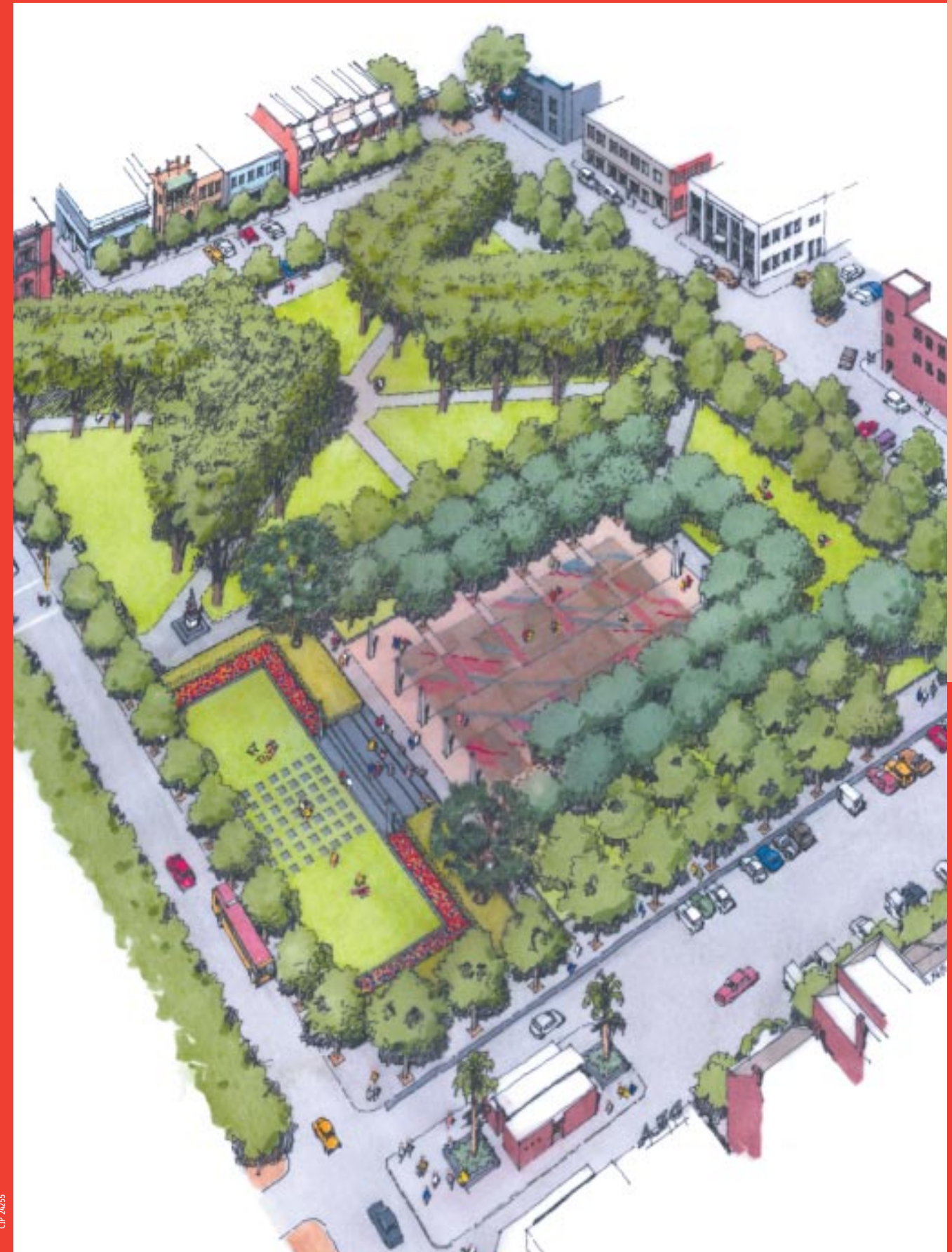


# Argyle Square Piazza Project

## Concept Master Plan Report



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GPO Box 1603M  
Melbourne Victoria 3001

Hotline (03) 9658 9658  
TTY (03) 9658 9461  
[enquiries@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@melbourne.vic.gov.au)  
[www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

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## New Italian Style Piazza for Carlton

The City of Melbourne has released a new Concept Master Plan for a vibrant, Italian-style piazza in Argyle Square, Carlton.

Under the Plan, the northern part of Argyle Square would be transformed into a contemporary piazza merging the best of Italian culture with Melbourne's relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.

As part of the design process, The City of Melbourne is collaborating with renowned Milanese architectural firm, Design Innovation.

The collaboration is one of the first initiatives of a new Sister City Agreement recently signed between Melbourne and Milan, signed 3 March 2004.

Initial designs for the new piazza show a flexible public space, with opportunities for quiet contemplation, family get togethers, markets and major events.

It is envisaged the piazza would become a central meeting place for the Carlton community, evoking the tradition and history of Italian culture while capturing the impulse and energy of everyday life. The new piazza would also have strong links to Carlton's other parks and reserves and to nearby commercial, retail and cultural precincts.

Proposed design elements include new tree planting, hedges, a striking architectural colonnade, seating steps, formal paths, and intricate paving designs.

The City of Melbourne is seeking your feedback on the Argyle Square Piazza Project – Concept Master Plan.

## Nuova piazza italiana per Carlton

La Città di Melbourne ha reso pubblica una nuova Proposta di Piano Generale per una vivace piazza di stile italiano all'Argyle Square, Carlton.

Secondo questo Piano, la parte a nord dell'Argyle Square verrebbe trasformata in una piazza moderna che fonde il meglio della cultura italiana con il rilassato stile di vita all'aperto proprio di Melbourne.

Come parte del processo di progettazione, la Città di Melbourne sta collaborando con il rinomato studio di architetti milanesi, Design Innovation.

La collaborazione è una delle prime iniziative del nuovo Accordo di Gemellaggio firmato di recente tra Melbourne e Milano il 3 marzo 2004.

I progetti iniziali per la nuova piazza mostrano un flessibile spazio pubblico, con possibilità di raccolta contemplazione, riunioni familiari, mercatini e avvenimenti di grande respiro.

Si prevede che la piazza dovrebbe diventare un importante punto d'incontro per la comunità di Carlton, richiamandosi alla tradizione e storia della cultura italiana e al tempo stesso cogliendo l'impulso e l'energia della vita quotidiana. La nuova piazza avrebbe anche forti collegamenti con gli altri parchi di Carlton e i confinanti rioni d'affari, commerciali e culturali.

Gli elementi del disegno proposto includono il collocamento di nuovi alberi, aiuole, un attraente colonnato, gradini su cui ci si può sedere, marciapiedi e intricati disegni sul pavimento.

La Città di Melbourne desidera conoscere il vostro parere in merito alla Proposta di Piano Generale per il Progetto Argyle Square Piazza.

# Introduction

In the early 1990s the City of Melbourne made a commitment to refurbish the northern half of Argyle Square, demolishing Carlton Bowling Club in late 1994.

In 1995, following a favourable feasibility study, Council sought community feedback on plans for an underground car park and refurbishment of the northern part of the square, culminating in a lengthy process for planning and legislative approval.

In 2000, Council deferred major refurbishment of the park, pending a review of the feasibility of the car park. In the interim, the northern part of Argyle Square was grassed and other enhancement works were undertaken.

In 2002, the City of Melbourne decided not to proceed with the car park due to uncertainty about its financial viability. Soon after, Council started work with a sub-committee of the Carlton Business Association and the Carlton Residents Association to develop a design brief for refurbishment of Argyle Square, including a piazza.

With this new impetus, the process to create an Italian-style piazza in Carlton began in May 2003.

## Background: Argyle Square

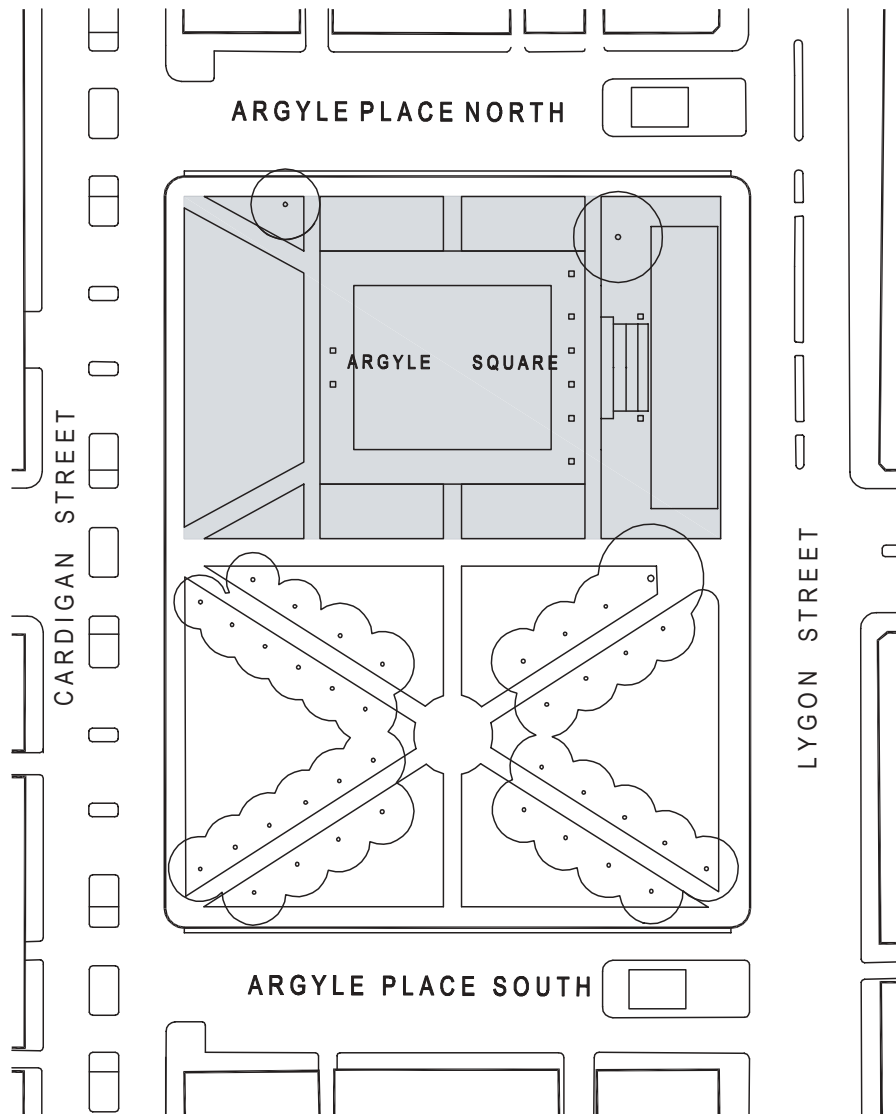
Argyle Square is located in Lygon Street, Carlton. The rectangular-shaped, 1.3 ha park is divided into two discrete halves by the east-west Pelham Street footpath. The southern half has a formal diagonal path network defined by large, majestic elms and well used grass areas.

The northern half of Argyle Square consists of an elevated grass and floral garden facing Lygon Street. A basalt retaining wall separates the garden from a large, flat middle space that once operated as the lawn bowls facility and a rear embankment. Only the northern half of Argyle Square would be converted into a piazza.

## Project Aims

The main aims of the project are to create:

- a vital public space in the heart of Carlton that makes reference to the celebrated public spaces of Italy.
- a new urban space that resonates with the urban context of Carlton and is uniquely Melbourne.
- an inclusive and welcoming place that, in keeping with other cultural precincts of Melbourne, celebrates the contribution of the Italian community to the city's cultural diversity.



# Collaboration with Milan

As part of the design process for the new Argyle Square Piazza, the City of Melbourne is collaborating with experienced Milanese architectural firm, Design Innovation.

The collaboration was arranged by the Milan City Project and is one of the first initiatives of the new Sister City Agreement between Melbourne and Milan, signed 3 March 2004.

The aim of the project is to create an authentic, contemporary piazza that merges the best of Italian culture with Melbourne's relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.

## design themes

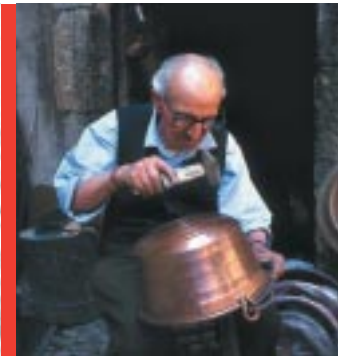
- knowledge
- la dolce vita - the good life
- atelier - fashion design/ workshop

## defining the piazza

"(Piazas are) spaces of exchange where the culture and market live together in harmony." *Design Innovation, Milan, November 2003*

The City of Melbourne/Design Innovation vision for Argyle Square Piazza is of a flexible space, characterised by opportunities for quiet contemplation, observation and getting together.

As a central meeting place for the Carlton community, it will evoke the tradition and history of Italian culture while providing a forum for the impulse and energy of everyday life. The piazza will be a place of many sensations, with a range of activities and elements to stimulate sight, sound, touch and taste.



# Ingredients for an Italian Piazza in Melbourne

The creation of a piazza in Carlton has involved a considerable amount of research and reflection on the identity of the area and the future uses of Argyle Square. In addition to the basic requirements of an attractive, functional design, the following elements have been central to the preparation of the Argyle Square Piazza design.

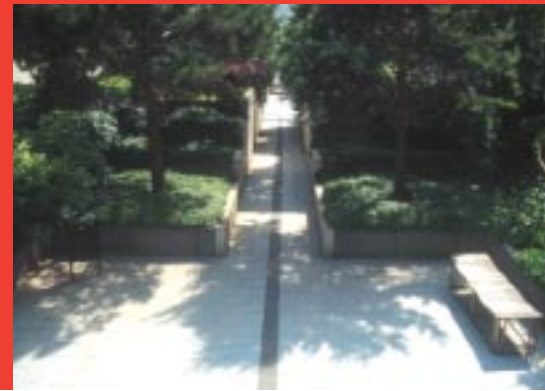
## piazza ~ square/ market/ place

For most people, the term 'piazza' conjures images of some of the most famous and grand urban spaces in Italy.

Italian piazzas come in many shapes and sizes. In a broad historical sense, they grew out of being the public space surrounding local village wells. The daily need to collect fresh water drew villagers together and market stalls and businesses naturally located nearby, framing the piazza with activity. This established a pattern of behaviour so entrenched in Italy that the introduction of piped water did not diminish social interaction. Wells were converted into decorative fountains and businesses continued to open their doors to piazzas with vibrant retail and dining.

Centuries later, the piazza continues to function as the heart or meeting place of many communities, in Italy and all over the world. The presence of water provides a powerful symbolic reference, drawing people to meet and linger. Modern piazzas attract people to spend time together in an outdoor setting by creating an innate sense of vitality.

Developing a piazza for the heart of Carlton is much more than a design challenge. The new piazza needs to have strong community support and appeal, offering a setting for a range of activities and uses. As a public outdoor space, the piazza requires seating, new landscaping and other elements to make people feel welcome and comfortable. Changes to pedestrian access and circulation are also needed to encourage social interaction and more effective links with surrounding residential, retail and commercial activities.



## connection

Argyle Square Piazza will be an essential part of the life of the Carlton community. The new piazza will have strong links to Carlton's other parks and reserves and to the area's commercial, retail and cultural places. Likewise the established southern half of Argyle Square will be integrated with the piazza and cultural connections will be expressed through programming of events and activities by the local Italian community.



## la passeggiata ~ the ritual evening stroll

Lygon Street has wide footpaths to accommodate ritual evening strolls.

La Passeggiata or The Walk is an essential ingredient of the life of any piazza. New, well lit paths will create safe and inviting ways to experience the vitality of Argyle Square – day and night.

## a place to meet

Argyle Square piazza will be a place to congregate and linger, attracting people from surrounding neighbourhoods and the wider metropolitan area. The piazza will offer spaces to sit, relax and observe the passing parade, with a variety of sunny and shady seating to accommodate the biggest family gatherings and the most intimate meetings.

## a showcase of contemporary Italian culture

The design for the new Argyle Square Piazza is elegant and contemporary, without being nostalgic or rarefied. Through form, space and design, the piazza will celebrate the rich and diverse history of Italian settlement in Carlton and look with optimism towards the future. Contemporary artworks will be fully integrated into the new piazza design.

## an attraction

The piazza will be a vibrant attraction for the area, contributing to Carlton's strong sense of community spirit. It will be a place for the community to gather and enjoy major events such as the Lygon Street Festa, outdoor performances and possibly regular markets.



## formal layout

Some of the elements that will be used to create an inviting setting for Argyle Square Piazza include tree avenues, hedges, low walls, seating steps, formal paths and intricate paving designs.

## a testament to Melbourne's cultural diversity

In the context of Melbourne's cultural precincts, Argyle Square Piazza will provide the urban heart for the Lygon Street Italian precinct. As the centre of this precinct, the piazza will be a place of welcome and respite for everyone.



## project theme ~ 'peace offering'

The idea of a 'peace offering' was chosen as the wider theme for the piazza to express the hopes for peace and prosperity that all immigrants bring to their new home.

The theme has been interpreted through the image of a Persian rug - weaving together notions of multiculturalism and cooperation between Australia and Italy. The metaphor of the Persian rug also makes historical reference to the celebrated architecture, textiles, mosaics and frescos of the Byzantine period of the Roman Empire. This period was renowned for cultural and ethnic tolerance and the flourishing of artistic expression, which had a profound influence on the evolution of European and Middle Eastern art.

## design elements

- dramatic sense of arrival via narrowed paths
- piazza enclosed by a green garden
- striking central piazza with intricate high quality pavement artwork
- architectural elements
  - colonnade
  - seating steps
  - integrated lighting features
- programmable for cultural events of various scale

# Heritage

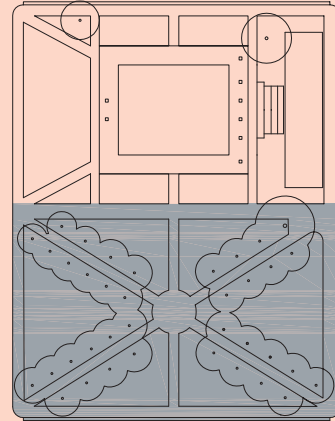
## Argyle Square south

Design of southern part of Argyle Square dates back to 1850s. Significant elements that must be retained are:

- diagonal paths, edges and asphalt surface
- east-west path – Pelham Street axis
- perimeter basalt edging
- lawn areas defined by the cross
- paths and the perimeter
- water fountain

Associated enhancement works include:

- reinstatement of north-south path connecting both halves of Argyle Square
- reinstatement of tighter corner entrances

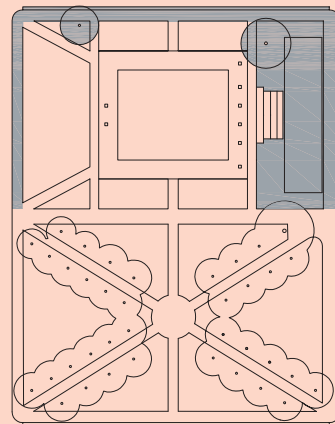


Argyle Square south

## Argyle Square north

Significant elements that must be retained:

- definition of the original land reservation delineated in paving
- grass address to Lygon Street is highly valued and has been in constant use since the 1800s
- ornamental floral planting at Lygon Street entry
- large basalt rock retaining walls north, east and south of the lawn
- oak on northern boundary
- lemon scented gum
- possible realignment of hurdle fences



Argyle Square north

# Streetscapes

## simplified streetscapes

The City of Melbourne proposes simplifying the streetscape surrounding Argyle Square to consolidate street parking and make the area more pedestrian friendly. This process would include new street tree planting and would give the piazza a stronger visual presence.

## spaces

The northern half of Argyle Square is made up of three distinct spaces. The design of the piazza seeks to reinforce the existing arrangement of entry, central space and rear.

## arrival

Dense tree planting and narrow pathways will form a series of transitional spaces, creating a sense of drama on arrival into the piazza.

## main entry to Lygon Street

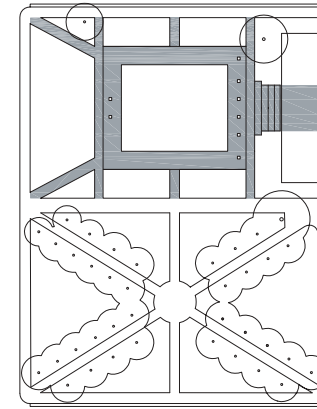
The entry has been modified to more clearly represent the existing crisp, geometric arrangement of manicured grass lawn surrounded by highly decorative floral beds, which in turn will be framed by low level clipped hedges.

## central piazza space

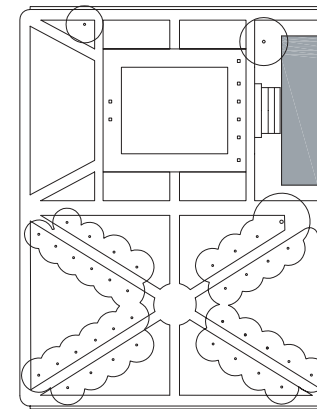
The central piazza will be defined by layers of formal elements including richly embellished paving contrasted with smooth grassed surfaces; formal avenues of trees; and an architectural colonnade.

## address to Cardigan Street

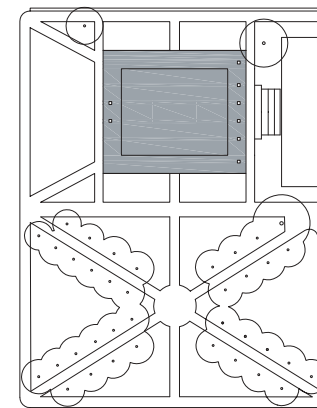
Grassed terraces will step down to Cardigan Street, emulating the formal entry on Lygon Street.



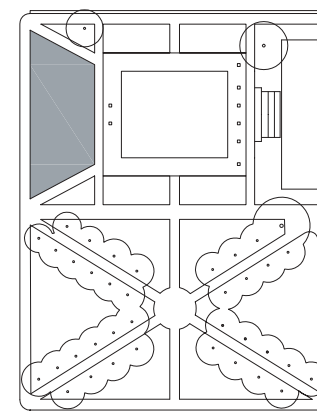
arrival



main entry to Lygon Street



central piazza space



address to Cardigan Street

# Planting

## framing Argyle Square

Trees will be planted around the perimeter of the park to unify the northern and southern halves of the square.

## enclosure of the piazza

Golden coloured, deciduous trees will be selected to frame the piazza. These trees will be planted at relatively close intervals and pruned to maintain dense, high branching canopies.

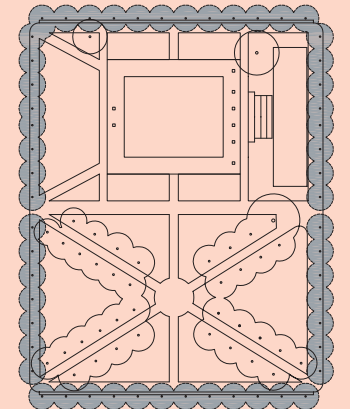
The architectural use of trees, contrasting colour and texture and formal rows of trunks will powerfully define the space. The lush shade will give much needed respite from exposure to the north and west in summer and create a sun-drenched courtyard throughout winter.

## ornamental planting

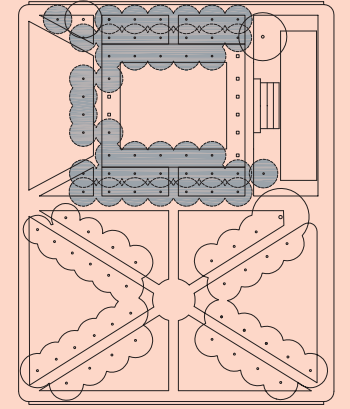
Seasonal floral displays will continue to be a feature of the piazza at the Lygon Street gateways and will be introduced to the Cardigan Street entry.

## grass

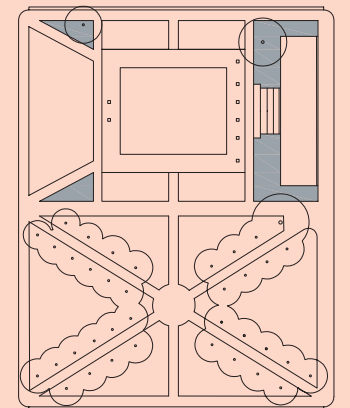
Grass areas will be planted along each end of the piazza, contributing to the impression of an urban space framed by a green border.



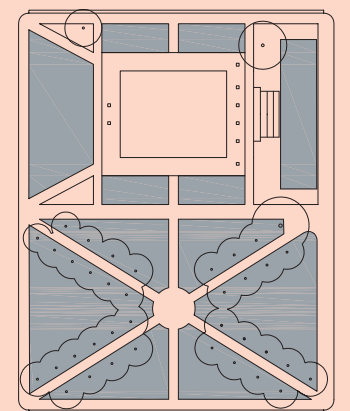
framing Argyle Square



enclosure of the piazza



ornamental planting



grass

# Special Features

Detailing of the piazza will include crisp urban finishes, furniture and architectural elements that reinforce its image as a special space.

## rug

The piazza will be defined on the ground by a richly embellished pavement treatment in the form of a rug. Surfaces that could be used to create this impression include:

- lush floral images screen printed onto ceramic tiles to give the impression of a textile finish
- mosaic tiling reminiscent of Byzantine artworks
- images sandblasted into bluestone flagging to give intricate change in texture and more subtle finish across the piazza.

## colonnade

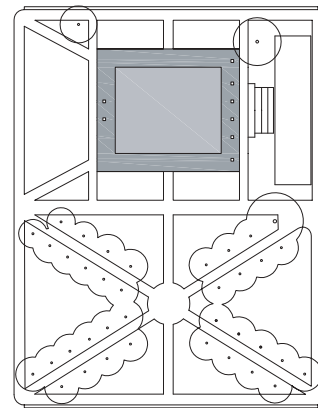
A striking architectural colonnade will be used to define the eastern edge of the piazza and serve as a highly visible marker from Lygon Street.

## lighting

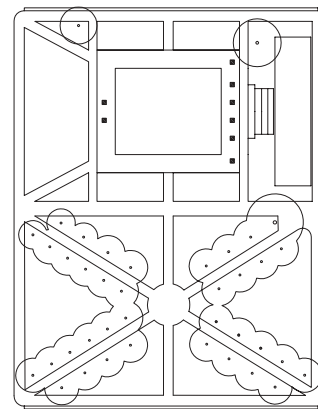
Lighting will be integrated into the design of the piazza. At night visitors will be drawn into the piazza to admire the dramatically lit fountain. Additional lighting will ensure the space is a safe and welcoming environment for evening strolls.

## potential fountain

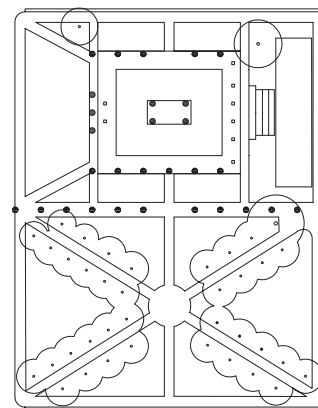
Subject to potential funding by external sources a fountain may be sited in the middle of the piazza, and a series of water jets will rise from the paving to sparkle, dance and fascinate in day time. As the fountain will be set flush in the piazza paving, the space can be extended for major events by turning off the jets. Most importantly when the piazza is needed to be dry, the surface will be functional and attractive and will not give the impression of the switched-off fountain.



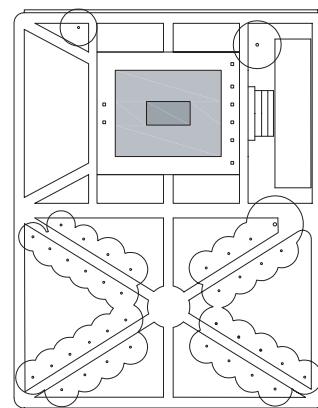
rug



colonnade



lighting



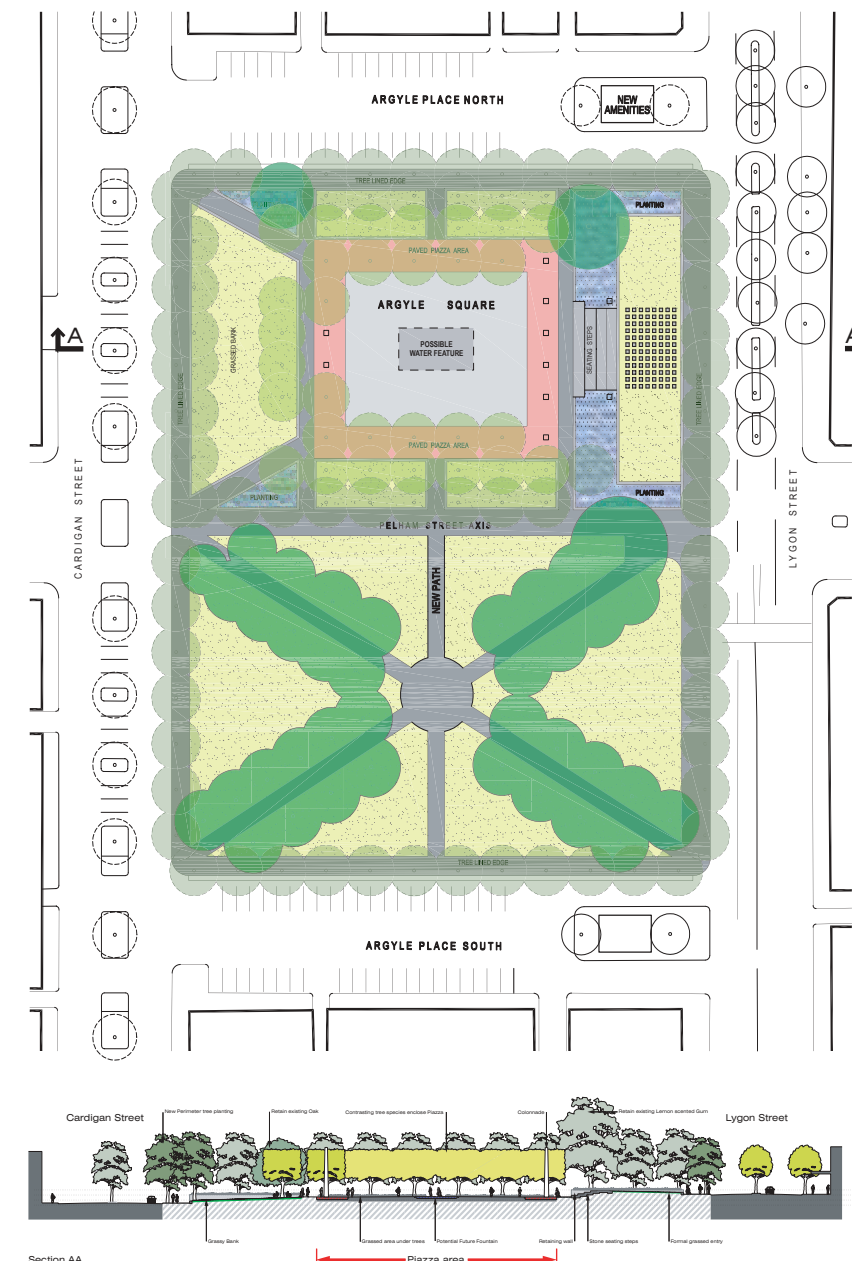
potential fountain



View into piazza from Lygon Street steps

# A Successful Piazza

Ultimately the success of Argyle Square piazza will depend on its sense of vitality and its ability to attract and draw people to spend time there throughout the year. Its future will be linked to the way it can inspire spontaneous acts of enjoyment and accommodate major public events.



Piazza Concept Plan February 2004

# Sharing Your Views

The City of Melbourne is interested in your response to the Concept Master Plan for the Argyle Square Piazza.

Please take the time to read the Plan carefully and provide feedback on the overall design solution and/or proposed design elements. Your response will help determine the future of Argyle Square.

Please respond in writing to:

Argyle Square Project  
 City Projects, Arts & Culture Division  
 City of Melbourne  
 GPO Box 1603M  
 Melbourne, Victoria, 3001

Email: [enquires@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquires@melbourne.vic.gov.au)

# Contact Us

For further information contact the City of Melbourne Hotline on 9658 9658 or visit [www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

If English is not your first language and you have questions, call and speak to us:

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- 9280 0719 Bahasa Indonesian
- 9280 0720 Italiano
- 9280 0721 普通話 (Mandarin)
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