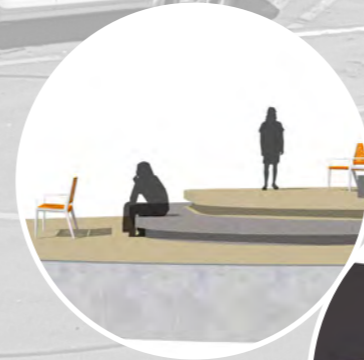


Durie Hill Improvements Landscape Concept Design



WHANGANUI DISTRICT COUNCIL

DURIE HILL IMPROVEMENTS

LANDSCAPE CONCEPT DESIGN

Date: 1 MARCH 2021

Status: FINAL

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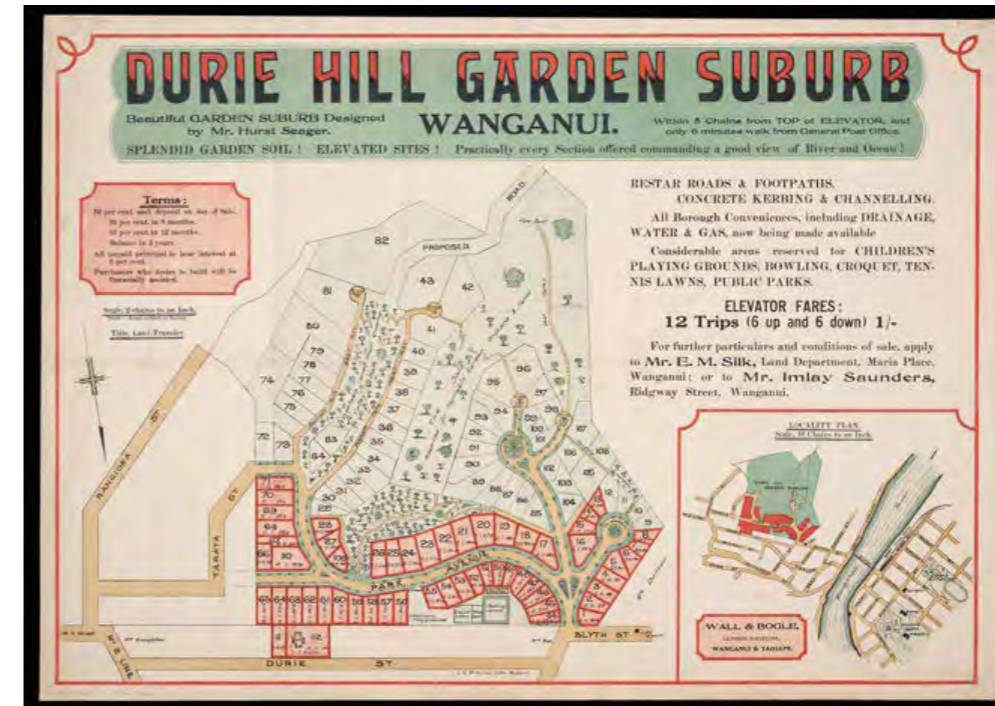
BACKGROUND

Durie Hill is a feature in the settlement story of Whanganui for both of Māori and subsequent settlers. While more information will be gained as we move through to the engagement phase we do have a good understanding of why Durie Hill is set out as it is.

A garden suburb was planned in the 1920s at Durie Hill, based on garden-city planning principles considered desirable in many cities of the time. Specific features were curvilinear streets, reserves, and recreational amenities like croquet lawns and tennis courts. Several of these physical features remain present, although their early heritage intent will be less evident to users.

The suburb was connected to the city by the Durie Hills Steps, and more uniquely by a public elevator. Both remain in place. Also present is the War Memorial Tower, a key local landmark visible from some distance away.

Taking advantage of excellent views across the city played an important part in the initial layout design for the suburb. Those views remain. Views of the War Memorial Tower could be considered equally significant, meaning that visual connection between the area and other parts of the city are of great significance.



Durie Hill Garden Suburb Plan
Digital Image: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/map/25732/durie-hill>



Location plan



View from Victoria Avenue looking at Durie Hill, 1918 (image left) Working Bee on Durie Hill Steps, 1910 (image right)
Digital images: <https://whanganuiregionalmuseum.wordpress.com/>

BACKGROUND – A UNIQUE FIRST, THE DURIE HILL GARDEN SUB-URB AND ELEVATOR

A garden suburb was planned in the 1920s at Durie Hill, based on garden-city planning principles considered desirable across in many countries at the time. It is considered by some to be New Zealand’s first modern suburb. Specific features were curvilinear streets, reserves, and recreational amenities like croquet lawns and tennis courts. Several of these physical features remain present, although their early intent may today be less evident to users.

The suburb was connected to the city by the Durie Hill Steps, and more uniquely by an electric tram engine powered public elevator, at a 101 years old the oldest public elevator in the Southern Hemisphere. Both remain in place. Also present is the (WWI) War Memorial Tower, a 33m high key local landmark built in 1925. It is constructed of shell rock which is said to be around two million years old. The tower adds a further dimension to views from the site, and is also visible itself from some distance away and a key feature on the city’s skyline.

Talking advantage of excellent views across the city played an important part in the initial layout design for the suburb. Those views remain. Views of the War Memorial Tower could be considered equally significant, meaning that visual connection between the area and other parts of the city are of great significance.

The views are amazing – fantastic views of Mt Ruapehu, Mt Taranaki, the Whanganui River and the coastline all await!

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The lookout is situated in the former Durie Garden Suburb development, and several important elements of that concept remain in place and define or make an important contribution to the nature of the place today. These features can be enhanced or emphasised in design. Key amongst these are:

- Public Elevator
- Lookout area
- Durie Hill Steps
- War Memorial Tower
- Heritage Fence
- Open space ‘landscaped’ areas

The design approach for this site is inspired by and intends to respond to this specific and unique heritage. It seeks to emphasise these



Durie Hill Concept Design

KEY

Existing Features

- ① Existing sealed carpark
- ② Existing asphalt path
- ③ Existing vegetation
- ④ Existing lawn area
- ⑤ Existing palm trees
- ⑥ Existing War Memorial Tower
- ⑦ Existing Elevator Tower
- ⑧ Existing heritage fence
- ⑨ Existing public toilets and picnic table (picnic table to be relocated)

Proposed Features

- ⑩ New lookout
- ⑪ New flowering garden beds
- ⑫ New picnic tables
- ⑬ New picnic lawn
- ⑭ Restore historic fence
- ⑮ New native shrub planting
- ⑯ Enhance sightlines (crown lift trees)
- ⑰ Footpath connection (future stage)
- ⑱ Cobbled pedestrian crossing (future stage)
- ⑲ Garden Suburb Interpretive Sign
- ⑳ Tower Interpretive Sign
- ㉑ 'View' Interpretive Sign

features, drawing and developing on them with a 'light-touch' to greatly enhance a strong sense of 'place' for the site; in support contemporary desired uses associated with informal recreation and views from the site. It also supports more contemporary uses such as tourism and Te Araroa the national cycle trail. The significance of the site to tāngata whenua, will influence the design, particularly around the lookout area, incorporating a reference to cultural heritage would be done in consultation with Iwi and hapū.

The vision is to deliver a higher amenity and unique landmark centred on themes associated with the site's heritage, lookout views and recreation. Adjacent to the Elevator and Steps, and connected to a 'garden space around the War Memorial Tower and heritage fence are facilitates that support, rest and picnic type activities for local residents, visitors, cyclists, dogs and others. These will respect and reinforce the local heritage these and sense of place. Features respecting and referencing tāngata whenua heritage will be developed with Iwi and hapū and likely centred around the lookout area. All the features set within a calmed streetscape at Blyth Street where landscaping features on both sides of the street support garden suburb heritage, recreation and visitor themes.

KEY DESIGN IDEAS INCLUDE:

- Revitalising and refreshing Durie Hill in stages to maintain interest and celebrate cultural identity and built heritage;
- Drawing inspiration for the design elements from the Garden City movement and War Memorial Tower. These themes highlight to visitors and tourists the local culture and stories;
- Creating robust and unique design interventions provides a place for gathering of local whanau and a destination for visitors;
- Providing a safe place for the community, CPTED, compliance with safety standards, and ongoing maintenance have been carefully considered and integrated into the design;
- Using local materials and craftsmen to reinforce sense of ownership for community, local context, as well as sustainable principles;
- Upgrading signage and interpretation; and
- Retaining and taking full advantage of view shafts through the use of low growing shrubs located in strategic locations.



Curved tiered concrete lookout to maximise viewing angle and to reference the concentric arrangement of the Garden City



Concrete steps draws users into the view



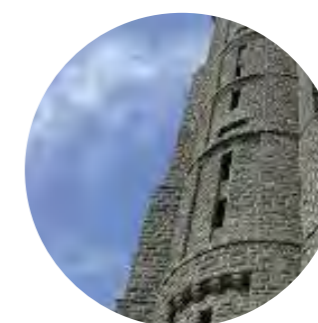
Pedestrian crossing and connections



Low shrubs can be used to anchor the restored timber fence in the landscape and reflect the Garden Suburb concept



Lookout tower handrail and staircase to provide inspiration for the viewing platform balustrade



Utilise shellrock to reference the War Memorial Tower

Durie Hill Elevator and Steps (Lookout)

Views, Elevation and Movement – Emphasising the movement and transition from the low lying land adjacent to the river and taking advantage of the long views from the site. Placement of a higher amenity space adjacent to the Elevator Tower and path will reinforce amenity of both uses, as well as supporting ongoing value of the area as a lookout and in supporting tourism visits. Emphasising the path and ‘steps’, topography and taking in the view in the design will further add individual character and place, as well as making the relatively small space more functional and improve the ability to accommodate larger numbers of people. Seating should be placed to optimise views out from the site and placed towards the sides of the lookout areas, enabling improved circulation through it.

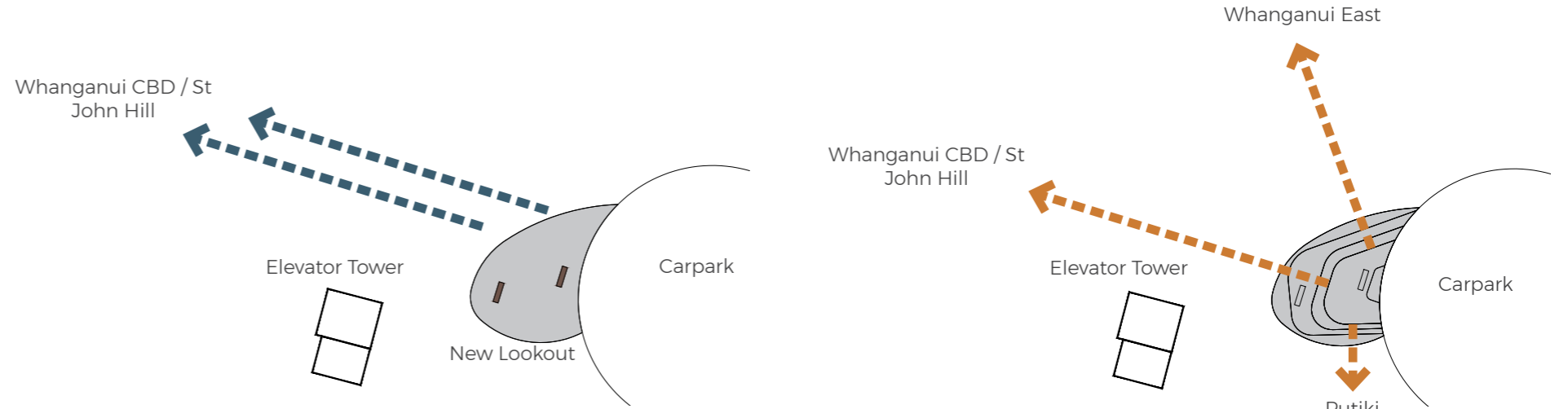
Tower Garden – Blyth Street (Garden)

Amenity and Character - Emphasising the recreation and open space amenity character associated with the areas heritage and its existing layout suggests landscaping planting and furniture heritage around the War Memorial Tower. This could be achieved in keeping with the heritage era of these features. This suggests a defined 1920-30s era ‘garden’ layout in the space between the Water Memorial Tower and heritage fence, and on the opposite side of Blyth Street. Combined these garden features will create a ‘garden streetscape’ environment that support current open space use, with a specific reference to a unique history, reinforce the local character of the Durie Hill neighbourhood, and add high local amenity value.

Reflecting the ‘street’ nature of part of this space, it’s ‘rest and picnic’ use, and the location of the national cycle trail and public toilet, some cycle facilities should be provided at this location in conjunction with route and wayfinder features.

Interconnection between lookout and Garden

Both the Lookout and Garden can be designed with a character and function that is independent; or can be combined while retaining their own distinct characters. A strategic approach to design by using both sides of Blyth Street can assist in ‘calming’ the space and giving the street the impression of being more parkland in nature. This will support the initial garden suburb heritage, and a desire to support the ‘lookout’ and ‘rest/picnic’ contemporary uses of the space. Design treatment between the two spaces should facilitate logical movement between them, while reinforcing the distinct sense of character and ‘place’ in each.



Seats focused on Victoria Avenue, the town centre and St Johns Hill. The seats are angled to look past the Elevator Tower

Informal seating opportunity on steps, angled to take in panoramic views of Whanganui

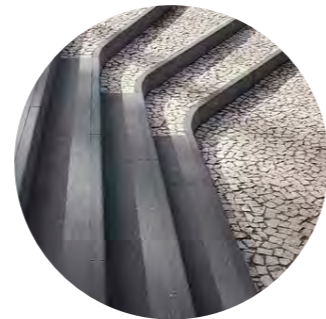


FURNITURE AND MATERIALS

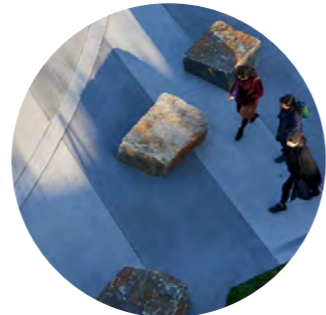
The suite of materials and design elements have been selected to create a consistent feel throughout the site. It is intended that the overall design is minimalistic in order to avoid over complicated embellishments. The selection of the site elements will be used to reflect both the Garden Suburb and Industrial narrative of the location. References to increased levels of pedestrian and cycle use and ease of maintenance has also influenced material selection.



Coloured concrete bands arranged in concentric rings



Mixture of hard materials for visual interest



Concrete, shell rock or timber bollards to reference architectural form of the Lookout tower



Standalone timber and steel seating or a combination of low concrete walls



Dog drinking fountain



Steel handrail to follow shape of lookout

PLANTING PALETTE

Low growing native shrubs are proposed for their ease of maintenance while avoiding the impact on sightlines; the latter for safety reasons, view shafts and optimising long views. Flowering varieties such as hebes and dianella should be included to reference the decorative design principles of the Garden City movement.

In keeping with the 1920-30s era 'garden', low flowering plants are proposed as a high amenity 'setting' for the beds along the historic fence, around War memorial Tower, public toilets and entrance. These areas have been limited for greater ease of maintenance.

Native Shrubs for Colour



Coloured flax



Dianella varieties



Hebe varieties

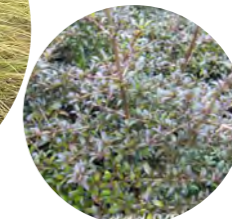
Native Shrubs for Structure



Phormium 'Emerald Gem'



Carex virgata



Coprosma



Libertia varieties

Flower Garden beds



Concept Design

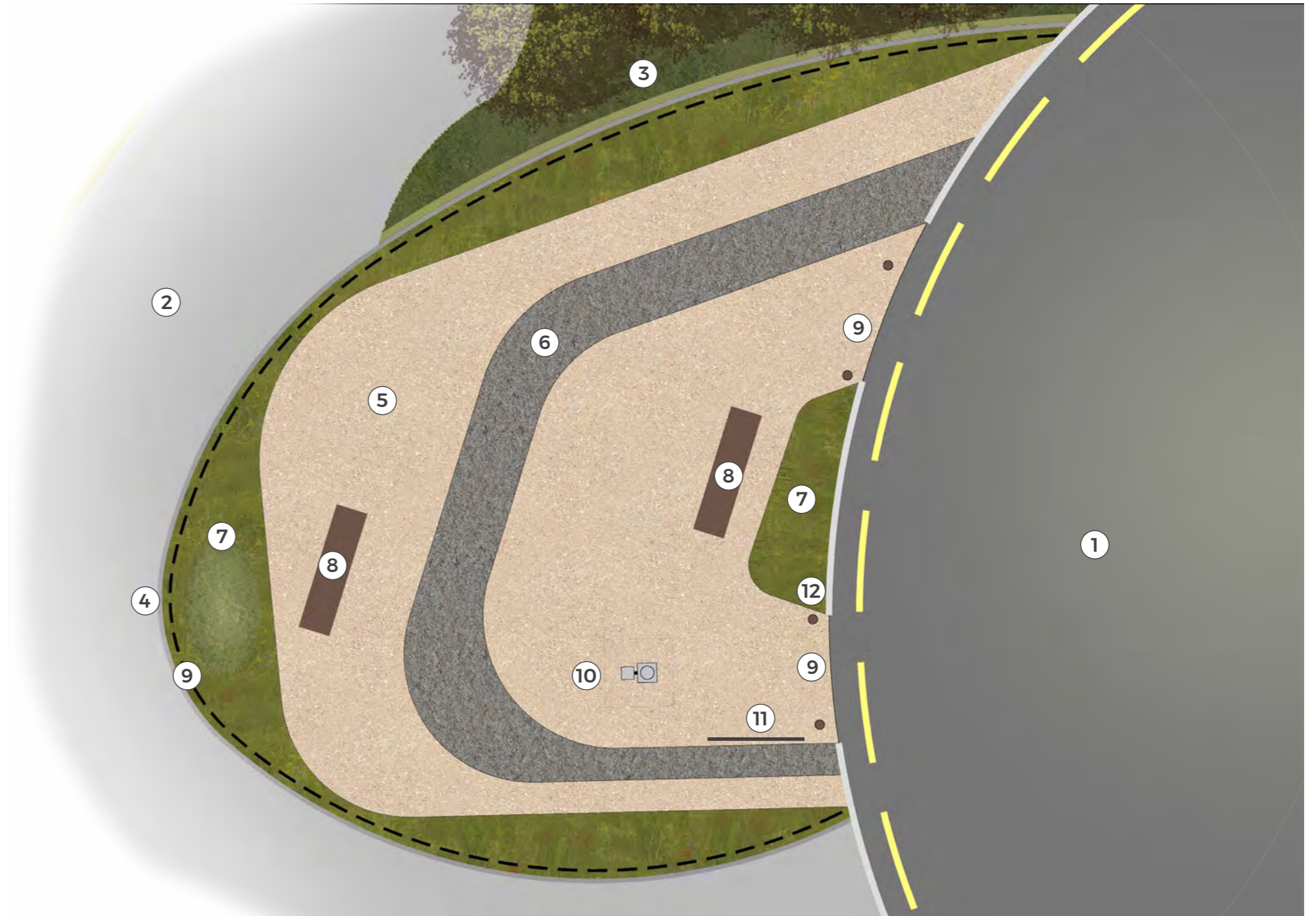
KEY

Existing Features

- ① Existing seal
- ② Existing asphalt path
- ③ Existing vegetation
- ④ Existing retaining wall

Proposed Features

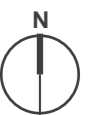
- ⑤ New light coloured concrete steps
- ⑥ New dark coloured concrete step
- ⑦ New low level native shrub planting
- ⑧ New seats
- ⑨ New steel balustrade
- ⑩ New human drinking fountain / lower dog bowl
- ⑪ New bike stand
- ⑫ New rubbish bin



Lookout Concept Design

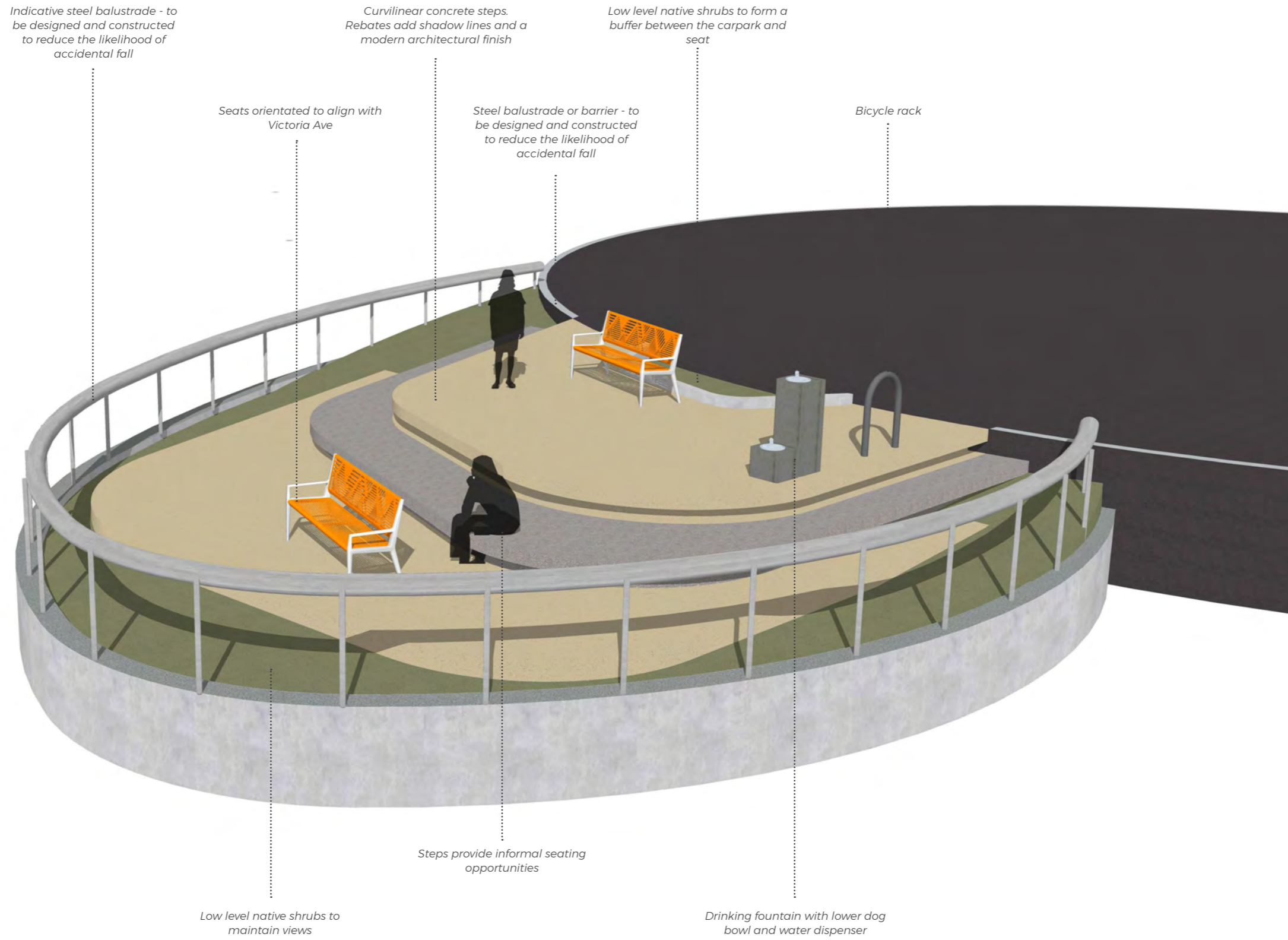


Location Plan

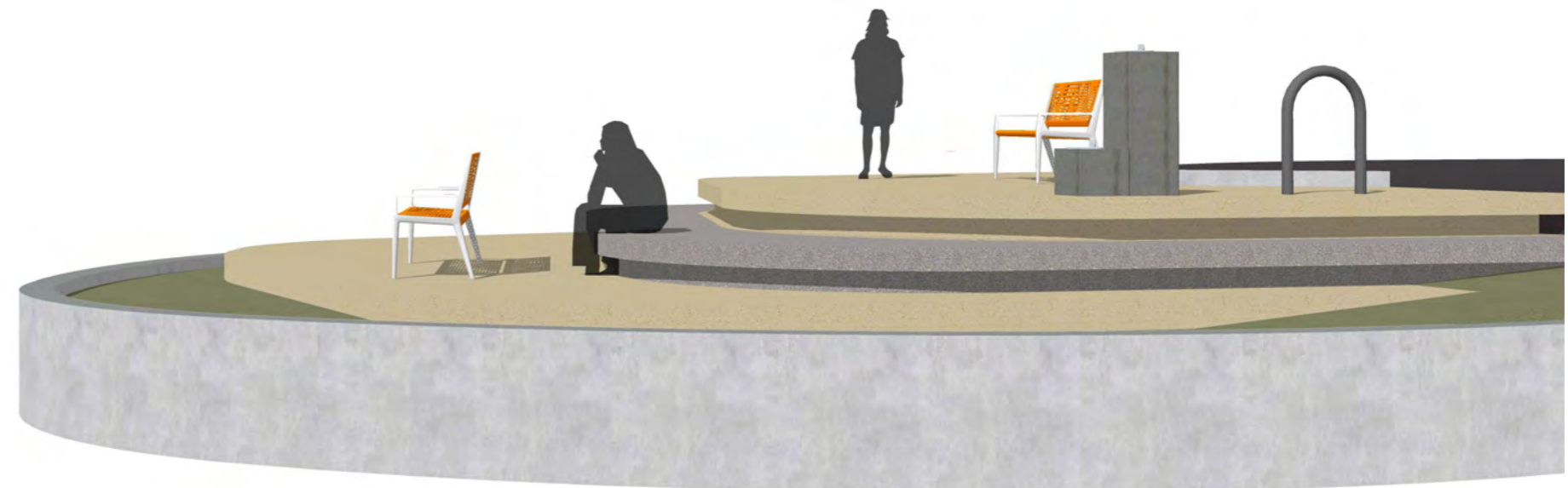
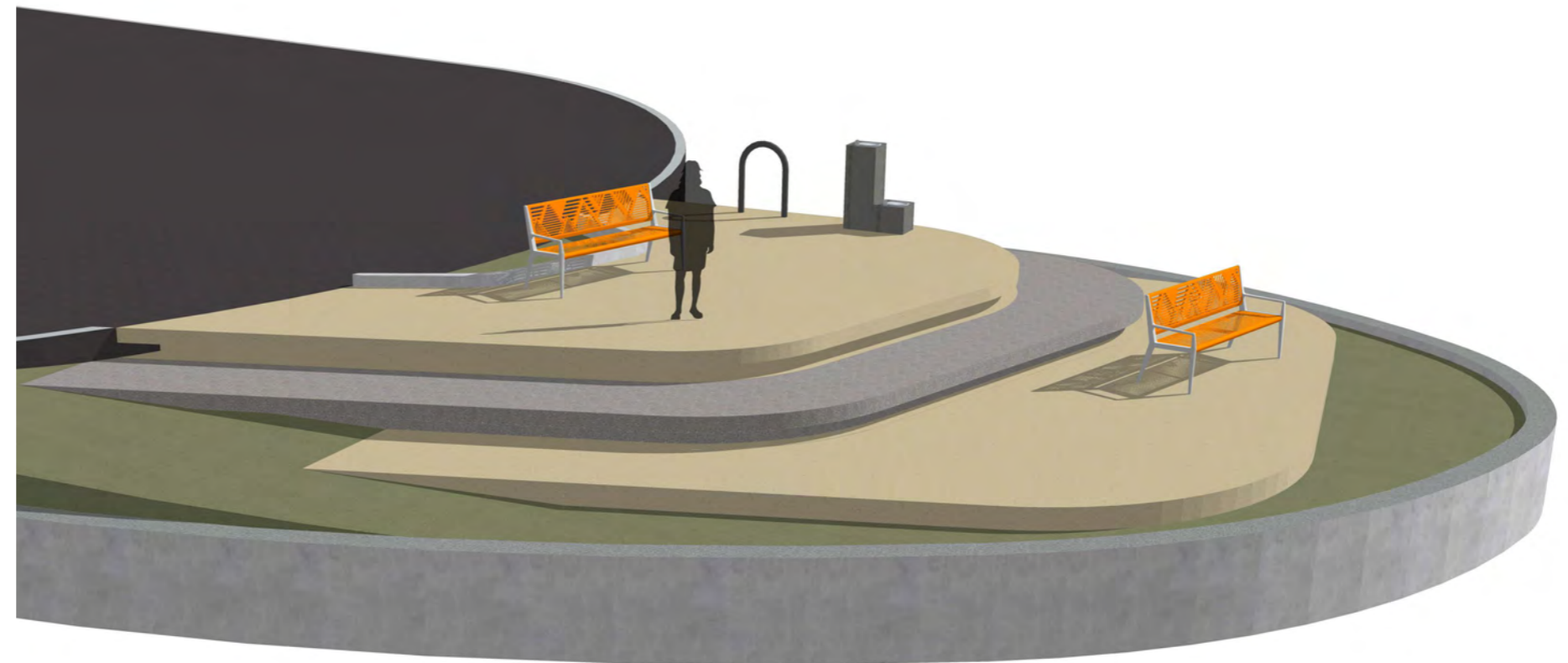


Not to Scale

Artist Impressions



Artist Impressions



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