

A black and white photograph of a park area. In the foreground, there is a concrete path leading through tall grasses. To the right, a large, mature tree with a thick trunk and dense foliage stands prominently. In the background, there is a grassy field, more trees, and a building with a flat roof. A signpost is visible near the path.

Morton Homestead Play Space

Consultation Summary Report

Prepared by Hansen Partnership

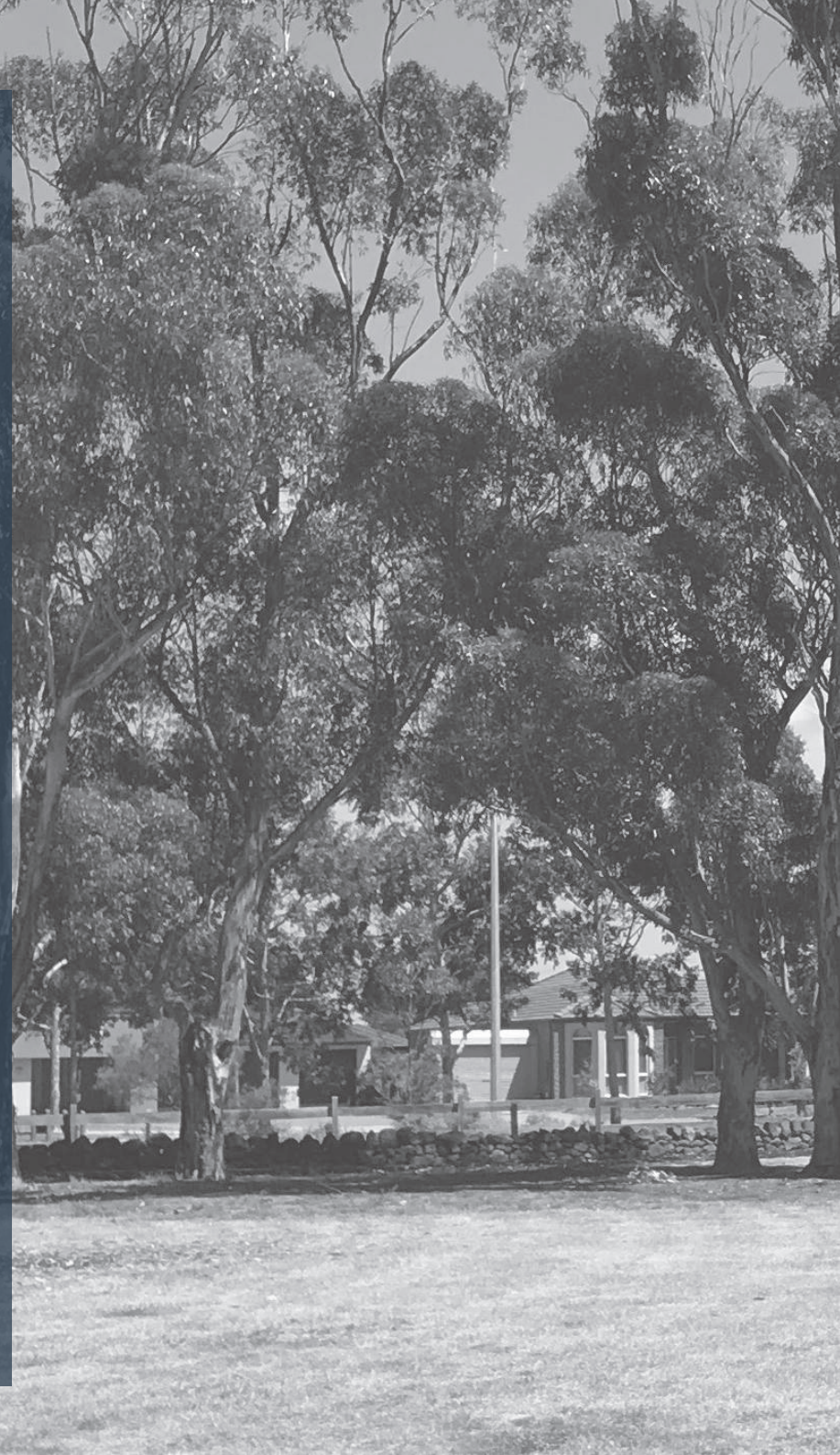
For Melton City Council

April 2019



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Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Hansen Partnership has been engaged to collaborate with Melton City Council to develop a plan to upgrade and activate Homestead Park in Taylors Hill. The proposed works will seek to upgrade the reserve to a level that will provide opportunities for play, active and passive recreation, gathering spaces, events and community interaction.

Through site analysis and participation in community and stakeholder consultation, a concept plan and design documentation for the Park will be developed with anticipated construction works being undertaken in mid 2019.

Melton City Council, in a joint venture with the Victorian Government, has resolved to upgrade the existing open space at Homestead Park, which includes the installation of a new play space to cater for the local community and users and visitors of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed and Morton Homestead.

Council recognises the importance for all residents to have equitable access to safe and usable public open space. The Homestead Park upgrade will address a significant open space infrastructure deficiency for the Taylors Hill community. While open space has been provided in the broad area of Taylors Hill, there is a scarcity of recreational, play and community infrastructure in the immediate area.

1.2 Process

The project process that will inform the development of the plan and upgrades to Homestead Park is as follows:





Study Area

2 Study area

2.1 Existing site

The existing site of Homestead Park occupies an area of 0.3ha, surrounded by local streets with overlooking residential dwellings to the north and east. Directly south of the Park is the heritage-listed Morton Homestead and car park; and to the southeast the Taylors Hill Men's Shed.

The site is comprised of a wide expanse of grass with a very flat profile. The grass area is enclosed on three sides by an existing heritage-protected dry stone wall - characteristic of those found scattered around the local area. The fourth side (southern) is bound by a gravel footpath and existing car park.

Existing trees and mulched garden beds run around the full perimeter of the site, though there are little to no under story plants (shrubs/ground covers) growing within the garden bed areas. The exception is along the southern boundary abutting the car park, which comprises of native low shrub planting.



2.2 Existing vegetation

There are many large and significant existing trees within the Reserve. In early 2019 an arborist report was undertaken to assess the health and estimated longevity of the trees. The report identified 15 Australian native trees (species include *Eucalyptus*, *Angophora* and *Acacia*) with retention values ranging from low to high. These trees are scattered primarily along the northern and western site boundaries. 20 exotic Peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle* var. *areira*) were also identified, with low to very low retention value, and are located along the eastern and southern site boundaries. A key design principle is to maintain and protect as many of the healthy existing significant trees as possible.

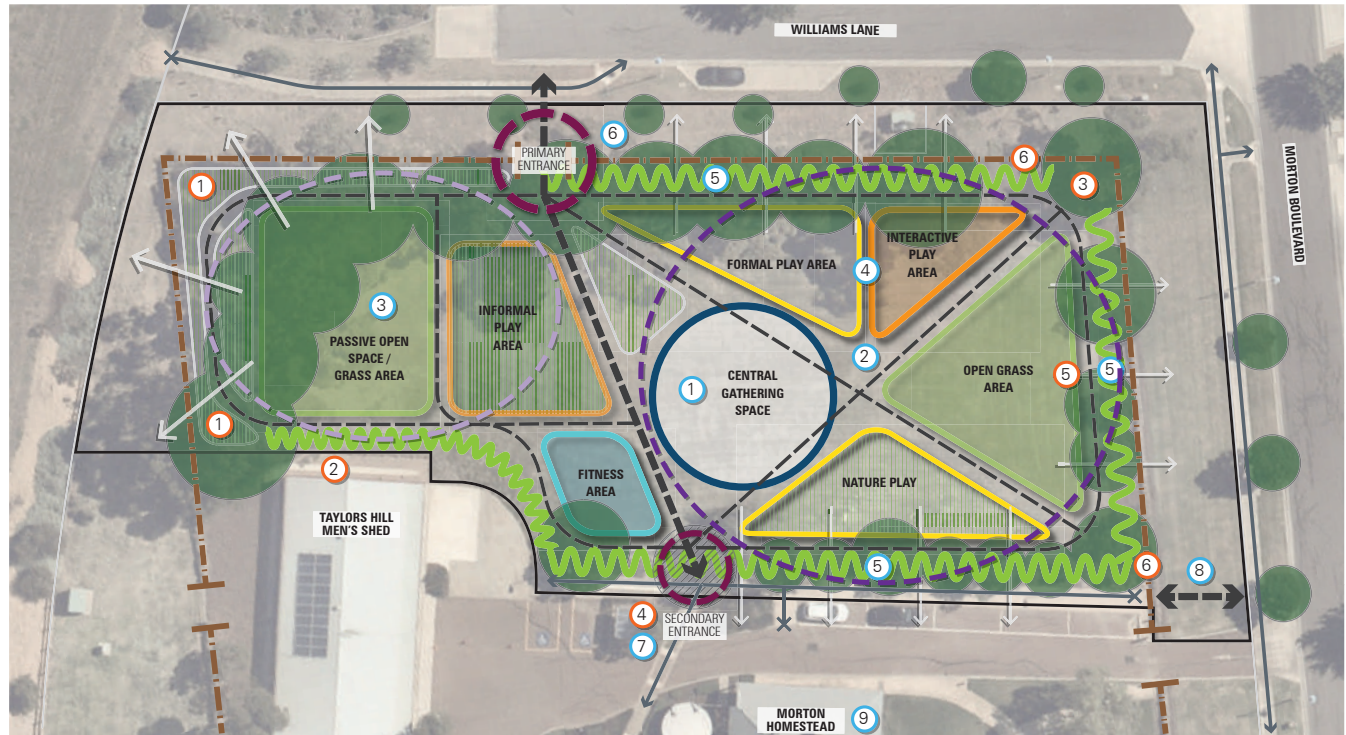


2.3 Analysis framework plan

Extensive background research and site analysis was undertaken by Hansen and Council to develop a strong understanding of the existing site conditions, history, and cultural and social significance.

This research led to the identification of a series of opportunities and constraints which were translated into an illustrative Analysis and Framework Plan.

This plan, accompanied by a series of precedent imagery, comprised the reference material utilised by Hansen and Council to engage in a series of community and stakeholder consultations sessions.



OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 Create a centralised destination within the reserve as it is visible from all corners of the reserve, the car park and flanking street frontages.
- 2 The eastern section of the reserve is large and visible from many vantage points outside the reserve. This area is suggested for more active forms of recreation that benefit from passive surveillance and being co-located to encourage associative play.
- 3 Encourage more passive forms of recreation in the western section of the reserve as it is setback from the noise and activity along the road frontages.
- 4 Locate active play areas adjacent to each other to encourage parallel play.
- 5 Enhance the existing garden beds along the reserve perimeter to serve as a vegetated buffer and Tree Protection Zone for the existing significant trees to be retained.
- 6 Utilise the existing opening in the dry stone wall as the primary entrance to the reserve. This allows for a direct connection to the footpath and residential area, and potential future path connections west.
- 7 Provide a secondary entrance to align with the existing pedestrian crossing through to the Homestead, Activity Centre, Taylors Hill Men's Shed and car park.
- 8 Provide a direct pedestrian connection from Morton Boulevard to the existing granitic sand path along the southern edge of the Reserve.
- 9 Reference the heritage characteristics of the Morton Homestead throughout the reserve through materiality, form, colour and subtle creative design interventions in furniture or play elements.

ISSUES

- 1 Maintain open sight lines in these areas with low vegetation, pruned tree canopies and minimal visual obstructions to avoid creating dark and hidden corners.
- 2 Existing retaining wall step is a potential fall hazard. Ensure any paths are setback from the retaining wall. Provide a wide garden bed area here to serve as a vegetated buffer zone.
- 3 Existing beehive within existing tree. If it is not possible to remove safely, provide a substantial buffer zone around this area and avoid locating active play here.
- 4 Potential removal/trimming of existing vegetation to create secondary entrance to reserve.
- 5 Drainage issues on site to resolve. Utilise Water Sensitive Urban Design interventions where possible, such as swales and rain gardens.
- 6 Existing heritage-protected dry stone wall limits access to the site.

Legend

Subject site		Open views	
Property boundary		Central gathering space	
Existing trees to be retained and protected		Proposed garden bed and tree planting	
Vegetation to be cleared		Open grass area	
Existing footpath		Formal play area	
Existing dry stone wall to be retained and protected		Informal play area	
Proposed primary path		Nature play area	
Proposed secondary path		Interactive play area	
Proposed entrance		Fitness area	
Proposed vegetated buffer		Active recreation area	
Maintain clear open views		Passive recreation area	



Community Consultation

3 Consultation and engagement

3.1 Purpose of engagement

In order to develop a vision and direction for the future development of Homestead Park, Hansen and Council sought to engage with the local community and relevant stakeholders to seek insight into the wants, needs and perceptions of users of the Park, as well as to identify the features considered valuable and significant. The consultation process provided a platform for the community and stakeholders to voice their concerns, identify issues to be addressed and opportunities for the development and activation of the Park.

Consultation and engagement with the local community, stakeholders and user groups is an important part of the design process as the knowledge and information gathered can influence design initiatives and inform the direction of future works.

3.2 Methodology

The public consultation process for the Morton Homestead Play Space took place over two weeks from the 5th - 22nd of February 2019.

A number of forms of community engagement were utilised as part of the consultation program, including:

- Community bulletin and questionnaire;
- Community drop-in session;
- Stakeholder consultation session; and,
- Direct mailing lists.

3.2.1 Bulletin and questionnaire

A project bulletin and questionnaire were circulated, in both print and online format, to provide a medium for the dissemination of project-related information and seek feedback on the proposed project objectives and direction.

The questionnaire was available in a digital format accessible from Council's project website; and was also distributed via mail-out to residences and organisations within the immediate vicinity of the Park. The questionnaire was also available in hard copy format at the consultation sessions.

The questionnaire included a series of questions addressing desired play opportunities, frequency of usage, age groups of users, and any opportunity to voice any other ideas or concerns. The results were collated and tabulated to identify the most desired play opportunities as well as the likely age groups to be accommodated in the design.

The surveys were available for completion from 5th - 22nd of February 2019.

3.2.2 Community drop-in and stakeholder consultation sessions

Two consultation sessions were held during the consultation period. The first as a casual drop-in session for members of the local community; and the second as a formal consultation session with key stakeholders and user groups.

The casual drop-in session for the community was advertised via digital and mail-out bulletins. For the second session, user groups and key stakeholders were personally invited by email and word of mouth. Both sessions were held on site.

These sessions provided an opportunity for the design team and Council to engage directly with local user groups to collect local knowledge about the existing use and function of the Park, acquire feedback on potential design upgrades and activities, and address any concerns raised about the site and its existing and future usage.

The community drop-in session was open to the public and took place at Homestead Park from 9:30-11:00am on Saturday 16 February. Local residents were invited to 'drop-in' and have their say. Hansen prepared an illustrative Analysis and Framework Plan identifying a series of opportunities and constraints informed by early site analysis and background research. This plan was accompanied by a series of precedent imagery available for the public to review and comment.

The comments were recorded and tabulated for reference during the design phase.

The stakeholder consultation session took place on Tuesday 19 February from 11am-12pm in the Taylors Hill Men's Shed. Attendees included members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed and employees of the Morton Homestead which are currently the two largest user groups of the site.

Representatives from Council and the design team presented a brief history of the project, the project aims and objectives and next steps. The Analysis and Framework Plan and precedent imagery were then presented to the group for discussion and feedback.

Questions and comments were recorded and tabulated for reference during the design phase.

3.2.3 Direct mailing list

At all engagement activities, the opportunity was made available for community members to be added to the project mailing list to receive direct mail copies of bulletins as they are distributed.

The results of the questionnaire, combined with the feedback gathered during the consultation sessions will inform the development of a concept plan for the park.

Play and fitness



Design initiatives relevant to play and fitness were the most commonly discussed subject matter. Out of the 90 votes received, 55 related to types of play equipment and spaces that the community voiced their support for.

General amenity



Requests related to general amenity and comfort received 14 votes, with the need for a covered picnic area being the most wanted initiative, followed closely by BBQ facilities.

Access and circulation



Both active and passive forms of access and movement were raised during the consultation session. There was strong support for a path to the perimeter of the park to service both walkers and children on bicycles.

Play initiative	Votes	Amenity initiative	Votes	Access initiative	Votes
Accessible fitness equipment	////////	Covered picnic area	////////	Bike track around the reserve	////////
Swings	////////	BBQ	////	Colourful paving	///
Water play	////	Additional bike racks	///	Sealed walking track	///
Multi-use climbing tower	////	Entry sign	///	Play ramps for bikes	///
Nature play	////	Doggy bag	///		
Slide	///	Formal seating	///		
Monkey bars	///				
Basket hoops	///				
Flying fox	///				
Open lawn area	///				
Trampolines	///				
Carousel	///				

Planting and landscape



There was strong support voiced for retention of the existing native trees, which aligns with a key project objective. The community also requested space for a community garden and supported the use of native plant species in garden beds.

Planting initiative	Votes
Community garden area	//
Native gardens	//

Other



Other concerns raised related primarily to the cultural and historical context of the site, and the need to make reference to the existing Homestead. There were also concerns that if the park is activated it may attract unsavoury activity and potential vandalism to the new works and the existing Homestead.

Other initiatives	Votes
Reference to the Homestead	//
Modern design	//
Concerns with vandalism	//

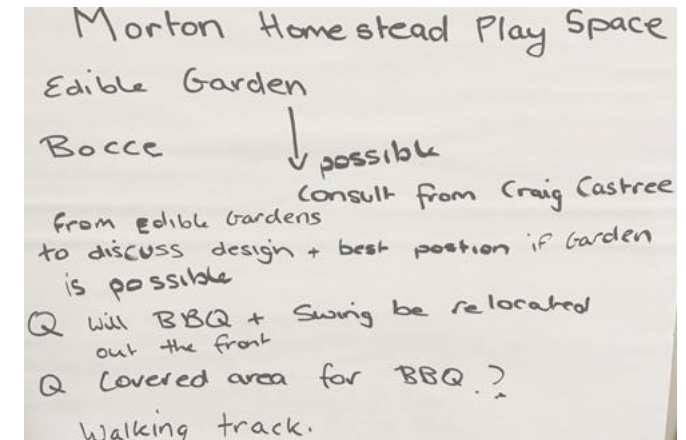
3.3.2 Stakeholder consultation session

The format of the stakeholder consultation session was an open discussion and a question and answer session held with Council representatives, members of the design team and members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed and employees of Morton Homestead.

The comments and feedback received from the stakeholders has been consolidated and collated based upon the volume of feedback received for particular design initiatives and interventions.

This particular engagement session revealed a series of design interventions that had not previously been conceived by Council or the design team, including the provision of space for a vegetable garden [to be managed and used by members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed], game courts and tables a range of seating types.

The following design interventions are ordered from those that received the most support to lower priority initiatives.



Community garden

There was overwhelming support for the incorporation of an edible garden in the form of raised vegetable planters. The Taylors Hill Men's Shed currently manage a handful of raised vegetable beds, located to the west of the Men's Shed. However existing trees leave this area in heavy shade most of the day making it unsuitable for vegetation propagation. Recommendations were made to move and expand the garden to a sunnier position in Homestead Park.

Access and circulation

Recommendations were raised to provide a perimeter walking track around the reserve for low intensity exercise. Safety concerns were raised about the materiality, specifically a loose gravel path being more dangerous and not as easy to manoeuvre a walker or wheelchair along. A sealed or hard-surfaced alternative was preferred.

Fitness equipments

The stakeholder group expressed interest for fitness equipment. This was also raised during the community consultation session. Should fitness equipment be integrated, it should cater for multiple age groups and skills levels. Members of the Men's Shed suggested it be located in close proximity to the Men's Shed for easy access.

Shelter and bbq area

The Men's Shed have an existing BBQ and picnic area south of the shed, however it is poorly configured and does not accommodate users comfortably. There was strong support for removing the existing facilities and relocating/ incorporating them into a central picnic area in the Park. The picnic area should be large enough to accommodate a large group but also oriented so that multiple smaller groups could enjoy the space concurrently. A shelter over the picnic area is also highly desirable.

More tables, including picnic and game [chess] tables were also requested, as well as multiple forms of seating (to be in active and passive areas) throughout the park.

Game courts and tables

The provision for passive forms of recreation was highly supported. Activities such as bocce ball, chess, and table tennis were the most commonly suggested.

Noise concerns

Employees of Morton Homestead raised concerns about the potential increase in noise from the Homestead Park should it become activated - in particular with formal play areas and higher-intensity activities. The Morton Homestead office is located at the eastern side of the building, and directly opposite to the Homestead Park. Consideration should be made to where active recreation areas are located, and to buffering options.

Reference the cultural heritage of the Morton Homestead

A considerable amount of comments were raised for the new play space design and/or picnic shelter to reference the heritage aspects of Morton Homestead and the historical site context. The design elements should not directly mirror those of the Homestead but should be complimentary to the aesthetics of the Homestead.

Interactive sculptures

The popularity and success of previous public art initiatives within the Homestead and park were raised as something that should continue. There was some interest amongst the group to see a similar playful take on sculptural design and interpretive artwork within the park upgrades.

3.4 Survey

A project bulletin and survey questionnaire were circulated, in both print and online format, to provide a medium for the dissemination of project-related information and seek feedback on the proposed project objectives, design initiatives and direction for the development of Homestead Park.

A total of 22 response were received.

The survey included a series of questions addressing desired play opportunities, frequency of usage/visitation, age groups of users, and an opportunity to list any other ideas, likes or dislikes.

The results were collated and tabulated to identify the most desired play opportunities as well as the likely age groups to be accommodated in the design.

7. Please draw your ideas here. We welcome drawings by kids, too!

Child's Name: _____ Child's Age: _____

Melton City Council is committed to ensuring that survey information remains confidential and is managed in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2000. Your contact details will be used for the purpose of providing you with updates about this project and for no other purpose unless required by law.

Name: _____

If you would like to be kept informed about this project, please tick ☐ one of the following:

☐ Email: _____

☐ Mail Address: _____

Thank you for your feedback.
All suggestions made will be considered in the development of the play space.
Please fold the form as shown in the diagram below.
Seal the envelope with tape or staples and return via free post by Friday, 22 February.

CITY DESIGN
Delivery Address:
PO Box 21
MELTON VIC 3337

Join us & have your say
Morton Homestead Play Space
You are invited to the community feedback session.

Enjoy a free coffee or tea with us on-site

When
Saturday 16 February 2019
9:30am - 11:00am

Where
Morton Homestead Reserve, Taylors Hill
Next to the Taylors Hill Men's Shed

MELTON



Morton Homestead Play Space

Williams Lane
Morton Boulevard
Taylors Hill Men's Shed
Morton Homestead

Landscape Concept Plan
The upgrade of Morton Homestead Reserve is a jointly funded project between Melton City Council and the Victorian Government. The project seeks to develop a play space that includes a shelter, seating, path networks, tree planting and general landscaping to provide additional opportunities for the local community to play and interact. This project will provide opportunities for informal recreation, community connection and ensure that local residents have access to quality open spaces.

Get involved and have your say:
You can make a submission by:
• Filling in the feedback form online at melton.vic.gov.au/mortonplayspace
• Filling in the feedback form and mailing reply (paid) to Melton City Council
• Phoning 9747 7200

Have your say:

1. Which of the following do you think will improve the Reserve? Please tick ☐

	Would not improve	Slightly improve	Unsure	Moderately improve	Significantly improve
New play equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nature play space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connecting paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More shade trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More garden beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Park furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How often do you visit Morton Homestead Reserve? Please tick ☐

☐ Everyday ☐ 2-3 times a month ☐ Other: _____

☐ 2-3 times a week ☐ Ever 2-3 months

☐ Once a week ☐ 1-2 times a year

3. Which piece of play equipment would be your top five preferences? Please tick five boxes ☐

☐ Swings ☐ Balancing beam ☐ Logs ☐ Cubby house

☐ Slides ☐ Monkey bars ☐ Sandpit ☐ Other: _____

☐ See-saw ☐ Climbing tower ☐ Spinning elements

Please describe:

4. Do you visit the park with children? Please tick ☐

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. If yes to question 4, please indicate how many children you usually take to the park and their ages.
(Example: 2 x Children 3-5 years old)

_____ x Children under 2 years old _____ x Children 9-11 years old

_____ x Children 3-5 years old _____ x Children 12-14 years old

_____ x Children 6-8 years old _____ x Children 15+ years old

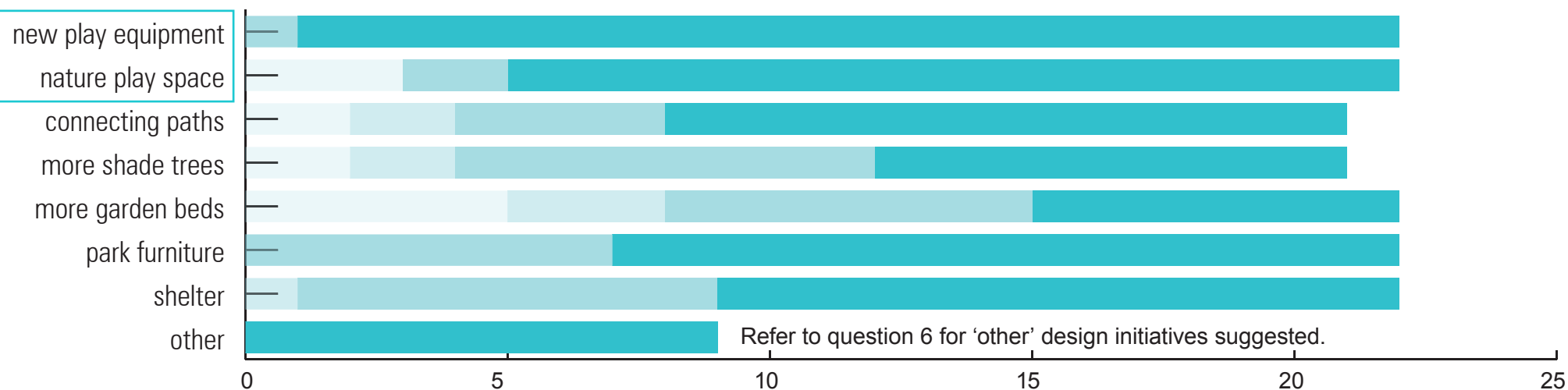
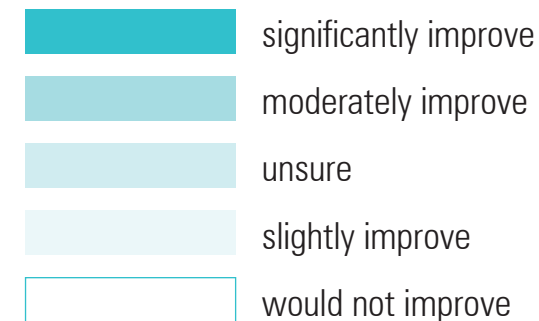
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Morton Homestead Reserve, what you like or dislike?

3.4.1 Survey results

1. Which of the following do you think will improve the Reserve?

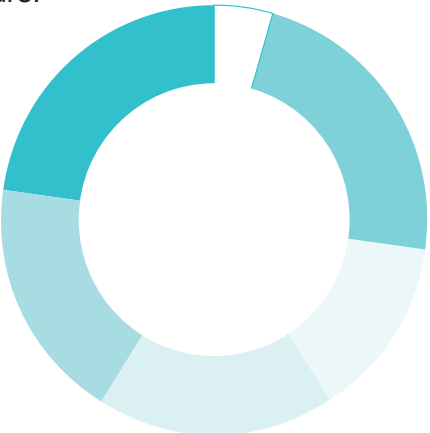
	Would not improve	Slightly improve	Unsure	Moderately improve	Significantly improve
New play equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nature play space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connecting paths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More shade trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More garden beds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Park furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The design initiative identified as having the most impact to improving the Park was the introduction of new play equipment, followed closely by a nature play space and park furniture.

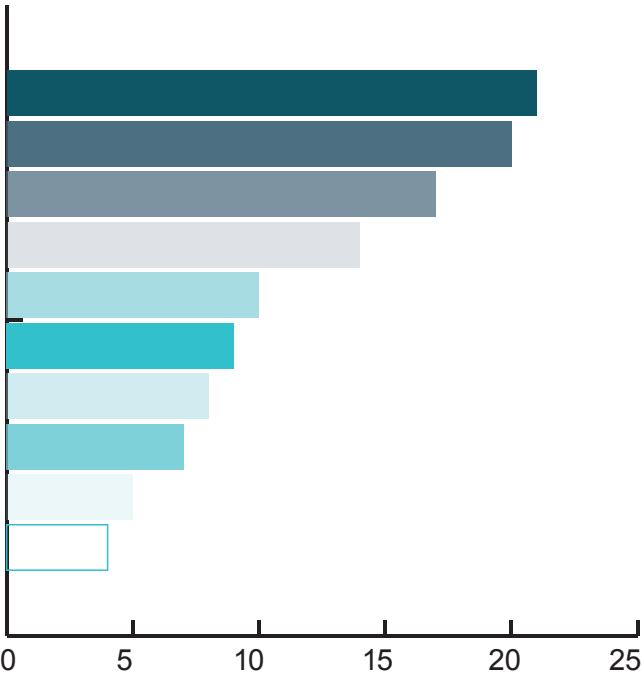
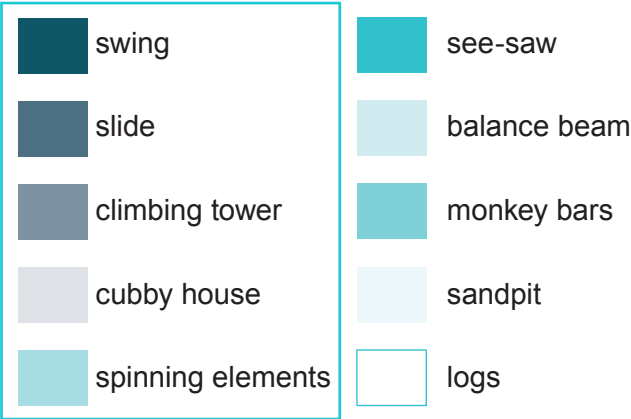


2. How often do you visit Morton Homestead Park?

There were 22 responses received for question 2. The results show that Homestead Park is actively visited by some, though not on a continual basis. This may be due in part to the lack of programmed activities and comfort facilities that attract use such as play equipment and park furniture.



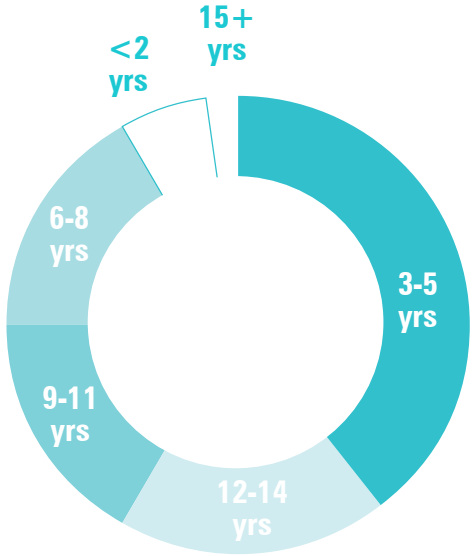
3. Which piece of play equipment would be your top five preferences?



4. Do you visit the park with children?



5. If yes to question 4, please indicate how many children do you usually take to the park and their ages?



The majority of children/young adults visiting the park are of 3-5 years old. Those between the ages of 6-14 years old frequent the park fairly often, with toddlers and teenagers (15+ years) rarely visiting the park. This indicates that a wide variety of user groups need to be catered for, including the provision of age-appropriate safe spaces for toddlers (<2 yrs) to encourage use.

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Morton Homestead Park, what you like or dislike?

“More activities for active elders (60+ yrs) and for teenagers.”

“We would visit more frequently if it was nicely landscaped and had play equipment.”

“Age appropriate equipment, toddler to young primary school age would be suitable as there is nothing of this type on the immediate area.”

“Play area catered for 0-6 yr would be ideal. The closest playground in this area has no slide and all the equipment is too high and advanced...”

“Sheltered playground and sheltered seating.”

“Secure child-proof fencing around play spaces to allow semi-independent child exploration...”

“...it currently lacks amenities, no real reason to stop. The addition of a focal point such as a playground would provide that reason.”

There is strong support to provide a variety of play areas catering for multiple age groups. The introduction of such play structures could serve as the attractor to draw people to the park. Similarly a picnic/BBQ area would also draw users to the park.

Once at the park, to encourage users to stay there needs to be provision for comfortable seating areas and amenities such as a drinking fountain, shelter and shade.

Other proposed design initiatives identified include:

- cafe
- water play
- flying fox
- basketball court/hoops
- bbq
- public toilet
- dog play area
- fitness areas for teenagers and elderly

7. Please draw your ideas here. We welcome drawings by kids too!

One response was received via the hard copy mail-out survey:

7. Please draw your ideas here. We welcome drawings by kids, too!





Conclusions

4 Conclusions

In general, the consultation period resulted in positive and unanimous support from the local community and user groups to see Homestead Park upgraded to cater for multiple user groups and activities.

The following is a summary of the key findings uncovered during the consultation and engagement period taken thus far.

4.1 User groups

Homestead Park is used by a variety of user groups including local residents and families with young children, members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed and members of Morton Homestead.

Future design considerations must cater to a variety of ages and user groups' capabilities and needs. This can be achieved by identifying age/user-specific design initiatives (such as a specific toddler play area or fitness equipment for the elderly); while also considering the shared use of spaces to encourage cross-generational interaction and opportunities for connection and associative play.

The design proposal for Homestead Park should clearly consider the community and user groups' feedback to achieve a balanced, safe and attractive park that accommodates the needs and capabilities of all users.

4.2 Key design initiatives

Design initiatives relevant to play and fitness were the most commonly discussed subject matter. There was overwhelming support by the local residents and stakeholders for the establishment of a playground - with 98% of the respondents stating it would significantly improve the park. The play space and fitness areas should cater for a variety of age groups and abilities, and address various modes of play such as physical/active, creative, cognitive, passive/quiet, individual and social play within formal and informal settings.

There was also strong support to provide general amenity and comfort, with the need for a covered picnic area being the most wanted initiative, followed closely by BBQ facilities.

An increase in tree canopy coverage across the reserve to provide shade and visual amenity was also strongly supported, accompanied by the incorporation of additional garden beds of native and indigenous planting.

There was overwhelming support from members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed for the incorporation of an edible garden. Recommendations were made to relocate the existing raised planter beds and expand the garden to a sunnier position in Homestead Park.

There was strong support for a path to the perimeter of the park to service a range of user groups and active and passive use. Safety concerns were raised about the materiality of the path to ensure it is easy to manoeuvre on. Given the high interest in such a path, it can be anticipated that usage will be high, alluding to the need for it to be sealed or a compacted hard-surface for durability.

4.3 Next steps

The Concept Plan should provide public amenities that allow for users to connect and socialise in a comfortable environment. This will ensure Homestead Park becomes a place that people will want to visit and stay.

The results of the survey questionnaire, combined with the feedback gathered during the consultation sessions and background analysis have derived five design initiative categories:

- play and fitness
- general amenity
- access and circulation
- planting and landscape
- culture and history

These categories will inform the development of project objectives and design principles that will then be translated into a Concept Plan for the Park.

