

Survey of Rathmines and Environs Young People re Rathmines Park

Introduction

The Rathmines Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group (RASNG) promotes active citizenship by participating in public life and decision making. To this end, the Group is active in participating in the decision making concerning the planned Master Plan for our local and much valued Rathmines Park. While the Council is expected to call for submissions concerning the Master Plan, the voices that are usually sought are those who use the park frequently. The largest group observed using the Park frequently are youngsters, mainly those under 10 years.

To ascertain the views of this young group, and their older peers, of how the Park could be improved, the RASNG set out to ascertain their views via a survey.

The Survey

The survey was a simple one: it simply asked the respondents to think about the Park and how it could be improved. Their answers could be written, a drawing, or some combination of both. They could answer individually or in groups.

Teacher-members of the RASNG conducted the survey. Invitations from the local Primary Schools' Principals meant the survey was conducted with older more literate pupils (Years 5 and 6). A teacher was present in the classroom while the survey took place. The older respondents (High School age) presented a problem as the area does not have a High School. Students boarding after-school buses to Rathmines from nearby High Schools were asked to fill in the survey and return it,

The primary school participants were read a participation information sheet. The older high school students were given the participation information sheet. All potential participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, that they could cease their participation at any time, and that their anonymity would be protected.

To protect their anonymity, they were not asked the usual demographic questions.

The Primary Schools allocated one lesson for the "project". They were instructed

You have been given money to develop Rathmines Park into a child friendly area, for all children to use whether local or from outside the area. You can have whatever you like there.

What would you advise Council to do?

This was also the instruction for the older students.

Results

Eighty-eight (88) responses were received from the primary students and 60 from the high school participants. Many of the primary school students added their names to their responses which were in word or drawings or a combination of both.

The primary-aged students made 23 different suggestions for improvement of the Park (see Attachments). These suggestions can be distilled into five themes:

1. More diversified playground
2. Improved skate park
3. More trees, rest areas and tables
4. Tree house
5. Better toilet facilities.

Unlike their younger counterparts, the high school students addressed both the Park and community facilities or the lack thereof. In relation to the Park, they want

1. an improved skate park with the possibility of a BMX park
2. more diversified playground including facilities more appropriate to their age groups and
3. better swimming facilities in the water adjacent to the Park.

Concluding remarks

The students want more trees in the Park. This can only be activated by a tree regeneration program. Such a program should protect the foreshore from storms and the resulting wave action and erosion as well as providing more shade in a period of climate change.

Notably the majority of students wanted to add to the facilities of the Park (more trees, more diverse playground suitable for all ages, improved skate park) rather than introducing new facilities. These young people value both space and trees.

Attachments:

Participating Schools

Arcadia Vale Public School

Charlton College

Rathmines Public School

St Joseph's Catholic School, Toronto

St Pauls High School

Wangi Public School

Improvement suggestions

Suggestion	No. Responses
Improved skate park	31
Swimming area	32
Improved toilet facilities	30
More trees/open space	31
More tables/rest areas	28
More diversified playground	64
Larger flying fox	
Sand pit	
Longer slides	
Trampoline	
Large climbing frame/wall	
Maze	
Monkey bars	
Bike track	15
Fencing	4
Netball/basketball courts	9
Tree house	12
Bubblers	8
Camping areas	2
Fencing	5
Garbage bins	1
Bird nesting boxes in trees	2
Bike stands	1