

9-5 NORTHBRIDGE PARK (NORTH) DRAFT MASTERPLAN

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DIRECTOR

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Purpose of Report

To Council to consider and approve for exhibition and consultation a draft Masterplan for Northbridge Park (North).

Background

Park Masterplans are the process which Council uses to develop a cohesive and shared vision for the development and management of significant areas within Willoughby's open space system.

Northbridge Park, located on the southern side of the Northbridge peninsular is one of the most significant pieces of developed open space within the City. Bounded by Long Bay, Sailors Bay Road and Northbridge Public School, the entire park is approximately 46 hectares in size. The entire Park incorporates the Northbridge Golf Course, although the draft Masterplan focuses on the northern section of the Park. The northern section of the Park, along Sailors Bay Road contains Northbridge Oval, the Girl Guides Hall, the Sea Scouts Hall, Council's branch Library, the Park Pavilion and car park, the Northbridge Golf Clubhouse and car park, the RSL Memorial Reserve, the BMX track, two tennis courts and the Men's Shed (formally the RSL Memorial Hall).

The park is managed by a Plan of Management (1998) which determines user and management strategies. A number of improvements to the Park have been undertaken in recent years, including the carpark, the multi-sport synthetic surface court and improvements to the public domain adjacent to the building.

There are however a number of pressures and demands on the site that the preparation of a Masterplan will assist in addressing.

The development of the draft Masterplan for Northbridge Park has involved consultation with all known user groups of the northern portion of the Park.

The first stage of consultation involved a survey of the groups using the northern section of the Park, namely:

- Northbridge Public School
- St Philip Neri School
- Northbridge Golf Club
- Northbridge Football Club
- Northern Suburbs Cricket Association
- Northbridge Sea Scouts
- Northbridge / Castlecrag Girl Guides
- Northbridge Progress Association
- Men's Shed community volunteer group
- Kids Caper / OOSH child care lessee

Follow up consultation with a number of these groups has occurred to further examine issues and opportunities.

Additionally the Director Infrastructure Services attended the 13 May 2009 meeting of the Northbridge Progress Association to present the results of early site analysis and consultation and to further canvass issues concerning the Masterplan area.

Discussion

A copy of the draft Masterplan for Northbridge Park will be circulated separately. The Plan outlines a comprehensive analysis including site investigation, consultation and opportunities which have enabled the development of specific recommendations for the park over the long term.

A summary of Park issues identified in the development of the Plan includes the following:

- Clearing of all the original vegetation cover and ad hoc development over many years has resulted in a loss of sense of place and a strong identity.
- The park does not have clearly marked entry points.
- Access to the eastern end of the park from Bonds Corner is physically and visually difficult.
- There are no safe, signposted pedestrian access ways to the harbour through the golf course.
- There is a lack of shade over much of the site.
- The existing planting is patchy and does not reinforce the character and habitat values of the adjoining bushland.
- The carpark adjacent to the golf clubhouse is very large and visually dominates the site.
- The existing buildings at the western end of the park are poorly arranged and do not adequately cater for the needs of current users.
- The existing toilets are in poor condition and do not meet Australian Standards for disabled use.
- There is strong and growing demand/competition for access to all the available recreational spaces and ancillary facilities within the Park.

The issues report and draft Masterplan identify in detail opportunities and specific recommendations for the Park. In summary, recommendations in the draft Masterplan encompass the following:

Active Recreation

- That the grass sportsfield be converted to a full synthetic grass sportsfield to cater for existing and future sporting demands. The field lighting be upgraded to meet Australian Standards for night training and competition use. The use of the field be widened to include a wide range of sports, as well as football and cricket.

- Subject to golf club support, that the northern portion of No. 1 fairway be modified to include two synthetic or natural grass training fields with lights. The fields would be used outside normal golfing hours and would meet continuing demand for training areas under floodlights in winter.
- Partially fence the BMX track and develop as an adventure play area for youth.
- Replace the existing tennis courts and perimeter fence with a basketball court and handball practice area with wall.
- Refurbish the Pavilion for sporting groups and construct new public toilets with disabled access.

Facilities

- Retain the Library building in the short term as an extension to the OOSH child care facility. Demolish the Library building in the long term and construct a new entry to the park with an open pavilion and planting adjoining the existing BBQ area.
- Fit out all new and existing buildings with rainwater tanks for use in irrigation and toilet flushing.
- Remove the existing hedge of small trees in front of the golf clubhouse and construct a new community recreation facility over the existing carpark, including a sports hall, kitchen, outdoor café, two levels of undercover parking and an overflow parking area at the rear.
- Extend the Men's Shed to provide additional office and storage space.
- Provide dedicated carparking for 12 spaces next to the Men's Shed.
- Subject to the approval of the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts organisations, construct a new community facility to accommodate the Guides, Scouts, an OOSH / preschool facility and other community uses.

Access, Aesthetic, Biodiversity and Sustainability

- Develop Sailors Bay Road as a boulevard with co-ordinated road calming, crossings, planting bays (on the north west side of the street) and street tree plantings using local species to both sides of the street.
- Provide night lighting in the carpark
- Planting indigenous trees and shrubs to reinforce a continuous theme of planting throughout the Park.
- Landscape the front of the existing golf clubhouse as an entry court.
- Construct a new pedestrian path within the park to link the War Memorial Reserve, golf club and sporting facilities.
- Provide a signposted public walkway to the waterfront.
- Construct a new entry point to the park opposite Bonds Corner including traffic calming, relocating the bus stop, new signage and planting.

- Upgrade the existing furniture with a BBQ and large shelter for group picnics.
- Plant the sloping areas adjoining the exposed rock outcrop with local species to reinforce the remnant bushland and provide a backdrop for the War Memorial.
- Intercept, collect and treat stormwater runoff from the golf course and other areas before dispersing it into the bushland below.
- Fit out existing and new buildings with rainwater tanks.

The draft plan is now in a form that public exhibition and formal consultation will further enhance development of the plan and provide guidance to Council's custodianship of the Park into the future.

The process of exhibition is proposed to occur over a two month period and will involve the following:

1. have all information available on the Council website
2. place an advertisement in the North Shore Times
3. letterbox the neighbourhood
4. letter to the local Progress Association and presentation to their meeting, if desired
5. place plans / reports on site (at the Golf Club and the branch Library), the Council offices in Victor Street and the main Willoughby Library

Query, feedback and input to the Plan will be sought. Some of the proposals may be contentious and it is appropriate that a broad range of the community views be sought before Council commits to a long term vision for the area.

A further report outlining feedback and progress of the Masterplan will be presented to Council in February 2010.

Conclusion

Northbridge Park is a Crown Land Reserve, with Willoughby Council as the Reserve Trust Manager. It is a highly valued open space asset for the City of Willoughby, in particular for the Northbridge community. The Park is a blend of bushland, harbour foreshore, sports areas and parkland. The involvement of the community in determining the management and future development of the park is an essential role in achieving the social and physical well-being of the community. The draft plan is recommended to Council for exhibition to enable formal community consultation to commence.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the Issues Report and draft Landscape Masterplan as prepared by BioDesign and Associates, dated April 2009 be placed on public exhibition and that input and feedback on the draft Masterplan be sought.**
2. **That a community briefing in co-ordination with the bi-monthly meeting of the Northbridge Progress Association, be held during the public exhibition period.**
3. **That the public exhibition period of a minimum 2 months be undertaken, with a report to Council after submissions close.**