

5. MILLBROOK RESERVE - PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT

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| General Manager responsible: | General Manager City Environment |
| Officer responsible: | Greenspace Manager |
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to obtain Board approval for the amended landscaping plan for Millbrook Reserve (see **attachment**).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Greenspace Unit Capital budget has funding allocated in the current financial year for landscaping redevelopment at Millbrook Reserve. A concept plan was prepared incorporating enhancement suggestions from the local community, Community Board and the staff project team. Future maintenance requirements were also designed into the plan to enable all development to occur over the same period.
3. The plan suggested:
 - Improving access to the water's edge with low steps and graduated bank edges.
 - Opening up and highlighting Old Mill Race (currently piped into the Avon River).
 - Constructing a new walking path and seating with views of the river.
 - Incorporating a heritage style arbour with seating and photographic information on park history.
 - Enhancing views into and out of the gardens by removing the existing hedge and low shrub gardens at Rossall Street entrance.
 - Renovating existing garden beds with new colourful shrub planting.
4. A draft concept plan was distributed to approximately 450 residents near to Millbrook Reserve, with consultation also carried out with local community interest groups and residents' associations. Project information was posted on an on-site noticeboard for those recreating in the reserve. 107 submissions were received with the majority supporting most aspects of the proposed enhancement plan.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

5. The proposed enhancement project for Millbrook Reserve is programmed in the Greenspace Unit's capital budget for construction over the 2005/06 and 2006/07 financial years. Funding has been allocated from the Avon Tributaries Budget, project funding from the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board and Greenspace Maintenance budgets.
6. Development such as pathway excavation within 15 metres of the Avon River, and day-lighting of Old Mill Race may require resource consent. However, no issues are anticipated in obtaining these consents.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve the proposed landscaping plan for Millbrook Reserve.

BACKGROUND ON THE PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT FOR MILLBROOK RESERVE

7. Millbrook Reserve is one of Christchurch's nine garden parks, bounded by the Avon River on one side and residential housing to the north. Little Hagley Park is adjacent to Millbrook Reserve across the Avon River. Millbrook Reserve is renowned for plantings of azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias and varied species of mature trees. Various garden clubs and trusts administered the gardens for many years before it was handed to the Council in the late 1950s.
8. The enhancement plan for Millbrook Reserve came about from ongoing maintenance issues with the mature trees and shrub borders, and concerns from the community in regard to some secluded and unsafe areas of the reserve. The changes suggested will provide new interest while not diminishing the character of the heritage garden park.
9. A draft concept plan was distributed in March 2005 throughout the local community, to local interest groups and organisations for public comment. There was generally strong support for the initiatives suggested in the plan. Many respondents took the time to suggest improvements to the design details - a summary of the recurring feedback is outlined below:
 - The secluded car park area at the Rossall Street entrance is seen as a concern with frequent vandalism and ongoing noise and litter problems.
 - Ease of access for wheelchairs and for those less mobile should be seen as a priority.
 - Suggestions regarding more appropriate sites for seats were received from people who use the park frequently.
 - There were an equal number of submissions either liking or disliking the low colourful planting at the reserve entrances.
 - The feeling toward using artwork in the reserve was positive.

The suggestion that attracted the strongest reaction was regarding the walkway in Little Hagley Park - to open up sections of the existing native planting for glimpses across the river to Millbrook Reserve. Many respondents had very strong feelings on the safety and suitability of the semi-mature plantings, with an equivalent number refuting the need for any change along this walkway. The proposal for Little Hagley Park has since been superseded by the consultation and development of the wider Hagley Park Management Plan and these comments will be evaluated as part of this strategy.

10. In light of the responses received, project staff propose to modify seat placement and picnicking areas to those suggested as more appropriate for sun and views.

Feedback from adjacent neighbours regarding sightlines, car parking, trees and maintenance will be implemented into this development plan and/or passed to the Greenspace Maintenance Team to action. The garden area surrounding the Rossall Street car park will have existing trees lifted and shrubbery thinned out or replaced to give open views from the road and from the reserve/river walk area.

Ensuring pathway surfaces are appropriate and correctly sloped, with access closer to the river ensured by handrails and some ramped areas will mitigate safety and comfort for those less able.

11. Much of the new development for the 2005/06 financial year falls under waterways budgets. If approved, development work would be concentrated on the Rossall Street entrance with projects such as day-lighting the Old Mill Race, the new boardwalk and pathway, plus new planting. Thinning and lifting vegetation will be completed from maintenance budgets. The optimal time for planting is the autumn season, from April next year, and the development work would be coordinated with this constraint. Completing each area, or group of projects will minimise overall disruption for visitors to Millbrook Reserve.