

Port Places

Re-zoning Fishermans Bend to a capital city zone was a bold strategy that needs to be matched by a bold vision. It offers immense possibilities to implement the best thinking in 21st century approaches to urban redevelopment and what is needed to create communities. It also offers exciting opportunities to transform urban landscapes through the skilful treatment and re-use of stormwater.

HISTORY AND PLACE MAKING

Fundamental to place making is a deep understanding of a particular place. The Fishermans Bend vision reveals little understanding of the place which is to be transformed. Without knowing the place, the foundations of the vision are not well grounded. The vision document treats Fishermans Bend as if it has no history. History is not just quaint stories and curiosities – although these abound about Fishermans Bend – but fundamental to approaching the future.

What is the essential history of Fishermans Bend that is so relevant to its future? Its natural and topographical history. As described so well in Gary Presland's recent book *'The Place for a Village: how nature has shaped the city of Melbourne'*, Fishermans Bend's identity was and remains associated with the river and the sandy, swampy sandy land inside Bend. This made it entirely unsuitable for residential development in the early settlement of Victoria. Its relationship with the port of Melbourne in all its many incarnations has also been a critical part of its history and remains critical to planning for the future. These two features of Fishermans Bend have influenced every layer of its subsequent development from its early use for sand mining to being set aside for industry at the time of the second World War. Fishermans Bend has always been seen as a site of possibility by decision makers in different eras for a range of different projects – from housing to Port development to industrialisation.



Cox 1864 map of Melbourne, showing the swampy nature of the terrain

INVESTING EVERY DROP OF RAIN IN THE FUTURE LIVEABILITY OF FISHERMANS BEND AND THE HEALTH OF THE YARRA RIVER

Fishermans Bend offers the opportunity to re-interpret the wetlands of Fishermans Bend shown in the map above in a 21st Century way through implementing the vision and the strategies of contained in *Melbourne's Water Future*: 'A smart resilient water system for a liveable, sustainable and productive Melbourne.'

The thinking has been done – *Melbourne's Water Future* is government policy. It remains to be implemented through a coordinated total whole-of-water cycle plan for Fishermans Bend. As the plan says: 'We need to value and use the rain that falls on Melbourne It will improve the health of our waterways and bays, reduce urban flooding, enhance our liveability and amenity, and help cement Melbourne as a centre of expertise in whole-of-water-cycle management – a key capability for the twenty first century.'

Many and various opportunities must be created for the beneficial use of this stormwater in both the public and the private realm. In the public realm through the creation of skilfully designed raingardens that create beautiful places while cleansing and slowing stormwater inputs into the River. There are wonderful opportunities here to tie in references to the wetlands that characterised Fishermans Bend in the early days in a 21st century interpretation.

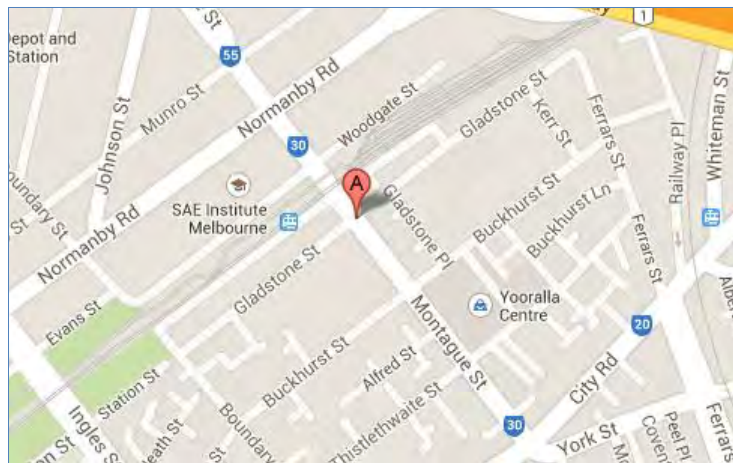
To give effect to the aspirations in the Fishermans Bend vision and *Melbourne's Water Future*, performance measures and targets for stormwater in all new development both in the public and private realm need to be stated and incorporated as basic requirements in the planning scheme. Intensification in Lorimer and Montague has the potential to increase pollutant load to the Yarra River and the Bay. This must not be permitted. Instead, this is a generational opportunity to continue to improve the water quality in the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay – the two greatest natural assets of Melbourne. Approaches such as water capture and retention for re-use on site in private development as well as within streetscapes for urban raingardens, swales and other like treatments should be an integral part of every precinct of Fishermans Bend.

CLIMATE READY

The low lying nature of much of Fishermans Bend and Montague means that with rising river levels stormwater will not be able to make its way to the river. This is both a current and a historical phenomenon and can be anticipated to be a stronger feature of the future. Even now, rain events mean that localised flooding occurs in Montague.

The *Port Phillip Bay Coastal Adaptation Pathways Project* is a key piece of research which must inform future planning for Fishermans Bend. The case study of SouthBank is particularly instructive and includes this area. It must be drawn upon. Planning for Fishermans Bend must be proactive in preparing for climate change impacts such as rising water levels in the Yarra River, and stormwater runoff from the catchment based on the best available climate science and flood modelling.

Consider the following location in a past, present and future scenario



Montague and Gladstone Streets, Montague

This photograph shows ponding in this place the day after a big rain event.



Access to Montague Light Rail station, off Montague Street, 10/2013

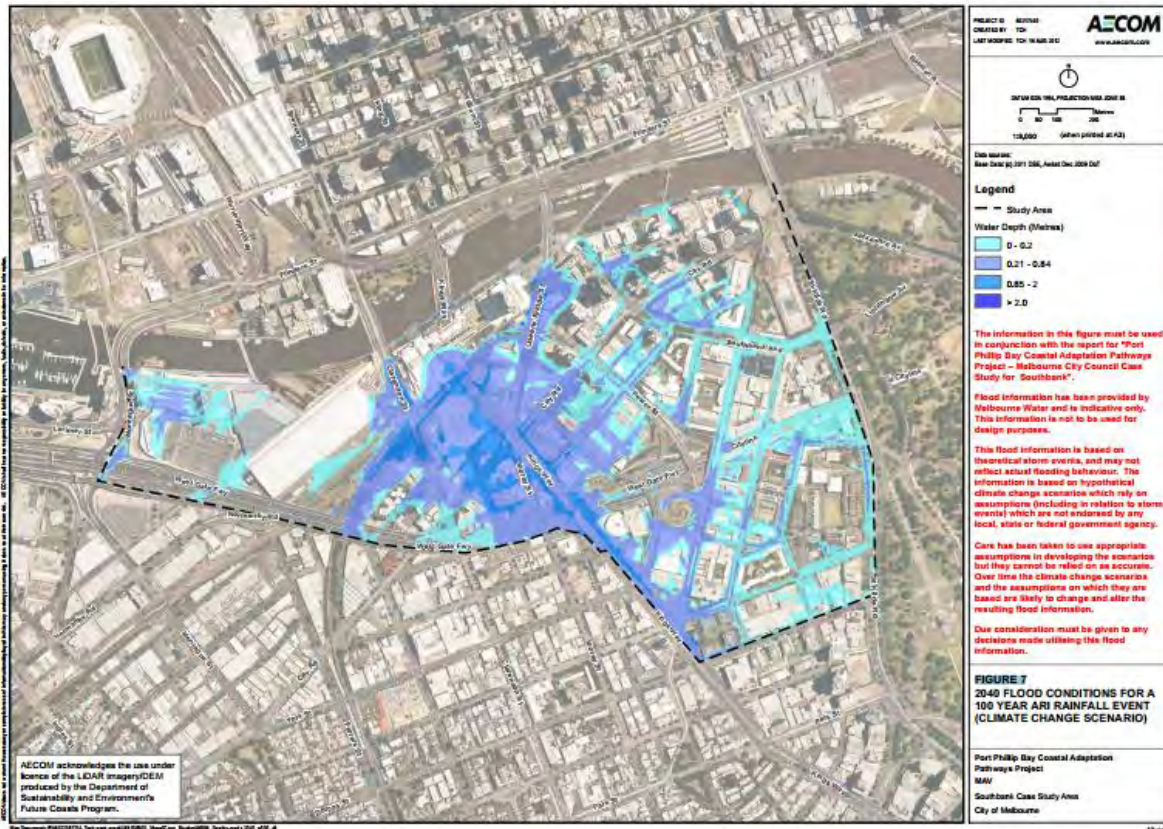
Or consider this photograph of roughly the same place in 1924. Before Montague Station was built, this area was referred to as 'Salt Lake City'.

FLOODS IN SOUTH MELBOURNE.



More than 12 hours of practically continuous and heavy rain flooded the low-lying areas of South Melbourne and Montague yesterday. Some streets were inundated with several feet of water stretching from fence to fence. Vehicles are shown in one of these thoroughfares; horses made slow but sure headway, but the motor came to grief, and had to be towed out of the flood.

Now consider projections for this area into the future at 2070



Source: Port Phillip Bay Coastal Adaptation Pathways Project

The cheapest climate adaptation is that which is planned ahead of time. Retrospective action is much more expensive. Planning should be undertaken up front to ensure that future buildings anticipate future flooding and creating climate resilient buildings that can withstand periodic flooding. Any climate adaptation protections should not adversely affect neighbours and should always be considered as part of a regional response.

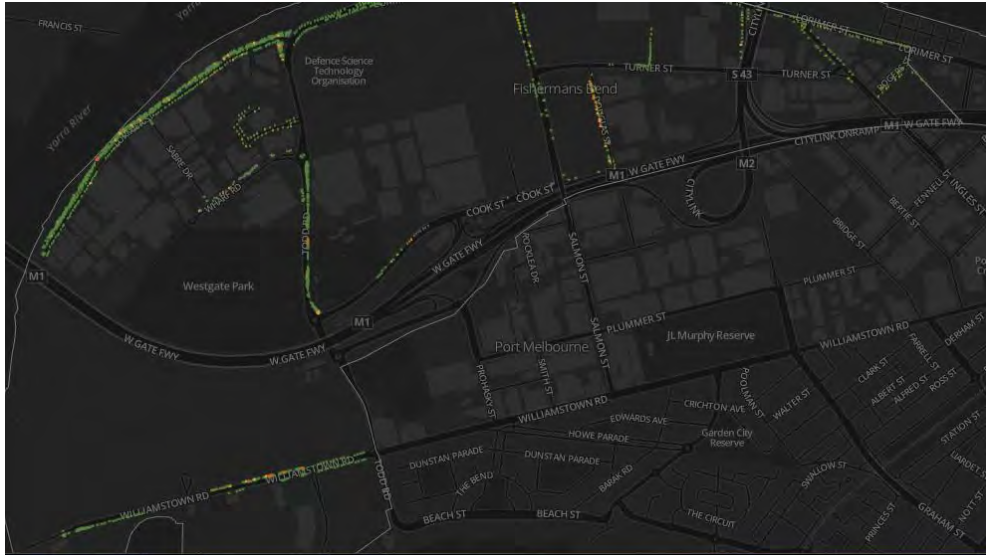
How might this location look in 2070?

Port Places imagines buildings and places well adapted to flooding from intense rainfall events associated with high tides

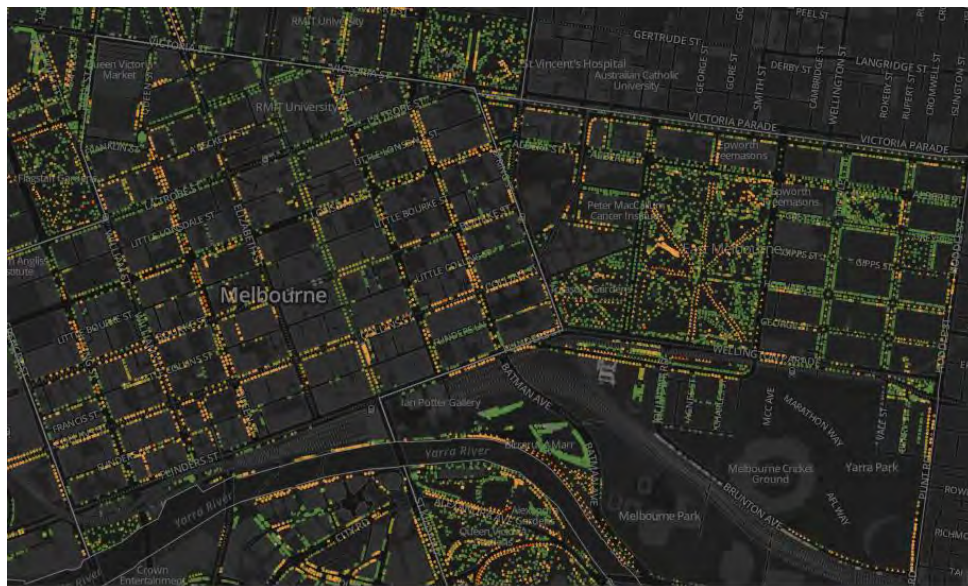
TREE COVER

Large trees were not characteristic of the sandy terrain of Fishermans Bend, but tree planting must be part of its future. Apart from a few notable streets such as Salmon St and Woodruff St, Fishermans Bend there is a dearth of tree canopy relative to the more established parts of the City of Melbourne as these graphics from Melbourne’s Urban forest show

<http://melbourneurbanforestvisual.com.au/>



Fishermans Bend tree cover, City of Melbourne



Tree cover, City of Melbourne

This is also illustrated in the following maps



City of Melbourne

How will this map look in in the future?

Port Places imagines the Fishermans Bend of the future with tree lined streets and Boulevards that contribute to Melbourne's continued reputation for liveability.

A fully developed landscape plan must be an integral part of the planning for each precinct if the liveability attributes of the Fishermans Bend plan are to be realised. Targets for tree and vegetation cover must be set. There is also an opportunity to increase the presence of plants indigenous to the region to reference not only the natural history of the Fishermans Bend but to increase the representation of biodiversity in the city.

The City of Port Phillip, in advance of the rezoning of Fishermans Bend and in recognition of the paucity of tree cover, began an energetic tree planting program. Trees planted in that program should be protected during development.

OPEN SPACE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTSTANDING URBAN LANDSCAPES

There is a contradiction between the recognition of the value and importance of open space in a future Fishermans Bend with its under provision in the vision document. In spite of very significant population densification, there is no correspondingly significant increase in open space. Instead, reliance is placed on Port Melbourne's open spaces, already under significant pressure. More open space needs to be set aside in Fishermans Bend itself if the liveability aspirations of the vision are to be achieved.

The quality of the public realm will make or break the future liveability of Fishermans Bend. Every precinct needs to have clear guidelines for generous footpaths and coherent landscaping themes and planting palettes.

Access to the Yarra River and the treatment of the river frontage needs to be very carefully considered. With shipping berths still active in the southern reaches of the river, access to the river is limited. Anticipating an active and an active ageing population, the river walk must always be generous, providing spaciouly for pedestrians and cyclists. The high quality public realm that characterises the Port Phillip foreshore is a model to consider with its use of indigenous plants in skilfully designed environments.

LINKING THE COMMUNITIES: SANDRIDGE AND LORIMER

Currently, the only connection between the Sandridge and Lorimer precincts is the bridge over the M1 at Ingles St. This narrow bridge crosses over 10 lanes of fast moving traffic on the M1. The bridge will become a critical connection between the communities of the precincts of the future. The bridge only has a footpath on one side. It is not a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Neither is it a pleasant one. It is extremely hostile and stark – perhaps appropriate to an industrial landscape but not to the future aspirations for FBURA. In order to achieve improved community connectedness as well as to encourage the uptake of walking and cycling anticipated in the plan, this bridge needs to be significantly widened and made safer for pedestrians and cyclists. It could also be made into a beautiful connection – our version of a 'HighLine' park.



Ingles St Bridge (top)
View from Ingles St Bridge (bottom)

Port Places imagines the Ingles St Bridge as a ‘green bridge’ covered in vegetation linking the two new precincts and communities of Fishermans Bend. Here is just such a concept under consideration in London

<http://inhabitat.com/thomas-heatherwick-unveils-new-images-of-london-garden-bridge-as-public-consultation-launches/garden-bridge-view-d-final-25-10-13/>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the successful realisation of the aspirations in the draft vision document, there need to be

- Targets and performance measures for the retention and re-use of stormwater in the private and public realm
- Targets for tree canopy cover
- Extensive use of raingardens in the landscape
- Flood resilient buildings and up front planning for anticipated climate change impacts
- Safe streets designed to facilitate walking and cycling

SOURCES DRAWN UPON IN PREPARATION OF THIS SUBMISSION

Melbourne's Urban Forest

<http://melbourneurbanforestvisual.com.au/>

Melbourne's Water Future

http://www.livingvictoria.vic.gov.au/PDFs/Melbourne's_Water_Future_full.pdf

Port Phillip Bay Coastal Adaptation Pathways Project

<http://www.abm.org.au/adaptationproject/>

Port Phillip Bay Coastal Adaptation Pathways Project: [SouthBank case study](#)

<http://www.abm.org.au/adaptationproject/reports/CoM%20Southbank%20Final%2019%20September.pdf>

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