

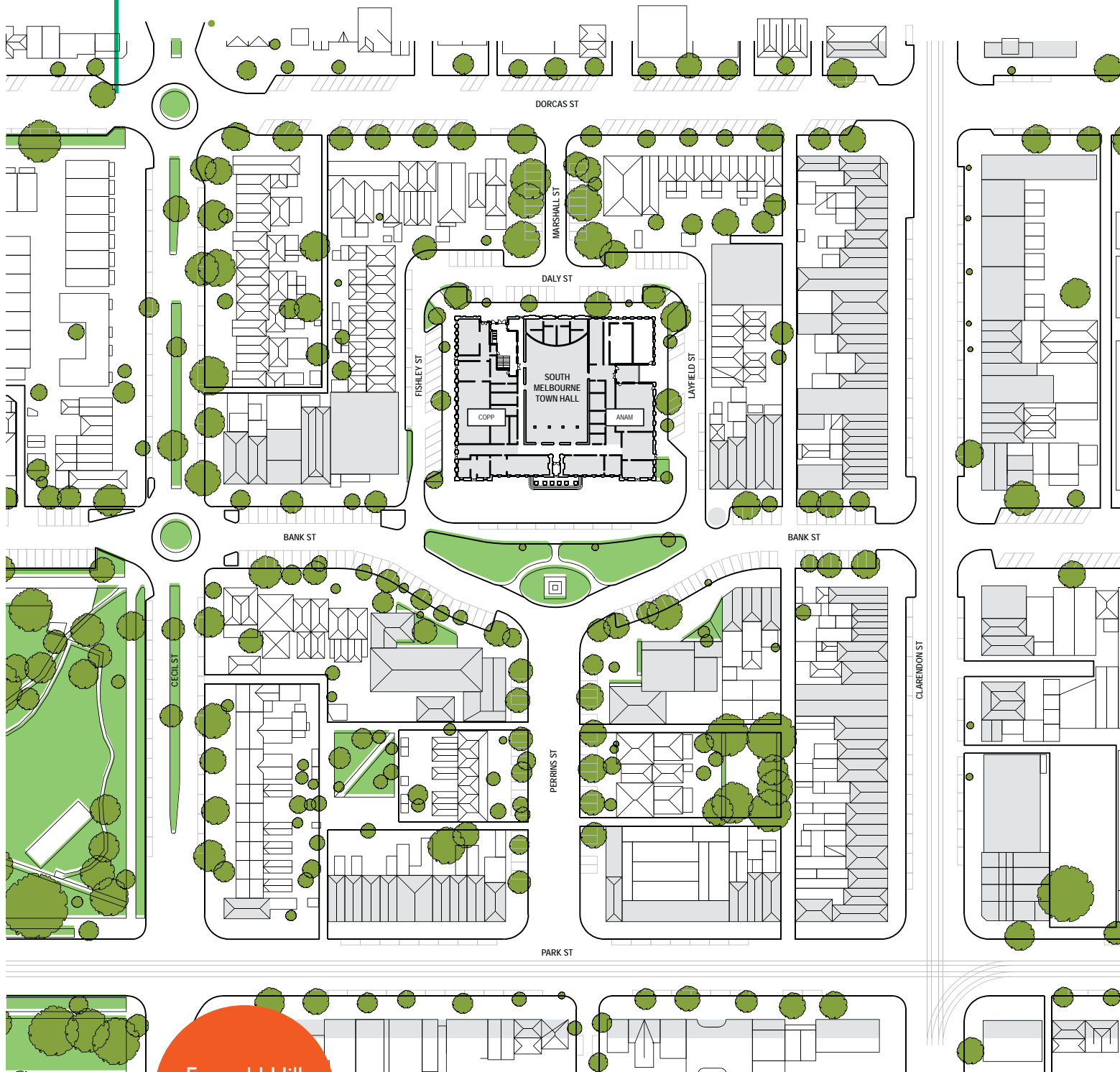


# Emerald Hill master plan

## City of Port Phillip

21 March 2012  
Version 2 A





Emerald Hill  
Precinct Map



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## The Emerald Hill Vision

On 12 September 2011 Council adopted the Emerald Hill Vision.

*“Council’s vision is to create a vibrant arts and community hub to reinvigorate the precinct around South Melbourne Town Hall and to re-establish it as the cultural and civic heart of South Melbourne.”*

The vision for Emerald Hill re-affirms the principles developed with extensive community consultation in the South Melbourne Central Structure Plan, South Melbourne Shopping Precinct Streetscape master plan in 2007 and reinforced by recent targeted stakeholder consultation in November 2010.

That is to:

- Develop the role of the Emerald Hill precinct as a community hub and as a place for service delivery to the local community and beyond.
- Foster the role of the Emerald Hill precinct as a cultural and creative focus for South Melbourne.
- Create a vibrant, engaging environment which supports the local community, cultural and civic activities of Emerald Hill.

The vision reinforces these through the following deliverables:

- Creating a vibrant and accessible South Melbourne Town Hall
- A dynamic and engaging Town Hall forecourt
- Refurbishing and expanding the Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre
- 222 Bank Street forming the core of a new arts focus and activity
- Public realm improvements







Council's vision is to create a vibrant arts and community hub to reinvigorate the precinct around South Melbourne Town Hall and to re-establish it as the cultural and civic heart of South Melbourne.



## The Precinct

The Emerald Hill Vision covers the precinct from Park to Dorcas Streets, Clarendon Street to the east, and to Cecil Street in the west.

Emerald Hill is the physical, historical and civic centre for the South Melbourne community.

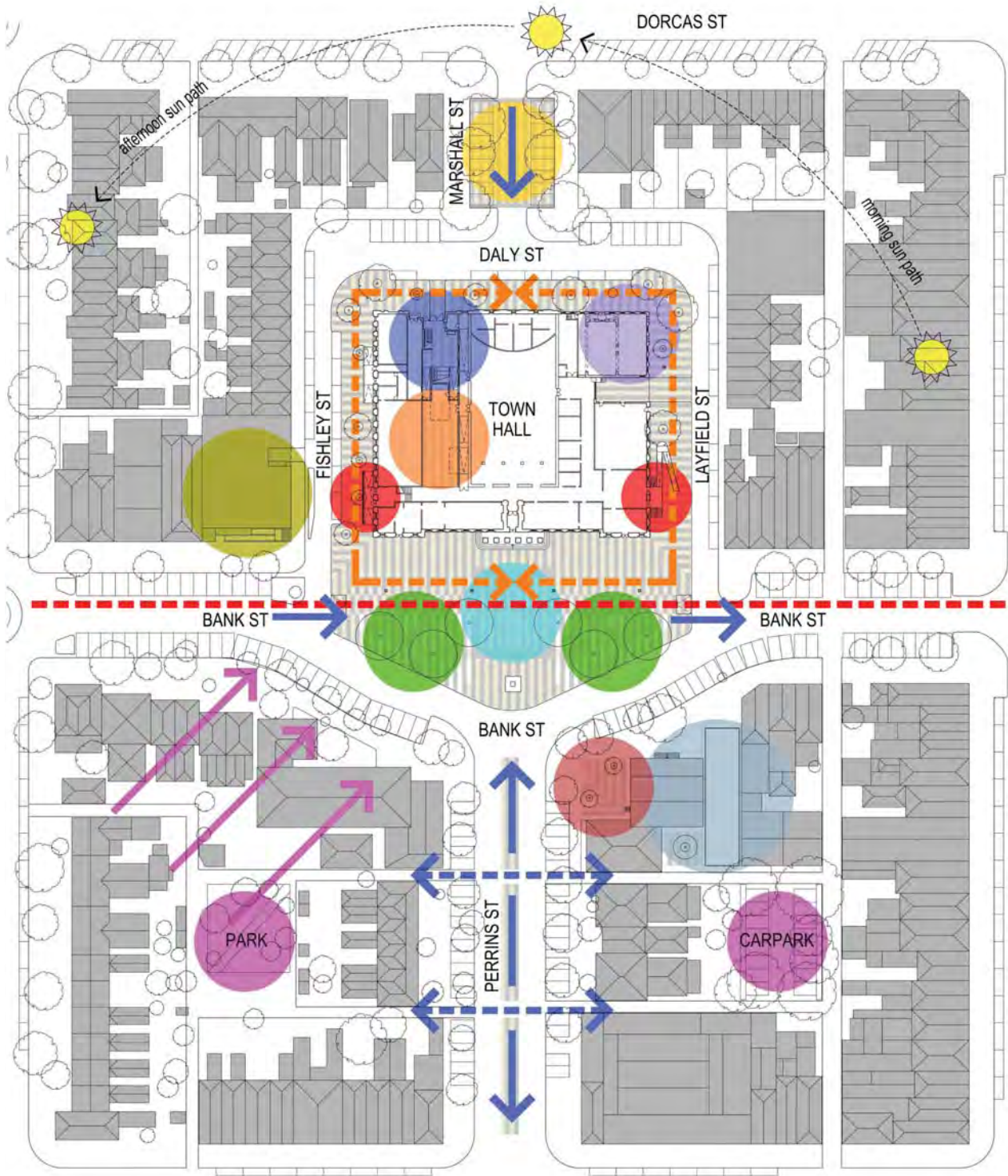
Key characteristics of the precinct are:

- the South Melbourne Town Hall, library and police station that provide a civic focus to the centre of the precinct
- significant Indigenous heritage, historically important buildings, urban form and streetscapes
- a clearly visible clock tower that provides a visual and auditory focus for surrounding areas
- a number of national and state arts and entertainment organisations are located within the precinct
- a relatively low vehicle traffic environment
- established public and private housing

The street environment is consistent and of a reasonable standard. Footpaths and roads are finished in asphalt with dressed bluestone kerbs and bluestone cobble gutters. Footpaths around the sides and rear of the building are narrow and obstructed by street trees. There are numerous street trees and a number of mature specimen trees. The streetscape is rich in period detail and evocative old signage.

This part of South Melbourne has a formal and unique street pattern around the South Melbourne Town Hall building. The building is set within the open spaces of the forecourt and Marshall Street car park. There are also two open space squares within the precinct. Both are underutilised, mainly due to lack of natural surveillance. One is currently used as a car park in Emerald Hill Place. Both would be improved by increased adjacent population to support the parks with natural surveillance.

Current uses in the Town Hall and precinct buildings provide some activation to the precinct. The key to the precinct's long term success however, are improvements that encourage people to use the public realm and create opportunities for events.



**Marshall Street**  
(flexible use existing car parking and occasional closure for events)

**North Service Yard**  
(new destination point, north orientation, protection from prevailing winds)

**Gallery and Auditorium**  
(Gallery space, new auditorium foyer to optimise community access)

**Ballantyne Room**  
(Enhance existing facilities, commercial kitchen, modify loading dock, opportunity for function venue)

**Side entries**  
(enhance existing entry points, improve wayfinding, DDA compliant, improved shade and sun protection)

**Forecourt events** (organised events, new material patterns to enhance forecourt experience, define service vehicle zone)

**Forecourt gardens** (new gardens with trees and soft landscaping, improved seating, lighting and shade, stormwater capture)

**222 Bank Street**  
(facade activation, enhanced building and street corner, 'vertical garden screen wall')

**Library Courtyard** (organised and spontaneous events, improved seating and lighting, connection to Town Hall forecourt through new paving material)

**Pocket Parks** (re-instatement of 'pocket park' quality to eastern car park, improve parks for public use, existing protection from prevailing winds)

**Enhanced Promenade**  
(widen footpaths to provide pedestrian space, improved lighting and seating, modified parking)

South West prevailing winds

Important Views





Bank Street facade, South Melbourne Town Hall



2011 Community Open Day



Marshall Street car park



Ballantyne Room north facade



Historic streetscape example, corner Perrin and Park street



Surrounding built form styles

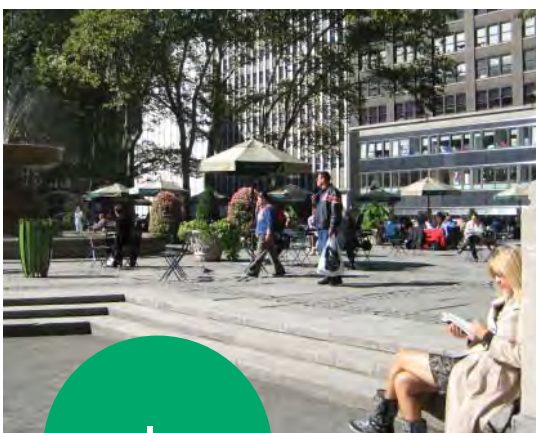
## Places to ...



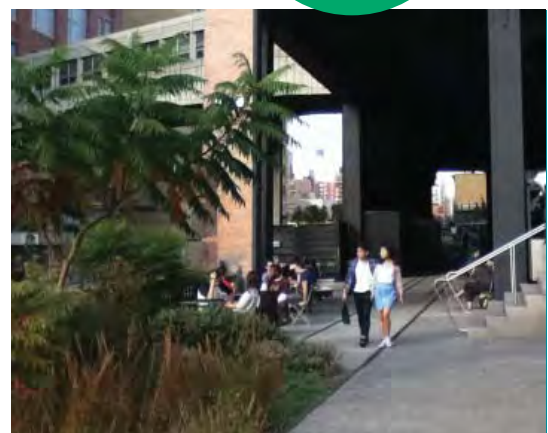
gather



perform



relax





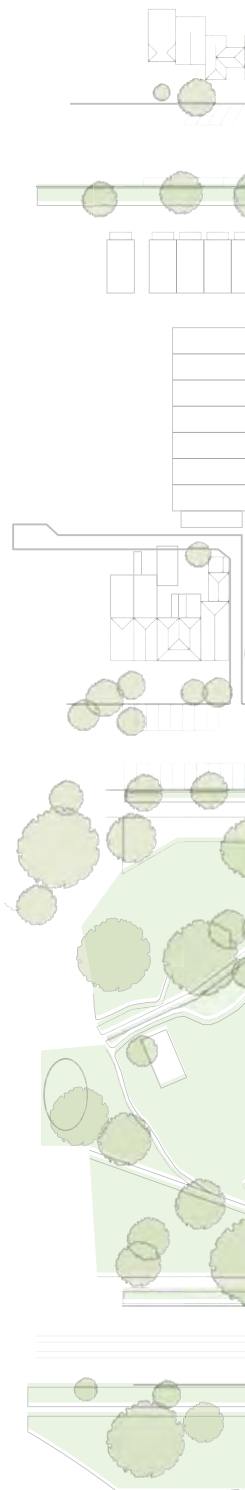
## Objectives

The Emerald Hill master plan seeks to influence the design of new public realm opportunities, the programming of events around the Town Hall and how people get to and move around the precinct – by walking, cycling, public transport or car. Projects are planned to support and strengthen the form and the use of the precinct. The master plan also includes art, signage and public lighting.

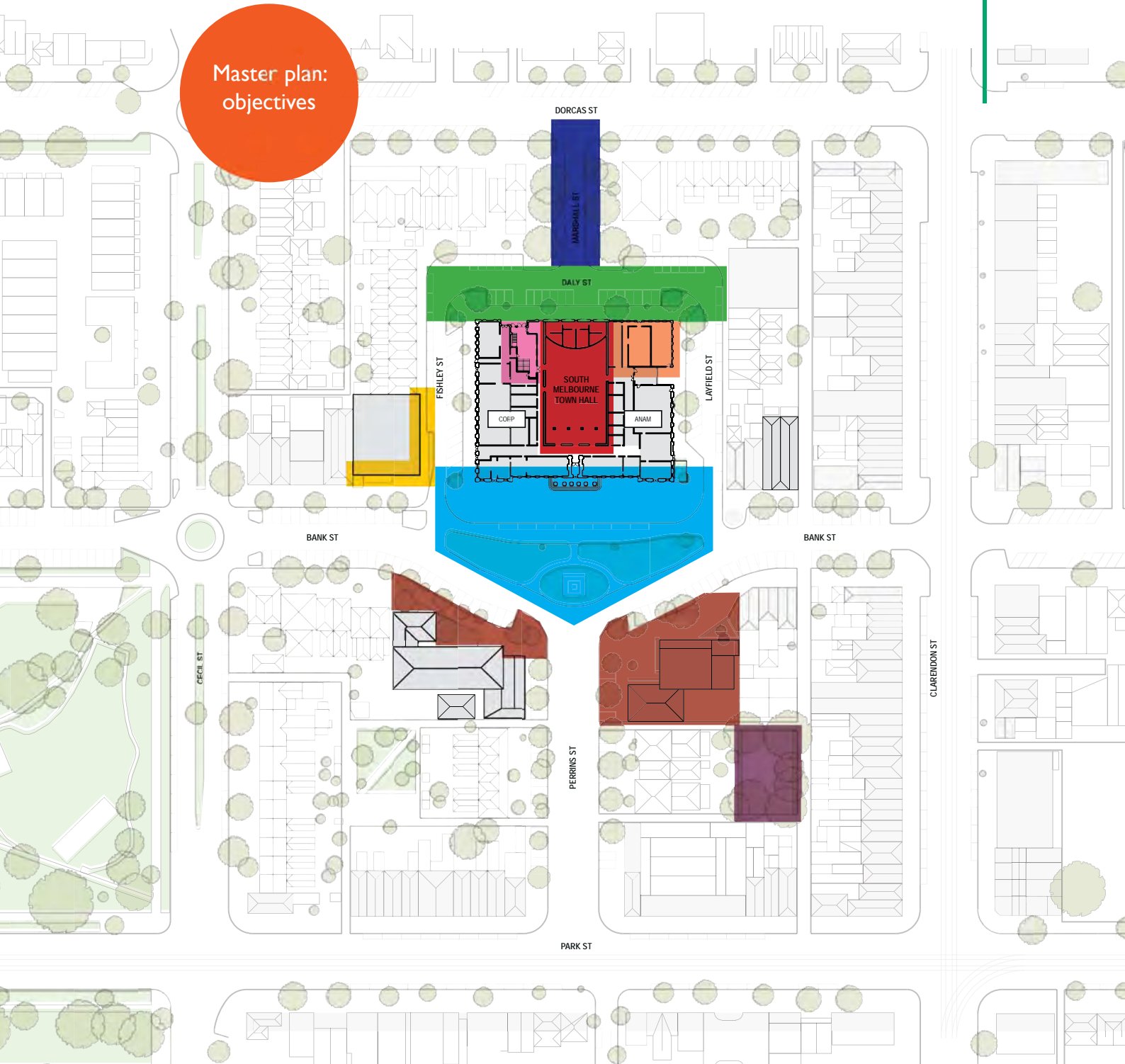
The Emerald Hill master plan will provide the framework to guide the next 15 years of public realm improvements. The projects are described on pages 22 to 49 and have been identified to:

- encourage people to use the public realm
- create opportunities for events
- improve the overall look, feel and function of the area

The master plan does not provide detailed designs that can be directly translated into capital works projects. Each project will require detailed technical design prior to implementation.



## Master plan: objectives



Existing use with active street presence

Activation of street frontage (reveal functions of Arts Access & Auspicious Arts Incubator)

Possible performance space (Art installations, connection to auditorium, new entry to TH)

Town Hall Auditorium (Optimise community access, cabaret festival, school events, functions)

Possible Marshall St closure (Public / pedestrian use; spontaneous events)

Town Hall north forecourt (solar access, more seating, reduced carparking, spontaneous events)

New building use (restaurant, weddings, functions, street activation)

Town Hall south forecourt (organised events, improved seating, shade & lighting)

strong connection between Library, forecourt, police station and future pocket park (pedestrian link and design style)

Reinstatement of "pocket park" quality

## Development of the master plan

In 2010 Council commissioned Jackson Clements Burrows Architects to prepare a series of design concepts for public realm improvements around the South Melbourne Town Hall to provoke discussion about the future. The public realm concepts were prepared to highlight opportunities to:

- develop a cohesive precinct character
- maintain views from Dorcas Street to the rear of the Town Hall
- improve the forecourt to allow the space in front of the Town Hall to be used for public events
- widen the footpath around the Town Hall building to improve its setting and the general levels of accessibility in the precinct
- re-organise car parking around the building to provide better amenity
- enhance the profile of existing entrances
- improve night time appearance and safety

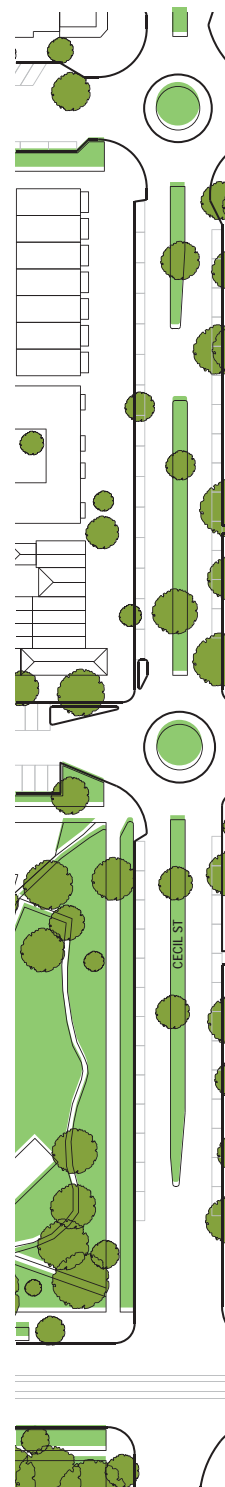
The architects also identified opportunities to:

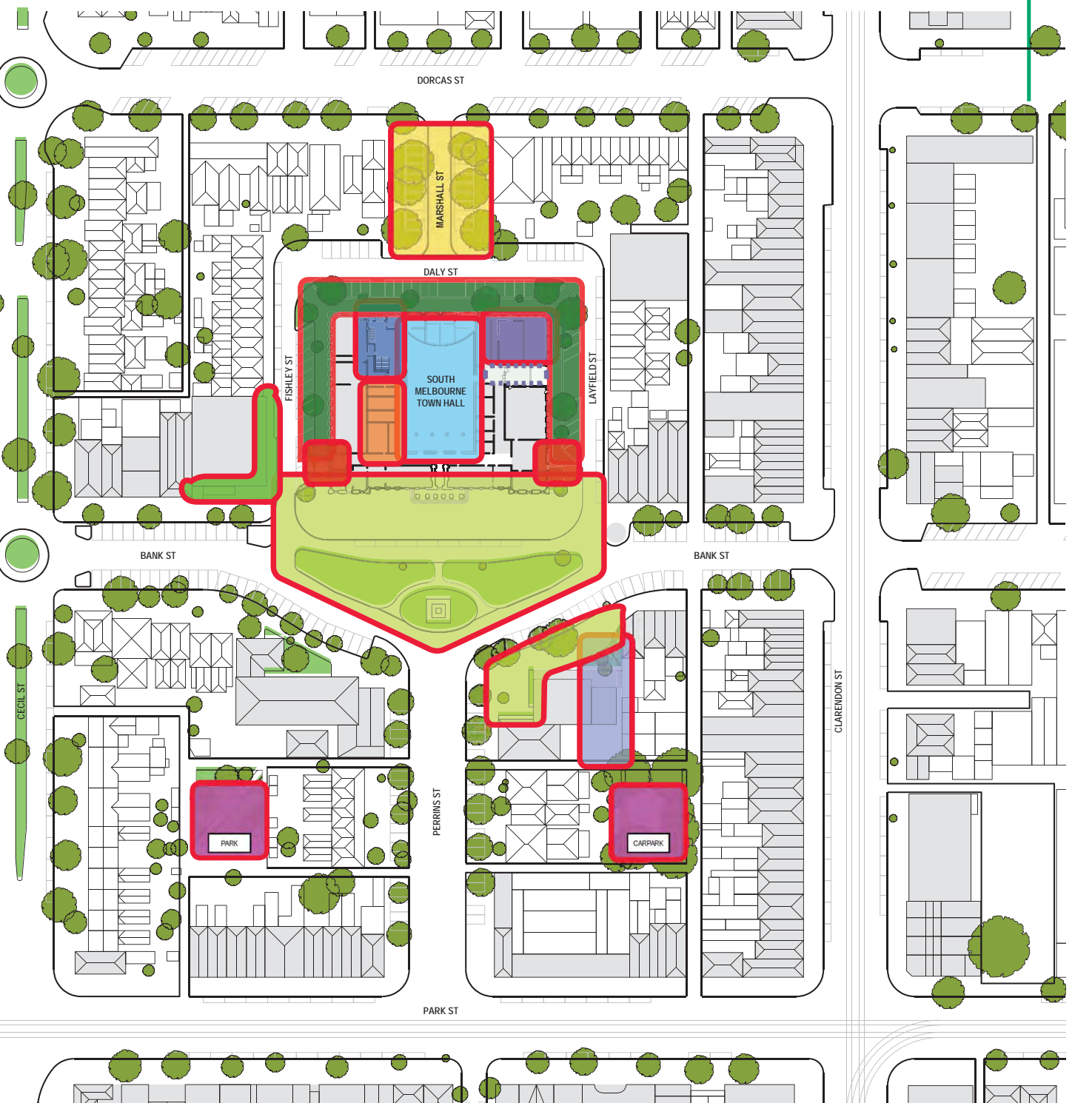
- create a new public space in the north courtyard, with short, medium and longer term possibilities
- identify possible longer term uses for the Ballantyne Room
- screen 222 Bank Street and provide an attractive backdrop to the Town Hall

Council received community feedback on these public realm concepts at two information sessions, written submissions from stakeholders, completion of an on-line survey, as well as several face to face meetings. There was also an opportunity to address the Council at a Council meeting in August 2011.

Consultation identified the following requirements as being important to future works in the precinct:

- frame key views of the Shrine of Remembrance from Bank Street and of the South Melbourne Town Hall from the corner of Park and Perrin streets
- maintain or increase the amount of soft landscaping
- be mindful of the heritage of the South Melbourne Town Hall
- avoid use of strong contrasting colours, such as red, in addition to the Town Hall building





Existing use with active street presence

Marshall Street Limited closure (flexible use for organised events)

Daly, Fishley & Layfield Streets (improved pedestrian amenity and improved setting for Town Hall)

North Courtyard (active uses, performances, cafe and new use for former fire station residence)

North Courtyard (new gallery and Auditorium foyer)

Town Hall Auditorium (optimise community access)

Ballantyne Room: Daly and Layfield St activation (restaurant, weddings, functions, street activation)

Town Hall side entries (improve wayfinding and access)

222 Bank Street (improve access to building and provide an attractive setting for the Town Hall)

Town Hall and Library forecourts (improved seating, shade and lighting, space for organised events)

Library (separate project)

Park (reinstatement of pocket park quality)

## Relationship to Council Plan and Strategy

The preparation of an Emerald Hill master plan is consistent with the 2009 – 2013 Council Plan:

- Support and revitalise arts precincts across the city as integrated arts, learning and cultural centres (Action 3.2.3).
- Integrate approach to the revitalisation of neighbourhoods based on sustainable urban design (Action 4.1.1).
- Ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the public realm (Action 4.2.1).

City of Port Phillip's Vision for Public Open Space (2009) is

*A city where public open spaces define the city's character and respond to its people's need for places to rest, recreate and be inspired.*

The Open Space Strategy sets out key strategies addressing issues of higher population densities and participation trends in the City of Port Phillip. The most pertinent to this precinct include:

- Use of streetscapes as attractive open spaces for social and casual recreation and exercise
- Provision of attractive walking and bike riding spaces
- Provision of public plazas where traditional green open spaces might not be feasible
- Provision of spaces for communal interaction in high density housing
- Provision of lighting at key open spaces to provide safe 24 hour access
- Creation of links between existing open spaces

The Emerald Hill master plan is informed by extensive earlier consultation which occurred as part of the South Melbourne Central Structure Plan 2005 and the South Melbourne Shopping Precinct Streetscape Masterplan in 2007.

The development of the Emerald Hill precinct as a civic, community and arts 'hub' implements a key strategic direction of the South Melbourne Central Structure Plan (2007) and associated planning scheme policy for this area.

The Emerald Hill master plan is also consistent with South Melbourne Central Structure Plan (2005). This document sets the goal for Emerald Hill to:

- Develop the role of the Emerald Hill precinct a community hub and as a place for service delivery to the local community, and beyond.
- Foster the role of the Emerald Hill precinct as the cultural and creative focus for South Melbourne Central.
- Create a vibrant, engaging environment which supports the community, cultural and civic activities of the Emerald Hill precinct.





artist's impression, Bank and Fishley street corner



artist's impression, Daly and Layfield street corner



artist's impression, Marshall Street car park

## Indigenous cultural heritage

Emerald Hill is thought to have been a traditional social and ceremonial meeting place for a number of Indigenous groups. A great gathering had been witnessed there in 1840 by a number of the early European settlers.<sup>1</sup>

This is supported by a painting of a corroboree on Emerald Hill in 1840 by W.F.E Liardet, held at State Library of Victoria collection.

In 1840 Richard Howitt described fifty men dancing in Emerald Hill assisted by the musical accompaniment of women as a performance to “haunt the soul for years afterwards”.<sup>2</sup>

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 provides protection for all Aboriginal places, objects and human remains in Victoria. There is a requirement to report discovered Aboriginal heritage.

The works proposed in the master plan are not on the list of specified high impact activities. The trigger for a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is excavation resulting in significant ground disturbance. Therefore a preparation of a CHMP is voluntary. A CHMP identifies and records significant heritage places and values with the assistance of local Elders and develop recommendations for the protection of significant heritage places.

There is no Registered Aboriginal Party for Emerald Hill. Three groups have a registered interest in the study area; the Wurunjeri, the Bunurong and the Boon Wurrung.

The reflection of Indigenous history on the site and the development of suitable ways to celebrate and preserve this history are appropriate. Community consultation supported the celebration of Indigenous history in future works.

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1 Source: [http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/history\\_port\\_phillip.htm](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/history_port_phillip.htm)

2 Source: [http://skhs.org.au/~SKHSflood/The\\_Traditional\\_Owners.htm](http://skhs.org.au/~SKHSflood/The_Traditional_Owners.htm)



'A Corroboree on Emerald Hill' in 1840 by W. F. E. Liardet.

## History of public housing in Emerald Hill

*Written by Kay Rowan, Municipal Historian*

The Emerald Hill precinct is approximately 11 acres, and its origins lie with the grant of land reserved for the Melbourne Protestant Orphan Asylum as depicted on Robert Hoddle's 1852 subdivision of the suburb of Emerald Hill. The Melbourne Orphan Asylum occupied this site from 1855 until 1878 when a new orphanage was opened in Brighton.

Emerald Hill developed rapidly during the 1850s, becoming a municipality in 1855, a borough in 1863 and a town in 1872. From the first, the site of the orphanage became a contentious issue with the residents of the hill, as it effectively cut the town in two. It became a barrier to the progress of the town, when it was obvious that Clarendon Street was the main commercial centre. At this time civic pride, an increase in population and also, necessity, demanded that new council premises be erected.

In 1875 an Act of Parliament was passed to facilitate the orphanage move, and to allow the city council to purchase the orphanage buildings and seventy feet on either side. The rest of the land was to be subdivided and leased, giving the orphanage a continued income. By 1878 the Orphan asylum had completed its move to Brighton and plans were well under way for the erection of the new Town Hall. The orphanage leases stipulated that all buildings would be of brick or stone, with bluestone foundations, and that the houses must be painted externally every seven years. There were to be no public houses or wineshops erected on the land, and leases were for thirty-three or fifty years.

The Council surveyor Sydney Smith subdivided the land, and the first buildings to be erected were those with a Clarendon Street frontage, appropriately named the 'Orphanage buildings'. The new Town Hall was erected in 1880, and in 1883 Emerald Hill became the City of South Melbourne.

By the early 1880s many of the shops and dwellings that now exist had been built, although even well into the twentieth century there were still occasional vacancy blocks. From time to time there had been necessary alienation of the land from the orphanage trustees by government bodies, such as when the court house, police station and post office were erected. The long tenure of single ownership by the orphanage had left the building stock in the area almost intact, but there was little money spent on repairs or renovations. By the 1920s the ground leases on many of the properties had reverted to the orphanage, and this became a burden upon their administration.

The area was always working-class with a number of professional men such as solicitors and dentists in residence to service the needs of the community. Before 1900 most of the shopkeepers lived over their premises. By the 1930s many of the buildings had become boarding houses. South Melbourne was in decline, ready for slum reclamation. The Emerald Hill area reflected this demise.

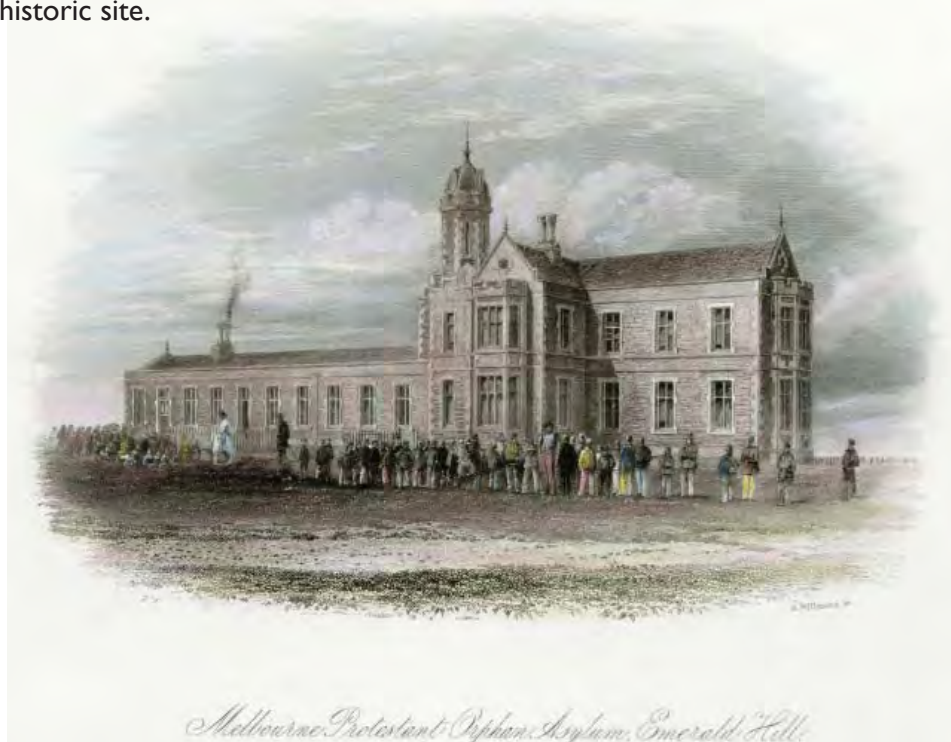


In 1973 the old Melbourne Orphan Asylum which had changed its name to the Melbourne Family Care Organization, was in need of funds to continue its work. Without much warning to the Council or residents it advertised some 5.2 acres of Emerald Hill for sale. They even advertised the sale of this prime site overseas.

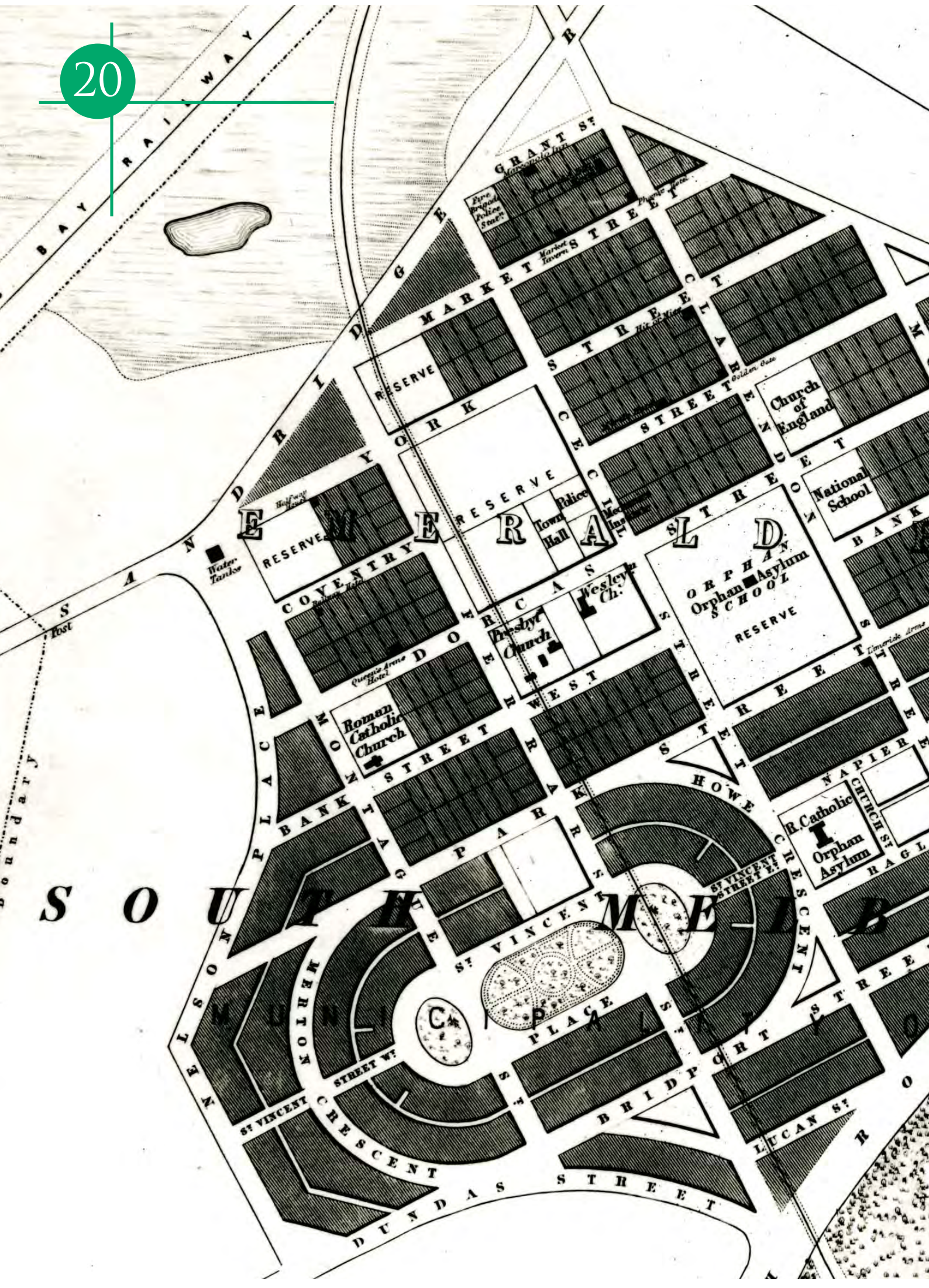
This proposed sale came as a shock to many and concern grew for the fate of the buildings. The auction was to take place on 6 December, 1973. By this time not only locals were involved in the fight to save the hill. The State and Federal governments were appealed to, with success. Two days before the auction the Federal government promised fund to purchase the site. On 20 February, 1974 a 3.5 million dollar loan was forthcoming from the Federal government, for the State government to purchase the site.

The area was then handed over to the Victorian Housing Commission and in conjunction with South Melbourne Council, a number of urban renewal proposals were implemented, and the restoration of the area began. Verandas and fences were renovated and restored, and building interiors and exteriors were painted and renovated, all within heritage guidelines. By 1983 when South Melbourne celebrated their city centenary all was in place.

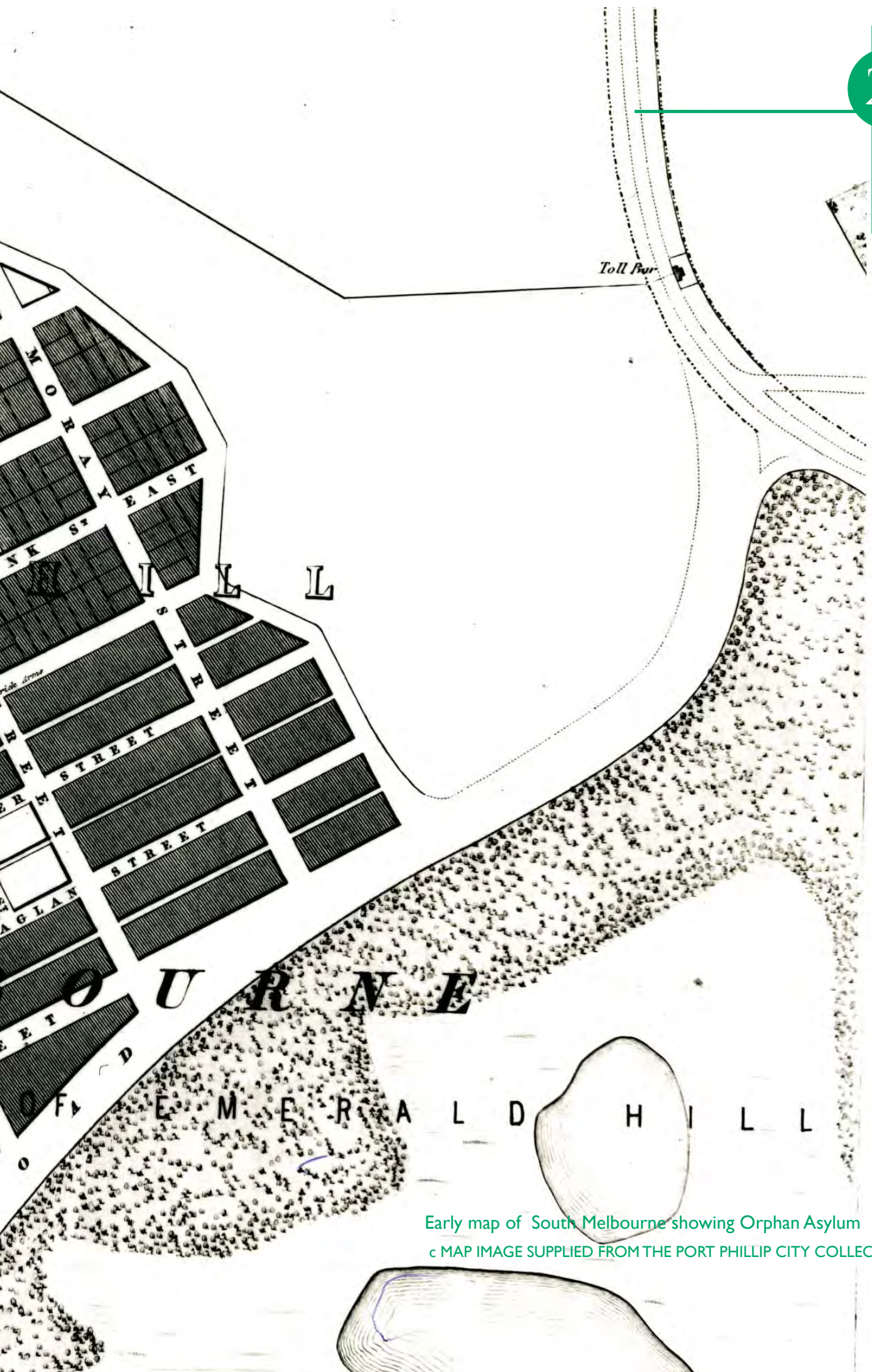
Unfortunately the low income earners who inhabited the hill for many years and who had welcomed the 1974 change in ownership, found that the Housing Commission policy of market rents forced them to leave the hill. At present the residents of the hill are still tenants of the Housing Commission, but that may not be for long, as Council amalgamation and State government cut backs have put the Emerald Hill Estate once again up for sale, this time selling off individual properties and thus threatening the integrity of this historic site.











Early map of South Melbourne showing Orphan Asylum

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## The South Melbourne Town Hall

The South Melbourne Town Hall is a local landmark and one of Victoria's grandest Town Halls. Designed by successful Victorian architect, Charles Webb, it symbolises the prosperity and confidence of the municipality in the 19th Century. The Town Hall is built on an elevated site with outstanding landmark and townscape qualities. The building has four street frontages and enjoys a prominent position on the crest of Emerald Hill. Both the land and buildings are owned by the City.

The Town Hall's giant order Corinthian portico, matching pilasters and an imposing clock tower dominate Emerald Hill and the heritage significance of the building extends to its surroundings. The Town Hall has a formal, axial and symmetrical relationship with its surrounding streetscapes. The relatively intact Victorian streetscape and coherence of the built form is a clear strength of the precinct. The streetscape is formal, grand, confident and symmetrical.

Dr Phillip Goad, in his publication on Melbourne architecture, notes the following about the site;

*On the suburb's most prominent site, Charles Webb (1821-98) produced one of the period's most accomplished urban designs, as well as an assured complex of giant order Corinthian pilastered and columned bays flanking a portico topped by a dramatically telescoping pile of classical forms. ... The building originally contained offices, a public hall, Mechanics Institute, fire station, post office, police station and court house. Some of these were later relocated directly opposite, creating a precinct of distinguished municipal structures.*

The South Melbourne Town Hall is on the National and Victorian Heritage Registers (VHR), and the latter includes the Jubilee Memorial Fountain. The Emerald Hill precinct is on the VHR as citation H1136. City of Port Phillip's own Heritage Review Citations also cover most of the precinct.

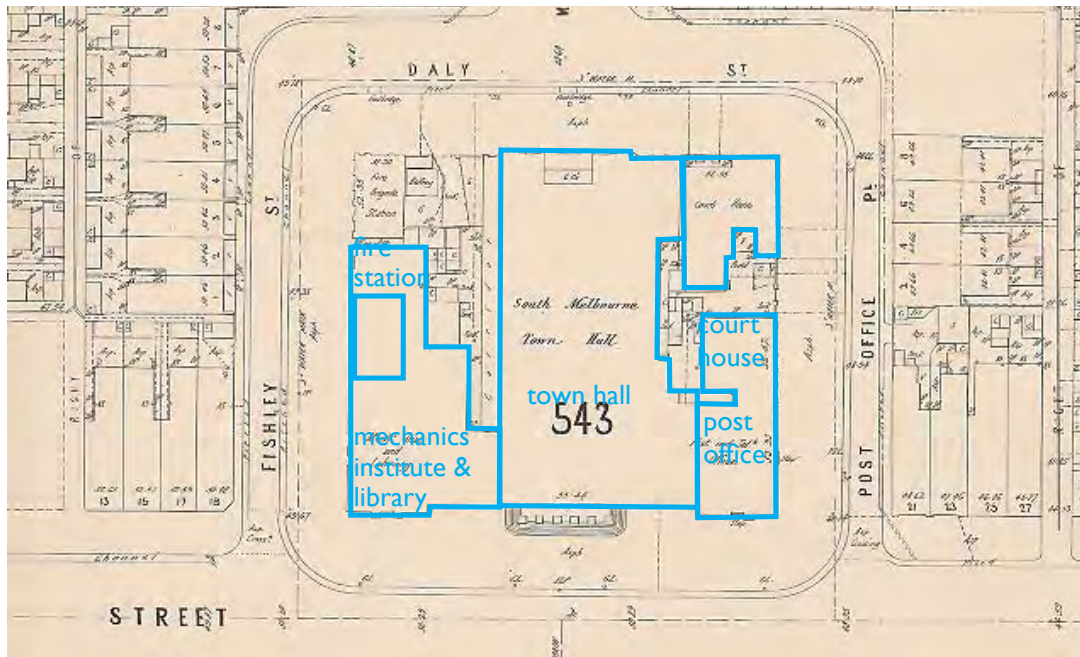
Heritage constraints include:

- the Jubilee fountain and its context
- permanent structures that interrupt views to the Town Hall building, particularly to the front and rear elevations
- historic street lamps in Bank Street and Daly Street

The heritage citation does not cover the road, forecourt and footpath around the town hall building.



The South Melbourne Town Hall has a grand civic history. It is vital to maintain a civic role and community access to this building. The South Melbourne Town Hall will continue to provide a meeting location for the community. All changes to the Town Hall building will require approval from Heritage Victoria.



The South Melbourne Town Hall was a collection of civic buildings including Post Office, Mechanics Institute and Library, Town Hall, Fire Station and Court House



View of Fishley and Bank Street  
circa 1900 - 1909



Aerial view of Emerald Hill  
circa 1930

## Principles

Principles underpinning the master plan provide a rationale to guide future work. These are divided into three categories; precinct, use and form.

### Precinct principles

- celebrate Indigenous heritage through art projects and interpretive signage
- strengthen the cohesive sense of place and character
- recognise and celebrate the heritage of Emerald Hill
- maintain the human scale
- improve safety and perception of safety
- protect and enhance key views of:
  - the Shrine of Remembrance from Bank Street
  - the Town Hall from Park Street
  - the rear of the town hall from Dorcas Street
- create a range of public spaces for quiet contemplation, public gathering and events
- maximise pedestrian access through the precinct
- improve amenity for pedestrians and cyclists

### Use principles

- encourage active uses that support street life
- design for everyone (universal access)
- transform inactive building edges to provide an engaging experience to the street
- support the use of pocket parks
- ensure processes allow the community to maximise the use of the South Melbourne Town Hall

### Form principles

- design new projects to make a positive contribution to the streetscape and reflect the formal, grand, confident and symmetrical streetscape
- adopt a consistent theme of materials and detailing complementary to the precinct's heritage character, without resorting to pastiche
- provide exemplary designed and respectful new built elements in line with Burra Charter and Council heritage policy
- design public realm improvements to be physically robust, for ease of repair and relatively low levels of maintenance
- improve way finding around the precinct and neighbourhood context
- implement a sustainable landscape theme:  
*Examples of this could include the use of drought tolerant plants, warm season grasses, low energy public lighting, alternative water sources and water sensitive urban design.*

Reference - City of Port Phillip's Vision for Public Open Space (2009)





Key view of South Melbourne Town Hall down Perrin Street from Park Street (circa 1903 - 1913)

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Protect and enhance key view to the Shrine of Remembrance



2008 aerial plan showing heritage overlay in yellow and precinct boundary in red

## Staging the projects

The projects will need to be staged, subject to existing Council commitments, funding, and further consultation processes. The goal for each of project is identified followed by a number of actions to achieve this goal in the short, medium and long terms:

- Short term
- Medium term
- Long term

The projects presented in the Emerald Hill master plan are

- the North Courtyard
- the Ballantyne Room
- Town Hall side entries
- Town Hall forecourt
- Town hall setting
- Marshall Street
- 222 Bank Street
- Public Art
- Lighting and safety

