

Elements of Great Public Spaces that Benefit Health

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BACKGROUND

This research provides an analysis of the different things within great public spaces that benefit the health and wellbeing of the community.

It forms one component of the wider Newport Project and utilises Paine Reserve as a platform for urban planning studies.

Through this research and the Newport Project, we hope to become the catalyst for Paine Reserve to reach its full potential as a public space. To enable the reserve to become a landmark location within Newport and the greater Hobsons Bay area.



CONTEXT

The subject site is Paine Reserve at 11 Mason Street, Newport. It is located close to the centre of Newport, making it a key location for the community. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the site.

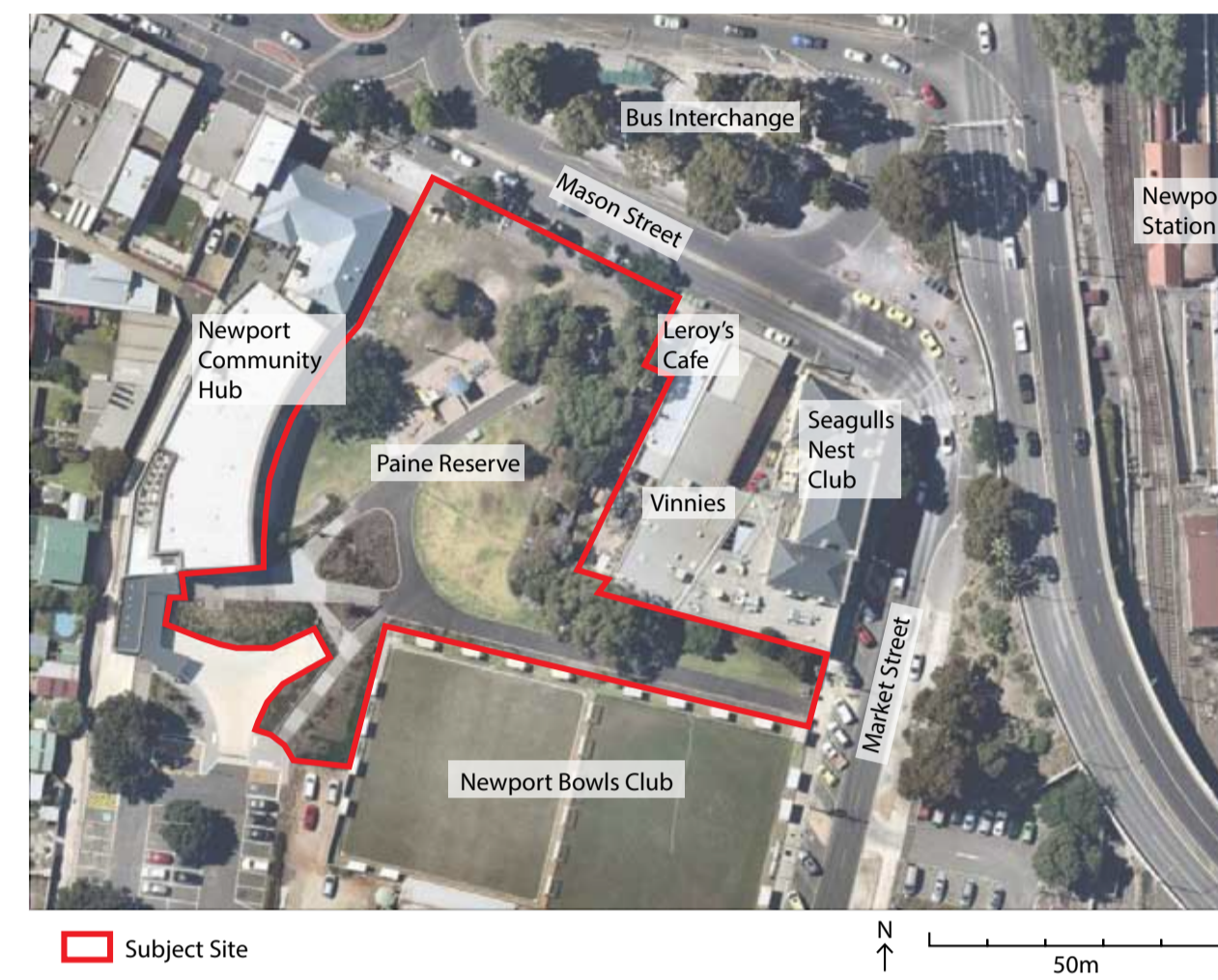


Figure 1: Map of Paine Reserve, Newport, Victoria, Australia.

METHODS

Data for this research was collected through observation and a community consultation. We set up clear perspex boards to allow the community to draw what they want to see in Paine Reserve. It also allowed us to have some great conversations with community members about their drawings.



OPPORTUNITIES

Paine Reserve has a number of opportunities that is in harmony with the results from the collected data.

1. Improving accessibility by increasing walkability and cyclability.
2. Enhancing comfort and aesthetics by improving safety through visibility.
3. Fostering social values by promoting greater social activity.
4. Developing functional uses by providing recreational activities.



RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim is to determine the various components of public spaces that can turn Paine Reserve into a high-quality location that benefits physical and mental health.

The research question that will be addressed in this paper is:

“What are the desired elements of high-quality public spaces that benefit health and well-being?”



FRAMEWORK

The 'Attributes for a Successful Place' framework developed by 'Project for Public Spaces' will be used to understand the qualities that make a successful public space. These qualities are accessibility, functional use, aesthetics and social values. How these qualities relate to health and wellbeing will form the focus of this research.

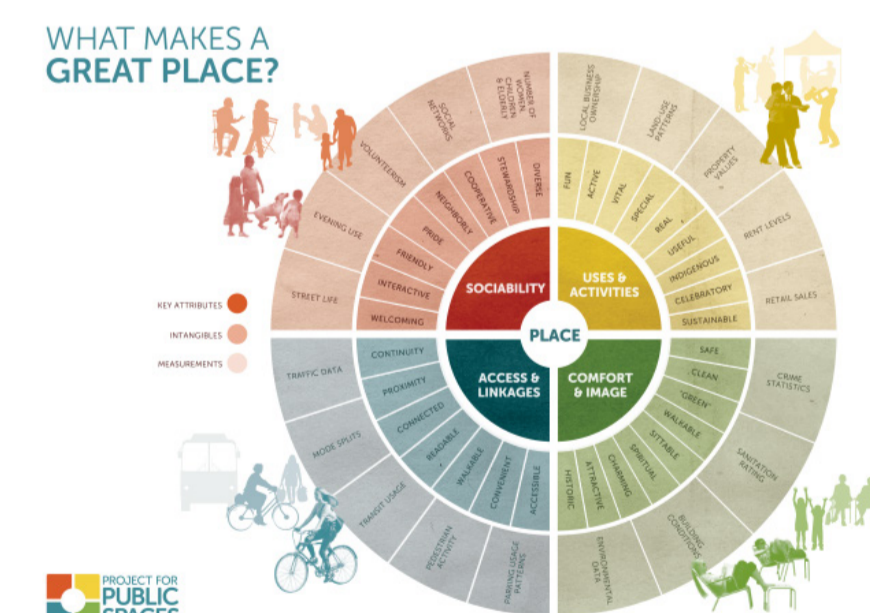


Figure 2: 'Attributes for a Successful Place' framework. Source: Project for Public Spaces.



RESULTS

The results from the collected data show that there is a significant lack of presence by teenagers and young adults at Paine Reserve.

From the feedback gathered at the consultation, the common themes that occurred include a nature or water play area, seating, shade, event facilities and the capacity to be a meeting space.

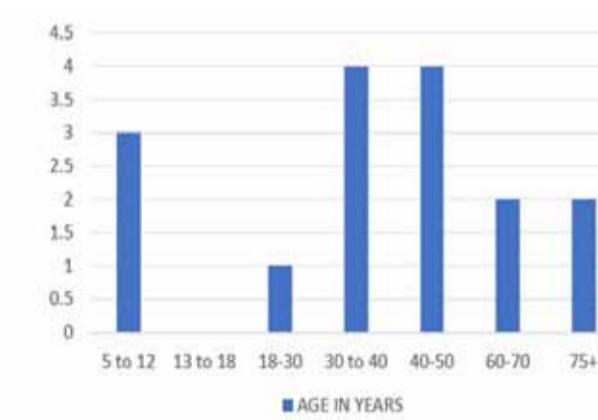


Figure 3: Consultation participant's age ranges.

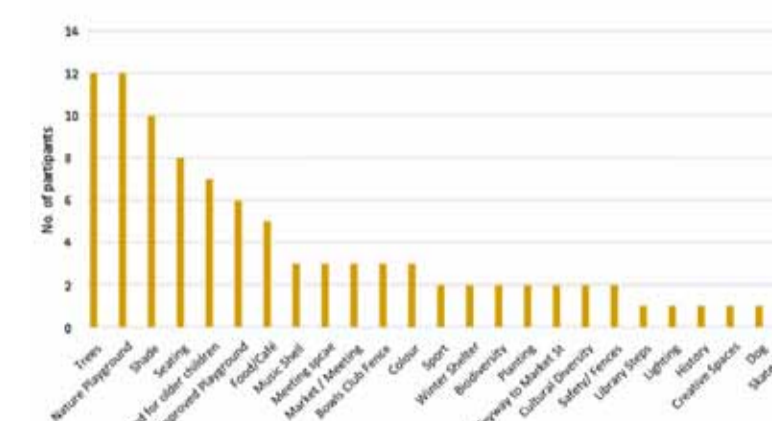


Figure 4: Breakdown of the feedback gathered from consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many different opportunities exist for Paine Reserve and from this research, recommendations for ways to improve the space is provided.

The photos below show just some of possible forms that these recommendations can take.



Adding more natural elements like wood and grass to improve aesthetics. Comfort in nature will also improve mental health.

Planting more large canopy trees to provide shade and contribute to nature. Helps to avoid weather elements and benefits general well-being.

Restructuring the paths network to promote more walking and cycling. To improve access to facilities and promote physical health.

Running day and night markets, as well as other events to create new uses, bring more people in and promote more social activity.

Provide lighting to the space to activate its use at night. A well lit area will also improve safety and mental well-being for users at night.

Install innovative and natural seating to enable people to stay in the space longer. Promotes use and benefits physical well-being.