



Engagement Report Summary

Heritage, People and Place Discussion Paper 2024

The City of Melbourne (CoM) Heritage Strategy aims to protect the city's heritage buildings, places, and objects to celebrate and preserve its cultural significance. As the current strategy, developed in 2013, reaches its conclusion, the new strategy will focus on a people-centred approach to identifying, acknowledging, sharing and protecting the city's diverse traditions, memories, places, and objects.

CoM prepared the Heritage People and Place Discussion Paper (Discussion Paper) to initiate a conversation with the community and other stakeholders. The Discussion Paper outlines potential approaches to addressing emerging challenges and opportunities, and feedback received will help guide the development of a new heritage strategy (Draft Heritage Strategy 2025).

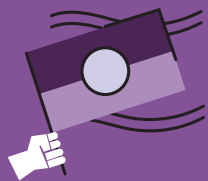
The Discussion Paper explores how heritage can positively address various urban pressures and changes CoM faces. It suggests adopting a people-centred approach across different focus areas that prioritises community involvement and values people's relationship with places.

The key aspects of a people-centred approach include:

- recognising the significance of place due to their connection with people
- empowering community to shape cultural heritage
- encouraging diverse community involvement while respecting expert knowledge.



The Discussion Paper explores how a people-centred heritage framework could be implemented through Five (5) Focus Areas, including:



1. Reflecting Aboriginal heritage:

Acknowledging and celebrating the central role of Aboriginal history which links to all other focus areas in the paper.



2. Heritage interpretation

Better understanding the city's heritage, its heritage places, and values by creating experiences that connect people with the place's stories.



3. Heritage, urban change and the economy

Accommodating growth and change while ensuring that Melbourne's distinctive places remain a prominent feature of its evolution and ongoing economic prosperity.



4. Heritage and climate change

Adapting to climate change and providing environmentally sustainable heritage buildings and places for people to live, work and enjoy.



5. Innovative heritage planning and processes

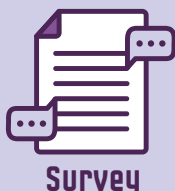
Exploring the future of heritage protection, alternative processes that enable more community involvement, and how the heritage of different parts of the community can be better understood and protected.

Engagement approach

A range of promotional, communication, and engagement tools were utilised to ensure COM's residents, businesses, government agencies, industry partners, and other relevant stakeholders had a chance to share their ideas and feedback.

Engagement over 4+ weeks

The engagement activities occurred for a little over four weeks, with an **online survey** open from **20 February to the 19 March 2024**.



5 workshops



4 in-person



1 online

There were five workshops held with peak bodies, general community, industry professionals, resident groups and historical societies to have a deeper discussion about the ideas proposed in the Discussion Paper.

Several submissions were received from institutions, individuals and activist groups in relation to the Discussion Paper.

The CoM has separately engaged with Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and will continue to do so as the new Strategy is developed.

This report presents findings and insights from all feedback received during the community engagement period.

Engagement outcomes

Feedback was received from

216

participants

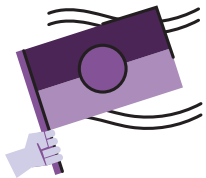
55%
males

41%
females

4%
other

Most survey participants were residents and workers in the COM, with the majority of the participants aged between 20-49 years.

The following is a summary of the feedback received from all engagement methods for each of the five Focus Areas.



1. Reflecting Aboriginal heritage feedback received

Participants expressed the need for CoM to centralise Aboriginal culture, heritage and knowledge into heritage planning and change standard approaches.

Participants supported CoM acknowledging Aboriginal cultural heritage in the city through public art, exhibitions and performances, the design of public spaces, onsite interpretation boards and community events.

Participants had a strong awareness of the listed examples of the work CoM is doing to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal cultural heritage in our city and highlighted other examples of relevant projects including:

- Yulungah App and walking tours
- support of Yirramboi and Rising festivals
- Stolen Generations marker
- Colours of our Country project
- Floating wetlands project
- Town Hall Commons project.

Workshop participants highlighted:

- the need for **meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners** and the importance of **truth telling** (for example the 'forgotten' stories about dispossession)
- the need to undertake deep research to **record this information**, and **mapping** as a useful tool
- the need to provide **Traditional Owners with more opportunities to influence** the built environment and planning controls.

"Deep research, 'real' meaningful consultation, embrace the difficult and challenging"

– workshop participant



2. Heritage interpretation feedback received

Feedback received across the engagement called for CoM to consider the importance of intangible heritage.

Key methods identified for how CoM should explore engaging with diverse voices included: meeting with community groups, through events, and via social media and engagement activities for children and young people.

CoM could lead by example with heritage interpretation by acknowledging:

- the **importance of layered interpretation** such as including **multiple people and groups' stories** related to place
- the importance of **nuance in heritage interpretation**, particularly **cross-cultural interpretations** for example in relation to CoM's transient population.

Participants outlined who was important to involve in heritage and the ways this participatory involvement could be conveyed.

The appointment of a City Historian was strongly supported, to draw together information.

- There were also comments for CoM to **invest additional funding to uncover peoples stories.**

"Melbourne has had waves of immigration, there is a multicultural history to tell"

– workshop participant



3. Heritage, urban change and the economy feedback received

Most survey participants (81%) either strongly disagreed (43%) or disagreed (38%) with the statement

“The City of Melbourne provides the right balance between heritage protection and new development.”

The main reasons for disagreement included:

- There is a sense that **new developments have ‘spoiled’ the city** and have not taken into context the surrounding built environment.
- Many had issues with the quality of new developments and a **perception of missed opportunities for placemaking and integration**.
- There were concerns regarding **developers ‘winning out’ over residents and passionate community members** advocating for the protection of heritage buildings and culturally significant locations.
- There is a need for **enhanced protections and acknowledgement of places of significance related to Aboriginal culture**. Examples were shared for how to build knowledge amongst the community about stories as well as places.
- Many participants commented on the **need for stronger heritage protection that includes more than just the façade**, such as notable interiors.
- Conversely, a few felt that **heritage protection is having negative impacts on housing opportunities**, and that this balance needs to be addressed.

‘We must commit to what we have already built, maintain those buildings which are heritage listed as community environments. Deepen the history via engagement rather than erasing and starting a new, this must be community driven rather than the function of gentrification.’

– survey respondent

Of those survey participants who agreed (12%) or strongly agreed (2%):

- A few participants acknowledged the **difficulties in balancing new and old buildings**.
- A few participants expressed that they felt **CoM is progressive** and had taken a greater focus on protecting heritage in recent years.

The following summary relates to feedback gathered during the workshops

Whilst a few participants raised concerns that heritage buildings aren’t being adequately protected (e.g., through VCAT decisions), others stated that CoM needs to allow for more change to account for population growth.

To preserve cultural richness, participants felt that urban living should be accessible to people of different socio-economic backgrounds to create a city for everyone.

Participants supported opportunities for adaptive re-use and outlined benefits. It was suggested CoM could promote case studies of successful adaptive re-use projects.

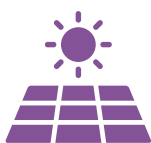
Many participants emphasised that developments are not a hinderance to heritage but rather contribute to the evolving story of CoMs’ built environment. Participants expressed a desire for the value of heritage to be better acknowledged. These values included economic, cultural, social and intangible benefits. Additionally, participants highlighted that heritage buildings bring people into the CBD and contribute to the knowledge economy.



4. Heritage and climate change feedback received

45%
agreed

23%
disagreed



45% of survey participants acknowledged that they would be in support of **CoM not requiring planning permits for visible solar panels** on local heritage places, given their positive impact on the environment. In comparison, 23% voted 'no' to supporting this, given the disruption of panels on the character of heritage streetscapes, and a further 15% opposed them due to their impacts on the appearance of a heritage building.

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement

"In addition to solar panels, other changes should be permitted to heritage places to improve their environmental sustainability."

37%
strongly
agreed

31%
agreed

12%
were
indifferent

that permits shouldn't be required

Most survey participants agreed that more changes to heritage places should be allowed if they are done so sustainably.

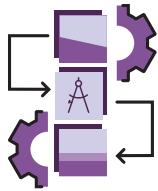
68%
strongly agreed
or agreed

The following summary relates to feedback gathered during the workshops

The topic of solar panels generated a mix of responses at workshops. Many participants recognised the benefits of having solar panels and their role in the environment.

The majority of participants agreed that there is room for CoM to allow for flexibility so that heritage places can operate more sustainably. A few argued that permit processes serve as a check and balance to prevent visual clutter and maintain the city's character.

There were a number of suggestions on how buildings can be adapted to be more sustainable while honouring the heritage of the building. Participants were in support of CoM providing information and offering support for owners to future retrofit heritage buildings.



5. Innovative heritage planning and processes feedback received

Least recognised/celebrated heritage

45%
building
interiors

39%
places of
significance to
multicultural
communities

45% of survey participants considered 'building interiors' as the least recognised/celebrated form of heritage in CoM, followed by 'places of significance to multicultural communities' (39%).

A slightly smaller number of survey participants (35%) considered 'intangible heritage' and 'landscape or natural heritage' as the least recognised/celebrated heritage in CoM, with 'Aboriginal heritage' following closely at 34%.

An equal number of survey participants (23%) were either against flexibility in heritage policies or were okay with it as long as it resulted in more affordable housing, and a further 22% were in favour of flexibility if it allowed for the continuation or expansion for traditional use.

Workshop participants highlighted the importance of understanding a place's significance and historical use, with an emphasis on the need to challenge the limited knowledge of history and educate future generations on the value of heritage sites.

Important benefits of heritage

22%
City
identity

22%
Character of
local places

5%
Cultural
uses

2%
Personal
connection

Survey participants identified **city identity** and the **character of local places** as the two most important benefits of heritage. **Cultural uses** and **personal connections** received the least support with a few stating there was no benefit in the open-ended response.

*"Understanding our
past equips us to
understand and deal
with the future."*

– survey respondent

Next steps

CoM will seek to engage with its community, Traditional Owners and other relevant stakeholders as it moves through all stages of the development of a new Heritage Strategy.

The feedback gathered will help inform the preparation of the Draft Heritage Strategy, which will be considered by the Future Melbourne Committee in 2024.

Future engagement on the Draft Heritage Strategy will lead to the development of the Final Heritage Strategy in 2025, including an implementation plan with agreed actions and timeframes.