

Appendix 1

Review of Relevant Plans, Policies and Strategies

A number of the City of Whittlesea's existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the VR Michael Reserve Master Plan. The following section contains summaries of the main background documents reviewed including any key directions relevant to the reserve.

Whittlesea 2040 – A place for all

The City of Whittlesea's 2040 – A place for all is a long-term vision supporting the municipality to be ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring, and ensures that the City of Whittlesea is a great place to live now and in the future.

Whittlesea 2040 outlines four interconnected goals which have been identified as essential elements to realising the core vision.

The community consultation undertaken for Whittlesea 2040 included over 4,000 people participating through submissions, workshops and forums. Feedback was received from all ages ranging from 3 years to 85+. Listed below are the key goals related to the actions and objectives in the master plan:

Goal 1 – Connected community

- A socially cohesive community
- A healthy and safe community
- A participating community

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

- Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

Goal 4 – Sustainable environment

- Valued natural landscape and biodiversity
- Climate ready
- Leaders in clean, sustainable living

Open Space Strategy 2016

The Open Space Strategy guides the future design and management of public open space in the City of Whittlesea, and provides a framework for the planning and provision of open space across the older established urban and rural areas of the municipality. The Strategy includes specific actions for all the existing and proposed open space in the established areas.

The Open Space Strategy 2016 identifies VR Michael Reserve as a municipal open space which is characterised as a predominantly non-sporting reserve that has an extensive connected path system, open grassed areas and play facilities. The Open Space Strategy recommends maintaining the park and providing exercise equipment, more seating and shelters with BBQs.

The Reserve was identified as one of the most popular in Lalor and Epping in the community survey undertaken in 2018 for the Whittlesea Open Space Strategy. In terms of hierarchy, it is identified as a municipal open space with 500m walking catchment.

Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023

Thomastown Lalor Urban Place Framework illustrates a shared community and Council vision to guide the future of Thomastown and Lalor. The framework aims to identify community priority opportunities that can shape local places and form connections to deliver a network of improvements over time.

The project is an ongoing collaborative approach to improve streets, public spaces, community precincts, infrastructure, built form and transport.

The Place Framework translates Whittlesea's 2040 Vision: A Place for All to Thomastown and Lalor and the needs and aspirations of the community. It considers the key five goals – Connected community, Liveable neighbourhoods, Strong local economy, Sustainable environment and High performing organisation to deliver local outcomes. Over time the framework will assist to develop local actions to deliver the seven strategies outlined in Council's Integrated Planning Framework.

The Whittlesea 2040 Goals have been translated to Thomastown and Lalor in response to place analysis and community consultation. The Framework identifies VR Michael Reserve as an opportunity location under the 'Sustainable Environment' and 'Liveable neighbourhood' Goals. These goals and opportunities are listed below:

Sustainable Environment - Green Spaces

Opportunity - *Grow and rewild open space to improve tree canopy cover and biodiversity'*

- Advocate for funding to support biodiversity and environmental initiatives for businesses and residents.
- Partnerships with community groups to provide planting opportunities. E.g. Merri Creek and Friends, Friends of Edwards Lake etc.

Liveable neighbourhood - Enhanced Character, the Framework identifies open space Interfaced improvement for the VR Michael Reserve's Interfaces.

Epping Central Structure Plan 2023

The City of Whittlesea's Epping Central Structure Plan sets out a policy, development and implementation framework for the future development of Epping Central providing an integrated and strategic vision to guide the growth and development of the Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC).

Long established as a major retail destination and health hub, Epping Central is now transitioning into its next growth phase. A strong focus on economic investment, job creation, public realm improvement and residential growth will see Epping Central mature into a diverse and thriving centre to service the rapidly growing Northern Growth Corridor.

The Epping Central Structure Plan (Structure Plan) sets out a planning framework that builds upon Epping's strong foundation to support growth. The Structure Plan aims to reinforce continued support for development and economic growth which supports key directions within Whittlesea 2040: A place for all and ensure the future success of the Epping Central MAC as a vibrant and liveable centre.

The Structure Plan outlines that "Epping Central already has strong foundations that will help it continue to transform into the economic heart of Melbourne's North becoming a diverse, job rich, thriving Activity Centre."

The Plan also identifies 10 key directions as follows:

- Support the intensification of development and a greater diversity of uses in the urban core as the centre of activity and regional facilities.
- Support the development of an expanded health precinct anchored by the Northern Hospital.
- Capitalise on the centre's strategic advantages to support a diversity of enterprise and employment opportunities particularly in employment precincts and the urban core.
- Prioritise pedestrians in the urban core and better connect the activity centre via improved pedestrian movement links between key destinations.
- Enhance the Darebin Creek and Edgars Creek as corridors of open space, habitat and pedestrian/ cycle links.
- Plan for public realm improvements including new open space, public spaces and street tree planting in the activity centre particularly in the Urban Core, High Street Village and New Epping neighbourhoods.
- Enhance Cooper Street as a Boulevard lined by canopy trees and high-quality built form and High Street as a more pedestrian friendly main road.
- Plan for the Wollert Rail extension and other public transport infrastructure including a centrally located transport interchange.
- Support the redevelopment of strategic development sites/precincts to provide for additional employment and housing opportunities and improvements to the public realm.
- Encourage new development in the High Street Village and New Epping neighbourhoods including medium-density housing, commercial and local retail uses.

The Structure Plan also outlines the Growth, Economic, Community and Transport snapshots which provide an overview of key elements of Epping Central and present some of the key opportunities that the Activity Centre can take advantage of, as it continues to grow.

The Transport Snapshot outlines the proposed future Wollert Rail corridor that goes through VR Michael Reserve. *"Delivery of the proposed future Wollert Rail corridor linking Epping Central to the northern growth areas together with increased coverage and frequency of the local bus network is critical to improving the level of public transport service to support the planned growth and to improve connectivity to the critical services."*

In regards to VR Michael Reserve, the Plan also identifies a proposed off-road shared path going through the reserve.

The plan outlines nine (9) precincts, and the VR Michael Reserve is in precinct 4, 'Regional Demand', with the following characteristics:

This precinct focuses on the area encompassing Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, the Epping Homemaker Centre and the Northern Hospital, and their areas of future expansion and development. It includes the major southern gateway to Epping Central via High Street. The development of the Wollert Rail Corridor and additional train station within this precinct will improve public transport connectivity and reduce car dependency.

Plans to expand on the current retail and commercial land uses and evolve this precinct into a mixed-use area will reduce at-grade car parking, better utilise large underdeveloped sites and improve movement networks. Intensification of shops, services, food outlets, entertainment venues and the development of future residential apartments will support this precinct to become the centre of activity of Epping Central.

The Structure Plan for Epping Central sets out the vision and implementation framework for the next 20 years. The implementation of many projects has already commenced, whilst the delivery of many others set out in this Structure Plan may take some time to be fully realised. The Plan will require monitoring and ongoing review in response to changing demographic trends, major projects and changes in State and Local Government policy.

Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016–2026

The City of Whittlesea's Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016-2026 provides Council with clear direction for the provision, management and operation of Off-Leash Areas within the Municipality. The Plan's mission is to provide residents and their dogs with safe and sustainable off-leash opportunities that can be accessed equitably, while considering the needs of all open space users.

The Plan outlines three types of Off-Leash Areas including Open Unstructured, Confined Unstructured and Confined Structured.

- **Open Unstructured**

No constructed barrier to provide separation from other reserve users. Caters for dogs off-leash and play where facilitated by existing landscapes.

Open Unstructured Off-Leash Areas will be considered where the host site has sufficient space to accommodate the minimum size requirement and where there are existing features which enable clear delineation of the Off-Leash Area.

- **Confined Unstructured**

Constructed barrier provides separation from other reserve users. Caters for dogs off-leash and play where facilitated by existing landscapes.

Confined Unstructured Off-Leash Areas will be located as close as possible to concentrations of registered dog ownership.

- **Confined Structured**

Constructed barrier provides separation from other reserve users. Caters for dogs off-leash and structured play facilitated by existing or modified landscapes and/or play/agility equipment.

Confined Unstructured Off-Leash Areas will only be considered on a regional basis and will ideally be placed in an accessible point within the target region.

The Plan identifies VR Michael Reserve as a future dog off-leash area in Lalor. It is outlined as 'open unstructured' dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

The purpose of the Walking and Cycling Plan (2022-2027) is to improve walking and cycling conditions in the municipality, raise awareness about the opportunities for walking and cycling and increase the level of walking and cycling participation.

This plan builds upon the work undertaken in the previous bicycle plan, while taking into consideration the following:

- Whittlesea is growing - The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria and Australia.
- State Government target - The Victorian Government's new Climate Change Strategy has set a target of 25 per cent of trips to be active travel (walking or cycling) by 2030. This is up from the current target of 18 per cent.
- Health Benefits - Transport options that provide incidental exercise offer people with busy lives a means of staying active, providing increased health benefits such as reduced risk of diseases and ill health associated with lack of physical activity.
- Economic Benefits - A range of economic benefits can be realised through an increase in active travel participation, including increased public transport usage, reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced health costs, and potential for changes to landuse planning to cater for more public spaces.
- Environmental Sustainability - Walking and cycling as modes of transport have been identified as crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change in Victoria's Climate Change Strategy.
- Active Travel in response to COVID-19 - Covid-19 and its precautionary measures have required people to work from home, and stay local, increasing the opportunity for those who have never walked or cycled, to make it a part of their daily routine.
- 20-minute neighbourhoods (Plan Melbourne) - Active travel is an integral part in delivering the 20-minute Neighbourhood plan by giving people the ability to meet most of their needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or local public transport trip from their home.

The plan outlines that City of Whittlesea residents experience a number of barriers to uptake of Active Travel, unique to its size (covering an area of approximately 489 square kilometers) and growth that differentiates it from the inner-city Local Government Areas. In particular:

- Long distances to key destinations
- Time spent traveling to work each day limiting access to personal time for recreation
- Lack of infrastructure

- Wait time to cross busy roads
- Missing links in the footpath network
- Access to open space
- Lack of tree canopy cover

The Plan also outlines that current levels of active travel participation are low in the City of Whittlesea. Walking and cycling is mostly undertaken for recreational purposes – 8.9 per cent of all trips are by Walking in the City of Whittlesea, in comparison to 16.4 per cent across Greater Melbourne, and 0.6 per cent are by bicycle (1.7 per cent across Greater Melbourne).

The Plan identifies four key directions and a suite of actions aimed at improving conditions to enable more walking and cycling across the municipality. The key directions are as follows:

- (a) Make active travel safer
- (b) Encourage and promote active travel
- (c) Build and maintain a high-quality network
- (d) Monitor active travel in the future

The Plan identifies Deveny Road-Childs Road and High Street as 'Strategic Cycling Routes' in the Ultimate Cycling Routes Path. It also identifies High Street Shared Path as a priority walking and cycling project. The first section of High Street Shared Path from Childs Road to Memorial Avenue is determined in the feasibility stage and the second section from Childs Road to Keon Parade is in design stage.

Community Plan 2021-2025

The City of Whittlesea's Community Plan 2021-2025 shapes the future for the City of Whittlesea and has been informed by extensive community engagement. It clearly articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025, how it will prioritise its resources and effort, and how it will measure success by meeting the needs of its community.

The Community Plan 2021-2025 has developed 60 initiatives under Whittlesea 2040 goals, which will be delivered between 2021 and 2025, and which respond to community priorities.

This includes Council's planning to achieve key health and inclusion outcomes such as family violence prevention, climate change, gender equality, reducing barriers to goods, services and facilities access, participation in employment, inclusive communications and preventing discrimination against persons with a disability. In developing the Community Plan, Council considered the community's goals and aspirations set out in Whittlesea 2040.

As part of the development of the Community Plan, The City of Whittlesea invited the community to share its ideas and priorities for Council to focus on delivering over the next four years. Council asked the community two key questions to consider when forming their views and ideas:

- What should Council focus on over the next 4-10 years to make sure the City of Whittlesea is a connected community, with liveable neighbourhoods, a vibrant local economy and a sustainable environment?

- How should Council's \$2m Community Recovery Fund be spent to help our community recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Across all of the engagement activities, The Plan listed 6 priorities that people were strongly in favour of. The first & fourth priorities which are relevant to open spaces are listed below:

- *More parks and playgrounds and improving the maintenance of those we already have.*
- *Biodiversity, including planting more trees, conserving habitats and looking after wildlife*

Other priorities are public safety, festivals, events, arts, culture, heritage and markets, social connection: access and inclusion, sports facilities and infrastructure and community groups and community infrastructure.

To help recovery from COVID-19, the community asked Council to focus on three themes. Two of them which are relevant to open spaces are:

- Community connections, including supporting vulnerable people and providing facilities and spaces for groups of people to meet
- Health promotion, emphasising mental health and wellbeing; natural environments and green open space; connected walking and cycling paths and trails, safety in public places and opportunities for social connection and exercise.

Additionally, The Plan listed recommendations for the \$2 million Pandemic Community Recovery Fund related to 2040 goals. Recommendations applicable to open spaces include:

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Recommended actions:

- Create more community gardens and support local events
- Advocate for better public transport
- Build health and recreational facilities
- Provide more public amenities

The Plan also proposes key initiatives related to CoW 2040 goals. The applicable initiatives to open spaces which Council will deliver in 2021-2025 include:

Goal 1 - Connected Community Goal

Key Initiatives:

- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Strengthen community connections through a vibrant arts and events scene celebrating our diverse culture and heritage, activated open spaces and facilities and local markets

- Improve access to physical activity and social connection by providing accessible, multiuse sports infrastructure which meets the diverse needs of our community

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Key Initiatives:

- Increase the quality, access, safety and amount of public open space in the municipality, including additional dog parks and a local park improvement program
- Develop and implement a plan to improve public toilets making them accessible, useable and safe
- Design and upgrade local streetscapes and shopping precincts to make it easier to move about, celebrate local culture, heritage and character, and connect people to the natural environment

Goal 4 - Sustainable Environment

Key Initiatives:

- Deliver on our Greening Whittlesea Strategy including increasing tree canopy along main road residential streets and in conservation reserves, park and major facilities
- Goal 5 - High-performing Organisation

Key Initiatives:

- Continue to strengthen local community engagement in line with Council’s Community Engagement Policy to inform Council programs and decision-making

Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)

The City of Whittlesea’s Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021 – 2041 (the Plan) provides a framework to guide the provision of sport and leisure infrastructure within the City of Whittlesea. the Plan:

- Identifies what sport and leisure infrastructure is needed to build healthy and active communities across the City of Whittlesea
- Provides an overview of existing infrastructure currently available to the community
- Defines Council’s role and level of service in infrastructure delivery to meet ongoing community needs
- Makes informed and evidence-based recommendations on the distribution of possible locations for future facility provision.

The Plan adopts a four-stage methodology and a place-based approach to maximise consideration of local factors that may influence participation in the sport and leisure activities assessed; including but not limited to demographics, natural or built barriers and participation trends.

Stage 1: Demand and Supply Analysis

The likely number of participants per sport and leisure activity and the number of facilities required to meet total municipal demand is calculated. This is then compared to all available and planned facilities accessible to the public to determine where a facility surplus or shortfall exists.

Stage 2: Council's Role

Using a prioritisation matrix, each sport and leisure activity is assessed to determine if and how Council should support its development in the municipality. Council is allocated as a provider, facilitator or advocate for facility provision of training, competition and pathway facilities. In rare instances, Council may have no role in supporting infrastructure provision.

Stage 3: Asset Response

Sports and leisure activities are grouped into the type of asset they use and the findings of the demand and supply analysis are refined to determine the final number of facilities required to meet demand. This stage focusses on the sports and leisure activities that Council will provide or facilitate infrastructure for and is needed to maximise multipurpose use as many activities can share facilities.

Stage 4: Action Plan

An Action Plan is developed that outlines recommendations on how Council will fill any gaps or address any excess provision. Recommendations are mapped and prioritised by time (short, medium and long term) for action and indicative costs for implementation are provided.

The plan identifies the southwest region (Epping, Thomastown and Lalor) with the highest level of Socio-economic Disadvantage across the City of Whittlesea according to the region profile.

The Plan also provides the provision assessment which presents an overview of the theoretical number of facilities needed to meet total demand within the nominated regions and a rating reflective of how the demand will be met by the proposed asset responses within the Plan.

Based on the provision assessment for this region, the plan proposes that limited changes are required in this region as provision is servicing established sporting clubs and community groups. Existing facilities play an important role in supporting neighbouring regions that have facility shortages and there are three vacant sites. There is little demand for new facilities and the priority for this region is renewal of ageing infrastructure to ensure it remains fit for purpose. It also identifies VR Michael Reserve with an existing bocce court in Lalor.

Also, the provision assessment table for this region rates the following facilities as the facilities that are met within the municipality and not the region.

- Outdoor playing field (Athletics)
- Outdoor playing field (Diamond)
- Outdoor playing field (Diamond)
- Golf course
- Outdoor skate sport facility
- Bowls green
- Gymnastics Centre

Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028

The City of Whittlesea's Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028 is an evidence-based strategy and action plan to guide the planning, provision and promotion of sport, leisure and recreation programs, services and facilities within the City of Whittlesea over the next ten years. Active Whittlesea aims to increase the number of residents who are physically active by 10 per cent and includes actions to achieve the overall goal of: *75 per cent of residents participating in one or more hours of physical activity per week by September 2028*. To achieve this goal Council will implement three key directions, consistent with community feedback and grounded in evidence-based practice.

- Key Direction 1 Communications and Promotion — increasing the physical literacy and community awareness of inclusive participation opportunities
- Key Direction 2 Responsive Programs and Partnerships — programs that respond to local needs and partnerships that share skills, knowledge and resources to generate positive community outcomes
- Key Direction 3 Open Space / Infrastructure — ensuring local communities have access to places and spaces that are safe, inclusive, accessible and meet their needs

Priority Actions applicable to VR Michael Reserve include:

- 2.1 Support, promote and facilitate club development opportunities to build capacity of existing and new sports clubs and strengthen participation from under-represented groups
- 3.1 Improve equity, accessibility and safety of community spaces through the development of infrastructure plans and the delivery of inclusively designed new works projects
- 3.4 Connect, improve and expand existing travel networks to create built environments that support active travel, incidental exercise and physical activity

Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan

The Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan has been developed to guide Council's ongoing investment in community infrastructure, defined as the buildings and spaces Council has a responsibility for that support the delivery of community services, programs, organised activities, sport and recreation. Taking a long-term outlook, the Plan uses evidence-based analysis and prioritisation, with a focus on equitable and timely community infrastructure provision, supporting our long-term community vision, Whittlesea 2040: A place for all.

The Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan takes a place-based approach that is responsive to the distinct needs and aspirations of local communities.

The plan outlines that Parks and playgrounds, public toilets, council offices and transport infrastructure, including roads, car parks and footpaths, are not included in the scope of this document.

The plan also identifies 7 principles that set out the underlying philosophy that guides the prioritisation, planning, design, operation and activation of community infrastructure, as follows:

Sustainable

- Reducing Council’s carbon footprint through designing and building facilities to be resource efficient, easy to maintain and long-lasting.

Service led

- Community infrastructure planning is service led – informed by community needs and our responding service delivery model.

Local responses

- Community infrastructure provision considers the distinct characteristics of the local community and involves community in the design and development process
- Temporary spaces such as pop-ups provide short-term solutions to address gaps in infrastructure provision, to test diverse types of space and uses and to activate town and neighbourhood centres in emerging communities.

Optimised investment

- Seeking opportunities for optimised, integrated and changing use of existing community facilities, as well as investing in new infrastructure.

Collaboration and partnership driven

- Designing and resourcing hubs to encourage collaboration and service integration
- Council, partner and community-driven activation of community facilities
- A partnership approach to funding and/or delivery of community infrastructure.

Flexible and multipurpose

- Creating multipurpose community hubs that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure and cultural experiences on a single site or in close proximity
- Integration between indoor and outdoor spaces to create operational synergies and support the activation of open spaces
- Space flexibility and adaptability aiding increased utilisation and easier adaption as community needs change and evolve.

Welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible

- A focus on equity, inclusion, cultural safety and accessibility in how spaces are designed and integrate into local neighbourhoods so they are places where all community members can connect and participate
- Locating community infrastructure to optimise community access, including proximity to other services and amenities within town or neighbourhood activity centres close to where people live, and easily reached by public transport and active travel such as walking or bike riding.
- Reducing barriers to access public buildings and spaces for people with a disability.

The plan outlines VR Michael Reserve as one of the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in Lalor. The action is Identifies as "*Undertake site masterplan to improve site condition and facilities*" to be undertaken in short term.

Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026

The Multiple Sports Strategy: Broadening opportunities for participation in sport provides information and direction on how Council responds to identified participation and interest in less traditional sports, and to identify trends and facility development needs to create greater accessibility to these sports to ensure residents have access to a range of sports and recreation opportunities. The Strategy investigates the needs and demands of 34 different sports and makes recommendations on future facility requirements and development opportunities to support the growth of these sports.

Each sport covered in this Strategy has been given a level of priority to help guide Council resources and investment into their future planning and development. Ten sports were given a high priority as these are seen to have the greatest demand at the local level.

The high priority sports have been identified as:	Seven sports have been identified as second tier priority:
Athletics	Hockey
Baseball	Badminton
Calisthenics	Bocce
Dance	Croquet
Softball	Kabaddi
Gymnastics	Volleyball
Martial Art	Table Tennis
Touch Football	
Rugby League	
Rugby Union	

In addition to the sports above, 17 sports were identified as requiring no action in the short term.

In regards to VR Michael Reserve, as mentioned above, The City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy identifies this reserve as a non-sporting reserve however, the reserve includes a bocce social club and bocce rinks. Bocce is identified as second tier priority in the Multiple Sport Strategy.

The Strategy also provides the following Information and recommendation about bocce.

Bocce has 38 registered members living in Whittlesea, which the majority are male (79%). Almost half of the members live in either Thomastown or Epping. Council's Active Participation in Sport Study (2015) identified bocce participation (including social) at 588, significantly higher than the registered membership numbers provided above and suggests that bocce players are casual/social players rather than registered members.

Bocce facilities are located in the established areas of Epping, Thomastown and Lalor which have a higher percentage of elderly residents particularly from Italian and Macedonian cultures in which the sport of bocce is popular. The percentage of residents in Whittlesea with Italian heritage is approximately double that of Greater Melbourne and those with Macedonian heritage is eight times higher than in Greater Melbourne (2011 census data). With a high percentage of this demographic within CoW, it is important that sports offered reflect the community and so the provision of bocce should be continued.

Recommendation

- Consider bocce in public open spaces designs, future town centre designs or near community meeting spaces
- Review potential requirements of a facility / shared space pending participation trends identified in Sports Participation Audit.

Playspace Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16

The City of Whittlesea's Playspace Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16 is a comprehensive document aimed at informing Council officers and developers responsible for providing or maintaining playspaces within the Municipality with an understanding of the value and principles of play. The Policy reflects current research into the importance of play and nature play for children as well as adults and acknowledges that play happens everywhere while providing direction on how to design and provide best practice play environments in delineated municipal playspaces and playgrounds.

As mentioned above, VR Michael Reserve is identified as a Municipal level open space by the Open Space Strategy, and the Playspace Planning Framework and Policy defines a Municipal Reserve as a district playspace. A district playspace is a space that provides a broad range of play opportunities and amenities, which allows for a longer stay, and is often co-located with a sports reserve or a passive recreation reserve with a range of parkland features. A district reserve is likely to have more amenities than smaller parks and provide for a range of play and social opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Other characteristics of a district playspace, as described in the Policy, are listed below:

- District playspaces should be located within a 15-minute cycle trip - around two kilometres from residents' homes.
- Catchment populations are estimated to be around 8000 persons.
- Embellishment costs for the playspace (not including amenities that may be provided for if it was
- Located within a reserve with existing amenities) could range from \$300,000 to \$500,000
- District playspaces provide a range of play and social opportunities for all ages and abilities. Taking into account the disability design features of local and neighbourhood playspaces, district playspaces could provide specialised facilities, for example, a playspace designed to cater for children with specific disability such as hearing impairments. It is known that play opportunities and equipment designed for children and young people with a disability provide greater variety, stimulation and play value for all children and young people.

Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy

Thriving Children, Young People and Families outlines the City of Whittlesea's evidence-based approach to supporting the health, wellbeing and positive development of children, young people and their families in the municipality. It responds to the needs of people from before birth to 25 years. It aims to start a conversation, to inspire innovation and to provide a flexible and adaptive framework to work from. It provides the strategic

direction for Council to meet its requirement under the Local Government Act (1989) to build safe, healthy communities and to provide equal access to services and facilities.

The plan refers to all aspects of the public realm including the built environment, the natural environment, facilities, town centres, streetscapes and open space as Physical Infrastructure. It outlines ' Planning and providing social and physical infrastructure that ensures the provision of quality, integrated services and programs for children, young people and families' as one of the Local Government's role.

It also provides 4 objectives and associated actions to support the positive development of children, young people and families, listed below:

Objective 1 Provide services and programs that promote positive wellbeing and development	Priority Actions 1.0. Deliver quality programs and services that promote children, young people and families': a. Positive health, development and identity b. Sense of community and safety c. Connection to place, heritage, diversity and natural environment.
Objective 2 Identify and respond to the needs of children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability or risk	Priority Actions 2.0. Advocate for more access to local specialist services in response to emerging issues including: a. Health and wellbeing (physical / mental) b. Youth disengagement and its contributing factors c. Family violence d. Developmental vulnerability.
Objective 3 Work in partnership to strengthen service delivery and advocacy	Priority Actions 3.0. Seek opportunities and funding to coordinate projects, planning, and frameworks for the middle years. 3.1. Facilitate and advocate for well-planned, integrated infrastructure that supports access, participation and connection. 3.2. Enhance the use of data and analytics to: a. make better decisions b. measure community outcomes c. share insights with the community and our partners
Objective 4 Provide children, young people and families with opportunities to inform decisions and connect with the community	Priority Actions 4.0 Engage with children, young people and families to ensure their voices inform decision making. This includes engaging traditionally under-represented groups and increasing community engagement and decision making with Aboriginal children, young people and community. 4.1. Develop fast and user-friendly ways of sharing information with the community, service providers and other key stakeholders.

Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People 2013-2018

The main purpose of the City of Whittlesea's Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People is to encourage public realm design to consider the needs of young people (ages 12-25) and older children in their middle years (ages 8-12). The report argues that they not only have the right to have access to age appropriate, engaging and challenging places but also to be actively involved and consulted regarding their provision.

Changes in the health of young people such as increasing obesity rates, decreased physical activity and increasing mental health concerns as well as decreased independent mobility owing to parental fears has highlighted the need for a shift in governance and the planning and design process to create more Child Friendly Cities and encourage a move back to safer pedestrianised and connected communities.

Spaces 8 to 12+ outlines five principles for designing places and spaces for young people. The views of young people and related research are detailed under each principle and linked to best practice responses and resources. The five principles identified are as follows:

1. Accessible: Creating the public realm that is accessible to all young people

- Young people are able to walk, cycle or use public transport to access places to meet the needs of their everyday life
- All young people have opportunities, including those managing social, cultural or economic barriers
- Public spaces are interconnected with safe, fully accessible links.

2. Diverse: Diversity of uses for diverse young people

- Provision that encourages activity at different times of the day, for different purposes, and generates interaction in the community between young people of varying ages, interests, identities, abilities and cultures
- Facilitates the self-expression of young people.

3. Inclusive: Making the public realm socially inclusive and connected for young people

- Young people have the right to feel connection with the community through places, to feel valued, accepted and welcomed
- Young people have a role in influencing what happens
- Developmentally young people need gathering places to interact socially.

4. Safe: The public realm must enable young people to feel safe and to be safe

- All young people must be enabled to move in public places independently and with confidence.

5. Engaged: Young people are experts on things related to young people

- Young people should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the planning and designing of all aspects of the public realm.

Greening Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea's Greening Whittlesea Strategy was developed following consultation with a broad range of stakeholders representing our community, the Wurundjeri Narrap Team, state government and agencies, special interest and environmental groups, local business including developers, academics, industry specialists, and Council officers. Consultation on this strategy reinforced our community's strong connection to, and love of, the City's natural environment, which was communicated through the Whittlesea 2040 consultation process.

This report outlines Lalor with 6.51% tree canopy cover which 3.91% falls on the non-council land (private, other Government Agencies, and Crown Land). It also identifies Epping, Lalor and Thomastown with the lowest green cover among the established urban suburbs.

The report also proposes increasing the size of City of Whittlesea's city forest which is dependent on the availability of land unencumbered by existing infrastructure such as buildings, roads, paths, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, and water bodies which is called a plantable area. 35.42% of Lalor is identified as a plantable area with 9.64% on the Council and 25.78% on non-council owned land.

The strategy outlines the vision for the city:

Our residents and our environment benefit from a diverse, colourful, and healthy City Forest that connects people to people, people to nature, and people to place.

Delivery of the Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy will be guided by a detailed implementation plan outlining the actions required to realise our strategic goals and targets over the life of the strategy. Council will prioritise making people's lives better by improving liveability within connected communities across our city. The hierarchy of principles below will be applied.

- (1) Our first priority is to provide benefit at the local level.
- (2) Our second priority is to provide benefit at the suburb level.
- (3) Our third priority is to provide benefit at the regional level.

The followings have been identified as priorities for action in established urban areas.

- Targeted greening to deliver liveability improvements, especially heat mitigation.
- Protect existing trees and green cover.

Other priorities for action across the City related to open space design and planning are listed below:

- Identify and implement appropriate controls to protect existing vegetation in waterway corridors.
- Incorporate decision-making criteria into work processes to ensure existing mature trees are not removed until all possible solutions to protect the trees are exhausted.
- Record data for all existing and future trees on Council land in Council's asset management system, including species, size, canopy spread, and health/ condition.
- Develop a City Landscape Masterplan to guide planting programs across the City.
- Develop an open space planting program guided by the City Landscape Masterplan and incorporating plantable opportunities analysis, increased park plantings, habitat connectivity, urban heat amelioration,

better use of transmission easements, and greater planting around and within sporting facilities, wetlands, waterways, and reserves.

- Include increased greening (with emphasis on tree retention and planting) in all Urban Design Frameworks, Integrated Community Facilities Planning, Public Space Planning and New Works Public Space projects.
- Implement planting in line with the City Landscape Masterplan, and the Open Space and ten-year Street Tree Planting Programs.

Equal and Safe Strategy 2019

The City of Whittlesea's Equal and Safe Strategy 2019 is an integrated strategy that will continue to build the recognition and understanding across the organisation and community that gender inequality is the driver of violence against women and will shape Council's work in improving gender equality.

The work undertaken through this Strategy will contribute to three of the four goals in Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All:

Goal 1 – Connected community

- A socially cohesive community
- A healthy and safe community
- A participating community

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

- Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

Goal 3: Strong Local Economy

- Increased local employment
- Successful, innovative local businesses

The strategy has listed factors that can increase the harms of violence against women and family violence. Two of the factors which are relevant to open spaces are as follows:

Sports and Recreation Settings - Sports, active recreation, social and leisure spaces are an important setting because these environments can have a powerful influence on gender relations through their modelling of attitudes, behaviours and social norms. Sporting contexts can reinforce gender inequities if they are male-dominated and exclude women and girls. By increasing gender equality in these settings, local government can reach a large proportion of people in the community. Sports, active recreation and social settings receive significant funding and resources from Council and the State Government. It is crucial that everyone in the community is able to benefit from this investment.

Facilities and infrastructure - Consideration of equity and diversity during planning and development can have a significant bearing on the extent of women's economic, social and civic participation and also on access to facilities, transport and public spaces. Council provides a wide range of essential infrastructure including vital

social infrastructure and community facilities and makes land use planning decisions that affect the community's use, access and experiences.

Beyond the evidence base, this Strategy was developed with input from key local service agencies and community members which strengthened the understanding of local issues, complexities and priorities. A qualitative survey was conducted with community members, asked *What changes would you like to see locally in order to achieve an equal, safe and respectful community?* The feedback received categorised in different themes. The following two themes are applicable to open spaces such as VR Michael Reserve and public realm.

- Women's safety in public realm

A very common theme emerging from the community surveys was women's safety in public realm. Respondents described their vision for an equal, safe and respectful community being one where women could "go for a walk at night without the fear of being hurt", where women and girls "would feel safe walking through my neighbourhood at day and night" and "without harassment" and where "I could walk home from the train without worrying about whether it is safe". Respondents referred to "walkable streets connecting neighbourhoods" with "more lights", "toilets... in public spaces", public places such as shopping centres which should "reduce the gender stereotyping of how they also advertise" and provide "change facilities that are accessible to men and women". Safety in public realm was linked to the need to develop active bystander behaviours in the community – "people looking out for each other and standing up together to combat racism, sexism and hatred in public places".

- Equal access to recreation and sport

Respondents to the community survey described sport and recreation settings as key environments for gender equality, safety and respect. From basic needs such as "separate change rooms in sporting clubs" to "more female friendly clubs", "better female facilities", "equity of access to facilities" and "less stereotypes of genders – females work in the canteen". What is clear from these responses is that the community value the role Council has in providing environments and settings for sport and recreation but that these environments need to be more accessible to and inclusive of women and girls.

This Strategy has identified four (4) Objectives and Priority Actions. The objective 3 and associated actions which are relevant to open spaces are as follows:

Objective 3 - Ensure that community facilities and public spaces enable safe and gender equitable access and an active community life for all.

Priority Actions

- a. Build a gendered community safety approach into Council's master-planning for public realm, reserves and facility development
- b. Include gender equity criteria in the process of prioritising and planning capital works
- c. Improve employment, recreation and safety outcomes for women and girls through the review of public realm and land use planning strategic documents.

These objectives and priority actions will be implemented by the organisation through annual action plans. The impacts of the Strategy and action plans will be evaluated in line with Council's Evaluation Framework.

Your Ground Project 2021

Your Ground is a collaboration between Crowd Spot and Monash University's XYX Lab to crowd-source women and gender-diverse people safety related experiences of public and recreational space. No pins were recorded by the community regarding safety of VR Michael Reserve.

Signage Management Plan

The City of Whittlesea's Signage Management Plan provides a well-designed, cost-effective and contemporary suite of Council signage, along with clear guidelines and templates for its delivery across various locations within the municipality, including civic buildings, parks and reserves, shopping precincts and gateway locations.

The signage family is categorised into types, based on signage purpose to assist developers, planners and designers in selecting and determining their signage needs. These include:

- Municipal Identity
- Precinct Identity
- Wayfinding
- Site ID
- Notifications.

These sign types also consider three main types of users and their modality to guide selection of the most appropriate sign type:

- Pedestrian
- Bicycle
- Vehicle

The plan describes the planning, design, approvals and implementation process for new and replacement signage in Whittlesea. It also provides principles of placement to aid accessibility and legibility for users of all abilities, as follows:

1. Identify the areas where signs are needed
2. Find the best location in those areas
3. Determine the best orientation for the sign

Factors to consider optimising accessibility:

- Position signs free of visual obstructions and in optimum sight lines that are free to access by foot, wheelchair or mobility scooter.
- Place wayfinding signage consistently at decision points to provide assurance to users.
- Over signing can be confusing and discouraging for users.
- Remove obsolete or redundant signage that may be misleading.

- An appropriately sited sign should be obvious but not dominant.

It also provides information regarding signage selection. Selecting the most appropriate sign type for a location is a key part of the process. Having considered the primary user and viewing scale for a sign, it is important to identify a sign's general location and the type of information it will provide.

In regards to Sign Purpose, the following purposes have been identified for signs in open space:

- Secondary Wayfinding
- Tertiary Wayfinding
- Site ID / Destination (at minor and mid destinations)
- Notifications and Information (for various sites)

Additionally, the plan provides a guide to appropriate text height viewing distances for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle users. The table below outlines the appropriate text height for pedestrians as a more applicable option for open spaces.

Required Viewing Distance	Minimum Text X-height
2 metres	6 millimetres
4 metres	12 millimetres
6 metres	20 millimetres
8 metres	25 millimetres
12 metres	40 millimetres
15 metres	50 millimetres
25 metres	80 millimetres
35 metres	100 millimetres
40 metres	130 millimetres
50 metres	150 millimetres

The plan has also reviewed Thomastown Recreation & Aquatic Centre as a case study to audit the existing signage throughout the sites and offer new signage locations, that considers: Audience & modality, Purpose & message, Facilities & services, Location & prominence and Scale of site. The case studies also provide visualisations of indicative signage, demonstrating their siting, location, messaging and purpose. This can be applicable to parks/reserves master plan development.

Disability Action Plan 2017-2021

The City of Whittlesea Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2017-2021 details how Council will work with the community to meet the vision of an inclusive municipality where people of all abilities are encouraged and enabled to lead

satisfying, fulfilling and contributory lives. The Disability Act Victoria 2006 requires each Local Government to develop a DAP. Section 38 of the Act states that a public sector body must ensure that a DAP is prepared for the purpose of:

- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- Reducing barriers to obtaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

The Disability Action Plan is underpinned by the following principles:

- A. The actions will be shaped and driven by the people for whom it has relevance,
- B. Access to contributory living through the development of inclusive communities is the right of everyone who lives, works, studies, attends events or visits the City of Whittlesea,
- C. Universal access is fundamental to all community facilities and premises,²⁶in The City of Whittlesea,
- D. Access to wellbeing, education and meaningful employment are universal rights,
- E. Council will advocate for and collaborate with all levels of government as well as with community agencies for the best possible outcomes for people with disabilities, their families and friends, and;
- F. Progress on actions and outcomes will be monitored and regularly reported to Council and the community.

Relevant Actions

4.3.2 Investigate the development of Playground communication signage at parks and gardens across the municipality for use by people with autism.

In regards to VR Michael Reserve, Given the steepness of east side of the reserve, the challenge will be in providing a DDA compliant footpath.

Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016

The City of Whittlesea's Natural and Built Shade Policy outlines Council's commitment to taking a preventative approach to protecting the community from over-exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) through the adequate provision of best practice public facilities and environments that provide shade and shelter, particularly in high risk areas such as early years facilities, playspaces and outdoor community gathering spaces.

The key policy principles include the prioritisation of the provision of canopy trees and urban forest where possible, to provide shade as well as help reduce pollution, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve social and mental wellbeing.

Park Lighting Strategy 2006

The City of Whittlesea Park Lighting Strategy provides a strategic framework for the inclusion of lighting within public open space areas. The Strategy also provides direction for Council in relation to the provision of lighting in

existing open space areas, should the need be identified. In this case, the level of implementation will be subject to available Council funding.

According to the Park Lighting Strategy, VR Michael Reserve is considered as a District Park, and the strategy recommends that the lighting of major landscape elements could be used to create a visual amenity that benefits the nighttime character of the local neighbourhood as well as providing an opportunity for recreational pursuits. The strategy recommends provision of an integrated lighting system for the following park elements:

- Toilet, BBQ & picnic facilities
- Major landscaped features
- Significant trees
- Extensive circulating and lineal connector path systems
- Interpretive signage
- Playgrounds
- Dedicated car park facilities
- General accessibility
- Seats / viewing platforms
- Visual profile

The strategy provides guiding principles for the provision of lighting in public open spaces:

- Provide a strategic framework for the installation of lighting in Council's open space areas.
- Promote, comfortable and safe use of parks.
- Enhance the perception of Whittlesea's parks and open space as a major asset.
- Make a contribution to the legibility of the Council's major open space areas at night.
- Create memorable and individual images of the parks and open space at night.
- Improve the attractiveness of parks and open space for regular night activities and occasional festive events.
- Consider new lighting technologies, environmental initiatives and sensible efficiencies in the running costs associated with these technologies.

Lighting for Shared User paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea - Arup 2022

Lighting for Shared User paths presents the culmination of a 10 month project to develop a set of high level guiding principles using an evidence based, co-design approach to improve perceptions of community safety after dark through informing and influencing lighting design outcomes in the City of Whittlesea.

The recommendations in this document reflect high level considerations towards providing gender-inclusive nighttime amenity across Shared User Paths in the City of Whittlesea.

The guideline provides site specific design considerations when implementing the guiding principles for lighting to improve perceptions of community safety.

The following should be considered in relation to parks and passive recreational use such as dog-off leash areas:

- How can lighting work to increase visibility and sense of personal safety?
- Are there areas in which lighting can facilitate a better experience of the space, travelling through or long term enjoyment?
- How active will this park be during the later hours? Will the lighting levels vary as the usage of the space declines?

Lighting for Shared User paths outlines five principles to improve perceptions of community safety with light. These principles reflect in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses of night time experiences in three representative Shared User Paths in the City of Whittlesea. The five principles identified are as follows:

- Guiding Beacons of Light
 - Marker, or ‘glowing’ lights to indicate changes and variations in pathways.
 - Highlighted landmarks to help orientate the user in the space and improve wayfinding
 - Warmer colour temperatures more welcoming than cold colour temperatures and multi coloured lights
- Considered Lighting Context
 - High uniformity of lighting across a site is preferred as it is less dramatic and distracting.
 - Implement transitional lighting spaces with a gradual change of brightness.
 - Subtle ambient light is preferred over harsh bright light
- Brightness Journeys
 - Implement lighting during reasonable functional hours outside daytime hours
 - Efficient solar lighting is a desirable design outcome for implementation
 - Lighting of a whole pathway is not required to improve spaces at night
- More Consistent Lighting
 - Highlight amenities and material qualities of a space for visual clarity and safety
 - Light gaps and dark corners to enable awareness of environment.
 - Light up dark spaces to increase feelings of safety
- Layers of Light
 - Implement uplighting and diffused lighting for a more organic glowing quality
 - Light to vertical surfaces as a visual aid for people with vision impairment.
 - Light at varying levels which covers planting, pathways and approaching figures.

Appendix 2

Community Engagement

Phase 1 Engagement Summary, August 2023

Introduction

VR Michael Reserve is one of the City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Lalor, an established area of the municipality.

In response to a petition from the Lalor United Bocce and Social Club, Council resolved in December 2022 to upgrade the offsite parking (east of VR Michael Reserve entrance) and provide an all-weather pedestrian connection from the parking area to the clubrooms as part of the 2023/24 capital works program. The future upgrade of the carpark will improve accessibility for all individuals using the facility. Council also agreed to develop a reserve master plan, including features that help our community get active, socialise and enjoy the outdoors. The master plan will include medium and long-term improvements to be delivered over the next 10 years.

The VR Michael Recreation Reserve master plan is a high-level document providing a broad vision for the entire reserve. The master plan does not focus on one specific item or user group, but instead looks at all features, equipment, and users of the reserve. The master plan aims to find a balance between the needs of all current and future user groups and the facilities required. It will outline the improvements required to achieve this balance in a staged action plan.

The master plan will look at issues such as:

- Public access and connections to the reserve
- Visibility and safety
- Visual appearance and maintenance of the reserve.

The master plan will also consider ways to increase usage of the reserve by providing facilities in the reserve that cater to current and future users. These may include:

- Circuit walking paths
- Picnic shelters and seating
- Fitness stations
- A small off-leash dog park.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders will inform the VR Michael Reserve master plan.

How we engaged you

The VR Michael Recreation Reserve Phase 1 master plan consultation was open for community comment from 26 June to 24 July 2023.

Phase 1 consultation was undertaken with diverse representation from a range of targeted stakeholders including retailers along Deveney Road and High Street, The United Lalor and Bocce Social Club users, visitors to the reserve and residents within 400 meters of the reserve.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and discover the key ideas for improvement.

Visitors were informed of the consultation through several channels; letterbox drop within 400m of the reserve, large corflute signage installed at the main entry point of the reserve, Council's social channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and the Lalor and Epping Community Development Officers shared details with their connections, including local schools and CALD groups. The communications materials encouraged residents to attend the planned pop-ups and to share feedback via the project's digital engagement page.

During this period the project team held staffed community pop-ups on Wednesday 5 July at VR Michael Recreation Reserve in two areas, near the playground that captured families with young children and inside the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club that enabled us to hear from seniors who regularly attend the Bocce and Social Club. An additional community-based pop-up was held in the first week of the school term on Wednesday 11 July at the Lalor Library.

The project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform featured three consultation activities, a survey, an ideas board and a pinpoint map. The survey captured feedback on how respondents use the area as well as any insights on how we could best improve the area. The pinpoint map enabled respondents to drop a pin and make a comment on a specific point within the project area and provide feedback or an improvement idea for that location. At in-person consultations respondents were presented with the same survey and offered the opportunity to share their thoughts on large activity boards.

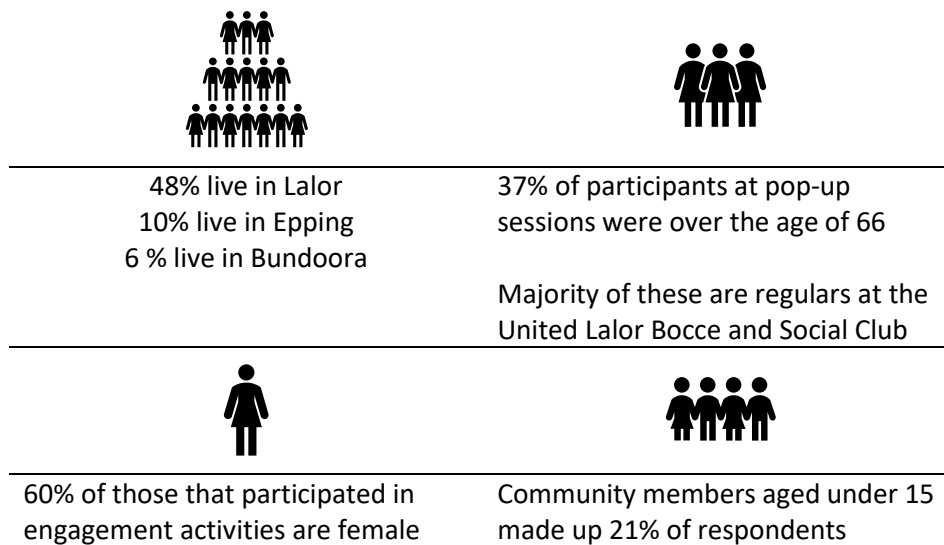


Above: Community participating in consultation at VR Michael Reserve pop-up on 5 July

Participation

A total of 172 people contributed to the consultation, with majority (131 people) participating in person at our community pop-ups by filling out a survey and/or sharing ideas on the map activity. The project Engage page was viewed by 305 people of which 41 contributed by completing the survey or participating in the online map activity.

Below is an overview of the demographics of participants:



Majority of participants aged over 66 years that shared feedback at on-site community pop-ups are members of the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club, and attend the club at least once a week for activities. The main concern for members is the lack of parking, particularly when an event is being held at the club. Suggested improvements shared by members focussed on parking improvements through the introduction of additional parking spaces including accesible parking, an adjustment to the current parking layout and creating a drop-off zone.

A snapshot of community participation is captured below:



VR Michael Recreation Reserve Master plan page on the Council’s Engage Whittlesea platform attracted 305 visitors of which 45 participated in the consultation by completing the survey or sharing their thoughts on the interactive map.

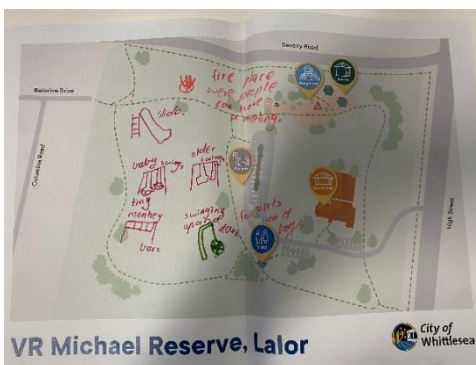


Three social posts and one event shared to Council’s social channels - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Posts reached more than 5,499 people with 208 of these people interacting with it in some way (sharing, commenting, or leaving a reaction).



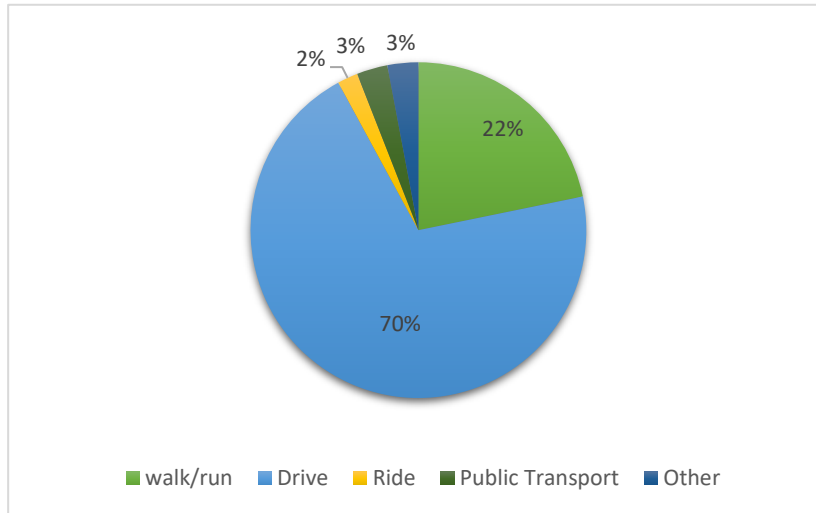
A total of 131 community members attended pop up sessions. Of these participating , 74 community members competed the survey and 57 participated in the map activity.

Several local families attended pop ups; with the older children sharing their innovative and interesting ideas on the map activity while the younger children enjoyed drawing a picture.

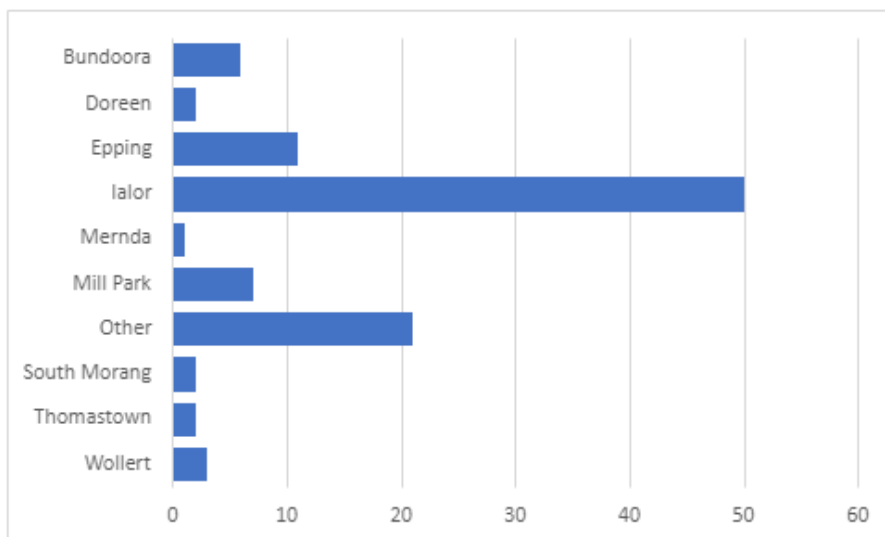


Above: children sharing their ideas at community pop-up sessions.

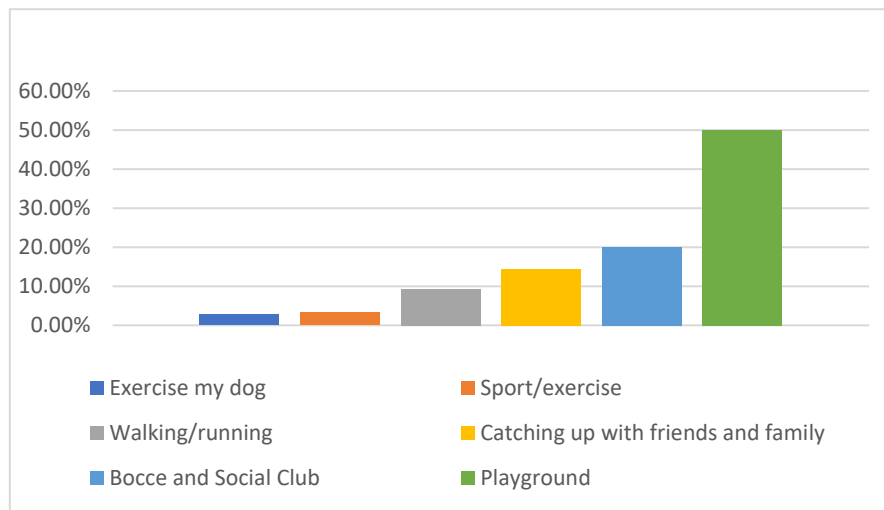
the Lalor Library to have his say, walks daily around the reserve. Safety was his main concern, minimal lighting and dead branches make it difficult to walk around the reserve.



Majority of respondents live in Lalor (48%), followed by Epping (10%). We also heard that 20% of participants live outside the municipality in nearby suburbs, Greensborough, Eltham, Reservoir and Research. These visitors of VR Michael reserve attend the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club.



The top two reasons that visitors use the reserve is to use the playground facilities (50%) and attend events/activities at The United Lalor Bocce and Social Club (20%). Others use the reserve to walk/run or catch up with family or friends. Fifteen members of the Bocce and Social Club that participated in the engagement stated that they attend activities at the Bocce and Social Club, as well as take grandchildren to the playground and catch up with family and friends on the weekend. Refer to graph below for actual figures.



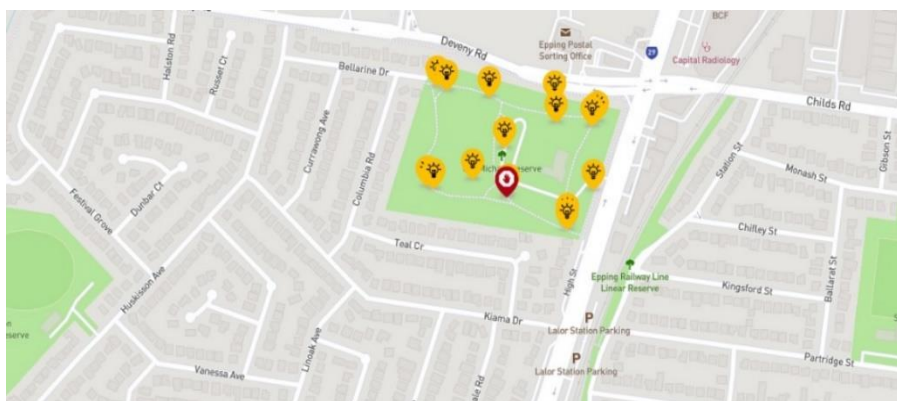
When asked what would make them visit the reserve more and their priorities for improving the reserve, safety was the highest ranked priority for many participants (26%). Lack of lighting, security cameras and the playground’s proximity to the road were the main concerns raised.

A couple who regularly take their grandchildren to parks in the municipality, choose not to go to VR Michael Reserve because the playground is located too close to the main road and there is no access from Deveney Road and access from High Street is difficult.

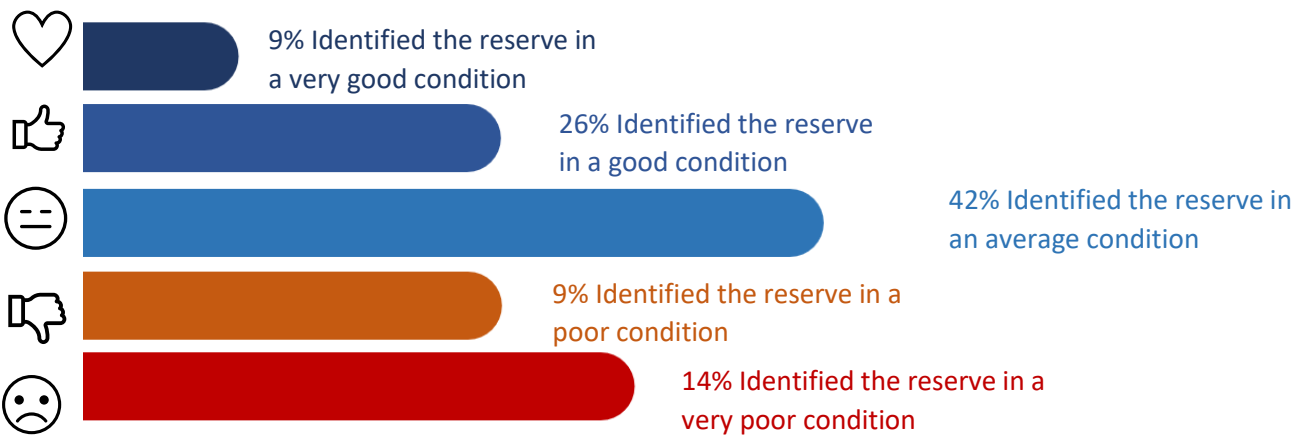
An upgrade to the public toilet block was identified as a second priority (15%) for improvement. Additional toilets including all ability toilet should be considered, as well as the position of the toilet block when designing the master plan. *“The remote location is too far from the playground and has many bushy areas that are not visible. Put the toilets closer to the playground where they’re clearly visible”.*

The VR Michael Reserve has a bad reputation amongst community members for anti-social behaviour in and near the public toilet, which has hindered the number of visitors to the reserve. *“It has a bit of a bad reputation in the area, it needs to be salvaged so families can feel safe to use the area (not just the playground)”.*

Of the 45 online contributions, 16 chose to participate in the social map activity and suggested that a jogging track, adult outdoor gym, footpath upgrade, public toilets near the playground, more bins and an off-leash dog park be included in the draft VR Michael master plan.



Participants were asked to rate the existing condition of the reserve which saw 65% rate it as in an average to very poor condition.



Opportunities

Respondents shared potential future opportunities for VR Michael Recreation Reserve, some of which may be out of scope of this project. These have been grouped below:

Recreation for all users and abilities

Playground



Extending the playground with age-appropriate equipment to cater for all age groups. Consider the materials when upgrading the reserve and to always keep safety in mind. Big rocks are used in many upgrades, but they are dangerous.

“A proper playground that is suitable for toddlers 1 – 3 years old, challenging, but also age appropriate so they can navigate themselves”

“More picnic and undercover areas to socialise”

Walking, Running and Cycling



More regular grass and tree maintenance to keep paths clear and accessible by all users. Access to the reserve and adequate pathways/walking track around the reserve will increase reserve users.

“Paved paths, jogging/running track with outdoor exercising equipment”

“Provide concrete all-weather track instead of existing dirt/gravel track”

Fitness and Sports



Introducing fitness facilities that cater for family and friend groups as opposed to formal sporting facilities. Outdoor gym equipment was a common suggestion. Community members highlighted the need for sporting facilities for older children, such as upgrading the existing basketball court and introducing a synthetic grassed areas for sport play.

“There is no need for a skateboard facility at this reserve. The demographic in the local area is mainly retired and young families. The

“Connecting and clearly marked cycle trails leading into the reserve”

playground and basketball facilities are enough. Maybe include some bench seating next to the basketball area for players and spectators”

Facilities and safety

Facilities



Additional facilities that complement the current playground equipment, extra seating (senior friendly), picnic tables, shelter, BBQ and bins.

“would like to see it become a more functional and recreational space where families in the area can gather and have picnics and do fun activities”

“Higher raised benches for elderly people to sit on. They are sometimes too low and hard to get up if you have mobility issues”

Safety



Introducing lighting and security cameras around the reserve to make users feel safer.

Additionally, safety concerns around the position of the playground were raised. A fence around the playground was suggested by a number of participants.

“Lights around existing/new paths which make them safer to walk at night”

“The entrance to the reserve looks too uninviting and does not provide you with a sense of safety”

Off-Leash Dog Park



17 community members left a comment that they would like to see an off-leash dog park as part of the Master plan for the reserve.

“Safe areas for dogs to socialise and exercise is desperately needed in Lalor and this spot seems ideal given the park is large enough to accommodate this”

“To have an off-leash dog enclosure for dogs to socialise in a safe and controlled environment. Our neighbourhood needs one badly with the number of dogs I meet at the reserve”

Community spaces

Historic Display



Introducing an area in the reserve that recognises the man, VR Michael, possibly an

Arts and Events



Activating the area by holding events at the reserve, including regular markets, multicultural events, Christmas

Natural Environment



Incorporating a community herb garden and sensory garden to the reserve.

information board with historical details.

Carols and structured events during school holidays.

“I would like to commemorate VR Michael the man, other than just having his name attached to the park. Some information boards or something like that to show all the ways that VR Michael helped the community”

“I would also like to see some historical information about the park/neighbouring area such as, I believe it was an old quarry site”

Other opportunities identified through the consultation included:

- Areas to socialise and better facilities for families to meet and have fun
- More rubbish bins
- More visible wayfinding signage from High Street
- *Mini outside gym, soccer goals*
- *More facilities for older children*
- *More parking and disabled parking*
- More shade trees
- Fence off the playground
- *Feature landscaping*
- Special events or programs such as weekend fun activities, multicultural events, community cycling events and food trucks and crafts markets
- *More play equipment like zip lines, water play, sensory play and skate ramp*
- Better maintenance of the central lawn and paths as they are prone to flooding.

Participants also took the opportunity to highlight concerns with the reserve, including:

- Flooding occurs during winter
- Dumped rubbish
- Poor access path to the toilet block
- Poor lighting in the car park
- Poor access path from the off-site car park to the Bocce Social Club

Next steps

Thank you to everyone that completed the survey, dropped a pin and participated in the community engagement.

Feedback gathered from the community is being used to develop the master plan design and will be incorporated into the decision-making process. While we are not able to accommodate everyone's comments, the project team will provide solutions to the issues raised and balance them with the requirements of Council.

Council will endorse the draft master plan for phase two of community consultation, providing the community with an opportunity to see how their feedback has helped shape the master plan and to provide any further feedback.

Phase 2 Engagement Summary, May 2024

Introduction

VR Michael Reserve is one of the City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Lalor, an established area of the municipality.

In response to a petition from the Lalor United Bocce and Social Club, Council resolved in December 2022 to upgrade the offsite parking (east of VR Michael Reserve entrance) and provide an all-weather pedestrian connection from the parking area to the clubrooms as part of the 2023/24 capital works program. The future upgrade of the carpark will improve accessibility for all individuals using the facility. Council also agreed to develop a reserve master plan, including features that help our community get active, socialise, and enjoy the outdoors. The master plan will include medium and long-term improvements to be delivered over the next 10 years.

The VR Michael Recreation Reserve master plan is a high-level document providing a broad vision for the entire reserve. The master plan does not focus on one specific item or user group, but instead looks at all features, equipment, and users of the reserve. The master plan aims to find a balance between the needs of all current and future user groups and the facilities required. It will outline the improvements required to achieve this balance in a staged action plan.

How we engaged you

We consulted with our community to inform the development of the masterplan and again to seek feedback on the draft. Consultation was undertaken over several years.

This report summarises the community engagement undertaken as part of phase 2; following the first phase undertaken in mid-2023 and summarised below.

Phase 1: Gathering Ideas – Monday 26 June to Monday 24 July 2023

The VR Michael Recreation Reserve Phase 1 master plan consultation was open for community comment from Monday 26 June to Monday 24 July 2023.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and discover the key ideas for improvement.

The community was able to have their say via the [Engage Whittlesea page](#) or in-person at two community-based pop-ups.

Residents within 400m of the reserve, received a letter to update them on project status and invite them to share their feedback through the project Engage Whittlesea page or at one of the community-based pop-ups.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders in phase 1 informed the draft VR Michael Reserve Master plan.

During this phase, a total of 172 contributions were made to the consultation, 131 of which were captured at community-based pop-ups, 41 online through the [Engage Whittlesea page](#). A total of 305 people visited the project Engage Whittlesea page. Feedback captured from the community and stakeholders in phase 1, informed the VR Michael Reserve master plan that was presented in phase 2.

Contributors in phase 1 included Lalor United Bocce & Social Club members, students from nearby school, parents, grandparents, dog walkers and daily walkers/runners. Safety was an overarching theme, specifically the lack of lighting, uneven paths and obstruction of paths, the close proximity of the playground to Deveny Road and anti social behaviour at the reserve. This feedback from community in Phase 1 was integral in the development of the draft master plan and Phase 2 recommendations by Council.

Phase 2: Sharing the draft master plan for community feedback – Monday 22 April to Monday 20 May 2024

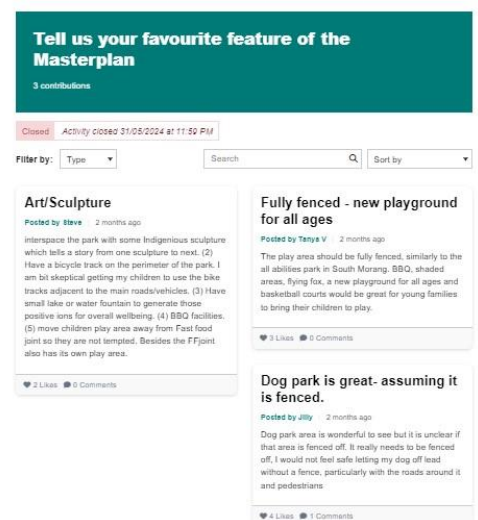
During this phase we shared the VR Michael Reserve draft master plan with key stakeholders previously consulted in phase 1, as well as the wider community to understand if the proposed draft plan meets community expectations and the current and future needs of groups currently using the space.

The community was able to view the draft master plan and have their say online via the [Engage Whittlesea page](#) or at the in-person community-based pop-ups.

Online Engagement

The project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform featured three engagement activities, a survey, an interactive view of the draft master plan and an open forum to share your favourite feature of the master plan. The Engage Whittlesea page presented a summary of opportunities captured from the community through the phase 1 consultation period and offered visitors a chance to learn more about the key recommendations of the plan. Visitors to the page were also encouraged to complete a short survey to let us know how they feel about the proposed thirteen master plan recommendations.

Below: interactive map, open forum and Council’s recommendations from proposed VR Michael Reserve draft master plan on Engage Whittlesea page



Proposed recommendations by Council

- Realign and upgrade main paths within the reserve to concrete paths
- Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed play space and picnic area
- Upgrade and realign the existing path to connect the central car park to the Bocce Club
- Proposed lighting along the extended carpark
- Proposed integrated and upgraded carpark, comprising over 65 car parking spaces
- Proposed drop-off area next to the Bocce Social Club
- Proposed multi-use space comprising smaller areas with social seating, drinking fountain and shade trees
- Proposed relocated play space further away from Deveny Road including a range of play experiences and nature play
- Proposed open unstructured dog off-leash area with seats, shelter, and a fountain
- Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins, and social seating
- Establish interpretive signage along the proposed main paths that provide education on the history of VR Michael
- Proposed diverse informal recreational facilities beneath the future Wollert rail overpass including a half basketball court, table tennis tables, skate features, bouldering wall, native pollinator, garden, and outdoor gathering space (the proposed activities beneath the rail will be delivered as part of the future Wollert Rail project).

In-person Engagement

During phase 2 consultation the project team held two community-based pop-ups and one drop-in session:

- **Pop –up at VR Michael Reserve on Tuesday 7 May from 9.30am to 12pm**
Here we captured a range of demographics, including families with young children and seniors who regularly attend the Lalor United Bocce & Social Club, some who also take grandchildren to the park and gather with friends and family.
- **Drop-in Session at Epping Memorial Hall on Thursday 16 May from 10am to 12pm**
As an outcome of consultation phase one, we learned that women and girls are reluctant to use VR Michael Reserve due to its poor reputation and antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, as part of conducting a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA), a requirement for all council projects, we have decided to engage with CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) groups to ensure that the open spaces and parks we design are inclusive and meet their needs.

Project staff invited 15 culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) female groups to participate in a targeted drop-in session at Epping Memorial Hall. The invited groups were:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Zenobia Association | • Alawi Islamic Association |
| • Libyan Women’s Association | • Thomastown Neighbourhood House |
| • St Anthony Senior Club | • Craft group and Arabic playgroup |
| • St Marys Multicultural Club | • Thomastown Library Manager |
| • Iraqi Women’s Group in Epping North | • Epping Wollert Nepalese Community |
| • and Arabic playgroup in Thomastown | • Sikh Community |
| • Lalor Carers Support Group | • Al- Siraat College |
| • Multicultural Women’s Association | • Nepalese Neighbourhood community |
| • Whittlesea Community Connection | |

Of the 15 groups invited, none were able to attend on the day, however members of the Greek Cypriot group attending an event at Epping Memorial Hall on the same day, participated in the consultation. We acknowledge the need to refine our approach to engaging with CALD groups, as highlighted by our experience with VR Michael consultation.

Pop- Up at Epping Plaza on Friday 17 May from 2.30pm to 4.30pm

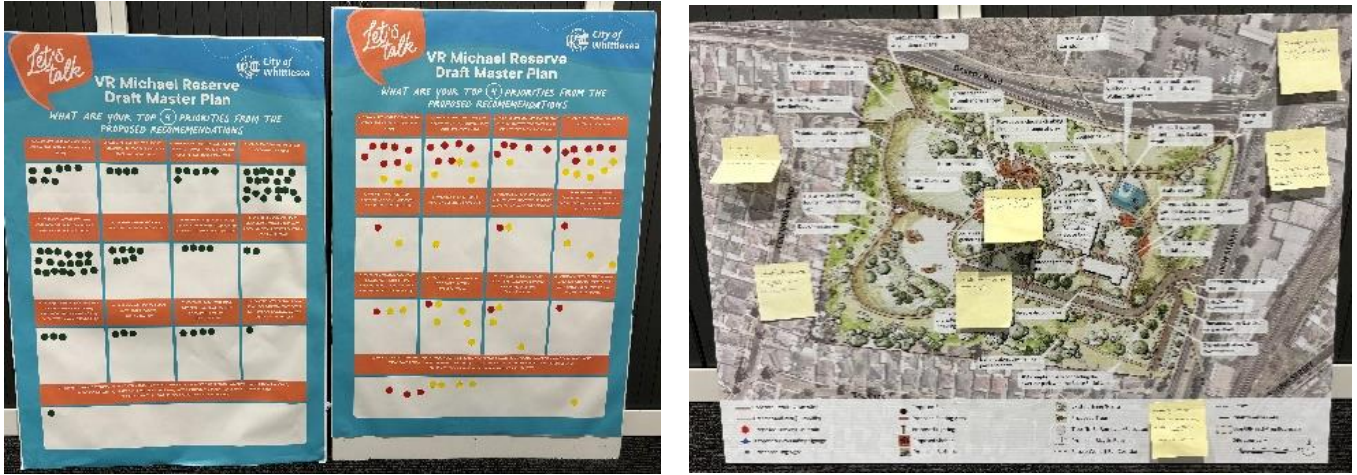
Council staff attended nearby Epping Plaza on Friday 17 May to share the draft master plan with community. We were able to capture data from a younger demographic, including students from local schools, parents, and young adults.

Below: Council project team at VR Michael Reserve pop-up on Tuesday 7 May, Epping Memorial Hall on Thursday 16 May, and Epping Plaza on Friday 17 May 2024



At the in-person community-based pop-ups, respondents were presented with a summary of key recommendations that mirrored the Engage Whittlesea page and were encouraged to share their top four priorities (of 13 recommendations) for the upgrade. There was also an opportunity to provide additional comments about the proposed draft master plan.

Below: draft VR Michael Master plan and dot boards used at community-based pop-ups



Residents within 400m of the reserve received a letter to update them on the project status and invite them to view the draft master plan and share their feedback through the [Engage Whittlesea page](#) or at one of the community-based pop-ups.

Visitors to the reserve were alerted to the consultation through large corflute signage installed at the main entry point to the reserve. The signage featured the QR code directing them to the Engage Whittlesea page.

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement and community-based pop-ups was shared on Council's social media channels including Facebook and Instagram.



Left: VR Michael Reserve Facebook post and large corflute signage at the entry point to the reserve promoting the consultation period

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on which enables users to easily switch to screen reader mode or easily adjust settings such as font size, contrast, dyslexia friendly options to improve the overall accessibility of the site. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to reduce language

barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality.

Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously indicated an interest in parks and/or the Epping and Lalor areas were sent a project update by email and encouraged to visit the project page and share their feedback.

Youth Council

During phase 2 consultation, the project team presented the draft master plan at City of Whittlesea's Youth Council meeting on 6 May. The Youth Council reviewed the draft master plan and offered feedback and recommendations on behalf of the youth of City of Whittlesea, with the feedback and recommendations outlined later in this report.

Targeted Engagement

Council invited community groups to participate in the in-person VR Michael consultation. Location, illness, and clashes with timetable made it difficult for some members of the community to attend. These groups were also invited to submit their feedback via the project Engage page and email. Council will review and conduct further investigation on ways we can better connect with these groups face to face for future projects, in particular local schools, and CALD female groups. See below for groups invited to participate.

- *CALD women and girl groups*
- *Epping Primary school*
- *Peter Lalor Secondary College*
- *Lalor Primary School*
- *Lalor Secondary College*
- *Lalor Bocce Social Club committee and members*
- *Residents within 400m*
- *Youth Council*

Participation

During Phase 2, a total of 85 contributions were received, 67 of which were captured at the community-based pop-ups and the remaining 18 contributions made on the Engage Whittlesea page. To gather feedback from the youth of City of Whittlesea, Council presented the draft master plan at a Youth Council meeting.

A total of 226 unique visitors to the project Engage page, 50 of which opted to follow the page to receive project updates.

Below is a snapshot of engagement activity.



Two organic posts across Facebook and Instagram, reaching 4731 accounts with 70 engagements linking through to the Engage page.



Three community-based pop-ups were held and saw 67 people share their feedback through surveys, dot boards and conversations with Council staff.

- 38 completed a dot board activity and survey
- 29 completed a survey only
- 10 provided additional comments



The Engage Whittlesea page was viewed 348 times during the consultation period, with 18 people participating in the online survey and 5 participants opting to use the open forum to share their comments.

Below is a snapshot of in-person Community participation demographics:



A total of 58.2% identified as female and 41.8% as male.



A total of 71% of in-person participants were 66 years of age and over.

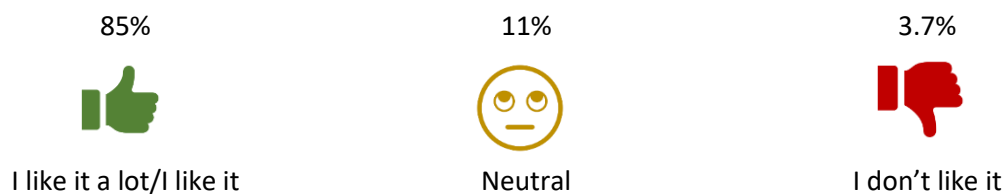


A total of 49.2% of in-person participants live in Epping and Lalor.

What we heard

Survey results

When asked how do you feel about the overall draft master plan for VR Michael Reserve? 54 participants responded indicating if they liked/liked a lot, can live with it or don't like/don't like at all the draft master plan.



The 54 survey participants were also asked how they feel about the 13 recommendations proposed by Council for the reserve upgrade.



There was an overwhelming positive response to the 13-recommendations proposed by Council. The top most **liked** by community are:

1. *Proposed lighting along the extended carpark (96%)*
2. *Proposed multi-use space comprising smaller areas with social seating, drinking fountain and shade trees (92%)*
3. *Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins, and social seating (92%)*
4. *Upgrade and realign the existing path to connect the central car park to the Bocce Club (91%)*
5. *Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed play space and picnic area (88%)*
6. *Proposed relocated play space further away from Deveny Road including a range of play experiences and nature play (88%)*
7. *Proposed fitness and exercise station with equipment arranged in groups to allow for socialising (83%)*



Some members of community had a **neutral** response to the proposed recommendations, not reacting positively or negatively.

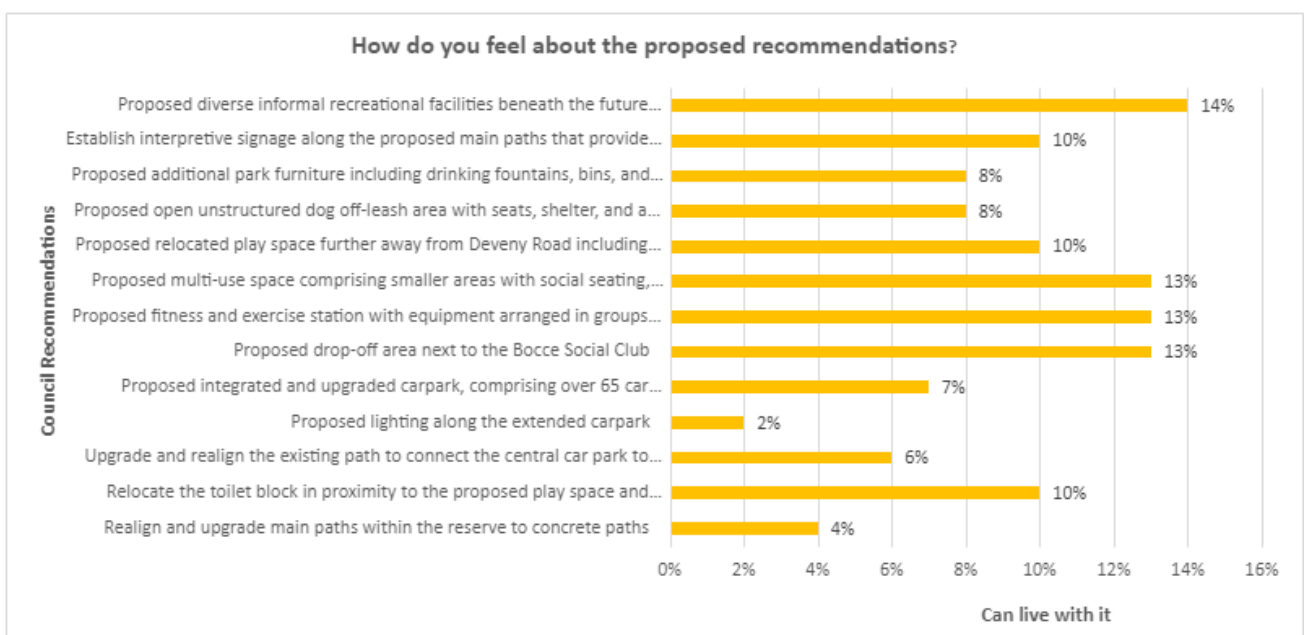
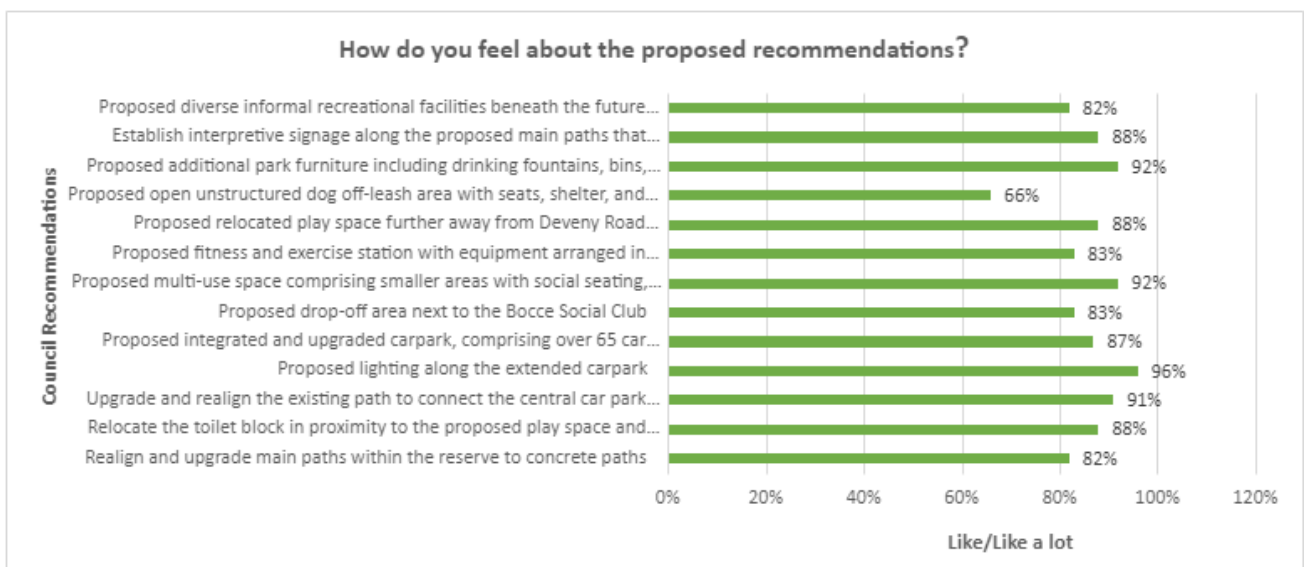
- *Proposed drop-off area next to the Bocce Social Club (13%)*
- *Proposed multi-use space comprising smaller areas with social seating, drinking fountain and shade trees (13%)*
- *Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed play space and picnic area (10%)*
- *Proposed relocated play space further away from Deveny Road including a range of play experiences and nature play (10%)*
- *Establish interpretive signage along the proposed main paths that provide education on the history of VR Michael Reserve (10%)*

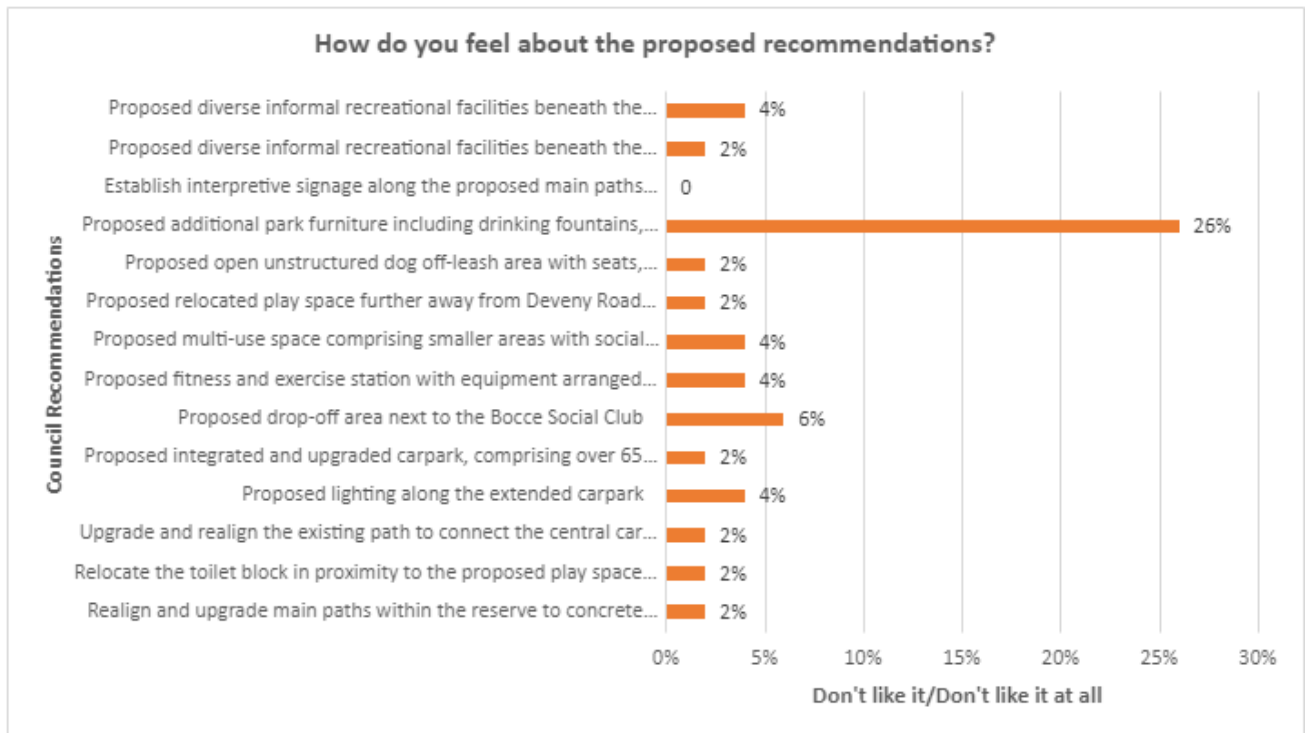


A total of 26% of all survey participants expressed a **negative** sentiment towards the *proposed open unstructured dog off-leash area with seats, shelter*. “Unstructured” was the main concern as expressed by a participant below.

“The off-leash dog area in the draft master plan doesn’t seem to be fenced, I would suggest fencing this area as it’s close proximity to the children’s play space and presents a risk to child safety”

See graphs below for a full breakdown of how community feel about the thirteen proposed recommendations for VR Michael reserve.





In person community engagement activity

A total of 38 people participated in the dot board activity across the two community-based pop-ups, choosing their top four recommendations (out of thirteen) for improvement. Additional lighting around the carpark was the top priority for improvement (33 dots). See top four recommendations below:

1. *Propose lighting along the extended carpark (33 dots)*
2. *Proposed integrated and upgraded carpark, comprising over 65 car parking spaces (20 dots)*
3. *Realign and upgrade main paths within the reserve to concrete paths (18 dots)*
4. *Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed play space and picnic area (14 dots)*

During discussions with project staff, further comments were shared related to the project.

Online Open Forum

Four participants opted to use the open forum on the VR Michael Reserve Project Engage Page to share other comments related to the project.

“Interspace the park with some Indigenous sculpture which tells a story from one sculpture to next”

“Have a bicycle track on the perimeter of the park. I am bit sceptical getting my children to use the bike tracks adjacent to the main roads/vehicles”

“Have small lake or water fountain to generate those positive ions for overall wellbeing”

“BBQ facilities”

“move children play area away from McDonalds so they are not tempted. Besides McDonalds also has its own play area.”

“The play area should be fully fenced, similarly to all abilities park in South Morang. BBQ, shaded areas, flying fox, a new playground for all ages and basketball courts would be great for young families to bring their children to play.”

“Dog park area is wonderful to see but it is unclear if that area is fenced off. It really needs to be fenced off, I would not feel safe letting my dog off lead without a fence, particularly with the roads around it and pedestrians”

“For the safety of the kids and the dogs, please fence this park. I too wouldn’t feel comfortable taking my dog to an unfenced dog park - especially with so many cars on high street!”

Feedback received by email from a women’s group unable to attend the drop-in session

“From my side for any park to make inclusive and attractive following things to consider:

- *Having parking available, especially for special needs with enough parking facilities.*
- *Exercise area gym, running space*
- *Toilets and change area with drinking water access.*
- *BBQ and picnic spots with shade*
- *Garden and electric space which we can hire”*

The Youth Council

The City of Whittlesea Youth Council provided valuable feedback on three main categories with recommendations from the project team in response on page nine of this report:

Youth targeted areas within the reserve:

“By providing spaces for sport, recreation, socialisation, and study, the reserve becomes a hub for youth engagement, physical activity and community building. by investing in youth targeted areas within the reserve contributes to the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of young people and strengthens the sense of community within the municipality. Through sporting facilities, specifically, basketball courts, soccer pitch, exercise machines, foot and bike tracks, and skate parks are likely to attract youth who are interested in sports and physical activities”

Popular Leisure/sports activities for youth:

“Some of the more popular leisure and sports activities that may attract youth to this reserve include, basketball, skateboarding, volleyball, tennis and general outdoor exercising using gym equipment, additional facilities such as

playgrounds, modern seating areas, solar powered tables for studying outdoors, and shaded picnic areas”

Challenges to youth utilisation and safety concerns:

“Some safety considerations that may discourage youth from engaging in this area is inadequate lighting, and surveillance. Surrounding foliage and lack of visibility from nearby roads contribute to this issue, potentially deterring young visitors from utilising the park after dark”.

Refer to appendix 1 for more detailed information and following pages for response from the project team.

Key messages from community feedback

Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the proposed draft master plan and offered potential future opportunities for VR Michael Reserve, some of which may be out of scope of this project. Below are the themed comments received through both online and in-person engagement activities.



Playground– Moving the playground away from busy Deveny road and upgrading the existing playground with a play space for all ages and abilities was a priority for respondents.

“Separate area for babies/toddlers to play”

“The play area should be fully fenced, similarly to all abilities park in South Morang. BBQ, shaded areas, flying fox, a new playground for all ages and basketball courts would be great for young families to bring their children to play”

“Toddler safe slides and climbing sections”

“Sandpit in the playground area”

Technical response: We will provide a range of play experiences for different age groups as part of the proposed playspace.



Accessible – upgrading paths and adding additional all ability car parks and equipment to make the playground and Lalor Bocce Club accessible to all is a priority for respondents.

“It says over 65 car parking spots, doesn't specify the exact amount and how many disabled car parking spots there will be. The more car parking the better. I don't understand why the new proposed path from the lower car park to the social club

isn't more direct instead of going up and then coming back. The elderly struggle to walk up the hill from the lower car park"

"As a regular visitor to the Bocce club and having a disabled sticker, better parking facilities are essential. Walking out at night after an event and having to walk to the bottom of the hill as could not find parking closer to club house is very dangerous"

"Enable a delivery access path to the club delivery door located on the eastern side of the pavilion"

Technical response: Specify the number of car park spaces that could be allocated from the additional proposed car parking space outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Note: The National Construction Code specifies the number of DDA compliant car parking spaces based on the classification of the associated building. It mandates one space for every 50 car parking spaces. However, considering the demographics of the Lalor United Bocce & Social Club members, we propose increasing this requirement to three DDA compliant car parking spaces.

We have investigated the opportunity for providing a vehicle entry node from Deveny Road; however traffic on Deveny Road, VR Michael Reserve's limitation due to the future rail corridor, site topography, and existing trees restrict this opportunity. Additionally, the main facilities, such as the playspace and picnic area, will be relocated to further away from Deveny Road to the central area of the reserve, which will have good access from the proposed extended car park.

We will provide a delivery access path and a trolley loading area to the club delivery door located on the eastern side of the Lalor United Bocce & Social Club



Sustainable and Nature-Inspired Park Enhancements – community would like to see recycled materials used in the upgrade and the existing grassed area maintained.

"Have small lake or water fountain to generate those positive ions for overall wellbeing"

"It would be nice to have a dedicated space, like a rainforest, with ferns, shade trees and a small pond. Walking amongst nature is important for people's mental therapy"

"A water play area would be fantastic"

Technical response: It is not possible to include a waterbody such as a lake or pond in the reserve because VR Michael Reserve is old landfill. As part of the development of New Epping, the existing wetland and a section of Edgars Creek in this vicinity will be transformed into public open space. Situated adjacent to the Northern Hospital Epping on the south side of Cooper Street, it is approximately 600m west of VR

Michael Reserve on Deveny Road. This development will offer significant opportunities for accessing public open space with natural water features for the local communities of Lalor and Epping



Facilities – Respondents highlighted the need for additional shade, seating areas and drinking fountains to encourage family and friend gatherings at the park.

“More gathering places for adults/parents when they are supervising their kids rather than standing on the path (bikes etc ride past quickly. Especially at the play area people come from McDonalds and they struggle to find a place to sit”

“Have a bicycle track on the perimeter of the park. I am bit sceptical getting my children to use the bike tracks adjacent to the main roads/vehicles”

“Shelter for families. Grass nearby to sit on a picnic mat”

“A drinking fountain next to the proposed half basketball court”

Technical response: We will investigate the potential provision of a number of additional features including a bicycle track/loop or an informal learn to ride loop as part of the proposed paths, and the integration of public art in the reserve and murals along the Wollert rail corridor.

We will provide additional seating next to the proposed play area and an additional drinking fountain next to the proposed half-basketball court.



Safety and lighting – introducing additional lighting, a lockable toilet block, new fencing, safe playground equipment and car park improvements to make users feel safe and help to deter anti-social behaviour.

“Safety needs to be paramount”

“Have any spaces where there is seating to be visible and have clear lines of vision. This will help women feel safer and provide passive surveillance”

“Is there the opportunity to create a secondary vehicular entry on Deveny Road? Visitors coming from the north or west will be required to do a U-turn on High Street to access the High Street car park entry”

“Provide lighting along the path on the north side of the reserve connecting the entrance from High Street to the entrance from Bellarine Drive”.

Technical response: We will investigate lighting opportunities for evening/after dark use activities such as dog-off lead park and informal recreation activities beneath the Wollert rail corridor as lighting was raised by both the local community and Youth Council.

Note: the public toilet will be closed during evening hours and night time, so no lighting is required for this area and the access path.



Future Wollert Rail Overpass – community have questions about the impact of the proposed future rail overpass and the impact on VR Michael Reserve and nearby residents.

“If the proposed Wollert Rail extension is ever built, the project will claim much of VR Michael Reserve for construction activities. During construction, access into the reserve from High St (e.g., the driveway to the social club) will likely be severely impacted, possibly even completely blocked.

The timeline. When will all this start and how will it be impacted by a future railway? Will the council be spending money on amazing features for it only be destroyed when the train line is finally built? Can the council actively and vocally advocate for it to be built sooner?

Technical response: The master plan recommendations are staged into short to medium term, long-term and post-rail coming stages to address community priority needs and have less interfere with the future Wollert Rail corridor project. Regarding the timeline of the Future Wollert Rail corridor project, Council’s Advocacy Prospectus 2023-25 advocates for the construction of the rail corridor by 2030, however at the time of writing this report, the Victorian Government has not committed to the timing or funding of this project. The master plan justifies the council’s advocacy for the proposed facilities beneath the rail to be funded by the state government and to be delivered as part of the Future Wollert Rail project (we can add this green section).



Off-leash Dog Park – Community would like to see the inclusion of a fenced dog park area.

“Dog park area is wonderful to see but it is unclear if that area is fenced off. It really needs to be fenced off, I would not feel safe letting my dog off lead without a fence, particularly with the roads around it and pedestrians”

“Unless the dog area is closed off by fencing, it’s too close to the area that our members BBQ and seating area”

Technical response: We will investigate the provision of a fence around the designated area for the dog off-leash park.



Inclusive Play space – Community would like to see a range of play experiences for different age groups.

“It is important for the reserve to meet the diverse needs and interests of young people in the municipality. By providing spaces for sport, recreation, socialisation, and study, the reserve becomes a hub for youth engagement, physical activity, and community building. by investing in youth targeted areas within the reserve contributes to the physical, social, and emotional wellbeing of young people and strengthens the sense of community within the municipality. Through sporting facilities, specifically, basketball courts, soccer pitch, exercise machines, foot and bike tracks, and skate parks are likely to attract youth who are interested in sports and physical activities”

Technical response: Provide a range of play experiences for different age groups as part of the proposed playspace.

The following recommendations are being considered as part of the feedback received from the Youth Council.

Youth-targeted areas/activities:

- Council to advocate for the proposed youth-oriented facilities beneath the rail to be delivered by the state government as part of the future Wollert rail project.

Note: The proposed sports court including a half basketball court, tennis tables and a bouldering wall as well as a skate feature area offer opportunities for recreation, exercise, and social interaction among young people.

Outdoors studying spaces:

- Investigate opportunities for solar-powered tables/shelters in the proposed gathering area, providing renewable energy for device charging, Wi-Fi connectivity and outdoor studying opportunities.

Lighting and security cameras:

- As mentioned above, we will investigate lighting opportunities for evening use activities.
- Note: The proposed and relocated facilities provide passive surveillance opportunities across the reserve. While the ability to propose activities on the eastern interface is limited due to the topography and steepness of the site, the proposed shared path from High Street and the new entry from the corner of High Street and Deveny Road will activate this interface and provide additional passive surveillance opportunities. Council does not have an established CCTV program for the implementation of CCTV in public open space, which is paramount in ensuring privacy of park users.

Next steps

Thank you to everyone that visited the project Engage page and contributed through the online survey or at in-person community engagement opportunities.

The project team will review the feedback received and develop a revised master plan with amendments that where possible address concerns raised by the community.

The final master plan design will be presented to Council for endorsement on August 22. The community will be kept updated on further developments via the [VR Michael Recreation Reserve project page](#).

Appendix 1: Feedback from City of Whittlesea Youth Council

Youth Targeted areas within the reserve

It is important for the reserve to meet the diverse needs and interests of young people in the municipality. By providing spaces for sport, recreation, socialisation, and study, the reserve becomes a hub for youth engagement, physical activity and community building. by investing in youth targeted areas within the reserve contributes to the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of young people and strengthens the sense of community within the municipality. Through sporting facilities, specifically, basketball courts, soccer pitch, exercise machines, foot and bike tracks, and skate parks are likely to attract youth who are interested in sports and physical activities. These areas offer opportunities for recreation, exercise, and social interaction among young people. Moreover, playgrounds equipped with modern and inclusive facilities, such as the basketball courts, gyms and 'grown up' playgrounds, can cater to the diverse interests and age groups of youth. These spaces provide opportunities for fun, physical activity and socialisation. In addition, areas designed for hanging out, such as large benches, shaded seating areas, and solar powered tables are essential for fostering social connections among the youth. These spaces offer opportunities for relaxation, study, and social interaction in a natural outdoor setting. importantly, ensuring easy access to the reserve through sidewalks, signs and driveways are crucial for attracting youth. improving accessibility can address potential barriers to youth engagement, such as lack of transportation or awareness of the reserve's locations.

Popular Leisure/Sports Activities for Youth

Some of the more popular leisure and sports activities that may attract youth to this reserve include, basketball, skateboarding, volleyball, tennis and general outdoor exercising using gym equipment, additional facilities such as playgrounds, modern seating areas, solar powered tables for studying outdoors, and shaded picnic areas are also appreciated. These facilities play a key role in supporting the physical health, social interaction, mental wellbeing and skill development of young people and others. Through the social and recreational appeal, it is likely to attract the youth to utilise these facilities.

Challenges to youth utilisation and safety concerns Addressing

Challenges to youth utilisation and safety concerns are crucial aspects to ensuring that the Michael reserve is accessible and welcoming to our diverse youth community. Some safety considerations that may discourage youth from engaging in this area is inadequate lighting, and surveillance. Surrounding foliage and lack of visibility from nearby roads contribute to this issue, potentially deterring young visitors from utilising the park after dark. A possible solution to this issue is

enhancing lighting infrastructure throughout the reserve to improve safety and visibility during evening hours. Implementing low-energy lighting solutions placed strategically can address safety concerns while preserving the park's natural ambiance. Without adequate surveillance, the reserve may be vulnerable to vandalism and antisocial behaviour, discouraging other young members in the community from engaging in this area. If there is a lack of security cameras and patrols, it can diminish the sense of safety for our youth park users. A possible solution to this is placing security cameras around the premises, and warning signs.