



# Auckland Botanic Gardens MASTER PLAN BOOKLET

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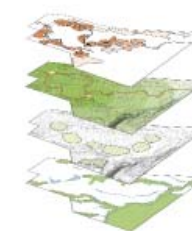
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# S E C T I O N   O N E

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

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1.03 Master plan purpose

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1.05 Consultation & design development

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## 1.01 Background

Auckland Botanic Gardens (ABG) is located in Manurewa, Auckland and is bounded by the Southern Motorway to the west and Totara Park to the north. It has a regionally important role and function as a visitor destination in Auckland.

The traditional role of a Botanic Gardens for the study and identification of plants is recognised worldwide. However contemporary Botanic Gardens have a much more diverse role; one which balances goals for conservation, education, science and recreation. Auckland Botanic Gardens has made a conscious effort to recognise the connection between people and their environment, and to inspire greater interest in the community for the collection and display of plants suited to Auckland conditions.

The opening of the new visitor centre Huakaiwaka in April 2005 has increased visitation, along with an expanding events programme and the inaugural Stoneleigh Sculpture in the Gardens. According to 2008/09 vehicle counts the Auckland Botanic Gardens attracted 950,000 visitors and is now the second most visited regional 'park' after Muriwai Regional Park.

Whilst the messages being conveyed to visitors continue to become more potent and engaging, spatially and thematically the Auckland Botanic Gardens lack a comprehensive structure. A lack of overall integration and clear orientation through the Gardens, means that most visitors do not fully experience all the Gardens have to offer. The master plan addresses these issues.

## 1.02 Background documents

A master plan for the Botanic Gardens was last completed by landscape architect Stephen Brown in 1998. This plan outlined the development opportunities for the Gardens and included consideration of feedback from key stakeholders, staff and councillors at the time. Following completion of this plan, the Auckland Botanic Gardens Management Plan was adopted in 2001. The purpose of this five year plan was to provide direction and guidance for the ARC to manage the Botanic Gardens.

The Management Plan incorporates the vision for the Botanic Gardens which is:

"A spectacular South Pacific Botanic Garden that is widely recognised for its outstanding plant collections, Auckland regional identity and the interest inspired in the community".

The Management Plan 2001 sets out goals, policies and objectives for the core business of the Botanic Gardens relating to plant collections, recreation activities and facilities, education, conservation and environmental values, science and fostering relationships.

A number of new plant collections are mandated in the Management Plan 2001, and have been considered in the master plan. These plant collections are at varying stages of development and include:

- Gondwana Arboretum
- Children's Discovery Garden
- Ethnobotanic Garden
- Lifestyle courtyards

Also relevant to the master plan is market and event research undertaken in 2008 by Captivate for the Auckland Botanic Gardens. The objective was to understand what events or attractions would increase visitation and contribute to the vision of the Botanic Gardens. A Marketing Plan was also developed to clarify the marketing goals and objectives for the Botanic Gardens in relation to its role, brand, and positioning statement "where ideas grow".



## 1.03 Master plan purpose

The master plan will guide the long term future development of the Botanic Gardens, and show what the Gardens should look like 10 to 50 years from now, in a way that strongly emphasises the Botanic Gardens sense of place as “a major hub of the South Pacific”. The master plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate evolving ideas, while providing a fixed spatial framework for comprehensive development.

Importantly, the purpose of the master plan is to harmoniously unite the various and complex components of the Botanic Gardens in a manner that optimises visitor enjoyment, way finding and understanding of key messages. Emphasis is placed on clear orientation that provides visitors with an unambiguous and seamless journey through the plant collections.

The master plan has been developed under the umbrella of the Botanic Gardens Management Plan August 2001, but will also guide the formal Management Plan review process by identifying design solutions for operational issues. The Management Plan review will consider implementation of the master plan, and alignment of objectives and policies to achieve this.

The master plan is intended to be a framework, and does not provide sufficiently detailed information for construction or implementation. Typically a developed design phase would follow the master plan process, to identify the 'look and feel' of key repeated elements within the Gardens such as paths, walls, bridges and the like. Following this, a staged detail design and implementation process would ensue for specific gardens, collections, development areas or landscape elements. In all cases, the big picture must drive the detail.

## 1.04 How to use this booklet

The audience for this booklet includes Auckland Botanic Garden staff and Auckland Regional Council staff and Councillors who may be involved in making management or development decisions that affect the site. The master plan booklet may also be used as a communication tool for informing the wider public about future plans for the Gardens. This will include the Management Plan review process.

The master plan booklet is divided into five sections as follows:

- 1. Introduction:** This section explains the brief and scope for the master plan, and how it has been developed in consultation with stakeholders.
- 2. Concept overview:** This section is an executive summary of the master plan, and provides an overview of the concepts and structuring elements underpinning the master plan.
- 3. Context and analysis:** This section sets out the context and connections for the Botanic Gardens, including how people get to the Botanic Gardens and from where. It also considers the constraints and opportunities for the site itself.
- 4. Master plan layers:** This section describes the master plan, and identifies layers relating to path hierarchy, viewshafts and open space, garden theming, and new development areas.
- 5. Appendix:** This includes benchmarking examples and documents which have been developed for the Botanic Gardens independently of the master plan process but have informed the master plan outcomes.



## 1.05 Consultation and design development

The master plan for the Auckland Botanic Gardens has been developed through a consultative process with key stakeholders. The collective knowledge and contribution of the following groups has been conveyed through workshops, individual meetings, presentations and site walkovers:

- Auckland Botanic Gardens staff
- Project Design Team (including ABG and ARC staff, and consultant specialists)
- Key Stakeholder Focus Group (including representatives of: The Friends of the Botanic Gardens, Auckland Regional Councillors, and other expert advisors for arts, botanic gardens and ecology)

At each stage of the master plan development from preliminary through to final, workshops have been held to identify aspirations and opportunities, understand issues and constraints, test ideas and seek feedback on proposed options. The refinement of the master plan through this process has led to robust and enduring solutions for the future development of the Botanic Gardens.

The role of the Project Design Team is to:

- assist with identifying and prioritising the major issues which require consideration across the Gardens,
- provide advice and direction to enable the development of various conceptual options for the future development of the Gardens,
- highlight potential opportunities for consideration within the design process,
- act as a source of expertise, information and advice to the wider project team,
- provide feedback on master plan and concept designs developed by the Project Landscape Architects,
- ensure that the master plan is aligned with the vision for the Botanic Gardens and the direction set out in the Management Plan 2001, and
- endorse the final master plan to the Parks and Heritage Committee

The role of the Key Stakeholder Focus Group is to:

- provide advice and direction to enable the development of various conceptual options for the future development of the Botanic Gardens,
- enlist expert advice from within the industry, to define the future aspirations for the Botanic gardens, that is aligned with the Botanic Gardens marketing plan and Auckland Regional Council values,
- provide feedback on master plan options developed by the Project Design Team, and
- support the final master plan to be endorsed through the Parks and Heritage Committee.

Final sign off for the master plan is made through the Parks and Heritage Committee.

Wider public consultation will be undertaken on how key proposals will be managed as part of the formal Management Plan review process.



## 1.06 Vision and master plan principles

### Vision

The principles have been developed to reflect the vision for the Gardens which is:

“a spectacular South Pacific Botanic Garden that is widely recognized for its outstanding plant collections, Auckland regional identity and the interest inspired in the community.”

There are 4 strands to this vision, which so far have been interpreted in existing and planned developments as follows:

1. South Pacific Garden: a particular character expressed in the design of the buildings, the themed planting for entrances and gathering areas, and the kiwi style of living and gardening expressed in themed gardens.
2. Outstanding plant collections: a place for the research, curation and documentation of comprehensive plant collections, conservation and protection of threatened species and valuable germplasm, horticultural interpretation and education, and growing plants that are suitable for Auckland conditions.
3. Auckland regional identity: the most visited and recognised public garden in the Auckland region, and primary source of plant and garden related information.
4. Interest inspired in the community: appeal to visitors and engage with the community by making plants and gardens accessible and relevant to people’s lifestyles, and by making education fun, dynamic and wide ranging.

### Principles

The following design principles have been developed with input from the Project Design Team and the Key Stakeholder Focus Group. The principles have been distilled from workshop discussions about aspirations for the future development of the Botanic Gardens, and were developed to create a focus for the master plan.

The completed master plan has been tested back against these principles to ensure that it delivers the desired outcomes. The design principles will continue to be a key reference point in the future, particularly when assessing the appropriateness of a new garden developments.

#### Principle 1

Create a legible framework for the Botanic Gardens to organize plant collections and optimise visitor engagement with them.

#### Principle 2

Create an interesting and unique visitor experience by developing a South Pacific theme expressed in the overall landscape framework.

#### Principle 3

Showcase plant collections from New Zealand and around the world selected for their relevance to Auckland, within the broader landscape structure of the gardens and the unique setting of native trees, bush and waterways.

#### Principle 4

Showcase sustainable solutions, and enhance environmental protection throughout the gardens by applying low impact design principles and identifying education and interpretation opportunities.