

Revised report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.3****Opportunities to deliver new public open space for Southbank****7 May 2024****Presenter:** David Callow, Director Parks and City Greening**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of activity and actions to secure new public open space in Southbank. The report seeks approval of the Normanby Road Reserve expansion project (Attachment 2 of report from management) as the priority approach to creating new public open space for the Southbank community.
2. Major Initiative 16 Increase public open space (MI16) in the Council Plan 2021–25 includes an action to secure new open space in Southbank. The Council Plan sets a target of an additional 1.1 hectares of open space in Southbank by 2025.
3. A budget of \$20 million for acquisition in 2021–22 and \$5 million for park development in 2022–23, fully funded by the Public Open Space Reserve, was included in the Budget in 2021. This action is consistent with the Open Space Strategy 2012, which identified a need for additional open spaces in Southbank to service the growing population.
4. Significant progress has been made to deliver and upgrade open spaces in Southbank since the Open Space Strategy 2012 was adopted. This progress is summarised below:
 - 4.1. Transforming Southbank Boulevard, Boyd Park and Kennedy Park have added a combined 1.02 hectares to the Southbank open space network. Of this, 0.44 hectares has been achieved since the 2021 target was set.
 - 4.2. An additional 0.23 hectares (approximate) of open space is either in delivery or has been secured through agreements at Dodds Street Linear Park and Riverside Quay (part of the former Esso House).
 - 4.3. Upgrades to Southbank Promenade (stage 1) and the Kings Way and Moray Street Reserve dog park have been completed and improvement works to the ACCA Forecourt, City Road Park, Miles and Dodds Street Reserve and the Kings Way Northern Undercroft are in the planning phase.
5. The area to the west of Kings Way is the priority area for new open space. Residents in this area currently have limited access to open space within a reasonable walking distance. The only open spaces in this area are the Normanby Road Reserve, Kings Way and Moray Street Reserve (dog park), Yarra Promenade (managed by Crown Casino) and South Wharf Promenade (part of Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre).

Key issues

6. Management has been working to identify and purchase a suitable property to provide new open space in Southbank since the 2021–25 Council Plan was released, with a focus on the western part of the suburb.
7. Investigations into suitability as open space, including valuations, have been undertaken on eight properties. Discussions on purchase price have been held with the owners of four of these properties, and of these, further investigations and negotiations on two are ongoing as of April 2024. Each of these sites would be a 'small local open space' under the Open Space Strategy classification.
8. Securing these properties would not achieve the hectares target for additional open space set out in the Council Plan and would exceed the available budget.
9. Additionally, a high-level feasibility study was prepared in 2021 for decking of the CityLink entrance, in accordance with recommendation L3 of the Southbank Structure Plan 2010. L3 is recommended for discontinuance due to constraints of land ownership, prohibitive cost and structural feasibility. The site is owned by CityLink. Its redevelopment carries a probable cost in excess of \$1.5 billion. The site is also likely to be contaminated and its location on structure places limitations on load, structural penetrations

and tree growing conditions. Given the above matters it is proposed not to proceed with the further evaluation of a deck above CityLink. (See Attachment 3, Briefing Paper South Bank Structure Plan, Recommendation L3, for further detail)

10. Significant additional land for open space in Southbank can be achieved by reclaiming part of the road reserve on Normanby Road. This does not require the purchase of land.
11. The Open Space Strategy identifies the need for the Normanby Road Reserve expansion as well as three new small local open spaces in surrounding blocks west of Kings Way. All are required to serve the existing and forecast community.
12. The Normanby Road Reserve expansion project could deliver a Neighbourhood Open Space of up to 1.2 hectares (an increase from the existing 0.59 hectares), primarily serving residents within a 500 metre walking distance. It would deliver on a priority action in the Open Space Strategy 2012 and would exceed the Council Plan target of 1.1 hectares.
13. The Normanby Road Reserve is unique in Southbank for its access to northern sunlight and its size. No other opportunities in the neighbourhood could achieve a similar size. Its potential size and aspect allows for the future park to provide for a diversity of uses and landscape types. There will be space for play, lawns, extensive plantings, integrated water management features, informal recreation, picnics and community gatherings. Although it is not centrally located to the neighbourhood, it has the potential to be a drawcard and a place for Southbank residents to come together.
14. The preliminary cost estimates to deliver the maximum amount of open space at Normanby Road by reclaiming the whole southern carriageway of Normanby Road is \$22.5 million. The project would take approximately three years to deliver.
15. Management will explore opportunities to secure funding contributions from external sources, including from state government and transport agencies which control much of the surrounding transport infrastructure. The site also abuts the Fishermans Bend Montague precinct (in City of Port Phillip). The draft Making Montague Precinct Implementation Plan identifies ambitions to reclaim road space and the West Gate Freeway undercroft for public use. There may be potential to partner with the Victorian Government to deliver some elements of the future park in this important interface area.
16. Normanby Road is an arterial road. Engagement with and approval of the Department of Transport and Planning would be required.
17. The Southbank community includes vocal and passionate advocates for additional and higher quality open space in Southbank. An allowance for three phases of engagement are proposed in the design program. These phases include: Phase 1: an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the open space vision and input to potential uses of the site to inform the development of a concept plan; Phase 2: engagement on the concept plan to provide feedback on the proposed specific uses and layout, and; Phase 3: public notice and submissions as part of the formal road discontinuance process.

Recommendation from management

18. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 18.1. Approves the Normanby Road Reserve expansion project as the priority approach to creating new public open space in Southbank.
 - 18.2. Notes the planned approach for engagement with the Southbank community and requests a report be presented with a final concept plan to a meeting of the Future Melbourne Committee by June 2025.
 - 18.3. Resolves not to proceed with Southbank Structure Plan 2010 Recommendation L3 – *Prepare a master plan and business case for the decking of the City Link tunnel entrance* (refer Attachment 3 of the report from management) due to constraints of land ownership, structural feasibility and prohibitive cost.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (page 3 of 6)
2. Normanby Road Reserve expansion project extent (page 5 of 6)
3. Feasibility study (page 6 of 6)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications from the recommendation from management.
2. The future discontinuance of part of Normanby Road will be subject to the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA). Council will also need in principle consent from DEECA to the discontinuance and DEECA agreement that any of the road discontinued will be reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and the Council appointed committee of management. Subject to future Council approval of a plan, Council will be required to commence a formal statutory road discontinuance process which will include a public notice in accordance with sections 206 and 223 and clause 3 of Schedule 10 of the LGA. Following the community engagement and hearing of any submissions received, a report will be presented to Council to consider whether or not the Road is reasonably required for public use and the suitability of the discontinuance.

Finance

3. The \$22.5 million estimated cost of the Normanby Road Reserve expansion is almost the full \$25 million allocation for Southbank new open space. Any future opportunities for land acquisition in Southbank would be subject to approval of additional budget either from the Public Open Space Reserve or Council funds.
4. The Public Open Space Reserve balance as of 31 March 2024 is \$92.9 million. It is forecast to be \$92.7 million at end of financial year, including project expenditure and forecast income from contributions. The four-year financial forecast, which assumes full expenditure of the Major Initiative 16 projects, estimates the balance at \$22.5 million at end of 2026–27.

Conflict of interest

5. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report

Health and Safety

6. Increasing the provision of public open space directly and indirectly benefits the health and wellbeing of the community and makes an important contribution to social and environmental resilience of the City of Melbourne. This is especially the case in heavily urbanised areas such as Southbank, where it can be difficult to find areas of relative quiet and green respite.
7. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

8. Stakeholder engagement has occurred at the Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee in March 2022, May 2022 and February 2024. The Committee has made useful suggestions and identified potential challenges, including the location of Normanby Road Reserve being not centrally located relative to the neighbourhood. The Committee will be further engaged throughout the project, including on the development of a community engagement plan.
9. A community engagement plan will be developed to map out an extensive stakeholder engagement process.
10. Other stakeholders include Department of Transport and Planning, the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, VicTrack, the City of Port Philip, the Fishermans Bend Taskforce and nearby businesses.

Relation to Council policy

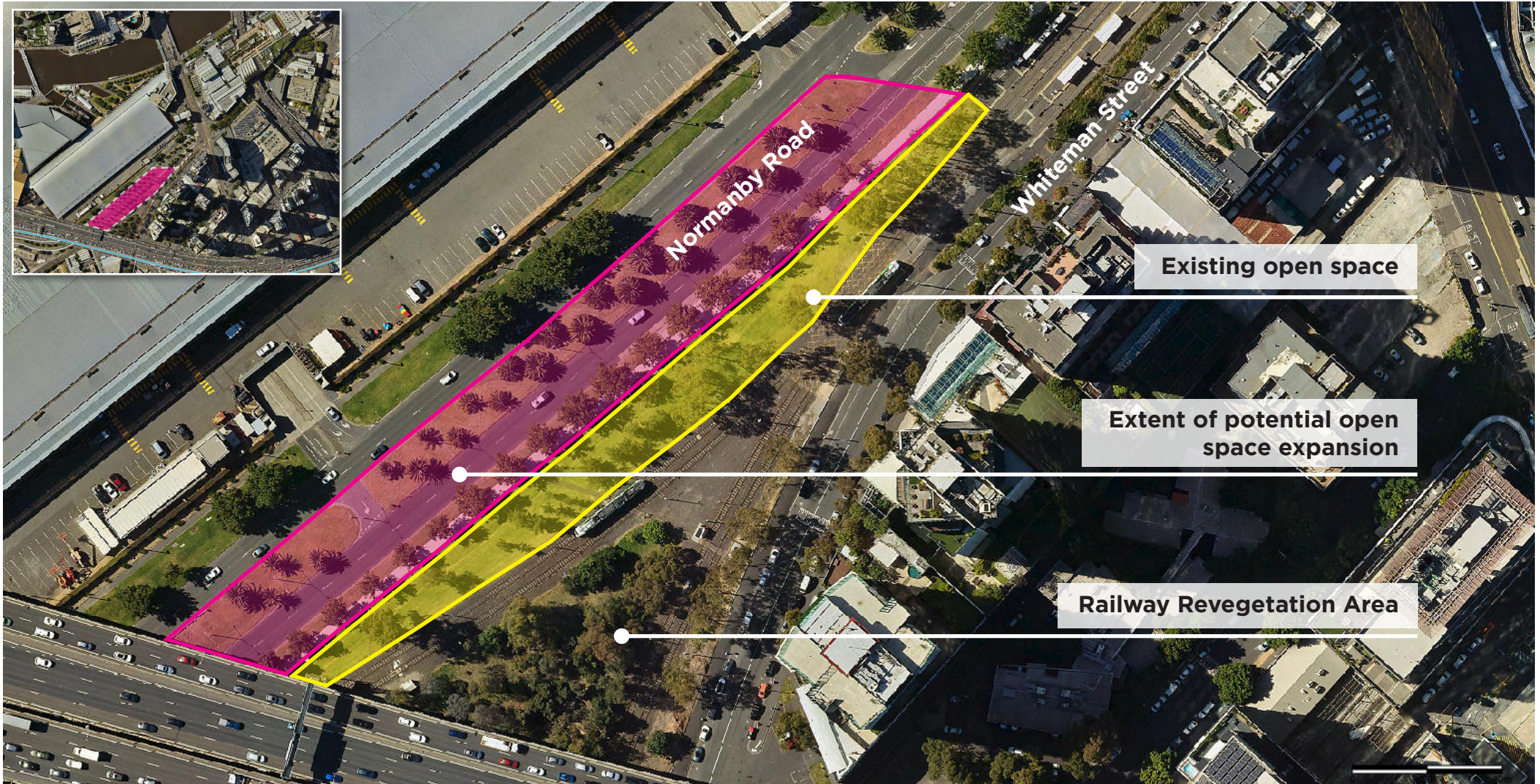
11. The Open Space Strategy 2012 recognises the need for additional Neighbourhood and Small Local open space in the area of Southbank west of Kings Way.
12. The Open Space Strategy 2012 included long-term actions to deliver Municipal and Capital City Open Space on space created by decking over the CityLink tunnels, if it occurred.
13. An update to the Open Space Strategy 2012 will be considered by the Future Melbourne Committee in June 2024.

Environmental sustainability

14. An increase in the size of the Normanby Road Reserve would create opportunities for planting large canopy trees, increasing permeable areas to reduce stormwater runoff, integrating water management features and increasing the area for biodiverse understorey planting.

NORMANBY ROAD RESERVE EXPANSION

NORMANBY ROAD, SOUTHBANK





Attachment 3

Feasibility Study

Southbank Structure Plan 2010 Recommendation L3 Discontinuance

Purpose To undertake a high-level feasibility on the proposed discontinuance of Recommendation L3 CityLink tunnel entrance deck

From: Rick Kwasek, General Manager, Infrastructure and Amenity

Date: 16 April 2024

Background

1. Southbank Structure Plan 2010 *Recommendation L3 – Prepare a master plan and business case for the decking of the City Link tunnel entrance*, is recommended for discontinuance due to constraints of land ownership, prohibitive cost and structural feasibility. The decking proposal is also referenced in the Open Space Strategy 2011 as an option for new municipal open space, subject to the outcome of the Structure Plan recommendation.
2. The tunnel entrance comprises a 4.8 hectare site (the site), located at Sturt Street opposite Malthouse Theatre and ACCA, approximately 400 metres south of Southbank Boulevard.

Key Issues

3. The site is owned by CityLink. City of Melbourne Open Space Policy limits council investment on encumbered land not owned by council.
4. A high level feasibility study prepared by management in 2021, identifies a probable cost in excess of \$1.5 billion to redevelop the site for open space.
5. Redevelopment of the site is accompanied by multiple challenges. The site is likely to be contaminated. Its location on structure places limitations on load, structural penetrations and growing conditions for trees and vegetation.
6. The site is located outside the City Road Masterplan 2016 boundary. The masterplan post-dates the Southbank Structure Plan 2010 and does not mention the site. Any concept for City Road East-West would logically follow the strategic directions of the masterplan.

Recommended action

Note management's intention to discontinue Southbank Structure Plan 2010 *Recommendation L3 CityLink tunnel entrance deck* due to constraints of land ownership, structural feasibility, and prohibitive cost.