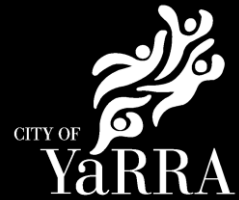


Property Strategy Community Engagement Report



This report details the specifics of the property strategy community engagement and evaluates the participation. The consultation opened on 31 May and was live until Monday 24 June 2024.

Why we ran this consultation?

Yarra City Council manages a significant property portfolio on behalf of its community. We are responsible for all property management functions for buildings owned by Council. This includes investment, acquisition, operation, maintenance, and sale of properties.

Council adopted its first property strategy in 2018. The new draft Property Strategy builds on our existing objectives and aims to provide more transparent and equitable approaches to property management in Yarra. It has been informed through detailed benchmarking, as well as previous community feedback received through the development of existing documents like the Council Plan, Community Vision and Financial Sustainability Strategy. We have previously heard from our community that is a strong desire for all of our properties to be well utilised which has been addressed through the inclusion of a property assessment tool. We have also included a more robust decision-making framework which will enable Council to be more transparent about how community access and pay for the use of our community facilities.

Objectives of this engagement

1. To inform the community about the draft Property Strategy and the more proactive property management approaches included.
2. To seek community feedback on the draft Property Strategy, specifically to see if there is anything missing or if there are any other comments related to the Strategy.
3. To capture the voices of Yarra's diverse community in the community consultation.
4. To share how feedback will help inform the final Property Strategy.

Level of Community influence

1. The community could influence and help us to understand community priorities in relation to Yarra's property management.
2. The community could influence and help us to consider if there was anything missing from the draft Strategy, where applicable and in line with the Strategic Property Objectives.

What did we ask?

Participants were asked:

- Have we missed anything in the draft Property Strategy that you think is important to include?
- Do you have any other comments about the draft Property Strategy?

Methods included:

- An online survey tool on the Your Say Yarra web page
- Hard copy surveys available to complete at an in-person pop up

Engagement Reach

370 responses were received by 360 participants as part of this community consultation. 369 responses were received through the Your Say Yarra online project page and in person, and one was received through Council's customer request management system and was included after the consultation closed by request.

Of the 370 responses:

- 6 responses were incomplete and only provided demographic information, these were removed.
- 8 sets of duplicate email data was found and consolidated, reducing the total responses by 4.

Therefore, this report considers 360 responses received from participants.

Engagement and Communications Activity
1 x place-based pop-up at the Gleadell Street market • Support from Bicultural Liaison Officers at the pop up
Your Say Yarra (YSY) page
Social media posts and ads • Across LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram
Email newsletters • Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra email newsletters, and emails to current participants
100 targeted emails to representatives of Yarra's recreation and leisure organisations
49 enquiries through Council's customer service channels (email and phone)
400 Postcards distributed primarily across 19 Council-run facilities
News item on the corporate website
Digital screens at Council facilities
CALD radio ads with 3ZZZ

What did we hear?

The open text responses received were analysed and categorised into key themes. We heard seven key themes of feedback throughout the engagement:

1. Feedback on the proposed officer delegations for the acquisition and disposal of property
2. Concern that properties will be sold to generate income and repay Council debt
3. Concern that community properties will be sold without consultation
4. Suggestion that the 2018 Yarra Property Strategy does not need to be updated
5. Varying views on whether Council should sell property
6. Unique suggestions on how we could improve the strategy
7. Support for the property strategy

Feedback on officer delegations proposed in the strategy

What did we hear	Our response
Participants expressed that they did not support the proposal to delegate the CEO authority to approve property acquisitions and disposals up to the value of \$10 million. - Participants expressed that they feel all decisions regarding property acquisitions and disposals should be a decision of the elected Council, irrespective of value. - Participants expressed that the CEO should have authority to approve property acquisitions and disposals in line with the CEO procurement expenditure delegation of \$1 million. A small number of participants supported increasing this to \$2 million for property related decisions. - Participants expressed the view that decisions regarding property disposals should be made by democratic vote of all Yarra community members. This was the most prevalent theme of feedback, with 316 participants expressing a view on the proposed officer delegations.	As a result of the feedback we received around officer delegations and the acquisition and sale of properties we have updated the draft Property Strategy to be clear that any sale or acquisition of property will be a decision of the elected Council and not the CEO. This recommendation will go to Council for endorsement.

Concern that the property strategy will result in community property being sold to fund debt

What did we hear	Our response
Participants expressed concern that the intent of the property strategy is to sell properties to generate income to repay Council debt.	The draft Property Strategy states that any funds that are generated through property disposals will be held in a strategic acquisition fund to enable the purchase of new community infrastructure. Any disposal or acquisition of property will be a decision of the elected Council.

Concern that significant community properties will be disposed without consultation

What did we hear	Our response
Participants expressed concern that community infrastructure like kindergartens, libraries and recreation centres will be sold without consultation.	The draft Property Strategy provides a robust framework for making decisions about property disposals. We recognise that property can only be sold once, and we need to make sure that any decision to sell a property is well considered. We have developed clear criteria to help guide decisions about property disposals as part of the development of this Strategy. The Strategy also states that we consult with the community on decisions of significance through targeted engagement, in accordance with Yarra's Community Engagement Policy. We have also updated the latest version of the Strategy to be clear about how we will consult on property related decisions.

Suggestion that the 2018 Yarra Property Strategy does not need to be updated

What did we hear	Our response
A small number of respondents suggested that the 2018 property strategy doesn't need to be updated	The 2018 Yarra Property Strategy is due for renewal. In considering the direction of an updated property strategy, we identified opportunities to strengthen our decision-making criteria and processes, to provide greater clarity about how decisions about property are made. The current draft Property Strategy is a step towards better governance of Yarra's property portfolio. The draft Strategy provides a greater level of transparency compared to the existing strategy and will provide clear guidance for officers (under Council's supervision) to make operational decisions regarding leasing, licensing, acquisitions, disposals and partnerships.

Varying views on whether Council should sell property

What did we hear	Our response
Participants expressed varying views on whether Council should sell property. Some participants stated that Council should be conservative in disposing of property or shouldn't sell property assets at all. Other participants expressed support to sell under-utilised property assets to allow investment in new infrastructure.	The draft Property Strategy provides a robust framework for making decisions about property disposals. We recognise that property can only be sold once, and we need to make sure that any decision to sell a property is well considered. We have developed clear criteria to help guide decisions about property disposals as part of the development of this Strategy. The draft Strategy also states that we consult with the community on decisions of significance through targeted engagement, in accordance with Yarra's Community Engagement Policy. We have also updated the latest version of the draft Strategy to be clear about how we will consult on property related decisions.

Suggestions on how we could improve the strategy

What did we hear	Our response
We heard some ideas and suggestions about things we can do to improve the property strategy, and our approach to property management. These included: 1. A suggestion that Council should have a property listing available for community viewing. 2. A suggestion that the typical term for a lease or a license should be more than three years, to give tenants and licensees more stability. 3. A suggestion that adjoining landowners should have first pass opportunity to purchase any laneway or road that Council may sell that abuts their private property. 4. A few suggestions that the property strategy is too long.	1. We are working on developing a property register that lists all of Council's properties. When this is ready, we will share it on Council's website. 2. We agree and after benchmarking different councils policies, we have increased the typical lease or license term from three years to five years. 3. We are currently mapping our road discontinuance and sales process. We have deferred this suggestion to this process. We recognise that the draft Property Strategy 2024-2029 is longer than the current strategy. This is primarily because the strategy also includes policy on portfolio management, leasing and licensing, acquisitions, disposals and strategic partnerships and investments. Consolidation of all property related governing frameworks into a single strategy is considered best practice.

Support for the draft property strategy

What did we hear

Participants expressed support for the draft Property Strategy. Specifically, participants stated that the strategic objectives resonated and that they were pleased to see that strategy provided a framework for lease and licensing of Council facilities.

Who did we hear from?

Demographic data was collected in person and through our online engagement platform from 359 participants.

Demographic data for the single submission received through Council's customer request management system was not collected.

What's your connection to Yarra? Participants were able to select more than one category	Numbers	Percentage
I live in Yarra	338	94.15%
I work in Yarra	87	24.23%
I visit Yarra	17	4.74%
I study in Yarra	6	1.67%
I own a property or mortgage in Yarra	218	60.72%
I rent in Yarra	13	3.62%
I own a business in Yarra	33	9.19%
What gender do you identify as? Participants were able to select only one category	Numbers	Percentage
Man	132	36.77%
Woman	191	53.20%
Self-described	3	0.84%
I prefer not to say	33	9.19%
What is your age range? Participants were able to select only one category	Numbers	Percentage
Under 11	0	0%
12 to 17	0	0%

18 to 24	2	0.56%
25 to 34	19	5.29%
35 to 49	66	18.38%
50 to 59	70	19.50%
60 to 69	73	20.33%
70 to 84	90	25.07%
85 and older	3	0.84%
I prefer not to say	36	10.03%
What suburb do you live in Participants were able to select only one category	Numbers	Percentage
Abbotsford	11	3.06%
Alphington	3	0.84%
Burnley	5	1.39%
Carlton North	14	3.90%
Clifton Hill	64	17.83%
Collingwood	13	3.62%
Cremorne	4	1.11%
Fairfield	2	0.56%
Fitzroy	51	14.21%
Fitzroy North	108	30.08%
Princes Hill	1	0.28%
Richmond	76	21.17%
I live outside of Yarra	7	1.95%

Select all that apply. I am..... Participants were able to select more than one category	Numbers	Percentage
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	23	8.88%
A person living with a disability.	26	10.04%
A member of the LGBTIQ+ community.	29	11.20%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	3	1.16%
None of the above.	226	87.26%
I prefer not to say.	69	26.64%

Evaluating the engagement

Objective	Evaluation
Inform the community: Informing the Yarra community about the draft Property Strategy and the more proactive property management approach included.	- We ensured that all information provided was relevant, timely and accurate - The consultation was promoted through a variety of channels and methods to reach a wide audience: - Your Say Yarra page received 1924 views across the consultation period - We reached 4981 people on our social media posts 18,057 people saw our social media ad at least once - Email campaigns were sent to 13,322 people and was opened by 7863 people - Approximately 25 people attended our in person pop up session at Gleadell Street Market
Seek community feedback: To seek feedback on the draft Property Strategy, specifically to see if there is anything missing or if there are any other comments related to the Strategy.	Responses received related to the content in the draft Strategy and can be used by the project team to help finalise the Property Strategy and gain an understanding of the community's sentiments
Ensure that the engagement is accessible and inclusive: To capture the voices of Yarra's diverse community in the community consultation.	- We used plain English descriptions - Bicultural Liaison Officers (BLOs) were present at the pop-up session at the Gleadell Street Market in Richmond 3ZZZ radio ads were run in 5 languages over the course of the consultation

Share how feedback will help inform the final Property Strategy.

- Participants have been updated at the close of the engagement to acknowledge and respond to the large amount of feedback relating to officer delegations and the acquisition and sale of properties
- Participants will be updated on the progress of the Final Property Strategy and informed how their feedback has influenced the development of the Strategy
- This report will be uploaded to the Your Say Yarra page and content on the page will be updated after the consultation and review concludes