

Project 5

An off-street cycling and walking route below the Westgate Freeway linking the heart of Southbank to the river and including a series of open spaces with recreational facilities such as netball or tennis courts.



OBJECTIVES:

1. Make the undercroft spaces attractive, exciting and active spaces that contribute positively to the amenity of the area.
2. Remove the blight effect of the undercroft spaces.
3. Provide space and facilities for local recreational needs.
4. Create an attractive, safe and convenient east-west route for cycling and walking.
5. Improved cycle links between South Melbourne, Southbank and Docklands along Cecil Street and through the Exhibition Centre/ Convention Centre precinct.

Westgate Freeway undercroft conversion and Docklands - South Melbourne links

ISSUES

Available space:

The undercroft includes large land parcels, potentially suiting activities that demand large ground-floor spaces. The clearance to the overhead structures varies from 12 to 15 metres, and with the wide spacing of the piers, the spaces have reasonable natural light and shelter. They are generally unencumbered by structures other than the elevated motorway, with only wire mesh fences and car parking attendants' facilities in portable buildings. Landscape devices to protect structure supports could be incorporated into the recreational landscape design. These spaces offer unique opportunity.

Blighted land:

The undercroft is unattractive with shabby pavements, fences, temporary structures, and use of the area for car parking causing unnecessary environmental blight.

Ownership and uses:

The undercroft spaces between Kings Way and Montague Street are Crown land. Most have been leased until around 2015 to a variety of car park operators, except where a McDonalds outlet has been built west of Clarendon Street at City Road.

Street frontages:

All of the spaces are exposed to local streets. Because of this exposure, the condition of the undercroft blights a wider area beyond it, affecting perceptions of environmental quality, safety and vitality, degrading land values and development potential, and deterring pedestrian circulation between Southbank and South Melbourne.

Lack of local open space:

There is a lack of open space in the immediate area.

Connecting through the new Conception Centre:

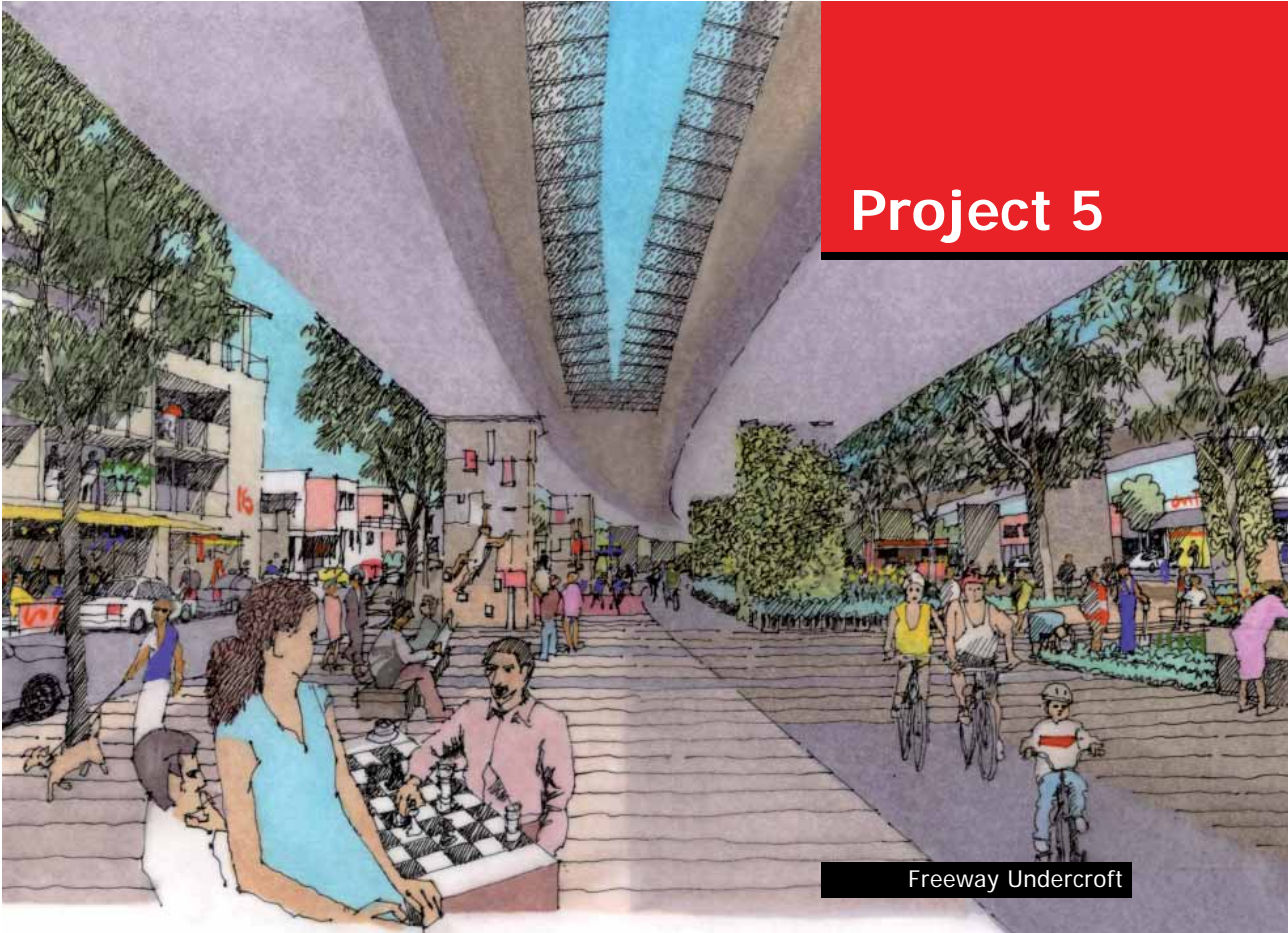
It is a planning scheme requirement to provide a new footbridge over the Yarra River and a shared walking/cycling path from the new bridge through the new Convention Centre to Normanby Road. This will be an important link to the river and Docklands from the south.

Opportunities:

5a. Landscaped public spaces, cycling and walking paths and recreational facilities under the freeway viaducts:

This will be a new, off-street and generous east-west pedestrian and cycle link running through Southbank from Kavanagh Street (refer to project 4b) to South Melbourne. Parks using freeway undercrofts have been successfully developed in Seattle and San Francisco where they have provided skate parks, dog walking areas and other facilities. These spaces under the Westgate Freeway offer an important, strategically located resource for Southbank and South Melbourne communities. The proposed upgrade of the Westgate Freeway is an opportunity to implement this project. These spaces can accommodate local recreational needs, especially active uses that are less sensitive to traffic noise than passive recreation and selected city-wide recreational needs that are difficult to meet in existing parks. This should also be a distinctive example of how to transform the image and use of spaces that are usually considered to have little potential as public space.

Project 5



Freeway Undercroft



The blighted freeway undercroft transformed as space for active recreation, walking and cycle paths and activating adjacent sites

LEFT: Plan of Freeway undercroft.

BELOW: Existing blight of the undercroft.

5b. Streetscape improvements below the Freeway:

The streetscapes of the roads that intersect the undercroft will need more attractive frontages onto the streets between Southbank and South Melbourne to encourage more walking in the area and provide pedestrian and bicycle crossing priority at the intersection with the undercroft paths.

5c. A cycle/walking path link from Docklands to South Melbourne via the new Convention Centre:

Connect to the priority bike trail from the bay up Cecil Street and along the freeway undercroft to Normanby Road. Integrate the tram stop at Normanby Road with the shared bike/walking path to cross into and through the Exhibition and Convention Centre precinct to the river and across the proposed footbridge to Docklands.



SOUTHBANK PLAN