

O'Neil Street Park Design. 2017.

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The concept for the design was inspired by the aesthetics of the surrounding architecture, the social history of the area, and the functionality required of an inner city park. The design aims to combine the romanticism of 19th century landscape architecture with 21st century functionality and materiality.

The importance of preserving the qualities of a past still evident within the streets of Ponsonby, and so enjoyed by the residents and visitors of today, influenced this concept. This was tempered by the contemporary requirements for safety, environment, and functionality. Security issues have been addressed by using clear sight lines, ensuring the park interior is both quiet, and open enough to provide a sense of security when traversing and enjoying the spaces.

An orchard has been used to provide a quiet informal place, to reference the home garden orchards of the past, and provide a play space for children. A wide variety of planting styles has been used to create a sense of discovery throughout the park. The roof of the Ponsonby Road shelter would provide Solar Panels for an LED lighting system that would provide both security and interactive lighting designs for dramatic effect. Public art would be commissioned for the facade of the Ponsonby Road shelter in the form of hand lettering, for the design of a bicycle rack, and the corrugated iron boundary wall in the Orchard.

The design concept has accommodated a variety of uses; these include large groups and public events such as markets and performances, as well as areas for small groups and individuals. The design acknowledges the importance of quiet contemplation in such a busy urban setting. It uses the calming qualities of planting design rather than hardscaping to achieve functional spaces. The design integrates public art into the functionality of the park rather than using monumental pieces.

An inclusive, green, open space.

The design incorporates wide open space, structured spaces, and a wild place, and is designed for all age groups. There are no barriers or potential hazards for the elderly or disabled people, and it creates spaces for play and discovery for children; here they can learn how to ride a bicycle, discover insects, birds, and see the life cycle of fruit trees. The design creates a diverse green space that uses specialty planting to produce strong seasonal variations within the park. It is true that some tree varieties are associated to cultures, and can promote inclusivity for people when used symbolically within public spaces.

A relaxing place, with seating.

The design creates a series of spaces for relaxation, both open space for Yoga or group activities, and more enclosed and private spaces, as well as incorporating an orchard with wildflowers. All these spaces have seating suitable for the experience they provide. Visitors can choose how they would like to relax within a variety of environmental experiences. The seating has been designed to be in sheltered spaces and provide for groups or individuals, this is supported by a balanced degree of privacy and public safety.

A flexible space.

The design has created multiple use possibilities. Importantly it enables people to remain separate from events if they wish, so no one activity will dominate the space. Markets can happen under the Ponsonby Road structure, or in the open space off O'Neil Street. Multiple families or groups can meet in spaces and have a small impact on the use of the rest of the park.

Shelter.

Provision has been made for shade shelter through the planting plan, through wind break hedging and with the use of two structures. The structures provide shelter for meeting places, and with the Ponsonby Road one, for a small street market. As the trees in the orchard and the enclosed gardens mature, there will be plenty of shade from the sun. No additional built structures were used, as priority was given to green space, with the use of trees to counter road noise and pollution.

A place of simplicity, and calm.

To create space where people can experience calmness, a degree of privacy within a busy urban environment, as well as provide for multiple events, a degree of complexity in the design is required. This complexity has been mitigated through the use of clear sight lines, consistency in the design of the enclosed gardens, and the openness of the access into, within, and across the park. The built structures mirror the restful architecture of the Villas and old buildings of Ponsonby, the wide boulevard that traverses the park makes the passing through a restful and contemplative experience.