

## 8. LINWOOD PARK CONSULTATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the recent Linwood Park consultation process and to present recommendations that meet community needs.

### CONTEXT

Linwood Park is a large open space used for sports, recreation, and as a thoroughfare. The different use areas are generally well defined, though there is a spill over of users from the skate park which overlaps with pedestrian and sport use. Overlapping conflict occurs between the skate park and sports fields, as there is no buffer between the two areas. Informal recreation opportunities are spread throughout the park. The design of the park and its facilities supports its intended use.

A number of social issues that are present in the community are sometimes displayed in the park. Graffiti, vandalism and reported bullying give an impression of the park being unsafe at times. There have also been problems at the neighbouring plant nursery which has been subject to vandalism. These problems appear to be generated from within the park. Council owns the land adjacent to the Park through to Smith Street (incorporating the Nursery and Linwood Tennis Club land) and there may be, through a Parks planning process, an opportunity long term to open up the Park through to Smith Street.

The Community Board allocated 2001/2002 discretionary and strengthening community funding for improvements to Linwood Park and allocated further funding from its 2002/2003 Project Fund. To date, this Board allocation totals \$45,000 for expenditure in 2002/2003. It is hoped that the Parks and Waterways Unit would allocate some funding to the Linwood Park project following completion of a planning process.

### BACKGROUND

In January 2002 three members of the Linwood community (Jim Tanner, Oral Reihana and Leigh Mitchell) met with the Chair of the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board, Bob Todd, and Community Advocate, Jude Pani. They presented residents' concerns of the activities of youth in Linwood Park and the negative impacts on the community, particularly residents living alongside the Park. They were concerned about the incidents of intimidation, abuse and vandalism by young people 'hanging out' in Linwood Park. They claimed that the problems have worsened since the closure of Time Out at Eastgate Shopping Centre. The residents were particularly disappointed at what appeared to be Council's lack of consultation surrounding the installation of the skate park and more latterly the fence mural. They further expressed their frustration with Council's lack of response and follow up of the community concerns that had been raised with some staff over the past year.

These community representatives perceived the negative issues that have been a part of Linwood Park for a long time had been exacerbated by the installation of the skate park and mural art work. There was outrage at Council supporting the mural art work which was seen by the community as further support for one group of youth. They felt it reinforced negative behaviour and Linwood Park ownership by these youth. It was decided that a deputation to the Community Board and a public meeting were two options that could be undertaken immediately.

The 30 January Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board meeting received a deputation from Leigh, Oral and Jim. They expressed concern about the safety of Linwood Park and noted that since the skate ramp was built and the mural completed on the fence the problems have escalated. Issues they raised included the large number of young people congregating in the park, alcohol, abusive language and threatening behaviour. Park and school facilities were being tagged and broken and there was insufficient Park lighting. The residents were of the view that the Police tended to respond quicker to another area rather than Linwood Park. They thought that a lot of the youth causing the trouble were not from Linwood.

The Community Advocate and Community Development Adviser agreed to facilitate a public meeting to try and determine the level of community concern and involve the community in trying to resolve the issues. This public meeting was held on 20 February 2002.

## **PUBLIC MEETING - FEBRUARY**

A public meeting was held on 20 February 2002 at the Linwood Service Centre. Seventy people signed the attendance sheet, including Council staff, Board members, Maori Wardens, residents, community workers, Eastgate Mall representatives, sport representatives and Police. The overwhelming response to the issues raised was that the community wanted to reclaim the Park. Some of the solutions suggested were: develop the Park into a sporting park by giving the sports people more support; redo the mural with community input; consider enhanced lighting and a security camera; supervision of the Park; remove the skate ramp; increased maintenance; introduction of curfew and increased policing.

A working group called "Friends of Linwood Park" was formed comprising eight of the attendees. The working group agreed to work with Council staff on the issues and solutions raised at the public meeting and report back to a future public meeting. The objective being to reclaim Linwood Park for the community.

## **FRIENDS OF LINWOOD PARK**

The Friends of Linwood Park met with the Council team five times. Of the eight people who formed the Friends of Linwood Park, a core group of three has followed through on the issues. (It should be noted that there were several young people in attendance at the public meeting and one volunteered to be involved with the working party. However, the young man did not attend the working party meetings.)

## **PUBLIC MEETING - MAY**

Following extensive investigation of the issues raised at the first public meeting the community circulated 2000 flyers and advertised in local papers to promote the report back public meeting to be held on 30 May 2002. Thirty-four people signed the attendance sheet for this 2<sup>nd</sup> public meeting. Included in the 34 were four Police officers, the Community Board Chair and six Council staff.

The Friends of Linwood Park and Council staff reported back to the meeting suggesting that seven themes be progressed:

- The mural from the skate park to Mackworth Street be redone by an artist to reflect the sporting theme of the Park in a design to be agreed by the neighbours who overlook this section of the Park.
- An events programme for summer 2002/2003 be developed by the Community Recreation Adviser. Along with the annual LYFE Festival, the programme could include: Movie in the Park, BBQ, and Family Days.
- Lighting to be enhanced. A mock up of the enhanced lighting to gauge the effect prior to approval will be carried out.
- Increased Security levels involving Maori Wardens and Park Rangers already in place be continued. In addition, a security firm to be engaged.
- Two ideas for the skate ramp were: bury the skate ramp with a view to uncovering at a later date; landscape the skate ramp area.
- Securing the Park at night. Introduce a new bylaw which would enable trespass orders against those abusing the Council bylaw.
- Because of the feedback from the Police about the ineffective legislation, the working group were keen to see changes in legislation.

This second public meeting received some feedback in addition to the work already completed by the working party. This has been picked up by the Parks Planning team and is reflected in the recommendations below. The themes have also been incorporated into the work of the Friends of Linwood Park and with other consultation groups. Of particular note were several safety issues that have lead to the Parks Planner instituting a safety audit of the Park (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design – the process for a CPTED is explained below).

The public meeting was keen for the Friends of Linwood Park to continue and participation from others in the community was invited.

## **FOLLOW UP ON SECOND PUBLIC MEETING**

The Friends of Linwood Park re-formed at a meeting on 4 July 2002. Two new members joined the previous core group; one representing Rugby League, the other a resident and cycling user of the park. The working party followed up on the themes worked on by the previous group incorporating other issues raised. Several of the themes are being implemented with Council planning and development staff. Others are now being presented back to the Board for recommended funding allocations.

At the 4 July working party meeting members confirmed that lately Linwood Park had been much quieter for residents.

## **PRIORITY AREAS FROM FRIENDS OF LINWOOD PARK**

Of the themes followed through by the working party, the following are what the working party considers are the priority areas for Board funding:

- Events programme for summer 2002/2003.
- Assist League financially to remove the glass on the field near the skate ramp on Saturday mornings.
- Enhanced lighting.
- Skate ramp – landscaping or burying. Burying possibly enabling it to be used in the future.
- Increased security and supervision.

## **SKATE RAMP**

The one area that there has been no consensus by the working party is about what to do to address the perceived issues surrounding the skate ramp. At the February public meeting the skate ramp was seen by some present as needing to be removed for the issues in Linwood Park to be resolved. Other sectors in the wider community would share this view. On the other hand, others in the community are convinced that removal of the skate ramp is not the issue. Throughout the process the Community Constables have been advocating for removal of the skate ramp and that this removal would solve the problem. Council staff do not share what appears to be a simplistic approach to dealing with the social issues that are present in the community.

Community workers, youth workers and some of the youth themselves share the Council staff perspective that removing the skate ramp will not solve the social issues in Linwood Park. I therefore cannot recommend to the Board that the skate ramp be removed or be buried, but would recommend that the Council put energy into environmental improvements and enhancement of the Park limiting the negative impacts and building on the very strong community energy to reclaim the Park.

There are, however, some learning points from the Linwood Park skate ramp experience that could be applied to other areas, for example, the positioning of the ramp in relation to the street and lighting. Further, a skate ramp should be viewed like any other leisure facility in terms of planning for ongoing operational elements, for example, asset management planning, maintenance, management plan, recreation programmes and supervision.

## **YOUTH PERSPECTIVE**

Discussions have been held with the Youth Advocate, Youth Workers Collective, Community Workers, Youth Initiatives Facilitators and with youth themselves.

I have been advised: Linwood Park is used as a party place. Prior to the February public meeting when negative activity in the Park appeared to be at its worst, there were no parties happening so the Park was used as a party place. Word got around and youth were coming from all over the city to attend the “party” in Linwood Park. This has been confirmed from an adult who advised that he knew of two young people who at midnight were off to Linwood Park to a “party”.

Information is being gathered by the Youth Initiatives Facilitators from youth in the area.

The Council Youth Work Team, along with a police officer who works alongside them, frequently include Linwood Park on their Friday night “rounds”. They may call in any time between 9pm and 2am. They usually find it quiet.

## **SAFETY, CRIME AND LEGAL ASPECTS**

Discussions have been held with the Community Constables and Inspector Dave Lawry. There seems to be different interpretations of the police powers relating to the existing legislation. As already stated, the Community Constables throughout this process have been keen to see the removal of the skate ramp and supported the community taking this position. They have stated at the working party meetings that the existing legislation is not sufficient for the Police to be effective in dealing with the youth issues in the Park. There also appears to be a staffing issue when front-line police need to take youth off the street – this process necessitates the Police staff being engaged with the offending youth for several hours.

The working party were keen, therefore, for some dialogue with the Board and with our local Members of Parliament to discuss the issue of ineffectual legislation. However, Inspector Lawry is of the mind that there is enough legislation to address any issues that may arise in the Park. Two members of another community in Christchurch have been advocating for changes to legislation and have represented their case to Parliament Select Committee. They have had a response from the Select Committee indicating that there was enough legislation available at present.

### **CPTED - (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)**

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is based on the principle that people's behaviour within the urban environment, particularly in terms of the possibility of offending is influenced by the design of that environment. CPTED, therefore involves the application of a range of design initiatives and principles to an area to minimise the potential for the area to support criminal behaviour.

Recently, six Council Officers applied the process to Linwood Park noting that several aspects of the park design and layout were not satisfactory.

It is intended that user groups within the community such as neighbouring residents, sports people and school pupils are involved in identifying issues within the park through this process.

## **CONSULTATION**

The following have been consulted throughout this process: Community members who attended the 2 public meetings and the working group "Friends of Linwood Park"; Youth Workers Collective; Christchurch City Council Parks Planners, Youth Advocate; Youth Initiatives Facilitators; Police; Community Workers; Maori Wardens; Armourguard, Parks Rangers and Park Wardens.

Copies of the minutes of these public meetings and Friends of Linwood Park working sessions are available on request from the Community Advocate.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The community has been really appreciative of the Board commitment to the Linwood community and to the Linwood Park enhancement. The following steps are suggested:

- The Parks & Waterways, and Leisure Units work together to fulfil the recommendations requested by the community and that they involve all of the community as much as possible and report back to the Board on the funding allocated.
- That the Community Recreation Adviser report back to the Community, Policy and Finance Committee with the events programme for summer 2002/2003.
- Planning process – long term Park plan. Once the CPTED process has been completed, there will be sufficient information to review the entire plan of Linwood Park. This will address issues of making the park a safer area, attracting a wider community participation and resolving concerns of sports ground usage. On this basis a development plan should be prepared for the park, detailing issues for immediate, medium term and long term implementation.

### **Staff**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received and the staff continue to work with the community reporting back to the Community, Policy and Finance Committee on progress and funding allocations and that the Community Board are included in the Linwood Park planning process.

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received and the Community Advocate and her team be complimented on the way the matter has progressed.