4. CONNECT CITY ROAD TO THE ARTS CENTRE AND YARRA RIVER

At St Kilda Road, City Road is lowered below grade, re-emerging eastbound from the underpass as Alexandra Avenue.

This underpass creates an inhospitable and unsafe environment bounded by traffic guard rails, concrete structural supports and theatre back-of-house loading areas.

Coupled with fast-moving heavy traffic, this is a difficult area for pedestrians to navigate and underwhelming and disorientating for visitors to the globally renowned arts precinct.

The following pages present several design concepts for significant upgrades to pedestrian access around City Road at St Kilda Road.
Arts Precinct

Above City Road, the Arts Centre’s St Kilda Road frontage benefits from a prominent address and high quality pedestrian environment. Arts Victoria’s ‘Arts Precinct Blueprint’ sets a vision to expand the arts throughout Southbank to create one of the world’s leading arts and cultural districts.

The interface between City Road and St Kilda Road provides a significant opportunity for the integration of the Arts Centre, the Yarra River and the expansion of the arts precinct into Southbank.

Reconnecting City Road with the city

This project acknowledges and highlights the strategic importance of reconnecting City Road with the Hoddle Grid by integrating the arts precinct within Southbank. It proposes ways to transform the existing disconnected and poor quality pedestrian environment into a connected, inviting and engaging place for people.

This project aims to:

- Create a safe pedestrian environment that is easy for everyone to get around.
- Create an inviting, public ‘back door’ from City Road interface to the Arts Centre.
- Replace or upgrade inadequate and outdated infrastructure.
- Create direct pedestrian links between the Arts Centre, the Yarra River and Southbank.
- Provide an improved pedestrian connection over City Road.
- Deliver a flexible concept which does not limit future expansion and growth of the precinct.

The design concepts on the following pages illustrate ways this area could be reconnected to serve both the local community and deliver on the broader Arts Precinct vision.
Connecting Southbank to the Arts Centre

Figure 3.42 presents a design concept for improving pedestrian connections between St Kilda Road and the Arts Centre lawn to the Yarra River. This design concept includes the upgrade of Southgate Avenue (Figure 3.47 p.79) by minimising parking and through-traffic while enabling better pedestrian and cycling links.

“Better links are required between St Kilda Road and City Road - It’s an ugly wasteland under Hamer Hall”
Matt, visitor

Figure 3.40: Existing pedestrian and cycling connections are poor quality, indirect and difficult to find

Figure 3.41: Proposed connections that improve accessibility between the Arts Precinct, the Hoddle grid and Southbank

Figure 3.42: Artist’s impression of potential public realm upgrades looking east to the Arts Centre

After
Figure 3.43: Existing view of Southgate Avenue looking east to the Arts Centre

Street is dominated by car parking
Blank walls create an inactive & uninteresting street frontage
Obscured ramp and stairs are difficult for pedestrians to see (cyclists must dismount)
Narrow, poor quality footpaths are difficult for pedestrians to walk along
Under utilised undercroft space creates unpleasant street frontage

Before

Clear pedestrian and cycle ramp to St Kilda Road
Potential for Arts Centre activation (for example, a ticket box office)
Stairs to provide direct pedestrian link over City Road to Sturt Street
Connecting Southbank to the Arts Centre

Blank walls create inactive and uninteresting street frontage

Tree canopy growth is compromised by lack of space

Poor access to St Kilda Road - difficult to find

Before

Figure 3.44: Existing view of Southgate Avenue looking south to the Arts Centre

Narrow footpaths with obstructions are difficult for pedestrians to navigate

Poor cycle connection to St Kilda Road

Figure 3.45: Existing connections between the riverfront and St Kilda Road

Figure 3.46: Proposed connections between the riverfront and St Kilda Road
After

Figure 3.47: Artist’s impression of potential upgrades to Southgate Avenue looking south to the Arts Centre

Cycle access to St Kilda Road via ramp (obscured)

Direct access to St Kilda Road and across City Road to Sturt Street

Footpaths widened and resurfaced to improve access and safety

Arts Centre posters to create visual interest

Street trees relocated

“An attractive pedestrian link would help to remove the feeling that City Road splits Southbank in two”

Nathan, resident
Connecting Southbank to the Arts Centre

Figure 3.50 presents a design concept for creating an inviting entrance from City Road to the Arts Centre. A staircase and elevator would provide direct pedestrian connections between City Road and the Arts Centre and would help to integrate Southbank as part of the arts precinct.

“This really should be the gateway for pedestrians from Melbourne to the whole Southbank area. Flowing the garden down to the road would be a game changer.”
Steve, resident

After

Figure 3.50: Artist’s impression of possible upgrades to connect City Road to the Arts Centre

Figure 3.48: Existing pedestrian and cycling connections are poor, indirect and difficult to find

Figure 3.49: Potential connections will activate frontages around City Road and provide direct access to the arts precinct
Figure 3.51: Existing view of City Road underpass looking east towards Alexandra Avenue

Before

Staircase provides direct connection to St Kilda Road

Elevator incorporated in structure

Potential for permanent open space to interface directly with City Road

Poor visual connection to St Kilda Road from City Road creates a disorienting pedestrian environment

Temporary arts space ‘Testing Grounds’ provides opportunity for an improved City Road interface

Staircase provides circuitous connection to St Kilda Road (not DDA compliant)