

A photograph of a modern park. In the foreground, a young tree stands next to a winding, reddish-brown paved path. The path curves through a lush green lawn. In the background, there is a colorful playground with slides and climbing equipment. Further back, a modern residential building with large windows and a parking lot with several cars are visible. The sky is clear and blue.

# DOING MORE WITH LESS

## A SMALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK WITH STYLE

AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL

TE PUKA WHAKAĀIRANGA I'A TAMAKI MAKAURAU

PARKS // INFORMAL RECREATION CASE STUDY

Bluestone Park  
Mount Wellington, Auckland

# OVERVIEW

A small neighbourhood park is delivered particularly well, creating a distinct sense of place and making the most of minimal land in a new residential development.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Bluestone Park is a small neighbourhood park which was developed as part of the larger Stonefields subdivision in Mt Wellington. It was one of the first two neighbourhood reserves to be built within the development.

Bluestone Park embodies the idea of play in every aspect of the design. Colourful bands of soft native grasses, oval red paths (which have enough gradient to gather speed on wheels), a central open lawn area and a compact playground with central adventure trail are all features of the park.

Providing a safe and fun environment was a key outcome of this project. The red oxide concrete paths have an acid etch finish rather than exposed to minimize grazing. Extensive garden beds provide division between the playground and the road and the strategic location of trees and garden beds has reduced the need for bollards.

The compact playground offers something for all ages. Junior and senior play structures are linked with the adventure trail (seating, balancing, stepping, and negotiating) which incorporates volcanic forest type trees and bluestone boulders sourced from the quarry.

Natural Habitats were engaged by Landco Land Developments (now Todd Property Group) in April 2008 to provide developed, detail and contract observation Landscape Architectural services for the reserves within the Stonefields development. Concept plans for all reserves had been produced by James Lord of Surface Design, a San Francisco based urban design consultancy.



Doing more with less – Bluestone is small neighbourhood park with style.

# KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

MAIN ENVIRONMENT MODULE  
INFORMAL RECREATION

KEY FEATURES

DESIGNER

COST

**CONSTRUCTION COST \$480,000**

Playground with a mixture of natural play features

Surface Design (San Francisco): James Lord- Initial Concept Design

LOCATION

**GARIN WAY, MT WELLINGTON**

SITE AREA

**3,400 M<sup>2</sup>**

A rectangular shaped site (approximately 61m long x 51m wide) which is surrounded by residential streets on three sides and terraced housing on the other side.

Picnic tables

Natural Habitats: Debbie Tikau (Senior Landscape Architect), Jenny Wood (Landscape Architect) – Developed Design, detail design and construction observation

Specimen trees

Play specialist engaged: Phillipa Bollond

Large blocks of native planting

Oval red pathways

# ENJOY MORE USE & A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES

1. Planting breaks up the edges of the park into smaller pockets of uncluttered space for smaller gatherings, recreation and relaxation.
2. An oval path runs around the perimeter of the park, which defines the space and has gradient change for greater interest for children riding bikes.
3. A generous lawn area central to the park creates a flexible and adaptable space for a range of activities.



This open flat grassy area is very flexible, allowing it to host a wide range of informal recreation and play activities.

# CONNECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Residential housing fringing the park on all sides creates excellent passive surveillance of the area, and enhances the connection between the community and their park.
2. Plant selection utilise species typical of volcanic forests, to help the park create a recognisably volcanic identity that embodies the natural and cultural heritage of the site.
3. Heights of surrounding residential houses have been set where parks within Stonefields can enjoy a view of Mt. Wellington.



The trees and plants incorporated into the space are typically found in volcanic forests, connecting this park, which is located in a crater, to the wider landscape.

# ENJOY HEALTH FUN & WELLBEING

1. Cushionfall has been used as a play surface to enhance the natural appearance of the playground, while reducing the chances of injury through play.
2. Off-the-shelf play equipment brings colour to the play area and adds to the diversity of play elements to ensure the space remains interesting, fun and engaging.
3. Passive play elements such as logs, posts and boulders allow for adventure and imaginative play, and can be used as informal seating.



A range of play elements are offered to encourage kids to get active and have fun.

# CONNECT PEOPLE

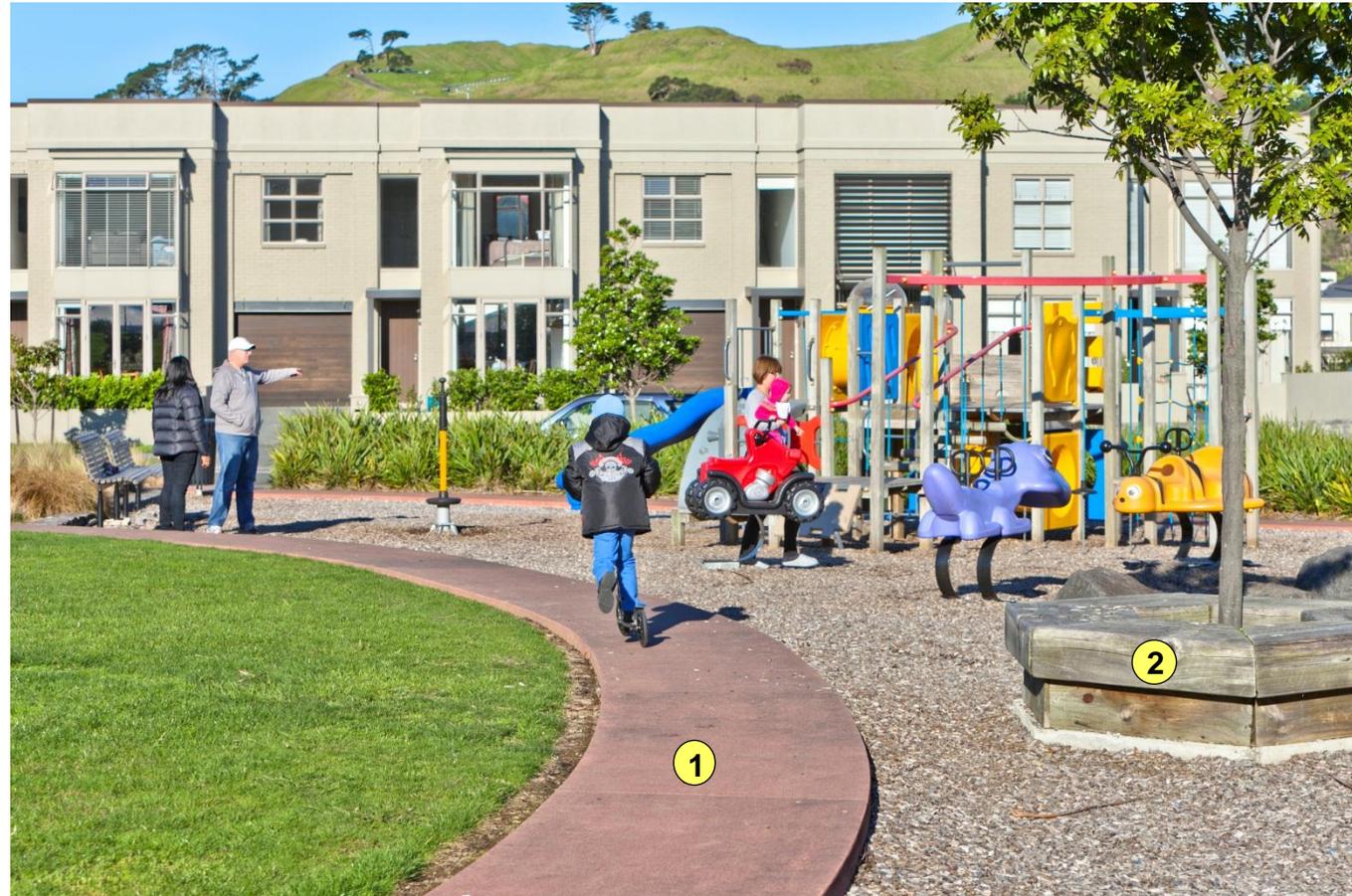
1. Signage is subtle and appropriate for the scale and context of the park, and is consistent with the signage used for all parks across Auckland.
2. A wide area of native flax planting creates a barrier between the playground and the road, increasing the space between playing children and moving traffic.
3. Low planting around the perimeter of the park creates a soft buffer between the open space and the hard edge of the surrounding buildings.



Low planting is provided along the park edges to ensure visual connections and passive surveillance is maintained.

# ENJOY COMFORT & SAFETY

1. The use of acid etched concrete instead of exposed aggregate for paving near play areas prevents severe grazing should children fall down.
2. Seating beneath trees can provide shelter from the sun during summer.



By using etched concrete for the pathway, designers help ensure that kids who fall down don't get severe grazes.

# ENJOY COMFORT & SAFETY

1. Planting areas restrict vehicles from entering the open space and create a barrier between the playground and the road.
2. Play structures that require jumping and hanging and involve a higher level of risk and challenge are important in children's development.
3. Amenities such as rubbish bins and bike racks located at strategic locations around the park, in particular at entrances/exits, promote the responsible use of the park.



By providing safe and well-connected movement networks with good passive surveillance from neighbouring properties, the designers have encouraged frequent use of the park.

# ENJOY MORE USE & A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES

1. Amenities such as drinking fountains with built in dog bowls ensure the wellbeing and comfort of all users, encouraging them to use the space for longer and more often.
2. Seating around the perimeter of the play space provides a comfortable place for caregivers.
3. Low level planting maintains clear sight lines, allowing passive surveillance and creates a more open, safe and comfortable environment.



By incorporating good amenities such as drinking fountains, shade and seating, the park invites park users to relax and stay a while.

# UTILISE OUR RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY

1. The use of native plants can enhance environmental diversity by creating habitat, and can contribute to the park's sense of place.
2. Off-the-shelf furniture often uses standardised components that mitigate theft, are easily sourced and can reduce maintenance costs.
3. Bespoke furniture contributes to the unique identity of the space and provides other functions, such as serving as a raised planter which reduces clutter and justifies costs.



By incorporating standard play components with more unique elements, the designers have kept costs down, offered variety and helped to ensure that long-term maintenance is easy and cost efficient.

# CONNECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. As they grow, these trees will form habitats and connections for native birds.
2. Play spaces with open space and elements that promote imaginative and explorative play can trigger games and social interaction between children, forming part of their development.
3. Parks with large areas of open space and native planting add visual amenity and open up views beyond the park, connecting surrounding residential properties to the park and broader landscape.



These native trees and plants will offer habitats for native birds and allow neighbours to connect with the natural environment.

# UTILISE THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

1. Generous areas of lawn allow for the flexible and diverse use of the space and have a relatively low dependency on water, helping to reduce maintenance costs in summer.
2. Non-treated bark chip has a low environmental impact and allows for water to naturally infiltrate without leaching chemicals into the ground.
3. Bespoke furniture doubles as part of a series of obstacles for play. This reduces clutter and justifies costs.



Permeable soft fall bark chips allow for water to filter down into the ground, helping to safely and effectively manage stormwater on site.

# AUCKLAND DESIGN MANUAL

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The Auckland Design Manual provides practical advice, best practice processes and detailed design guidance to enable us to design and build the world's most liveable city. The manual will enable us all to make informed choices, to build houses and develop our streets and neighbourhoods to not only look good but to ensure they are built to last, sustainable and give the best return on investment.

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