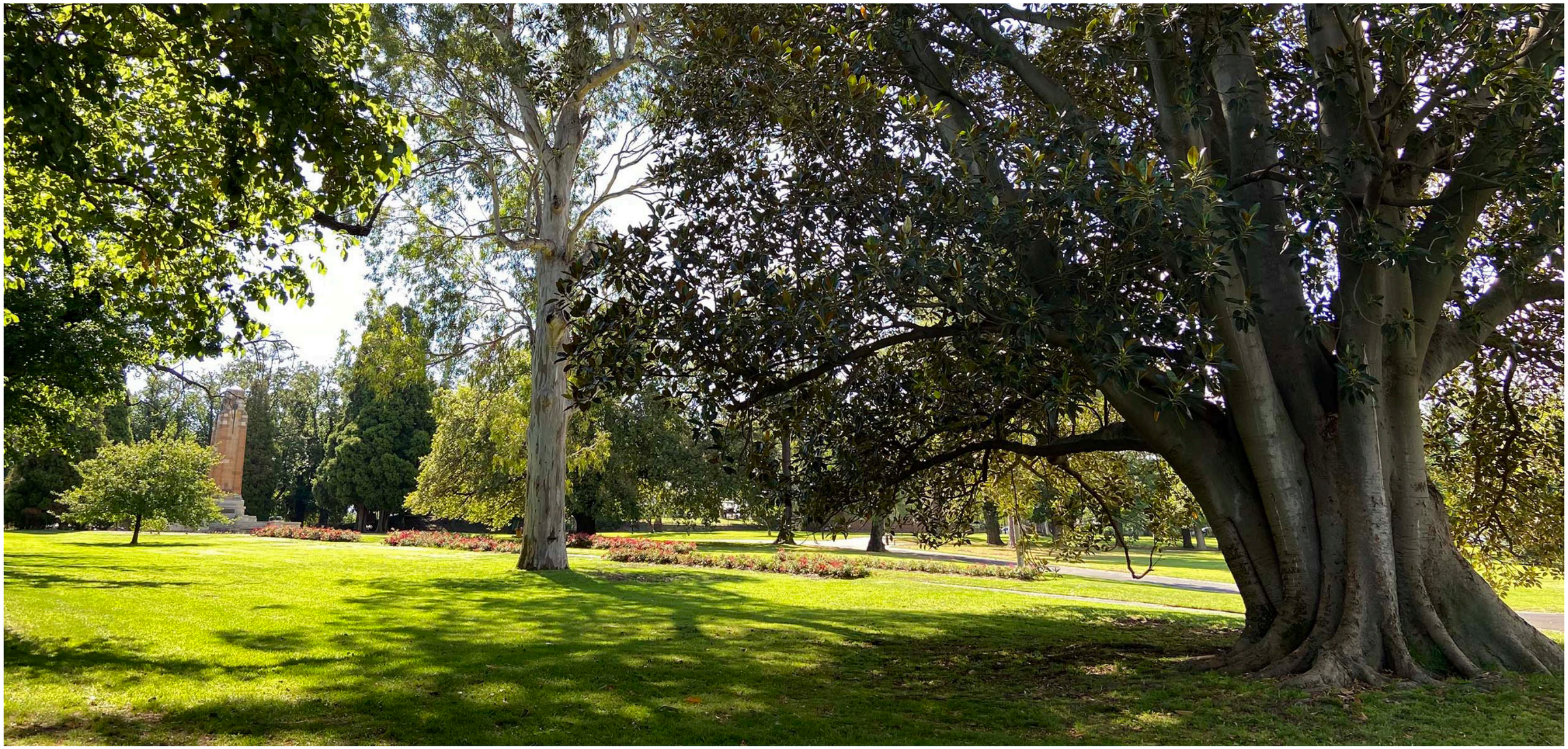
St James Park Master Plan

Community Engagement Summary

Draft for community feedback, November 2023



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Boroondara acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original Custodians of this land, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Prepared for:

The City of Boroondara

Prepared by:

Environmental Sustainability and Open Spaces – Open Space Strategic Design team

In collaboration with Internal Project Control Group (PCG) made up of council officers from the following departments:

- Environmental Sustainability and Open Spaces
- Trees Team
- Parks Team
- Environmental Sustainability
- Open Space Strategic Design
- Health and Wellbeing Services
- Sports and Recreation
- Customer and Transformation
- Strategic Communications

Responsible directorate: Environmental Sustainability and Open Spaces, Places & Spaces

Authorised by: <Council or ELT>

Date of adoption: <Date>

1.0 Table of contents

1.0 Table of contents 1

2.0 Community engagement 2

3.0 Methodology 3

4.0 What we heard, what we learnt 5

5.0 Key themes 6

Appendix 1: Summary of responses to survey on Engage Boroondara website



Figure 1. Photograph of historical elm avenue, facing south adjacent to Burwood Road

2.0 Community engagement

The St James Park Master Plan involved an initial engagement with the community to gather input and inform them about the project. Various methods were employed, including surveys, on-site sessions, tours and meetings with key stakeholders.

Pre-consultation communication: 7 February 2022

A letter to community and stakeholders informed them of the upcoming tree renewal and MP work and how they could be involved in the near future. This was the first step in educating the community on why tree replacement is necessary and how avenue renewal will be managed.

Community consultation: March to April 2022

Council sought feedback on what is important to the community about the park and what improvements could be made. Feedback on replacement tree species and methods of removal were also sought.

The engagement process revealed the following key considerations:

- Most respondents supported removing aging trees and favoured activities such as exercising, sports, relaxation, picnics, and walking their dogs in the park.
- The park's history and age were appreciated by the community, and the input of local school children was particularly valuable. Residents and nearby workers regarded the park as a natural retreat and valued it for relaxation and observing wildlife.
- The community's preference for the future use of the pétanque green area were for a mix of informal recreation and green spaces. The second most popular choice was for a passive recreational space with lawns, trees, and seating.

For a detailed summary, refer the Community Engagement Summary (separate document).



Figure 2. Photograph taken during on-site information session (March to June 2022)



Figure 3. Aerial photograph used at on-site information session showing people's feedback on sticky notes that replicated the online interactive social mapping activity on the Engage Boroondara page

3.0 Methodology

A variety of engagement methods were used to obtain valuable responses from the community including:

- an online survey
- two on-site information and listening sessions
- on-site tour of trees with a Council arborist
- a map of a self-guided walk for residents to explore the neighbourhood to view examples of replacement tree options
- an interactive social mapping activity
- meetings with stakeholders
- on-site tours with small groups of children from the local primary school
- meetings with internal stakeholders and staff.

Engagement Activities

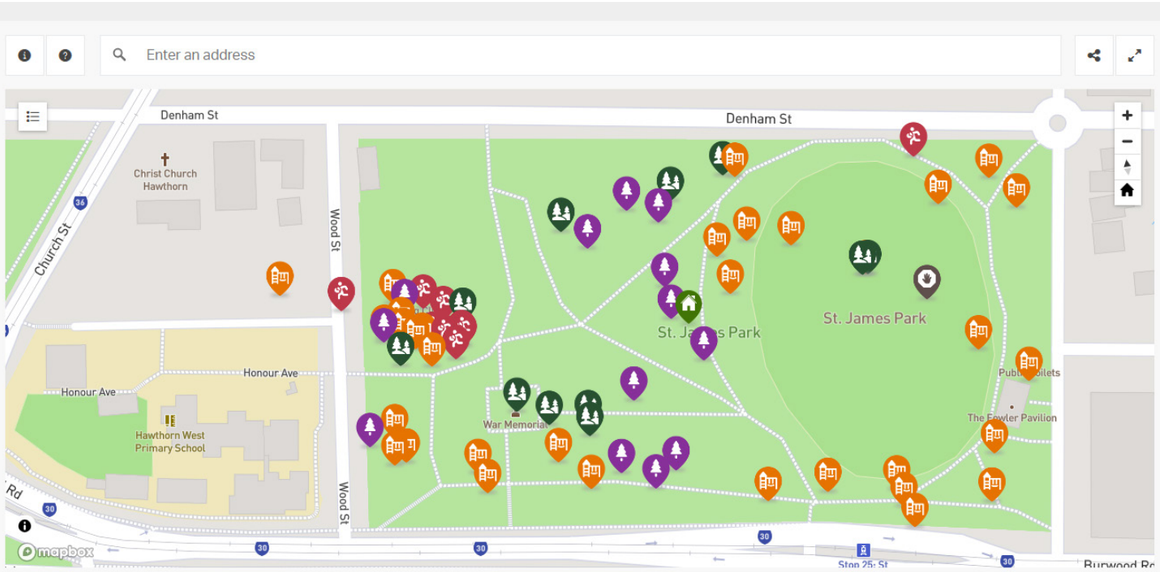
Online community survey

An online community survey was hosted on the Engage Boroondara engagement website at engage.boroondara.vic.gov.au/st-james-park-master-plan over the 31 March – 26 April 2022 period.

The online survey consisted of predominantly quantitative questions:

- user/visitor characteristics – reasons for visiting, home address, age group, gender
- options for removing and replacing the trees along the park's central diagonal avenue
- options for tree species to be planted
- options for removing and replacing the trees along the park's southern avenue
- options for planting in the garden beds along the path to the war memorial
- options for the southern former petanque bowling area.

Refer to Appendix 1 for more details on survey responses and breakdown of demographics.



Mapping activity

The second engagement activity involved a mapping activity where participants could suggest specific areas for facilities, activities, trees and signs - in total 36 people provided 67 responses to the social mapping activity. Comments were recorded in the following themes (in order of frequency) below:

- facilities for the park
- trees
- open spaces
- activities.

Comments from the mapping activity

Locational Element	Summarised comments (in order of frequency)
Facilities – seating, lighting and bins	• Picnic tables and seating/terraced seating (24%) • Better lighting for safe exercise (16%) • Other – lookout tower, vintage tram, new public toilets, remove water tank (15%) • Paving and paths (12%) • Informal recreation area – running and walking, fitness area (12%) • Fencing along Burwood Road, around playground (12%) • Return land to Bowling Club (6%) • Bins for dog poo (3%).
Trees	• Remove elms (inappropriate climate) (20%) • Improve health of area – too dry, no mulching (20%) • Plant extra specimen trees (20%) • Trees for bird habitat (hollows) (10%) • Plantings of more height near cenotaph war memorial (10%) • Propagate indigenous trees from mature specimens (10%) • Playground shade by trees, community garden (10%).
Open space – what would make you spend more time here?	• Low maintenance plants (19%) • Incorporate indigenous history and heritage (18%) • Alternative water sources for use in the park (18%) • Ideas for the petanque green: secret garden; labyrinth; indigenous food garden (9%) • Quiet space to view the sunrise, for contemplation and meditation (9%) • Oval to be fully fenced to ensure safety of children and dogs (9%) • Improve health of earth throughout grassed areas (9%) • Introduce informal recreation, seating (9%).
Activities – what would make you spend more time here?	• Return land to Hawthorn Bowling Club (45%) • Community garden/food forest (9%) • Indigenous insect attracting plants with interactive educational signs (9%) • Fulfill needs not currently met - a basketball hoop, picnic area, reading/ meditation garden, circuit walking path (9%) • Strengthen pedestrian and cycle connections from the west side of the park (Wood Street) (9%).

4.0 What we heard, what we learnt

Overall, 101 people completed the hard copy and online community surveys and 67 responses were provided to the social mapping activity.

Responses indicated overall support for removing the senescing trees.

Respondents' most popular activities were informal exercising, playing organised sports, a place to relax, enjoying picnics, going to events, and walking, exercising and socialising their dog/s.

We learnt that the history and age of the park added to the community's appreciation of the park. We heard memories and stories passed through the generations that added richness to local families' appreciation of the park.

We learnt that the school uses the park for Physical Education classes, an annual cross-country competition, social get togethers and it's a popular place for the school's community to gather and play after-school.

Hearing the perspective of the local school children through the tours was invaluable. They told us about their favourite things in the park, including:

- the trees
- places to play including the playground, on and around trees, on the oval and in the "messy" overgrown gardens near the pétanque green
- the grassy embankment next to the oval where they liked to roll down
- the oval's fence to swing and somersault.

They requested more challenging play equipment and rubbish bins that don't smell.

We learnt that local residents and nearby workers like to visit the park to relax and it is an important natural retreat. Some spoke of it being a wonderful place to watch the sunrise or observe wildlife.

Hearing community preferences for the future use of the former pétanque green, an important guide for the future development of this space and has informed the recommendations in this MP. The survey asked community members to indicate their preference for:

- a grassy space with trees and seating – similar to the rest of the park
- a half basketball court alongside a grassy space with trees and seating – similar to the rest of the park
- another idea.

People's ideas revolved around active recreation, passive recreation or leasing the space to the Bowling Club again.

Refer appendix 1 for more details on survey responses and demographics.

5.0 Key themes

A number of key themes emerged from community engagement (with general consistency amongst all age groups, genders and active and passive users of the park).

Trees

- General acceptance of the reasons to remove the deteriorating trees and renewal of trees (no negative feedback disputing the need to remove senescing trees).
- Support for replacing central avenue with a new species from the shortlist of trees suitable. *Quercus castaneifolia* was the most popular choice.
- Requests for more native trees wherever possible to provide wildlife habitats.
- Requests to plant more trees to give natural shade at the playground.
- Need to care for trees for future generations.
- Appreciation of park's history and desire for it to be conserved.
- Requests for more interpretive information about the park's history.

Amenities/Park furniture

- Request for more picnic tables, at the playground and at corner of Denham and Barton Streets (opposite café).
- Provide more accessible bench seating and picnic settings, especially at eastern end of park near the oval and near the playground.
- Bins are smelly and need a different design.
- Provide seating so they can enjoy views from the upper part of park.
- Provide more reliable drinking fountains.
- Remove redundant water tanks.
- Requests for more and better seating was the most common feedback heard in the social mapping exercise.

Green Space to relax and unwind

- The park's trees and green spaces are important place to relax and retreat from urban life, including those who live in Richmond, City of Yarra (many school families).
- Pleasure in watching and listening to birdlife with habitats in mature trees.
- A lovely spot to view sunrise from the western end of park, looking towards the valley.
- Restoring the pétanque green to passive open space is the second most popular option. The most popular option is to use the space for active recreation with grassy space.

Environment

- The need for climate resilience of all new plantings, potential for water harvesting and the importance in protecting parks, trees, green spaces and nature were commonly included within the social mapping and the comments suggesting future uses of the pétanque green.
- Green spaces are important for health of our planet (as well as people).
- Providing native vegetation for a healthy biodiversity and for wildlife habitats.
- Explore sustainable water and irrigation management systems.

Safety

- Requests for lighting along southern path (parallel to Burwood Rd) and throughout park to improve safety when exercising.
- Request to fence playground - traffic safety.
- Request to fence oval to improve safety for children and dogs.
- Concern about alcohol consumption at the Bowling Club, especially if it's expanded into former pétanque green.
- Making supervision of children easier by providing nearby seating to play areas and improving view lines to keep children within line of sight.
- In the social mapping exercise[1], safety was the only theme where there were significantly more women than men who mentioned issues and suggested how safety could be improved.

Recreation

- Organised sport and informal recreation important use of the park (football, cricket, bowling).
- Running, walking, dog walking are popular activities.
- Some community needs are not currently fulfilled in the neighbourhood, such as a basketball hoop, picnic area, reading/meditation garden, circuit walking path.
- Need more facilities for active but not organised sport. Nearby facilities such as basketball half courts tend to be dominated by older children and younger children don't get a chance to play (feedback from Hawthorn West Primary school).
- At the former pétanque green, an active space integrated with seating, trees and lawn areas was the most popular response. Ideas included a small basketball area, outdoor learning or fitness activities.
- More nature play near playground.
- Epworth Rehabilitation hospital use park for rehabilitation exercises and need accessible paths and seating.

Footnote

1 9% of all comments in the social mapping exercise relating to safety were made by women; 2% by men.

Appendix 1: Summary of responses to survey on Engage Boroondara website

An online community survey and social mapping activity were hosted on the Engage Boroondara engagement portal over the 31 March – 26 April 2022 period.

The key engagement questions were:

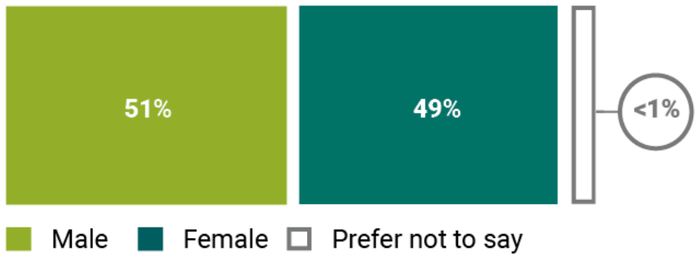
- How do you use the park?
- Your preferred approach for replacing the elm trees in the central diagonal avenue and in the southern avenue.
- Which new tree species you would prefer to see planted in the central diagonal avenue.
- Your preferred option for replanting the garden beds near the war memorial.
- Your preferences for the future use of the southern former pétanque bowling area.

Preferred approach to replacing the deteriorated trees along the park's central diagonal avenue

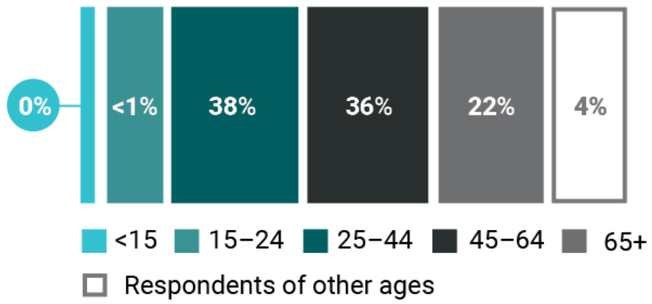
Just under half of all survey respondents preferred the trees along the park's central diagonal avenue to be removed and replaced, one side at a time. *Quercus castaneifolia* was the most popular replacement species, followed by *Zelkova serrata* and *Celtis australis*.

Who participated

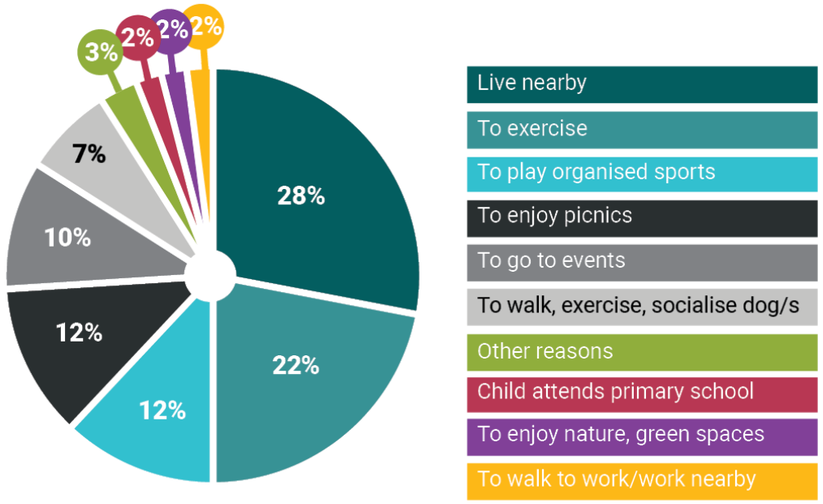
Gender



Age



Reason for visit



Preferred approach for removing and replacing the trees along the park's southern avenue

There were mixed views about the park's southern avenue with 31% of all survey respondents having no preference, 29% preferring the removal and replacement of all the trees this year, 22% preferring the removal and replacement of the trees on each end of the row and, the remaining 18% preferring pruning of deadwood on all trees this year. Note that no option was given for replacement species as trees will be replaced with elms due to its protected microclimate of this avenue compared with the central diagonal avenue.

Options for planting in the garden beds along the path to the war memorial

Planting preferences were similar between a mix of Australian and other plants (46%) and Australian plants only (45%). A small percentage of respondents preferred plants from other parts of the world only (9%) .

A mix of Australian and other plants – stronger preference by those who lived within 500 metres of the park, by males, by those aged 45-64 years and by those who walked their dog/s or exercised at the park.

Australian plants only – stronger preference by those who lived more than 500 metres away from the park, by females, by those aged 15-44 years and by those who visited the park to play organised sports or to attend events.

Options for the southern former pétanque bowling area

This question asked people to select their preferred way to use the space formerly used as a pétanque bowling area from three options:

- a half basketball court and grassy space
- a grassy space with trees and seating
- another suggestion (with an open field inviting people to write their idea).

A total of 100 people responded to this question.

Options for the southern former pétanque bowling area

Preferred way to use the space formerly used as a pétanque bowling area	Respondents who selected this option	Respondents who selected the "another idea" option and suggested similar ideas	Total
A half basketball court and grassy space	34%	12% put forward ideas for active recreation including outdoor learning, fitness activities or an exercise area.	46% prefer space for active recreation open to all.
A grassy space with trees and seating	23%	15% put forward ideas for passive recreation including a garden setting, biodiversity planting, indigenous plants or a retreat space.	38% prefer space for passive recreation with lawns, trees and seating open to all.
Another suggestion: (with an open field inviting people to write their idea)	n/a	21% suggested leasing the space to the Bowling Club for a synthetic green.	21% prefer leasing the space to the Bowling Club.

The totals add to more than 105% because a small number of people who chose to suggest their own idea suggested a mix of active recreation and passive recreation uses for the space.

Contact page

Website: www.engage.boroondara.vic.gov.au/st-james-park-master-plan
Email: boroondara@boroondara.vic.gov.au
Telephone: **9278 4444**
After hours emergencies: **9278 4444**

Postal address:
Private Bag 1 Camberwell VIC 3124

Customer Service centre:
Camberwell office
8 Inglesby Road, Camberwell

For speech or hearing impaired:
National Relay Service: **TTY 13 36 77**
Speak and Listen: **1300 555 727**
Free interpreting service: **9278 4002**

BOROONDARA