

Activity Centre Program

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
PHASE 2

Engagement Report Niddrie (Keilor Road) & North Essendon

MARCH 2025

Acknowledgement

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living and continuous culture. The activity centres we are planning for are located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and we acknowledge that they have never ceded their sovereign rights to lands and waters. We recognise their unbroken connection to Country, we celebrate their culture and history, and we honour their rights as custodians.

Introduction

This report details findings from Phase 2 engagement with the community on the Niddrie (Keilor Road) and North Essendon Activity Centres as part of the Victorian Government's Activity Centre Program. This follows on from Phase 1 engagement which took place earlier in 2024, where we asked the community about places in their local area that were important to them.

Overview of engagement approach

Feedback is presented in this report and other activity centre-specific reports, one for each centre. This report outlines who we heard from; what we heard; and the changes that have been made or other responses to key feedback received. This report is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Activity Centres Program Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report](#) which details the policy context and background as well as all the engagement activities to obtain community feedback.

The Engagement Summary Report details the processes followed and the methods that were used to consult the community. It also outlines what we heard from community and stakeholders regarding the Activity Centre Program overall, and the changes that have been made or other responses to key feedback received. This includes feedback gathered from all Engage Victoria pages and VPA engagement sources, including where feedback was provided on the program as a whole.

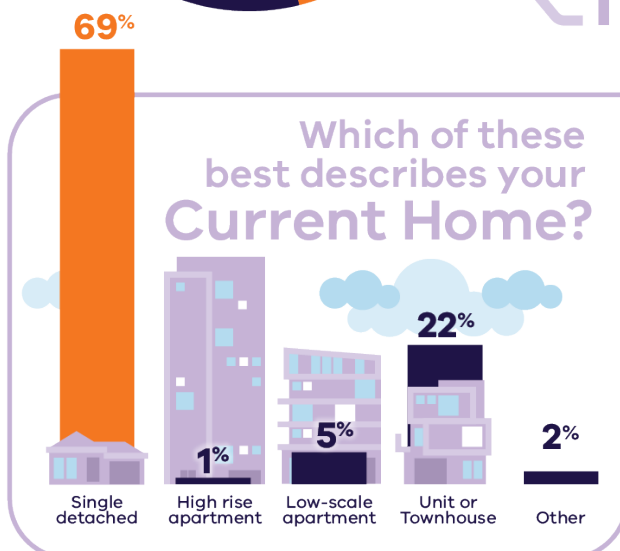
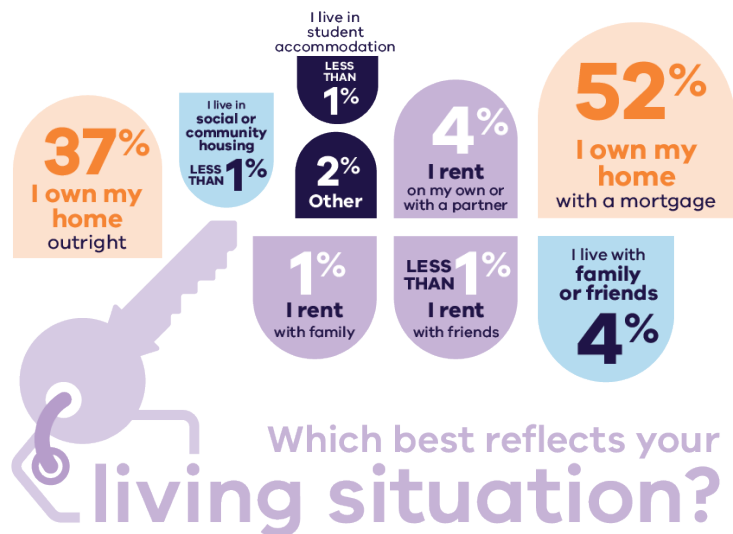
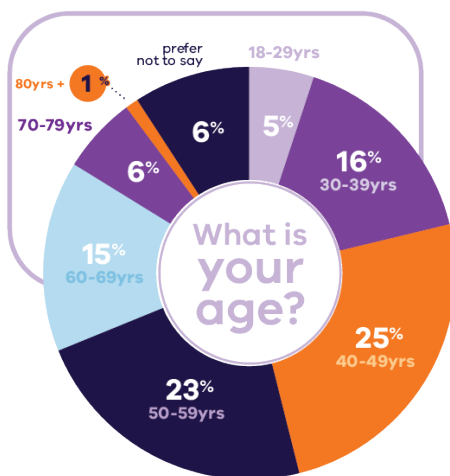
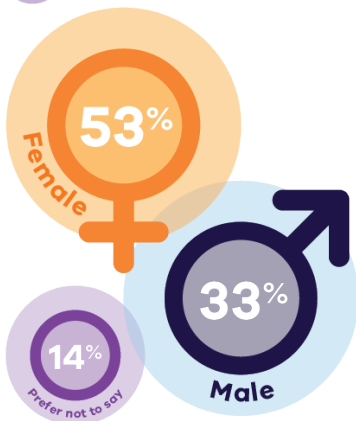
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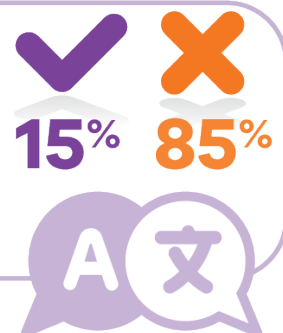
Who we heard from

We asked respondents to provide us with demographic information to understand who in the community has engaged with our consultation. Below is an overview of who we heard from.

What is your gender?



Do you speak a language other than English at home?




What we heard

The Niddrie and North Essendon community showed mixed levels of support for the proposed Niddrie (Keilor Road) and North Essendon Activity Centre plan. Only some people agreed on the need for more new homes near jobs, services and transport. Most people who engaged with the project did not support the overall vision for the area or the proposed building heights. A streamlined planning process and infrastructure plans also had low support. The protection of sunny streets and parks and improving main streets was supported by most people.

Key themes

The below are the themes we heard in the free text fields of the surveys as well as what community told us in their submissions.



Local infrastructure and services are already at or above capacity and could not support an increase in population.


Among respondents who indicated support for more homes, it was conditional on an increase in local infrastructure and services.

Upgrades and improvements to local infrastructure would need to come first, before more homes or population could increase.

More detail required about the delivery of infrastructure upgrades.


Support more local business and services.

Local infrastructure and services



Strong opposition to the proposed scale of development and proposed more homes, which are inappropriate and unwanted in the area.

Scale of development




Increased population will exacerbate this, particularly Keilor Road, Bulla Road, and Mount Alexander Road.

The precincts do not have adequate public transport to support the proposed housing densities, with only one tram service and no train stations.

The tram service already operates at capacity or is overcrowded at peak times. More detail required about the delivery of infrastructure upgrades.

Support for public transport upgrades including airport link.

Traffic, parking and public transport



Strong opposition to the proposed building heights as inappropriate for the area, citing concerns about overshadowing, loss of privacy, and loss of sunlight.

The proposed building heights will result in overshadowing of homes and gardens, particularly in the catchment areas.

Support for the plan's protections for sunny parks and streets, but concern about sunlight protection in all areas of the precinct, not just those protected in the plans.

Building heights, overshadowing and privacy



No adequate protections for heritage, community, local amenity and streetscapes.

Increased building heights and densities would compromise the area's community, local amenity and streetscapes, and the existing local amenity and streetscapes should be preserved and prioritised.

Heritage, local amenity and streetscapes



Concerns about traffic accidents and pedestrian safety, in particular at the Bulla Road roundabout.



Opposition to the streamlined planning process proposed citing concerns about loss of community rights, lack of transparency, and potential for overdevelopment.

Safety

Streamlined planning process



More green parks and open spaces needed.

Increased density would result in a reduction in green spaces.

Parks and green open spaces



Concern about potential decrease property values.

Property values



The suburban streets included in the catchments are inappropriate for more homes or development.

Opposition to the proposed building heights and extent of the catchment boundaries.

The activity centre core should include a train station.

Walkable catchments

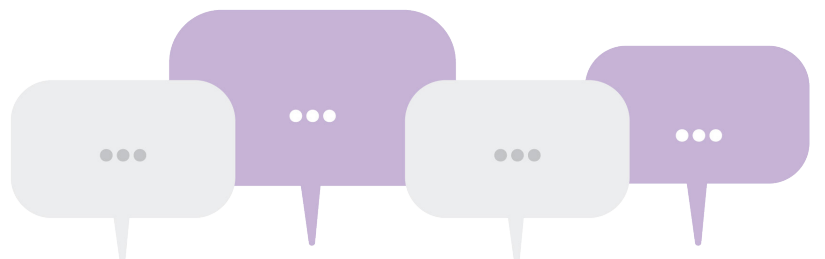


Distrust in the intentions of the Activity Centres Program and in the legitimacy of the consultation exercise.

Planning process has been rushed, lacked transparency and a sufficient level of detail about the implications of planning changes.

Perceived failure to complete a full and in-depth consultation process.

Trust in government and consultation process



Key stakeholders

The below is what we heard from the key stakeholder submissions for Niddrie (Keilor Road) and North Essendon. We received 16 submissions from key stakeholders about the Niddrie (Keilor Road) and North Essendon Activity Centre.

Moonee Valley City Council

- Objects to the Activity Centres Program stating that it has been rushed and has been planned poorly.
- Has concerns surrounding a lack of consultation with council and lack of transparency.
- Suggests that the Activity Centres Program should only be released after Plan for Victoria.
- States that there has been a missed opportunity to properly plan for infrastructure.
- States that there has been a missed opportunity to plan for parks, gardens and community facilities.
- Has concerns regarding the fact that technical documentation supporting the activity centres has not been released as part of public consultation.
- States that there is a lack of clarity around what and how new planning rules will apply.
- Supports the proposed building heights but only if the buildings have high quality design.
- Requires more information around 'deemed to comply' requirements and will not support them until more information is available.
- Would like to make sure that buildings are well designed and welcoming at the ground level.
- Objects to the proposed setback as they are too restrictive.
- Desires more consideration toward tree canopy cover in the activity centres.
- Wants more information around how development contributions will work.
- Proposes mandatory requirements for affordable housing in the activity centres.
- Proposes mandatory requirements for landscaping and gardens around developments.

Other key agencies

- Concern that the proposed building heights will conflict with airport flight paths.
- Concern that the activity centre will limit the ability of the airport to operate.

Major landowners

- Concern toward overshadowing rules being too restrictive.
- Concern toward activity centres being too general and therefore do not relate to the location that they are being planned for.

State agencies are being engaged separately from the public engagement process.

Community Reference Group

13 registered attendees, plus an additional 17 unplanned attendees

We reconvened Community Reference Groups as part of phase 2 engagement. A workshop was held to obtain community feedback and the below is what we heard:

Activity centre controls

Building setbacks: There was strong support for appropriate building setback controls to protect from overshadowing impacts. There was support for stronger controls along Keilor Road to avoid large, dark spaces. Others suggested setbacks at the rear of dwellings and boundaries. They suggested that planning should ensure appropriate setbacks, prioritising protection of dwellings, parks, schools, and heritage buildings from overshadowing.

Cascading building height: There was a general preference for cascading building heights, with taller buildings near the core. There were concerns about heights near one and two storey homes within heritage areas. The attendees preferred that maximum heights are 10 storeys in activity centres and 3 storeys in the catchment, emphasising high-quality, liveable buildings.

Catchment controls

Catchment boundary: Opinions varied on the catchment size; some suggested reducing it, while others recommended including areas near Glenbervie and Essendon Railway Stations. Removing Spencer Street, Woolley Street, and Mar Lodge Estate from the North Essendon plan was proposed. Concerns were raised about the map not reflecting single-dwelling covenants.

Building type and design: There was a preference for more houses and townhouses over apartments. Emphasis was placed on high-quality building with strong environmental ratings, with adequate transport and community infrastructure.

Community infrastructure

Transport and connectivity: Participants emphasised the need to resolve traffic and parking issues, enhance services on the Craigieburn line and trams, and improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Community infrastructure: Recommendations included expanding facilities like sports venues, schools, libraries, youth centres, a police station, health services, and fire stations.

Public open space: Participants would like new gathering spaces, off-leash dog areas, and protection of flora and fauna, particularly trees in Woodlands Park, prioritised as part of the plan.

Next steps

Once the Niddrie (Keilor Road) and North Essendon Activity Centre Plans are in place, landowners in these activity centres will have clear new rules to follow if they want to build new homes on their land. Each landowner can decide if and when they want to apply for a planning permit (where required) to build new homes. If they don't want to change anything on a property, they don't have to. Landowners will have more opportunities to build more different types of homes on their property.

Over time there may be more homes being built in these neighbourhoods which also means more customers and opportunities for local businesses. It also means more Victorians will have the chance to find a home that's right for them.

The Activity Centres Program is now expanding to new activity centres near train stations or trams across Melbourne. This will support new homes to be built in areas with good existing transport capacity and leverage new capacity created through Victoria's Big Build investment in the Level Crossing Removal Program and Metro Tunnel project. Community feedback on the initial 10 draft activity centre plans has emphasised the importance of prioritising locations with good public transport. The new centres are well serviced by public transport, community facilities and shops and will support the supply of more homes across Victoria.

Activity Centre Program

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Engagement Report

NIDDRIE (KEILOR ROAD) & NORTH ESSENDON

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