

Engagement summary report

Prepared by i.e. community for City of Port Phillip

City of Port Phillip Housing Strategy

2 August 2023

Snapshot of activities and participation

This report provides a summary of the findings from the engagement activities run from 11 May to 17 May 2023 as input into the new City of Port Phillip Housing Strategy.

The strategy aims to address housing growth and change in Port Phillip over the next 15 years, considering factors such as population and household growth, diverse housing needs, decreasing affordability, climate change impacts, and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

211 people provided input

Online survey

An online survey was distributed through Council's Have Your Say platform from 11 April to 17 May 2023.

103 people responded

Pop-ups

Pop-ups provide an opportunity to engage with the community in person, encouraging participation and obtaining input.

3 locations across Port Phillip

44 people engaged through intercept survey

43 people contributed to the engagement boards

Industry workshop

An online workshop was held on 4 May 2023 to explore how Council can work with the industry to address housing challenges in the City.

7 people attended

Community workshop

An online workshop was held on 9 May 2023 to explore how affordability is impacting the community and areas for increasing supply.

7 people attended

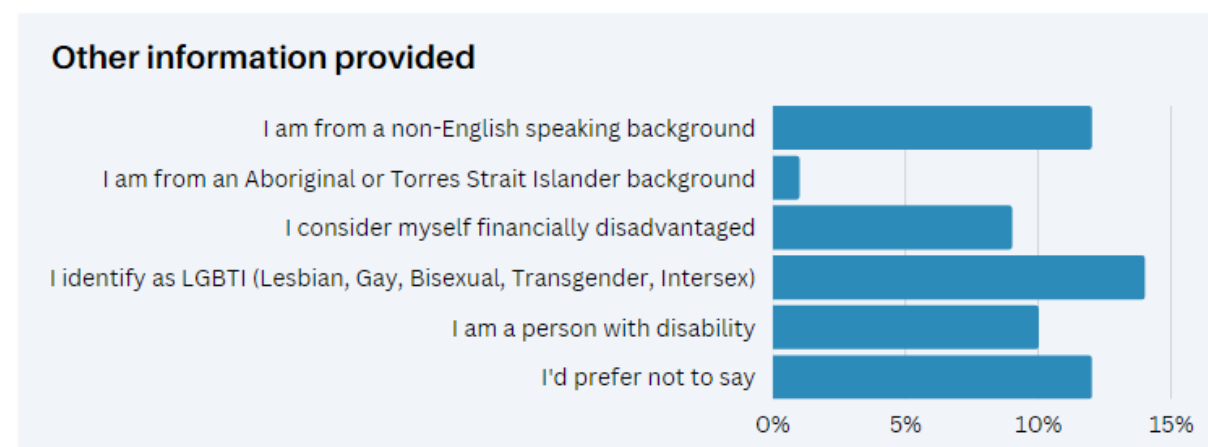
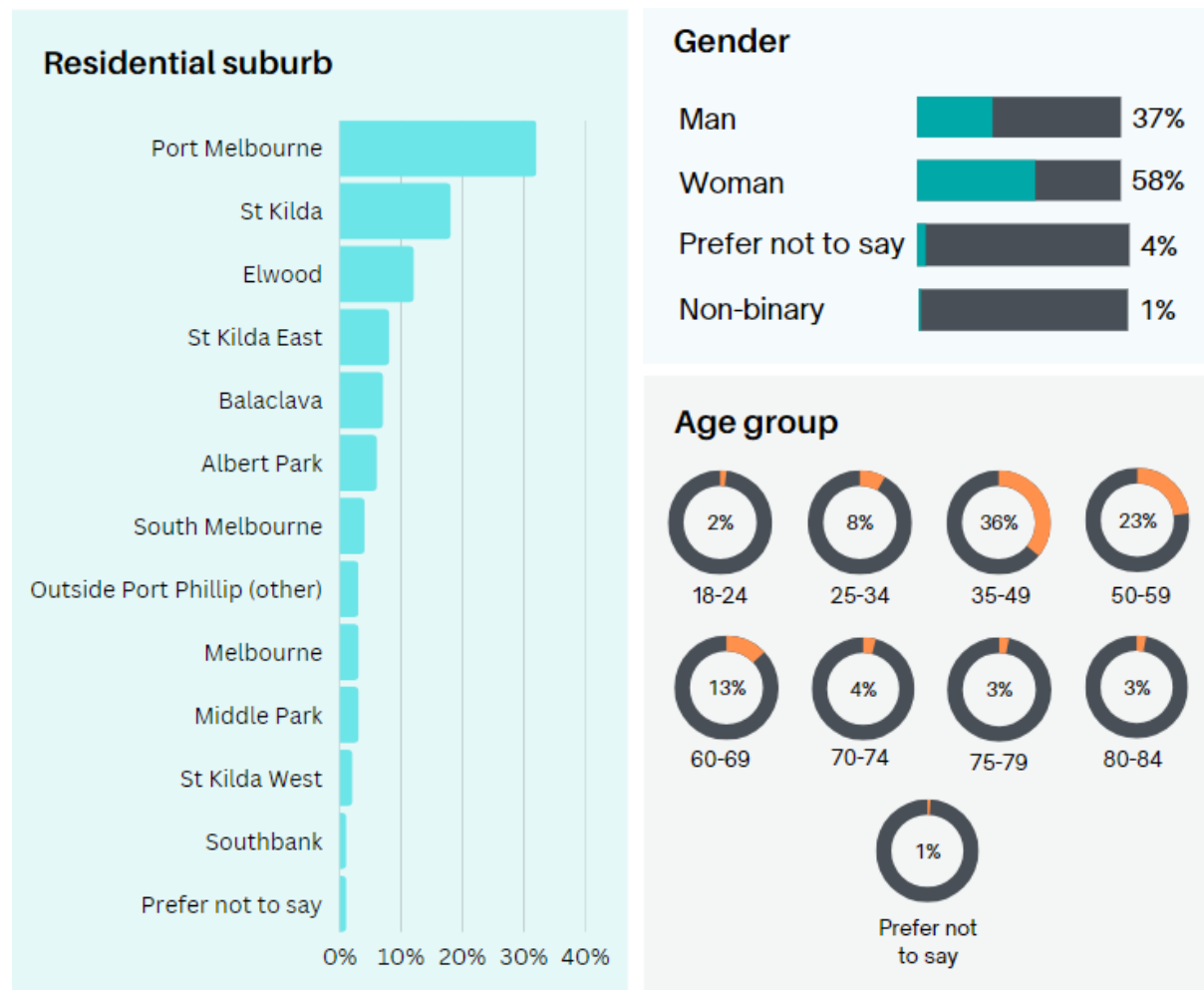
1:1 discussions

One-on-one meetings were offered to discuss the Housing Strategy with Council's planning team to interested community members and stakeholders.

1 meeting was held

Who we heard from

Reflecting the focus on younger people, renters and apartment dwellers, most participants were from Port Melbourne, St Kilda and Elwood. More than one-third of the participants were in the 35-49 age group, with more than half being women or female.



What we heard

Understanding current housing situation, priorities and aspirations



Housing status

- 75% of the survey respondents reported owning their own homes, with almost half (48%) having a mortgage, while 27% owned outright.
- Only 23% of the survey are renting, with most of these in private housing (22%).



Housing type

- Over half (55%) of the survey respondents live in a house, evenly split between separate and semi-detached dwellings.
- 44% of survey respondents live in apartments, with slightly more living in a one, two, or three-story block (24%) than in a block of four or more stories (20%).



Length of stay in current home

- Nearly half (49%) of survey respondents have lived in their current home for less than five years, while 38% have lived in their homes for more than a decade.
- As expected, homeowners stay in their homes longer than those who rent and live in apartments.



Future housing plans

- The majority of survey respondents (54%) expect to stay in their current home for the next 15 years, while 46% expect to move.
- A little less than a quarter (23%) of respondents expect to move away from the City of Port Phillip in the next 15 years, while others plan to upsize (16%) or downsize (7%) within the City.
- Renters and apartment dwellers show a greater interest in upsizing, while homeowners without a mortgage show a greater interest in downsizing within the City.



Reasons for the expected change in housing

- The primary reasons given for an expected change in housing are changes in living arrangements (needing more or less space) (31%) and financial reasons (29%).
- Renters report financial and family reasons as the likely primary reason for the expected change, while homeowners often cite changes in living arrangements.



Finding housing in Port Phillip

- The majority (58%) of survey respondents rated finding suitable housing in the City as difficult, with 37% rating it somewhat difficult and 21% as very difficult.



“For families looking to move into the area and have space for kids, it can be quite expensive”

“It is mostly apartment living, and the new ones are really small. It is also quite expensive. In saying that, there are some very nice places to live in Port Phillip.”

Feedback on key elements of the Discussion Paper



The vision

- The draft vision was supported by less than half (45%) of online survey respondents, of which 17% were very supportive.
- Of the remaining respondents, 21% were not supportive, with 9% not supportive at all. A significant proportion (34%) were neutral.
- The key suggestions for additions to the vision were a greater emphasis on affordable and social housing, a stronger reference to preserving neighbourhood character, promoting better-designed homes, and including environmental and sustainability outcomes.
- The main concerns of those who were neutral or not supportive were that it didn't adequately address affordable and social housing, needed more emphasis on neighbourhood character, was too generic and lacked tangible outcomes.
- When responses to the vision were examined by housing status, renters showed the highest levels of support for the draft vision. Apartment dwellers showed the least, and homeowners with and without mortgages presented more varied responses.



"At this stage, it is just words on paper. It will be better when it is closer and more of a reality."

"It is too general and doesn't deal with the actual sources of problems like the conflict between heritage and housing."



Most significant housing need

- In the online survey, housing design quality was identified as the most significant need, followed by preferred neighbourhood character, housing diversity and accessibility, and appropriate location of future housing.
- At the pop-ups, affordable housing choices was identified as the most significant need, followed by housing diversity and accessibility and housing design quality.
- Looking at different groups, homeowners emphasised the importance of location, preferred neighbourhood character, and housing design quality. Renters and apartment dwellers prioritised affordable housing choices and housing diversity and accessibility.



Draft strategic directions

- A little more than half (54%) of online survey respondents reported having a degree of confidence that the strategic directions outlined in the Discussion Paper; of these, 43% reported some confidence and 10% quite a bit of confidence.



"Paper does a good job of identifying issues but not practical solutions."

"I think the issues are bigger than Port Phillip, and there needs to be more of a coordinated effort between all levels of government."



Affordable housing

- Concerns around housing affordability emerged throughout the engagement process. The view that Port Phillip is a difficult place to find suitable housing was mainly due to issues relating to affordability for homeowners and renters.
- This was also true of the feedback provided through the workshops. Participants in the community workshop expressed concerns about the rising cost of housing and the need for more affordable options. Industry representatives highlighted the role of Council in facilitating affordable housing.
- The lack of majority support for the draft vision was mainly due to the desire for a greater emphasis on affordable and social housing. Concern about the struggle to afford housing despite the availability of rental units sends clear signals for the need for a more effective, holistic approach to affordable housing.

- Preserving the balance between affordability and neighbourhood character emerged as a recurring theme, with calls for more to be done to address both needs.
- Respondents largely called for an increase in affordable and social housing options when asked about their expectations of Council in meeting the community's housing needs. They also urged Council to explore innovative housing solutions, such as rezoning commercial areas for residential use.
- The City of Port Phillip is seen as having the potential to be a leader in providing community and affordable housing, building on its strong history in this area.



"Provide more community/social housing options"

"I have lived here for over 40 years and seen housing in Port Phillip become less and less affordable."



Location and supply

- Throughout the engagement, the desire for well-designed, accessible, and energy-efficient housing options in the right location was highlighted. This was closely linked to housing diversity to meet the needs of different people.
- The location of future housing is of significant interest, with the proximity to infrastructure and amenities seen as crucial factors.
- There were differing viewpoints around density and the change area criterion. While some respondents expressed a desire for higher density to meet housing demand, others highlighted concerns about the impact of high-rise developments on neighbourhood character.
- The role of infrastructure and open space is seen as important when planning new housing. Participants believe new developments should adequately consider existing infrastructure capacity and ensure the provision of open spaces.
- The importance of evidence-based decision-making in planning and communicating housing-related decisions was emphasised, especially in the industry workshop. This approach could help address community concerns about development.



"Accept not everyone can live in Port Phillip - continue to keep it a desirable place to live"

"Implement a plan for Fishermans Bend. There are a range of housing types, but developers are building apartments and not family housing"

Understanding values around neighbourhood character



Welcoming and safe

- The three features most important to respondents for feeling more welcoming and safer in their neighbourhood were spaces designed for a range of activities, streets that are easy to navigate for people of all ages and abilities, and a mix of housing types for different families and lifestyles.
- Less important features included slower traffic speeds, buildings designed to allow visibility of the street from inside, and less on-street car parking.
- Space designed for a range of activities was the most selected feature across all housing statuses, demonstrating a universal desire for multi-purpose spaces that encourage activity throughout the day.
- Streets that are easy to navigate for all was the second most popular feature overall, with higher support among homeowners (both with and without mortgages) and those living in a house.
- Respondents' third most important feature was a mix of housing types, receiving slightly more support from homeowners without mortgages and renters.



Environmentally friendly and enjoyable to live in

- The feature most important to respondents for making their neighbourhood more environmentally friendly and enjoyable is the presence of plants on streets and nature strips for plants, animals, and water conservation.
- The second most preferred feature is more trees along the streets for shade, indicating the value of natural elements in improving the quality of the neighbourhood environment.
- Homeowners (both with and without mortgages) and people living in houses showed a strong preference for sunlight access to private outdoor spaces and more trees along the streets for shade.
- Renters and apartment dwellers prioritised features such as nature strips, plants on streets, and a better bicycle network, highlighting a potential link between housing type and environmental priorities.

Future of housing

- Environmental sustainability and parking provision were highlighted in the discussion about the future of housing at the community workshop.
- Participants in the industry workshop identified roadblocks to housing, including capacity constraints in the building industry (availability of labour and materials), the tension between addressing community concerns about development and meeting housing demands, issues with approval processes, and the availability of affordable land for development.
- The growing built-to-rent market and the need for incentives to encourage units to return to long-term rentals were also discussed.

Expectations of Council

- When asked what the one thing Council could do to meet the community's housing needs, a significant portion of respondents called for an increase in affordable and social housing options.
- The second most common theme in the responses was to explore innovative housing solutions. This includes rezoning commercial areas for residential use, lifting heritage protections to allow subdivision, and converting old office buildings into housing.
- Some respondents expressed a desire to preserve the neighbourhood's character and limit high-rise development, indicating concerns about urban densification's impact on the area's aesthetic and cultural qualities.



“Incentivise good developers to include more social housing and energy efficiency in their developments”

“An increase in the supply of quality infill / medium density housing. This can be done as build to sell or build to rent - quality and sustainability is important and ensures that adaptive, diverse housing options are priced”