



RECORD OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

#1 – Holt Micro-Forest

Sunday 1 August 2021



CONTEXT

In 2021, community members from Holt ran a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to build a micro-forest and nature play space in Holt. They raised just over \$25,000 and have also received an ACT Government 'Nature in the City' grant for \$15,000. More information is available on the [Holt Micro-Forest website](#). The Holt community, working with Capital Regional Community Services, has engaged The Climate Factory to deliver the project.

This project will be based on the successful pilot project, the Downer micro-forest built over 2020-21. More information about the Downer micro-forest is available at [The Climate Factory website](#).

On 1 August 2021, the first formal consultation session with the Holt community was held via Zoom, to find out what's important to the community. The session aimed to help the community determine features to prioritise in the park that fit with the natural elements of a micro-forest and nature play space. It was also an opportunity for community members to ask questions, clarify concepts and express any concerns.

The online session was led by Social and Sustainability Planner, Liesl Codrington using the online collaboration tool, Mural. Liesl is also leading the newly formed Casey micro-forest.

Themes

Six themes were explored. These were:

- Community gathering and connection
- Biodiversity (including habitat)
- Nature Play
- Education
- Indigenous Engagement
- Safety and Maintenance

INVITATIONS

Participants were invited to attend the event through the following channels:

- Holt micro-forest facebook group (over 300 members) and Instagram (220 followers)
- Climate Factory's Facebook page (over 780 followers)
- Letterbox drops on streets surrounding the proposed micro-forest site
- The Holt Micro-Forest email database of 162 people
- The Climate Factory's email database of 500 people
- Posters established around the site at the Holt Shops
- 666 ABC radio Saturday morning gardening show

ATTENDEES

In total 15 community members attended the session.

PRESENTATIONS

Jennifer Bardsley presented on the overall project objectives, the budget and indicative timeline.

Edwina Robinson, Founder and Landscape Architect from The Climate Factory outlined the principles embodied in a micro-forest that will be included in the design. These were:

1. Water harvesting – to capture water at a plants' roots where it's needed most rather than at the soil surface. The Downer Pilot project incorporated 26 lineal metres of underground trenches and 6m² of bog. The design for the Watson micro-forest incorporates underground trenches which drain to a dry creek bed.

2. Great soil preparation and earth sculpting – helps with capturing water and getting carbon into the soil
3. Choosing local natives and natives adapted to hotter and drier areas. For example, the Downer micro-forest sourced Kurrajong, *Brachyciton populneus* from a nursery in NW NSW where they experience temperatures of up to 49C in summer and -9C in Winter.
4. Dense planting based on Miyawaki and Afforestt re-forestry models using a planting ratio of 3-4 plants per square metre. Afforestt say their forests grow 10x faster than a natural forest -www.afforestt.com.
5. Multiple vegetation layers – like a natural forest, groundcovers, climbers, trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials are used.
6. Inclusion of nature play elements – use simple nature play elements like stones and logs. Elements are kept under 600mm high so we don't have to comply with playground codes around softfall, fall heights, setback etc.
7. Places to sit and gather.
8. Safety – Compliance with crime prevention through environmental design by providing broad paths in and out of the micro-forests. These paths are at least three metres wide.
9. Habitat – micro-forests create a stepping stone for wildlife from our parks to our gardens, the bush and waterways.
10. Thermal comfort – winter sun & summer shade.
11. Sustainable material use.
12. Low maintenance once established and maintained by an active carer group – a requirement of ACT Government approval is to demonstrate that a group of people are willing to participate in maintaining the space for at least 2 years.
13. Organic only – no herbicides. At Downer, no herbicides were used when preparing the site for earthworks. Instead, the top layer of weeds and soil was removed, stockpiled and covered with a black tarp to solarise the weeds.

DISCUSSION

Participants were invited to post ideas, suggestions, comments and questions as electronic sticky notes under each of six themes, as well as to provide specific site information. This brainstorming board that captures this information is shown in the image on the next page.

Participants explored and posted sticky notes onto each of the themes. Yellow sticky notes represent ideas that can be included in the project. The mauve sticky notes represent ideas provided by participants that could be explored in future initiatives for example, to include a bore (i.e. ideas beyond the scope of the current project). These mauve suggestions, like installing water bottle refilling stations, could be explored at later times. Blue sticky notes refer to the Food Forest proposal that is subject to a separate grant application with the ACT Government. If successful, the Food Forest will be developed alongside the Micro-forest.

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CONCERNS

During the session, a concern was raised that there may not be enough space to kick around a ball for a casual game of soccer or a picnic. However, it was clarified for attendees that this micro-forest will only be using a small proportion of the available park space, so there will still be ample room to kick balls around (including in the central area of the micro-forest). A second concern was raised around vandalism. Through the discussion, the community supported a strategy to help address this issue through engaging with the local school. This will include encouraging and inviting local children and teenagers to become involved in planting and looking after the micro-forest, therefore increasing their sense of ownership and connection to the site.

VOTING

Participants voted on the principles that were most important to them and should be included in the landscape plan.

Principle & No. of votes	The Climate Factory Response
Spaces for seating (4)	We will design the micro-forest and nature play area so there are spaces of different sizes and different options for seating. Initially, seating will be mostly boulders, logs and potentially a seat/s with backs. Options to install additional seating can be explored in the future.
School Engagement (3)	We support engaging with students from local schools, including Kingsford Smith School, Holt. We suggest that one of the community working bees is open to school students to participate in 2022. This will help foster a sense of stewardship of the site and hopefully reduce incidences of vandalism.
Different size boulders and stumps surrounded by tree bark (3)	We will endeavour to produce a creative nature play space using natural materials, noting that it needs to be approved by Transport Canberra and City Services, Directorate. They are wary of using timber elements as they require more maintenance than just rock.
Dry water course (3)	We can incorporate a section of dry creek bed as part of the water harvesting design. The dry water course will also be used by children for play.
Welcome board with map and information, history of site and plant info (2)	Pending sufficient funding, this will be completed. It could be added later if money is not available initially.
If any signage, use Ngunawal language as well as English where possible. (2)	Agreed.

Accessibility of pathways for mobility equipment (2)	Unfortunately there is insufficient money in the current budget to provide paved surfaces. All ground surfaces will be the existing dryland grass or mulch. We suggest that later on the group could apply to the ACT Government for funding if a paved surface is deemed necessary.
Understand the history of the area to inform the plants and use of the site. (2)	Plants will be chosen from local species as well as species from hotter, drier climates.
Bee food plants (2)	The Climate Factory has committed to include Pollinator Patches within each of its micro-forests to attract pollinators. These will be areas without many trees and include lots of flowering native plants.

Next steps

From here, the results of this community consultation will be incorporated into the drafting of the landscape design. The indicative timeline for the initiative is outlined below.

- Community consultation and design process (including water harvesting design) - July to November 2021
- Establish plant list and order plants - October/November 2021
- Landscape plan distributed - December 2021
- Formal approvals obtained - February 2022
- Earthworks completed - March 2022
- Community planting day 1 - April 2022 (note: one of the community planting days may be held with a school during the week)
- Community planting day 2 - May 2022
- Community planting day 3 - June 2022

This consultation report will also be distributed to the Holt community for review and comment.