

Bell Street Mall Masterplan and Design Guide

Community Consultation Findings on Masterplan

September 2025

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Bell Street Mall Masterplan and Design Guide, funded through the Federal Government's Housing Support Program, sets out a clear and forward-looking vision for the future of Bell Street Mall. The project aims to unlock housing potential while creating a vibrant, mixed-use local centre that reflects the Mall's unique multicultural identity and its role within the Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct.

Community Engagement – Stage One

In March and April 2025, Council undertook the first round of community and stakeholder engagement, receiving more than 300 contributions. Feedback was carefully recorded and analysed. The findings highlighted strong community support for:

- More green and open spaces
- Kid-friendly and family-friendly amenities
- Improved safety and accessibility across the Mall
- Adequate, affordable, and accessible parking
- A vibrant mix of shops and services
- Integration of retail and residential spaces
- Affordable housing for local residents
- Protection of the Mall's character and heritage

From the three early concept options presented, Option 2, which included a new public open space on Oriel Road, was the preferred choice. This feedback informed the consultants' preparation of an optimised draft masterplan.

Draft Masterplan and Design Guide

The draft masterplan, endorsed by Council in August 2025 for further consultation, is structured around five chapters:

1. **Introduction** – Purpose of the project and context of the site
2. **Process** – Key steps, issues and opportunities, and summary of first stage of engagement findings
3. **Masterplan Vision** – Structured around four themes:
 - **Vibrant Mall:** Land use changes to support revitalization
 - **Connected Mall:** Access, parking, and movement networks
 - **Inclusive Mall:** Public realm and open space improvements to create a safe, welcoming place
 - **Transformative Mall:** Built form guidance for future development
4. **Implementation** – Staging and strategies for development, housing delivery, and public realm works
5. **Design Guide** – Technical guidance on land use, site planning, built form, public realm, and landscaping

Community Engagement – Stage Two

The second round of engagement on the draft masterplan took place between 6 August and 3 September 2025, including:

- **An online survey** focused on the four key Masterplan themes.
- **Two public Information and Q&A sessions** with Council officers and consultants, covering the project scope, vision, and open discussion. These included dedicated sessions with traders, business property owners, not-for-profit organisations, and the broader community.
- **Direct submissions** from residents, traders, and stakeholders via email or by phone.

Key feedback from Stage Two included:

- **Public Spaces:** Strong support for new parks, pedestrian links, and flexible gathering areas.
- **Land Use:** Desire for active ground-floor uses, including community hubs and retail, to enliven the Mall.
- **Housing:** Support for affordable and key-worker housing, provided safety and infrastructure are addressed.
- **Community Identity:** Suggestions for stronger gateways and improved wayfinding.
- **Transport:** Requests for better bus services, accessible stops, and stronger pedestrian and cycling connections.
- **Safety:** Calls for improved lighting, security, and passive surveillance.
- **Building Heights:** Some concern about taller buildings; lower-scale heights generally accepted.
- **Parking:** Concerns about adequacy, safety, and signage; suggestions included better wayfinding and potential basement parking under Oriel Square.
- **Construction:** Concerns about disruption to services and amenity during redevelopment.

Next Steps

Community feedback from the second engagement phase is being used to refine the Draft Masterplan. The revised version will be delivered for internal review by late October 2025, presented to Councillors in early December 2025, and considered for formal adoption. This iterative process ensures that the final plan reflects the aspirations and needs of the community, paving the way for a revitalised Bell Street Mall that serves as a vibrant hub for all.

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Project Overview

Banyule is preparing a new Masterplan and Design Guide for the Bell Street Mall Neighbourhood Activity Centre (NAC) aimed at enhancing the mall through the integration of well-designed and diverse housing and open community spaces tailored to the local community's needs. This initiative will explore opportunities for both the mall and its surrounding area, establishing a strategic vision, key directions, and a phased funding approach to optimise land use, urban design, public realm, pedestrian and public transport connections, and community infrastructure.

Engagement Objectives

In the second round of community and key stakeholders' consultation the main aim was:

Objective 1	Share and test the draft masterplan with the community and stakeholders Present the optimised draft masterplan and design guide, explain the vision, key themes, and proposed actions, and ensure everyone has a clear understanding of how earlier feedback shaped the draft.
Objective 2	Gather feedback to refine and finalise the masterplan Encourage the community, traders, businesses, and organisations to provide their views on the proposed strategies—particularly around parking, safety, housing, open space, and connectivity—so that the final version reflects community needs and aspirations.
Objective 3	Build confidence and support for the project's future direction Address questions and concerns, provide additional information on key issues (such as staging, accessibility, safety, and services), and strengthen trust and collaboration to ensure broad support for the final masterplan before adoption.

Stages of Engagement

Stage One (March/April) involved community engagement through online surveys, pop-up sessions, and drop-in sessions to explore three potential future outcomes for the Bell Street Mall.

Based on the feedback received in Phase One, a draft Masterplan and Design Guide was developed.

Stage Two (August–September) focused on gathering community feedback on the Draft Masterplan and Design Guide. The main focus was on four key themes: Vibrant Mall; Revitalising the Mall through shops, community spaces, and events; Connected Mall, seeking feedback on improvements to access and movement; Inclusive Mall, creating a safe, green, and welcoming place for everyone; and Transformative Mall, planning for long-term growth with new housing, services, and thoughtful design. The Draft Masterplan will be reviewed based on the consultation feedback and then submitted for Councillor adoption.



Summary of Findings

Based on the insights gathered from the Second community engagement process, the project team has identified the following key focus areas that require being considered in the final masterplan and design guide:

Stage 2

1. Vibrant Mall – Revitalisation Through Shops, Community Spaces, and Events

- **Support:** Approximately 57% of respondents supported proposed land use changes, including upgraded buildings, new housing, and community services.
- **Exciting Features:**
 - Oriel Square (central green space) – 64%
 - Library, community hub, and plaza – 57%
 - Culture Precinct with outdoor dining and multicultural events – 55%
- **Community Priorities:**
 - Cafes, restaurants, and night-time activity
 - Family-friendly events, markets, and cultural festivals
 - Public art, galleries, and heritage markers
 - Open spaces, greenery, and interactive areas for all ages
 - Essential services and support for independent traders
- **Concerns:** Potential gentrification, affordability of retail spaces, and accessibility

2. Connected Mall – Access, Parking, and Movement

- **Perceptions:** About 60% felt walking, cycling, and parking upgrades would improve access.
- **Key Themes:**
 - Parking: Adequacy, safety, signage, and accessibility; concerns about multi-level car park design
 - Safety & Lighting: Need for well-lit streets, passive surveillance, and secure laneways
 - Traffic & Vehicle Access: Improved traffic flow, safer crossings, and clear wayfinding
 - Active Transport & Public Transport: Safer bike lanes, better pedestrian links, improved bus services, and potential shuttle links
- **Concerns:** Traffic congestion, integration of new residential developments, and navigation challenges

3. Inclusive Mall – Safe, Green, and Welcoming Public Spaces

- **Support:** 51% of respondents felt the new public spaces would be safe and welcoming; 35% felt improvements were needed.
- **Community Priorities:**
 - Safety and perceived security: lighting, CCTV, patrolling, open sightlines
 - Green spaces: parks, shaded seating, playgrounds, and community gardens
 - Inclusivity: accessible facilities, unisex toilets, multi-faith prayer rooms, and cultural expression
 - Social spaces: cafés, flexible community areas, and pop-up events
 - Housing considerations: human-scale, low-density, affordable, and sustainable
 - Accessibility: ramps, wide pathways, family- and sensory-friendly spaces
 - Vibrancy & Services: night-time activations, local markets, and events
 - Maintenance & Amenities: clean, safe, and functional public facilities
- **Concerns:** Safety in darker areas and multi-level car parks, overshadowing from taller buildings, accessibility challenges, ongoing maintenance, and ensuring inclusivity for all ages and cultural groups.

4. Transformative Mall – Built Form and Long-Term Growth

- **Support:** 67% of respondents were supportive of proposed housing, community services, and building upgrades.
- **Priorities in Planning New Homes & Services:**
 - Protection of sunlight, views, and green space – 65%
 - High-quality sustainable buildings – 57%
 - Community hubs and services – 53%
 - Affordable housing – 33%
 - Housing for local workers – 37%
 - Retaining local character – 29%
- **Excitement Points:** Safer streets and better lighting (74%), Oriel Square (64%), community hub and library (57%), and multicultural events (55%)
- **Concerns:** Building heights, overshadowing, traffic, and integration of residential and commercial elements

Engagement Methods

The engagement process was delivered through a combination of online, written, face-to-face, and digital channels to reach a broad cross-section of the community and stakeholders. An **online survey** was available on the Shaping Banyule website from 6 August to 3 September. To raise awareness and encourage participation, **3,450 letters were distributed to households in Heidelberg West and Bellfield**, while **60 invitation letters were mailed to landowners**.

Council officers also **hand-delivered invitation postcards to businesses within the Mall** and **sent postcards via email to non-profit organisations and key stakeholders** including Melbourne Polytechnic, Homes Victoria, and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). The engagement was further promoted through **social media channels** (Instagram and Facebook) and the August edition of the Banner.

Two 90-minute information and Q&A sessions were held with the project team, Councillors, and Council officers. Each session included 30 minutes of project presentation followed by 60 minutes of open Q&A.

- **Key stakeholders** (traders, not-for-profit organisations, etc.) – *Friday 15 August, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm*
- **Community session** – *Wednesday 27 August, 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm*



52 responses to the survey



15 attendees at the Information and Q&A session with landowners, traders' association, and non-profit organisations in the catchment area



27 attendees at the Information and Q&A session with the wider community



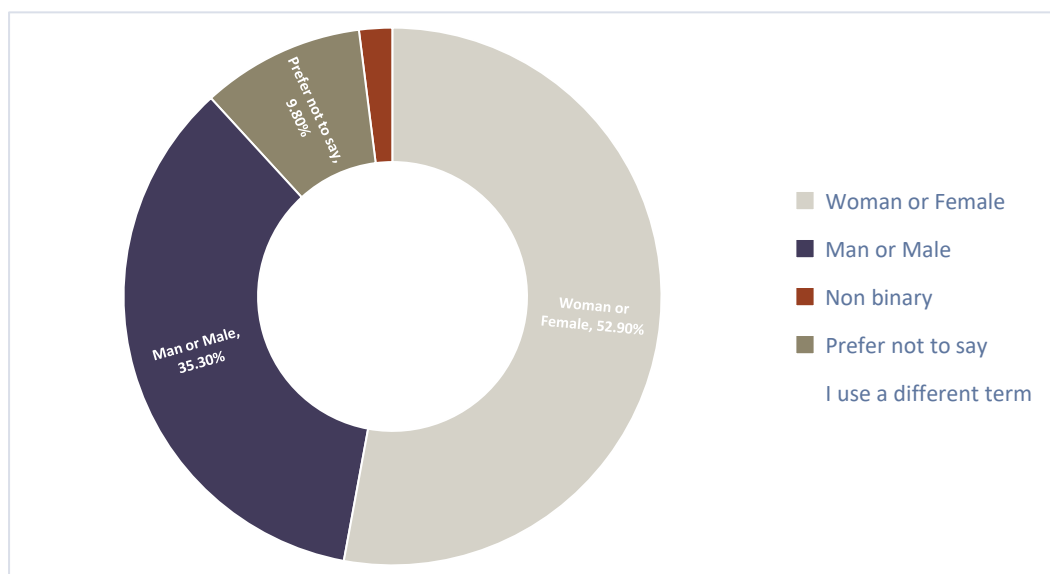
5 submissions (via email and telephone)

Who we heard from

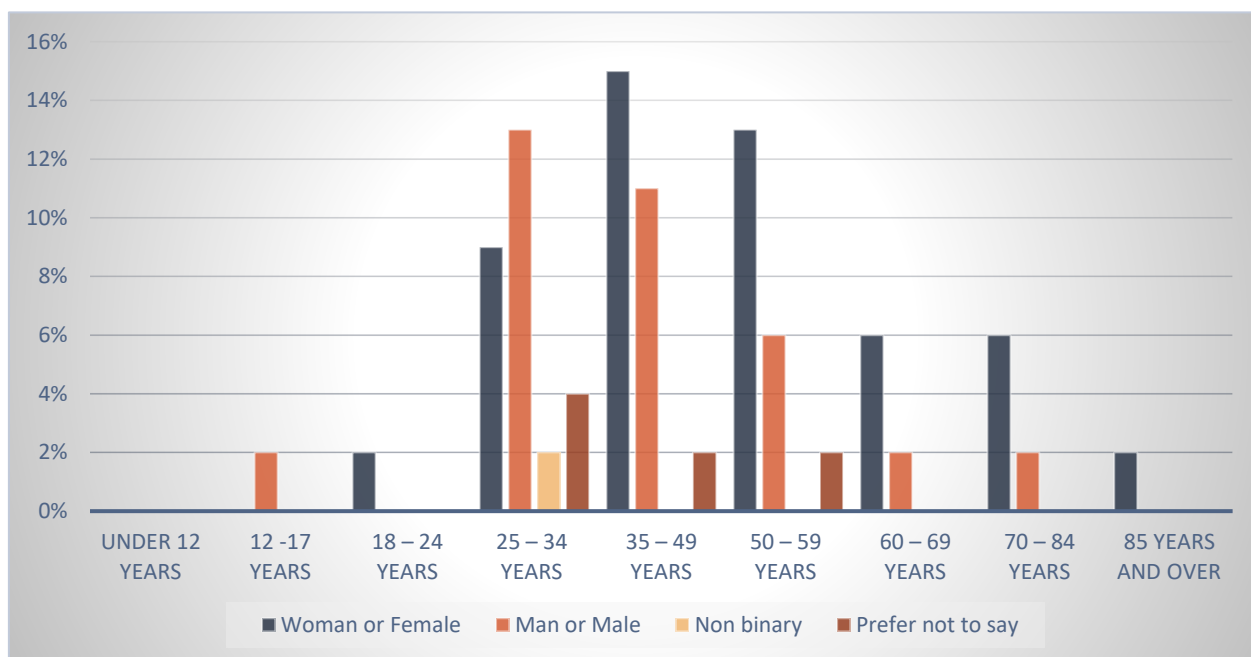
■ Survey Demographics

During the second round of consultation (6 August – 3 September 2025), Council received **52 responses to the survey**. This level of participation demonstrates strong community interest and commitment to the future of the Mall. The results presented below combine the demographic information collected through the online survey engagement.

+ Gender

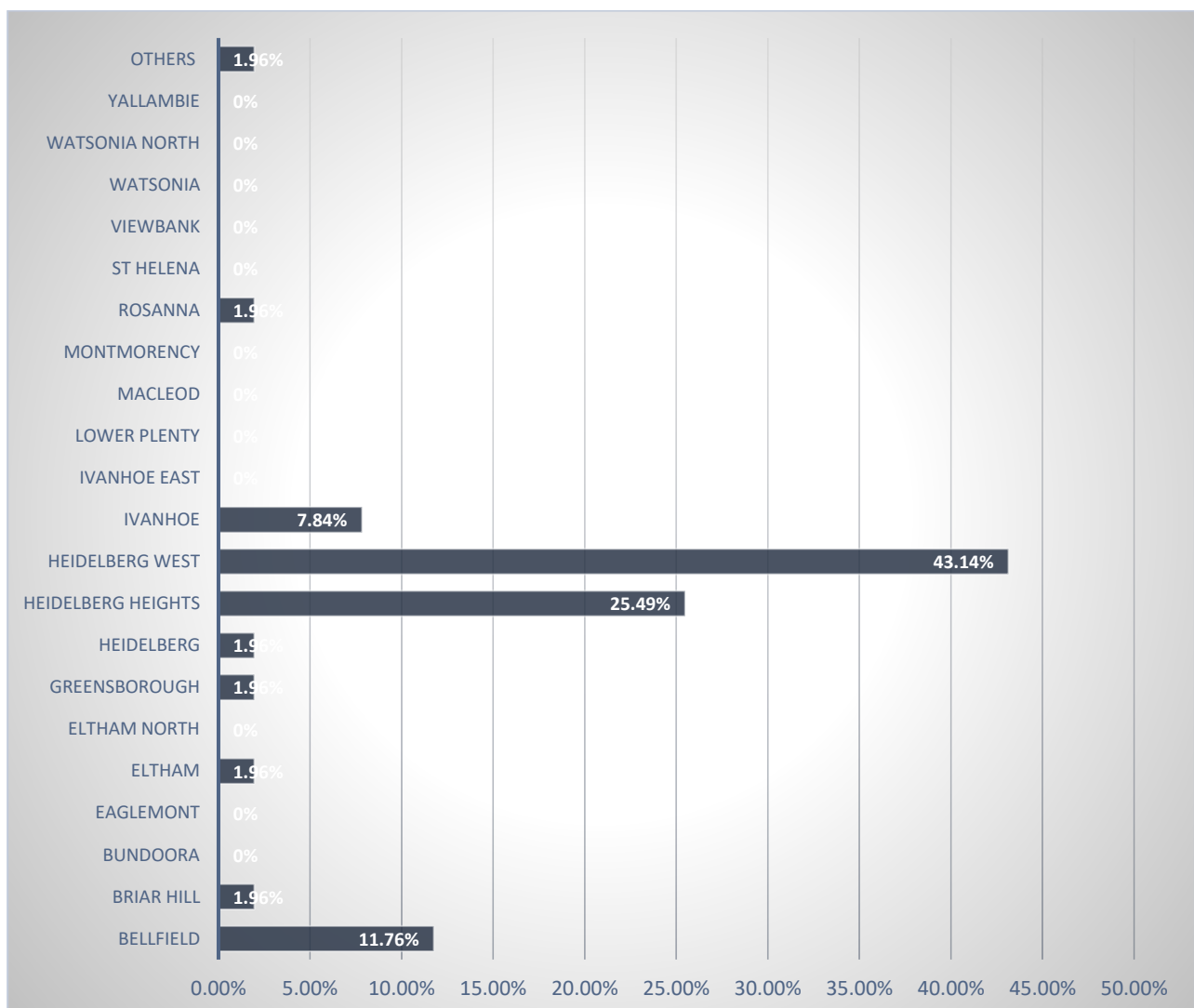
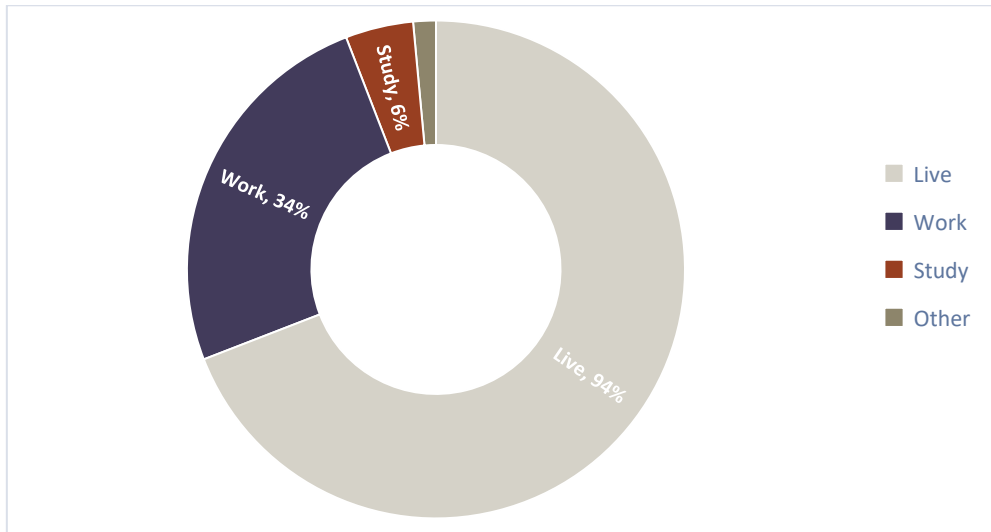


+ Age groups

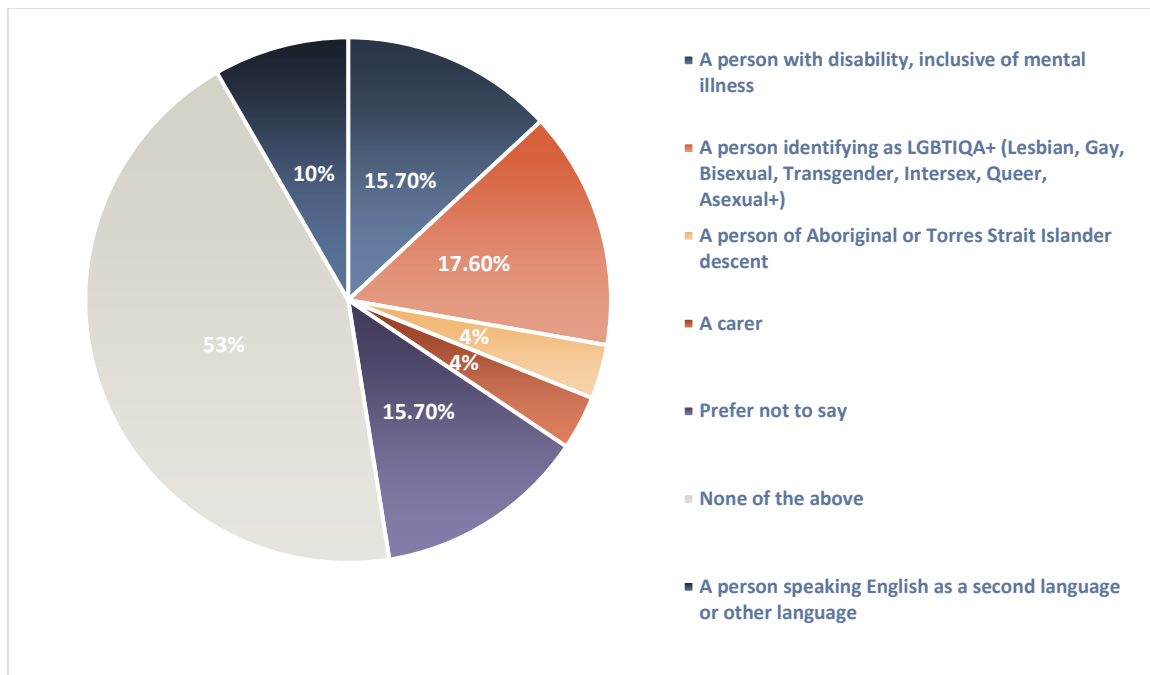


Relationship to Banyule

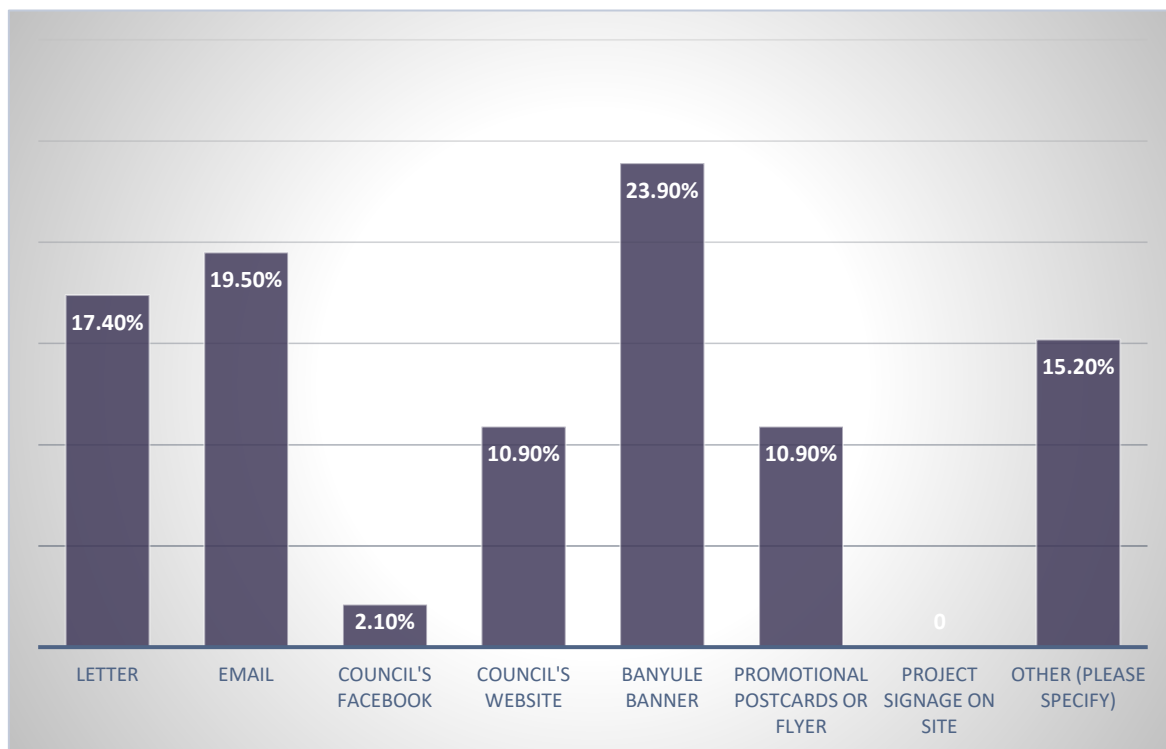
Most participants live locally, with most from Heidelberg West (43.1%), Heidelberg Heights (25.5%), and Bellfield (11.8%).



Access and Equity



Source of Notification



Detailed Findings

❖ Online Surveys

The online survey on the Shaping Banyule website focused on the draft Masterplan, with questions organised around the four main themes of the Masterplan:

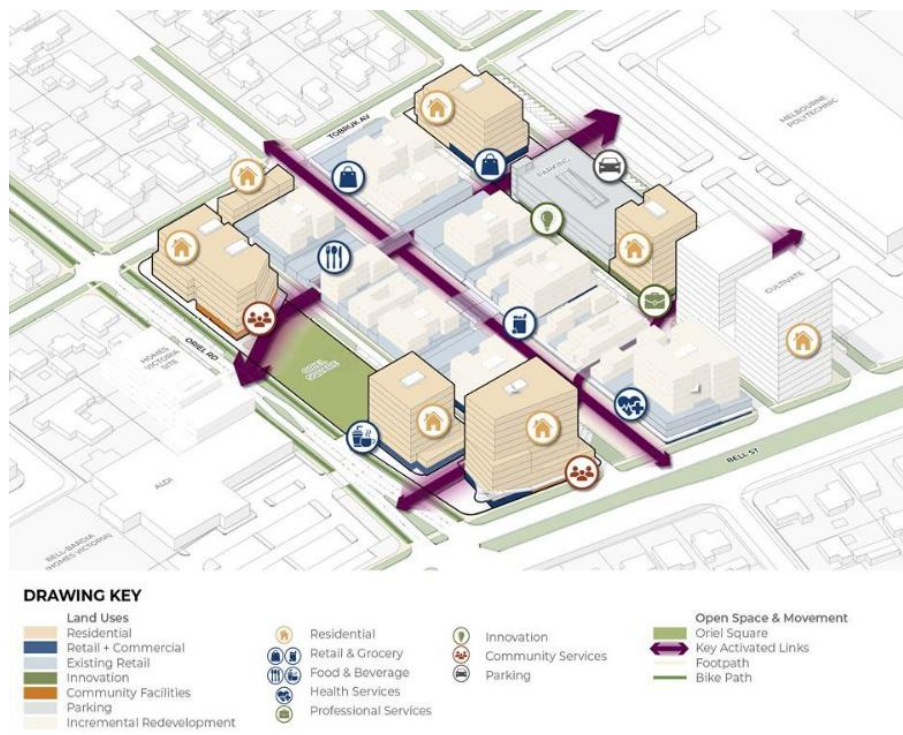
- **Vibrant Mall:** Land use changes to support revitalisation.
- **Connected Mall:** Access, parking, and movement networks.
- **Inclusive Mall:** Public realm and open space improvements to create a safe, welcoming environment.
- **Transformative Mall:** Built form guidance for future development.

The survey also considered the Masterplan from a holistic perspective in relation to these themes.

This section provides an analysis of the open-ended responses for each theme and the overall Masterplan. We received **51 responses through the Shaping Banyule website** and **1 response via the hardcopy survey**.

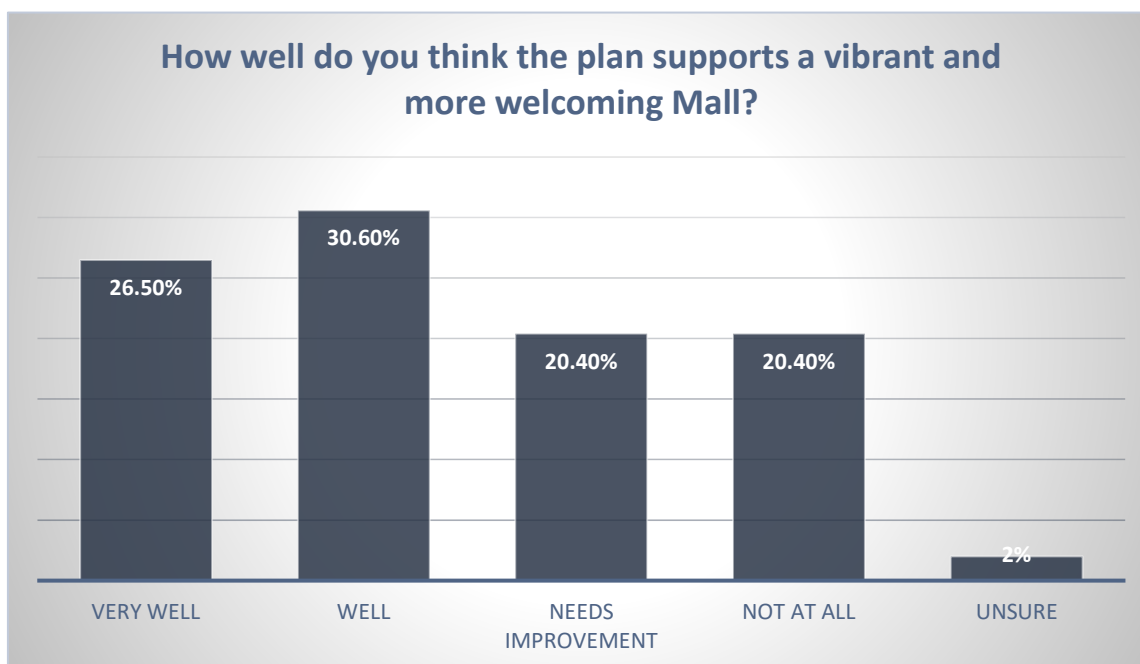
Vibrant Mall

Revitalising the Mall through shops, community spaces and event.



The draft Masterplan proposes to create a vibrant and more welcoming Mall by introducing a mix of shops, public spaces, and community activities. It features three distinct precincts—culture, community and health, and innovation village—each designed to offer unique experiences and services. A new public space, Oriol Square, is proposed as a central hub for events, relaxation, and gathering, surrounded by outdoor dining, local markets, and improved streetscapes.

➤ How well do you think the plan supports a vibrant and more welcoming Mall?



The majority of participants **(57%) felt the plan effectively supports a vibrant and welcoming mall**, rating it as 'Very well' or 'Well'. Around **20% felt it 'Needs improvement'**, another **20% felt the plan does not fully support a vibrant and welcoming mall**, and a small group (2%) were unsure.

➤ What types of shops, services or events would you like to see more of at the Mall?

Community members provided a wide range of suggestions, reflecting a strong desire to see the Mall revitalised as a safe, vibrant, and inclusive community hub. While individual preferences varied, several clear themes emerged around food and retail diversity, community and cultural activities, public realm improvements, and essential services. The key themes identified are:

1. Cafes, Dining, and Night-time Economy

- Most frequently mentioned request: more cafes, restaurants, and casual dining options.
- Suggestions included family-friendly cafes, multicultural food outlets, night markets, and pop-up food stalls with outdoor seating.
- Many respondents wanted the Mall to have a stronger night-time presence, creating a destination for both locals and visitors.

2. Markets and Community Events

- Night markets, multicultural festivals, and pop-up events were repeatedly suggested.
- Residents wanted family-friendly activities, arts and cultural events, and regular community activations to draw people in and make the Mall feel lively at all hours.

3. Essential Shops and Services

- Calls for practical, everyday services included:
 - Supermarkets (Coles/Woolworths, revitalised IGA, green grocers, bakeries, butchers, hardware, medical centre).
 - Banks, post office, and other essential services, to reduce reliance on travelling to Northland.
- Many stressed the need to support small, independent traders over chain stores.

4. Arts, Culture, and Heritage

- Strong support for galleries, murals, and public art that celebrate the community's diversity and local identity.

- Suggestions included a history walk, heritage markers (including First Nations history), and murals by local artists and schools.

5. Open Space, Greenery, and Safety

- Many respondents emphasised the need for green spaces, trees, seating areas, and open gathering places.
- These were strongly linked to perceptions of safety, vibrancy, and wellbeing.
- Specific ideas included spaces for outdoor yoga, bird-friendly landscaping, shaded seating, and playgrounds.

6. Community Services and Facilities

- A library (ideally a larger one than currently planned) was one of the most consistent requests, along with interest in toy and tool libraries.
- Spaces for co-working, workshops, and community gardens were also suggested.
- Some highlighted the importance of inclusive facilities such as a multi-faith prayer room, unisex toilets, and accessibility improvements for older residents and people with disabilities.

7. Sustainability and Innovation

- Several respondents emphasised sustainable design: solar panels, electric vehicle charging, water fountains, and environmentally responsible retail.
- There was also interest in spaces for innovation and entrepreneurship, such as short-term rental studios and small business incubators.

Other Concerns Raised

- Some respondents expressed concerns about high-rise development, affordability of retail spaces, and the risk of gentrification, fearing that locals could be priced out.
- Accessibility was raised as a major issue, with requests for better signage, safe parking, and improved transport connections.

➤ Sample Community Quotes – Vibrant Mall

"We need more green spaces, spaces to sit, chill out. More open spaces so it's not so dark and dangerous. Nice bars, cafes and social spaces like bike shop etc!"

"Ensure the shops that are there are actually open. More op shops, bakery, hardware, butcher, post office, banks services so we don't need to go to northland. Library pop up. LGBTI+ events, inter-generational events"

"We would love to see the Mall continue to grow as a vibrant and inclusive community hub. In particular, we'd like to see more multicultural food options, family-friendly events, night markets, and pop-up shops that reflect the diversity of the local community. These additions would help celebrate the Mall's rich cultural heritage and bring people together in meaningful ways. Most importantly, we support retaining and celebrating the existing features and structure of the Mall, its history, and its diverse community. Any future developments should build on the Mall's unique identity and foster a sense of belonging for all."

"As a woman, I currently only use this mall to pick up from Australia Post, it's often deserted when I visit, and I just don't feel safe here. I'm so glad that you're redeveloping this space and I'd love to see this place used more for community activities to draw people in and keep them here, night markets, more cafes and a library would be amazing!"

"Coles! cafes, restaurants, markets, you should take some inspo from the Brunswick east village."

"A greengrocer, an organic store, a revitalised IGA supermarket, independent clothing retailers, shoe and watch repairer, Cafes, Market events. "

"Night opening services particularly ones that brings different uses to this area (eg: Student Library for adults). "

*"Support retention of small shops throughout mall, focus on fine grain and activated spaces
Support 20% affordable or key worker housing, this is great."*

"Cafes, galleries, arts and crafts, night markets."

"I think the ideas looks good here and would definitely make me want to go to the mall (which I don't currently go to much) due to safety and derelict buildings. My question is more around the incremental development in the main mall area are only some of the shops getting rebuilt? It shows a fair few staying the same."

"Markets! Night markets, food stalls and multicultural food events! Moonlight cinema spot would also be fantastic. I love all the op shops in the mall -perhaps we could have bi-monthly clothes swap or vintage clothes market days

Could we somehow incorporate an area for some outdoor yoga or mum and bub events-perhaps by having an area that's soft (like recycled outdoor cork flooring or rubber) as opposed to pavement? I'd love for the Mall to have lots of murals painted by local artists- and perhaps even one painted by kids at the local primary schools! A little "history walk" would also be great- perhaps just a wall with framed photos and newspaper clippings forms the history of Heidelberg west.

I really like the idea of a multi-faith prayer room to make everyone feel included as well as unisex toilets. Would be awesome if the innovation area had a little workshop space available for short term rent and workshops -like woodworking holiday programs for kids and teaching people DIY home maintenance. I also think a little short term rent photo studio would be very popular.

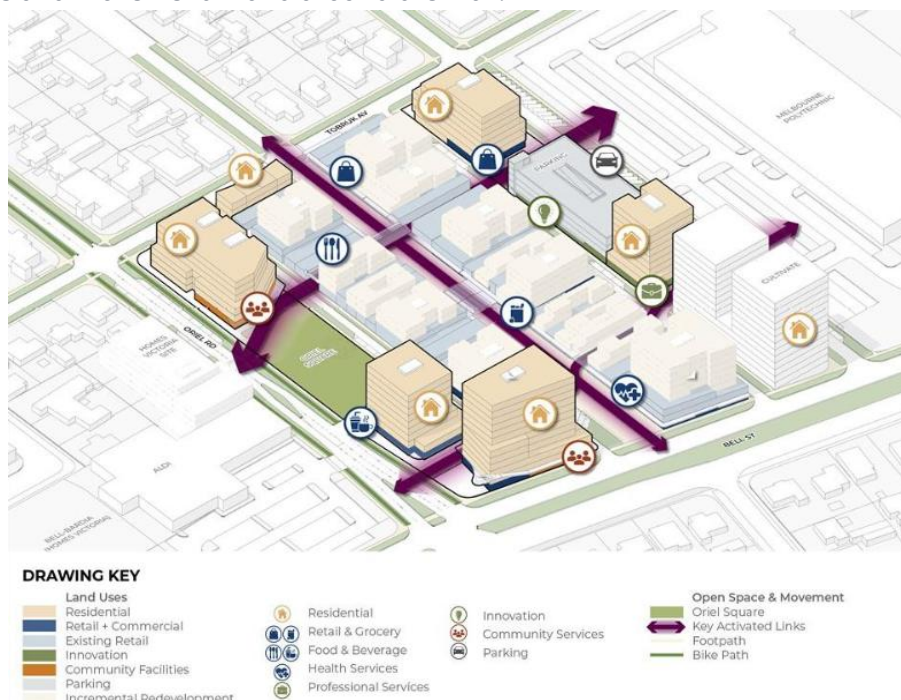
I also think it would be great to have a nice park with native plants and a bird bath or fountain to attract birds to the area and help them out on hot days -maybe with some seating nearby so people can watch the birds. Drinking taps are a must to combat plastic pollution and I really, REALLY believe a library should be incorporated in the design-ideally a large one (not a small one as in the current plan). So many people in Heidelberg west would benefit from all a library brings. I also think a toy library and a tool library would be fantastic

It would also be great if the whole area had free Wi-Fi and tables and chairs so people could do work/homework outdoors.....

Lots of murals would be great and it would be awesome if we could have a statue acknowledging a famous/or impactful/historical indigenous person from the area as well as an acknowledgement of country.....

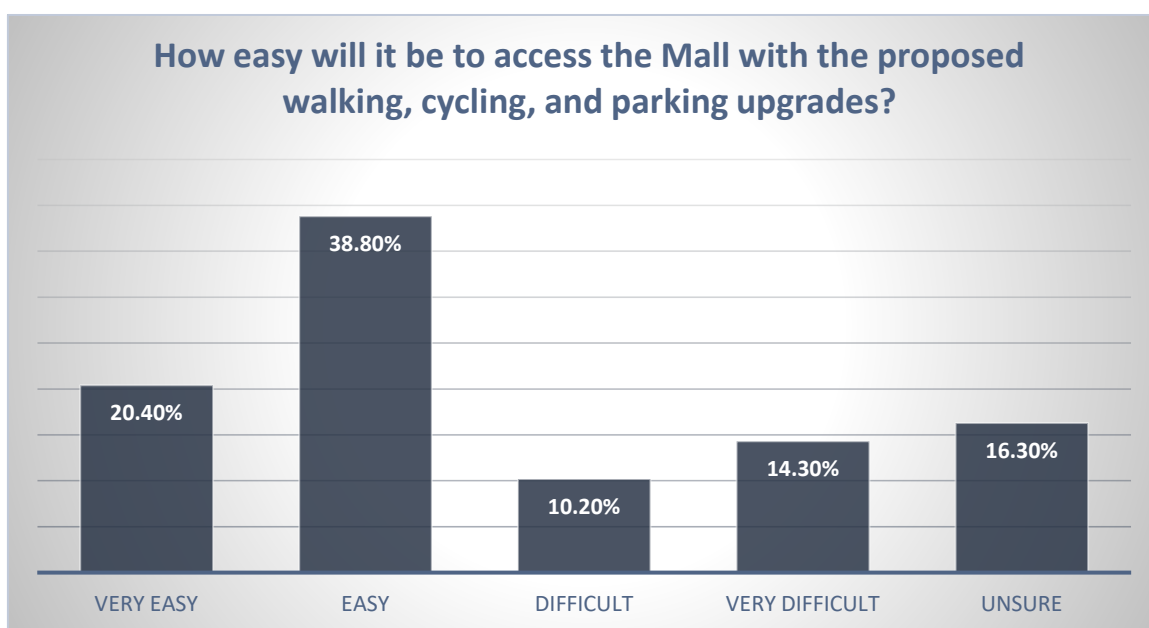
The car park should have an electric vehicle charging station and all buildings should be equipped with solar panels. Setbacks from all roads (but particularly Bell St and Oriel Road) not just Tobruk Avenue corner, should be incorporated to allow for trees and improve the appearance of the area and quality of life for residents"

Improving access and movement in and around the Mall.



The Draft Masterplan proposes a range of improvements to make the area safer, more accessible, and better connected. It includes enhanced walking and cycling links, safer pedestrian crossings, and stronger connections to surrounding streets. Oriel Road is set to be redesigned with new crossings, dedicated bike lanes, additional tree planting, and upgraded parking. The plan also introduces new east-west pedestrian links across the Mall, a consolidated four-storey multi-deck car park, improved access to open-air parking areas adjacent to the community and health precinct, and safer laneways supported by improved traffic flow.

➤ How easy will it be to access the Mall with the proposed walking, cycling, and parking upgrades?



Together, around **60% of respondents** felt access would be “easy” or “very easy”, while about **24.5% felt it would be difficult or very difficult**.

➤ What improvements would make it easier for you to visit the Mall?

Community responses to this question reveal a wide range of ideas, but several **common themes** clearly emerged:

1. Lighting and Safety

- Many participants emphasised the need for **better lighting** throughout the Mall and surrounding streets to improve perceptions of safety, particularly at night.
- Concerns about **anti-social behaviour, loitering, and unsafe enclosed spaces** were common. People wanted designs that avoid “blocked in” areas and reduce opportunities for crime.
- Suggestions included: motion-activated lighting, open-sightline design, CCTV, security patrols, and application of **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** principles.

2. Parking Access and Design

- Parking was one of the most frequently raised issues.
- Community members supported **accessible, short-term, open-air parking** close to key services (e.g. post office, shops).
- Many expressed concerns about the **proposed multi-level car park**, citing risks of theft, anti-social behaviour, poor visibility, and unsafe design.
- Calls were made for **pram- and disability-friendly parking** and maintaining free or low-cost parking to ensure the Mall remains accessible.

3. Traffic, Crossings, and Vehicle Access

- Several people raised issues about **traffic congestion**, especially with new residential development.
- Specific concerns included turning lanes on Oriel Road, potential bottlenecks, and ease of access to and from Bell Street.
- Safer pedestrian crossings and better traffic management were requested to improve safety for both drivers and walkers.
- Clear **signage and wayfinding** were also recommended to help visitors navigate the precinct.

4. Active and Public Transport Connections

- Many responses supported **better walking and cycling infrastructure**, with a focus on safe, separated bike lanes on Oriel Road and Bell Street, and links to the Darebin bike path.
- Some worried that proposed bike lanes do not properly connect, limiting their usefulness.
- **Bus stops and public transport access** were highlighted: requests for better designed, well-lit, accessible shelters, and improved bus frequency and interchange connections.
- Ideas such as a **local shuttle** to train stations were also raised.

5. Concerns About Residential Development

- Multiple participants opposed **high-rise residential towers**, viewing them as out of character with the low-density neighbourhood.
- Fears that new developments would lead to congestion, overshadow public spaces, and create unsafe environments were common.
- Some suggested capping building heights or rethinking multi-level parking and residential mix.

6. Other Suggestions

- Calls for more **greenery, trees, and shade** to encourage walking.
- Better integration of **Oriel Square with shops** to reduce barriers.
- Provision of **bike parking/storage** and **EV charging stations**.
- Support for maintaining the **Mall's character**, including its iconic sign and heritage buildings, while revitalising shopfronts.
- A minority view suggested leaving the Mall largely as it is, with minimal changes.

➤ Sample Community Quotes – Connected Mall

"Better Bike Lanes on Orel and Bell Street to better connect the community. And a higher quality Bus Stops which should include level boarding."

"We strongly support active transport options for walking and cycling, including clear and safe shared paths with vehicles. These paths should be well-marked and designed to ensure safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike. We also strongly support upgrades to Oriel Road, which will improve accessibility and safety for all visitors."

We also support clear connections from one side of the Mall to the other, making it easier for people to move through the space without barriers. Clear signage is essential to indicate when you've arrived at the Mall and to help visitors navigate the area confidently."

In addition, we support having enough car parking to cater for existing and future uses, including overflow from new developments, even though those developments should ideally provide on-site parking. Adequate parking is crucial to ensure accessibility for all, especially families, older residents, and those with mobility challenges."

"The proposed separate bike lane on Oriel Street looks good, however does not really go anywhere due to the dog leg onto Bell Street and Push bikes and Bell street really do not mix. A safe separate bike path connecting to the Darebin bike path would be a real upgrade to infrastructure. Particularly taking in the Bell Bardia and Tarakan St development. I also think more of a priority on a PTV solution, possibly a shuttle to Train stations or greater 250, 350, 513 and 514 schedule."

- *Incorporate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles, including open sightlines, good lighting, and visibility throughout all levels of the parking structure.*
 - *Install security cameras and ensure they are actively monitored.*
 - *Provide emergency call stations at regular intervals.*
 - *Design clear pedestrian pathways that are separated from vehicle traffic and well-lit.*
 - *Include signage and wayfinding to help users navigate safely and confidently.*
 - *Ensure regular security patrols, especially during peak hours and evenings.*
-

"I'd like to see well lit, undercover bus stops and lots of bike parking-maybe even a bike storage cage. I often worry about my bike being stolen if I ride there. I'm concerned about the lack of a cycle lane along Bell st (though I realise this may be too big a problem to solve). Currently walking along Bell St can be quite unpleasant in spots without enough shade trees so perhaps more trees will need to be planted to encourage people to walk to the mall. I think several electric car charging stations should be incorporated into the car park."

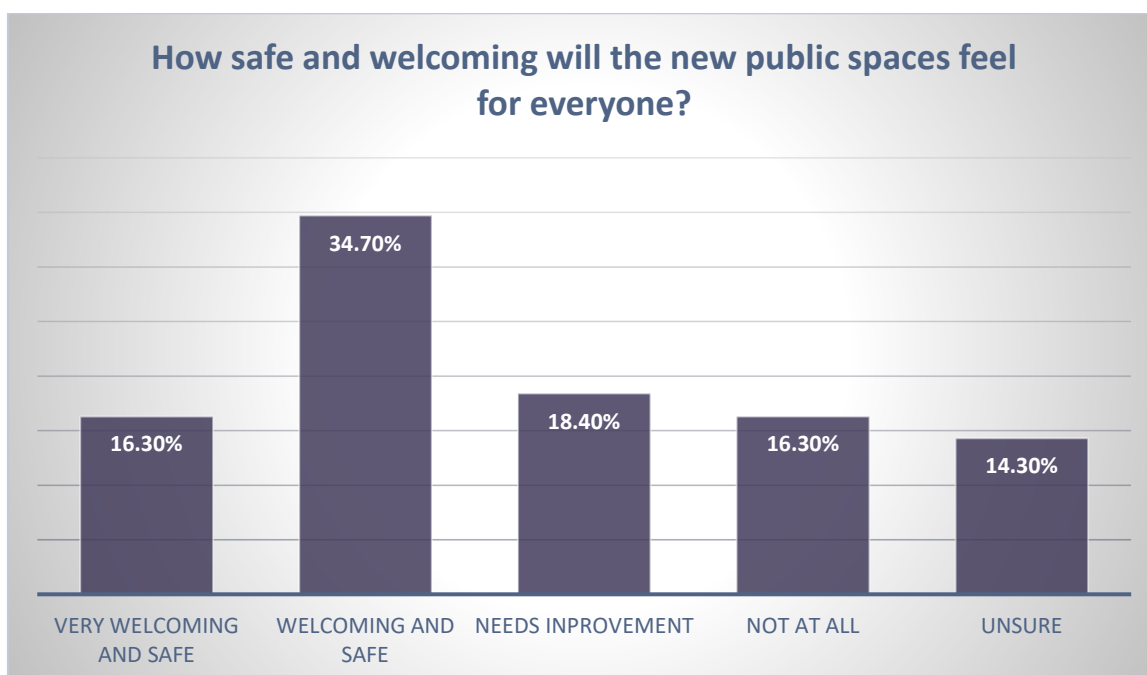
"I believe some key improvements could significantly enhance the precinct. First, I'd like to suggest exploring how to better integrate Oriel Square with the surrounding shops by reviewing the vehicular and loading movements that currently act as a barrier. Secondly, it will be crucial to implement effective strategies for managing the increased traffic from the new multi-level developments to prevent precinct-wide congestion. Finally, while the pedestrian setbacks are a great start, we should consider designing these spaces to actively encourage people to linger and interact, truly transforming them into vibrant community gathering spots rather than just thoroughfares."

Creating a safe, green, and welcoming place for everyone.



The draft Masterplan proposes new housing, upgraded buildings, and expanded community services to create a vibrant neighbourhood hub, while protecting the Mall's unique character. It includes high-density well design homes, with a focus on affordable and key worker housing, as well as two new community hubs offering services like a library, childcare, and health and wellbeing support. Mixed-use buildings will help preserve the Mall's identity, alongside protections for important views, sunlight access, and green spaces.

➤ How safe and welcoming will the new public spaces feel for everyone?



Over **half of respondents (51%)** felt the new public spaces will be welcoming and safe, with others highlighting opportunities for improvement or sharing feedback to strengthen the design.

➤ What features would make the Mall feel more inclusive and enjoyable for you and others?

Community responses indicate a strong desire for the Mall to be transformed into a **safe, welcoming, and inclusive space** that serves diverse age groups, cultures, and abilities. The feedback demonstrates that people want the Mall to be more than a shopping precinct—it should be a **community hub that encourages social interaction, cultural expression, and engagement with the public realm**. The key themes identified are:

1. Safety and Perceived Security

- Respondents repeatedly highlighted **concerns about safety**, both real and perceived. Key issues include:
 - Poor lighting, shadows from high-rise buildings, and dark corners making areas feel unsafe.
 - Presence of anti-social behaviour (e.g., intoxicated individuals, loitering, drug use).
 - Multi-storey parking and high-rise developments perceived as unsafe without active surveillance.
- Suggestions to improve safety included:
 - **Good lighting throughout the Mall and public spaces**, designed to avoid light pollution.
 - **CCTV monitoring and regular security patrols**.
 - Clear sightlines and open public spaces to promote **passive surveillance**.
 - Prompt response to maintenance and anti-social behaviour.

2. Green Spaces and Public Realm

- **Strong support for increased greenery, open spaces, and seating areas**, including shaded spots for socialising or resting.
- Retaining existing trees and adding new landscaping were seen as essential for **comfort, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits**.
- Suggestions included **parks, community gardens, playgrounds, and spaces for outdoor activities**, contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive atmosphere.

3. Inclusivity and Cultural Diversity

- Respondents emphasised features that make the Mall **welcoming for diverse cultural and social groups**, including:
 - **Unisex toilets and multi-faith prayer rooms**.
 - **Public art, murals, and installations celebrating local culture, Indigenous heritage, and LGBTQ+ communities**.
 - **Programming and events that reflect cultural diversity**, such as food festivals, arts display, and family-friendly activities.
- The goal is to **create a sense of belonging** for all visitors.

4. Community and Social Spaces

- Calls for spaces that support **interaction and engagement**, including:
 - Cafes, brunch spots, and casual dining areas.
 - Flexible community spaces suitable for **pop-up shops, local performances, workshops, and educational activities**.
 - Areas where residents can **meet, eat, and socialise safely**.
- Many respondents emphasised that **open, active ground-level frontages** on new buildings are essential to maintain community connection.

5. Housing and Built Form Considerations

- Several responses expressed concern that **high-density or high-rise housing could undermine safety and inclusivity**.
- Preferred approaches include:

- **Low-density, family-friendly housing** integrated sensitively with public spaces.
- Sustainable and socially inclusive housing options, including **affordable housing** carefully balanced with overall safety and community cohesion.
- Avoiding overshadowing of public spaces to maintain sunlight, openness, and safety.

6. **Accessibility and Universal Design**

- The community highlighted the importance of **physical accessibility** for all ages and abilities:
 - Wide pathways, ramps, and accessible public facilities.
 - Family-friendly and sensory-friendly spaces, including playgrounds and quiet zones.
 - Adequate and accessible parking, particularly for families and people with disabilities.
- **Wayfinding and signage** improvements were also suggested to ensure the Mall is navigable for all visitors.

7. **Vibrancy, Engagement, and Services**

- Respondents want the Mall to be **active at all times of the day**, with businesses, shops, and events that attract visitors.
- Key ideas include:
 - Regular markets, night-time activations, and street events.
 - Cafes, restaurants, small independent shops, and local service providers.
 - Maintaining and improving the current shops while avoiding long periods of closure.
- Several respondents emphasised that the Mall should **retain its identity** while revitalising its spaces to appeal to both existing and new users.

8. **Maintenance and Amenities**

- The current condition of the Mall was noted as a barrier to inclusivity and enjoyment.
- Improvements suggested included:
 - Resurfacing car parks and pathways.
 - Clean, well-maintained public facilities (bathrooms, seating, and open areas).
 - Active management of anti-social behaviour and derelict or underused spaces.

➤ Sample Community Quotes – Inclusive Mall

“To make the Mall feel more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone, we support and encourage the inclusion of a mix of residential developments, with adequate options for homes suitable for large families. This helps ensure that people from diverse backgrounds and household types can live close to the Mall and actively participate in its community life. Currently, there is a need for more welcoming public spaces that cater to all age groups and abilities. We suggest adding accessible seating, shaded areas, and play spaces for children, as well as quiet zones for older residents and those with sensory sensitivities.

We also recommend multicultural programming and events that reflect the diversity of the local community, such as food festivals, cultural performances, and community art displays. These initiatives would help foster a sense of belonging and celebration of the Mall's rich cultural heritage. Improved wayfinding signage, inclusive design features, and safe, well-lit pathways would further enhance the experience for all visitors, making the Mall a place where everyone feels welcome and valued. We support additional greenery and the retention of as many existing trees and shrubs as possible, as these natural elements contribute to the character and comfort of the space. We also support proper controls to prevent overshadowing throughout the Mall, especially in community open spaces, to ensure these areas remain welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.”

“Having cafes and spaces where I can meet with my friends and do my shopping without having to go to northland! ”

“Bring more acknowledgement to Indigenous owners, for example by renaming ‘Oriell Square’ to another choice such as ‘Michael Ah Matt’ (1956 Indigenous athlete) and design a more permanent future for the square with a story of Indigenous input through co-design.”

“Without removing any of the existing shops, I worry that there’s still not enough open space to make the mall itself feel safe. I also wouldn’t be sure about accessing multi-story carparking on my own at night. But I absolutely love that there is a park included here.”

“Unisex toilets, multi-faith prayer rooms and art celebrating diversity, gay pride, indigenous Australians and Somalian Australians is really important for making the Mall feel inclusive. Love the idea of the eat-street corridor! I think the main thing that will make me feel safe is having businesses that open at night and people in public areas at night. I want lots of lighting but ideally designed to minimise unwanted light pollution for our native wildlife. I think murals over shuttered shop fronts (like what has been put on the roller doors on Waterdale rd) would also make the place feel safer as it would feel less dark and desolate when shops are closed. Some CCTV cameras would also be really good and make me feel safer.”

*“Keep existing trees as much as possible
Have lower density housing so they’re not overwhelming and not eyesores
Plant many trees and wildlife.”*

“The longstanding identity of the mall means that without an overhaul it will never attract people who need a safe environment to shop or conduct business. I would never take my under 10kids there because it's dodgy at the moment.”

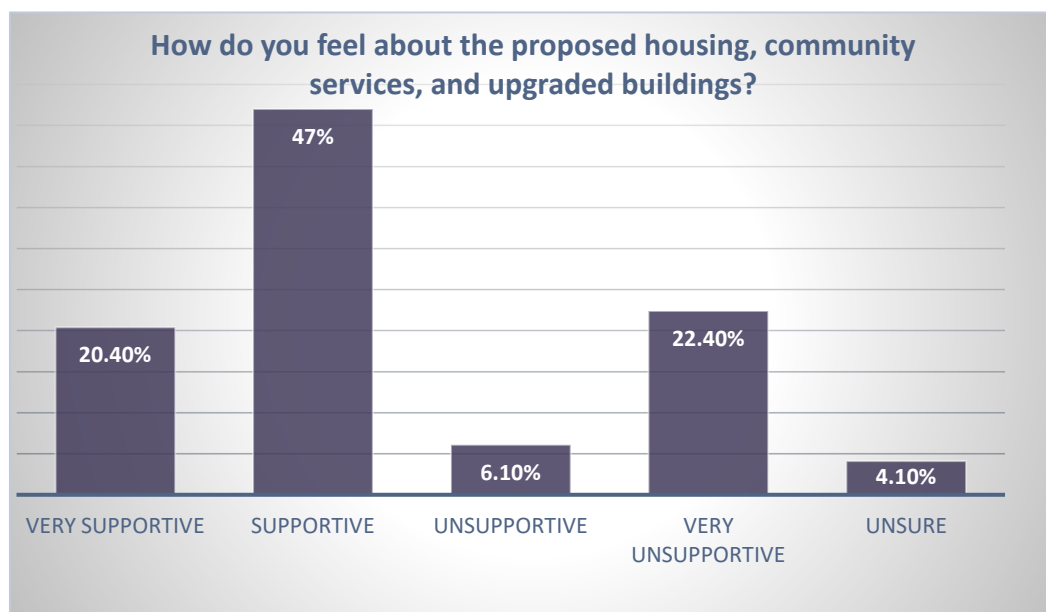
Transformative Mall

Planning for long-term growth with new housing, services, and thoughtful design



The Draft Masterplan also introduces new green spaces, public gathering areas, safer streets, and inclusive community programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. Key features include Oriel Square—a new public space designed for play, relaxation, events, and greenery—along with shaded seating, community art, improved lighting, and co-designed spaces that reflect the Mall’s cultural diversity. Accessibility upgrades across footpaths and internal streets will ensure the area is welcoming and easy to navigate for everyone.

➤ How do you feel about the proposed housing, community services, and upgraded buildings?

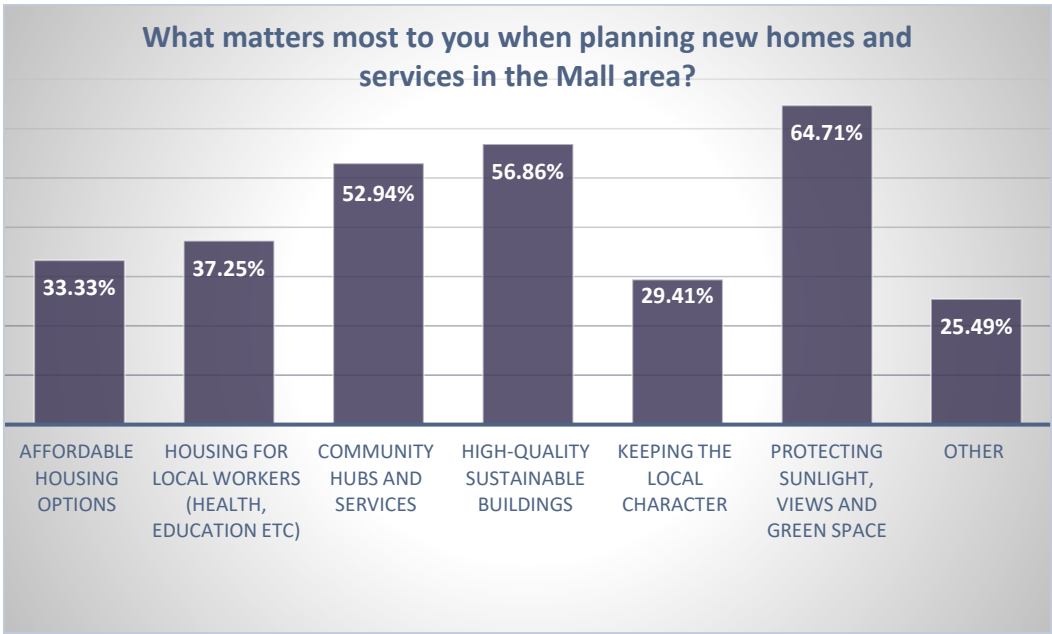


The survey asked respondents how they felt about the proposed housing, community services, and building upgrades in the Mall area. **A majority of participants, 67%, indicated that they were supportive or very supportive of the proposals, reflecting strong community approval for the Masterplan.** This suggests that residents see value in improvements such as new housing, upgraded buildings, and enhanced community services.

Despite this strong support, **28.5% of respondents expressed unsupportive or very unsupportive views.** This indicates that there is a significant minority with reservations, which may relate to concerns about the scale of development, impact on local character, or potential disruptions during construction. Understanding these concerns is important for planners to ensure that the final plan is balanced and inclusive.

The distribution of responses highlights both enthusiasm for positive change and the need for engagement with those who may feel the changes could negatively affect the community. Overall, the findings provide a clear mandate for proceeding with planning while considering strategies to address minority concerns.

➤ **What matters most to you when planning new homes and services in the Mall area? (Select all that apply)**



This question asked respondents to identify their priorities for planning new homes and services, with participants able to select multiple options. **The highest priority, selected by 64.71% of respondents, was protecting sunlight, views, and green space, reflecting a strong community emphasis on environmental quality and livability.** High-quality sustainable buildings (56.86%) and community hubs and services (52.94%) were also highly valued, highlighting the importance of design quality and social infrastructure.

Affordable housing options (33.33%) and housing for local workers (37.25%) were moderately important, indicating that inclusivity and support for essential workers are key considerations, though slightly lower in priority compared to environmental protection and design quality. **Keeping the local character (29.41%)** was another important factor, suggesting that residents want new developments to respect the existing identity of the Mall area.

Overall, the survey results indicate that environmental protection, sustainability, and social infrastructure are primary drivers in community priorities, with housing needs and local character also important. These findings suggest that future developments should balance these aspects to create a livable, inclusive, and well-designed community.

➤ Sample Community Quotes – Transformative Mall

More open spaces, more trees and more trees.

"To ensure the Mall can effectively support new and existing residents, we recommend that the development of the community cultural hub and wraparound community service facilities—such as Shop 48 and Olympic Neighbourhood House—be prioritised early in the redevelopment process. These facilities play a vital role in fostering social connection, providing essential services, and supporting community wellbeing."

"Suggest adopting a Jan Gehl approach in terms of building heights, human scale, this is adopted for the pedestrian mall but not wider areas. It's more than just activation at ground level. Current heights proposed do not achieve human scale, 9-12 storeys are imposing and overpowering....."

"I would love a library and additional cafes/restaurants and really love the park/green space planned (grass please, not too much concrete!!).

Please consider incidental, short stay car parking and parking for those that can't walk far (all the way to the multi-storey parking at the back). "

"I really like the renovations, just try to keep the old building if possible. They are original from the 59s and would leave a great vibe and character if they were fixed and saved and renovated. "

"Retention of existing trees. Almost none of the existing trees are proposed to be retained. This should be a key component of a masterplan claiming to be high quality or sustainable."

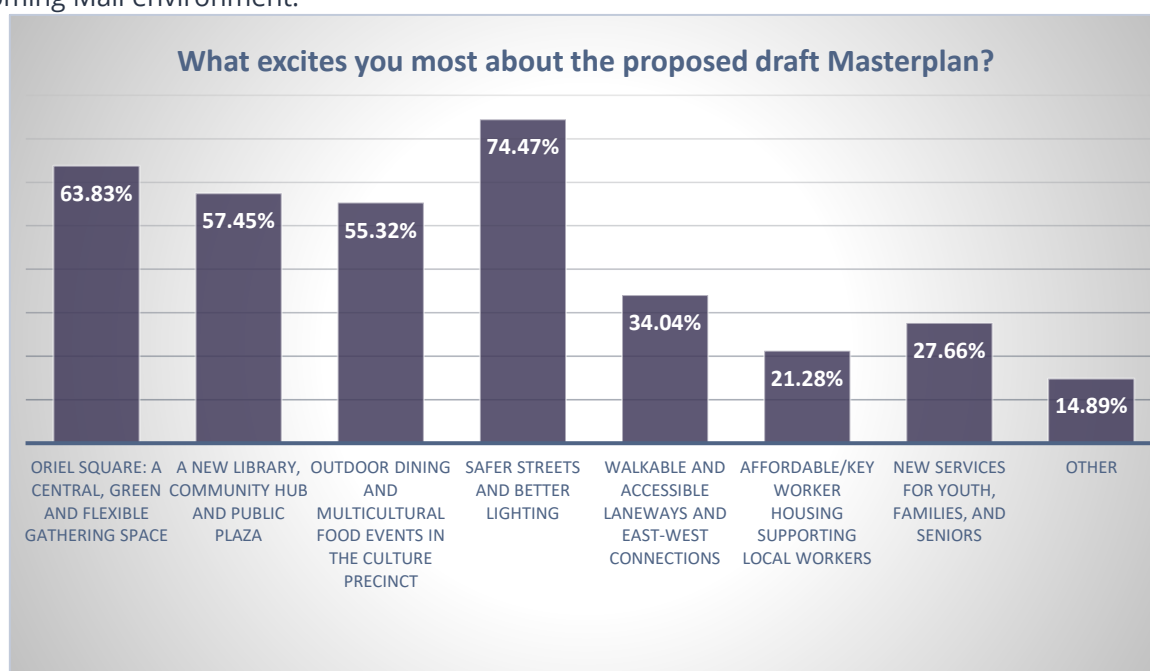
➤ What excites you most about the proposed draft Masterplan? (Select all that apply)

Safer streets and better lighting were identified as the most exciting feature of the draft Masterplan, with 74% of respondents selecting this option. This reflects the community's strong desire for practical improvements that enhance safety and accessibility in the Mall.

Public spaces were also highly valued. **Oriel Square, envisioned as a central, green, and flexible gathering space, was chosen by 64% of participants,** while the **new library, community hub, and public plaza attracted 57%.** **Outdoor dining and multicultural food events in the Culture Precinct followed closely at 55%,** highlighting the importance of vibrant social and cultural experiences.

Other features also received notable support, including **walkable and accessible laneways and east-west connections (34%)** and **new services for youth, families, and seniors (28%). Affordable/key worker housing (21%)** and "other" suggestions (15%) generated less excitement but remain important elements of the plan.

Overall, the findings emphasise that the community values visible, practical improvements to safety, accessibility, and vibrancy, with public spaces and social infrastructure central to creating an engaging and welcoming Mall environment.



➤ Do you have any other ideas or comments to help improve the draft Masterplan?

The community feedback on the draft Masterplan reflects a strong desire for the redevelopment of Bell Street Mall to prioritise community wellbeing, maintain the character of the area, and provide inclusive, accessible, and functional spaces for all residents. Key themes emerging from the open responses include the importance of community infrastructure, human-scale design, careful management of building heights and density, enhancement of public spaces, and thoughtful integration of residential, commercial, and cultural elements.

1. Community Infrastructure and Services

A recurring concern is the alignment of the redevelopment with the broader community context, particularly the timing of nearby Homes Victoria residential developments at Bell Bardia and Oriel Street. Respondents emphasised that increased population will place additional pressure on existing infrastructure. To address this, it is recommended that the development of community hubs and wraparound service facilities—such as Olympic Neighbourhood House and Shop 48—be prioritised early in the redevelopment process. Early

planning and meaningful consultation are critical to ensure that interim service locations during construction are accessible, safe, and meet the needs of vulnerable populations. The community also encourages advocacy for increased service funding to support continuity of programs, expansion of capacity, and responsiveness to emerging needs.

2. Human-Scale Design and Building Heights

Many respondents highlighted the need to adopt human-scale principles, such as those advocated by Jan Gehl, to ensure the development is visually and socially appropriate. Current proposals for 9–12 storey buildings are widely considered imposing and inconsistent with the character of a neighbourhood activity centre. Ensuring that community infrastructure is provided prior to decisions on using public land for private housing is considered essential. Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding comparative heights with other centres like Heidelberg and Ivanhoe, noting that Bell Street Mall differs in scale and context and therefore requires careful height management.

3. Public Spaces, Greenery, and Mall Revitalisation

There is strong support for the revitalisation of the Mall as a vibrant public space. Suggestions include increasing open green areas, minimizing concrete surfaces, and incorporating native plants to support local biodiversity. Features such as splash parks, interactive play equipment, amphitheatre-style seating, and spaces for community events were recommended to enhance usability and engagement. Public facilities should consider the needs of all users, including seniors, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness, with suggestions including seating with backs, public showers, and accessible design throughout. Respondents also highlighted the importance of safety, cleanliness, and maintenance to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment.

4. Integration of Residential and Commercial Elements

Feedback indicated mixed opinions regarding the integration of multi-level residential towers within the Mall precinct. While some respondents support additional housing to increase supply, many expressed concerns regarding potential traffic congestion, parking limitations, and impacts on the streetscape. Maintaining adequate parking, careful traffic flow management, and pedestrian-friendly design were repeatedly noted as essential considerations. Respondents also called for clear design guidelines to maintain aesthetic character, such as restrictions on bare concrete or dark façades and encouragement of vertical greening.

5. Additional Considerations

Other ideas include the establishment of a toy and tool library, expansion of affordable housing beyond the current 20% allocation, provision of supermarkets, cafes, and cultural facilities, and the adoption of sustainable and energy-efficient design practices. Residents also highlighted the need to retain the Mall's character and ensure public spaces remain safe, accessible, and conducive to social connection.

In summary, the community's feedback underscores that the Bell Street Mall Masterplan should prioritise human-scale design, accessible and well-resourced community infrastructure, vibrant and safe public spaces, and thoughtful integration of residential and commercial development. By incorporating these considerations, the Masterplan can ensure Bell Street Mall remains a central, welcoming, and sustainable hub for the community.

❖ Info Sessions Feedback

To ensure the Bell St Mall Draft Masterplan and Design Guideline aligns with community and key stakeholders' priorities, two targeted information and Q&A sessions were held in August 2025: one with traders and non-profit organisations, and another with the broader community. These sessions provided stakeholders with the opportunity to review the draft proposals, ask questions, and provide feedback.

Key objectives of these engagement sessions included:

- Clarifying aspects of the draft masterplan, including parking, building heights, land use, housing numbers, and public transport connections.
- Discussing potential challenges and opportunities for the Mall precinct.
- Identifying community priorities and concerns to inform refinement of the draft masterplan.

A total of 15 traders and non-profit representatives attended the first session, while approximately 27 members of the broader community attended the second session. Councillors O'Kane participated, providing additional insights and guidance.

The following sections provide detailed summaries of each session, including participant feedback, analysis, and key recommendations.

🚦 Session 1: Traders and Non-Profit Organisations

Date: Friday, 15 August 2025

Time: 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Attendance: 15 participants, **plus Councillor O'Kane**



Traders generally supported the overall direction of the Masterplan, while highlighting the need for particular attention to the south-west corner building's ground plane and visual interface, safety and security measures, wayfinding and parking strategies, and the staging of interim conditions during construction. Approximately 15 participants attended the session, actively engaging and raising detailed questions, especially regarding operational impacts such as parking and vehicle access. Confusion around truck access and multi-level parking was addressed through clarification of the proposed laneway arrangements. Key discussion areas included:

1. Parking and Vehicle Access

- Participants expressed ongoing concerns regarding the adequacy, safety, and clarity of parking for both shoppers and residents.
- Suggestions included clearer signage, staging of development, and potential basement parking beneath part of Oriel Square to support the community hub.
- Confusion arose over vehicle access to shops, particularly regarding deliveries; clarifications were provided that internal laneways would remain open.
- Drop-off zones near the medical centre were discussed, with Councillor initially suggesting a turn-around drop-off, later deemed unnecessary due to planned internal laneway connections.

2. Open Space and Public Links

- General support for preserving the special character of the Mall.
- Positive feedback for the northeast-southwest link connecting to the Culture Precinct and the southern east-west link.
- Concerns raised about building heights ("Great Wall" effect) along the south-western corner, particularly by medical centre landowners. Other heights were generally accepted.

3. Building Heights and Land Use

- Lower-scale heights for private land were broadly supported.
- The possibility of relocating the medical centre to the south-west corner was discussed, aligning with opportunities for active ground-level uses such as a community hub or retail/commercial spaces.
- Traders supported an inviting Mall interface, especially at the northern end for café use.

4. Housing Numbers and Affordable Housing

- Attendees did not question the number of dwellings but highlighted concerns regarding safety, security, and supporting infrastructure.
- Support was noted for key worker housing initiatives.

5. Safety

- Safety emerged as a top concern, with discussions on strategies including crime prevention, security measures, resident population, and long-term planning.

6. Construction and Interim Conditions

- Participants expressed concern about disruptions to services, amenity, and foot traffic during construction.
- Guidance on maintaining services during development was suggested for inclusion in the Implementation Chapter.

7. Public Transport

- Councillor O'Kane raised concerns about accommodating additional bus trips and potential bus hubs.
- Options included spreading bus stops along Bell Street to improve accessibility and travel times.

Session 2: Broader Community Engagement

Date: Wednesday, 27 August 2025

Time: 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Attendance: 27 participants, plus Councillor O’Kane



Community members generally expressed support for the masterplan, with particular emphasis on accessibility, safety, and integration with public transport, while also raising concerns regarding traffic congestion, parking, and housing affordability, highlighting the need for detailed implementation strategies. Approximately 27 community members participated, providing feedback that reinforced earlier trader concerns, particularly around safety, accessibility, and the quality of public spaces. Key discussion areas included:

- **Parking Provision**
 - Questions on car parking adequacy for 2–3-bedroom dwellings and visitors.
 - Queries regarding whether the proposed 200 car spaces would be sufficient and whether parking would be free or paid.
- **Housing Delivery Strategy**
 - Interest in the approach to housing, including potential build-to-rent models and affordability concerns.
 - Concerns were raised about affordability for low-income and pensioner households.
- **Connectivity and Traffic**
 - Questions about Oriel Road bike lane connections to main roads.
 - Suggestions for traffic congestion management as the area becomes busier with increased population.
- **Public Spaces and Safety**
 - Concerns regarding the safety of the proposed playground in Oriel Square.
 - Requests for clearer design responses in the masterplan.
- **Visibility and Accessibility**
 - Feedback on the visibility of the precinct car park, particularly for people unfamiliar with the area and those with disabilities.
 - Emphasis on ensuring accessibility for people of all ages, including access to car parks and ground-level housing.
- **Mall Identity and Wayfinding**
 - Suggestions to strengthen the visibility and identity of the Mall via defined gateways and improved wayfinding.

- **Public Transport**
 - Suggestions for improved bus services, shuttle links to nearby train stations (e.g., Ivanhoe), and expanded community bus services.
 - Discussions on potential new train stations were noted but considered long-term possibilities.
- **Existing Trees and Environmental Considerations**
 - Clarifications provided regarding the retention of existing trees and identification of new plantings in the draft masterplan.

Conclusion of Phase Two Community Engagement

The second round of community engagement for the Bell Street Mall Draft Masterplan and Design Guide, conducted between 6 August and 3 September 2025, provided valuable insights into community priorities, concerns, and aspirations for the Mall's future. Feedback was collected through an online survey, two targeted Information and Q&A sessions, and direct submissions from residents, traders, and stakeholders, with a total of 52 survey responses, 42 face-to-face attendees, and 5 additional submissions received.

Community feedback aligned closely with the four themes of the Draft Masterplan, providing clear guidance on how each should be refined and delivered.

- **Vibrant Mall (land use changes to support revitalisation):** Approximately 57% of respondents supported or strongly supported proposed changes to land use, including housing, upgraded buildings, and expanded community services. Excitement centred on new features such as **Oriel Square** (64%), a flexible and central green space, and the **library, community hub, and plaza** (57%). The Culture Precinct, with **outdoor dining and multicultural food events** (55%), was also seen as key to strengthening the Mall's cultural identity and vibrancy.
- **Connected Mall (access, parking, and movement networks):** Around 60% of participants felt the Masterplan's proposals for walking, cycling, and parking were adequate, but concerns were raised about the design and safety of multi-level car parks. Improved pedestrian access, particularly **safe east-west links and accessible laneways** (34%), and clearer signage and wayfinding were highlighted as essential improvements to ensure easy navigation and connections to surrounding transport.
- **Inclusive Mall (public realm and open space improvements):** The strongest support was expressed for safety and public realm upgrades, with 74% of respondents highlighting **safer streets and better lighting** as the most exciting feature. The protection of **sunlight, views, and green space** (65%) and the provision of **community hubs and services** (57%) were also identified as high priorities. While affordable and key worker housing (21%) was supported, participants stressed that new residential development must complement open space, support accessibility, and ensure safety, particularly in car parks and laneways.
- **Transformative Mall (built form guidance for future development):** A clear majority of respondents (67%) supported the proposed housing, upgraded buildings, and new community services. Community priorities included **protecting sunlight, views, and green space** (65%), **delivering high-quality and sustainable buildings** (57%), and ensuring **accessible community hubs and services** (53%). However, concerns were raised about building heights, overshadowing, and the potential impact on the Mall's character. Many emphasised the importance of human-scale design, careful integration of new development with the existing context, and clear staging of works to reduce disruption for traders and residents during construction.

Areas Requiring Further Attention

The engagement revealed several topics where additional detail or reconsideration is warranted:

- Parking strategies, particularly in relation to multi-level car parks and visitor access.
- Safety measures across public spaces and high-density housing areas.
- Traffic management and transport connections to accommodate population growth.
- Affordable and key worker housing delivery, ensuring accessibility and equitable outcomes.
- Staging and management of construction to minimise disruption to traders, residents, and community services.

The Stage Two engagement demonstrates strong community alignment with the Draft Masterplan's overarching vision: creating a safe, inclusive, and vibrant Bell Street Mall that balances housing growth,

commercial activation, and public space enhancements. While the majority of feedback reflects positive support for the plan—particularly in relation to safety, public realm improvements, and community infrastructure—several key areas, including parking, building heights, accessibility, and construction staging, require further refinement. Incorporating these considerations into the revised Masterplan will ensure it responds comprehensively to community needs, supports long-term growth, and reinforces Bell Street Mall’s role as a central, welcoming, and sustainable hub.