From Participatory Planning to Citizen Assembly

Refining the Bókay Garden project through participatory engagement

FROM PLAN
→
TO
VALIDATION

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Two participatory phases – different roles, one project logic

1. PARTICIPATORY PLANNING 2023–2024

Set the long-term spatial and functional direction

2. CITIZEN ASSEMBLY refinement stage

Validate and refine EUI programme elements and community operation

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING answered:

"What should the park become, spatially and functionally?"

CITIZEN ASSEMBLY answered:

"How should people actually use, programme and co-own that place?"

This is the key synergy: the second phase does not replace the first – it makes it socially operable.

Phase 1 – Participatory Planning architecture

From broad user feedback to stakeholder decisions and an interactive plan review

Sep 2023
Preparatory meeting

→

Nov 2023
Open survey
1,180 responses

→

Dec–Apr
3 stakeholder sessions
+ 10-person survey

→

Jun 2024
Interactive public plan presentation

Output: a prioritised masterplanning direction, not a simple wish list

Phase 2 – Citizen assembly methodology

Quota-based recruitment to approximate demographic and territorial diversity

Recruitment principle

- Quotas were applied to the applicant database
- The aim was a sample striving for representativeness, not a statistically perfect random sample
- International practice accepts attrition in the second contact round; 20–40% drop-off and up to ~60% commitment were treated as realistic

77 ideal sample

- Demographic quotas
- Territorial quotas
- Age / sex structure
- Density and district-part patterns

3
Citizen Assemblies

What the Participatory-planning phase established

Four strong signals shaped the masterplan

81%

More space for
park / leisure functions

78%

Would visit more often
after transformation

77%

Closer integration
with Turul Park

78%

Support for an
inclusive playground

300+ individual ideas further detailed needs: green space, water, playground, sport, toilets, drinking fountains, buildings and modest hospitality

What participants did during the Citizen Assembly

1

Assess and evaluate

What already works / what is missing in the district and Bókay Garden?

2

Co-design

Assemble project elements, priorities and operating ideas

3

Validate

What blocks or enables community programmes?

Bókay Garden: advantages and development limits

1

Existing strengths

Recognised green public asset with strong community potential.

Suitable for low-threshold meetings: picnics, walks and movement programmes.

Can connect age groups through family, sport and informal leisure uses.

Main disadvantages / limits

Current spatial layout does not sufficiently invite face-to-face interaction.

Programme information is weak; residents often hear about events too late.

Use may remain occasional without regular, repeated activities and local hosts.

Most valuable development need

Turn the garden into an everyday community meeting place, not only an event venue.

Add small social infrastructure: facing benches, tables, chess/card tables.

Link physical improvements with predictable communication and recurring programmes.

Bókay Garden’s value lies in becoming a visible, nearby and regularly used “community living room”.



Co-design game

Functions And Actions

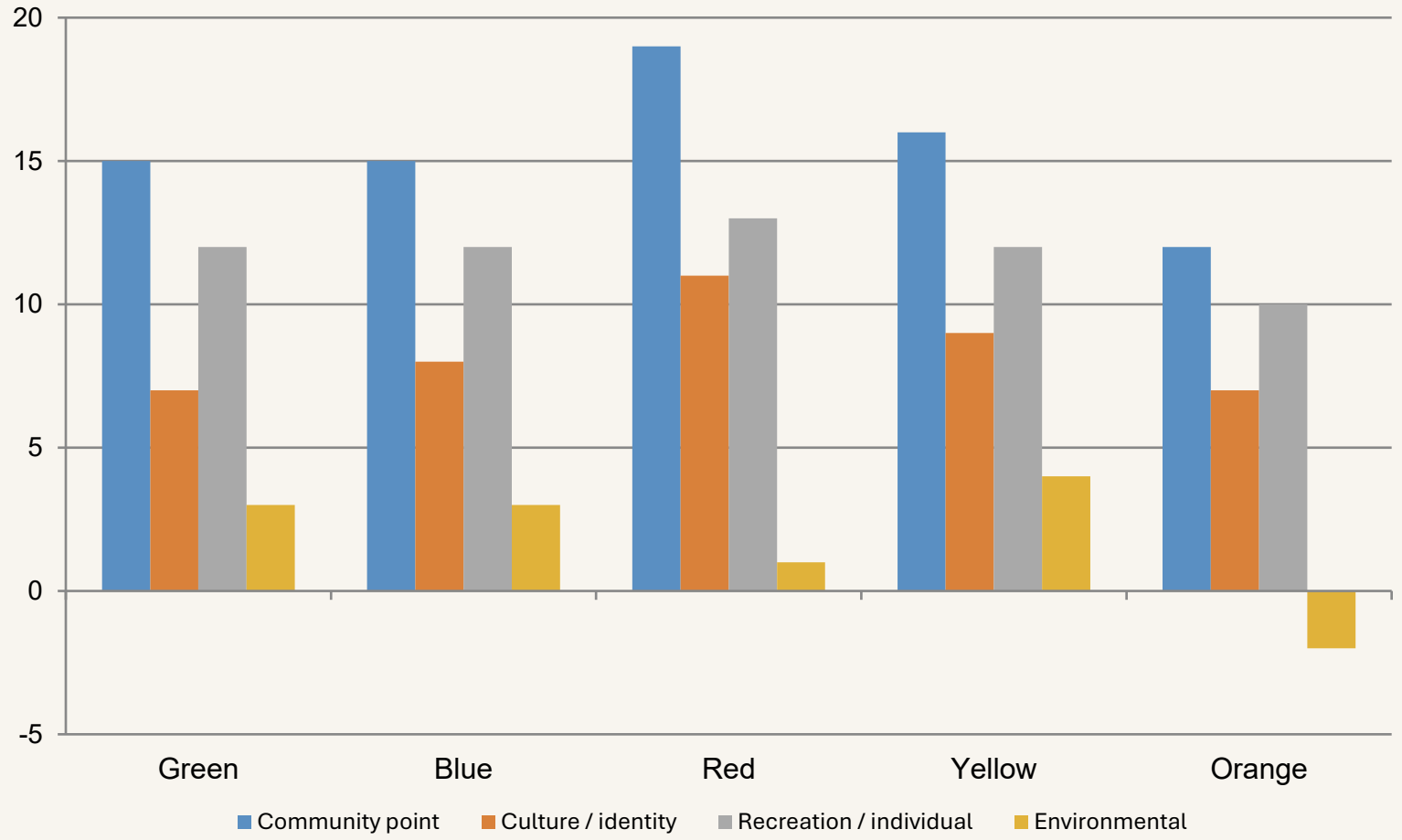
2




Természetkapcsolat és élmény
Az emberek közvetlen kapcsolata a természettel és az ökológiai rendszerekkel.
Rekreáció és turizmus
A zöldterületek és közterek pihenési, kikapcsolódási és szabadidős használata.
Közösségi kapcsolatok
A közterek közösségépítő és társadalmi interakciókat támogató szerepe.
Fizikai és pszichológiai tapasztalatok
Lehetőségek fizikailag és pszichológiailag előnyös tevékenységekre, gyógyulásra, pihenésre, kikapcsolódásra, szabadidőre és esztétikai élvezetre a természettel való szoros kapcsolat alapján.
IDENTITÁS ÉS ÖRÖKSÉG
Kézműves workshop
Hatás:
+1 közösségi pont
+2 kulturális-identitás pont
+1 környezeti pont
HELYI TERMÉKEK
Helyi piknikasztalok, étkezés- és étkeztetési lehetőség kialakítása. Kis léptékű „szabadtéri étkező"
Hatás:
+2 közösségi pont
KREATIVITÁS
Szabadtéri filmvetítés
Hatás:
+2 közösségi pont
+1 kulturális-identitás pont
+2 rekreáció-egyéni pont
-1 környezeti pont
KULTÚRA ÉS MŰVÉSZET
Helyi művészeti fesztivál
Hatás:
+2 közösségi pont
+2 kulturális-identitás pont
+1 rekreáció-egyéni pont
-1 környezeti pont
TÁRSADALMI KOHÉZIÓ
Nyitott közösségi fórum
Hatás:
+2 közösségi pont
+1 kulturális-identitás pont

Game-based co-design – what the teams prioritised

Points by team and project-element category



Total points

Community	**77**
Recreation	**59**
Culture / identity	**42**
Environmental	**9**

Interpretation: within this game, community and recreational functions received the strongest emphasis.

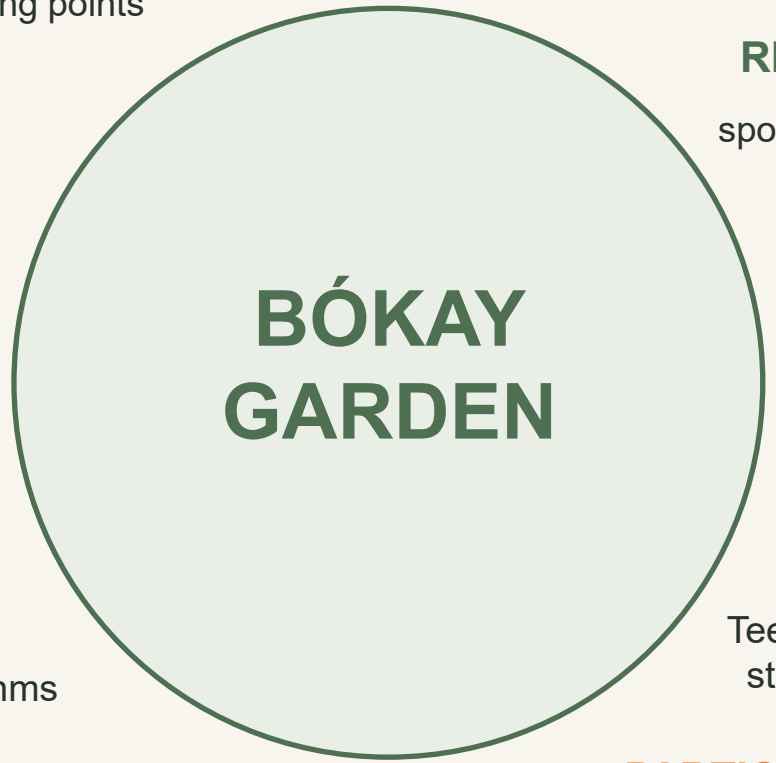
Five team concepts – different emphases, common goal

Orange	**“Bókay, the district’s heart”**	sport + walks + heritage + light/sound + picnic
Red	**Bókay365**	all-year, nature-based, inclusive, educational
Yellow	**“With heart and soul for Bókay”**	identity + youth + local talent + civil partners
Green	**Urban picnic and education**	food, games, making, reuse, family events
Blue	**Environmental and digital programme package**	nature, bookings, cinema, sport, app, feedback

Common denominator: not a “party zone”, but an all-year, nature-based, community, educational and recreational district centre.

What the citizen assembly added

The biggest value was operational and social detail



COMMUNICATION

One information ecosystem; app + offline channels

COMMUNITY

regular meeting points

RECREATION

sport + health + rest

NEIGHBOURHOOD LOGIC

Smaller, reachable community programmes and district-sensitive access

NATURE

biodiversity + education

IDENTITY

history + local culture

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Forums, idea box, civil intermediaries, “civil scouts”

YOUTH

Teen and young-adult programmes, stages, debates, creative formats

REGULARITY

Weekly / monthly rhythms

PARTICIPATION TOOLS

Registration, voting, booking, points and feedback

PARTICIPATION

feedback + co-management

INCLUSION

accessible for all ages

3

Validation results

Bókay Garden community development

Team-by-team synthesis of residents' priorities, feasibility risks and most valuable development needs.

- Green table
- Yellow table
- Red table
- Orange table
- Blue table

People need visible, nearby and repeated reasons to meet — supported by clear communication and low-threshold public spaces.

Green table

Local mutual aid and communication channels as the basis for community life.

What mattered most

Residents can mobilise when a concrete local problem appears. **Existing trust-based networks** — building representatives, caretakers, churches, playgrounds and Facebook groups — are the strongest starting point.

Least feasible / main risk

A **district-wide app or communication system may be difficult** unless it is broken down into very local units and backed by trusted local intermediaries.

Most valuable development need

Build a neighbourhood-level help and information network: micro-area feeds, caretaker/common-representative involvement, visible local notice points and volunteer contact persons.

VALIDATION TAKEAWAY

Development should start from existing trust: local faces, micro-communities and practical help.

Blue table

Generational openness, local identity and cooperation between civil actors.

What mattered most

Community programmes must feel useful, valuable and enjoyable. The team highlighted generational gaps after Covid, the need to welcome newcomers, and the special isolation of Erzsébet-telep.

Least feasible / main risk

Expecting young people to stay locally is unrealistic if local services, functions and social places are missing. Civil organisations may also remain fragmented without a shared goal.

Most valuable development need

Strengthen intergenerational and **newcomer-friendly programmes, targeted outreach** to Erzsébet-telep, and joint civic goals that encourage organisations to cooperate rather than compete.

VALIDATION TAKEAWAY

The strongest development value lies in connection: between ages, old and new residents, areas and civil groups.

Red table

Concrete programme ideas and spatial design for Bókay Garden.

What mattered most

A shared goal can mobilise residents. Concrete social formats matter: community picnics, walks, running/walking circles, cycling or running meetups, intergenerational quizzes and a local civil market.

Least feasible / main risk

Programmes already exist in some places, but **weak communication means they remain invisible**. Without regular promotion, even good initiatives will not reach residents.

Most valuable development need

For Bókay Garden, the most valuable upgrade is **community-oriented furniture**: face-to-face benches, chess/card tables and spatial arrangements that make spontaneous meeting natural.

VALIDATION TAKEAWAY

Bókay Garden should become a social meeting landscape, not only a green recreational area.

Yellow table

Low-threshold spaces, regularity and attractive programme formats.

What mattered most

The biggest barriers are **lack of suitable places, weak information flow,** transport fatigue and distrust. People need spaces where they can sit, talk and join without pressure to consume.

Least feasible / main risk

Large or **one-off events are less reliable** if people do not already have a habit of attending; transport and late communication can strongly reduce participation.

Most valuable development need

Create **repeated, easy-to-enter programmes** supported by more benches, better cycle routes, prior registration and clear explanation of why participation matters.

VALIDATION TAKEAWAY

Regular, familiar and low-effort participation formats are more valuable than isolated events.

Orange table

Information gaps, missing community points and territorial inequality.

What mattered most

The central issue is that **information about community programmes does not reach residents**. Many people cannot become active because they simply do not know what is happening.

Least feasible / main risk

Community planning becomes less feasible if residents do not receive feedback. **Periphery areas also have fewer spaces** and fewer chances to connect.

Most valuable development need

Develop visible community points across the district, especially outside central areas, and create a feedback loop so residents can see what happens with their suggestions.

VALIDATION TAKEAWAY

The validation process itself must continue with feedback, otherwise trust and participation will weaken.

Synergy map – what reinforces what?

A greener leisure park usable in everyday life	+	Bókay365, seasonal nature programmes, biodiversity, tree adoption	The physical green space gains **active, year-round community use**
Inclusive playground and a family park	+	Accessible experiences, intergenerational and 0–100 programming	Inclusion becomes **not only a design principle, but also a programming principle**
Better sport and recreation functions, Improved public-space infrastructure, more opportunities to stay and spend time	+	Resident booking, community leagues, yoga / tai chi / mass sport Picnic / grill points, staying places, predictable low-threshold hospitality	**Community access** to existing infrastructure is strengthened The idea of a “good park” is translated into **concrete forms of social interaction**
Preserving the historical character and local identity	+	Local walks, “Bókay tells stories”, local artists, talent events	Historical heritage becomes **an actively experienced element of local identity**
Food and beverage services should support, but not dominate, the park	+	Affordable café/buffet options,	Both processes reinforce a **stay-oriented, non-consumption-driven model**
Strengthening residents’ everyday use of the park	+	Neighbourhood-sensitive programmes, wider information network and access, Registration, booking, voting, app, suggestion box, community forum	The user becomes an **active participant** who can also provide continuous feedback

Together: a place that is physically attractive AND socially activated

Take-away

Community planning gave direction; the community assembly gave depth, validation and social operating logic.

- The two processes are complementary, not competing.
- The strongest overlap is around green everyday use, inclusion, recreation, local identity and better places to stay.
- The assembly adds regularity, youth focus, communication, digital tools, civil participation and feedback mechanisms.
- The game-based exercise demonstrates which project elements residents most strongly prioritised—especially community and recreation.
- Together, the two phases turn a masterplan into a more socially grounded EUI programme.

Thank you