Draft South Melbourne Structure Plan - Phase 3

Engagement Summary Report

May 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.
We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

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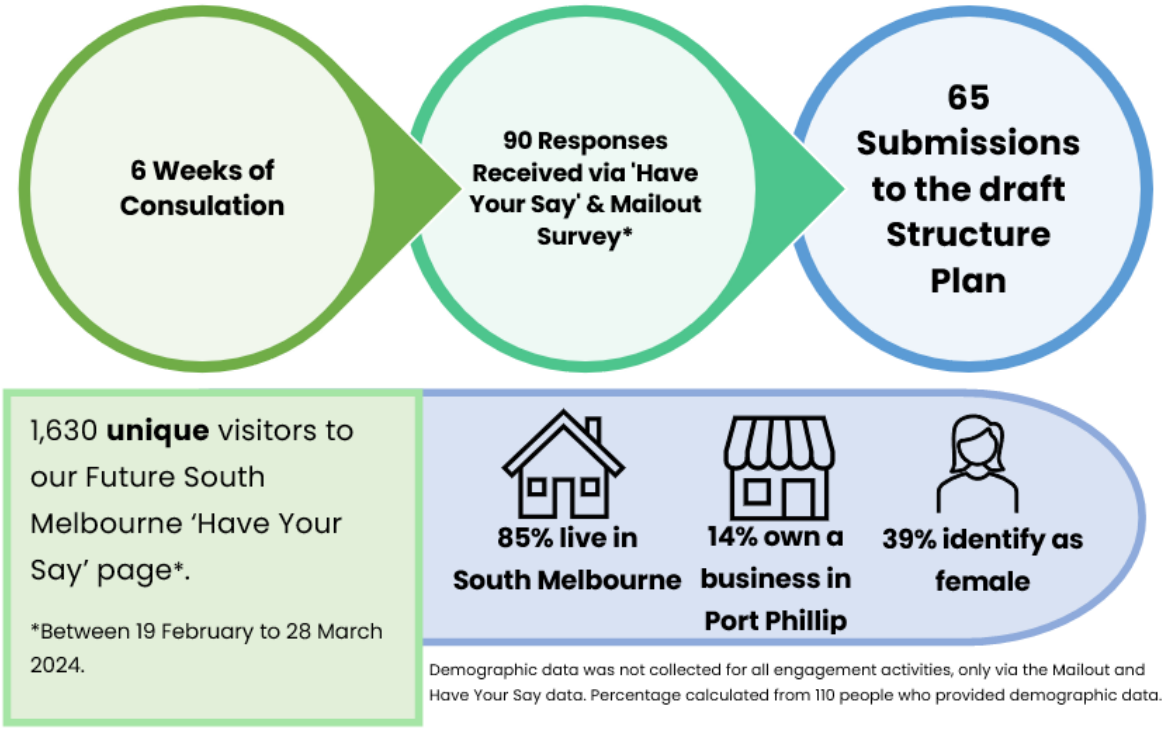
Background

In February and March 2024, the City of Port Phillip conducted engagement to seek feedback on the draft South Melbourne Structure Plan (SMSP), promoted publicly as Future South Melbourne. Following the previous two rounds of engagement (Phase 1 in March-April 2021 and Phase 2 September-October 2022, respectively) the focus for Phase 3 was to seek community and stakeholder feedback on the vision, key themes and series of actions that form the basis for the draft Structure Plan.

Snapshot of our engagement



Engagement scope and objectives

The South Melbourne Structure Plan process provides the community with the opportunity to provide input at key stages. This Phase (Phase 3) sought feedback on the draft South Melbourne Structure Plan and its associated actions and recommendations, which also built on the engagement undertaken in Phase 1 and 2.

What we set out to achieve

The key objectives for the Phase 3 engagement were to:

- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to share their feedback on the objectives and actions presented in the draft Structure Plan.
- Show how Phase 1 and Phase 2 stakeholder feedback has informed the draft SMSP.
- Promote the draft SMSP's key directions and ensure stakeholders understand them.
- Introduce the local community, landowners, and other stakeholders to the project, if they were not already familiar with the project.
- Inform stakeholders about why the project is being undertaken if they were not already familiar with the project.
- Maintain interest in the project following Phase 1 and Phase 2 engagement.

About this report

The purpose of this report is to share the findings of the community engagement with the City of Port Phillip community, and to further inform Council's decision-making about the draft SMSP.

Before reading this report

The following should be considered in reading this report:

- The information in this report is based on qualitative research and does not necessarily reflect the views of a statistically representative sample of the community.
- The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions, perceptions and feedback heard from across all the engagement activities. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information maybe factually incorrect, unfeasible, or outside of the scope of this project.
- City of Port Phillip strives to include diverse voices in our engagement activities. We acknowledge, however, that some people are likely to have experienced barriers to participation in the activities that are outlined in this report – including people with disability, multicultural communities, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others.
- The word '**participants'** is used to describe the total group of community members and stakeholders who contributed to this engagement process. The terms '**respondents'** is used to talk about the sub-group of total participants who responded to a specific question or engagement activity. The term '**submitters'** refers to community members and stakeholders who made a submission on the South Melbourne Structure Plan.
- This report summarises key feedback from participants and does not preclude the project team from considering community feedback in its original format.
- The report summarises the feedback from engagement activities. While every effort is made to include the full breadth of feedback provided, not all comments,

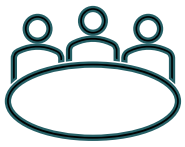
views or advice are shown in the findings of this report. Where appropriate, a mix of quotes, themes and metrics are used to convey community feedback.

- We acknowledge that, while efforts are taken to manage duplication, there is potential for double counting where participants have attended multiple events, and/or completed online activities via the *Have Your Say* website.
- Detailed participant demographic data was not collected or mandatory across all engagement events and activities. This may affect the weight of findings about community participation. Where appropriate, response numbers for each question are displayed or acknowledged.
- This report focuses on the communication and engagement activities delivered by Council. It does not necessarily include events, meetings, surveys, or communications organised by the community or third parties.

What we did

Engagement activities

The following engagement activities were undertaken in Phase 3: Monday 19 February to Thursday 28 March 2024.

	**Online survey** **(36 completed)**	The survey was designed and distributed by Council with a 'Likert' scale testing of the recommended actions of the SMSP.
	**Mailout survey Community Members within the SMSP Study Area** **X 5,700**	Adapted from the online survey to be shorter and simpler. The factsheet survey was distributed in hardcopy format to owners and occupiers with a covering letter and reply-paid envelopes (refer to Attachment A for distribution area). The surveys were designed by Council and distributed by Australia Post.
	**23 Online and In-person consultation meetings (40 people attended)**	Residents were able to book an online or in-person meeting with the project team every Thursday (or at a time requested) between 19 February 2024 to 28 March 2024 to raise any questions on the draft Structure Plan.
	**65 Written submissions on the draft South Melbourne Structure Plan**	Council received submission on the draft SMSP via the project email address, as well as through the Have Your Say – Future South Melbourne page.

Communications activities

To promote the engagement program and support participation Council undertook the following activities:

	**'Have Your Say' website**	Council's 'Have Your Say' engagement page hosted the Future South Melbourne project page, with project timelines, an online survey, frequently asked questions, booking form to meet with members of the team as well contact details for the project team.
	**Mailout Flyer to Community Members within the SMSP Study Area**	To support promotion of the opportunity to provide feedback on this project, 5,700 letters and paper surveys were sent to owners/occupiers with a QR code linking to the Have Your Say project page.
	**Advertising on social media.**	Social media advertising was undertaken to further promote the project through Facebook and Instagram.
	**Email blast to interested parties and other key stakeholders.**	Interested parties and stakeholders were informed of the project through email blasts from the project email.

Participation

Total participation

Phase 3 of the project engaged with **240 participants**. Of that, **156** participants made a submission in some form to the draft SMSP.

Participation per activity

The participants in each engagement activity are outlined in the table below.

Engagement Activity	Participation
Online Survey via Have Your Say	36
Mailout Survey	53
Long-form submissions via Have Your Say	20
Long form submissions via email	45
Council Advisory Committees	45 people (6 committees and groups)
In-person consultation	25 people (14 meetings)
Online consultation via Teams	15 people (9 meetings)

Table 1 Engagement activity participation breakdown

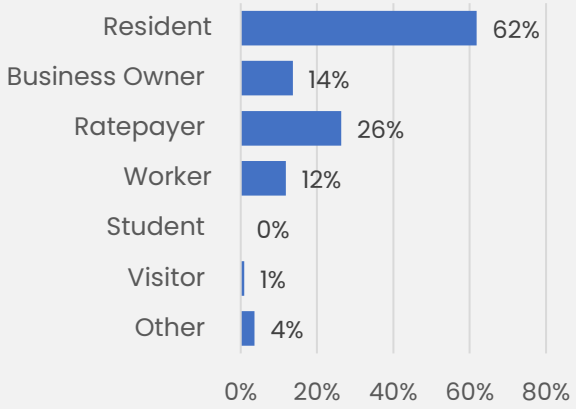
Who we heard from

Demographics of participants

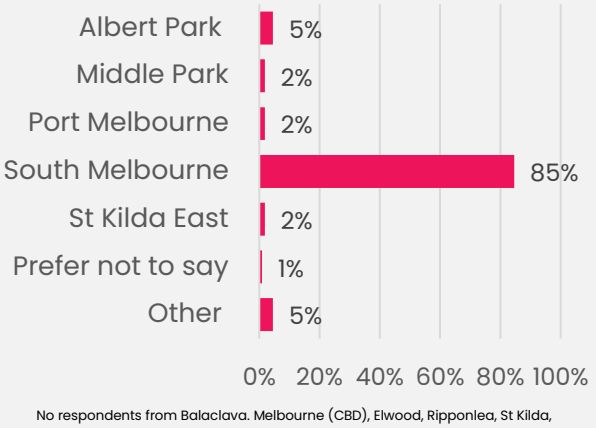
Demographic data was captured through online and hardcopy surveys, but not in the workshops, community conversation pop-ups and advisory group meetings.

111 people provided demographic data.

Relationship to Port Phillip

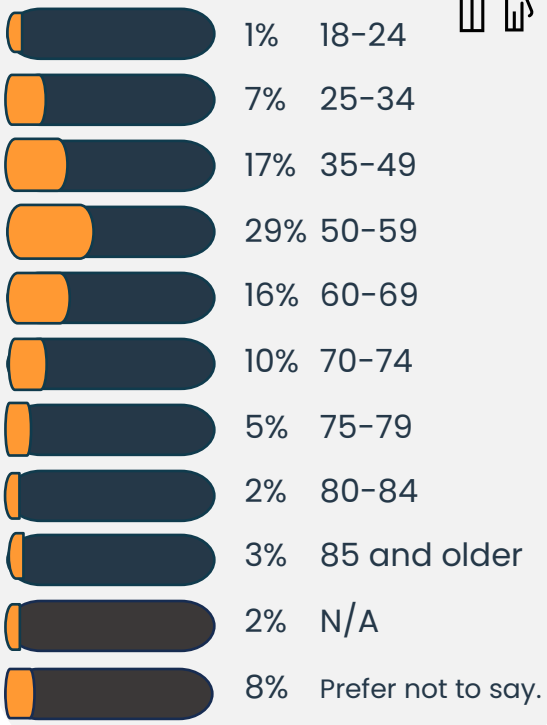


Residential Suburb

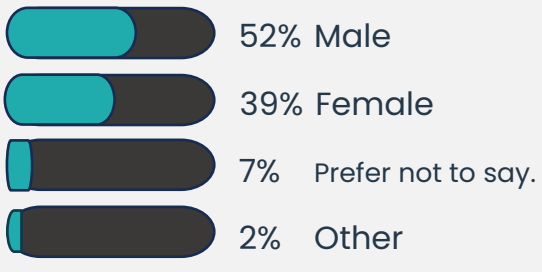


No respondents from Balaclava. Melbourne (CBD), Elwood, Ripponlea, St Kilda, St Kilda West, and Windsor

Age



Gender



Key stakeholders that were engaged as part of Stage 3

Stakeholder engagement was also important at this stage of engagement. The following were key stakeholders engaged in the lead up to and as part of the Stage 3 Engagement:

- Clarendon and Coventry Streets Business Association
- Melbourne Water
- Department of Transport and Planning
- Homes Victoria
- VicTrack
- Heritage Victoria
- Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- South Melbourne Landowners Group
- Emerald Hilll Residents Association
- Traditional Owner Groups (Post Stage 2 and Prior to Stage 3)
- Local and Federal Members (Noting Only)

What we heard

An overview of *'What we Heard'* in Phase 3

The following is a full overview of the feedback that was received via all modes of engagement.

Theme 1: Activities and Uses

- There was support to protect the Enterprise Precinct from residential encroachment by continuing to apply the Commercial 2 Zone, which prohibits dwellings. This view is consistent with the direction of the Victorian Government's Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan, which identifies land in South Melbourne as both regionally significant commercial and industrial land. There were calls from some submitters to rezone remnant Industrial 1 Zone land in the City Road Wedge/Triangle to a zone that allows dwellings, rather than the Commercial 2 Zone.
- Conversely, other submitters, suggested that more land be rezoned to allow increased residential densities, noting perceived low residential growth, and the Victorian Government's Housing Statement, and the ongoing housing crisis.
- Similarly, there were calls to increase housing density in existing areas that permit dwellings, to support businesses and increase activation. It was suggested that higher population targets should be pursued in South Melbourne.
- Meanwhile, other submitters were of the view that density and development should be limited as overdevelopment could threaten South Melbourne's liveability and character. Connected with this view was that South Melbourne's population should not be substantially increased.

- Melbourne Water submitted that flood risk should be addressed through the SMSP, including consideration of land use zoning and ensuring there is not an increase in density that may result in consequential risk to life and property risk. Therefore, Melbourne Water recommended that the SMSP area be reduced to remove areas of flood risk.

Theme 2: Built Form

- Many submitters supported removing controls that result in a wedding cake typology, where buildings have a stepped design, along with expressing support for the tailored built form response across the four precincts designated in the SMSP. Shadow controls measured at the spring equinox rather than the winter solstice were supported.
- While there was support for strengthening planning controls and policy to preserve heritage, many respondents thought these directions should be further strengthened, particularly at the interface between existing lower-scale neighbourhoods and the activity centre. Some respondents were of the view that mandatory controls could see fewer applications decided by VCAT, in turn providing greater certainty to stakeholders about expected development outcomes. Some respondents believed that building heights should be restricted to five storeys, if not fewer.
- Despite general support for the SMSP's overarching built form approach, some respondents were of the view that the execution was too conservative and that recommended buildings heights and Floor Area Ratios are too low. Recommended controls were perceived to unreasonably limit growth and development in South Melbourne.
- In turn, these submitted suggested that all controls be proposed as discretionary, rather than the mix of mandatory and discretionary controls proposed by the SMSP. Wide streets were viewed as having the potential to accommodate significantly taller buildings. Additionally, some lsubmitters believed that heritage protection would stifle activation along Clarendon Street

and Park Street, despite other submitters strongly supporting the continued focus on protecting and embracing South Melbourne's heritage.

Theme 3: Access and Movement

- Submitters emphasised the need to improve pedestrian safety, particularly to improve pedestrian crossings and connections from South Melbourne to other areas and points of interest. A few suggested building an overpass across Kings Way. There were some calls for Council to more strongly advocate for the delivery of the Park Street tram extension.
- Discussion was mixed about improving bike riding infrastructure. Some respondents suggested that the SMSP recommend more bike lanes, however others did not support providing bike lanes.
- Likewise, there was support for the SMSP's recommendations around reconfiguring car parking to facilitate other uses and investment, however there were calls from others about the need to provide more parking for residents, shoppers and visitors that is cheap and plentiful.

Theme 4: Public Spaces and Places

- There was support for creating new parks and green spaces for residents and workers, with some submitters suggesting that recommendations to increase biodiversity, plant more trees to reduce urban heat islands and sustainability should have a greater priority in the SMSP.
- Establishing a piazza, square or event space at the South Melbourne Town Hall was supported.
- Recommendations to plant more street trees and incorporate more greening were supported. The need to improve street safety and activate Clarendon and Park Street were highlighted as priorities. Laneways were perceived by some as underutilised, providing opportunities for activation.

- There was a perceived lack of vision for the South Melbourne Market, although it is noted that this will be primarily addressed by the South Melbourne Market Project Connect, the scope for which was endorsed by Council on 15 May 2024. There was a desire to preserve the original character and purpose of the market and not be too "upmarket". There was a suggestion that there is too much of a reliance on the South Melbourne Market as an attraction and driver of retail activity in South Melbourne.

What we heard: Received via Have Your Say

Theme 1: Activities and Uses

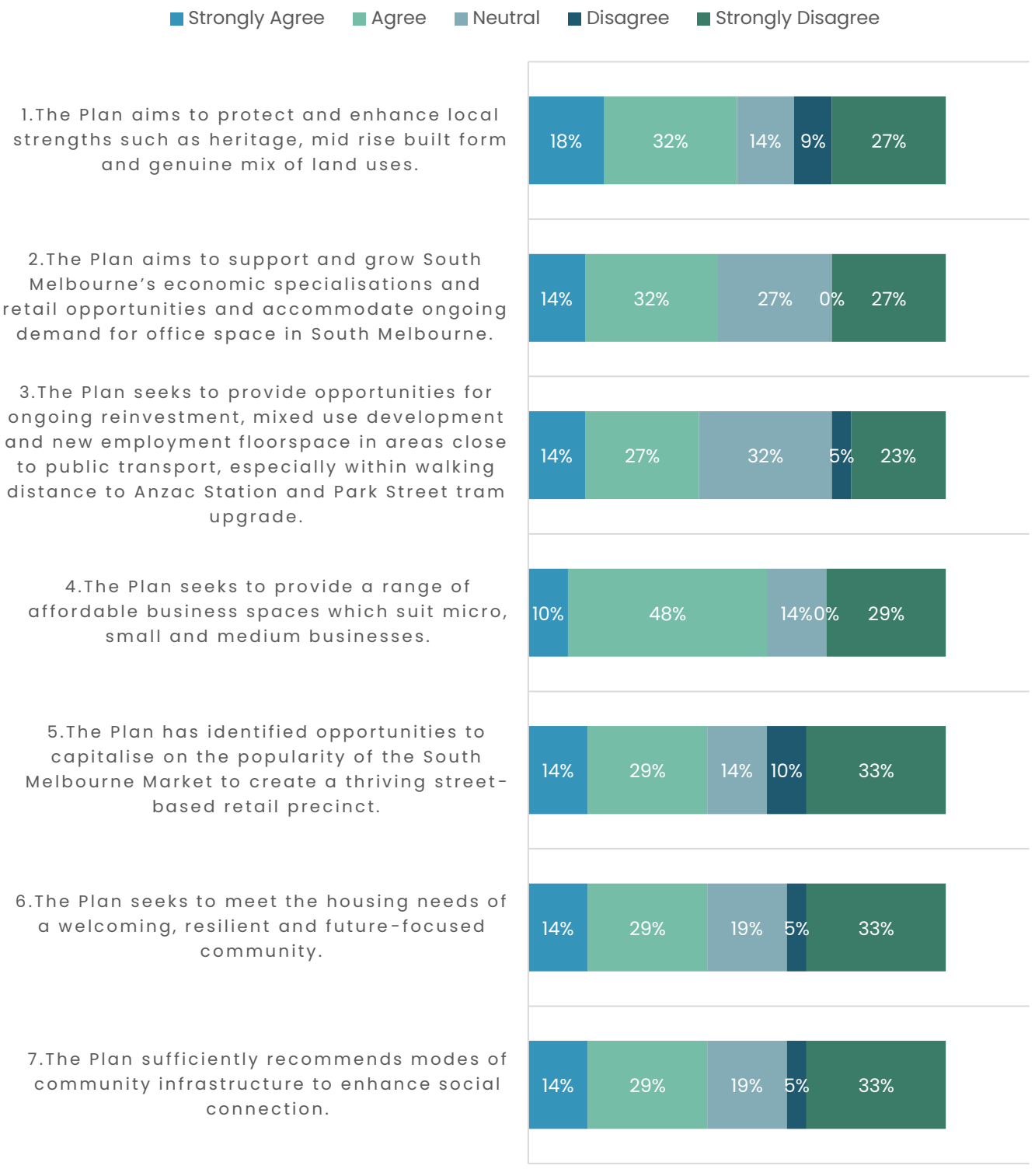
South Melbourne includes both a Major Activity Centre and Enterprise Precinct. The strong presence of professional and financial services, along with retail, hospitality, and personal services, highlight the significance of South Melbourne's contribution to the local and regional economy.

The draft SMSP recommended supporting business and employment growth within South Melbourne, attracting businesses seeking high levels of local amenity with a range of housing, retail, and hospitality options, and accommodating the housing needs of a welcoming, resilient, and future focused community.

The following are some examples of the feedback we received, however is not an exhaustive list of issues identified from this engagement on this theme. A full summary and response to submissions is include at Attachment 1, of the Council Report, dated 21 August 2024.

The following provides excerpts of what we heard were the ideas and challenges for the future of South Melbourne's employment and housing framework.

THEME 1: ACTIVITIES AND USES



Have Your Say Responses – Theme 1

Theme 2: Built Form and Design

The character of South Melbourne will continue to evolve as development pressure increases. With increasing demand for varied workplaces and residences, South Melbourne will continue to be a highly attractive location for public and private sector investment. Therefore, the recommended planning policy and controls articulated in the draft SMSP will seek to effectively manage this increasing development pressure while also striking a balance between accommodating population and employment growth, preserving heritage, minimising amenity impacts, and improving liveability. This framework will provide a higher level of clarity and certainty for the city and the wider community on the preferred outcomes sought for the area.

Each objectives includes the preferred built form and heritage outcomes for key design elements, such as (but not limited to) Floor Area Ratio (FAR), building height, heritage, internal amenity, street wall height, upper-level setback, solar access to the public realm, and building separation.

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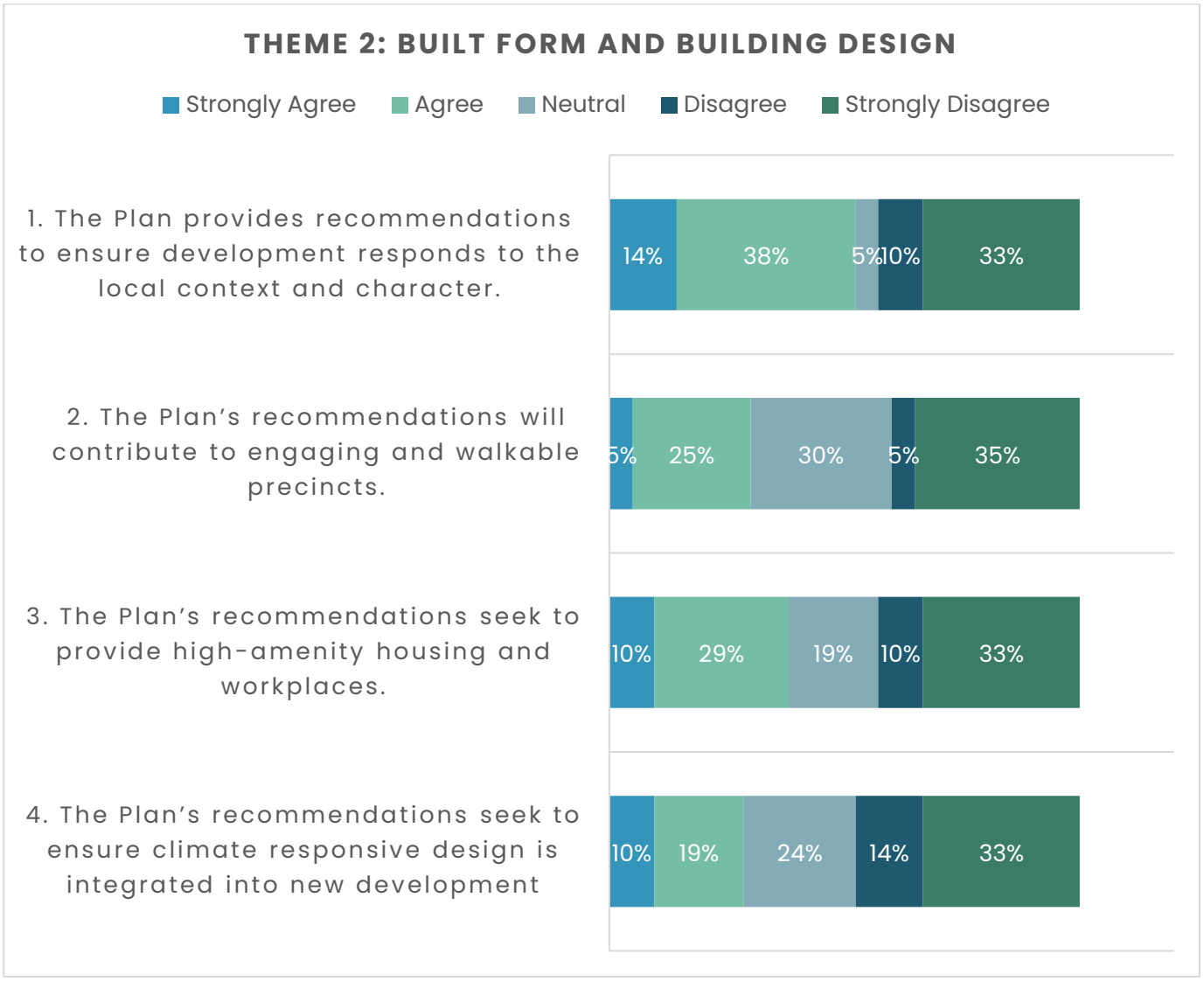


Have Your Say Responses – Theme 2

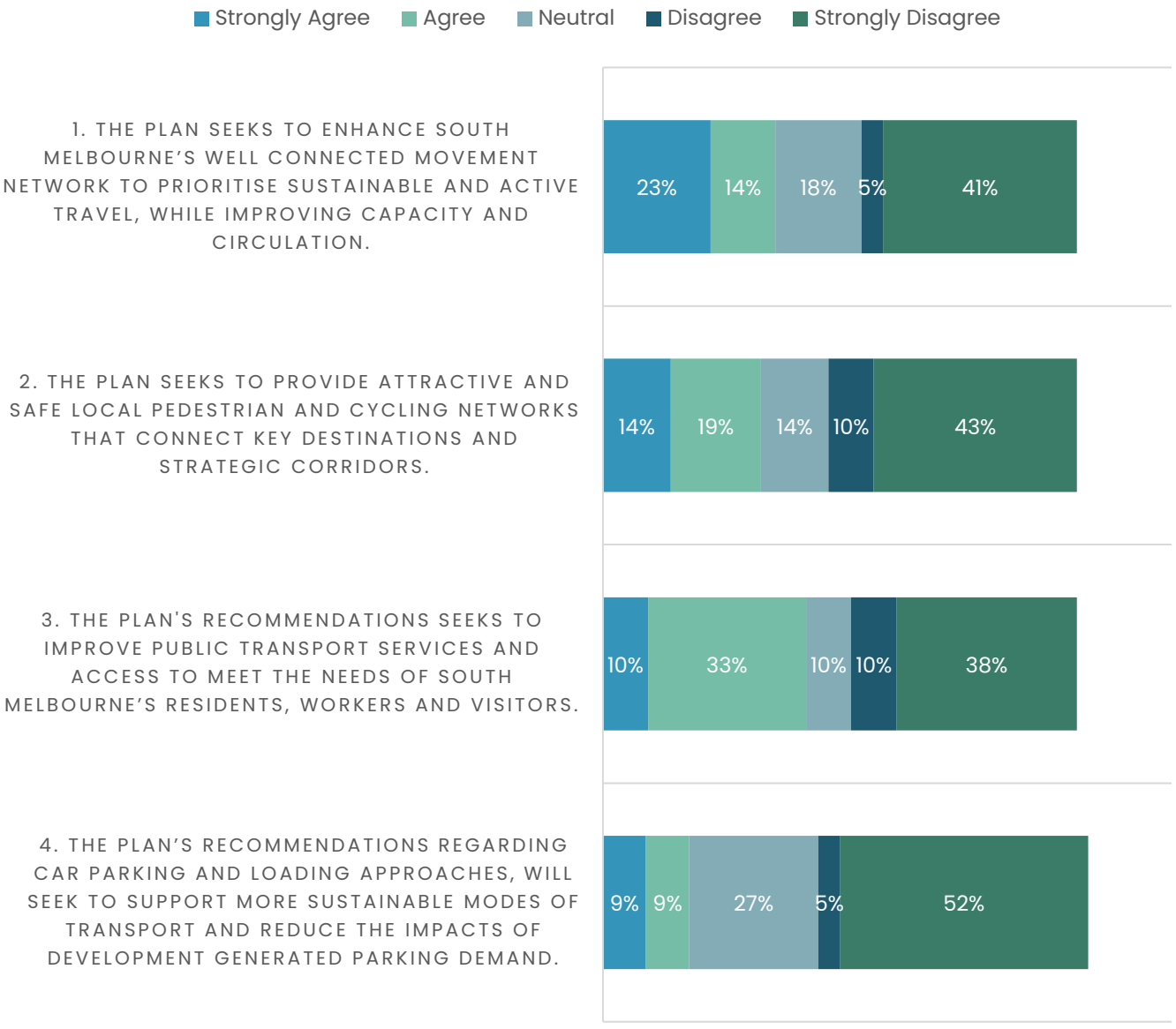
Theme 3: Access and Movement

As activity intensifies in South Melbourne, competition for road space among people who use motor vehicles, ride a bike, walk, or use public transport will also increase. A proactive and balanced approach is essential to effectively manage access to and within South Melbourne, mitigating congestion.

The draft SMSP identifies opportunities to enhance walkability and accessibility within South Melbourne by improving pedestrian crossing infrastructure at several key intersections. It also encourages improving movement connections to nearby key destinations such as Fishermans Bend and the Anzac Station.

The following are some examples of the feedback we received, however is not an exhaustive list of issues identified from this engagement on this theme. A full summary and response to submissions is include at Attachment 1, of the Council Report , dated 21 August 2024.

THEME 3: ACCESS AND MOVEMENT



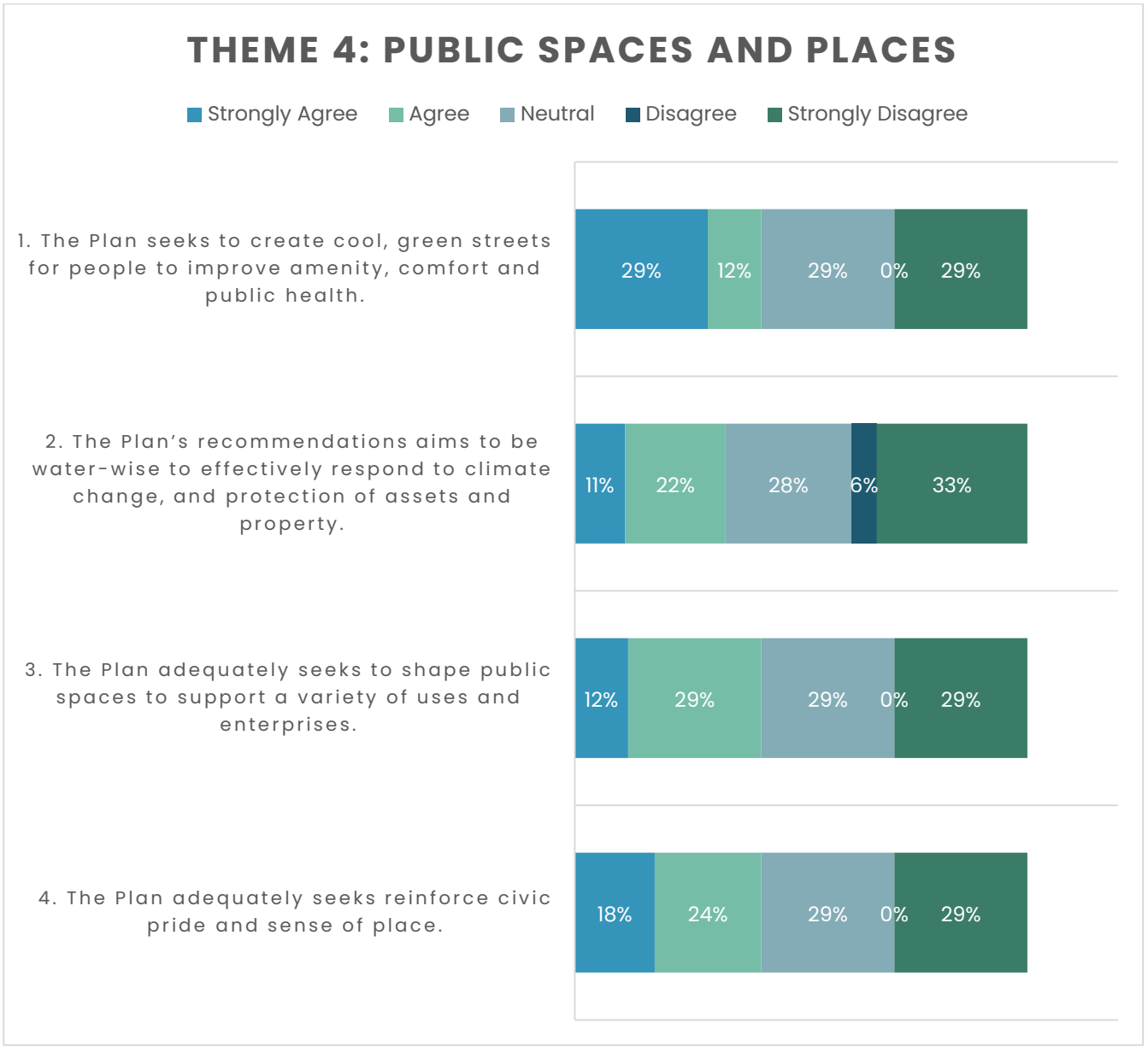
Have Your Say Responses – Theme 3

Theme 4: Public Spaces and Places

South Melbourne's public realm plays a vital role in connecting people to destinations and activities, providing spaces for individuals to pause, meet, and rest during their journey. The area's roads, footpaths, shared laneways, and parks contribute to the distinctive streetscape character, enhancing the overall environment through incorporation of greenery, shade, and weather protection.

The draft SMSP recommends actions that seek to reinforce South Melbourne as a place with a welcoming and creative community that celebrates its diversity and shares its stories supported by attractive, vibrant, climate-resilient, and people-friendly public spaces.

The following are some examples of the feedback we received, however is not an exhaustive list of issues identified from this engagement on this theme. A full summary and response to submissions is include at Attachment 1, of the Council Report, dated 21 August 2024.



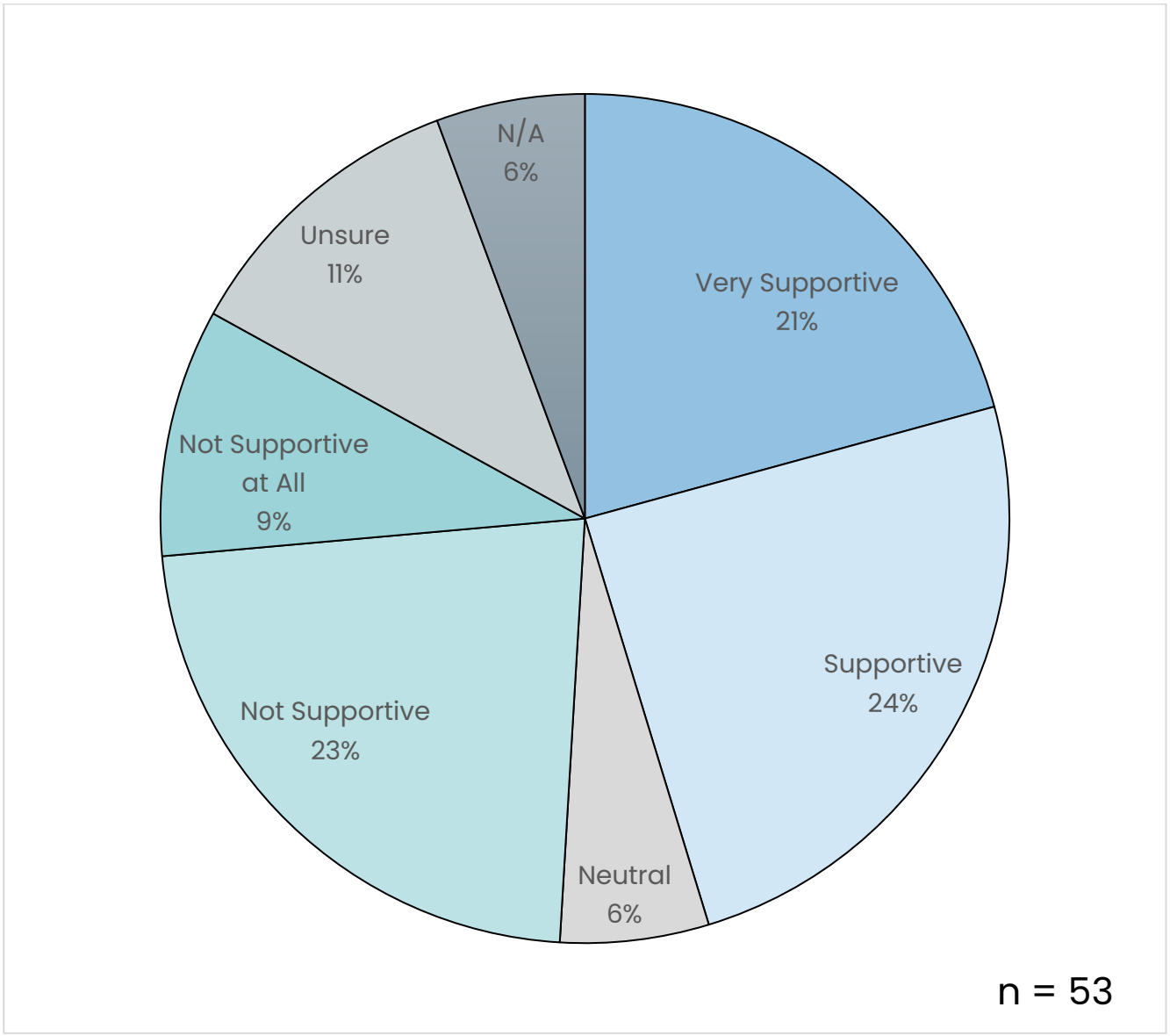
Have Your Say Responses – Theme 4

What we heard: Received via Mailout/Factsheet Survey

The mailout survey was adapted from the online survey and designed to be shorter to fit within a paper-based format. The factsheet survey was distributed in hardcopy format with reply paid envelopes. The surveys were designed and distributed to promote an accessible form of communication between the project and community. They included a QR code linking to the Have Your Say project page, where the community could obtain further information about the project. A total of 5,700 flyers were delivered by Australia Post with a QR code linking to the Have Your Say project page.

Mailout Data

The mailout survey was designed to broadly gauge owners/occupiers' attitudes towards the structure plan document. We asked participants *How supportive are you of the draft South Melbourne Structure Plan,"* as well as inviting any further feedback. The following graph is an indication of the broad support on the project from very supportive to not supportive at all.



Mailout data results

What we heard: Received via Written Submissions

Providing open feedback on the draft South Melbourne Structure Plan was open to the community and stakeholders and received via the project email address, as well as through the Have Yor Say – Future South Melbourne page. Written submissions had initial data analysis by Council with further data and analysis provided by Council and key technical consultants.

The following are some examples of the feedback we received, however is not an exhaustive list of issues identified from this engagement on this theme. A full summary and response to submissions is include at Attachment 1, of the Council Report, dated 21 August 2024.

Theme 1: Activities and Uses

Activation of High Streets

Submissions highlighted the need for specific objectives and actions in the SMSP to highlight support for economic growth, mixed-use development, and affordable business spaces. Further, active frontages and attractive buildings and increased residential densities were posed as a solution to enhance commercial activity.

South Melbourne's Population in the Context of a Major Activity Centre

Submissions raised concern regarding the perceived decline of South Melbourne's residential population over several decades and posed that the structure plan needs to support higher residential growth. Further submissions also noted that the housing crisis justifies more ambitions housing targets. Other submissions cautioned increasing the population.

The Application of Commercial 2 Zone (C2Z)

Some submissions suggested that land in the Commercial 2 Zone be included in the either the Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), or Mixed-Use Zone (MUZ), deeming these zones more suitable as they would enable a greater mix of uses and housing. These submissions were of the view that increased residential development is needed, especially amid the national housing crisis, and perceived demand for new commercial office space being lower.

Theme 2: Built Form and Design

Applying Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to Recently Approved Development

Some submissions highlighted that the proposed FAR control was too conservative.

Preservation of Heritage Character versus Built Form Controls

Some submissions posed that heritage constraints already limit growth potential, and applying FAR further restricts development capacity. However, some submitters also raised concerns with perceived over development, urging the Council to take a more proactive role in preserving the area's heritage and residential amenity.

The Use of Mandatory Controls

Some submitters argued that introducing FAR as a mandatory requirement should not be supported, suggesting that the draft SMSP is inconsistent with State Government guidelines. Other submitters noted that mandatory controls would provide more certainty.

The Use of State Policy in the SMSP

Some submissions agreed that the draft SMSP aligns with regional policies, emphasizing the role of South Melbourne as a significant employment and creative industry hub, noting the Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan (MICLUP). However, some of the proposed planning controls were perceived to be too rigid for a

Major Activity Centre and having regard to Victoria's Housing Statement (the Housing Statement) (released in September 2023).

Theme 3: Access and Movement

Parking

Submitters highlighted the need for a Parking Overlay and associated Parking Precinct Plan to manage parking effectively and respond to increased density and development demands.. Other submitters called for more onsite parking in new developments, whilst others sought greater emphasis on supporting sustainable transport modes.

Some submitters sought more on street parking for residents and shoppers, whilst others suggested that parking spaces be removed from small and narrow streets.

Calls for Advocacy Regarding Park Street Tram Extension

One submitter requested that Council advocate for the Park Street tram line extension more strongly and as a matter of great importance.

Theme 4: Public Spaces and Places

New open space

Submissions highlighted for the need for additional parks to provide relaxation spaces for high-rise residents and workers. It was suggested that this could be achieved by converting vacant blocks and closing roads to create new parks.

What we heard: Advisory Committee Meetings

Six meetings were conducted with key groups, including Council's advisory groups and committees, and a local business association. These were arranged during regular meeting times to facilitate easy participation. Feedback heard in advisory committee meetings allowed for a range of views to be heard on the Structure Plan. Below is a table outlining which committees we met with and when.

Port Phillip Multifaith Network	12 February 2024
Clarendon Street and Coventry Street Traders	19 February 2024
LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee	22 February 2024
Older Person Advisory Committee (OPAC)	4 March 2024
Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)	5 March 2024
Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC)	5 March 2024

The need for 'Third Spaces'

Feedback was received on the need for 'third spaces", i.e., social surroundings that are separate from the two usual social environments of home and the workplace. These open spaces could be used for bazaars, festivals, and plazas. The need for event and café spaces that can allow people to hang out and linger as well as providing public spaces that are inviting and not overwhelmed by buildings was suggested.

Community Facilities

Increased provision of community facilities for community meetings was suggested, including places of worship.

Better Transport Links

Concerns and ideas for better transport connectivity in and around South Melbourne were raised. These included ideas of better connectivity from St Kilda and Fishermans Bend, more services during peak times (especially with ANZAC Station set to open in

2025), and improving public transport connectivity from South Melbourne to places south of South Melbourne, for example Park Towers to Albert Park Golf Course.

Sustainable Transportation and E-Bikes

The need for increased walkability and livability, ensuring South Melbourne is a well-connected suburb was raised, noting thatpeople want to live in a place where to enjoy these amenities. The need for e-bikes for better connectivity was raised, namely access to e-bikes with baskets, bright bike sheds to brighten surrounds and education on e-bikes for a better utilized and safer system.

Better Built Form Design

Sustainability and more climate friendly buildings were raised as an issue of importance. Furthermore, providing a mix of modern and heritage buildings was raised to attract different demographics to South Melbourne and celebrate its diversity. One respondent raised that they would like to see the end of 'wedding cake' building typologies in South Melbourne, where upper levels are tiered.

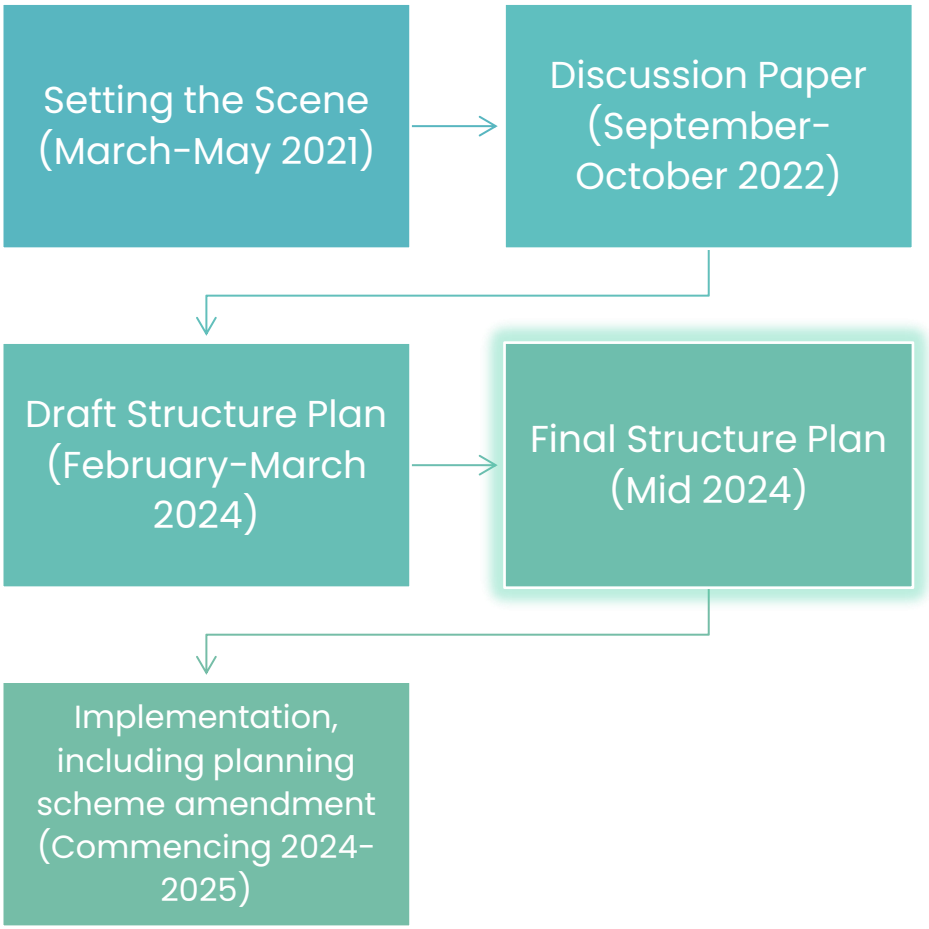
Shaded streets and planting

There is a need for comfortable areas around South Melbourne Market. Shade, toilets, and better seating at tram stops are needed for a comfortable public realm experience. This was partly echoed by other sentiments that shade, weather protection, shelter is critical especially given Melbourne's climate. Greater planting of native vegetation was also posed as an idea.

Next steps

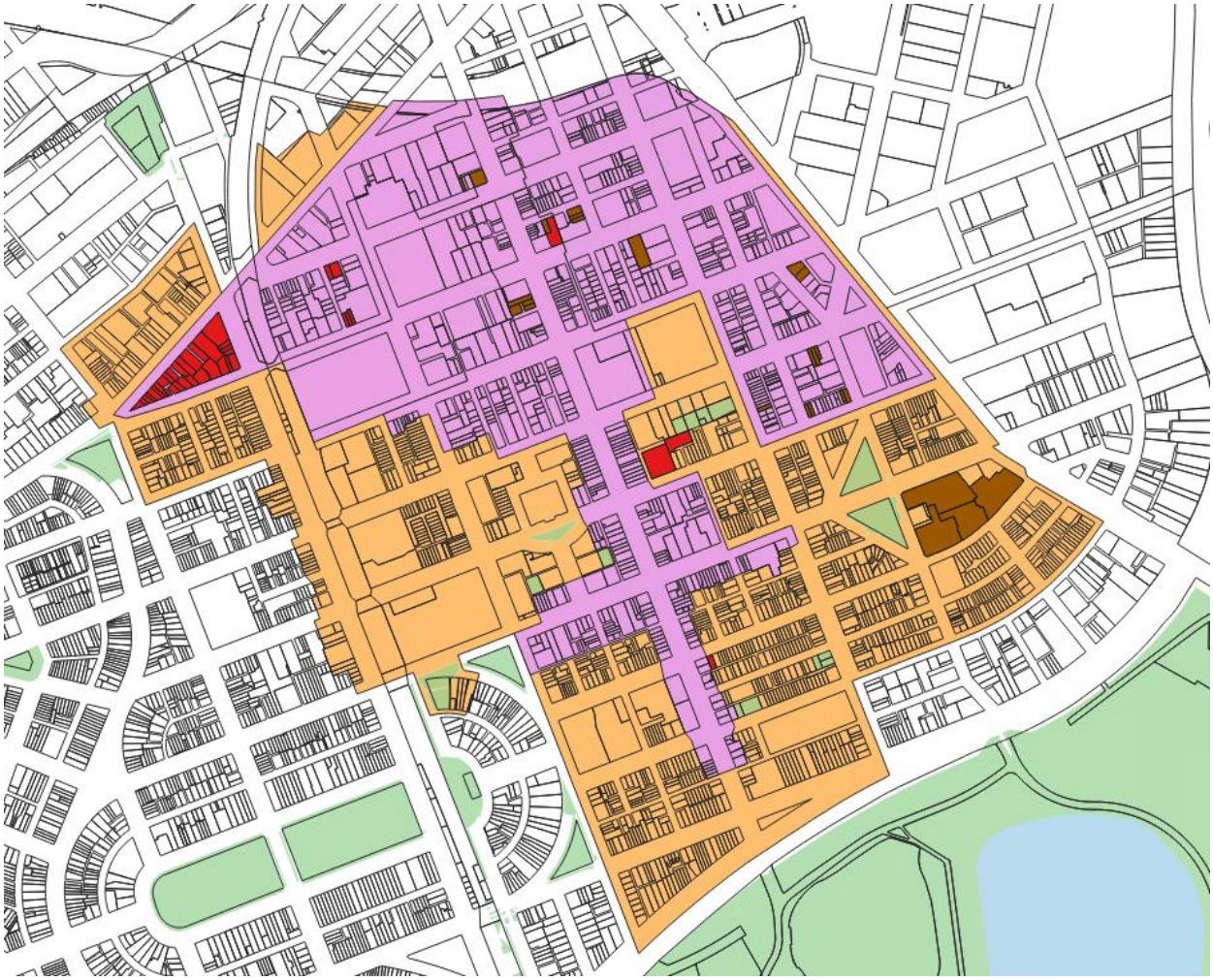
Further activities/Next steps

The South Melbourne Structure Plan (SMSP) will be an integrated planning framework to guide change in South Melbourne over a 20-year period. The draft SMSP contains an implementation strategy which lists the actions and provides a timeframe for delivery.



Attachment A

SMSP Mailout Distribution Area



Owners and occupiers in the denoted orange, pink, red and brown areas, were notified via the mailout.