



CITY OF BALLARAT
**Neighbourhood
Parks Improvements
Program 2023/2024**
Visioning Community
Engagement Summary



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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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Background

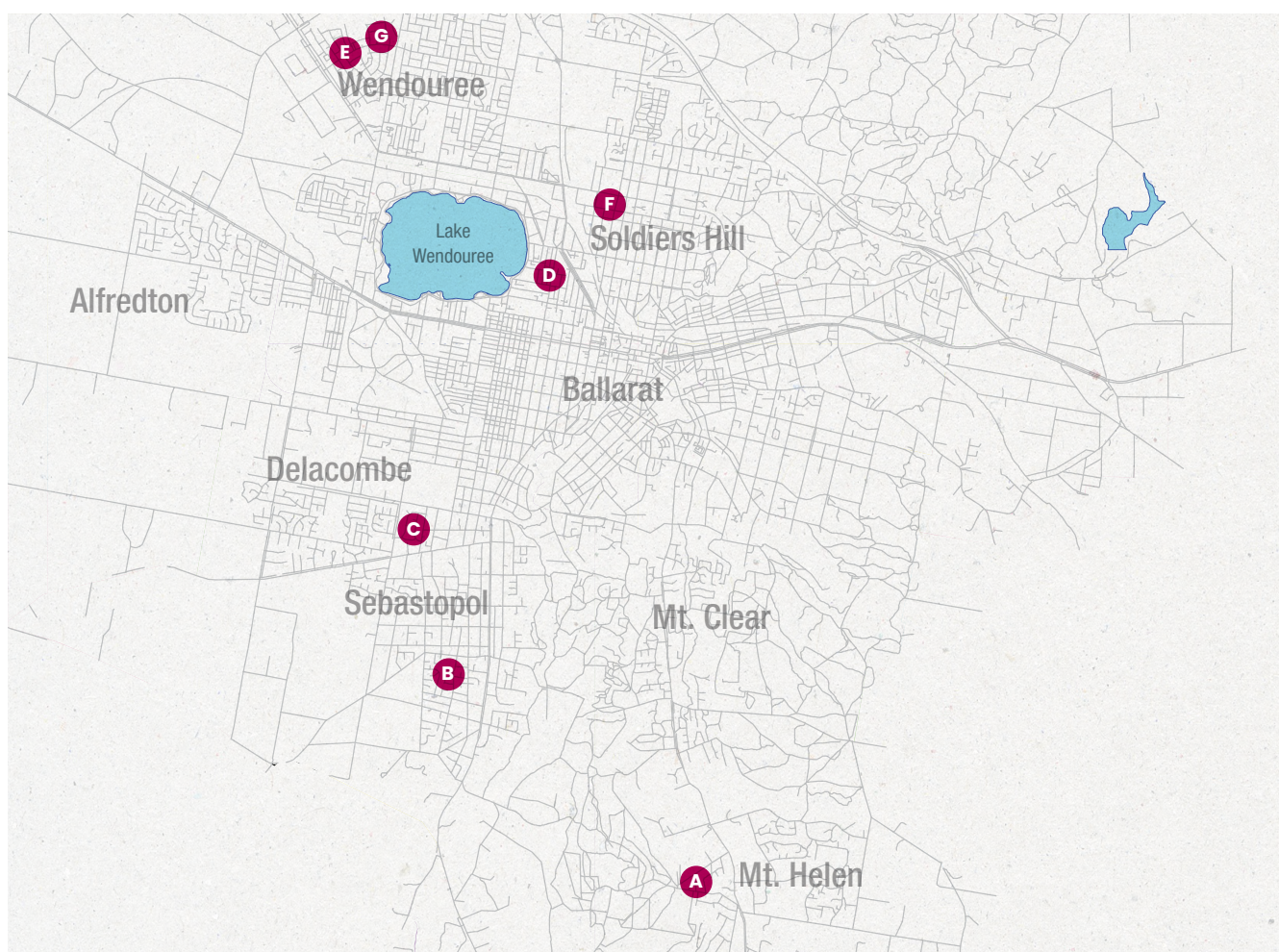
Neighbourhood Parks are Council's smallest public open spaces. These reserves are often the closest open space to people's homes and are used frequently for short periods of time.

As part of the implementation of the Open Space Strategy, City of Ballarat has a rolling, five-year plan to improve up to 10 nominated neighbourhood parks/reserves each financial year. Parks are selected based on need and locations are distributed throughout the municipality. Works are intended to improve amenity, attractiveness, usability, provide natural shade, habitat and increase pedestrian connection.

The Neighbourhood Parks Improvements Program (formerly called Small Parks Improvements Program) is supported by a budget derived from open space contributions collected as part of the planning process from development. Neighbourhood parks will be designed and delivered in a 2-year cycle where each year has a set of parks in design and implementation. This current selection of neighbourhood parks will be designed in 2023/2024 and implemented in 2024/2025.

The current set of neighbourhood parks that will be designed in 2023/2024 are:

- A** Yarana Drive Park
(Yarana Drive, Mount Helen)
- B** Victoria Street Park
(63 Victoria Street, Sebastopol)
- C** Kowree Crescent Park
(14-16 Kowree Crescent, Sebastopol)
- D** Drummond Street Park
(311 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central)
- E** Clover Street Park
(9-13 Clover Street, Wendouree)
- F** Gregory Street Park
(514 Gregory Street, Soldiers Hill)
- G** Marigold Street Park
(12-14 Aster Street, Wendouree).



Community Engagement

Engagement with the community features strongly as part of the design process with a multistep consultation process guiding the upgrades. Each stage uses Council's MySay platform as a base to collect and record engagement feedback. Steps include:

- **CURRENT - Visioning** – Provide a high-level site analysis and survey for comment and discussion. The goals are to inform the community about the plan for upgrade as well as to understand how the reserve is currently used and what aspects should be kept/changed/added or removed. An onsite listening post at each reserve accompanies the online information gathering. Promotion is through social media, letter drop, MySay Newsletter, Media Release etc.
- **Concept Design** – Using the feedback from the Visioning engagement, strategic local knowledge and site analysis create a concept design for improvements to each park. Through a series of workshops, collaboratively critique and revise each design to be in line with the community's vision for open space.
- **Final Design** – Release the revised designs for each reserve and update the implementation timeline.

- **Implementation** – Following a public tender process, provide informational engagement regarding the process to implement the designs for each neighbourhood park.

For this round of neighbourhood parks, community engagement took place across July and August 2023 and was centred around a MySay Ballarat open call for feedback. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Parks Improvements Program community engagement was to:

- Inform the community about the Neighbourhood Parks Improvements Program including which parks were up for design in financial year 2023/2024.
- Gather ideas and feedback regarding the way each nominated open space is used, what should remain the same and what changes the community would like to see changed.
- Upgrade small open spaces to be in line with the needs of a changing community
- Promote Council's investment in community open space.

Neighbourhood Park Selection

The current set of reserves have been selected based on need or through a community request. Need is assessed as reserves that have not had landscape improvements in at least 15 years, have older equipment that is no longer suited to the needs of the

community, provide low levels of amenity, are in areas that have undergone significant change in recent years or are under serving the needs of their community. They were also selected to be spread out across the municipality.

Why Neighbourhood Parks?

Local and Neighbourhood Parks are classifications in Ballarat's Open Space Strategy (2008) that identify the municipality's smallest open spaces suitable for short interval, regular use by the residents living within a 500-metre catchment. There up to 200 reserves in these categories that will be addressed by this program over time.

Improvements consider the character of the neighbourhood including connections to the broader open space network where possible. A neighbourhood park might have a small play space, tree planting for

shade and habitat, improved connections/amenity or a small shelter with a picnic setting. Neighbourhood parks generally do not contain things like BBQs, toilets, major sporting infrastructure, splash parks, skate parks, rubbish bins, recycle bins, fenced dog parks, dog poo bags, signage or complex play equipment like a flying fox large climbing frame. This type of infrastructure is reserved for the municipality's larger district or regional parks.

Engagement Statistics – Visioning Feedback

The engagement process for the current group of neighbourhood parks directed respondents to the MySay page through a variety of engagement methods. The MySay page contained downloadable site assessment documents for each reserve, information and key dates.

The following methods were used to engage with the community:

- Letters delivered to residences surrounding each reserve
- Signs onsite pointing to the MySay page
- Listening Posts at each reserve
- Open Call for email submissions
- Media Release

Outgoing communication generated a reasonable degree of interest in the project with:

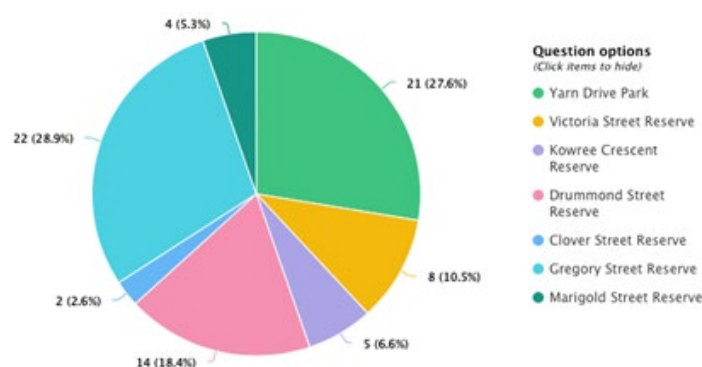
- Total MySay page visits – 425 (1 new registration)
- 69 contributors completed 76 surveys
- Participants visiting multiple project pages - 252 individuals
- Surveys completed – 148 by 165 people (some completed for multiple locations)
- Documents Available – 11
- Document downloads – 166
- Most popular downloads – Drummond Street, Gregory Street and Victoria Street Parks.

The survey asked a series of 6 questions about each reserve including:

- Which reserve are you providing ideas on?
- How do you use this reserve now?
- What would you like to see changed or added to this reserve?
- What would you like to see remain the same about this reserve?
- If you could apply a theme to the reserve, what would it be?
- Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

Amount of feedback varied between reserves with the following distribution of survey participants:

- Gregory Street Park – 22 surveys
- Yarana Drive Park – 2
- Drummond Street Reserve – 14
- Victoria Street Reserve – 8
- Kowree Crescent Reserve – 5
- Marigold Street Reserve – 4
- Clover Street Reserve – 2



The engagement feedback is summarised for each reserve separately on the following pages

Gregory Street Park	7	Kowree Crescent Reserve	16
Yarana Drive Park	10	Marigold Street Reserve	17
Drummond Street Reserve	12	Clover Street Reserve	18
Victoria Street Reserve	14	Engagement Learnings	19



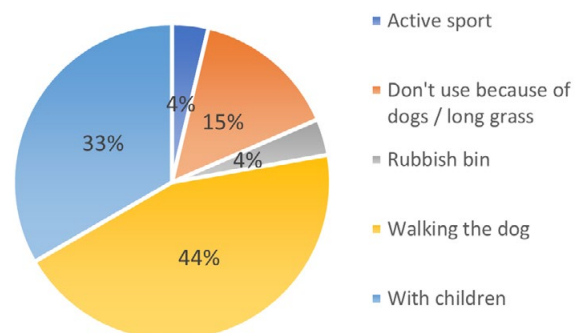
Gregory Street Park

Gregory Street Park, located in Soldiers Hill, received the most feedback with 22 completed surveys and X Drop in visitors. Gregory Street Reserve's chief function is as a detention basin for the Gnarr Creek. A detention basin holds flood waters of a waterbody like a creek or stream during a major storm event. By catching and slowing the water in an area where it can seep into the soil naturally, flooding and erosion to the surrounding and downstream properties and landscapes can be prevented or mitigated. Detention basins are a key part of drainage systems and must remain open to allow them to collect water. The secondary function of the reserve is as public open space.

How do you use Gregory Reserve?

The majority of users visit Gregory Street reserve with children (44%) to use the play area or with their dogs (33%) for play or exercise. While many supported the presence of dogs at the park, a number of respondents referenced the prevalence of dogs as a deterrent to their using the reserve due to dogs not being on lead, interfering with children or not under effective control.

Gregory Street Reserve is one of Ballarat's dog off leash areas but is not designated as a dog park with fencing or equipment suitable for exclusive use by pet owners. The two most popular uses for this reserve – with children and dogs – seem to have some friction amongst some users.

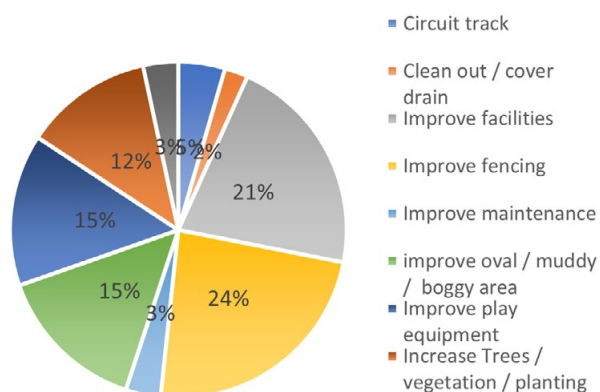




What would you like to see changed/added?

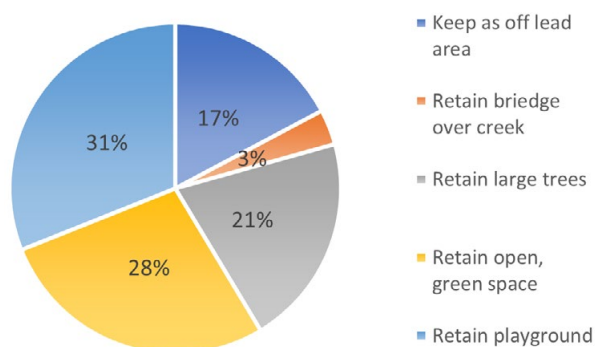
When asked what about Gregory Street Reserve should be changed, the most common answer was improved fencing (24%) followed by improved facilities (21%), improved play equipment (15%) and improved oval/boggy area (15%). Improvements to facilities references several categories of infrastructure including the most popular requests for seating, BBQ/picnic area and shade. Improvements to fencing included fencing to make the reserve a 'dog park', followed by fencing to keep dogs and children separate as well as a fenced play area. These requests further confirm that there is some conflict between the major activities that take place in Gregory Street Reserve.

Several of the comments about Gregory Street Reserve made clear that there is a low level of understanding amongst users about the function of the reserve as a detention basin. Because of this function, areas suitable for upgrade are limited to allow for unfettered collection and holding of storm water.



What would you like to see remain the same?

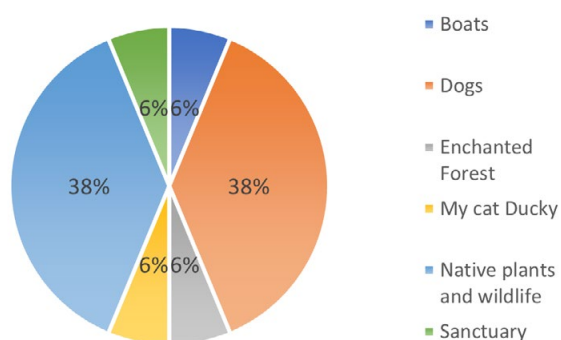
Respondents showed great appreciation for the reserve with strong support for the inclusion of play (31%), the open, uncluttered feel (28%) and the large trees (21%). There was also support for retaining the reserve as an off lead dog park.





Theme

The most popular recommendations for a theme for Gregory Reserve were boats and dogs.



Recommendations for Design

- Build understanding of the reserve's purpose as a detention basin.
- Enhance and add to the native planting around the reserve
- Provide information regarding dog off lead areas and dog parks
- Circuit path with increased tree planting for natural shade and seating
- Seating nodes with natural shade
- Improved playground setting
- Increased tree planting
- Barrier plantings to provide separation between the main user groups – children and dogs.



Yarana Drive Park

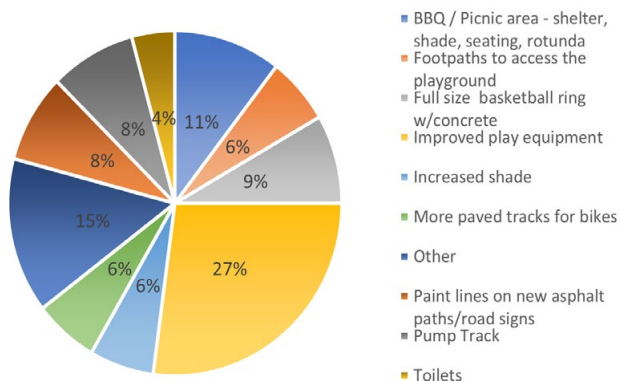
Yarana Drive Park is located in Mount Helen and was the second most commented on park with 21 completed surveys and 3 drop in visitors. It is a medium sized reserve with a sloping aspect and several large, established trees. There is a reasonably sized existing play ground surrounded by a new asphalt path, older cricket nets and small basketball hoop.

How do you use Yarana Drive Park?

The overwhelming use for Yarana Drive Park is with children (85%) be it frequently or infrequently. Secondary user groups were those who used the reserve for exercise, quiet contemplation, decompressing and visually.

What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

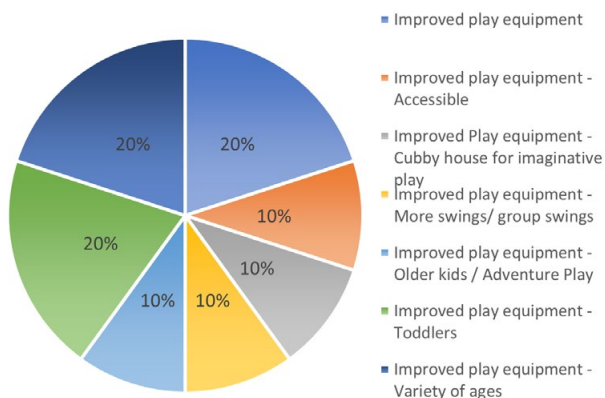
The most requested changes for Yarana Drive Reserve were improved play equipment (27%), BBQ/picnic shelter (11%) and a full sized basketball ring (9%). Given the intense use of the reserve by and with children, many of the comments focused on improvements to play. Popular requests included line marking on existing paths for children's bikes, more adventurous play for older kids, a cubby house and equipment for group play. Collaborative design focusing on children and their caregivers would help to streamline the improved play offerings. A deep dive into the requests for improved play show that a diversity of play is required to suit multiple ages, activity levels and styles.





What would you like to see remain the same?

The highest valued aspect of Yarana Drive Reserve is the large open space with 67% of respondents noting it for retention. Other popular features are the existing play equipment and the basketball court.

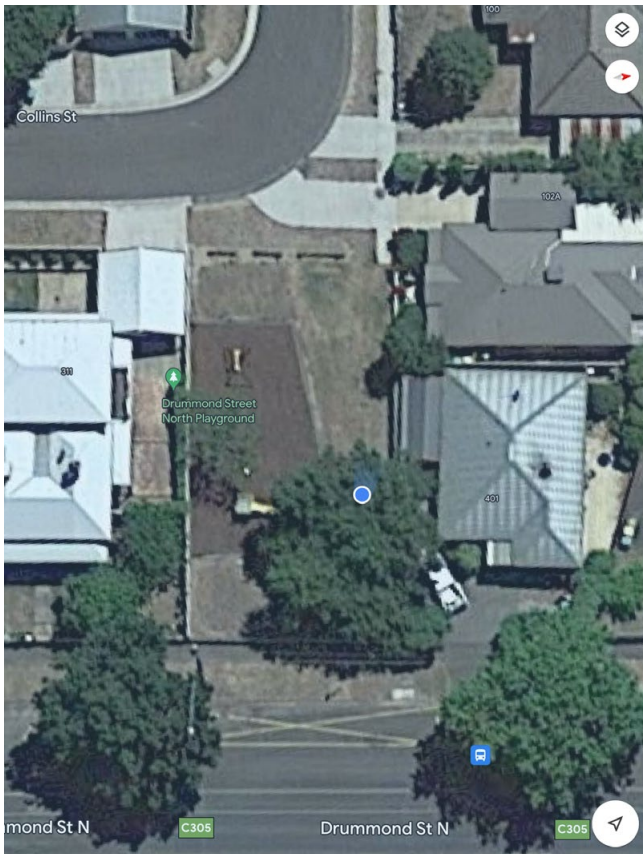


Theme

The overwhelming majority of respondents favoured 'Aussie Bush' as a theme for the reserve with a focus on koala and kookaburras. Sustainability and biodiversity were also recommended. Increasing the amount of flowering native trees was specifically requested. The trees would increase the amount of bird life that visit the reserve enhancing the experience.

Recommendations for Design

- Engagement with kids of all ages
- Review the layout and size of the existing play equipment. Make changes to equipment that has reached the end of its useful life expectancy and intersperse with new equipment, nature play and iconic features to create a sense of place.
- Consider equipment that allowed for group play
- Full height basket ball area with paved court
- Consider removing cricket nets
- Consider a set of swings to allow for group play
- Line marking on existing paved paths to suit learn to ride bikes and consider a better network of footpaths
- BBQ shelter/picnic area
- Seating nooks for contemplation and respite
- Increased planting with a native planting palette designed to increase bird and insect life
- Active play equipment for older kids
- Rubber matting under swings
- Clusters of plantings to be seen from windows
- Improve accessibility with accessible play equipment and mulch edging
- Retain open feel and unprogrammed open space
- Consider wayfinding to enhance connectivity with adjacent open spaces.

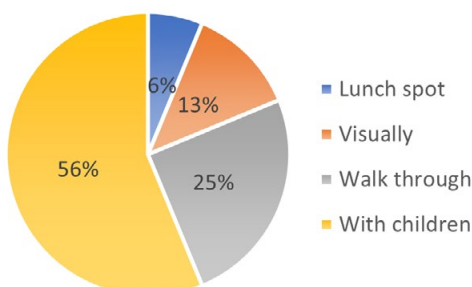


Drummond Street Reserve

Drummond Street Reserve is a very small reserve, about the size of an urban house block located in Ballarat Central. Despite its small size, it is well used and well regarded with the community with 14 surveys and had 2 visitors at the drop in session. The reserve contains a small playground with inaccessible edging, a picket fence and a large established tree.

How do you use Drummond Street Park?

The primary way that the community uses Drummond Street Reserve is with children for play (56%), as a walk through (25%) or visually (13%). The park is close to a very busy road but is bounded by a picket fence on the road side. The fence provides a protective barrier and has recently been replaced.



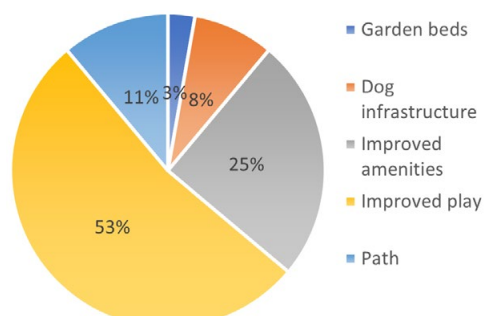
What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

In their responses regarding what should be changed or added to Drummond Street Reserve, community members identified two key areas – improved play offerings and improved amenities.

Detailed comments regarding what improvements to play included more imaginative and nature play, a play fort, swings to suit a group of users, see-saw, slide and a climbing net.

Improvements to amenities included request for a picnic shelter from wind and sun, bin/poo bags, communal semi-circular seating, picnic setting, sealed path and lighting.

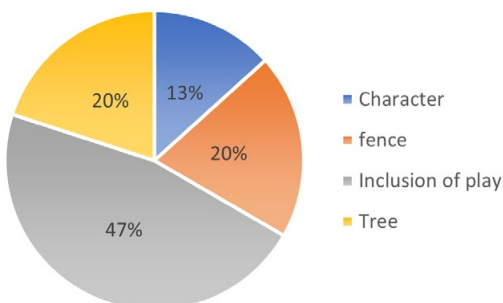
Some requests focused on greening and biodiversity with requests for nesting boxes, additional tree planting and some garden beds that offer visual appeal and attract birds and pollinators.





What would you like to see remain the same?

Respondents were very supportive of retaining the inclusion of play in the reserve with 47% of respondents identifying this as something they'd like to see remain. Other positives included the picket fencing barrier along Drummond Street (20%), the large established tree (20%) and the overall character of the small green open space.



Theme

There were several creative ideas for a theme for Drummond Street reserve including nature/jungle animals, French Provincial, flowers, whimsical play or Lake Wendouree.

Recommendations for Design

- Education about CoB's provision of lighting, poo bags, water play
- Sealed path connecting Drummond and Collins Street
- Bespoke timber 'serpentine' or circular seat in timber, something that can cater to a small, intimate group.
- Consider table with chairs
- Remove existing play equipment and raised mulch edge and replace with a nature themed, imaginative play area with a balance of activities – bouncing, balancing, spinning, swinging, climbing etc. Consider a fort. Incorporate plants into play. Elements can be spread out along the path or clustered
- Add tree planting and garden beds focusing on aesthetics, flowering plants that will attract pollinators
- Reach out to community living close by to get a neighborhood group to help with maintenance



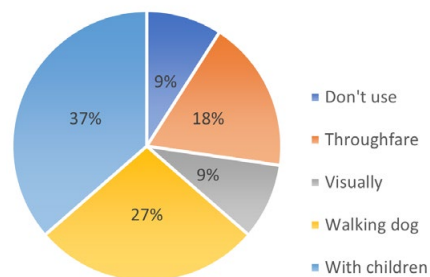
Victoria Street Reserve

Victoria Street Reserve is a large, natural park located in Sebastopol. The reserve has entrances from Victoria Street, Owen Close, Teague Court and a residential cul-de-sac. The seven acre reserve bounds on to several residential back fences and grades up to a naturalised area with many established trees. There is a small existing play space and some onsite parking. There was a low level of community response for Victoria Street Reserve with 8 (10.5%) completed surveys and 8 visitors at the drop in session most of whom were passing by when the engagement session was held. The reserve is close by to several other public open spaces including MR Power Park (well appointed, large open space), Sebastopol Dog Park, Teague Court Playground (low play value) and Bedggood Court Playground (low play value). This gives the opportunity to differentiate Victoria Park from those other reserves close by providing a unique experience not offered elsewhere.

How do you use Victoria Street Park?

The majority of people responding the survey used the reserve with children (37%), walking the dog (27%) or as a throughfare (18%). The reserve connects several residential areas and is probably used frequently by school children and pedestrians as part of their active transport commute.

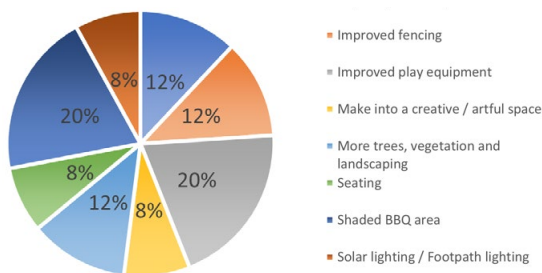
Victoria Street Park is shaped like a mound, having vantage into several of the surrounding backyards. This gives a sense of surveillance to the park user. There is no lighting in the reserve and it would be very dark at night.





What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

The majority of respondents would like to see improvements to Victoria Reserve's footpaths (20%), play equipment (20%), more trees (12%), shaded BBQ area (12%) and improved fencing (12%). The addition of footpaths includes a circuit walking path as well as footpaths to connect to each of the entrances. One high school aged student stressed the importance of paved paths as walking through the grass in the mornings led to wet, cold feet all day. Given the proximity to MR Power Park, improved play should be different from what is offered there perhaps having a natural feel to compliment the naturalised setting of the open space.



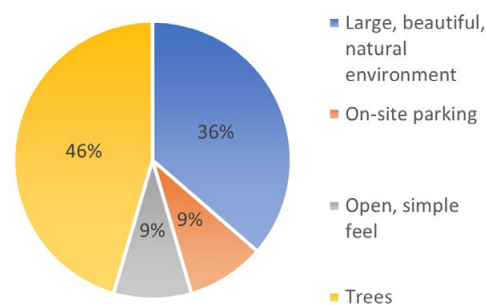
What would you like to see remain the same?

Of those that responded, there was overwhelming preference for the trees (46%) and the large, open and beautiful natural environment (36%). This clearly points to the preferred character of the reserve which is a natural, open space with trees, habitat and supports biodiversity.

Theme

Ideas for the theme of the reserve focus on the natural environment with nature, Aussie bush, native animals and colour being among the suggestions.

There is abundant bird life onsite and the sounds of the traffic are easily drowned out by birdsong and other sounds of nature.



Recommendations for Design

- Differentiate Victoria Street Reserve as a natural, green oasis with a focus on biodiversity, native planting and habitat planting
- Maintain the open feel by clustering trees and/or vegetation along a circuit path with connections to each of the surrounding streets
- Reimagine the play space to have a focus on natural, imaginative play with rocks, logs, planting, the natural grade of the land and trees incorporated into the play offerings
- Add additional seating nodes around the circuit path and a communal picnic area with shade
- Introduce wayfinding through a series of whimsical features or signs.



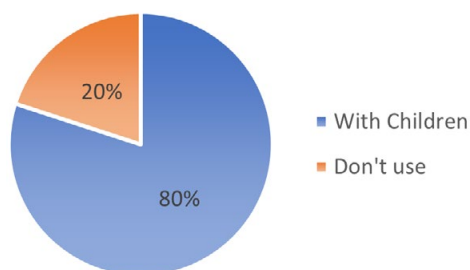
Kowree Crescent Reserve

Kowree Crescent Reserve is a small reserve located in Sebastopol. It is accessed from a residential street and cul-de-sac and residential back fences on two sides. It contains a bench and a small playspace with no vegetation. There was evidence of graffiti and rubbish in the reserve.

Engagement feedback was low for Kowree Crescent Reserve with 5 completed surveys and a single person attending the onsite drop in session.

How do you use Kowree Crescent Park?

Of those responding, residents reported that they used the reserve with children or didn't use the reserve. One resident expressed that concerns for safety kept her out of the reserve.



What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

When responding to the question regarding changes or additions to Kowree Crescent Reserve, the most commonly requested improvement was new play equipment (55%) followed by improved facilities (20%), more vegetation and trees (10%) and Improved drainage (10%). Specific mentions for improved play include a basketball court, improved variety of play offerings, more active play options (flying fox, half pipe) and more swings. Facilities specifically mentioned were a BBQ/picnic area, rubbish bin, more seats and shade. One person requested that no BBQ be put in over concerns about noise, loitering and antisocial behaviour.

What would you like to see remain the same?

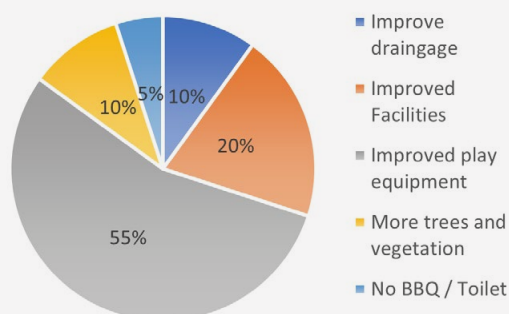
People reported enjoying the playground and seat in the reserve currently.

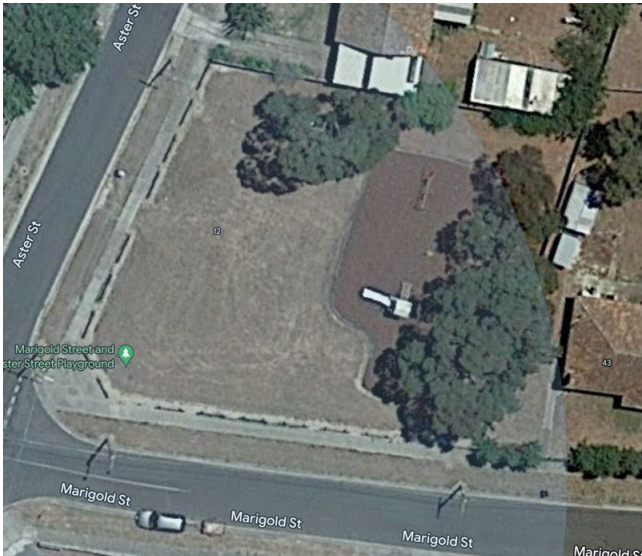
Theme

Themes suggested were animals, zoo and activity.

Recommendations for Design

- Remove the existing play equipment and create a new play area with increased diversity of play, imaginative play and nature play
- Consider equipment that serves older, more active children
- Relocate the play area to open up the reserve
- Increase tree planting
- Add picnic area with shade and seating.





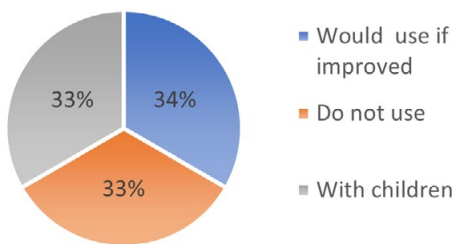
Marigold Street Reserve

Marigold Street Reserve is a house block sized corner reserve located in Wendouree. The reserve contains a small, dilapidated play area and a stand of established trees. There was dumped rubbish, shopping trolleys and broken glass scattered around the reserve.

Engagement feedback was low for Marigold Street Reserve with 3 surveys completed and 2 visitors to the drop in session (held jointly with Clover Street Reserve).

How do you use Marigold Street Park?

Of those responding, one reported using the reserve with children. The others didn't use it or would use it if it was improved.



What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

The most commonly requested improvements were repairs to the fencing, a new footpath to allow access to the play area and improved play equipment. Improvements to play included active play elements like sports goals or a basketball ring.

What would you like to see remain the same?

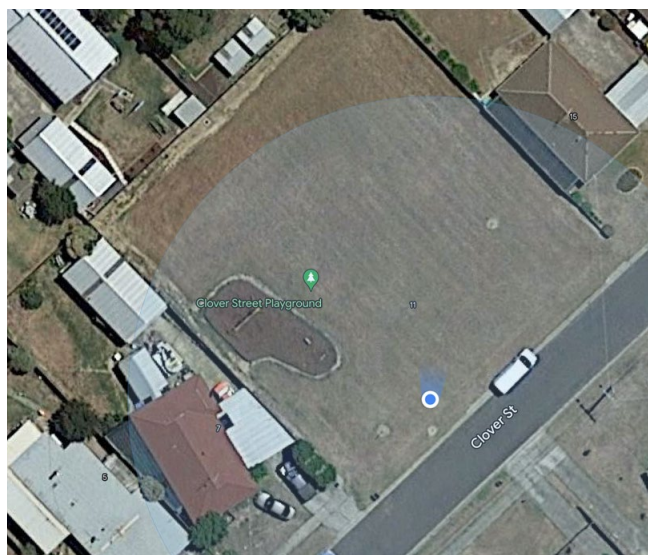
The elements that people enjoyed and would like to remain in the space are the presence of a playground that was separate from the unplanned open grassy space sometimes used for ball games. Others reported enjoying the presence of the trees.

Theme

Flowers were suggested as a theme for the reserve.

Recommendations for Design

- Consider improvements to Clover Street and Marigold Street Reserves together offering a different experience at each reserve. Opportunity to add Primrose Street Reserve into the design outcome.
- Clean up the broken glass and dumped rubbish
- Remove existing post and rail fence and replace with a more aesthetic barrier
- Remove and renew the playground
- Add shaded seating area and a path leading to the existing footpath.
- Increase provision of shade through tree and habitat planting.



Clover Street Reserve

Clover Street Reserve is a small, house sized reserve located in Wendouree. There is a small, dilapidated play area and two earthen mounds that show evidence of failed tree planting. Clover Street Reserve had a low engagement rate with 2 survey responses and 2 visitors to the drop in session (held jointly with Marigold Street Reserve). Clover Street Reserve is surrounded on three sides by residential back fences.

At the drop in session, a community member attended and spoke passionately about Clover Street Reserve offering several design ideas for consideration.

How do you use the Clover Street Reserve?

Of those responding, one reported using the reserve with children. The other did not use the reserve.

What would you like to see changed in the reserve?

Improvements to the play offerings was the focus of the suggestions for change with respondents requesting monkey bars, slide, swings, climbing frame as well as a shelter and improved drainage.

What would you like to see remain the same?

Of those responding, there was a great desire to see the reserve given a fresh, new look.

Theme

A suggestion for a theme was rainbows.

Recommendations for Design

- Remove the existing playground and remediate the soil to remove broken glass
- Replace the fence with something colourful and whimsical
- Add a footpath, picnic setting shelter and shaded seating area
- Consider pavement games like hopscotch or art work painted on the fences
- Create a play space that focuses on the senses with things to hear, see, touch and move
- Increase tree planting and focus on habitat planting as well as planting that appeals to the senses of smell and touch
- Consider designing in conjunction with Marigold Street Reserve.



Engagement Learnings

- Letters and signs onsite were an effective way to let people know about the engagement process.
- Onsite listening posts were poorly attended. Onsite listening posts were held in the afternoon on week days given the short days of winter and the low temperatures. This may have contributed to the low attendance.



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November 2023