

Item 8.1 Presentation of CEO Report – Issue 77

Question from Councillor Clark:

Regarding the Bothwell Street, Woody Meadow project, a resident raised concerns regarding lack of canopy cover, loose stones creating trip hazards and graffiti management. Can officers provide an update on these works and if there are any plans in place to remove the graffiti?

Response

Background

The Woody Meadows project is a part of a research project in conjunction with the University of Melbourne to trial a new planting and maintenance form in the City of Port Phillip. The resulting landscapes are designed to be low maintenance, add to diversity of species, be visually engaging, while increasing canopy and cooling.

The meadow does look different to other planting around the City of Port Phillip, especially in the establishment phase. More information about the research project can be found here: <https://woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au/>

This project is in line with City of Port Phillip's strategic objective - Sustainable Port Phillip: A sustainable future, where our environmentally aware and active community benefits from living in a bayside city that is greener, cooler, cleaner and climate resilient.

Current and future planting

The initial planting at the Chapel Street end is acting as a Woody Meadow test plot. The planting in this area is designed to give us data on the performance of the plant species - enabling us to measure success and determine which plants we should use in further woody meadows across CoPP. Therefore is not part of the original design for the full project planting.

The feedback from the community has been taken on board and new designs are currently being developed. Once the updates have been prepared, Council officers will engage with the Gibbs and Bothwell St residents specifically and the wider community.

The updated design only converts pockets of the median along Bothwell St into Woody Meadows, the new plans include areas of more conventional planting and a very wide pathway with gathering spaces running along the length of the median. The wide pathway was included after consultation with community members. Depending on community feedback when the plans are released, the landscape plans can be altered prior to any works commencing on site.

Fencing and Stones

The rigid hoop fence and base have been designed to contain a deeper layer of scoria which is being tested as a planting medium as a part of the Woody Meadow research project with the University Melbourne. The fencing defines the planting area and provides a line for future pruning. As the plants grow, the fence will be obscured by foliage and will not be a visually prominent aspect of the planted area. We expect the plants to grow into the space over the next 5-6 months. The below photo of a garden in the City of Melbourne demonstrates how the fencing becomes less prominent as the plants grow.

We have informed our maintenance crews of the potential hazard with the loose stones and they will address any concerns.



Tree removals

The overall project will significantly increase the canopy in the area through the planting of 20 new trees.

Some trees will be removed as the project starts as they are in poor health and/or with poor structure (see below)



The project will also include the long term, staged replacement of Desert Ash in the median strip, replacing with native Australian species - this will start with the lower-rated specimens. The higher-rated Desert Ash will be retained from a visual/amenity perspective.

Desert Ash trees have a significant invasive potential and are naturalized in many disturbed/abandoned urban settings across Melbourne from ornamental/amenity plantings. This is corroborated by invasiveness and impact ratings under the Victorian Weed Risk Assessment (VWRA) framework by Agriculture Victoria. Desert Ash trees are dioecious, and all trees can produce thousands of wind seeds annually and currently the railway reserve at the end of Gibbs Street is dominated by several Desert Ash - the result of self-sown seeds from our adjacent amenity trees.

**Please note: answers to any questions in Public Question Time and Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.*