

**FUTURE MELBOURNE (ECO-CITY)
COMMITTEE REPORT**

Agenda Item 5.2

**RETURN TO ROYAL PARK IDEAS PLAN AND PHASE TWO
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

14 August 2012

Presenter: Ian Shears, Manager Urban Landscapes

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Ideas Plan and proposed phase two community engagement program for the Royal Park (former hospital) site and seek endorsement to proceed.
2. The draft Ideas Plan (see Attachment 2) for the Return to Royal Park project has been prepared from information gathered through the first phase of community engagement in March–April 2012. A report incorporating this information was distributed to all participants and Councillors. The information gathered was combined with technical information (including site opportunities and constraints, and existing policy framework including the Open Space Strategy 2012 and Royal Park Master Plan 1998) to prepare the plan. The Return to Royal Park Reference Group has assisted in preparation of the plan.
3. While the City of Melbourne is taking a lead role in the project, the cost for the community engagement is being met by the Department of Health, as part of the State Government's commitment to the return of parkland.

Key issues

4. It is proposed that the second phase of community engagement be undertaken from Wednesday 15 August to Wednesday 12 September 2012 and that community engagement consultants, Capire Consulting group facilitate the process. The techniques for community engagement (see Attachment 3) in the second phase will include an online forum and three community forums. Separate children's consultation will also be undertaken.
5. The outcome of the second phase of community engagement on the draft Ideas Plan will be a final design brief for the returned parkland. The detailed design for the park will then commence, with a view to tenders being let for construction to commence when the site is available in August 2013.
6. The draft Ideas Plan considers the park landscape beyond the technical site boundary of the hospital demolition. This enables the completion of the interface between the new hospital and the park, the opportunity to respond to more of the ideas from the community, as well as a logical park planning outcome through good landscape design.
7. The Return to Royal Park Reference Group considered the draft Ideas Plan at its meeting on 23 July 2012 and supported it and the proposed community engagement.
8. The Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee have been updated on the draft Ideas Plan and community engagement proposed by email.

Recommendation from management

9. That the Future Melbourne Committee endorse the draft Ideas Plan and commencement of phase two of the community engagement for the Return to Royal Park project.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment
2. Draft Ideas plan
3. Proposed phase 2 community engagement

SUPPORTING ATTACHMENT

Legal

1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Finance

2. The cost for the community engagement is being met by the Department of Health as part of the State Government's commitment to the return of parkland.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Stakeholder consultation

4. The community will be invited to participate in the community engagement through letters to stakeholders (including known groups who use or have an interest in Royal Park), letters to those who participated in the first phase of engagement, posters on site and in community venues and advertising in local newspapers. The Ideas Plan and a feedback form will be available on line and in hard copy. Stakeholders will be encouraged to promote the opportunity to participate through their networks. Media releases will also be distributed.

Relation to Council policy

5. The recommendation is consistent with Council's endorsed community engagement framework.

RETURN TO

ROYAL PARK

IDEAS PLAN

August 2012

The City of Melbourne and the Department of Health are working in partnership to guide the establishment of the parkland adjacent to the new Royal Children's Hospital. This parkland will be reinstated on the site of the former Royal Children's Hospital on the corner of Gatehouse Street and Flemington Road, Parkville.

The City of Melbourne and the Department of Health are committed to working collaboratively to deliver a parkland which meets the needs of our diverse community.

A key aspect of Return to Royal Park is consulting with the community to understand their perspectives for the new area of parkland and to obtain feedback during the design process.

Over a six week period which began on 5 March 2012, the community told us their vision for the reinstated parkland. Their ideas and aspirations have been used to inform the **Return to Royal Park Ideas Plan**.



We invite your comments and feedback on the Ideas Plan.



What we heard...

Australian native landscape

There was extensive support for the continuity of the Australian native landscape character into the reinstated parkland.

Other landscape elements suggested include a therapeutic garden or healing space, sensory gardens, walking paths, shaded seating and garden beds with intellectual as well as aesthetic appeal. Small and more intimate spaces for quiet contemplation were also suggested, acknowledging that there are already many large open spaces within the park.

As an Australian native landscape character is also consistent with the Royal Park Master Plan (1998), it would be appropriate for this approach to be the basis for the landscape character in the reinstated parkland.

Integration with Royal Park

Community members felt that the planning of the reinstated parkland should incorporate the neighbouring areas of Royal Park to ensure design continuity and the appropriate location of spaces and amenities.

Pathways and play zones could be used to link the reinstated parkland with the existing Royal Park.

Children's play

Many people expressed ideas related to children's play. These included requests for play spaces that combined water play, inquisitive play, a place all children can enjoy, places for adventure, with wooden structures, bridges, flying fox, climbing walls, swings, slides, cubbies, forts, monkey bars, and a maze.

A consistent observation was the likelihood of many children coming to this part of Royal Park.

The City of Melbourne recognises a variety of play spaces are required to cater for the range of community interests and demands. The site provides a good opportunity to create a play space with a focus on access to nature and unstructured play. The setting could include some traditional play elements such as swings, slides and elevated areas, but with a nature play focus.

Providing a play space in this location is also consistent with the Royal Park Master Plan (1998).

Ideally, the location of a play space would be appropriate closer to the hospital and away from busy roads.

Visitor amenities

Many community ideas emphasised the need for amenities to support visits to the reinstated parkland and the broader Royal Park. These included seats, drink fountains, picnic areas, BBQs, bins and toilets and other shaded seating, rotundas and lighting.

From a park management perspective, amenities are very important and valued by many different sectors of the population. The longer the visit to a park, the more important these amenities become. It is often a visitor expectation that these amenities are provided. They help the park visitor experience be more positive. Amenities are also a key component of a park being accessible to different age groups.

The Royal Park Master Plan (1998) describes the support for visitor amenities in previous consultation, and how these can assist with attracting more visitors to use and enjoy the park.



Sports ground

It was suggested that a full sized sports ground be provided on the site, to replace the oval that was removed during the planning and construction of the new Royal Children's Hospital. Many people who participated in the consultation emphasised that current demand exceeds supply for sports grounds for both training and games.

Preliminary reviews of the site have identified constraints to constructing a similar size sports ground to the previous one in this corner location. Constraints include topography, the extent of land required for such a facility leaving little land for other activities and the preference to co-locate sporting grounds to maximise the use of shared changing rooms. A smaller facility could be considered but may not meet the required need and therefore be under utilised when supply of facilities is at premium.

The expressed demand for replacement of a sports ground is considerable, and matched with research for future demand for sports grounds. It is recommended that the City of Melbourne investigate other locations within Royal Park for establishing another full size sports ground, with the preference for co-location with other similar facilities.

While the sports ground that was removed was used for formal games, it was also used for informal 'kick about' play. Parks are used extensively for this activity and some of the new park areas proposed would be suitable settings for these activities.



A place where young people can play

Many people suggested that a space be provided to cater for young people to play and gather. Specific ideas included a skate park and places to ride bikes.

Providing places for young people is recognised by the City of Melbourne as very important. Sometimes it is difficult for planners to describe what the future activity or use might be, but this can be resolved by working with young people to create a space. Encouraging play in a bush setting for young people is achievable in this location.

A park for all

It was emphasised by many people that the park should be for all people in the community. This was described by the importance of improved access to ensure older people, children and people with disabilities could enjoy visiting the park. It was also evident through the requests for a variety of recreational opportunities, including programs and events targeted at specific groups in the community.

The focus of 'a park for all' is consistent with the City of Melbourne's Open Space Strategy (2012) which defines Royal Park as a park of State significance, "designed for use by all Victorians."

Programs

A range of programs were suggested including educational programs for children in a natural setting, mystery tours, guided walks for children and walks to the zoo. Activities such as tai chi and swing dancing were proposed, as well as programs such as outdoor movies, festivals and markets. Places to support entertainment such as a small stage were also put forward. Many suggested the introduction of interpretive signage to describe the park's fauna, flora and links to indigenous history.

There was support for creating environments that facilitate recreational and leisure activities. This is consistent with the Royal Park Master Plan (1998) which recommends that appropriate activities and programs are held within the park and well promoted.

Principles

The outcome of the first phase of consultation was a set of community inspired principles to inform the preparation of the Ideas Plan.

1. Create a native park which complements the existing vegetation and landscape character of Royal Park.

To respect the heritage, landscape quality and iconic cultural value of Royal Park, the new park must complement existing features of the park.

2. Build a place which provides passive and active recreation opportunities for all members of the community including children, the elderly and people with a disability.

The new space must be designed to encourage inclusive and respectful social interactions and recreation in a manner that integrates intergenerational interests and multi-cultural values.

3. Create a sense of entry to Royal Park that is accessible and welcoming.

The new Flemington Road frontage to Royal Park becomes a recognised gateway to the park and offers activities, design, landscape and planting clues that gradually transitions the visitor from a city-scape to the bush-scape landscape of Royal Park. The new 'gateway' is welcoming and inviting. It draws in new visitors and compels them to explore, learn, play, relax a while or revive.

4. Design a place for creative and natural play.

The new park must provide a wide range of opportunities for play that will stimulate the imagination, provide opportunities to play alone or with others and cater for a wide range of ages.

5. Provide appropriate level of amenities to support the park users.

The new park will receive additional users and must service the needs for short to medium term stays in the park to increase amenity and comfort.



IDEAS PLAN

-  Zone with playful elements leading to location of new childrens playspace with a strong focus on nature-based play consistent with the character of Royal Park.
-  New park spaces, catering for informal ball games, picnic & BBQ use and quiet reflective spaces, including a variety of seating options and amenities.
-  Potential reconfiguration of car parking to allow for improved entry to the park.

- 01** Royal Children's Hospital.
- 02** New pedestrian pathways between new entry points and the existing pathway network of the park.
- 03** New and existing entry points to the park.
- 04** New park plantings consistent with the 1998 Royal Park Master Plan, creating a variety of spaces for new activities.
- 05** Circulation pathway with cultural, botanical & ecological interpretation options. Operating as an entry point within the park.
- 06** New public toilet.
- 07** Connection between park path network and 'Grassland Circle'.

About the Ideas Plan

The Return to Royal Park Ideas Plan was informed by a range of information including:

- Outcomes of the community priorities discussed during the first phase of consultation;
- Physical attributes of the site including the topography, soil, drainage and existing vegetation;
- Demographic information of visitors and potential visitors to Royal Park;
- Knowledge of existing levels of use and demand for public open space and supporting facilities;
- Existing policy framework including the Royal Park Master Plan (1998) and the City of Melbourne's Open Space Strategy (2012).

From this analysis, key design elements were identified to support the delivery of the community inspired principles.

The key elements of the Return to Royal Park Ideas Plan are described here.

1. Australian Native Landscape Character

The character of the parkland will follow the planting palette from the Royal Park Master Plan (1998). There is potential to include a range of landscape settings from the natural 'bush' setting through to a more designed landscaped setting such as the Australian Native Garden.

Which of Royal Park's landscape styles would you like to see introduced to the site?



2. Entrances / Gateway

There can be a number of entrances into the reinstated parkland including a well-defined 'gateway' on the corner of Flemington Road and Gatehouse Street. The entrances and gateway could be defined through landscaping and sympathetic / interpretive way finding signage or by more formal elements which celebrate an entry into the park. There may also be 'gateways' from within the park, signalling a transition to a different area.

Are there any other 'gateways' or entries that should be considered and if so, why?



3. New Park Spaces

A series of spaces will be created with different characters that will be enjoyable for passive recreation or more active recreation. The spaces may be formed by landscape plantings and the slope of the land, creating areas for both passive contemplation and enjoyment, and more active recreation such as unstructured ball play. These spaces could also include areas for BBQ and picnics.

What features do you think the more contemplative spaces should include?

4. Nature Based Play Space

The nature based play space will include experiences for children and young people including unstructured play, as well as more traditional play elements such as swings and slides. A location which is visible and easily accessible may encourage families with children visiting the hospital or the Melbourne Zoo to visit.

What are your ideas for a new play space at Royal Park? Your response could include the type of things children might do on their visit.

5. Car Parking

Existing car parking on the Gatehouse Street corner will need to be reconfigured to allow for an improved entry to the park. The car park could be more efficient and have a smaller footprint if designed to current day standards.

Is this location suitable to support access into the park?

6. Pathways

Pathways will be located within and beyond the actual former hospital site to connect to the park's pathway network. Way finding signage, interpretive signage, maps and other tools to assist navigation should be included along pathways. A circular pathway linking experiences and spaces could assist users of the park in accessing areas such as the nature based play space.

Are there any paths missing in the Ideas Plan?

7. Public Toilet

The provision of an accessible public toilet located on the Gatehouse Street boundary of Royal Park and adjacent to the reconfigured car park. The design and location of the public toilet will comply with the City of Melbourne's Public Toilet Plan (2008 – 2013).

Is this the best location for a public toilet facility given its proximity to the car park and nature based play space area?

8. Other Amenities

Seating, drink fountains and other amenities may be provided in locations that best service the use of that area.

Where do you think these amenities should be located?



Community feedback

We invite you to provide feedback on the *Return to Royal Park Ideas Plan* between Wednesday 15 August and Wednesday 12 September 2012.

Opportunities include:

Community forums at the State Netball and Hockey Centre, 10 Brens Drive, Royal Park on Saturday 25 August (9.30am – 12pm), Wednesday 29 August (6pm – 8.30pm) and Saturday 8 September 2012 (9.30am – 12pm). Please RSVP telephoning (03) 9285 9012.

An **online forum** will be live between Wednesday 15 August and Wednesday 12 September 2012. This is an opportunity for you to provide feedback on the Ideas Plan. To participate, please visit www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/returntoroyalpark

Community members and local groups are invited to **complete a feedback form** in response to the Ideas Plan. The feedback form can be obtained at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/returntoroyalpark or by telephoning (03) 9285 9012.

For more information about the *Return to Royal Park* project please visit www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/returntoroyalpark or telephone (03) 9285 9012.

Next steps

The outcomes of this phase of consultation will be used to inform a design brief for the parkland. Over the following months, the design brief will direct the preparation of a final design. The site will be available to commence reinstatement of the parkland in August 2013 with works anticipated to be complete by the end of 2014.



Return to Royal Park project – proposed phase 2 community engagement**Table 4: Phase 2 Proposed dates: Wednesday 15 August – Wednesday 12 September 2012**

Tool/Technique	Description
<p>1. Public Announcement</p> <p>Date/s: 15 August 2012</p>	<p>A public announcement will officially ‘launch’ Phase 2 of the engagement process.</p> <p>This public announcement will include a series of communication materials ‘announcing’ the project. These materials could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release; • Updates to project webpage; and • Advertisements.
<p>2. Targeted Letters</p> <p>Date/s: 15 August 2012</p>	<p>Targeted letters will be sent to stakeholders informing them of Phase 2 of the community engagement process and encouraging them to participate. The letter will outline the key engagement events and ways to obtain more information.</p> <p>The letter will be signed by the Lord Mayor and be presented on the City of Melbourne’s letterhead.</p> <p>The recipients of the letters will be those stakeholders targeted during the first phase, along with all those who have participated in the process to date.</p> <p>In the absence of a postal address, stakeholders will be sent an email.</p>
<p>3. Posters</p> <p>Date/s: 15 August 2012</p>	<p>An A3 poster will be developed to provide a context for the engagement process and promote the events. The poster will be displayed at key community information points and places of community significance.</p>

Tool/Technique	Description
<p>4. Online Forum</p> <p>Date/s: Wednesday 15 August – Wednesday 12 September</p>	<p>A moderated online forum will be used to host a discussion with stakeholders who have access to the Internet and choose to participate. The Phase 2 online forum will ask for stakeholder feedback on a draft ideas plan.</p>
<p>5. Feedback Form</p> <p>Date/s: Wednesday 15 August – Wednesday 12 September</p>	<p>A feedback form will be developed for stakeholders to provide feedback on the ideas plan. The feedback form will be available in hard copy and also available on the online forum.</p>
<p>6. Community Forums</p> <p>Dates:</p> <p>9.30am – 12 noon Saturday 25 August, 6pm – 8.30pm Wednesday 29 August, 9.30am – 12 noon Saturday 8 September</p>	<p>Three Community Forums will be held to present the rationale for the ideas contained in the ideas plans. Participants will also have an opportunity to provide feedback on the ideas and discuss refinements with members of the project team. The Return to Royal Park Ideas Forums will be 2.5 hours in duration.</p>
<p>7. Phase 2 – Engagement Summary Report</p> <p>Date/s: TBC</p>	<p>A summary report detailing the key findings from Phase 2 will be prepared. The report will largely be qualitative with some quantitative results. The report will include an analysis of the consultation outcomes as well as relevant secondary information.</p> <p>The report will be made available to all stakeholders.</p>