ANALYSIS OF ST KILDA FORESHORE
— THE PEOPLE, THE SETTING AND PLACE

THE PEOPLE

St Kilda Foreshore is a passion for the local people. While representing diverse backgrounds, they all contribute to its urban quality and care about its future. It is also treasured by the broader population—this is a place to visit and to be in as an urban person, a place for fun and leisure, recreation and vacation, a place to touch the sea, experience the Beach and share the place with other people.

Demographics

St Kilda is one of the most densely settled urban areas in Australia and a successful model for apartment living. Recent interest in medium-density development in the area continues to reinforce this role and has brought in yet more residents keen to combine the benefits of urban life and a seaside ambience. Some 30,000 people now live within one minute's walking distance of the St Kilda Foreshore.

According to the 1996 census, three quarters of the households comprised a single person or a couple. Only two percent were households with children—children account for only seven per cent of the St Kilda population, which is substantially less than other Melbourne suburbs. Over half of the population is aged between 25 and 50 years—this reflects the rise in upwardly mobile accommodation in St Kilda, which is attractive and affordable to reasonable income households.

While the percentage of lower income households is declining, the absolute number of this demographic has remained fairly stable and still makes up one third of the households.

Three quarters of the dwellings in St Kilda are apartments and over 50 per cent of the total of the dwellings are rented out.

In 1996, 68 per cent of St Kilda residents over 15 years of age belonged to the labour force. 14 per cent were then unemployed, compared to over 18 per cent in 1991.

The proportion of migrants in the St Kilda area is still notable—in 1996, over a quarter of its population was born overseas and one seventh speaks a language other than English at home.

THE SETTING

St Kilda has a particular environmental setting, cultural history and role in the Capital City and metropolitan Melbourne. These have created a particular plan and built form typology, identity and image, which together, conceptually and visually, make the place. Moreover, the Foreshore has a particular, bold formal typology, which differs from a more fractured inland one and sets a basic structure for its urban design order.

Landscape structure

Map reference: Fig. 3: Landscape elements and structure.

St Kilda sits opposite to Williamstown across Hobson's Bay. Together, these two nodal points guard the bay and define its landscape scale.

St Kilda Foreshore’s landscape structure is composed of four elements: the sea, a sandflats belt rising from the sea, a sandstone cliff—St Kilda Hill—rising from the sandflats and the omnipresent sky, which forms an overarching canopy.

The topographic expression of these geological conditions creates a unique formal relationship between the land and the sea. Both the shoreline and the sandstone cliff have a curvilinear edge. The point where the sweeping curve of the water’s edge and the tight curve of the cliff's edge meet marks a point of great interpretive, thematic potential: This is where built environment and open space—human culture and the wilderness—ultimately meet. It is also the point where the dramatic contrast of the gentle curve of the Beach and the

FIG. 3
The steepness of the cliff is visually and experientially most apparent. The clear differentiation of the upper and lower levels is perhaps the most striking and unique feature of the Foreshore’s landscape structure.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Celebrate the relationship of the concave and convex landscape arches and their meeting point as significant definers of landscape identity.
- Maintain the differentiation of the upper and lower topographic levels as key features of the Foreshore’s three-dimensional structure.

Natural environment

St Kilda Foreshore is exposed—and vulnerable—to the extremities of climatic facing west, it receives both the best and the harshest of sun exposure. Open to the Bay, it is subject to the forces of the sea and the dynamics and delights of the marine environment—the shaping of the shoreline by waves and currents, the sea spits, break down, and salt winds brought on by winds, and the marine wildlife and vegetation that thrive along its flanks.

St Kilda Harbour is a highly modified environment which includes a range of culturally shaped structures such as St Kilda Pier, breakwater, a marina and stormwater drain. These structures have shaped and continue to shape the ecological processes of the Harbour’s natural environment. Within the unique and varied marine ecological setting, flora and fauna assemblages have established, adapting to the prevailing conditions. The environmental values of this ecosystem are considered significant, as it exists in such close proximity to urban activity and human contact. In effect, the ecosystem of St Kilda Harbour is reliant on urban elements.

St Kilda Pier, the breakwater, the Harbour and stormwater outlets all have a significant effect on coastal processes, including wave action and the resulting longshore drift—the natural movement of sand along the coast. The impact of these active processes on the sediment deposition in St Kilda Harbour have resulted in erosion and loss of sand, requiring realignment and development of Foreshore areas. In particular, the beach south of St Kilda Marina to Point Ormond has been shifted, requiring the realignment of coastal processes to prevent further erosion. The creation of a new coastal feature, a breakwater, requires dredging due to continuous build-up of sand.

The breakwater provides important habitat for Little Penguins, Rakali (Water Rat), Crested Terns, and cranes. Crested Terns and cranes also utilise the piers, pylons, and other less disturbed parts of St Kilda Pier. The breeding colony of Little Penguins is valuable due to its urban location. At St Kilda Harbour, exposure to disturbance and predation have been identified as the main risks to the colony.

St Kilda Harbour exhibits a range of intertidal and subtidal habitats, supporting diverse marine life. Naturally occurring rock platforms, ridges and artificial structures such as piers, pylons, and breakwaters provide habitat for fish and invertebrate species which utilise sand substrata. The area and sand substrata support a diversity of marine invertebrate species and provide a nursery habitat for juvenile fish. The habitat of the Harbour includes the Mediterranean fanworm, the anadromous fish and the Northern Pacific Seastar.

Most of the vegetation in the Harbour area is highly modified. Community groups, although present, have mostly planted native species, and the Foreshore does not contain remnant vegetation. The area around the Cowderoy Street drain exhibits estuarine vegetation. The mouth of the Harbour exhibits mangrove and algae. Mangroves are established in sheltered areas of the Harbour and extend both inland and seaward. They provide a range of coastal habitats and fish. They are sensitive to environmental disturbance such as turbidity, which can occur due to storms, erosion of the coastline and dredging, as well as increases in salinity levels.

The water quality in St Kilda Harbour is generally good and falls within limits set by the Environmental Protection Authority. Outflow from the Cowderoy Street drain is the main source of stormwater discharge into the Harbour, with occasional flow from Yarra River.
contributing to input of organic and metal contaminants. The levels of these contaminants can fluctuate greatly due to dumping and dredging of sediments, as well as due to changes in flow such as during heavy rain. Inadequate dispersion of flow from the drains can result in increased nutrient levels in the Harbour.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:
• Ensure sustainability of marine wildlife and bay ecology.
• Monitor and manage coastal processes.
• Alter for improvement of the elements.

Pre-European settlement
Before European settlement, the St Kilda Foreshore was dominated by the St Kilda Hill. Originally this was a green knoll of redgum woodland, wattle and sheoak formed from a tertiary bedrock outcrop. The last vestige of this outcrop is the embankment between Jacka Boulevard and The Esplanade. This was formed to the north and south by sand dunes vegetated by tee trees and coastal shrubland and swampland in low lying areas further inland.

The area comprised the traditional lands of the Boonerwrung, a language people of the great Kulin Nation. There are a number of sites known to be used for ceremonial, food gathering and food preparation by the Boonerwrung in Port Phillip but none are known in the St Kilda foreshore area. The closest known site is the Corroboree Tree at the St Kilda Junction, originally located on the edge of the old South Melbourne Swamp (now Albert Park lake), a haven of life and bird life for Boonerwrung food gathering and hunting.

Over the last 30 or more years some Aboriginal people started to meet at various sites near the Foreshore. Foremost has been the Cleve Gardens which has become a significant, contemporary meeting place with a distinct indigenous identity. In 1997 this identity was recognised by its relandscaping in an aboriginal theme. Other meeting sites are the Catani Gardens, Point Nepean Reserve and the St Kilda Foreshore Park.

Historic evolution
Map references: Fig. 5: Historic positioning — 1800s, Fig. 6: St Kilda 1866, Fig. 7: Catani Gardens 1997.

St Kilda has evolved in waves and wanes, but throughout within a consistent, persistent focus on lifestyle, leisure and entertainment. By the end of the 19th century, it was already intensely settled, with wealthy business and professional people occupying St Kilda Hill and poorer folk residing in surrounding suburbs.

St Kilda’s resort role fundamentally arose from its environmental qualities including the presence of a beach and promontory, when all other land between Melbourne City and Hobson’s Bay was uninviting swamp and mudflats. A map of the area from 1866 already shows a number of bathing enclosures along the Foreshore and also depicts a clear differentiation between Melbourne’s social arteries—St Kilda as the place of healthy life and leisure, Port Melbourne as an industrial, working part and Williamstown an emerging shipyards and military base.

Located at the juncture of three main roads—St Kilda Road, Port Road and Williamstown Road—St Kilda was readily easily accessible from the city and its surrounding region. The narrow line down from Melbourne operated already in the 1850s and the alignment of streets through unbuilt land made the transition from the city to the sea into a proper journey.

The arrival of a rail line in 1857 consolidated St Kilda’s resort role, which was further enhanced by the later development of tramways. Palmer Street and Acland Street were established as commercial strips by 1874 (first engulfment by a sounds broaderannexed enlargement process). St Kilda Pier and eventually a Baptist Church at its end.

A cross-governmental St Kilda Foreshore Committee was established in 1909. It set out to enhance the entertainment aspect of the area. The construction of Luna Park and the Palais de Danse confirmed St Kilda’s identity as Melbourne’s entertainment centre. In particular, the St Kilda Hill area transformed from a place of established gentility to one of impermanence and mobility, with many former mansions converted to guesthouses and hotels.
Carlo Catani, a founding member of the Foreshore Committee and eventually Chief Engineer, envisaged the area in the style of a European resort, complete with a split level esplanade, amusement, dance halls, theatre,  bowling and a French-Italian style of landscape treatment, complete with palms, succulents, exotic conifers and hedges interspersed with native plants, such as Banksias, Tea trees and Casuarinas. The Committee’s work acted as a catalyst for private investment in the area, which secured St Kilda’s position as the pre-eminent beachside resort of the broader metropolis. The interwar years saw a decline in the use of St Kilda’s facilities, due to recession, lesser amounts of disposable income and, ultimately, the emergence of the private car, which allowed people to seek recreation and enjoy coastal regions further out of Melbourne. Existing modes of entertainment were infiltrated with less savoury activities, such as bootlegging, drugs and prostitution. St Kilda’s reputation and the state of its facilities sank. Hotels closed and the area was largely left with substandard accommodation.

In the 1930s, however, new coffee lounges, an ice skating rink and the first mixed sea baths added interest and the following ten years experienced St Kilda as a major centre for entertainment and youth culture: increased facilities and the availability of affordable accommodation, such as furnished flats, attracted young people, artists and entertainers to resettle into the area. The population size was further enhanced by a influx of postwar migrants from Eastern Europe, bringing with it the cosmopolitan cuisine, culture and ambience St Kilda became famous for.

St Kilda breakwater was constructed in the mid 1950s primarily to host yachting events for the 1956 Olympic Games, but also to provide a mooring location for boats. It was further extended in 1998. 1965 saw the construction of the St Kilda marina, responding to the increasing need for moorings for pleasure craft. The original breakwater was extended further in 1998.

Residential flat development proliferated in the 1950s and 1960s. This added to the intense urban feel of the area, but many developments were of a modest standard, detracting from St Kilda’s residential amenity as well as its resort ambience. Moreover, Melburnians were offered a broader choice of entertainment and recreation venues, including an increased amount of accessible beaches, parks and reserves. Greater mobility turned people’s recreational interests elsewhere. The St Kilda breakwater facilities fell into decline. The original sea baths closed down and the building came to house a range of dank, dark and dreary venues of dubious repute, culminating in a notorious rough period in the 1980s. Conversely, a whole new subculture was emerging in the area, integrating creative people — artists, writers, artisans and students. Their diversity and stimulation from the area’s diversity forged a vibrant social and cultural climate, integrated with a continued cosmopolitan ambience which, undoubtedly, they also contributed to.

Most recently, cross-governmental efforts have again helped restore St Kilda’s role as an entertainment centre, catalysing investment and remaking the area into an increasingly desirable place to live and visit. Substantial landscape improvement works took place already in the 1980s. Furthermore, the infilling and redevelopments of the various civic elements, the continuous addition of cultural experience resonates in the area’s form, eclectic mix of people and activities and its historic layering of space and time that together make its fundamental identity and image.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Retain St Kilda’s mixed use character as an essential defining of its urbanity.
- Promote a horizontal and vertical mix of uses rather than single, designated use, particularly in commercial streets and entertainment areas.
- Respect the rich cultural ecology St Kilda has sustained.
Fashionable Fitzroy Street from the Yacht Club Historic photograph.

The Upper and Lower Esplanade Historic photograph.

West St Kilda from the Yacht Club Historic photograph.

The Gardens Historic photograph.

The gardens modeled the St Kilda technique with the style of European sources, partly inspired by French 19th-century gardens. The concept of using pools, mazes, fountains, and pathways along the beachfront dates back to its influence.
St Kilda has a threefold function within the Capital City and metropolitan Melbourne:

Firstly, it is a leisure destination, where people come to socialise, absorb the ambience and interact with the sea—by it bathing, seeking in the sun, fishing, boating, promenading, walking, cycling, downing alfresco drinking quietly at the edge of the distance. Being at the junction of colliding urban grids, it is easily accessible by car from all directions, with a number of streets arriving at its edges. Ferries further enhance accessibility across the Bay, a substantial number of tram routes into the city and to its northern and eastern suburbs and there is a possibility for temporary docking for private boats at St Kilda Harbour. St Kilda’s role as a leisure destination is strengthened by the capacity to attract visitors to the area—the Foreshore is of national and international tourism importance. In addition, the many private ventures around the Foreshore provide work for many people in a range of jobs, contributing significantly to Melbourne’s economy.

Secondly, and importantly, St Kilda is a place of residence by choice for people who do not wish to part with it, but rather be its part. This is a heterogeneous mix of people from varied walks of life and stages in their lives, leading cosmopolitan, urban lives, doing ordinary things in an extraordinary environment and by their very being there and by supporting local culture and businesses, attract others to visit.

Finally, St Kilda is a busy thoroughfare between Melbourne City and its southern suburbs. Apart from commerce in private vehicles and people enjoying a weekend seaside drive, it carries large volumes of truck traffic, servicing the industrial areas of Dandenong, Springvale and the Western Port and the Port of Melbourne, and interstate via connecting highways from the city.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Create an equitable balance between residents, everyday needs and tourist attractions.
- Manage through traffic, particularly on Jacka Boulevard and residential streets.
- Reorient St Kilda as the terminus based on its threefold role: residential, leisure and entertainment, and marine recreation uses.


The Place
Apart from its people, its setting and its culture, the physical characteristics of the Foreshore are key ingredients of the ‘St Kildaness’ of the area, reflecting and interpreting its quality and evolving a special, dynamic sense of place and evolution.

Key attractors and their relationships

St Kilda Foreshore has a myriad of attractions on and off the water, each with its own specific quality. Day and night, across the seasons, they always make for a rich experience. Many attractors are visually and culturally iconic elements, which define St Kilda as a special place in common consciousness.

Fitzroy Street and Acland Street mark the edges of St Kilda Hill and interlink via Upper Esplanade, which its Sunday Market and the Esplanade Hotel entail. Fitzroy Street is the formal Foreshore entry boulevard, lined with trees, good restaurants and guest accommodation. Acland Street combines a local shopping centre function with established coffee houses and iconic specialty shops within a colourful and quirky streetscape ambience.

The entire St Kilda entertainment complex—Craigmie Park, Palace Theatre and Palais Nightclub—is clustered below the hill at the meeting point of Acland Street and Upper Esplanade. It fronts the string of public gardens that stretch across the former Foreshore area from Point Park Reserve across Catani Gardens to the West Beach nature project and forms the backdrop to the Beach.

The Beach itself—its broad expanse and its Foreshore Promenades, the Pier and Harbour, the waterfront clubs, sea baths and restaurants—is the attractor that sets St Kilda Foreshore apart from other Melbourne areas of entertainment and social activity. It provides opportunities for a day of leisure—which include water-based activities, people-watching, and refreshments, arts and culture—and for extending the stay into the night, with a transformed ambience and culture.

Within the Foreshore area, community assets and facilities have been developed and maintained for the benefit of the community. Local and grass roots community organisations are recognised as contributors to the history, culture and urban amenity of the Foreshore environment. The role of community groups, and their continued use of community assets and facilities should be preserved and protected.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:
• Support the characteristic differentiation of existing attractors.
• Retain the visual and conceptual status of recognised St Kilda icons.
• Introduce new features that upgrade and complement existing areas and have potential as future icons to interpret the culture and architecture of this century.
• Create linkages between attractors considering their actual need to interconnect rather than attempting to categorically interlink them all.
• Promote and protect the role of community groups and the continued possibility for them to use community assets and facilities.
ANALYSIS

Plan structure

Map references: Fig. 11: Street grids and plan structure, Fig. 12: Urban grids.

St Kilda’s plan structure is composed of four basic elements: (i) street grids, (ii) a dense pattern of blocks and sites within the grids, (iii) the sweeping main street arches of Fitzroy Street–Upper Esplanade–Carlisle Street and Beaconsfield Parade–Jacka Boulevard–Marine Parade, and (iv) the open Foreshore area, whose detached edifices of various sizes—pavilion buildings—appear as independent objects.

The plan structure dates back to St Kilda’s earliest days of settlement and follows the structure of the local landscape. The street grid was laid out in the 1830s at an angle to the main grid of Melbourne’s eastern suburbs to align with the shoreline, which created the distinct triangular forms of St Kilda proper. A divided Esplanade appeared soon after, as well as Shakespeare Grove, albeit originally lined by an open drain. Jacka Boulevard, St Kilda Pier and both the St Kilda West and Elwood grids were in place by the end of the 19th century, replacing former swamplands. Catani Gardens and associated parklands appear in early 1920s maps.

The original plan structure has remained remarkably intact. Urban evolution and development has primarily occurred within its frame, only slightly modifying the basic elements. The founding urban design concept is obviously robust and adaptable. The properties and relationships of its basic elements—along with St Kilda’s iconic buildings—are strong enough to hold past urban memory, while change and innovation can add layers to enrich the contents of the urban fabric.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Retain the fundamental qualities, proportions and relationships of the basic elements of St Kilda’s plan structure as essential contributors to its urban identity and sense of place.
- Direct innovation and urban renewal to occur within the bounds of the basic elements to add to the quality and content of St Kilda’s urban fabric, experience and livability.
ANALYSIS

FIG. 12

Oblique aerial photograph of St Kilda.

St Kilda's plan structure and basic urban patterns have been significantly altered by urban centres and development.

URBAN GROWTH
Built form typology

Map reference: Fig. 15 Building pattern
See also: Opportunity 15—Fig. 28: Illustrative 3D model of St Kilda.

Built heights vary from one to sixteen stories at St Kilda Foreshore. The predominant height varies in between two and four stories regardless of building use, and buildings from different uses have different story heights, which visually even out the parapet and rooflines in the streetscape. This condition creates a distinctly horizontal, linear built form image across the urban Foreshore, which reflects and emphasizes the typical linear organization and three-dimensional structure of the Foreshore landscape.

On Beach Road and Upper Esplanade, the basic, low-rise height datum is punctuated by high-rise residential towers. These towers form higher built form and visual nodes for the Framework area. On public land, culturally and historically significant, iconic buildings and structures—Palais Theatre, Luna Park, the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron building, clock tower, cenotaph and Marina Lighthouse—stand out from the prevailing built forms, due to their height and (or) distinct built form image in comparison with their surroundings. Building in space is a common building type characteristic of the St Kilda Foreshore. It will be important to implement future building heights and forms that do not interfere with views to these landmark buildings and structures.

The edge of Beaconsfield Parade features buildings from one to sixteen stories, with a predominant height range of two to four stories. The edge of Marine Parade features buildings from one to thirteen stories, with a predominant height range of one to three stories. Beaconsfield Parade has proportionally more tall buildings than Marine Parade, which only houses a single tower of thirteen stories within the Framework area.

The edges of Upper Esplanade and Alfred Square have a varied range of building heights, ranging from one to fifteen stories. Those between one and four stories are most common, but the considerably bulk of the taller buildings make them visually dominant.

Building heights at the absolute beachfront range between one and three stories, with the two Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron buildings as the tallest forms. Current built heights at the St Kilda Triangle site and adjoining Luna Park are equal to five or six standard stories.

Fitzroy and Acland Street are technically not parts of the Framework area, but are important entry corridors with a consistent built form typology, and so influence perceptions of the Foreshore built form image. Acland Street has numerous buildings that are set back from the street edge, which is consistent with the predominant pattern of the Foreshore public realm. Acland Street is also proportionally wider and has capable of taking greater stories.

Tall buildings can cause substantial overshadowing of surrounding properties and the public realm as well as wind turbulence and downdrafts in exposed areas, such as St Kilda Foreshore. To avoid such harmful impacts on the Foreshore public realm, it will be important to implement future building heights that will not further overshadow Upper Esplanade, the St Kilda Triangle site, or the beachfront beyond Beach Road.

While the buildings on Fitzroy and Acland Street are typically attached to form continuous facades at the street edge, the buildings on Beach Road and Upper Esplanade are detached, and these are the absolute beachfront free standing in space.

There are three types of relationship between the buildings and street edge along Beach Road and Upper Esplanade: Most of the premodern and early modern residential apartments and individual houses feature a wall at the street edge and a minor setback and front garden to the building. This is the predominant pattern. The modern tower buildings are typically free standing and not back from the street, so they cannot gain garden amenities and car parking spaces.

The two commercial buildings along these streets are typically attached at the street edge. The façades are predominantly continuous, except for occasional setbacks. The two commercial buildings along these streets are typically attached at the street edge. The façades are predominantly continuous, except for occasional setbacks.

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St Kilda Foreshore contains buildings from all its stages of development, representing architectural styles from the Federation through the Interwar period to Postwar and late twentieth century developments. Consequently, there is no single St Kilda style of building, but rather a mix of styles is typical and unique to this area. While some distinctive elements of buildings may be common to or evocative of St Kilda's resort origins and ambience, some important features of its urban architecture are the rich presence of characteristic design responses, materials and details from each period, and the varied, visually interesting elements they bring together. Design innovation has been a significant factor throughout the building of St Kilda. This particularly relates to the building of flats—St Kilda contains a greater variety of flats than any other Melbourne suburb, and is a virtual showcase of the history and development of the type from early days to the present.

It will be important to retain the cultural and visual richness, design quality and innovative spirit of the built fabric in any future development within the Framework area.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Retain and enhance the distinctively horizontal built form image across the Foreshore area and the level differentiation between Upper Esplanade and the Lower Esplanade through built form.
- Generally determine preferred heights by dimension rather than by number of stories.
- Continue the current built heights along Fitzroy and Acland Streets to maintain their differentiation of character and ambience.
- Determine local heights at the entertainment complex—the St Kilda Triangle site—so as not to undermine the iconic landmark status of Palais Theatre and Luna Park.
- Set the height datum on Beaconsfield Parade, Upper Esplanade and Marine Parade, according to predominant parapet and rooftop heights, allowing for a sufficient number of stories for residential buildings to justify the construction of lifts.
- Implement future building heights and forms so that they do not interfere with views to recognized scenic, landscape, buildings and structures and their continued visual and contextual value.
- Maintain the low-rise character of the absolute beachfront, with the possible exception of increased height around St Kilda Marina for significantly contributing buildings and at the Yacht Squadron to create a stronger termination for the Fitzroy Street vista.
- Unify street edge conditions along Beaconsfield Parade, Upper Esplanade and Marine Parade by infill building and (or) construction of visually sympathetic walls at street edge boundaries of sites.
- Retain and enhance the cultural and visual richness, design quality and innovative spirit of building in any future development within the Framework area.
The unique combination of topographic conditions, plan structure, built form typology and, significantly, a location at the interface of land and sea, creates a distinct view structure for St Kilda Foreshore. Its alternating combinations of spatially confined street vistas and expansive sea views make for a much more complex visual experience than can be had in any inland situation—and in the ordering of views by conspicuously identifying buildings differentiation is readily seen from any other inner Melbourne locations.

The views are modulated by the hillcrest, which first directs them to the sky and only then to the coastal panorama of the sea eventually unfolding to extensive seaside scenery at the edge of the urban fabric.

Important opportunities for glimpsed vignettes of the Foreshore include the view beside Palais Theatre terminating at the Marina Lighthouse, the view down Fawkner Street terminating at Palais Theatre and the view down Victoria Street towards the Sea Baths.

Direct vista termination points are otherwise sparse in St Kilda Foreshore. View chains along Upper Esplanade and Palais Boulevard, in particular, are terminated by buildings—particularly terraced housing that obscures views from the beachfront. Moreover, the only locations for any significant vista termination is around the intersection of Upper Esplanade–Acland Street–Carlisle Street and at the edges of Luna Park, where differently orientated street grids collide.

While the natural elevation and belvedere shape of Upper Esplanade provide wonderful views towards the bay, these are undermined by a poor topographic definition of street's ground plane, heavy balustrades and shrubby vegetation, as well as the lack of any public seating to enjoy the view. Alfred Square, once a prime location for enjoyment of the seascape, is similarly made redundant as a viewing place by the screening balustrade and vegetation. Full sea views currently open up only at the absolute beachfront, which also has a variety of purpose-built viewing areas to experience them, such as those set within the lava rock walls, the Catani Arch and the platforms at West Beach—once the circular platforms that step down to the sand along the beachfront promenade can be used for this purpose.

Views and intimate views back to the land from the sea are particularly absent at the mid-point of St Kilda Pier, a 360° view displays in sequence all the visual elements that define the inner Melbourne cityscape and conceptually set its landscape frame—You Yangs, Williamstown, Middle Harbour, West Gate Bridge, Webb Dock, Port Melbourne, CBD buildings, St Kilda Road, South Melbourne, St Kilda pier, Brighton and, finally, the Port Phillip Bay horizon. While the full marine experience—sea breezes, scents and sounds—integrates St Kilda with the sea itself, the prominent views to polluted areas of the urban context may uniquely interact with it in its broader—and originating—urban context.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Enhance the intrinsic complexity of the view structure as an essential part of the St Kilda experience and ambience, providing for direct views for orientation purposes, as well as anticipatory views for sense of anticipation and discovery.
- Protect and enhance the visual landmark status of iconic buildings and structures and create an improved visual image for existing conspicuous buildings of lesser iconic or design quality.
- Maximize the identifying and organizing potential of existing vista termination points and consider creating new ones at key locations, such as the St Kilda Triangle site.
- Reopen views from Upper Esplanade to the sea by reinstalling a more transparent balustrade and tree vegetation management.
- Ensure the continued provision of both exposed and secluded viewing places along the beachfront.
- Promote the unifying panoramic view from the mid point of St Kilda Pier.
- Provide opportunities at key points to provide additional, delightful visual experiences of the Foreshore and views back to land.
Public spaces network

Much of St Kilda Foreshore is public space, set against a private building backdrop, with streets, squares, parklands and the Beach all contributing components to the network. West Beach north end, St Kilda Pier entry area and Marina Reserve are at key structural points within the system. They articulate the length of the Foreshore into two physically and functionally distinct sections and mark its landscape limits. West Beach north end, end of Mississippi Street, Sea Baths, the St Kilda Triangle site and the VegOut site are at key nodal points of the system for linear continuity and interconnectivity of important parts, while the ends of Cowderoy and Flinders Street, the north entry to Pier Road and all of Shakespeare Grove imply axial connectivity across the Foreshore space.

All these vital places are currently underperforming as components of the public spaces network, due to underdevelopment, movement barriers, which include physical structures and/or private operations, conflicts between transport modes and, significantly, unbalanced pedestrian access across Beach Road, especially at key desire lines. This complex condition causes excess and overcrowding of some components of the Foreshore’s public spaces system and inadequacy of others, detracting from the potential functionality and image of it as a whole—from its potential to constitute an integrated network.

Apart from defined patches of native, coastal vegetation at West Beach, introduced species and traditional, cultivated planting patterns currently dominate public spaces at St Kilda Foreshore. Exotic tree species in parks and boulevards, such as palm trees, figs and cypresses originally placed within meticulously manicured lawns and parterre plantings, evoke a cosmopolitan resort ambience, conceptually linking St Kilda to famous European holiday locations and their associated gardens. Environmentally tolerant New Zealand mirror bushes combine with rock walls throughout the Foreshore to shelter parklands from the sea. Residential streets continue the introduced planting theme, but contrast with the parks and boulevards in containing mostly deciduous species, notably planes and elms. Due to limited tolerance of the current species to the marine environment, the rows of trees within the residential areas, particularly St Kilda Hill, and behind the streets reach the edge of the built fabric.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Strengthen the place-defining, structural role of West Beach north end, St Kilda Pier entry area and Marina Reserve in the open space network through vitalisation of use and improvement of environmental quality and visual image.
- Improve linear interconnectivity between existing public spaces by ensuring pedestrian permeability, attractiveness and visual guidance at key locations—across the VegOut site and St Kilda Triangle site, around the Sea Baths and the end of Flinders Street, between Catani Gardens and West Beach and between Marina Reserve and St Kilda Beach proper.
- Improve cross-connectivity between the built urban fabric and Foreshore proper by (i) re-establishing Shakespeare Grove and the Cowderoy Street–Pier Road link as an attractive pedestrian-oriented axial route and (ii) ensuring safe, convenient pedestrian crossings across Beach Road at key desire lines.
- Concentrate activities at the key nodal points—West Beach north end and West Beach Reserve area, end of Mississippi Street, Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron area, St Kilda Pier entry area, Sea Baths, St Kilda Triangle site, VegOut and Marina Reserve—and retain the functional and visceral template of the Foreshore public spaces.
- Minimise pedestrian conflicts with other modes of transport by (i) decommissioning car parks across Pier Road and (ii) enhancing pedestrian safety at key crossing points (iii) re-establishing the direct walk and cycling role of Pier Road and (iv) redeveloping the tram tracks to maximise capacity for people moving on Foreshore Promenade and access to public transport.
- Facilitate the use of public transport to reconnect close-in intersections with transport nodes and provide safe pedestrian crossings at major traffic stops—where the stop at the intersection of Upper Esplanade, Carlisle Street and Flinders Street is currently partially designed—and (v) providing for improved, continuous tram-based transport.
Foreshore typology

A foreshore is typically a linearly organised environment, comprising geologically and ecologically differentiated zones in alignment with one another and the edge of the water.

St Kilda Foreshore has four such zones: the sea, the beach, the backdune and the promontory—St Kilda Hill. These have been culturally adapted over time, colonised for marine activities, recreation, entertainment and urban living, as well as modified to hold the soil and to make the zones suitable for human purposes.

Adaptation has made the zonal pattern more intricate. Sea walls, rock walls, retaining walls with vaults, paths and roads add to its intricacy and deliberate activities, while piers cutting across the zones enable for interaction between and bring the Foreshore out to the sea.

Urban design principles for St Kilda Foreshore:

- Utilise the characteristic, linear structure of the Foreshore as the ordering mechanism for development and landscape design and articulate the linearity with thematic axes at critically located intersecting streets and piers.

Map reference: Fig. 16. Foreshore spaces.

ANALYSIS

FIG. 16