

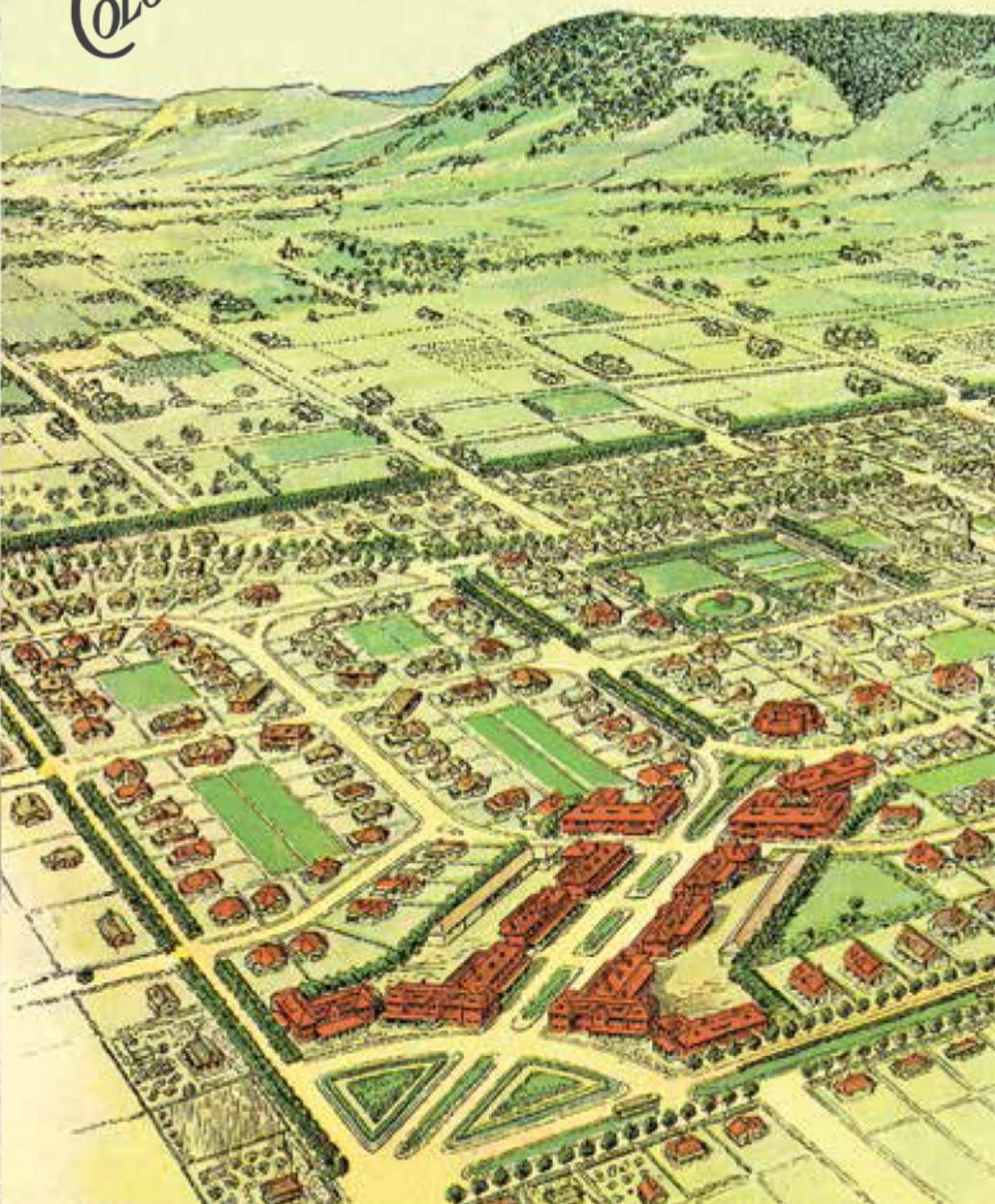


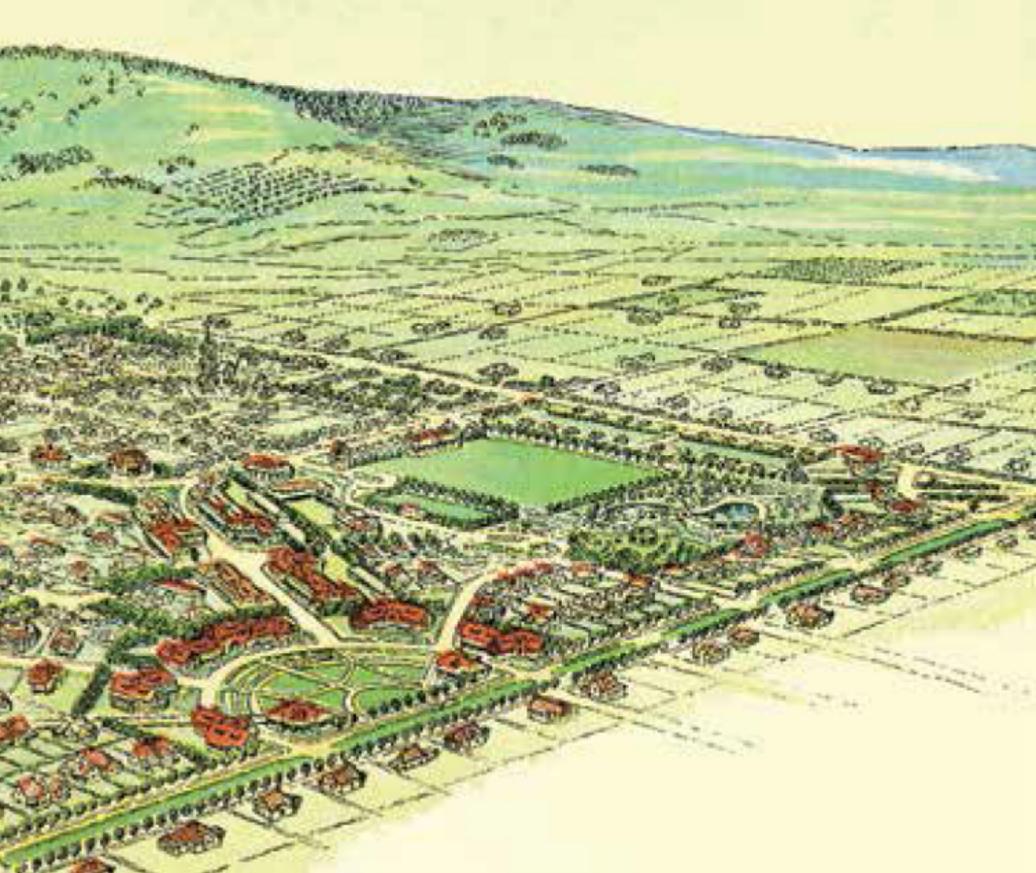
CITY OF
MITCHAM

Colonel Light Gardens

Australia's best example of a garden suburb

COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS





Extract from coloured birds-eye view issued in the 1921 Colonel Light Gardens Sales Brochure.

For more information on the history of Colonel Light Gardens, please visit www.clghs.org.au

All images in this walk brochure are from the Mitcham Heritage Research Centre and the Colonel Light Gardens Historical Society.

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Map concept Maggy Ragless City of Mitcham.

A fold out map is provided inside the back cover. The numbers on the map refer to the features described in the following pages.

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About this walk

This brochure has been prepared to allow the community to enjoy a pleasant walk and to discover the special planning features which make Colonel Light Gardens so historically important.

A fold out map is provided inside the back cover. The numbers on the map refer to the features described in the following pages.

History of Colonel Light Gardens

In June 1915 the Vaughan Labor Government purchased the property 'Grange Farm', south of Adelaide, from the trustees of the estate of William Tennant Mortlock. The farm occupied 121.4 hectares and the Government intended to establish the site as a 'model garden suburb'. The Government's decision followed the impact of Charles Reade's lectures during his 1914 Australasian Town Planning Tour. Reade was sponsored by the British Garden Cities and Town Planning Association and was considered an expert by his colleagues in the field of town planning. He promoted model garden suburb schemes popular overseas in public lectures, enhanced by lantern slides, newspaper releases, and in an official report, *Recommendations in Regard to Town Planning in South Australia*. His planning principles were guided by the garden city movement which aimed to improve the lifestyle and residential environment of all classes of people; Colonel Light Gardens clearly reflects those principles in its design.

World War 1 interrupted the State Government's intention for 'Grange Farm' and the land was used as an army training camp until 1920. Meanwhile, during 1916, Reade had been employed as South Australia's (and Australia's) first Government Town Planner. In January 1917, when the need arose to improve drainage at the camp, Reade was consulted. He was requested to prepare plans for a model suburb and designed a scheme with the

COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS

working title 'Mitcham Garden Suburb'. His plans were shown publicly and for the first time at the First Town Planning and Housing Conference and Exhibition in Adelaide in October 1917. They were ratified by the State Government in 1919 when the *Garden Suburb Act* was passed. The Act, together with associated regulations, provided a detailed plan for the suburb's development. One of its innovations was in the suburb's administration—instead of coming under the jurisdiction of the local Council, it was controlled by a Garden Suburb Commissioner who had responsibility for all aspects of its development.

The name Colonel Light Gardens was adopted by State Cabinet in April 1921. A Sales Brochure was published which outlined the benefits and services available in the suburb and included a plan of the scheme as well as a coloured perspective. The first blocks available for public purchase were in the north-east section of the suburb and were released in August 1921. Additional sales were made in 1922 and 1924. The new suburb offered prospective residents *comfort, convenience and beauty* with services – gas, electricity, water and sewerage—surfaced roads, public transport and views of the foothills. Land sales were slow but steady and by mid-1924 sixty houses were occupied or being built. Their style reflected the popular preference for Californian bungalows (although a number of neo-Tudor homes were also later constructed).

In June 1924 development of the suburb was accelerated by the Labor Government's decision to initiate a mass housing project, the Thousand Homes Scheme, on a large portion of the undeveloped land in Colonel Light Gardens. The central and southern sections of the suburb were remodelled to accommodate 363 houses. Two farming properties on the western side of Goodwood Road were purchased as sites for a further 332 houses. (The remaining 305 homes of the Thousand Homes were built in Adelaide's western suburbs). Although some residents of the northern end of the suburb

believed that the Thousand Homes Scheme would devalue their properties and were fearful of 'slum conditions' they were advantaged by the scheme. It quickened the availability of facilities including shops and parks and assisted the pace of private investment in the suburb. Two schools and five churches were established. The Garden Theatre (for moving pictures) sited on Goodwood Road opened in 1927. Also in 1927 the Garden Suburb Commissioner reported that all available building blocks were sold and that the suburb's initial development was complete.

Colonel Light Gardens has remained substantially unchanged since the 1920s. The Garden Suburb Commissioner approved the subdivision of Piccadilly Circus, originally intended as the main entrance to the suburb, in the 1940s. Houses in southern portion of Eton Street were also built in that decade. Unused shop sites in the former Bond Street (now Salisbury Crescent) were allocated for housing, and subdivisions of housing allotments were made during the 1960s and 1970s in several other parts of the suburb. Due to financial constraints, responsibility for Colonel Light Gardens was transferred to the City of Mitcham in 1975 and the *Garden Suburb Act* was repealed. Since then the former Garden Suburb Commission depot in Eton Street has been cleared and replaced by houses.

During the 1980s local community awareness of the significance of the suburb's plan led to successful application for funding of the *Colonel Light Gardens Conservation Study*.

In recognition of its unique place in national and international planning history, the suburb was included on the Register of the National Estate in 1999 and declared a State Heritage Area in 2000.

Christine Garnaut's book *Colonel Light Gardens model garden suburb* (Sydney Crossing Press 1999; reprinted 2006) provides an excellent resource on the suburb's history and significance.

We hope that you will enjoy your walk.



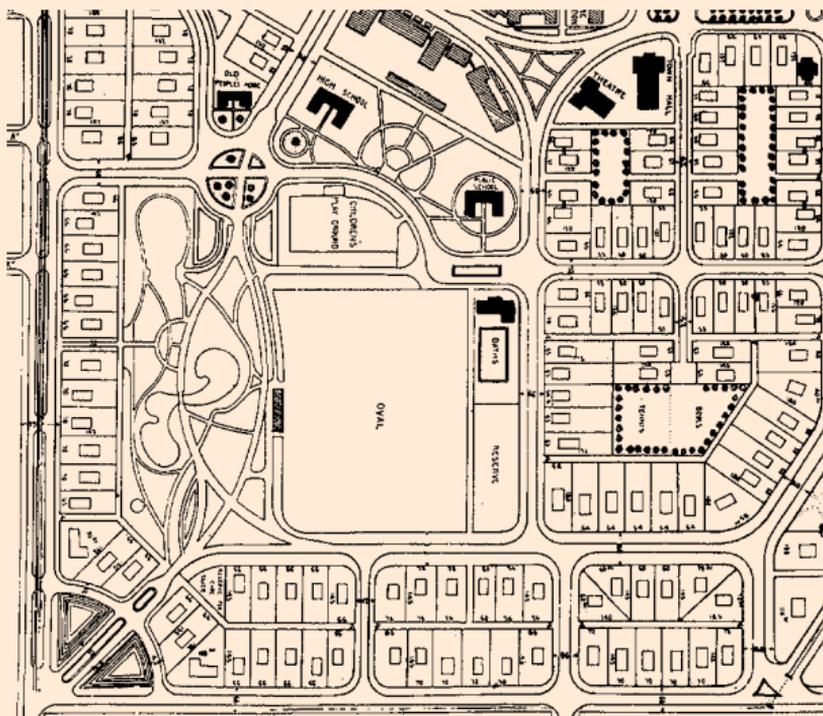
Charles Compton Reade.

Charles Compton Reade

Colonel Light Gardens was designed principally by Charles Compton Reade. A New Zealander born in 1880, Reade first visited Britain in 1905. As a journalist, he wrote about the slums which had developed around the major industrialized cities in Britain and the lessons for Australasians. Reade worked in London with the Garden City and Town Planning Association gaining sufficient experience in Britain to enable him to lead a public lecture tour promoting the garden city planning philosophy throughout Australasia during 1914-1915.

Soon after the tour ended, South Australia appointed Reade as its first official Town Planner. In 1917 he drew up plans for an Adelaide garden suburb (now Colonel Light Gardens) and these were first shown at Australia's First Town Planning and Housing Conference which he organised.

Comprehensive state-wide town planning legislation was the main focus of Reade's attention and this was achieved with legislation passed in late 1920. Reade left Australia for the Federated Malay States in December 1920 to take up a temporary appointment. He did not return to Australia. Sadly, after working successfully in Malaya and Rhodesia (now Malaysia and Zimbabwe respectively), he committed suicide in South Africa in 1933.



Reade's Plan for Mortlock Park 1917.

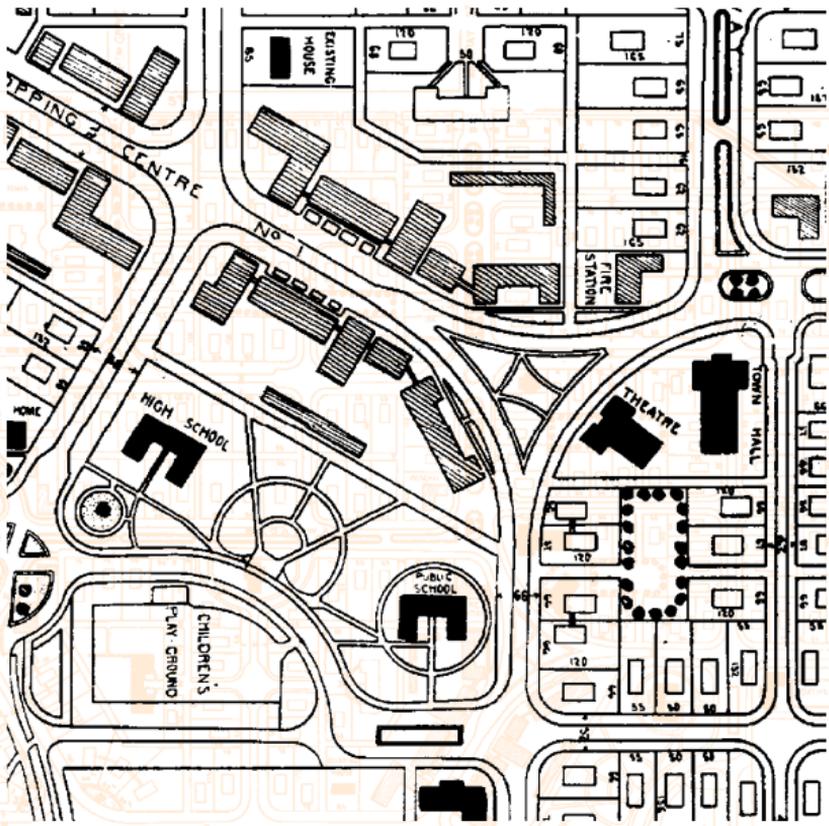
1 Planned open space - Mortlock Park

A principle of Garden Suburb planning is that *adequate sites must be allocated for parklands, playgrounds, flower plots...* Colonel Light Gardens contains many of these reserves.

Mortlock Park is the largest public reserve in the suburb. It is named to recognise the donation of 4 hectares of land for a recreation area by the Mortlock family, the former owners of the Grange Farm.

Reade's plan included gardens, swimming baths and an ornamental lake with bridge. These features were deleted with the redesign to incorporate the Thousand Homes Scheme.





2 Community facilities

This area formed an integrated community facilities zone. It was to include the school, the major recreation reserve and shops (all built), a picture theatre (built elsewhere on Goodwood Road) and a town hall (built as part of the Institute on West Parkway).

The Colonel Light Gardens Primary School is the largest building in the suburb. The single-storey building was opened in 1926 and the main two-storey building opened in March 1927.



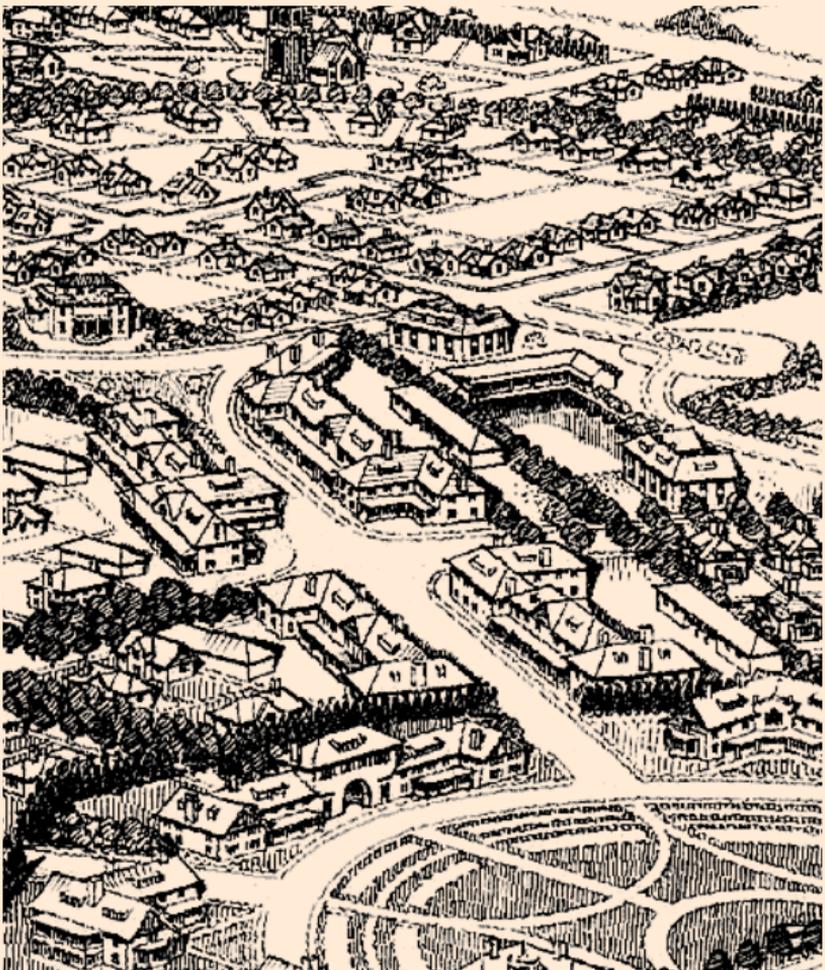
Colonel Light Gardens Infant School March 1926.

3 Land use zoning

The 1921 Colonel Light Gardens Sales Brochure set out that *special attention is directed to the fact that no buildings for business or manufacturing purposes will be permitted except in the business sector specially designed for that purpose*. Reade's design is now regarded as one of the first attempts to zone areas according to their best use. Other areas were zoned for schools, churches, recreation etc.

Shops

Reade allocated two shopping zones to service the suburb's residents. This concept of neighbourhood shopping differed greatly from the corner shops found elsewhere and was eventually adopted in the State Development Plan from the 1960s.



Reade's suggestion for The Strand Shopping Centre 1917.

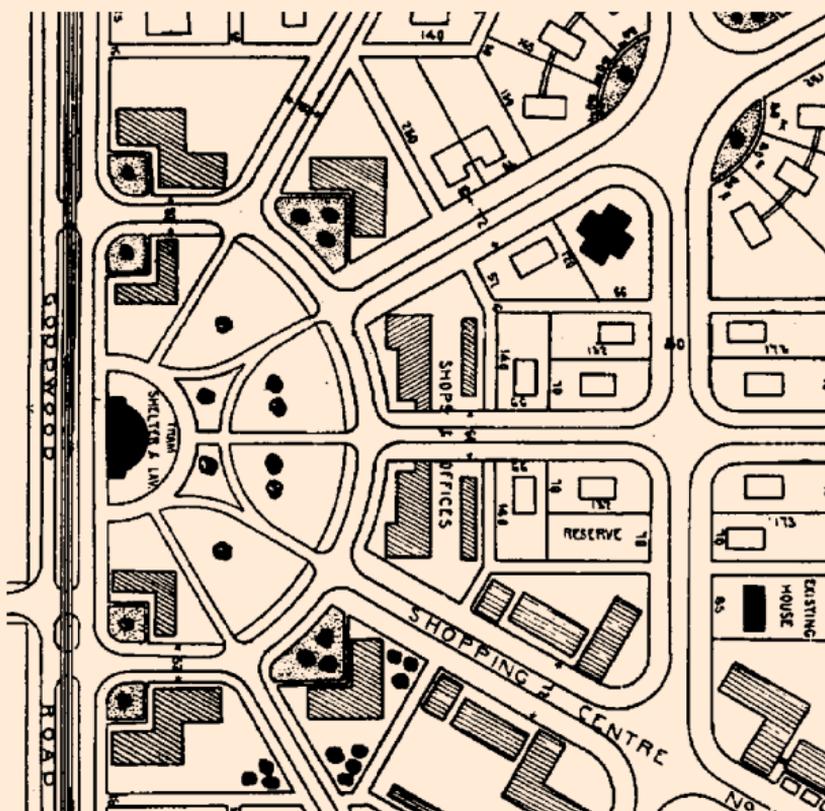


Looking east along Doncaster Avenue circa 1925.

4 Nature conservation

The principle that *any existing trees or natural objects of interest should be preserved if possible and incorporated into the plan* is evident in Reade's retention of the avenue of river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) planted along the driveway which led to the original farmhouse.

There are two further sites where the existing river red gums were retained: one group near the south-east boundary of the Colonel Light Gardens Primary School and the other near the Reade Park reserve.



Reade's plan for Piccadilly Circus 1921.

5 Formal gateway entrance

Piccadilly Circus was designed as the main formal garden entranceway to the suburb. Vehicles could enter the circus and choose a road radiating from it to quickly and efficiently reach their destination along one of the wide internal highways.

The radial entrance design was used by noted British architect, Raymond Unwin in his 1912 publication, *Nothing Gained By Overcrowding*. There is no evidence to support the often repeated story that the design was to incorporate the 'Rising Sun' as a mark of respect to the soldiers of World War I.

A tram stop was provided on Goodwood Road to allow passengers to safely alight from the trams.

The formal garden entranceway was not developed and the land was sold in the 1940s as housing allotments. The austerity style homes which were built on the garden site are readily distinguishable from the bungalow style home which is characteristic of Colonel Light Gardens.

6

View to bandstand and western section

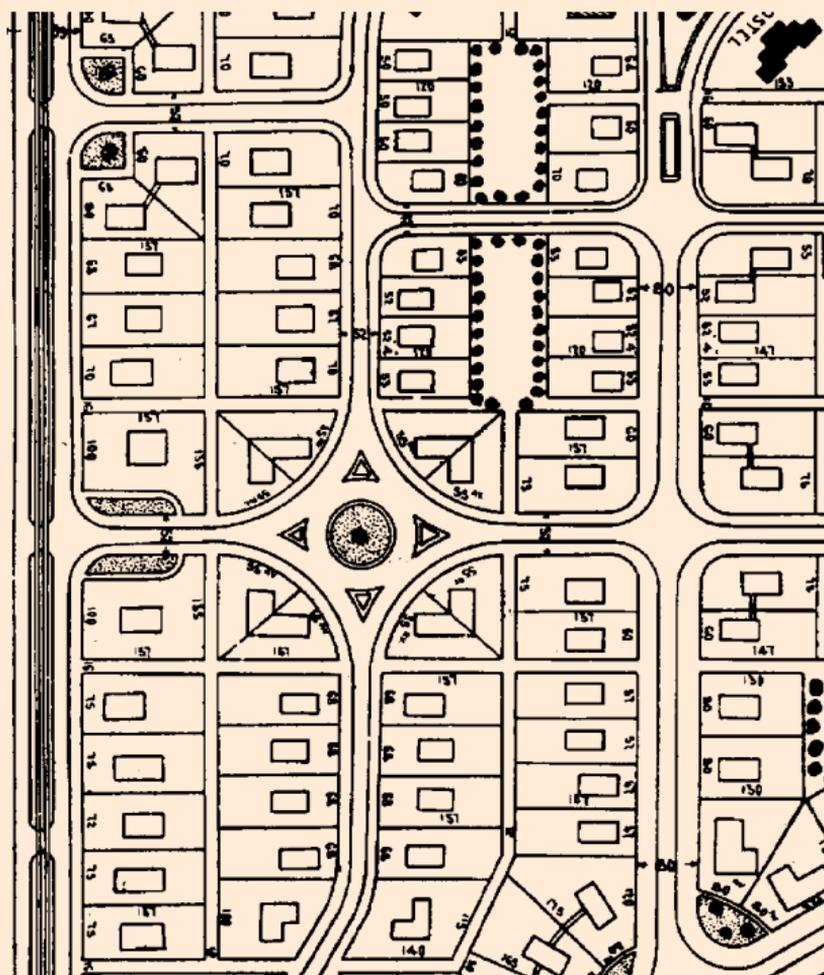
Looking west across Goodwood Road the 1924 western extension to the suburb can be seen. A bandstand was built in the late 1920s by local residents on Hillview Reserve, the site now used by a tennis club. The bandstand was moved to the current site on Light Place reserve a short time later. The original bandstand fell into disrepair and was removed. The current bandstand was erected in 1993, also by local residents. Early photographs including the one reproduced below were used to assist in the design.

PLAN OF COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS



Original bandstand and park under construction.

This walk does not include a visit to the western section of Colonel Light Gardens. You are encouraged to walk through the area and appreciate the harmony of the streetscape created by the Thousand Homes Scheme. The layout follows the conventional grid-iron format.



Rounded street corners at intersections - 1921 Plan Rochester Avenue with intersections at Goodwood Road (left), Kandahar Crescent (centre) and West Parkway (right).

7 Rounded street corners

The 1921 Colonel Light Gardens Sales Brochure explained that *in order to minimise traffic dangers, road junctions and crossings have been treated so as to afford drivers the clearest possible view. This rounding of corners also adds considerably to their appearance and harmonizes with the general design.*



Ludgate Circus - detail taken from a 1930s photograph, Goodwood Road running to right, Grange Road running to left. Bond Street (now a part of Salisbury Crescent), running through Ludgate Circus reserve.

8 Retail zone

The second retail area was located in the north-west of the suburb.

Like The Strand shopping area, these shops did not develop on the scale depicted in the 1917 drawing.

View to Ludgate Circus

Look to the north-west to view Ludgate Circus.

This area was designed as a formal entranceway to the suburb and as a street garden reserve.

9 Hierarchy of streets

In 1914 Reade wrote that it was necessary to classify roads according to the intended level of use. In a 1918 account of the design elements of the suburb it was explained that:

the streets [were] designed to direct and concentrate the flow of through traffic along the routes specially constructed for their use, and away from residential streets, where lighter and economical construction providing amenity, as well as utility is proposed.

Roads and Avenues.

These centres are linked up by a radial network of streets, designed to direct and concentrate the flow of through traffic along the routes specially constructed for their use, and away from residential streets, where lighter and more economical construction, providing amenity, as well as utility, is proposed. These roads (apart from the main arterial route aforesaid) comprise—

1. Broadway (99 feet wide), double track avenues and floral or botanic treatment, and terminated at either end by the two principal public buildings. (See illustration No. 3.)

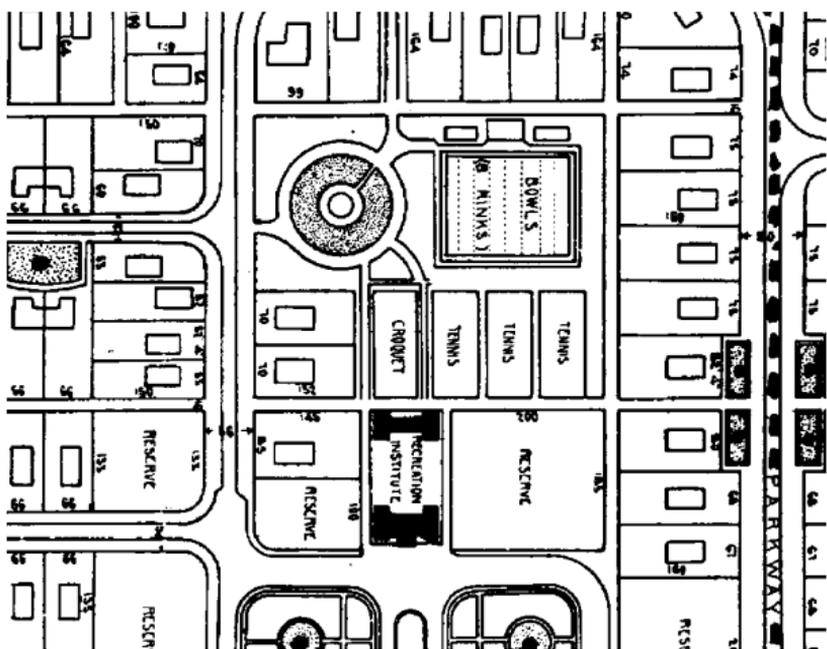
2. Parkway Avenue (80 feet wide), encircling the suburb, and passing through the principal park en route, also connecting the main diagonals entering the suburb, in accordance with the direction of traffic. (See illustration No. 3.)

3. Secondary traffic and shopping streets, varying from 66 to 80 feet in width.

4. Residential streets, planned as above, and varying from 42 to 52 feet in width.

Nature strip width

The width of the nature strip also varied according to the anticipated level of vehicle traffic on the adjacent carriageway. Streets designed as internal highways had a wider carriageway to accommodate the additional vehicle traffic. On these, wide grassed footpaths were provided to form a park-like avenue and to distance the traffic from the adjacent houses.



Reade Park as planned by Charles Reade.

10 Community facilities

The Reade Park reserve formed the second tier of open space provided in the plan. Reade's suggestions included bowling and croquet clubs, three tennis courts, rotunda, formal gardens and open space. The sporting clubs adopted the name Reade Park and quickly established their facilities. The rotunda, formal gardens and open space were not developed.

For many years residents in the northern section of the suburb adopted Reade Park as their address to distinguish themselves from the Thousand Homes Scheme area.

Original trees

The river red gums located adjacent to Reade Park were planted prior to 1914 and were retained in the plan.

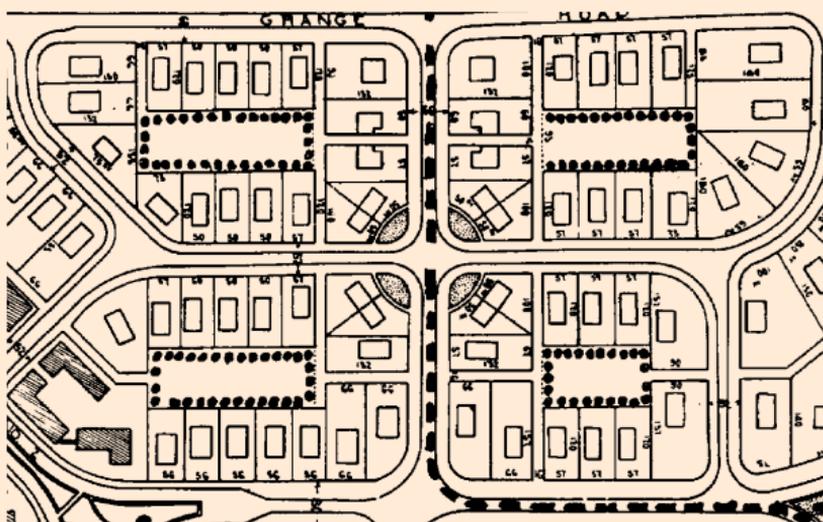


Salisbury Crescent from West Parkway circa 1930.

11 Park-like environment

Garden Suburb town planning required that *trees, shrubs, lawns and public gardens were to merge into a park-like environment*. The wide tree-shaded footpaths of East and West Parkways, Salisbury Crescent and Sturt Avenue are the *parkways* or an early form of modern linear parks.

Parkways were described as pleasure drives which are not in parks... [with] lawns, flower gardens, plantations shrubberies, etc.



1917 drawing and 1921 plan showing some of the internal reserves.

12 Internal reserves

The suburb was designed so that *houses and allotments [were] provided for all classes, and distributed in groups throughout the suburb, in order to avoid undue segregation of persons more or less of a class or type.*

Internal reserves which form the third tier of open space were placed behind the smallest-sized housing allotments and were to be used as community open space and/or for horticulture. They were considered innovative and practical.

The internal reserves are now only found in the northern section of the suburb as they were not incorporated in the 1924 redesign of the southern section for the Thousand Homes Scheme.



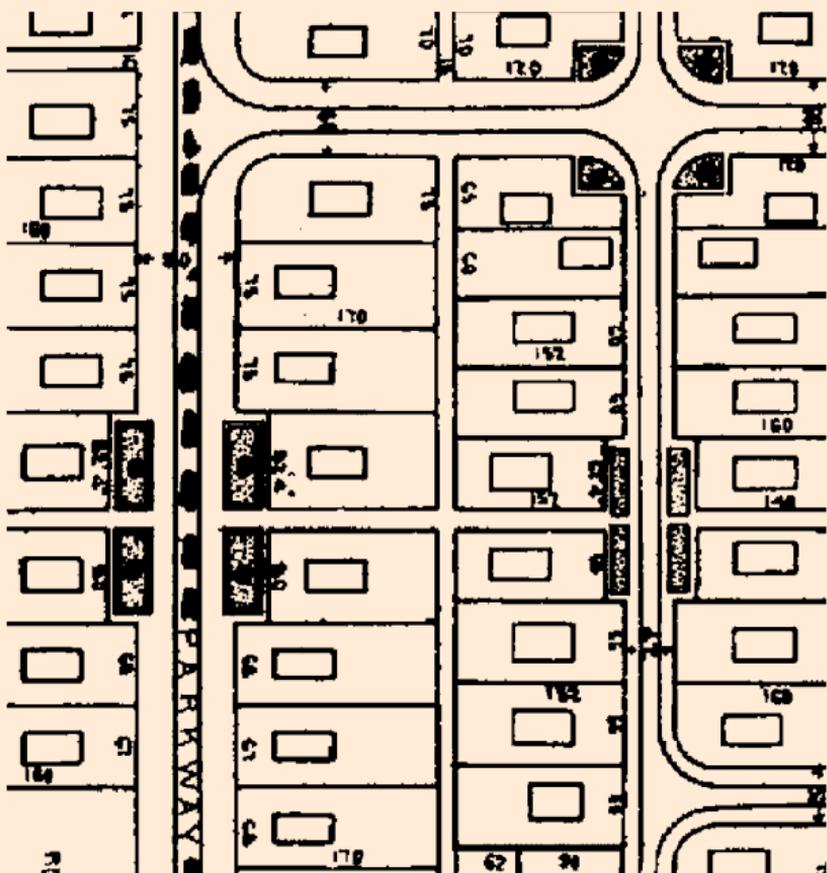
The garden reserve at The Strand circa 1940.

13 Street garden reserves

Many streets incorporated curves to add visual interest ...*each advancing step discloses a new view.*

Street garden reserves added further interest and form the fourth tier in the hierarchy of parks, and range from the parks at Ludgate and Oxford Circuses to the open space at the rounded street corners.

Houses were required to be set back from the front property boundary. The effect was for the trees, shrubs, lawns, private and public gardens to merge into a *park-like environment.*



Two pairs of houses set back on East Parkway and in Lincoln Avenue 1921.

14 Building alignment

Single dwelling with ample yard space

Reade incorporated into the plan his view that the Australian approach of *one family one house* should be maintained and that there should be strict limitations on the number of houses to the hectare.

Reade's plan had houses 'set back' to add visual interest to the building alignment.

Variation in house design

In 1913 Reade wrote of the need for *harmony between buildings located on adjacent sites*. He was promoting the garden suburb principle of *harmony but not uniformity*. This philosophy was applied throughout the suburb's main period of development 1921-1927. The later houses and recreational and sporting facilities constructed in the 1960s to 1980s depart from the concept that there should be *no jarring note*.

15 Street trees and utility ways

Street trees

The principle that *trees should be planted along roads wherever possible - the same variety on both sides until a break occurs* was adopted throughout the suburb's early development.

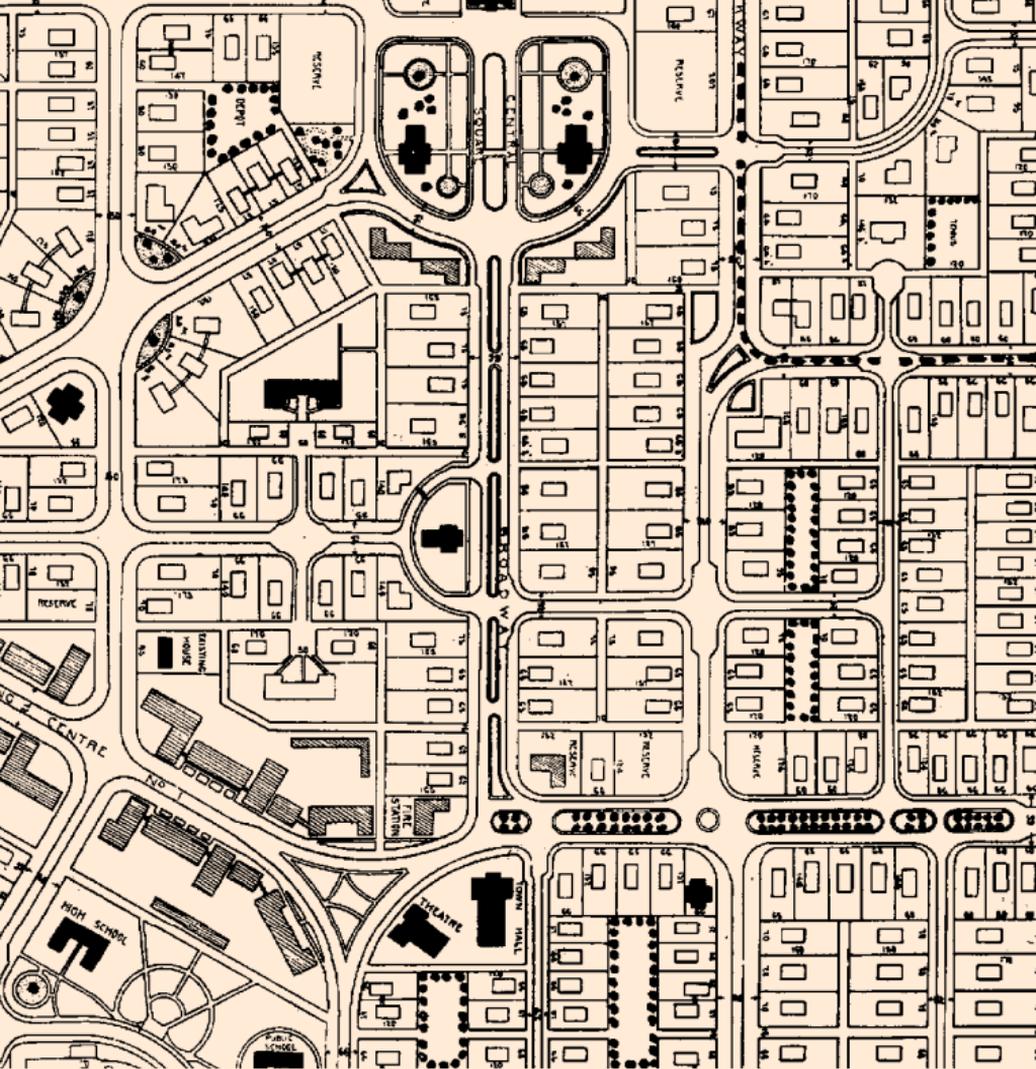


East Parkway circa 1930.

Utility ways

Utility ways were provided in Reade's design to serve many functions. The curved street design was not considered suitable for the laying of sewerage pipes. Reade's answer was to locate these pipes in the laneways together with other services such as gas and electricity. Their placement ensured *the preservation of the appearance of the street, as well as the foliage and growth of its trees* and the parkway effect was not marred by poles and wires. The lanes were to also serve the public as a public footway.

Contrary to popular belief the utility ways found in Colonel Light Gardens were not for 'night-carts'!



1921 plan of Broadway.

16 Central square

Broadway was described in the 1918 account of the plan as comprising:

Central Square, the principal aesthetic feature, containing public buildings, including churches and recreational institute (with gardens and rest park in rear). The buildings are placed to make architectural terminals to main avenues, and subsequently, their detailed planning will be correlated in accordance with a unified design.

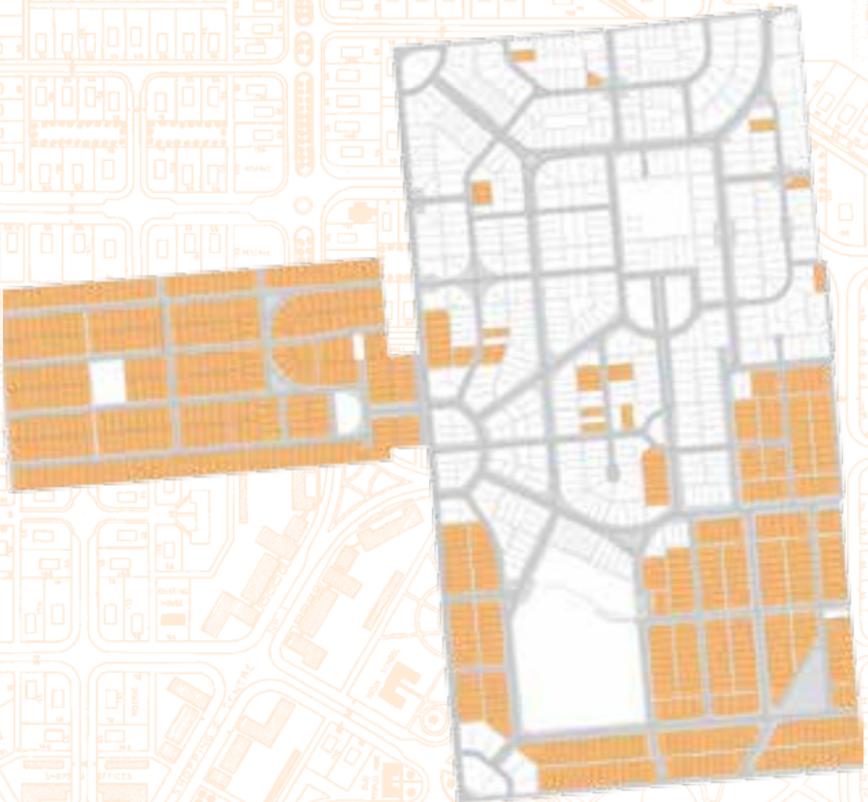
The church buildings were built on the sites planned at the northern section of the Broadway. The public institute was built on West Parkway. A war memorial respects the area's links with the former Mitcham Army Camp and the soldiers who served their country.

17 Thousand Homes Scheme

Six hundred and ninety-five of the houses under this Scheme were built in Colonel Light Gardens.

The southern section of the site which had been originally designed by Reade was remodelled and additional land was purchased west of Goodwood Road. The building work began in July 1924 and after numerous difficulties was completed in late 1926.

Applicants for the Thousand Homes chose from 14 designs which were based on previously prepared plans for soldiers' residences drawn by the State Bank's draughtsmen. Whilst there were similarities in the floor plans, the exteriors differed to allow for the garden suburb principle of harmony but not uniformity in design. No houses of the same design were constructed side-by-side and if neighbouring applicants chose the same design, the frontages were reversed.



Location of the Thousand Homes Scheme homes.



DESIGN A



DESIGN 3



DESIGN 8



DESIGN B



DESIGN 4



DESIGN 9



DESIGN C



DESIGN 5



DESIGN 11



DESIGN D



DESIGN 6



DESIGN 14



DESIGN E



DESIGN 7

Thousand Homes Scheme facade designs.



1927 photograph of a family in the front garden of their Thousand Homes Scheme house.

Garden Suburb town planning principles

The following description from 1921, whilst not exhaustive, provides an introduction to the concepts of garden suburb town planning:

The special characteristics which differentiate them from the ordinary town or suburb are the allocation of special quarters or sites for each kind of building, the absence of congestion of dwellings and their better arrangement, the ample provision of parks, playgrounds, and open spaces, the planting with trees and grass of part of the width of the roads where not required for traffic, and the provision of greater opportunities for social intercourse.

The following concepts provide further assistance in appreciating the features of a garden suburb:

- the suburb was to have its own distinct physical and social entity and be situated in a park-like setting,
- land use zoning with residential, commercial and community use zones,
- residential zones which were not socially segregated comprising single detached dwellings varied in design to avoid monotony, having ample yard space front and back,
- public open space with a hierarchy of parks including internal reserves,
- classification of roads into a functional hierarchy including curved roads and rounded street corners based on a curvilinear symmetrical design.

A special suburban environment has been developed in Colonel Light Gardens by the use of garden suburb town planning principles. The significance of the suburb to Australia's built and cultural heritage has led to the formation of the Colonel Light Gardens Historical Society. The Society is a nonprofit incorporated association committed to preserving the special qualities of Colonel Light Gardens.

The aims and objectives of the Society are:-

- To encourage the physical development of Colonel Light Gardens in a manner consistent with Garden Suburb town planning principles and accepted conservation practices.
- To promote the recognition of Colonel Light Gardens on the appropriate heritage registers.
- To promote a public interest in the history of Colonel Light Gardens.

Colonel Light Gardens



Legend

- 1** Planned open space - Mortlock Park
- 2** Community facilities
- 3** Land use zoning
- 4** Nature conservation
- 5** Formal gateway entrance
- 6** View to bandstand and western section
- 7** Rounded street corners
- 8** Retail zone
- 9** Hierarchy of streets
- 10** Community facilities
- 11** Park-like environment
- 12** Internal reserves
- 13** Street garden reserves
- 14** Building alignment
- 15** Street trees and utility ways
- 16** Central square
- 17** Thousand Homes Scheme

Approximate length 3.8 kms allow 2 hours

MITCHAM
BIRDS' EYE VIEW
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Aerial photo 1936.



CITY OF
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Colonel Light Gardens

Australia's best example of a garden suburb

