

**CM13.2. Australia Park Car Park, Pedestrian Bridge and Levee Bank Reconstruction Works
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

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FURTHER ENQUIRIES	David Costello City Landscapes	PHONE	6023 8111
AUTHOR	David Armstrong		

Purpose of Report

To present the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the 'Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction' project to Council for consideration and endorsement prior to commencing public exhibition for 28 days to seek further community feedback on the project.

Background

Australia Park is the first riverside park encountered after crossing the NSW/Victoria border into Albury and is an important gateway to the public parkland areas adjoining the Murray River. This project seeks to increase flood protection to the city, as well as improve amenity for visitors to the riverside parks through increased car parking and accessibility. The project is part of a wider range of projects identified within the Murray River Experience (MRE) Master Plan that seek to improve our connection with the Murray River.

In early 2017, a proposal and breakdown of proposed car parking spaces across the entire Riverside Precinct was presented to Council, including 100 additional spaces within Australia Park. This was subsequently adopted by Council in June 2017. Community consultation was then initiated to gain community feedback in relation to the Draft Riverside Precinct Concept Plans through a 'Have your Say' process, with 562 residents participating.

The community response was overwhelmingly positive, with 91% of respondents supportive of plans to 'further improve facilities, parking and pedestrian connectivity between Australia Park, Oddies Creek Play Space and the other riverside park areas'. This information was presented to Council in August 2017 with project endorsement.

Since this time, the project has now progressed with detailed design and completion of relevant due diligence and approvals, including a Biodiversity Assessment, Aboriginal Assessment, Arboriculture (Tree) Impact Assessment, Landscape Plan, and completion of a 'Review of Environmental Factors'.

The scope of the works included in this project is summarised below:

- realignment of a section of the South Albury Levee Bank;
- construction of an 80-space car park (with four accessible parks);
- reconstruction of Ebden Street, between Wodonga Place and the western turning area;
- landscaping, picnic shelter (with BBQ and seating), shade-tree planting, native revegetation along Oddies Creek, and installation of new linking pathways;
- pedestrian bridge linking Oddies Creek Park and Australia Park;
- decommissioning and rehabilitation of old gravel car parks adjacent to Wodonga Place and Oddies Creek;
- decommissioning of temporary service vehicle access across Oddies Creek and construction of new service vehicle creek crossing; and
- associated water, sewer and electrical works.

Tenders were released for this project in October 2023, with a report presented to Council on 27 November 2023 seeking to award the contract following the tender evaluation. At this meeting, Council resolved not to accept any of the tender submissions and to place the Australia Park car park and levee construction concept on public exhibition for 28 days to seek further community feedback on the project, prior to recommencing the tender process for construction.

Issues

The Oddies Creek Park Play Space currently has a gravel car park which is not fully compliant and is unusable during flood events. Access to the car park is via a one-way vehicle bridge with a 5-tonne limit. In addition, there is no designated pedestrian link from Australia Park or Ebden Street (the only access is via the one-way road bridge) to Oddies Creek Park, which creates safety risks with the mixing of pedestrians and vehicles. This project seeks to address these issues by creating a new car park outside the flood affected area, which would include a designated pedestrian bridge from the new car park to connect with the Oddies Creek Park Play Space.

Demand for parking at Oddies Creek is significant, primarily for people accessing the playground and off-leash area, especially during weekends and school holidays. Parking demand is expected to increase with the proposed establishment of a splash park at Oddies Creek, which is currently subject to a feasibility assessment. The proposed creation of a new car park with capacity for 80 vehicles is expected to help address current and potential future parking demand in the precinct.

Realignment and reconstruction of the flood levee is being undertaken as part of a larger design review and upgrade in South Albury. The proposed new levee and retaining wall in Australia Park will be constructed to current standards, to meet the 1% AEP flood requirements and improve flood protection in this part of the city.

The proposed works will require the direct removal of 22 trees, which includes 18 planted exotic trees and four young River Red Gum trees. A detailed Arboriculture Impact Assessment Report has been prepared outlining tree impacts anticipated by the project. Further to this Impact Assessment, the project has been assessed under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*, which has concluded that the environmental impact of the project is not likely to be significant, with Tests of Significance indicating that the project is unlikely to significantly affect threatened species or their habitats.

Landscaping of the new car park and levee bank will include 18 mature trees (Lemon Scented Gums and Illawarra Flame Trees) and 2,126 understorey plantings. Landscaping plans also include the installation of new BBQ and seating facilities, lighting, and pedestrian pathways. Additional revegetation of Oddies Creek will be undertaken with a minimum of 30 River Red Gum trees to compensate for the removal of four young River Red Gums.

The construction of a new car park at Australia Park and resultant decommissioning and rehabilitation of existing gravel car parks and hard stand areas will result in no effective net loss of green space in the parkland area.

The project aligns with outcomes contained within *Towards Albury 2050* including:

A Growing Sustainable Economy:

- 1.1 Albury is a liveable city supporting sustainable population growth through the provision of high-quality infrastructure, industry –leading services and high levels of amenity.
 - 1.2.1 Effectively plan, upgrade, and maintain our network of roads, bridges, cycleways, footpaths, walkways, and street lighting.
 - 1.3.1 Communicate the story of Albury through our tourism offerings, providing an authentic and engaging visitor experience.
 - 1.3.3 Investigate partnerships to attract visitors to our region, and increase the diversity in attractions, events and facilities for our community and visitors.

An Enhanced Natural Environment:

- 2.4 Albury is a recognised leader in the protection, conservation, and management of our natural assets.
 - 2.4.3 Acknowledge our connection to the natural environment by providing opportunities for the community to connect and respectfully enjoy our natural surroundings.

A Caring Community:

- 3.3 Our community values arts, culture, heritage, and place. All residents share and celebrate our multiculturalism in a welcoming and open community.
 - 3.3.3 Our spaces will provide a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for our community to enjoy.
- 3.5 Albury is a safe, inclusive, and accessible region for our entire community.
 - 3.5.2 Our buildings and spaces are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all community members.

A Leading Community:

- 4.2 Albury collaborates as a community to plan for the future and work towards a shared vision.
 - 4.2.1 The community is consulted and engaged on important decisions in two-way conversations that result in informed decision making and shared leadership.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – the Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction project seeks to increase flood protection for the city as well as improve car parking capacity and overall amenity for visitors to the Riverside Precinct. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared to ensure the community is provided an opportunity to comment on the project prior to recommencing the tender process for construction.
- **Corporate Risk** – the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the project provides a framework whereby stakeholders and the wider community can review the concept plans for the project, as well as access the detailed design drawings, REF document, and associated biodiversity/Aboriginal/tree assessments and Oddies Creek revegetation plan. This provides a level of transparency on all proposed project elements and can be used through the consultation period to determine the extent that the project elements resonate with the community.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – these are not considered in the development of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan however will be considered during the project delivery phase of the project.
- **Environmental Risk** – a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and associated investigations have been undertaken to identify any environmental risks and suitable measures to mitigate them. The REF has concluded that the environmental impact of the project is not likely to be significant, with Tests of Significance indicating that the project is unlikely to significantly affect threatened species or their habitats. The REF will be published on Council's website along with other associated documentation as part of the consultation process.

- **Delivery Program Risk** – endorsement of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan will allow commencement of public exhibition of the project and allow the community to have input into the project prior to recommencing the tender process for construction. Delivery timeframes for construction will be reassessed, pending feedback received from the community and any resultant changes to the project that may be required.

Community Engagement

Initial community engagement for this project in Australia Park commenced in 2017, with 91% of respondents supportive of plans to 'further improve facilities, parking and pedestrian connectivity between Australia Park, Oddies Creek Play Space and the other riverside park areas'. This information was presented to Council in August 2017 with project endorsement.

Since endorsement of the car park project in 2017, the project has continued to be further refined as it has moved through further investigations, due diligence, detailed design, and relevant approvals. Given it has been more than six years since the initial community consultation, it is now timely to undertake further community consultation to ensure the project elements still resonate with the community. On this basis, a new Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared (see Attachment 1).

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan identifies a 28-day public exhibition, during which a concept render (see Attachment 2) will be widely distributed within the community to identify the proposed scope and various project elements. The full suite of other project documentation will also be accessible on Council's website to ensure the community has access to the detailed design drawings, REF document, associated biodiversity/Aboriginal/tree assessments, and proposed revegetation plan for Oddies Creek. The public exhibition period will include the following engagement techniques:

- on-site signage with QR code link to AlburyCity website;
- pop-up information session;
- media opportunities;
- All about Albury;
- Frequently Asked Questions;
- social media across various platforms;
- hard copy displays in Council venues; and
- letter box drop (Wodonga Place).

Options

1. Endorse the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the 'Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction' project, and move into public exhibition for 28 days to seek further community feedback on the project.

This is the preferred option as it will provide the community with an additional opportunity to have input into the project prior to recommencing the tender process for construction. **Recommended;** or

2. Not endorse the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the 'Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction' project, and request amendments.

This option is not recommended as the proposed Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared to allow the community to have input into the project prior to recommencing the tender process for construction. **Not recommended.**

Conclusion

Australia Park is located adjacent to Oddies Creek Park and the historic Turks Head building. Australia Park is an important gateway to the public parkland areas adjoining the Murray River. This project will increase flood protection for the city as well as improve car parking capacity and overall amenity for visitors to the Riverside Precinct.

Key components of the Australia Park project are the upgrade and realignment of the South Albury Flood Levee, and the construction of an 80-space landscaped car park to provide improved amenity for the Oddies Creek Play Space, Australia Park, Noreuil Park and the wider Riverside Precinct. Additionally, a new linking pedestrian bridge will be installed to connect the new car park to the Oddies Creek Play Space, as well as improved landscaping, connecting paths, a new picnic shelter and additional native revegetation along Oddies Creek.

Some preliminary community consultation was undertaken in 2017 with many respondents supportive of plans to further improve facilities, parking and pedestrian connectivity between Australia Park, Oddies Creek Play Space and the other riverside park areas. However, given it has been more than six years since the initial endorsement, it is now timely to undertake further community consultation to ensure the project elements still resonate with the community.

The resultant feedback received from the community can then be used to inform any changes to the project, prior to recommencing the tender process for construction.

Recommendation

That Council endorse the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the 'Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction' project, and move into public exhibition for 28 days to seek further community feedback on the project.

Attachments

1. Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction – Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC23/454127).
2. Australia Park car park, pedestrian bridge, and levee bank reconstruction – Concept Render (DOC24/22374).