

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LOWER CAUSEWAY 700 GOVERNMENT STREET

Description of Historic Place

The historic place is a wide, formally-designed section of the public promenade skirting the perimeter of Victoria's Inner Harbour. It comprises a quayside walkway flanked by a raised area of planting, incorporating treed seating areas, set against the rustic stone retaining wall of the older causeway.

Heritage Value

The heritage value of the lower causeway resides in its strategic role in the development of Victoria's urban environment, for the way it reflects the changing role of Victoria's urban environment, for its design, and its use.

Completed in 1974, the lower causeway was the key recommendation, and the most tangible outcome, of Arthur Erickson Architects' 1973 Inner Harbour Study, commissioned by and written in collaboration with the City of Victoria, to consider enhancing the living and working environment of the Inner Harbour as its role as a commercial port and industrial margin declined. This innovative study, the first to look at the entire shoreline of that area, provided design guidelines that could be used by the City to make the shoreline accessible to the public. The guidance is of interest for reflecting the spirit of the age, focusing on people, health and play rather than machines, commerce and work.

Designed by Vancouver architect and waterfront design specialist, Norm Hotson, while at Arthur Erickson's office, and one of the last major projects engineered by City of Victoria staff, the causeway is of significance as a piece of enduring 1970s urban design. Its popularity as an open-air market, tourist destination, and attractive urban park are testament to the success of its design.

The form of the lower causeway is of value for the way it reflects the principles underlying Erickson's architecture. Spatially, the provision of a dedicated pedestrian route away from the traffic along Government Street, the creation of areas for events and people watching, and the integration of contemplative spaces are characteristic of his landscape design at that time, as is the sculptural use of "sitting and walking" steps and tiers to define spaces. The trees and low hedges that provide shade and a windbreak, and the "mushroom lights" and contrasting paving material at the promenade edge to avoid the use of railings are of interest for the way they illustrate the architect's lateral thinking on design issues.

The lower causeway has become a significant public space at the heart of the city, used by workers and visitors, market stall-holders, musicians and artists.

Character-Defining Elements

- Waterside location
- Public access by boat and on foot
- The steps and tiers that create zones, including the pedestrian zone, gathering areas, and contemplative areas
- The absence of buildings and signage

- The integration with the fabric of the old stone causeway, including the visibility of the rustic stone revetment as a backdrop to the lower causeway seating, and the adaptive reuse of the old steamer steps to link new causeway to old
- Uninterrupted views along the lower causeway promenade and between the trees and stone face of the old causeway
- Trees in square planters shaped to permit views of the Inner Harbour from the benches on the lower causeway, and from the parapet of the stone causeway behind
- The curving of the causeway at the northeast and southeast corners
- The paving materials, including the exposed aggregate placed concrete, the quartzite pavers at the water's edge, and the slate pavers in the seating areas
- The universal, including the benches on the upper tier, the octagonal planters arranged in groups, the mushroom luminaires, and the lighting poles
- The careful positioning of elements throughout the lower promenade, including the alignment of trees, control joints and lighting poles, the centering of benches between the trees, the even spacing of the lighting, and step irons to the water.