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# **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

**0645SYD COOKS RIVER PARKLANDS  
HJ MAHONEY RESERVE**

JULY 2019

Project Client: Inner West Council  
Project Name: Cooks River Parklands  
Project Number: 0645SYD COOKS RIVER PARK

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# Introduction

## Site Background

Council conducted an extensive research project in 2012 resulting in the development of the Recreation Needs Research Study – Strategic Directions for Marrickville. The study identified the community need for improved recreation and environmental outcomes for the Cooks River and its parklands. The Cooks River Parklands Plan of Management (PoM) and Masterplan was subsequently prepared in 2016 to guide the future development and management of the 2.5km Cooks River foreshore.

McGregor Coxall was commissioned by Inner West Council to design the Cooks River Parklands upgrades, based on the Masterplan and Plan of Management.

Since 2018, the Masterplan has been progressively implemented with Stage 1 – Steel Park Waterplay Expansion completed and Stage 2 – Steel Park to Kendrick Park Upgrades underway for completion in 2019.

This report contains the Community Engagement Report for a new youth facility at HJ Mahoney Reserve as one of the key components in the Cooks River Parklands Upgrade Stage 3 at HJ Mahoney Reserve.

## Methodology

The Community Engagement for HJ Mahoney Reserve sought to get input for the proposed Concept Design of the new youth facility. The Engagement consisted of:

- A YourSay Inner West web page was established providing details of the proposed park upgrades which include the youth facility, stormwater swale and wetland systems, paths and picnic facilities. The web page also included the draft concept design for the proposed youth facility and an online survey form seeking information on community preferences for the use and development of the youth facility. The online survey was open from 18 March to 7 April 2019.
- A newsletter was distributed to 3,550 properties along the Cooks River Parklands within the Inner West LGA and 1,050 properties in the adjacent Earlwood area within the Canterbury-Bankstown LGA. The newsletter provided information on the project scope and timeline and directed the community to the Your Say Inner West webpage and to an on-site engagement session.
- Key stakeholders identified were adolescents between 11 and 18 years old.
- Emails forwarding the newsletter and information about the project engagement were also sent to local schools, nearby community services/ organizations, and sports clubs to invite comments on the proposal online as well as attending the onsite engagement session.
- An on-site community engagement session at the HJ Mahoney Reserve was held on 30th of March, from 9am to 3pm. The session aimed to inform people, answer questions and to take note of ideas and suggestions provided by community members. The Your Say survey could be completed onsite via provided iPads and also in written form on a print-out version. Two representatives from Council and two from McGregor Coxall attended the session.

# Engagement results

## Summary

A total of 376 visits were made to the HJ Mahoney Reserve Your Say Inner west webpage. The documents with project information were downloaded 180 times and 70 surveys were submitted.

More than 50% of the surveys were submitted by people aged 13-17. Also more than half of the respondents live in Marrickville with 37% being female and 63% male. Three written submissions were made, two of which were the only submissions made on behalf of an organization (sports clubs who regularly use the Reserve) and one was provided by a local resident.

The majority of the survey results and informal responses given by attendees at the onsite session supported the project.

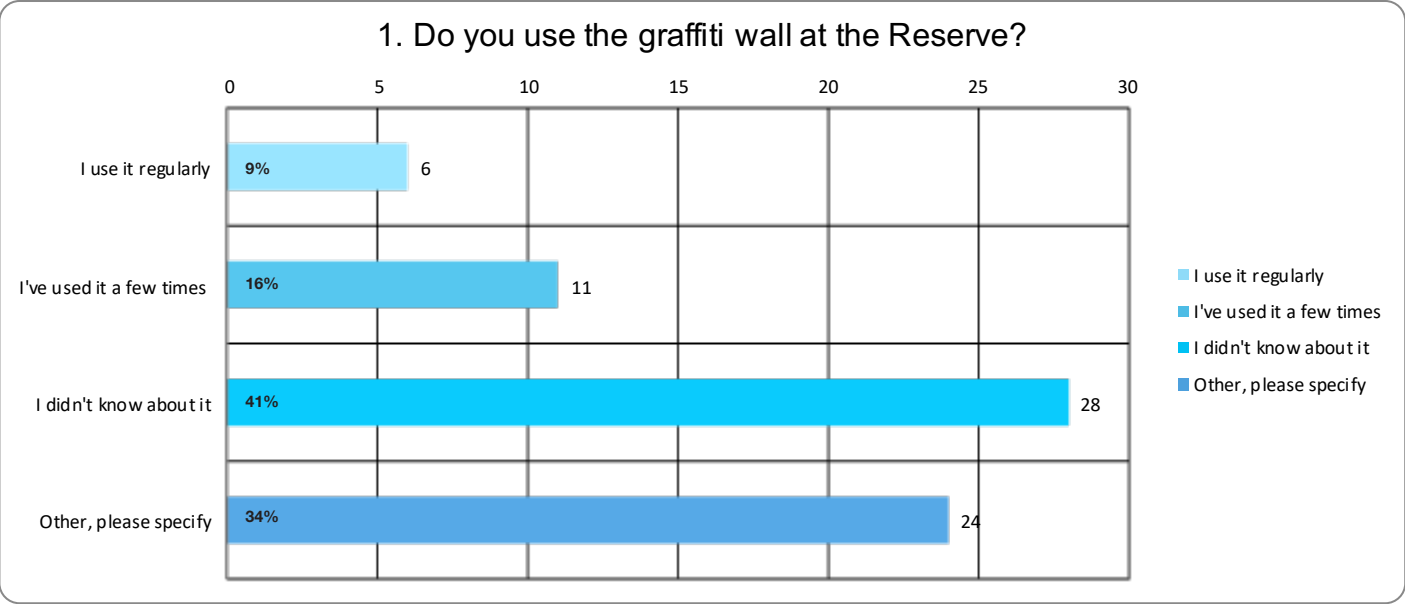
## Survey results

In the Your Say survey people were asked for their demographic information and four multiple choice questions to identify their preferences for the functions of the facility. The survey also included open-ended questions asking for any further comments.

General findings in survey responses reflect:

- The existing graffiti wall is valued by park users as viewers or artists practicing art on it;
- A variety of preferences for activities in the proposed youth facility in particular and social activities and informal sports.

The survey questions and the collated results are shown below.



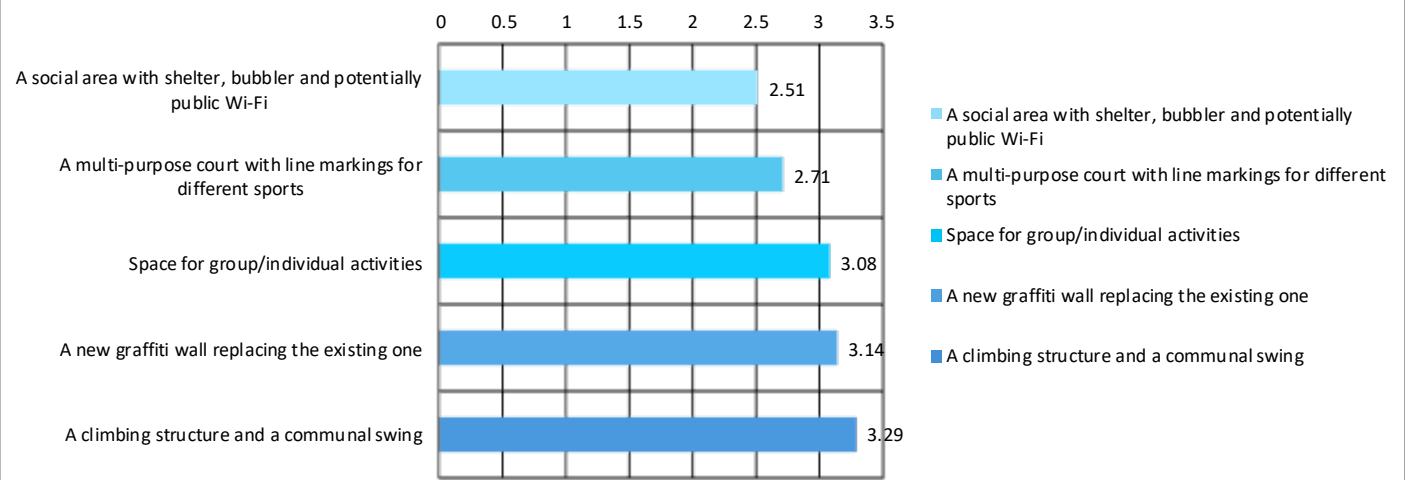
Answer choices	Responses	
I use it regularly	6	9%
I've used it a few times	11	16%
I didn't know about it	28	41%
Other, please specify	24	34%
Total	69	

'Other' responses:

- enjoy viewing / support the wall (9)
- never used the wall (10)
- photograph the wall (2)
- aware of the wall (2)

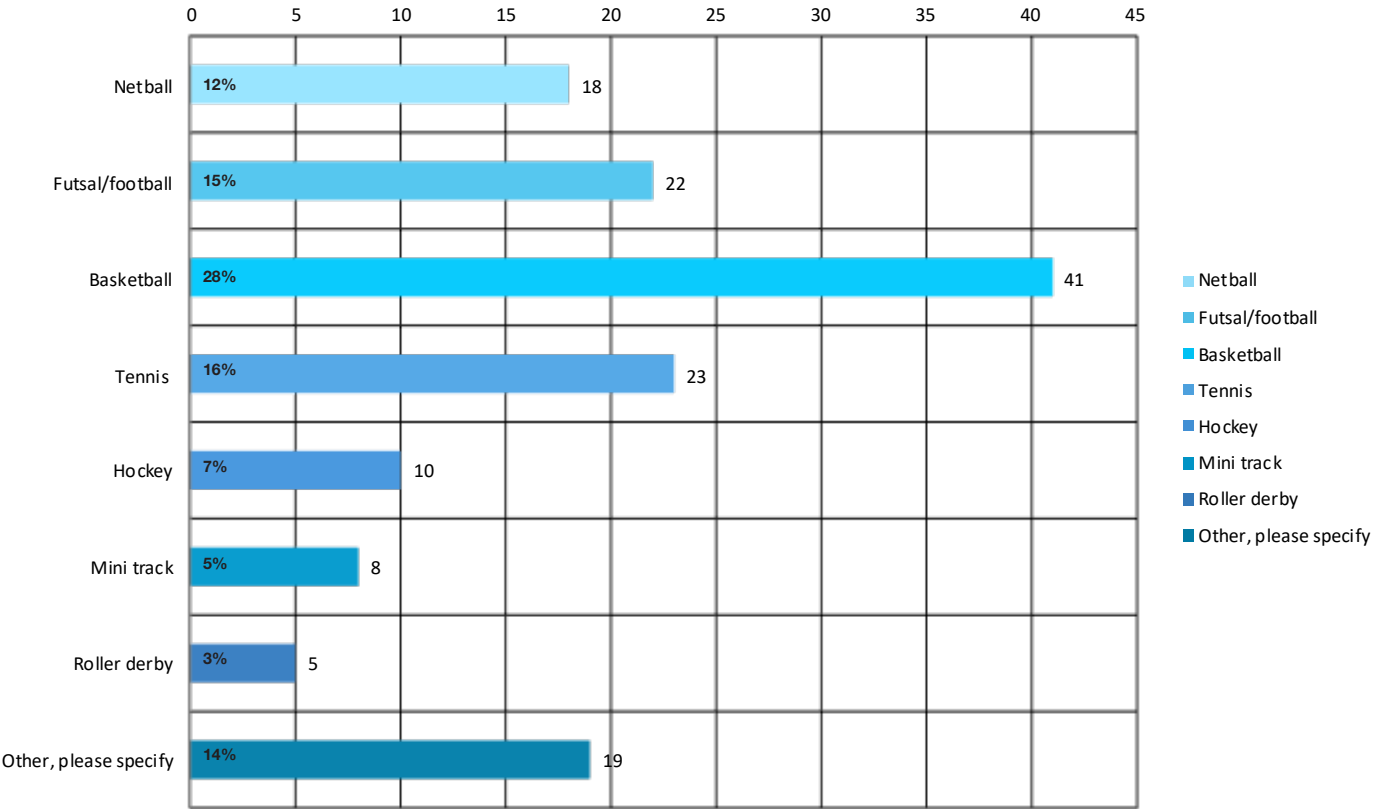
\* number of responses in brackets

2. Vote for your favourite feature of the proposed design  
(1 being most favourite, 5 least favorite)



Answer choices	Rank in favourite feature
A social area with shelter, bubbler and potentially public Wi-Fi	1 – most favourite
A multi-purpose court with line markings for different sports	2
Space for group/individual activities	3
A new graffiti wall replacing the existing one	4
A climbing structure and a communal swing	5 – least favourite

3. What activities would you like to do on the new multi-purpose court?

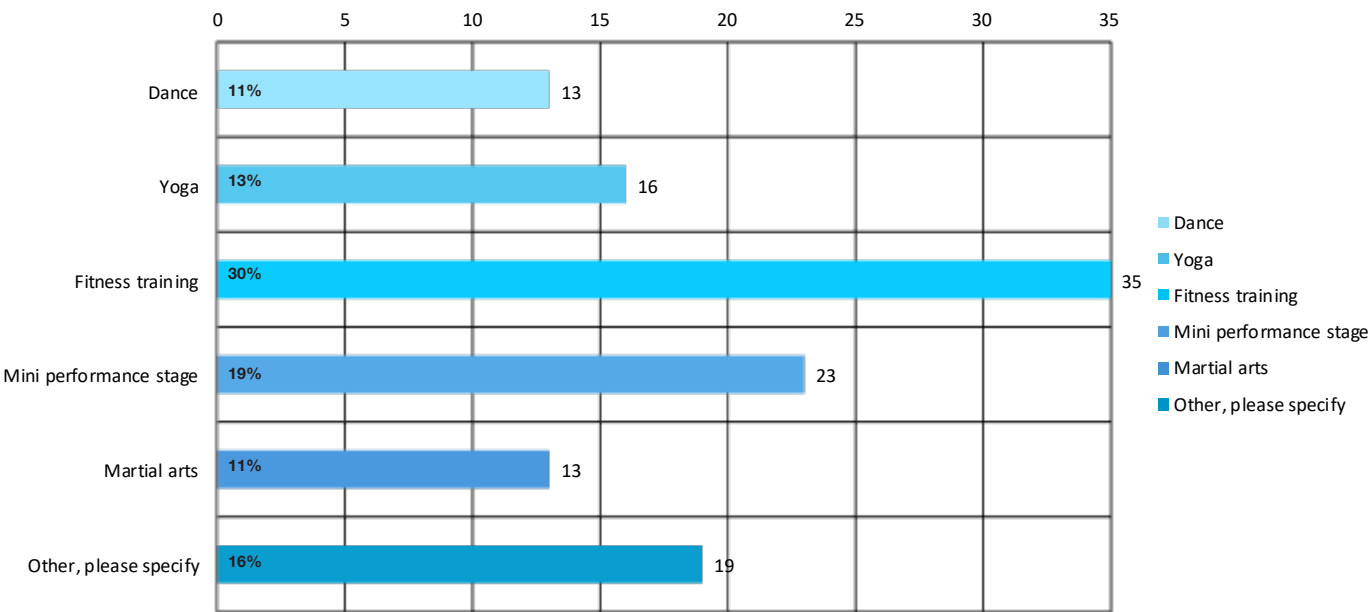


Answer choices	Responses	
Netball	18	12%
Futsal/ football	22	15%
Basketball	41	28%
Tennis	23	16%
Hockey	10	7%
Mini track	8	5%
Roller derby	5	3%
Other, please specify	19	14%
Total	169	

‘Other’ responses:

- AFL (2)
  - Handball (2)
  - Riding scooter (1)
  - Volleyball (1)
  - Exercise (1)
  - Batminton (1)
  - Skating (2)
  - Table tennis (1)
  - Chess boards (1)
  - Walking and cycling (1)
  - No multi-use court (3)
- \* number of responses in brackets

4. How would you use the new space for group/individual activities?



Answer choices	Responses	
Dance	13	11%
Yoga	16	13%
Fitness training	35	30%
Mini performance stage	23	19%
Martial arts	13	11%
Other, please specify	19	16%
Total	119	

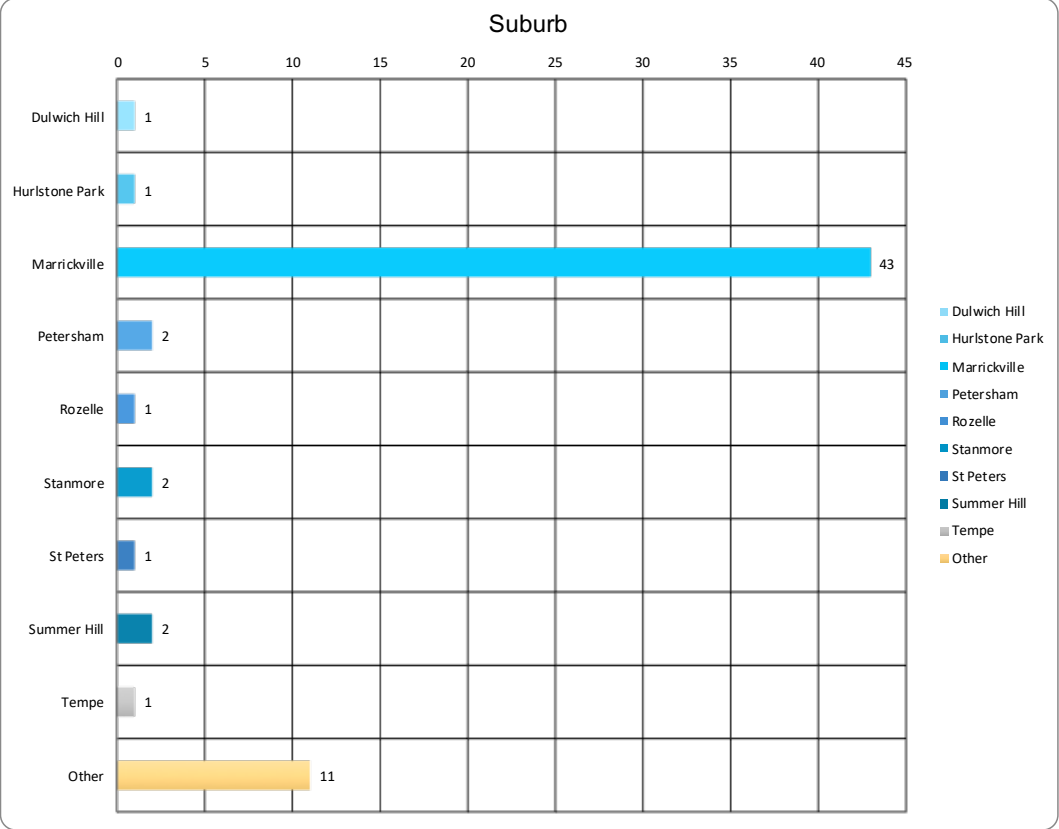
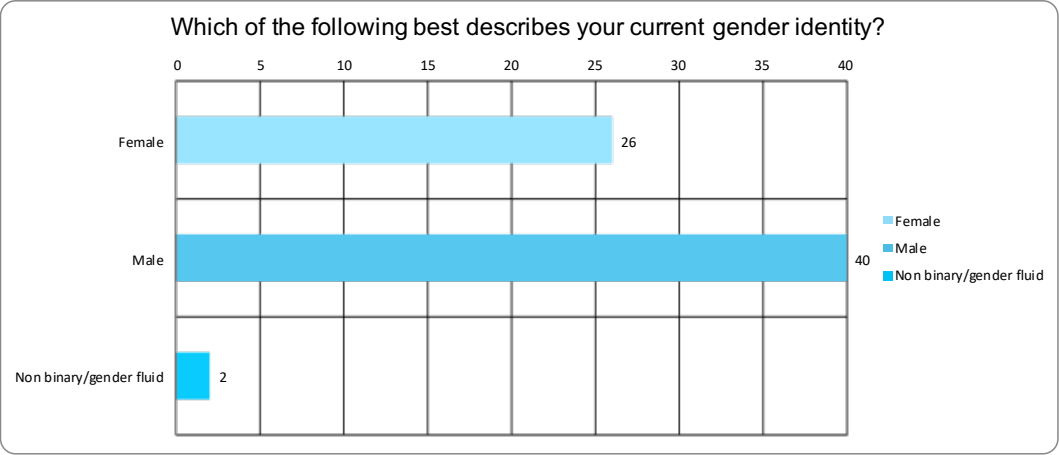
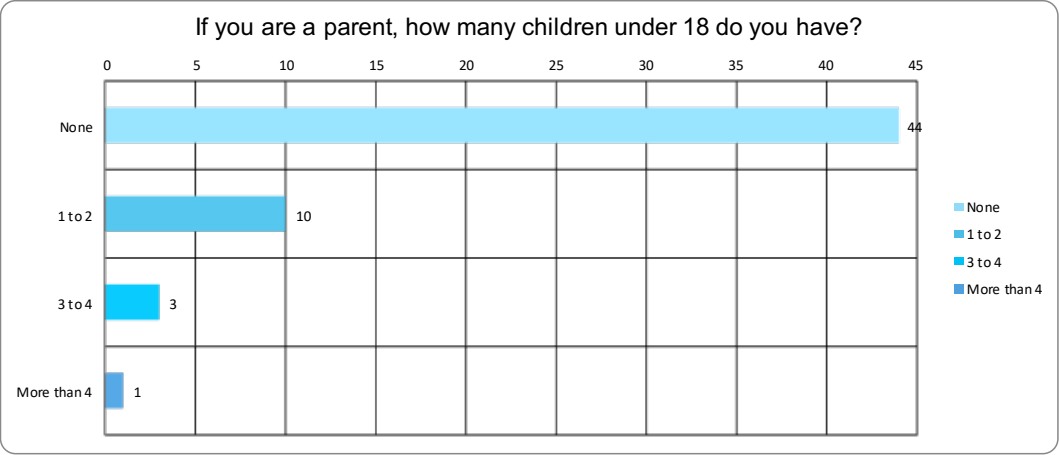
'Other' responses:

- Archery (1)
- Board games (1)
- Reading (2)
- Picnic (1)
- Gymnastics (1)
- Hanging out with friends (7)
- No space (1)
- Art (1)
- Riding bike and scooter (2)

\* number of responses in brackets



Demographic questions



### Written submissions

Three written submissions were received during the engagement period from two sporting clubs and one resident as summarized below.

#### **Sydney Woman's Baseball League:**

- The youth facility will be potentially located within the foul ball lines and encroach into the area for baseball games.
- Tidal creek proposed location covers areas with poor drainage and are damp and muddy during wet winter season.
- The Facility will take up the current warm up area. This is to keep the sportfield for games only.
- The increase in foot traffic between the diamonds during a game, which holds up playing time.
- Unsatisfactory condition of the public toilets and inadequate capacity of this facility.
- No shelter in the park.
- No storage solution for sports equipment in the amenities building.
- No hard surface in front of the amenities building and this area has poor drainage.
- Only one bubbler in the park and cannot fill water bottles.

#### **Newtown Breakways Football Club:**

- The youth facility is considered as a low priority upgrade in comparison to the unsatisfactory condition and inadequate capacity of the amenities building.
- The new youth facility will cause loss of warm up area leading to higher demand of hours using the sports ground which is already at capacity.
- Potential conflicts of activities in the youth facility and organized sports in the sportfield, such as balls landing in the Facility disrupting activities or causing injuries.
- Request for improved public facilities including BBQ and spectator mounds.

- Retain the fence between the field and golf course to reduce impact of conflicting activities with gates or stiles included.
- A range of comments regarding other aspects of the Masterplan which are outside the scope of the current project and would be considered in future stages and sports strategies (eg. car parking, sports field surface and irrigation, designation of the reserve as a woman's sporting and recreation area).

The one written submission from a local resident expressed general objection to the proposal, because green open spaces have been over designated to organized sports and built structures.

## Other suggestions

At the on-site engagement session it was suggested that Council commission an artist, preferably a female artist, to create a graffiti art work on the new wall as part of an opening event for the facility. Street art workshops could also be held regularly to introduce young people to this art form.

## Conclusion

The community engagement indicated strong support for the project, in particular the proposed youth facility. Suggestions and concerns raised during the engagement will be considered for the development of detailed designs.

Concerns raised by sports clubs include potential conflicts between the youth facility and sporting activities and the condition of the amenities building and other facilities. These issues have been reviewed and a detailed response provided to the clubs. The potential conflicts are considered to be manageable or are not expected to occur. These issues were not raised at the time of the Cooks River Masterplan community engagement. Upgrade of the amenities building is included in the Masterplan and the Marrickville Public Toilet Strategy is being planned for in future capital programs.