. Gender Impact Assessment**

The project will seek to conduct a gender impact assessment (GIA) as the project will have an impact on the community. In completing the GIA, the project will look into opportunities to increase gender equality, create better and fairer outcomes for the community and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources.

**24. Environmental impacts**

The project will assess the potential of testing the City of Melbourne Depot Assets and Materials Reuse Program, repurposing some of City of Melbourne's existing asset collection. There is opportunity for the project to implement carbon reductions via the final design.

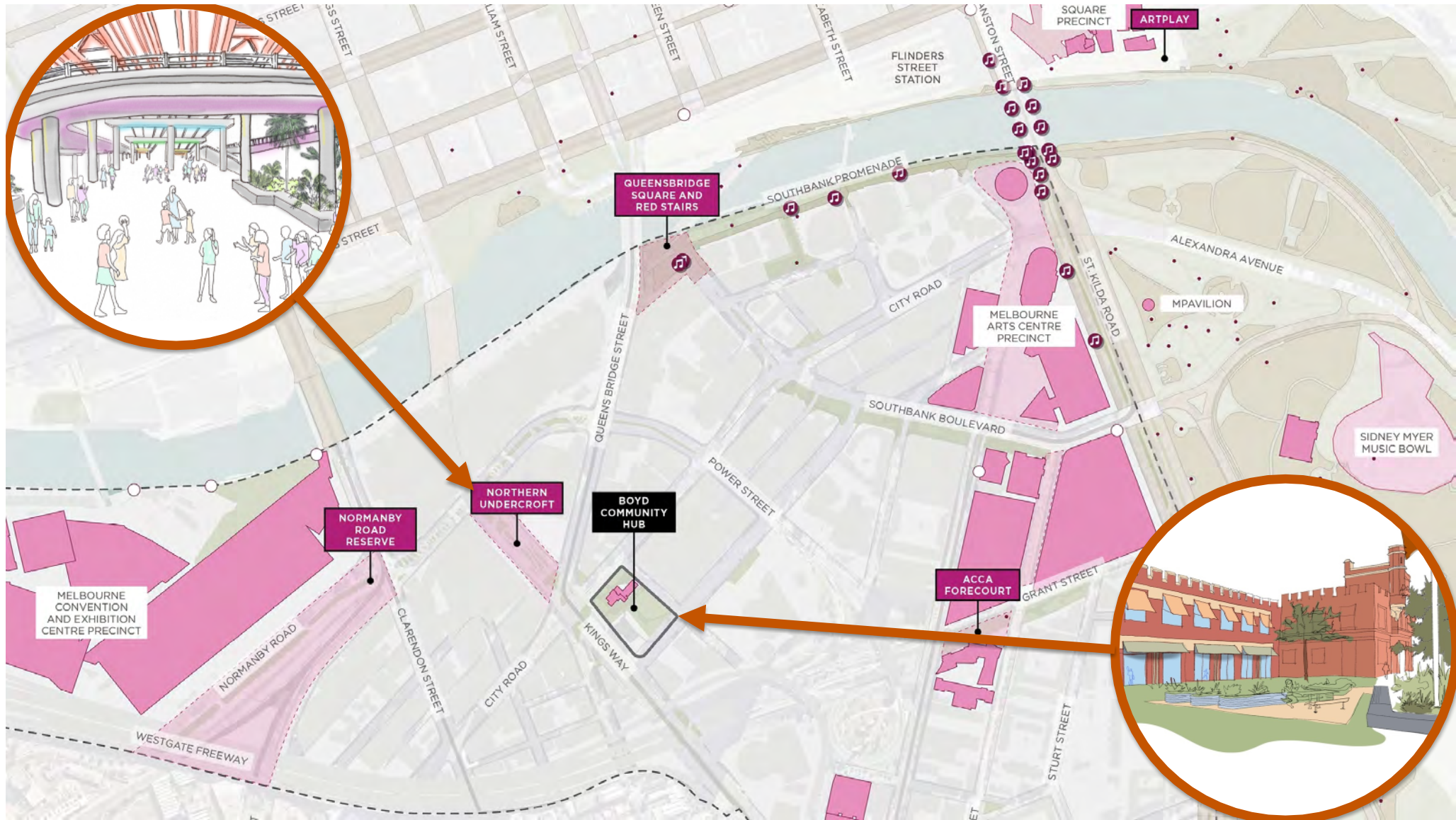
**Attachment List**

1. 250414 Northern Undercroft Portfolio Presentation KC [6.1.1 - 11 pages]

# Northern Underpass Open Space and City Road Park

## Concept Design

1 Northern Undercroft and City Road Park



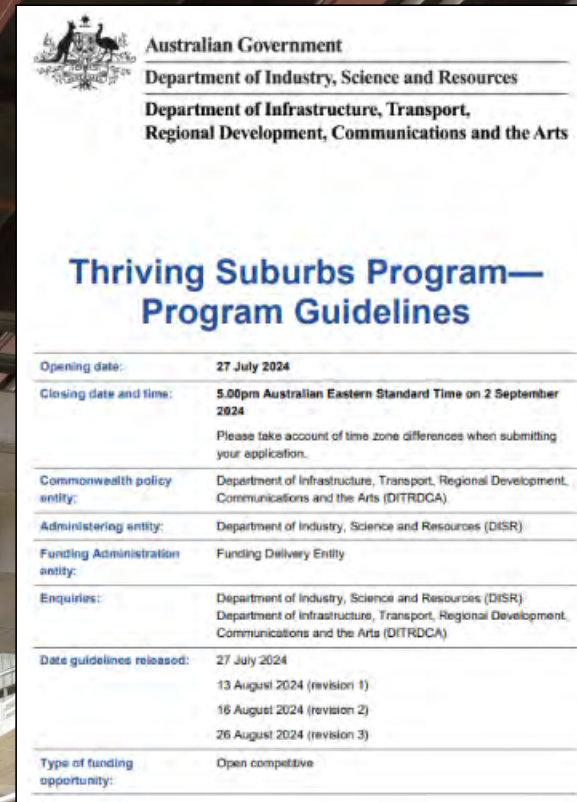
**This is City of Melbourne's first underpass project**

### Thriving Suburbs Program (TSP)

- TSP grant awarded 4 December 2024 for \$4.05m.
- CoM CEO grant agreement signed April 2025.
- CoM co-contribution 50/50 of total project costs.

### Housing Support Program (HSP)

- HSP grant applied. Pending announcement of outcome.



Australian Government  
Department of Industry, Science and Resources  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

### Thriving Suburbs Program— Program Guidelines

Opening date:	27 July 2024
Closing date and time:	5.00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time on 2 September 2024 Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Administering entity:	Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)
Funding Administration entity:	Funding Delivery Entity
Enquiries:	Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA)
Date guidelines released:	27 July 2024 13 August 2024 (revision 1) 16 August 2024 (revision 2) 26 August 2024 (revision 3)
Type of funding opportunity:	Open competitive



Community engagement



**76%** of survey respondents expressed strong or full support for the proposed concept design.



**55%** of respondents highlighted the underutilisation of the space, suggesting that **improvements could lead to more usage.**



The consultation gathered **117** survey responses, with a total of **40** face-to-face conversations and **130** people reached through intercept surveys.



**70%** of feedback focused on the need for **creative design solutions due to space constraints.**



**60%** of respondents indicated a preference for spaces **that combine both active recreation and passive relaxation areas.**



**65%** of respondents emphasised the importance of **incorporating environmentally sustainable practices in the development and maintenance of the park.**



Preston Level Crossing Removal Project

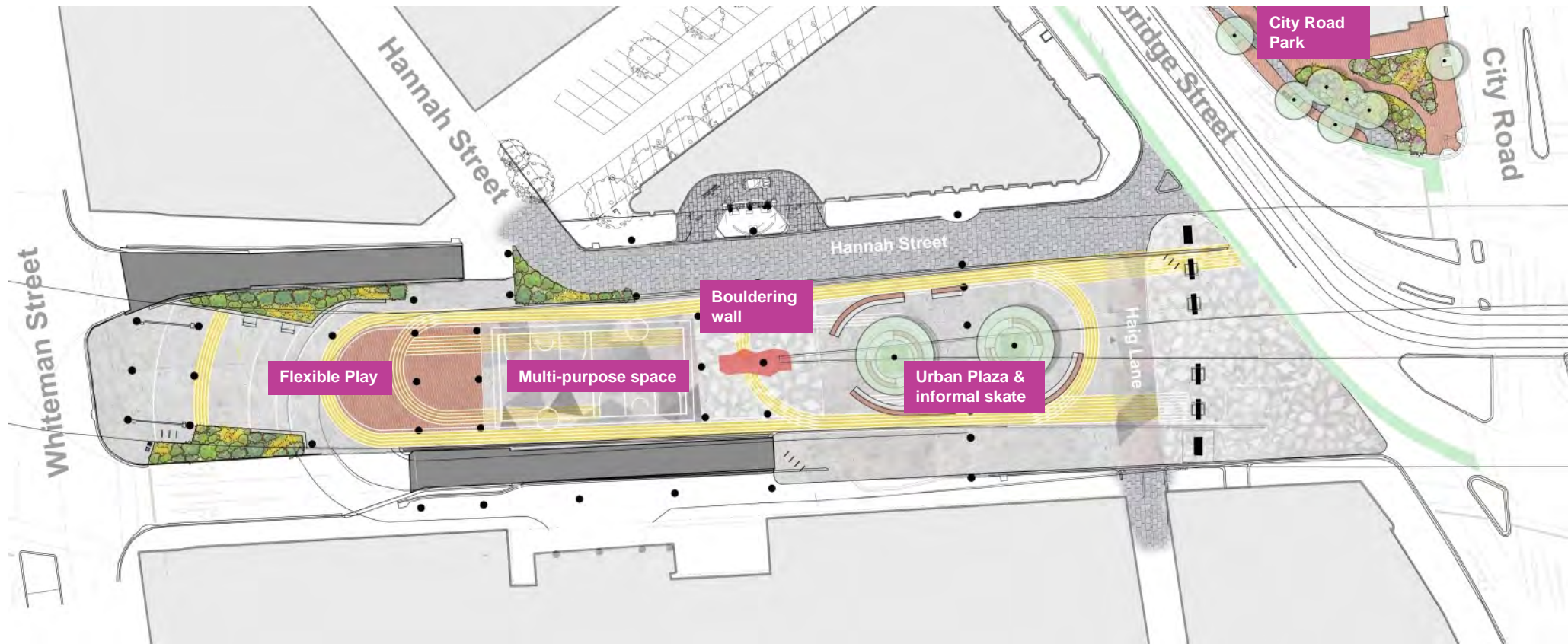


Regeneration of Northern underpass and open space enables Council to revitalise a neglected area in Southbank by:

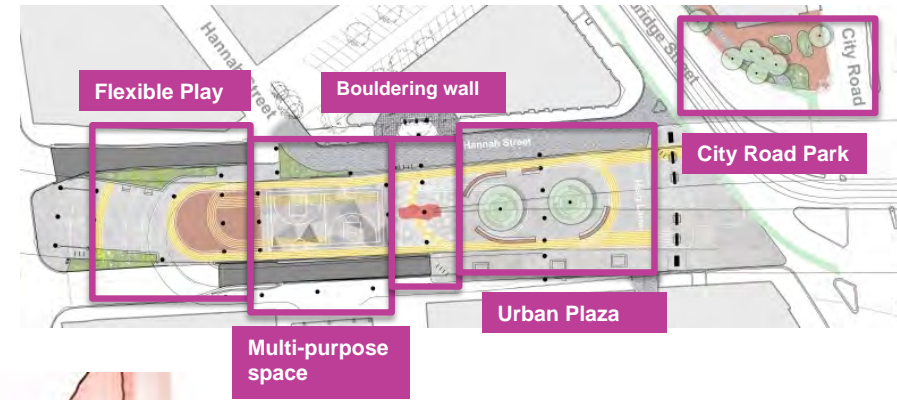
- Improving safety
- Boosting economic activity
- Enhancing connectivity
- Providing green space
- Adding recreational facilities and gathering spots, and
- creating vibrant, multi-use spaces for the Southbank community.

Bell Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project

**Concept plan Underpass space**



Concept plan Underpass space



**Key benchmarks**



The **Bentway** in Toronto is an urban regeneration project that transforms underutilised infrastructure into a dynamic, multi-functional public space, which supports community engagement, sustainability, and economic revitalisation.



The **West Bund Shanghai** climbing wall integrates an iconic, visually striking design with a functional public space that promotes outdoor activity, attracts tourists, and enhances the urban landscape.



The **Geelong Youth Activity Hub** combined multi-functional surfaces with a strong focus on youth engagement, offering a dynamic, inclusive space that fosters creativity, social interaction, and physical activity for young people.



The **Miami Underline** is a strong example of urban renewal as it transforms an abandoned railway corridor into a vibrant, multi-functional space that enhances connectivity, promotes sustainability, and fosters community engagement.



