

3. MIDDLETON PARK PLAYGROUND AND TOILET UPGRADE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment, DDI 941-8656
Officer responsible:	Michael Aitken, Greenspace Manager
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval of the plan for the Middleton Park playground and toilet upgrade following consultation with the local community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Board members will recall that the concept plan for the playground and toilet upgrade on Middleton Park was presented to the Environment Committee at its meeting of 27 February 2006, prior to the Greenspace Unit carrying out consultation with the local community.
3. Board members may also recall that Mr Tony Sutcliffe tabled a letter sent to him from the Marist Albion Rugby Club on behalf of a number of clubs currently using the park. The letter outlined the possibility of a joint proposal for toilet/changing facilities and possible relocation of the existing playground.
4. The Greenspace Unit has formerly responded back to the club regarding this proposal. The club has been advised that we are unable to accommodate their proposal at this time for the following reasons:
 - (a) The cost to Council for the club's proposal is significantly more extensive than what is allowed for in the current design and budget allocation for this project.
 - (b) The current location of the existing playground and toilet is in the best position to provide easy and convenient access to the widest catchment area around Middleton Park. The consultation did not identify any community concerns with the current location.
 - (c) The club's proposal is at least three years out by their calculation and subject to them raising the necessary funds to proceed with the proposal.
5. However, the Greenspace Unit did not totally rule out the possibility of a joint development between the clubs and Council at some stage in the future, if circumstances and user trends justified the need. The club was invited to communicate with the Greenspace Unit closer to the time when they could confirm they were in a financial position to proceed with their development, to determine whether any opportunities for a joint development proposal exist at that time.
6. The plan was circulated to approximately 350 residential properties around Middleton Park in March 2006. There was a very good response from the local community with a total of 82 people returning the comment form providing feedback on the proposed plan.
7. Overall we received a very positive response from the community with the feedback indicating a good level of support for the playground upgrade. The plan showed two possible options for the playground design and requested respondents to indicate their preferred option.
8. The communities preference for the playground was option 1. The actual result was 42 or 59% preferring option 1 while 29 or 41% preferred option 2 (see table below).

Option 1	Berliner Spaceball and Abacus See-Saw	42
Option 2	Playco junior play fort and other individual items	29

9. The total for both options (71) is less than the total number of replies (82) because 11 of the respondents did not indicate a preference either way.

10. Many of the respondents commented that option 1 appeared to be more appropriate for older children while option 2 seemed directed more towards the younger age group. General comments indicated that the ages of the respondents children or grandchildren etc generally influenced which option they selected. Many suggested consideration be given to a combination of both, which the Greenspace Unit has recognised.
11. In recognition of the residents feedback, the Greenspace Unit proposes to make a number of minor changes to the original plan (see **attached** plan). The proposed changes will provide additional play opportunities for a wider range of age groups, which is what many of the respondents requested. The changes are listed below.

Proposed Changes

- (a) The Berliner "Spaceball" is proposed as the primary play structure. This was originally detailed as part of Option 1 (Residents preferred option) .
 - (b) Inclusion of the Supa Nova and Spinner Bowl which was originally part of Option 2.
 - (c) The addition of the Kompan" Hopper " see-saw as an alternative to the Abacus see-saw. (There is insufficient funding to install the Abacus see-saw when the additional items targeted at the younger age groups are included)
 - (d) Two picnic tables in addition to the one seat that was shown on the original plan.
 - (e) Replacing the Cabbage trees with Lancewoods.
 - (f) The toilets will both be unisex with one being a combined unisex/disabled toilet.
 - (g) Removal of existing see-saws which will be replaced by the Kompan see-saw.
12. The Greenspace Unit is confident the new playground will offer alternative recreational opportunities to a wide range of children. There are a number of other parks nearby that have more traditional play structures and other facilities, such as Hansons Park, Auburn Reserve, Harrington Reserve and Paeroa Reserve.
 13. The plan also showed a proposal to upgrade the existing male and female toilets. The plan provides two unisex toilets with one of the toilets being a combined unisex/disabled toilet. The toilets being repositioned to face out onto the playground area within the foot print of the existing building.
 14. There was a high level of support from the community for the toilet alterations. There were no adverse comments regarding this aspect of the proposal. However a number of residents commented on some undesirable activity associated with the existing toilets, particularly after dark.
 15. The Greenspace Unit was aware of these issues prior to commencing design for the current alterations. The upgraded toilets will be gender neutral and consistent with our current "safer parks" design standard. When the door is opened, the user can immediately see into the entire toilet area, there is no foyer area or cubicles as with some of the older style toilets.
 16. We are confident that the altered layout and increased visibility will address the issues that a number of residents made reference to in their feedback. Good design and improved visibility has successfully addressed similar issues at other locations in the past. If necessary the toilets can be locked after dark, however we are confident the current changes will have a positive impact and achieve the desired outcome.
 17. Work has already started on upgrading the toilet due to an administrative error. By the time this report is considered it is anticipated that the toilet upgrade will be completed. Given the high level of community support for the toilet upgrade and that the new facility will now be operative for the start of the winter sports season, there has been no significant adverse impact from this oversight.

18. All respondents have been sent a final reply letter thanking them for their input, including an A3 colour copy of the finalised plan. The letter informed respondents that the plan would be presented to the Riccarton Wigram Community Board for approval. Details of the meeting (Time, date , venue etc) were also provided so that any interested people could attend.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

19. The current 2005/06 Greenspace Capital Works Programme has funding available to undertake the upgrade of the playground and toilets on Middleton Park. Subject to any unavoidable delays the work will be completed within the current financial year.
20. The following table shows details of the proposed development programme.

Project Detail	2005/06
Playground Upgrade	\$50,000 - Includes play structures, pathway connections, picnic tables and minor landscape enhancement
Toilet Upgrade	\$71,000 - Includes toilet and internal building alterations, drinking fountain and pedestrian access paths

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Riccarton Wigram Community Board approve the plan for the Middleton Park playground and toilet upgrade and the Greenspace Unit commence the construction programme.