



## Predictions for a future Auckland

What effect can one event have on a city's future? Following the return of the Birdcage Hotel to its historical position, landscape architect Richard Reid sets out a few predictions for the city.

Words by **Richard Reid** Illustration by **Richard Reid and Sang Kim**

### PATRONS AND FLÂNEURS

Recent attention has focused on the insalubrious nature of the Birdcage Hotel's urban situation. NZTA's Victoria Park Tunnel Project has re-sensitised the city to the oppressive weight and intrusive force of the flyover. The restlessness of the new public space underlines its effect, distancing the hotel from view. We predict a more hard-edged urban culture will be drawn to this business and public space in the short-term. It will be a meeting place of alternative minds and sensibilities, not just for random bodies to pass through.

### DEVELOPMENT TREND FOR VICTORIA PARK

The return of the hotel continues the trend towards urbanisation of the Victoria Park 'Quadrant', with development of exclusive tenancies focused on and around the park. This is the only cohesive urban development occurring around a significant public space in Auckland. Air New Zealand, Vodafone, and most recently Telecom, have all established head offices around the park. Other developments, such as the upgrade to Victoria Park Market and the proposed mixed-use development of the City Works Depot, also signal recognition of the park as a niche address, in close proximity to Queen Street, Viaduct Basin and Wynyard Quarter.

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### REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF THE FLYOVER BY 2030

NZTA has signalled that the flyover will need to be removed in 15–20 year's time due to it succumbing to a form of 'concrete cancer'. We predict it will be replaced with a tunnel for south-bound traffic. The flyover's removal will significantly increase the amenity for those people and communities using the Park and those businesses and residences surrounding the Park.

The Birdcage Hotel will benefit immensely from the flyover's removal, inviting review and redress of the public space it fronts. By this time, we will have matured as an urban culture, encouraging the socialisation of space rather than seeking cumbersome features to fill it. The suburban emphasis on fixing boundaries will be relinquished for a wider appreciation of the local environment, especially the join with Victoria Park and adjacent market. At the larger scale of the city, the re-connected precinct will form a western gateway to the city centre.

### INSPIRATION WILL LEAD TO OTHER LEFT-OF-FIELD DEVELOPMENTS

The returned Birdcage Hotel and revitalised public space will become a keystone development for the western side of the city centre. We also predict:

- NZTA will underground the Cook Street off-ramp in conjunction with a south-bound tunnel replacing the flyover. This will remove the steep climb from the tunnel floor and maximise the development potential of the road space above. Our vision differs from the Draft City Centre Plan in that we expect off-ramp vehicles to integrate with the slower traffic flow of the city centre rather than continue to marginalise its edge via Union and Pitt Streets;
- Auckland Council will develop the 'Placemakers' site on the corner of Cook and Union Streets as a social/cultural/educational centre, in line with our recommendation to Auckland City Council in 2005;
- More radically, the corner of Victoria and Beaumont Streets will be developed with a V-shaped 5-storeyed residential apartment block which will re-energise the dead space of the Park's south-west corner, intensifying use of the streets' both day and night. Rather surprisingly, this side of the Park used to house multiple residences until fairly recently. Only the scale will be different in order to maximise the citymaking opportunities on offer.

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### BENEFIT-TO-COST RATIO

The return of the Birdcage Hotel, the replacement of the flyover with another tunnel and the realisation of development potential surrounding Victoria Park will demonstrate the high-value productive gains and economic benefits created from integrating infrastructure with the city. We predict the benefit-to-cost ratio of infrastructure projects will be evaluated in this much wider sense, in line with overseas measurements. Our city will seek multi-dimensional outcomes as of right from urban infrastructure. Lateral thinking and cross-disciplinary skills will concentrate on revitalising the city, not simply on accommodating infrastructure projects through it.

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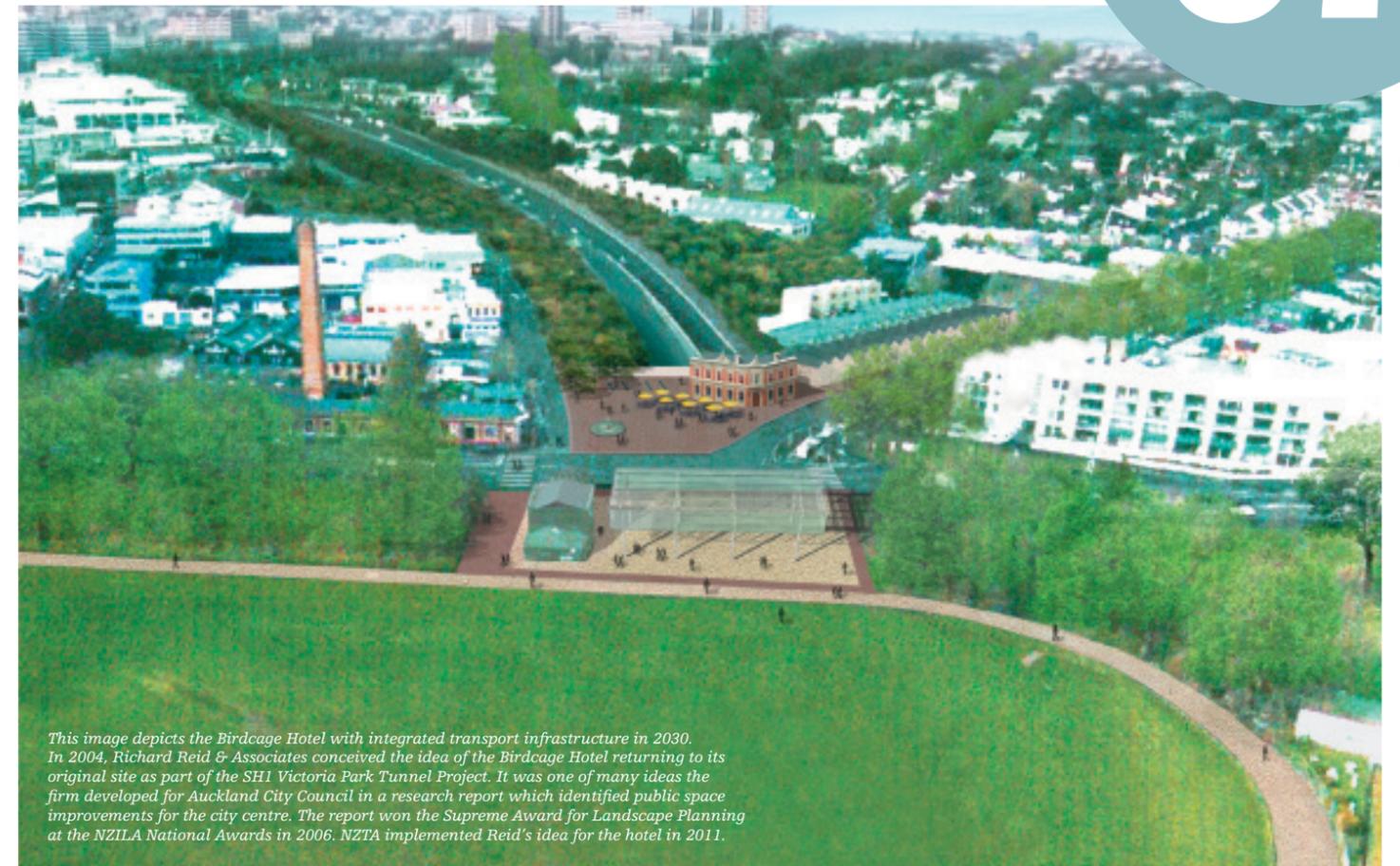
### LONG-TERM SPATIAL PLANNING

By 2030 the Birdcage Hotel's return will be recognised as a best practice example of long term spatial planning.

### A NEW HARBOUR CROSSING

The implications and opportunities from our strategic re-positioning of the Birdcage will be fully comprehended by the time another harbour crossing is needed. We predict the return of the Birdcage Hotel will influence, and may even determine, a harbour tunnel being built. We will not explain the how or why here, just that we believe it will.

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*This image depicts the Birdcage Hotel with integrated transport infrastructure in 2030. In 2004, Richard Reid & Associates conceived the idea of the Birdcage Hotel returning to its original site as part of the SH1 Victoria Park Tunnel Project. It was one of many ideas the firm developed for Auckland City Council in a research report which identified public space improvements for the city centre. The report won the Supreme Award for Landscape Planning at the NZLA National Awards in 2006. NZTA implemented Reid's idea for the hotel in 2011.*