PLANTING AND VEGETATION GUIDANCE - INFORMAL RECREATION ENVIRONMENTS

Informal recreation environments are open spaces which provide for informal leisure and social opportunities. They are often located in neighbourhoods and at key destination areas such as beaches, volcanic cones and bush areas. These spaces typically include a combination of purpose built areas, such as skateboard parks, and informal areas such as open flat grassy space. Vegetation is often a key component of these parks providing, shade, definition, aesthetic pleasure or community development through gardens or tree plantings.

Key outcomes:

- use tree and shrub planting in play spaces to provide an informal barrier and shade, as well as adding texture and sensory experiences for children
- plant species to attract native fauna back into the park, particularly in areas of the park where there is ecological value
- planting is used to frame desirable views or screen unsightly buildings or neighbours
- plant to provide shade, sheltered areas and wind breaks
- structure planting to provide buffers between different active uses within the park and between boundary conditions such as roads or residential properties
- integrate community gardens to provide activity, learning opportunities and to connect communities
- use large groupings of single species to provide visual unity and impact

Typical issues:

- poor placement of specimen trees results in an area of open space used for informal sports games to becoming unusable
- trees and planting block or obscure views as they grow, particularly in the coastal environment
- coastal erosion commonly occurs in these environments due to intensive use
- planted areas are poorly maintained or overrun with weeds
- planting is too close to neighbouring properties and blocks views and surveillance
- mowers and other maintenance vehicles damage tree trunks
- lack of theme or signature species to create distinctiveness
- conflicts between planting and buildings, particularly structures and infrastructure, as plants grow over time

Key considerations:

- **Protect areas of existing vegetation**. Identify and protect significant trees and shrubs as new planting in many of these parks will be difficult to establish due to environmental conditions.
- **Use vegetation to structure the space.** Tree and shrub planting can be used to create small rooms, areas of respite or areas that provide a wilderness experience for park users.
- **Consider incorporating edible vegetation**. Fruit trees can provide attractive form and colour while producing fresh fruit for the local community. Edible plantings are integrated most successfully when there is strong community support for these

features. Locate trees appropriately, where the community can access them and where fallen fruits are not likely to become a hazard.

- **Select suitable species**. Ensure the plant species are appropriate for the site and its conditions as this will result in less maintenance requirements.
- **Celebrate the unique**. Identify a unique aspect of vegetation on the site and celebrate it. Use it to define the park, so people can associate and identify with that aspect.
- **Minimise planting over public infrastructure**. Care should be taken to minimise planting over public infrastructure, particularly species that can damage infrastructure or could impede access to it.

Other considerations:

- select species which attract birds and bees
- provide mulch rings, stakes and frames to protect trees from mower and vehicle damage

NAME, LOCATION? This coastal park reflects the costal nature with mature pohutukawa trees along the foreshore and hardy native flaxes interspersed in the playground area.

St Heliers, Auckland. Iconic pohutukawa line the edges of many coastal parks. Under planting provides further seasonal interest and provides a greater buffer between the adjacent road and the beach.

Nell Fisher Reserve, Birkenhead. Planting used within this play area brings shade, texture and colour to the space.

Stonefields in Mt Wellington. A mix of native trees and shrubs has been used in neighbourhood parks.

Stonefields in Mt Wellington. Plants were selected for their flowering and colour qualities as well as their suitability to the site.