

Central City Reservoirs

Phase two community engagement insights

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Background

- To increase the supply of drinking water and capacity for firefighting for our growing central city, we need to build two 25 million litre reservoirs. One by 2028 and the other from 2040.
- The Ruakiwi site at Hamilton Lake (next to the existing Ruakiwi Reservoir) has been identified as the best site for the two new reservoirs and a valve chamber building.
- Phase one of community engagement was sought between 18 February – 18 March 2025, to help shape the design and layout of the reservoirs site, and identify how people use the space.
- The results were shared with the public and Elected Members at the Infrastructure and Transport Committee meeting on 13 May 2025.
- 94 submissions received, with comments indicating general support for the project.
- Ongoing communication has occurred with key residents whose views may be impacted by the new reservoirs since the phase one engagement.

Key residents' workshop

- Workshop held on 27 May 2025 to keep key residents informed on the project, and capture feedback on potential design elements.
- Nine people attended who live on Ruakiwi Road, directly across from the Ruakiwi site.

Key findings:

- Corten weathering steel received the most support from the reservoirs screen material options with six participants liking the material for being low-maintenance and visually appealing.
- Participants were divided on a public viewing path around the reservoirs and a viewing platform on top. Feedback received from residents not in favour was; that it was not necessary to get a view, going without would reduce costs, and privacy concerns with the viewing paths overlooking their property.
- Participants were divided on pathways through the reserve. Those against preferred to keep the space natural as there are other paths around the lake. Those in support said it provided an opportunity to interact with the site, and supported accessibility.
- Participants expressed support for cultural design elements and wayfinding signage, but were divided on the need for other features and play elements.
- Most wanted new plantings, but not blocking lake views. Several mentioned for the oak/street trees to be retained.

Drop-in session

A public drop-in session was held at The Verandah Cafe on Wednesday 9 July between 5pm - 7pm.

These were the types of things we heard from the community:

Trees:

- Concerns about tree removal, relocation, and mitigation.
- Views lost from properties (with the loss of the trees).
- Querying specific tree removal.

Paths:

- General support of paths, connectivity, and improved amenity.
- Some disliked the proposed paths, or path route.
- A couple did not want viewing platforms, or public access to the reservoirs.

Materials:

- The recommended materials (corten, concrete mass blocks) were generally preferred.
- Understand the practicality of corten, even if they dislike the look.

Additional features

- Suggestions for facilities (viewing, resting, café, etc) on top of the new reservoirs.
- Suggestions to convert the old water tower to accommodate facilities.

Phase two community engagement

- Phase two of community engagement occurred between 26 June - 13 July 2025 to help guide decisions on the reservoirs design such as building materials, public access, landscaping, and other potential features.
- To inform the community of the survey, we used:
  - Detailed information on Council's website linking to an online survey
  - Targeted tactics such as letter drops, visits to local residents, a media release, and a drop-in information session
  - Signs near the Ruakiwi site
  - Widespread social media advertising
  - Hardcopies available at the libraries and the reception of the Council Municipal building.
- We received 177 responses in total via the feedback form online, hardcopy, and in email.
- 74 individuals commented on relevant consultation posts on Facebook and Instagram.

Processing feedback

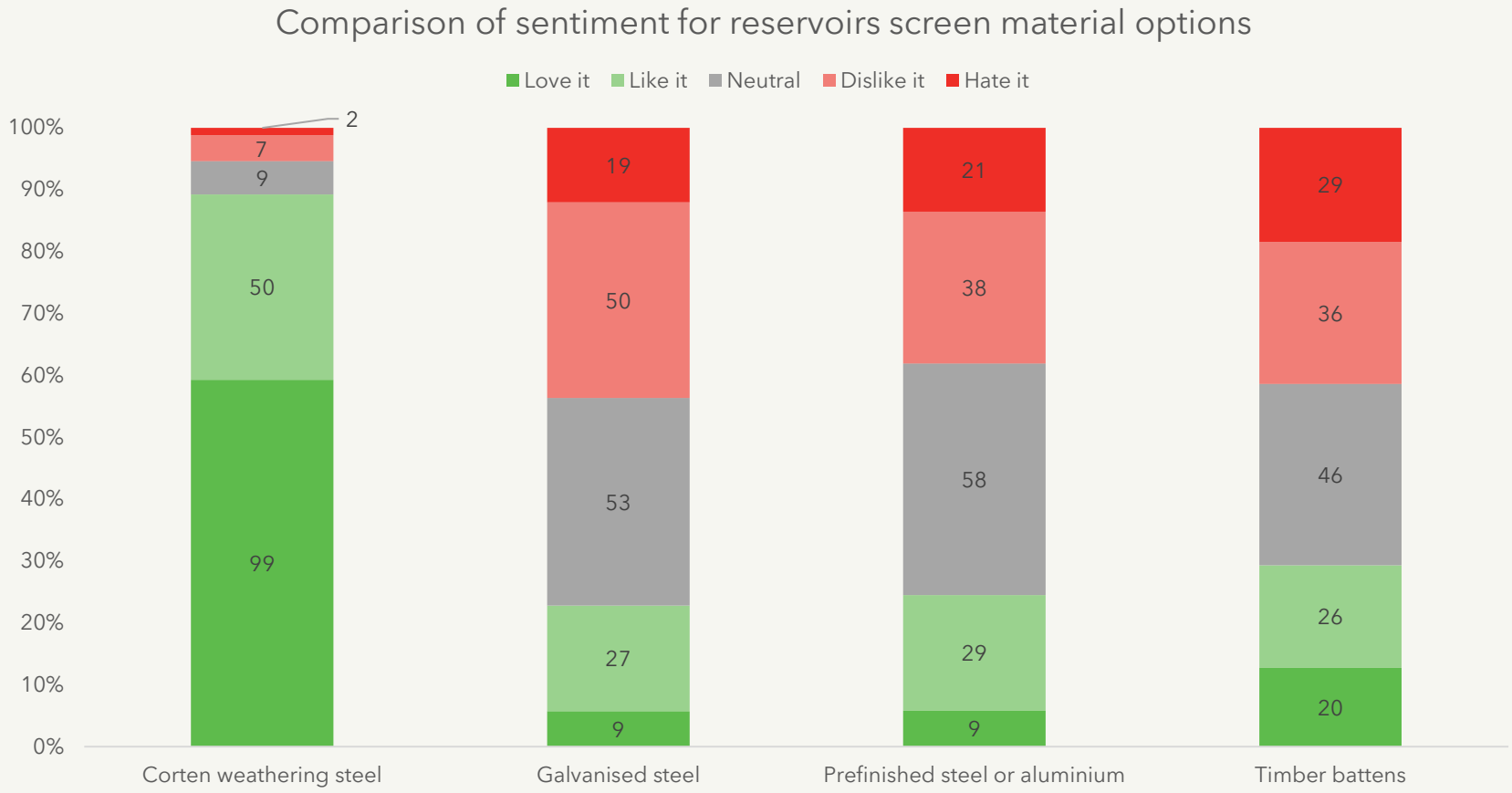
- Any emails or hardcopies were entered into our online survey tool.
- Duplicate responses were combined when the name and email matched.
- Any attachments were manually checked.
- Counts and percentages were calculated using Microsoft Excel.
- Submitters could opt not to respond to any question.
- Comments could apply to multiple themes or sections if relevant, and not every submitter provided comments.
- Only one sentiment was applicable per option, for each submitter.

Materials for reservoirs screen

What do you think about the material options we have considered?







Materials for reservoirs screen

Material options comments - themes/overview

Corten weathering steel
Staff-recommended option

52 comments: 43 positive, 9 negative

Visually appealing
n = 16

Low repair/ maintenance
n = 15

Durable/ long-lasting
n = 12

Not visually appealing
n = 9

Example comments

"Looks beautiful and as it weathers will blend into the surroundings so wonderfully."

"It's natural patina protects it from corrosion, eliminating the need for regular painting or sealing."

"More organic in look and visual feel… with the ability to age gracefully over time."

"Currently fashionable but will … not allow for the later construction to be sympathetic to the design values two decades down the track."

Materials for reservoirs screen

Material options comments - themes/overview

Galvanised steel

1 comment

"Could the Galvanised steel be painted, or would that add too much to the cost?"

Prefinished steel or aluminium

There were no specific comments about this material option.

Timber battens

3 comments: all positive



Visually appealing

n = 2



Ages well over time

n = 1

Key findings – reservoirs screen material

- Feedback found corten weathering steel was the most preferred material by a large margin.
- Corten weathering steel received a lot of positive comments, noting it as durable, low-maintenance, and aesthetically appealing.
- Timber battens were a distant second preference.
- Respect for the surrounding natural environment was reflected as an important consideration in all elements of this section.
- There were 17 suggestions for alternative materials or additional design elements, included patterning, cultural inclusion in design, breaking-up solid panels, and planting to enhance this natural appeal.

Viewing path around the reservoirs

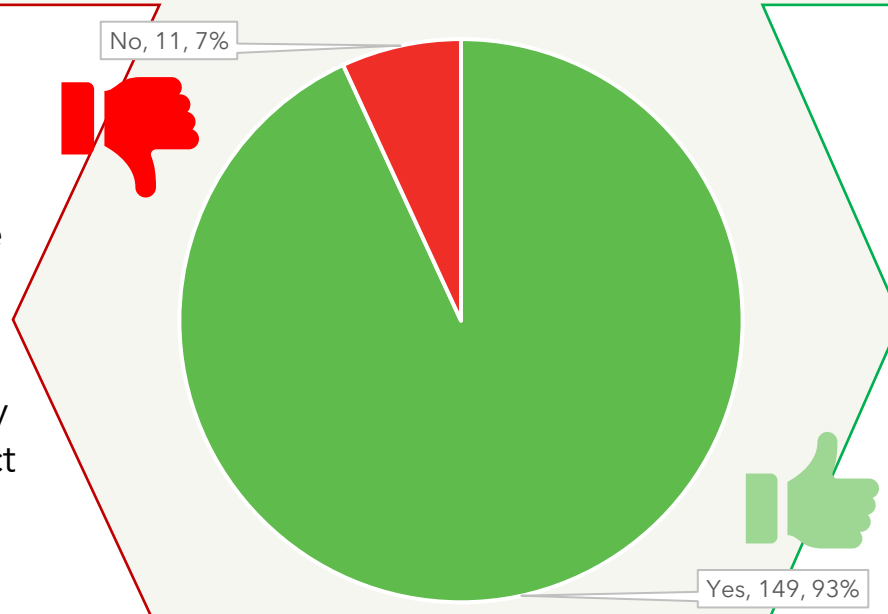
Do you like the idea of a public viewing path?

Overall sentiment for the idea of a viewing path around the reservoirs

Example comments

"Although you would have awesome views around the city, I'm concerned about the security."

"Seems like an unnecessary expense and likely to attract 'taggers'."



Example comments

"Excellent way to provide some public interactive with infrastructure."

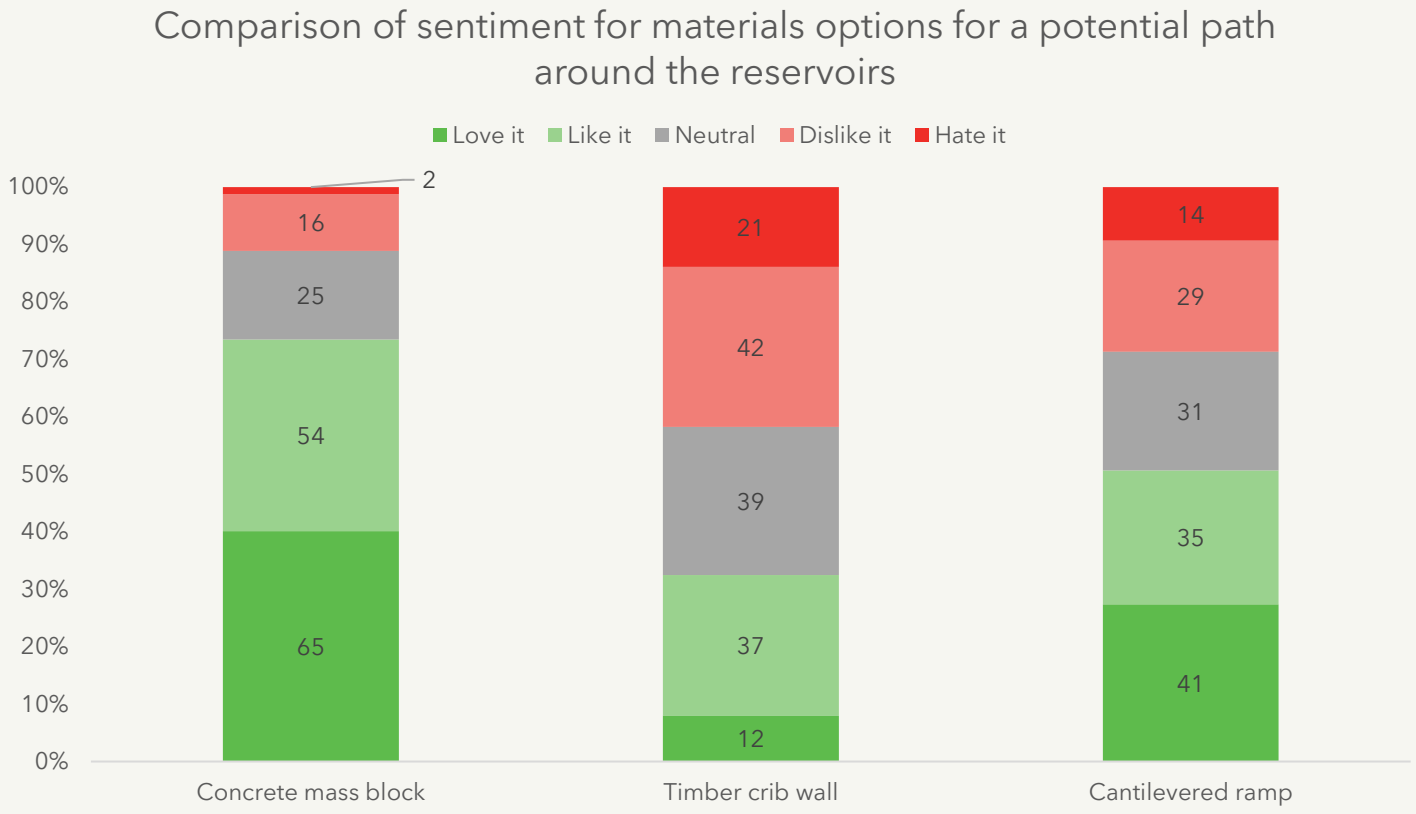
"The path should be an essential part of the design"

"Makes a feature of the facility."

Viewing path around the reservoirs

What do you think about the material options we have considered?





Viewing path around the reservoirs

Material options comments - themes/overview

Concrete mass block

Staff-recommended option

16 comments: 11 positive, 5 negative

- Visually appealing — n = 5
- Not visually appealing — n = 5
- Durable/ long-lasting — n = 4
- Low maintenance — n = 2

Timber crib

5 comments: 1 positive, 4 negative

- Not visually appealing — n = 5
- Durable/ long-lasting — n = 3
- Visually appealing — n = 1

Cantilevered ramp

7 comments: 5 positive, 1 negative, 1 neutral

- Security concerns are not significant — n = 5
- Security concerns are too risky — n = 1
- Unfair comparison: ramp materials not specified — n = 1

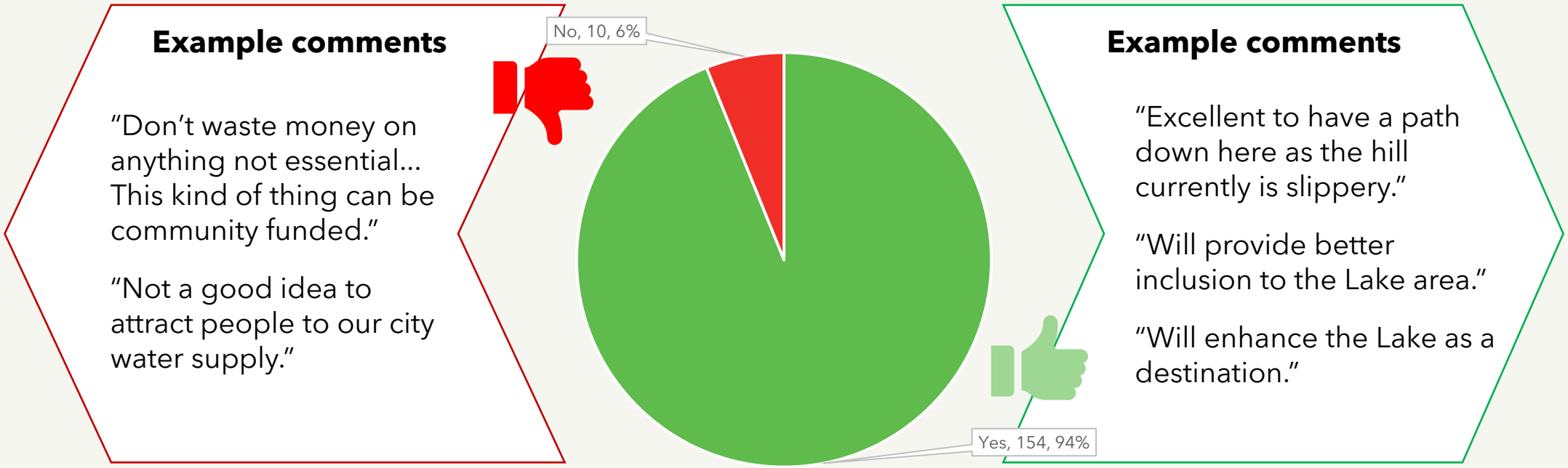
Key findings - public viewing path

- Sentiment was overwhelmingly in favour of a public viewing path.
- Some comments reflected enthusiastic support, while others were concerned about unnecessary investment.
- The favourite material was concrete mass block, though some concerns were raised about its aesthetic impact.
- The timber crib wall was the least popular option, with concerns about longevity and maintenance requirements.
- Supporters of the cantilevered ramp felt concerns about the ramp covering criminal activity would be easily mitigated by design or increased security measures.
- There were 14 suggestions for material or design alternatives/additions for the public viewing path, which included cultural representation, patterning, and other decorations.

Path through the reserve

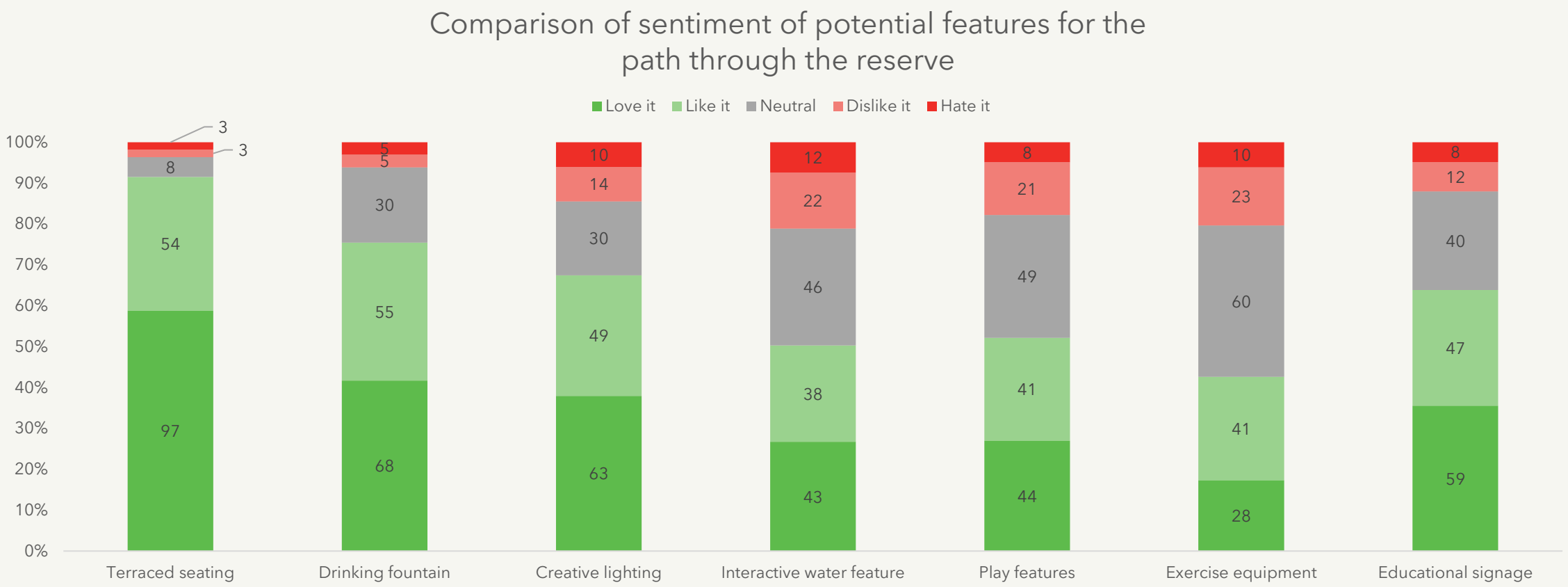
Do you like the idea of a path connecting the reserve to the lake?

Overall sentiment for the idea of a path through the reserve to the lake



Path through the reserve: features

Would you like the path to include any of the following features?



Path through the reserve: features

Comments overview

Example comments in support		Example comments in opposition
"Opportunity to turn this side of the lake into another social and recreational hub."	**Features in general** *7 positive; 15 negative*	"Prefer not to add too much clutter to the landscape."
"Would allow people a place to sit and either enjoy the view or have a breather."	**Terraced seating** *6 positive*	
"A drinking fountain is a must. This is a busy running path."	**Drinking fountain** *3 positive; 1 negative*	"Drinking fountain on the ground like that [provided image] will become unhygenic."
"Lots of lighting for low-light hours… both bright lights and colored lighting for ambience and effect."	**Creative lighting** *11 positive; 7 negative*	"Lighting will discourage bats in the area at night."

Path through the reserve: features

Comments overview

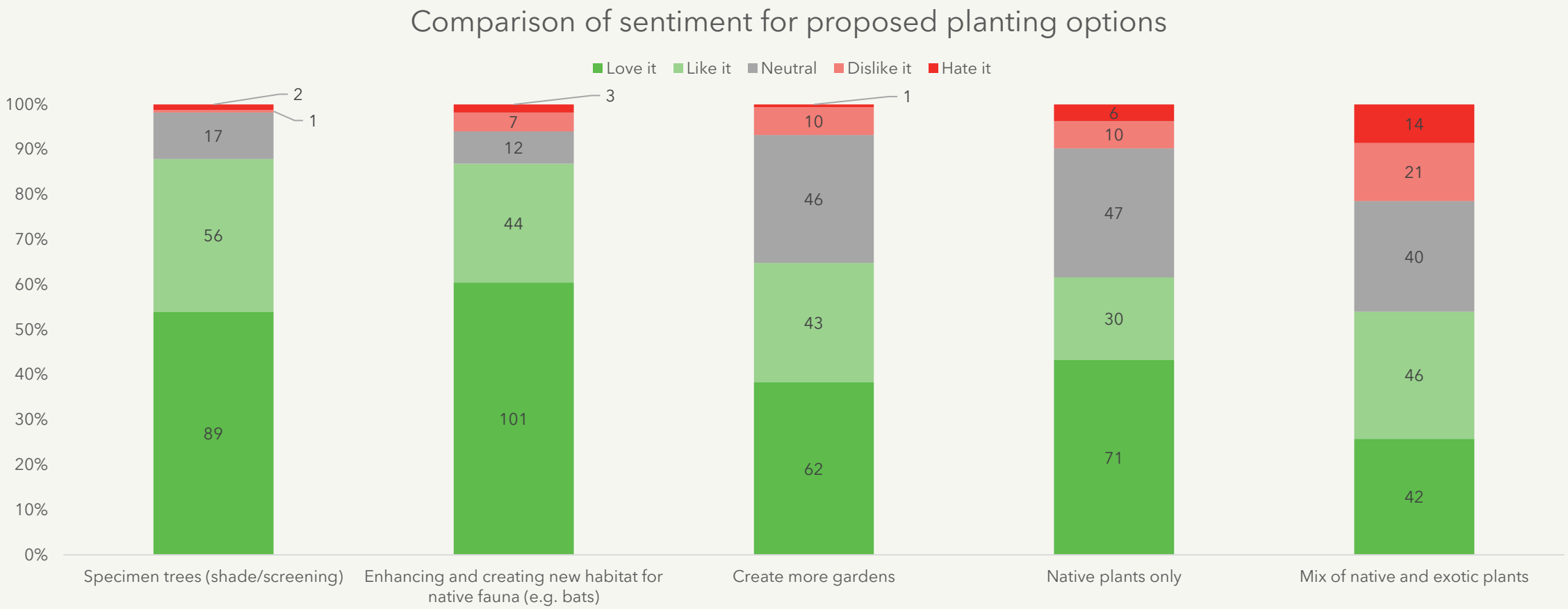
Example comments in support		Example comments in opposition
"As it is a water reservoir, would be good to have a water related feature."	**Water feature** *5 positive; 1 negative*	"Will be vandalised so sadly I question their longterm value."
"Kids would lead their whanau up if there are play features to draw them up."	**Play feature** *5 positive; 6 negative*	"Children can free play - there are already to designated play areas around the lake."
"This city needs more public exercise equipment so this would be really good."	**Exercise equipment** *4 positive; 3 negative*	"Already have sports equipment… on the other side of the lake and nearby."
"Educational signage regarding the construction of the reservoir would be beyond awesome to see there!"	**Educational signage** *4 positive*	

Key findings - path through reserve

- Sentiment overwhelmingly in favour.
- Many looking forward to the accessibility and connection the path would provide, and suggestions were shared to further increase this.
- Some comments about the path showed significant concern about the cost and necessity of the potential features, considering similar facilities nearby.
- Creative lighting, educational signage, and play features received the most comments.
- There were eight suggestions for the path itself, including for the path surface, connections, cultural representation, rubbish bins, and an off-lead dog area.
- Most of the features also received suggestions, including types of signage, play and exercise equipment, and ideas about creative lighting.

Planting

What do you think of the planting options we are considering?



Planting

Comments overview

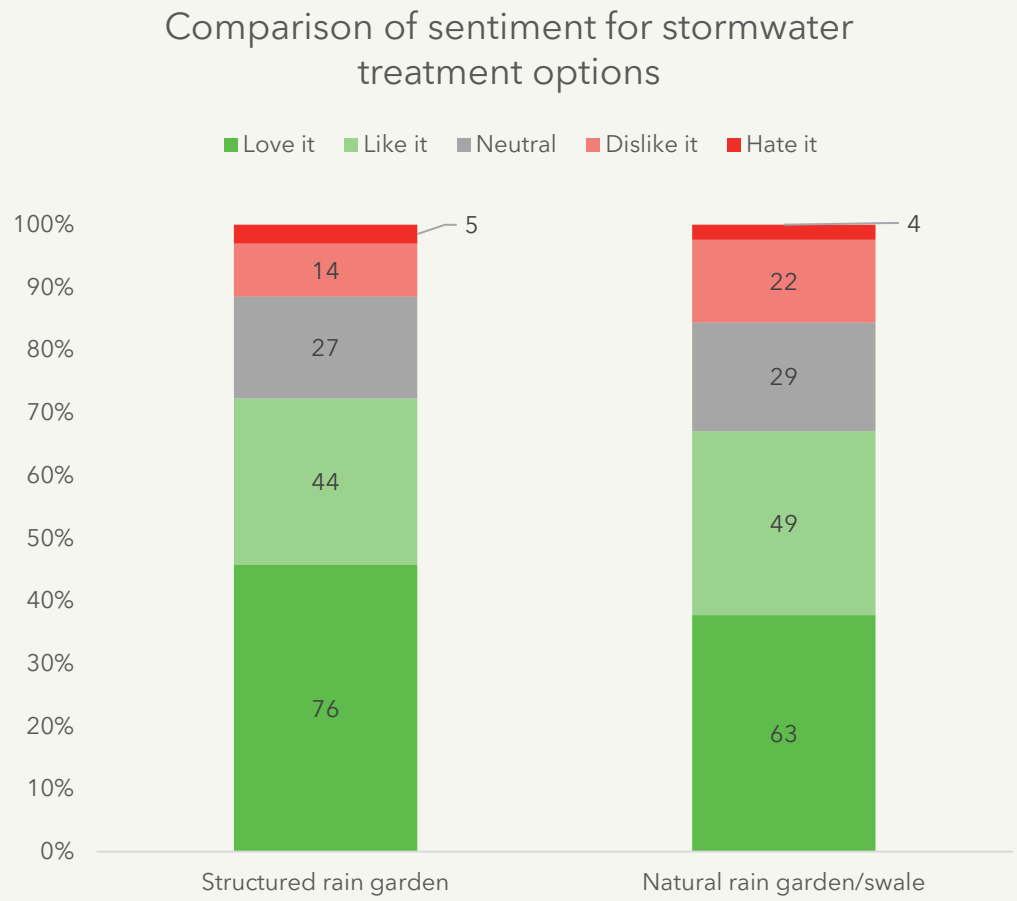
Example comments in support		Example comments in opposition
"Preferred screening option with shade."	Specimen trees *2 positive*	
"Enhance the native flora and fauna."	Native fauna habitat *2 positive; 1 negative*	"Is there any risks of having native bats pooping over a water reservoir?"
"Mix of structured and natural, mix of open areas and gardens sounds lovely."	More gardens *1 positive; 1 negative*	"Manicured gardens create more maintenance."
"I love this country's bats and I love this country's plants too. Anything to cater to them would be fantastic!"	Native plants *4 positive*	
"The plantings should be for all or any bird in Lake Domain. It is heavily modified land and supports native and later arrivals."	Mix of native/exotic *1 positive*	

Key findings – planting

- There was a strong emphatic desire to save/retain as many or all of the mature trees at the reservoirs site.
- Similarly to this, multiple requests were made for transparency and sharing information publicly as to which trees will be retained, relocated, and lost.
- Native fauna habitat enhancement and native tree planting were the most popular planting types.
- Echoed in the comments about native fauna habitat enhancement was additional concerns about the loss of existing habitats with the removal of the mature trees for the reservoirs.
- Some suggested specific trees and plant varieties for planting.

Stormwater treatment

What do you think of the stormwater options we are considering?



Example comments

Structured

"Generally seem to be easier to keep tidy."

"Looks more put together and like it's meant to be there."

"Should assist with keeping people/animals etc out of the device.

"[Natural] option doesn't give much functional interaction with public."

Natural

"Best to keep our natural environment as natural as possible."

"The natural rain garden in the picture looks nicer."

"Natural rain garden/swale are a great idea, just needs to have an adequate maintenance for weed control."

Key findings – stormwater treatment

- Preference in sentiment for structured rain gardens or natural swale was divided, with both options receiving similar preference.
- The comments that indicated a preference for the swale stormwater treatment option liked the natural look and appeal of this option, and felt the structured design was too rigid and posed health and safety risks.
- Those that preferred the structured rain gardens liked the organised/tidy aspect of this option, and felt it offered more opportunities for public interaction (boardwalks, etc). They were concerned the natural swale would look messy and unkempt.
- Suggestions included going with the cheapest/least maintenance option.

Social media comments

- Comments on relevant social media posts were analysed separately from formal submissions.
- We received 69 comments on Facebook and five on Instagram.
- The most common themes were:
  - Concerns regarding the cost/rising rates costs to pay for the reservoirs.
  - General approval of the project and design.
  - Concerns about the water quality of Hamilton Lake.
  - Opposition to the location chosen for the reservoirs.
  - Suggestions to utilise top of reservoirs.



What's next?

The plans including design and layout for the reservoirs will be updated with the feedback from the community.

Council will apply to designate and reclassify some of the current park land needed to build the reservoirs under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and Reserves Act 1977 (Reserves Act) processes.

The community will have further opportunities for the community to share their voice on the updated designs through the RMA application process.

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