

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
24 AUGUST 2009**

2.	ST KILDA BOTANICAL GARDENS FUTURE DIRECTION PLAN
LOCATION/ADDRESS:	ST KILDA BOTANICAL GARDENS, BLESSINGTON STREET ST KILDA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:	SAM HEWETT ACTING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY ASSETS AND SERVICES
PREPARED BY:	CHRIS WHITE, COORDINATOR - OPEN SPACE
FILE NO.:	62/01/114
ATTACHMENTS:	ATTACHMENT ONE – ST KILDA BOTANICAL GARDENS FUTURE DIRECTIONS PLAN ATTACHMENT TWO - FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement to adopt the St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report.
- 1.2 The report provides information to the Council on the process undertaken to develop the St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report.
- 1.3 The St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Directions Plan details the key functions of the botanical garden and outlines the values and principles to guide the management and development of the gardens into the future. The Arboriculture Report provides an implementation plan for the maintenance, removal and replacement of trees in the St Kilda Botanical Gardens.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 2.1 Endorses the St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Directions Plan and St Kilda Botanical Gardens Arboriculture Report.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The St Kilda Botanical Gardens were established in November 1861 making it one of Victoria's oldest botanic gardens and will celebrate its 150th year in 2010.

- 3.2 The St Kilda Botanical Gardens is distinguished from other gardens in the municipality by its botanic function. A botanic garden has four key roles:
- Scientific
 - Conservation
 - Education
 - Recreation
- 3.3 In 2007 Council engaged Stephen Fitzgerald, an independent tree specialist to assess tree health and provide an implementation plan for the maintenance, removal and replacement of trees - The St Kilda Botanical Gardens Arboriculture Report.
- 3.4 In 2008 Council engaged Jill Orr-Young to undertake The St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Direction Plan.
- 3.5 In 2009 a report into the use of Non-Potable water to Irrigate Public Open Space in Inner Melbourne was undertaken by Sinclair Knight Merz. This study included the St Kilda Botanical Gardens and undertook a preliminary assessment into Storm Water, Ground water, Sewer Mining and Industrial Waste Water. The preferred option was sewer mining as it is the only option for a significant amount of potable water substitution (24,138 kL annually).
- 3.6 The Future Directions Plan is not a master plan. It examines botanic function and cultural heritage and is a bridge between planning and design. It provides direction for strategic planning for capital and maintenance works.
- 3.7 The Future Directions Plan examines botanic function and cultural heritage and looks for answers to questions such as:
- What is the condition of the existing tree collection?
 - How is planting structured as living botanical collections?
 - What is missing from the complexity?
 - Who was the original designer?
 - What was the original design intent?
 - How does original design intent survive in the Gardens?
 - How can interpretation enrich the visitor's experience?
 - What contemporary values can be reflected in the physical setting?
- 3.8 The Future Directions Plan provides principles and values to guide future direction and maintenance. These are:

Principles:

- Aim for a healthy tree collection that is suited to climate and resources
- Aim to respond 'beyond the visual', eg. consider the other senses, particularly smell and touch, the feeling underfoot, and intangible experiences

- Provide free drinking water
- In recognition that this is a much-loved garden that offers respite for residents and visitors who don't have private spaces, appreciate and enrich what is already there by small design interventions which integrate the whole (e.g. spectacular effects can be created by strategic placement of one special tree)
- Retain stormwater on site for reuse/recharge
- Ensure areas of dry rainforest have representation in the gardens that ensure diverse plant collection and visitor experience

Values:

- The botanical role (plant collections, conservation of species, interpretation)
 - Age/history/heritage (conservation of the extant tree collection, conservation of original design intent, interpretation)
 - Diversity (a place for everyone, equitable access)
 - Cultural vitality/life (movement/change, seasonal colour, changing light, events, ephemeral art)
 - A welcoming setting (sun and shade, seating, lawns, drinking water, information, facilities)
 - Visible care (quality maintenance, attention to detail)
 - Future heritage (new design – new ideas, renewal, layers)
- 3.9 The Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report will ensure a healthy tree and plant collection that is suitable to a low rainfall climate.
- 3.10 The Future Directions Plan provides opportunities for future themes to ensure the garden continues to provide a unique space for residents and visitors whilst retaining its cultural heritage significance as one Victoria's earliest botanic gardens.

4. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Expert consultation

- Dr Sara Maroske and Richard Barley (Royal Melbourne Botanical Garden) John Arnott (Cranbourne Botanical Gardens) were consulted during the development of the Future Directions Plan in 2008

4.2 Key community groups

- The Friends of St Kilda Botanical Gardens were consulted during the development of the Future Directions Plan in 2008

4.3 Community Consultation

- Council sought to engage local residents and park users by holding public information sessions on 8 June (Queen's Birthday) and 13 June, 2009.
- Council distributed 800 postcards to local households, posted signs on site and the Council Internet to promote the community consultation days.
- Approximately 35 people attended the on site consultation

During community consultation the following material was available:

- Plans of trees to be removed and replaced;
- Proposed signage and;
- Future directions plan principles and values.

4.4 Results of community feedback are summarised in Attachment Three. A summary of this feedback is provided below:

- The community overall were supportive of the plan with reoccurring comments focused on security and need for additional gardeners.

Additional principles and values were added including:

- Maintain as open space for perpetuity.
- Maintain character and cultural heritage significance, while accepting the inevitability of continuing changes in detail.
- Maintain botanical diversity.
- Maintain a healthy tree collection, with a spread of ages, recognizing visual values, climatic constraints and the sequence of tree growth and maturation.
- Recognise and accommodate climatic constraints (particularly water availability) and adapt to them through plant content management, and appropriate engineering interventions.
- Provide for passive recreation through appropriate but discreet facilities (lawn areas, discreetly placed rubbish bins etc)
- Foster community and cultural activities, including educational activities
- Provide attention to detail in garden, lawn and facility maintenance.
- Maintain an appropriate level of security, particularly through night time Garden closures.
- Create heritage, harmony and mystery through placement of plants and retention of heritage layout.

4.5 The values and principles have been updated in the Future Directions Plan to reflect community feedback

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 PREFERRED OPTION

5.1.1 That Council endorses the Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report.

5.1.2 No other option has been provided, as the plan provides

- Direction for a healthy tree collection;
- Strategic direction for maintenance and capital development of the gardens and;
- Ensures the garden will retain the four roles of a botanic garden (scientific, conservation, education and recreation)

5.2 ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN

5.2.1 The recommendation in this report aligns with the Council Plan as Outlined below:

5.2.2 Enhancing Liveability

- Strategy 4.1.7 Preserve our heritage, valuing the past and planning for the future
- Strategy 4.3.2 Protect, preserve and reinstate local natural environments and open spaces within the city

5.2.3 Engaging and Governing the City

- Strategy 1.1.1 Enhance council's engagement with the community by maximising community feedback to ensure open and inclusive decision making.

5.2.4 Taking Action on Climate Change

- Strategy 2.1.2 Reduce council's potable water use

5.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS PLAN

The Future Directions Plan is consistent with existing council policy.

5.3.1 The Open Space Strategy 2006 states:

- Continue to develop and maintain the St Kilda Botanical Gardens in accordance with the Conservation Study and Management Plan. The Future Direction Plan supersedes the Conservation Plan

5.3.1 The Playground Strategy 2007 states:

- That some of the high profile sites do not have high quality play spaces, such as St Kilda Botanical Gardens.

5.4 FINANCE / RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 In the 2009/10 budget there is a budget allocation to undertake Stage one works, which is \$75K to design the pond renewal and \$200K to design and install new gates.

5.4.2 To implement the Future Directions Plan a number of key projects have been identified and include:

Stage	Cost	Project
Stage One	\$ 275K	Pond design and design and installation of new gates
Stage Two	\$ 350K	Pond construction and design fence detail
Stage Three	\$ 508K	Playground design, signage/plant labels, detailed garden bed design and install fencing.
Stage Four	\$ 500K	Construct playground stage 1 Construct new garden bed on Herbert street and Tennyson Street
Stage Five	\$ 350k	Construct playground stage 2

5.4.3 The estimated cost for these works is \$1.98M. Council has currently budgeted \$275 K for Stage one in 2009/10.

5.4.4 Stages two to stage five would need to be considered as part of Council's annual budget process.

5.4.5 The Inner Melbourne Action Plan Water reuse in public open space 2008 project identified sewer mining as the most effective non potable water supply. The estimated cost for sewer mining is \$5.6 million. There is no budget allocation for this. Implementing this project would need to be considered in the context of Council's Water Management Plan and budget process.

5.4.6 A number of projects shall be delivered within existing operational budgets, including tree works, removal and replacement planting.

5.5 LEGAL & RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 The risk of not endorsing the Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report is that a strategic approach to future works and maintenance would not exist. This may impact on Council's potential to achieve outcomes in the council plan.

5.5.2 The Future Directions Plan was developed to ensure the garden retains the four roles of a botanic garden - scientific, conservation, education and recreation. Not endorsing the document may result in the importance of these roles being undervalued.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

6.1 TIMELINE

6.1.1 The Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report will be used to inform maintenance programs at the gardens such as tree pruning, removal and replacement and strategic planting of feature plants.

6.1.2 The maintenance program shall be developed by Council's parks staff and the works undertaken by Citywide as part of the parks contract.

6.1.3 The Future Directions Plan will be used to develop capital works proposals for Council to consider as part of the annual Capital works program. The table in clause 5.4.2 provides an implementation plan over the next five years.

6.2 COMMUNICATION

6.2.1 KEY MESSAGES

- The St Kilda Botanical Gardens Future Directions Plan will ensure the garden retains the four roles of a botanic garden - scientific, conservation, education and recreation.
- The Future Directions Plan and Arboriculture Report will ensure a healthy tree and plant collection that is suitable to a low rainfall climate.
- The Future Directions provides opportunities for future themes to ensure the garden continues to provide a unique space for residents and visitors whilst retaining its cultural heritage significance as one Victoria's earliest botanic gardens.

7. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

7.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.