

Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan

January 2022

Traditional Custodian Acknowledgement

Victoria's network of parks and reserves, of which Braeside Park is one, form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation.

They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns.

Parks Victoria acknowledges the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation as Traditional Custodians of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and ongoing role in caring for Country.

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Introduction

Vision

Braeside Park will continue to be a place for people to relax, recreate, be healthy, come together, learn about and enjoy culture and nature.

Background

Braeside Park consists of 312 hectares located in the south-east region of metropolitan Melbourne, within the City of Kingston Local Government Area. The park is a green-space oasis amid an urbanised, residential environment, where, apart from local beaches, access to large public open-space is limited. The park offers a variety of educational and recreational opportunities. It protects significant environmental values and cultural heritage, from Aboriginal occupation to European settlement. The park's Red Gum grassy woodlands, Heathland and the wetlands, provide a series of diverse, complex and valuable environmental communities.

Over 800,000 people visited the park in 2020, particularly with the impact of Covid 19 restrictions and limited access to open space and parkland. However, the visitor numbers are continuing to grow. These visitors use the seventeen kilometres of multi-purpose trails meandering through the park, providing opportunities for walking, running or cycling. A gentle stroll can be taken through the interactive horticultural space, around the muraled art walls or tree stump carvings. An adventure playground includes modules for both younger and older children including access for those with limited mobility. Barbecues and picnic facilities are also available.

Objectives

The Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan, developed in consultation with the community and stakeholders, guides the future of Braeside Park over the next 5- 10 years.

The objective of developing a broader visitor experience plan for Braeside Park is to acknowledge the changing use and pressures currently impacting and surrounding the park and to pro-actively plan for the future to maintain the park's integrity.

The Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan will provide direction for Braeside Park for the next 5-10 years, informing how the park is used and its natural and cultural assets protected. It will provide short to medium term guidance for management decisions that support the park's future direction, as follow

1. Define Braeside Park, its assets, role and uses;
2. Develop a vision for the park ; and
3. Map and describe future activity.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

To gather ideas about future possibilities for Braeside Park and understand how the community currently use the park, Parks Victoria hosted three stakeholder workshops and an online survey via Engage Victoria. The workshops and survey built an understanding of how Braeside Park is currently perceived, understood, utilized and managed from multiple perspectives. These sessions assisted in documenting the varied values and key issues impacting the park, addressed above.

Across the three workshops, 33 key stakeholders attended from Parks Victoria, City of Kingston, Friends of Braeside Park, Dingley Village Men's Shed, Southern Migrant Refugee Centre and other local community groups. Further to the workshops, a community based, Engage Victoria online survey was completed by 1,132 residents and park visitors.

Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan

The Plan defines clear directions for future planning and programming of the site. The operational and management values and how they overlay on the park are clearly outlined to inform the influence of stakeholders and community groups, including the role they will play in the future of Braeside Park.

Other initiatives of the plan are to improve site accessibility through developing greater site signage and way finding. Improving and upgrading toilet facilities to cater to increasing visitor numbers. Installing potable water points along trails and add seating to allow the trail journeys to be more enjoyable. Restoration of environmental values will remain a high priority at Braeside Park to highlight and build on the values and benefits of the park. Dogs and horses will not be permitted in the park, due to impacts on environmental values, cost, potential conflicts with other park users and that there is no overwhelming community demand for these activities.

Initiatives

1. Entrance and Interface

The park does not have an outward facing appeal to the significant traffic that passes by. The interface between the park and the surrounding urban development does not highlight the jewel that exists within the fence line. Thus, a key initiative is to increase the visual appeal of the park for passers-by, visitors attending the park and as a distinctive public space.

The design ideas to implement this initiative includes utilizing the existing telegraph poles as a canvas to paint with motifs and imagery that relate directly to the park. This will visually identify the park along Lower Dandenong Road, that can then clearly identify the entry points to the park.

To create a single unified boundary fence to accentuate the entry points into the park. The fence detail can be utilized along all sides of the park that allow for access. A specific treatment to the interface with the Mordialloc Freeway may be required. The pedestrian and vehicle gateways can be designed to be robust and clearly legible.

2. Community Hub

The community hub currently consists of the visitor centre, toilet amenities, the Dingley Village Men's Shed and horticultural space. This area will be the focus for infrastructure to support community activation in a setting that enables people to engage with nature. Parks Victoria will work with partners to provide facilities, programs and activities that improve physical and mental health, address social isolation and provide pathways to employment.

3. Events Space

The current open area contained within the entry road, car parks and Cypress Drive will be maintained as open space, and available for larger community style events. This area is supported by easy vehicle and pedestrian access and ample parking.

Infrastructure development will be kept to a minimum, with event based infrastructure being temporary and removed at the conclusion of an event.

4. Increased trails

Additional trails will be constructed in the park such as the heathland, to enable improved walking, running and cycling experiences. To the existing trails additional rest and respite areas will be located along the journeys. These will provide seating for rest, reflection and respite. The seating will be designed as a family of furniture consistent with the aesthetics of the park.

5. Expanded play space

With the current bush kinder program expanding and an increasing visitation to the park of young families there is a great opportunity to introduce the special qualities of the park to these young minds. This can be through further educational programs, events and potential for an expanded natural environment play space, reflecting the qualities and values of the park and materials within it.

6. Shared user path

With the construction of the Mordialloc Freeway, upgraded shared user path connections to the park's existing entries are proposed. This freeway linear shared use shared user path will allow for greater access to Braeside Park. To support this initiative, the plan proposes an additional park entry from the shared user path at the south end of the park. These entries will be themed in line with the park interface fencing and gateways.

7. New Wetlands

To build on the value of environmental restoration and support the environmental values of the park, in an area that remains unremarkable the Keysborough and Dingley Waterways provide an opportunity to initiate and develop new wetlands. Broadening the area of wetland habitat, trail network and overall Park appreciation.

8. Way-finding, Signage and Interpretation Strategy

A strategy for way-finding, signage and interpretation is an initiative required to fulfil the ambitions of the other initiatives. It will direct and inform entry points, navigation through the park, identification of key park features, provide information and learning about the values and heritage of the park.

Implementation

The initiatives identified in this plan form the basis for future programming of works. This plan outlines a hierarchy for implementation and the potential costs for implementation. The action items prioritised for implementation in the short term include trail linkages, new entrance to the park, the establishment connections to the new Mordialloc Freeway shared user path, the development of a nature-based play space and zoning for future building consolidation. The cost for these works is estimated to be in the order of \$10-\$12 million.

Fully implemented, this plan will provide a range of new and improved facilities, experiences and recreational opportunities to benefit both locals and visitors whilst retaining the environmental and cultural values of Braeside Park.



Initiatives (Map 1)



KEY

Existing Features:

- Buildings
- Road
- Trail
- Management Track
- Waterway
- Wetland
- S.E.T.S.
- Play space
- Remove Trail

New Features:

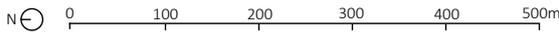
- Gateway
- Pedestrian Access
- Vehicle Access
- New Trail
- Vegetation Restoration Area
- Welcome Fence
- Fence
- Telegraph Pole Graphics
- Events Space
- Community Hub
- Extended Play space
- Traffic Management
- New Wetland

Vic Roads:

- Shared user path

IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES

- 1 Park Interface and Entrances
- 2 Community Hub
- 3 Events Space
- 4 New Trails
- 5 Expanded Play space
- 6 Freeway Shared Trail
- 7 Wetlands



Implementation Approach

Recommendation	Priority
Landscape Recommendations	
1a. Park Interface: North Boundary- Upgrade fence to one consistent style, install pedestrian gateways (3 No.), install ped/cycle gateway (1 No.), upgrade vehicle entry/exit gateway.	High
1b. Park Interface: West Boundary- Consult with Major Projects for Mordialloc Freeway to upgrade fence along boundary. Design to be consistent design style, install ped/cycle gateway (1 No.) as Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan intent.	High
1c. Park Interface: South Boundary- Upgrade fence to one consistent style, install pedestrian gateways (1 No.), install ped/cycle gateway (1 No.), upgrade vehicle entry/exit gateway.	High
1d. Traffic Management Plan: South Boundary- City of Kingston to prepare a Traffic Management Study in collaboration with VicRoads for vehicle gateway at Governor Rd.	High
2. Park Interface- Pole Art: Establish art program to paint existing power poles with thematics relating to Braeside Park. This will require permissions to access poles from local service authority.	High
3. Park Interface: North Boundary- Install path along length of park along Lower Dandenong Road to facilitate access along full length of park northern boundary. This initiative will require a collaborative approach with City of Kingston.	High
4. New Trails: a. Red Gum Grassy Woodland- Install new trail across area central to Phar Lap track. b. Cypress Drive – Telford Picnic Area trail link	High
5. New Trail- Heathland- Allow for trail access into Heathland, modifying existing service trails to create a walk through the Heathland.	High
6. New Wetlands - In partnership with Melbourne Water, design and install new wetland on the Keysborough waterway in the eastern section of the park. Including earthworks, planting and water management strategy.	Low
7. New Wetland Access- Install new trails to newly established wetland and supporting infrastructure such as lookout, bird hide, seating, interpretative information and shelter.	Low
8. Landscape furniture- Install seating for respite and viewing along existing and new trails at nominal 250m intervals.	Medium
9. Signage way-finding and interpretation- Develop signage and interpretation plan for entry signage including way-finding and interpretative signage throughout the park at key and notable features.	High
9a. Trail Distance Markers- Install distance markers along identified trails used for measured distance walking and running, nominally 2km and 5.5 km.	High
10. Parks Victoria office, depot and nursery- Locate new staff accommodation, including toilets and visitor centre within the community hub.	Medium
10a. New Changing Places toilet facility, Telford Picnic Area / Community Hub. Potential for this to be a Changing Places facility to enable full accessibility.	High
11. Play Space Expand the offer to include nature play within the park to cater to increasing use for a range of ages and abilities.	Low
12. Vegetation Restoration- undertake planting and land care continuing to build on the environmental values of the park.	High
13. Metropolitan Camping Opportunity- Investigate the potential for including camping in the southern end of the park.	Low



Implementation Approach (Map 2)



Photo: Braeside Park Setting Sun