



Nick Ascenzo Reserve

MASTER PLAN REPORT

October 2023

Open Space Planning



City of
Whittlesea

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Thomastown

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is situated in Thomastown, in the southwest area of the municipality. Thomastown is approximately 15 square kilometres in size, and although it is known as a residential area, it also has a significant industrial area. Thomastown is surrounded by Merri Creek in the west and Darebin Creek in the east. The Metropolitan Ring Road, Hume Freeway, Edgars Road, High Street and Dalton Roads present barriers to safe walking access to open space within the suburb.

The forecast residential population change in Thomastown represents a 10.3 percent increase in the total population with a forecast increase of approximately 2,183 people by 2026. This is distributed throughout the established residential areas with higher levels of concentration of change around the Neighbourhood Renewal areas east and west of High Street.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) provided information on the demographics, cultural and language diversity of Thomastown. Some of the key information found are as to right (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) 2021):



POPULATION

20,234 residents in 2021

Population density
1,349 persons per square km
+ 8000 more residents by 2041

27.5% of population are **60+ years of age**

27% of population are **less than 25 years of age**

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



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

56.4% were born overseas

71.8% speak a language other than English at home

(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

42.1% of households are couples with children

35.4% of households are couples without children

20.1 are one parent family

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



OPEN SPACE AND TREES

23 square meters provision of usable (unencumbered) **open space** per resident (2023)

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

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

7.02% canopy cover

(Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040)

Nick Ascenzo Reserve

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is one of the City of Whittlesea’s open space reserves in Thomastown, an established area of the municipality. Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified as part of Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Improvement Project, which will transform the precinct including, revitalisation of the town centre, neighbourhood open space and includes improvements to traffic management in the precinct.

Phase one the Alexander Avenue Town Centre Revitalisation program was a 2020/21 Council Action Plan, that aims to improve the functionality, attractiveness, and vibrancy of local and neighbourhood town centres across the City of Whittlesea. Phase Two of the precinct revitalisation is Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan development.

The Open Space Strategy 2016 identifies the reserve as one of the most frequently visited open space reserves within walking distance of residents with a peaceful/quiet environment. In terms of the hierarchy and character classification, it is specified as a municipal open space with sporting and service easement as a primary and secondary character.

The Open Space Strategy recommends “Preparation of a Landscape Master plan to guide future upgrades and use of this park for both structured and unstructured sport and recreation use. This review is to consider the car parking facility location (including the play area); improving the connection between the adjoining shopping precinct and the park; and improving visual access into the park through trimming selected vegetation.”



Figure 1. Site Location



Figure 2. Alexander Avenue Precinct



Figure 3. Context Plan

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 .

The purpose of this master plan is to guide the future development and management of Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

The masterplan 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 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.

1.3 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, background research and reviews of existing documents was initially conducted, as summarised below, as well as an analysis of the study area, to build an understanding of the context. The analysis focussed on the study area's existing conditions, current issues and challenges and opportunities to improve the site.

The background analysis and site understanding were expanded by a visit to the study area. The project process then focussed on the Stakeholder/Community Engagement process, which sought inputs from residents and traders, about Alexander Avenue shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

The purpose of these engagement activities was to gain greater knowledge about the issues, opportunities and priorities for the shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo 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 Nick Ascenzo Reserve. The Stakeholder Engagement Findings Report can be found in Appendix 1.

In the next stage, the project process focussed on the development of the concept plan for the site. Following this, a second phase of community engagement will take place to gather feedback on the draft master plan.

The diagram illustrates the steps for the project.



1.4 Study area outline

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve with a 500m walking catchment in Thomastown. This catchment is limited by The Boulevard and Dalton Road on the north and east side of the site.

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is the major area of open space north of the Metropolitan Ring Road between High Street and Dalton Road. The reserve is the largest informal recreation open space in Thomastown (no formal organised sport), with an area of approximately 3.5 hectares which is generally characterised by open grass area surrounded by garden beds and mature trees offset from the reserve boundaries. The reserve comprises of several facilities including playground, rock climbing wall, bocce rink, half basketball court, table tennis, playground, picnic facilities, public toilet, car parking, footy and soccer goals, community hall and scout hall. Infrastructure in the park is aging, and in some cases inadequate.

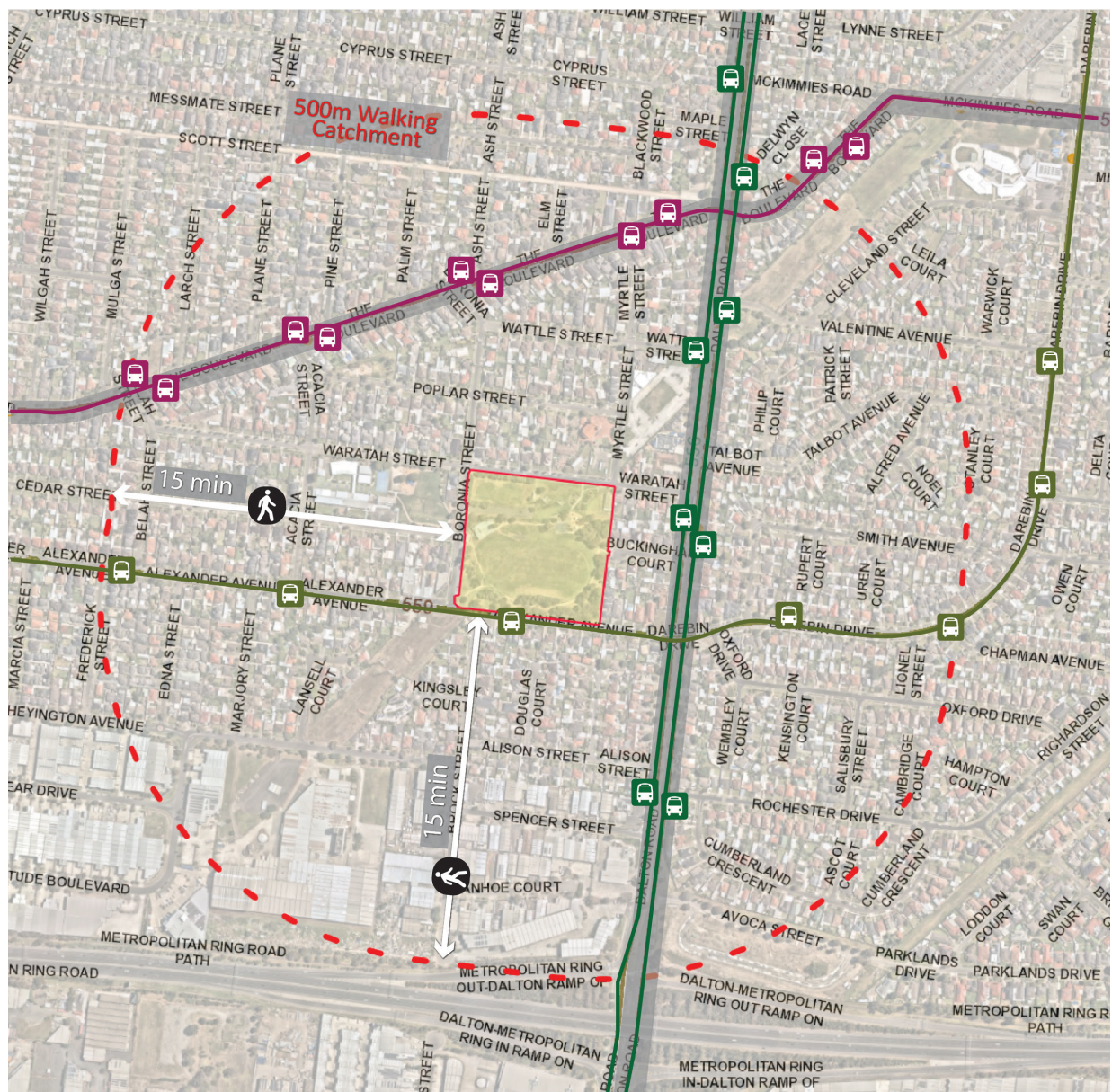


Figure 4. Walking Catchment

1.5 Planning controls

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is located within a Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), next to Commercial Zone (C1Z), General Residential Zone – Schedule 5 (GRZ5) and Public Use Zone – Education (PUZ2), as presented in Figure 5.

The electricity transmission line with a 60m easement width runs along the middle of the reserve, dividing the site into two parts physically and visually and limits development around this corridor as seen in Figure 6.

According to the flood modelling, this area is not in a floodplain zone, as per Figure 7.

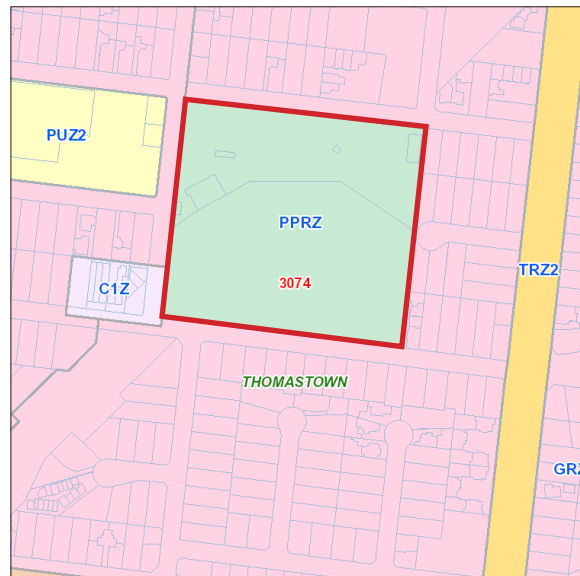


Figure 5. Planning Zone

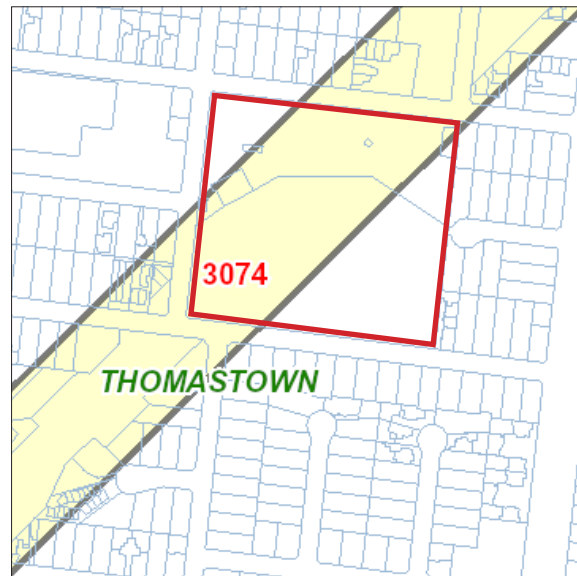


Figure 6. Transmission Easement

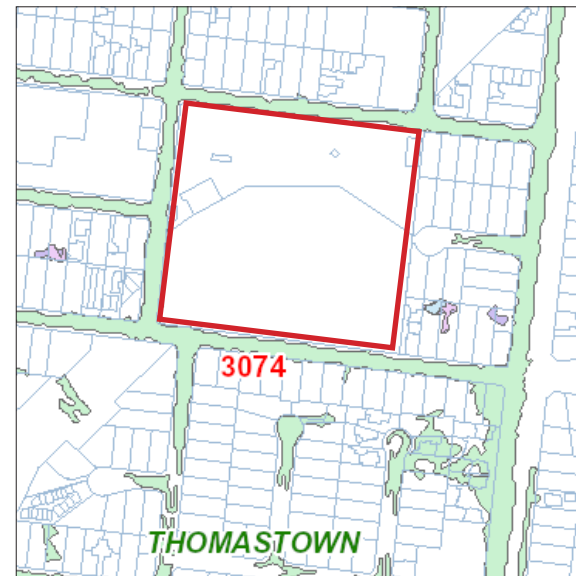


Figure 7. Flood Modelling



2.0 Background Documents

Several existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the Nick Ascenzo Master Plan. A review and summary of each including key directions relevant to the park is included in Appendix 1. The documents reviewed are as follows:

City of Whittlesea

- Whittlesea 2040 – A place for all
- Whittlesea Open Space Strategy 2016
- Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 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
- Disability Action Plan 2017-2021
- Signage Management Plan
- Your Ground Project 2021
- Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016
- Park Lighting Strategy 2006
- Lighting for Shared User paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea - Arup 2022

AusNet

- A guide to living with transmission line easements
- AusNet services, Your guide to planting near electricity lines



3.0 Site Analysis and Assessment

3.1 Existing conditions

The analysis covers findings categorised into the following themes:

-  **Movement and access**
-  **Informal recreation and park infrastructure**
-  **Environment and landscape**

3.1.1 Movement and access

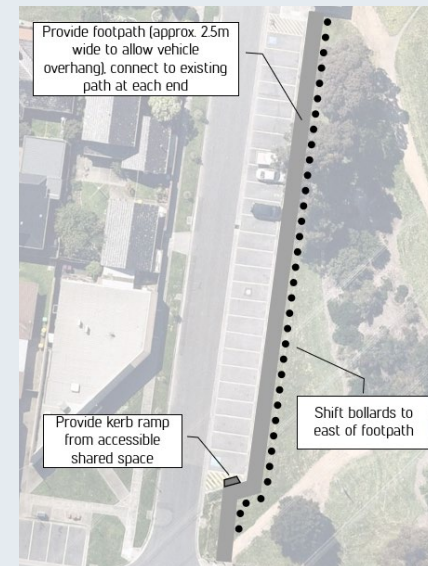
Footpath

The study area has relatively good walking facilities in place, with footpaths provided along Waratah Street and Alexander Avenue. There is an informal footpath on the eastern side of Boronia Street along the reserve which is interrupted by the toilet platform and on-street parking in this street.

There is a combination of formalised and unformalised footpaths in the reserve which provides an oval walking path around the park from the park 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 eastern side of Boronia Street near the car parking area and toward the roundabout intersection with Waratah Street.

Pedestrian and cyclist surveys were conducted by SALT3 in the study area to quantify the movements of active travellers at key locations. SALT3 recommendations for footpaths surrounding the Nick Ascenzo Reserve are as follows:



Proposed footpath along Boronia Street parking spaces (SALT 3, 2022)



Proposed footpath on the northern section of Boronia Street (SALT 3, 2022)

It is proposed to provide a footpath along the end of the 90-degree parking spaces for ease of pedestrian movement to and from the reserve and shops from these parking spaces. This footpath should be 2.5m wide to allow for overhang of the parked vehicles. The existing bollards should be shifted eastward adjacent to the footpath. This can connect into the existing paved footpath near the public toilets to the north, and the existing footpath on Alexander Avenue.

A kerb ramp should be provided from the accessible parking shared space to the new footpath to allow access for those with mobility devices.

It is proposed to extend the footpath along Boronia Street and provide a barrier kerb with landscaped nature strip along the eastern side of Boronia Street.

This footpath will connect to the paved area at the car park entrance and community centre and the existing footpath set back within the park slightly.

Furthermore, there is potential to provide a further landscaped nature strip at the frontage of the car park entrance as this area is currently underutilised.

Cycling path

There are no on-road or off-road cycling paths within the study area. In the vicinity of the site, Dalton Road and The Boulevard are provided with on-road bike lanes. The residential nature of many of the streets in and around the study area provides a low-speed and volume environment, suitable for sharing between vehicles and cyclists.

It is noted that Alexander Avenue is recognised as a priority corridor for walking and cycling improvements, within Council's Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027.

Public transport

The area is well-served by public transport, with bus and train services in the vicinity.

Bus route 559 operates on Alexander Avenue, with a bus stop situated to the south of Nick Ascenzo Reserve. This is a circular bus route throughout Thomastown and provides access to Thomastown Station, Lalor Plaza and Lalor Station. Bus route 570 operates on The Boulevard, with bus stops located near the intersection with Acacia Street. This operates between Thomastown and RMIT Bundoora Campus (refer to Figure 4).

The study area is located in close proximity to Thomastown Railway Station which is situated at the eastern end of Alexander Avenue, approximately 1km (12-minute walk) from the study area. Thomastown Station is on the Mernda train line, between Melbourne CBD and the northern suburbs.

Park entrances

There are seven entrances, including two main entrances in the north and southwest corners and five minor entrances. Based on the pedestrian count conducted, the entrances in the north, west, southwest, and the entrance from the internal car park are identified as the primarily used entrances, as per Figure 8. It's recommended to make these entrances more prominent.

The pedestrian count was undertaken at the study area on the following days/times:

- Thursday 30 November 2022 between 8am-10am; and
- Friday 2 December 2022 between 3.30pm-6pm.



Figure 8. Pedestrian Count

Car parking

Car parking is provided throughout the study area including on-street and off-street provisions. The locations of parking in the Alexander Avenue Precinct is shown in Figure 9.

Parking occupancy surveys were undertaken by SALT3 across the study area at the following days/times:

- Saturday 10 September 2022 between 10am-4pm; and
- Wednesday 14 September 2022 between 8am-9.30am and 3pm-4pm.

From this, the peak hours for parking occupancy are found to be at 9.30am and 3pm on Wednesday, and at 11.30am on Saturday. The parking utilisation across the study area at these times is presented in Figures 10-13.

The total car parking capacity in the precinct is 382 spaces, and according to the parking analysis, it can be concluded that parking is widely available within the precinct with a weekday peak occupancy of 61 spaces (16% occupied) occurring at 3pm, and a weekend peak occupancy of 75 spaces (20% occupied) occurring at 11.30am.

The internal car park capacity is 54 spaces. Peak occupancy of the car spaces is 40% on weekdays and 22% on weekends. This indicates an opportunity to reduce the existing car park spaces.



Figure 9. Car parking in the Alexander Avenue Precinct

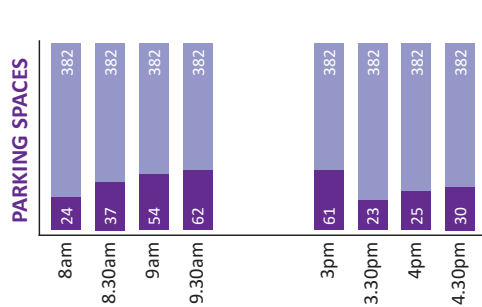


Fig 10. Parking survey results – Wed 14 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

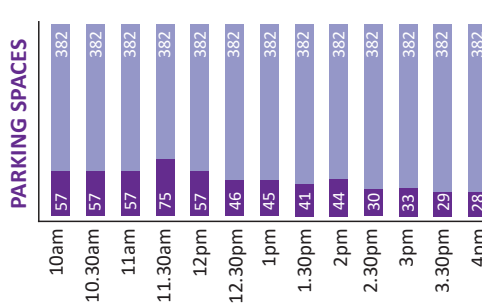


Fig 12. Parking survey results – Sat 10 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

Supply Occupancy



Fig 11. Peak Hour Parking Occupancy – Wed 14 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)



Fig 13. Peak hour parking occupancy – Sat 10 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

Intersections

SALT3 recommendations for intersections along Boronia street are as follows:

It is recommended to develop a footpath on the eastern side of Boronia Street and a raised intersection in the intersection of Boronia and Cedar Streets to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety and connection.

The proposed raised intersection at Boronia and Cedar Streets will assist to slow vehicles and improve pedestrian crossing safety. This treatment results in the removal of one parallel parking space. However, this improves pedestrian sight lines to oncoming traffic when exiting the park, thus is a positive improvement.

It is also recommended to extend the footpath to allow pedestrians to cross Boronia Street from the southern side of Cedar Street.

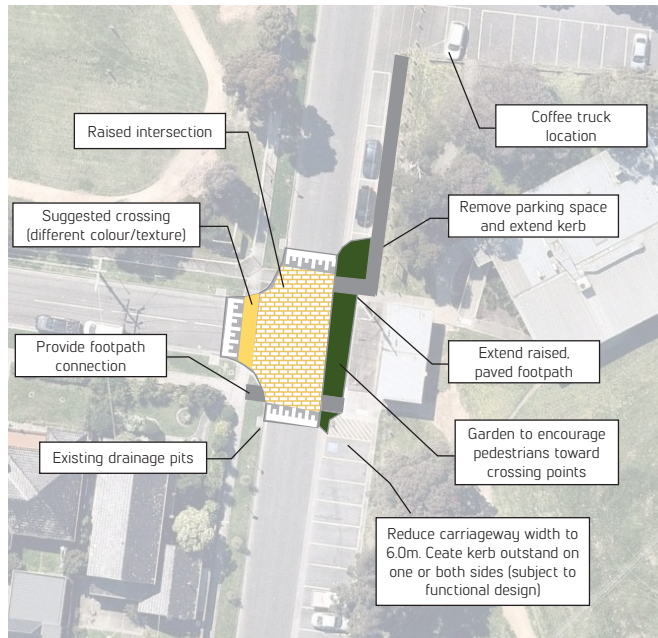


Figure 14. Boronia Street / Cedar Street raised intersection (SALT 3, 2022)

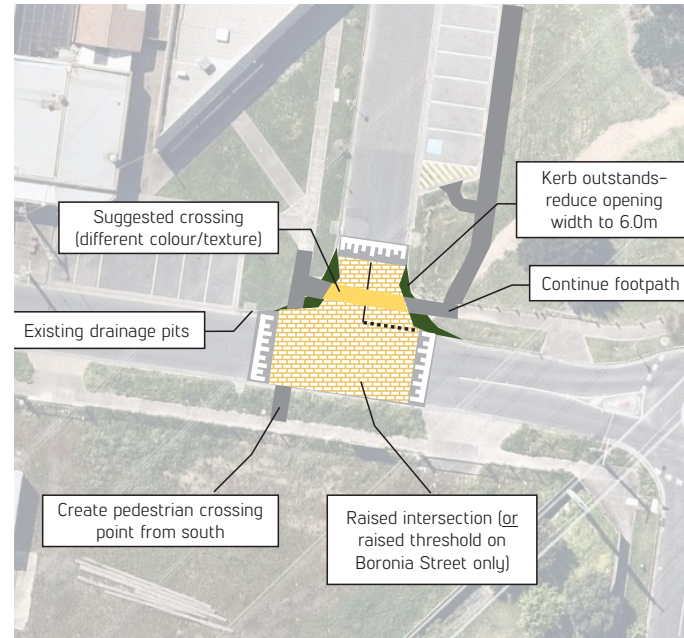


Figure 15. Alexander Avenue / Boronia Street proposed raised intersection (SALT 3, 2022)



Figure 16. Boronia Street / Waratah Street raised roundabout (SALT 3, 2022)



3.1.2 Informal recreation and park infrastructure

The reserve is comprised of several facilities including playground, rock climbing wall, bocce rink, half basketball court, table tennis, playground, picnic facilities, public toilet, car parking, footy and soccer goals, community hall and scout hall. Some of these facilities are in a dilapidated situation and/or dysfunctional and require a master plan to assess their community need and upgrade.

3.1.3 Environment and landscape

This reserve is generally characterised by open grass area surrounded by garden beds and mature trees offset from the reserve boundaries. The study area is not in a floodplain zone but the lawn area is subject to water logging in winter.

The electricity transmission line with a 60m easement width runs along the middle of the reserve, dividing the site into two parts physically and visually and limits development around this corridor. Figures 18, 19 and 20, provides a summarised analysis of existing conditions.

The following pages provide images of a summarised analysis of existing conditions.



Figure 17. Electricity Transmission Corridor & Towers



Movement & Access

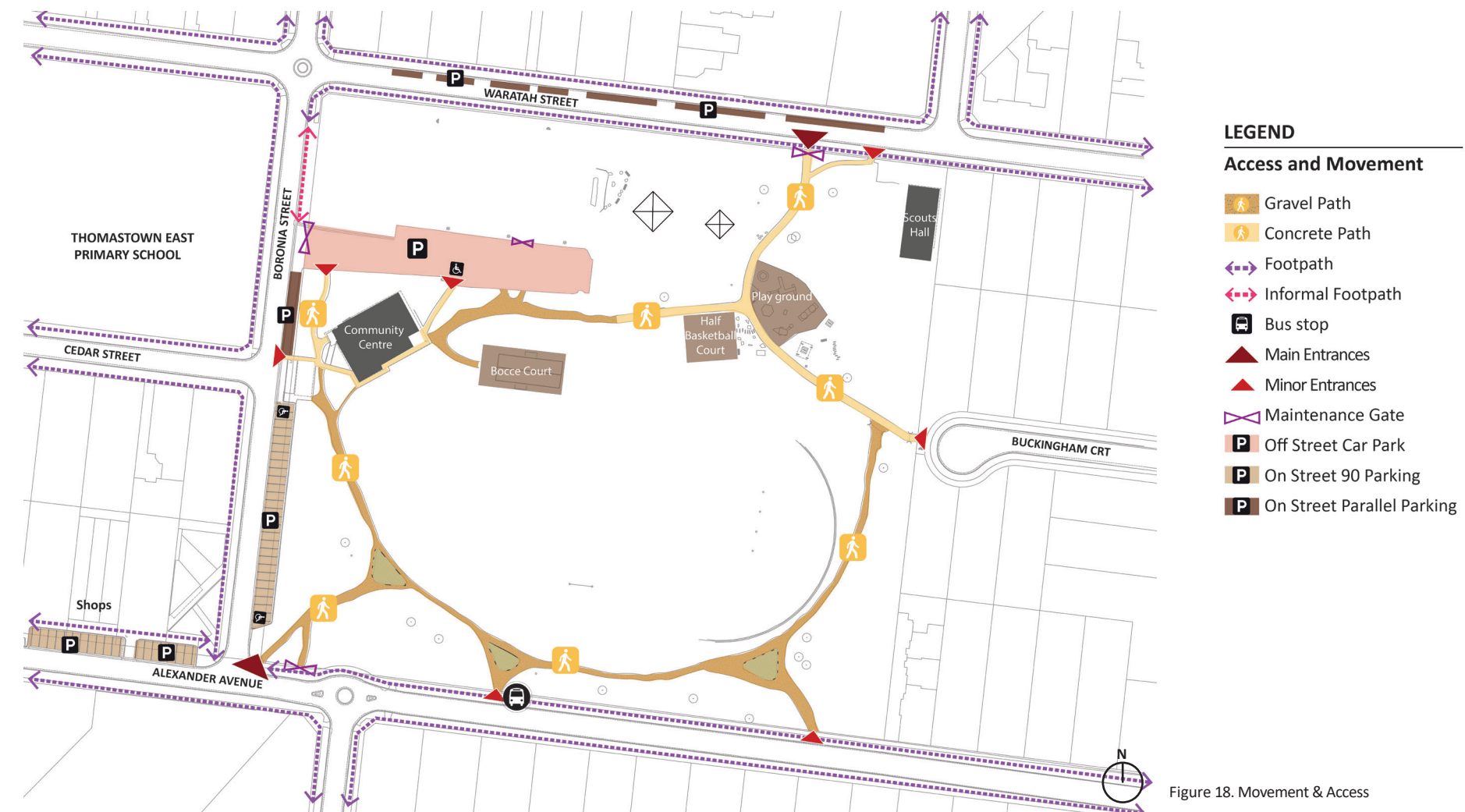


Figure 18. Movement & Access



Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure



LEGEND

Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure

- Playground
- Rock Climbing Wall
- Half Basketball Court & Bocce Court
- Tennis Table
- Picnic Area (BBQ and picnic table)
- Shelter
- Bin
- Seats/Benches
- Entrance Signs
- Toilet
- Scouts Hall & Community Hall
- Shops
- Fence
- Transmission Tower
- Powerline Easement
- Footy & Soccer Goals
- Light
- Spoon Drain

Figure 19. Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure



Environment & Landscape



LEGEND

Environment & Landscape

- Bushes/Shrubs
- Open Grass Areas
- Garden bed
- Tree
- Topography

Figure 20. Environment & Landscape

3.2 Analysis

Site and desktop analysis, and internal and external consultation were undertaken to identify key issues and opportunities of the site.



3.2.1 Issues

Movement and access

Paths

- The pathways within the reserve primarily consist of compacted gravel, particularly around the open grassed area, with varying widths. While these informal footpaths meet the minimum DDA requirements, they can become increasingly expensive to maintain and do not adequately cater to the needs of individuals with limited mobility
- The paths surrounding the community centre, scouts hall, and toilets are inconsistent in surface treatment and not DDA compliant
- There is an informal footpath along the northern side of Boronia Street, while the southern section lacks a formal footpath
- Walking next to the window of the Community Centre is not desirable, given the discomfort caused by the lack of buffer distance between the Community Centre and the footpath on the south-east side of it
- Lack of formal pathways throughout the reserve

Car parking

- No footpath access along Boronia Street to the car park
- The car park has 54 spots, but only about 40% are used during busy times, indicating there is an excess of parking spaces
- Car tracks and anecdotal evidence indicate motorcycles and cars are entering the oval

Entrance

- No way finding signage within the reserve
- Lack of pedestrian safe crossing facilities, particularly from Thomastown East Primary School and Alexander Avenue Shops to the reserve

Issues – Movement & Access

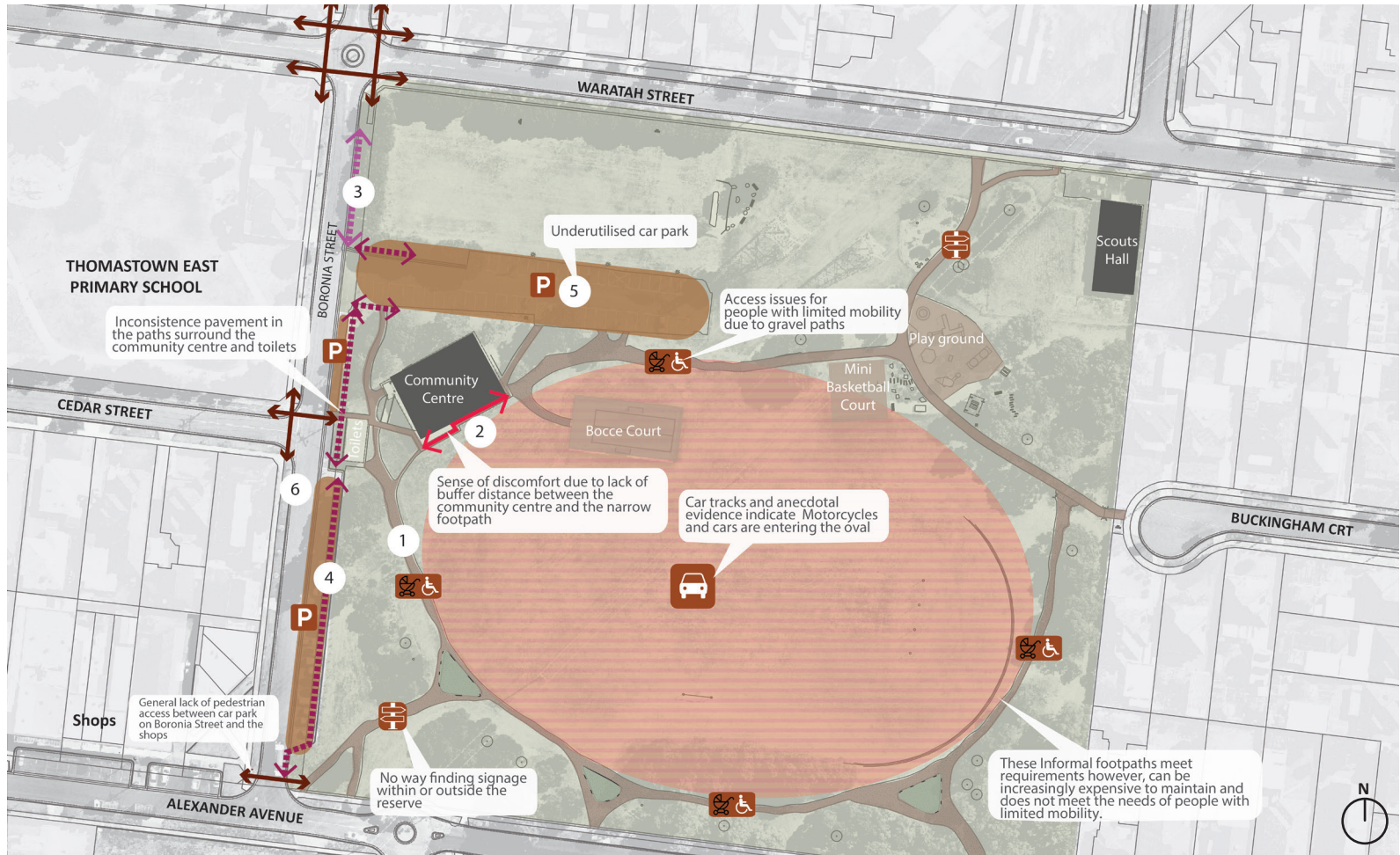


Figure 21

LEGEND

High maintenance cost of gravel paths	Lack of footpath	Underutilised car park
Access issues for people with limited mobility	Informal footpath	Motorcycle and car tracks on the central lawn
Lack of pedestrian crossing/safety	No way finding signage	Narrow footpath and lack of buffer
① High maintenance cost of gravel paths	③ Informal footpath along the northern side of Boronia Street	⑤ Highly underutilised car park spaces with peak of 40% occupancy
② Sense of discomfort due to lack of buffer distance between community centre and footpath	④ Lack of footpath along the southern section of Boronia Street	⑥ Lack of crossing facilities along Boronia Street





Informal recreation and park infrastructure

Play space

- Lack of suitable activities for older kids/youth e.g., skate parks, exercise equipment and community sports
- The rock climbing wall is underutilised due to it being dilapidated and unsafe. It is also isolated from other park features and does not have connecting paths

Informal recreation facilities

- The bocce court is in poor condition and currently fenced off. Its deteriorated state suggests that it hasn't been used much
- Lack of shade within the play space, limiting longer stays during sunny days
- The footy and soccer goals withing the central lawn are old and within proximity to powerlines
- The east orientation of the footy goals and proximity to the footpath is not ideal
- Lack of buffer between the pedestrian path and adjacent footy and soccer goals risk pedestrian safety

Park support facilities

- Lack of quality seating areas next to the climbing wall
- The increasing rubbish in the car park and reserve indicate shortage of adequate rubbish bins
- Lack of drinking fountains and bottle refill stations
- Lack of existing outdoor facility to support users of the Community Centre who are mainly senior citizens
- The toilets, in high demand, are outdated and require upgrade or replacement to meet the growing needs of the community and bring them up to standards
- Vandalism is occurring due to bare walls of the public toilet and lack of surveillance
- Underutilised and inactive space on the north-west side of the park and south-west next to the shops
- Underutilised fenced-off open space next to the Scouts Hall
- Seats and benches are predominantly located on the north side of the reserve and not equally distributed along paths
- The existing seats and benches are inconsistent in type and not DDA compliant



Issues – Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure

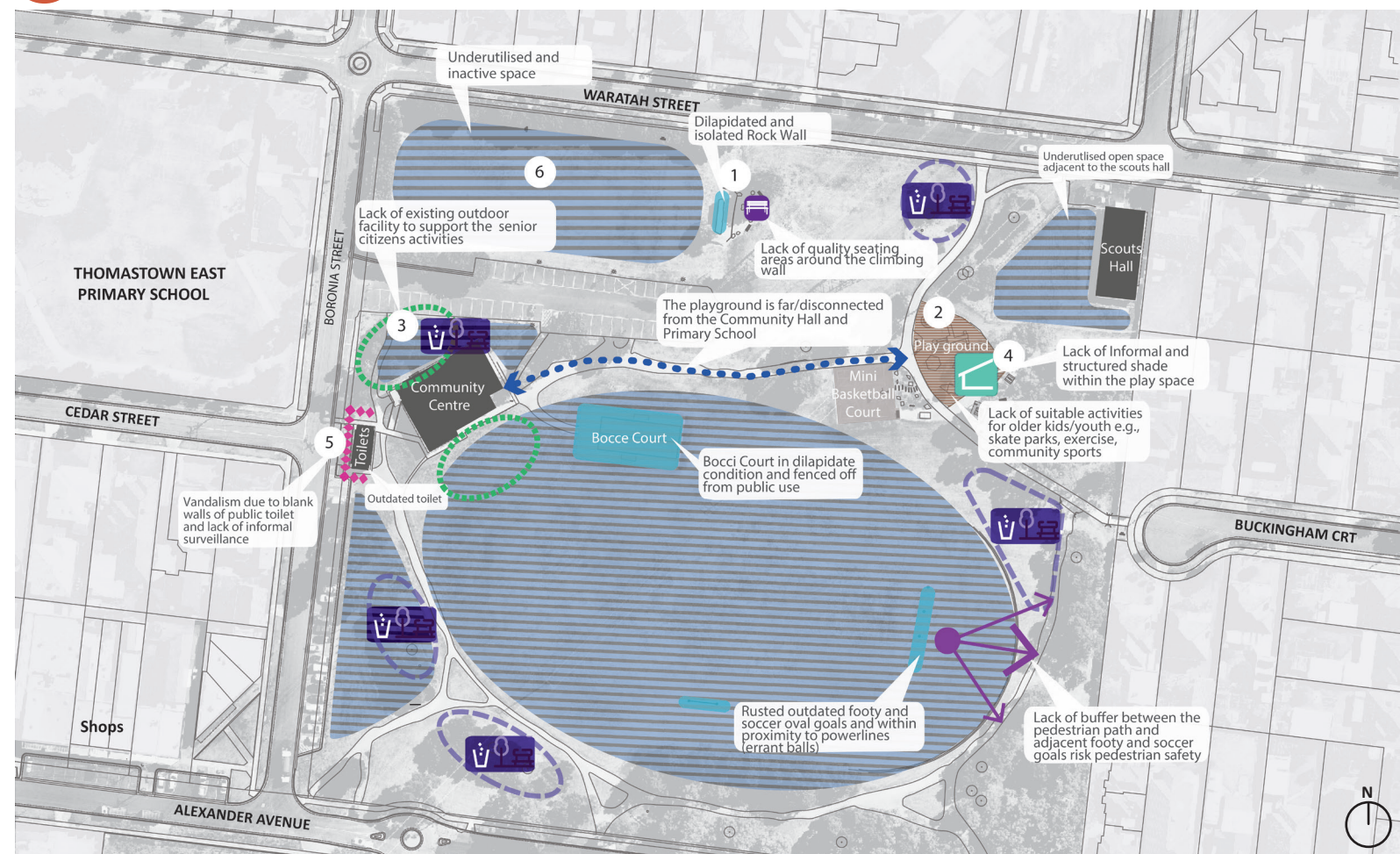
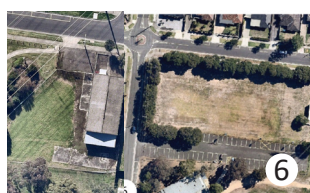


Figure 22

- 1 Dilapidated rock climbing wall/Lack of quality seating areas
- 2 Lack of suitable activities for older kids/youth eg., skate parks, exercise, community sports

- 3 Lack of outdoor facility to support the community centre
- 4 Lack of shade within the play space

- 5 Outdated toilets
- 6 Underutilised and inactive space on the north-west side of the park and next to the scouts hall



Environment and landscape

Landscape and vegetation

- The landscape is disjointed as a result of the car park which segregates the open space landscapes
- The lawn area is not well maintained and often overgrown
- Understory planting and thick bushes limiting visibility and passive surveillance into the park
- The lawn area is subject to water logging in winter
- No public area lighting exists within the reserve
- The existing (solar) lighting within the car park and external footpaths do not provide sufficient lighting resulting in the area being perceived as unsafe especially by the female members of the community
- Anti-social activity around the public toilet and the internal/off-street car park due to poor passive surveillance

Look and feel

- Hidden areas and Visual barriers due to understory planting and thick bushes
- The north section of the reserve near the neighboring properties lacks any planting
- Poor perceptions of safety in the area due to lack of lighting at night-time, poor passive surveillance and open views, lack of activities/ things to do near the shops
- The visual impact of electricity transmission line is unappealing and can deter people from visiting the park
- The visual impact of the Scouts Hall car park and fence is unappealing, and the car park is not utilised



Issues – Environment & Landscape

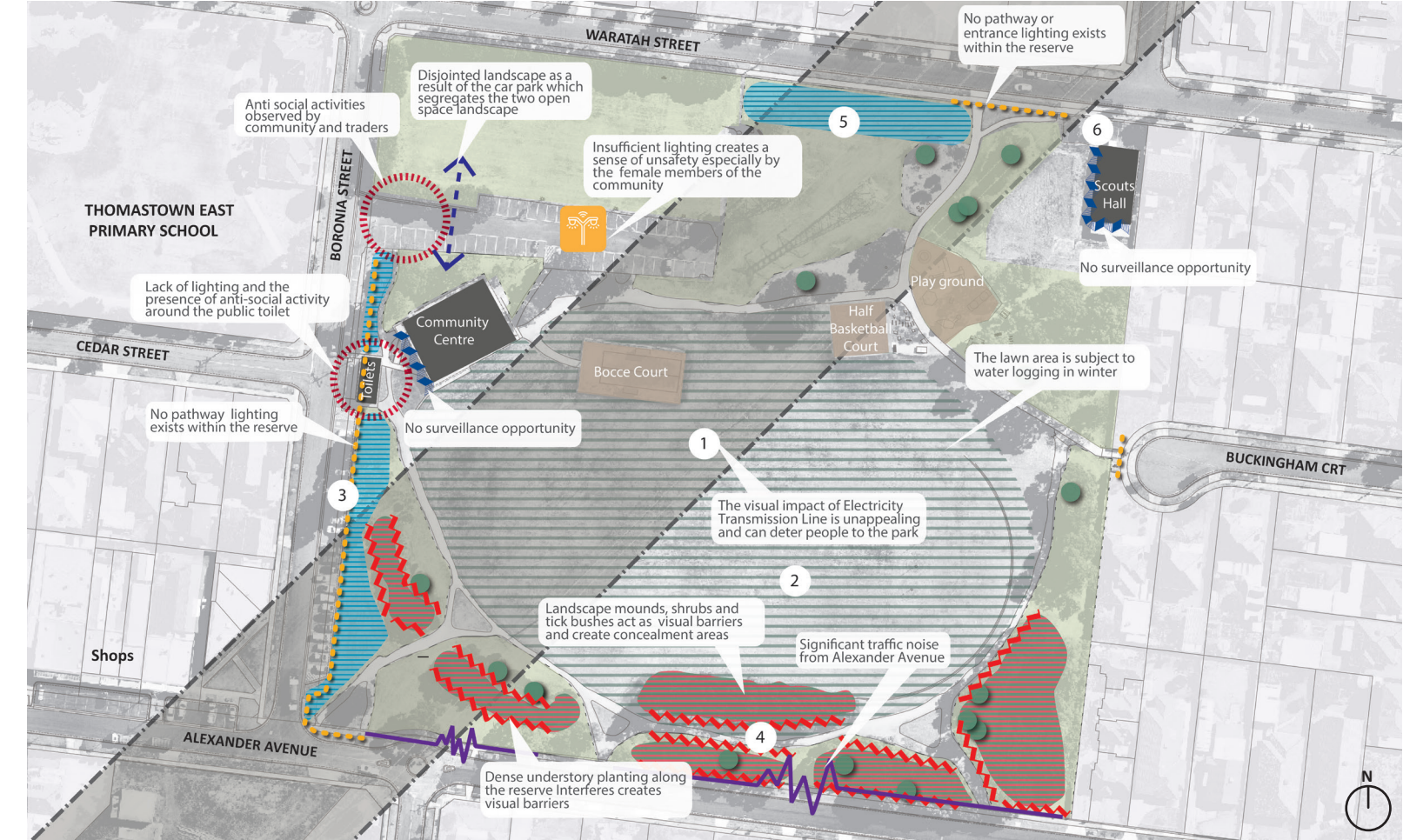
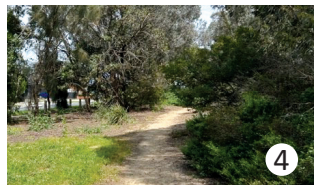
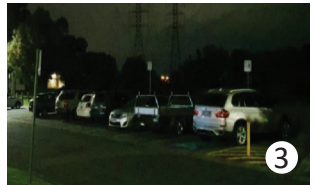


Figure 23

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ① The visual impact of electricity transmission line | ③ Lack of lighting and the presence of anti-social activity around the public toilet | ⑤ The north section of the reserve near the neighbouring property is bare |
| ② The lawn area is subject to water logging in winter | ④ Dense understory planting | ⑥ Visual impact of the scouts hall car park and fence |



3.2.2 Opportunities



Movement and access

Paths

- Investigate formalising the main existing paths within the reserve to concrete to create consistency within the reserve and minimise maintenance cost
- Consider footpath widening around the community centre, toilets, scout hall and external surrounding footpath
- Electricity transmission line provides a linear corridor which could be developed into a cycling/walking path throughout the reserve
- Improve pedestrian access into and through the reserve
- Investigate alternative paths around community centre and reinforce green buffer between the community centre and the path

Car parking and vehicle access

- Upgrade car park and return the excess space to open space
- Investigate relocation of the internal car park
- Investigate increasing bollards surrounding the reserve to avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- Extend the existing path along Boronia Street to car park

Entrances

- Improve the reserve entrances from surrounding streets to be more prominent, accessible and welcoming
- Consider traffic calming initiatives at intersections along Boronia Street



Informal recreation and park infrastructure

Play space

- Provide a new rock-climbing wall in close proximity of the play space
- 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

Informal recreation facilities

- Investigate bocce court fence removal to allow the general public to access and use
- Increase informal and structured coverage for wet weather and hot summer days in all children's play areas
- Provide informal/passive recreation activities in the central lawn with the appropriate orientations and supporting infrastructure
- The south-east end of the central lawn could benefit from catch nets to prevent balls from the footy goals rolling onto the road

Park support facilities

- Provide more supportive facilities such as bins, seating areas, drinking fountains, bike racks and shade
- Investigate the opportunity to upgrade the central lawn for outdoor activities, informal recreation and school programs with supporting infrastructure
- Provide outdoor gathering opportunities for the community centre by activating underutilised spaces adjacent to it
- Investigate removal of the fence or taking some of the fenced-off area around Scout Hall, encouraging greater use of facility and supportive activities



Environment and landscape

Landscape and vegetation

- More shade trees around the play spaces
- Reinforce green and softscape buffers on north side of the reserve
- Additional tree planting

Look and feel

- Improve visibility to the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting or replacing with more suitable greenery
- Potential additional buffer planting in the north side of the reserve to soften the visual outlook
- Consider replacing fencing of Scout Hall car park by Scouts Victoria to improve look of the north entrance
- Reduce the visual impact of the electricity towers
- Consider time sensitive lighting within the reserve to increase use at night and increase passive surveillance
- Additional lighting to illuminate the internal/off-street car park at night
- Enhance/activate the reserve frontages along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street
- Improve safety through activating underutilised spaces in the reserve and enhance passive surveillance opportunities
- Establish wayfinding signage to support pedestrian navigation across the reserve

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, how they would like to be using the reserve in the future, and their preferred priority upgrades. Two phases of consultation were undertaken with the results from both phases used to directly inform the key directions of the Master Plan. Refer to Appendix 2 for the full report.

Additionally, the 'Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2022' we have identified concerns relevant to Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

Methodology

The community were consulted on the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan in two phases:

- Phase 1 – capturing challenges and opportunities of the site as part of the *Revitalisation of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct*, August 2022
- Phase 2 – presentation of the draft master plan, May and June 2023

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

- Meeting with key Council internal stakeholders
- Meeting with key external stakeholders
- Onsite interviews with the community

- Direct mail outs
- Surveys
- Onsite pop-up sessions

Key internal stakeholders

Several key stakeholder meetings were held with Council staff from a range of departments including Urban Design & Transport, Capital Delivery, Strategic Projects, Active & Creative Communities and Communications & Engagement, and with various subject matter experts.

Key external stakeholders

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

- Traders on Alexander Avenue
- Thomastown East Primary School (staff and parents)
- Community Activity Centre users
- Scouts
- Visitors to the shops
- Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group
- Community

PHASE 1

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

Outcome

Overall, we heard that the area's infrastructure is

degrading and in need of repair, paths and car park 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'.

Feedback was received from 144 participants including traders in the activity centre, residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods, visitors to the shops and Nick Ascenzo Reserve as well as the students, their parents, and staff members of Thomastown East Primary School.

Key Recommendations

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

- Upgrade the playspace to include equipment for all ages
- Provide activities for older kids
- Upgrade the path network, including realign and upgrade circuit path
- Ensure safety in the reserve by increase view lines and passive surveillance through the removal of understory vegetation
- Investigate expansion of the picnic area
- Provide outdoor supportive facilities for the community Centre's users
- Provide signage
- Improve lighting
- Upgrade the public toilet and investigate the relocation of the toilet block
- Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing wall

- Provide more seating
- Investigate providing community gardens in the reserve
- Investigate the removal of the bocce court and better utilising of the space



“The paths need to be paved, we walk our dog here and the paths are gross and muddy especially when it rains. It is very deserted and sad looking, could do with fencing and some landscaping for a good dog park.”
– Community member

“Always lots of rubbish, broken glass, the lawn is usually not well looked after.”
– Community member

PHASE 2

The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan to ensure that the future of the site reflects our community's needs. Results from the first phase of consultation were used to create a design for the draft Master Plan. This plan was then exhibited to the community for feedback between 19 May and 25 June 2023.

Participants were asked the following questions:

1. How do you feel about the draft concept plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve?
2. Do you use the existing footy and soccer goals and how often?
3. How do you feel about the draft master plan recommendations?
4. Is there anything that we have missed in the concept design?
5. Would you be in support of the dog off leash area in the reserve in future?

Outcome

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan page on Council's engage platform received 268 visitors with 33 community members completing the online or sharing their thoughts through pop up sessions.

The consultation responses demonstrate the community supports the Master Plan with inclusion of the below new or amended recommendations.

Key Recommendations

The consultation demonstrated that the community supports the recommendations of the Master Plan. The following recommendations were developed from the detailed community feedback:

- Create a new path from the car park to the Community Centre
- Line mark the proposed circuit path with distance markers to allow for formal running
- Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating, and review waste bins locations around the park
- Incorporate similar rock climbing elements in the proposed playspace
- Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX
- Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs

- Note: Nick Ascenzo Reserve is limited due to the high voltage powerlines and does not allow for water play and associated infrastructure.
- Investigate increasing the playground surface material from organic mulch to rubber
 - Expand the proposed fitness and exercise equipment to allow for different user groups
 - Investigate potential for upgrades to the existing toilet block including relocation as part of the Community Centre’s future upgrade
 - Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of ‘Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan’ and ‘Open Space Plan’
 - Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets

- Incorporate park lighting in warm colours at the park entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
- Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north east park entry.
Note: Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection is out of the scope of the project and needs further investigation by the Traffic Team.

Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework Engagement Summary 2022

The Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework identified the following five concerns relevant to Nick Ascenzo Reserve:

- Shade, and coverage in children play areas
- Anti-social behaviour and concealment areas
- Car and motorcycle tracks on the s ports oval
- Lack of maintenance
- Potential for recreational activities

Consultation and Engagement Main Themes

August 2022, May & June 2023

-  **General safety**
-  **Pedestrian access and safety**
-  **Greenery**
-  **Parking and traffic movements**
-  **Public art**
-  **High quality design**
-  **More things to do**
-  **Signage**

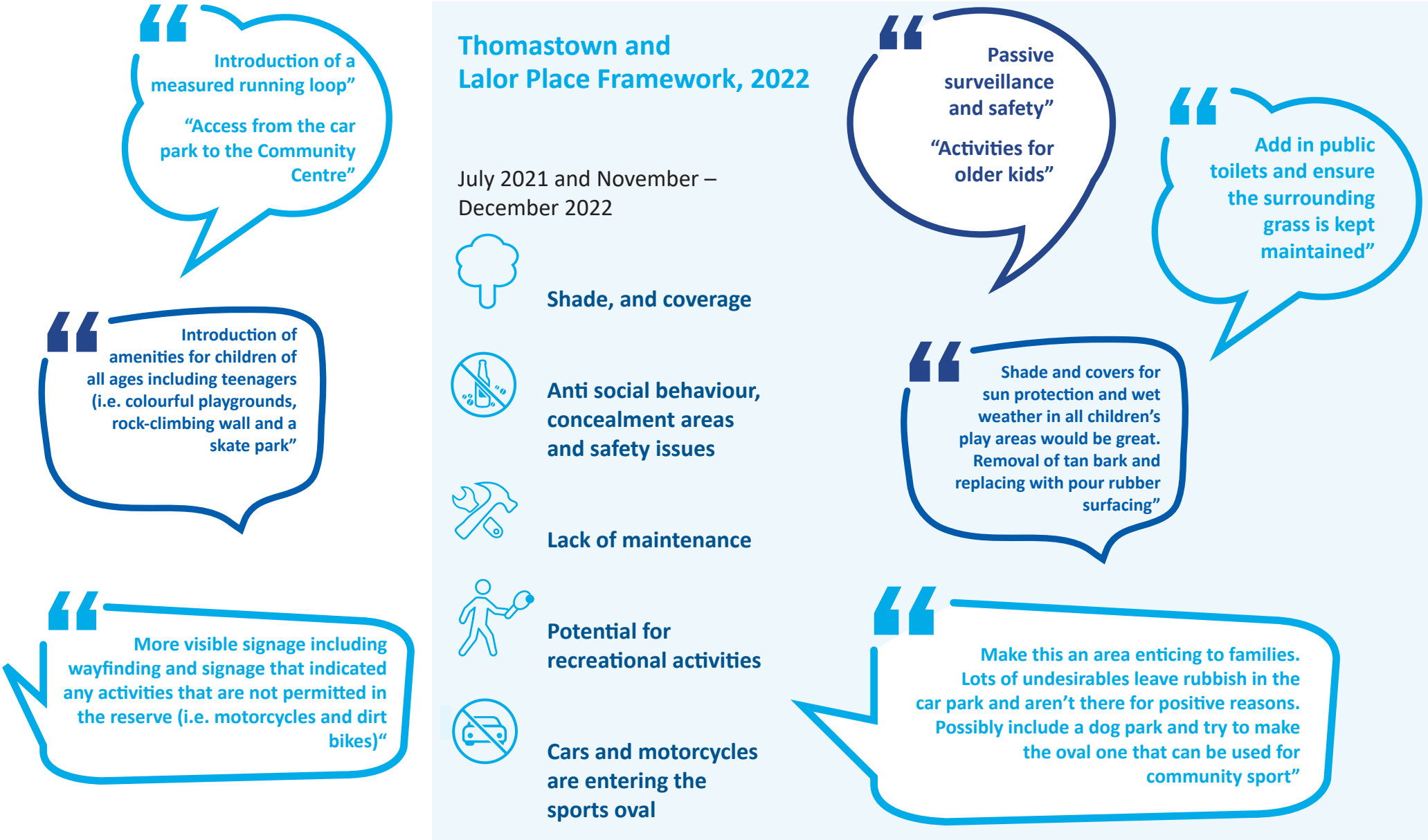


Figure 24. Community Feedback Summary

5.0 Master Plan

5.1 Vision and key objectives

The site analysis and consultation work undertaken has resulted in a vision to improve the functional layout of Nick Asceznzo Reserve as a Municipal Park upon the delivery of seven key objectives:

Vision

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is an inclusive and distinctive park that provides a range of active recreation, informal sport and social opportunities for all people to enjoy whilst enhancing the natural values of the park. It provides an environment that is accessible, well-connected, attractive and sustainably managed.

Objectives



Establish a well-maintained reserve



Invite and inspire people of all ages and abilities



Promote and facilitate social community use and events



Upgrade informal sporting infrastructure and community facilities



Promote environmental sustainability and landscape character



Provide well-defined, safe and accessible connections within the reserve and the Alexander Avenue shops and Thomastown East Primary School



Provide clear sight lines across the reserve and activate during night and day to improve perceptions of safety in the area

5.2 Recommendations

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

Movement and Access

» Path

- Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop
- Proposed concrete footpath along Boronia Street with minimum 1.5m width

» Entrance

- Upgrade the north-east, west and two south entrances as more significant and welcoming entrances by providing wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, and landscaping

» Car parking

- Proposed footpath from Boronia Street to the carpark accessing the Community Centre and proposed exercise area
- Proposed upgraded car park with a water-sensitive approach

Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure

» Playspace

- Proposed playground including range of play experiences (nature-based play)
- Proposed scooter, skate and BMX loop with mounds
- Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing/ bouldering wall and install similar climbing elements in the proposed play space

- Change the playground surface material as part of the playground renewal program
- Proposed fence on the north side of the multi-purpose court due to catch balls

» Informal Recreation facilities

- Proposed multi-purpose court
- Proposed fitness and exercise station
- Remove the existing fenced bocce court
- Remove the existing old goals in grassed area
- Flexible central lawn for games, events and picnics

» Park Support facilities

- Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, seating, drinking fountain and bins
- Install diverse DDA compliant seating at high use areas such as the playground and forecourt of the Community Centre and entrance from Alexander Avenue Shops
- Allow for Community Centre future upgrade and/or extension as per the Council Community Infrastructure Plan
- Improve the forecourt of the Community Centre, including a bus drop-off area
- Upgrade the toilet block (location will be further investigated in future as part of the community centre upgrade), with shorter term improvement of the safety and amenity
- Proposed outdoor gathering space in proximity to the community centre
- Proposed plaza space near Alexander Avenue Shops with seating, drinking fountain and small shade trees
- Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins and seating

Environment & Landscape

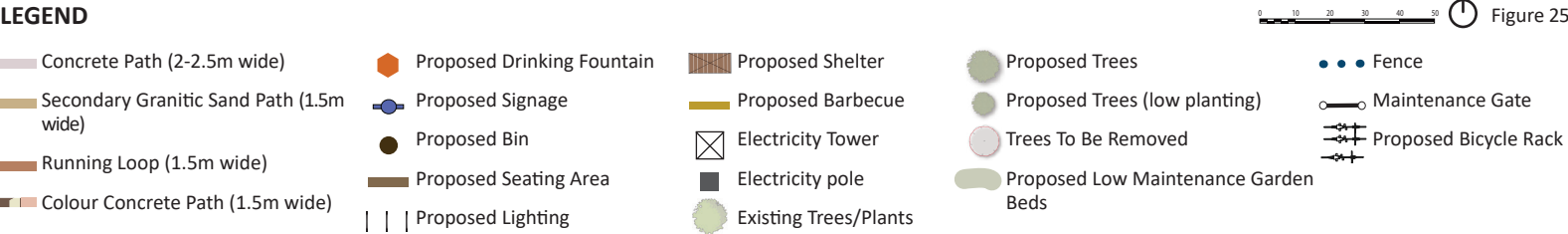
» Landscape & Vegetation

- Plant additional trees throughout the reserve to strengthen ecological biodiversity with AusNet approval
- Investigate the species type for the proposed planting to ensure it doesn't obstruct pedestrian sightlines
- Investigate captured rainwater irrigation system to maintain grass coverage of the central lawn
- Low maintenance garden beds next to the proposed skate/scooter loop and proposed picnic area
- Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible

» Look & feel

- Improve visibility into the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting and replace with low maintenance plants to eliminate visual barriers
- Proposed lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, and the internal/off-street car park
- Investigate lighting the reserve's internal paths and elements with the holistic Public Realm Lighting Plan
- Remove the existing tree in the south-east corner of the reserve to open the pedestrian sight line and have a more welcoming entrance
- Reduce the fenced area around Scouts Hall and reinstate it to open space
- Upgrade the reserve timber and post barriers to standard vehicle exclusion fencing (bollard and cable)

Master Plan



- 1 Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop
- 2 Proposed outdoor gathering space
- 3 Remove understory planting and open sightlines
- 4 Proposed plaza space with seating area, drinking fountain and small shade trees
- 5 Proposed upgraded car park (26 car park bays)
- 6 Improve the forecourt of the Community Centre, including a bus drop-off area
- 7 Upgrade the toilet block
- 8 Proposed fitness and exercise station
- 9 Proposed multi-purpose court
- 10 Proposed mounds
- 11 Proposed playground including range of play experiences (nature-based play)
- 12 Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- 13 Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, picnic settings, drinking fountain and bins
- 14 Entry node with way finding signage
- 15 Proposed lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, main entrance and the internal/off-street car park
- 16 Proposed footpath from Boronia Street to the car park accessing the Community Hall and the proposed Senior Exercise Park
- 17 Proposed concrete footpath along Boronia Street
- 18 Flexible central lawn for games, events and picnics
- 19 Mulch the garden bed and plant small trees
- 20 Proposed scooter, skate and BMX loop
- 21 Remove the existing old goals
- 22 Remove the existing fenced bocce court
- 23 Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing wall and install similar climbing elements in the proposed play space
- 24 Upgrade the reserve vehicle exclusion fencing

Precedent Imagery

Path and signage



Granitic sand path

Way finding signage

Access and circulation



Circuit path and running loop

Concrete path

Coloured concrete path

Play space



Nature play & Climbing elements

Inclusive play

Multi-age play equipment

Precedent Imagery

Recreation



Multi-purpose court



Fitness and exercise station



Scooter/BMX loop



Recreation and park support facilities



Plaza space



Outdoor gathering space



Drinking fountain with dog bowl



Bike hoops

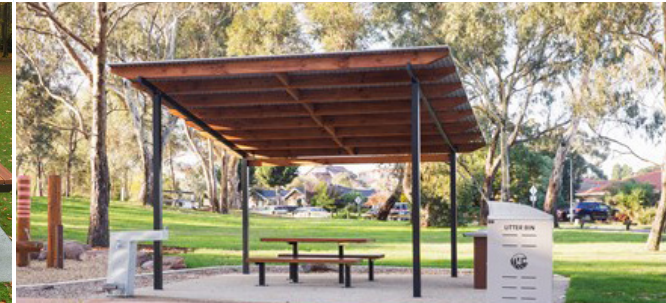
Recreation and park support facilities



Bin



Picnic table



Shelter and seating



Seating



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

Precedent Imagery

Car park



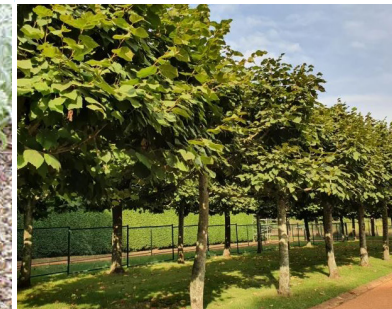
Permeable car park



Vegetation



Garden bed with feature planting



Tree planting



Mounding

Lighting and fence



Park fences



Solar bollards



Solar pedestrian light



6.0 Master Plan Implementation

The implementation of the Master Plan will be mostly procured through Council funding, however, some additional funding through State Government Grants will contribute to certain proposed initiatives within the overall Master Plan.

A summary of the project packages, actions and time frames for each precinct are outlined below.

Priorities of projects and actions from this master plan are a guide and are subject to holistic Council Capital Works project prioritisation.

Reference/ Area	Project Package	Priority
A	General Landscape Improvement	Short term
B	Multi-Use Central Lawn Precinct & Circuit Path	Short term
C	Alexander Avenue Entrance, Plaza Space & Toilet Improvement	Short term
D	Car Park & Access Path	Short term
E	Lighting	Short term
F	Fitness & Exercise Station	Medium term
G	Multi-Purpose Court	Medium term
H	Scooter, skate & BMX Loop	Medium term
I	Picnic Area & Nature-Play	Medium term
J	Playspace	Medium term
K	Boronia Street Entrance & Gathering Space	Long term
L	Fence Upgrade	Short to Long term
M	Tree Planting	Short to Long term

SHORT TERM (1-3 years)

MEDIUM TERM (4-7 years)

LONG TERM (8-10 years)

Project Packages Master Plan

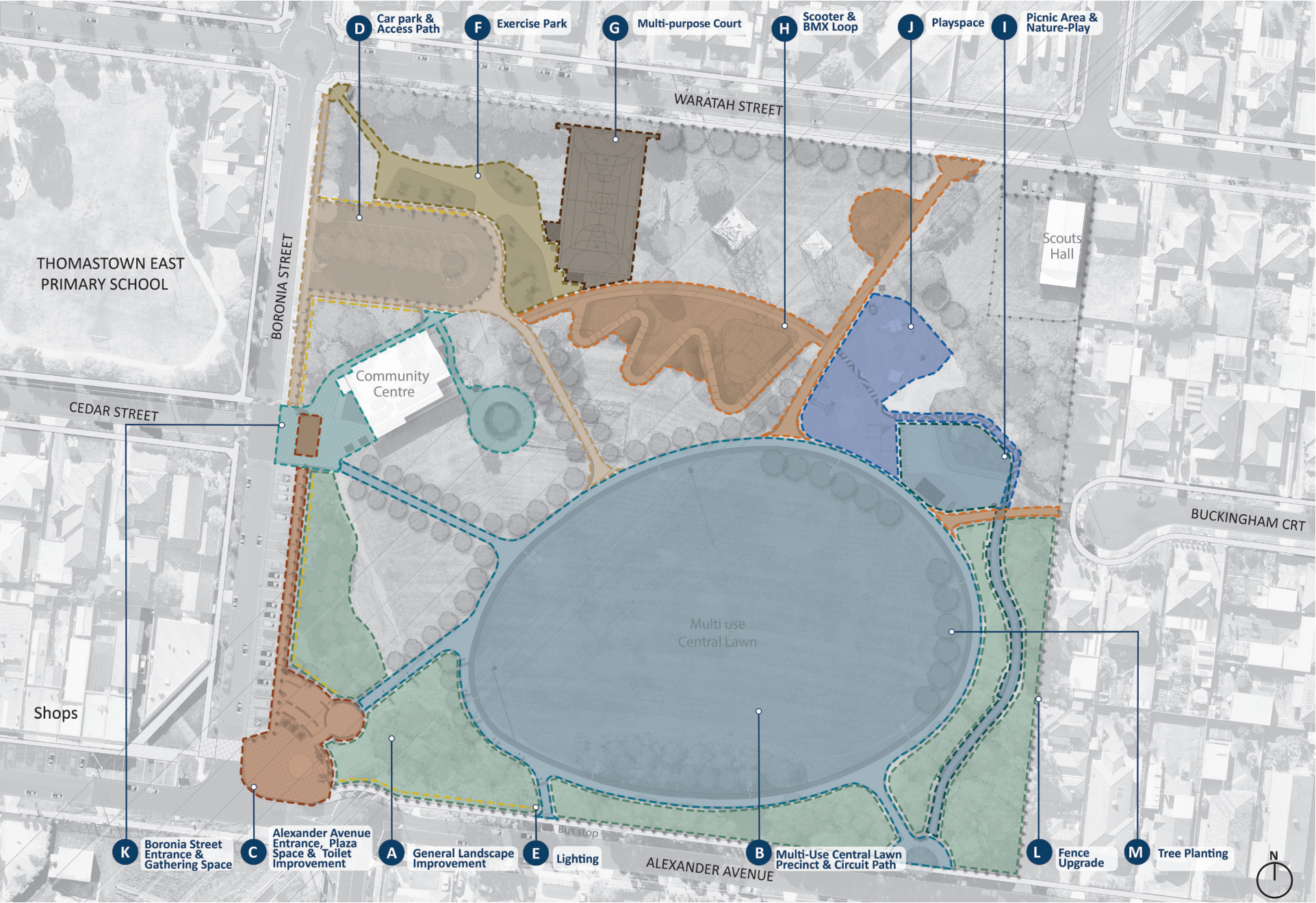


Figure 26



Area A: General Landscape Improvement



Key Plan



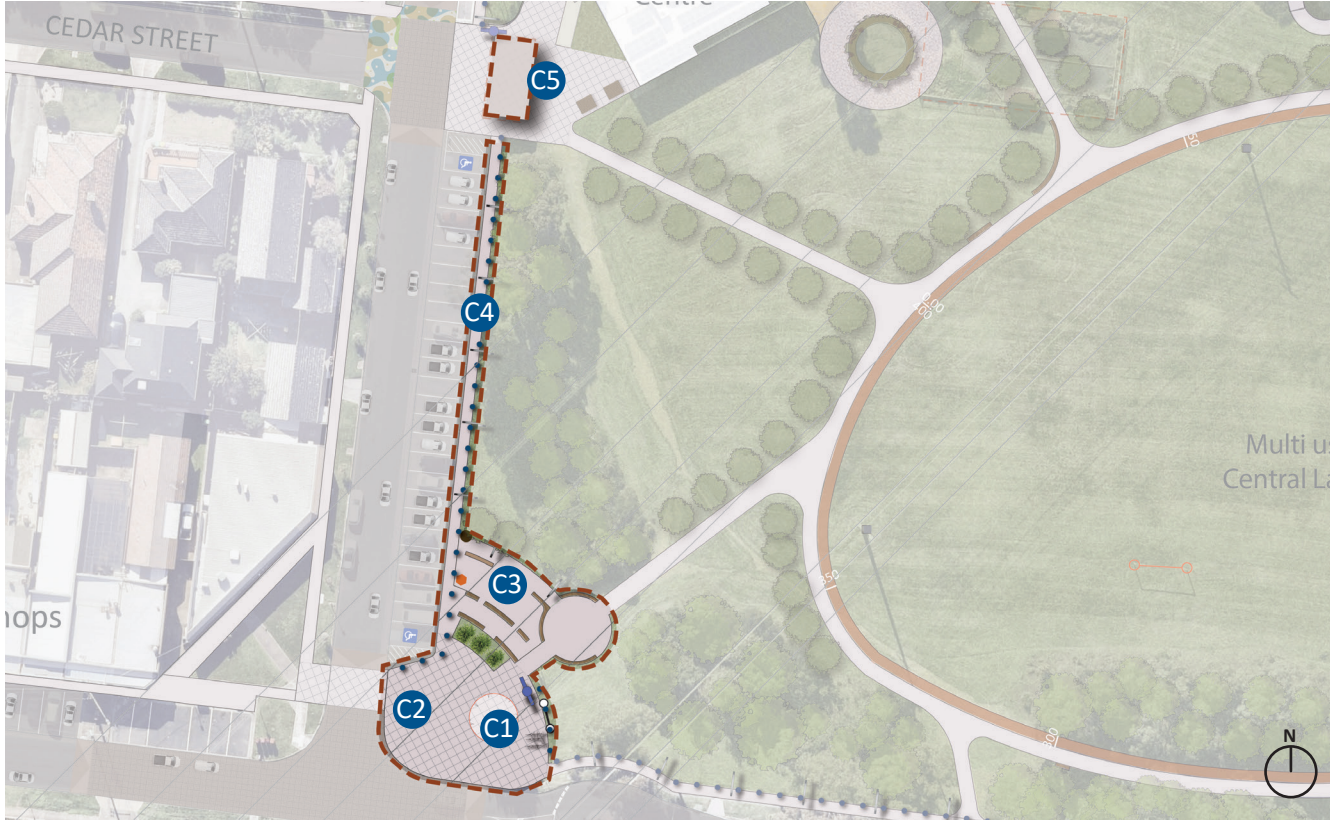
Area B: Multi-Use Central Lawn
Precinct & Circuit Path



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
A	Remove understory planting and open sightlines (General plant reduction by one third in garden beds)	Short term		n/a

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
B1	Remove the existing circuit path and any paths branching from it to allow for new works	Short term		
B2	Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop	Short term		State Government
B3	Investigate captured rainwater irrigation system to maintain grass coverage of the central lawn	Medium term		Water authority
B4	Remove the existing old footy and soccer goals in grassed area	Medium term		
B5	Additional tree planting within the central lawn (east side)	Medium term	Greening Whittlesea Park Planting	



Area C: Alexander Avenue Entrance, Plaza Space and Toilet Improvement



Key Plan



Area D: Car park & Access path



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
C1	Remove the current tree to improve the view into the reserve and enhance the pedestrian sightline	Short term		
C2	Upgrade the entrance from Alexander Avenue next to the shops by providing entry and wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, bike rack, and landscaping	Short term		State Government
C3	New open plaza space with feature paving, drinking fountain, seating and small shade trees	Short term		State Government
C4	New 1.5m concrete footpath along Boronia Street up to the toilet block	Short term		
C5	Improve safety and amenity of the existing toilet block	Short term	Asset Renewal Program	

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
D1	Remove the half of the existing internal carpark to allow for new works and retain the second half for temporary activities such as learn to ride	Medium term		State Government
D2	Upgrade the car park including 26 car park spaces with permeable pavement facing inwards to passively irrigate the existing trees (WSUD approach), fences and gate	Medium term	Car park Renewal Program	Water authority
D3	Remove/relocate existing trees from the entrance of the upgraded car park	Medium term		
D4	Remove the existing fenced bocce court and its shelters to allow for new works	Medium term		
D5	New 1.5m concrete footpath along Boronia Street from the toilet block up to Waratah Street	Medium term		
D6	Upgrade and additional solar lighting to car parking & relocate the existing solar light	Medium term		State Government



Area E: Lighting



Key Plan



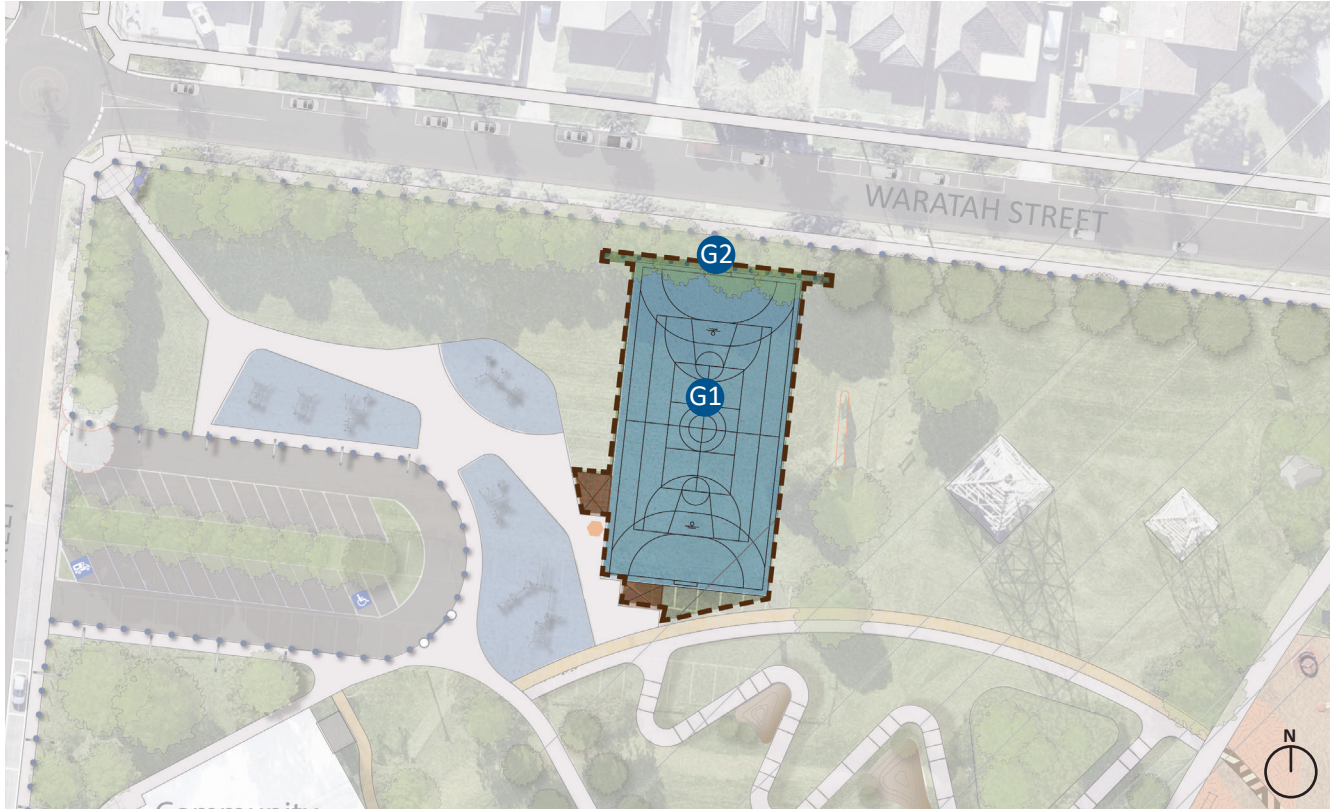
Area F: Fitness & Exercise Station



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
E	Lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, main entrance and the internal/off-street car park	Short term		

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
F1	Remove the second half of the internal car park to allow for new works	Medium term		
F2	Creation of an outdoor exercise/fitness area with exercise equipment for different age groups including clear instructional signage and QR codes to show people how to use the equipment	Medium term		State Government
F3	New entrance and access path from Boronia street to the proposed exercise area	Medium term		
F4	Relocation of two solar lights to allow for new work	Medium term		



Area G: Multi-purpose Court



Key Plan



Area H: Scooter, Skate & BMX Loop



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
G1	New multi-purpose sports court which allows soccer too with colourful and creative line-marking with a drinking fountain, two shade shelters and seating	Medium term		State Government
G2	Fence off the north side of the proposed court to catch balls	Medium term		

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
H1	Remove the existing gravel and concrete paths, half basketball court, climbing wall and benches to allow for new works	Medium term		
H2	New scooter & BMX loop with seating area and additional landscaping including tree planting, a garden bed, turf and mounding	Medium term		State Government
H3	Realign and upgrade paths from Waratah Street and Buckingham CRT to the circuit path	Medium term		
H4	Mulch the existing garden bed next to the path and plant small trees	Long term		
H5	Additional tree planting and turf	Long term	Greening Whittlesea Park Planting	



Area I: Picnic Area & Nature-Play



Key Plan



Area J: Playspace



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
11	Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, picnic setting, drinking fountain and bin	Medium term		
12	Retain the existing shelter structures, undertaking repairs as required	Medium term		
13	New path along the residential side with benches connecting the south-east entrance to the picnic area providing passive surveillance opportunities	Medium term		
14	Creation of a nature play area utilising the existing trees and proposed plants to learn, explore and play. Inclusion of small details that creates an element of surprise and curiosity such as timber logs and mudrock	Long term		State Government

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
J1	Creation of playground extension with seating and play equipment including range of play experience	Medium term	Playground Renewal Program	State Government
J2	Creation of colour concrete path linking the nature play area to the scooter/BMX loop	Medium term		
J3	Upgrade the existing play equipment and investigate increasing the playground surface material from organic mulch to rubber as part of the playground renewal program	Long term	Playground Renewal Program	State Government
J4	Remove/relocate the tree to allow for new works	Medium term		
J5	Additional tree planting around the playspace to provide shade	Long term		



Area K: Boronia Street Entrance & Gathering Space



Key Plan



Area L: Fence Upgrade



Key Plan

Reference/ Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
K1	Remove the existing concrete and gravel paving and the tree on the north side of the community centre and public toilet to allow for new work	Long term		
K2	Improve entrance area as an integrated and visible main entrance with feature paving and entry signage including a bus drop-off area	Long term		
K3	Creation of a new path from the upgraded car park to the Community Centre	Long term		
K4	Improve garden beds surrounding the entrance ramp of the community centre through feature landscaping	Long term		
K5	Creation of an outdoor gathering space with a shade tree, seating and bin	Long term		
K6	Public toilet location to be further investigated in future as part of the community centre upgrade	Long term	Asset Renewal program	

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
L1	Upgrade the reserve timber and post barriers to standard vehicle exclusion fencing (bollard and cable)	Short to Long term	Vehicle Exclusion Fencing Program	
L2	Reduce the fenced area allocated to the Scouts Hall	Medium term		



Area M: Tree Planting



Key Plan

Appendix 1

Review of Plans, Policies and Strategies

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
M	Additional tree planting within the multi use central lawn and along the proposed paths	Short to long term	Greening Whittlesea Park Planting	





Appendix 2

Community Engagement

Council Offices

25 Ferres Boulevard
South Morang VIC 3752

Email: info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Website whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Postal address

City of Whittlesea Locked Bag
Bundoora MDC VIC 3083

Phone: 9217 2170

National Relay Service: 133 677
(ask for 9217 2170)

Connect with us in your
preferred language:

Free telephone interpreter service



131 450



**City of
Whittlesea**