

Design your Darebin 2041
Phase 1 Engagement Findings Report

for

Darebin City Council
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CONSULTING

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Acknowledgement of Country

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

Our Community

The Darebin Community embraced the opportunity to share their insights to help design the future of their City and without their participation the insights in this report would not be possible. We'd like to acknowledge the participation of the Darebin community across the various engagement activities undertaken as part of the first phase of the Design your Darebin 2041 program.

Executive Summary

In late December 2020, the City of Darebin launched the first phase of the Design your Darebin 2041 program. Designed to generate community insights to inform development of a 20-year Community Vision in line with requirements of the new Local Government Act, the findings of this engagement are outlined in this report.

The City of Darebin's goal was to engage the community in a way that is representative of the population. That is, the people who participate in community engagement should follow the demographic characteristics of the real community.

A total of 1,631 members of the Darebin community participated in the Phase 1 engagement, representing a diverse range of demographics similar to that of the 2016 Census Darebin Community Profile. Promoted through both traditional and digital council and community channels the engagement leveraged a number of methods to maximise inclusiveness including face-to-face place-based pop-up community events, hardcopy and online surveys and a phone survey. These methods focussed on the exploration of three key areas, namely:

1. What do you love most about Darebin?
2. What is the one thing we need to change or do to make Darebin the best it can be?
3. Thinking ahead to 2041, what three words would you use to describe the Darebin you want to see?

Across each of these forms of engagement, a very consistent pattern of themes is evident, these include:

- **Greening the City:** the community values 'green' spaces (parks as well as street trees) and want more of them and the ones they have to be protected and enhanced.
- **Inclusive diversity:** the Darebin community values multiculturalism and aspire to preserve inclusivity.
- **Sustainability:** there's much regard and respect for the many people in the Darebin community who care about the environment and sustainability across a range of perspectives, from promoting less car use, protecting native plants and animals as well as driving action on climate change.

- **Safety:** The community aspires for a future that is clean and safe. Safety is referenced from both a sense of personal physical and psychological safety (“feeling safe” while out) and also about safety as a cyclist and a pedestrian. Respondents also seem to connect urban design with safety. There is a clear link between poorly lit and/or unkept dirty places with a feeling of being unsafe.
- **Lifestyle:** members of the Darebin community both love the amenity of their City and also want to see it get better in the future. Amenity covers a range of things from the convenience of public transport, accessibility to local services to protection from over-population and over - development.

Consistently raised by members of the community these key areas present Council with a unique opportunity to ensure efforts and future planning are tightly focussed to deliver on the drivers and aspirations underpinning these themes. The themes also provide clear direction on Community aspirations for Darebin 2041, to be considered and addressed in deliberations and development of the 20-year Community Vision and supporting priorities.

What we did

The Design your Darebin 2041 engagement program was developed to support the development of a 20-year Community Vision and a new Council Plan in line with requirements under the new Local Government Act 2020. Under the Act Councils are required to facilitate the development of a Community Vision and it further prescribes the Community Vision:

- be developed with the municipal community using deliberative engagement practices, which are to be determined through the development of the Darebin Community Engagement Policy
- be for a period of at least 10 financial years
- describe the municipal community’s aspirations for the future of the municipality
- be adopted by 31 October 2021 and have effect from 1 July 2021.

The Design your Darebin 2041 program was designed to capture a broad cross-section of community aspirations for the future of Darebin on a 20 -year horizon and focussed on three key areas of exploration:

1. What do you love most about Darebin?
2. What is the one thing we need to change or do to make Darebin the best it can be?
3. Thinking ahead to 2041, what three words would you use to describe the Darebin you want to see?

The engagement program used a number of different methods to capture the future aspirations of the community for Darebin in 2041 including telephone surveys, place-based Community Pop-Up events, postcard surveys (hardcopy) and an online survey.

Telephone Survey

A telephone survey was conducted with 400 randomly selected community members between January 13-29, 2021. The sample comprised a good mix across the eight precincts in Darebin as well as by gender and age. It also included those who speak a language other than English at home and people with a disability. The fieldwork was conducted on our behalf by TKW Research who are specialists in data collection and ISO Accreditation in this field.

Community Pop-Up Events

ChatterBox Projects was engaged by Darebin City Council (Council) to facilitate nine place-based pop-up events from 24 January to 10 February 2021. Attracting a mix of residents and visitors of all ages from a diverse range of backgrounds the events covered each of the Darebin Council Wards. Each event provided community members the opportunity to provide their feedback and ideas for the Darebin 2041 Community Vision by:

- completing a short, hard copy, three-question survey (DL Postcard)
- participating in a voting pod activity
- commenting on one of three chatboards
- drawing their ideas using a creative response drawing sheet.

The locations, dates and times for these events were selected to target different suburbs and demographic groups and are detailed below.

Date	Time	Location
Sunday 24 January	10am -1pm	Darebin Parklands, Alphington
Thursday 28 January	12pm -3pm	Broadway, Reservoir
Saturday 30 January	9am -12pm	Regent Street, Preston/Reservoir
Saturday 30 January	2pm-5pm	High Street, Northcote
Sunday 31 January	1pm-4pm	AH Capp Reserve, Preston
Saturday 6 February	9am-12pm	Edwardes Lake Park, Reservoir
Saturday 6 February	2pm - 5pm	Penders Park, Thornbury
Sunday 7 February	8am - 1pm	Kingsbury Market, Bundoora
Wednesday 10 February	11am -2pm	Preston Market, Preston

Table 1: Community Pop-Up Event Details

Online Survey

Community members were invited to complete a short online survey on the Design Your Darebin 2041, YourSay engagement platform. Consistent with all other methods of engagement the survey comprised three vision questions, in addition to key profile questions to capture demographic characteristics of respondents. The three questions included:

4. What do you love most about Darebin?
5. What is the one thing we need to change or do to make Darebin the best it can be?
6. Thinking ahead to 2041, what three words would you use to describe the Darebin you want to see?

The survey was intentionally kept short and sharp, to maximise completion rates. While respondents were not required to complete all three questions, 99% of respondents completed all questions.

How we promoted it

To drive participation and program reach, Design Your Darebin 2041 was underpinned by a multi-faceted communications plan. Combining both broad-based and targeted communications, the plan leveraged a number of traditional and digital channels to ensure clear, consistent, simple and easy to understand messaging was delivered to the Darebin Community, so they understood how and where to participate in the program and were openly encouraged to help design the future of their City. Keeping the messaging simple and easy to understand was also key for translated materials to ensure effective and meaningful engagement of Darebin’s’ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.

Aside from strong promotion through Darebin City Council corporate channels including Darebin’s Community Engagement Platform, YourSay, the Council website, social media, mass email marketing to community groups and direct email marketing to key stakeholders the communications plan also deployed the following tactics to drive awareness and increase participation from CALD and vulnerable groups in Design Your Darebin 2041:

- Social Media designed for multilingual audiences through Council channels.
- Print including local press with language aid / multilingual support line, translated advertisements in CALD print media and letterbox drops highlighting translated materials
- Radio including 3ZZZ- Ethnic Community Broadcasting Association of Victoria

Internal communications were also key to ensuring Darebin City Council staff were aware of the Design Your Darebin 2041 program and its importance in terms of future planning. By ensuring staff were actively engaged they were best positioned to confidently promote this to community members and their key networks.

Who participated?

In total there were 1631 participants in the Phase 1 engagement across the Darebin community. These participants represented a diverse range of participants similar to the composition of the Darebin community, based on the 2016 census.

Engagement Method	Recruitment Method	Participants
Face to face events	Participation in pop-up events	770
	Completion of postcard survey	(458)
Online Survey	Community opt-in	461
Phone Survey	Random selection	400
Total		1,631

Table 2: Engagement approach & participants

Participants at the face-to-face events were also able to complete a postcard survey that was analysed with the other online survey responses. In the table above, we have only counted face-to-face participants once.

City of Darebin’s goal is to engage the community in a way that is representative of the population. That is, the people who participate in community engagement should follow the demographic characteristics of the real community.

A number of demographic characteristics were collected on the participants so that this could be monitored. Overall, the group of participants (the ‘sample’ of the community) was quite similar to the Darebin community. The sample is similar enough that the engagement team and the community can have confidence that the views of these people represent the broad majority of Darebin’s community members.

The charts below show a comparison between the different feedback collection methods and the community as shown in the census. Some methods match with different parts of the community better. For example, the phone survey was better for finding community members who speak languages other than English at home, while the pop-up events were better for involving younger members of the community.

Overall, between the different approaches to involving the community there was good coverage of many different groups and we are confident that the responses represent most people living in Darebin.

Age group : Comparison

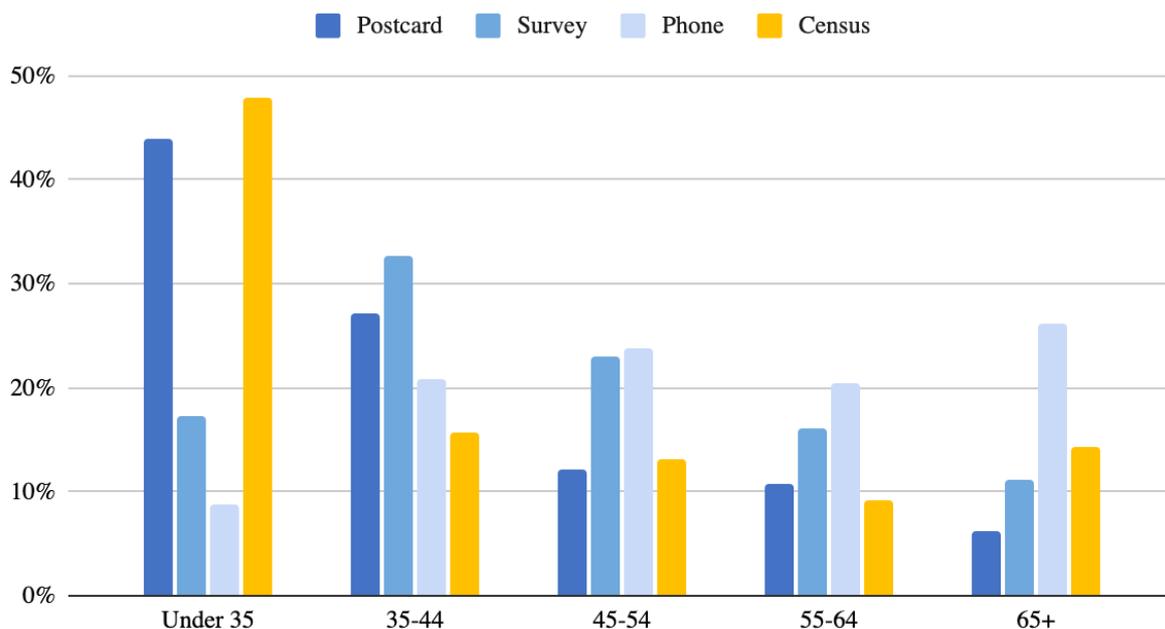


Figure 1: Age Group Comparison-Engagement vs. 2016 Census Data

All age groups have been well represented. The under 35 group was covered by the postcard/face-to-face engagement, while the other engagement methods worked more effectively to involve older age groups.

Participation by suburb

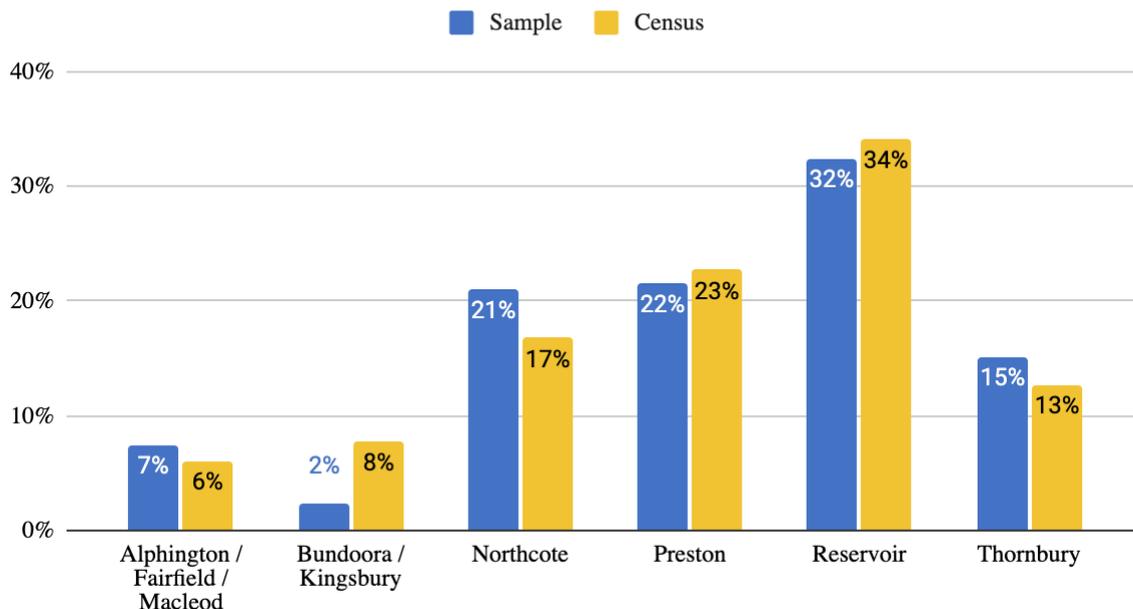


Figure 2: Suburb Participation-Engagement vs. 2016 Census Data

There is a healthy representation of people across all parts of the municipality. The one area that is less represented is Bundoora and Kingsbury. Additional efforts were made to drive participation from this area with an additional place-based Community Pop-Up at the Kingsbury market.

Language Comparison

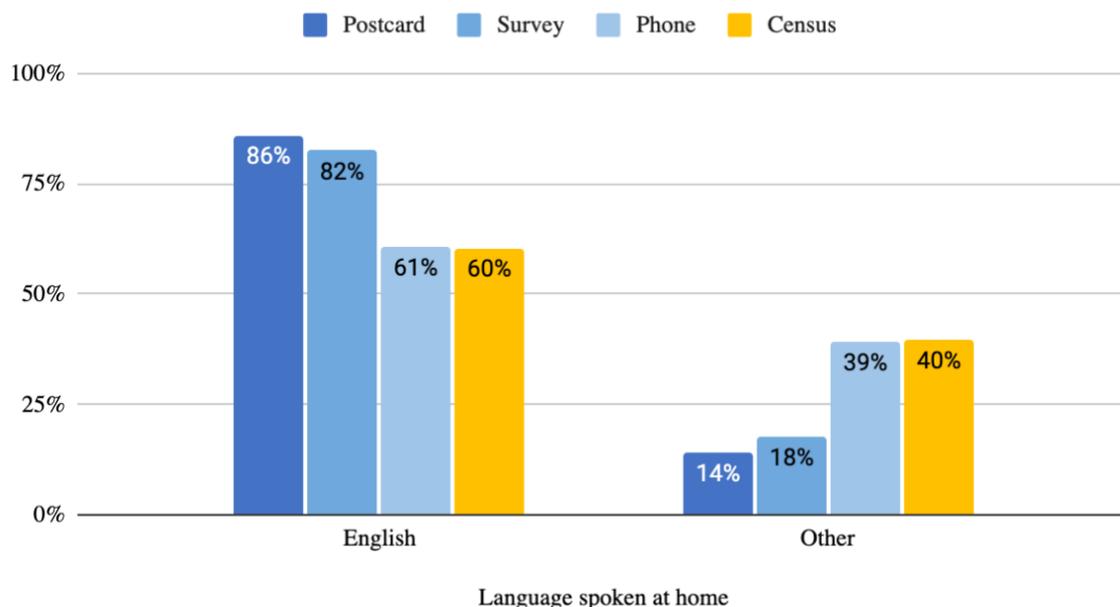


Figure 3: Language Comparison-Engagement vs. 2016 Census Data

Face-to-face (postcard) engagement and the online survey were less effective at involving people who speak other languages than the phone survey. Between these different methods we were able to collect enough people to represent Darebin residents who speak other languages.

What we heard

Darebin City Council took feedback from the community across a number of different mediums in order to maximise inclusiveness. Across all forms of feedback, a very consistent pattern of themes can be seen, providing confidence that the process is robust.

The themes that can be seen across all forms of feedback are:

Greening the City

People value 'green' spaces (parks as well as street trees) and want more of them and the ones we have to be protected and enhanced.

Respondents listed their favourite places as parks and gardens near their homes, or the larger parks around the city. People also mentioned the importance of 'tree lined streets and paths' as well as access for all residents to 'green spaces'.

"Green open spaces, including linear parks along the creeks."

"More tree canopy please."

"More trees especially for shade/shelter so more people can walk."

Inclusive diversity

People value multiculturalism and want to preserve inclusivity. Across the feedback received people frequently used the following words to describe what they love about Darebin and what they hope to preserve for the future:

Diversity

Multicultural

Inclusive

Welcoming

Sustainability

Respondents love that there are many people in their community who care about the environment and sustainability across a range of perspectives, from promoting less car use, protecting native plants and animals as well as action on climate change. Across all forms of feedback, people aspire to a more sustainable, eco-friendly future.

"I love that Darebin is progressive, green and committed to community building. I love the focus of the environment and sustainability."

[I love] "It's leadership in sustainability initiatives."

"I think, now that a climate emergency has been declared, it would be ideal to see the council ensuring that they act like it's a climate emergency."

Safety

The future is clean and safe. People talk about safety both from a sense of personal physical and psychological safety ("feeling safe" while out) and also about safety as a cyclist and a pedestrian.

Respondents also seem to connect urban design with safety. By this we understand that there is a link between poorly lit places and/or unkept dirty places with a feeling of lack of safety.

“Darebin needs to be a safer community. More community connectedness, neighbours need to look out for each other more. More localised events.”

“Safety around train stations”

“There is a dirty, dodgy little lane way between Reservoir PS and Kenilworth Street. Lots of kids use this to walk to school. Please clean it up and make it safe!!”

Lifestyle

Our respondents say they both love the amenity of Darebin and also want to see it get better in the future. By amenity people mean a lot of different things, including:

- Protection from overdevelopment/overpopulation
- The ability to shop and dine locally for anything they need or want
- Great public transport, active transport and ease to get around
- Proximity to the city and the benefits of being in a major city like Melbourne

“Making our streets green, walkable, accessible. More spots to be outside and enjoy close knit shops and restaurants. Less car-based shopping centres and parking.”

“Support the strip shopping streets and make them vibrant again. The so-called shopping centres are tawdy, dull and lifeless and do not add anything to the culture of the community.”

“Maintain (or even improve) the ratio of development to green space. “

What residents love about the City of Darebin

As a response to this question, community members frequently listed things that they love about their neighbourhood. The most frequent answers and the percentage of participants who mentioned them included:

- Parks and open public spaces (39% of participants)
- Diversity / multiculturalism / inclusivity (38%)
- Amenities / proximity to the CBD (27%)
- Public transport options (14%)

Some examples of the responses sounded like:

“The amount of green space, easy to bike around and good community facilities for families.”

“The people. It's a friendly and diverse community that has been so incredibly welcoming to me.”

“I love the diversity of: People (Cultures), Local restaurants & bars, Places (parks & outdoor activity)”

“Lots of parks and outdoor facilities and great public transport.”

Participants at the face-to-face engagements in a range of public spaces had very similar comments to those seen via the survey responses. Some notable comments that were popular on the ‘chatboards’ (shown above) included:

- High Street shopping
- Parks
- Music
- Diversity

We interpret these as matching strongly with themes identified in other feedback such as: local amenity, improving public open space and supporting diversity and multiculturalism.

What residents suggested could change to improve Darebin



Figure 4: Community Vision ‘chatboard’ at place -based Community Pop-Up event

Respondents had a wide range of ideas to improve Darebin for the future. The most common responses heard included:

- Improve paths and congestion - this related to walking and cycling and congestion due to cars (15% of participants)
- Improved greening of streets and parks (tree planting) (12%)

- Improve amenities - this includes both the transport as well as enhancing local shopping strips rather than 'large retail' (11%)
- Increase/improve open space (including maintaining existing) (11%)
- Reduce development - in some cases large apartment buildings, in other cases referring to too much 'in-fill' development (11%)
- Improve waste management - these included improvements to recycling, but also mentions of keeping curb sides and public places clean from rubbish (9%)

Some examples of the verbatim responses included:

"Reduce the traffic and make our streets greener"

"Upgrade parks and play equipment in areas that are not necessarily the busiest."

"Reduce the traffic and make our streets greener."

"Why is it so dirty and run down? The roads and pathways are in such disrepair, not to mention how neglected many of the playgrounds are. Having these be made cleaner and safer should be a priority."

"Quality designed streetscape including availability for car parking (enough time for a catch-up with friends, attracting people from other areas at least 90 minutes), good coverage of vegetation to encourage local people walking to shops and making the journey to public transport station a pleasant one."

"Provide larger bins, the green bins are tiny, and you can hardly fit anything in it especially when you have a family. Allow a second hard rubbish collection throughout the whole year, not just a winter and "limited" spring collection."

"More rubbish bins especially in dog parks, more dog parks."

Participants at the face-to-face engagements in a range of public spaces had very similar comments to those seen via the survey responses. Some notable comments that were popular on the 'chatboards' (shown above) included:

- Less littering
- Foster community urban food growing
- Climate change
- Reduce emissions, reduce vehicle usage

We interpret these as matching strongly with themes identified in other feedback such as: improving public open space, focus on sustainability and improving amenities (including local pathways to encourage active transport).

Describe the future of Darebin

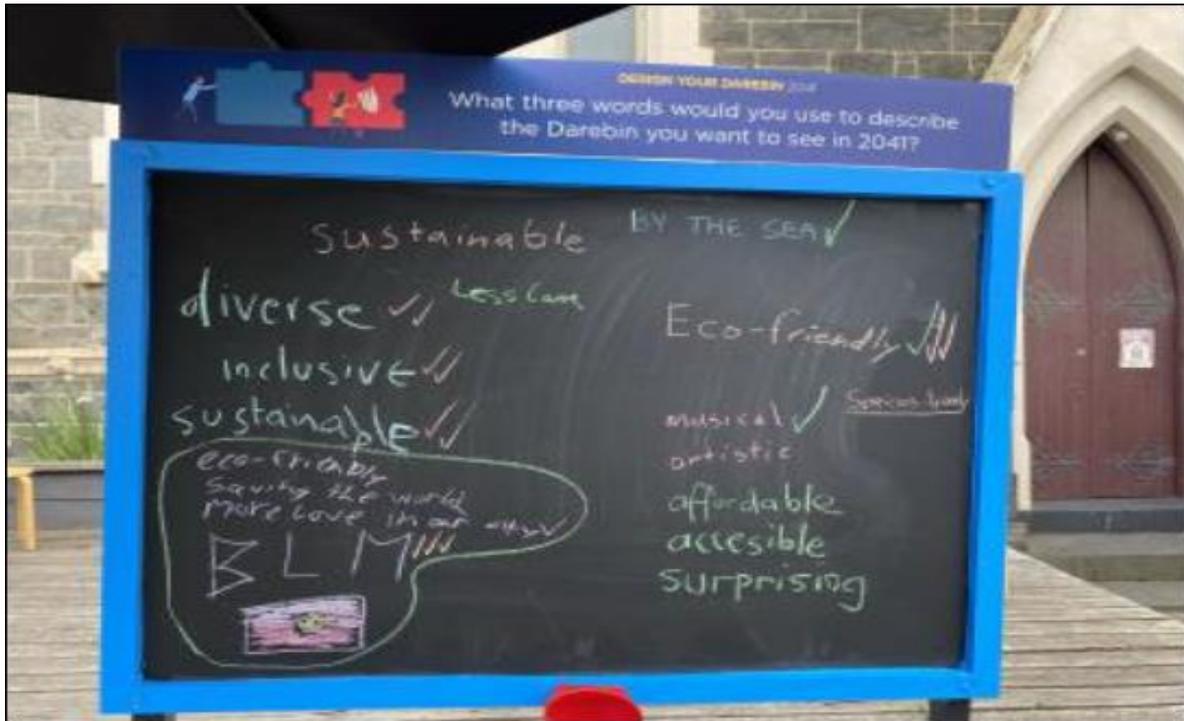


Figure 5: Community Vision 'blackboard' at place-based Community Pop-Up event

To answer this question respondents were asked to provide three words which would describe the Darebin of the future. Please note, people did not describe their answers, they just gave key words. Here are the most common themes for the words seen:

- Greener (increased vegetation, shade, streets and public spaces) (*mentioned by 28% of participants*)
- Clean / safe (25%)
- Inclusive / diverse (21%)
- Sustainable / eco-friendly (18%)



Figure 6: Word Cloud of key word phone & survey responses

Words written on the chatboards frequently matched those seen through other forms of feedback. In particular, some words and terms were seen more than others, including:

- Diverse
- Eco-friendly
- Sustainable
- Inclusive (including BLM - Black Lives Matter)

We interpret these as a strong match with other feedback we have seen particularly relating to supporting diversity and multiculturalism as well as sustainability and supporting our natural environment.

Key opportunities & considerations

As with all forms of community engagement there are always challenges in establishing program understanding and attracting participation from harder to reach or more disengaged sections of the community especially when they may be more directly impacted by the decisions arising from the engagement.

The Phase one engagement highlighted some community engagement challenges with key segments within the Darebin municipality including:

- Youth and young persons who will be directly impacted by the Vision in years to come
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Specific CALD communities i.e., African community,

While effectively engaging these community segments was identified as a challenge of the Phase one engagement, it presents key opportunities and considerations for future engagement. This includes identifying key stakeholders or segments highly impacted by the decisions arising from the engagement and ensuring more targeted and culturally relevant means of engagement are identified to increase

participation, this may mean using different techniques or approaches to engage specific groups. As an example, while there was significant representation for under 35-year olds, given the impact of the Vision on younger generations, more work could have been invested in engaging youth and young persons through preferred channels of engagement such as social media or school/ classroom-based activities. Engagement length and timing is also key, allowing sufficient time for planning, approach development and execution, program cut-through and participation. Point-in time assessment through the engagement life cycle to gauge impact with harder to reach segments also provides opportunity to innovate approaches in-train or pivot techniques/methods where necessary.

The themes consistently raised by members of the community throughout the Phase 1 Engagement also present a unique opportunity for Council. These themes, namely,

- Greening the City
- Inclusive diversity
- Sustainability
- Safety
- Lifestyle

send a very clear message around community expectations for the future of Darebin and provide a strong case for where Council ensure efforts and future planning could be tightly focussed to deliver on the drivers and aspirations underpinning these themes. The themes also provide clear direction on Community aspirations for Darebin 2041, to be considered and addressed in deliberations and development of the 20-year Community Vision and supporting priorities.

Next Steps

The key findings from the Community Vision Phase one engagement will be shared with the Design Your Darebin 2041 Deliberative Panel for consideration in their formulation of a 20-year Community Vision and their deliberations on key priorities for how to deliver on this through the Council Plan.

To help further unpack some of the Phase 1 engagement findings some additional vision activities have been developed and are currently running on the Design your Darebin 2041 YourSay page. These include the opportunity for Darebin community members to map and pinpoint the places they love or believe need more love in Darebin, share their big ideas for Darebin 2041 or visualise what Darebin 2041 could look and feel like. The findings from these additional activities will be analysed and reported back to the Deliberative Panel for finalisation of their vision and consideration in the key actions to be addressed through the Council Plan.

It is also strongly recommended that Darebin City Council circles back to the community to close the loop on the Phase 1 Engagement. In doing so, this provides Council the opportunity to share who participated in the engagement and how and most importantly what they've heard from the Community and the steps being taken to address this.