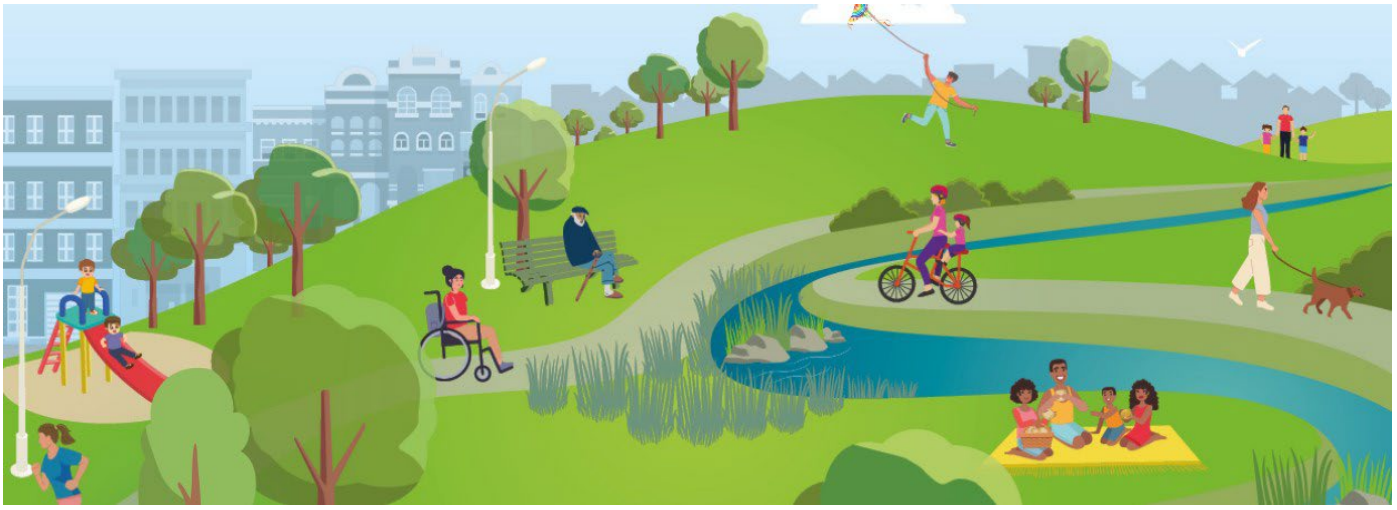
City of Moonee Valley

Community Consultation Report

Open Space Strategy

May 2024



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1 Introduction

At the end of 2023, Moonee Valley City Council (Council) consulted with the community about the draft Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy (the draft Strategy), which will provide a long term guide for Moonee Valley's open spaces for a healthy, vibrant and resilient open space network now and into the future.

The draft Strategy includes a vision, strategic directions, objectives and prioritisation criteria. The draft Strategy is also supported by an Open Space Implementation Plan.

Consultation on the draft Strategy was open from 15 November to 31 December 2023. Individuals were given the opportunity to contribute to the consultation in a variety of ways including an online survey, attending a pop-up event, providing recorded feedback through the Speak Pipe tool embedded on the online Your Say page, via email, phone or by completing a hard copy survey located at Moonee Valley Libraries or Djerring Flemington Hub. The majority of responses were received through the online survey, with a number of written submissions received via email.

To support community members to respond to the draft Strategy, the online Your Say page included a document library with a summary of the parks that have master plans – some of which are mainly complete, and others which are still underway, and the Recommendations Report from Council's September 2023 Community Advisory Panel on how Council can achieve biodiversity in public open spaces.

Feedback was also received from the Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Unit and three Council committees: the Disability Advisory Committee; Moonee Valley Pride; and the Active Ageing Reference Group.

To refine the Strategy, officers will use the results of this consultation summary, plus a summary of relevant feedback from a different engagement process - the *Family and Children Framework* (also undertaken in 2023). A summary of the relevant feedback from the Family and Children Framework consultation is included in the appendices.

1.1 Summary of key findings: what we heard from the community

A total of 420 people accessed the survey online, with 389 fully completing the survey and 31 partially completing the survey (responded to at least one question).

A number of written submissions were received from the general community, as well as community and reference groups, who provided further feedback on specific actions that the respondent, or group, would like Council to consider to improve open space over the next 10 years.

Most survey respondents “supported” or “strongly supported” both the vision (72%) and the strategic directions (80%).

Respondents were asked to rank a minimum of five (out total of 10) types of actions Council could take to achieve the Open Space Strategy. 173 respondents participated in this ranking activity, with the resulting show that:

- The two highest ranked were environmentally focused: *Increase habitat and trees in open space* and *improving the health of waterways*
- Followed by the proposed *park upgrade program* which ranked a close third
- Acquisition of new land was ranked moderately high as follows:
    - *Acquiring or repurposing land for new open space for walking, cycling connections* - ranked fourth
    - *Acquiring or repurposing land for higher density areas* - ranked sixth
    - *Acquiring or repurposing land for the environment* - ranked seventh
- The fifth highest ranked action was *increasing community access, inclusion, safety and amenity.*
- *Increasing variety of play and recreation facilities* was ranked eighth
- *Master plans* were ranked ninth and *supporting activities and events* was ranked lowest.

In response to what is “most important for Council to understand in relation to the Open Space Strategy”, the following theme groupings received the most comments (over 20 responses), highlighting the need for Council to improve inclusiveness, play opportunities, maintenance, dog facilities and public amenities, as detailed:

- More/improved open space facilities especially for dogs, informal active recreation elements and playgrounds (89)
- Make open space more inclusive and accessible (both to and within) (85)
- Improve open space amenity such as improved maintenance and more toilets (78)
- Increase vegetation - supporting biodiversity, more trees and shade (79)

- Increase new and repurposed open space (45)
- Comments about building and materials including requesting reduced buildings in open space and more use of nature and sustainable materials (47).

The survey responses from the previous question (above) were reinforced by further comments about additional actions Council could take, with over 20 comments for:

- Improved maintenance (26)
- More dog facilities (23)
- More informal active recreation facilities (22).

Feedback of other stakeholder groups and individual written submissions reinforce the need for inclusiveness, waterway health, impacts of private developments on public open space, balancing sporting activities with other public open space uses and protection and enhancement of existing open space.

2 Methodology

2.1 Engagement questions

The survey (see Appendix 5.1) comprised the following questions. Participants were not required to answer every question.

- To what extent do you support the vision for the draft Open Space Strategy?
- To what extent do you support the strategic directions?
- What is most important for Council to understand in relation to our Open Space Strategy for the next 10 years?
- Below are different types of actions Council could take to achieve the Open Space Strategy. Please rank a minimum of 5 by placing a number in the box before each sentence.
- Is there anything else you would rank higher than the list above that wasn't there for you to choose? If so, please type it here and indicate the level at which you would rank it.

2.2 Participation

Table 1 provides information about the consultation participation.

Table 1: Consultation Participation

Consultation	Promotion Details	Participation
Online Your Say (see Appendix 4.2)	Page visits	2,241
	Unique visitors	1,621
	Project followers	26
Survey	Accessed online or via hard copy	420 (389 complete, 31 partially complete). 5 hard copy surveys have been included in this total.
Written submission	Received via email	15 written submissions were received from the general community
Face-to-face engagement events	Essendon Station, Thursday 30 November 2023, 3 – 4:30pm	
	Milleara Mall, Saturday 2 December 2023, 10:30am – 12:30pm	
	Riverside (pirate ship) Park, Sunday 3 December 2023, 10am – 12pm	
Your Say Campaign Email	Automated email to registered Your Say users who identified an interest in Parks, Gardens and Open Space.	18 recipients

2.3 Promotion and Social media

The consultation was shared six times on Council's social media during the consultation period. Details regarding the reach of these posts can be seen in Appendix 4.3.

The consultation engagement was also advertised by signage in 35 parks across Moonee Valley.

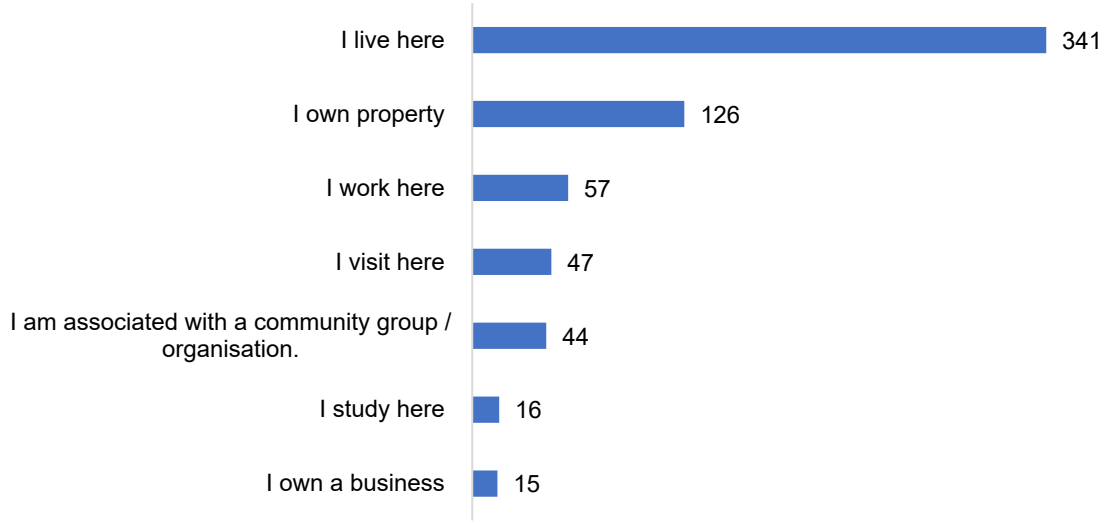
2.4 Survey respondent demographics

2.4.1 Connection to Moonee Valley

Respondents were asked to indicate their connection to the city of Moonee Valley. Respondents could select any category that applied to them. Most respondents indicated that they live in Moonee Valley (341), with 126 indicating that they own property in Moonee Valley, as shown in Figure 1.

44 respondents indicated that they were associated with a community group/organisation. Of those, 13 were associated with '*Friends Of*' groups, 11 were associated with sports clubs, six were associated with dog clubs and four were members of a Council committee (Disability Advisory Committee, Active Ageing Reference Group).

Figure 1. Connection to Moonee Valley

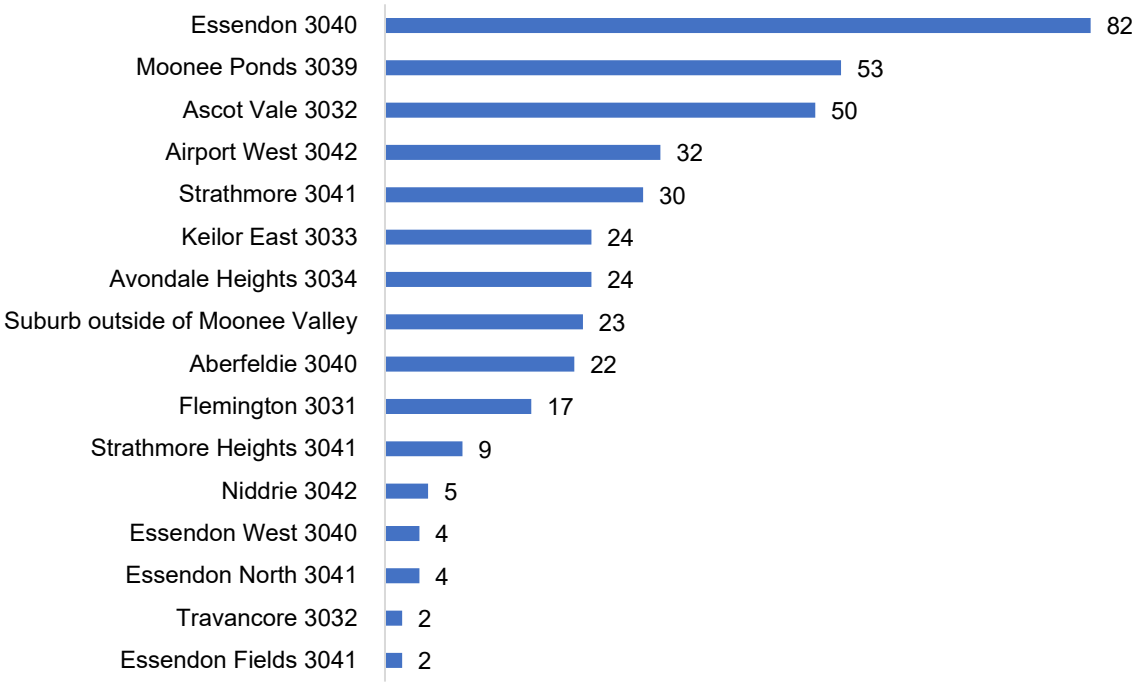


2.4.2 Suburb of residence

Respondents were asked to indicate their suburb of residence. 383 people responded to this question. Most respondents indicated they live in Moonee Valley. 23 respondents indicated that they resided in a suburb outside of Moonee Valley.

The highest number of respondents (82) resided in Essendon, followed by Moonee Ponds (53) and Ascot Vale (50), with these three suburbs representing nearly half of all survey respondents, as shown in Figure 2.

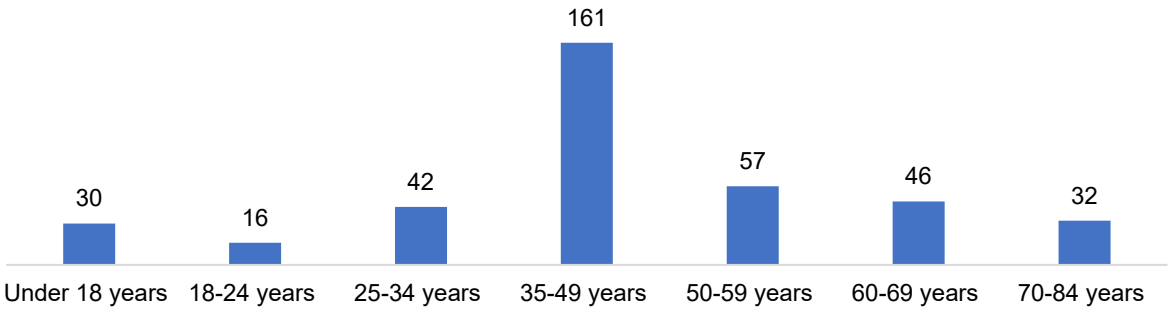
Figure 2. Suburb of residence



2.4.3 Age

Respondents were asked to indicate their age group. 384 people responded to this question with most age groups reflected in the results. The highest number of respondents indicated they were aged 35-49 years (161) as shown in Figure 3.

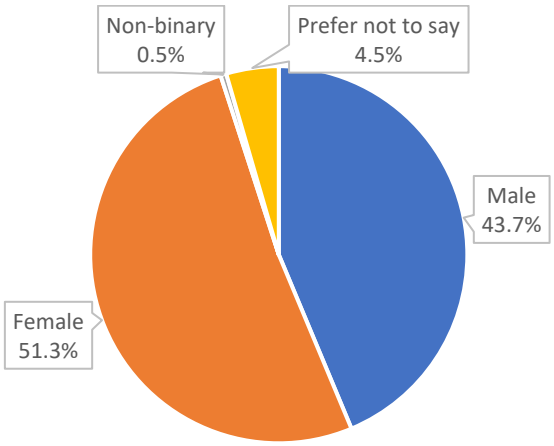
Figure 3. Age group



2.4.4 Gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. 382 people responded to this question. The majority of respondents indicated they were female (51.3%) followed by male (43.7%) as shown in Figure 4.

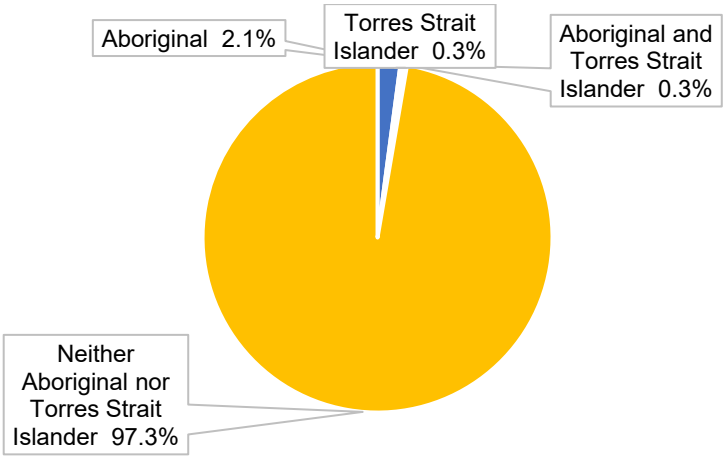
Figure 4. Gender



2.4.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Respondents were asked if they identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Of the 376 respondents to this question, the majority of respondents (97.3%) did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Eight respondents identified as Aboriginal, with one respondent identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and one as Torres Strait Islander as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



3 Findings

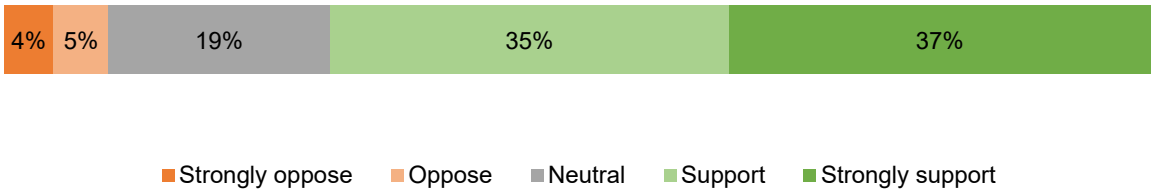
3.1 Survey findings

3.1.1 Vision

Respondents were asked to what extent they opposed or supported the vision for the draft Strategy.

Of the 414 people who chose to respond to this question, the majority (72%) 'supported' or 'strongly supported' the vision of the draft Strategy. 9% of respondents 'opposed' or 'strongly opposed' the vision as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Level of support for vision



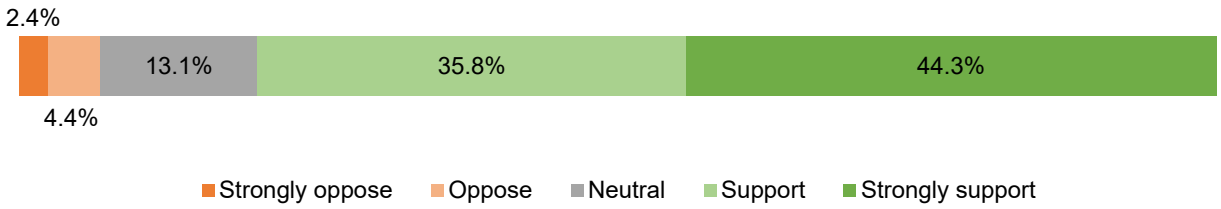
3.1.2 Strategic Directions

Respondents were asked to what extent they opposed or supported the strategic directions in the draft Strategy, which are:

1. Addressing gaps and improving connections across our open space network
2. Enhancing the quality of our open space
3. Strengthening the climate resilience and biodiversity of our open space
4. Planning together for the future of our open space

Of the 411 people who responded to this question, the majority (80%) supported or strongly supported the strategic directions in the draft Strategy, as shown in Figure 7. Just under 7% of respondents indicated that they opposed or strongly opposed the strategic directions.

Figure 7. Level of support for strategic directions



3.1.3 What is most important?

Respondents were asked, “what is most important for Council to understand in relation to our Open Space Strategy for the next 10 years?” 358 comments were submitted for this question (see Appendix 4.4 for full list of comments).

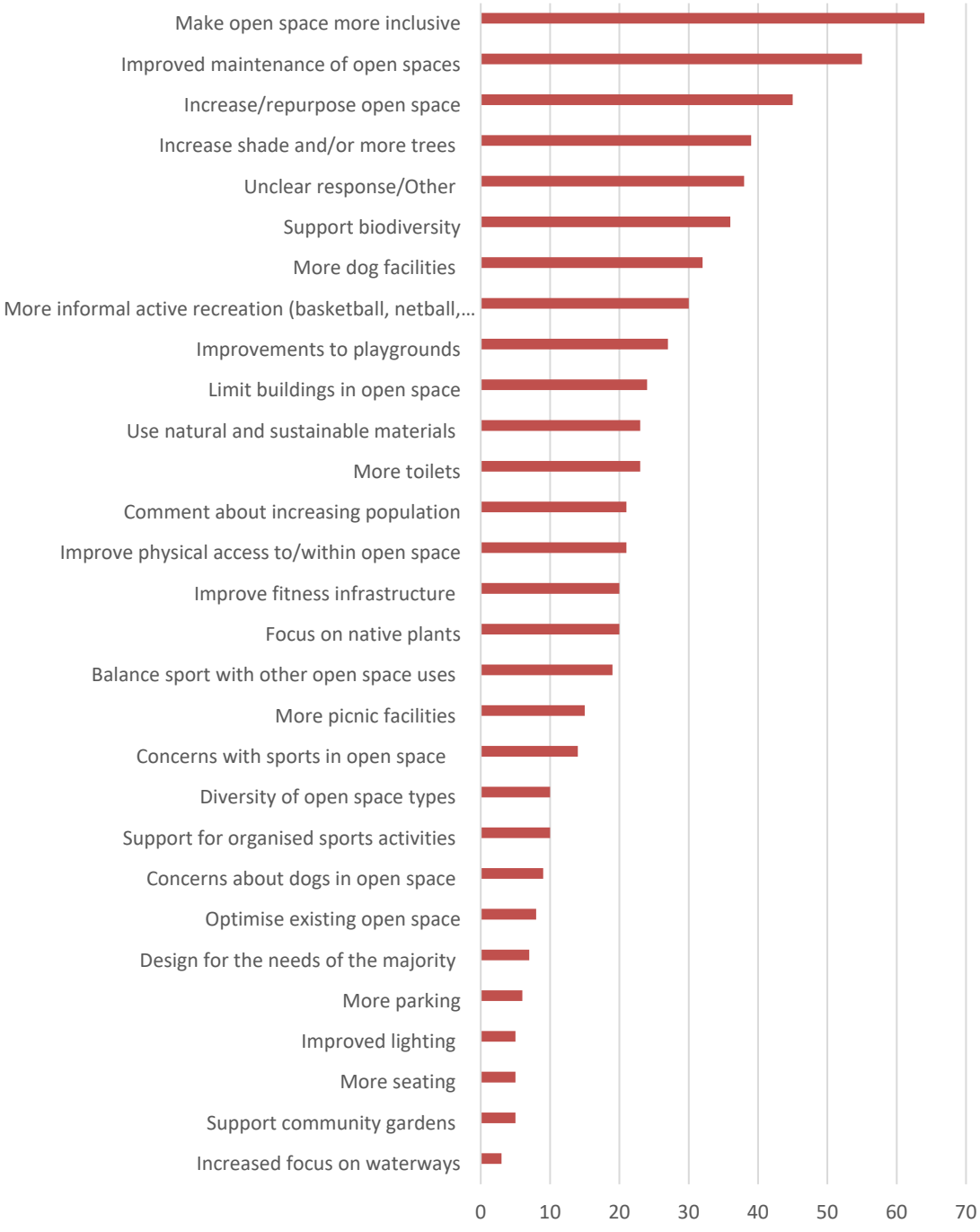
Responses received were themed to identify the common categories of priorities for respondents (see Figure 8).

The theme with the highest number of comments highlighted the importance of *open spaces being more inclusive* for all abilities and needs (64 comments), followed by *improved maintenance of open spaces* (55) and *increase/re-purpose open space* (45).

This was followed by other themes which also received many comments (also shown in Figure 8) including:

- increase shade and/or more trees (39 comments)
- support biodiversity (36 comments)
- more dog facilities (32 comments).

Figure 8. Themed comments - what is most important for Council to understand in relation to our Open Space Strategy for the next 10 years?



Note: numbers reflect the quantity of times a comment was made, not the number of respondents.

Sample comments

- *That we are a diverse community and that an Open Space Strategy should strive to take into account the many interests of such diverse community ie age, gender, ability, needs, particular interests and etc In this the use of current facilities should be maximised as well as new ones established.*
- *We need to make sure that the open spaces are maintained, i.e kept clean. This will ensure people want to utilise the spaces.*
- *To make the most of the existing open spaces while considering options for new spaces.*
- *We all need these open spaces, gardens, trees, to encourage us to exercise, refresh our mental health by communing with nature.*
- *Open space provides a healthy environment for the community by allowing free air flow and greenery (preferably trees) to remove and absorb pollutants from vehicles and everyday activities. Open space also provides habitat for birds, insects and animals necessary for human good health.*
- *With the increasing population (and increasing pet ownership) it is important that Council does not just focus on the humans. Including more open spaces for dogs, while at the same time, increasing open space for native animal habitats will be important*

3.1.4 Open Space Strategy Actions

Respondents were provided with a list of 10 different types of actions Council could take to achieve the Open Space Strategy and asked to rank a minimum of five actions. 173 respondents participated in this ranking activity. The overall ranking of the list from survey respondents was as follows:

1. Increase habitat and trees in open space
2. Improve the health of our waterways
3. Establish a park upgrade program for smaller parks
4. Acquire or repurpose land for open space to provide walking and cycling connections
5. Increase community access, inclusion, safety and amenity in open spaces
6. Acquire or repurpose land for new open space in higher density areas
7. Acquire or repurpose land for new open space to improve the environment
8. Increase the variety of play and recreational facilities in open space
9. Prepare and implement master plans for larger parks
10. Support organised activities and events in open space

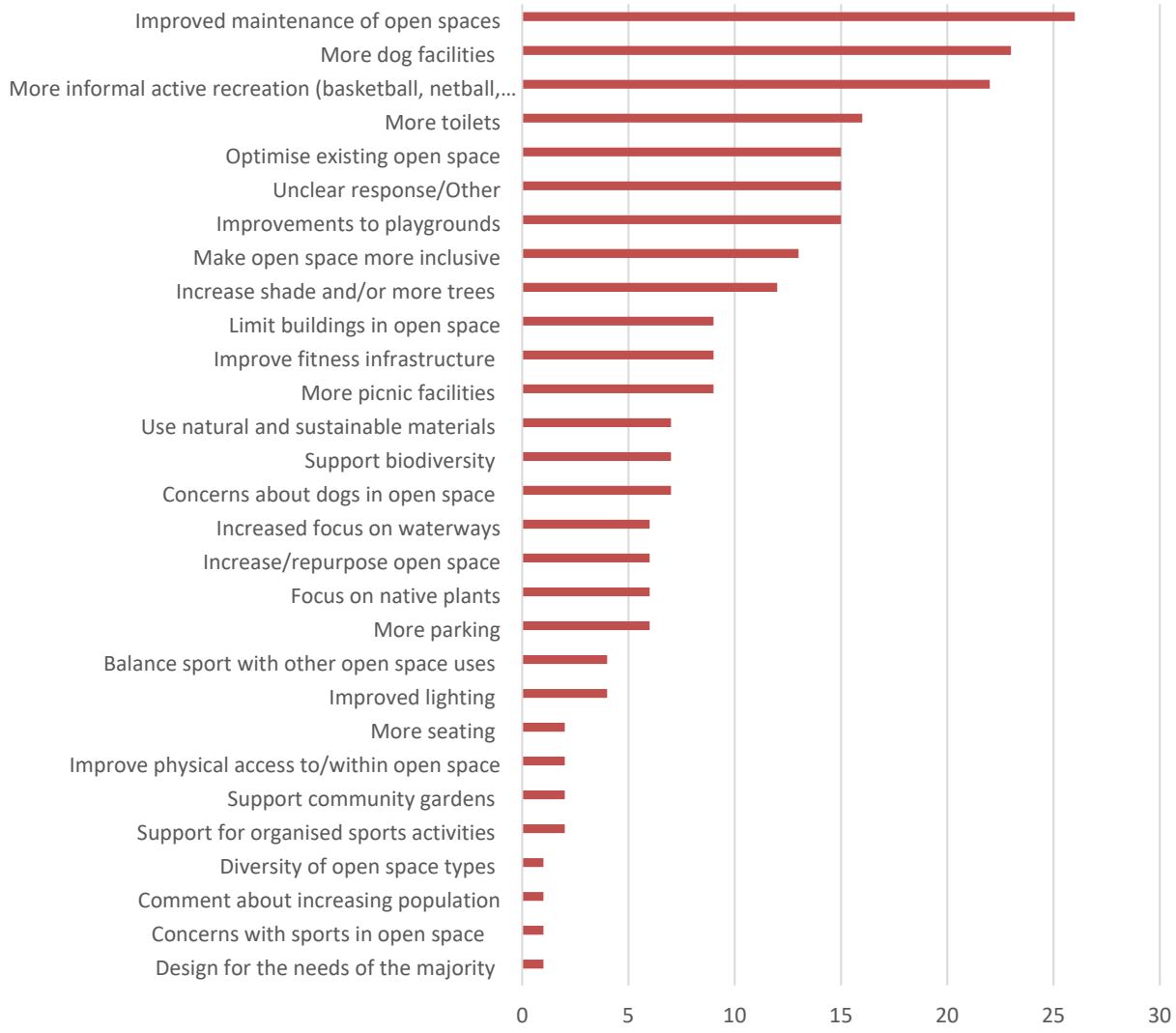
3.1.5 Additional actions

Respondents were asked if there were any other actions (not in the list provided) that they would rank higher. 173 comments were provided for this question. Responses were themed against a variety of categories as seen in Figure 9.

The highest number of comments for this question requested:

- improved maintenance of open space (26 comments)
- more dog facilities (23 comments)
- more informal active recreation - basketball, netball, tennis, bike tracks, skate park, soccer (22 comments).

Figure 9. Additional actions theming



Note: numbers reflect the quantity of times a comment was made, not the number of respondents.

Sample comments

- *Improve the quality and maintenance of existing parks and open spaces. Also we should be improving our waterways as a non- negotiable and matter of urgency.*
- *Before repurposing or acquiring new parks or space we must ensure our current parks and service are proving their upgrades and maintenance.*

- *Dog friendly parks are very important. They help people to connect and feel part of their community. The parks enable dogs and owners to socialise and exercise in a responsible manner, in a natural environment. Great for mental health.*
- *We need free tennis courts and free netball/basketball courts for our teenagers. The basketball court in the Maribyrnong Council side of the river is safe and well utilised. Even half a court would be good somewhere. We also need more seats for the elderly to sit on and public toilet facilities near the parks.*
- *Improve access to public toilets throughout Moonee Valley. The current provision of public toilets in parks such as Queen's Park is woefully inadequate and makes these spaces much less accessible for people who rely on public toilets – e.g. the elderly, women who have recently given birth, and carers of young children.*

3.2 Face-to-face engagement sessions

Three in person pop up sessions were held at the following locations to provide another opportunity for the community to provide feedback and meet with officers to ask any questions:

- Essendon Station, Thursday 30 November 2023, 3 – 4:30pm
- Milleara Mall, Saturday 2 December 2023, 10:30am – 12:30pm
- Riverside (pirate ship) Park, Sunday 3 December 2023, 10am – 12pm

The verbal feedback received at these sessions, is noted below:

- Recognition that nature strips are an asset, that could potentially contribute to biodiversity
- Active transport connections should be acknowledged
- Interest in community gardens
- Concerns about removal of open space parking that may restrict access for elderly people.
- The importance of seating for older community members
- Request to provide more for our older residents in parks, especially in Keilor East.

3.3 Moonee Valley City Council Committees feedback

Disability Advisory Committee

Feedback from Council's Disability Advisory Committee primarily related to the following aspects:

- Request for more maintenance and safety, particularly along waterways,
- Request for separated paths along waterways, and
- Request more toilets, tables for wheelchairs and adult playgrounds.

Moonee Valley Pride

Feedback from Council's Moonee Valley Pride group related to the following aspects:

- Give safety more prominence in the strategy and consider both generic and specific LGBTIQA+ people safety issues
- Places that don't feel safe include Young Street, Union Road (during race season) and opposite Moonee Valley Racecourse at night (due to drunk and disorderly behaviour)
- Make inclusion and accessibility more upfront in the strategy
- Upgrade of sports facilities to be more inclusive of women should also be inclusive of all genders outside of the binary, all LGBTIQA +
- Interest in related Council strategies: lighting, public toilets, CCTV.

Active Ageing Reference Group

Feedback from Council's Active Ageing Reference Group related to the following aspects:

- Some of the open spaces in Moonee Valley which are valued include: Maribyrnong River, Mount Alexander Road palm tree row, Lincoln Park farmers market, Cliff Allison Reserve (very accessible), beauty of Lily Street Reserve and Valley Lakes path network.
- Concerns / ways to improve open space:
    - Planting:

        - More large, shady trees (not gum trees)
        - More sensory planting
        - Bushes planted around paths can feel unsafe
    - Activate open space
        - At the Maribyrnong River bluestone terracing and rotunda
        - Bring music into open space e.g. band concerts
        - Suggested park event in each precinct to promote the park and introduce the councillor to the community.
    - Improve access and amenity:
        - More seating (with backs, not steel)
        - Provide enough parking /disabled parking for older people to access open space
        - Address inaccessibility: public transport, steps into shops, crossovers, steep paths
        - Not enough toilets in parks impacts older people and grandchildren
    - Lack of planning has meant low open space provision in high rise areas - e.g. Keilor Road.

3.4 Written submissions

15 written submissions were received from the general community via email as part of this consultation. The feedback generally reflected the same themes expressed through the online Your Say survey with a greater focus on environmental values of open space and waterways, and the protection of open space from encroachment. Feedback also included requests for more inclusiveness, balancing sporting activities with other public open space uses, and enhancement of open space and open space facilities.

In addition, written submissions were received as part of this consultation from the following five community groups located within Moonee Valley:

- The Ascot Vale Trugo Club raised concerns mainly related to the condition of available facilities.

- The Glenbervie Stationeers highlighted the open space needs of the Essendon Neighbourhood, the need to vegetate railways station car parks and opportunities for Five Mile Creek, Napier Crescent Reserve and Windy Hill.

- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek requested greater emphasis on local waterways and the acquisition of land for public open space along waterways, especially Moonee Ponds Creek, and comments on preferred plant selection and weed /pest control approach.

- Moonee Valley Sustainability requested more environmental initiatives (biodiversity, habitat, tree canopy, planning controls, waterways), and Council targets and funding commitments for these, and more support for active transport and community gardens.

- The Friends of Steele Creek advocated for improved water use, waterway health, habitat and a healthy environment, the need to address the impacts of intense storm event, and support for the changes to Council's naturestrip policy.

3.5 Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Unit feedback

The Cultural Heritage Unit Elders provided the following feedback about the draft Strategy:

- That requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* be adhered to.
- That this strategy preserves Aboriginal cultural heritage, and that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung intangible cultural values be documented, protected, and promoted wherever possible, and that Council Planning Permits or schemes include flexibility for adjusting plans to protect cultural heritage
- That the acquisition of private land for open space is prioritised along the Maribyrnong River, Steele Creek, Moonee Ponds Creek (and unnamed waterways) due to the importance of named and unnamed waterways to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples.
- That early and ongoing engagement occurs with the Wurundjeri Corporation regarding acquisition and development of open space.

3.6 Social media comments

A small number of comments were received on social media, which is noted in Appendix 4.6.

4 Survey information

4.1 Survey tool

The Vision for the draft Open Space Strategy is:

“Moonee Valley has a flourishing and resilient network of open space that supports healthy people and nature to live on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.”

1. **Please indicate to what extent you support the vision for the draft Open Space Strategy.**

☐ Strongly oppose ☐ Oppose ☐ Neutral ☐ Support ☐ Strongly support

The Strategic Directions for the draft Open Space Strategy are:

- Addressing gaps and improving connections across our open space network
- Enhancing the quality of our open space
- Strengthening the climate resilience and biodiversity of our open space
- Planning together for the future of our open space

2. **Please indicate to what extent you support the Strategic Directions.**

☐ Strongly oppose ☐ Oppose ☐ Neutral ☐ Support ☐ Strongly support

3. **What is most important for Council to understand in relation to our Open Space Strategy for the next 10 years?**
4. **Below are different types of actions Council could take to achieve the Open Space Strategy. Please rank a minimum of 5 by placing a number in the box before each sentence.**

	Acquire or repurpose land for new open space in higher density areas.
	Acquire or repurpose land for new open space to provide walking and cycling connections.
	Acquire or repurpose land for new open space to improve the environment.
	Prepare and implement master plans for larger parks.
	Establish a park upgrade program for smaller parks.

	Increase community access, inclusion, safety and amenity in open spaces.
	Increase the variety of play and recreational facilities in open space.
	Support organised activities and events in open space.
	Increase habitat and trees in open space.
	Improve the health of our waterways.

5. **Is there anything else you would rank higher than the list above that wasn't there for you to choose? If so, please type it here and indicate the level at which you would rank it.**
6. **What is your connection to Moonee Valley?**

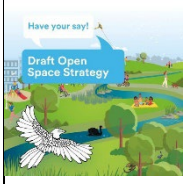
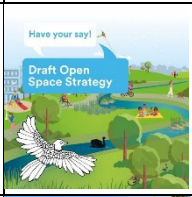
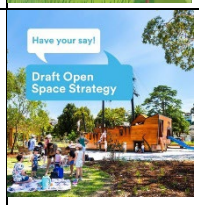
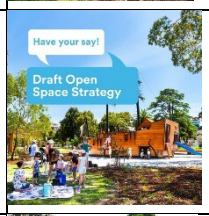
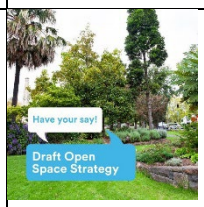
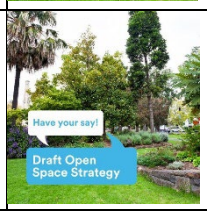
☐ I live here ☐ I work here ☐ I visit here
☐ I study here ☐ I own property here ☐ I own a business here

☐ I am associated with a community group / organisation. Please name:

7. **Suburb**: _____
8. **Gender**:_____
9. **Age group:**_____
10. **Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**

4.2 Your Say page

4.3 Social media reach

Date	Channel	Photo	Reach	Clicks
16 Nov 2023	Facebook		1,967	49
16 Nov 2023	Instagram		446	(n/a – link in bio)
28 Nov 2023	Facebook		1,460	24
28 Nov 2023	Instagram		1,279	(n/a – link in bio)
13 Dec 2023	Facebook		4,196	72
13 Dec 2023	Instagram		478	(n/a – link in bio)