



**Nick Ascenzo Master plan – Phase 3
Community Engagement Summary
22 March – 19 April 2026**

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea has developed a Master plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve in Thomastown, with the aim of creating a safer, more accessible and welcoming space for the community to enjoy, stay active and connect. The Master plan will guide future upgrades to the reserve, enhancing its overall character while improving accessibility, safety and opportunities for social interaction and recreation.

The community feedback gathered during phase one and two of the Alexander Avenue and Nick Ascenzo Reserve master plan community engagement in August 2022 played a clear role in shaping both plans. People told Council that improving safety, accessibility, and the connection between the Alexander Avenue shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve mattered most. In response, the draft concept plan and draft master plan focus on better lighting, reconfigured car parking, upgraded facilities, and clearer sightlines between key areas.

The master plan also reflects the community's desire for a reserve that supports people of all ages and abilities, proposing a new playground and seniors exercise area, a multi-purpose court, expanded picnic spaces, upgraded paths, and stronger links between the reserve and the shopping strip. Together, these recommendations translate what we heard into a practical roadmap for a safer, more inclusive and better-connected local destination.

Council sought community input from people who live near or visit Nick Ascenzo Reserve during phase 3 to understand what the community values about the proposed plan, gather ideas for future events and activation, and identify perceived challenges within the space. This feedback will help refine the plan ahead of construction later this year. The aim is to create a space that caters to the diverse needs and preferences of the community.

How we engaged you

The third phase of community engagement on the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan was open for comment from 22 March to 19 April 2026. Feedback was sought through Council's *Engage Whittlesea* platform, direct mail to homes and businesses within a 500m radius of the site, and in-person conversations at two pop-up events held during the community engagement period.

The *Engage Whittlesea* platform utilises an accessibility add-on ensuring that it is as accessible as possible for all users. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to mitigate any language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top fifteen languages spoken within the municipality.

In-person engagement activities

The project team hosted two community-based in-person engagement opportunities. The first was an information session held at the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Community Centre and the second a pop-up at the Alexander Avenue Shopping strip, taking advantage of the foot traffic of residents who frequent the area. Corflute posters and flyers were distributed around the Nick Ascenzo Reserve to promote the in-person sessions and provide broader project information.

The in-person activities mirrored the questions asked during the online community engagement and aimed to understand how often the community uses the reserve, what features would improve safety and accessibility, and what challenges people feel the reserve currently faces. Feedback was also sought on potential events and programs to help activate the space, as well as the types of playground equipment the community would like included in the reserve refresh.

Participants were encouraged to share additional suggestions and discuss any concerns directly with project staff.

Details of the community-based in-person engagement activities:

Date	Time	Where	Address/location
Tuesday 24 March	6pm – 7pm	Nick Ascenzo Reserve Community Centre	2 Boronia Street, Thomastown
Saturday 18 April	10am – 12pm	Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct	Corner of Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street, Thomastown

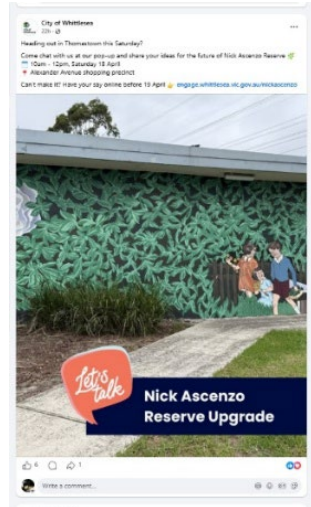


Above: Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan – Phase 3 Community Information Session and pop-up

Project promotion

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement was promoted through a range of channels to have a widespread reach across the target area including:

- a dedicated project page on Council's digital engagement platform *Engage Whittlesea*
- Engage Whittlesea campaign to registered users who have expressed interest in the topic or location
- direct mail to homes and businesses within 500m of the project zone (approx. 950 properties)
- three A2 corflute posters with QR code to participate in the project placed around Nick Ascenzo Reserve
- social media posts on Council's social media channels
- direct email sent by key internal staff to their networks.



Above L–R: Poster/flyer, social media post and corflute sign promoting the Nick Ascenzo Reserve community engagement – four posts were shared over a four-week period, receiving 12,400 views, 26 interactions, and 8 link clicks on Facebook, and 1,967 views and 25 interactions on Instagram

Participation

A total of 47 community contributions were received as part of the third phase of community engagement on the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan. Below is a snapshot of participation in this community engagement.

Snapshot of community participation



21 people participated in-person at the Information and pop-up events.



26 people contributed online via the *Engage Whittlesea* platform from 246 views and 188 visits to the page.

Snapshot of participant demographics

Gender Identity



Respondents indicated that 39% identified as male and 61% identified as female.

Age



All age brackets participated with the most represented being 35-44 years and 45-54 years (33% each) and 25-34 years (23%).

Suburb



Most participants were local to Thomastown (74%), followed by Lalor (11%), with Wollert and Epping each accounting for 4% of participants.

LGBTIQA+ Community



8% of participants identified as members of the LGBTIQA+ community.

First Nations Community



4% of participants identified as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

Multicultural Community



47% of participants spoke English as a second language.

Community members living with or caring for someone with a disability



26% of participants identified as living with a disability or an unpaid carer of an older person or someone living with a disability.

What we heard

Community members were invited to review the first iteration of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan, the revised concept design informed by earlier community feedback, and a selection of proposed playground equipment for preference voting. Community engagement sought to understand what the community values most about the reserve, opportunities to improve accessibility and safety, key challenges currently facing the space, and ideas for future activation and use of the reserve.

The following section summarises what we heard from the community across the community engagement activities. Additional comments provided through surveys and in-person discussions have been themed, with selected quotes included where available to highlight common views and experiences. Please note that while not all comments captured are featured in this report, all comments will be considered by Council when finalising the Master plan.



How often do you visit Nick Ascenzo Reserve?

Many participants reported visiting Nick Ascenzo Reserve 2–3 times per week (47%). This was followed by participants who visited a few times per month (26%), while 21% indicated they visited daily.



How would you rate Nick Ascenzo Reserve Overall?

Most respondents rated the current state of Nick Ascenzo Reserve as poor (43%). This was followed by ratings of 'ok' and 'very poor', each receiving 21% of responses. Community feedback indicated strong support for upgrades to the reserve, which many participants described as dated and lacking a sense of safety in its current condition.



What key features would make this a safe and accessible space?

Community feedback identified several key features they felt would improve feelings of safety and accessibility within Nick Ascenzo Reserve. Priorities included improved lighting (91%), upgraded pathways (83%), additional tree planting (53%), and clear sight lines into the reserve from surrounding roads (47%) to enhance visibility and passive surveillance. Participants also highlighted the importance of improving connections to surrounding neighbourhoods (38%) to support safer and more accessible movement through the space.

“The playground needs to be relocated to either closer to the hall with possible lighting and security cameras facing it or closer to the shops.”

“Poor lighting makes the area feel unsafe.”

“I think it would be a good idea to put more lights around the park at night as it’s very dark to make it safer for people to use at twilight.”

“Perimeter fencing needs to be well secured also so people can’t get in with cars to dump rubbish or do donuts on the lawn.”

“The community have lots of neurodiverse kids, all abilities and fencing could be good considerations.”

“Inclusive signage and access for wheelchairs into the park and those with a disability.”



What do you feel are Nick Ascenzo Reserve’s main issues?

Community feedback identified several recurring themes regarding key issues and priorities for Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

- Safety and security were the most frequently raised concerns, with participants highlighting poor lighting, limited visibility due to overgrown vegetation, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol activity, and a lack of surveillance or CCTV. Many community members also expressed concerns about feeling unsafe when walking through isolated or poorly visible areas of the reserve, particularly at night.
- Cleanliness and maintenance were another common theme, with repeated concerns about rubbish dumping, litter, overgrown landscaping, poor lawn conditions, and ageing amenities contributing to perceptions that the reserve is unkempt and underutilised.
- Improved infrastructure and facilities including requests to upgrade playgrounds, add additional seating and BBQ areas, better pathways and walking tracks, improved toilets, fencing near roads and play spaces, and facilities that cater to a wider range of ages and abilities. There was also strong interest in creating more inclusive and activated community spaces, including areas for exercise, dog recreation, water play, markets, events, and social gathering opportunities.

- Accessibility and connectivity were also highlighted, with community members seeking safer pedestrian connections, improved paths, clearer sight lines throughout the reserve, and spaces that are welcoming and usable for all members of the community.

“I agree with the masterplan whereby the greenery and sight lines are improved along Alexander Avenue, as at times I am scared walking in that section on my own with my dog, as I feel unsafe when walking in this particular area.”

“Not much infrastructure, visually very unappealing, not enough benches, uneven spaces.”

“Not enough lighting, no formal track for exercise needs more lights and clean up the trees around the walking track.”

“Make the open walking space safe. There is a small area where when you walk through it your hidden by trees and no one can see you. As a female it makes me feel unsafe and all I want is to go for a walk.”



Are there any events/programs you would like to see at the Nick Ascenzo Reserve?

Community feedback highlighted a strong desire for more community-focused events, programs, and activities that encourage social connection and increase activation within Nick Ascenzo Reserve. The most common suggestions included community markets, food truck events, live music performances, outdoor movie nights, and multicultural or community festivals. Participants expressed interest in regular family-friendly activities that create a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere within the reserve.

Many responses also identified opportunities for increased recreation and sporting activities, including football, soccer, running and jogging tracks, bike or skating spaces, and programs for children, seniors, and families. Community members emphasised the importance of creating inclusive spaces and activities that cater to a broad range of ages, abilities, and cultural groups.

Several participants also highlighted the potential for stronger integration between the reserve and the community hall, suggesting the space could support future programs such as fitness classes, meetings, cultural gatherings, and community events. Overall, feedback reflected a desire for a more active, well-maintained, and regularly programmed community space that encourages ongoing use and connection.

“Family movie nights - picnic and byo chairs.”

“Fenced dog area to help with the people who bring dogs for a run.”

“A monthly market possibly on the grass or parking lots for the local community.”

“An alternative approach for the oval could be to reimagine this area as a more active community gathering space. Additional seating, play equipment, and BBQ

facilities could encourage families and groups to spend more time in the park. This space could also potentially support small community events such as markets, food trucks, or local gatherings, helping to create a stronger community hub.”

“Need more play area for different range of kids, like skate park, bike area and also need bbq for family gathering. Also need more area for grown up especially elder community member to do exercise.”

“Secure fence for the play space to ensure safety of young children near the roads - cars speed along these side streets and don’t obey the speed limits creating a dangerous combination. Another pedestrian crossing is needed along Waratah st to connect the park to Myrtle st.”

“Currently I’d much rather drive 10 minutes to the Mill Park all abilities play space than walk 3 minutes to this Nick Ascenzo reserve, this park is a great one for inspiration for play equipment and amenities.”

“Security, lighting. You hardly ever see anyone using the grounds. The space could be utilised as a weekend market with lots of store holders and events for kids.”



What type of playground equipment would you like to see?

Community members were invited to review and vote on a range of proposed playground equipment options as part of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan community engagement. Feedback aimed to identify the types of play experiences and equipment most valued by the community, with a focus on creating an engaging, inclusive, and age-appropriate play space that encourages active recreation, social interaction, and accessibility for children and families of all abilities. Votes have been tallied across online and in-person engagement showing most to least favourable equipment below:



27 votes
Adventure
playground/tunnel



20 votes
Water play



19 votes
Fitness equipment



17 votes
Trampoline



16 votes
Spinning play



16 votes
Imaginative play



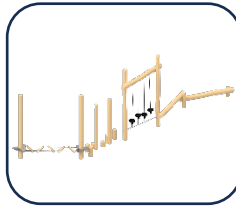
13 votes
Nature play rocks



11 votes
Double swing with
basket swing



11 votes
Adventure
playground



10 votes
Activity trail



10 votes
Balance play



9 votes
Nature play logs



6 votes
Musical play drums



6 votes
Junior swing



4 votes
Musical play
glockenspiel



4 votes
Rocking chair

Next Steps

Thank you again to everyone who contributed to this community engagement by sharing comments, feedback and participating in activities.

The feedback captured will be used to finalise the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan that will commence works later this year. We encourage you to follow engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/nickascenzo to keep up to date on the progress of this project.

Community feedback captured may also support the development of other key Council plans, strategies and projects, contributing to the vision of making Whittlesea *A Place for All*.