

Green Space Strategy

West End, Highgate Hill and South Brisbane

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Executive Summary

The peninsula, comprising the suburbs of West End, Highgate Hill and South Brisbane, is projected to grow to a population of 47,620 by 2031; that's more than double its population in 2011. One of the reasons that local residents enjoy about the peninsula is access to quality green space. Already, popular green spaces such as Orleigh Park which provides that highly sought after informal space for picnicking, throwing or kicking a ball, are at capacity at the weekends, when regular park-goers must compete for space with programmed events. By 2031 it is highly likely that the vast majority of residents in the peninsula will be apartment / unit dwellers without private gardens. For these reasons and more, it is critical that the peninsula provides an adequate supply of quality green space to meet increasing demand.

The Kurilpa Precinct Area cannot deliver the 12.32ha green space required for its projected 11,000 population due to a lack of space, so let's support a green space strategy that can deliver the equivalent amount of quality green space not only in the development area, but also across the entire peninsula. This approach should be applied to other development areas in the neighbourhood, thus delivering this community the same benefits as in any new growth area in the city.

The strategy shows that we can build an additional 11 hectares of great open spaces throughout the peninsula's streets, verges and unused crown lands. These are the kinds of public realms that we find in the great, walkable cities of the world like Paris, where every space is valued. Some of these 11 hectares can be planned to supplement development in the Kurilpa Area right now. For example, the Hampstead Common area would deliver 3 hectares with no loss of private land or movement area required for roads.

In the bigger picture, the peninsula will require a total of 26 hectares of new green spaces, at modest rate, say, of 0.55 hectares per 1000 residents (new development areas actually require 1.12 hectares) in order to provide for 47,620 residents by 2031. Aside from green space creation, we can also remediate the weed infested waterways, and repair the aged walkways and bikeways of the neighbourhood using the balance shortfall of funds dedicated to parks and open spaces through these planned and forecasted development contributions.

Section 1 - Overview

Purpose

Why do we need a strategy?

- Increased population projections
- Currently no green space plan to meet increasing demand
- Under allocation of parks
- Rapid pace of development

Who does the strategy serve?

- Residents and workers of West End, Highgate Hill and South Brisbane
- Visitors to the area
- The business community, including developers
- Local and state government agencies

Introduction

The West End, Highgate Hill and the South Brisbane peninsula is a model of urban living for the rest of Queensland and Australia. There are probably only a handful of other places that have the diversity of people, housing, work, culture and city landscape that characterises this neighbourhood. However, this vibrant and dynamic character is currently under threat from urban policies.

Currently there is no plan for the peninsula that tells the community how the impending buildings, traffic and people will be properly accommodated; nor how water, energy or heat gain will be sustainably dealt with. There is no plan to show how a dense city neighbourhood is to provide for green spaces and active public realms. This open space strategy is a primer for the community, business and government to endorse an integrated plan that provides real, new green spaces.

Section 2 – Background

Recent history of open spaces in West End Peninsula

The West End peninsula has not fared well in regards to open space and the public realm in the last twenty years. During this period, despite a dramatic increase in population, there has been little increase in the provision of park or public space, not since Boundary Street was renovated in the early 1990's.

The only major public space improvement in the 2000's has been the Melbourne Street Boulevard, which provides little useable space, is not really considered by local residents to be within the 'Kurilpa' neighbourhood and is more associated with the expansion of the city into Southbank. Both the Melbourne Street Boulevard and the Boundary Street landscape works have become neglected due to insufficient ongoing maintenance. Brisbane City Council (BCC) as the largest local authority in Australia appears to have little appetite to implement strategic policy about the public realm, particularly in regard to local and district parks.

When it comes to suburban centres, it appears that once BCC have redeveloped a suburb's main street, that's the end of that neighborhood's share of the public realm kitty. The West End Peninsula has three other active main streets, that of Hardgrave Road, Gladstone Road, and the emerging Montague Road. None of these main streets have received any public improvements over the last twenty years, apart from street tree planting. It is apparent that there is a poor level of urban place infrastructure (including furniture, public art, trees and garden beds) in the existing main street precincts. It is therefore difficult to imagine a high level of public space improvements will be provided in the post-industrial areas.

In Brisbane new development in the suburbs must contribute at least 10% public open space in each new site, and usually up to 20% on a variety of public spaces and parks within larger housing areas. When new suburban subdivisions are created, these places are required to create a system of integrated parks and walkways of differing sizes and needs. The developers who have built the houses and units for the thousands of new residents in The West End Peninsula over the last twenty years have not built the required percentage of new public space. The funds that should have been set aside for public space appear to have been diverted to BCC general revenue to fund expensive infrastructure schemes such as major road infrastructure.

The new high-rise developments contribute little to the public realm in the neighbourhood, since the main goal is to create secure, semi-private internally landscaped precincts. Even when a developer wants to contribute to the public realm this is generally not encouraged. For example, several years ago when a developer wanted to build an active street edge with an arbor in The West End Peninsula, Council deterred the works, because Council's works department did not want to maintain it.

In the most recent local area plans, new parks were identified to be created to provide for the increasing population. Council sought to buy the land for one pocket park on the corner of Vulture and Thomas Streets. The community had to fight to retain this space due to development industry pressure. On the Absoe site, a park was identified, however developers are targeting these open space allocations to become privatised open spaces in the form of plazas which are controlled in time and use by landholders.



The Absoe site fronting Boundary Street



How the space for a public park on the Absoe site could be easily made, as planned in the local area plan

Open spaces planned in the Kurilpa Precinct

BCC's recent Kurilpa Master Plan 'generously' gives us park and riverfront that we already enjoy. Whilst the notion to create higher quality parkland is to be commended, council has no track record of delivering this through twenty years of urban growth in this neighbourhood. This is despite the fact that Council has delivered significant new parkland areas of quality in other areas of the city over the last 15 years such as Rocks Riverside Park at Seventeen Mile Rocks and Calamvale District Park.

The proposed population of the whole Kurilpa Precinct Plan is 22000 residents and 8000 workers, irrespective of the new population in the other two thirds of the peninsula. The whole of South Brisbane peninsula is estimated to now grow to an additional 17,734 people by 2031. This equates to 19 ha of open space using BCC standards of 1.12 ha per 1000 residents (reference City Plan 2014).

The Kurilpa Precinct is 25 ha and, with a projected resident population of 11,000, the site alone should provide 12.3 ha of park and open space based on 1.12 ha per 1000 residents). Currently, only 1.3 ha of new parks are proposed. This is on top of the existing 2.3 ha which makes up the Riverside Drive parklands providing for current residents.

As such, we should not unreasonably expect much larger parks of up to 12 ha, just within the plan area, or at least one continuous waterfront parkland the same width as Orleigh Park nearby to the east (this park is 60 metres wide from river to road), best spread equally across the three large industrial sites.

The land to the west of the large industrial sites comprise many smaller lots and landowners. Open spaces will not be easily delivered in these places, except for retail earning plazas owned privately and fronting active streets. These are not considered public space since they are privately regulated, as is soft landscape comprising body corporate areas within apartment complexes.

Streets for living

Montague road is already showing signs of peak traffic congestion, even before the additional estimated 70,000 additional vehicles which are likely from the population of the new plan areas. The proposed plan shows a four lane road, however there is no space for that road to continue beyond the plan area, and congestion is highly likely as that road transitions back to two lanes at the rail bridge and when it meets Mollison Street. There is no system to allow cyclists to move safely beyond Montague Road and toward South Brisbane.

The plan area needs a street layout commensurate to its intended population. Only a grid of streets are likely to provide the release necessary to avoid massive congestion. These streets need to be configured as boulevards to provide streets for living and to provide adjunct public open space to help remediate the large shortfall in the plan. Montague Road, as the main distributor, could have a central parkway to provide for a range of open space activities, and should be 40 metres wide to allow for all the transit and pedestrian uses, as well as to scale back the increased height of buildings and provide access to sunlight.

Improving open space provision in the Kurilpa Plan

The new open spaces in the Kurilpa Plan area do not need to be highly programmed as per the current masterplan. We already have one Southbank with extensive adjunct event spaces and, across the river, the Botanic Gardens and Roma street gardens, both highly programmed for events. A continuous and broad open space corridor the width of Southbank would enlarge and improve the current riverside parklands to provide more large lawns for kicking a ball, with big shade trees and plentiful picnic spots. Orleigh Park is the perfect model for the Kurilpa Plan open space corridor. Residents want places where they can walk, relax and meet. They don't need a tourism park, just breathing spaces to relax within the city.



The streets in the peninsula are highly used open spaces which residents use and enjoy

Section 3 – The Strategy

Strategy principles

- Community inspired
- Flood resilience
- Delivers minimum open space provisions (e.g. 0.55 hectares per 1000 residents (new development areas actually require 1.12 hectares)).
- Open space located within easy walking distance (say 400m) of every resident in the peninsula
- High quality, useable open space
- Funded program of open space implementation

Where can the open space be made?

The whole of the peninsula has a shortfall of open space, so the increased density of the Kurilpa Point site can be compensated by direct funding, through infrastructure and open space contributions, for other nearby areas needing parks.

Highgate Hill has the biggest shortfall of open space, being the densest population area currently. One idea is to convert Hampstead Road, in the centre of Highgate Hill, into a parkway: its wide road reserve can allow a kilometre of north facing linear parklands, whilst still maintaining the current vehicular movements. Hampstead Common, as it could be named, would be one of a number of parkways created out of unused crown land and road reserves. Hampstead Common on its own could provide for 3 ha of park and open space in this manner. This would provide nearly a third of the shortfall open space from the Kurilpa Point Plan (3 of the 11 hectares that are currently not provided in the plan).

Hampstead Common is an idea developed within the West End community over a number of years, in consultation with adjacent residents and arising from community led workshops. The concept has broad acceptance in the community and would be a precedent for new parkways in the area. Parkway could be built on any wide road reserve. Montague Road in its entirety would also provide a significant area of urban open space in this manner. To enable this to happen, BCC has to take leadership in the progressive construction of co-ordinated spaces. An urban movements strategy is needed to create an integrated system allowing pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and vehicles to move easily and safely through the precinct as a whole.

Opportunities

- Destination Boulevards
- Travel-way Boulevards
- Green Links
- Pocket Parks
- Improved Riverside Park
- Edible Streets / Parks
- Community Gardens

Destination Boulevards

These are vibrant pedestrian oriented streets located in mixed use centres (combined residential, entertainment, commercial and retail areas). They include a high level of detailing and quality of finishes and materials in all street components from ground level to the third

floor including building facades. The streetscape is located on a minimum verge width of 6.5-metres that includes furniture, pavements, garden beds and colourful sub-tropical trees. Horticultural structures such as arbors, trellises and pergolas are acceptable. Trees are planted at regular intervals to create avenues and are provided with a soil volume of at least 15 cubic metres per tree (soil cell technology is likely under road and footpath pavements). These boulevards are maintained to the highest standard, including irrigation.

Travel-way Boulevards

These are comfortable and delightful mixed traffic corridors with iconic subtropical flowering trees and predominantly mown grass verges (minimum 4 metres wide) with broom finish concrete paths. Garden beds are kept to a minimum and are located at key intersections and other travel crossing paths only. Public transport and private motor vehicles dominate the movements but active transport (walking and cycling) is also catered.

Green Links

These are local movement corridors with significant offerings to pedestrians including minimum 5 metre wide verges and continuous tree or awning shade plus garden beds and street furniture. Regular safe crossing points are provided via 'zebra crossings' or traffic signals. Green links include the following sub-categories:

- 1) **Parkways** – Streets that allow connections to nearby district parks and the river. They may include centre median planting where the existing street width allows.
- 2) **Edible Streets** – Streets where the verges are planted with an edible landscaping component where it is safe to do so. Edible streets connect directly with the West End State School (where a school garden is currently located) and potentially other local schools.



Street verges planted with fruit trees



The Hampstead community orchard: a stepping stone to a larger park common



context



now



water sensitive

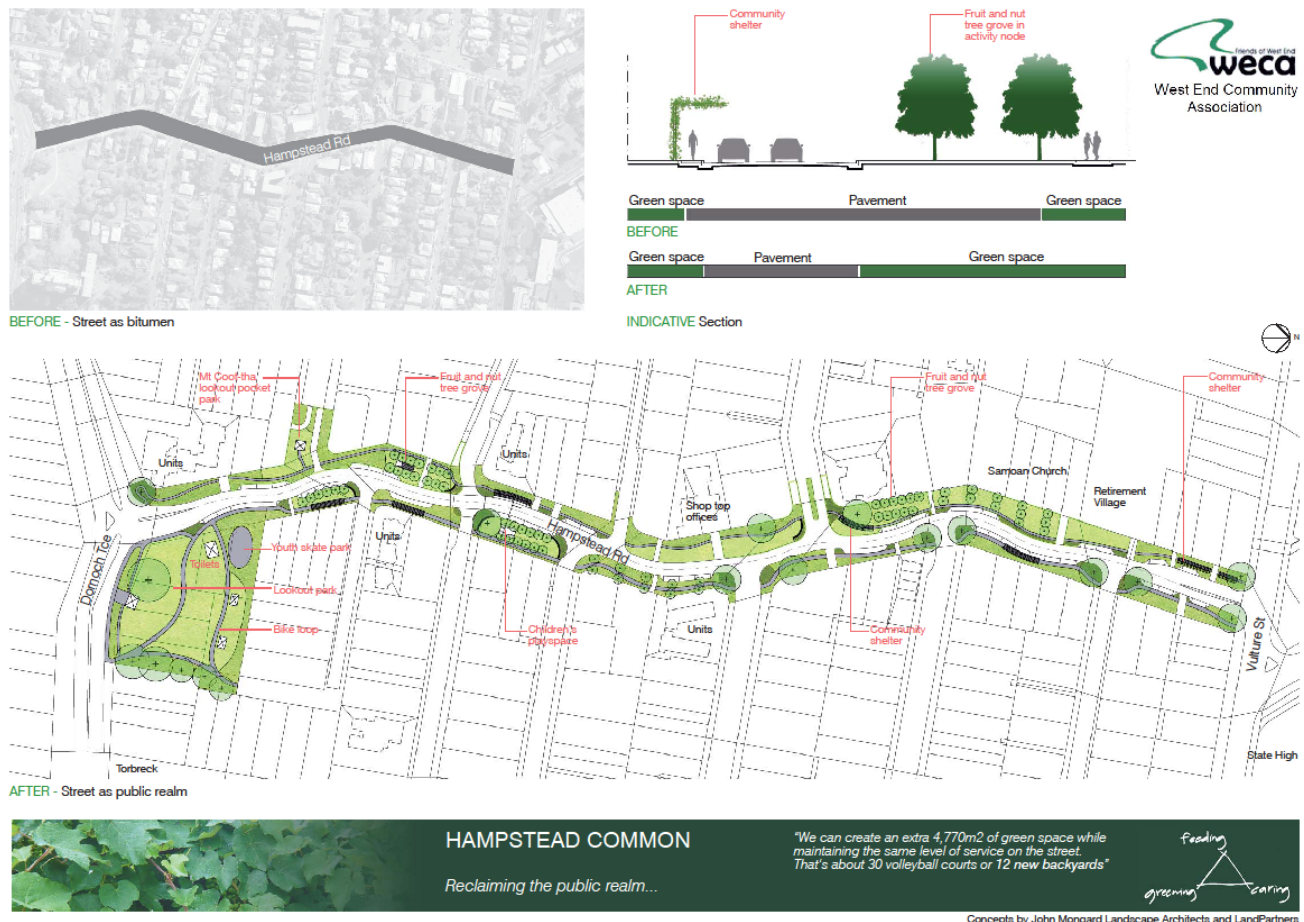


urban design



reclaiming the road - vine shelters

These vine shelters provide multiple uses – shade, seating and food



Concept plan for Hampstead Common

Pocket Parks

Micro sized green oases catering to local residents and workers within walkable distances (up to 400 metres). They are typically underused left over spaces located on the road reserve that do not serve any transport needs. These spaces provide opportunities to create cool, shady tree-lined places with outdoor furniture, garden beds and community gathering space. New pocket parks include:

- 1) **End of Street Parklets** – these are places where a cul-de-sac or single lane through-way is created to allow most of the road reserve (including the asphalt pavement) to be transformed into much needed green space.
- 2) **River Pocket Parks** – these are exciting mini parks that typically connect to West End Riverside Park on the Milton Reach. They provide an elevated vantage for local residents and workers to enjoy the river-scape. These are end of street facilities that extend the riverside open space into surrounding street network.
- 3) **Merivale Viaduct Undercroft** – this space, identified in Brisbane City Council's *Kurilpa Master Plan* (2014), is transformed into a series of interconnected arts and youth spaces.



The stage and goanna on boundary street, west end: a pocket park on a 150m² area of road

BCC could create a pocket park strategy targeting all the unused crown lands, and this could provide for some of the 8 remaining hectares shortfall of open space provision. Unused road space can be reclaimed all around the peninsula, creating small, urban gathering places in the manner of the reclaimed road plaza at the goanna sculpture and fig tree on Boundary and Russell Streets. This plaza takes up only 150m² of space in the road. Twenty of these small public plazas would add 3000m² of urban public open space to the peninsula.

Improved Riverside Park

West End Riverside Park, extending from Forbes Street to Bouquet Street, is enhanced with high quality facilities such as public toilets, outdoor gym and recreational equipment (gym stations, outdoor table tennis, basket ball half courts and the like), seating and shelters to cater for the high density residential population that is emerging west of Montague Road in addition to the existing residents and workers.

New Parks

Within the Kurilpa Precinct the parkland widens to a minimum of 100 metres and is edge by medium rise towers with Montague Road behind. East of Montague Road taller towers could be located. This is a similar development pattern to the Southbank/Grey Street area.

At the ACI glass site the parkland extends to Montague Road to create an industrial heritage park that conserves the existing emissions towers, the administration building, the electrical substation and other important items. The existing milk factory (owned by Parmalat) is transformed into an entertainment complex to replace the aging and poorly located Boondall Entertainment Centre.

Other new parks include:

- An extension to Davies Park (this has been investigated by BCC)
- Thomas & Vulture Street Park
- The Absoe site park
- Pradella development area park.

Community Gardens

The West End community has compensated for Council's failure to provide open space by creating a number of community run gardens. These include Paradise Street Community Garden, the Jane Street Community garden, and The Hampstead community orchard. These spaces are created from unused crown land.

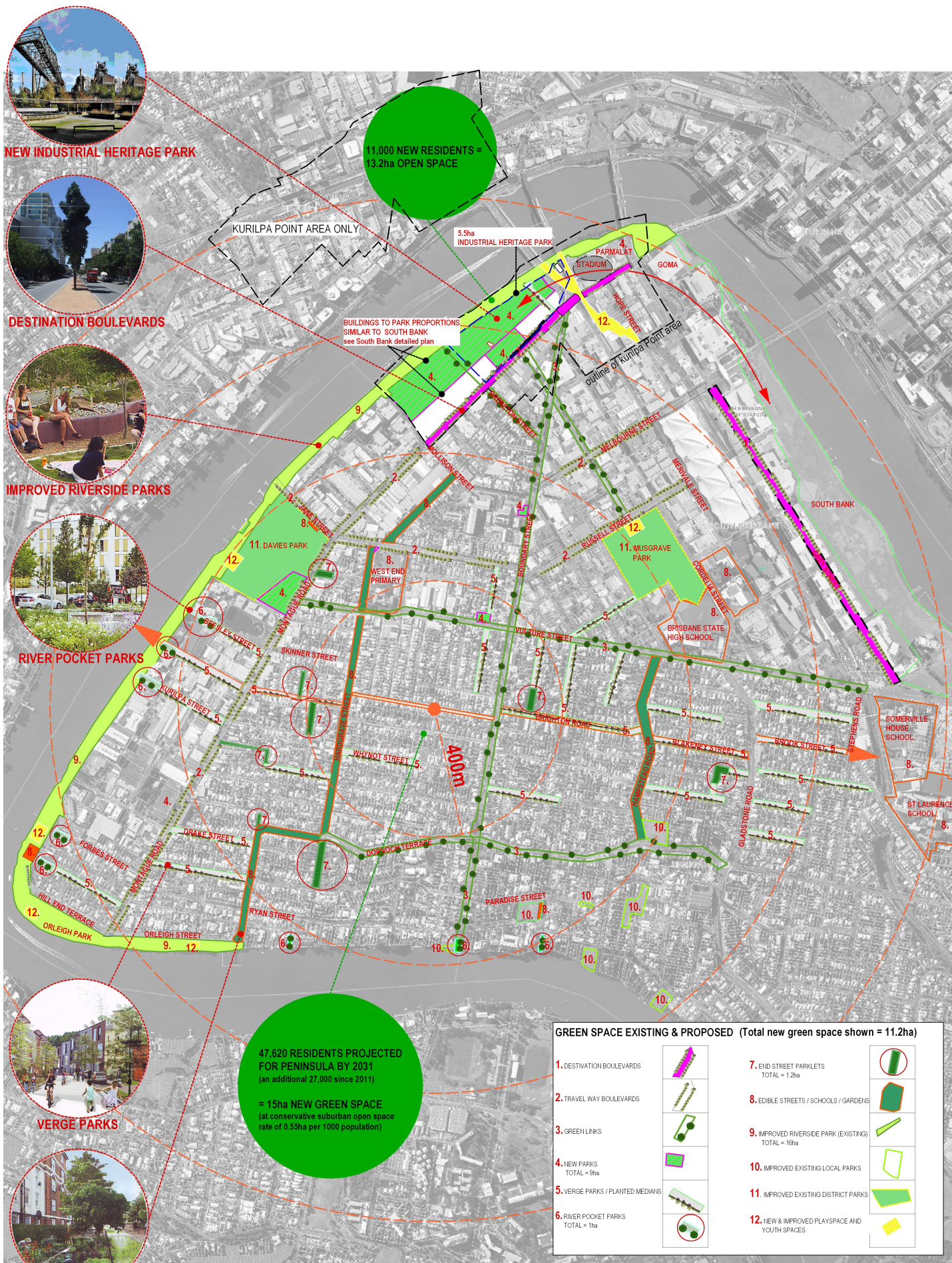


Jane Street Community Garden, West End: designed, built and maintained by local residents

Conclusion

This strategy details many opportunities to upscale the green space offering throughout West End, Highgate Hill and South Brisbane. It includes the creation of new public open spaces on the existing road reserves and through the expansion of parks. It also advocates for the improvement of existing parks in response to the increasing demand. The strategy offers innovative, out-of-the-box solutions that will improve the lives of existing future resident workers, visitors and business people in the area.

Appendix 1 – Drawings



GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

WEST END, HIGHGATE HILL & SOUTH BRISBANE

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