

Draft Arden Structure Plan
**Consultation Analysis:
Summary Report**
February 2021



Considering the future of Arden

In July and August 2020, the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Planning Authority sought public feedback on the draft *Arden Structure Plan* (draft Plan). The draft Plan builds on the principles of the *Arden Vision*, which underwent public consultation in 2016, and was finalised and endorsed by council and State Government in 2018. The vision begins to set the direction for the development of the Arden precinct over the next thirty years.

Views were captured with online surveys, virtual focus group discussions, phone calls, one on one meetings and written submissions.

Key questions were asked during this latest phase of consultation, which focussed on how well the draft Plan achieved the objectives in the shared vision based on six key areas:

1. Neighbourhood character
2. Buildings and affordable housing
3. Community facilities and services
4. Open space
5. Getting around
6. Sustainability.

This summary provides an overview of the key consultation findings.

This document presents the high-level themes that emerged from all the consultation undertaken during this period, and also provides a detailed analysis of the online survey, and virtual focus group feedback. For the purposes of this summary, where participants responded to open-ended questions with comments or ideas, these have been synthesised and paraphrased to convey the most frequently held positions.

The feedback will inform the final *Arden Structure Plan*.

Our engagement objectives

We aimed to:

- Understand the level of support for the draft Plan among the precinct community and stakeholders.
- Consult the community on whether the draft Plan delivers the objectives outlined in the *Arden Vision*.
- Gather community input on valued attributes, features, values, and characteristics of the existing community to be reflected in Arden.
- Support a wide range of community members to participate meaningfully in the engagement process.

How we engaged the public

In total 350,000 people were reached, and the views of 490 people recorded, across five virtual events and six digital platforms.

As part of this consultation, we spoke with Aboriginal Traditional Custodians, residents, interested community members, neighbourhood associations, landowners, business owners, property and planning groups, and government agencies.

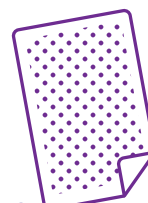
We encouraged people to participate in the conversation via the Arden website, where there was an online survey, virtual discussion board, frequently asked questions, a project brochure and an interactive map of Arden. We also ran small focus groups online, to have more detailed conversations with interested parties. Our targeted social media promotion reached thousands and project postcards were delivered to all homes and businesses within a 1km radius of the precinct. We sent emails to local organisations, owners of major landholdings and government agencies, as well as e-newsletters to project subscribers. Posters were put up at key locations around North Melbourne.

Due to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions across Victoria, and particularly North Melbourne, planned face-to-face engagement activities were not possible. Digital engagement, phone interpreter services, as well as an 'after-hours' phone line were provided to help mitigate these barriers. The small focus groups were also held virtually, and two additional weeks were added to the consultation period to provide more time for people to get involved.

Promotion



15,300
postcards
delivered

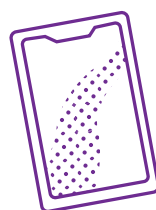


30
posters
pinned up

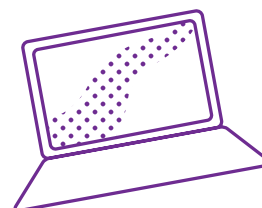


600
emails sent

Reach



350,000
social media
views

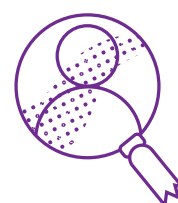


29,458
website visitors

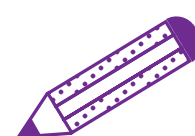
Feedback



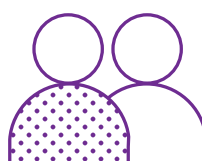
411
online surveys



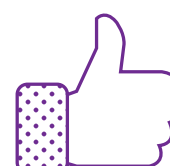
29
focus group
participants



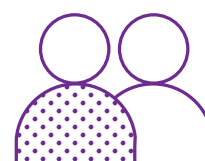
50
written
submissions



16
one on one
conversations



2,500
social media
reactions



8
questions
posted

Who we heard from

Of the 440 people who responded to our online survey or participated in a focus group discussion, the largest proportion were aged between 26 and 35 years old. The vast majority live or own a home locally to the precinct.

A further 50 written submissions were received from landowners, businesses, local residents, community organisations and advocacy bodies. We also collected views from the community through social media and directly meeting with 14 business owners.

This feedback contained wide commentary, often technical and detailed in nature, and has been considered separately from the analysis of the survey and focus groups.

We also sought concepts and impressions from Aboriginal Traditional Custodians in recognition of their original and continuous connection to the area.

Note:

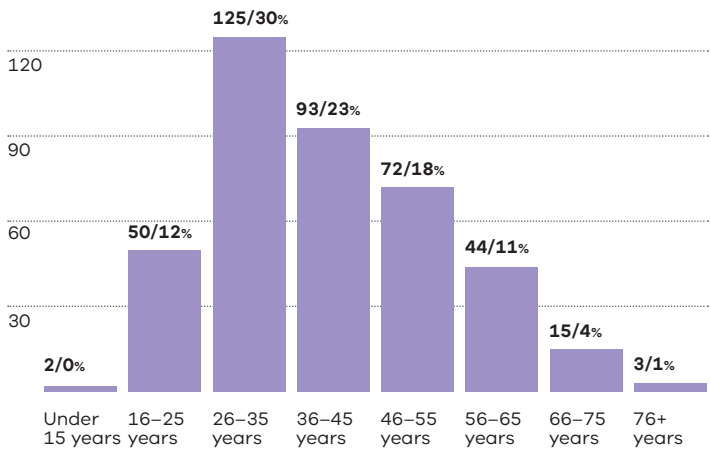
All of the feedback gathered during this time was de-identified and read by independent data analysts. Each comment has been coded and categorised, following multiple rounds of review to highlight common themes. Responses to multiple-choice or ranking questions have been charted to help gauge relative levels of support for particular proposals. For rating questions (1 being least supportive and 10 highly supportive) answers were allocated into three groups:

- 1–4 = unsupportive
- 5–6 = unsure
- 7–10 supportive.

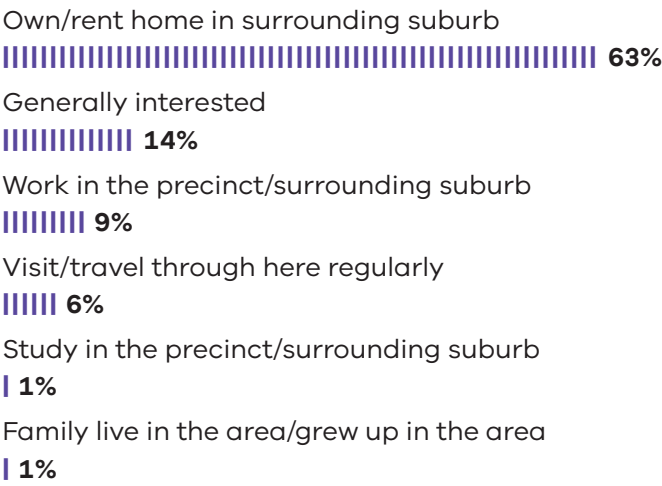
Where survey and focus group topics overlap, the results are presented together.

Participant demographics

Age



Relationship to the precinct



Summary of emerging themes

The following high-level themes summarise the most prominent ideas and sentiments expressed in relation to the draft Arden Structure

Plan. The remainder of the report outlines feedback findings in more detail.



Neighbourhood character

Feedback received expressed the importance of creating relaxed, informal places within Arden where individuals and groups can gather, relax or exercise in a 'village' feel. Encouraging a diversity of businesses to be active at street level was seen as a key to creating a vibrant atmosphere that is safe, interesting and inclusive. Reflecting and respecting the heritage of the area was also seen as a key to ensuring that the precinct develops as a cohesive neighbourhood.



Sustainability

Sustainability was a key theme found in many submissions as well as drawing a strong response from survey and focus group participants. Most feedback expressed interest in the development of a sustainable, socially inclusive neighbourhood where high-quality construction and design will create a peaceful place to live. Survey participants in particular expressed that the sustainability objectives outlined in the final plan for Arden must be realised in the future.

Across all feedback there was significant interest in how sustainability would be implemented in the delivery of Arden.



Movement and access

There was a strong desire to make the precinct safe and connected for cyclists and pedestrians while ensuring that it was accessible to all.

The carparking model proposed in the draft Plan received mixed feedback, with some participants expressing concern about how this might impact on the elderly, disabled, or people with children. A deeper understanding about how this carparking model would work in practice is required by the public.



Public realm

The public realm was of key concern to many who engaged with us, with strong responses in the survey, social media commentary and from Aboriginal Traditional Custodians around streets and green spaces, and how they intersect with water management.

Participants have high aspirations for the management of the environment and equity for the people who live in and near Arden. They want the buildings to be built to last, the open space to be green and safe, with small, locally owned business to service the needs of residents.



Affordable housing

There was overwhelming support across a majority of those who provided feedback, that the project must deliver on affordable housing. There was a strong consensus from survey respondents that the prescribed amount of affordable housing should be more ambitious than the six per cent suggested.

Many submitters wanted to better understand how this would be implemented noting the number of ways in which affordable housing could be delivered.



Delivery and implementation

People were interested in how Arden would be delivered. Key questions included how the transition of land uses would be handled and the protection of existing land uses and businesses. Many submitters were interested in the mechanisms for funding infrastructure, the proposed precinct governance model and more detailed information on the specific planning controls that would help achieve the vision.



Building heights

Concerns were raised about the proposed building heights within the precinct, particularly the resulting overshadowing of open space and wind tunnels that these tall buildings might cause. Most people supported locating the majority of the tallest buildings near the freeway and suggested that good design of buildings would make the height more acceptable.

Many submitters were interested in the future planning controls and asked questions about the use of floor area ratios.

Next steps

The final *Arden Structure Plan* will be shaped by the feedback received from local residents, community bodies, landowners, businesses and Aboriginal Traditional Custodians. Final technical studies into the opportunities and constraints of the precinct are also being completed and these will further inform the final outcomes.

The Victorian Planning Authority is the planning authority for the Arden precinct, and is working collaboratively with the City of Melbourne and Department of Transport to prepare the final *Arden Structure Plan* and associated draft amendment to the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*.

The amendment will enable new land uses and set built form parameters, confirming the spatial structure and facilitating delivery of necessary infrastructure.

It is anticipated the next round of public consultation on planning for Arden will take place later in 2021.

To receive Arden updates subscribe at vpa.vic.gov.au/arden/ or participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/arden

Traditional Custodians

We hosted three virtual workshops with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, and

Boon Wurrung Foundation to discuss how we interpreted Aboriginal cultural heritage and values in the draft Plan for Arden and nearby Macaulay.

We heard:

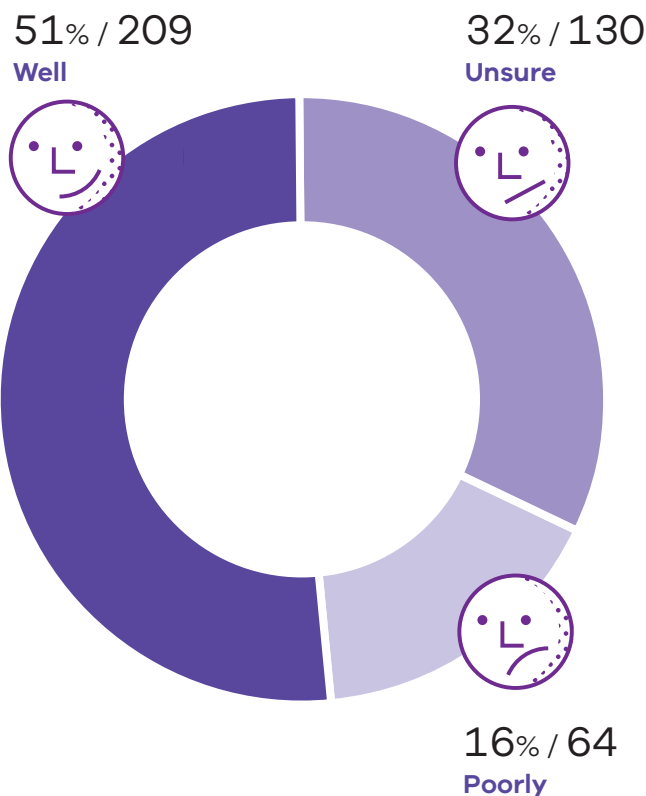
- The proposed 'celebration of water' in Arden and use of indigenous vegetation would be an effective mechanism to engage with the historical landscape of the area. We must work with the natural flows and ecology of the water system. This will spark excellent opportunities for community education.
- The use of local Aboriginal symbols, naming and design in the built environment will embed meaningful reminders of the Country's heritage and history. We should avoid monuments and celebrate contemporary Aboriginal culture as well as heritage.
- The provision of a dedicated and flexible space for Aboriginal business and activities would be of great benefit to the surrounding Aboriginal community and should be located next to outdoor spaces and parks, where meeting and cultural activities can take place.
- It's critical to build in 'triggers' through the Planning Scheme or in design briefs that encourage developers to engage with Aboriginal Traditional Custodian Owners at the conception of projects – the earlier the better.
- Arden must be designed to be culturally and economically inclusive of Aboriginal people, but also new Australians. The cultural diversity and history of working class people in North Melbourne is an important part of its identity that should be embraced, including the provision of a high level of affordable housing and community facilities.
- We must empower people to express a diversity of languages and cultures to enrich Arden and Melbourne.
- As the site develops, Aboriginal people should be given additional opportunities to conduct archaeological investigations. It is important to create more opportunities for Aboriginal people to capture the history of the area and help tell the story of Arden.

Survey & focus group findings

What you told us about the draft Plan’s fulfilment of the Arden Vision

Survey and focus group participants were asked to refer to the *Arden Vision* and consider how the draft Plan will deliver on it. **51 per cent believe** the draft Plan addresses the directions in the vision well.

How well does the draft Plan address the directions in the vision?



You said:

“Overall the vision appears to be thoroughly addressed and has all the elements to make this a success.”

– Survey respondent

“A vision/plan evolves and changes especially such as this project having a time frame of 15 years. Being in its infancy I hope this building project does not be a blight on the beauty of the surrounding suburbs. I hope the buildings will blend in.”

– Survey respondent

We heard:

- Some people feel that the draft Plan is clear and covers all directions set out in the vision, while others still need more information.
- Some people feel the proposals may lead to over-development, without enough open space, yet for others there was a good balance between housing and green space.
- Sustainable design is well represented in the draft Plan.
- It would be good to have more affordable housing included in the final development.

Note:

All of the feedback gathered during this time was de-identified and read by independent data analysts. Each comment has been coded and categorised, following multiple rounds of review to highlight common themes. Responses to multiple-choice or ranking questions have been charted to help gauge relative levels of support for particular proposals. For rating questions (1 being least supportive and 10 highly supportive) answers were allocated into three groups:

- 1–4 = unsupportive
- 5–6 = unsure
- 7–10 supportive.

Where survey and focus group topics overlap, the results are presented together.



Your 'top three' ways to make Arden a great place to be

A series of questions offered survey and focus group participants the chance to prioritise a list of pre-defined features which they would most like to see delivered in the neighbourhood.

For an inviting destination and a great place to live (top three choices)

1. Street trees, water features and vertical gardens on buildings
2. Prioritising people walking and riding bikes
3. Aboriginal and industrial history is incorporated in design, signage and murals

You said:

"Incorporation of greenery as a priority, and making the infrastructure welcoming for people to idle by (lots of available outdoor seating and tables, etc)."

– **Survey respondent**

"Ensure ground level interactions are possible, retail spaces need to be filled, include shops and people around."

– **Focus group participant**



Most important neighbourhood features (top three choices)

1. Streets that are easy to get around by foot, bike and public transport
2. Environmentally sustainable systems
3. Places for people to meet, get help, learn, create or enjoy nature

Top activities for the large parks and paved plazas (top three choices)

1. Markets, performances and public events
2. Relaxation and connection with nature or heritage
3. Individual exercise or dog walking

Top activities for smaller pocket parks and green street reserves (all these choices had similar response rates)

1. Relaxation and connection with nature or heritage
2. Picnics or BBQs
3. Individual exercise
4. Children's play

Most important local amenities (top three choices)

1. Independent retail and eateries
2. Fresh food stores
3. Small business shopfronts

You said:

"Errol Street doesn't have many chain stores. Model the new street on that, it fits the vibe and would merge well with the surrounding area. Blends in seamlessly."

– Focus group participant

Most important community facilities (top three choices)

1. Learning and library services
2. Arts and cultural expression opportunities
3. Social and recreational programs

You said:

"Creating a sense of community means you need to enable interactions and conversations."

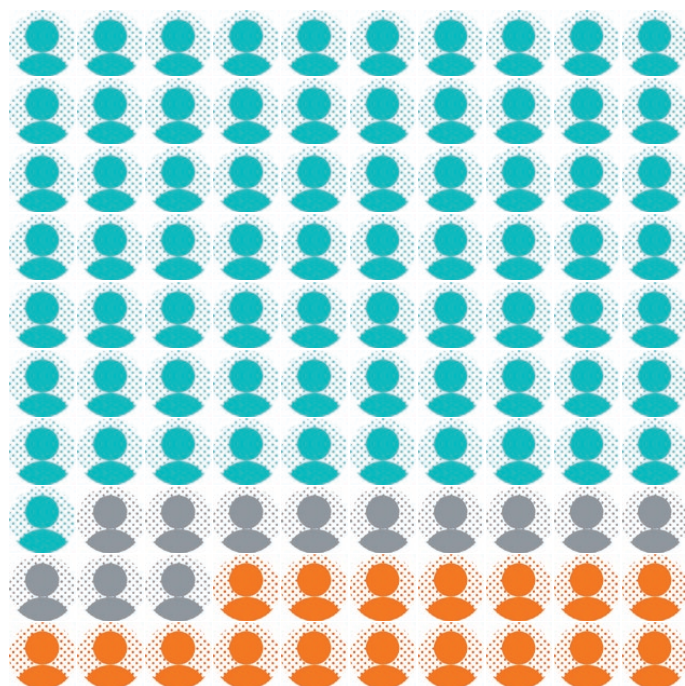
– Focus group participant

Affordable housing

The draft Plan proposes the dedication of six per cent of dwellings for affordable housing. Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with this proposal.

71 per cent support mandatory requirements for at least six per cent of all new housing in Arden to be affordable for people living on very low to moderate incomes.

To what extent do you support mandatory requirements for at least six per cent of all new housing to be affordable for people living on low to moderate incomes?



71%
Support

12%
Neither agree
or disagree

17%
Disagree

You said:

"It's a small start but it should be far higher than six per cent. The more you support people who are unable to find affordable accommodation the greater impact you will see overall in the community. Should be at least 10 per cent if not higher."

– **Survey respondent**

"I think we need to be clear, we're not just talking about public housing, we're also talking about low-cost housing for essential workers, which is linked to things like COVID. If people live close to their work they're less likely to have to cramp on public transport."

– **Focus group participant**

We heard:

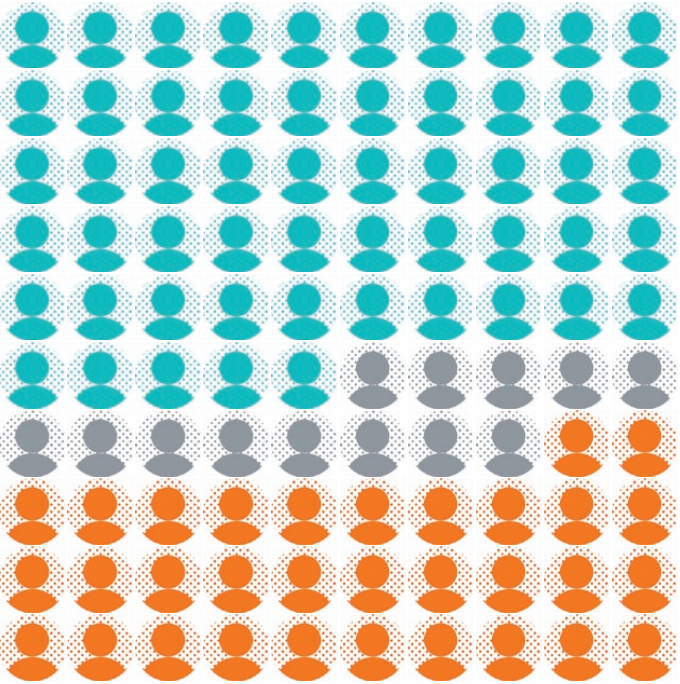
- Strong support for providing more affordable housing.
- Affordable housing is important to support a diverse community.
- Everyone deserves an affordable home.
- Low income workers should be supported.

Location of taller buildings

Participants were provided with detailed plans for how high proposed buildings would be, where they would be located, and the transition of buildings heights around the neighbourhood in the draft Plan. Participants were then asked if they supported what was proposed.

55 per cent support locating Arden’s taller buildings (between 16–40 storeys) mainly along the freeway boundary, with heights transitioning down (from 15 storeys) as they meet adjoining neighbourhoods and open spaces.

To what extent do you support locating Arden’s taller buildings (between 16–40 storeys) mainly along the freeway boundary, with heights transitioning down (from 15 storeys) as they meet adjoining neighbourhoods and open spaces?



55%
Support

13%
Neither agree or disagree

32%
Disagree

You said:

“It’s good to keep them focused in one area, stepping down from the freeway. They must however have adequate soundproofing and not overshadow adjacent communities both within and outside the precinct.”

– Survey respondent

“A transition is good, and I support much more intense densification, but skyscrapers are quite environmentally unsustainable, and contribute to many negative externalities (wind tunnel effect, UHI, high energy requirements).”

– Focus group participant

We heard:

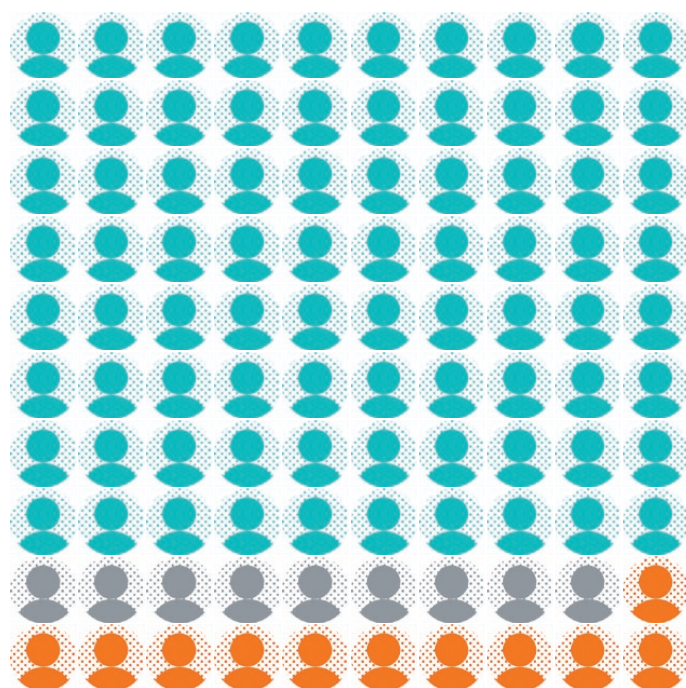
- Placing high density buildings near the freeway makes sense, because they have the potential to reduce traffic noise and limit shadowing of lower-scale parts of the neighbourhood.
- High-rise buildings are not desirable and don’t feel sympathetic with the surrounding environment.
- In other parts of Melbourne tall buildings create shadows and wind-tunnels that impact significantly on livability.

Travelling to and around Arden

The draft Plan proposes to dedicate some road space for a tram or bus service. Participants were asked whether this is a proposal they support.

80 per cent support allocating road space for a dedicated tram or bus service for Arden.

To what extent do you support allocating road space for a dedicated tram or bus service for Arden?



80%
Support

11%
Neither agree
or disagree

9%
Disagree

You said:

"Encouraging people to not drive and instead use public transport is paramount and is the future."

– **Survey respondent**

"If the PT is effective, I'll be more encouraged to use it. Driving is a last resort for me, when it's local I'm cool with catching easy public transport."

– **Focus group participant**

We heard:

- This measure will encourage more people to use public transport.
- It's important to encourage public transport use, as well as cycling and pedestrian infrastructure over the use of private vehicles.
- Trams are preferable to buses and will make it easier to get around the suburb.
- The area already has a strong network of public transport.

Your 'top three' ways to make us less car-dependent

1. Safer bike lanes, footpaths and waiting areas
2. Streets that are simple to navigate and well connected to key destinations
3. Safer streets with better lighting

"At the moment on Canning Street where the Woolworths is, that's extremely car-centric. You can tell people want to go to the end of the block and cross the street which is now how people cross. I would love to see pedestrians given an equal way as car drivers so drivers get the message they really have to slow down."

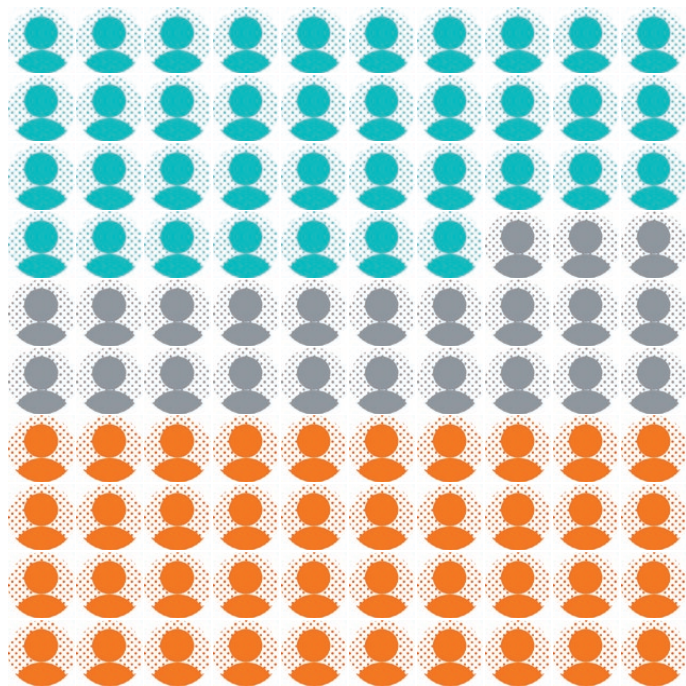
– **Focus group participant**

‘Decoupling’ parking from apartment buildings

The draft Plan proposed separating car parking from residential buildings, as a way to minimise traffic in parts of the precinct. Participants were asked whether they supported this proposal.

37 per cent support the location of residential car parking for apartment buildings in a separate, secure building, within five minutes of home.

To what extent do you support the proposal to locate residential car parking for apartment buildings in a separate secure building within five minutes of home?



37%
Support

23%
Neither agree
or disagree

40%
Disagree

You said:

“This is impractical. Not everyone is able to carry heavy items or control children etc such a distance from home to the car.”

– Survey respondent

“Lack of parking would deter me, unless it was more affordable.”

– Focus group participant

“The apartment I have has a storage cage and a car spot. Because I have so many things I need that storage space. If my parking space is separate I couldn’t use it as storage.”

– Focus group participant

We heard:

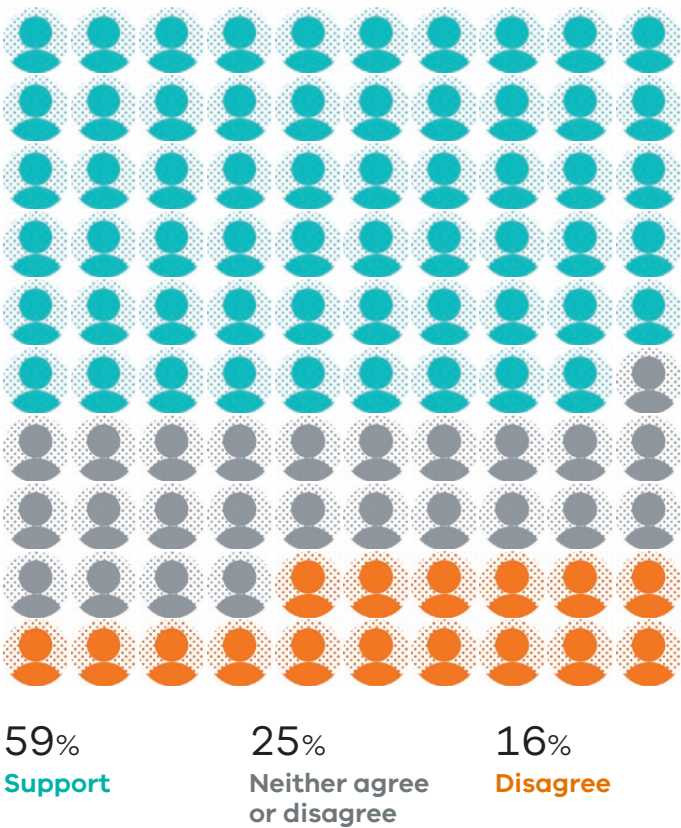
- Having direct access to parking is especially important for people with mobility challenges and young children.
- This design is a better use of space and will discourage high levels of private car use in this neighbourhood.
- We need to feel safe getting to and from our cars late at night, and able to carry heavy loads from the car to the house.

Neighbourhood sustainability

Participants were asked both whether the draft Plan would support the development of a sustainable place to live, as well as whether they had any ideas for how to achieve the sustainable neighbourhood they envisage for the future.

59 per cent think the actions proposed in the draft Plan will ensure Arden becomes a sustainable neighbourhood.

To what extent do you think the actions proposed in the draft Plan will assure that Arden becomes a sustainable neighborhood?



You said:

“Good foundations, always more can be done. A space can affect the ways in which people live, this space could be designed to encourage living a sustainable lifestyle with communal compost bins, community gardening lots, education centres etc.”

– **Focus group participant**

“Ensure that buildings, new infrastructure etc is maintained and well kept. Make sure that the buildings are built with durable materials.”

– **Focus group participant**

“Private sector will be building most of these buildings – (they) will aim for the minimum standards to maximise profit. Please have high standards of new builds that developers have to meet.”

– **Focus group participant**

We heard:

- There are many additional opportunities we should explore to achieve our sustainability objectives for Arden.
- We’d like to see renewable energy options through communal solar and/or wind schemes as part of the overall development.
- Large apartment buildings could have organic waste collection points that feed a commercial composting system, as well as other recycling options other than regular council collection.
- Let’s green our roofs and create spaces for productive community gardens.
- High quality construction materials could be mandated in order design long-lasting buildings.



Other sources of feedback

Written submissions and one on one conversations

During the consultation period, we received 50 written submissions from the community, including from landowners, businesses, local residents, community organisations and advocacy bodies. We also had one on one conversations with key landowners in the precinct.

We heard:

- The draft Plan has largely been received positively.
- Greater clarity is needed around the delivery mechanisms and governance arrangements of Arden.
- Submissions included requests for more information on the proposed planning controls.
- Detailed questions focussed on core planning, including statutory planning controls and proposed definitions of future 'innovation' land uses.
- There was notable interest in the North Melbourne Football Club and its future role within the Arden precinct.
- Open space provision was regularly discussed including the amount, type and location of open space provided, and how it can be best used by the community.
- The transition of the precinct from the present-day to the *Arden Vision* was of special interest to many existing businesses or landowners. Existing businesses were interested in how they will continue to operate in this transitioning neighborhood.
- New infrastructure and high design standards come with a financial cost that must be balanced in order to be viable.

- Further clarification was sought on the technical aspects in the plan which include proposed land uses, flood management, road hierarchy and design and traffic movement.
- There was an appetite from some submitters seeking greater development heights to enable delivery of more jobs or apartments within areas of the precinct.

Social media

We advertised the opportunity to participate in Arden consultation activities via Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Our posts generated hundreds of reader comments. The most common views expressed reinforced feedback received through the survey and the focus groups.

We heard:

- Parks and green spaces must be prioritised in planning for the precinct.
- High-rise buildings are not desirable.
- There is desire to avoid the risk of 'over development'.
- The provision of additional affordable housing for people on low incomes is vital.
- There is a need to learn from previous urban renewal mistakes and create a place that people are proud of and enjoy spending time in.
- More sports facilities were cited as excellent assets for the area.
- There is strong support for a better public transport system to support the precinct.

