

He Rākau Koikoi
Purposeful Activity



Te Māra

Community consultation on the proposed urban garden Sept' – Oct' 2017

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Te tīmatatanga

Without a sense of purpose or a sense of belonging, it is hard to call somewhere home.

Many of the guests at Te Pūaroaha Whare Hupa do not feel that they have a place in our community or hope for the future. He Rākau Koikoi is our ambition to share a place to stand with our guests: to build a community of purpose and people that will nourish whānau to grow and find a place to call home.

Central to the vision of He Rākau Koikoi is the urban garden that is being developed on a site adjacent to Te Pūaroaha Whare Hupa. This will be designed and built with our guests and people from the wider community over the summer months of 2017 – 2018. This will be a place where we all work together to create an oasis away from the streets of Wellington and to grow kai that we can all share.

Around the garden a programme of activities will offer opportunity for whānau to learn new skills, practice old skills, have fun and enjoy being with other people. Through art and cultural sessions, outdoor activities, healthy living, volunteering and vocational training and educational opportunities, whānau will improve their wellbeing and be able to look with hope to the future.

As part of ensuring we are accountable and our service meets our whānau's wants, needs and aspirations, we have undertaken a comprehensive consultation that will guide our next steps. This report details what we have learnt.

How we consulted

What we wanted to find out

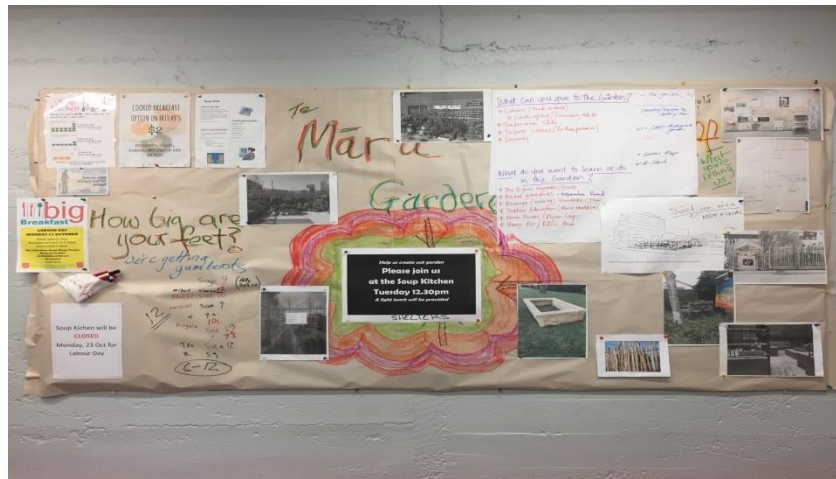
He Rākau Koikoi is based on co-production and utilizes an asset based approach to work with the strengths of whānau. The initial consultation is the first step in supporting our guests to lead the way in the design, implementation and evaluation of the project. As such it is only one part of a broader framework for ensuring that all our work is based on what whānau actually want.

The initial consultation was focused on capturing the big ideas that will provide the framework for designing the plan and early stage implementation of te Māra. It aimed to provide key information about:

- How people want to be involved with te Māra
- The defining ethos of te Māra
- The key features and design of te Māra
- The key activities that will take place in and around te Māra.

Methodology

The methods used for capturing the information recognize that many of the guests at Te Pūaroaha Whare Hupa face considerable barriers in being heard and involved through consultation work. As such a number of informal mechanisms were used alongside more traditional consultation approaches. A graffiti board was maintained in the waiting room for a period of 4 weeks that advertised the project and where people added their ideas. Multiple informal conversations were had with guests and feedback obtained. Over 40 people were spoken to about the project in this period.



As well as the informal approach, three formal consultation meetings were held. Two of these were for guests and one for guests and the wider community. In total 25 individuals who use Te Pūaroha Whare Hupa attended formal meetings. Over 50 individual guests were consulted during the consultation process.

Alongside this, members of the wider community were consulted about the proposal. Over 15 meetings were held with individuals or organisations with skills, knowledge and expertise that could guide the project. These included Wellington City Council, education providers, health and social service providers and environmental, community and gardening groups. In total over 75 people were consulted about developing the project.

What we learnt

People want the project!

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the idea of an urban garden. Of all the people spoken to, only four said they were not interested in the project. Some of the other respondents said that had not done gardening in the past or were not sure about gardening; however they were all keen to be involved in different ways. A great deal of emphasis was placed on incorporating arts and activities within the garden space. There was also a strong push for providing work and vocational opportunities within the project. People clearly want a garden and the space it provides, but not just as something to look at. The activity that goes with the garden is seen as key to making it a success.

Te Māra will be a place of.....

The key themes that we were told should inform the project were:

People and community: the garden must help build relationships, active connectedness and fellowship. People want a place to belong and to share with others. The importance of including whānau was repeatedly emphasised.

Health: wellness, recovery and wellbeing were stressed as key aims for te Māra. The garden should nurture and help build resilience in whānau. Incorporating health programmes within the project was seen as a priority.

Safety: people were clear they wanted a safe and secure place, where they could feel a calmness and peace. The garden should be a space away from the concrete jungle where whānau can be who they want to be.

Sustainability: the garden should aim to be sustainable and environmentally friendly. Resourcefulness was seen as a key attribute. Ensuring nothing goes to waste and resources are used as efficiently as possible must be achieved.

Activity: people told us that having fun, learning and living is fundamental to what they want. The garden should be a happy place with energy and purpose in which people can work together.

Ngā Mātauranga Māori

We were told that Mātauranga Māori must be central to the design of the garden. Recognising that Māori, as Tangata Whenua, have lived with and alongside the land for many generations and have deep stores of knowledge about living with the land, is seen as key to ensuring that we work with the land in a sustainable and environmentally robust way.

Alongside this, it was recognized that many of the people who attend te Whare Hupa are Māori and that the garden must acknowledge their needs, wants and aspirations and Māori culture if it is to truly be a place for us to stand with them. Therefore ensuring that ngā mātauranga Māori is embedded deeply and early into the project is seen as key to its success.

This includes looking at the design of the garden and incorporating and ensuring that it reflects this knowledge. The planting of rongoā and traditional huawhenua and food sources will emphasise this. In developing growing calendars, these will be based on Matariki and maramataka, the Māori lunar calendar. The project will also ensure that there is appropriate tikanga and kawa around the garden, for example in hosting celebration and hui. This will include ensuring that karakia and whakawhanaungatanga are foundational features of all gatherings.

Additionally traditional Māori activities will be included within the project. We were told that people want to learn raranga / weaving. Whakairo / carving is another art that people want to take place in te Māra. People want to be able to host hangi and to bring whānau together over food. And of course waiata and music is seen as central to people being together and people were very clear that waiata and music will be a constant in the garden.

Te Māra will be full of.....

Life: people want a place that is green and living. Having worm and butterfly farms, insect nests, bees and birds were seen as helping create this. The use of composting, recycling and organics were seen as central to promoting the cycle of life.

Taste: people want the garden to be edible. Fruit and berries, herbs and rongoā, beans and vegetables were all wanted in the garden. Being able to eat together was seen as very important.

Smell: memories of the smell of flowers and scented plants were constantly brought out during conversation. The calming effect of these was repeatedly noted. The smell of citrus and herbs when taken for cooking or freshly turned compost were seen as helping to create the sense of being somewhere alive.

Scenery: the importance of being in a place of beauty, one of vibrant colour or green serenity, was highly valued. The use of flowers, hanging baskets or walls, art and sculpture were repeatedly suggested as ways to develop this sense.

Texture: the feeling of grass under feet and the different textures of the earth and plants were seen as key elements in the feel of any garden. Being able to feel and work with your hands was a key theme within the consultation.

Sound: bird song, the sound of rain falling on tin, wind rustling leaves and music were some of the suggestions that showed how beautiful sound is valued by people. Finding means to mitigate the urban sounds around the garden is seen as highly important.

Water

There was great stress placed on how water is used in the garden. This was both as a resource and as a feature. Developing a system for water collection and irrigation was seen as key. The use of hydroponics was suggested and having access to clean, drinkable water was seen as highly desirable. Alongside this people suggested having water and drinking fountains, ponds and a birdbath. Exploring how we can access, save and use water needs to be a key component within the design.

Food

The importance of growing, harvesting and sharing of kai was a constant message given to us in the consultation. Being able to grow food for the kitchen was seen as a valuable resource for te Whare Hupa. Equally whānau wanted to be able to cook and share food in the garden. Having a space for cooking including cooking facilities is very desirable. People repeatedly suggested having a hangi pit and umu for bread and pizza alongside the ubiquitous BBQ. Ensuring that there are options for sitting in the garden and eating, such as picnic tables, were also requested.

Learning about food was also a strong message we were given. People want to learn about horticulture and working their own garden. Understanding how to propagate, nurture and harvest crops, safe storage and raw food preparation were some of the main interests suggested. Incorporating this learning within the maintenance of the garden is essential.

Key design elements

The first principle of the garden was seen to be that it is accessible to all. This included ensuring that people with mobility difficulties would be able to work on the garden. Ensuring that there are broad paths and raised beds was seen as central to this. Alongside there was a recognition that the garden should be accessible to those with sensory impairment. Having good signage and incorporating features that will support everyone to use the garden is essential.

Effective working spaces are required. Having a shed for storage, a place for propagating seedlings or a greenhouse are seen as necessary. Compost and recycling bins should be included within the design. Garden beds will be needed for growing kai and a place for trees, rongoā and herbs incorporated into the overall design. A decision will also have to be made as to how living elements such as beehives or worm farms can be developed on the site.

Space to rest and relax while working on the garden is important. Incorporating shade and shelter is seen as necessary. One potential solution was the use of umbrellas on picnic tables that could be brought out when required.

Space for activity is also required in the garden. An area for cooking is a prerequisite and consideration needs to be given as to where this is situated. A very popular idea was that of running a learning circle and having an area where people could gather in a group for lessons, talks and activities. This was seen as a central feature needed for the design.

Finally it was acknowledged that there is a considerable piece of work to be done around what is to be planted and grown and how. This includes looking at areas such as planting calendars, companion planting and pest control. This will be taken up in future consultations with stakeholders.

Activity

There were a range of activities identified that will be explored and developed into a programme for He Rākau Koikoi. However simply being part of a process and exploring a new project was already seen by some guests as highly valuable. Creating opportunities for people to try something new and to be involved was seen as extremely important.

A number of key types of activity were identified that will guide this:

Gardening: people were keen to be involved in all aspects of the garden, from design and planning, fundraising and building to watering and weeding. A broad range of skills were identified that people could give to the project but there was as great a desire for the garden to be a place where new skills could be learnt. Ensuring that there are opportunities to both use skills and learn new skills will be a key principle for He Rākau Koikoi. It was also stressed that activities should focus on creating and belonging.

Arts: mahi toi was seen as incredibly valuable. People want sculptures, pottery and garden art. Being able to create was seen as gift to the garden. Using the fence as a graffiti wall, flower arranging, tile and mosaic work were all given as examples of what could be done. There was also a strong emphasis on traditional Māori art such as raranga and whakairo.

Music: incorporating waiata and music into the programme was repeatedly emphasised. Having performance space, open mic sessions and guitar groups were all suggested. The possibility of incorporating a sound system was discussed.

Physical activity: promoting positive wellbeing and health was a key theme of the consultation. Gardening was valued for its physical nature but other suggestions included having gym equipment, a basketball hoop or table tennis. Running yoga sessions, meditation and relaxation workshops were seen as an opportunity to improve wellbeing. Incorporating healthy living and lifestyle programmes was seen to have a potentially significant impact.

Vocational activity: whānau recognize the importance of work and could see the garden as an opportunity for developing skills that would help find and sustain employment. Finding money making opportunities was seen as important. A frequently mentioned suggestion was running a weekend market where arts and produce could be sold and people could receive training in retail and marketing or with koha coffee.

Ensuring that there are effective volunteering opportunities that include training, induction and lead to work references was valued. This would include taking roles on the steering group that will oversee project development. Alongside this there is a key role in education to help build work skills.

Learning: people were very clear that they valued the opportunity to learn. Along with vocational training people were very keen on learning in multiple areas. Developing a greater understanding of Te Ao Māori was given as positive example. People want to learn about local history and to hear people talk about their areas of interest. Health programmes were repeatedly emphasised and there was a strong emphasis on ensuring learning is embedded deeply across the project.

Extra activities: people were keen on having games available in the garden. Tables with embedded chess boards, cards and places to read and relax were suggested. Creative writing, poetry and spoken word were repeatedly given as potential activities. People were also clear that they want to create and build features of the garden, such as a thank you wall, signs and fencing. A photographic record of the story of the garden could also be done by guests.

A final thought

“A tree to climb, that’s the hundred year plan!”

People were very clear that the garden is not a short term vision but must be a long term project. For He Rākau Koikoi to promote sustainable change for whānau, it needs to not just work in the here and now but with an eye to the future. It was recognized that for some people there are no quick solutions. We need to be prepared to be there for as long as it takes.

Next steps

The consultation raised a number of additional issues that will be considered in the next steps of project development. Identifying the resources required and sourcing these, while also developing the finer detail, will take time. This will also require further consultation and involvement. However the initial consultation has provided a great deal of insightful, knowledgeable and valuable ideas to lead us to our next steps. We are very grateful to all the people who took part and led us to this point.

The consultation document will be passed to the designer for incorporating into the plans for the garden. This process will take approximately four weeks and the plan should be ready in early December. Currently the building on the site of the garden is in the process of being demolished and the land being prepared. Once this is complete a blessing and gifting of the land will be held with the Sisters of Compassion. At this stage work will commence on the garden and people will be invited to join us over the summer months of 2017-18 to begin our journey.

If there are any further questions, ideas, or thoughts, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your help and support is already greatly appreciated.

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi

With your basket and my basket the people will live

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

Matt Petrie
