

REIMAGINING RUTHVEN

MASTER PLAN



2020



Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians

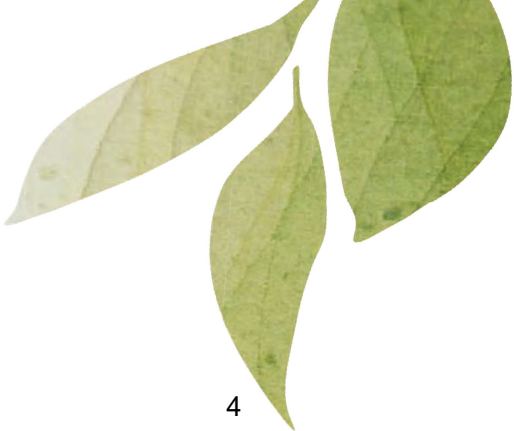
Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging. Council affirms that Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

Council respects and recognises all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self determination.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

REIMAGINING RUTHVEN	4
Blueprint for Biodiversity	4
What a Master Plan does	5
Existing Conditions	6
UNDERSTANDING RUTHVEN	6
Features & Opportunities	8
Challenges	8
Demographic Snapshot	8
DRIVERS & OPPORTUNITIES	9
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	10
What You Said	12
Master Plan Principles	15
Key Design Directions	17
THE MASTER PLAN	18
Direction One: Blueprint for Biodiversity	20
Biodiversity Precedents	24
Proposed Planting Palette	26
Biodiversity at Ruthven	28
Direction Two: A Park for All	30
Direction Three: Creating Play	31
Direction Four: Spaces for Contemplation,	
Education and Appreciation	32
Direction Five: Access & Safety	33
Direction Six: Sustainability, Resilience & Future	35
Design Precedence	36
MASTER PLAN OUTCOMES	40
NEXT STEPS	42





REIMAGINING RUTHVEN

Blueprint for Biodiversity

Ruthven Park is Darebin's newest park. It will be a place of welcome, play and retreat for Reservoir West.

This document outlines a vision to transform the former Ruthven Primary School into a bushland sanctuary; a haven for people, birds, bees, marsupials, insects, reptiles, trees and plants.

Reimagining Ruthven brings together many factors for consideration in the planning and design of this park. Understanding existing and future demographics, ground conditions, heritage, existing vegetation, solar access and movement, land use and activities are factors that have all been considered in the creation of this Master Plan.

Community input has also been a key driver in shaping the design of the park. Some of the key ideas gathered during community consultation included:

- Reconnecting with nature.
- Enriching the health and well-being of the community.
- Creating safe and fun places for the youngest and oldest in the community.
- Planting an abundance of indigenous trees and plants.
- Creating a safe and accessible park.
- Providing spaces for contemplation.

Reimagining Ruthven is a framework for a sustainable future, which deliberately leaves space for the park to evolve organically as the local needs and the environment changes over time.

The process so far

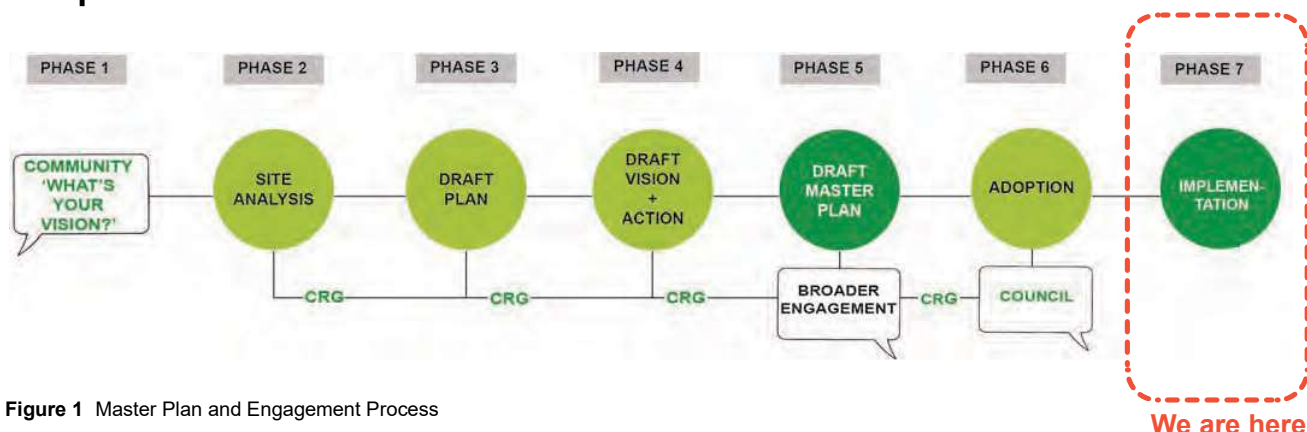


Figure 1 Master Plan and Engagement Process



Existing Trees along Wilson Boulevard

What a Master Plan does

- Provides a clear, long term vision for the park.
- Establishes strategies which have guided the development of the park, outlining planning, design and access issues, considerations and opportunities.
- Provides clear Council and community driven actions to help deliver the Master Plan over time.
- Ensures that a staged development of the park is realistic and achievable.

Timeframes for implementation

Reimagining Ruthven is designed to set a vision and chart a course for 20 to 30 years.

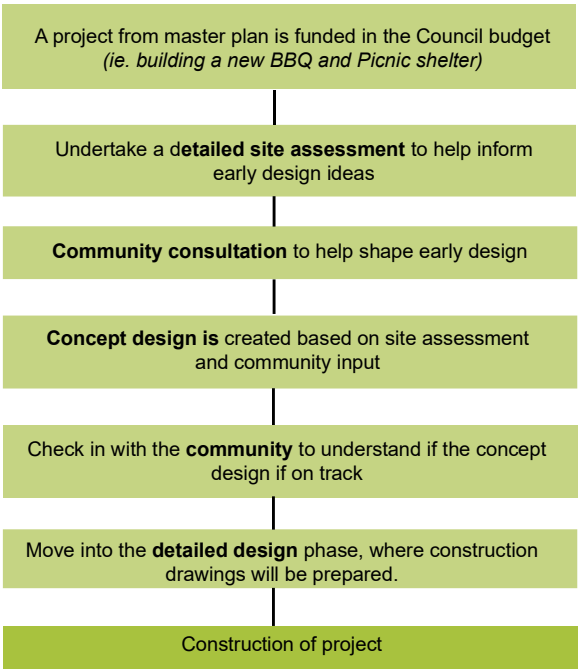
Improvements to the park outlined in the Master Plan would be referred to future budgets for consideration balancing needs across the City.

Council and community could use the Master Plan as a basis for seeking grant funding for some of the initiatives.

As this is a long term Master Plan , Council will need to check in with the community (each five or ten years), ensuring the projects identified in the Master Plan align with community needs.

What happens next?

As the Master Plan is a visionary document, each key project outline the plan will be subject to detailed site assessments and community consultation to help inform the detailed design of key projects.





UNDERSTANDING RUTHVEN

Existing Conditions

- Ruthven Park is located at 74-76 Glasgow Avenue Reservoir West (Merrilands).
- Reservoir West is a low-density suburban area characterised by large lots and detached dwellings.
- Merri Creek frames the western edge of Reservoir West, and its tributary, Edgars Creek divides the precinct.
- The area contains two schools, four small local shopping villages and two Council community facilities including PRACE and Merrilands Childcare.
- Many of the larger parks located in the precinct are dominated by formal sports and include local sporting ovals and pavilions. Ruthven provides an opportunity for play, rest and relaxation in Darebin's North.
- As this park addresses a shortfall in open space for the precinct, it has been classified as a 'district level park' in the Darebin Open Space Strategy, *Breathing Space* (2019).
- The park contains 137 existing trees, indigenous, native and exotic, in relatively good condition.
- People currently use the park for informal exercise, walking and dog-walking.

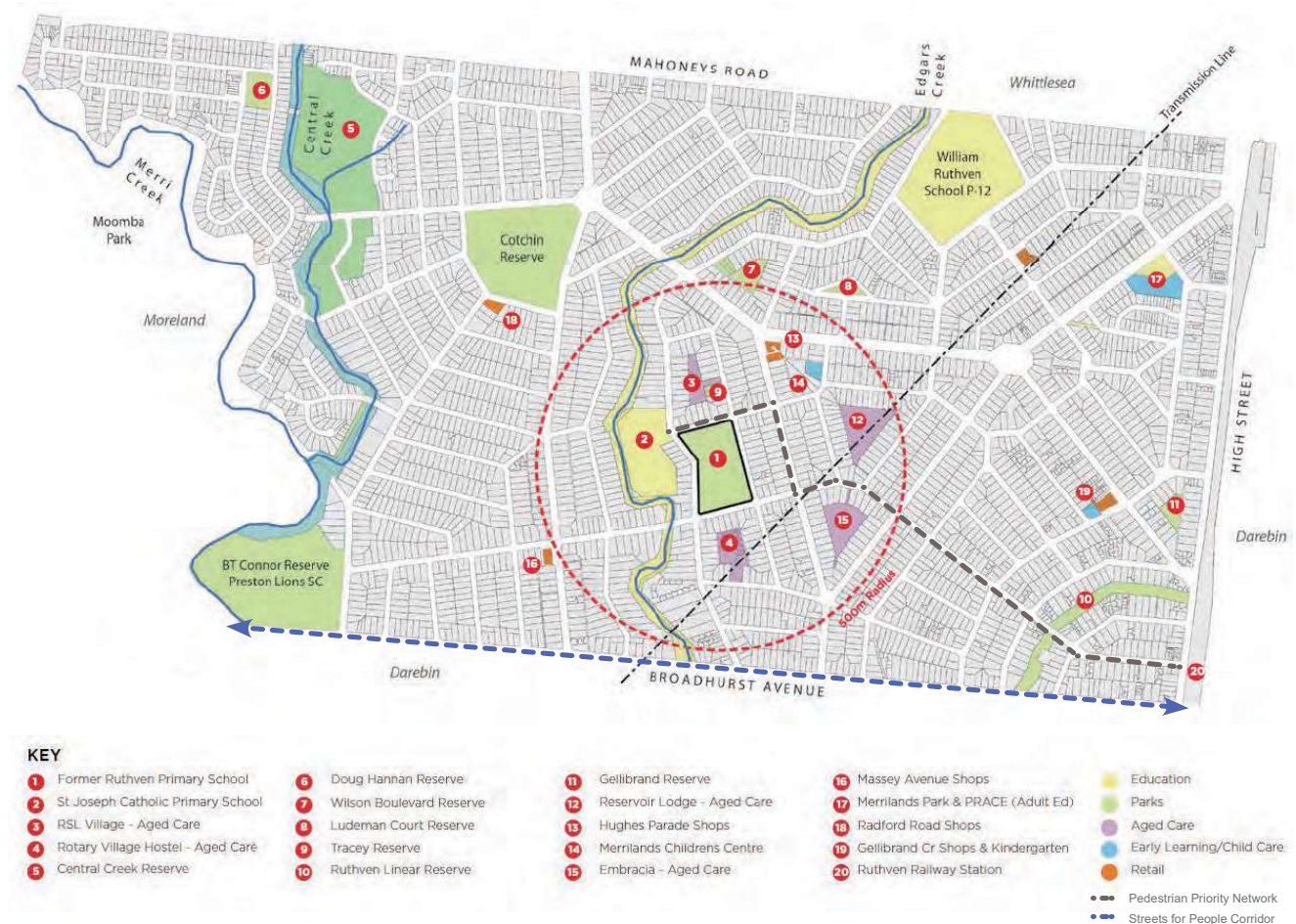


Figure 2 Context map - Reservoir West



3.056
Hectare park



**Wurundjeri
Woi Wurrung**
people are the
Traditional
Custodians



43
years
the primary
school operated
on site



137
trees of
which
40 are
native



9
fauna
species
found at
park



11
types of
remnant
grasses



Figure 3 Existing site conditions & opportunities.



10,594
Total
population
of Reservoir
West
(Merrilands)



27%
of the
community
are aged
60-84



16.2%
are aged 70-84
in Reservoir
West, a higher
proportion
than the
Darebin
average (8.2%)



33%
of the
population
are couples
with
children



36%
of the
community
have Italian
heritage



43
is the
median age



18%
of the
community
are aged
0-17

Snapshot from 2016 Census

Features & Opportunities

- There are 137 mature trees on site which are highly valued by the local community.
- It is a 'stepping-stone' for local habitat and biodiversity along the Edgars Creek corridor.
- The park fills a gap in Darebin for leisure and play, contemplation and nature.
- Open lawn areas for informal sports and play.
- Four street frontages creating excellent access into the park.
- A community space and cultural ecosystem which benefits a diverse cross section of the community.
- Panoramic view lines throughout the park.
- Changes in topography with a gentle slope towards Edgars Creek provide an opportunity for collecting stormwater for reuse.

Challenges

- Finding balance between nature and a public park.
- Risk of over development of the park.
- Poor access into the park due to existing school layout and fencing.
- Mitigating local flooding issues.
- Protection from prevailing winds.
- Creating an agile framework which leaves space for the park to evolve organically as the local needs and the environment changes over time.

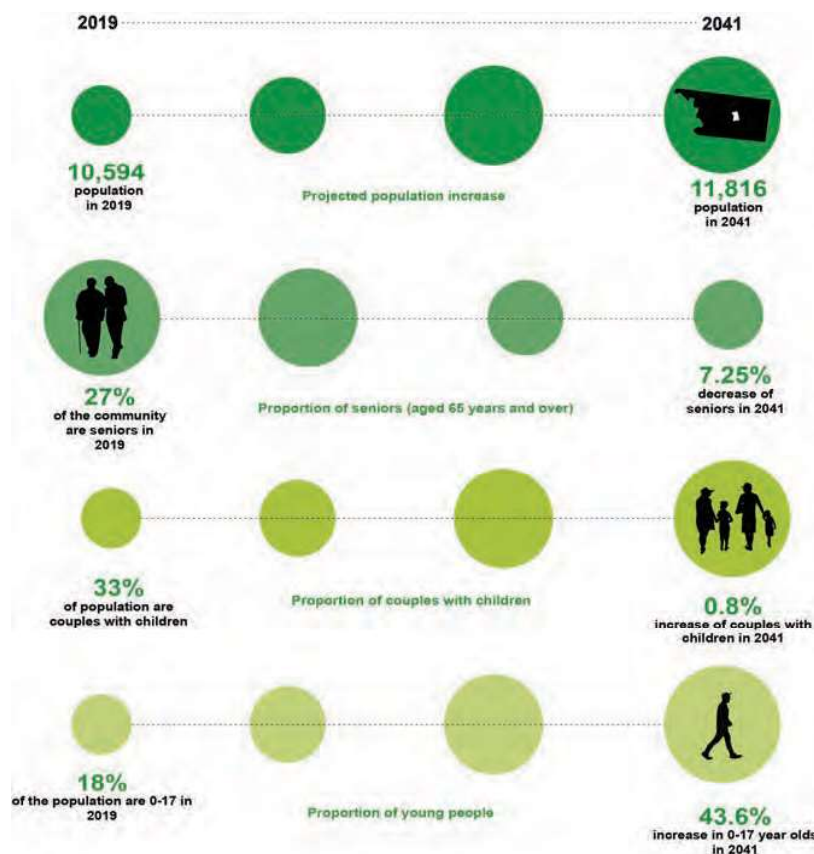


Figure 4 Projected change in demographic from 2016 to 2041



DRIVERS & OPPORTUNITIES



Existing trees



Ecological function



Play and contemplation opportunities



Creating an inclusive space for all



Park users - current and future



Site views and topography



Improving access and safety



Site history



Connection to Country



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Feedback from the local community has shaped the development of Ruthven Park. Key community engagement activities included:

- Collecting over 350 ideas at a Family Fun Day held in October 2017.
- Talking with local residents via phone or email, during a three-week community consultation period from October – November 2017.
- Collecting ideas from local community groups including the Merri Creek Management Committee, Darebin Bicycle Advisory Committee and Darebin Nature Trust.

What the community really want to see:

- Playgrounds which foster community meeting spaces.
- Walking circuits and paths.
- A BBQ and picnic shelter.
- Park amenities such as public toilets, seating, drinking fountains and bins.
- Outdoor exercise equipment.
- A native landscape.
- A park which supports community activities such as a local market.

What local kids want in their park:

- Slides (16)
- Swings (10)
- Climbing equipment and adventure play (7)
- Flying fox (5)
- Basketball (5)
- Monkey bars (4)
- Football Oval (4)

The community showed little support for:

- Any community building, community hub or early learning centre
- A dog off lead area
- A skate / BMX area

Community Reference Group

The Ruthven Community Reference Group has supported the creation of this Master Plan. The group met monthly to guide the vision and champion the community's desire for the park to be retained as an open space unencumbered by buildings.



Collecting the community's ideas at the Family Fun Day in October 217



WHAT YOU SAID

“Native trees and plants, open space”

“Quiet areas for the elderly/reading and reflection”



“Space to fly kites, kick balls”

“Multi aged play facilities”

“Links green spaces for native flora and fauna”

“Large canopy trees to picnic under”

“Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land within the precinct of this park”

“Indigenous garden, dog free areas, kids and family friendly”



“Playgrounds which foster community meeting spaces, walking circuits and paths, BBQ and picnic shelter, outdoor exercise equipment”

*“Native planting,
natural shade,
nesting boxes for
birds”*

*“Open space,
somewhere to sit
and relax. Maybe
covered shade”*



*“Lots of native trees
– no buildings”*



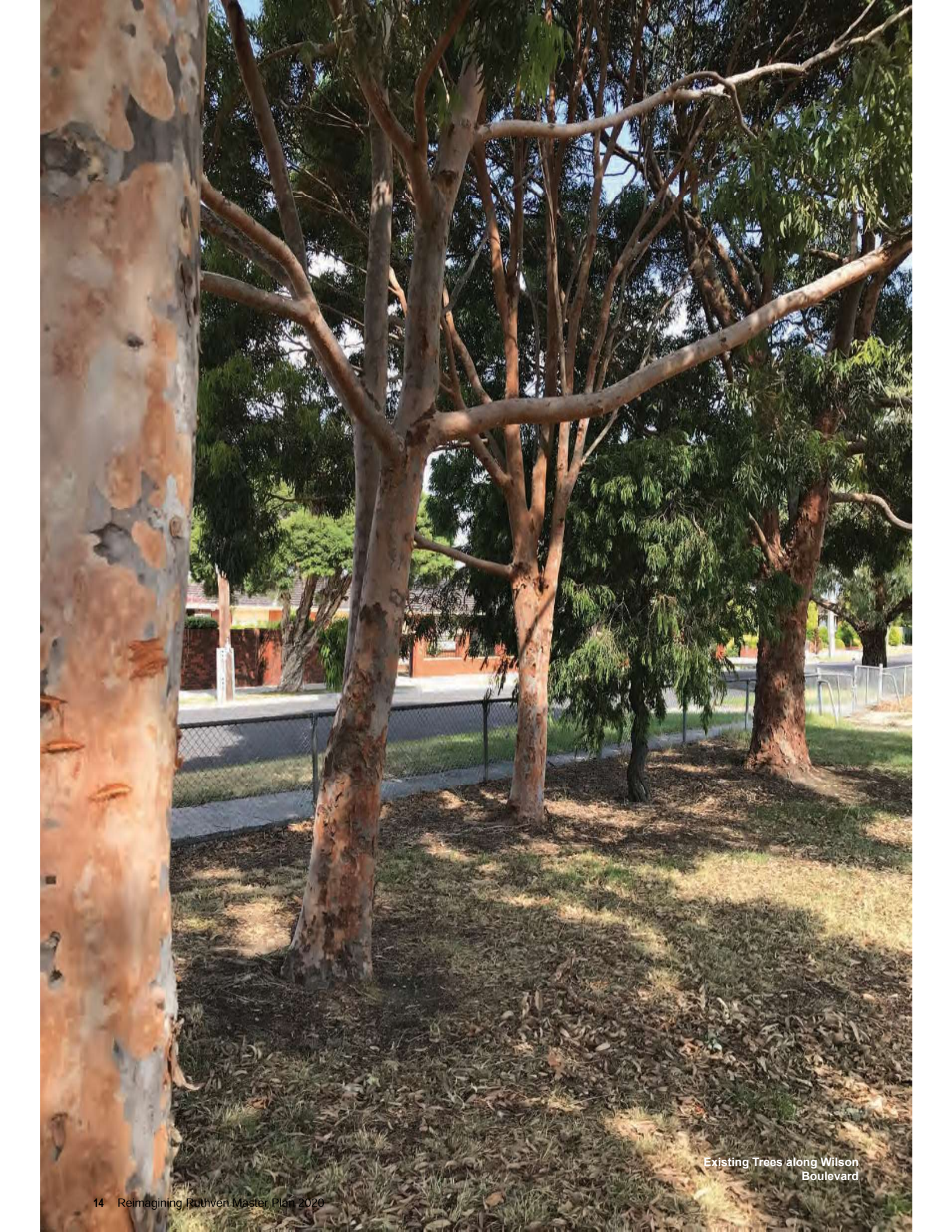
*“Safer pedestrian
crossing to access
park.*

*Speed bumps and
hoon reduction, traffic
calming. Plant trees
in the middle of the
road”*

*“Wheelchair
friendly. Walking/
scooting with
toddler and pram –
even out footpath..”*

*“Use recycled
materials where
possible, e.g.
timber flooring”*

*“Playground: all
ages and abilities.
Progressively
challenging and
interesting”*



Existing Trees along Wilson
Boulevard



POLICY CONTEXT

Reimagining Ruthven is based on the following Council strategies and policies:

Breathing Space – the Darebin Open Space Strategy (2019-2029)

- Darebin's Open Space Strategy 'Breathing Spaces', will guide the function and level of investment for the park.
- Bushland character is the default choice for the park.
- The proposed plant palette will use plant species of local provenance as a priority and enhance Reservoir's local biodiversity.
- Create a resilient environment that responds to climate change.
- Create an opportunity for Ruthven Park to be an education site for the Open Space Strategy.
- Renaming this new park in collaboration with the Traditional Custodians of the land.
- Creating a welcoming, inclusive and accessible park for Reservoir's diverse community.
- Creating a park which balances the needs of different users within open space.
- Engage the community as partners in biodiversity protection.
- Create a 'Green Streets Network' for biodiversity connections.

Natural Heritage Strategy (2015-2025)

- Continue to use indigenous species of local provenance in all landscaping along waterways or habitat corridors.
- Rehabilitate the original grasses that are still existing.
- Create habitat for bees through the inclusion of flowering plants.
- Educate residents about local flora and fauna to promote Darebin natural heritage.
- Continue to maintain and improve the quality and extent of indigenous vegetation by allocating more resources for replanting programs and weed control.

Darebin Walking, Active Travel and Transport Strategies

- Develop high quality, key pedestrian and cycle links across Darebin.
- Develop pedestrian-friendly path design and maintenance standards.
- Install secure bicycle parking at key public destinations.

Darebin's Urban Forest Strategy (2013)

- Increase tree coverage on public land to at least 25% over 15 years in the City of Darebin.
- Increase indigenous and native tree diversity, enhancing local habitat for native animals and birds.
- Broaden tree species selection to develop a diverse urban forest, focusing on species from warmer and drier environments. Consider trialling new species.
- Plant the largest tree suitable to each location to achieve the canopy cover targets.
- Develop and maintain a healthy, resilient, diverse and safe Urban Forest which will provide multiple, long-term benefits to the community and the environment.

Access and Inclusion Plan (2015-2019)

- Creating open spaces which are inclusive, accessible and equitable, responding to the needs, rights and priorities of our communities.
- Reduce barriers for people with a disability to access places, goods and services.

Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy (2011-2021)

- Reduce barriers to people with a disability accessing places, goods and services.
- Creating open spaces which are inclusive, accessible and equitable, responding to the needs, rights and priorities in our communities.

Towards an age friendly Darebin (2019)

- Create an age friendly outdoors environment
- Safe and accessible 'walking and wheeling' paths and routes are designed for the park.
- Seats with backs are provided.
- Seats are plentiful and grouped to encourage conversation and exchange.
- Implement this plan with support from the Older Persons Open Space Audit Advisory Team.
- Explore the possibility of permanent games and exercise equipment for the elderly.



Ruthven Park will be a bushland sanctuary, a place of welcome, play and retreat in the heart of Reservoir West



Figure 5 Artist Impression of Future Ruthven, showing nature play, accessible path, indigenous grasses and planting.

KEY DESIGN DIRECTIONS



BLUEPRINT FOR BIODIVERSITY

A biodiverse, indigenous landscape will be showcased, enriching Reservoir West's urban ecosystem.



A PARK FOR ALL

A welcoming and inclusive park, supporting a multi-age, multi-diverse community of Reservoir West.



CREATING PLAY

A fun and happy destination will be created for Reservoir West's oldest and youngest residents.



CONTEMPLATION & EDUCATION

A choice of spaces for contemplation, connection to country and appreciation of nature.



ACCESS & SAFETY

A safe and accessible place for all ages, genders and levels of mobility.



SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE

A resilient and agile framework is established, supporting the organic evolution of the park in line with its community and climate.



THE MASTER PLAN



Figure 6 Draft Ruthven Master Plan



A Blueprint for biodiversity

1. Retain indigenous trees and shrubs on site and enhance with more planting.
2. Remove all exotic shrubs, bushes and plants, found throughout the site, ensuring that succession planting occurs prior to removal.
3. Create a 'Biodiversity Planting Palette & Plan' which will be the catalyst for transforming the site into a biodiversity haven.
4. Create 'wild spaces' and 'habitat areas' which retain a natural bushland character.
5. Create 'Indigenous Grassland Re-establishment Areas'.
6. Support this park being formally recognised as a 'Dog-on Lead' park.



A Park for All

7. Create a sheltered community space designed to support local BBQ's, community picnics, birthdays and cultural celebrations. Accessible BBQ, picnic table and drinking fountains are to be included in this space.
8. New accessible public toilet
9. Rehabilitate the old school site and transform it into an informal lawn area for picnicking.
10. Install new seats and benches along the main accessible walking paths, under natural or structured shade areas.



Creating Play

11. Create a new playspace, which includes slides, adventure play elements and a swing. Ensure that adequate seating areas are included in the design to allow community to socialise.
12. Create a natural based play area, allowing kids to play, explore and connect with nature.
13. Create an intergenerational, multi-purpose play area for all ages to use and enjoy. This may include a half basketball/netball court, tennis hit up wall, soccer net, bouldering wall, bocce pitch. Include seating areas in the design of this space.
14. Provide outdoor exercise station to support active and healthy aging. Host some free exercise programs targeted for the local elderly community.
15. Reshape the former oval. Retain it as an open lawn area and a space to fly kites or exercise.



Sustainability, Resilience & Future

16. Remove the existing asphalt and concrete footings of the former school.
17. Retain Tracey Street as the main access entry for maintenance vehicles.
18. Ensure that the parks planting palette includes low maintenance and drought tolerant species.
19. Undertake investigations to help determine the feasibility of creating an ephemeral wetland in the long term.



Contemplation, Education & Appreciation

20. Create several seating and conversation corners throughout the park.
21. In partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, rename the park in the Woiwurrong language.
22. Recognise Reservoir's migration history and diversity through subtle design gestures in the park design.
23. Create a biodiverse bushland at Ruthven Park that will also act as an educational tool.
24. Incorporate local stories and narratives from past pupils and teachers through a placemaking/local art/landscape intervention in the park (i.e. seating nodes/conservation corners).



Access & Safety

25. Create a main 'walking and wheeling' loop within the park, connecting people to key park entries and destinations throughout the park. This will not be a formal shared cycling and walking path.
26. Create a bushland walk, providing an opportunity for the local community to meander through and connect with the natural, bushland experience of the park.
27. Glasgow Avenue was the main entry whilst the site operated as a primary school. Retain and upgrade as the main feature entry to the park. This could include some park signage and feature landscaping as tribute to the former school.
28. Improve access to the park by creating new entry points to the park.
29. Create safer pedestrian access to the park. Install raised zebra crossings at strategic locations to the park (i.e. local school, aged care facilities and bus stops along the main pedestrian routes).



DIRECTION ONE: BLUEPRINT FOR BIODIVERSITY

Why is this important?

- Nature enriches our lives, improves our physical, mental and social well-being, thus creating healthy communities.
- Our natural environment provides an essential ecosystem servicing our cities.
- As custodians of the natural environment, it is our duty to protect the biodiversity in our city.
- It can enhance the local community experience and connect nature.

Planning for Biodiversity

Council led projects:

- Retain all indigenous trees and shrubs on the site.
- Remove all exotic shrubs, bushes and plants, including the Desert Ash Trees along Tracey and Hurley Streets, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and Cherry Plum trees found throughout the site. Ensure that succession planting occurs prior to removal.
- Create a 'Biodiversity Planting Plan' which will be the catalyst for transforming the site into a biodiverse haven. This plan should aim to:
 - Retain trees, plants and grass species - indigenous to the area and region. Use plants of local provenance where possible.
 - Use a plant list inspired by Ruthven's indigenous ecology found in EVC 55 'Plains Grassy Woodland' as its foundation.
 - Use plant species which respond to the dry, windy, north-westerly microclimate of the site, creating effective and layered windbreaks.
 - Increase canopy coverage across the site to 25% coverage.
 - Provide habitat and food sources for local fauna.
 - Create habitat areas for bees, butterflies, small birds to hide.
 - Showcase planting for community education.
 - Incorporate colour and seasonal change into species selections.
 - Incorporate recommendations from the Wurundjeri Land Corporation.
 - Eye level shrubs are considered for key entrances into the park, delivering on CPTED principles (page 33 for details).

- Create 'wild spaces' which retain a natural bushland character with no seating or pathways.
- Re-wild the nature strips adjacent to the site.
- Use mounds as a landscape feature. Locations to be determined through the detailed design process.
- Create 'Indigenous Grassland Re-establishment Areas', where the sites existing remnant grasses can be re-established and monitored. Develop a management plan to help rehabilitate and transition the site into a biodiversity haven.

The Biodiversity Planting Plan should consider strategies to:

- Manage exotic weeds including *Romulea rosea*
- Create the 'Indigenous Grassland Re-establishment Areas'.
- Manage, protect and trans-locate the remnant grasses found at site.

Community led projects:

- Bring back community tree planting days.

What the difference between an Indigenous and native plant?

Indigenous plants are not only native to Australia, but they are plants that occur naturally in your local area. Indigenous plants are, by definition, those native to the specified locale.

Native plants are indigenous to a given area in geologic time. This includes plants that have developed, occur naturally, or existed for many years in an area.

Reservoir West's historical landscape

Reservoir West area was once occupied by Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC55). The soil associated with these woodlands was generally alluvial or volcanic in origin.

River Red Gums were the dominant tree species and made up around 30% of the canopy. Other trees included the Silver Wattle and Black Sheoak. The understorey was predominantly grassy with scrambling herbs.

Remnants of this indigenous ecology exists in the grassland and woodland species of the park.

We often refer to a sites Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) to understand the landscape, climate, geomorphology, geology, soils and vegetation of an area prior to settlement.



Figure 7 Remnant grasses at Ruthven

Fauna found at Ruthven



Fauna & habitat conservation

- Thanks to the established vegetation and the proximity to the Edgars Creek the site is already home to native birds.
- Species such as the Australian Magpie, Galah, Little Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red Wattle bird and Tawny Frogmouth have been seen on site feeding and nesting in the established trees. Small reptiles like the Eastern Striped Skink and the Bougainville's skink have also been found on site.
- A White-faced Heron has been observed during many site visits – reinforcing the site geographic location (proximity to Edgars Creek and water) an important factor in attracting terrestrial fauna to the site.

Council led projects:

- Retain any dead, mature trees as habitat trees.
- Create safe, hiding spaces for small native birds and other fauna by planting shrubs and introducing habitat logs.
- Plant more food sources for fauna, including flowering gums and pollen throughout the park.
- Create special gardens throughout the park to encourage bees (planting of the Native Flax Lily), butterflies, insects and hiding spaces for small birds.
- Install nesting boxes and bird baths throughout the park.
- Support this park being formally recognised as a 'Dog-on Lead' park in the Darebin Local Laws.
- As lighting in the park may impact local fauna it will be discouraged.



Opportunities for nesting boxes at Ruthven

Stepping-stone for biodiversity

Why is this important?

- Flora and fauna populations are more likely to survive when their habitat is protected and when they are able to move safely across environments.
- Improving connectivity and creating habitat corridors can mitigate habitat fragmentation.

Council led projects:

- Promote the use of indigenous planting used in the new Ruthven Park by:
 - hosting tree planting days, which may include free plant give aways to local residents
 - run an indigenous garden workshop for local residents.
 - encourage surrounding landowners and/or redevelopment sites to use indigenous planting.
- Advocate and work with Melbourne Water to increase the biodiversity planting along the Edgars Creek corridor.
- Investigate long term options to improve connectivity and reduce habitat fragmentation from the site to the Edgars Creek corridor, through strategic land acquisitions.
- Create a 'Green Connector Streets' network:
 - Encourage street tree plantings in local streets surrounding Ruthven to contain bird and pollinator attracting tree species (indigenous species where possible).
 - Support local residents to transform their nature strips using low level indigenous planting, in accordance with Council's nature strip policy.
- Enhance biodiversity in local streets that connect to Ruthven Park by selecting bird and pollinator attracting tree species (Figure 9). This should include planting in roundabouts close to the park.

Community led projects:

- Use the 'Ruthven Biodiversity Planting Palette' to create your own native bushland oasis in your backyard, enhancing the biodiversity connections in Reservoir West.
- Participate in bird surveys led by the Merri Creek Management Committee and other community groups, to track and record fauna sightings for the park, helping understand and measure the success of the Biodiversity Planting Plan.
- Establish a partnership with a university provider to use Ruthven Park as a 'living laboratory', allowing future environmentalists and horticulturalists an opportunity to rehabilitate the biodiversity values of the site.

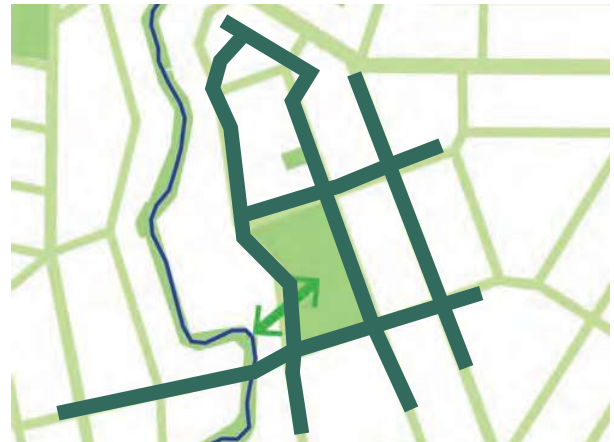


Figure 9 Streets where native plantings could be considered



Ruthven is strategically located to play a key role in enhancing the biodiversity network and minimising habitat fragmentation for Reservoir West, given its proximity to Edgars Creek, Edwardes Lake and the Central Creek Grasslands and the Merri Creek catchment.

It will also provide additional habitat, food and play opportunities for the local fauna, including the Blue-banded Bee, the Buff-banded Rail, several small birds and parrots. The endangered Growling Grass Frog and the Golden Sun Moth are also found in several nearby locations.

Figure 10 How Ruthven can play a part in the stepping stone for Biodiversity for Reservoir West

BIODIVERSITY PRECEDENTS



Permeable material on informal paths supports water retention



Immersive nature-based experiences



Improving habitat connections



The proposed 'Bushland path' offer an immersive nature-based experience.



Habitat that supports specific reptile and insect species (habitat logs)



Providing accessible water resources for bird and wildlife



Exploring integrated water habitats (ephemeral wetlands) to enhance biodiversity and immersive nature-based experiences



Grassland habitat will be integral to the park experience



Formal design with indigenous trees



Habitats that support birdlife (nesting box)



Habitat that supports specific bird and wildlife species (tree knots)



Informal seating with natural materials



PROPOSED PLANTING PALETTE

Ruthven's indigenous ecology found in EVC 55 'Plains Grassy Woodland'. Some examples are provided below.



Eucalyptus camaldulensis River Red Gum (EVC 55.61)



Acacia pychantha Golden Wattle (EVC 55.61)



Acacia paradoxa Hedge Wattle (EVC 55.61)



Austrostipa mollis Supple Spear Grass (EVC 55.61)



Themeda triandra Kangaroo Grass (EVC 55.61)



Bossiaea prostrata Creeping bossiaea (EVC 55.61)

PROPOSED PLANTING PALETTE

Local plant species which respond to the dry, windy, north-westerly microclimate of the site.



Dianella amoena Matted Flax Lily



Allocasuarina verticillata Drooping Sheoak



Acacia dealbata Silver Wattle



Leptospermum continentale Prickly Tea-tree



Enchylaena tomentosa Ruby Saltbush
*(currently existing on site)

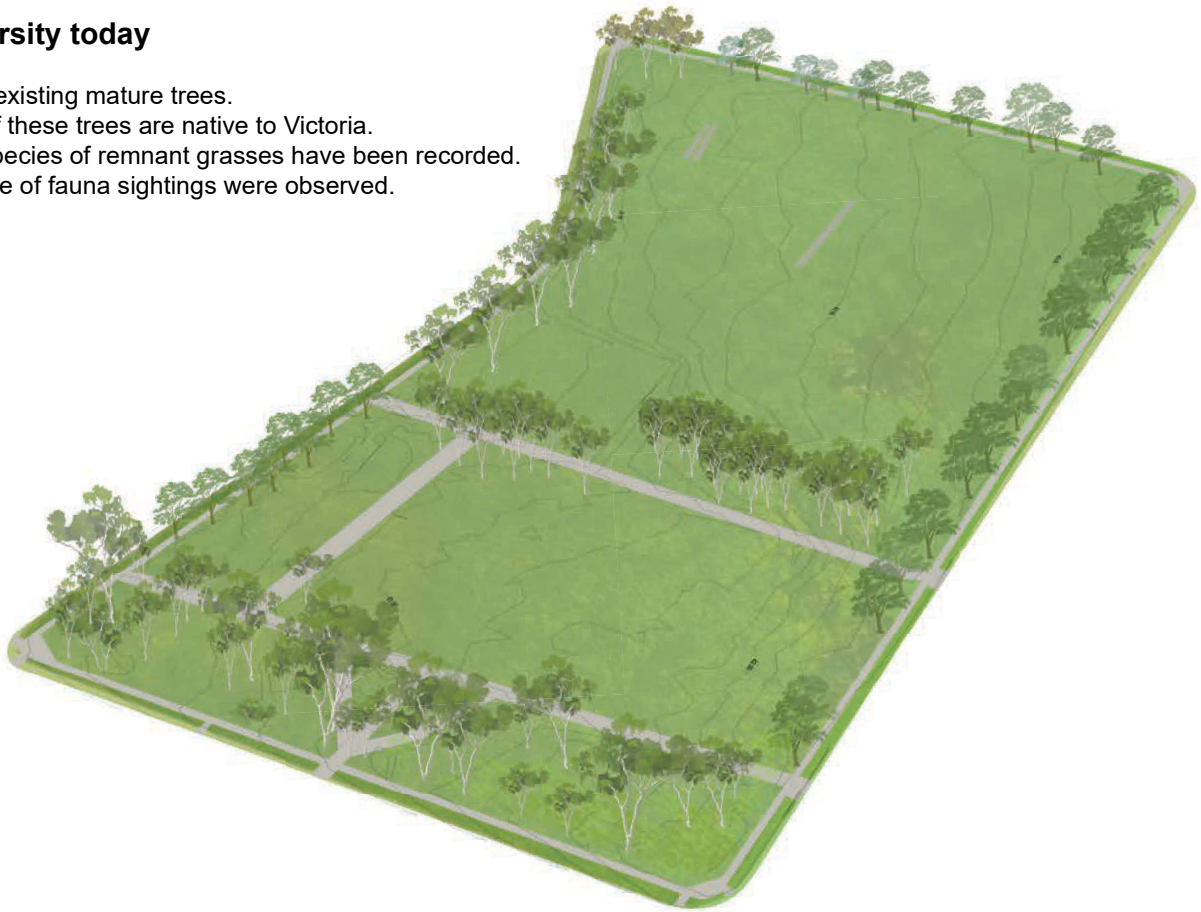


Corymbia maculata Spotted Gum
*(Currently existing on site)

ILLUSTRATIVE EVOLUTION OF RUTHVEN

Biodiversity today

- 137 existing mature trees.
- 40 of these trees are native to Victoria.
- 11 species of remnant grasses have been recorded.
- 9 type of fauna sightings were observed.



What we hope to achieve in 5-10 years

- Replacement of exotic plant species with indigenous plants.
- Approximately 250+ new indigenous trees.
- New habitat and nesting boxes throughout the site.
- Establishment of habitat conservation areas.
- Management of exotic weeds.
- Indigenous landscape.



What we hope to achieve in 20-30 years

- A rich biodiverse landscape.
- A true stepping stone enhancing Reservoir West's biodiversity.
- A series of small ephemeral wetlands to be established, enhancing aquatic fauna life.



Future proofing the wetland

To ensure that the wetland can be delivered in the future with minimal disturbance to the park, a 10m buffer will be established in Council's GIS mapping system, ensuring that no significant tree planting or major works will be planned for this area during the implementation of the master plan.





DIRECTION TWO: A PARK FOR ALL

Why is this important?

- Parks are free public spaces. They should be welcoming and inclusive for all ages, diversity and levels of mobility.
- They are spaces for Darebin's diverse community to gather with others, feel a sense of home and make connections with their local neighbours and broader Darebin population.
- Parks with a diversity of facilities and activities encourage people of all abilities and ages to participate in social and physical activities and events.
- They should be designed to be safe, with equitable access for all residents, particularly those with a disability, older people, children and young people and gender diverse residents.

Council led projects

- Create a sheltered community space designed to host BBQ's, picnics, birthdays and cultural celebrations. Accessible BBQ, picnic table and drinking fountains are to be included in this space.
- An accessible public toilet could be included within this structure, reducing the amount of buildings in the park.
- Rehabilitate the old school foundations by transforming it into an informal lawn area, suitable for picnicking, large family lunches or somewhere to lay and read a book. A local market or community food exchange could be held here.
- The main walking path is designed for jogging, walking, wheelchair and pram access.
- Install new seats and/or benches along the main walking path, where possible every 500m, under natural or structured shade areas.

- Install rubbish, recycle bins, drinking fountains and dispensers with recyclable poo-bags for dogs in locations to support park activities.

Community led projects

- Investigate opportunities for a 'Friends of Ruthven Park' to continue.
- Support local community groups to host small meetings and walking events.
- Support local community groups to host small events, food swaps and local markets.
- Kindergarten and school education and excursions.



Conversation corners will be designed to be inviting spaces, fostering community interactions and neighbourhood catch ups.



DIRECTION THREE: CREATING PLAY

Why is this important?

- Parks and open spaces are important to maintain healthy and active communities.
- They encourage social inclusion and provide opportunities for learning and development for all ages.
- Children visiting their local park independently of adults improves their self-confidence and physical development.
- Parks reduce social isolation in the elderly community.

Council led projects

- Create a new playspace, which includes a slide, adventure play elements and a swing. Ensure that adequate seating areas are incorporated in its designed, allowing for the local community to socialise.
- Create a nature based play area, allowing kids to play, explore and connect to nature. Nature play and sensory elements could include logs, sand, dry creek bed, timber equipment.
- Create an intergenerational, multi-purpose play area for all ages to use and enjoy. This may include a half basketball court or netball court, tennis hit up wall, soccer net, bouldering wall, bocce pitch. Include seating areas. Ensure that this space is designed to sensitively respond to the natural environment of the park. Use sound attenuation technology. Co-design the space with local young people and teenagers.
- Provide an outdoor exercise station to support an active and healthy ageing community.
- Council to host some 'free exercise programs' targeted for the local elderly community.
- Reshape the former oval. Retain it as an open lawn area to kick a footy, fly kites or go for a jog.

Community led projects

- Support creative-based kindergarten programmes such as bush play.
- Support community driven exercise groups (i.e. walking group, mothers outdoor yoga group).



Basketball courts provide healthy, outdoor recreation and exercise



Conversation corners will be designed to be inviting spaces



DIRECTION FOUR: SPACES FOR CONTEMPLATION, EDUCATION AND APPRECIATION

Why is this important?

- We live busy lives. Parks and open spaces provide us with an escape and visual relief from the urban environment.
- Open spaces can conserve and encourage understanding of the historical and cultural value of the region.
- Increasing appreciation of and respect for urban biodiversity will lead to greater community support, awareness and commitment to biodiversity protection.
- Acknowledging Ruthven Park's history is an important step in developing a vision for the site.
- Traditional Custodians have recognised this connection for thousands of years and their cultures reflect their profound connection to country.

Council led projects

- Create several seating and conversation corners throughout the park:
 - a. On the mound to take advantage of the lovely north facing panoramic views of the park. This could feature a native flowering garden.
 - b. Nestled amongst the gum trees.
 - c. On a new mound overlooking the oval area and future wetlands.

These spaces will feature a custom design complemented by a unique material and plants palette. The will be welcoming spaces, that foster community connection. They will be designed to incorporate natural and/or built shade, responding to the site's climatic conditions.
- Install new seating and/or benches in locations which allow the user to sit, ponder and appreciate the nature that surrounds them (i.e near a flowering gum to enjoy the birds singing or, for example the view of the future wetland).
- In partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, rename the park in the Woiwurrong language, recognising the Wurundjeri, the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters. Explore options to name seating areas and/or play areas in Woi Wurrung language.
- Where appropriate, undertake a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.
- Recognise Reservoir's migration history and diversity through subtle design gestures in the park. This may include heritage interpretation, design features/pattern in paving or furniture design.
- Creating a biodiverse bushland at Ruthven Park will also act as an educational tool for local community. This can be enhanced by:
 - a. Developing a series of interpretative signs for the park. The signs could feature natural history stories, identify local flora and fauna. Ensure signage is multilingual and integrates with in the environment.
 - b. Creating a 'nature discovery' walk-through the bushland area, providing a fun and educational trail – teaching kids to learn about the local flora and fauna found in the park.
- Incorporate local stories and narratives from past pupils and teachers – celebrating the sites history, through a placemaking/local art/landscape intervention in the park (i.e. seating node/ conservation corner).



Seats will be placed to enjoy the natural environment of the park.



DIRECTION FIVE: ACCESS & SAFETY

Why is this important?

- Walking and bike riding improves physical health and mental wellbeing.
- Sustainable transport encourages less reliance on cars and increased use of environmentally friendly travel such as public transport, walking and cycling as it helps reduce our impact on climate change
- Creating safe parks and public spaces will ensure that they are inviting and well used by the local community.

Council led projects

Getting around the Park

- Create a main 'walking and wheeling' loop within the park, connecting people to key park entries and destinations throughout the park. This will not be a formal shared cycling and walking path.
- Create a bushland walk, providing an opportunity for the local community to meander through and connect with the natural, bushland experience of the park.
- Glasgow Avenue was the main entry whilst the site operated as a primary school. Retain and upgrade as the main feature entry to the park. This could include some park signage and feature landscaping as tribute to the former school.
- Improve access to the park by creating new entry points to the park.
- Install bike hoops at key entries and people destinations in the park.

Travelling to the park

- Create safer pedestrian access to the park. Install raised zebra crossings at strategic locations to the park (i.e. local school, aged care facilities, bus stops, along the main pedestrian routes).
- Realign the pedestrian priority network (PPN) to Tracey and Hurley streets reflecting this park as a local, walkable destination.
- Support traffic calming interventions in surrounding streets and along key walking and cycling routes to the park. This may include tree planting, raised pedestrian crossings, kerb build outs and redesign of the roundabouts.
- Improve the on-road cycling environment along Wilson Boulevard, connecting cyclists to the Edgar's Creek shared user path and the 'Streets for People' corridor along Broadhurst Avenue.
- Provide on-street parking only.
- Install dedicated on-street disabled parking bays.

- Advocate to Melbourne Water for a continuous shared user path along Edgars Creek, connecting Reservoir to the Merri Creek Trail.
- Upgrade bus stops and shelters for Bus 558. Advocate for broader bus network improvements for Reservoir.

Community Safety

- Ensure that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles are applied through the implementation of the Master Plan.
- Undertake regular safety audits during the delivery of the Master Plan.
- Increase the number of entries into the park.
- New planting and landscape features (i.e. mounds) must not create hidden public spaces with poor surveillance.
- Install new park and wayfinding signage throughout the park. Ensure that it is multilingual.
- Ensure clear sightlines throughout the park to the street are kept open.

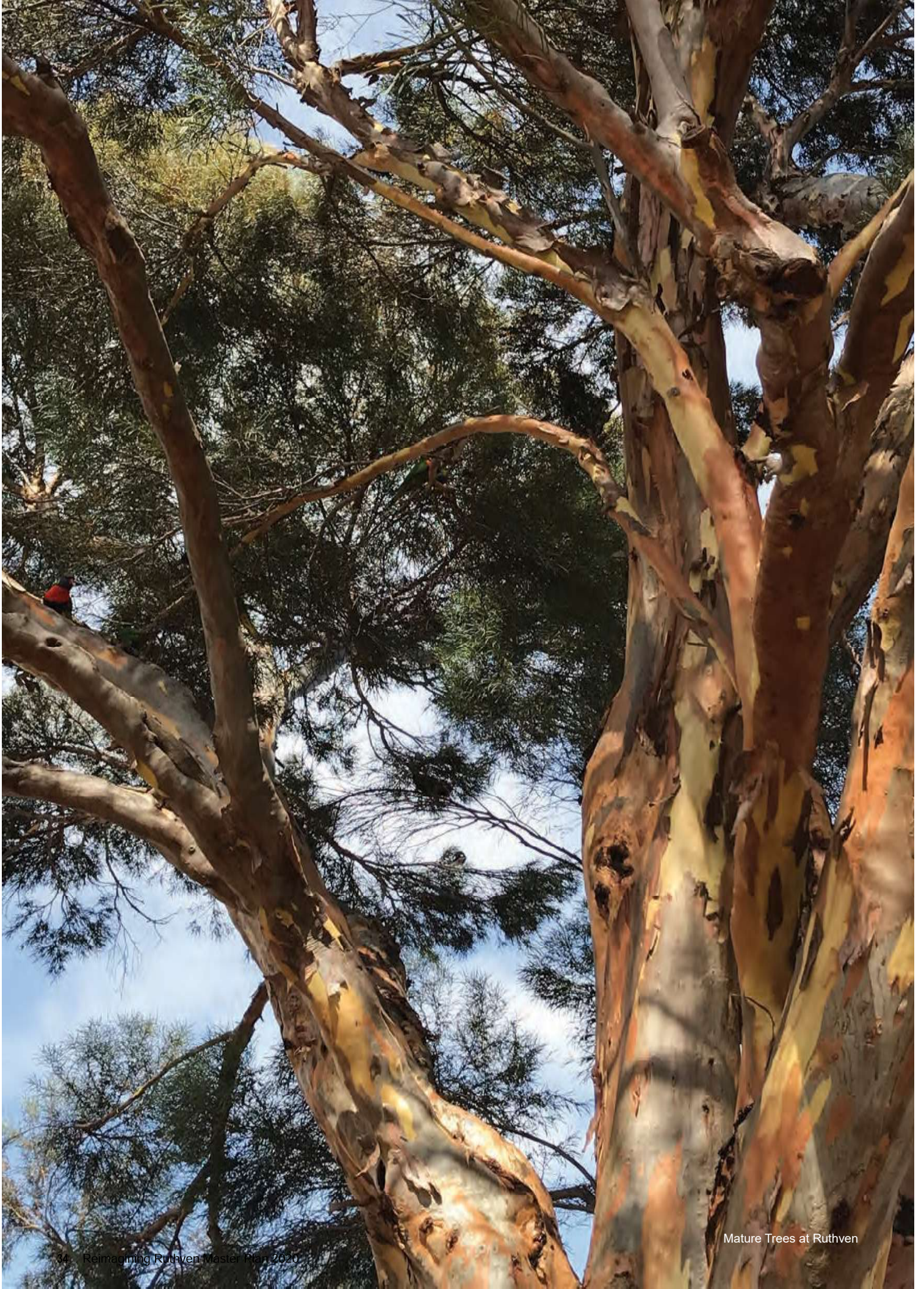
Community Led projects:

- Support local walking groups.

What is Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED)?

CPTED are best practise principles applied the built environment ensuring they are designed to reduce the opportunity for crime.

CPTED considers increasing passive surveillance, improving lines of sight, activating unused spaces, or defining boundaries between private and public spaces. It ensures that through good design, safer public space are created for the public to enjoy.



Mature Trees at Ruthven



DIRECTION SIX: SUSTAINABILITY, RESILIENCE & FUTURE

Why is this important?

- The park's natural and built elements are robust, easy to maintain, and durable for the long-term to support current and future generations.
- Sustainable infrastructure selection and well considered design provides numerous environmental and economic benefits.
- Future proofing the park and its ability to adapt and transform to weather and climate changes and remain a comfortable green open space for the community for future generations.

Council led projects

- Remove the existing asphalt and concrete footings of the former school.
- Ensure the main walking path is designed to support maintenance vehicles.
- Retain Tracey Street as the main access entry for maintenance vehicles.
- Minimise requirements for ongoing maintenance including weed management through good design, reduction in edges and effective use of surface materials.
- Mulch around existing remnant trees.
- Ensure that the parks planting palette includes low maintenance and drought tolerant species.
- Perform regular tree assessments, maintenance of tree health and succession planting of trees reaching maturity and those in decline.
- Select locally made, sustainable, robust and easily maintained open space assets (play equipment, benches, bins etc), leading to a longer life for assets and increased enjoyment and use by the community.
- Support the use of natural materials for park infrastructure and playpaces.
- Use renewable technologies in new park infrastructure where possible (i.e. solar panels)
- Undertake investigations to help determine the feasibility of creating an ephemeral wetland in Ruthven Park in the long term. Investigations to include geotechnical work and MUSIC modelling to understand water volumes and feasibility.

Community led projects:

- Support community working bees.



Figure 11 How ephemeral wetlands might function at Ruthven Park, based on existing topography and natural water flows

DESIGN PRECEDENTS

PLAY



Playgrounds built of natural materials

CONTEMPLATION



Quiet spaces for reflection and contemplation

COMMUNITY



Structures that provide opportunity for community gathering

EDUCATION & PLAY



Nature play opportunities for children to engage with our natural environment



Unprogrammed spaces for relaxation



Contemplation/conversation corners



Connecting children with Australia's rich natural environment

DESIGN PRECEDENTS

PLAY



Spaces for sports, recreation and all ages fun

INTERPRETATION



Wurundjeri stone markings at Birrarung Marr



Northcote Civic Square



Afghan Bazaar, Dandenong

MATERIALS PALETTE



Various concrete aggregate colours will be explored for the main walking path



New accessible gratic gravel paths will be explored for the main walk path.



School entry paths layout to be retained



Benches made of local, native timber



Picnic tables made of local, native timber



Existing seats retained on-site



Explore opportunities for public art



Reference the former school through design and play



Grantic gravel will be used for the bushland walk path.



Dog on lead parklands for safety and the protection of flora and fauna

COLOUR PALETTE

A distinctive colour palette can be derived from existing features within the park. For example, the changing colours of the bark of Angophoras, Eucalypts and Corymbias could inform the design.



Angophora costata



Eucalyptus scoparia



Corymbia maculata



MASTER PLAN OUTCOMES

The combined actions of the Reimagining Ruthven Master Plan will deliver the following outcomes:



BLUEPRINT FOR BIODIVERSITY



BEFORE

- Remnant school gardens
- 47 exotic Trees
- 40 native Trees
- 5 native plants
- 11 types of remnant grasses



AFTER

- Biodiversity park
- 250 new native Trees
- 120 new native plants
- Removal of 42 exotic trees
- Protection of remnant grasses
- New habitat zones



A PARK FOR ALL



BEFORE

- Community facilities were demolished in 2013
- Two (2) picnic tables
- One drinking fountain

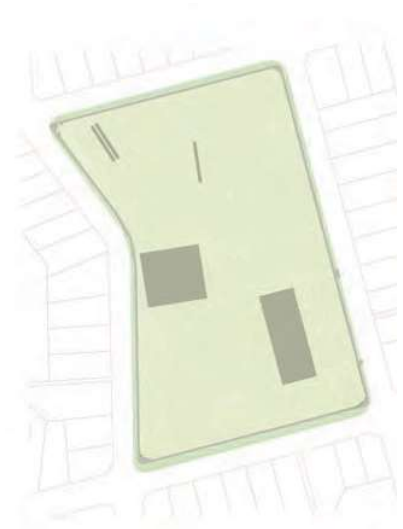


AFTER

- Picnic shelter, BBQ, large picnic tables
- 11,960 m2 of new community spaces
- Two open grass areas for community picnics and leisure



CREATING PLAY



BEFORE

- Two old cricket pitches
- Former junior school oval
- Former basketball & netball courts



AFTER

- 16,100 m2 of new play areas
- New playground
- Nature based play
- Intergenerational play
- Two open grass areas for informal play



CONTEMPLATION & EDUCATION



BEFORE

- Three (3) seats are in the park

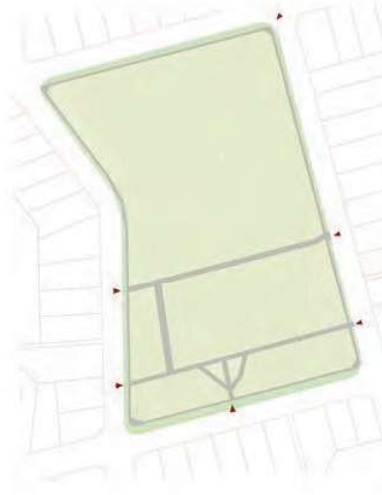


AFTER

- 3 bespoke seating areas focusing on nature & contemplation
- Nature discovery trail
- At least 20 new seats and/ benches
- Connection to Country
- Planting is an educative tool for community



ACCESS & SAFETY



BEFORE

- Path only servicing the south
- Four existing entrances
- Lack of entrances in the north



AFTER

- 8 entrances.
- 3,660 m2 new paths.
- New granitic path for a bushland experience



SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE



BEFORE

- 6,350 m2 of hard surface.
- 24,261 m2 of permeable surface
- 106 trees for natural shade
- No water sensitive urban design



AFTER

- 5,200 m2 of hard surface.
- 26,950 m2 of permeable surface.
- 250 trees for natural shade.
- Ephemeral wetland capturing stormwater run-off.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation of both Council led activities and community led activities are essential to realising the vision and goals of the Master Plan. These may include:

- Targeted consultation and detail design of spaces within the park
- Establishment of an incorporated Ruthven Park Friends Group
- Community investigations and activations
- Capital works bids to deliver upgrades
- Funding and grant investigations and applications

1-2 years



- Renaming of park
- Concrete removal and reseeded
- Exotic tree and shrub removal
- Tree planting
- Design of playspace
- Biodiversity Planting & Management Plan
- Commencing biodiversity planting in the south east and west sections of the park

Next 3-10 years



- Walking paths
- New park entrances
- New seating
- New bins and bike hoops
- Creating play areas
- Community shelter
- Tree planting
- Habitat planting
- Wetlands investigations
- Outdoor gym

Working with local experts to help realise the Master Plan

- Explore partnerships with universities to create a 'Living biodiversity Laboratory' at Ruthven Park. A research and teaching collaboration could be established in Reservoir West, to help deliver the biodiversity function of this plan.
- Explore opportunities to work with our local experts including (i.e. the Merri Creek Management Committee, Darebin Nature Trust, Darebin Bushland Team). They can provide specialist, local advice in delivering the biodiversity recommendations of the Master Plan.

Next 10-20 years



- Walking paths
- New seating
- Tree planting
- Habitat planting
- Wetlands investigations
- Creating play areas

Next 20+ years



- Ephemeral wetlands
- Tree planting
- Habitat planting

