

Community Consultation  
Draft Victoria Park Master Plan  
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## **SECRA's response to Master Plan for Victoria Park/Pakapakanthi) Park 16 (May 5, 2023) by Aspect Studios**

**August 14, 2023**

### **BACKGROUND**

The South East City Residents Association (SECRA) was asked during the first round of consultations relating to this Master Plan to provide its perspectives on the future needs for Victoria Park (Pakapakanthi). In its submission to the City of Adelaide (CoA) Council (August 30, 2022) SECRA identified five major items and made these recommendations:

1. **Climate Proof the park by increasing the tree canopy** in northern and southern sections and remove, or shade, as many bitumen surfaces as possible. We considered this required urgent action because of the climate emergency and the significant lack of trees in the Park, most critically along walking paths and pedestrian/ cycling thoroughfares and around playing fields.
2. **Enhance and emphasise the park's biodiversity** including the use of the new Miyawaki horticulture technique for rapid revegetation and enhancement of biodiversity.
3. **Increase opportunities for family recreation and an appreciation of nature.**
4. **Reduce the negative impacts of major events e.g.** blocking public access during excessively lengthy construction and disassembly of race infrastructure
5. **Encourage community participation in maintaining and managing Victoria Park** as a People's Park.

Driven by community concern at the lack of tree canopy and the rapidly declining amenity and safety for people using the Park during increasingly longer and hotter summers, SECRA wrote to the CoA Council in January 2023 with a proposal to immediately start planting trees for shade and understory to enhance biodiversity and cooling. The CoA Council agreed and a volunteer community group *Green Pakapakanthi* was formed which currently has over 70 members and this winter has planted over 100 trees and 500 shrubs in the park in collaboration with the CoA.

Congruent with SECRA's concerns, SECRA notes the first two key points in the brief given to Aspect Studios by the CoA Council were:

- "Lack of trees and shade particularly, but not exclusively, at the northern end of the park."
- "The need to provide a hospitable and landscaped environment for a future, hotter climate."

### **CRITIQUE OF THE MASTER PLAN**

In the report's introduction, the authors state that the "draft Master Plan has been prepared on the basis of the following assumptions:

- That motor sports events will continue to be programmed on the site.
- That greening initiatives have been selected recognising that open spaces are limited to areas that will not impact on sports and recreational activities."

These two statements concern SECRA. The sweeping powers of the SA Motorsport Board with respect to Victoria Park (Section 20, South Australian Motor Sport Act 1984), the present extensive hard stand for car racing and the motor sports events themselves are having a negative effect *presently* on the park's ability to provide a health-promoting, safe recreational space for SA's citizens. Furthermore, they have significantly limited the ability of the authors to produce a long-sighted plan for the park that meets the dual challenges of global heating (much longer and hotter summers) and substantial high-density inner-city living and population growth that will require greater access to open green spaces.

The Master Plan is based on stakeholder input, a review of comparable multipurpose parks in other cities and Aspect Studios' own landscape design knowledge and research.

### **Vision Statement**

The Plan's vision statements are hard to fault,

1. Be greener, cooler and more climate-resilient
2. Celebrate cultural and social values
3. Continue to provide space for unprogrammed community use and connection to nature
4. Be biodiverse and improve Adelaide's open grassy woodland landscape character
5. Provide consistent quality community sports and recreation
6. Be a park that attracts and supports a diverse range of events and activities.

However, as indicated in SECRA's original submission, and extensively [documented by the WHO](#), parkland open green spaces have an essential function in contributing to the physical and mental health of a city's citizens. Missing from the the vision statement is that the park "Contribute to people's physical and mental health".

### **The key moves**

Section 4.1 contains the Master Plan's vision statements, further developed as eight Master Plan principles in section 4.2. They describe the design concepts upon which the Plan is based, such as consolidating the path network and revealing pre and post-colonial history. Section 5 (The Master Plan - 8 "key moves") provides more planning details/ diagrams and attempts to show how the visions and planning principles can be realised "with particular emphasis on preserving and enhancing the park's much-loved structured and un-structured recreational activities and tree studded landscape character while ensuring universal access to the park is improved and maintained into the future." Some of these are relatively simple and highly desirable, (e.g. planting trees for shade). Others are innovative and potentially exciting (creating micro wetlands through the creek lines and stormwater drains) or essential to ensure children's safety (rethinking the alignment of the criterium track), while others are more blue sky (Smart Park showing how to embrace the future).

**SECRA supports many of the concepts and plans that are described, but there are some important gaps and potential risks that should be highlighted.** We make the following observations and recommendations.

1. While taking important steps in the right direction **the Master Plan falls short in its vision for the Park to "Be greener, cooler and more climate resilient"** and it does not adequately address key points in its brief viz., the lack of trees and shade particularly at the northern end of the park, and to provide a hospitable environment for people in a hotter climate.
  - a. **The proposal to increase the Park's tree canopy by 4% is totally inadequate** given the rapidly deteriorating situation with [global heating](#) and that the main Park is presently almost devoid of canopy (see Figure 1.). SECRA recommends that the City of Adelaide Council sets a target increase in tree canopy of at least 20% for Victoria Park.
  - b. **No canopy trees are proposed for the open northern end of the Park** to cool and protect cyclists, pedal car drivers and children at play on the criterium track and sports spectators who gather around the expanded playing surfaces. Is the health and safety of park users at this end of the Park being held hostage because of the Motor Sports Board's insistence on having a clear line of sight for TV cameras during the Adelaide 500 race or on having unfettered flexibility to erect marques and other infrastructure? Pavement paint will lower surface temperatures minimally (see below). However, neither it, nor the "temporary greening" described on page 44 will protect park users in this area from the more extreme radiant solar heat expected in future summers. SECRA urges the Lord Mayor and City of Adelaide Council to engage with the Motor Sports Board and the relevant State Government ministers to reach a compromise whereby some trees at least can be planted in this (northern) area of the Park.
  - c. **Extra trees to shade paths.** It is pleasing that the report draws attention to the opportunity for many more trees to be planted for shade along existing and new secondary paths, and along the east-west asphalt commuter thoroughfares. The tree shading diagram (p44) shows some gaps on existing paths that require explanation, most notably along one of the east-west commuter paths and the paths adjacent to the Grey Box Grassland/ Butterfly Conservation Zone. There are also sun exposed paths in the wetland that are not mentioned, although reference is made to the opportunity for trees to be planted on the existing mound. It is important that, as soon as possible, trees are planted along paths to protect pedestrians, runners and cyclists. SECRA's Green Pakapakanthi, proposes a new race for Victoria Park: the GP500 race. In collaboration with CoA, Green Pakapakanthi volunteers will race to plant 500 trees for shade by September 2024.



Figure 1. [SA Govt Urban Heat and Tree Mapping Viewer](#) demonstrating the dearth of tree canopy in the centre of Victoria Park compared with Parks 15 and 17 to the north and south west, respectively.

- d. **Canopy trees in open spaces and around playing fields.** The Master Plan recommends "New trees in open turf areas (at strategic locations)" (p44). SECRA considers that there is scope to greatly increase the number of trees around playing fields above what is depicted in the Master Plan diagram (p44). See, for example, tree canopy distribution around sports fields in Parks 15 and 17 in Figure 1. A more ambitious, climate-appropriate tree canopy target is needed and requires far more trees be planted in Victoria Park. More trees need not have a negative impact on sports and recreational activities, or the distant views to the Adelaide Hills. On the contrary, more trees can provide critically needed shade and cooling for sport spectators, walkers and dogs owners and with careful design can "activate" the Park by providing additional spaces for family picnics and children's play. Furthermore, with strategic design these treed areas could frame and enhance the vistas to the distant hills face. It would be wrong to restrict tree planting in the southern end of the park, and in so doing jeopardise the health and safety of park users throughout the year, just to allow unfettered access for car parking during a 4-day motor sport event. Alternative public and private transport solutions, such as are deployed during major sporting events at the Adelaide Oval, need to be designed rather than use Victoria Park as a giant parking lot (See Figure 2). SECRA proposes that, as part of the GP500 race, many more trees be planted in open spaces than

are recommended in the Master Plan and that, to facilitate this the Lord Mayor and CoA Council approach the Motor Sport Board to find alternate solutions to on-park car parking.



**Figure2. Cars as far as the eye can see on the southern end of Victoria Park on race day Adelaide 500**

- e. **Hard surfaces and the heat island effect.** The report acknowledges (p37) that "The preference from the majority of stakeholders is to minimise asphalt and hard infrastructure in the Park Lands to reduce the urban heat island effect and to reinforce the park's primary function as a flexible-use and biodiverse greenspace." However, no effective remedy has been proposed in the Master Plan to deal with the extensive hard surfaces in the northern end of the Park and it is proposed that more hard surface paths be constructed (asphalt, aggregate concrete), with very little prospect they can be shaded by trees in the next decade. It is proposed in the Master Plan that a cooling paint be applied to asphalt surfaces to reduce the surface temperature by "as much as 10-30 degrees Fahrenheit". However, we have measured surface temperature to be over 60°C on the unshaded E-W asphalt paths in Victoria Park on a 35°C day. Cooling spray-paint would only reduce surface temperature to a still very hot 51-56°C. SECRA recommends that the Lord Mayor and Council request the Motor Sport Board resurface the recently asphalted secondary paths in the northern part of the park with compacted gravel, concrete aggregate or similar; and requests the CoA Council review the composition and need for the new paths that are proposed in the Master Plan.
2. **Biodiversity.** It is pleasing to see that the Masterplan recommends "Pocket/biodiversity planting along western edge" and "understorey planting on Fullarton Road edge" (p44). SECRA strongly supports efforts to enhance biodiversity in the park. The new wetland, constructed primarily for flood mitigation, is a superb biodiversity "gift" for the park that must be nurtured. The creation of a string of micro wetlands on the western fringe (p45) would be a similarly welcome addition. When considering the pressures that will be placed on the park in future years by large population increases and rapid overheating, it is important that Council and the community strike the right balance between preservation of remnant vegetation (e.g. open grey box grassland) and revegetation. The Miyawaki method of densely planting trees and understorey in small pockets is

gaining increasing attention, internationally. The method lends itself to rapid revegetation of native endemic plants and enhancement of biodiversity in small areas that need not impinge on sports and recreational spaces. With the assistance of the CoA, SECRA's volunteer group, Green Pakapakanthi, planted out a 170 m<sup>2</sup> Miyawaki pocket forest in the new wetland in August. SECRA would welcome the opportunity to work with the CoA Council to design and establish additional Miyawaki pocket forests in the Park to rapidly provide habitat for native birds, insects and small reptiles and to assist in cooling.

3. **SECRA strongly supports the various concepts enunciated in the Master Plan to help visitors of all ages appreciate and learn about the Park's cultural history and biodiversity** and agrees that there will be opportunities for the Council to pursue partnerships with schools and universities, and it is hoped, with community groups such as SECRA. SECRA would appreciate the opportunity to co-design with Council a biodiversity outdoor classroom and interpretative hub for education, on-going learning and nature experiences for children and adults. The hub would engage the community in the study and appreciation of the unique urban biodiversity precinct at the southern end of the Park and in Park 17.
4. **Year-Round Park Activation - Maximising Opportunities for Event Mode.**
  - a. **Equity** The Master Plan places a great deal of attention on further "activation" of the Park. SECRA supports a number of the initiatives to increase access to and the enjoyment of the Park for people of all ages e.g., the development of safe spaces for children to play, and to interact with nature; and First Nations peoples accessing the Park and telling their stories. However, it notes that little attention has been given to ensuring equity of access to the Park for the disabled and the very elderly, and little mention is made of improving access for those using public transport.
  - b. **Barriers to 'activation'** The Master Plan authors have put a lot of effort into thinking how the asphalt and concrete expanse in the northern section might be turned into a pop-up play and entertainment centre and night-time movie theatre – perhaps akin to trying to "turn a pig's ear into a silk purse". However, apart from the challenge of combating extreme summer heat in this area of the Park, which SECRA believes has not been adequately addressed, there is a risk that year-round activation of this area could shut down this end of the Park for most of the year. Adding more events or activities that cordon off the Park for days or even weeks to bump in and out infrastructure excludes thousands of people from enjoying this end of the Park for personal exercise and recreation and puts pressure on the remainder of the Park. This already happens with the Adelaide 500, 3-D Equestrian Events, pedal prix and light show events. Adelaide already has the second lowest area of green space per capita of all Australian capital cities. Effectively locking up half of the 70-hectare Victoria Park in perpetuity for events is not good public health policy. SECRA recommends that the CoA carefully review the practicality and wisdom of the initiatives suggested in the Master Plan for the large expanse of hard paved surface in the north of the Park.
  - c. **Built form** Activation also inevitably leads to the wish for more permanent built structures as is proposed with the addition of a redeveloped "amenities block" adjacent to the hard stand that will include public toilets, viewing platforms to the sports fields and criterium track and storage facility. SECRA supports the call for 'no increase in size (of facilities) on park land'.

In conclusion, SECRA is pleased to have had the opportunity to comment of the Draft Master Plan for Victoria Park and is the grateful for the time extension given for its submission. SECRA's *Green Pakapakanthi* would



welcome the opportunity to continue its collaboration with the City of Adelaide Council to implement ( and extend) the regreening initiatives recommended in the Draft Master Plan.

Should you wish to discuss any of the matters raised in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me at [DougmcEvoy@hotmail.com](mailto:DougmcEvoy@hotmail.com) or M: 0434 812 043

Yours sincerely

R. Doug McEvoy AM

Chair, South East City Residents Association

On behalf of the SECRA Committee

August 14<sup>th</sup> 2023

**SECRA RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MASTER PLAN FOR VICTORIA PARK/PAKAPAKANTHI) PARK  
16 (MAY 5, 2023) BY ASPECT STUDIOS**

1. SECRA recommends that the vision statement be broadened to include people's physical and mental health.
2. SECRA recommends that the City of Adelaide Council sets a target increase in tree canopy of at least 20% for Victoria Park
3. SECRA urges the Lord Mayor and City of Adelaide Council to engage with the Motor Sports Board and the relevant State Government ministers to reach a compromise whereby some trees at least can be planted in the northern area of the park.
4. SECRA's Green Pakapakanthi, proposes a new race for Victoria Park: the GP500 race. In collaboration with CoA, Green Pakapakanthi volunteers will race to plant 500 trees for shade by September 2024.
5. SECRA proposes that, as part of the GP500 race, many more trees be planted in open spaces than are recommended in the Master Plan and, to facilitate this, suggests that the Lord Mayor and CoA Council approach the Motor Sport Board to find alternate solutions to on-park car parking.
6. SECRA recommends that the Lord Mayor and Council request the Motor Sport Board resurface the recently asphalted secondary paths in the northern part of the Park with compacted gravel, concrete aggregate or similar and requests the CoA Council review the composition and need for the new paths that are proposed in the Master Plan.
7. SECRA would welcome the opportunity to work with the CoA Council to design and establish additional Miyawaki pocket forests in the park to rapidly provide habitat for native birds, insects and small reptiles and to assist in cooling.
8. SECRA would appreciate the opportunity to co-design with Council a biodiversity outdoor classroom and interpretative hub for education, ongoing learning and nature experiences for children and adults. The hub would engage the community in the study and appreciation of the unique urban biodiversity precinct at the southern end of Victoria Park and in Park 17.
9. SECRA recommends that the CoA carefully review the practicality and wisdom of the initiatives suggested in the Master Plan for the large expanse of hard paved surface in the north of the park.