

#### 4. BENMORE GARDENS RESERVE – PROPOSED LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT

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The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the Benmore Gardens Reserve landscape enhancement, following consultation with local residents.

##### BACKGROUND

Benmore Gardens Reserve was created during the formation of the Nunweek Park/Skyedale Estates sub-division, and has been designed to serve the double function of a recreation reserve and an occasional drainage area in times of heavy rain. This land is currently grassed and maintained to a minimum standard, awaiting finalisation of an overall concept plan.

Board members will recall the initial plan for the reserve showed a children's 'play mound', an all weather path crossing the reserve and a mixture of exotic and native planting for the swale treatment and surrounding trees.

The proposed plan was tabled at the 18 March 2003 meeting of the Works, Traffic and Environment Committee with the recommendation that the plan be circulated to local residents for their comments and feedback. A reduced version of this plan is **attached** for information.

##### COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A public information leaflet (PIL) showing a concept plan of the proposed landscaping enhancements was distributed to the community for comment. Benmore Reserves' natural community boundaries were assessed as being inside the boundaries of the Nunweek Park and Skydale Estates sub-division, and led to an information circulation of approximately 140. The return rate for the landscaping enhancement information was 48 written replies (approx 35%).

Key features of the feedback received from the PIL response included:

- Many respondents asked for toddler-age play equipment
- Two of the properties adjacent to the reserve queried the proposed tree species
- There was a general consensus that adding picnic tables would enhance the family atmosphere
- Some comment was on the general standard of maintenance within other parts of the subdivision, including the lack of street trees in the Becmead side of the subdivision.

##### DISCUSSION

More than half of the feedback on the proposed landscaping included requests for more interactive play equipment for small children – specifically swings and a small slide. Pre-design consultation in late 2001/early 2002 with the subdivision developer and the few houses surrounding the reserve steered the initial proposal toward providing a passive reserve, highlighted by the natural reserve contours and exotic planting. However, many of the new residents in the area are young families who have indicated a strong preference for the reserve to be a family area with some play equipment and picnicking facilities.

The only feasible areas for extra play equipment to be located are either the flat section north of the children's play mound, or on the area proposed as a 'formal lawn'. Staff have discussed the addition of play equipment with residents closest to these sites, therefore most affected, and there has been a mixed response. The residents who are unhappy with the new proposal have commented about the unwanted visual aspects of the play equipment and are anticipating increased noise and activity. While the play area will be visible for some time, there are screening shrubs and trees proposed along the north boundary which, when established, will mitigate these concerns.

The tree species planned for the reserve are mainly ornamental varieties such as maples, ash, Ginkgo, Cercidiphyllum and dogwood. The deciduous species show spectacular autumn colour and are of the smaller leaf type. The proposed landscaping has a low shrub border planned for the southwest terrace, with trees intermittent and away from the boundary and adjacent residents' northern aspects. The northeast slope will have a woodland feel with the trees under-planted with spring bulbs.

Following from residents concerns regarding maintenance in other swale/walkway reserves in the sub-division, this feedback was passed to Parks and Waterways Unit Maintenance staff for action. These areas have been added to the asset register and will now be on a maintenance roster. Another repeated query through this consultation process was the lack of street trees in the Becmead Drive side of the sub-division. The Community Board has already recognised the desirability of street tree planting, and to this end have previously requested a street tree planting programme. This matter currently rests with the Parks and Waterways Arboriculture team.

#### **PLAN AMENDMENTS**

While the Parks and Waterways Unit acknowledge the concerns of the two properties unhappy with the proposal, support for toddler play equipment in Benmore Gardens Reserve was particularly strong, with the area demographics adding weight to this request.

The Parks and Waterways Unit therefore recommend adding play equipment to the flat area of lawn north of the children's play mound. The play equipment proposed will be very low key – specifically a swing set, a small slide and a seesaw.

#### **DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND FUTURE FUNDING**

The Parks and Waterways Unit will be able to fund all of this development in the 2003/04 financial year through the Capital Works Programme.

The Parks and Waterways Unit anticipate that the redevelopment of Benmore Gardens Reserve may occur in stages depending on the availability of contractors and the planting season. Should this be the case, stage one will incorporate the formation of the pathway, major planting, the formal lawn, and the play mound and play equipment. Stage two will then finish the plan with under-planting and the staircases.

The Parks and Waterways Unit 5 year Capital Works Programme has the following allocated for Benmore Gardens Reserve landscape enhancement:

<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Waterways Capital Works Programme – Nunweek Playground &amp; Landscape Enhancement</b>
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#### **CONCLUSION**

The landscaping and associated planting take best advantage of the reserves natural contours and necessary drainage swale, with the play equipment and seating providing a family-friendly atmosphere and creating an area that will be a focal point for the community.

The local residents seem very enthusiastic to see work commence on this reserve, and are confident that the redevelopment will provide improved recreational opportunities for the area.

#### **Staff**

**Recommendation:** That the proposed amendments to the landscaping enhancement plan for Benmore Gardens Reserve be approved for implementation.

#### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.