

Report 04.37
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Committee Landcare
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International home spaces (arboretum)

1. Purpose

To report back on the investigation into the international home spaces (arboretum) proposal.

2. Background

At the August 2003 meeting Councillor Shields suggested that an arboretum might be a useful addition to the regional parks infrastructure. Cr Shields noted that an arboretum could create a home space for recent migrants. In essence, immigrant communities could be involved in developing parts of an “international home space” that would provide a link with the regional community as a whole. An example of such an attraction is the Hungarian garden in Molesworth Street.

Consequently, the Committee requested that officers investigate the opportunity to establish an arboretum at Battle Hill.

Further discussion with Councillor Shields determined that the proposal would involve a series of approximately five connected “home spaces”, each to include trees shrubs and structures from the representative region. It would also include spaces for games (e.g. soccer) and a combined events/performance area.

A structured planting area would be developed initially to frame the home spaces, ideally with native tree species to give a New Zealand context. Each home space would be developed inside the frame of trees and designed in consultation with the regional grouping or country it represents.

Staff joined Councillor Shields on a tour to investigate available land within the Parks and Forests network. Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, Belmont Regional Park and the Te Marua area of Kaitoke Regional Park were visited.

3. Site identified

While we have not undertaken a detailed analysis of sites, initial indications suggest that the best location would be in Queen Elizabeth Park on the northern side of Whareroa Road. The site of the old playing fields at the MacKays Crossing entrance is in an already modified area, has sufficient flat land with room to expand, and is near SH1 and the very popular Whareroa Beach.

4. Success requirements

During the course of this investigation we discussed the proposal with other agencies and identified the following factors as critical to the project's success:

Planning

- Identification of target ethnic communities and potential regional groups, establishment and development of long-term relationships with them.
- A detailed scope of the proposal.
- Consistency with the management plan.
- Guidelines for design of structures and plantings, which fit with the landscape character, scale and future vision of the Park.
- Fit with bylaws, planning and legislative requirements.

Good relationships with and ongoing support from:

- Relevant migrant communities.
- Existing community and interest groups in the park.
- Local Iwi.
- Territorial authorities, government agencies and other organisations that work with ethnic migrants, including the diplomatic corps.

Use of plant material

- The use of non-invasive exotics.
- Complying with budgets and biosecurity requirements.

Capacity

- Establishing links to identified communities and engaging those with appropriate skills (including understanding/knowledge of language and customs).
- Ongoing staffing, expertise and resources to maintain the intensively managed areas.

A strong theme that emerged from our investigation was the need to thoroughly plan the project. Further, the need to establish and maintain very long-term relationships suggests that the project should not be rushed.

5. Next steps

The physical construction of home spaces is relatively straightforward, although as with any capital development it would need to be funded through the LTCCP. The key factor governing the success of a project such as this is the buy-in from the targeted community and regional ratepayers in general. For that reason we suggest the following approach:

1. Raise the initial concept in the draft of the new Management Plan. The review is to begin later on in 2004. This will allow the community the opportunity to debate the idea. As part of the management plan development process we would undertake some additional consultation with groups representing new migrants to New Zealand and other relevant agencies.
2. If there was general support for the proposal in the management plan we would then prepare a detailed programme for the next LTCCP including:
 - relationship building with ethnic communities
 - feasibility study
 - detailed design
 - construction.

6. Communication

In the first instance the matter can be brought to the Friends of QEP as an idea for park development. A public media release will follow.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report.*
2. *note the contents of the report.*

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