

# **ROYAL PARK TO FITZROY RAILWAY LAND**

A report on a  
Strategic Development Land Use Plan  
for the Former Royal Park to Clifton Hill Railway Line,  
the Fitzroy Branch Line and the Fitzroy Rail Yards

prepared by the

**ROYAL PARK TO FITZROY FORMER RAILWAY LINE WORKING PARTY**

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## THE NEED FOR A WORKING PARTY

The Royal Park to Fitzroy Former Railway Line Working Party was established in May 1984 to make recommendations for the future use of the land around the former railway line in urgent response to two factors:

- 1) The land was soon to be declared surplus and sold by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).
- 2) The strong public response to the proposal that some of the land be sold to the Ministry of Housing and developed for public housing.

The Working Party was therefore established to take a broad view of the issues involved and to develop a comprehensive plan for the land, to be known as a Strategic Development Land Use Plan.

## GOALS OF THE WORKING PARTY

The goals of the Working Party agreed at the first meeting of the Working Party on 16 May 1984 were:

### Principal Goal

To produce a strategic development land use plan for the land known as the former Royal Park to Fitzroy Railway Line. The strategic development land use plan should examine the most appropriate future use of all the parcels of land within the line, with all possible options to be considered.

### Subsidiary Goals

- 1 To develop a future land ownership plan for the former railway line. The Working Party will also suggest to the Government a basis for transfer/disposal of the relevant land.
- 2A To examine any possible exchanges between Councils/Ministries and Authorities to facilitate the best use of the land.
- 2B To examine the basis for any exchange of Council land with the Ministry of Housing through the existing preliminary contracts between the Ministry of Housing and the relevant Transport authorities.
- 3 To keep community groups, relevant unions and others involved with, and informed of, the progress of the Working Party.

## TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THESE GOALS ACHIEVED?

The Working Party has fully met its principal goal and has produced a strategic development land use plan for the land (see Map 5.1).

In respect of the various secondary goals:

## Future Land Ownership

No 1 A future land ownership plan has been suggested (Map 6.1).

## Land Exchanges

No 2A The Working Party has examined possible exchanges between Councils/Ministries and Authorities. It would appear to the Working Party that a land exchange 'between' the Ministries of Transport and Conservation, Forests and Lands may be appropriate for dealing with the proposed open space land. However, this matter is clearly one for decision by the relevant Ministers and not the Working Party.

No 2B The Working Party has been informed that the 'land bank' involving preliminary contracts between the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Transport has been used to purchase transport properties elsewhere. Consequently, this exchange option is no longer available.

## Community Involvement

No 3 The Working Party has strived to operate openly and has received extensive input from community representatives, lessees and others. There has been public consultation at all stages, with exhibition of proposals and public meetings being held at appropriate times.

Submissions were invited from interested parties and minutes of Working Party meetings and other information was mailed to more than 120 people or groups. In total the Working Party received 60 formal submissions. Thirty-three of these were received prior to the Draft Strategic Development Land Use Plan and dealt with questions or issues and needs. The balance were received in response to the exhibition of the Draft Strategic Development Land Use Plan. These submissions deal principally with concept and detail in the plan.

## STUDY AREA

### Location

The land under investigation consists primarily of the former railway reserve which is located in the municipalities of Melbourne, Brunswick and Fitzroy. Map 2.1 shows the location of the railway land in relation to the surrounding area.

### Railway Reserve in the Cities of Melbourne, Brunswick and Fitzroy

The railway reserve commences just west of The Avenue in Parkville and runs eastwards through a cutting under The Avenue and Royal Parade to Princes Park. Immediately to the east is the Hardy-Gallagher Reserve, from which the reserve runs parallel to Park Street until it reaches St Georges Road. At this point the reserve diverges, with one section continuing east to Rushall Station and the Merri Creek and the other section veering south to run through the Edinburgh Gardens, terminating at Queens Parade. The reserve is crossed by roads at eleven points including major roads such as Lygon Street, Nicholson Street and St Georges Road; there are underpasses at The Avenue and Royal Parade.

## **Additional Land**

Some areas that adjoin the railway reserve have been included in the study area. For example, where the railway reserve abuts Park Street along a 1.5 kilometre section, the Park Street road reservation has been included in the study area in order to cover all possibilities such as narrowing the road pavement or altering the paving surface. Other adjoining roads and laneways have been incorporated in the study area including a tree reserve and community facilities such as schools, halls and parkland. This has enabled a more cohesive approach to the study as the use of the abutting land may affect the future use of the railway reserve.

## **OPPORTUNITIES, ISSUES AND NEEDS**

### **Opportunities**

The Royal Park to Fitzroy Former Railway Line covers more than 16.5ha in a tightly developed inner urban area. More than 11.5ha (70 per cent) of the total area is currently vacant and available for development. It is an unrepeatable development opportunity.

### **Issues**

The principal issues addressed in the report are:

- 1) What is the most appropriate future use of the various parcels of land within the former railway line area?
- 2) What is the most appropriate balance of these uses?

### **Needs**

The Working Party identified a number of needs.

- 1) The surrounding neighbourhood is clearly deficient in local public open space and the land could ideally serve this need.
- 2) There is a critical need for local public housing in the area and the land could be used for this purpose.
- 4) There is high unemployment in the area and local industries on the land provide valuable employment and services.

## **THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LAND USE PLAN - ITS PROPOSALS**

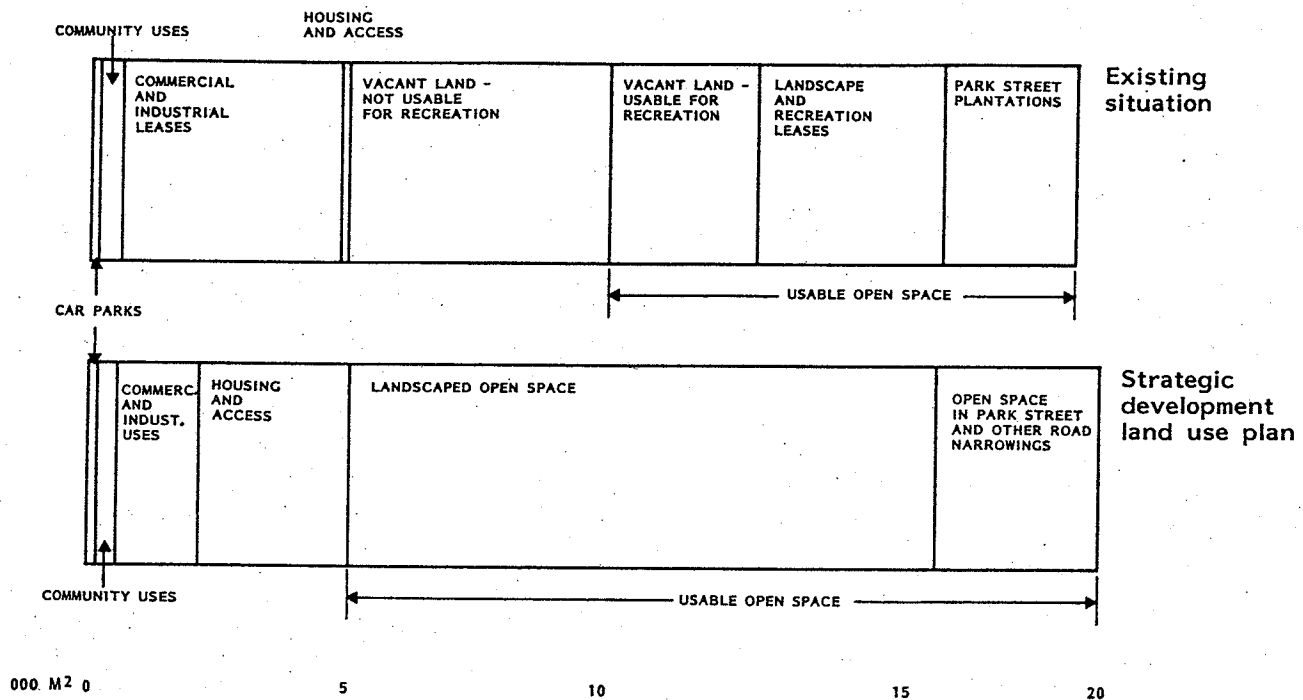
After careful consideration of the arguments and submissions in support of the three most favoured possible uses - open space, housing and commercial/industrial - the Working Party concluded that the greatest benefits would be gained by integrating various uses. In particular:

- (1) The provision of parklands would benefit not only existing residents in the area but also tenants in the proposed housing and workers in adjoining factories.

- (2) The usability and security of open space can be enhanced if some of the railway land is selectively used for housing. Houses will provide for informal supervision of the open space to reduce vandalism and generally improve the quality of the open space.
- (3) Factories and warehouses may be retained where appropriate to provide employment and services. In some cases, businesses can provide a buffer between houses, open space and noisy roads.

The Strategic Development Land Use Plan is shown as Map 5.1. The allocation of existing uses within the study area is compared with the allocation of proposed uses in the following diagram.

### Comparison of land uses in the strategic development land use plans with the existing situation



## OPEN SPACE

While much of the land is presently vacant and available for informal recreation, it is undeveloped and generally neglected. The Working Party believes that confirming its future use for open space will allow it to be landscaped to be more useful and beneficial.

## LINEAR PARK

A major regional consideration and focal point of community concern was the opportunity to use the railway land for a linear park from Royal Park to Merri Creek and the Edinburgh Gardens. The Working Party recognises and accepts this aim and accordingly a linear park has been made an integral component of the proposed plan.

## SHARED FOOTWAY

A shared footway is proposed for the linear park which will link up with a number of other pathways and become part of an important recreational network. It will connect with the Merri Creek pathway (which in turn links with the Yarra River), the footways and cycle paths in Royal Park (a future path from here) is proposed to run along the Moonee Ponds Creek), and the cycle route running through Fitzroy along Napier Street.

## ROAD CLOSURES TO CREATE OPEN SPACE

The Working Party has recommended deleting the Park Street Secondary Road Reservation to guarantee the future availability of the linear park and to ensure that the residential amenity of adjoining houses is preserved. Further, a decision was made to narrow other road reservations abutting the old railway in order to extend parkland areas. This would add 31,680 square metres of open space, which combined with other land delineated as local open space, provides a total of about 11.7ha of open space.

## PUBLIC HOUSING

The Working Party has recognised the need in the area for further public housing and the excellence of this location for such development. The plan proposes seven parcels of land for public housing which is expected to provide for approximately 120 public housing units for elderly people and families.

Following investigation, the Working Party believes that all the proposed housing sites are workable. They could easily provide for housing which integrates with the surrounding residential areas and generally fronts on to existing streets or extensions of them. Other key areas are left without houses to allow for broader open spaces which provide for a greater range of possible recreation activities. Most of the houses will be built where houses existed prior to the construction of the railway.

## ELDERLY PEOPLE'S HOUSES

Housing proposals include a number of elderly person units which will allow the Ministry of Housing to relocate elderly tenants from walk-up flats (particularly those in the estate in Bennett Street) without moving them away from the familiar North Fitzroy area.

## FAMILY HOUSES

Family houses are proposed in a number of locations. These are intended to be one and two storey townhouses which are in character with the surrounding area and have private gardens and off-street parking. The Working Party believes that the incorporation of housing into the plan will benefit the area by replacing houses and streets in areas where they were removed for construction of the railway last century.

## INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL

### Existing Lessees

Existing industrial and commercial railway lessees presented a special problem for developing the land use plan. They represent considerable capital investment, are significant local employers and some provide services and goods to the local area. On the other hand, a number of the leases are run-down, unattractive and inappropriately located in primarily residential areas, or are sited so that other goals of the Working Party are compromised.

### Leases to be Retained

Some of the businesses are nominated for retention in the long term and it is proposed that they purchase their existing sites to allow for their long term development. Controls under the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme will be used to ensure that their continued operations do not compromise the amenity of surrounding areas. In general, those leases identified for retention are such that the scale and type of operation, their locations and quality of the structures will ensure that residential and open space amenity in the area is not unduly affected.

### Leases Suggested for Relocation

The Working Party agrees that those leases identified as being inappropriate for long-term retention are generally more likely to cause environmental problems such as fumes, noise or traffic or are located as 'islands' in residential or open space areas.

### Assistance with Relocation

It is proposed that existing leases will continue until the end of their terms if the lessees desire so that the relocation of investment and employment will be phased over time. The Working Party also recommends that the implementation agency and the local councils provide practical assistance to businesses in finding alternative, more appropriate sites for long-term development. Thus, whilst jobs will be lost in the commercial and industrial sector, it is planned that these losses will be progressive and relocation will occur wherever possible.

In the long term, the amenity of the area will be improved as it will no longer suffer from the intrusion of a number of isolated industrial operations. These were originally located in a predominantly residential area due to their association with the railway. It is also clear that the influx of population into the new housing will generate employment in local service industries and for the housing construction, landscaping and maintenance of open space.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Working Party wishes to emphasise the importance of establishing a process for putting the Strategic Development Land Use Plan into effect, as it is quite complicated. A number of inter-related actions and decisions will be required to achieve implementation.

The order in which key decisions and actions should be undertaken is:

- 1) The approval in principle of the Working Party's recommendations by the Government and four Ministers involved, particularly concerning proposed land uses and transfer of property ownership.
- 2) The establishment of a Former Railway Line Implementation Committee under the chairmanship of a senior officer from the Ministry for Planning and Environment. The Committee should ensure that statutory processes, sales of land, and detailed developments proceed in accordance with the Working Party's recommendations and in a co-ordinated manner.
- 3) Approval of an amendment to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme to reflect the uses proposed in the Strategic Development Land Use Plan and ensure appropriate planning control over these uses.
- 4) The transfers of land between the Metropolitan Transit Authority government agencies, councils and private owners in accordance with the ownership plan included in this report.
- 5) Development of detailed designs for the open space, housing and other areas and the obtaining of appropriate approvals under the general co-ordination of the Implementation Committee.
- (6) Progressive development of approved projects.



## WORKING PARTY RECOMMENDATIONS

### LAND USE PLANNING

- 1 That the Strategic Development Land Use Plan be adopted.
- 2 That the plan be used as the basis for an amendment to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme.
- 3 That the land owned by the City of Melbourne located on the corner of Holtom Street West and Arnold Street, North Carlton, be included in the proposed amendment to the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme and be reserved for public open space.
- 4 That the Park Street secondary road reservation be deleted and the land be rezoned appropriately.
- 5 That the Ministry for Planning and Environment ensure that appropriate statutory planning control exists over the buildings identified as historic features in the text of the report and covered by Recommendations 22, 23 and 24.

### LAND TRANSFER

- 6 That the land on the former railway line vested in the Metropolitan Transit Authority be declared surplus as soon as possible.
- 7 That the land on the former railway line currently, vested in the State Transport Authority and leased to Canterbury Timbers Pty Ltd, be declared surplus on termination of the lease.
- 8 That the approximately triangular parcel of land adjacent to the Epping railway line and Rushall Crescent be declared surplus and used for open space. If the Metropolitan Transit Authority proposes to use this land for its own purposes, however, such a proposal should ensure linear park access to Merri Creek in keeping with the standard adopted along the remainder of the former railway line. In addition, the proposal should take into account the residential amenity of the area and other planning considerations in consultation with the Ministry for Planning and Environment and the City of Fitzroy.
- 9 That the land be disposed of to the bodies identified on the land ownership plan (Map 6.1) in the following way :

#### Land to be used for open space

Any land held by the Crown prior to the construction of the railway should revert to the Crown and be reserved for recreational use.

Any previously freehold land purchased by the rail authorities should be vested in the Crown and reserved for recreational use. Processes for reimbursement of the Metropolitan Transit Authority and State Transport Authority should be instigated.

#### **Land to be used for Public Housing**

For land originally purchased from freehold, the Ministry of Housing should compensate the Metropolitan Transit Authority and State Transport Authority at a value determined by the Government in a manner equitable to the parties concerned but recognising that the intention is to provide for public housing in these areas.

For land originally held by the Crown, compensation by the Ministry of Housing should be determined on the merits of each case.

#### **Land to be used for commercial or private residential purposes**

For land originally purchased from freehold, provision should be made for acquisition from the MTA or STA at market value.

For land originally held by the Crown, provision should be made for purchase at market value.

- 10 That the Working Party plan be taken into account in the process of land valuation.
- 11 That the 'strategy for leases' as set out in Table 6.1 be adopted.
- 12 That on the transfer of land currently subject to leases, all rents be reviewed at the earliest opportunity.

#### **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

- 13 That the Ministry for Planning and Environment be requested to manage the implementation of the Working Party's recommendations by establishing a Former Railway Line Implementation Committee.
- 14 That the Implementation Committee help relocate the businesses of lessees affected by the recommendations of the Working Party if they seek to relocate at or before the termination of their leases.
- 15 That the Implementation Committee be requested to consider the use of the Metropolitan Improvement Fund to assist councils with the purchase of open space parcels if necessary.

- 16 That following the transfer of open space land to the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands and its reservation for public recreation, a combined committee of management should be established for the linear part of the park (excluding those sections in Royal Park, Princes Park and Edinburgh Gardens) in a form acceptable to the three local municipal authorities concerned and the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. The parts contained within Edinburgh Gardens, Royal Park and Princes Park should come under the control of the management committees existing for those reserves.
- 17 That the community be consulted about landscape plans and the development of recreation facilities and housing.

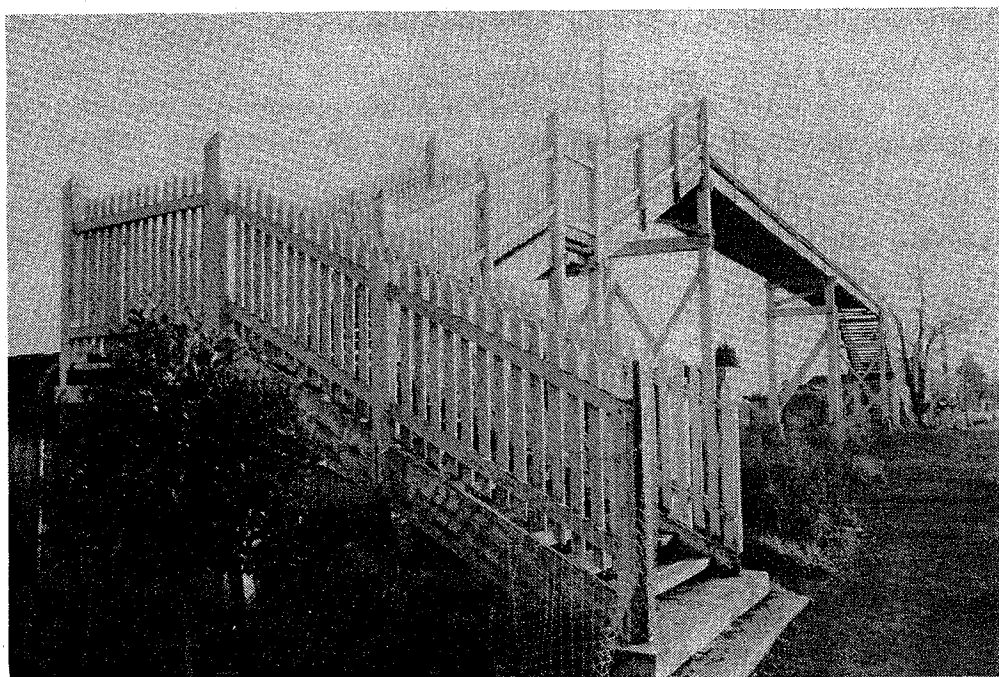
#### ROAD CLOSURES AND NARROWINGS

- 18 That the road narrowings and closures recommended in the report be adopted in principle.
- 19 That if the narrowing of Park Street between Rathdowne Street and Nicholson Street cannot be guaranteed then the plan must be reviewed in order to ensure an adequate linear open space.
- 20 That if the narrowing of Park Street between Brunswick Street North and Best Street cannot be guaranteed, then the plan must be reviewed in order to ensure an adequate linear open space.
- 21 That the existing bus route be examined in conjunction with the Metropolitan Transit Authority and other relevant authorities with a view to re-routing to allow for the closure of Amess Street.

#### HERITAGE AND DESIGN

- 22 That the old railway substation in Park Street be retained as a building of local historic importance and that the Implementation Committee examine and approve appropriate uses for the building.
- 23 That the old North Carlton railway station be retained as a building of local historic importance and continue to be used for community purposes.
- 24 That the old North Fitzroy fire station be retained as a building of local historic importance and used for community purposes.
- 25 That the North Fitzroy railway footbridge be retained as a landscape feature if it does not compromise development proposals for the site.
- 26 That proposed housing be designed so as to respect the Victorian character of the area, present an attractive facade to the linear park and open space areas and be sensitive to open space design in its locality.

- 27 That a consistent landscape theme be adopted for the areas of the former railway line designated for open space use.
- 28 That a shared footway from Royal Park to Merri Creek and Edinburgh Gardens be constructed as soon as possible, in consultation with the State Bicycle Committee and local Councils.
- 29 That a standard road crossing design be adopted to regulate intersections between the shared footway and major and minor roads.
- 30 That the link from Princes Park to Royal Park under Royal Parade and The Avenue be maintained as a public thoroughfare.
- 31 That the Implementation Committee, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the councils examine the most appropriate location for a proposed indoor recreation centre and that the study include an examination of the specific features required in the centre.
- 32 That where residences cited in the report adjoining proposed new housing have been constructed against the property boundary, a strip of railway land be offered for sale to the owners to create an adequate building envelope.
- 33 That the Brunswick South Primary School ground be integrated with the proposed open space to the south and developed for school use and public access.



Footbridge in Fitzroy rail yards

### 5.3 THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LAND USE PLAN

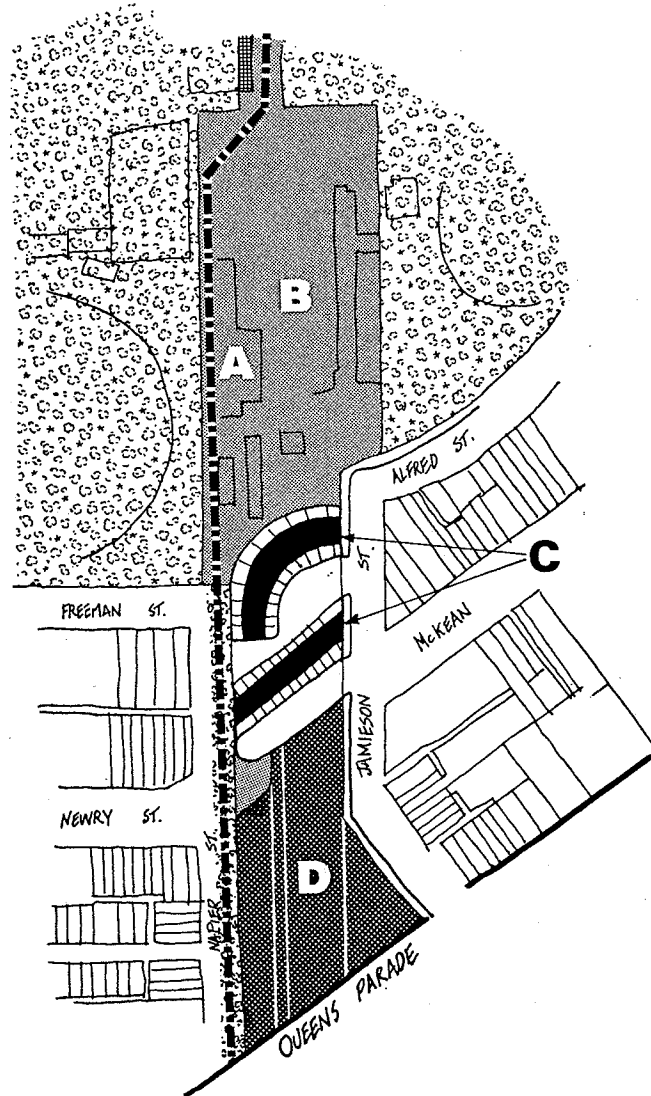
The following pages contain plans and tables which summarise the recommended Strategic Development Land Use Plan, showing the overall plan and detailed sections. The proposed use for each parcel is itemised together with its constraints, final owner and the benefits of the recommended use. The Strategic Development Land use Plan is shown as Map 5.1, while Maps 5.2 to 5.8 show sections in detail.

The shared footway and linear park from Royal Park to Merri Creek and through Edinburgh Gardens remains a key element of the plan. The major uses proposed are open space, recreation, and linear links which occupy 76 per cent of the available area. Housing and access represent 15 per cent of the total area, with commercial and industrial uses being the next largest use at 7.5 per cent.

Most land within the former railway reserve is owned by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) but some parcels are owned by the State Transport Authority (STA). Land currently in road reserves and proposed to be closed is generally public highway vested in Council. On each of the detailed maps the Working Party has indicated who it feels to be the most appropriate owner. It is envisaged that the owner will be responsible for developing the land in accordance with the Strategic Development Land Use Plan and the Working Party's recommendations.



North Fitzroy fire station, recommended for community use



Map 5.8