

Gosford Leagues Club Field

Community engagement outcomes report



Summary

The Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation (HCCDC) undertook a four-week engagement program inviting the community and key stakeholder groups to put forward their ideas for the upgrade to the Gosford Leagues Club Field.

The program included an interactive online tool that generated 134 visitors and 49 contributions from nine individual contributors. It also generated nine written submissions, comprised of emails from key stakeholder groups and postcards designed specifically for the engagement.

Overall, responses expressed support for upgrades that would attract more people into the city centre and infrastructure installation that would activate the area.

Throughout the program, HCCDC followed the IAP2¹ best practice approach to 'consult with the community'.

¹IAP2 standards for the level of participation define the public's role in any community engagement program

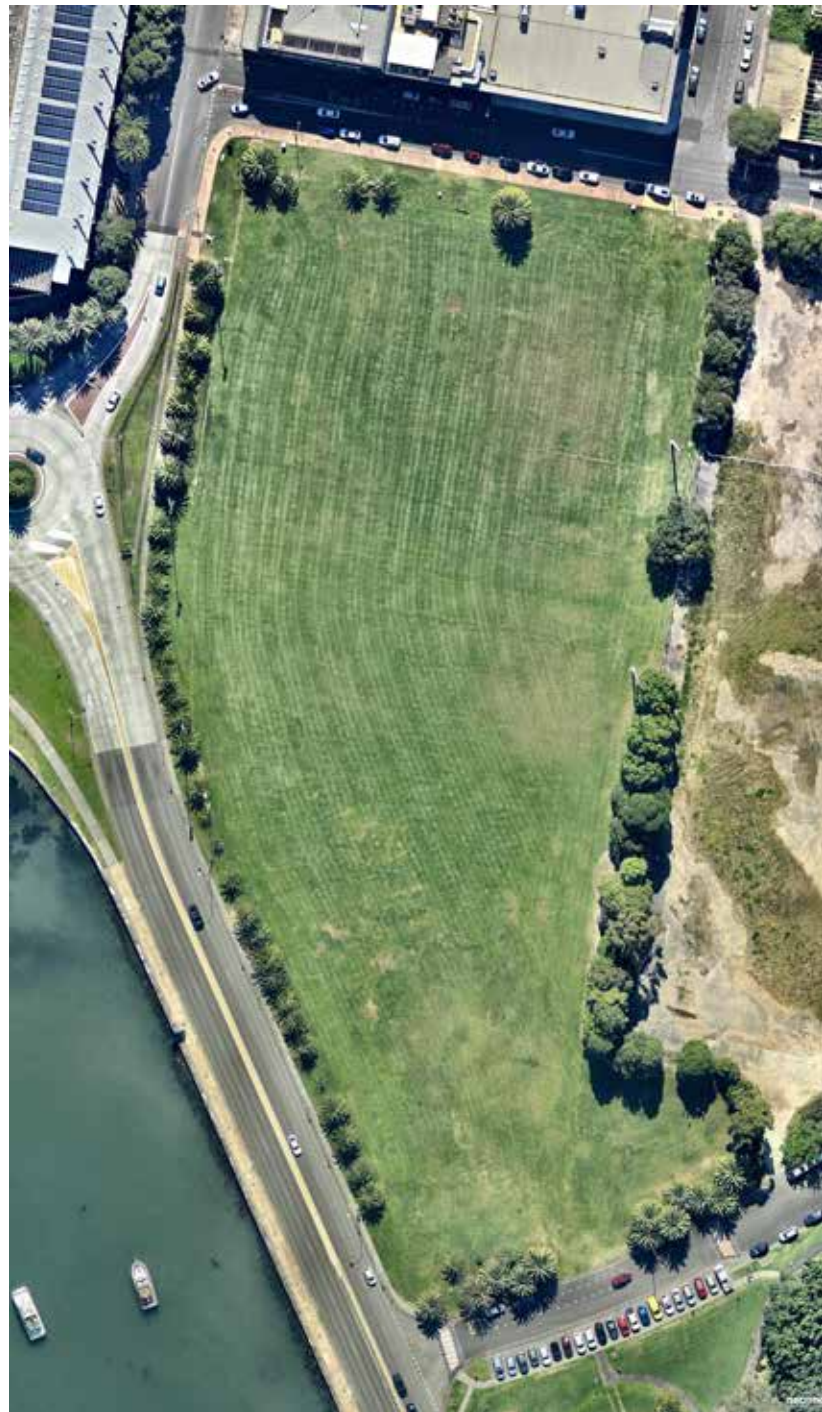


Leagues Club Field: The Project

HCCDC will upgrade the Leagues Club Field to create a regional park and play ground near the Gosford Waterfront as a primary deliverable from the Government Architect NSW's [Gosford City Centre Urban Design Framework \(UDF\)](#).

The UDF sets out a design-led, place-based revitalisation process for Gosford, focusing on public domain renewal. It identified several gaps in infrastructure, including a lack of recreation amenity. Concepts from the report were used to inform and inspire the engagement.

The regional play space and public domain upgrades were announced by The Hon. Anthony Roberts, Minister for Planning, in May 2018 as part of a city revitalisation package, which included \$10m for public domain upgrades.

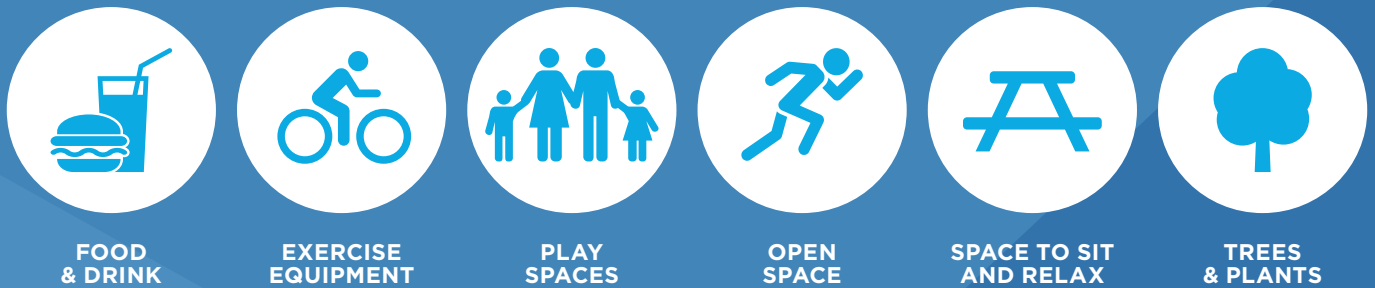


Leagues Club Field

Engagement methodology

From 29 August to 3 October 2018, HCCDC invited the community to submit ideas for the regional park and play space.

This program invited people to engage through the *Engagement HQ* online platform, where users could select 'pins' based on concepts taken from the UDF and place them on a virtual map of the Leagues Club Field. The concepts were designed to inform the engagement and align community expectations with what the park upgrade could deliver. They included:



Users were also able to comment and pin a 'great idea' for concepts not identified in the above categories.

Physical postcards were also made available in the GoGosford office in Mann Street, allowing local residents and businesses to provide feedback without the need to access the internet. A large decal of the space that replicated the postcard and online survey was also installed in the GoGosford office, enabling pins to be allocated to areas of the park. Community members and stakeholders were also encouraged to email their thoughts or ideas to HCCDC.

A range of engagement tools were selected to reach a broad cross-section of the community, including those without online capabilities and visitors to the businesses in the area.



ONLINE
269 total visits
134 individual visitors
9 contributors
49 contributions



POSTCARDS
Six postcard comments received



EMAIL
Four email comments received

HCCDC used a range of channels to promote the consultation - including local media, social media and the HCCDC website - inviting the community to participate. Some informal comments were also received on third party social media posts promoting the engagement. These were not captured in this report, which only focused on formal responses generated via specific channels, in response to the process of engagement.

Overall, respondents were enthusiastic about the upgrade to the Gosford Leagues Club Field and contributed insightful comments and perspectives on what could be done with the space. The contributions were generally positive and constructive, using the concepts derived from the UDF, which saw support for the introduction of trees, plants, walking and cycling paths, and exercise infrastructure to suit ball games.

Themes

Throughout the engagement process, several themes emerged for each pin category. These themes provide valuable feedback and will help inform HCCDC in developing the final plans for the site.



Food and drink

Identified themes include:

- café/restaurant/bar
- healthy eating options
- integration into the buildings surrounding the park
- filtered cool water fountains.

There was generally support for the activation of the Leagues Club Field through cafes, bars and restaurants. These ideas have the potential to temporarily activate the area in the short term, using café vendors and food trucks along the outer perimeters.

Comments were dominated by one contributor who advocated throughout the engagement for the view of the highway to be blocked out from the park, in this case via the installation of food and drink outlets along Dane Drive. This idea contrasts with comments made by other community members to utilise the waterfront views as an attraction to visitors to the park.

Other comments nominated the eastern frontage of the park along Baker Street to be remodelled into an area suitable for bars, restaurants, live music and cafes.

In people's words:

“Cafes, restaurants and bars to create some buzz and life to the area.”

Exercise equipment

Identified themes include:

- child-friendly cycling track
- connection to cycleways
- bicycle parking.

The engagement with exercise equipment on the online map was low. It is possible that users assumed exercise equipment meant work-out infrastructure like bars and obstacle courses and did not consider them to be a priority.

Aside from the use of the exercise equipment in the online map, respondents in the engagement supported infrastructure for ball games and bicycle riding.

Bike racks, connections to cycleways and a space for children to cycle were among other ideas for exercise equipment.

In people's words:

“Wide, safe, kid friendly cycling track”

“Connection to cycleways.”

Themes

Throughout the engagement process, several themes emerged for each pin category. These themes provide valuable feedback and will help inform HCCDC in developing the final plans for the site.



Play space

Identified themes include:

- a regional play space fit for children of all ages
- provide amenities – safe and easily monitored public toilets
- incorporate the *Everyone Can Play in NSW* guideline into the planning and design.

As indicated in the UDF, a regional play space in the Leagues Club Field was a key point in the engagement to attract families into Gosford. Through the engagement, most respondents supported a range of active equipment to allow children of all ages, big and small, to enjoy the play space.

Respondents also emphasised the need for park amenities, such as restrooms, BBQ facilities and drinking water.

In people's words:

“A regional play space that rivals some of the best playgrounds in the country would be a big drawcard to Gosford.”

Themes

Throughout the engagement process, several themes emerged for each pin category. These themes provide valuable feedback and will help inform HCCDC in developing the final plans for the site.



Open space

Identified themes include:

- maintain plenty of open space
- suitable space for a picnic
- open and passive spaces that do not impact one another
- the health benefits of open accessible space
- an area large enough for ball games – soccer and touch football.

As identified in the Government Architect NSW's UDF, a combination of active and passive open space would cater for a range of visitors, as opposed to the current configuration of a single large sporting field.

The **Central Coast Local Health District** engaged with the program by sending a letter to advise of the positive health benefits that informal physical activity brings to Central Coast residents, and the need to safeguard it in the planning and design of the Regional Park and Play space:

"The Leagues Club Park is the only freely accessible active open space in a walkable distance of the Gosford City Centre, providing residents, workers and visitors with an opportunity for informal activity, sport and recreation. We strongly advocate for the retention of an open space area of sufficient size and quality to ensure it is functional and safe for informal physical activity, sport, and passive spaces (away from the Central Coast Highway), to simply sit and relax, have a picnic and enjoy nature."

The advocacy for open and passive play spaces was also reflected in an email received from a local worker, who asked for the retention of space large enough to accommodate social lunch activities such as touch football and soccer.

Through the placement of pins, online contributors nominated the centre areas of the field for open space away from the boundaries of Dane Drive and Georgiana Terrace. This is consistent with calls to maintain sufficient open space for ball games that do not interfere with passive visitors who may come for the play space or food and drink along the boundaries of the field.

In people's words:

"Open space to allow room to run around, kick a ball that is away from the central coast highway."

"I (we) would appreciate an area that is large enough to accommodate our chosen activities (touch football and soccer) with enough area surrounding that we are not impacting others just enjoying being outside."

Themes

Throughout the engagement process, several themes emerged for each pin category. These themes provide valuable feedback and will help inform HCCDC in developing the final plans for the site.



Sit and relax

Identified themes include:

- picnic area
- benches under the trees
- provide shade – natural and built
- enjoyable views.

This theme garnered more responses than most others, with people nominating spaces across the field as good examples to 'sit and relax'. Pins included shaded spaces to sit, eat and enjoy the water and garden views.

This feedback aligns with the UDF, which indicates that as well as active play areas, space to accommodate 'sit and relax' passive activities can be just as important in creating the character of a space. It suggests clear separation between the two but to still allow sporting activities and children's play to be viewed from the passive areas.

In people's words:

"Sit and relax and maybe have a picnic."

"Benches under trees to sit and enjoy the views."

Trees and plants

Identified themes include:

- hide the main road with plants
- enhance the area with beautiful trees and plants
- walk-through gardens
- shade.

The inclusion of more trees and plants in the Leagues Club Field was strongly supported throughout the engagement. This aligns with the UDF to use trees and plants to redefine the park and reduce the impact of the highway.

Presently, the Leagues Club Field is an expansive open space with the only natural shade coverage provided by trees along the very edge of the boundaries. People identified trees and plants throughout the space as an effective feature to provide for areas to sit and relax that can separate the open space for active users of the field.

In people's words:

"Hide the main rd (sic) with plants but keep the level low enough so that the water and beautiful scenery beyond the road can be seen."

"Beautiful plants and trees and bushes enhance the area and make it a place that is serene and welcoming where families like to bring the children and couples and singles like to walk and enjoy the views and the gardens."

"Trees and groundcovers but no shrubs/bushes (=safer)."



Next steps

Drawing on the outcomes of this report, HCCDC will work with landscape architects, heritage experts and Central Coast Council to finalise the design of the field. Environmental and contamination studies will also take place in the coming months.

HCCDC are also working closely with the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council throughout the design process to ensure that culturally-significant sites are not disturbed and to draw on their stories and knowledge of the region.

The public will have further opportunity to comment on the designs during a public exhibition period, before works commence in mid-2019.

Conclusion

Community members and stakeholders who participated in the engagement expressed their passion for the use of the Leagues Club Field upgrade to benefit the broader Gosford revitalisation. There was a theme throughout responses to attract people back to the city centre through cafes and restaurants, natural parkland, exciting play spaces for children of all ages and increasing the connectedness between the city, field and waterfront.

The engagement also highlighted the need to balance active and passive users of space in the Leagues Club Field. Those stakeholders who reached out via email expressed a high value to having continued easy access to the field for social activities as it benefits the health and well-being of Gosford community members. Concurrently, other community members put forward their ideas for benches, play spaces, trees, plants, and other installations on the field.

The maintenance of open space was generally supported across all respondents, utilising the centre of the field for active uses and the perimeter areas for passive space.