



NZILA RESENE PRIDE OF PLACE
LANDSCAPE AWARDS 2019

PG

Landscape Design:
PG Playgrounds
Mara Hupara Playground

Submitted by
Boffa Miskell

Boffa Miskell



Mara Hupara Playground



Project Summary

The mara hupara playground is part of Te Auaunga, an Auckland Council Healthy Waters project through Walmsley and Underwood Reserves. This was a stream restoration project that delivered shared paths and bridges, an outdoor classroom, a community fale, and natural play spaces to the local community.

Boffa Miskell Landscape Architects worked closely with local schools, Harko Brown (Kaitamatariki Trust), Tina Dyer (Park Central), and Te Auaunga project team (Auckland Council, WEC, and Fulton Hogan), to design and construct ngā taonga tākaro (traditional Māori artefacts) and natural play elements from recycled and found natural materials.

The result is a first-of-its-kind playspace that offers children a unique and imaginative experience, while also reinforcing the wider values of Te Auaunga (Oakley Creek) project to restore the wairua of the Reserves. Boffa Miskell were Design Lead in a team with AECOM NZ for planning, consent, and design. These roles continued through 18 months of construction supervision.

"[I HAVE] BEEN INSPIRED AND DEEPLY MOVED BY [MY] PRIVILEGED ASSOCIATION WITH THE PROJECT TEAM AND PARTICULARLY MARK LEWIS, WHO DURING THE YEARS OF PLANNING AND CONSULTATIONS, PROFOUNDLY MAINTAINED HIS APPRECIATION AND DETERMINATION FOR A DOMINANT MARA HUPARA PRESENCE ON THE RESERVE....

THE SCOPE FOR FURTHER INNOVATIONS, NOW THAT THE DIE HAS BEEN CAST BY ALL INVOLVED, IS IMMENSE. WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE IMPORTANCE AND PROMINENCE OF HUPARA IN THIS DEVELOPMENT, IT IS TRULY APPARENT, THAT THIS INITIATIVE IS ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS!"

Harko Brown, Te Mara Hupara: 39 Ancient Maori Artefacts for Play, Learning and Exercise

WORKING WITH MARK [MARK LEWIS, BOFFA MISKELL] OVER THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS HAS CONSTANTLY DEMONSTRATED THE FOCUS TO DETAIL AND TREMENDOUS EFFORT AND ENERGY THAT HE BRINGS TO A PROJECT OF THIS NATURE...

HE CAREFULLY CONSIDERS ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT AND OPTIMISES THESE THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT STAGES TO ENSURE THAT AN ENDURING LEGACY IS LEFT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF AUCKLANDERS.

Cameron Smythe, WEC, Engineer's Representative to the Contract

COLLABORATORS - INTERNAL

Boffa Miskell	Mark Lewis (NZILA) Sarah Collins (FNZILA) Larissa Moyle (Grad. NZILA) Aynsley Cisaria (Grad. NZILA)
---------------	--

COLLABORATORS - EXTERNAL

Harko Brown	KaiMatariki Trust
Tina Dyer	Park Central
Auckland Council	Tom Mansell, Healthy Waters Project Manager
Shaun Jones	Prev. AECOM, Design Team Project Lead
Auckland Council	Amy Donovan, Community Development
Cameron Smythe	WEC, Eng. Rep.
Fulton Hogan	Constructors
Harry Doig	Puketapapa Local Board
Kaitiaki for: Te Kawerau a Maki; Ngāi Tai Ki Tāmaki; Ngāti Tamaoho; Te Akitai, Waiohua – Tāmaki; Ngati Te Ata; and Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei	

"THANKS TO THE DESIGN TEAM, LED BY BOFFA MISKELL, THIS PROJECT HAS SET A NEW STANDARD FOR AUCKLAND COUNCIL PROJECTS FOR PARK ENVIRONMENTS.... THE COMMUNITY HAVE WHOLE-HEARTEDLY EMBRACED THE PROJECT DUE TO MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND THEIR JOY OVER THE OUTCOME ... THE DESIGN TEAM HAVE CREATED AN ENVIRONMENT WITH A UNIQUE AND RICH IDENTITY THAT SPEAKS TO THIS PLACE. ONCE AGAIN BOFFA MISKELL HAVE SHOWN GREAT CARE FOR THEIR QUALITY OF WORK, WHILE NOT SHYING AWAY FROM EXPLORING NEW WAYS OF WORKING AND INNOVATION. "

Tom Mansell, Auckland Council Healthy Waters Project Manager

Site History

Historically, Te Auaunga meandered through Wai o Rakataura, a very large wetland, formed by the confluence of lava flows from Puketāpapa and Owairaka. The overarching Te Auaunga project sought to deliver a flood channel that would prevent flooding to approximately 200 homes in the adjacent catchment, and restore both the stream (Te Auaunga) and historic wetland (Wai o Rakataura).

The new sinuous path of the restored stream formed a number of varied 'islands' of raised grass areas and glades of existing mature trees, surrounded by streams, wetlands, and planted swales. It was on these islands that the play areas were created, connected by paths, boardwalks, stepping stones, logs, and mulch paths. The mara hupara were formed in these discrete locations.

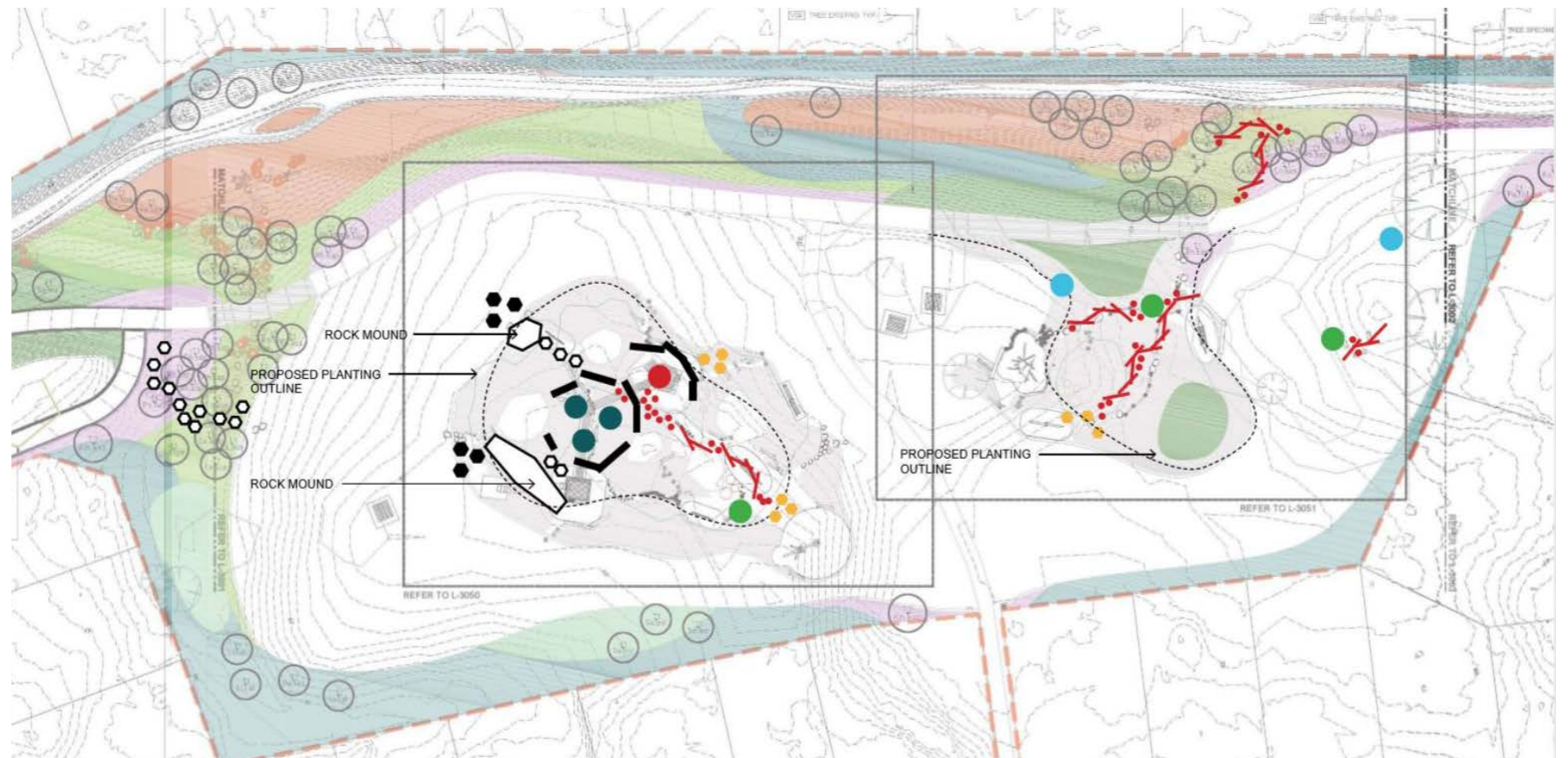
Where Te Auaunga project encountered in-situ basalt, the flood profile worked around the natural character of kōhatu. These rock islands were other locations for children to explore, accessible by wera te patu (stepping stones of re-used kōhatu).

A transformational project

The community around Te Auaunga was developed as a public housing estate from the 1950's. Residents today represent a new generation of New Zealanders, with over half born overseas. Unfortunately, the community have high scores for socio-economic deprivation and the area has the lowest level of open space per head of population in the Auckland Region.

The restitution of Te Auaunga, provided an opportunity to attenuate flooding while also treating urban stormwater. The remedy of these issues along with upgrades to open space is expected to significantly improve living conditions for this community.

The local community were directly affected by park closures, construction, and will ultimately experience the long term changes to their community made possible by this infrastructure project. What resulted from collaborative design, open days, and working closely with community reps, was an extraordinary level of trust and goodwill toward the project and construction team.



Schools and Community Engagement

Te Auaunga was a partnership between many stakeholders, including Mana Whenua, Community, Schools, and Local Boards. Community engagement was particularly important in driving social and environmental outcomes for the project. There are kindergarten, primary and intermediate schools all within close proximity to Te Auaunga. Walmsley and Underwood Reserves in the project are used frequently by children and young adults to get to and from schools, and most weekends for diversions. This is despite the limited play equipment or even kick-a-ball areas.

In order to engage with this stakeholder group, project team representatives met with Owairaka Primary, Wesley Intermediate, and Wesley Primary to inform them about the project and identify opportunities for the schools to participate.

During the course of discussion, students were invited to think about 'nature' and the 'outdoors' and how they like to play in these environments. They were also asked to describe outdoor play from their countries of origin, if appropriate, and to think about how others use reserves as well. 'Props' were provided in the form of maps and photos, and as children drew pictures and wrote, the project team members discussed their illustrations and stories.

The children's responses to nature included the joy of climbing trees, stepping on stones in the river, adventuring, exploring, and building huts. This was encouraging for an urban population of children. There were also many sensitive responses to the health of Te Auaunga, including concern about pollution and the desire to clean up the river and create homes for tuna (eels) and birds.

Aspects of play was a hot topic among the pupils and there was a large variety of suggestions and aspirations, but also certainly a consensus.

I think the creek and park should look something like this...



Physical aspects of play

The favoured aspect of play for children was to move dynamically through the reserves on bikes and skateboards and for general open space to play tag, ball sports, running, cartwheels, and 'fighting'.

Most were also interested in playing in nature, on logs and stepping stones, and in trees and orchards.

Social and cognitive aspects of play

Many children sought places and opportunities to interact with their friends, family, and pets through walks and special or secret places for picnics and gossip. Many wanted just to relax or read, explore in the outdoors - on adventures with their friends. Many wanted to play games in 'pretend places'.

'Natural play'

Following consultation with schools and the community, the design team set out to scatter play opportunities, including 'natural play' throughout the reserves, to discover beside the restored stream, under islands of trees, and within the wetland environments of an outdoor classroom. All these play areas sit beneath stands of mature existing trees, which themselves sit in 'islands' between the meanders of the restored stream.

One of the play areas was a bmx track that wove around and between the trees and up and down existing landforms. However, the majority would appear upon exploration - large excavated or constructed basalt rock formations, stacks of woody debris, and giant and ancient swamp kauri stumps. These play areas would be connected to main paths by stepping stones, mulch paths, and boardwalks. They offer children a unique experience to engage with their restored environment, to 'get dirty' and enliven their imaginations.

The project team specifically set out to deliver play spaces that spoke to people about wild places and natural environments, and create opportunities for exploration and daring using nature as a guide.



Ngā Aro Tākaro

The mana whenua project partners worked with the project team to realise an opportunity to integrate traditional Māori play into the project.

In Māori society, traditional games and aro-tākaro (play items) are inextricably linked and highly valued. Ngā aro-tākaro reinforce social norms and connect people to their environments. They become a means for children to engage with nature and history simultaneously through challenge and learning.

Through the guidance of Harko Brown, recommended by mana whenua to be a guide for the project, traditional play items were integrated into the environments. These were artefacts that spoke to the natural values and traditional uses of Te Auaunga and the historic wetland of this place Wai o Rakataura. Archaeological records indicate ongoing maori settlement near Te Auaunga in pre-european times.

Traditional Māori play elements installed in the project include:

- A torere tree for climbing
- A triple-posted tama-tane-wahine installation
- Giant upturned ancient kauri log roots - te ko-uru which are linked by ko-papa;
- Several dozen hikeikei on which to hop, jump and walk over;
- A land-based kōkiri; and
- A series of wera-te-paatu to practice agility, speed and balance.

After the construction of ngā aro tākaro, the local school staff and pupils were treated to workshops with Harko Brown to learn about traditional taonga tākaro and games, and also to decorate a select number of the hupara to reinforce their educational and play uses, which have subsequently been installed in the reserves.

"TE AUAUNGA AWA PLAYGROUND IS COMPLETE. OH, TO BE A KID AGAIN. THIS IS AN AMAZING SPACE THAT WILL BE ENJOYED BY MANY - YOUNG AND OLD."

Te Whangai Trust, Facebook June 2018





Essential Criteria

1. Clarity

As design lead and site advisor, Boffa Miskell integrated the diverse elements of Te Auaunga project. Playground areas were hidden to encourage exploration, but also legible - associated with 'islands' of mature tree-groups and signalled by informal paths and kohatu (mauri and stepping stones). Massive swamp kauri, some as large as 12 tonnes, peek above low vegetation to reveal play areas.

2. Sense of place

Ngā taonga tākaro are the first in a public Reserve, yet they utilise materials from the site, are integrated into the existing landscape, and were specifically chosen by the design team for their relevance to the values of Te Auaunga project and to the mana whenua group.

3. Performance

The design responded to the community's aspirations for outdoor play in nature, with adventure and discovery. Although the project is opening May 2019, it has already received the Auckland Council Project of the Year Award for Innovation.

Before opening, Te Auaunga received hundreds of visitors, including mataawaka maori and mana whenua. Many kaumātua remember ngā aro tākaro, though it has skipped a generation. Many had tears in their eyes to see their mokopuna playing with them.

4. Value

Unfortunately, budgets did not materialise for the original play structures proposed for Te Auaunga. Therefore, the project team had only their existing landscape budget to deliver on promises to the community.

The construction of te mara hupara was undertaken entirely with products recycled from the site (basalt rock, felled trees, earth, and mulch), and items rescued from waste streams (re-purposed jarrah power poles, and swamp kauri stumps destined for the chipper). Despite these limitations the design-construct exercise delivered a play intervention with significant physical and cultural impact.

5. Innovation

This is the first ngā aro tākaro playground in a public reserve. It was additionally unique by utilising ancient swamp kauri, which are tens of thousands of years old. They were combined with other wholly recycled and reused natural materials to form nga aro takaro.

6. Execution

Ngā Aro Tākaro was a design-build to integrate the organic forms of earth, trees, rock, and logs. We were assisted by a 3-D electronic points survey of the roots and trunks of the mature trees.

Documentation was through CAN notes with marked-up photographs. These were informed by IPTED/CPTED guidelines and playground environmental/safety standards. Boffa Miskell were on-site daily during construction, assisted by Harko Brown. The project was audited by Tina Dyer during and at-completion of the project.

7. Planting

Existing trees provide the project with a mature landscape and all-year food for birds. There was considerable effort to direct earthworks to save trees in-situ and transplant existing kahikatea with no losses. Te Auaunga was planted with representative vegetation, native to the Tamaki ED and grown in a community nursery on Mt Roskill Intermediate, operated by Te Whangai Trust, and staffed by locals.

Specific planting for mara hupara includes transparent shrubs (e.g. kawakawa) to protect mature tree roots from play areas, while sedges protect these shrubs. In open areas, widely spaced rushes and sedges provide legible views to paths and encircle and accentuate grass 'islands' (protected by recycled hardwood 'mowing strips').

8. Environmental stewardship

Te mara hupara relied on natural and renewable resources used in innovative ways to achieve an holistic beneficial outcome. The local schools were invited into this process, including decorating hupara.

9. Significance and influence

The project has introduced new aspects of playground design, including 'natural play' within a restored stream and wetland environment, and ngā aro tākaro (traditional Māori play) in a public reserve,





