

Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting

Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 6pm

You are advised that a Meeting of Council has been called by the Chief Executive Officer on Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 6pm for the transaction of the following business.

This meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang and will be [livestreamed via Council's website](#).

C Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

Administrators

Lydia Wilson Chair of Council

Peita Duncan Administrator

Christian Zahra AM Administrator

On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed the Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea and appointed Lydia Wilson as Chair of the Panel. The Panel of Administrators comprises of Lydia Wilson, Peita Duncan and Christian Zahra who will undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

Senior Officers

Craig Lloyd Chief Executive Officer

Emma Appleton Director Planning & Development

Agata Chmielewski Director Community Wellbeing

Sarah Renner Director Customer & Corporate Services

Debbie Wood Director Infrastructure & Environment

Janine Morgan Executive Manager Public Affairs

Jacinta Stevens Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Order of Business

1	Opening	5
1.1	Meeting Opening and Introductions.....	5
1.2	Apologies	5
1.3	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement	5
1.4	Diversity and Good Governance Statement	5
1.5	Acknowledgements	5
2	Declarations of Conflict of Interest	5
3	Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s.....	6
4	Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters	7
4.1	Public Question Time	7
4.2	Petitions	7
4.3	Joint Letters	7
5	Officers' Reports.....	8
5.1	Audit and Risk Committee Report on Activity	8
5.2	Informal Meetings of Administrators	19
5.3	VR Michael Reserve Draft Master Plan	21
5.4	Lalor Recreation Reserve Master Plan.....	66
5.5	Draft Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) - Endorsement for Community Consultation .	124
6	Notices of Motion.....	187
7	Urgent Business.....	187
8	Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update	187
9	Confidential Business	187
9.1	CEO Employment Matters - Mid-term Review	187
9.2	Appointment of acting Chief Executive Officers	187
10	Closure.....	187

Note:

At the Chair of Council's discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

Question Time:

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow for public questions, petitions or joint letters from our community to be read out by the Chief Executive Officers delegate and responses will be provide by the Chief Executive Officer.

Questions are required to be submitted in writing no later than 12 noon on the day prior to a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to agenda items. Any questions submitted after 12 noon the day prior will be held over to the following Council Meeting.

The Public Question form can be downloaded from Council's website. Refer:

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council's democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone the Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2170.

1 Opening

1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will open the meeting and introduce the Administrators and Chief Executive Officer:

Administrator, Peita Duncan;
Administrator, Christian Zahra; and
Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd.

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Emma Appleton, Director Planning and Development;
Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing;
Sarah Renner, Director Corporate and Customer Services;
Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment;
Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs; and
Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.

1.2 Apologies

1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

“On behalf of Council, I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

I would also like to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”

1.4 Diversity and Good Governance Statement

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

“At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community’s vision of A Place For All.”

1.5 Acknowledgements

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s

Recommendation

THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:

Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 19 March 2024.

4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters

4.1 Public Question Time

4.2 Petitions

No Petitions

4.3 Joint Letters

No Joint Letters

5 Officers' Reports

5.1 Audit and Risk Committee Report on Activity

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance & Audit Officer

External in Attendance: Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of key activities undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) during the period 6 September 2023 to February 2024.

The Committee's Biannual Report (Attachment 1) provides Council with information on:

- The progress of its Annual Work Plan and activities for this reporting period.
- Activities that the Committee monitors and reviews to ensure it complies with the requirements under the Committee Charter.
- Details of discussions and recommendations made relating to the key activities of risk management, financial and performance reporting, systems of internal control, internal assurance, internal audit, external audit, compliance and governance.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note:

1. **The Audit and Risk Committee's Biannual Report for the period 6 September 2023 to February 2024 at Attachment 1.**
2. **The Audit and Risk Committee have provided valuable support to Council and discharged their responsibilities under the Audit and Risk Committee Charter including providing oversight on financial and performance reporting, systems of internal control, risk management and audit and assurance activities.**

Background / Key Information

The Committee is an independent advisory committee of Council whose role is to report to Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters presented to it. The Committee acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing and advising on issues within its scope of responsibility and assisting Council's governance obligations to its community.

In accordance with s54 (5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Committee is required to prepare a biannual report on its activities. A copy of the report was provided to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at this Council Meeting.

At its 12 November 2020 meeting, the Committee determined that it would prepare a report for Council on its activities following the March and September Committee meetings each year.

The bi-annual report was approved by the Chair on behalf of the Committee out of session, who is in attendance to present the report to Council.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost is included in the current budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

The Audit and Risk Committee is a non-delegated Committee of Council and therefore, no community consultation and engagement are required.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(e) Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.

Public Transparency Principles

(b) Council information must be publicly available unless— (i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.
- (d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

There are no implications with the presentation of the biannual report. It is a legislative requirement under s 54 (5) of the Act.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

This report is one method by which Council is informed of the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and is made publicly available to members of the community through the Council meeting agenda and minutes.

Critical Dates

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Audit and Risk Committee's Biannual Report is to be tabled at the subsequent Council Meeting.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report 6 September 2023 to [5.1.1 - 8 pages]



Audit and Risk Committee

Bi-annual Report: For period September 2023 – February 2024

Final Report Issued Date: 16 April 2024

Table of Contents

1. Role of the Audit and Risk Committee.....	3
2. Independence	3
3. Period of this Report.....	3
4. Purpose of this Report	3
5. Committee Charter	4
6. Committee Membership and Meeting Attendance	4
6.1 Committee Membership	4
6.2 Committee Support	4
6.3 Meeting Attendance	4
6.3.1 Senior Management Team	4
6.3.2 External Service Providers	5
7. Committee Annual Work Plan	5
7.1 Financial and Performance Reporting.....	5
7.2 Risk Management	5
7.3 Strategic Internal Audit Plan	6
7.4 Internal Audit	6
7.5 Compliance and Integrity	6
7.6 Systems of Internal Control	7
7.7 External Audit	7
8. Reporting to Council	7
9. Committee Performance Assessment	7
10. Conclusion	8

1. Role of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) is an independent committee of Council. Its purpose is to support and advise Council in fulfilling its responsibilities related to:

- financial reporting
- risk management
- maintenance of sound systems of internal control
- assurance activities including internal and external audit, and
- Council's performance regarding legislative and regulatory compliance.

It acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing, and advising on issues within its scope of responsibility.

The Committee reports to Council on the outcomes of its work programme and provides advice and recommendations on matters relevant to its Charter. The Committee may also endorse key reports for consideration by Council.

2. Independence

An independent Audit and Risk Committee is a fundamental component of a strong corporate governance culture. Council's Committee is independent of management and is not involved in any operational decisions. Committee members do not have any executive powers, management functions or delegated financial responsibilities.

3. Period of this Report

This report covers the Committee activities from 6 September 2023 to February 2024.

In that period the Committee has met 3 times - 12 September 2023, 15 November 2023, and 13 February 2024.

4. Purpose of this Report

This report is prepared in accordance with Council's reporting requirements under section 54(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA), which requires the Committee to report to Council twice annually on its activities, findings, and recommendations.

Importantly, this report provides Council with a summary of matters that the Committee has addressed in the period to discharge its responsibilities under its Charter. This report has been reviewed by all Committee members.

5. Committee Charter

The Committee's Charter is set by Council and was last reviewed and approved by Council at its 21 March 2023 meeting.

The next review of the Committee's Charter is scheduled for the 14 May 2024 meeting. Following the Committee's endorsement, the draft Charter will be presented to Council at its next ordinary meeting for their consideration and approval.

6. Committee Membership and Meeting Attendance

6.1 Committee Membership

The Committee has four independent members and two Administrator members.

The independent members collectively have skill sets and experience as mandated in s 53 of the LGA, including skills in financial management and reporting, risk management, audit and assurance programs, compliance management and internal control frameworks.

The Chair of the Committee is an independent member. The mix of independent and Administrator members enables open discussion based on best practice and gives Administrator's insights into Council's governance practices.

The composition of the Committee remained stable during the year, with the continuity of four independent members and two Administrator members.

6.2 Committee Support

The Committee enjoys a strong professional working relationship with Council Officers, which helps the Committee deliver insights, advice, and support to Council. The Committee and Council Officers are always alert to opportunities for improvements.

6.3 Meeting Attendance

	Meetings		
	12 Sept 2023	15 Nov 2023	13 Feb 2024
Independent Members			
Geoff Harry (Chair)	Attended	Attended	Attended
Jen Johanson	Attended	Attended	Attended
Bruce Potgieter	Attended	Attended	Attended
Marco Bini	Attended	Attended	Attended
Administrator Members			
Lydia Wilson	Attended	Attended	Attended
Christian Zahra	Attended	Attended	Attended

6.3.1 Senior Management Team

The Committee has been strongly supported by Council's CEO and senior management team who have attended all meetings during the year.

6.3.2 External Service Providers

Both the internal audit team (Pitcher Partners) and the agent of the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) have attended as required.

7. Committee Annual Work Plan

The agendas for the meetings are driven by the Annual Work Plan (AWP).

The AWP and agendas contain the activities undertaken by the Committee to ensure it meets its Charter responsibilities.

The AWP is reviewed at every meeting to ensure that the Committee continues to discharge its responsibilities to Council on a timely basis.

The work of the Committee is summarised below in each of the key areas.

7.1 Financial and Performance Reporting

The Committee monitored the quality, content, and commentary of the financial and performance reports provided to Council, which were tracked against the approved budget and Council Plan.

The Committee also received quarterly updates on the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

The Committee was satisfied with the quality of the financial performance reporting.

7.2 Risk Management

The Committee monitored risk management activity at each meeting, which included consideration of the following matters:

- Outcomes of assessments of strategic and operational risks
- Management of significant insurance activities
- Outcomes of disaster recovery test plans
- Emergency management and business continuity activities
- Effectiveness of fraud and corruption Systems
- Outcomes of the review of the Risk Management Framework
- Briefings from Council Officers on emerging risks for Council including:
 - Data governance
 - Assets, facilities, and capital delivery
 - Post 2024 Council election legislative compliance requirements and Councillor inductions
 - Digital and cyber security.

7.3 Strategic Internal Audit Plan

The Committee monitored the Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP) which was developed by our internal auditors in consultation with the Committee, the Executive Leadership Team, and the Risk and Assurance team.

The Committee approved the Three Year Strategic Internal Audit Plan and noted the Business Function Risk Assurance Map at its 12 September 2023 meeting.

7.4 Internal Audit

The internal audit function is contracted to Pitcher Partners under an agreement that commenced in July 2023 for an initial term of 3 years.

The Committee monitored the progress of the delivery of the SIAP for 2023/24 and was satisfied that delivery is on track.

Internal Audit Reviews
Parks Maintenance Contract
Payroll
wat djerring Animal Facility Operations
Climate Change Adaption
Family Day Care Operations

The Committee also regularly monitors management performance in closing out recommendations for improvement and is particularly alert to high rated actions that are not closed by the target dates.

The Committee is satisfied that there is appropriate management focus on the actions, bearing in mind that some recommendations require system changes or enhancements with long lead times.

7.5 Compliance and Integrity

The Committee monitored Council's compliance and provided advice on:

- Systems and processes for monitoring legislative compliance
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register to assess fraud risk and conflict of interest compliance
- Key Personal Expenses (including Administrators, CEO, and the CEO's Executive Assistant) to assess fraud and integrity
- Internal Assurance Program
- Procurement performance
- Regulatory Integrity Report Review program, which screens for investigations and reports by State Integrity Agencies (including VAGO, IBAC, Ombudsman Victoria, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, Australian Water Association) with officers providing briefings and best practice insights to be actions where there is an opportunity for improvement of Council processes and controls.

7.6 Systems of Internal Control

The Committee considered several reports on the review of policies, systems, and controls during the reporting period. The key matters monitored and subject to review included the following:

- Alignment of policies and procedures with Overarching Governance Principles
- The review of key internal policies
- Targeted areas:
 - CX/DX Program
 - Developer contributions
 - Significant Contracts and Projects

7.7 External Audit

The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) appointed HLB Mann Judd as its agent to undertake the external audit of Council's annual financial report and annual performance statement for the year ending 30 June 2024.

The Committee was briefed on the draft external audit strategy for the 2023-2024 Annual Performance Statement at the meeting on 13 February 2024, which focused on key external audit risks likely to be considered in delivery of the audit.

8. Reporting to Council

To advance the transparency of Committee decision making, advice and deliberations:

- All Committee meeting unconfirmed minutes are reported to the next ordinary Council meeting for in principle approval.
- The Annual Financial Report, which was audited by the appointed external auditors was tabled at Council's 19 September 2023 meeting.

9. Committee Performance Assessment

The Committee endorsed the questionnaire for use in the upcoming performance self-assessment survey at their 13 February 2024 meeting and confirmed the method for undertaking and reporting on the survey results.

The outcomes of the survey will be presented to the Committee at its 14 May 2024 meeting.

The results of the survey will also be incorporated into the Committee's next biannual activity report to Council in September 2024.

10. Conclusion

The Committee is satisfied that it has fully discharged its responsibilities for the reporting period as set out in its Charter. The Committee has seen indicators of improving risk management performance and a strengthening of the internal control environment.

I wish to acknowledge the support of Council's senior officers in the preparation of agendas, minutes, reports, and presentations, all of which ensure that the Committee remains well-briefed and effective.

Geoff Harry

Chair, on behalf of the Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 16 April 2024

5.2 Informal Meetings of Administrators

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Coordinator Governance Administration

Executive Summary

Chapter 5 of the Council Governance Rules requires a summary of the matters discussed at a meeting of Councillors (Administrators) that:

- is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors (Administrators);
- is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- is not a Council meeting or Delegated Committee meeting

The summary of matters discussed at the meeting must be:

- tabled at the next convenient Council meeting; and
- recorded in the minutes of that Council meeting.

The record of Informal Meetings of Councillors (Administrators) at Attachment 1 is reported to Council in accordance with this requirement.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note the record of Informal Meetings of Administrators at Attachment 1.

Attachments

1. Informal Meetings of Administrators Report [5.2.1 - 1 page]



RECORDS OF DISCUSSION

ASSEMBLY DETAILS	ADMINISTRATOR ATTENDEES	OFFICER ATTENDEES	OTHERS PRESENT	MATTERS CONSIDERED	CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES
2 April 2024	Chair of Council Wilson Administrator Duncan Administrator Zahra	Craig Lloyd Emma Appleton Sarah Renner Debbie Wood Jacinta Stevens Andrew Chau Adis Cindrak Robert Cobolli Aaron Gerrard Daniel Lendvai Ricardo Ramos Catherine Thwaites Russell Tricker		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Councillor Induction Public Submission Process Waste and Energy Plant Submission Update Draft Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) – Endorsement for Community Consultation Lalor Recreation Reserve Masterplan General Business 	Nil

5.3 VR Michael Reserve Draft Master Plan

Director/Executive Manager: Director Infrastructure & Environment

Report Author: Open Space Planner

In Attendance: Coordinator Open Space Planning

Executive Summary

- The VR Michael Reserve Master Plan project is the result of a council resolution, at the Council meeting on 12 December 2022, in response to a petition requesting an increase to car parking spaces and accessible parking at VR Michael Reserve in Lalor. The Council resolutions were to:
 - Undertake a park masterplan in the 2023-24 Financial Year for a more comprehensive approach to park planning for existing and future uses;
 - Upgrade the offsite parking (east of entrance of VR Michael Reserve) and provide all weather pedestrian connection from the parking to the clubrooms as part of the 2023-24 capital works program.
- The Open Space Planning Team has developed the draft VR Michael Reserve Master Plan which provides the City of Whittlesea with a vision, objectives, recommendations and prioritisation for future development over the 10 years.
- As per the Council resolution, a plan to upgrade the existing gravel parking lot located in the southeast of VR Michael Reserve has been completed. The upgrade includes the construction of a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant shared path from the car park to the Lalor Bocce Social Club within the reserve, the extension of the existing footpath along High Street as well as the provision of 24 car parking bays.
- Phase One of community consultation and internal stakeholder engagement have been completed, and the community feedback has shaped the draft master plan.
- The master plan will enhance our preparedness for advocacy, contributing to better open space and urban design outcomes. This includes addressing challenges such as rail corridor land acquisition and ensuring a balanced approach to open space loss.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Note that the draft VR Michael Reserve Master Plan has been informed from feedback gathered during the phase one consultation, undertaken from 26 June to 24 July 2023.**
- 2. Endorse the draft VR Michael Reserve Master Plan to be presented for community consultation from 22 April 2024 to 20 May 2024 to gather additional feedback and comments to refine and finalise the Master Plan.**
- 3. Resolve to refer the draft VR Michael Reserve Master Plan to the Youth Council for feedback prior to the final Master Plan coming back to Council for adoption.**

Background / Key Information

- The VR Michael Reserve Draft Master Plan (the Master Plan) guides and provides direction for future upgrades and improvements to VR Michael Reserve. The Master Plan responds to insufficient car parking (on days of Bocce Club gatherings), safety issues, connectivity and community needs along with recommendations to improve the natural environment.
- VR Michael Reserve (the Reserve) is outlined in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve in Lalor which is characterised as a predominantly non-sporting reserve. 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 2014 for the Whittlesea Open Space Strategy. The reserve has an area of approx. 7.4 hectares which is characterised by open grassed areas, groups of trees and several facilities including a play space, Lalor United Bocce Social Club, basketball court, picnic facilities, public toilet and car parking. The Playground equipment was upgraded in 2018. The site exhibits varied topography, particularly noticeable on the eastern side, with an approximate elevation difference of 4 meters between High Street and the Bocce Social Club.
- Key data for Lalor include:
 - 23,587 residents in 2021
 - 46.5% of households are couples with children
 - 32% of households are couples without children
 - 23.4% of population are 60+ years of age
 - 30.2% of population are less than 25 years of age
 - Median age is 37
 - 53% were born overseas
 - 70% Speak a language other than English at home
 - 35-39 is the dominant age group forming 7.9% of Lalor population
 - Italian and Indian are the dominant cultures/groups in Lalor after Australians
 - 6.51% canopy cover (Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy, 2020-2040)
 - 24 square meters provision of usable (unencumbered) open space per resident (Open Space Plan, 2016)
 - 19 square meters projected provision of usable open space per resident (projected population 2041)
- The Dog off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan 2016-2026 proposes VR Michael Reserve as future dog off-leash area. It is outlined as 'open unstructured' dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

- The Epping Central Structure Plan 2023 outlines a proposed off-road shared path and two options for the alignment of the future Wollert Rail Corridor that passes through VR Michael Reserve. Council 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.
- Geotechnical investigations were completed in 2012, revealing a history that includes basalt quarrying prior to 1960. Subsequently, during the 1960s and 1970s, the area served as a municipal tip, likely operated by the City of Whittlesea. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has confirmed its recognition as a former municipal landfill, operational from 1974 to 1978, spanning 7.5 hectares and accumulating approximately 250,000m³ of waste.

The vision of the Draft Master Plan is:

VR Michael Reserve is an accessible, inclusive and vibrant reserve that offers a variety of informal recreational opportunities for individuals and families, catering to the diverse interests of our community. This reserve is a hub of inclusivity and engagement, where residents can celebrate and share cultural identity and diversity.

The objectives are:

- Promote inclusivity and accessibility
- Enhance recreational opportunities
- Improve aesthetics and environmental sustainability
- Provide meaningful and safe play
- Activate and enhance spaces and interfaces of the Future Wollert Rail Overpass

The Master Plan sets out recommendations which are articulated through the key themes of Movement and Access, Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure and Environment and Landscape, and will achieve the following outcomes for the community (Refer to Attachment 1 - VR Michael Reserve Master Plan Report (draft) and Attachment 2 - VR Michael Reserve draft Master Plan).

Movement and Access:

Enhanced Accessibility: The realigned and upgraded concrete paths will make the park more accessible to a wider range of community members, including those with mobility challenges.

Improved Parking Convenience: The integrated and upgraded car parks, along with the proposed lighting and a proposed drop-off area adjacent to the Bocce Social Club, will enhance convenience for park users, ensuring a safer and more accessible parking experience.

Welcoming Entrances: Upgraded entrances with wayfinding signage, feature paving, improved accessibility and landscaping will create a more welcoming atmosphere, guiding visitors and enhancing the overall park experience.

Enhanced Accessibility for Bocce Club Users: Upgraded path connections between the central car park and the Bocce Social Club, proposed drop-off area, and DDA-compliant path from the lower car park to the Bocce Social Club, will significantly improve accessibility for Bocce Club members, ensuring a seamless and inclusive experience for all users. This enhancement will promote ease of access and participation in club activities.

Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure:

Increased Recreational Opportunities: The proposed outdoor gathering spaces, fitness stations, and diverse informal recreational facilities beneath the future rail overpass including multi-use ball court, table tennis tables, skate features and bouldering wall will increase opportunities for social interaction, and physical activity within the reserve for young adults

Safe and Diverse Play Experiences: The play space enhancements, including relocation to space further-away from roads, and the addition of nature-based areas, will provide a safe and enjoyable environment for children, fostering community engagement.

Improved Park Facilities: The addition of park furniture, signage, and regulated dog park areas will improve overall amenities, creating a more comfortable and informative park experience.

Upgraded Public Toilet: The proposed medium-term action to relocate the public toilets closer to the existing and proposed play space and picnic area, along with the short-term action of upgrading the access path to the existing public toilet, ensures immediate improvements in accessibility but also creates a more inclusive and convenient public toilet experience in the future.

Environment and Landscape:

Enhanced Visibility and Safety: The reduction of dense vegetation, improved lighting and activation of the southwest area of the reserve, will enhance visibility, and reduce visual barriers, ensuring a safer environment for park users. Additionally, the proposed bocce court offers passive surveillance opportunities, enhancing public safety for the play space, picnic area, toilet, and exercise station within the vicinity.

Ecological Sustainability: The careful management of vegetation, including planting shade trees and maintaining buffer planting, will contribute to ecological sustainability and create a more environmentally friendly park.

Aesthetic Improvements: Replacing overgrown understory planting with low-maintenance plants will lead to aesthetic improvements, creating a visually appealing and inviting park.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Connected Communities

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play. Well-planned, accessible open space is proven to have preventative health benefits including opportunities for the community to socially interact and undertake physical activities. The W2040 Liveable Neighbourhoods goal includes an indicator to increase use of open space. Providing additional value in existing open spaces and increased accessibility to these facilities is important to the health of the community.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The estimated budget required to implement the Master Plan is subject to further design development. The initial high-level costing estimates the total cost of Master Plan implementation at \$4.3m. The inclusion of CPI adjustments over the life of delivery estimates overall implementation to be \$5.4m.

Master plan implementation is subject to the Council annual budget process. Of the required \$5.4m of funding, approximately \$1.5m will be funded by existing asset renewal programs including the playground renewal program and additional tree planting through the Greening Whittlesea program. Items requiring additional funding will be referred to Council's annual budget process and external grant opportunities.

The plan also justifies the council's advocacy for the proposed facilities beneath the rail to be funded by the state government, with the estimated current cost for these facilities being approximately \$520,000.

The operational and maintenance estimate to maintain the fully implemented master plan is \$14,605p/a. This figure is in addition to maintaining existing elements proposed to be retained.

The master plan ensures our preparedness to advocate to State Government for better open space and urban design outcomes. This includes addressing challenges such as rail corridor land acquisition and ensuring a balanced approach to open space loss or restriction.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Phase one of the consultation was undertaken from 26 June to 24 July 2023 to collect information on the needs of current and future users of VR Michael Reserve. The consultation was accessible online through City of Whittlesea Engage Page.

In person consultation and engagement activities include conversations with retailers along Deveny Road and High Street. The United Lalor and Bocce Social Club users, visitors to the reserve and residents within 400 meters of the reserve and a pop-up consultation (Refer to Attachment 3- Technical Engagement Summary Report).

Feedback was received from 172 participants with the 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 top two reasons that visitors use the reserve are to use the playground facilities (50%) and attend events/activities at The United Lalor Bocce and Social Club (20%).

According to the total responses, the top six (6) priorities for improvement are as follows:

- General safety
- Public toilet
- Walking track
- Pedestrian access
- Greenery
- Central lawn area

Respondents shared potential future opportunities for VR Michael Recreation Reserve which have been grouped below.

Inclusive Recreation Facilities

- Extension of the playground with age-appropriate equipment
- More regular grass and tree maintenance
- Outdoor fitness & exercise station
- Vehicle drop-off area
- Jogging/running track
- Concrete all-weather track

Park Support Facilities & Safety

- More picnic and undercover areas to socialise
- Bench seating next to the basketball area
- Off Lead Dog Park
- Lighting and security cameras

Community Spaces

- Information board featuring historical details
- Community herb garden and sensory garden
- Areas to socialise and better facilities for families to meet and have fun

The next phase of the consultation involves the exhibition of the draft master plan (Refer to Attachment 2, VR Michael Reserve Draft Master Plan) and key recommendations to the broader community. This consultation seeks to:

- Inform the local community of the project and encourage them to share their feedback.
- Confirm Council's understanding of how the broader community use the reserve and how they would like to see the reserve in the future.
- Receive feedback on the draft master plan concept, confirming whether it caters to the ongoing and future needs of the community.

Community consultation is scheduled to commence on the 22 April 2024, lasting for a period of 4 weeks. A range of engagement activities are planned, including an online engagement page with a survey, direct mail outs, pop-up sessions onsite and around VR Michael Reserve, and meetings with target groups including the United Lalor and Bocce Social Club users, local youth and culturally diverse women groups. This engagement will confirm that the draft master plan caters to the needs of the community. Feedback will be used to refine the master plan and create a priority list of actions.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.
- (c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.
- (d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

The VR Michael Reserve Master Plan will contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment through increased tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and sustainable infrastructure including integrated water management in the car park and new infrastructure.

Social, Cultural and Health

The VR Michael Reserve Master Plan will provide opportunities for physical activity, recreation, and relaxation. It will foster a sense of community and provide spaces for residents to come together, leading to improved social cohesion.

Economic

Upgrade of existing facilities in VR Michael Reserve and activating underutilised spaces will attract more people to the local area, enhance passive surveillance, improve perception of safety of the precinct, boost property values, and provide a positive impact on local economy contributing to economic growth.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy**Communication**

A Communication Plan has been developed in line with the Engagement Plan. With the support of the draft master plan recommendations for community consultation from Council, a variety of communication activities will be undertaken to promote community consultation. This will include social media posts, direct mail outs to the local community, media releases and school newsletters.

A variety of engagement activities are planned, including an online engagement page with survey, direct mail outs, pop-up sessions onsite and around VR Michael Reserve and meetings with target groups including the United Lalor and Bocce Social Club users, local youth and culturally diverse women groups.

Critical Dates

22 April to 20 May 2024: Community consultation

June to July 2024: Finalise Master Plan

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. VR Michael Reserve Master Plan Report (Draft) [5.3.1 - 21 pages]
2. VR Michael Reserve Draft Master Plan [5.3.2 - 1 page]
3. Technical Engagement Findings Report [5.3.3 - 14 pages]



VR Michael Reserve

DRAFT MASTER PLAN REPORT



CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Overview	2
1.2 Purpose of Master Plan	3
1.3 Project Method	7
1.4 Planning Controls	8
2.0 Council Strategies and Plans	10
3.0 Site Existing Conditions & Analysis	12
3.1 Site Conditions	12
3.1.1 Movement & Access	13
3.1.2 Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure	15
3.1.3 Environment & Landscape	15
3.2 Site Analysis	19
3.2.1 Movement and Access	19
3.2.2 Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure	21
3.2.3 Environment & Landscape	23
4.0 Consultation Summary	26
4.2.1 Consultation Phase 1	26
4.2.2 Consultation Phase 2	27
5.0 Master Plan	30
5.1 Vision & Key Objectives	30
5.2 Recommendations	31
5.3 Draft Master Plan	33



VR Michael Reserve was identified as one of the most popular open spaces in Lalor and Epping in the community survey undertaken in 2018 for the Whittlesea Open Space Strategy.

The reserve has an area of approx. 7.4 hectares which is generally characterised by open grass area comprising several facilities including playspace, Lalor United Bocce Social Club, basketball court, picnic facilities, public toilet and car parking. The Playground equipment was upgraded in 2018.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

VR Michael Reserve is situated in Lalor which extends from Merri Creek in the west to Darebin Creek in the east and is relatively central in the established areas.

Lalor adjoins Thomastown to the south and Epping to the north. The Hume Freeway, Edgars Road, High Street, Dalton Road and Mernda Railway corridor present barriers to safe walking access to open space within the suburb.

The forecasted residential population change in Lalor is a 9 percent increase of approximately 3,861 people by 2026.

67 percent of the forecasted additional dwellings will be located in the Carlingford and Mosaic Living Development Plan area west of Edgars Road.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data 2021 provided information on the demographics, cultural and language diversity of Lalor.



POPULATION

23,587 residents in 2021

Population density
3,143 persons per square km

+ 4000 more residents by 2041

23.4% of population
are 60+ years of age

30.2% of population are
less than 25 years of age

Median age is 37

*(The Australian Bureau of
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

53% were born overseas

70% speak a language other than
English at home

Italian and Indian are the
dominant cultures/groups in Lalor
after Australians

*(The Australian Bureau of
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



URBAN HEAT

5-10°C hotter above the
non-urban baseline

*(Cooling and greening
Melbourne, Urban Heat
Data 2018)*



FAMILIES

46.5% of households are couples
with children

32% of households are couples
without children

19.3% are one parent family

*(The Australian Bureau of
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



OPEN SPACE AND TREES

24 square meters
provision of usable
(unencumbered) open space per
resident (Open Space Plan, 2016)

19 square meters projected
provision of usable open space
per resident (2041)

Recommended minimum open
space provision is 20-25 sqm per
resident

6.51% canopy cover

*(Greening Whittlesea City Forest
Strategy 2020-2040)*

VR MICHAEL RESERVE

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

The Reserve was developed in the 1950s and is a predominantly non-sporting reserve, located on the south east corner of Deveny Road & High Street in Lalor. It has an extensive connected path system, open grassed areas and play facilities and occupies an area of 7.07 hectares.

The Open Space Strategy 2016 identifies the reserve as a municipal open space which is characterised as a larger predominantly non-sporting reserve which has an extensive connected path system, open grassed areas and play facilities.

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. The open Space strategy recommends maintaining the park and providing exercise equipment, more seating and shelters with BBQs.

Additionally, VR Michael Reserve is proposed as future dog off-leash area in the Dog off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan. it is outlined as ‘open unstructured’ dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

HISTORY OF VR MICHAEL RESERVE

Vic Michael was a past councillor, Shire President, and Mayor.

- Shire of Whittlesea Councillor from: 1954-1988
- Shire President 1958-1960, 1971-72, 1979-80, 1987-1988
- First Mayor as the City of Whittlesea 1988.

Mr Michael was an early resident of Lalor moving in 1951. He represented the growing urban areas of the municipality at a time when the Council was dominated by rural interests.

He received an MBE (Member of the British Empire) for services to the Lalor Community. The Great Hall, City of Whittlesea is also named after Vic Michael.

1.2 Purpose of Master Plan

As per the Open Space Strategy, Master Plans are recommended to be prepared when major works are required for State, Regional and Neighbourhood open spaces which have a broader catchment of users and frequently a range of community stakeholder groups such as community organisations and sporting clubs.

This project is raised as a council resolution in relation to matters raised in a petition requesting an increase to the number of parking spaces and accessible parking at VR Michael Reserve in Lalor.

The petition was tabled at the Council meeting on 19 September 2022; Council resolved to note the petition from 99 signatories (60 residents and 39 non-residents) requesting Council increase the parking spaces and accessible parking spaces for elderly citizens at VR Michael Reserve. The Council resolution was to “Undertake a park master plan in the 2023/24 Financial Year for a more comprehensive approach to park planning for existing and future uses”.

The purpose of this Landscape Master Plan is to guide the future development and management of VR Michael Reserve.

The master plan endeavours to:

- Create a safe and inclusive, highly accessible reserve that supports and encourages use by people of all ages and abilities;
- Promote environmental sustainability through ecological conservation and improvement, increased tree canopy cover and water sensitive urban design;
- Improve community safety through a well-considered functional layout as well as adherence to CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Urban Design) principles and applying gender-sensitive lens;
- Inform future capital works, as stand-alone projects, or staged with a logically cumulative sequencing;
- Recommend necessary improvements to the reserve to achieve a high-quality landscape setting while protecting and enhancing its existing character.

The Australian Urban Observatory (AUO) in 2021 provided information on the liveability criteria for Lalor, as follows:



LIVEABILITY 98.6

The Liveability Index is a composite indicator was calculated based 13 domains: Community Centres, Culture and Leisure, Early Years, Education, Health and Social Services, Sport and Recreation, Food, Convenience, Walkability, Public Transport, Public Open Space, Housing Affordability, and Local Employment.

(100 is average)



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE 98.6

Social infrastructure refers to community and individual support services and resources such as health, education, early childhood, community support, community development, culture, sport and recreation, parks and emergency services.

(/15)



LIVEABILITY 39.8

Percentage of dwellings within 400 m of public open space larger than 1.5 hectares.

(400m (%))



WALKABILITY 0.1

Walkability for transport is calculated based on three key factors: land use mix and services of daily living (something to walk to); street connectivity (a way to get there); and dwelling density (higher population densities are associated with increased populations needed to supply services and different land uses).

(0 is average)



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRESS 28.1

The Liveability Index is a composite indicator was calculated percentage of households in the bottom 40% of incomes spending more than 30% of income on housing costs.

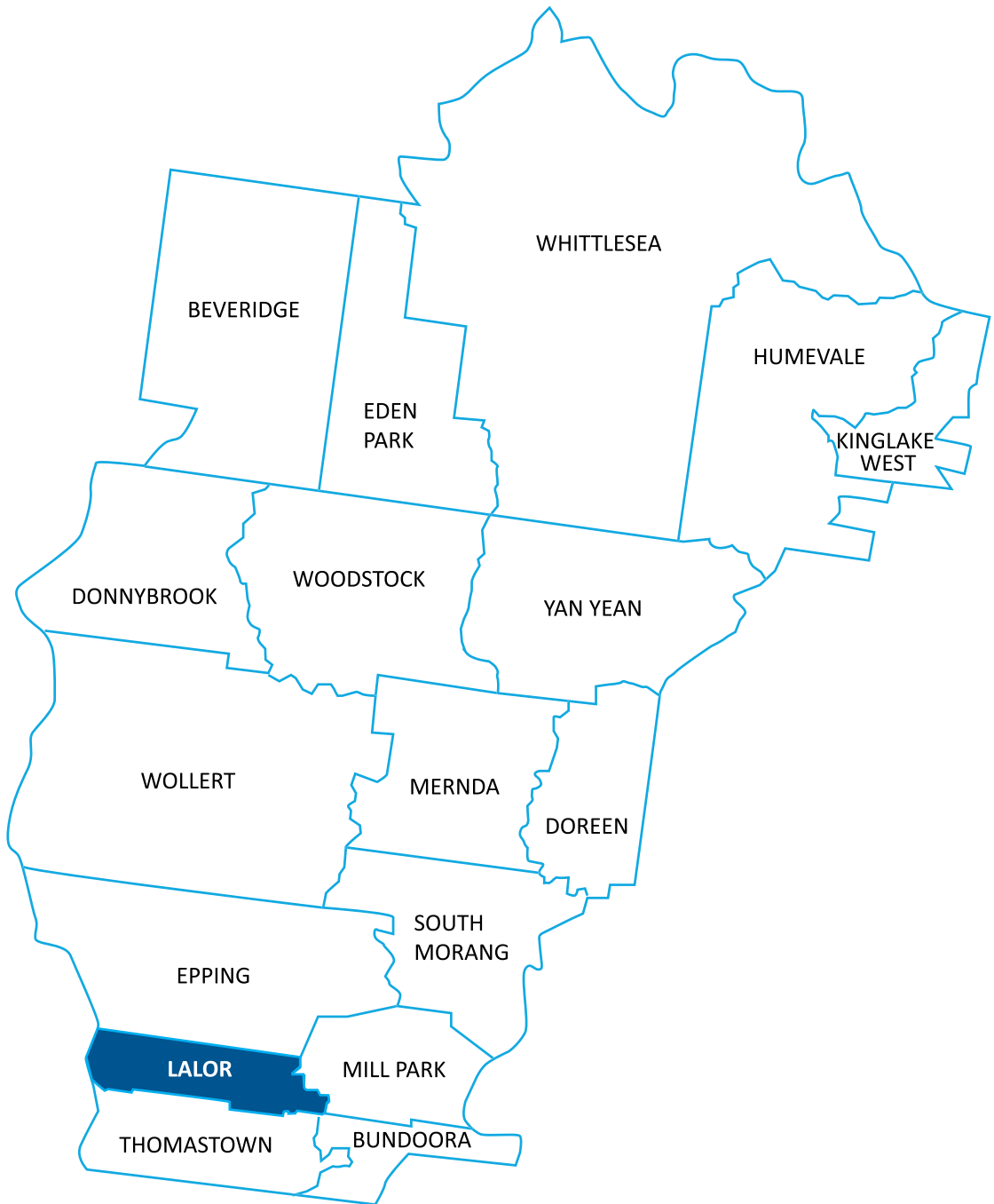
(%)



REGULAR PUBLIC ACCESS 48.9

Percentage of dwellings within 400m of public transport with regular 30 minute weekday service (7am-7pm).

(%)



Source: The Australian Urban observatory (AUO), 2021

01. IMAGE Site Location

Open Space & Public Realm Opportunities Identified by Epping Central Structure Plan

-  New Public Open Space Opportunity
-  Urban Square/Public Realm Focal Point (New Opportunity)

02. IMAGE Context Plan



LEGEND

CONTEXT PLAN

- Site Boundary**
- Open Space (Recreation)**
 - 1 Lalor Recreation Reserve
 - 2 Partridge Street Reserve
 - 3 Stockade Park
 - 4 Huskisson Recreation Reserve
 - 5 Ziebell's Farmhouse & Lutheran Church Land
 - 6 Supply Park
- Education & Health**
 - 1 Lalor North Primary School
 - 2 High Street early Learning & kinder
 - 3 Outer Northern trade Training Centre
 - 4 Merriang Special Development School
 - 5 Peter Lalor Secondary College
 - 6 Northern School for Autism
 - 7 St Catherine's Primary School
 - 8 Lalor Gardens Primary School
 - 9 St Lukes Primary School
 - 10 Vasey Park Preschool
 - 11 Lalor Primary School
 - 12 Lalor Secondary College
 - 13 Northern Hospital Epping
- Community Facilities**
 - 1 Mill Park Soccer Club
 - 2 Medical diagnostic imaging center
 - 3 Wedding venue
 - 4 Aged Care Service
 - 5 Bocce Social Club
 - 6 Rochdale Medical Centre
 - 7 Links Community Garden
 - 8 Lalor Community Garden
- Commercial Facilities**
 - 1 Fast food restaurant
 - 2 Costco Wholesale
 - 3 Pacific Shopping Mall
 - 4 Rochdale Square Shops
- Industrial**

LEGEND

OPEN SPACE HIERARCHY

- State**
 - 1 Ziebell's farmhouse & Lutheran Church Land
- Municipal**
 - 2 Lalor Recreation Reserve
 - 3 Partridge Street Reserve
 - 4 Huskisson Recreation Reserve
- Neighbourhood**
 - 5 Stockade Park
 - 6 Supply Park
- Site Boundary**

03. IMAGE Open Space Hierarchy



3.1 Project Method

The development of the Master Plan has involved a comprehensive review of background documents as well as extensive engagement with the community and consultation with key external and internal stakeholders.

Informed by consultation and site understanding, key recommendations were developed for the overall site.

In preparing this report, our team initially conducted background research and reviews of existing documents, as summarised below, as well as analysis of the study area, to build our understanding of the context. Our analysis focused on the study area's existing conditions, current issues and challenges and opportunities to improve the site.

Our background analysis and site understanding were expanded by a visit to the study area. The project process then focused on the Stakeholder/Community Engagement process, which sought inputs from nearby residents, traders of adjoining shops, Lalor United Bocce Social Club members, general users of the reserve and internal stakeholders.

The purpose of these engagement activities was to gain greater knowledge about the issues, opportunities and priorities for VR Michael Reserve, to form a more detailed 'brief' for the planning work going forward in the project, and to provide the foundations for developing a Vision for the VR Michael Reserve. The Stakeholder Engagement Findings Report can be found in Appendix 2.

In the next stage, the project process focuses on the development of the concept plan for the site. Then, the project process focuses on the second phase of the community engagement to have community feedback on the draft master plan.

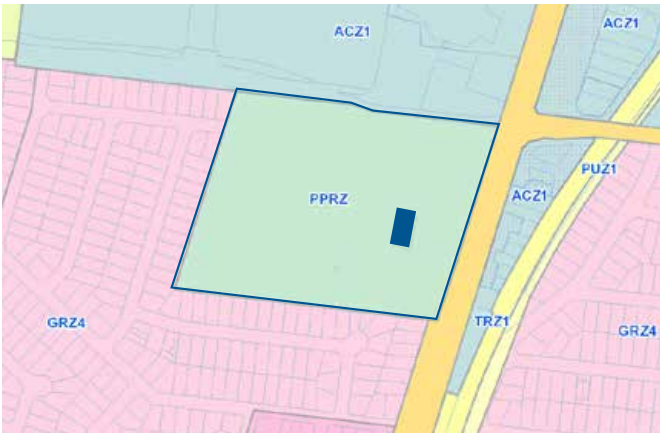
The diagram illustrates the steps for the project.



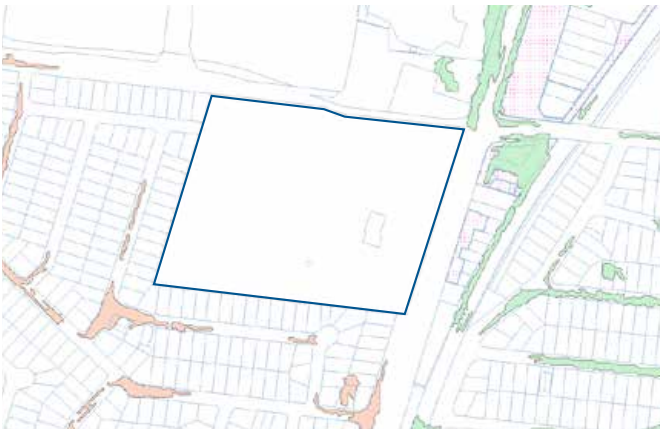
1.4 Planning Controls

VR Michael Reserve is located within Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), next to Activity Centre Zone (ACZ1), State Transport Infrastructure Zone (TRZ1), General Residential Zone – Schedule 4 (GRZ4) and Public Use Zone – Service & Utility (PUZ1), as presented in **Figure 4**.

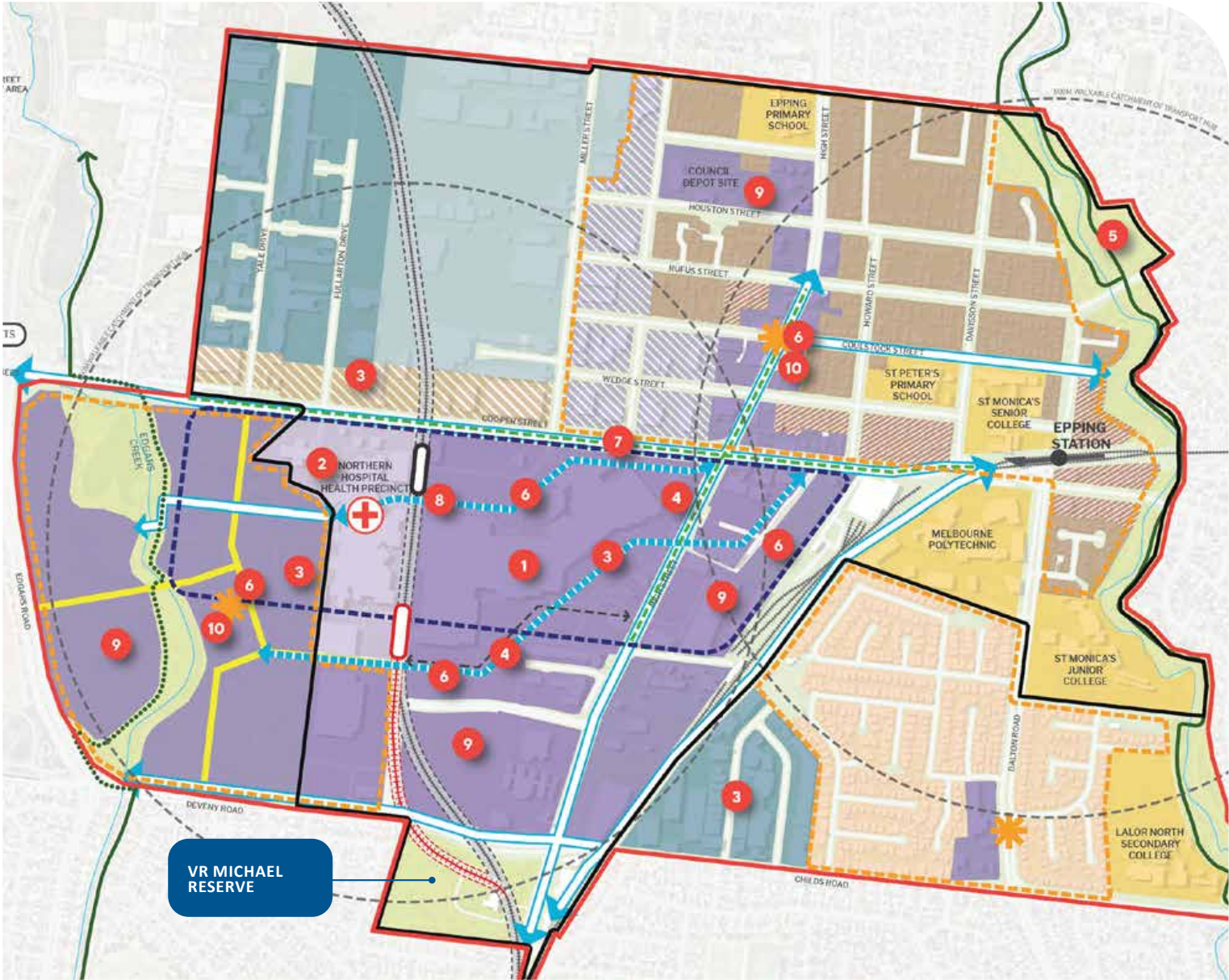
The Lalor Bocce Social Club within VR Michael Reserve (shown in blue) is a council owned land that has been leased out. According to the flood modelling, this area is not in a floodplain zone, as **Figure 05**.



04. IMAGE Planning Zone



05. IMAGE Flood Modelling



06. IMAGE Strategic Framework Plan, Epping Central Structure Plan, 2023

LEGEND

EPPING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

- Potential Wollert Rail Corridor
- Proposed Alternative Rail Alignment
- Future Train Station Interchange
- Potential Alternate Train Station

Background.

Whittlesea 2040 - A Place For All

To be ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring, ensuring that the City of Whittlesea is a great place to live now and in the future.

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy

More than ever, our public spaces and infrastructure need to perform even more roles to meet the needs of all of our community. For example, our local parks need to cater to all ages and abilities – and even dogs!

Connected Community Strategy

Improve safety and perceptions of safety for our community through activating public spaces and places, supporting community vibrancy, and helping people to feel safe and supported.

The Dog off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan 2106-2026

Proposes VR Michael Reserve as future dog off-leash area. It is outlined as 'open unstructured' dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

The Epping Central Structure Plan 2023

Outlines a proposed off-road shared path and two options for the alignment of the future Wollert Rail Corridor that passes through VR Michael Reserve.

The Plan also identifies going through the reserve. Council Advocacy Prospectus 2023-25 suggests the construction of the rail corridor for 2030, as **Figure 06**.

2.0 Council Strategies and Plans

Several existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the VR Michael Reserve Master Plan. A review and summary of each including key directions relevant to the Reserve is included in Appendix 1.

The documents reviewed are as follows:

- ▶ Whittlesea 2040 – A place for all
- ▶ Whittlesea Open Space Strategy 2016
- ▶ Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023
- ▶ Long-Term community Infrastructure Plan
- ▶ Epping Central Structure Plan 2023
- ▶ Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016–2026
- ▶ Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027
- ▶ Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028
- ▶ Community Plan 2021-2025
- ▶ Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)
- ▶ Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026
- ▶ Play Space Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16
- ▶ Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- ▶ Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People 2013-2018
- ▶ Greening Whittlesea
- ▶ Equal and Safe Strategy 2019
- ▶ Your Ground Project 2021
- ▶ Signage Management Plan
- ▶ Disability Action Plan 2017-2021
- ▶ Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016
- ▶ Park Lighting Strategy 2006
- ▶ Lighting for Shared User Paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea - Arup 2022



Site Analysis.

The site has undergone geotechnical investigations, revealing a history that includes quarrying for basalt prior to 1960.

Subsequently, during the 1960s and 1970s, the area served as a municipal tip, likely operated by the City of Whittlesea. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has confirmed its recognition as a former municipal landfill, operational from 1974 to 1978, spanning 7.5 hectares and accumulating approximately 250,000m3 of waste.

3.0 Site Existing Conditions & Analysis

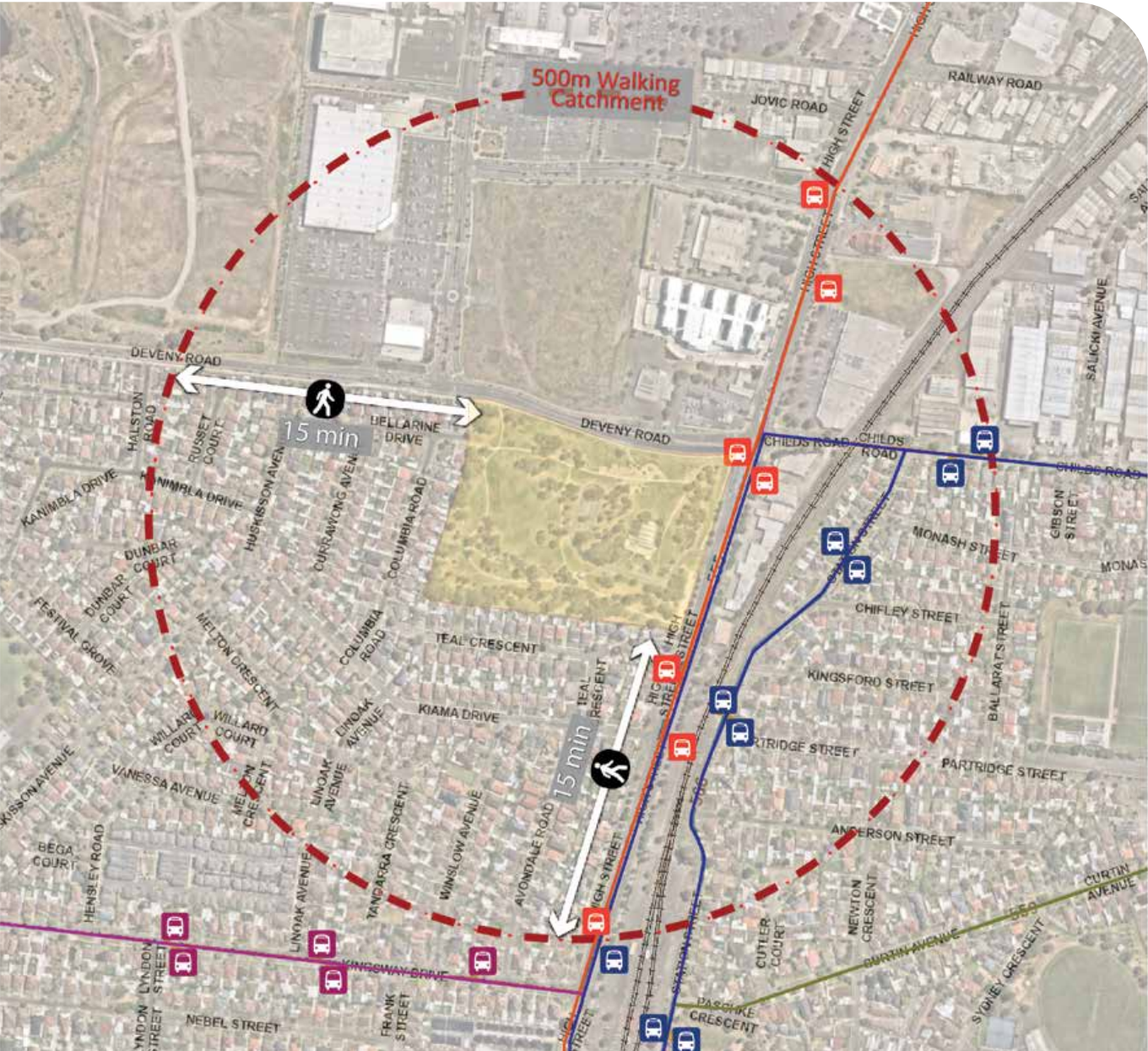
3.1 Site Conditions

This section of the plan provides a summarised of existing conditions categorised into the following themes:

- Movement & Access
- Recreation and Park Infrastructure
- Environment & Landscape

VR Michael Reserve is identified in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve with a 500m walking catchment in Lalor which is about 10-15 minute walk, however this catchment is limited by Deveny Road and High Street on the north and east side of the site. Refer to **Figures 07** and **08**.

The site exhibits varied topography, particularly noticeable on the eastern side, with an approximate elevation difference of 3-4 meters between High Street and some part of the site.

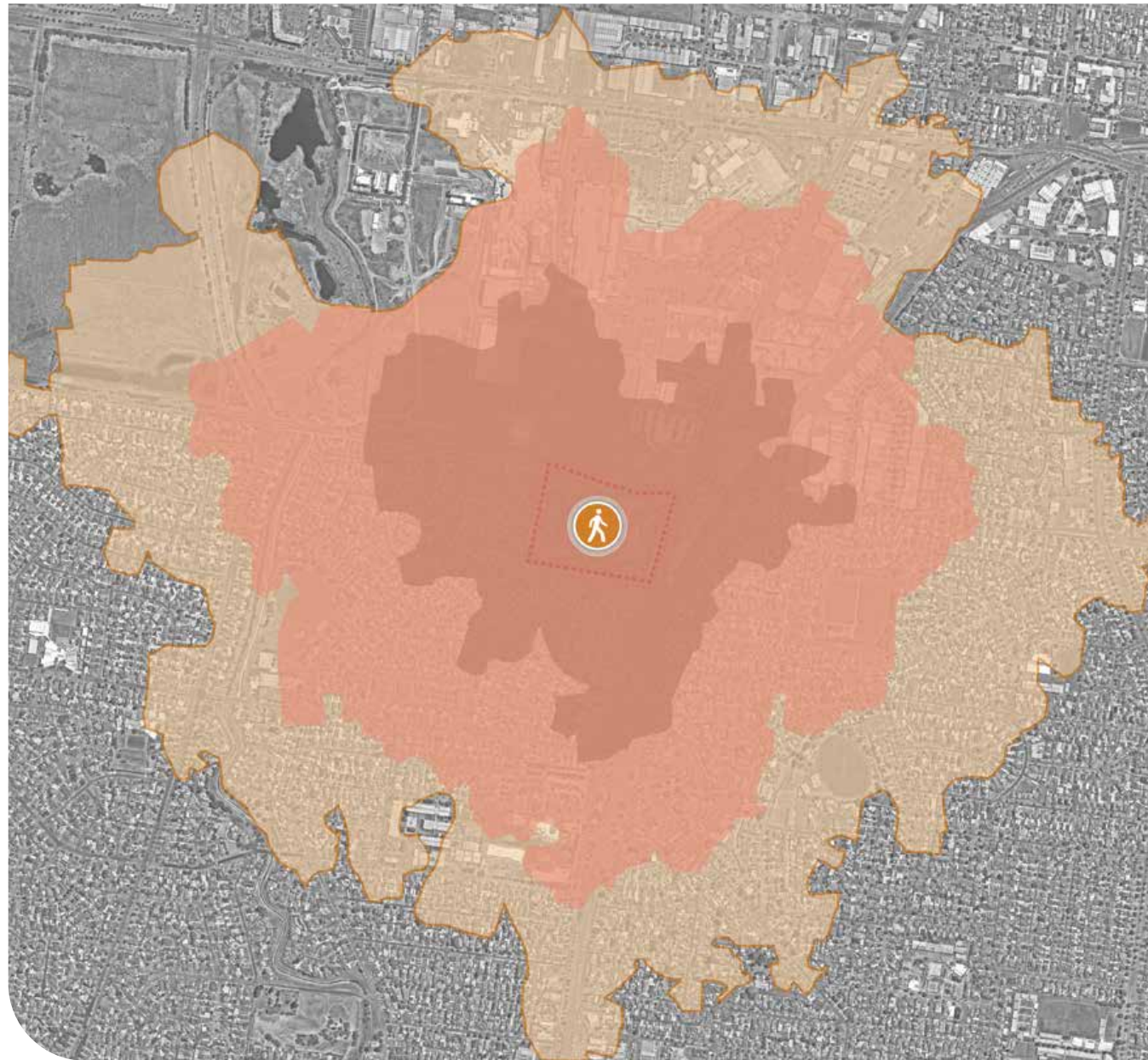


LEGEND

WALKING CATCHMENT

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Site Boundary | 566 Bus Route and Bus Stops | 555 Bus Route and Bus Stops |
| 500m Walking Catchment | 559 Bus Route and Bus Stops | 554 & 557 Bus Route and Bus Stops |

07. IMAGE Walking Catchment



LEGEND

PEDESTRIAN SHADE



08. IMAGE Pedestrian Shed

3.1.1 Movement & Access

Access to the study site is exceptionally versatile, offering the community a range of convenient methods. Public transport is a key player in accessibility, with two nearby bus stations situated at the High Street and Deveny Road intersection, providing efficient and well-connected services. The Lalor Station, serving the Mernda rail corridor, is within a 10-minute walk from the reserve, enhancing the public transportation options.

In terms of active transport, the community can utilise the on-road cycle lanes along High Street and Deveny Road. Simultaneously, pedestrians can enjoy clearly defined pathways to the reserve through shared-use paths along both High Street and Deveny Road, which will be connected to the VR Michael Reserve through the reserve master plan recommendations.

PATH NETWORK

The study area has relatively good walking facilities in place, with footpaths provided along Deveny Road and High Street.

There is a combination of formalised and unformalised footpaths in the Reserve which provides a loop walking path around the reserve from the reserve entrances in the surrounding streets.

A few locations in the study area have been identified to be lacking in pedestrian connection and footpaths. These are along the High Street near the lower car parking area, along the vehicle access

path to the reserve from High Street and the pedestrian-desired line from the bus stop on High Street to the reserve.

The main entrance from High Street requires an upgrade to its physical features (i.e. paving/planting) as well as reconfiguring to improve sight lines and highlight the entry.

CAR PARKING

Car parking for VR Michael Reserve is provided within the reserve in three areas, including the car park in front of existing Bocce Social Club with seven car spaces including one DDA compliant parking bay, the car park near the public toilets with eight car spaces, and the main car parking which has the highest capacity with up to 34 car parking spaces.

The three mentioned car parks are sealed with asphalt surfacing and include 49 spaces in total.

There is also lower car parking on the southeast side of the reserve with granitic sand surfacing which includes a 21 car space capacity.

The Council's Traffic and Transport Team undertook onsite investigation from 18 to 25 October 2022. The findings from the investigation indicate that the current parking demands in the reserve is high on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Refer to **Figure 09**.

There are 49 on-site parking spaces in total, which according to a recent traffic assessment, with 400 Bocce club members and a capacity of roughly 190 members, there are not enough car park

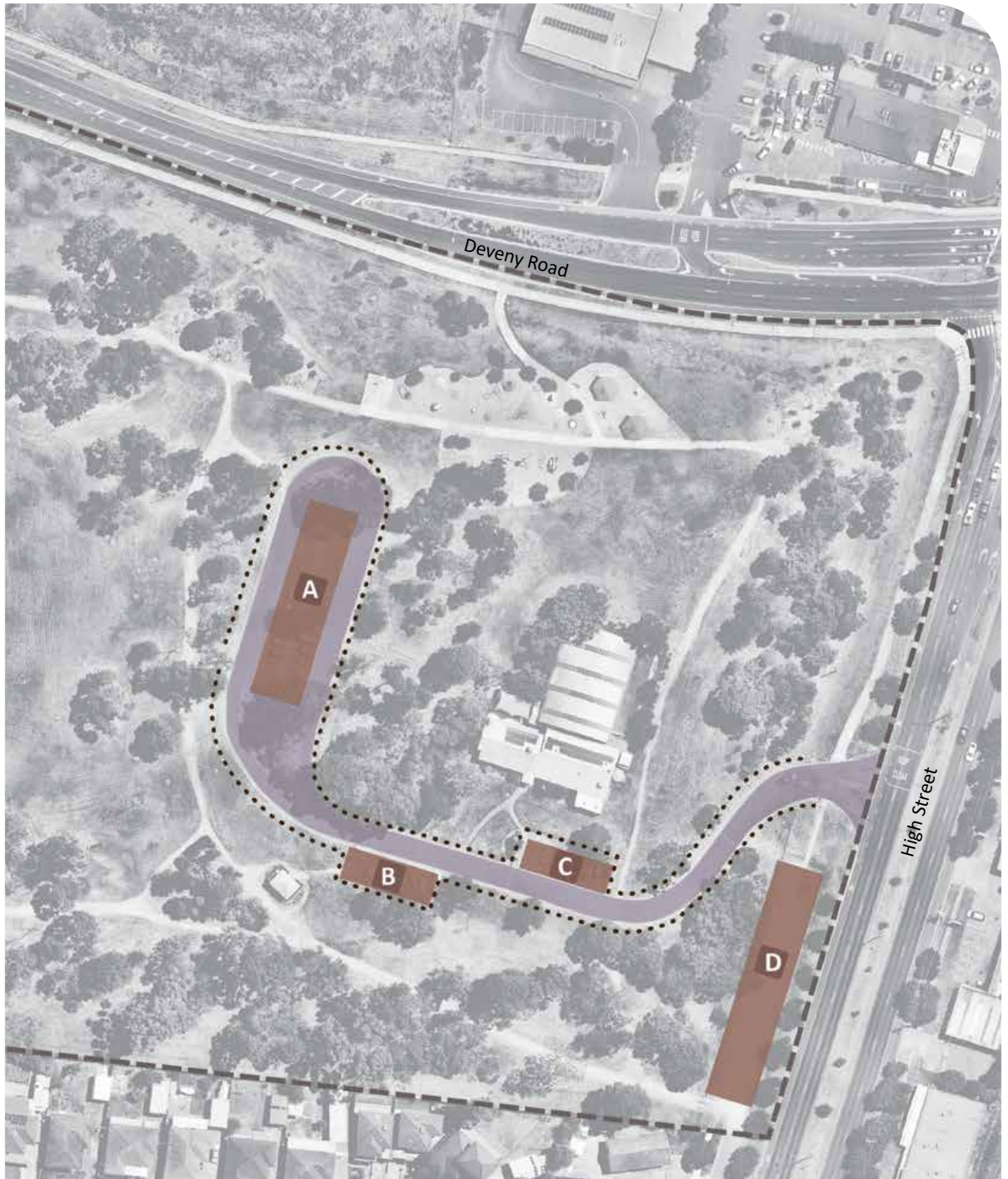
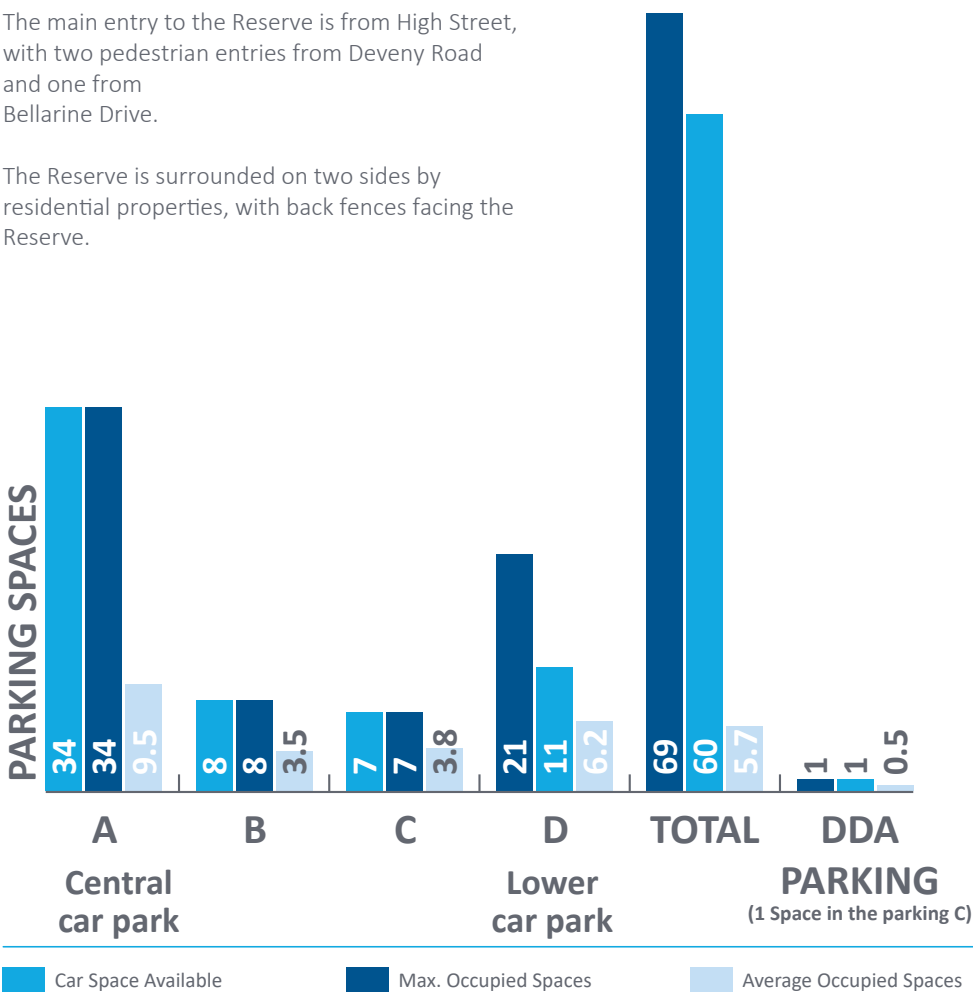
spaces to meet the demands of the club or park users.

Investigations indicate the parking area closest to the Lalor Bocce Club (parking area C) is the most accessible car park to the club and the most utilised. Whereas, the lower car park which is the least accessible due to the gradient, lack footpath, and informal surface, is the least occupied.

PARK ENTRANCES

The main entry to the Reserve is from High Street, with two pedestrian entries from Deveny Road and one from Bellarine Drive.

The Reserve is surrounded on two sides by residential properties, with back fences facing the Reserve.



09. IMAGE Car Park Survey



3.1.2 Informal Recreation and Park

INFRASTRUCTURE

The site currently contains the following facilities:

- ▶ Bocce social club
- ▶ Toilets
- ▶ Playground
- ▶ Picnic facilities
- ▶ Two shelters
- ▶ Basketball court
- ▶ Car parks
- ▶ Walking tracks

VR Michael Reserve currently includes a great deal of community infrastructure and social amenities, which are generally well used, however these facilities would benefit from rationalisation and upgrading where appropriate. In terms of park furniture, there is a need for more drink fountains, particularly one with a dog bowl.

PLAYSPACE

The playspace includes a slide, climbing ropes and a sliding pole. There are swings, wobble boards, trampolines and a rock climbing wall. Playground equipment was upgraded in 2018.

RECREATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The main sporting/recreation facility present at the reserve is the Bocce rink. Other provisions for sport in the reserve is basketball half court. Less formal provision includes the open grass area central to the reserve which currently has no goals.

The Lalor United Bocce and Social Club (the Club), established in 1996, is a non-profit organisation providing social, cultural, recreational, and welfare support to all members of the Maltese Community in the State of Victoria. Located in VR Michael Reserve, the Club provides activities and services such as Bocce and billiards competitions, line dancing, bingo, Maltese language classes, Maltese festivals and social events all year round.

The operating hours are Monday to Saturday, 9 am to 4 pm; the busiest days are Tuesdays and Saturdays. On busy days the club has recorded an attendance of 190 people. According to the Club president, the club has 400 members, and the majority of the members are senior citizens with mobility issues.

The toilet facility requires a complete upgrade or replacement to bring it up to today's standard.

3.1.3 Environment & Landscape

VR Michael Reserve's landscape character is fairly consistent throughout the reserve and is characterised by extensive and mature native vegetation. There are over 660 individual trees within VR Michael Reserve, a mixture of 273 Australian, 374 Victorian and 41 exotic species. Of those, thirty-five (35) Eucalyptus (Eucalyptus sp.) were at the end of their useful life expectancy

The canopy cover of trees with more than 3m height at VR Michael Reserve is 20025 sqm which is approx. 29.27% of the study area.

The following pages provide images of a summarised analysis of existing conditions. Refer to Figure 11.



LEGEND

CANOPY COVER

- Site Boundary
- Canopy cover (>3m height)

10. IMAGE Canopy Cover



11. IMAGE Site Feature



LEGEND

SITE FEATURE

- (A) Bocce Court & Social Club
- (B) Public Toilets
- (C) Picnic Area with Shelter
- (D) Playspace
- (E) Basketball Half Court
- (F) Lower Car Park
- Gravel Path
- Concrete Path
- Carriage ways/Asphalt path
- On-Road Cycle Lane
- On-Road Cycle Lane (shared with on street car park)
- Car Park Entry
- Pedestrian Entry
- Maintenance Gate
- Car Parking
- Trees/Vegetation
- Fence
- Wooden Posts
- Light
- Drinking Fountain
- Bus Stop
- Litter Bin
- Bench/Seat
- Entrance Sign
- Shelter & Picnic Table
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Pedestrian Desire Line



(A) Public Toilets



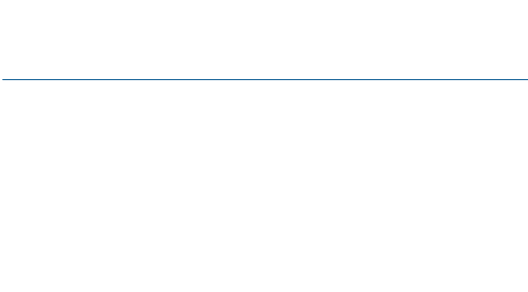
(B) Basketball Half Court and Playspace



(C) Shelters and BBQ Facilities



(D) Lalor United Bocce Social Club



(E) Bocce Court



(L) Central Lawn



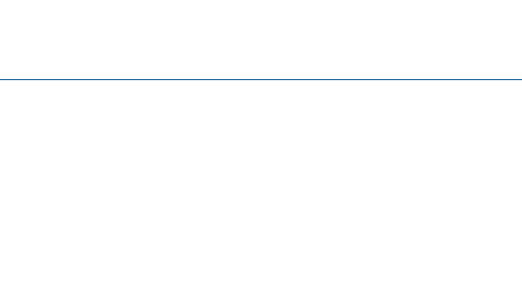
(F) Main Car Park



(G) Car Park net to the Bocce Social Club



(H) Lower Car Park



(I) Circuit Path



(K) Playspace



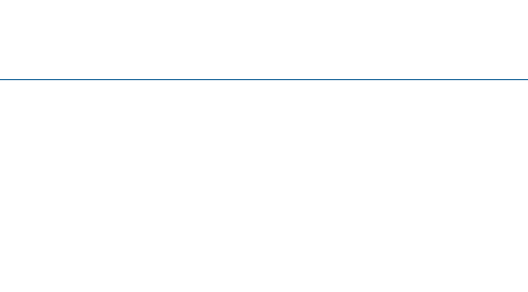
(J) Western Slide



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court



(E) Bocce Court

12. IMAGE Existing Facilities

3.2 Site Analysis

This section of the plan provides a summarised analysis of existing conditions. The purpose of the analysis is to provide commentary on issues and deficiencies identified by the project team ensuring recommendations to mitigate the issues can be constructed logically.

The analysis covers findings categorised into the following themes:

- Movement & Access
- Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure
- Environment & Landscape

3.2.1 Movement and Access

KEY ISSUES

PATH

- Pathways within the reserve are predominantly compacted gravel around the open grassed area with varying widths. These informal footpaths meet minimum Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements, however, can be increasingly expensive to maintain and do not meet the needs of people with limited mobility
- Pathways within the reserve are inconsistent in surface treatment e.g. Concrete to gravel connection Pathway areas are subject to water logging in wet weather
- No DDA access path to the public toilet
- Lack of continuous footpath along High Street
- Lack of pedestrian access/entry from the bus station and traffic light on High Street to the reserve
- Lack of connection/pedestrian path from the parking to the playspace and picnic area
- Lack of connection from the existing path to the second shelter
- No footpath connecting the main entrance from High Street to the reserve
- A narrow path from the central car park to the rear side of the club with no connection to the main entrance of the club
- Poor access path (no DDA compliance path) from the lower car parking to the Bocce Social Club

CAR PARKING

- Safety risk at the car park due to dead tree branches
- Lack of lighting in the central car park
- No Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives associated with car parks or buildings at the site
- Scattered car parks throughout the reserve
- Insufficient peak-hour car parking

ENTRANCE

- Poor entrance from Bellarine Drive
- Inconsistent and poor wayfinding signage at reserve entrances
- Lack of pedestrian safe crossing facilities, particularly from High Street to the main entrance of the reserve
- No vehicle access/entrance from Deveny Road to the reserve resulting in more distant and complicated access for visitors

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Investigate formalising the main existing paths within reserve to concrete to create consistency within the reserve and minimise maintenance cost
- Investigate improved drainage systems such as permeable paver in pathway areas to mitigate flooding and ensure usability even during wet seasons
- Provide a shared path along the lower car park and connect it to the North-South footpath on High Street
- Provide Pedestrian access/entry to the northeast corner of the reserve from the bus stop on High Street, enhancing accessibility and encouraging more visitors to use public transportation to access the reserve
- Provide a path connecting the central car park to the playspace and picnic area
- Provide a path from the existing path to the second shelter
- Provide a shared path along the entrance path from High Street to the existing central car park
- Investigate alternative path connecting the the central car park to the entrance of the Bocce Social Club
- A DDA compliant and all weather path from the lower car park to the Bocce Social Club
- Additional (solar) lighting to illuminate the the central car park at night
- Investigate relocation or integration of the car park areas
- Investigate increasing car park spaces next to the Bocce Social Club
- Improve the entrance from Bellarine Drive to create an attractive, welcoming gateway to the reserve
- Establish wayfinding signage for entrance nodes to direct people to existing facilities within the reserve and surrounding area
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street to improve safety and accessibility for visitors using the main entrance of the reserve
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street

KEY ISSUES



LEGEND

- High maintenance gravel Path
- Inconsistency in surface treatment
- Lack of footpath
- Poor & no DDA Compliant path
- Lack of pedestrian entry
- Poor entrances
- Lack of pedestrian crossing facilities
- Complicated vehicle access
- Inconsistent & poor way finding signage
- Areas subject to water logging
- Narrow footpath with no connection to the club entrance
- Scattered & insufficient peak hour car parking
- Proposed Wollert rail line
- Proposed off-road shared path



A Pathways are inconsistent in surface treatment



B Lack of pedestrian access to the reserve from High Street



C No DDA access path to the public toilet & subject to flooding



D Poor entrance from Bellarine Drive



E Pathway areas are subject water logging in wet weather



F Lack of connection from the central car park to the playspace



1.1.1 Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure

KEY ISSUES

PLAYSPACE

- ▶ Safety concern due to the close proximity of the playspace to Deveny Road
- ▶ Lack of play facilities for older kids /teenagers
- ▶ Lack of shade within the play space, limiting longer stays during sunny days.

INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

- ▶ The existing toilet is in poor condition (based on the toilet assessment report)
- ▶ The toilet is situated at a distance from the playground, but it is easily accessible from the main entrance.
- ▶ Lack of existing outdoor facility to support the bocce clubs's users
- ▶ Notable dog population in Lalor and deficiency of dog off leash are across the suburb (only Whittlesea Public Gardens includes dog off-leash area)
- ▶ No designated/flexible spaces for events such as regular markets, multicultural events and structured events during school holidays

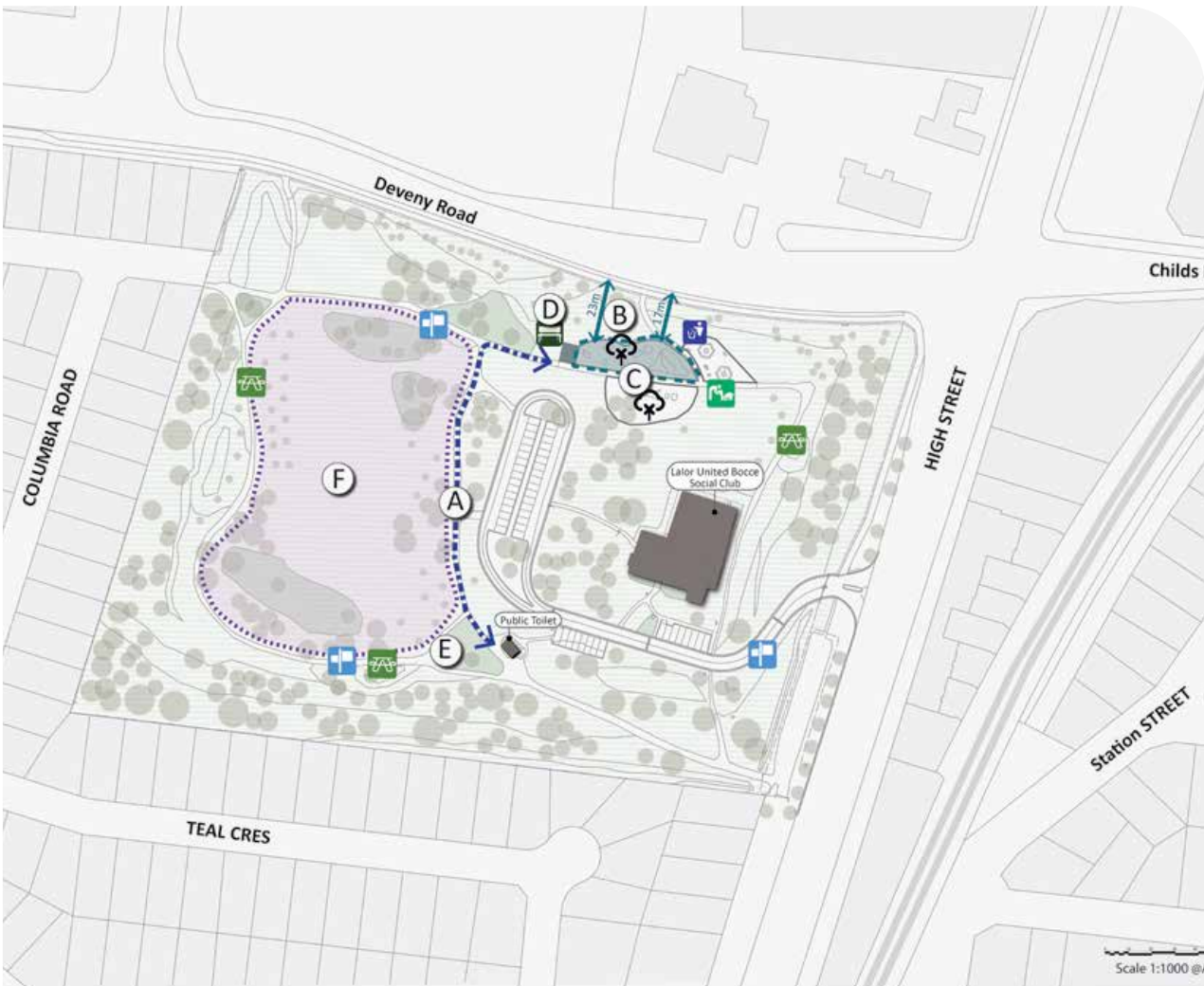
PARK SUPPORT FACILITIES

- ▶ Facilities are predominantly located on the east side of the reserve and not equally distributed throughout the reserve
- ▶ Shortage of rubbish bins
- ▶ A need for more drink fountains, particularly one with a dog bowl
- ▶ Lack of seating next to the existing half basketball court
- ▶ Lack of shade in seating areas
- ▶ Lack of grouped seating arrangements which foster face to face interaction and gathering
- ▶ Lack of historical/educational signage

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Upgrade the toilet block to improve safety and amenity
- ▶ Investigate relocation of the toilet block closer to the playground area
- ▶ Utilise adjacent space to the Bocce Social Club for the club's supporting facilities and outdoor gathering area
- ▶ Investigate providing a dog off-lead area as per the Dog off-leash Area policy & Management plan, 20216-2026
 - ▶ Investigate the development of flexible spaces for community events, workshops, and performances to encourage social interactions, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen community ties
- ▶ Providing physical barriers around the playspace due to the nearby street
- ▶ Consider diversity in play comprising nature play elements and increase play space size in future playground upgrade
- ▶ Expand the play space comprising of more challenging features for older children and teenagers
- ▶ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ▶ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins, bike racks, seating areas and informal and structured coverage where required
- ▶ Provide outdoor gathering opportunities and install grouped seating arrangements to encourage face-to-face interaction and social gathering
- ▶ Install educational/informative signage along pedestrian paths

KEY ISSUES



LEGEND

- ▶ Complicated and far access
- ▶ Lack of shade within the playspace
- ▶ Safety concern due to the close proximity of the Playspace to Deveny Rd
- ▶ Insufficient rubbish bins
- ▶ Lack of grouped seating arrangements Lack of seating next to the basketball court
- ▶ No designated/flexible spaces for events
- ▶ Lack of cultural heritage/educational signage
- ▶ Lack of drinking fountain with a dog bowl



A The toilet is situated at a distance from the playground



B Close proximity of the Playspace to Deveny Rd



C Lack of shade within the play space



D Lack of seating next to the existing half basketball court



E Lack of grouped seating arrangements



F No designated/flexible spaces for events such as regular markets and multicultural events



3.2.3 Environment & Landscape

KEY ISSUES

LANDSCAPE & VEGETATION

- ▶ Hidden areas and visual barriers due to shrubs and bushes around the public toilet
- ▶ Lack of shade trees near the existing benches next to the playground
- ▶ Lots of trees at the end of their useful life expectancy (ULE)
- ▶ Some sections of the reserve near the neighbouring properties lack any planting and could benefit from additional buffer planting
- ▶ Some areas such as the area next to the shelters are subject to water logging in winter
- ▶ The landscape is disjointed due to the car park which segregates the open space landscapes
- ▶ No Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives associated with car parks or buildings at the site
- ▶ Limited ability for proposing activities on interfaces due to the topography and steepness of the site, particularly on the east side

LOOK & FEEL

- ▶ Lack of passive surveillance in the southwest corner of the park due lack of pathway
- ▶ Understory planting and thick bushes surrounding the toilet block limit visibility and passive surveillance into the public toilet
- ▶ No pathway lighting in the west side of the reserve
- ▶ Anti-social activity around the public toilet
- ▶ Approximately 50% of the frontages are inactive with residential properties backing onto the reserve

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Improve visibility to the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting or replacing with more suitable greenery where required
- ▶ Potential additional buffer planting on the west side of the reserve maintaining an appropriate distance from neighbouring properties
- ▶ Additional tree planting
- ▶ Remove trees at the end of their useful life expectancy
- ▶ Investigate additional lighting with the Public Realm Lighting Plan
- ▶ Investigate activating the southwest corner of the reserve through more benches, path extension and or developing a dog park
- ▶ Establish wayfinding signage to support pedestrian navigation across the reserve

KEY ISSUES



LEGEND

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Hidden areas & visual barriers | Insufficient lighting | Anti-social activity |
| Lack of shade trees | Lack of passive surveillance | Inactive frontages and lack of buffer planting |
| Dead trees | Disjointed landscape | Topography and steepness |



A Hidden areas and visual barriers due to bushes around the public toilet



B Dried-out branches within the reserve



C Disjointed landscape due to the car park



D Lack of trees in the west side of the reserve



E Lack of passive surveillance in the Southwest corner of the park



F Inactive frontages

Consultation Summary.

“ Quotes from our community

“ The public toilet 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 Reserve 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).

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

4.0 Consultation Summary

This section provides a summary of consultation activities.

The purpose of the community consultation was to gain an understanding of how the community use the reserve and how they would like to be using the reserve in the future. Two phases of consultation were undertaken with the results from both phases used to directly inform the key directions of the Master Plan.

METHODOLOGY

The community were consulted on the VR Michael Reserve Master Plan in two phases:

Phase 1 Capturing challenges and opportunities of the site, June and July 2023

Phase 2 Presentation of the draft master plan, 22 April to 20 May 2024

A range of methods and tools were used to engage with the community and key stakeholders over the two phases of consultation. These included the following:

- ▶ Meeting with key Council internal stakeholders
- ▶ Meeting with key external stakeholders
- ▶ Direct mail outs
- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Social map
- ▶ Onsite pop-up sessions

KEY INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Several key stakeholder meetings were held with Council staff from a range of departments and with various subject matter expertise.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Meetings were held with representatives from various key external stakeholders including the following:

- ▶ Members of the Lalor United Bocce Social Club
- ▶ Reserve Users
- ▶ Local Businesses
- ▶ Residents

4.2.1 Consultation Phase 1

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 the park improvement. Refer to Appendix 1 for the full report.

OUTCOME

Feedback was received from 172 participants including users of the Lalor Bocce Social Club, residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods and visitors to the VR Michael Reserve.

Overall, we heard that the area's infrastructure is degrading and in need of repair, paths and carparking areas do not meet current standards of compliance and existing land uses in the precinct can be better connected. Residents and visitors perceive the area as 'unsafe', 'uninviting' and 'dull'.

According to the total responses, the top six priorities for change are as follows:

- ▶ General safety
- ▶ Car park
- ▶ Public toilet
- ▶ Walking track/paths
- ▶ Pedestrian access to the reserve
- ▶ More greenery
- ▶ Central lawn

Our community engagement highlighted the main issues as follows:

- ▶ Poor perceptions of safety in the area such as lack of lighting at night-time, and poor passive surveillance
- ▶ Pedestrian safety and access
- ▶ Close proximity of the playspace to Deveny Road is a concern of the community
- ▶ Insufficient peak-hour car parking
- ▶ Lack of play facilities for teenagers

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Draft Master Plan:

- ▶ Provide passive surveillance opportunities and improve perception of safety
- ▶ Upgrade the existing paths and improve access to the reserve including access from Deveny Road to the playspace and DDA compliant access from the off-site car park to the Bocce Social Club
- ▶ Investigate the potential for providing a dog off-lead area as per the Council 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan'
- ▶ Consider the development of facilities/activities for different user groups to provide range of play experiences
- ▶ Investigate the development of flexible spaces for community events, workshops, and performances to encourage social interactions, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen community ties
- ▶ Investigate the development of spaces for exercise encouraging physical and mental well-being
- ▶ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the playspace due to nearby street
- ▶ Investigate potential for upgrades/relocation of the existing toilet block
- ▶ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ▶ Upgrade and additional solar lighting to car parking and main entrances to the reserve Incorporating warmer colours in the park entrances and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways considering Shared User Paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles
- ▶ Improve entry node with feature landscaping and paving, access, educational/historical and wayfinding signage
- ▶ Explore the possibility of integrating a community herb garden and sensory garden within the reserve plan, enhancing its appeal and offering unique interactive experiences for visitors
- ▶ Improve maintenance of the central lawn
- ▶ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating where required

Master Plan.

5.0 Master Plan

The site analysis and consultation work undertaken has resulted in a vision to improve the functional layout of VR Michael Reserve as a Municipal Reserve upon the delivery of five key objectives:

5.1 Vision & Key Objectives

VISION

VR Michael Reserve is an accessible, inclusive and vibrant reserve that offers a variety of informal recreational opportunities for individuals and families, catering to the diverse interests of our community. This reserve is a hub of inclusivity and engagement, where residents can celebrate and share cultural identity and diversity.





5.2 Recommendations

The VR Michael Reserve Master Plan sets out recommendations which are articulated through the key themes of Movement & Access, Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure, and Environment and Landscape.

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

PATH

- Realign and upgrade main paths within the reserve to concrete paths, comprised of two walking/jogging loops
- Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed playspace and picnic area incorporating all-gender parent/carer rooms, a disabled toilet and labels indicating available facilities without specifying gender, as a mid to long term action
- Upgrade the surface material of the access path to the toilet block to provide a DDA-compliant access path as a short-term action
- Proposed 2.5m shared path along the lower carpark connecting the existing footpath on High Street
- Proposed an entrance and 2m path from the north-east corner of the reserve
- Proposed 2m path connecting the central car park to the existing playspace
- Proposed 1.5m path connecting the existing path to the second shelter (short-term solution)
- Proposed concrete shared path along the access road from High Street to the reserve with 2.5m width
- Upgrade and realign the existing path to connect the central carpark to the Bocce Social Club
- Realign and upgrade the 2.5m DDA compliant shared path accessing from the lower carpark to the reserve providing access to the Bocce Social Club

CAR PARKING

- Proposed lighting along the extended car park
- Proposed integrated and upgraded car park with a water-sensitive approach, comprising over 65 car parking spaces
- Upgraded lower car park comprising 24 car parking spaces
- Proposed vehicle drop-off area next to the Bocce Social Club
- Proposed entry/exit to the lower car park from the entrance road to the reserve providing safe access to the car park

ENTRANCE

- Upgrade the north entrances as well as the entrance from Bellarine Drive as more significant and welcoming entrances by providing wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, and landscaping

- Proposed wayfinding signage for entrance nodes to direct people to existing facilities within the reserve and surrounding area
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street to improve safety and accessibility for visitors crossing from the main entrance of the reserve
- Improve the forecourt of the Bocce Social Club including a vehicle drop off area and the direct access path

INFORMAL RECREATION AND PARK INFRASTRUCTURE

INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

- Proposed outdoor gathering space in proximity to the Bocce Social Club
- Proposed dog off-lead area (as per the Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan, 2016-2026) in the southwest corner of the reserve with seats, shelter and a fountain
- Proposed multi use space comprising smaller areas with social seating, drinking fountain and shade trees
- Proposed fitness and exercise station with equipment arranged in groups to allow for socialising

PLAYSPACE

- Proposed playspace with a safe distance from Deveny Road, with shorter-term provision of fence on the north side
- Proposed playground including a range of play experiences and nature-based area
- Plant additional trees throughout the reserve with raised tree canopies to strengthen ecological biodiversity
- Remove the existing trees in the playspace and increase shade through more canopy cover around the proposed play space and walking track where possible
- Proposed picnic area with picnic tables, BBQs and shelters
- Proposed bouldering wall beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor
- Investigate a community garden or a native pollinator garden beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor that use rainwater run-off to support the growth of species
- Proposed skate feature beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor
- Proposed half basketball court beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor

PARK SUPPORT FACILITIES

- Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins and social seating
- Proposed social seating such as picnic seating to provide a blend of private and public seating
- Establish interpretive signage along the proposed main paths that provide education on the history of VR Michael
- Establish dog park regulation signs indicating the designated dog park area

ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

LANDSCAPE AND VEGETATION

- Thin and selectively remove the existing thick vegetation to improve sightlines and passive surveillance throughout the reserve
- Remove the existing trees next to the seating areas around the playspace and plant shade trees near the existing benches and the proposed play space and walking track where possible
- Continue regular assessment and maintenance of trees
- Additional buffer planting maintaining an appropriate distance from neighbouring properties

LOOK & FEEL

- Investigate lighting the reserve's internal paths and elements with the holistic Public Realm Lighting Plan
- Improve visibility into the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting and replace with low maintenance plants to eliminate visual barriers

5.3 Draft Master Plan

The VR Michael Reserve draft master plan guides and provides direction for future upgrades and improvements to VR Michael Reserve. The master plan responds to insufficient peak-hour car parking, safety issues, connectivity and community needs along with recommendations to improve the natural environment.

The section in the following page illustrate the Future Wollert Rail Corridor which passes through the reserve and the proposed activities that proposed by the master plan to be located beneath the Wollert Rail. Refer to Figure 14.

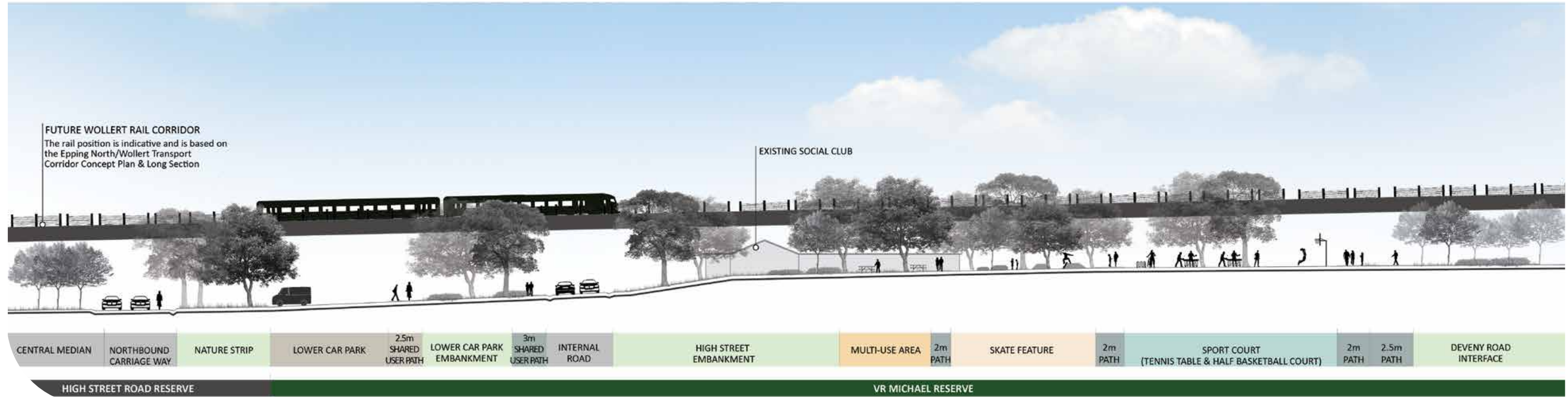
- 1 Flexible central lawn for games, events and picnics
- 2 Proposed dog off-leash area
- 3 Proposed playspace including climbing elements and range of play experiences
- 4 Proposed nature play area
- 5 Proposed picnic area with shelters, picnic settings, drinking fountain and bins
- 6 Proposed fitness and exercise station
- 7 Proposed toilet block with shorter term improvement of the safety and amenity of the existing toilet
- 8 Proposed social seating and gathering area
- 9 Proposed outdoor gathering space
- 10 Relocate the Bocce Court
- 11 Remove the central car park and extend the car park to west as an integrated and sustainable car park including 65 car park spaces
- 12 Proposed vehicle drop-off area next to the social club
- 13 Potential site for a community garden or a native pollinator garden using rain water tank for irrigation (will be further investigated as per the Council's protocol)
- 14 Proposed multi use area with social seating
- 15 Proposed skate feature
- 16 Proposed sport court with half basketball court and table tennis
- 17 Proposed bouldering wall
- 18 Proposed entry/exit to the lower car park
- 19 Upgrade car park (24 car park bays)
- 20 Proposed shared path along the lower car park
- 21 Proposed DDA compliant path connecting the lower car park with the Bocce Social Club
- 22 Realign and upgrade circuit path (2-2.5m concrete path)
- 23 Proposed shelter with a drinking fountain, seats and a dog sign
- 24 Improve entry nodes with way finding signage
- 25 Proposed entry from the intersection of Deveny Road and High Street
- 26 Proposed shared path from Boronia Street to the reserve
- 27 Improve the forecourt of the Social club, including a path from a vehicle drop-off area
- 28 Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- 29 Remove the existing playspace, basketball hoop and picnic area
- 30 Upgrade the reserve internal vehicle exclusion fencing
- 31 Proposed lighting along the main car park and entry

LEGEND

	Concrete Path (2-2.5m wide)		Proposed Lighting		Future Wollert Rail Corridor
	Granitic Sand Path (1.5m wide)		Proposed Shelter		Fence
	Proposed Drinking Fountain		Proposed Barbecue		Maintenance Gate
	Proposed Way Finding Signage		Existing Trees/Plants		Dog Off-lead Area Boundary
	Proposed Dog Signs		Proposed Trees		Site Boundary
	Proposed Bin		Trees To Be Removed/Relocated		
	Proposed Seating Area		Proposed Bicycle Rack		



13. IMAGE Draft Master Plan



Refer to the draft master plan map for the section line.

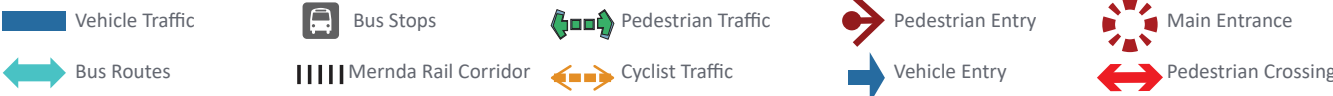
image

14. IMAGE Section A-A From the Proposed Wollert Rail Corridor and Activities Beneath It



LEGEND

ACCESS & MOVEMENT ANALYSIS



15. IMAGE Site Access & Movement Analysis



ACCESS & CIRCULATION



CONCRETE PATH



FEATURE PAVING



LEARN TO RIDE LOOP



PERMEABLE CAR PARK



RECREATION



MULTI-AGE PLAY EQUIPMENT



RUBBER MOUNDS



NATURE PLAY



CLIMBING ELEMENTS



FACILITIES



SHELTER AND SEATING



SOLAR & ELECTRIC PEDESTRIAN LIGHT



BIKE HOOPS AND VEHICLE EXCLUSION FENCE



PARK FURNITURE

The images illustrated are only examples and the recommendations provided may vary in their actual result.

SPORT COURT (beneath future Wollert rail overpass)



SKATE FEATURE



HALF BASKETBALL COURT



TABLE TENNIS



BOULDERING WALL



VEGETATION & SIGNAGE



FEATURE PLANTING



SHADE TREES



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE



ENTRY SIGNAGE



GENDER INCLUSIVE & SAFE SPACES



SOCIAL SEATING



MULTI-USE AREA WITH SOCIAL SEATING



FITNESS & EXERCISE STATION



The images illustrated are only examples and the recommendations provided may vary in their actual result.

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VR Michael Recreation Reserve Master plan

Technical Engagement Findings Report

Phase 1 Community Consultation

August 2023, Version 1

1

A place for all



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 the entrance of VR Michael Reserve) and provide a weather pedestrian connection from the parking area to the clubrooms as part of the 2023/24 capital works program. The proposed upgrade of the car park will improve accessibility for all individuals using the facility. Council also agreed to undertake a reserve Master plan, including features that help our community get active, socialise and enjoy the outdoors. The Master plan will include short, 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-lead dog park

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

The engagement includes two phases:

a) Phase one, Information Gathering -COMPLETED

b) Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition -

Consultation phase 1, was undertaken with diverse representation from a range of targeted stakeholders including Traders on Deveny Road and High Street, Lalor 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 in identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and defining the key ideas for the park improvement.



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.

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 messaging encouraged residents to attend pop-ups and 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 the VR Michael Recreation Reserve in 2 areas, near the playground and inside the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club, capturing families with young children and Seniors, who attend the Bocce and Social Club regularly. A subsequent pop-up was held in the first week of Term 2 on Wednesday 11 July at the Lalor Library.

The project Engage page 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 enables 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 particular point.

At in-person consultations respondents were presented with the same survey and offered the opportunity to share their thoughts on large activity boards.

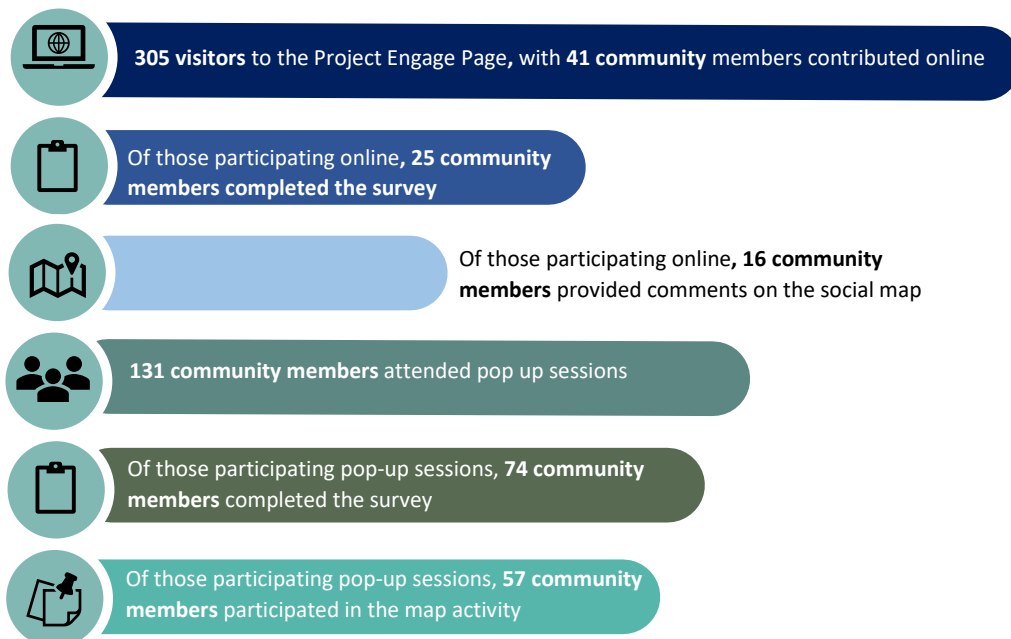


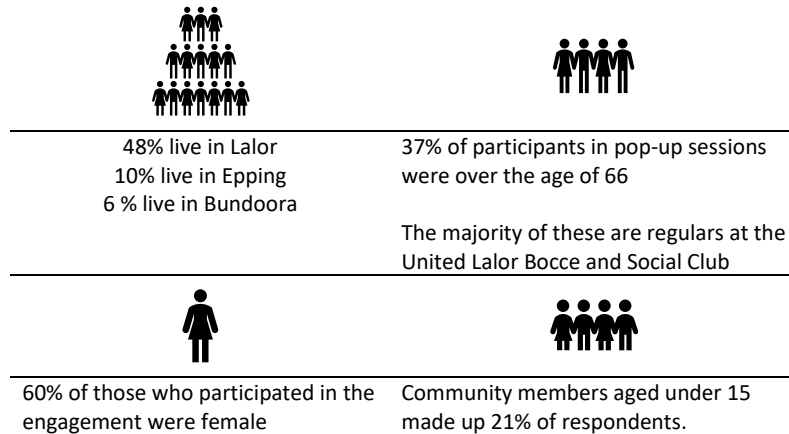
Image 01, 02: Project team engaging at VR Michael Reserve pop-up



Participation

The VR Michal Recreation Reserve Master plan page on Council's Engage platform attracted 305 visitors, with 41 contributions during the consultation period. In that time 7 community members opted to follow the project page to remain abreast of developments. A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:





At the VR Michael pop-up, 74 participants filled out a survey. Of these 83% were over the age of 66 and 6% were between the age of 36-45. 40 additional community members shared their ideas on our VR Michael Map activity.

The majority of participants over the age of 66 years of age who participated in the pop-up at the VR Michael Reserve are members of the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club and attend the club at least once a week for activities. The major issue for these members is the lack of parking, particularly when an event is being held at the club. Extra parking spaces including accessible parking, an adjustment to the current parking layout and a drop-off zone were suggested by members.

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. Here are some of their ideas:

- A fireplace where people can have a meeting
- Baby swings and older swings
- Monkey bars
- Slides

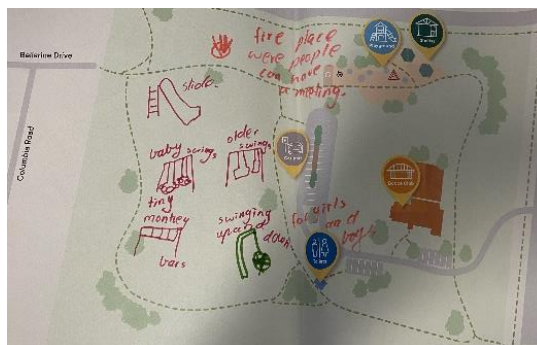


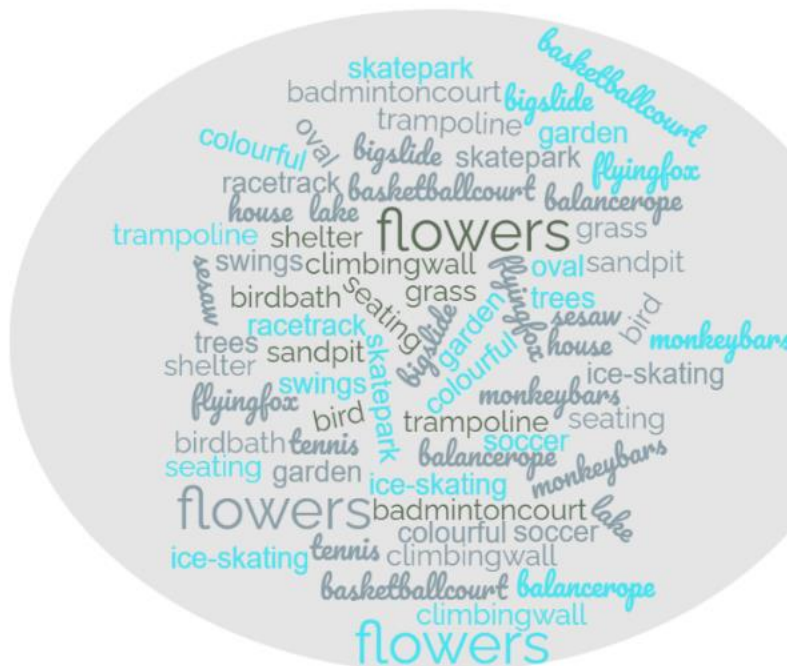
Image 03: Children's painting at pop-ups



Image 04, 05: Project team engaging at Lalor Library pop-up

At the Lalor Library pop-up, most participants were 15 years of age and under. They shared some innovative and interesting ideas for the Master plan. Here we also spoke to a group of five mothers, two grandparents and an elderly man who lives within walking distance of the reserve. They gave us some good insights into the reputation and possible reasons why VR Michael reserve is not well used and ideas to improve the area.

See below for the some of things our young people would like to see included in the master plan.





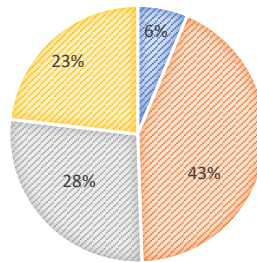
What we heard

Survey Results

This section provides results from the surveys completed by 99 community members. The online survey is a good indication of the community's thoughts on the master plan recommendations.

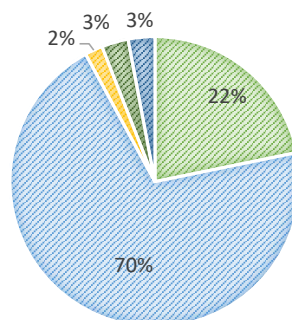
Almost 98% of respondents have been to VR Michal Recreation Reserve previously. Of the 96 respondents who answered that they had visited VR Michael Recreation Reserve, 43% visit the reserve 2-3 times a week. Interestingly 23% selected others and stated that they attend the United Lalor Bocce and Social Club once a week to attend a planned social event, such as Bingo. Almost a third of the respondents claim to rarely visit the reserve as they find safety and parking as a major issue.

■ Daily ■ 2-3 week ■ Rarely/Never ■ Other



70% of respondents indicated that they drive to the reserve, with only 22% walking to the reserve. An elderly man (88 years of age) who came to 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.

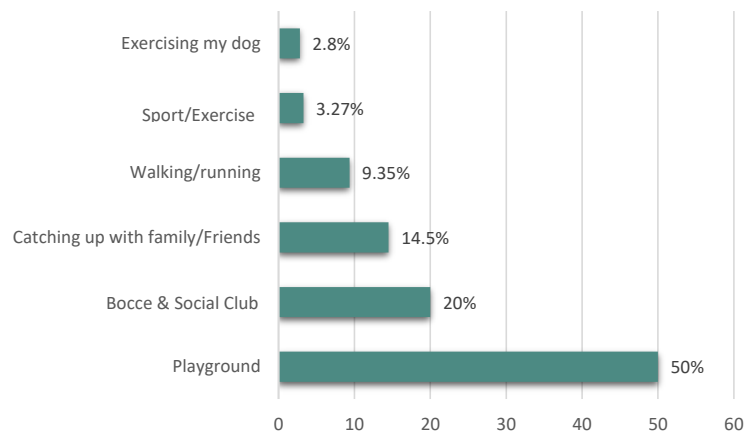
■ walk/run ■ Drive ■ Ride ■ Public Transport ■ Other





What do you use the reserve for?

The top two reasons that visitors use the reserve are 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 and friends. 15 participants and Bocce and Social Club members 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 the graph below for actual figures.

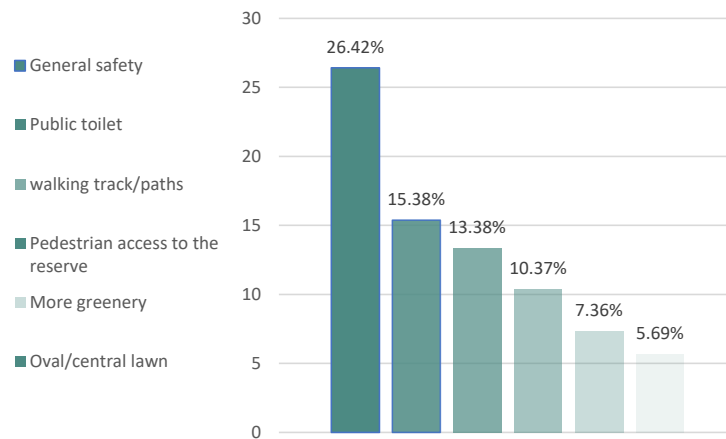


What are your priorities for improvement?

Safety was the highest priority for many respondents as illustrated in the below chart. Lack of lighting, security cameras and the playground's proximity to the road were the main concerns for users. A grandmother and grandfather 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 Deveny Road and access from High Street is difficult.

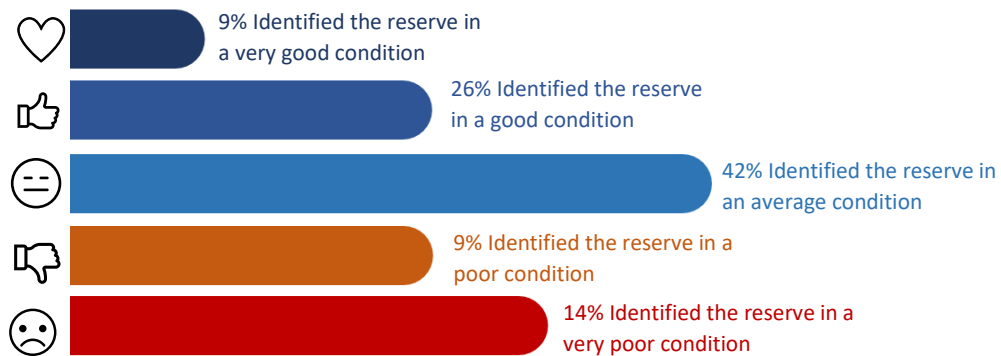
An upgrade to the public toilet block was identified as a second priority for improvement. Additional toilets including a disabled toilet should be considered, as well as the position of the toilet block when designing the Master plan. *"The remote location is too far from the playground and has many 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)".*



How would you rate this Reserve overall?

Participants were asked to rate the existing condition of the reserve. 65% of community members identified VR Michael Reserve in an average to very poor condition.





Social map activity

Of the 45 online contributions, 16 participated 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.

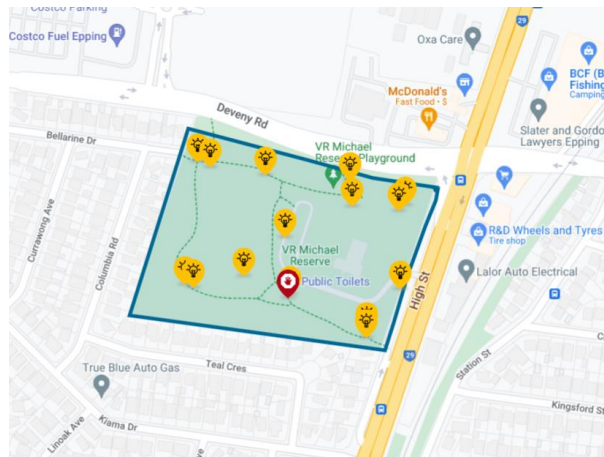





Image 05: Social map activity

Opportunities

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

Recreation for all users and abilities

Playground	Walking, Running and Cycling	Fitness and Sports
		
<p>Extending the playground with age-appropriate equipment to cater for younger and older age groups.</p> <p><i>“Consider the materials when upgrading the reserve and always keep safety in mind. Big rocks are used in many</i></p>	<p>More regular grass and tree maintenance was suggested to keep paths clear and accessible by all users. Access to the reserve and adequate pathways/walking tracks around the reserve will increase reserve users.</p> <p>An elderly man (88 years of age) walks daily around the</p>	<p>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</p>



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"

reserve. Safety was his main concern, minimal lighting and dead branches makes it difficult to walk in the area.

"Paved paths, jogging/running track with outdoor exercising equipment"




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

"Connecting and clearly marked cycle trails leading into the reserve"

introducing synthetic grassed areas for sports 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 playground and basketball facilities are enough. Maybe include some bench seating next to the basketball area for players and spectators"

Facilities and safety

Facilities	Safety	Off Lead Dog Park
		
<p>Additional facilities are suggested that complement the current playground equipment, extra seating (senior-friendly), picnic tables, shelter, BBQ and bins.</p> <p><i>"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"</i></p> <p><i>"Higher raised benches for elderly people to sit on. They are sometimes too low and hard to get up if you have mobility issues"</i></p>	<p>Introducing lighting and security cameras around the reserve was suggested to make users feel safer. Additionally, safety concerns around the position of the playground were raised. A fence around the playground was suggested by several participants.</p> <p><i>"Lights around existing/new paths which make them safer to walk at night"</i></p> <p><i>"The entrance to the reserve looks too uninviting and does not provide you with a sense of safety"</i></p>	<p>17 community members left a comment that they would like to see an off-lead dog park as part of the Master plan for the reserve.</p> <p><i>"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"</i></p> <p><i>"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"</i></p>



Community spaces

Historic Display	Arts and Events	Natural Environment
<p>3 participants suggested an area in the reserve that recognises VR Michael, possibly an information board with historical details.</p> <p><i>"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></p> <p><i>"I would also like to see some historical information about the park/neighbouring area as I believe it was an old quarry site"</i></p>	<p>Multiple community members highlighted hosting events at the reserve, including regular markets, multicultural events, Christmas Carols and structured events during school holidays.</p>	<p>Community members suggested incorporating a community herb garden and sensory garden into the reserve.</p>

Other opportunities identified in the online comments and in-person discussions are listed below.

- 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

The comments on the project Engage page reflect other issues as follows:

12

A place for all



- 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 parking to the Bocce Social Club

Key Recommendations

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following main recommendations are made for inclusion in the Draft Master Plan.

- ⇒ Provide passive surveillance opportunities and improve the perception of safety
- ⇒ Upgrade the existing paths and improve access to the reserve including access from Deveny Road to the playspace and DDA-compliant access from the off-site car park to the Bocce Social Club
- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing a dog off-leash as per the Council 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan'
- ⇒ Consider the development of facilities/activities for different user groups to provide a range of play experiences
- ⇒ Investigate the development of flexible spaces for community events, workshops, and performances to encourage social interactions, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen community ties
- ⇒ Investigate the development of spaces for exercise encouraging physical and mental well-being
- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the playspace due to nearby street
- ⇒ Investigate potential for upgrades/relocation of the existing toilet block
- ⇒ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ⇒ Upgrade and additional solar lighting to car parking and main entrances to the reserve Incorporating warmer colours in the park entrances and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways considering SUPs Guiding Principles
- ⇒ Improve entry node with feature landscaping and paving, access, educational/historical and wayfinding signage
- ⇒ Explore the possibility of integrating a community herb garden and sensory garden within the reserve plan, enhancing its appeal and offering unique interactive experiences for visitors
- ⇒ Improve maintenance of the central lawn
- ⇒ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating where required



Next steps

Thank you to everyone who 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.