

7. MURCHISON PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment Group DDI 941-8656
Officer responsible:	Transport and Greenspace Manager
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Shirley/Papanui Community Board to:
 - (a) proceed to detailed design and construction/ implementation of the Murchison Park Development Plan and playground upgrade; and
 - (b) proceed to detailed design and construction of the Lowry Avenue safety improvements; and
 - (c) approve resolutions for new no-stopping restrictions associated with the Lowry Avenue safety improvements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Murchison Park is large local park in Redwood and serves a large catchment with only a few small playgrounds nearby. Owen Mitchell Park is located on Grimseys Road, approximately 1km away, and contains a comprehensive playground, including a flying fox, that was recently upgraded. Redwood Primary School is located on Prestons Road and has a rear access to Pyatt Place. Murchison Park is used by the school for some physical education activities and is likely to be used as a route to school by many students/parents.
3. The Shirley/Papanui Community Board raised safety concerns with regard to Murchison Park and sought clarification about why the park does not provide a public toilet in a Notice of Motion dated 17 May 2006. A Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety audit of Murchison Park was subsequently undertaken in October 2006 to identify any safety issues in the park and to determine the safest location for the new playground. The audit identified issues with the existing playground due to the lack of visibility and opportunities for passive surveillance. The audit recommended that the playground be relocated to the Lowry Ave frontage and that the trees in this area should be thinned out to ensure that there is good visibility to the new playground from the road and surrounding park area.
4. In November 2006 a community survey was undertaken so that the issues and aspirations for the playground and for the park, as a whole, could be determined. The project team developed a concept plan for the development of the reserve and playground, which was circulated to the local community.
5. In February/March 2007 a publicity pamphlet was distributed to approximately 780 residences and key stakeholders (refer attachment 1). The consultation received a 15% response rate (120 responses). Community feedback was generally very positive. The feedback form asked whether respondents supported the Murchison Park Playground concept plan and whether they supported the overall Murchison Park Development plan. Comments were sought in regard to each aspect of the proposals.

In relation to the Murchison Park Playground Concept Plan:

- 100 of the 120 respondents (83%) answered "YES – I support playground concept plan"
- 8 of the 120 respondents (7%) answered "NO – I do not support playground concept plan"

In relation to the Murchison Park Development Plan:

- 94 of the 120 respondents (78%) answered "YES – I support the development plan"
- 10 of the 120 respondents (8%) answered "NO – I do not support the development plan"

The consultation outcome and project team responses are included in attachment 2.

6. The key issues identified by submitters relate to:
- Traffic and car parking
 - The toilet facility
 - Pathways
 - More seating was sought
 - Park lighting was sought
 - The proposed sculpture.
7. The project team considered the feedback from consultation and revised the concept plan to reflect community views, where possible. This included the addition of traffic calming, additional play equipment and park furniture. Track through the ecological area have also been included.
8. An adjoining neighbour expressed concern about the proposed removal of the willow tree at the Murchison Avenue entrance. The safety audit identified the area to the north of the willow tree as a potential entrapment spot. The removal of this tree would open up the entrance to the reserve and improve personal safety. An Arborist has assessed the willow tree and supports its removal as part of this development.
9. The Regional Parks Team has provided advice regarding the benefits of the proposed ecological corridor and its design and maintenance. This advice will be considered at the detailed design stage of this project.
10. The recommended concept plans are included as attachments 4 and 5. The Murchison Park Development Plan will be implemented over a number of years. The platforms, playground and associated footpaths, park furniture and fencing, tree pruning and landscape plan are scheduled for implementation in August – December 2007. The toilet, car parking, perimeter paths and park furniture, sculpture and the ecological corridor at eastern end of the park will be sought to be included into the 5 year Capital Works Programme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. The funding from council is being provided from the Transport and Greenspace Capital Programme. Specifically:
- 2007/08 \$140,000 Murchison Park – Playground Renewal

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

12. Yes. Funding is provided from within the Transport and Greenspace Capital Programme in the 2006-16 LTCCP.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

13. Nil.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

14. LTCCP 2006-2016

Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways – Page 123

Recreation – By offering a range of active and passive recreation and leisure opportunities.
Health – By providing areas for people to engage in healthy activities.

Recreation and Leisure – Page 131

Recreation – By encouraging more people to participate in leisure, physical and sporting activities.

Parks and Open Spaces Activity Management Plan

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

15. Social Wellbeing and Youth Strategy and Safer Parks Policy.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

16. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the local community via a letterbox drop and comment form to the local community and a temporary signboard in the park that advised the community of the proposed works. Adjoining neighbours were spoken to about the proposed traffic platforms and associated parking restrictions.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Shirley/Papanui Community Board:

- (a) Approve the plans in attachments 4 and 5 in order to proceed to detailed design and construction/implementation of the Murchison Park Development Plan and playground upgrade; and
- (b) Approve the plan in attachment 3 in order to proceed to detailed design and construction of the Lowry Avenue safety improvements; and
- (c) Approve the following new traffic restrictions:

New No Stopping - Lowry Ave

That the stopping of vehicles be prohibited at any time in the following locations:

- (i) On the North West side of Lowry Avenue, commencing at a point 34m from the south west kerb line of Goodall Street and extending south west a distance of 10m.
- (ii) On the South West side of Lowry Avenue, commencing at a point 21m from the south west kerb line of Goodall Street and extending south west a distance of 40m.
- (iii) On the South West side of Lowry Avenue, commencing at a point 6m from the south west kerb line of Goodall Street and extending North west a distance of 20m.
- (v) On the South West side of Lowry Avenue, commencing at a point 55m from the north east kerb line of Goodall Street and extending North east a distance of 14m.
- (vi) On the North East side of Lowry Avenue, commencing at a point 56m from the north east kerb line of Goodall Street and extending North east a distance of 13m.

CHAIRPERSON RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

BACKGROUND

17. Murchison Park is a large local park in Redwood. Its main road frontage is off Lowry Ave, off the Main North Road. There is also access to the park from Murchison Avenue, Solomon Avenue and Pyatt Place. The park is approximately four hectares in area and contains a waterway, facilities for junior soccer and a multi-play structure, which is located near the near Pyatt Place entrance. The existing fort does not comply with current safety standards and needs to be removed.
18. This playground serves a large catchment with only a few small playgrounds nearby (Canberra Reserve, Alwyn Park, and Dunedin Reserve). Owen Mitchell Park is located on Grimseys Road, approximately 1km away, and contains a comprehensive playground, including a flying fox, that was recently upgraded. Redwood Primary School is located on Prestons Road and has a rear access to Pyatt Place. Murchison Park is used by the school for some physical education activities and is likely to be used as a route to school by many students/parents.
19. The Shirley/Papanui Community Board raised safety concerns with regard to Murchison Park and sought clarification about why the park does not provide a public toilet in a Notice of Motion dated 17 May 2006. A Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety audit of Murchison Park was subsequently undertaken in October 2006 to identify any safety issues in the park and to determine the safest location for the new playground. The audit identified issues with the existing playground due to the lack of visibility and opportunities for passive surveillance. The audit recommended that the playground be relocated to the Lowry Ave frontage and that the trees in this area should be thinned out to ensure that there is good visibility to the new playground from the road and surrounding park area.
20. Two submissions on the LTCCP were received that relate to Murchison Park. They sought the following: a BMX track, sports fields, half-pipe (for skate boarding), a vertical ramp, swimming pool, tree trimming to aid safety, update to playground (wooden fort considered unsafe).
21. In November 2006 a community survey was undertaken so that the issues and aspirations for the playground and for the park, as a whole, could be determined. This revealed that this community:
 - Enjoys playgrounds like Spencer Park and Owen Mitchell Reserve.
 - Likes a variety of play items and would also like to retain the open space of the park. Prefers play equipment such as challenging ropes, climbing structures, flying fox, slides, swings.
 - Have concerns about the speed of traffic on Lowry Avenue and about personal safety in relation to the dense plantings of trees.
 - Would like a toilet, more seating and more sealed paths.
22. The preliminary research informed the project objectives, which were to:
 - To locate the proposed new playground near Lowry Avenue.
 - To remove existing fort and modular playground.
 - To add more interesting play equipment that meets the community's needs.
 - Improve accessibility and safety of the new playground.
 - To create a development plan for the whole reserve that addresses safety issues and the community's needs (e.g. toilet, pathways, seating and carparking).
 - Respond to the recommendations of the safety audit.
 - Improve the overall amenity and accessibility of the reserve.
 - To contribute to the ecological corridor in the area.
23. The project team developed a concept to meet these objectives, which included the following:
 - The new playground located near Lowry Ave, including:
 - A junior play area that includes swings, the relocated modular play equipment, Supernova and the You and Me.
 - A senior play area that includes swings, Roctopus and climbing nets.
 - Park furniture, pathways, landscaping and reoriented junior soccer field.
 - Toilet, carparking and an ecological corridor at eastern end of the park (no current funding).

24. While the initial survey included a number of requests for a flying fox, this was not included as part of this concept, due to the fact that Owen Mitchell Reserve has a flying fox and this is only 1km away. Part of providing playgrounds around the city is to try to provide play equipment that has a different play experience from its neighbouring parks.
25. In February/March 2007 a publicity pamphlet was distributed to approximately 780 residences and key stakeholders (refer attachment 1). This pamphlet included a summary of the concept, an initial concept plan and a feedback form. In addition to this, a signboard was erected in the park for the duration of the consultation period. The project team sought feedback from the community to see whether the proposal was generally supported.
26. The consultation received a 15% response rate (120 responses). Community feedback was generally very positive. The feedback form asked whether respondents supported the Murchison Park Playground concept plan and whether they supported the overall Murchison Park Development plan. Comments were sought in regard to each aspect of the proposals.
27. In relation to the Murchison Park Playground concept plan:
- 100 of the 120 respondents (83%) answered "YES – I support playground concept plan"
 - 8 of the 120 respondents (7%) answered "NO – I do not support playground concept plan", citing the following reasons:

Reason for opposition	Project team response.
Traffic hazard	Speed traffic and volume will be addressed with the installation of traffic platforms.
Need to spend funds elsewhere (Redwood Springs)	Funds have been allocated to the upgrade of Murchison Park. Work is proceeding at Redwood Springs and the proposed playground will be consulted on later this year.
Insufficient need for new playground	The existing fort does not comply with current safety standards and needs to be removed. Murchison Park caters to a large number of users and consultation has endorsed the support for the proposed upgrade.

28. In relation to the Murchison Park Development Plan:

- 94 of the 120 respondents (78%) answered "YES – I support the development plan"
- 10 of the 120 respondents (8%) answered "NO – I do not support the development plan", citing the following reasons:

Reason for opposition	Project team response.
Traffic hazard	Speed traffic and volume will be addressed with the installation of traffic platforms.
Need to spend funds elsewhere (Redwood Springs)	Funds have been allocated to the upgrade of Murchison Park. Work is proceeding at Redwood Springs and the proposed playground will be consulted on later this year.
Insufficient need for new playground and park upgrade	The existing fort does not comply with current safety standards and needs to be removed. Murchison Park caters to a large number of users and consultation has endorsed the support for the proposed upgrade.
Opposition to the ecological corridor, due to fire risk and poor maintenance	Need for the ecological corridor has been identified by the Regional Parks Team, who have recommended fire resistant species and a maintenance regime (see below).
Opposition to tree thinning	Tree thinning was recommended by the safety audit.
Opposition to relocated playground	The safety audit recommended that the playground be relocated.
Opposition to toilet	The majority of respondents support the inclusion of a toilet (11 submissions in support and six against). The Community Board made a Notice of Motion in May 2006 that requested an investigation into why the park does not provide a public toilet.
Need for perimeter paths as part of initial development	The desire for pathways is acknowledged and these will be installed as soon as possible. However this work is limited by budget constraints.

29. The consultation outcome and project team responses are included in attachment 2. The key issues identified by submitters relate to:
- Traffic and car parking (24 submitters) – concern about the speed and volume of traffic, need for the carpark at the same time as the playground, mainly in relation to traffic issues (seven submitters), three submitters do not want carpark.
 - The toilet facility - expressions of support (seven submitters support and two support in a different location) and opposition (five submitters oppose).
 - Pathways – six submitters sought that the perimeter paths be installed at the same time as playground, two submitters sought more paths.
 - More seating was sought (6 submissions).
 - Park lighting was sought (5 submissions).
 - The proposed sculpture was opposed by 5 submitters.
30. The project team considered the feedback from consultation and revised the concept plan in the following way:
- Installation of two traffic calming platforms on Lowry Avenue, and associated no-stopping lines, to slow traffic outside Murchison Park.
 - Inclusion of a 4 bay swing in the toddler area, which includes two toddler (infant seats) and two intermediate swings (strap seats).
 - Inclusion of 2 additional intermediated swings.
 - Inclusion of a second rubbish bin, the existing bin near Pyatt will remain.
 - Inclusion of a bicycle rack near the proposed toilet and carpark (to be installed when carpark is constructed).
 - Relocation of a seat/picnic table to between the two playgrounds.
 - Medium height shrub planting to be restricted to no more than a metre high, to allow views into park.
 - A slight change has been made to the configuration of the rope structure due to constraints from the suppliers.
 - Provision of informal tracks through the ecological area.
 - An amended implementation timetable which now schedules the work in the following ways:
 - 2007/08: traffic platforms, playground and removal of fort, soccer field reoriented, part of the landscaping near the playground, park furniture near new playground, pathway links around new playground
 - No current funding: Remaining park furniture and landscaping, perimeter path linkages, toilet, carparking, sculpture, ecological corridor at eastern end of the park
31. The public consultation indicated significant concerns about the traffic speeds and volume in Lowry Avenue, adjacent to the proposed playground. This issue was investigated by the Network Operations Team, which found that the need for traffic calming rates very highly for a future Neighbourhood Improvement Work. However without funding currently allocated, this work would not be undertaken for some years.
32. Given that the CPTED safety audit recommended that the playground be relocated to Lowry Avenue, where a need for traffic calming has since been identified, the project team recommends that the required traffic calming work be undertaken as part of the upgrade of Murchison Park. This would cost in the order of \$20,000 and would allow the playground renewal and park upgrade project to proceed without undue delays. This work will form part of the contract works for developing the playground site and path works and will be built at the same time.
33. Therefore, in response to consultation, two traffic calming platforms, and associated parking restrictions, are proposed for Lowry Avenue. The safety improvements plan in attachment 3 was circulated to the residents of Lowry Avenue, located between Murchison Avenue and Pyatt Place, as this proposal would result in a change to the road environment in this area. All of the residents that would be directly affected by a loss of on-street parking were spoken to. One of the four directly affected residents expressed some concern about the effectiveness of the proposed traffic calming and the loss of on-street parking. However the proposed traffic platform outside this property could not be relocated due to the curvature of the road and an unwillingness of the adjoining neighbour to lose their on-street parking. All other directly affected residents supported the proposed Lowry Avenue safety improvements.

34. The traffic calming platforms will be constructed to similar specifications as the ones installed recently as part of the Morrison Avenue Reserve project (without the kerb build-outs). This will result in much slower speeds near to the reserve. The current mean speed adjacent to the reserve is 49 km/h but there are also quite a few speeds in the 60-65 category. The installation of the platforms is predicted to reduce vehicle speeds to around 35 km/h. This is a significant reduction and will create a safer road environment adjacent to the reserve where it is anticipated that there will be significant pedestrian/children crossing movements. The Police have been carrying out widespread campaigns promoting the safety benefits of reduced speeds resulting in reduced vehicle stopping distances and reduced injury risk. Additional traffic calming may be installed at a later date, as a Neighbourhood Improvement Work, if this is considered to be necessary.
35. While there was some call to install the on site car parking at the same time as the playground, this request was made largely in response to the concerns about traffic speed and volume, which should be addressed by the proposed traffic calming. The car parking will be installed when funds allow, possibly in 2011/12, depending on allocations in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan.
36. The proposal to install a toilet in the park was largely supported by the local community with 11 submissions in support and six against. There was some concern by the opponents to the toilet that it would be unsightly and attract antisocial behaviour. In terms of aesthetics, this facility can be designed to compliment the surrounding environment rather than detract from it. Many of the concerns about antisocial behaviour can be addressed by locating and designing the facility in accordance with CPTED principles, which have been adhered to in the development of these plans.
37. At this stage there is no funding available for the proposed toilet at Murchison Park, largely due to the fact that this is not an official sports park. However, given the support from the community and the need identified by the Community Board for a facility of this kind, a toilet will be included in the development plan and it will be constructed when funds allow, possibly in 2011/12, depending on allocations in the 2009 Long Term Council Community Plan. The development plan determines the location of the toilet and the design of the toilet will be consulted on when funding is allocated.
38. It is proposed that the pathways in the vicinity of the playground will be installed in conjunction with the new playground. However, a number of submitters sought that all the proposed pathways be installed in conjunction with the playground. This work is limited by budget constraints and, while the desire for the immediate installation of the pathways is acknowledged, these will be installed as soon as possible. Once this plan is approved, the funding for the pathways can then be sought in the 5 year Capital Works Programme. Additional pathways are not considered necessary and are not proposed, at this stage.
39. While a number of submitters sought additional seating, it is not proposed to add any more seating to the development plan at this stage. The proposal includes a significant amount of seating - three seat/picnic tables and three seats around the playground and three seats around the reserve. Additional seats can be at a later stage, if a need is identified.
40. A number of submitters sought lighting within the park. The safety audit of Murchison Park, which was undertaken in October 2006, considered a possible north/south path through the park (from Pyatt Place to Murchison Avenue) and recommended that this not be lit. This is standard park practice as paths inside parks are not usually lit unless there is not a safe alternative route on the surrounding roads. Lighting the park's paths gives the impression that the route is safe at night which may not be the case. These paths are designed for daytime use.
41. A number of submitters opposed the proposed sculpture. This was included in the development plan to signal that some kind of artwork could be included in the upgrade to the park. There is currently no funding for artworks in the park but Council has a policy of including art in the city, which this proposal would contribute to. It could conceivably be included as part of the toilet block, which would be an inexpensive option that could enhance this facility.
42. An adjoining neighbour expressed concern about the proposed removal of the willow tree at the Murchison Avenue entrance. The safety audit identified the area to the north of the willow tree as a potential entrapment spot. The removal of this tree would open up the entrance to the reserve and improve personal safety.

43. An Arborist has assessed the willow tree and supports its removal as part of this development. The tree assessment found some minor deadwood/dieback in canopy and some root damage. A cavity in the stem on north side is of concern and is consistent with the dead/dying part of canopy. One stem has failed and the 'sounding' (of wood) indicates that there may be decay present in root/trunk union. This would be typical of willow species, which are prone to failures of this nature (whole stem from multiple attachment point). Longer term, its removal is considered inevitable as another stem is likely to fail at some stage, and, although the probable impact of this is likely to be minimal there is a degree of risk to public safety which will need to be addressed.
44. The Regional Parks Team has provided the following advice regarding the benefits of the proposed ecological corridor and its design and maintenance. This advice will be considered at the detailed design stage of this project.

Features of the Native Bush Ecological Corridor

45. The native bush corridor should comprise tree and shrub species appropriate for the soil types found within the park. Matai, Totara and Kahikatea will be the principal canopy trees with a diverse range of smaller trees and shrubs forming the bulk of the plantings. The final mix of species will largely be self-determined by natural seed fall and the germination of seedlings. Removal of weeds and invasive exotic trees will require ongoing maintenance. Taller trees should form a central block in the centre of the bush corridor with denser and lower trees and shrubs on edges to protect the centre from wind and to avoid shading surrounding properties.
46. Key native bush bird species likely to occur within this bush patch include resident Grey Warbler, Silvereye and Fantail with visiting Bellbird. Introduced bird species likely to occur within Murchison Park include Blackbird, Song Thrush, Starling, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Magpie and Little Owl.
47. As nearby Styx Mill Conservation Reserve develops and native bird populations there increase, additional visiting species may include NZ Pigeon (Kereru), Kingfisher, Shining Cuckoo and Welcome Swallow.
48. As has been the experience with core bush bird habitats located close to suburban areas (i.e. Victoria Park and Riccarton Bush in Christchurch; Karori Reserve in Wellington, etc), once native bird numbers build up they spread out into the suburban hinterland and enrich the local garden and park avifauna. Styx Mill Basin Reserve will be the main core area with habitat patches such as that proposed at Murchison Park acting as secondary cores.

Fire Risk in the Native Bush Corridor

49. Any fires are likely to be those ignited by vandals. These are usually quickly reported and quickly put out by the Fire Service. Even in dry summers, the Christchurch urban area does not have a history of spontaneous bush fires.
50. The two native plant species most easily set on fire are toe toe and cabbage tree. To mitigate resident's concerns about fire risk, it is recommended that toe toe not be planted on site (nor pampas grass), and that cabbage trees be planted a minimum of 10 metres in from the edge of the bush. A list of "fire-resistant" tree and shrub species is provided below and the bulk of "edge plants" may be selected from these.

Low-flammability species:

Tree Fuchsia	Fuchsia excorticata
Lancewood	Pseudopanax crassifolius
Five finger	Pseudopanax arboreus
Karamu	Coprosma robusta
Taupata	Coprosma repens
Broadleaf	Griselinia littoralis
Lowland Broadleaf	Griselinia lucida
Kawakawa	Micropiper excelsum

Low/moderate flammability species:

Koromiko	Hebe salicifolia
Mahoe	Melicytus ramiflorus
Wineberry	Aristotelia serrata
Tutu	Coriaria arborea
Ngaio	Myoporum laetum
Karo	Pittosporum crassifolium
Lemonwood	Pittosporum eugenioides
Lacebark	Hoheria spp.
Silver Beech	Nothofagus menziesii
Lowland Ribbonwood	Plagianthus regius

Maintenance Issues

51. Problematic natives such as toe toe, cabbage tree and flax should either not be planted, or should be located away from the edge of the bush corridor.
52. The maintenance regime should facilitate natural regeneration of native seedlings but remove weeds and the seedlings of exotic trees and shrubs.
53. Children cutting down trees (especially those with softer wood such as cabbage trees), building huts and lighting fires is a problem within many suburban parks and reserves. Another problem is the unauthorised construction of tracks and makeshift bridges. To avoid the *ad hoc* construction of tracks, informal tracks will be provided in this area. Reporting by local residents and a follow up by parks officers or rangers seems to be the best way of combating these problems. To allay resident's fears of vandals, burglars, and nocturnal assemblages of teenagers, a useful way to limit free access into the bush except where tracks are constructed is to replicate nature and plant a dense zone of divaricating shrubs around the periphery. Various species of Coprosma, Muehlenbeckia, etc would be suitable for this.
54. The recommended concept plans are included as attachments 4 and 5. The Murchison Park Development Plan will be implemented over a number of years. The platforms, playground and associated footpaths, park furniture and fencing, tree pruning and landscape plan are scheduled for implementation in August – December 2007. The toilet, car parking, perimeter paths and park furniture, sculpture and the ecological corridor at eastern end of the park will be sought to be included into the 5 year Capital Works Programme.