

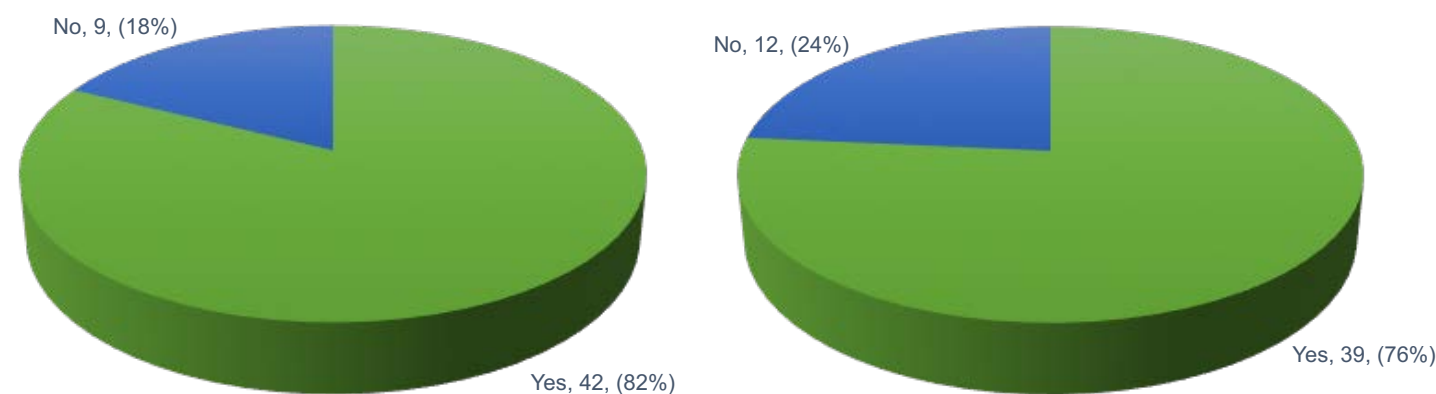
Community Engagement Report

Following the preparation of the draft Master Plan, community engagement activities were undertaken which included an on-line community survey and drop-in events held on site.

The community engagement activities were successful in engaging a broad cross-section of the community, including people holding different views about the draft Master Plan proposals. The engagement recorded a significant amount of support for the proposals. There was also a group of people opposed to aspects of the master plan, who were predominantly nearby residents who were concerned about amenity issues associated with increased use of the spaces in proximity to their properties, particularly associated with noise and light from sport training. Outcomes of the community engagement activities are discussed below.

4.1 On-line survey

Community consultation was undertaken through Hobsons Bay City Council's community engagement website, Participate. The Participate site, which attracted over 1,300 visitors, presented the draft Master Plan to the community and encouraged feedback through an on-line survey. The on-line survey received a total of 51 responses the majority of which live in Hobsons Bay and were in support of the Master Plan's vision and objectives. A summary of key findings from the survey are presented below.



Q1: Do you support the vision and objectives as defined in the Draft Master Plan

Q2: Is the Master Plan representative of your interests/needs?

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Master Plan through the Participate site. A number of key themes emerged from the comments, a summary of which is provided below.

General:

- Support for the draft Master Plan including:
 - open space for children to enjoy
 - how the reserve will be made more welcoming for a range of users
 - co-locating sport and areas for enjoyment of the environment so everyone can enjoy the space
- Respondents noted that the environmental objectives should be implemented prior to the sporting facilities

Wetland Education node:

- Strong support for the potential future wetland centre with particular mention of the tourism potential, the passive recreational value, and the connection to the surrounding environment

Biodiversity:

- Support was noted for the additional screening planting to boundary of proposed sporting fields, the increased natural elements within the reserve, viewing areas over the constructed wetland, and revegetation works to encourage and protect vegetation and wildlife.

Sporting fields:

- There were mixed responses in regards to the implementation of sporting fields within the reserve
 - Concern was expressed for the lighting associated with the proposed sporting fields, the suitability of a potential synthetic grass field, lack of screening planting to residences on the western boundary, and too much focus on formal sporting activities over passive recreation.
 - Residents noted their support for additional soccer fields to support the growing participation in the sport.

Path Network

- Residents supported the proposed path network and noted the following:
 - additional path connections to surrounding trails are required
 - paths within reserve should be pedestrian only
 - improved pedestrian crossings are required within and outside the reserve.

Drop- in events

Community drop-in sessions were held on-site at the Altona Sports Centre on Wednesday March 20 and Saturday March 23. The purpose of these sessions were to promote awareness of the draft Master Plan and provide an opportunity for informal discussion with users/visitors to the reserve. Approximately 30 people attended over the course of each session.

Written submissions were invited as a part of the engagement process, particularly for people who wished to ensure that their feedback was received and recorded. Seven written responses were received following the drop-in events, as summarised below:

- 4 written responses were from nearby residents expressing strong concern about the amenity impacts of the development of the open grassed area in the eastern part of the reserve for formal recreation activity.
- 2 written submissions expressing support for the development of a wetland centre at the site, as proposed by the Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre group. One submission was from an individual, and one from the BayWest Bicycle User Group (who see a wetland centre as a desirable destination along the shared trail that runs past the site).
- 1 written submission expressing general support for the Master Plan, but suggesting that the BMX facilities at the site should include something more suited to less advanced riders and kids, as the current 'jumps' facility provided is unsuited to many potential users.

The content of these written submissions is incorporated into the summary of all feedback received below.

General:

- Strong support for facilities that get children and the community involved in sport.
- Overall support for the draft Master Plan. Residents noted it was nice to see the site being developed and hopefully used by more people in the future.

Wetland Education node:

- Residents and members of the Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre expressed their support for the wetland education node noting that it provided an anchor for a potential future wetland centre.
- Strong support for the potential future Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre and its potential uses and benefits including: connecting visitors and children to the natural environment and educating them about the value of the site, encouraging passive recreation in nature, improve physical and mental health of visitors, a potential hub for research and education, and a rest stop for users of the Laverton Creek Trail.

Biodiversity:

- Support for the proposed action items aimed at improving biodiversity including habitat for the Altona Skipper Butterfly and conservation areas.
- Residents added that they would like to see interpretive and warning signs regarding snakes and additional indigenous vegetation.

Sporting fields:

- A mixed response in regards to the sporting fields was received during the drop-in events. Concerns noted included:
 - the proposed location of the soccer fields/ cricket ovals due to potential light spill, noise and additional traffic
 - sporting fields detracting from the natural environment
 - flora and fauna currently inhabit the area, particularly when wet
- Support for the sporting fields was also received as residents noted that there are insufficient sporting fields in the area.

- The proposed netball courts were supported by residents however concern was raised around the noise that may be emitted.
- Residents raised potential alternative uses for the reserve including markets, outdoor performances, low impact group activities such as yoga or meditation, picnic and BBQ areas, Botanic Gardens, open grass with more trees, and as a conservation area.

Path Network

- Residents supported the proposed path network however noted existing conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.

Vehicular access

- Concern that the additional programming proposed within the reserve will increase parking requirements in the reserve which will in turn negatively impact parking on local streets.
- It was noted that vehicular entry into the reserve is insufficient and queried if another entry/exit could be considered

Youth Precinct:

- Residents noted that they would like to see additional facilities added to the youth precinct such as a BBQ and fitness stations and a junior BMX facility.

Use of the reserve:

- Residents raised concern around how the increased programming will impact the use of the reserve. Concerns raised included:
 - Increased dog walkers not picking up after their dogs
 - Increased antisocial activities
 - Reserve not being retained as a dog off leash zone
 - Changes to current access and opening hours

Recommendations

Based upon the feedback received, two changes to the draft master plan are recommended:

1. In response to the concern of local residents, it is proposed to reconfigure the sport fields proposed so that the fields and associated lighting are further from neighbouring residences. In the draft Master Plan upon which the feedback was received, the lights proposed were at least 40 metres from residential boundaries. Under the proposed reconfiguration, this would increase to 110 metres. Although there is some efficiency losses under the reconfigured scenario (i.e. more light poles required, and the second soccer pitch is further from the proposed pavilion), it does address the reasonable concerns of neighbouring residents.

2. It was noted that the existing BMX facility is not suitable for most users, due to the height of the jumps. It is proposed that a smaller BMX facility is added in the vicinity to cater for more users, including family groups being catered for with the proposed new play space. As noted earlier in this report, no demand has been identified for a BMX club facility at this site. The proposed facility is intended only as a small-scale extension of the existing facility that increases opportunities for it's use, particularly by children

It is noted that there were also a range of issues identified that fall outside the scope of this Master Plan, however these have been noted so that it can be acted upon by the appropriate people.