

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY

DRAFT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN
MAY 2026



CITY OF MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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Executive summary

The City of Melbourne engaged on the draft Community Infrastructure Plan (draft Plan) between December 2025 and February 2026. Centred on the draft Plan's principles and initiatives, the consultation invited the public and key stakeholders to share perspectives on how the City of Melbourne should plan, design, manage and partner to deliver community spaces and what activities we should focus on over the next 4 years.

Engagement also sought feedback on the ideas for future community spaces in neighbourhoods across the City of Melbourne. The consultation delivered a diverse engagement program focused on hearing from a wide range of voices and deepening community understanding of what is meant by 'community infrastructure' and the role the City of Melbourne and others play in its funding, delivery, management and design.

Open to the public over 9 weeks, the program included three pop-up sessions, workshops with specific cohorts and meetings with key stakeholders. An online survey and interactive map ran in parallel to the in-person program.

Activity	Details	Participation
Online survey	Community feedback collected via an online survey on the Participate Melbourne website.	97 responses
Submissions	Community and stakeholder feedback collected via submissions page on the Participate Melbourne website.	14 submissions
Pop up sessions	Three pop-up sessions at Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre, Boyd Community Hub and Park, and the Multicultural Hub. Sessions were advertised through City of Melbourne newsletters, mailing lists, at other neighbourhood engagement activities and the Participate Melbourne website.	Not formally recorded. Approximately 70 attendees across three sessions.
Disability Advisory Committee – Focus Group Workshop	An online workshop for members of the Disability Advisory Committee to share insights on the draft Community Infrastructure Plan.	6 attendees
Youth workshop	An interactive, in-person workshop for young people between the age of 16 and 25 years to collectively design and pitch their idea of an ideal youth space.	24 attendees
Stakeholder and partner meetings	Meetings held with key stakeholders and partners to understand opportunities for collaboration, barriers and priorities for community infrastructure.	6 meetings

What we heard

There was strong support for the direction of the draft Plan. Overall, people felt it focused on the right issues and responds well to the pressures of growth, density and changing community needs. Support for future ideas was high across all local areas. Where people raised questions, this was mostly about wanting more detail rather than disagreement with the ideas or intent.

The community clearly values spaces that feel welcoming, safe and inclusive and accessible to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Many people spoke about the importance of community spaces as places to connect, belong and spend time without needing to spend money.

There was strong support for making better use of existing spaces, including activating underused or vacant buildings, allowing flexible and shared use, and extending opening hours. People also want a stronger community voice, with co-design and local knowledge shaping how spaces are planned, designed and run.

The community supported working in partnership with Traditional Owners, other levels of government, institutions and community organisations, and recognised that responsibility for community spaces is shared, with City of Melbourne playing a key role.

Recommendations to respond

Community feedback confirmed that the principles generally align with what people value in community spaces. To strengthen this alignment, the final Community Infrastructure Plan should more clearly centre equity, access, cultural safety and community voice within the principles and reinforce the role of partnerships.

To help illustrate how the principles apply in practice, the Plan should include short case studies of existing City of Melbourne community spaces that demonstrate how community needs and experiences are reflected in real places.

Feedback also highlighted the importance of clarity and plain language. In response, the final Plan should simplify language throughout, particularly in how the municipal initiatives are described, and use the term “community spaces” instead of “community infrastructure” to better reflect how the community understands and uses these places.

To support transparency and accountability, the Plan should include a clear commitment to reporting on municipal initiatives and projects as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It should also clearly set out how future ideas will be assessed and progressed, and how and when the Plan will be reviewed.

Together, these recommendations reflect community feedback and support improved clarity, accountability and informed decision-making about community spaces over time.

Next steps

The final Community Infrastructure Plan will incorporate the outcomes of community engagement including as identified in this report and be presented to Future Melbourne Committee for endorsement in June 2026.

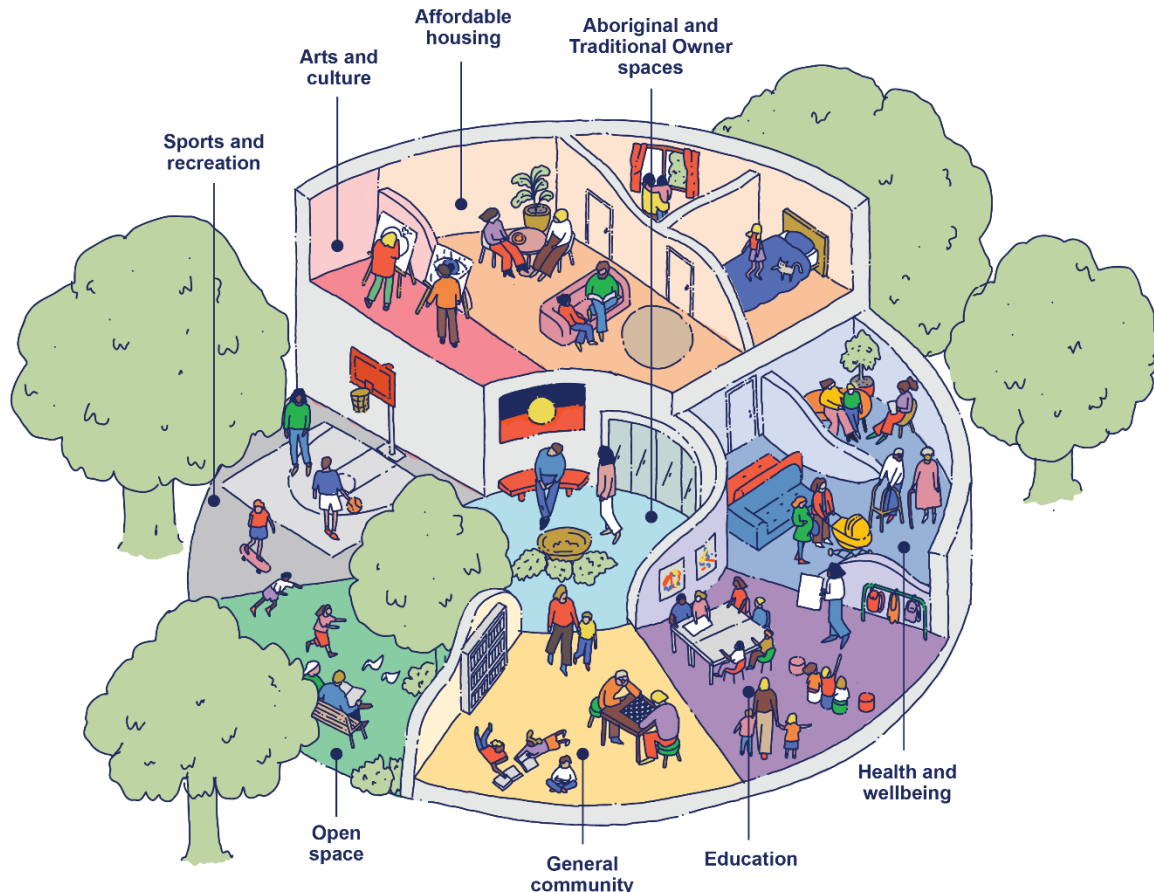


Figure 1 A visual representation of the different types of community spaces included in the Plan.



KENSINGTON COMMUNITY AQUATIC AND RECREATION

Engagement overview

Melbourne is growing, and with more people comes greater demand for places to meet, learn, play and access services. Community spaces – such as libraries, community centres, recreation facilities, schools and arts spaces – help people feel connected and supports a healthy, inclusive city.

Land in the City of Melbourne is limited, costs are high and community needs are changing. At the same time, local government resources are under increasing pressure. To respond, the City of Melbourne is developing a Community Infrastructure Plan to guide decisions and long-term planning for community spaces.

The Future Melbourne Committee endorsed the draft Community Infrastructure Plan (the draft Plan) on 2 December 2025 to go out for public consultation. The draft Plan is informed by detailed analysis of population growth, housing, existing infrastructure, service provision and community priorities. It sets out what community space is needed, where it is needed, and how the City of Melbourne can work with partners and the community to deliver an equitable, accessible and future-ready network.

Purpose and objectives of engagement

The purpose of engagement on the draft Plan was to build a shared understanding of community space across the municipality and to hear directly from people about what matters most to them.

Through engagement, we aimed to:

- Explain the City of Melbourne's role in planning, delivering and partnering on community spaces
- Increase awareness of existing and proposed community spaces
- Gather feedback on priorities for future investment
- Strengthen collaboration with communities and partners

Community feedback helped shape:

- The **principles** that guide how decisions are made
- **Municipal initiatives** City of Melbourne may lead, support or advocate for
- **Ideas for future consideration**, subject to further planning and funding processes

Through the engagement, we also gained insights into what people value most about community spaces. This report summarises what we heard and provides recommendations to refine the Community Infrastructure Plan in line with feedback.

Engagement activities

Engagement followed the City of Melbourne's Community Engagement Policy and focused on being place-based, inclusive and transparent. Activities included pop-ups across the municipality, online information and an interactive map to help people explore what exists and what may be planned in their neighbourhood. Targeted activities supported participation from groups who are often under-represented (older people, young people, multicultural communities and others as outlined in the Community Engagement Policy), and clear information was provided about how feedback would be used and what happens next.

Table 1 below summarises the details of each activity and their participation levels.

Table 1 Engagement activities for the draft Plan

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Communication

We promoted the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Plan between 4 December 2025 and 8 February 2026 via:

- Participate Melbourne website including option to download the draft Plan (*547 downloads of the plan were recorded*), an interactive map of existing community spaces, planned projects and future ideas by neighbourhood and a summary of content.
- Neighbourhood pages on the corporate website
- Signage and postcards at community hubs and spaces
- Social media posts
- Relevant City of Melbourne eNewsletters
- Direct outreach to community groups, service providers and stakeholders
- Direct outreach to relevant networks via internal relationship managers
- Emails to key partners.

An engagement objective was to generate awareness about the draft Plan and its purpose in an easy-to-understand way. The following statistics show a high level of awareness about the draft Plan and its purpose.

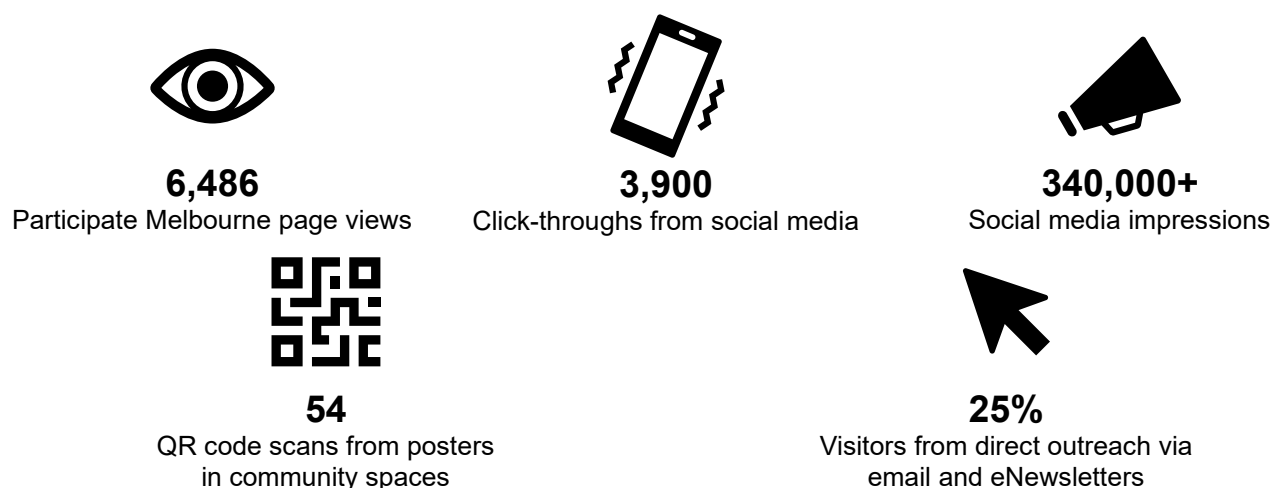


Figure 2 Communication activities and interactions on the draft Plan

Analysis and reporting approach

All feedback collected through the engagement program was combined and analysed together to provide a comprehensive view of community perspectives. Written feedback from pop-ups, workshops and other engagement activities was reviewed in full and systematically coded to identify common themes. These themes were then grouped and reported under the following key areas of engagement:

- Community infrastructure principles
- Municipal initiatives
- Ideas for future planning in local areas
- Other feedback

To support consistency and readability, indicative descriptors are used throughout this report to describe the relative number of comments received on each topic:

- 3 and under = a few
- 4 to 7 = several
- 8 to 14 = a small number
- 15 to 25 = a moderate number
- 26 to 51 = a considerable number
- 52 to 100 or more = a substantial number

Where response levels were generally low for a topic, the exact number of responses is identified to better indicate the scale of feedback and provide additional context.

Engagement limitations

- Not all participants responded to every question, meaning response numbers vary across topics.
- Feedback shared included both structured and open-text responses that required a level of manual analysis.
- Engagement was undertaken over a 9-week period that included the summer holiday season, which may have impacted awareness of project, participation levels and the availability of some community members.
- The online survey did not capture the extent to which respondents had engaged with the draft plan or supporting materials prior to completing the survey.
- Demographic information was not recorded for in-person activities or informal interactions.

What we heard

Community infrastructure values

In the pop-up sessions and workshops, participants were introduced to the project by reflecting on their favourite community space and describing why it mattered to them in 3 words. More than 200 words and phrases were shared. Figure 4 brings these together and highlights what the community values most about community spaces.

Pop-up participants particularly emphasised community and belonging, along with the importance of facilities (such as microwaves and computers), services, and programs. Words like friendly, welcoming, community, convenient, books, rooms and activities appeared frequently.

Recommendations to respond

To reflect what the community values most, the Plan should incorporate these insights by updating the ‘trends and challenges’ section and including short case studies of existing community spaces. These case studies should demonstrate how valued spaces operate in practice and how community needs and experiences are reflected in real places.



Figure 3 Pop-up activity capturing why community spaces mattered to them

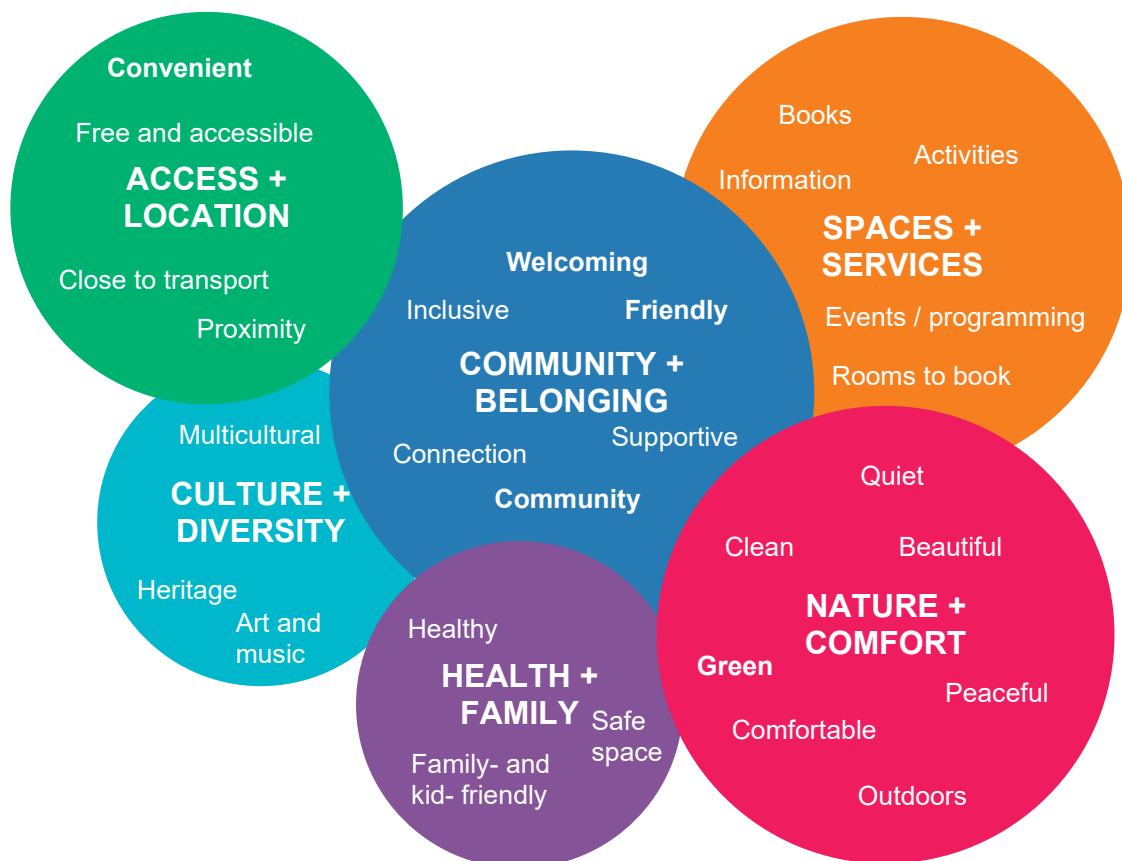


Figure 4 **Visual representation of the words people used to describe their favourite community space, grouped into themes.**
Larger circles indicate a larger number of responses related to the theme and bold indicates words used most often.

Young voices shaping future community spaces

We hosted a hands-on workshop with 24 young people aged 16–25. Young people make up almost one-third of the City of Melbourne’s residential population, making their perspectives critical to planning community spaces that work now and into the future.

The workshop was designed to be safe, welcoming and youth-friendly, supporting young people to share their lived experience and ideas with confidence.

We wanted to understand:

- What young people value most in community and youth spaces
- Whether the draft Plan’s principles resonate with young people
- Ideas to inform the planning and delivery of future youth spaces

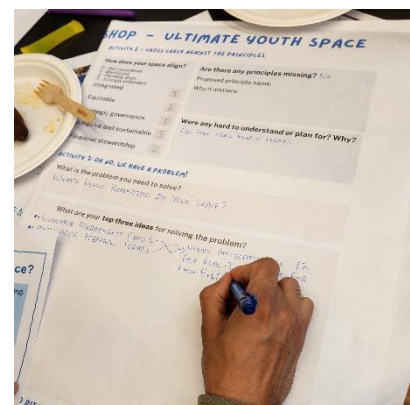


Figure 5 Example of the activity worksheet

Participants moved through a creative, hands-on journey that began with reflecting on what makes a community space feel safe and welcoming. Working in small groups, they then designed and sketched their ideal youth space, using the draft Community Infrastructure Plan principles to test how their ideas could work in practice. The session finished with young people problem solving real world challenges linked to proposed initiatives and pitching their concepts to City of Melbourne officers in a fun, “Shark Tank”-style presentation.

Strong and consistent themes emerged. Young people want spaces that are:

- Co-designed with young people
- Welcoming, safe and inclusive
- Multi-purpose, supporting recreation, creativity, study, events and quiet time
- Cozy and social, encouraging connection
- Bookable by young people
- Environmentally sustainable, with green materials and surroundings
- Open later, including evenings and weekends
- Easy to access, centrally located, near public transport and clearly visible
- A one-stop shop for support, learning and skill-building

The workshop confirmed that the draft Plan’s principles resonate with young people and highlighted practical ways youth spaces can better support connection, wellbeing and opportunity. Feedback from the workshop should be used to embed youth priorities into the Plan to support intergenerationally fair decision-making.



Figure 6 Workshop participants

“The Shark Pitch at the end”

“Collaboration and hands-on experience”

“Engaging with other young people for an impactful purpose”

“Useful to know the principles behind community spaces”

What young people enjoyed the most

Feedback on the principles

The draft Plan proposed 5 principles to guide how community spaces are planned, delivered and managed. Together, these principles aim to reflect community aspirations and the M2050 Vision: 'Liveable Melbourne, growing stronger together'. The 5 principles are:

- **Strategic governance:** We will make transparent, evidence-based decisions that empower communities and align with our broader goals.
- **Financial stewardship:** We will invest responsibly in infrastructure that delivers long-term value and is supported by sustainable funding and resource planning.
- **Adaptive and sustainable:** We will design flexible, future-ready infrastructure that makes the most of existing resources and supports a healthy environment.
- **Equitable:** We will ensure everyone can access welcoming, inclusive community infrastructure close to home, at every stage of life.
- **Integrated:** We will create connected, multi-purpose community spaces that celebrate local identity and work together as a unified network.

Survey respondents were asked to rank these principles from most to least important, with first ranked being the most important and fifth ranked the least important.

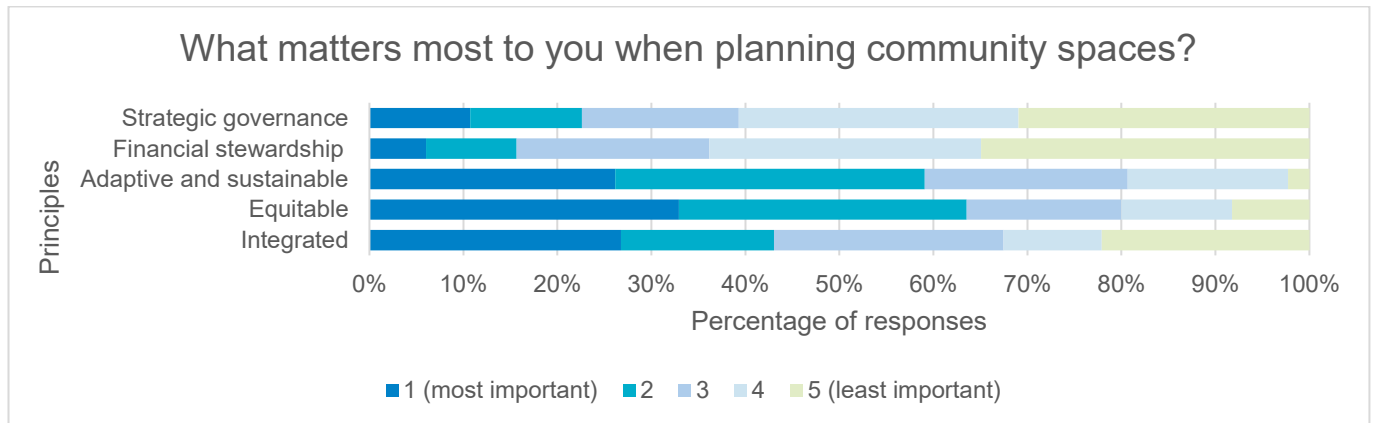


Figure 7 Bar graph showing respondents ranking of community infrastructure principles

To understand the overall ranking of the principles, responses were weighted by reversing the rankings so that a higher score indicated greater importance. Using this approach, 'Adaptive and sustainable' was ranked as the most important principle overall (3.64). This was closely followed by 'Equitable' with a weighted score of 3.56. 'Financial stewardship' received the lowest overall ranking, with a weighted score of 2.10.

In terms of first-preference rankings, the 'Equitable' principle was ranked as the most important principle by the highest number of respondents (28). This was followed by 'Integrated' and 'Adaptive and sustainable', which were each ranked first by 23 respondents. 'Strategic governance' was ranked first by 9 respondents, and 'Financial stewardship' was ranked first by 5 respondents. This was similar when viewing rankings from respondents identifying as women, non-binary or other, where 'Equitable' was most often ranked first (21), followed by 'Adaptive and sustainable' (16) and then 'Integrated' (12).

Participants in the Disability Focus Group workshop emphasised that all principles are equally important and should work together rather than being prioritised or traded off. Participants highlighted the need for consistent, universal accessibility across neighbourhoods including flat, easy-to-reach, free spaces with shelter, lighting and areas to pause. Affordability was seen as a core part of accessibility, with some people needing truly free options. Participants felt that well-designed, flexible spaces can successfully meet all principles without compromise, allowing people with disability and their carers to use the space in ways that best suit their needs.

Recommendations to respond

Feedback showed strong overall alignment with the principles and what people value in community spaces. In response, the final Plan should maintain the 5 principles and be updated to reflect feedback and reinforce that the principles are intended to work together rather than be prioritised or traded off.

Feedback on the municipal initiatives

The draft Plan included 6 municipal initiatives. These are the activities the City of Melbourne will focus on over the next 4 years to improve our network of community spaces. The initiatives are guided by the Council Plan 2025–29 strategic priorities:

- **Better data and process:** We'll improve how we plan for community infrastructure by using better data, clearer processes, and updated policies to make sure our spaces meet community needs now and into the future.
- **Easier to discover:** We'll make it easier for people to discover and use community spaces by improving signage, naming, and online information. We'll also explore new ways to use underused spaces and open facilities more often and for longer.
- **Advocacy:** We'll advocate to other levels of government to ensure delivery of community infrastructure and services that are important to our community's health and wellbeing are delivered.
- **Partnerships:** We'll partner with the Victorian Government, neighbouring councils, Traditional Owners, institutions and the private sector to share existing spaces and deliver new ones, including a dedicated hub for Aboriginal (or Aboriginal-focused) organisations and activities.
- **Lease and policies:** We'll review leases and policies, and work with tenants and service providers to open spaces for a wider range of community uses and activities, reduce vacant properties and support continuity of services.
- **Sustainability:** We'll improve energy efficiency and transition our buildings to net zero to ensure our community infrastructure is environmentally sustainable.

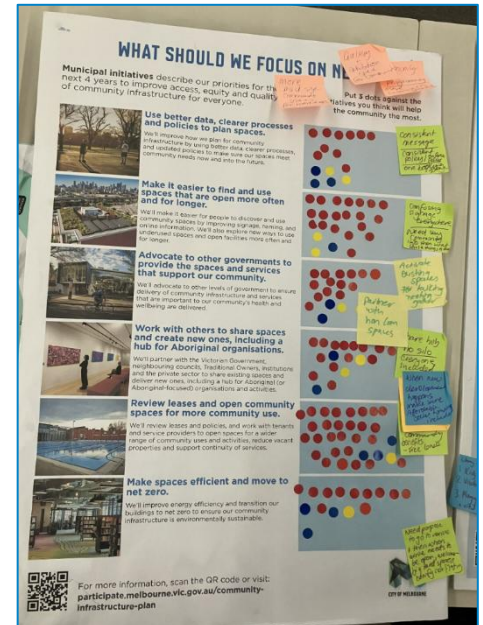


Figure 8 Example of activity at pop-up sessions on municipal initiatives

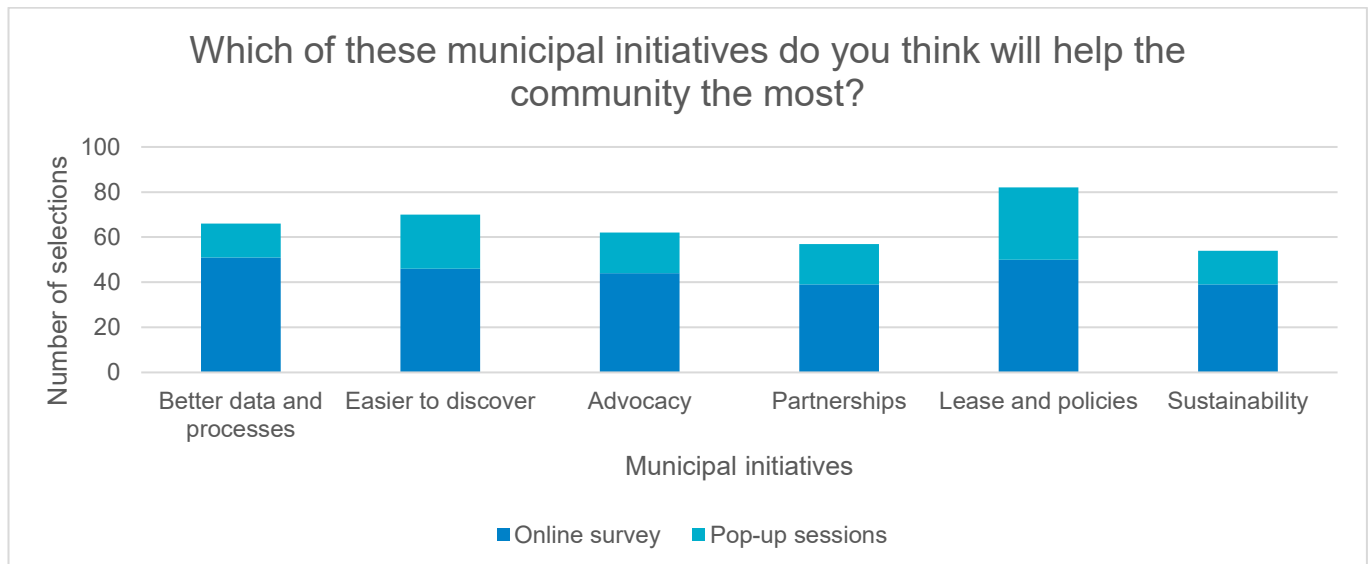


Figure 9 Stacked graph showing respondent selection of municipal initiatives

Survey respondents and participants at the 3 pop-up sessions were asked to select their top 3 of the 6 municipal initiatives. Overall, responses were balanced, with no single initiative standing out as overwhelmingly more or less popular than the others. The 2 most frequently selected initiatives were:

- Reviewing leases and policies to open up spaces for broader community use and reduce vacancy (82 selections).
- Making it easier for people to discover and use community spaces by improving signage, naming and online information and exploring ways to use underused spaces (70 selections).

Survey respondents were then asked to explain why they selected their top 3 municipal initiatives. 58 written comments offered further insights.

Many respondents noted that the initiatives aligned with their values and felt they collectively addressed the most pressing challenges facing community spaces. A small number of respondents expressed that the initiatives overlapped and made it difficult to choose, that they didn't agree with any of the initiatives or that it didn't make sense to pick a top 3.

Across all responses, there was a strong and consistent emphasis on equity and inclusion. Many comments referenced affordability and cost-of-living pressures, cultural safety and the need to remove barriers to access so that people on low incomes, young people and diverse communities can use community spaces.

A recurring theme was the importance of community spaces acting as “third spaces” – places that are free, welcoming and accessible to everyone, without the expectation to spend money. Several respondents noted that equity should be considered across all initiatives, rather than being treated as a standalone issue.

A moderate number of comments highlighted the importance of making better use of what already exists and activating vacant or underused spaces. Respondents highlighted benefits such as improved neighbourhood character, helping more people discover and feel welcome in community spaces and more efficient use of public resources. Activating underused spaces was also seen as a way to support grassroots activity and community-led initiatives.

A small number of comments expressed support for establishing a Aboriginal-led hub, alongside calls to celebrate and respect Traditional Owners and embed cultural safety into the design and use of community spaces.

Respondents demonstrated a clear understanding that City of Melbourne does not deliver all community spaces and services on its own and plays a key role in advocating for funding, services and infrastructure from other levels of government.

Participants of the Disability Focus Group workshop provided the following feedback on the municipal initiatives:

- Better use of existing assets: Participants highlighted large amounts of vacant, underused or derelict space. They saw these as major missed opportunities for community use.
- Equitable access to space: Growth areas and new apartments often lack green space, including areas needed for assistive animals. Developers should be required to deliver accessible, affordable community spaces within new developments.
- Community-led collaboration: Participants expressed scepticism about relying on government partnerships due to past funding cuts (e.g. disability arts). They emphasised the need for models that allow communities and businesses to self-organise, supported but not controlled by government. This included opportunities to leverage resources of big organisations and events such as the Australian Open to support community groups deliver their own programs and activities.
- Neighbourhood Houses as critical hubs: Strong support for Neighbourhood Houses as places that connect people to services, groups and resources, especially as populations grow.
- Extended opening hours: Recognition that shift workers, people working from home and those with variable routines need later access, including to libraries, recreation centres and community hubs.

Recommendations to respond

Feedback showed strong overall alignment and support for the municipal initiatives. To better reflect community priorities and strengthen the initiatives as a clear framework for action over the next 4 years, the final Plan should:

- Emphasise the City of Melbourne's enabling role, particularly in supporting community led and self-organised activity, shared use of spaces and collaboration with partners.
- More clearly articulate how the initiatives address equity and affordability, including the role of community spaces as welcoming, accessible “third spaces”.
- Strengthen the focus on activating underused or vacant spaces, with an emphasis on flexible use and light touch interventions.
- Reflect support of an Aboriginal-led hub by retaining it as a key activity within the initiatives.
- Strengthen accountability by describing how progress on the municipal initiatives will be reported on.

Feedback on future ideas for local areas

The draft Plan showed where existing community spaces are located across the City of Melbourne and outlined projects to improve existing spaces or create new ones over the next 4 years. It also includes ideas for the longer term, looking beyond the next 4 years, to help City of Melbourne plan for future community needs.

Survey respondents were invited to share feedback on future ideas across the following six local areas:

- North-west area: Includes Kensington, Flemington, Macaulay, Arden, Dynon and Maribyrnong Waterfront.
- North-east area: Includes Parkville, City North, Carlton and North Melbourne.
- South-west area: Includes West Melbourne, Docklands and Fishermans Bend (Lorimer and Employment and Innovation Area) and E-Gate.
- South-east area: Includes Southbank, South Yarra, East Melbourne and Jolimont.
- Central area: Includes the Hoddle Grid.



Figure 10 Spatial areas in the draft Plan

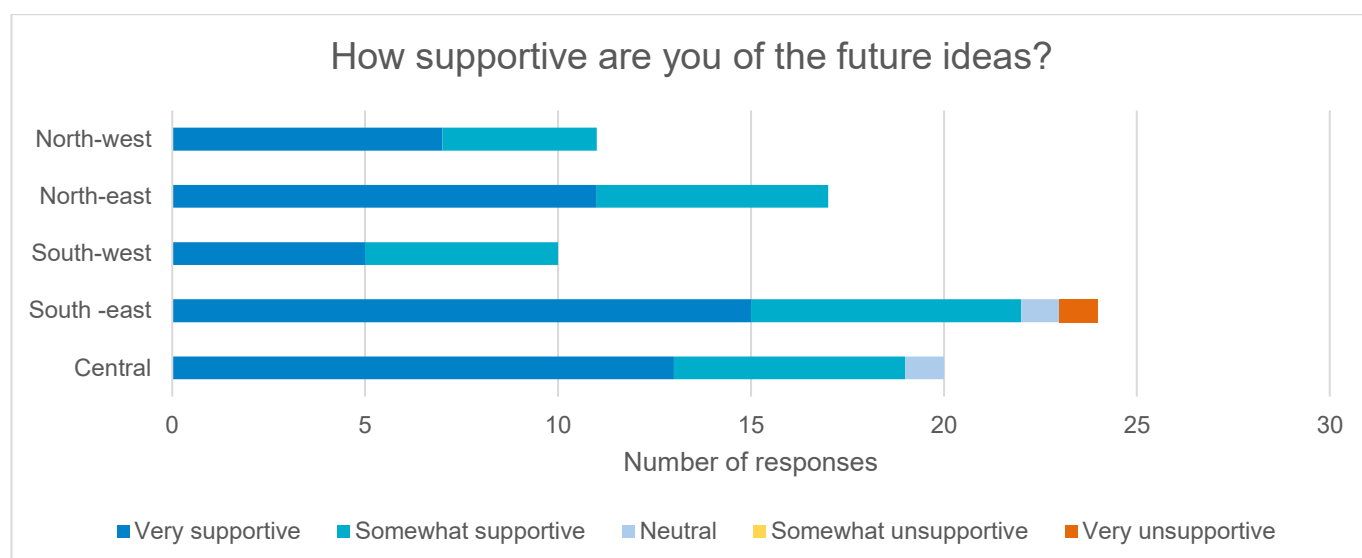


Figure 11 Bar graph showing level of support for future ideas in each local area

57 survey respondents chose to comment on this optional section. There was a very high level of support for the future ideas across all local areas. Across the 57 respondents, 62% were very supportive of the future ideas for their local area, with a further 34% somewhat supportive. Support was generally driven by a view that many areas have unmet demand and need more or better community spaces.

Feedback by local area

The following describes respondents level of support as well as analysis of the written comments describing to why they chose their level of support.

North-west area

There was a high level of support for the ideas for the north-west, with most of the 11 respondents being very supportive (7), and the rest somewhat supportive (4). 10 chose to provide comment.

Views were mixed on the future idea for the North Melbourne Recreation Centre. One suggestion was to open the pool year-round. Another respondent supported the need for more facilities but expressed concern that upgrades could risk making a “great facility” worse. Two comments recommended learning from the redevelopment of Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre when planning future changes.

There was support for addressing childcare demand, including a suggestion to work with Moonee Valley City Council to improve access for families living near the municipal boundary.

One response highlighted the opportunity to increase community use of Flemington Racecourse and Melbourne Showgrounds, while retaining their open space function.

North-east area

There was a high level of support for the ideas for the north-west, with most of the 17 respondents being very supportive (11), and the rest somewhat supportive (6). Feedback from the 11 who chose to provide comment was evenly split between very supportive and somewhat supportive.

Those who were somewhat supportive felt some ideas were missing key elements. Suggestions included well-equipped study or work spaces in Carlton, enclosed dog parks, respite services for carers, and a stronger focus on open space. One respondent felt the ideas were too vague to be actionable.

Very supportive responses highlighted the importance of spatial equity, including better access to community infrastructure in Parkville. Specific ideas included a 50-metre indoor heated pool and upgrades to Melbourne Museum Plaza to support flexible activities such as street dance.

South-west area

There was a high level of support for the ideas for the north-west, with the 10 respondents being evenly split between very supportive (5) and somewhat supportive (5).

Four respondents provided comments for the south-west area, 2 were very supportive and 2 somewhat supportive. While comments were limited, support reflected a strong sense that the area has a significant lack of community infrastructure, including schools, healthcare and open space.

South-east area

The south-east received a high level of support from 24 respondents, with 15 very supportive, 7 somewhat supportive, one neutral, and one very unsupportive response.

Very supportive comments (11) reflected a desire for greater capacity to meet growing demand and to open spaces to a wider range of ages and uses. Reimagining the South Yarra Senior Citizens Centre received strong support, with suggestions to expand programming and opening hours and to create an intergenerational hub linked to Fawcner Park as a civic heart for the area. There was also support for opening community pavilions to uses beyond sport, including green education and cultural activities.

Somewhat supportive (5) and neutral responses (1) sought more detail, including requests for toilets in Fawcner Park and expanded community use at Powlett Reserve (East Melbourne). Broader suggestions included more collaboration with neighbouring councils, increased space for community arts, more open and flexible spaces and better facilities for community events.

Views on the future of Victoria Barracks were mixed. While there was support for exploring new uses, some respondents wanted it retained for Defence. Two comments suggested repurposing the Repatriation Clinic as a community arts space.

The very unsupportive response (1) reflected frustration that East Melbourne had too few future ideas given its limited existing infrastructure, with a call for new facilities rather than upgrades alone.

Central area

Support in the central area was high. Of 20 responses, 13 were very supportive, 7 somewhat supportive, and one neutral. Very supportive feedback (8) emphasised increasing open space, activating underused areas, improving liveability in the CBD, enhancing connections to the Birrarung and ongoing maintenance and renewal of existing assets.

More mixed responses (6 somewhat supportive, and one neutral) reflected disappointment about the scaling back of the Greenline project, a desire for greater consideration of older people and calls for clearer detail. Others supported the ideas in principle but wanted more specificity.

Suggestions to strengthen the ideas included integrating community infrastructure with education spaces, partnering with landowners to create rooftop or mid-level recreation spaces, activating laneways and City Square as informal “third spaces”, providing quiet places for rest, developing a green hub, establishing an Aboriginal hub along the Greenline and opening boathouses for wider community use.

Recommendations to respond

Overall, feedback showed strong support for the future ideas across all local areas, reinforcing the importance of planning for additional and improved community spaces to meet current and future needs.

The future ideas in the draft Plan are intended to signal potential directions rather than detailed proposals. In response to feedback, it is recommended that the final Plan clarify how future ideas will be investigated and progressed from early concepts to potential projects.

Feedback emphasised the importance of partnerships, activating and sharing spaces, accessibility for different cohorts and affordability, which strongly aligns with the Plan’s principles and municipal initiatives, reinforcing that these are the right focus areas for improving the community infrastructure network over the next 4 years.



Figure 12 Example of the interactive map of existing community spaces, available on the Participate Melbourne website.

Other feedback from the online survey

As part of the online survey, respondents were invited to share what else the City of Melbourne should consider when planning community infrastructure, and whether there was anything further they wanted to tell us. 100 open-ended responses were received across these two questions.

The feedback has been analysed and grouped into 5 key themes that reflect the issues, priorities and opportunities raised by respondents. This analysis highlights how community feedback aligns with the proposed community infrastructure principles and other elements of the draft Plan, as well as identifying gaps and opportunities to refine the Plan in response to what we heard.

Access and inclusion

A considerable number of responses (29) focused on access and inclusion. People asked for spaces that are welcoming, affordable and universally accessible, with explicit support for all ages and abilities (including neurodivergent people and older residents), children and young people, and those experiencing homelessness or social isolation. Practical needs included free/low-cost options, clear information on accessibility features and everyday amenities (toilets, shade, places to sit) that make spaces genuinely usable. There was also a strong call for safe, well-lit environments and after-hours options for youth-friendly activities.

Making the most of existing spaces

A considerable number of responses (27) related to making the most of existing spaces. Most comments requested upgrades of specific places, including 16 comments related to upgrade and improvements to Fawkner Park and 3 comments related to the Department of Defence divestment of Victoria Barracks as an opportunity to deliver greater community and green space. Several comments saw bringing vacant spaces and opening existing spaces up for longer as a significant opportunity to improve access to community spaces, enliven the city and an efficient and responsible use of City of Melbourne resources. A couple of respondents suggested that the redevelopment of the Kensington Community and Recreation Centre was a missed opportunity.

Governance and community voice

A considerable number of responses (25) spoke to co-design and centering the voice of local communities when planning and designing community spaces. Feedback included calls for easier, clearer engagement and transparent decision-making. In terms of City of Melbourne's role, responses encouraged partnerships (with institutions, developers, and other governments) to unlock access to spaces, especially after hours, and for City of Melbourne to show how data and feedback are used to set priorities.

A few respondents found the survey language hard to understand and asked for changes to engagement methods.

Connected and visible

A moderate number of responses (19) emphasised better movement and visibility: prioritising walking, cycling and public transport over private cars. People also asked for improved and clearer signage, naming and online information so it's obvious when places are for community use and how to get to them.

Heritage, place and design

A small number of responses (10) highlighted the importance of heritage, character and local identity, asking City of Melbourne to avoid over-design and to add more greening (trees/grass for comfort and shade) and public art/storytelling to everyday places. Several comments pointed to opportunities where identity or representation could be strengthened through design, programming or interpretation.

Recommendations to respond

Overall, feedback from the online survey strongly aligned with the draft Plan's principles and municipal initiatives, providing confidence that the Plan is focused on the right priorities. The Plan should be refined to strengthen emphasis on affordability, cultural safety and universal accessibility, making better use of existing spaces through flexible use, longer opening hours and activating vacant spaces, and reinforcing commitments to co-design, transparency and decision-making with local communities. To help translate these commitments into practice, the final Plan should include case studies and examples that demonstrate how the principles and initiatives can work on the ground and respond to diverse community needs.

Online submissions

People were invited to provide a submission on the draft Plan through the Participate Melbourne website. Fourteen submissions were received, the majority of which supported the intent and contents of the Plan. The submissions covered a range of topics as summarised below.

Table 2 Summary of submissions received on the draft Plan and how we will respond

Topic	Submission detail	Recommendations to respond
Melbourne Park and surrounds	The submission expresses support for the draft Plan, particularly its recognition of community infrastructure as a critical enabler of social connection, resilience, cohesion, participation and wellbeing. It specifically supports: • Collaboration with managers and owners of major community spaces to strengthen physical connections through infrastructure, public art, activation and programming. • Embedding First Nations culture, knowledge and connection to Country in the planning and delivery of open spaces. • Integrating informal recreation and everyday movement within and around community infrastructure to support passive use and wellbeing.	It is recommended that the final Plan retain and further strengthen its direction on connection, inclusion and wellbeing, particularly through the Integrated and Equitable principles.
Multicultural spaces (Multicultural hub and Drill Hall) and communities	The submission expresses strong support for the draft Plan, including its principles and the emphasis on a community hub model. It recommends that the Plan: • Explicitly recognise partnership-managed multicultural community infrastructure, including the Multicultural Hub and Drill Hall. • Acknowledge the importance of culturally safe, affordable and centrally located spaces for diverse communities. • Clearly articulate the specific infrastructure needs of multicultural communities, such as culturally safe, affordable and accessible spaces that are interfaith, intercultural and intergenerational. • Commit to co-design, cultural safety and service continuity in any future planning for the Multicultural Hub.	It is recommended that the principles be reviewed to be more explicit about partnerships and diverse communities, and that the Plan include case studies of existing community spaces, including partnership-managed facilities, to illustrate these approaches in practice.
Infrastructure for community food	The submission supports the draft Plan's inclusion of community kitchens and community gardens as well as the emphasis on a community hub model and partnerships. It outlines a range of strengths and gaps related to food infrastructure and provides case studies of community food services and spaces. The submission recommends strengthening the draft Plan by: • Treating food insecurity as a core planning driver and positioning community food infrastructure as essential to health and wellbeing.	The draft Plan recognises food insecurity as a health and wellbeing issue and includes community kitchens, gardens and flexible shared spaces as part of the community spaces network. Consistent with the Plan's purpose, it is recommended that the Plan maintain its focus on community spaces rather than the programming of those spaces.

Topic	Submission detail	Recommendations to respond
	- Embedding food infrastructure (kitchens, gardens, shared eating spaces) across community spaces, supported by flexible programming and activation. - Clarifying Council's role in co-designing, governing and evaluating community food spaces in partnership with others. - Reducing administrative and cost barriers to booking and using community spaces. - Expanding the Plan's focus from buildings to include activation, programming and prevention-focused outcomes. - Better recognising young adults and tertiary students (18–34) as a distinct cohort. - Strengthening cultural safety, including embedding First Nations design principles and co-design with Aboriginal people and Traditional Owners. The submission also makes a series of recommendations to deliver a range of community spaces to respond to identified needs (space for older people, recreation spaces, open spaces etc.), with specific design recommendations.	It is recommended that the Plan include cultural safety and collaboration with Traditional Owners, and incorporate case studies that demonstrate how shared, flexible spaces can support community-led programming and access in practice.
Royal Park	The submission raises concerns about the alignment between the draft Plan and the draft Royal Park Masterplan. The submission: - Objects to the use of the term 'expand' in relation to community pavilions - Emphasises the need to protect the park environmental values - Requests that the Adaptive and sustainable principle be amended to explicitly respect existing environmental settings - Calls for a stronger focus on delivering new recreation facilities in urban renewal areas. - Requests future ideas for the north-west area to be categorised as planned projects. A second submission endorses the feedback relating to Royal Park.	The draft Plan recognises the role of urban renewal areas in accommodating new recreation spaces to help manage future demand. The draft Plan aligns with the objectives of the Royal Park Masterplan, particularly in responding to changing sport and recreation needs through increased capacity of existing facilities. It is recommended that the project relating to community pavilions be reviewed to clarify that the intent is to support broader community use, rather than expand building footprints, and that the principles more clearly reflect respect for existing environmental values and settings.
City North and university partnership	The submission strongly supports the draft Plan as a citywide framework and welcomes its emphasis on community hubs, access, adaptive reuse and partnerships. It identifies strong potential for a City North community hub to be delivered through partnership, alongside broader opportunities for shared use and coordinated programming of institutional spaces. The submission suggests refinements to strengthen the Plan's relevance in partnership-led contexts. These include more clearly articulating the benefits of the community hub model, broadening the definition and principle of <i>Integrated</i>, clarifying Council's role in places like City North, and strengthening	The Plan is intended to support ongoing conversations with the community and partners. To reflect this feedback, it is recommended that the Plan include case studies of partnership-managed spaces and strengthen its articulation of the role and opportunity of partnerships in delivering community spaces and services.

Topic	Submission detail	Recommendations to respond
	how outcomes are monitored and reviewed through implementation. It also recommends nuance in how categories and demographics are described, and suggests City North as a case study in the Plan.	
South Yarra	The submission identifies opportunities for South Yarra, including: • Elevating the redevelopment of South Yarra Senior Citizens Centre into a multi-generational hub. • Investing in Southbank and East Melbourne infrastructure to manage growth-related demand and protect Fawkner Park. • Investigating Victoria Barracks as future open and unstructured recreation space. • Establishing a clear partnership roadmap with Council.	The submitters feedback is consistent with the intent of the draft Plan, including its focus on partnerships, engaging with the community when planning, designing and delivery community space and the role of future ideas in guiding long-term planning for emerging and identified community needs. It is recommended that future and planned projects in the area be reviewed for alignment with recent Council commitments, including the Victoria Barracks.
Infrastructure for street dance	The submission seeks to include and elevate street dance in the draft Plan and describes its history and benefits. The submission requests that spaces for street dance be recognised as part of the community infrastructure network in the Plan and provides case studies. Specifically, it recommends: • Recognising street dancers as a user group. • Designating space for street dance. • Prioritising low-cost and adaptive upgrades to existing spaces. • Embedding street dance into planning and initiatives. • Leveraging partnerships to share spaces. • In the future, identifying a dedicated home for street dance with the community. A second submission endorses the feedback relating to street dance.	The draft Plan supports community-led activation through its principles. In response to feedback, it is recommended that the principles be reviewed to further strengthen support for flexibility and community-led programming, and that case studies be included to show how spaces are shared and activated by the community. Future ideas related to flexible spaces for unstructured sport and young people, along with initiatives focused on vacant and underused spaces and partnerships, are relevant to several of the submitter's recommendations.
Infrastructure for d/Deaf and Disabled artists	The submission presents an opportunity to partner with Arts Access Victoria to provide a home for services supporting d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities, demonstrating alignment with the draft Plan's principles.	The Plan is intended as a tool to support ongoing conversations with the community and key partners. We acknowledge the opportunity to continue working with the submitter.
Open space in Macaulay	The submission notes there are no planned projects in the north-west area to provide public open space other than Chelmsford Street open space and there is no specific mention of open space locations set out in the Macaulay Structure Plan. The submission requests that the draft Plan: • Align with previous feedback on community spaces in Macaulay.	It is recommended that future and planned projects in the area be reviewed for alignment with recent Council commitments, including those related to open space, and with the broader intent of the Macaulay Structure Plan.

Topic	Submission detail	Recommendations to respond
	• Include a planned projects to complete planning for open space identified in the Macaulay Structure Plan.	
Infrastructure for older people	The submission supports the draft Plan as a strong and well-considered strategic document that presents an opportunity to facilitate inclusive, and connected urban design and service delivery. The submission supports the inclusion of “spaces for older people” and the community hub model. The submission requests that the draft Plan: • Makes age-friendliness explicit, including by referencing recognised frameworks and legislative obligations. • Embeds ongoing participation and co-design with older people. • Strengthens visibility, access and inclusion for those most at risk of exclusion, including older people who are digitally excluded or socially isolated. • Provides facilities to support adult education.	The draft Plan supports flexible use of spaces, access for all ages and support for communities experiencing disadvantage through several principles. In response to feedback, it is recommended that the principles be reviewed to further strengthen access and inclusion for people of all ages, particularly those most at risk of exclusion, and to more clearly emphasise the role of communities, users and partners in designing and programming community spaces.

Meetings with partners

City of Melbourne met with 6 partner organisations during engagement. Partners included the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Traditional Owners, Victorian Government departments, universities and service providers. Across all discussions, there was strong support for the Plan as a platform for ongoing collaboration and shared delivery of community spaces.

A consistent theme was the importance of partnerships to make better use of existing assets and resources. Partners highlighted opportunities to align planning, share facilities, and coordinate service delivery to respond to community needs more efficiently. This included unlocking underused spaces, particularly through shared use agreements and better understanding patterns of peak and off-peak demand.

There was strong emphasis on community-centred and culturally safe approaches. Traditional Owners highlighted the need for early and ongoing engagement in the planning, design and management of spaces, and for community spaces to reflect cultural authority, truth-telling and connection to Country. This included support for the space for Aboriginal (or Aboriginal-focused) organisations and ceremonial types of community space in the draft Plan, and embedding cultural expression, languages and storytelling across the public realm. Safety – particularly cultural safety – was identified as a priority for Aboriginal and multicultural communities.

Service providers and partners emphasised the importance of integrated, flexible and welcoming spaces that support a range of uses, including health, learning, cultural activities and social connection. Case studies were recommended to demonstrate what works well across the City of Melbourne's existing network of community spaces. Partners also highlighted the need to reduce barriers to access and improve how spaces are promoted, booked and used.

Overall, engagement with partners reinforced many of the same priorities raised by the community, particularly the need to activate existing spaces, strengthen partnerships, embed cultural safety and support flexible, shared use. It also highlighted the importance of positioning the Plan as a collaborative, enabling framework that supports ongoing dialogue and joint delivery across sectors.

Recommendations to respond

Feedback confirmed the draft Plan is useful as a platform for collaboration and partnership. The final Plan should continue to emphasise partnership-led delivery, including shared use of facilities and coordinated action to better meet community needs.

The principles should be refined to more clearly reflect the role of partners and the community in the delivery, management and activation of community spaces. They should also strengthen the focus on cultural safety for both Traditional Owners and multicultural communities, including early engagement with Traditional Owners and embedding language and caring for Country in planning and design.

Including case studies will help demonstrate the value of existing community spaces and show how different partnership models support flexible, community-led use in practice.

Findings and next steps

There was strong support for the direction of the draft Plan. Overall, people felt it focused on the right issues and responds well to the pressures of growth, density and changing community needs. Support for future ideas was high across all local areas. Where people raised questions, this was mostly about wanting more detail rather than disagreement with the ideas or intent.

The community clearly values spaces that feel welcoming, safe and inclusive and accessible to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Many people spoke about the importance of community spaces as places to connect, belong and spend time without needing to spend money.

There was strong support for making better use of existing spaces, including activating underused or vacant buildings, allowing flexible and shared use, and extending opening hours. People also want a stronger community voice, with co-design and local knowledge shaping how spaces are planned, designed and run.

The community supported working in partnership with Traditional Owners, other levels of government, institutions and community organisations, and recognised that responsibility for community spaces is shared, with City of Melbourne playing a key role.

Recommendations to respond

Engagement findings informed recommended updates to the Community Infrastructure Plan. These include strengthening the principles to more clearly centre equity, access and community voice; simplifying language throughout the Plan, particularly for the municipal initiatives; and shifting from the term “community infrastructure” to “community spaces” to better reflect how the community understands and uses these places.

It is also recommended that the Plan include short case studies of existing City of Melbourne community spaces to demonstrate how the principles are applied in practice, and a clear commitment to reporting on initiatives and projects as part of monitoring and evaluation. The Plan should also clearly outline how future ideas may be assessed and progressed, and how and when the Plan will be reviewed.

Together, these recommended changes improve clarity and accountability, better reflect community priorities, and position City of Melbourne to make informed decisions about community spaces over time.

How to contact us

Online:

melbourne.vic.gov.au

In person:

Melbourne Town Hall - Administration Building
120 Swanston Street, Melbourne
Business hours, Monday to Friday
(Public holidays excluded)

Telephone:

03 9658 9658
Business hours, Monday to Friday
(Public holidays excluded)

Fax:

03 9654 4854

In writing:

City of Melbourne
GPO Box 1603
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia



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