

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

ONE OF OUR OLDEST PARKS
TELLS STORIES OF OUR PAST

AUCKLAND
DESIGN MANUAL

TE PŪKA WHAKATAIRANGA I A TĀMAKĀHAKA HIAHIA

PARKS // HISTORIC HERITAGE CASE STUDY

Western Park
Ponsonby, Auckland

OVERVIEW

Upgrades which included the addition of sympathetic modern art, restoration planting and weed removal have done wonders to revitalise on of our city's oldest and most beloved historic heritage parks.

PROJECT SUMMARY

One of Auckland's oldest parks dating back to the 1800's,

Western park occupies a coffin-shaped wedge of land bounded by residential properties and roads. It is a vast yet hidden green space with a landform which drops significantly from Ponsonby Road, and has a defined valley running through the centre.

Redevelopment of the park was undertaken in 2000 and included a number of upgrades including tree planting along the Ponsonby Road frontage, improving access, removing weed infestations, installing interpretive signage and planting native species throughout the park.

A key outcome of this process was the completion of a maintenance and enhancement plan for the park, which will help to ensure the park is well-maintained over time.



Everything old is new again, one of our oldest parks tells stories of our past.

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

MAIN ENVIRONMENT MODULE
HISTORIC HERITAGE

KEY FEATURES

LESSONS LEARNT

LOCATION

PONSONBY ROAD, AUCKLAND

OTHER PARK ENVIRONMENTS
ECOLOGICAL, INFORMAL
RECREATION

A large number of historic trees
planted between 1874 - 1879

Sightlines – Poor signage limits
daytime navigation and the
connection this park provides
through this central suburb.

DESIGNER

JOHN C BLACKMORE AND WILLIAM F
HAMMOND (1874)

SITE AREA
8 HECTARES

Formal promenade path
networks

Historic boundary elements
including basalt, timber and
stone fences

Edges – Boundary edge conditions
are poor, inconsistent and prone to
vandalism. Permeable fencing
would ensure more eyes were
watching the park, mitigating
antisocial behaviour and making
park users feel safer.

Tree labelling using ground
based plaques

Sculptures representing historic
buildings by John Radford

Furniture – The bespoke cycle
racks are not functional.
Customised furniture should be
aesthetically pleasing, practical
and tested by appropriate user
groups before being built and
installed.

Mosaic pebble features in the
walkway

Bespoke heritage furniture

A children's playground

Public toilets

A small performance space

TREASURE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Amenity items including seating, fitness equipment and rubbish bins are placed throughout the park ensuring this space is fun, comfortable and easy to use.
2. The park provides numerous spaces to enjoy for individuals or groups, including informal seating areas as well as picnic tables.
3. The path network responds sensitively to the topography and existing heritage trees, ensuring minimal site disturbance occurred.



The park's meandering path network embraces the park's undulating landscape with minimal site disturbance and the preservation of heritage trees..

ENJOY HEALTH, WELLBEING & FUN

1. Scattering the fitness equipment around the park encourages movement, and therefore exercise, between the equipment pieces. It also prevents the equipment from dominating the park space.
2. Encouraging the health and wellness of users is a great attribute of the park. Although many of the equipment pieces are older, the simplicity of their form enables them to be adapted for a range of uses.
3. Providing a map of the park helps users become spatially aware of their surroundings and encourages them to explore other areas.



Western Park provides fitness equipment and tennis courts for adults, a play space for kids, encouraging both active and passive recreation and fun throughout this heritage park.

CONNECT PLACES

1. Signage is subtle but legible and useful.
2. There are a number of access points to Western Park. This small side street entrance is clearly defined and celebrated with simple stone columns welcoming users into the space.
3. Small 100mm x 100mm blue stone pavers frame the edge of the park on the ground. These materials reflect the heritage character of the park.



Even at small entrances, park signage is visible, informative and inviting, bringing people into the park.

CONENCT THE ENVIRONMENT

1. Succession planting for heritage trees has been completed to ensure future generations have access to similar park environments with mature trees.
2. A distinct contoured valley forms the structure of the park, which has resulted in some steep gradients that are traversed with the path network. Stairs have been used in some places but the smooth asphalt or concrete paths form the main movement network, enabling push chair and scooter access.
3. The park provides a wilderness type experience for everyone to enjoy. Paths meander through the space, encouraging users to slow down and appreciate the heritage trees and park features.
4. Glimpses of the city are experienced through some of the park areas but no heritage trees have been sacrificed to increase the views.



Views to important landmarks, such as the sky tower, have been retained to connect this tranquil space with the wider cityscape.

TREASURE OUR HERITAGE

1. The form and characteristics of these heritage trees have been largely un-manicured resulting in some interesting specimens. The trees add character and identity to the space.
2. Fitness equipment made from natural materials is subtly located beside the path network.
3. Sculpture has been integrated to celebrate the built heritage forms that once existed on the site. These artworks succeed in contributing to a sense of place, integrate into the landscape and are robust and resilient enough to be climbed on by children.



These large heritage trees have been retained and respected by the path network's layout. Designers have also planted succession trees, so that future generations will be able to enjoy a similar park experience when these trees die.

ENJOY MORE USE & A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES

1. Large trees have been planted at the edges of the park providing clear sight lines and access through it.
2. Sports fields and tennis courts have been established at the base of the valley, to increase the active use of this park and to appeal to a wider variety of people.
3. Although this is a park of significant heritage with many areas densely planted with trees, open spaces have been integrated to encourage and enable a wider variety of activities to take place.



Open grassy areas are flexible and can be used for a wide range of activities.

ENJOY HEALTH, WELLBEING & FUN

1. Generous path widths through areas of the park allow a number of users to enjoy the movement networks at the same time.
2. This park is a designated dog exercise area, which allows dogs to be in the space without a leash. This is an important designation in this central city location where many dogs may have limited or no backyard areas in which to exercise.



Dog walking is a popular activity that encourages more people to be active more often. By designating western park as a dog exercise area, the designers have encouraged dog walkers to get out and enjoy the park.

TREASURE OUR HERITAGE

1. Clustering amenities together enables easy access for all.
2. Placement of these large interpretative panels along the park's edges, provides both historic information and wayfinding.
3. Interpretive signage has been integrated to celebrate and inform parks users of the significance of the park. Plans and graphics have been used to reveal the parks development over many years.



Interpretive signage tells our stories and connects people with the history of the park.

CONNECT PLACES

1. Many of the larger trees have small bespoke signs at the base identifying the species and origin. Additions like these provide a great educational tool in this environment, particularly for surrounding school children.
2. Many of the boundary structures including fences and walls were removed from the park during the early 19th century. These walls are a poor example of a park edge interface with a private property as no passive surveillance is possible through these structures. Small sections of stone walls have been protected and have been restored to improve their quality.



Western Park offers a variety of transit options so that people can choose to take a leisurely stroll or a more direct route through to their destination, creating a vital linkage for the neighbourhood.

TREASURE OUR MAORI IDENTITY

1. A non-conventional means of interpretation contributes to the unique sense of place and reduces clutter, providing a more welcoming entrance into the park.
2. A number of mosaic art pieces have been successfully integrated into the park. These were inspired through consultation with local iwi who revealed their historical use and relationship with the stream system that once existed on the site.
3. Simple light poles in a dark colour provide appropriate levels of light to support safe night time use and enjoyment of the space, without detracting from its heritage values.



The mosaic art piece incorporated into the main walkway along Ponsonby Road was developed alongside local iwi to demonstrate their connection with the stream that used to exist here.

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