

Appendix 1

Review of Relevant Plans, Policies and Strategies

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

Whittlesea 2040 – A place for all

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

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

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

Goal 1 – Connected Community

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

Goal 2 – Liveable Neighbourhoods

- Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

Goal 4 – Sustainable Environment

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

Open Space Strategy 2016

The Open Space Strategy guides the future design and management of public open space in the City of Whittlesea, and provides a framework for the planning and provision of open space across the older

established urban and rural areas of the municipality. The Strategy includes specific actions for all the existing and proposed open space in the established areas.

The Open Space Strategy identified a general gap in open space provision on the Eastern side of the railway. Nick Ascenzo Park is considered the only significant area of open space north of the Metropolitan Ring Road between High Street and Dalton Road. It is a municipal scale open space with a 500m walkable catchment.

Through the consultation for the OSS, Nick Ascenzo Reserve was identified as one of the more frequently visited spaces mainly for walking and enjoying the peaceful/quiet atmosphere. The community suggested the provision of more flowers and colourful vegetation. Other general comments are to provide additional multiuse spaces, improve ambiance and provide diverse and more challenging playground equipment.

The Open Space Strategy includes recommendations for existing individual open spaces in Thomastown. Action 5.9E-5 which has not been initiated yet pertains to the Nick Ascenzo Reserve specifically as a medium priority action.

'Prepare a Landscape Masterplan 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.'

Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023

Thomastown Lalor Urban Design Framework guides and prioritises Council's future initiatives for Thomastown and Lalor utilising an integrated place-based approach.

The framework builds upon the extensive work and community consultation previously undertaken and identifies projects based on this research. It plans for now and the future, whilst providing a framework for continued improvements that will build upon what makes Thomastown and Lalor a special place.

During the community consultation for Thomastown Lalor Urban Design Framework challenges and opportunities in July 2021, the community posted the comments on the 'social map' tool. The comment is generally positive and highlights the park's role in leisure and recreation for the residents of Thomastown despite the concerns about the antisocial behaviour around the public toilets.

Additionally, During the community consultation for Thomastown and Lalor Draft Place Framework in November-December 2022, the community posted the below comments about the Nick Ascenzo park on the 'social map' tool.

- *Create more coverage for wet weather and hot summer days. Add in public toilets and ensure the surrounding grass is kept maintained.*
- *Shade and covers for sun protection and wet weather in all children's play areas would be great. Removal of tan bark and replacement with pour rubber surfacing.*

- *Could be really lovely space to use. At the moment motorcycles and cars can get on the oval and drive recklessly. One happened just this afternoon. There was a homeless person sleeping under the childrens playground for over a month with all there personal items left there during the day. No lights or safety outside of the main daylight hours. People regularly leave used needles lying around and broken glass everywhere. There are not enough bins.*
- *Make this an area enticing to families. Lots of undesirables leave rubbish in the car park and aren't there for positive reasons. Possibly include a dog park and try to make the oval one that can be used for community sport. Make the nearby shops enticing for restaurants and cafes for young people with outdoor seating.*
- *It'd be great to make use of this open space. Currently very run-down but full of potential to be a place to recreation and community.*
- *Please fix the park. The garden is ugly.*

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

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

There are three types of Off-Leash Areas considered under the Management Plan: Open Unstructured; Confined Unstructured and Confined Structured. Nick Ascenzo Reserve isn't identified under the plan as a future Off-Leash Area. The plan didn't identify any existing or future dog ff-leash area in the Thomastown.

There are three categories of Off-Leash Areas outlined in the Management Plan: Open Unstructured, Confined Unstructured, and Confined Structured. However, Nick Ascenzo Reserve isn't designated as a forthcoming Off-Leash Area in the plan.

Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

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

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

- Long distances to key destinations

- Time spent travelling to work each day limiting access to personal time for recreation
- Lack of infrastructure
- Wait time to cross busy roads
- Missing links in the footpath network
- Access to open space
- Lack of tree canopy cover

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

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

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

Alexander Avenue is identified within the City of Whittlesea draft Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027 as a priority project. It is in the feasibility stage to provide improved walking and cycling facilities between Thomastown Station and Dalton Road.

Community Plan 2021-2025

The City of Whittlesea's Community Plan 2021-2025 shapes the future for the City of Whittlesea and has been

informed by extensive community engagement. It clearly articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025, how it will prioritise its resources and effort, and how it will measure success by meeting the needs of its community.

The Community Plan 2021-2025 has developed 60 initiatives under Whittlesea 2040 goals, which will be delivered between 2021 and 2025, and which respond to community priorities. This includes Council's planning to achieve key health and inclusion outcomes such as family violence prevention, climate change, gender equality, reducing barriers to goods, services and facilities access, participation in employment, inclusive communications and preventing discrimination against

persons with a disability. In developing the Community Plan, Council considered the community's goals and aspirations set out in Whittlesea 2040.

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

- What should Council focus on over the next 4-10 years to make sure the City of Whittlesea is a connected community, with liveable neighbourhoods, a vibrant local economy and a sustainable environment?
- How should Council's \$2m Community Recovery Fund be spent to help our community recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Recommended action

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

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

Goal 1 - Connected Community Goal

Key Initiatives:

- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Strengthen community connections through a vibrant arts and events scene celebrating our diverse culture and heritage, activated open spaces and facilities and local markets
- Commence construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda
- Improve access to physical activity and social connection by providing accessible, multiuse sports infrastructure which meets the diverse needs of our community

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Key Initiatives:

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

Goal 4 - Sustainable Environment

Key Initiatives:

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

Key Initiatives:

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

Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028

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

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

Priority Actions applicable to Nick Ascenzo Reserve include:

- 3.1 Improve equity, accessibility and safety of community spaces through the development of infrastructure plans and the delivery of inclusively designed new works projects
- 3.4 Connect, improve and expand existing travel networks to create built environments that support active travel, incidental exercise and physical activity

Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026

The Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026: Broadening opportunities for participation in sport provides information and direction on how Council can support less traditional or emerging sports to ensure residents have access to a range of sport and recreation opportunities. The Strategy investigates the needs and demands of 34 different sports and makes recommendations on future facility requirements and development opportunities to support the growth of these sports.

The high priority sports have been identified as:	Seven sports have been identified as second tier priority:
Athletics	Hockey
Baseball	Badminton
Calisthenics	Bocce
Dance	Croquet
Softball	Kabaddi

Gymnastics
 Martial Art
 Touch Football
 Rugby League
 Rugby Union

Volleyball
 Table Tennis

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

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

Nick Asceznzo Reserve currently has bocce court and table tennis from the sports listed in the report.

Playspace Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16

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

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

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

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

and equipment designed for children and young people with a disability provide greater variety, stimulation and play value for all children and young people.

Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy

Thriving Children, Young People and Families outlines the City of Whittlesea’s evidence-based approach to supporting the health, wellbeing and positive development of children, young people and their families in the municipality. It responds to the needs of people from before birth to 25 years. It aims to start a conversation, to inspire innovation and to provide a flexible and adaptive framework to work from. It provides the strategic direction for Council to meet its requirement under the Local Government Act (1989) to build safe, healthy communities and to provide equal access to services and facilities.

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

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

Objective 1 Provide services and programs that promote positive wellbeing and development	Priority Actions 1.0. Deliver quality programs and services that promote children, young people and families’: a. Positive health, development and identity b. Sense of community and safety c. Connection to place, heritage, diversity and natural environment.
Objective 2 Identify and respond to the needs of children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability or risk	Priority Actions 2.0. Advocate for more access to local specialist services in response to emerging issues including: a. Health and wellbeing (physical / mental) b. Youth disengagement and its contributing factors c. Family violence d. Developmental vulnerability.
Objective 3 Work in partnership to strengthen service delivery and advocacy	Priority Actions 3.0. Seek opportunities and funding to coordinate projects, planning, and frameworks for the middle years. 3.1. Facilitate and advocate for well-planned, integrated infrastructure that supports access, participation and connection. 3.2. Enhance the use of data and analytics to: a. make better decisions b. measure community outcomes

c. share insights with the community and our partners

Objective 4

Provide children, young people and families with opportunities to inform decisions and connect with the community

Priority Actions

4.0 Engage with children, young people and families to ensure their voices inform decision making. This includes engaging traditionally under-represented groups and increasing community engagement and decision making with Aboriginal children, young people and community.
4.1. Develop fast and user-friendly ways of sharing information with the community, service providers and other key stakeholders.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Diverse: Diversity of uses for diverse young people

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Greening Whittlesea

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

This report outlines Thomastown with 7.02% tree canopy cover which 3.91% falls on the non-council land (private, other Government Agencies, and Crown Land). It also identifies Epping, Lalor and Thomastown with the lowest green cover among the established urban suburbs.

The report also proposes increasing the size of City of Whittlesea's city forest which is dependent on the availability of land unencumbered by existing infrastructure such as buildings, roads, paths, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, and water bodies which is called a plantable area. 31.52% of Thomastown is identified as a plantable area with 9.64% on the Council and 21.88% on non council owned land.

The strategy outlines the vision for the city:

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

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

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

(3) Our third priority is to provide benefit at the regional level.

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

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

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

- Identify and implement appropriate controls to protect existing vegetation in waterway corridors.
- Incorporate decision-making criteria into work processes to ensure existing mature trees are not removed until all possible solutions to protect the trees are exhausted.
- Record data for all existing and future trees on Council land in Council's asset management system, including species, size, canopy spread, and health/ condition.
- Develop a City Landscape Masterplan to guide planting programs across the City.
- Develop an open space planting program guided by the City Landscape Masterplan and incorporating plantable opportunities analysis, increased park plantings, habitat connectivity, urban heat amelioration, better use of transmission easements, and greater planting around and within sporting facilities, wetlands, waterways, and reserves.
- Include increased greening (with emphasis on tree retention and planting) in all Urban Design Frameworks, Integrated Community Facilities Planning, Public Space Planning and New Works Public Space projects.
- Implement planting in line with the City Landscape Masterplan, and the Open Space and ten-year Street Tree Planting Programs.

Equal and Safe Strategy 2019

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

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

Goal 1 – Connected community

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

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

- Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

Goal 3: Strong Local Economy

- Increased local employment
- Successful, innovative local businesses

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

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

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

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

- Women's safety in public realm

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

- Equal access to recreation and sport

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

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

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

Priority Actions

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

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

Disability Action Plan 2017-2021

The City of Whittlesea Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2017-2021 details how Council will work with the community to meet the vision of an inclusive municipality where people of all abilities are encouraged and enabled to lead satisfying, fulfilling and contributory lives. The Disability Act Victoria 2006 requires each Local Government to develop a DAP. Section 38 of the Act states that a public sector body must ensure that a DAP is prepared for the purpose of:

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

The Disability Action Plan is underpinned by the following principles:

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

Relevant Actions

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

Regarding Nick Ascenzo Reserve, the steepness of east side of Boronia street along Nick Ascenzo Reserve, presents a challenge in creating a DDA compliant footpath.

Signage Management Plan

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

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

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

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

- Pedestrian
- Bicycle
- Vehicle

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

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

Factors to consider optimising accessibility:

- Position signs free of visual obstructions and in optimum sight lines that are free to access by foot, wheelchair or mobility scooter.
- Place wayfinding signage consistently at decision points to provide assurance to users.
- Over signing can be confusing and discouraging for users.
- Remove obsolete or redundant signage that may be misleading.
- An appropriately sited sign should be obvious but not dominant.

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

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

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

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

Required Viewing Distance	Minimum Text X-height
2 metres	6 millimetres
4 metres	12 millimetres
6 metres	20 millimetres
8 metres	25 millimetres
12 metres	40 millimetres

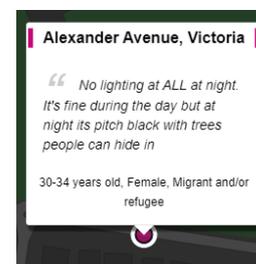
15 metres	50 millimetres
25 metres	80 millimetres
35 metres	100 millimetres
40 metres	130 millimetres
50 metres	150 millimetres

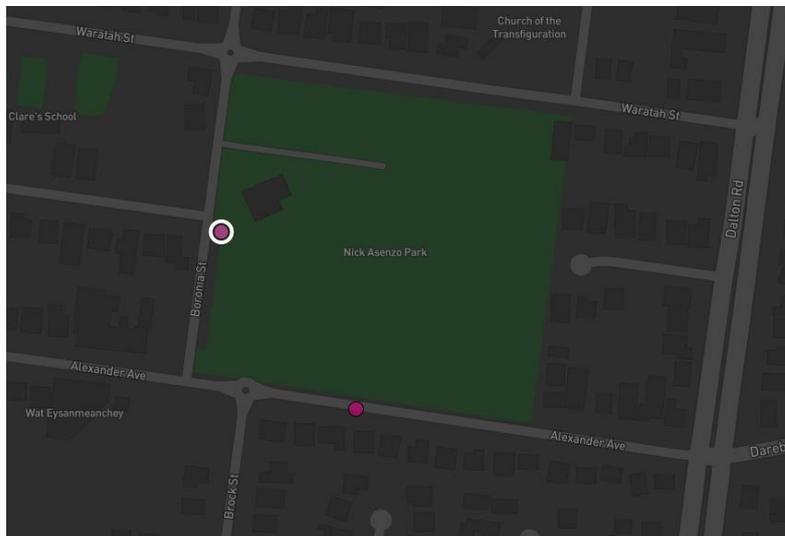
The plan has also reviewed Thomastown Recreation & Aquatic Centre as a case study to audit the existing signage throughout the sites and offer new signage locations, that considers: Audience & modality, Purpose & message, Facilities & services, Location & prominence and Scale of site. The case studies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

Your Ground Project 2021

Your Ground is a collaboration between Crowd Spot and Monash University's XYX Lab to crowd-source women and gender-diverse people safety related experiences of public and recreational space. Two pins were recorded by the community indicated low levels of perceived safety around Alexander Avenue, as follows:

- *No lighting at ALL at night. It's fine during the day but at night its pitch black with trees people can hide in.*
- *Lots of men hanging around the toilet area and cars constantly driving up, approaching the men and then driving off again. Occurs in the car park here also. Most probably drug deals.*





Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016

The City of Whittlesea’s Natural and Built Shade Policy outlines Council’s commitment to taking a preventative approach to protecting the community from over-exposure to ultra violet radiation (UVR) through the adequate provision of best practice public facilities and environments that provide shade and shelter, particularly in high risk areas such as early years facilities, playspaces and outdoor community gathering spaces. Another of the key policy principles includes the prioritisation of the provision of canopy trees and urban forest where possible, to provide shade as well as help reduce pollution, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve social and mental wellbeing.

Park Lighting Strategy 2006

The City of Whittlesea Park Lighting Strategy provides a strategic framework for the inclusion of lighting within public open space areas. The Strategy also provides direction for Council in relation to the provision of lighting in existing open space areas, should the need be identified. In this case, the level of implementation will be subject to available Council funding.

According to the Park Lighting Strategy, Nick Asceznzo Reserve is considered as a Local/Neighbourhood park, and the strategy recommends that the provision of lighting within Council’s neighbourhood parks should not be considered except in isolated cases, where there is a demonstrated need for after hour recreational pursuits such as walking or exercise trails or where a case may exist for the illumination of a path within a neighbourhood park where that path is utilised as a high traffic thoroughfare connecting an area of high night time pedestrian access.

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

- Provide a strategic framework for the installation of lighting in Council’s open space areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Guiding Beacons of Light
 - Marker, or ‘glowing’ lights to indicate changes and variations in pathways.
 - Highlighted landmarks to help orientate the user in the space and improve wayfinding

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

AusNet services, A guide to living with transmission line easements

The guideline specifies restrictions on easement use. In general, restrictions limit the use of easements to mainly ground level activities. The guideline refer to prevent hazards from powerlines that may result from reduced clearances, fire, impact or an explosion from any activity on the easement.

The guideline specifies permitted and prohibited uses of transmission line easements. The more relevant uses to Nick Ascenzo are underlines.

Permitted uses of transmission line easements:

- Grazing and agriculture.
- Market gardens, orchards and horticultural nurseries, excluding buildings.
- Water storage dams, subject to sufficient clearances from conductors and towers.
- Trees and shrubs with a mature growth height not exceeding three metres.
- Vegetation density is generally restricted to scattered trees or limited area clumps and shelter belts to control the total quantity of burnable materials on the easement.

- A tree clear area of 20 metres radius is generally required at tower sites for line maintenance purposes. Closer trees may be permitted in some locations where the interference caused to access and essential line maintenance is acceptable. However, a greater clearance area is required at future tower sites to provide for construction of new transmission lines.
- Landscaping and paving, subject to sufficient clearances to the conductors and towers if changes to the natural surface levels are proposed.
- Non-metallic fences up to three metres in height. Metallic fences, or fences incorporating metallic materials, must be suitably earthed and sectionalised and are subject to AusNet Services' approval.
- Sewerage, drainage and water pipes constructed of earthenware or plastic materials, but no closer than 20 metres to towers.
- Parking of sedan and utility types of vehicles. Barriers of an approved design may be required to protect towers from damage by vehicles.
- Tennis courts on 500 kV and 330 kV easements subject to certain specific requirements. Please contact AusNet Services for fencing requirements and further information.
- Tennis courts on 220 kV line easements, provided that earthed metal net posts are used. An elevated earthed umpire's chair is also permitted, provided that it is earthed, of all-metal construction, with a metal screen above the seating position. Perimeter fences should also be earthed. Please contact AusNet Services for earthing requirements and further information.
- Ground level sporting activities, such as football, cricket, golf, basketball and netball, subject to special requirements regarding the design of fences, goals and lights.
- Lighting poles, subject to sufficient clearance to the conductors and towers. The power supply must be underground and the lighting poles must lower to the ground for servicing.
- Playground equipment, subject to a 1 metre maximum height limit.
- For 220 kV line easements only – car, boat and trailer sales yards, excluding buildings.

Prohibited uses of transmission line easements:

- Houses, other buildings and structures, including eaves, awnings, canopies, shelters and the like. For 220 kV line easements only, domestic garages (non-habitable), carports and garden sheds MAY be permitted a limited distance onto the easement subject to a number of requirements being met. These include sufficient safety clearance to towers and overhead conductors; three metre maximum height; construction made largely of non-flammable materials and not attached to a dwelling.
- Erection of scaffolding.

- Swimming pools, both above and below the ground, including filtration equipment.
- Storage of materials in industrial type waste bins and skips.
- Stockpiling of excavated materials.
- Storage or handling of flammable liquids or gases. For 500 kV easements only, the storage or handling of such liquids or gases from bulk delivery vehicles is not permitted within 60 metres of the centreline of the transmission line.
- Fuelling of and repairs to vehicles, plant and equipment.
- Use of vehicles and equipment such as cranes, excavators, elevated working platforms and the like exceeding three metres in operating height.
- Parking of large trucks and caravans (traversing or crossing easements is permitted).
- Loading, unloading and load adjustment of large trucks.
- Operation of large water spray irrigators of the gun type.
- Metal pipes (including reinforced concrete), power cables and other electrically conductive materials within 30 metres of any tower steelwork.
- For 220 kV easements only, this minimum distance reduces to 20 metres.
- Electrical detonation or storage of explosives including fireworks.

AusNet services, Your guide to planting near electricity lines

The guideline specifies several key points regarding planting vegetation on transmission easements, including:

- Choose species that have a maximum maturity height of no more than three metres.
- Trees or shrubs should be scattered or clumped across the easement (an overall vegetative cover for mature trees and shrubs of up to 10 per cent is acceptable).
- Vehicle access along the easement should not be inhibited.
- As maintenance vehicle access is required, only grasses or low growing vegetation should be planted within a distance of 20 metres from each tower centre.
- In special circumstances, such as in gullies or watercourses, these requirements may be varied. Contact AusNet Services for guidance.
- When planting adjacent to, but not on an easement, make sure the vegetation will not impede vehicle access or pose a fire risk if it were to fall onto the easement.

- Low-growing species, with a mature height of no more than three metres, can be planted within seven metres of the line.
- For trees outside the seven metre zone, plant them at such distances so that if they do blow over, they will not fall on the lines. For example, a 10 metre tall tree should be planted at least 13 metre from the lines.
- As you approach mid-span (the mid-point of the line between two poles), gradually increase the distances between the powerline and any tree or shrub by an extra three metres.
- Do not plant vegetation within three metres of powerpoles

Indigenous species have been highlighted in this guideline as appropriate to plant near transmission lines and distribution powerlines. They have been chosen for their low growing height. this guideline provides a table with some suitable indigenous plants indicating the plants' growth habits and botanical zones.

The provided species should be considered in the detailed design of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve.



Appendix 2

Community Engagement

Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Revitalisation

Phase 1 Participation and Engagement Findings Report

September 2022

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea established the Town Centre Revitalisation Program 2021-2025 to have a structured approach to revitalising local and neighbourhood centres. The program addresses the key action of “Design and upgrade local streetscapes and shopping precincts to make it easier to move about, celebrate local culture, heritage and character, and connect people to the natural environment” identified in Council’s Community Plan 2021-25.

Alexander Avenue, Thomastown has been recognised as a high priority site in the Town Centre Revitalisation Program, with opportunities identified to improve social spaces, walkability and connectivity, safety, and greening.

In May 2021, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group made up of community members, traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School, together with Bronwyn Halfpenny MP, Member for Thomastown met with Council Directors and staff to share their concerns for the area. Key concerns raised included a lack of investment in the area, poor perceptions of safety and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings for young people (and the general public) crossing between the school, park and shops. Following this meeting Council committed to investigate improvements in the area. Since then, Council has:

- Undertaken surveys to analyse traffic movement and the movement of school students in the area.
- Following feedback from local traders, car parking hours have been altered in some areas around the shops.
- Engaged with other business areas across Council to help the project team to understand the project scope, challenges and opportunities.

The community will be consulted on the revitalisation of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve in three phases:

- Phase 1 – capturing challenges and opportunities of the site - COMPLETED
- Phase 2 – presentation of concept design options for feedback – COMPLETED
- Phase 3 – construction process – 2024

How we engaged you

The Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation program consultation was open for community feedback from 1 to 31 August 2022.

During this period the project team held 1-on-1 conversations and conducted a survey of Alexander Avenue traders, a workshop and site visit with Thomastown East Primary School student leaders and Principal on 26 August and a community pop-up

stall on-site from 3-7pm on Friday 26 August to capture Friday night trade at the take-away stores. Visitors were informed of the consultation and the project team captured feedback on their experiences with the reserve.

Residents within 700m were letterbox dropped in early August to inform them of the consultation and encourage them to share their feedback through the community consultation by attending the community pop-up or on the project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform.

Visitors to the shops were alerted to the consultation through posters that were placed in the windows of Alexander Avenue businesses.

The community consultation and community pop-up was shared on Council's social channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The seven posts (three on Facebook) were viewed by a combined total of 23,452, with 1,563 of these people interacting with it in some way (sharing, commenting or leaving a reaction).

Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously indicated an interest in arts, culture and community; planning, design and infrastructure; roads, paths and transport and/or the Thomastown area were notified via email of the new project page (total 466 subscribers). Of these, 290 recipients read the email with 30, or 6 percent clicking through to view the Alexander Avenue engage page.

The project Engage page featured two consultation activities, a survey 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 six key themes and asked to rank the areas they felt needed change/improvement the most.

Participation

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. This feedback is valuable to the City of Whittlesea to understand the community's concerns as well as their ideas and aspirations for the activity centre.

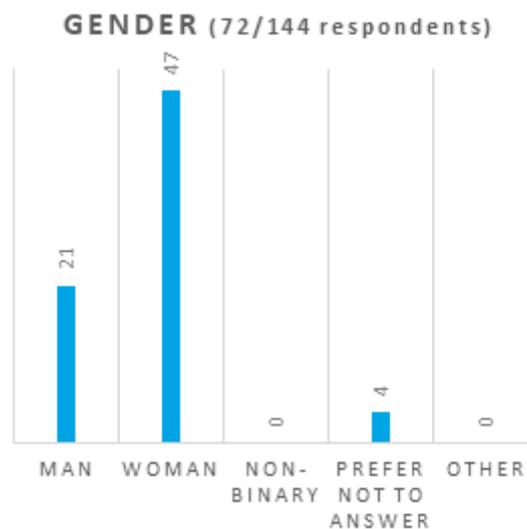
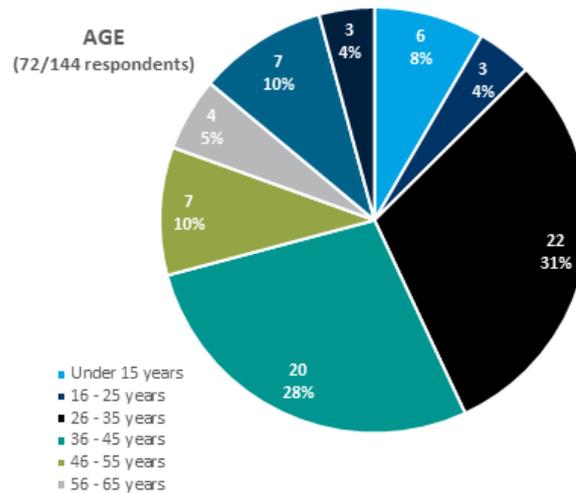
The Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation page on Council's Engage platform attracted 656 views and saw 85 contributions made including 73 surveys and 12 pins dropped on the interactive map.

The planned online workshop with the Enhancement Group didn't go ahead due to low attendance, instead the project team successfully engaged in 1:1 conversations with eight of the nine Alexander Avenue traders who also completed the survey.

An online workshop was scheduled for the evening of Monday 15 August, however like the Enhancement Group session this did not go ahead as there were no pre-registrations recorded.

On Friday 26 August the project team met with the Principal of Thomastown East Primary along with 19 student leaders. That evening the project team held a community pop-up on-site that was attended by 56 community members including an additional six young people who together made 56 priority votes and dropped 24 pins on the pinpoint map.

Participants in the consultation activities were of all ages, providing insight into the requirements and priorities of different age groups. Majority of participants were aged 26-45 years old and over half were women. Participants were typically from Thomastown and Lalor, but some also travelled from Bundoora, Epping, Mernda, Wollert, and Mill Park.



What we heard

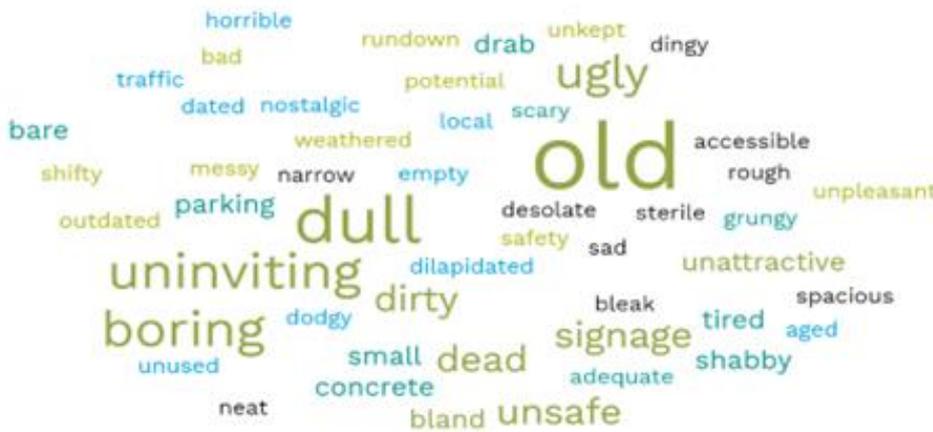
Overall, we heard that the area’s infrastructure is degrading and in need of repair, paths and carparking areas do not meet current standards of compliance and existing land uses in the precinct can be better connected. Residents and visitors perceive the area as 'unsafe', 'uninviting' and 'dull'.

Our community engagement highlighted three main points.

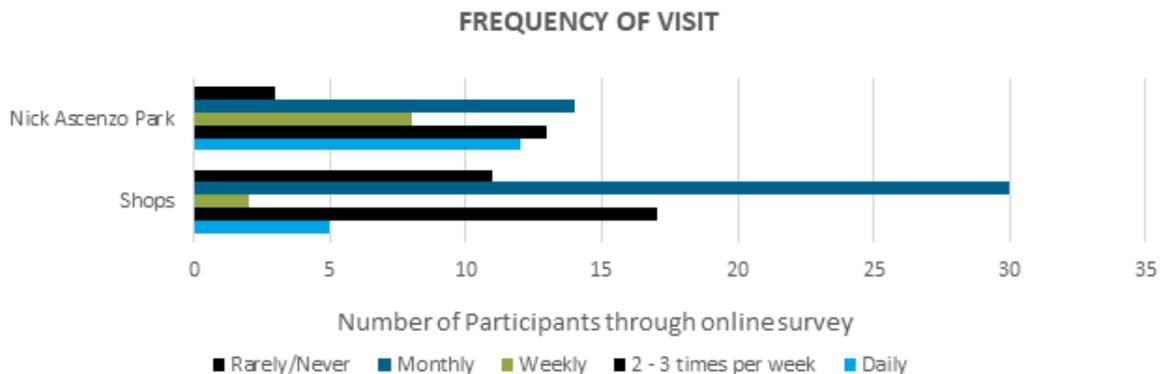
- There are poor perceptions of safety in the area (such as lack of lighting at night-time, poor passive surveillance and open views, lack of activities/things to do near the shops).
- Pedestrian safety and access is a concern of the community and traders; and

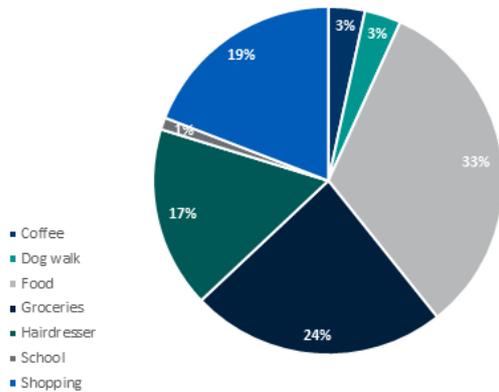
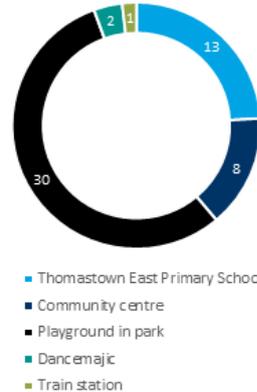
- Any improvement would be supported, especially those designed to activate the area (such as outdoor dining or public art).

Participants were asked to describe the area with three different words, the below wordcloud represents these visually, the more a word was mentioned the bigger it is.

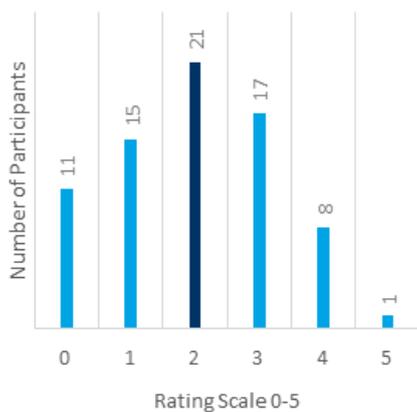
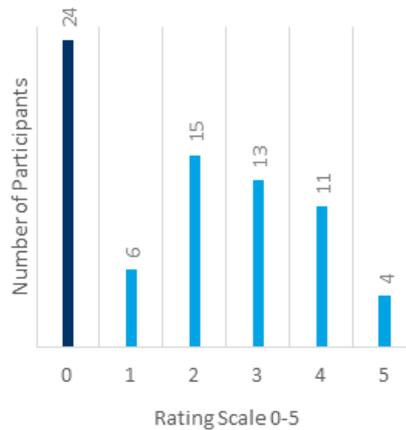


Residents and visitors including the parents of students accessing nearby Thomastown East Primary School use the shopping strip. People who visit the shops (63), do so once a month (30) or a couple of times a week (17). Many (11) do not visit the shops at all due to number of reasons such as a lack of options for shopping and activities and safety concerns. The infrequent visits from the community have reduced foot traffic in the area, coupled with inadequate lighting have led to sharp decrease in the perception of safety among the community.



REASONS FOR VISIT

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT


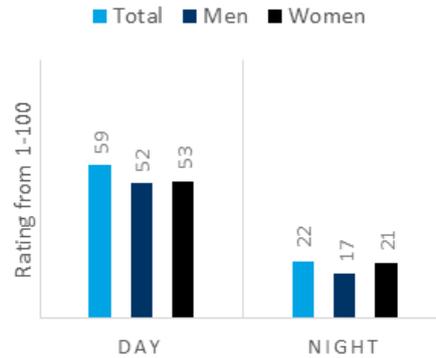
The shops are frequented by the participants to buy takeaway food (33%), groceries (24%), flowers and other items (19%) and visit the hairdresser (17%) and by parents dropping children off to school (1%). Due to the nature of these visits, time spent at the shopping strip ranges from a few minutes to an hour, except for hairdressing appointments, which could last up to a few hours.

ALEXANDER AVE. STREETScape AND SHOPS

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE


Participants were asked to rate the shops and the reserve on a scale of 1 (negative) to 5 (positive). Most participants felt that the shops and streetscape lacked amenity. Safety concerns also added to a low rating of the area. Nick Ascenzo reserve is not frequented by many of the community due to poor upkeep and a lack of diverse activities.

Participants were asked to rate their perception of safety on a scale from 0 (unsafe) to 100 (safe) during the day and at night. Perception of safety was moderate during the day (50%) and was especially low during the night (around 20%).

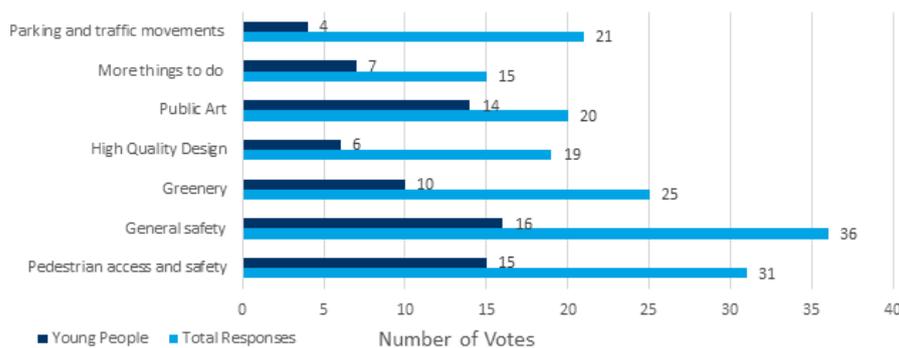
GENDER BASED PERCEPTION OF SAFETY



General safety and lighting were the key issues identified by traders. Almost half of the traders were women and the perception of safety among them was especially low. This is predominantly due to inadequate lighting, anti-social activities in front of the shops and in the park, obstructed sight lines, a recent assault at IGA and a history of ramraiding and burglary across the shops.

Traders reported a lack of activity in the area, speeding, poor access to the park and carparking area on Boronia Street. The traders would like to see better cleanliness measures, fit for purpose parking spaces/times and opportunities for outdoor dining activities. Better street furniture, lighting, trees and planters and activities such as a playground, were identified as ideas to attract more people and improve the area.

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS



Council staff members including Urban Design, Youth Services and Community Development walked with 19 Thomastown East Primary School students and their principal to the shops to gain perspectives of what mattered to young people in the area. Young people used a different colour dot to differentiate their priorities during the more general in-person engagement also. Younger participants were keen to see more public art in the space as well as more activities within the shopping strip and around the reserve that were relevant to their age group.



Image 01: Urban Design, Youth Services and Community Development Officers discussing issues and opportunities with Thomastown East Primary School students and Principal.



Image 02: Dark areas of carparking and park at night time.

Opportunities and concerns

The community felt that general safety was a priority, people have been assaulted in the area. Traders, especially women, feel unsafe working after dark. Pedestrian safety was another key concern as many incidents of speeding, ramraiding and improper usage of the open space in the park to drive vehicles have been noted by community.

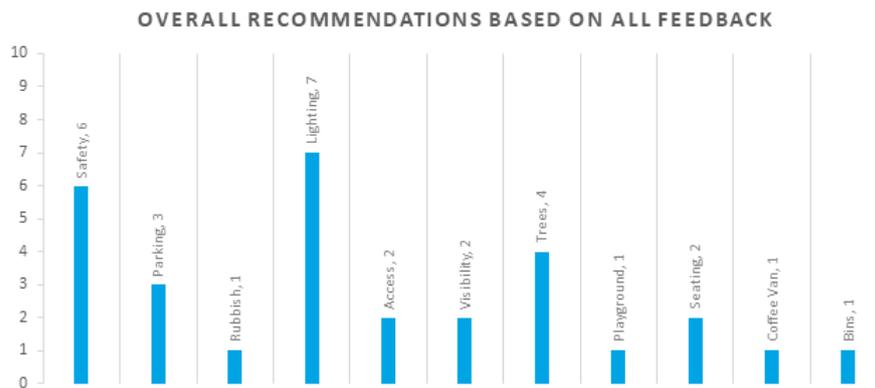
“Looks run down and not safe.” – Community member

They also prioritise greenery and shade to make it easier to walk, making the precinct cooler during summer, and increase its visual appearance. The community also indicated that high quality street furniture coupled with provisions for outdoor dining would make the shopping strip attractive for locals and visitors.

A key concern of the community was the potential increase in traffic flow due to the renewal of the shopping strip which would attract more people as well as a potential threat to pedestrians crossing the roads as there are no crossings in the area currently. The pinpoint map highlighted opportunities for reducing car parking

spaces to create space for outdoor dining, seating areas for the people to gather, greenery and planter boxes and trees to upgrade the strip.

Respondents of all genders identified that greenery, general safety and pedestrian access and safety were the most important themes to address.



Shopping precinct Issues and Opportunities summary

Issues with general safety

Comments and ideas:

- Uniform lighting over the entire area to prevent dark spots.
- Layered lighting, directional lighting as per requirement (with reference to Arup's LSUP (internal)).
- Façade improvements.
- Improve passive surveillance and sight lines through shops and park.
- Investigate empty shop front activation options.
- Public toilets in Nick Ascenzo considered unsafe and poor design.

Issues with pedestrian access and safety:

- Comments and ideas:
- Footpath across easement is a tripping hazard.
- Pedestrian crossing between shopping strip and reserve.
- Concrete strip/access point from Boronia Street carpark.

“Ideally a marked crossing from the opposite side of the road to get to the shops, especially due to cars coming from around the corner from Brock St, it makes it hard to cross safely” – Community Member

Issues with greenery

Comments and ideas:

- Increase tree cover in and around the shopping strip for shade and visual appeal.
- Increase the greenery of the precinct as well to make it a bit more aesthetically pleasing.

Issues with high quality designs

Comments and ideas:

- Introduce street furniture that responds to the current needs of the community.
- Install bins at better locations.
- Council’s level of maintenance is considered poor.

“Keep it Thommo! Keep it concrete!” – Community Member

Needing more things to do

Comments and ideas:

- Space for youth centric activities – skateboarding, tennis, cricket, futsal etc. near the shops.
- Outdoor dining activities to increase opportunities for socialization.

“Create bigger paths outside shops to create opportunity for outdoor dining. Could bring in better restaurants or gelati shop/cafe. There aren’t many good cafes in the area enjoyed by a greater number of young families coming into the area.” – Community Member

Issues with parking and traffic movement

Comments and ideas:

- Increase parking time for patrons running longer errands.
- New elements in road to minimise speeding in the area and create slower streets.
- Rethink parking spots and times.

- Bollards / hostile vehicle mitigation.
- Stop cars driving in park.

Public Art

Comments and ideas:

- Incorporate murals on blank walls and introduce other forms of public art such as sculptures, paving patterns etc to liven up the space.

Nick Ascenzo Reserve issues and opportunities

Issues with general safety

Comments and ideas:

- Lighting issues.
- Larger bushes need trimming/replanting with less foliage.
- Activities or design that prevents people from misusing large empty spaces.
- Toilet block feels unsafe.

Issues with greenery

Comments and ideas:

- Open/clear out bushes in the reserve, trees with low foliage density.
- Create possum boxes etc on trees.

Maintenance and Upkeep

Comments and ideas:

- Better pathways.
- Lawn needs to be cleaned/ free of litter, broken glass.

“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.

Lack of activities

Comments and ideas:

- Space for youth centric activities – skateboarding, tennis, cricket etc.
- Seating and BBQ area.
- Urban agriculture/community gardens (social enterprises may also be interested in urban agriculture area)
- Scouts Hall not very well utilised.
- Bocce court is not utilised for intended use, currently used as informal dog park.

Challenges summarised

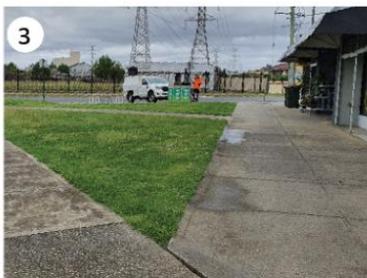
The below map summarises key challenges identified in this report that can be addressed through streetscape redesign. Further discussions with Council staff and subject matter experts will be undertaken to identify which challenges are a priority to address in a streetscape concept design and achievable within a reasonable budget.



Two power poles (one high voltage) exist within the shopfront streetscape.



Intersection of Alexander Ave and Boronia Street is wide and encourages speeding. Pedestrian crossing point is also not direct, with no safe pedestrian access between the Boronia carparking and shops.



Triangle grassed area on corner of Alexander and Boronia is privately owned body corporate.



Shrub planting creates visual barrier into the park, making it feel unsafe and unwelcoming. People cannot see what others are doing in the park - which could draw people in.



Steep crossfall and grass between shops and Boronia carpark causing slipping incidents.



Dark environment at night time on Boronia Street carpark and shopfronts, creating poor perceptions of safety.



Crossing from primary school to shops and Nick Ascenzo Reserve have children crossing unattended.



Steep crossfall and lack of footpath along western edge of reserve. The reserve also has a lack of uses along its western edge, resulting in a lack of activity and passive surveillance.

Next steps

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

Feedback gathered from the community is being used to develop the design of the streetscape upgrade and will be incorporated into the decision-making process. The project team will seek to develop a plan that addresses the issues raised and balances these with the broader needs of the community.

A draft concept design will be presented in the second phase of community consultation, providing an opportunity for the community to see how the feedback provided has helped shape the concept design. The draft concept design will need to be endorsed by Council to proceed to community consultation.

Appendix Item 1 – Trader Issues and Opportunities

Key issues identified by traders

General safety

- Observations of antisocial behaviour in the car park and park
- Inadequate lighting means the area is perceived as unsafe especially by female members of the community. It also facilitates anti-social behaviour and discourages visitors to the shop.
- Robberies reported at the shops, assault at IGA
- Overgrown landscaping around the reserve is inhabited by people after dark
- Area generally inactive at night.

Opportunities identified by traders

General safety

- Increase lighting around the shops
- Open/clear out bushes in the reserve, trees with low foliage density
- Integrate new uses (potentially something for young people) into the park near the shops – this could deter antisocial behaviour
- Increase active surveillance measures around shops by installing CCTV. It was highlighted with traders that CCTV isn't something Council generally offers as a service.

Key issues identified by traders

Pedestrian access and safety

- Frequent speeding around the corner of Alexander Avenue x Boronia Street
- Poor access from pedestrian pathways.
- People continue to slip on nature strip in between shops and Boronia Street
- Trucks hitting light poles when going around roundabout on Brock St
- No pedestrian access from carpark on east side of Boronia Street
- Ramraiding of shops in recent history
- Speeding in the area.

Opportunities identified by traders

Pedestrian access and safety

- 40 zone around shops - flashing lights to show this
- Concrete strip/access point from Boronia Street carpark
- Zebra crossings and street designed to encourage slower speeds
- Bollards / hostile vehicle mitigation
- Close Boronia Street between school and Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

Key issues identified by traders

Car parking

- Not busy throughout the week, but during peak hours, parking is limited or not fit for purpose (i.e., hairdressers want 4-hour parking near their shop, takeaways want quicker parking)
- Traders parking there all day, they don't have anywhere to park their cars without getting booked.

Opportunities identified by traders

Car parking

- Can parking be reorganised to have parking on both sides of Alexander Ave
- More carparking, could Council purchase transmission easement
- Better parking times for uses at the shops.
- Trader permits.

Key issues identified by traders

Greenery

- The shopping does not have trees/ planters/ landscaping elements that improve amenity of the area.

Opportunities identified by traders

Greenery

- More Trees and nature to make the place feel nicer
- Beautification, nice light poles, pavers, planter boxes etc.

Key issues identified by traders

Lack of things to do

- The area lacks activities that are targeted towards young people such as skate parks, exercise, community sports
- Lack of coffee shop? More outdoor dining would be great, helps business
- Inactive during the night.

Opportunities identified by traders

Lack of things to do

- Coffee van spot near the shops to help activate, no café currently
- Playground / play items for kids, bring them to shops more, more people around for more reasons
- Offer space for outdoor dining and street trading
- Possibility of Council purchasing or activating vacant transmission easement.

Key issues identified by traders

Poor maintenance and poor-quality infrastructure

- Littering and rubbish
- Broken glass bottles and hazardous items lying around in the car park
- The condition of the area deters people from coming to the shops
- Cracks in road, foot paths and aging bins
- Recently installed tables considered ugly, but they do get used.

Opportunities identified by traders

Poor maintenance and poor-quality infrastructure

- Install bins at better locations
- Check Council's level of maintenance
- Better seating, tables, umbrellas
- Improve design and quality of the area.

Key issues identified by traders

Wayfinding

- People are unaware of the shops resulting in low foot traffic
- No one would know there are shops here from Dalton Road.

Opportunities identified by traders

Wayfinding

- Better signage for shops
- Improve wayfinding to the shops from surrounding street network
- Improve lighting.

Key issues identified by traders

Visibility

- Don't clutter views/space – keep visibility open across the area
- Closed shops/roller doors make area unattractive.

Key issues identified by traders

Visibility

- Improve passive surveillance and sight lines through shops and park
- Clearer views across and into the park.
- Investigate empty shop front activation options

Seek options to work with shop owners to improve their facades.

Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan

Phase 2 Participation and Engagement Findings Report

July 2023, Version 1

Introduction

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is one of City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Thomastown, an established area of the municipality. Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified as part of the 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 1 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 precinct revitalisation is the Nick Ascenzo Reserve master plan development.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders will inform the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan. The engagement includes two phases: a) Phase One, Information Gathering, b) Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition.

Consultation phase 1, received diverse representation from a range of targeted stakeholders including Traders on Alexander Avenue, Thomastown East Primary School staff and parents, Community Activity Centre Users, Scouts, Visitors to the Shops and the community.

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 reserve improvement.

The consultation was undertaken in August 2022, Nick Ascenzo Reserve feedback was captured as part of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation engagement activities.

Consultation phase 2, was undertaken between the 19th of May 2023 to the 25th of June 2023 and involved engaging the broader community through pop-up sessions and on Council's digital engagement platform.

The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Alexander Avenue Streetscape and Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan to ensure that the future of the site reflects our community's needs. Council officers continued engagement with key stakeholders during phase two consultation.

The project engage page received 268 visitors with 33 community members providing feedback or completing the survey during the consultation period.

Increasing safety and accessibility in the area is a priority and the plans look to address these through better lighting, changes to the car parking, the upgrade and location of facilities including the play area and improving connection and visibility between the shopping precinct and reserve.

The draft master plan will guide the future development of the reserve and includes key recommendations that will create a safe and inclusive reserve to encourage people of all ages and abilities to access the park.

This report has been prepared by City of Whittlesea as part of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan project. It summarises the broader community and stakeholders consultation outcomes.

How we engaged you

Phase 1: Community consultation to inform the draft master plan (COMPLETED August 2022)

The project team met with key stakeholders including the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group, shopkeepers and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre to gather thoughts and ideas on what should be included in the master plan. We also consulted with community members including those who frequently visit and use the shops and reserve.

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

Following this consultation, a master plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve was developed to guide the future development of the reserve to create a safe and inclusive area for the community to enjoy.

Phase 2: Present draft master plan to community for further feedback (19 May- 25 June 2023)

The community consultation was promoted through a range of tactics including:

- Direct mail to adjacent property owners - Residents within 400m of the Alexander Avenue precinct were letterbox dropped to inform them of the draft concept plan and master plan and encourage them to attend a pop-up session or provide feedback through the projects Engage pages.
- Email to previously consulted Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders – Traders who participated in first phase of the consultation were emailed to inform them of the Draft Future Direction Plan and encourage them to provide feedback. In-person discussions were undertaken with traders.
- Social media - The opportunity to participate in the engagement was also promoted on Council's social media channels including Facebook and Instagram with the combined reach of 13,585 across the five posts.

The draft master plan was presented to the community for feedback between 19 May and 25 June 2023. Community feedback was sought online through Council’s Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at community-based pop-ups and key stakeholder meetings.

Council shared the key aspects of the master plan and asked the community whether they supported the draft master plan through a survey on the project Engage page that enabled participants to indicate their support of the plan using a rating scale from ‘I like it a lot’ to ‘I don’t like it at all’ with five possible options. Participants also could identify any missed opportunities that could be added to the guidelines.

The project Engage pages offered the community the opportunity to view or download the draft master plan and featured FAQ sections for the projects.

The Nick Ascenzo design package included the draft master plan, high-level phase 1 consultation summary, high-level traffic study summary, and recommendations.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an in-built translation tool to ensure that the information provided can be translated into the audience’s preferred language to ensure it is understood.

Two Community pop-ups were held on the 2nd of June at the Nick Ascenzo Community Centre and the Alexander Avenue Street in front of shops.

Participants at community-based pop-ups were presented with the same key aspects of the draft master plan and offered the opportunity to undertake the same activity on large activity boards. This board posed the same question and possible responses as well as space to share any missed opportunities.

The project team met directly with key stakeholders including Alexander Avenue shopkeepers, the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre. Stakeholders were briefed on the project, shown the draft plan and offered the opportunity to provide further feedback on the draft.

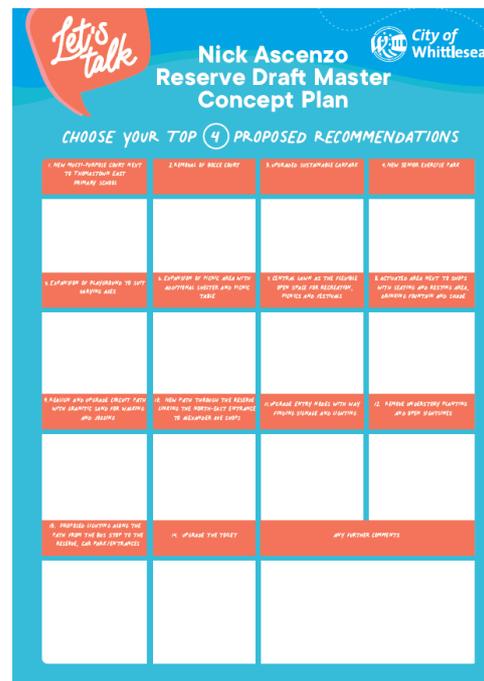


Image 01: Dot board activities used by the project team at the community-based pop-ups

Participation

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan page on Council's engage platform received 268 visitors with 19 community members completing the survey during the consultation period.

Council Officers spoke with a further 14 people at the two pop-ups, and had separate workshops with Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School. A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:



What we heard

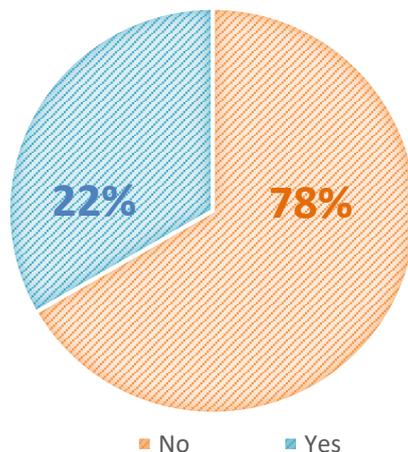
Survey Results

This section provides results from the online surveys completed by 19 community members. The online survey is a good indication of the community's thoughts on the master plan recommendations.

1. How do you feel about the draft concept plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve?



2. Do you use the existing footy and soccer goals? From 18 answers, 14 participants (78%) indicated that they don't use the existing goals, and the rest of them indicated that they use them on casual basis.



3. How do you feel about the following recommendations?

Participants that engaged digitally were asked to share their level of support for each of the 14 master plan recommendations. Interested community members were invited to use stickers to indicate their preference for each element. All recommendation were well received with many receiving the support of all participants.

The following charts illustrate the summarised result of the community's support of each masterplan recommendations.





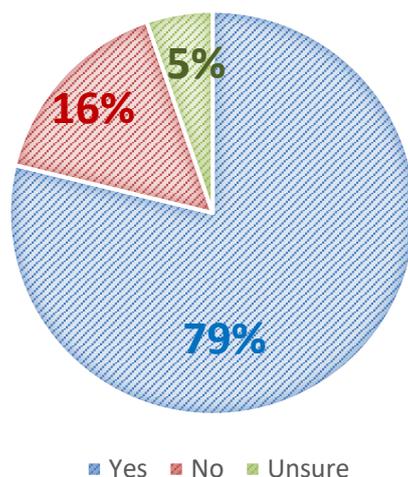
84% of the community members liked a lot or liked the proposal for a new senior exercise park



84% of the community members liked a lot or liked the idea of removing the bocce court

4. Would you support a dog off leash area in the reserve in the future?

Participants were asked if they would support the introduction of an off-leash dog park in the reserve in the future, From 19 answers, 15 participants indicated they would.



5. Is there anything we have missed in the concept design?

Participants were asked to identify anything the master plan may have missed. Fifteen community members responded to the question and shared ideas of other improvements that could be considered.

These ideas included the inclusion of a dog drinking fountain and additional bins in the area. Numerous participants also took the opportunity to further support the future introduction of a dog off-leash park in the reserve and possibly re-purposing the existing bocce court into a fenced dog off-leash area. Others provided examples of other parks and what they liked and didn't like about them including the planting of indigenous plants and replacing the tan-bark in the playground area with rubber soft-fall.

Gather Tool

Sixteen participants opted to use the gather tool on the Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation project Engage page to share other comments related to the project. Comments were also captured through meetings with key stakeholders and community pop-ups. The comments captured on Nick Ascenzo Reserve were:

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing and a skate park)
- Introduction of a formal running track
- An exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and near the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- More shaded areas
- Relocating the public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity to the community centre
- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting and lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicates any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e. motorcycles and dirt bikes)
- Concern around the placement of rubbish bins- positioning them closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

Below are some of the community comments:

Safety

"Love the idea and hope that it will bring more security to the area. There is currently a lot of graffiti happening there, drug affected people sleeping on the playground and I don't feel safe walking there myself due to the secluded section of the walking track inside the bushes."

"The two BIG issues with it are litter and antisocial behaviour. There is some sort of gathering that happens in the car park every Saturday night that results in the place being trashed afterward. Recently there's been signs of burnouts in the oval, destroyed fencing, and dumped hard rubbish. This needs to be addressed. I strongly recommend (a) more bins, especially in the car park, and (b) installing CCTV at the rec centre looking out over the car park and oval to aid in addressing the antisocial behaviour."

Signage

"New signage should indicate that certain activities are not permitted in the Reserve. For example, from time to time we get loud motorbikes operating in the Reserve (on the large grass area), which is not a great use of the area."

Playspace

"Activities for older kids i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing and a skate park"

"A water play area for children, underground trampolines etc (please no sand pits)"

Dog off-leash Area

"Fenced-off area within the park for an off-leash dog area - For example, the Bocce court could be redesigned and expanded to be an off-lead dog area; or ensure the oval is fenced off. Due to the openness of the ground, it is not a good spot currently to have a dog off-leash."

Greenery & Shade

"More shade trees to entice people to picnic there (my daughters childcare have taken excursions to this park and have lunch there, provisions like this would allow the broader community to use the area as well). I don't know what small shade trees are (as proposed) but some of the best parks we have include an abundance of large, medium and small trees offering shade and increasing appeal overall. Designing a landscape design that disguises the powerlines would be clever"

Park Infrastructure

"More bin around the park because always a lot of rubbish around the park."

"I strongly recommend considering the placement of rubbish bins. In the design rubbish bins are at the exits to Nick Ascenzo Reserve, including at the north end of the reserve (Waratah Street boundary). Unfortunately, we have quite a bad issue in the area with people dumping rubbish. I have a fear that putting a obvious bin on the Waratah Street boundary will result in this issue worsening. Perhaps the bin could be located closer to the picnic area (which is its current location) where families can use it after eating in the park."

Community pop ups

The in-person pop-ups had a similar quick poll for each of the main elements of the design. Interested community members were invited to add sticky dots in front of the design recommendations to indicate their top 4 priorities. The majority were in favour of the introduction of a senior exercise park and the expansion of the picnic area. The graph below shows the full rankings:

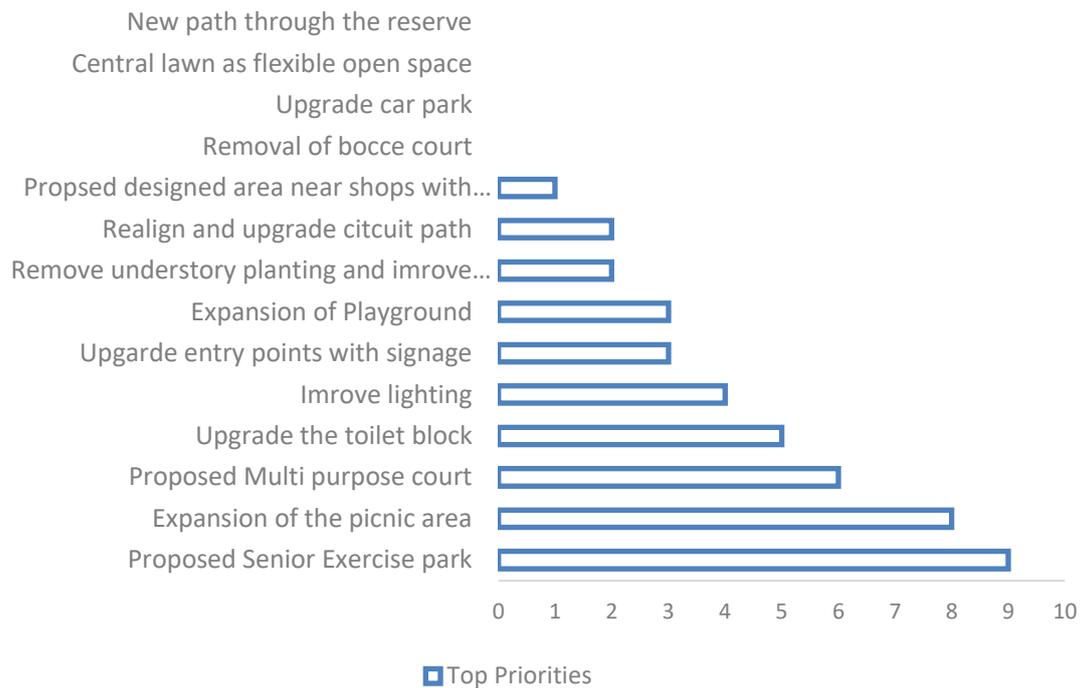
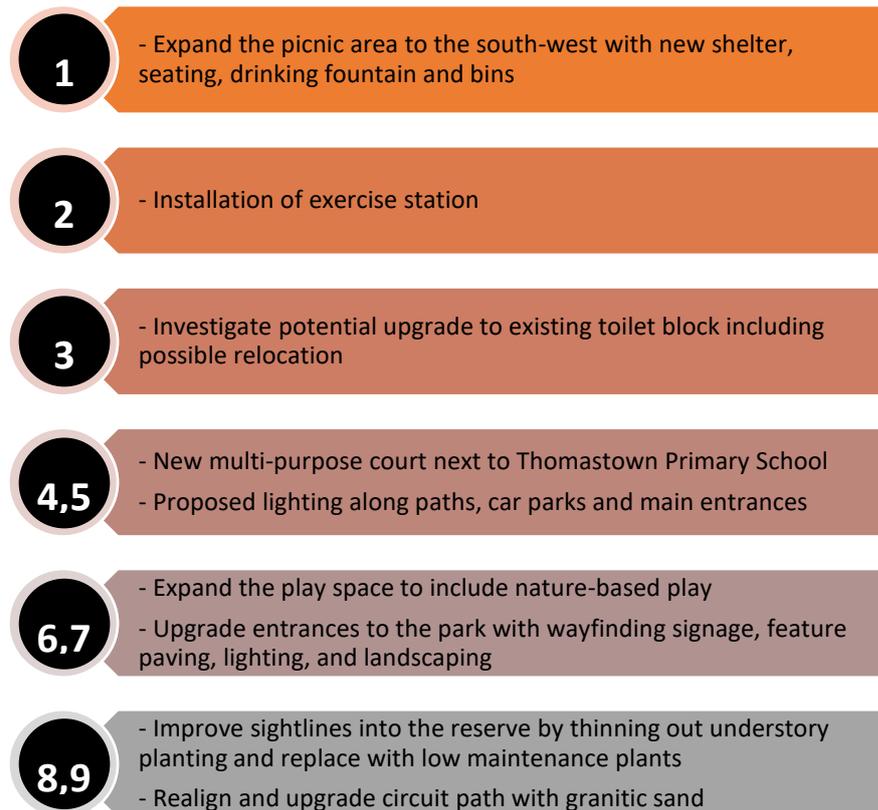


Image 02: ranking master plan recommendations at community pop ups



Image 03: project team engaging at the Alexander Avenue Shops and Nick Ascenzo Community Centre pop-ups.

The overall feedback received from the online survey and pop ups, reflected the following masterplan recommendations as the top nine (9) communities' priorities for improvement. As illustrated in the following diagram, some of the recommendations received the same level of support from the community.



Key messages from the gather tool and pop-up sessions

The items that were most commonly raised through the gathering tool and during pop-up sessions have been summarised and categorised under the following themes.

Access & Path

- Introduction of a formal running track
- Access from the car park to the Community Centre

Safety

- Avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- Additional lighting

Parking and Traffic Calming

- Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

Play space

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing wall and a skate park)
- Removal of tanbark in the playground and replacement with rubber soft-fall
- A water play area

Park Infrastructure & Community facilities

- Exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- Relocating public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity of the community centre
- More bins around the park
- Positioning rubbish bins closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- More shaded areas
- Fence off the multi-purpose court

Dog Park

- Fenced-off off-leash dog area

Landscape & Greenery

- More shade trees
- Better maintenance and use of the central lawn

Look & Feel / Signage & Lighting

- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting
- Lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicated any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e. motorcycles and dirt bikes)

Key Recommendations

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Master Plan. Some of the received comments are out of the scope of the project or are not in line with the COW's strategies and policies, hence the associated recommendations are explained further by the 'Note' below them.

- ⇒ Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north-east reserve 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. The outcome of the traffic analysis will inform the master plan.
- ⇒ 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
- ⇒ Provide softscape interventions e.g. more planting (low native planting) along Waratah Street to avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- ⇒ Incorporate rock climbing elements as part of the playground expansion
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX.
Note: A skate park is identified as an appropriate facility for larger parks such as state and regional parks.
- ⇒ Change the playground surface material as part of the playground renewal program
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs
Note: As per the open space strategy, the water feature is identified as an appropriate facility for the municipal parks, however Nick Ascenzo Reserve's limitation due to the powerline and associated facilities requirement for the water park, do not allow including a structured water play area in the reserve.
- ⇒ Expand the allocated area to include exercise equipment for different user groups
- ⇒ Investigate potential for upgrades to the existing toilet block including relocation as part of the Community Centre's future upgrade

- ⇒ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of the 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan' and 'Open Space Plan'

Note: Nick Ascenzo reserve has not been identified as a dog park in the adopted 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management plan'. It is being investigated to include the dog off-leash area in VR Michael Reserve in Lalor as part of the master plan development for this reserve. VR Michael Reserve is in 2km distance from Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets
- ⇒ Incorporate reserve lighting in warm colours at the reserve entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
- ⇒ Improve entry node with way-finding signage, different planting styles and/or types of materials used
- ⇒ Improve maintenance of the central lawn

Next steps

Thank you to all community members who provided feedback and have engaged with the project team.

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

The draft Nick Ascenzo reserve Master Plan will be presented to the Council for endorsement in the second half of 2023. Once endorsed the final plans will be shared with the community, providing any rationale for refinements made following community consultation. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates through the Council's Engage platform.