



Report to assist in the preparation of the

AUCKLAND CITY CBD PUBLIC ARTWORK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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BRIEF

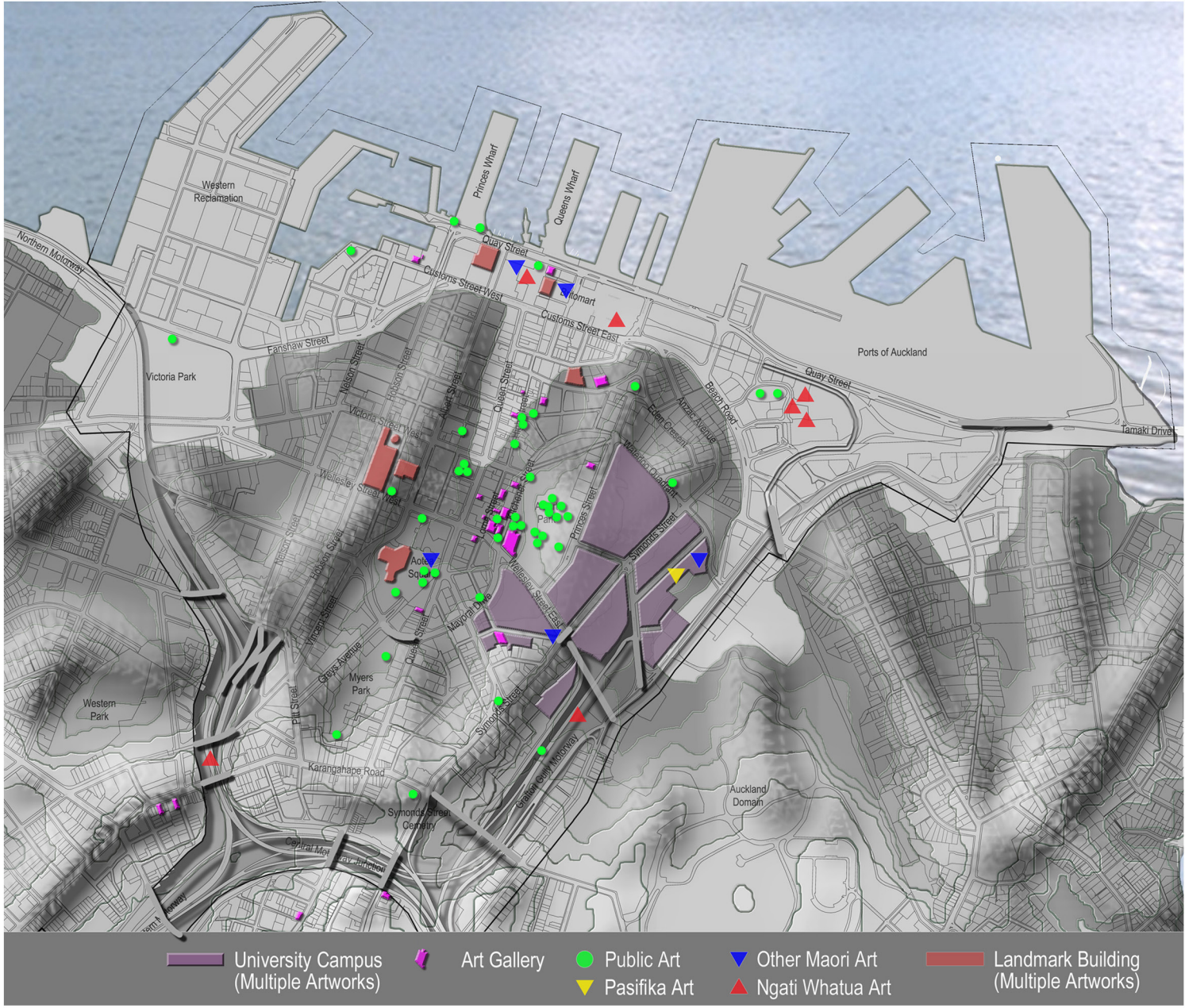
Auckland City has developed an ambitious 10 year vision for the Central Business District that seeks to “grow and consolidate its international reputation as one of the world’s most vibrant and dynamic business and cultural centres”. Auckland City sees a key factor in achieving this goal is the development of a CBD public artwork plan.

Auckland City’s CBD Public Artwork Development Plan is expected to align public art with the disciplines of urban design, architecture and planning in such a way that a “high quality urban environment” and a “place that feels like the heart and expresses the soul of Auckland” can be created. Hence, ideas and practices of art, architecture and urban design are joined with theories and experiences of the city, social relations and public space to reflect and enhance the bi-cultural/multicultural situations and landscapes of Auckland.

I have been commissioned to provide a report that assists in the preparation of the CBD Public Artwork Development Plan. One of the outcomes sought for the CBD is the creation of a cohesive network of public artwork sites within walkable distance of each other. This booklet contains a small selection from the large number of mappings that have been made in order to explore and fulfill this requirement. They are broadly representative of the design process followed. In the report, the mappings accompany an in-depth review of the paradigms and issues characterizing public art generally and Auckland’s CBD specifically. Please refer to this for a full account of both. Copyright rests with Auckland City.

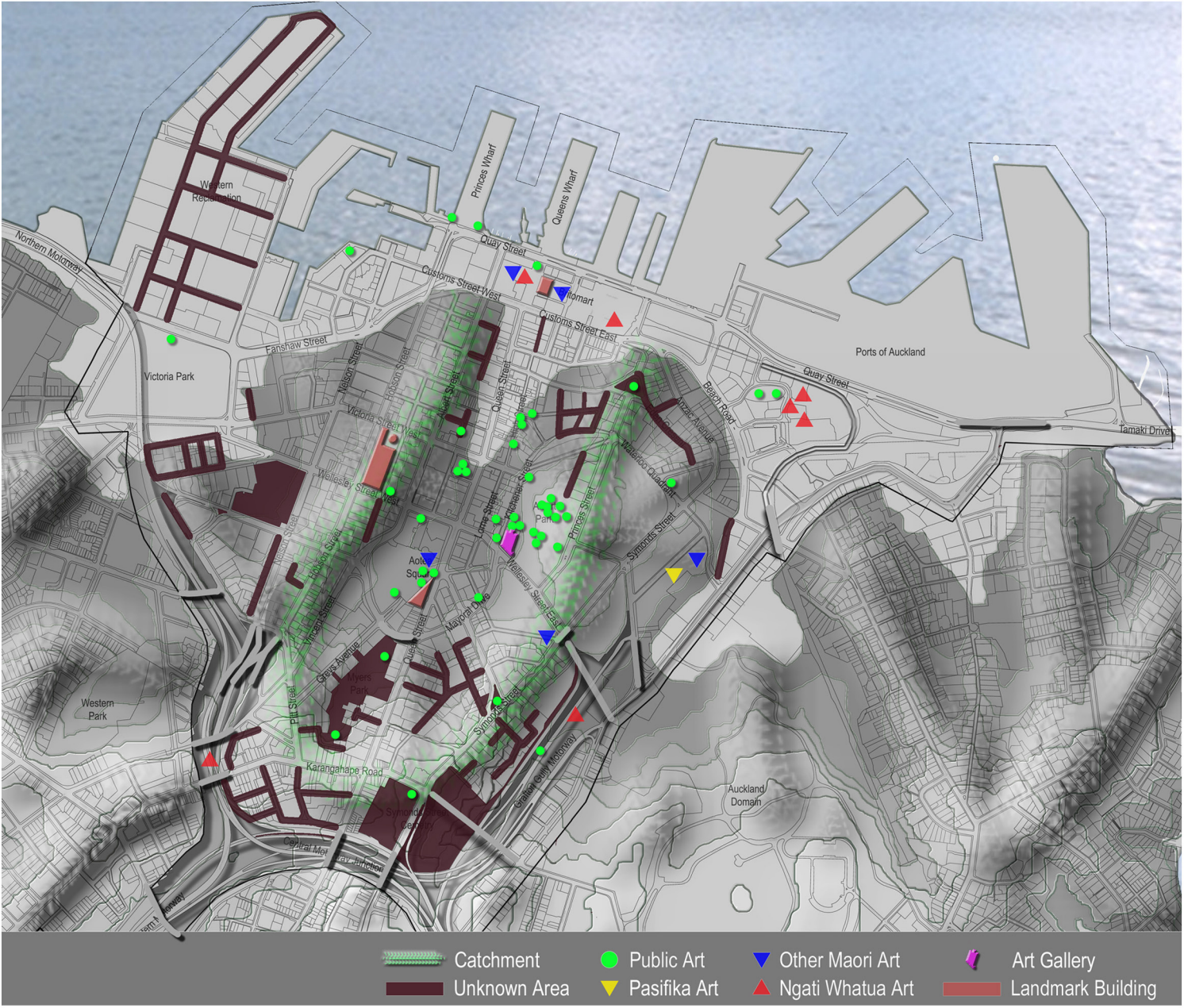
STRATEGIES

- to embrace diverse patterns and perspectives, including recognizing tangata whenua, mana whenua and ahi kaa status, identity, relationships and (lack of) expression;
- treat the CBD as highly unique as a result of all its particularities, not making assumptions and predictions according to overseas models of design;
- re-vision mapping as an imaginative and strategic enterprise where mapping acts can emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds (cf. James Corner);
- represent the landform of the CBD as a three dimensional artifact and use this as an integral way of visualizing and understanding the CBD;
- take into account at all times the essential conditioning of the CBD by its topography and roading infrastructure, particularly as these relate to and influence the requirement to provide a network of artwork sites within walkable distance of each other;
- view public art and artwork sites as being intrinsically tied to the provision, controls, uses, qualities and values of public space. By implication, commissioning of the report allows for the critical review and re-vision of public space in the CBD;
- broaden the concept of site to “enhance not only the aesthetic context of a work’s exhibition but the site’s symbolic, social and political meanings as well as the circumstances within which artwork, spectator and place are situated” (Rosalyn Deutsche);
- include public art within a practicable vision that includes “on the ground” installations such as furniture, lighting and planting, so that creation and experience of art is well thought through and thought of; not compromised, ad hoc or left out;
- develop a network of artwork sites that allows for the inclusion, experience and mix of both the strategic/structured/organised and the subjective/indirect/spontaneous



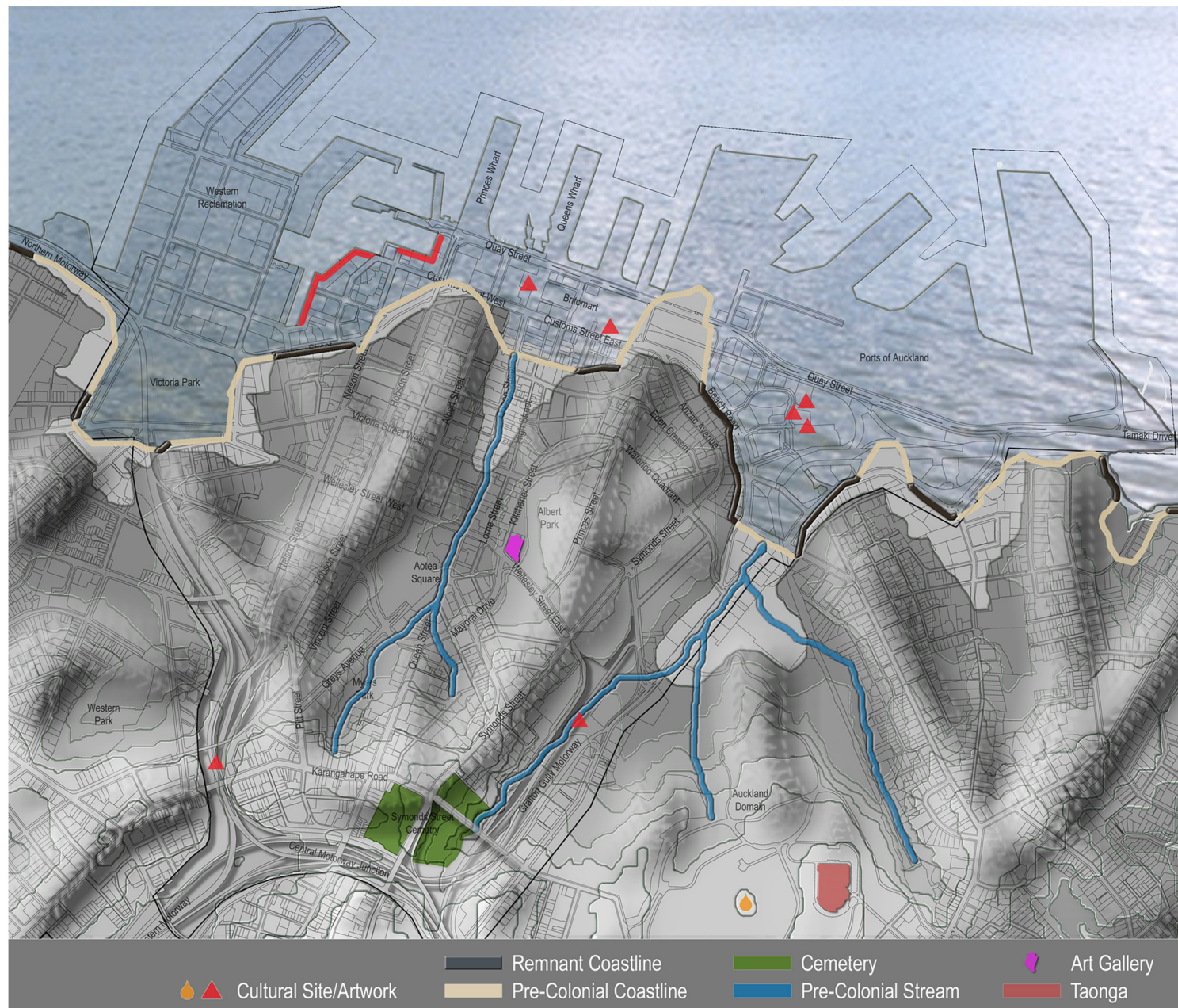
PUBLIC ART IN THE CBD

“Public art is the commissioning of artists and craftspeople to make new site specific work that can be permanent, temporary, internal or external. It can also involve artists’ unique creative abilities in the development and design of new spaces and regeneration schemes. Public art includes work that is integrated into a development, from street furniture, lighting, brickwork and landscaping designs to internal details of a building, its furniture, flooring, ceramics and textiles. It can also be sculpture, photography, performance, moving image and events. Public art need not be within public spaces, but has to be accessible to the public realm, or available in the semi-public areas of completed developments” (*Swindon Borough Council, UK, 2004*). The key areas in the CBD are Albert Park, the university precinct, around the Art Gallery or in Aotea Square – there is very little anywhere else although the harbour edge is becoming increasingly populated with public art as it is being re-developed.



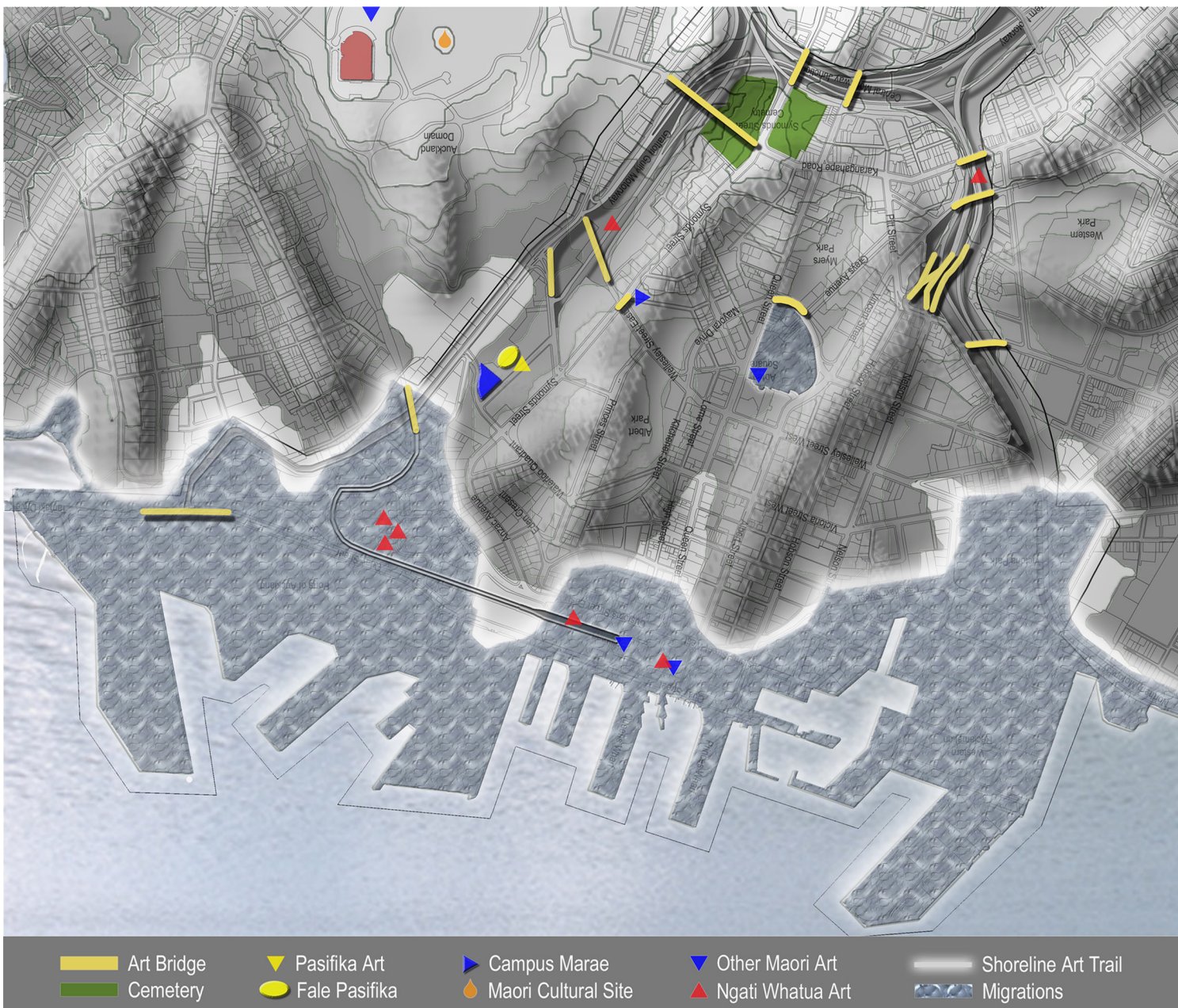
PUBLIC ART & UNKNOWN AREAS

A surprising amount of the CBD is relatively unknown, hidden from view or less frequented. Much of this is due to the difficult terrain of the CBD which is dominated by the Queen St catchment. The twin heads of this – Myers Park and Liverpool St - are particularly steep and remain secretive. Outside the Queen St catchment, the land falls away steeply and is terminated by the encircling motorway, contributing to a sense of remoteness and creating a ‘cold’ shoulder effect for the CBD’s periphery/edges, especially south of K’Rd. The CBD has therefore largely become defined by and focused on the Queen St valley, reinforcing a strong internalized condition (a sense of being contained within and by its ridges) with the ridges themselves occupying and marking the transition from an “outside” to the inside. Unknown, hidden or less frequented areas are prevalent on the inside faces and outside slopes of the catchment. There is almost no public art yet in any of these places.



NGATI WHATUA ARTS & CULTURE

“The development of Auckland City has...rendered Ngati Whatua and other Maori invisible on the Tamaki landscape. Most signs of Ngati Whatua identity and that of other iwi with historical associations in Auckland are now absent and have been replaced with foreign names, symbols, buildings, plants and animals. Ngati Whatua have effectively been ‘designed-out’ of their ancestral homelands with the exception of their turangawāwae at Orakei. However, beneath the concrete landscape and manicured council reserves are the many wahi tapu (sacred or restricted places), awa (rivers), papakainga, pa, tauranga waka (canoe landing places), mahinga kai (food-gathering places), and mara (cultivations) that mark Ngati Whatua identity and give them and other Maori a place to stand right across the city.” (Ngarimu Blair, *Whenua*, 2002, p67-68)



MULTICULTURAL EXCHANGE

Recent proposals for waterfront renewal suggest that Auckland City and the CBD might benefit from Pacific peoples involvement and participation in the way that the CBD is envisioned and developed as well as marked by public art. This seems so especially in light of ACC’s Treaty Relationship with Ngati Whatua and the changing cultural/social demographics of Aotearoa New Zealand. The CBD is presently land-based and focused, static and mono-cultural in its thinking and building and relationships expressed bear the weight of this. The waterfront might be a claim on the sea but it is also the place where the Pacific Ocean and the cultures that live on it have become attached to this land. These migrations speak of other ways of relating to who and what is in front of us. Where is the place to stand? Rather than settle into a pastiche of urban form that masks and protects personal and professional self-interest, Auckland City might open its planning and design processes to a multicultural urban design taskforce that is cognizant of these different positions and outlooks. Then, such features as the original shoreline might be marked more relevantly by the rituals and residues of arrival, welcome and cultural exchange. A shoreline art trail can recognize and celebrate these relationships.



CONTOUR LEVELS

“Paper geometries benefit from understandings gained through the experience of the walking designer and the on-ground experience of phenomena” (*Ben Jacks*, 2004).

Contours are drawn at 10m intervals (Harbour = 0m). Note the significant addition of reclaimed land from the harbour in front of the existing landmass of undulating ridges and valleys. Key CBD levels relate to the 10m contours: 10m = cnr Victoria & Queen St; 20m = Aotea Square; 30m = Mayoral Drive / Queen St & Hobson St (Sky City); 40m = Albert Park; 65m = Karangahape Rd. Note also the significance of the ridgelines encircling and containing the Queen St valley on its three sides - Princes St & Symonds St // K’Rd // Pitt St & Hobson St



HIGH & LOW GROUND

Plotting easy walking gradients for pedestrians reveals significant issues regarding moving between low and high ground. The CBD is distinguished by flat land on top of ridges (yellow) as well as below on the valley floors (orange). There is only one area that manages to comfortably traverse the difference in level between them. Even the Art Gallery is isolated. This seems mostly due to the steepness of the valley sides and the grid layout of streets on them which rise perpendicular to the ridge lines. For those unable or unwilling, these create an unassailable gap and barrier between the two levels, thus preventing or weakening passage between the east and west. This has resulted in the ridges’ isolation from one another and their downward sides becoming marginalized. Equally significant is the easy and strong connection between the Queen St valley and the flat area of reclaimed land in front. This area contributes by far the largest percentage of land for easy walking and is where the CBD is now sensibly developing towards.



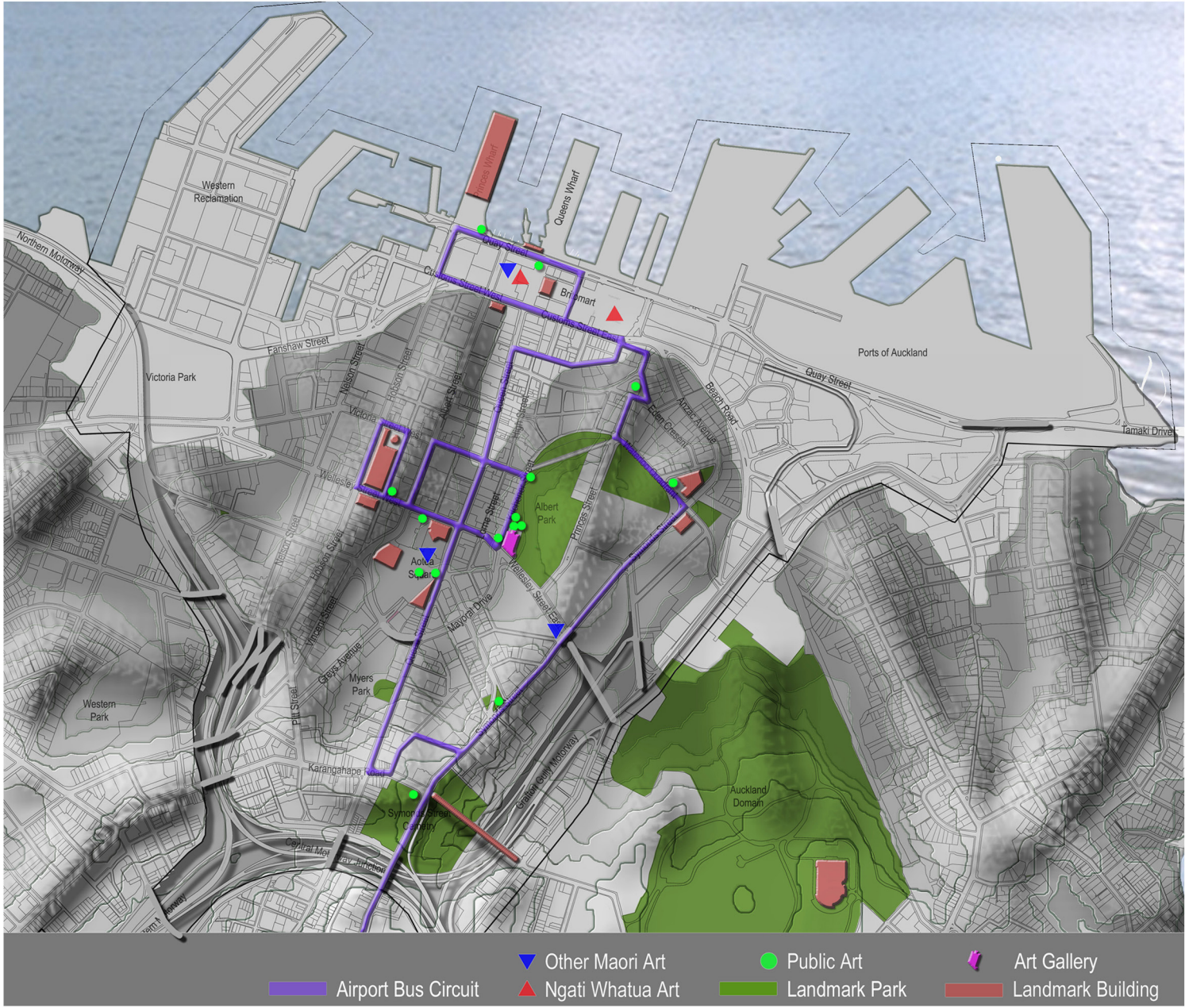
EXISTING PUBLIC SPACE

There is very little public space (as opposed to Public Open Space) to be enjoyed in the CBD, particularly when compared to premier international cities. This is true of both green, soft public space (parks and reserves) and hard public space (squares). The largest areas of public space are located either on the periphery of the CBD or on ridges well above the Queen St valley. Both topography and the roading infrastructure serve to isolate and separate these areas as well as access to them. There is little continuity (especially on & along Queen St). The western ridge in particular does not offer any relief from the climb from the low land either side. The most 'friendly' public space is on reclaimed land squeezed between the wharf area of the harbour and the rising natural land-mass of ridges and valleys behind. This flat land is only now being re-imagined as a major focal point and destination for public activity, although recent development and upgrades advertise an exclusive and moneyed vision for the area.



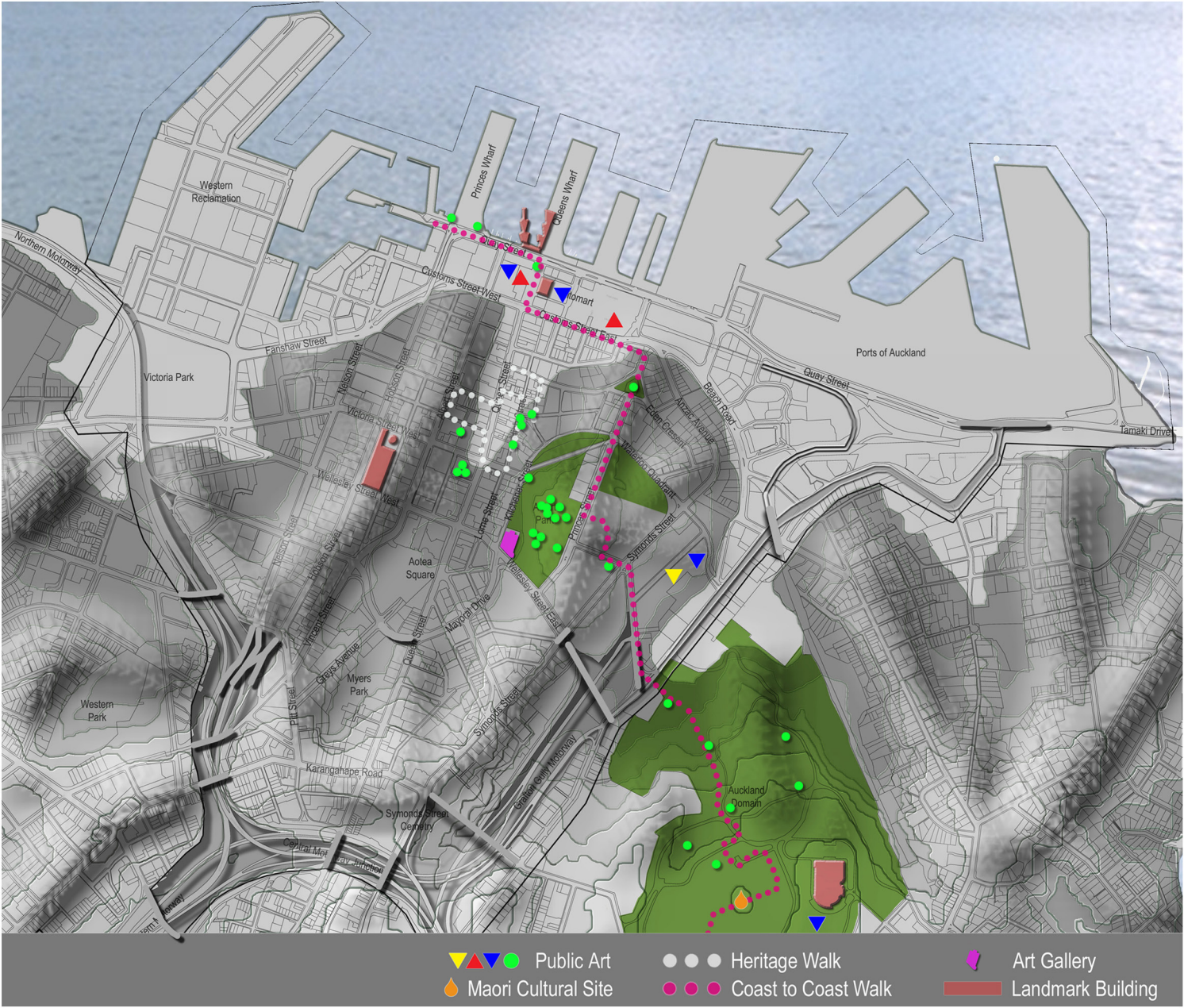
EXISTING PUBLIC SPACE & ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation can be increasingly identified in small developing precincts or quarters – Vincent; Upper Hobson St; West Side; Constitution Hill; Arena; Britomart; Viaduct Basin/Princes Wharf. Only the Vincent (and to a lesser extent Viaduct) Quarter congregates successfully around a significant public space or inhabits a cohesive and attractive environment. Mostly, precincts can be identified by the amount of accommodation available in an area rather than for the public space and designed environment that they enjoy and are part of. Typically, this situation underscores the importance of vertical development and long distance views of the harbour and Domain for visual relief. However, these are increasingly being built out, leaving an impoverished built environment with no sense of relationship with or connection to social or recreational spaces. The Victoria Quarter again distinguishes itself by having almost no public space whatsoever. What would the value and role of public art therefore be in all these areas?



PUBLIC ART & AIRPORT BUS CIRCUIT

The Airbus trip from the airport to the CBD represents the first opportunity for national and international tourists to gain an impression of Auckland City. The CBD and the waterfront are the culmination of that route. Public art and cultural landmarks have been plotted where they coincide with the route (or are visible from it e.g. Museum and Domain). The plotting has established several things: firstly, that very little of the art that is in place is observable from the Airbus; secondly, the public art that is viewed is mostly a peripheral and momentary experience (and may be too hard for tourists to retrace on foot given the arduous terrain and circuitous route of the bus). The plotting also reveals that the potential of the bus route to signpost and show off the CBD has not yet influenced urban design or the commissioning of public art. There is nothing distinctive about the journey into the CBD and even our celebrated harbour is concealed from view at the culmination of the journey.



ORGANISED WALKS

Two organised walks in the CBD reveal the potential walking has to engage with the arts, cultures and collective heritage of the city. The amount of public art possible to be viewed on these walks is significant. Importantly, experience of the art is melded into experience of the city and engagement with the land as these have been layered through time. The walks display different intensities of experience and focus: the mid-town heritage walk a studied concentration on the specifics of one area and one theme in time vs. a much longer landscape walk (Coast to Coast -Te Araroa) with its diverse cultural interests and outlooks creating a subtle absorption of time and place. These two walks suggest that commissioning of artwork might concern itself with covering the same ground and thus consolidate the experience/s; or alternatively, provoking a challenge to the identification and ordering of place through contrast, mix and layering. A timely example is how Fort St's original shoreline – a site of significance for Ngati Whatua – will be marked within the singular built and cultural environment that the Midtown Heritage Walk showcases and is a part of.



ENTRY INTO THE CBD

It goes unnoticed that entry into the CBD is via (or under) a bridge in every situation. The CBD is an island and operates like one. Construction and expansion of the motorway system is largely responsible for this; the 'architecture' of the ridges and valleys that the CBD has been built upon has also contributed in a formative way. Yet, it is only because of the normalizing effects of road engineering that we remain oblivious to the invitation to cross into, leave behind and be within the CBD. Instead, roads and bridges are designed and are experienced as mono-functional and one-dimensional environments devoid of awareness of place and sensory stimulation. They reflect an organizing principle and philosophy entirely independent from (and so far unsuccessfully challenged by) urban design. The strategic goals and aspirations for the CBD will be severely constrained and compromised if this is allowed to continue.



VEHICLE OPEN SPACE

The motorway system has moved well within the CBD, creating imposing barriers to other forms of movement. Public space has been displaced and made remote by major roads or suffers from domination by traffic. Public open space, as it has been coined by Auckland City, is more realistically and accurately described as Vehicle Open Space. Nelson and Hobson Streets, and to a lesser extent Mayoral Drive/Albert St, layer a triple barrier to east/west pedestrian movement, distancing and alienating one side of the CBD from the other. On and off-ramps such as Cook and Fanshawe St's also sever, restrict or discourage movement from north to south. Mayoral Drive ringbarks Aotea Square in terms of access to public space as well as energy emanating out from it. The continued exclusive focus on traffic management has seen one new bridge cross the Stanley St/Grafton Gully motorway with no allowance for pedestrians, willfully estranging pedestrians from the CBD.



RECOMMENDED LAND ACQUISITIONS

The functioning and well-being of the CBD in all its dimensions will benefit from further land acquisitions and additions to the public realm. The various mappings of the CBD undertaken in earlier sections of this report have revealed and marked specific areas of the CBD as having vital strategic importance and value for the medium to long term development and enhancement of the CBD; and hence, plans for a network of public artwork sites. The areas identified are located mostly at the periphery of the CBD (adjacent to the motorway) or on the edge of the harbour. One other piece of land recommended for acquisition is opposite the Sky Tower on the Hobson Street ridge. The value of acquiring land becomes clear when further developed with other public land beside or around it – either through the under-grounding of roads or carparking (see the following plans “Under-grounding” and “Outcome of acquisitions and under-grounding”).



PROPOSED UNDERGROUNDING

The functioning and well-being of the CBD in all its dimensions will benefit from under-grounding major roads and some carparks for future development of public space above. These roads all serve to alienate the public from enjoyment of public space or prevent access to major public spaces and natural features. The benefits from under-grounding the Victoria Park SH1 overbridge are well known, however these can be further enhanced by extending the under-grounding to include the Cook St off-ramp. The profile of this lends itself to a tunnel exit on the eastern side of the present rise and hence development opportunities above. The benefits from under-grounding Fanshawe St were raised and published some years ago by a team of internationally recognised urban designers engaged by Auckland City and lead by the world-renowned Sir Peter Hall. This would extend Victoria Park towards the harbour, greatly improving access to Viaduct Basin and encouraging movement the other way if and when the Western Reclamation is developed in the future.



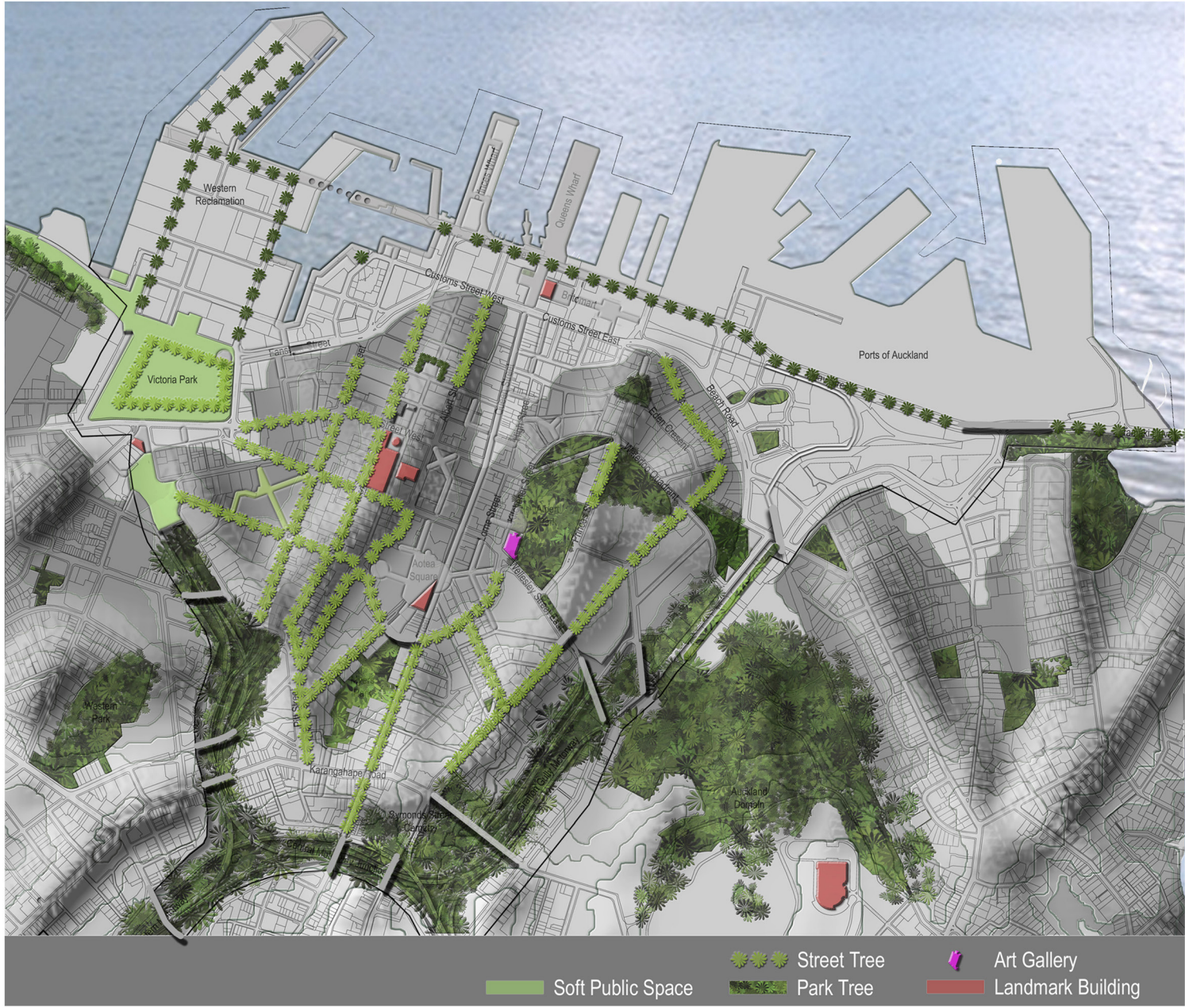
OUTCOME OF ACQUISITIONS & UNDERGROUNDING

The value of public space should not be measured solely by how little (or how much) it costs to develop or enhance but on the quality and enjoyment of that space and the outcomes and opportunities that it creates for the future. Acquisition and under-grounding of key areas will open up and (re)connect the CBD and surrounding residential communities to major public spaces and natural features. It will markedly help balance the dominance of traffic for pedestrians and will provide valuable space for new community facilities presently absent or under-represented in the CBD. Acquisition and under-grounding in turn allows for development of a wider and more integrated network of artwork sites through the extension and better connection of existing parks and squares, the creation of new ones and the marking of gateways inside and on the periphery of the CBD. Some of the outcomes of these proposals are: the CBD would re-acquire a landmark building and urban square with the Birdcage Pub at Victoria Park. The Sky City Tower gains dramatically from a gateway square opposite. The road at the base of Constitution Hill is removed, the reserve re-contoured and extended towards Stanley St to allow the landmass to re-express itself and for the introduction of community facilities and a gateway square.



LINKING STREET IMPROVEMENTS WITH HARD PUBLIC SPACE

Linking street improvements with the development of public space assists in enhancing and increasing the connections and continuities between public spaces. This will also greatly assist in the development and experiences of a cohesive network of artwork sites within walkable distance of one another. Re-vitalized and well-designed streets invite a continuity of experience (promenading) that is celebrated in cities worldwide (Paris and the figure of the flâneur being the most famous). They can also encourage the creation of and engagement with public art that speaks of a lively street and precinct culture rather than one where art and walking is an isolated, trivial and remote experience. Public art in these places might not always be “built-in” (permanent, fixed, grounded) but instead can be spontaneous, temporary, community focused and performed. These street improvements also address and amend the absence of and connections to public space on the western side of the CBD.



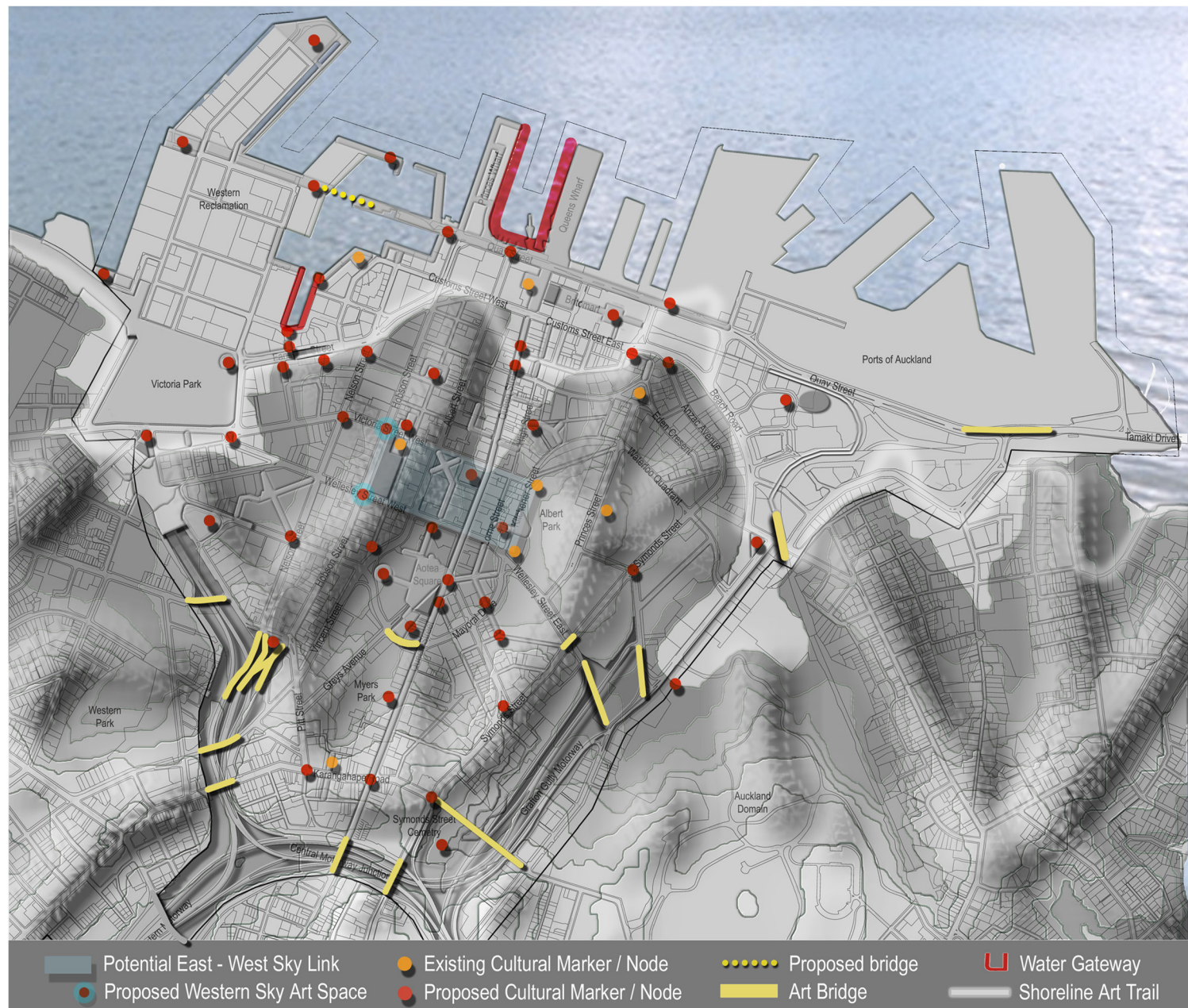
RECONSIDERATION OF PLANTING

Structural planting has been reconsidered as a consequence of investigations into the CBD's landform, public spaces, streetscapes, transport infrastructure, pedestrian movement and the placement and potential of public art. Analysis shows the importance of not making assumptions and predictions according to overseas models of urban design: Auckland's CBD is highly unique as a result of the influence of all its particularities. Of special note is the proposed absence of street trees on Queen St from Mayoral Drive to Quay St. Unless the pavements are significantly widened, it was felt trees here filled in a very fluid space (the only outlet to the harbour), obscuring building facades that were best left to tell this story on their own. Also recommended free of structural planting is Albert St between Wellesley and Wyndham St's to showcase key buildings, avoid retaining walls and reflect the presence of Albert Park opposite. Elsewhere, the planting to the motorway corridor has been re-scaled and intensified, heightening the bridge crossings, bringing the Domain closer to the CBD and creating an ecological corridor and habitat (present planting and public art only supports the mono-functional use of space and scale).



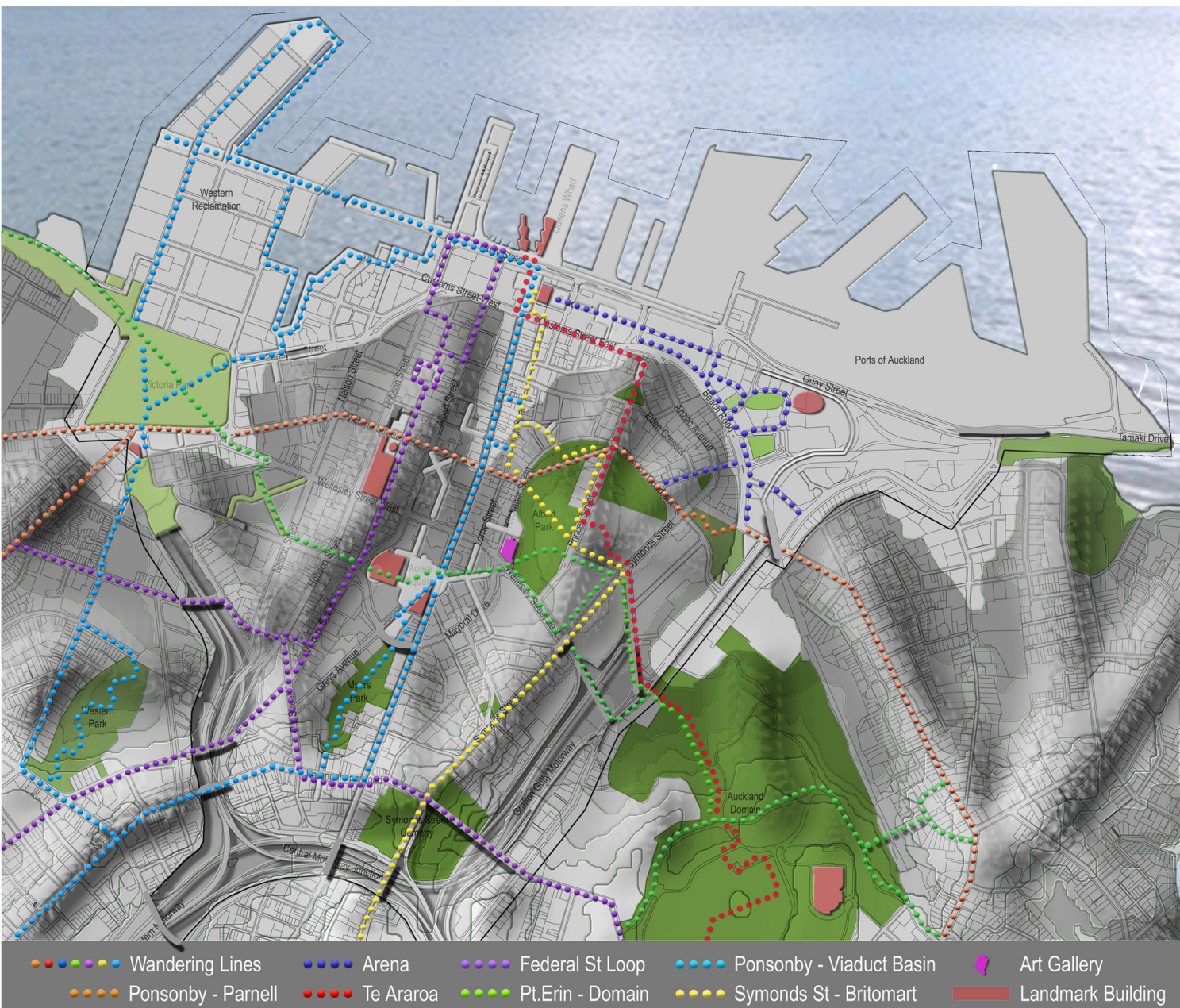
PROPOSED ART BRIDGES

This report recommends a profound transformation of the CBD's bridges into major urban design / artwork / street furniture / lighting sites to mark the transition and entry points into, out of and within the CBD. The bridges should register as significant landmarks of civic scale within the urban landscape. They should celebrate and invite Auckland's cultural diversity and uniqueness into and from out of the CBD. The most important bridges to mark in this way are upper Symonds St, mid Symonds St (above Wellesley St), K'Rd, the rail bridge above the Strand (in conjunction with development of public space/art at the base of Constitution Hill) and Tamaki Drive. The Grafton Rd bridge is already a work of art in its own right. All can be beautifully under-lit regardless of their position within a hierarchy of re-development. Transformation of these bridges could also be considered in conjunction with marking of the original shoreline. Both strategies speak of the arrival and dissemination of people, cultural ideas and practices, as well as the cross-stitching of water with land, CBD with city, region and country.



PROPOSED CULTURAL MARKERS / NODES & SKY ART SPACE

Cultural markers/nodes can strongly figure, form and connect the urban landscape through their strategic location, scale and degree of integration. In some situations, they will signify specific sites of cultural importance and might transcend their visible context. In other cases, they can mark or represent the overlapping / intersection of many layers of intense coincidence (physical, cultural, social, historical). A fine example of this is where Stanley St meets the Strand. This is a place overlain and pregnant with historical and contemporary importance - the line of the pre-colonial shore, the low and flat ground between hills either side, the opening to/from the Grafton Gully catchment, strong associations with and historical use by local iwi, below Auckland University's Waipapa Marae and Fale Pasifika, entry point into the CBD from the east, the start of the motorway corridor, and a foreground to the Domain. Together, these cultural markers/nodes will inform, dimension and demarcate the territory of the CBD for pedestrian and vehicular traffic alike. All are potential artwork sites and can be added to with further recognition of ahi kaa in the CBD and the diversity of cultures in Auckland generally.



NETWORK OF WALKS - “NETWALK”

Using Michel de Certeau's recognition of another mode of operating in the city that is an alternative to and independent from a 'proper' relationship to urban space, wandering lines have been arbitrarily mapped according to where they may take someone walking. The objective is not to plan or define formalized routes (excepting for accommodation of the Te Araroa Trail) but instead highlight the possibilities of a public art plan becoming open to what may be encountered spontaneously or incidentally along the way. This allows for the network of artwork sites to be developed with a balance between order and randomness, accepting temporality and social relations (everyday activities, spontaneous events, performances) as equal to spatial determinants and organization. Walking becomes the stimulus and the activator. On this basis, artists can be commissioned to create or enhance informal walks or trails such as in the Domain where the new art trail does not confine itself to but still beautifully enriches the more structured Te Araroa/Coast to Coast Trail. Alternatively, artists can explore other kinds of intensities within projects such as *artweb*.