

City Hill park – People’s Panel Session Summary

Session 1: 23 May 2026



29 members attended

9 project team members and observers attended

Session overview

Introduction to the City Hill park project, getting to know other panel members and a guided site walk of City Hill park.

Member motivations and goals

Members were asked to introduce themselves and share why they joined the People’s Panel and their interest in City Hill park.

Passion for Canberra and City Hill

- Long-term residents and newcomers alike care deeply about the city
- Strong interest in improving an underutilised space.

Interest in urban design and public spaces

- Some members have backgrounds or interest in planning, architecture, or landscape design and related fields
- Curiosity about how cities and public spaces work.

Desire to contribute

- Motivation to have a voice in shaping the city
- Interest in community participation and democratic processes.

Agreed group behaviours

The group identified and agreed on the following group behaviours:

- Listening with respect
- Being open to difference
- Recognising people have different ways of contributing
- Making space for all voices
- Challenging ideas, not people
- Be mindful of people’s backgrounds and why they are saying things
- Agree to disagree
- Don’t cut people off
- If you’re not sure ask a question
- Speak with respect for other people’s time
- Speak calmly and without strong emotions
- Revisit ground rules at start of each session.

Key questions and knowledge gaps

Members identified the following topics of interest for discussion in future sessions:

- Ngunnawal / First Nations and cultural context
- What can and can not be changed in the park
- Heritage constraints and flexibility
- Tree significance and environmental factors
- Current usage data and user needs (including children)
- Feasibility of design changes (levels, roads, infrastructure)
- Governance and responsibility (who manages and maintains the site).

Entry survey insights

Members joined with diverse but generally limited prior knowledge, open mindsets, and cautious confidence in the panel’s ability to shape outcomes.

Consensus rule

Members discussed options for defining what agreement looks like for this group, including what percentage of panel members need to agree or live with a decision for the decision to pass.

No single approach was confirmed, and the group will decide in Session 2.

Site walk observations

Members had a predominantly negative perception of the current state, using words such as: uninviting, barren, hostile and disconnected.

Key issues identified

- Poor connectivity across site and to rest of city
- Dominance of traffic and surrounding infrastructure
- Insufficient shade, seating, and amenities

- Poor maintenance (broken glass, dry grass, neglected landscaping)
- Lack of comfort and safety
- Limited usability (few people, little activity).

Observed usage

- Minimal legitimate use
- Some anti-social or transient behaviours (e.g. passing through, littering)
- Space is largely avoided by the public.

Early vision ideas

Members were asked to discuss and share in groups their early ideas for a future vision for City Hill park.

These ideas will be explored further and refined in future sessions.

Stronger identity and purpose

- Integration of history and Ngunnawal / First Nations storytelling
- Clear design intent and flow
- Potential cultural or destination feature.

A welcoming, usable park

- Safe, clean, and accessible
- Family-friendly and inclusive
- A place people actively choose to visit.

An active and vibrant space

- Events, gatherings, and social activity
- A “bustling central green”
- Opportunities for play, rest, and community use.

Improved connectivity

- Improved access and pathways for pedestrians and cyclists
- Reduced car dominance
- Stronger links to the surrounding city.

Nature and amenity improvements

- More greenery, shade, and biodiversity
- Seating, lighting, water features, and facilities
- A “nature break” within the city.