



Miles and Dodds Street Reserve expansion.

Community Engagement Summary Report.

Phase 2, August 2024.

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Background

Over four weeks in July – August 2024 Council invited community feedback on a draft concept plan of the proposal to expand Miles and Dodds Street Reserve. The draft concept plan was prepared in response to feedback in a first phase of community engagement during November and December 2023. The proposal to expand Miles and Dodds Street Reserve, involves discontinuing the east bound section of Miles Street, creating a larger green space for the community.

The proposal aims to:

- improve the design and value of the reserve
- better cater to local recreational use
- contribute to urban heat island effect mitigation.

Feedback was received via Participate Melbourne's online platform and two face-to-face pop-up consultation sessions at the Reserve.

Strategic context

Miles and Dodds Street Reserve is noted as a very high priority in City of Melbourne's Open Space Strategy, which recommends investigating the potential to expand the size of Miles and Dodds Street Reserve to "improve its design and value to better cater to local recreational use and contribution to urban heat island effect mitigation." The Miles and Dodds Street Reserve expansion project would be delivered under Major Initiative 16, as part of the Pocket Parks program. Major Initiative 16 seeks to increase the amount of public open space and improve access to open space in the municipality with a focus on areas of greatest need, such as Southbank and emerging urban renewal areas.

Previous community engagement

The first phase of community engagement was held late 2023 to explore the proposal to expand Miles and Dodds Street Reserve. Community consultation took place from 6 November to 17 December 2023. Feedback was collected at two in-person sessions in the park and on an online survey on Participate Melbourne. Paper copies were also available during pop up sessions. Signs were installed in the park with information about the proposal and a QR code linking to the Participate Melbourne survey.

The online survey was completed by 123 participants and over 60 community members attended in person pop up sessions in the to discuss the proposal with the project team.

Of the 123 responses:

- 54 per cent supported the proposal
- 33 per cent did not support the proposal
- 13 per cent felt impartial or did not answer.

The project team noted the unusually high level of objection to the proposal and extra attention was given to understanding the key themes of the feedback. Some community members shared valid concerns around safety, traffic, parking and antisocial behaviour.

The outcome of this first phase of community engagement was to proceed with developing a draft concept plan, taking community feedback into consideration, with particular attention to concerns raised and experiences that inform the differing areas of community support.

Further information on the first phase of community engagement can be found online at [Community consultation | Miles and Dodds Street Reserve expansion | Participate Melbourne](#).

Community Engagement Methodology

Using a similar approach to the first phase of community engagement, the second round of community engagement encouraged feedback through an online survey on the Participate Melbourne website, while information was also gathered in person at the two site sessions. The invitation to participate in the community engagement was promoted by the City of Melbourne through a range of mediums including:

- Online and paper copy surveys with questions asking if respondents had participated in the first phase of engagement, and if they support various aspects of the proposal including discontinuance of the road and a reduction in car parking to create a larger green space for the community.
- An illustrative draft concept plan showing how the proposal could be implemented, with simple sketches to help communicate the ideas.
- Information on potential traffic and car park changes.
- 4 x A1 information boards in the park with QR codes.
- Face-to-face engagement with two pop-up sessions held at the park.
- Email and phone correspondence from community members to key project officers.

Two officers from the Proactive Policing Unit also attended one of the pop-up sessions in the park. Community members who attended this pop-up session were able to talk directly with the Police Officers about their neighbourhood concerns.

Who we heard from

Throughout the engagement, participants had the chance to engage online through the Participate Melbourne page and pop-up events in the park. There were 113 contributions to the online survey, the survey data relating to who we heard from is explained in detail in the following tables.

Table 1 – Did you participate in the first community conversation in November – December 2023?

Answer choices	Percent
Yes	28.32%
No	71.68%

Table 2 - How do you describe your gender?

Answer choices	Percent
Man	39.29%
Woman	50.00%
Non binary	0%
Prefer not to say	9.82%%

Answer choices	Percent
Other	0.89%

Table 3 - What is your age?

Answer choices	Percent
Under 15 years	0%
15-19 years	0%
20-24 years	4.55%
25-29 years	10%
30-34 years	8.18%
35-39 years	13.64%
40-44 years	18.18%
45-49 years	7.27%
50-54 years	8.18%
55-59 years	3.64%
60-64 years	5.54%
65-69 years	5.45%
70-74 years	2.73%
75-79 years	1.82%
80-84 years	0%
85-89 years	0%
90 years	0%
Prefer not to say	10.91%

Table 3 - Do you identify with any of the following?

Answer choices	Percent
Aboriginal	3.54%
Torres Strait Islander	0%
Person with a disability	4.42%
Carer	3.54%
LGBTIQ	9.73%
Speak a language other than English at home	12.39%
Born overseas	25.66%
International student	0%
Prefer not to say	22.12%
None of these	34.51%

Table 4 - Which of the following best describes your connection to this City of Melbourne project?

Answer choices	Percent
I am a resident	91.15%
I am a worker	0.88%
I own a business	1.77%
I am a student	0%
I am a visitor	3.54%
Prefer not to say	0%
Other	2.65%

Table 5 – Where do you live, work, own a business, study or visit from?

Answer choices	Percent
Southbank (3006)	95.58%
CBD (3000)	1.77%
Carlton (3053)	0%
Docklands (3008)	0%
East Melbourne (3002)	0%
Kensington (3031)	0%
North Melbourne (3051)	0%
Parkville (3052)	0%
South Yarra (3141)	0%
Other	2.65%

What we heard from the community

During the engagement we asked a variety of questions to capture community thoughts and opinions on the proposal to expand the park, as shown in the draft concept plan for Miles and Dodds Street Reserve. The survey data relating to these various questions shown in the following tables.

Table 6 - Do you support the plans to expand and improve Miles and Dodds Street Reserve, as shown in the draft concept plan?

Answer choices	Percent
Yes	46.90%
No	53.10%

Table 7 - The draft concept plan proposes the closure of the east bound lane of Miles Street between Dodds Street and Wells Street. Do you support this change?

Answer choices	Percent
Yes	48.67%
No	49.56%

Answer choices	Percent
Unsure	1.77%

Table 8 - The draft concept plan proposes to reorganise parking bays to accommodate more green space. It is proposed that the number of car parking bays immediately around the park could change, resulting in an overall loss of up to four parking bays. Do you support this change?

Answer choices	Percent
Yes	43.36%
No	50.44%
Unsure	6.19%

Feedback on the proposed changes to the park

The draft concept plan proposes various changes to the park. Respondents were asked to provide their level of support for a list of proposed elements, with a rating scale of zero to five, with zero indicating strongly against and five indicating a level of strong support. This data is difficult to analyse due to the vast difference in level of support for the project overall. Many respondents indicated low levels of support for all elements, suggesting lack of support for the project overall.

Table 9 – Level of support for elements in the park, listed from highest level of support to lowest.

Answer choices	Level of support out of five
New seating and picnic tables.	3.24
Changing the vegetation and garden beds to improved sightlines in and out of the park.	3.22
Larger open lawn area with new pathways.	3.20
Bike parking on Dodds Street.	3.03
Improved Park safety by removing through traffic on the east bound lane of Miles Street.	2.98
Introduction of rocks and logs for seating and informal play.	2.96

Engagement findings

What we heard in response to the draft concept plan

Generally, most people are supportive of Council's strategic ambition relating to parks and city greening, with some positive feedback and enthusiasm received in response to the draft concept plan. We heard a positive response from many local families who live nearby in residential apartments that do not have access to private open space within their properties. We heard that there is a lack of street lighting, particularly on the east bound section of Miles Street. We heard that the current network of parks in this neighbourhood is good but could be better. We heard that exercise equipment for adults is missing in Southbank and that play opportunities could be better for families. We also heard that people are looking forward to greening of the ACCA forecourt.

Below are some direct quotes from the feedback received in support of the draft concept plan.

"I like the fact that you are trying to retain as many of the existing large trees as possible."

"I think that the propose green space will be a fantastic way to boost mental health, increase traffic to local shops and strengthen a sense of community in the area."

"Thanks for improving this park for local residents"

When compared to similar greening projects, an unusually high number of objections and negative feedback was received in response to the proposal and draft concept plan. Many residents and other community members shared frustrations with Council regarding the overall process. The road closure and loss of car parking is a very sensitive topic amongst locals. Some direct quotes from those who do not support the changes proposed in the draft concept plan are listed below.

"Vital road infrastructure will be removed. Car spaces will be lost. I see no use for a tiny park when there are better options within 5 minutes walking distance"

"With the council approving more high-rise developments in the area, this will result in increased motorist traffic and with less two-way roads, it will move more traffic to Coventry St. In peak time, it's hard enough getting out of this pocket, and this is going to make it worse."

"There are already significant green spaces in our area, namely the Botanical Gardens and Kings Domain only one block away."

"It will have a detrimental impact of the community with area for unwelcome lingering and the changes to the streets already limited parking and take way access to the area by changes to street."

"Unnecessary. will still "be a tiny space when there are more attractive open spaces elsewhere with better access, light and existing play equipment"

"It does not make sense to expand an area that is only used by suspicious adults after dark, it will only attract more of these persons and will reduce privacy, safety and security, not to mention loss of needed parking spots. Resources would be better used to expand Grant st. reserve for example."

"To give up a road and car parks including our privacies and safety will not be worth the rocks and logs. And the ugly power station will still be there including a street with car fumes blowing right into us when we sit there."

Additional conversations and feedback received

Before, during and after this phase of engagement Councillors and Council officers received phone calls, emails and letters of objection. All feedback received has been considered in preparation of this summary document, recommendations and next steps.

Outcome and next steps

Outcome

Council would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide their feedback on the proposed expansion of Miles and Dodds Street Reserve throughout both phases of community engagement. In this second phase of community engagement, most responses indicated strong objection to the proposed changes outlined in the draft concept plan.

There is support for parks and city greening amongst the community, however the feedback from those who participated in the survey indicates that expansion of Miles and Dodds Street Reserve does not have a high level of support from the community.

The outcome of this first phase of community engagement, is that a recommendation will be made to Council not to proceed with the expansion of Miles and Dodds Street Reserve at this time.

While the draft concept plan does respond to the concerns raised around safety, traffic, parking and antisocial behaviour, along with other feedback themes received, generally, the proposal to expand Miles and Dodds Street Reserve is not supported by the community.

In response to the feedback received Council could consider minor asset improvements in the park including refreshing of garden beds, improved lighting and general amenities.

Next steps

In March 2025, the community engagement summary and recommendation not to proceed with the project will be presented to Future Melbourne Committee for consideration.

In response to this experience and valuable feedback received, Council officers will undertake a review of the existing and planned parks and green spaces in Southbank, from an access, use and amenity needs perspective. This will include a review of community feedback received on other relevant projects in the area and the Neighbourhood Survey.

Further information can be found and shared via the [Southbank Neighbourhood Portal | Neighbourhoods | Participate Melbourne](#)