



Victoria Park, Ballarat



**Victoria Park Visioning
Internal Staff Workshop
May 2012
Facilitated by Sharon Sykes**

Internal Staff Workshop – Visioning Exercise held in April 2012

Attended by: David Lewis, Davis McMahon, Jacinta Baxter, David Grant, David Ronaldson, Sean O’Keefe, Adam Parrott, Ian Rossiter, Daryl Wallis, David Keighrey, Ashley Pittard, Susan Fayad, Brian Benson

Summary of Outcomes of the Workshop

Some key observations	
	Central park in Ballarat
The Challenges	
Landscape	Grasslands – public perception Preserving unique character Protection of whole site, including southern end Tree condition
Management	Crown reservation Managing and resourcing/financing the priorities There is no advocacy – no one is representing the park Partnerships are good but need to be carefully managed Cannot / should not provide everything for everyone within one park
Communication	Lack of awareness about various aspects of the park Lack of knowledge about issues such as the closing of the park gates Lack of appreciation Lack of understanding of the history of the park and the need to preserve it
Information	Providing quality information
Infrastructure	Deteriorating assets – all Lack of facilities for more activity Conditions of pathways and roadways Ponds and lakes Drainage and retention
Open space	Pressure for more development and from increased usage Increased demands and expectations Need to maximise use but not ‘alienate’ public open space
The community	Population growth to the west Park is underutilised
Activity	Regional level park (in the hierarchy) but it is not a sports precinct Inappropriate activities Achieving multi-use Park is suitable for events – requires a commitment to provide suitable infrastructure, need to be able to manage access into the park for events to be successful The areas that are fenced off are not ‘areas for everyone’
Traffic	Unrestricted vehicle access Extent of roads and thoroughfares Unsafe and insufficient crossing points Vandalism created by cars in the park Pedestrian and vehicles – the interface Connections to the park and the management of traffic around the park
Access	Accessing the park in winter
Safety / Risk	Lack of lighting
Maintenance	Quality and safety of ovals
Identity	Interface with saleyards Relationship with Lake Wendouree

Parks identified that Victoria Park is similar to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jells Park • Westerfolds Park • Centennial Park in Sydney • Eastern Park in Geelong • Kings Park in Perth • Hollybank (near Launceston) • Royal Park, Melbourne • Adelaide Parklands 	Victoria Park is not like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Park • Botanical Gardens • Lake Wendouree
--	---

Responses to key questions from the staff who attended the workshop – the following describes the individual responses provided to the questions that were asked:

Your first thoughts that come to mind when you think of Victoria Park?

Trees, dog walking, under developed. Potential to be something special
Large space – not used enough
Underused open space. Bit scary later in the afternoon
Wild, open, exploring, great trees, old
Open space, large, important, multi-use, to be protected. “Dodgy”
Open woodland
Large, open, green, trees, European style parkland, leisure and people space
Lungs of a growing city
Old style public open space with a charm of its own
Open space, cricket activities, trees
Valuable open space for the community for leisure, sports, events with significant vegetation
Historic, open space, objects, native vegetation

Your role/involvement with Victoria Park

Planning, supporting parks and completing capital works projects
Park used for hosting events
Lease/licence of buildings
Managing trees and vegetation
Discussing with stakeholders about the use of the park
Planning and design of the park
Coordinating and supporting the vision and developing an implementation plan for the outcome
Responsible for horticultural maintenance works and native vegetation conservation
Planning, project development, liaison with events, issues management, informing parks and gardens about works
Overarching coordination of heritage issues / role on Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee

What is your perception of what the community thinks about Victoria Park?

Underdeveloped, potential for more community ownership, shared space, passive recreation / not sports!!
Not used enough, untidy, a waste of space
Great open space but very underutilised and a bit scary at night
Not maintained properly, somewhat unsafe and dangerous in some areas, great huge open space
Some are engaged; some treat it as their very own to everyone else’s exclusion; some don’t care – idle space that should be used
They are proud of it, those who know about it
Big, underdeveloped and underutilised, sometimes intimidating and unsafe, great for sports, unkempt

It's well preserved and maintained on the northern precinct, but poorly maintained and preserved in much of the southern precinct
A place of many purposes – sport, passive recreation, quiet pursuits, but old. A people's park
2 main views: 1) Keep as is, with increased maintenance. 2) Develop further
Spacious, basically maintained, lots of ovals, places to go to walk, fish, dogs; lots of trees, unsafe due to unsavoury behaviour
There is a lot of ownership re the heritage and heritage elements of Victoria Park; don't want to see too much if any development

What are the challenges now facing Victoria Park?

Ballarat West Growth Area and demand for public open space / population increase – drainage, access in winter / lack of facilities
Without active use this site may be reduced or not maintained and unusable for events
Cost of maintenance vs revenue / lack of use and knowledge
Preserving the unique character of the park (not over-developing/maintaining) / greater use and appreciation of the park as a whole
Protection of the site – retention of the site from development / maintenance and improvement of the southern boundary / road and drainage infrastructure
Money to fund programs
Maintenance / assets falling apart and deteriorating, especially trees / pressure from development which would alienate open space
Tree assets condition / poor public perception of native grass areas / unrestricted vehicle access damaging environment
Over development / ageing infrastructure
Maintenance issues, use of the park for inappropriate activities
Groups wanting to build on and use it for basketball, showgrounds, archers and tennis, etc. / pedestrian and traffic interface and priority
Lack of attention, lack of understanding of heritage (place, items and natural) of the park – interpretation

What challenges will Victoria Park face in the future?

Development of organised sporting complex / commercial development, future of saleyards
High cost of upgrading / pressure to develop for commercial use
None if it is used right
Pressures from overdevelopment and increased usage
Population growth to the west / protection of the site and resistance from development
Tree decline, increasing demands, money
Increased demand for recreation use and events / funding deficiency / pressure from development
Pressures from development of 'closed' use facilities (stadia, arenas)
Staying relevant to the community needs
Meeting the needs of all the community / managing perception and interest groups
Total growth from the Ballarat West Growth and as a geographical town centre / always second in line to Lake Wendouree
Climate change, development pressures, lack of funding for heritage elements

What is the potential for Victoria Park?

Potential for a Friends Group / preservation of heritage elements – trees, native vegetation / education, linking to lake and gardens precincts / child friendly
Hubs for passive and active use for events, recreation and sport / if linked to the lake, there is huge potential
A wonderful space to meet, gather, celebrate, work out, etc.
Increased usage of the whole area / more tree planting and landscaping / education on historic landscapes and grasslands (indigenous)
Engagement with the community / groups to recognise the gift the park is to cherish and endorse its survival /

opportunity to agree on infrastructure to service the park
Huge space, historic
Put in infrastructure for outdoor events / build central community pavilion / improve road and pedestrian connections into and through the park / plant more trees / improve the appearance and interpretation and visitor facilities
Interpretation of indigenous flora and Ballarat's history / more passive recreation features / 24hr use through activation of some facilities
Has a big public awareness through the large numbers of sports played there – so can potentially be a big public 'hub'
Wonderful large piece of open space in the city that can cater for many different needs / great opportunity!!
To be highly activated / to be safer / more events and diverse use / better pedestrian and trail linkages / new activities (dog park) / new spaces including a play space / more vegetation including an urban forest
There was a lot of foresight putting Victoria Park where it is / open space and heritage combined is a great way of ensuring community identity is embraced whilst providing for new residents who will access the park

What will be required to reach this potential?

Ownership from the community / support from Council / increased funding / Vision and a 25 year plan
\$ and a plan to engage users (events / community / schools)
Knowledge of public, clean-up of unwanted activity, lighting, more BBQ facilities and shelters, etc. / a coffee shop or similar for people to gather round, to draw people there
Greater understanding of the resource (Victoria Park) itself and the various components limitations, life and ability to stand stress / increased use, options for management
Community agreement / Council leadership and communication for the Vision / resource allocation for the future / acknowledgement that it is not vacant space looking for a use
Community commitment
Funding / resource (human) / increased recognition of value by community and Councillors – a shared and supported vision / change of attitude by some current tenants and users
Agreement by Council and community on the Vision (An Accord) / continued recurrent and capital funding commitments / communication and engagement strategy
Sensitive development of sports facilities / conservation of native vegetation / tree planting to give a NYC Central Park type feel
Management of the various requirements from the public / community – being able to deliver on these
Public perception change / resources – place manager, \$ for development, \$ for maintenance, increased activity, increased surveillance
Interpretation and activities to engage community, new residents and visitors to build appreciation and understanding of this important place. Continue to connect with local community regarding their wishes for the Park as values and times change.

After a discussion about the challenges facing Victoria Park, the following questions were answered by the individual staff and responded to as noted below:

Your thoughts now when you think of Victoria Park?

A huge threat to the uniqueness of Victoria Park is the emphasis on 'active uses' throughout the park to the detriment of the 'space' itself and the loss of openness / quiet areas to do 'nothing' relatively free from other users / activities.
Multi-purpose parkland
A valuable open space for the community for sport, leisure and events with significant vegetation – desire to enhance Victoria Park as a quality, safe and functional open space for community use
A park for all people, so many roles to play for our future communities
Vital to be clear about the Vision – what is it? What isn't? Boundaries and community engagement, activity and use of the space.
Heritage values and how not to lose it / diminish it
If we make this safe and spread the knowledge it will become more user friendly

Trees, native vegetation, potential, more infrastructure
Great potential – need to be careful in getting all parts right
A wonderful space to use and to be able to accommodate a number of interests
‘People’s Park’ (I think that has been strongly articulated today and from the community consultation)
Broad open space that is historic, a part of Ballarat’s identity – albeit under used / recognised. In a nutshell – ‘An Opportunity!!’

What would you say to your successors in 20-30 years’ time about what they can expect Victoria Park to look like – in your ideal (realistic) world?

Value the simple things / champion the value of natural, tranquil spaces and the park as ‘lungs’ of Ballarat. The origins of the Park as a people’s space and natural environment – those values will always be threatened and need appreciation and protection. The ‘sustained amenity’ approach to the landscape is critical and long term views of how to manage the trees is vital.
Much the same as today but more consistently and extensively used and better maintained. “It Buzzes” – A hive of recreation and leisure where there is something to do for everyone.
Welcome to Victoria Park – the people’s park. Activated daily for health, fun and fitness. For families and all ages to enjoy the unique character, environment, leisure activities and history as the heart of Ballarat. (Maybe some unique items for a provincial town life (Wi-Fi, park applications to do activities, public art trails, amazing play spaces, etc.)
The tree asset has been maintained through strong sentiment of the community that replacement and appropriate management has delivered an urban forest. The park has provided important experiences for residents to commune with nature (people, plants and animals) for building communities that come together and interrelate. There is a range of experiences for all ages, abilities and interests. The park now tells visitors about our history, who we are and our vision for the future.
A whole space that is valued, used and maintained appropriately across the whole park. A space that encourages casual recreational usage in a safe manner. A space that can be closed for significant events (large) and has the infrastructure to support. A space that is available for a variety of local / district level organised sport outcomes. A space that is well interpreted for its heritage, cultural, indigenous and environmental aspects.
Retain its current heritage value and appeal and not to be like all the other parks around Victoria, Australia and elsewhere, but that it is uniquely “Ballarat”. Refer to ‘Ballarat Heritage Precincts Statements of Significance 2006 - Victoria Park No 165’ – This does not preclude development but it needs to be handled sensitively.
It took a lot of careful planning, consultation and discussion to make this space safe, user friendly and useful in the future.
Vision would incorporate well maintained public open space amenity for a varied use of passive and organised recreation, whilst preserving the original character of the park. The balance and diversity of environmental and ornamental horticulture and public space.
An equal to Lake Wendouree / a park of pride for the community / kept in character (history, layout, etc.) but used for multiple activities / an event hub.
It has to maintain its value to the community as a great, large piece of open space but at the same time there are developments / improvements that could be carried out that would enable far better use for a wider audience from the community. It is not about over development but building and expanding on what is there in a sensible way. Cater for many!
Victoria Park has been there for the people of Ballarat for a very long time – keep it accessible to all. It is elegant in its simplicity.
Similar, but adored, strengthened, enhanced and highly utilised. A vibrant green historic community hub which allows ‘free play’ in a more naturalistic environment in the middle of a busy city – like Central Park in NY. A visual and visible story.