

# Activity Centre Program

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION  
PHASE 2

## Engagement Report Preston (High Street)

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 Preston (High Street) Activity Centre as part of the Victorian Government's Activity Centre Program. This follows on from Phase 1 engagement which took place earlier in 2024.

## 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.

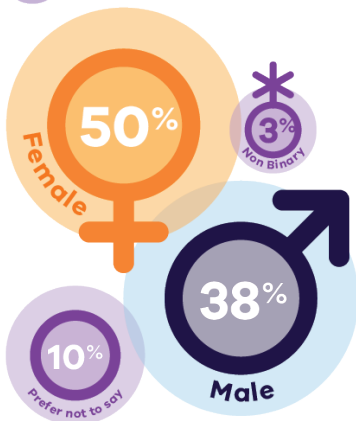
# Contents

<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Overview of engagement approach</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Who we heard from</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What we heard</b>	<b>5</b>
Key themes	5
Traffic, transport and parking	5
Housing	5
Parks and green open spaces	5
Community services and infrastructure	6
Building heights	6
Preston Market	6
Heritage, local amenity and streetscapes	6
Streamlined planning process	6
Catchments	6
Alternatives	6
<b>Key stakeholders</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Community Reference Group</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Next steps</b>	<b>8</b>

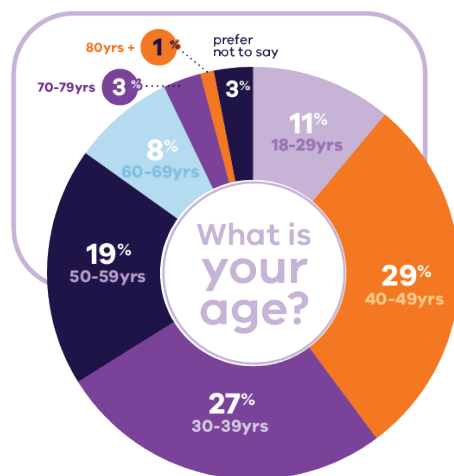
# Who we heard from

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.

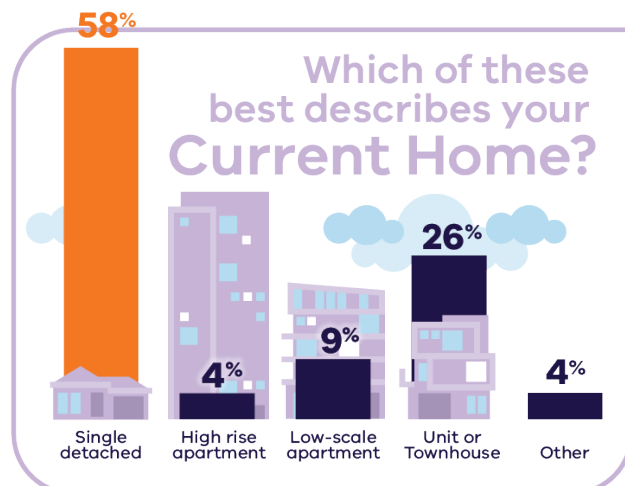
## What is your gender?



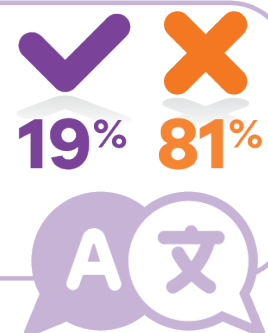
## What is your relationship to the Preston High Street activity centre?



## Which of these best describes your Current Home?



Do you speak a language other than English at home?



# What we heard

The Preston community showed strong overall support for the proposed Preston Activity Centre and the necessity for more homes to be delivered close to public transport, jobs, shops and other services across Melbourne. There was support for making it a more walkable suburb and some people who engaged with the project, supported a streamlined planning process and infrastructure plans.

## 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.



More public transport with higher service frequency and reliability.

More active transport infrastructure, e.g separated bike paths for safety and accessibility.

More homes will increase traffic congestion and parking demand.

### Traffic, transport and parking




Proposed recalculation of the target number of new dwellings.

Overdevelopment, building quality and architectural standards of new development.

Affordable housing and concern for the current lack of options.

A loss of affordability, displacement of existing residents, and negative impacts on community wellbeing.

### Housing



More green spaces, trees and parks to support growing population and reduce urban heat islands.

More homes, but in a way that prioritises green space and community amenity.

Need for flood mitigation in green spaces.

### Parks and green open spaces




More community services, including public toilets, libraries, and community centres needed.

More homes, but in a way that prioritises community services and amenities.

The need for investment in community facilities to support growth.

### Community services and infrastructure



Proposed height limits were too high, citing concerns about overshadowing, overlooking, loss of natural light, and impact on property values.

High-rise development would exacerbate traffic, parking and social issues.

### Building heights



Preserve the local amenity, streetscapes and integrity of the Preston Market.

The market should be publicly acquired to ensure its continued use as a community space.

### Preston Market



Protect local heritage, local amenity and streetscapes.

Opposition to excessive development that disregards these concerns.

Proposed buildings were poorly designed, lacked character, and would negatively impact the area's aesthetic appeal.

### Heritage, local amenity and streetscapes



A streamlined process may be exploited by developers.

Concerns streamlining would result in low-quality development.

More community consultation in the planning process needed.

The plan is vague and lacks detail.

### Streamlined planning process



More homes in walking distance of facilities and infrastructure.

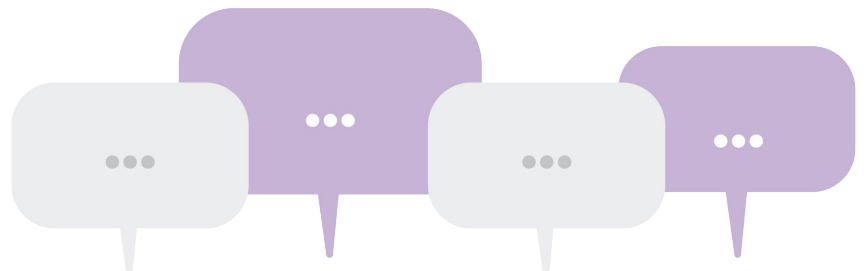
Improved street lighting to increase the feeling of safety.

### Catchments



Preference for the outcomes of previous planning work, e.g., structure plan, Future Homes, council work.

### Alternatives





# Key stakeholders

We received nine submissions from key stakeholders about the Preston (High Street) Activity Centre. The below is what we heard from the key stakeholder submissions for Preston (High Street).

## Darebin City Council

- Objects to the 'deemed to comply' approach because it does not allow innovative design.
- Requests more information on how development contributions will work.
- Requests further clarity on planning rules.
- Supports the requirements for sunlight access to parks and gardens.
- Held concerns about residents not being notified about planning applications.
- Called for the activity centre to relate more to the local area and consider its context and existing planning rules.

## Major landowners

- Support higher maximum building heights.
- Support the proposed activity centre area.
- Support the deemed to comply approach.

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

# Community Reference Group

12 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:

## Catchment controls

**Catchment boundary:** Attendees agreed that there should be a reduction of the proposed catchment boundary, especially to the east near Northland, while considering natural barriers. Some suggested including areas like Railway Parade, Oakover Road, and extending north into Reservoir.

**Building heights:** Recommendations included adjusting heights along tram routes, considering narrow streets, and potential wind tunnel effects on High Street.

**Housing types:** Emphasis was placed on diverse housing options for various life stages and incomes, including family apartments, social housing, and homes for aging in place, with adequate open space.

**Activity Centre Plan changes:** Concerns were raised about excluding Preston Market, suggesting its inclusion along with both sides of High Street south of Bell Street.

**Public spaces and parking:** Attendees stressed the need to protect existing green spaces, add new ones, and ensure sufficient parking in the activity centre.

## Community infrastructure

**Community infrastructure:** Attendees recommended relocating Preston Library, adding kindergartens and schools, and creating open, light-filled spaces for all ages. Using vacant land for community facilities was also suggested.

**Traffic and connectivity:** Suggestions included alleviating congestion on High Street, enhancing cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and improving east-west connections.

**Environmental enhancements:** Emphasis on increasing tree canopy with established trees and integrating native plants to enhance green spaces.

# Next steps

Once the Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan is in place, landowners in the activity centre 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

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION  
PHASE 2

### Engagement Report

## PRESTON (HIGH STREET)

MARCH 2025