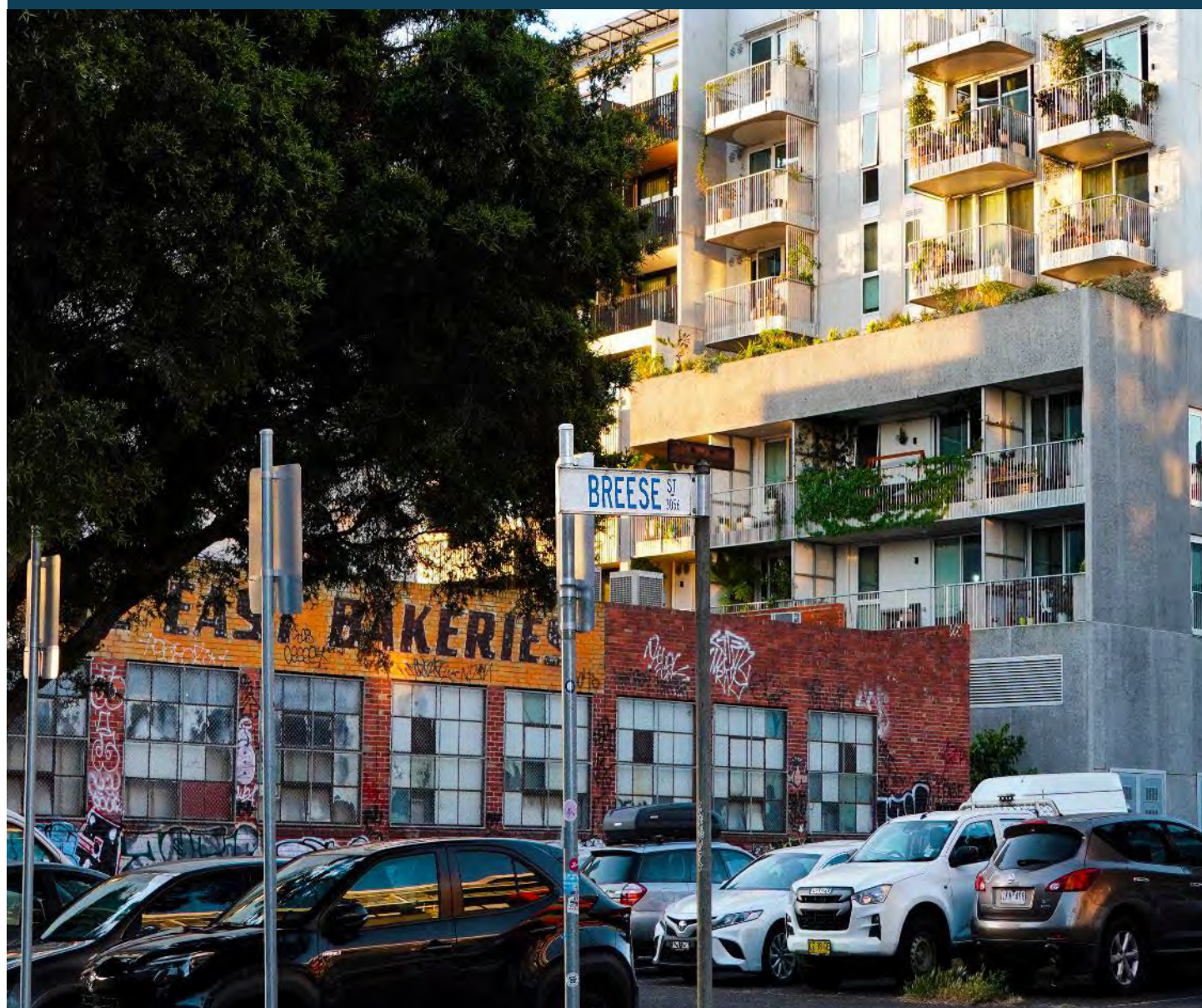




Merri-bek
City Council

Breese Street Masterplan.

Second Engagement Report



Executive summary

Consultation Process

Merri-bek City Council consulted with the community from 26 September to 26 October 2025 on two potential concept designs for the Breese Street Precinct. These designs were created in response to the preliminary community engagement which ran in November 2024.

We asked the community to provide feedback on the two options and indicate which option they preferred.

Platforms Used

- Online survey
- Direct mailing
- Physical advertising
- 2 pop-up sessions

Overview of Engagement



226 Responses Received



2 pop-up sessions
112 conversations



1,836 letters posted

What the community told us

- The community believed that both design options would improve the Breese Street Precinct
 - 80 per cent of respondents believed that Option 1 (One Way Southbound) would improve the precinct
 - 76 per cent of respondents believed that Option 2 (Central Shared Zone) would improve the precinct
- 75 per cent of respondents thought that Option 1 was either Very Good (49%) or Good (26%)
- 68 per cent of respondents thought that Option 2 was either Very Good (37%) or Good (31%)
- The community prefers Option 1 (One way southbound) with 54 per cent of responses indicating that this was their preferred treatment (37% of respondents preferred Option 2 (Central Shared Zone)).

Introduction

Breese Street is a high-density residential area in Brunswick between the Upfield Rail Corridor and Sydney Road. Over the last ten years there has been significant residential development and investment in the area. While there is mixed land use, many of the existing commercial blocks have planning permits to develop them into multi-story apartment buildings. Due to the changing land use in this area, the existing street environment is no longer fit for purpose.

Merri-bek City Council first identified this area for streetscape improvements during the 2024/25 budget cycle following a community campaign, and existing asset conditions. This project uses Council's Streets for People design methodology. Streets for People takes a holistic approach to understand how our streets function and how we can make changes to them. This ensures that the benefits are felt by all users and that it aligns with the values identified in Council's Transport Strategy *Moving Around Merri-bek*.

Council has identified five goals for this project.

Project goals



This second round of community engagement for this project ran from 26 September to 26 October with all information hosted on the Conversations Merri-bek website at conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/breese-street-streetscape-improvements. During this period two pop-up sessions were held where we spoke to 112 members of the community across the two pop-up sessions. One pop-up scheduled for 22 October was moved to 23 October due to forecasted dangerous winds.

Across these pop-up sessions, community members were directed to provide their feedback via the survey on Conversations Merri-bek, and physical copies of the survey were also provided.

Design methodology



Background and previous engagement

In November 2024 Council undertook a preliminary round of engagement where we asked the community to share their experiences using Breese Street and what sort of improvements they would like to see on the street. The community were informed that feedback gathered during this round of community consultation would be used to develop concept designs for the area, in line with our Streets for People process in the Streets for People Plan

Six questions were asked in a survey to learn more about peoples' experiences with the Breese Street Precinct.

Summary of responses

- 70 per cent of survey respondents suggested some form of greening to improve the Breese Street Precinct
- 39 per cent of respondents suggested some form of parking changes to the area
- The top issue that respondents had with the precinct was some form of traffic related challenge (75% of respondents)
 - o 42 per cent of respondents mentioned too many vehicles
 - o 31 per cent of respondents mentioned parking issues
 - o 11 per cent of respondents mentioned rat-running
- The top infrastructure treatment suggestions were
 - o 32 per cent of respondents mentioned some form of traffic calming
 - o 25 per cent of respondents mentioned making Breese Street one way
 - o 24 per cent of respondents mentioned improving the footpaths
 - o 20 per cent of respondents mentioned changes that prioritise pedestrians
 - o 20 per cent of respondents mentioned removing car parking on one side of Breese Street

Key issues identified as part of Preliminary Engagement.

Traffic issues were the most common issue respondents raised during this first community consultation. Frequently raised issues included as cars idling, getting stuck in traffic on weekends due to increased traffic and cars parked on the western side of the street, and the presence of trucks due to frequent construction.

Pedestrian and active transport challenges were also a key theme. Respondents noted that while the new crossing had made it easier to cross at that specific section of Breese Street, they still struggle to cross in other locations, and experience issues walking along the street due to the narrow footpaths, poor surface quality, and lack of shade cover while walking along the length of the street. Residents mentioned that the new crossing, though beneficial, had created a bottleneck on weekends when vehicles struggled to pass each other with increased traffic and parking on the eastern side of Breese Street.

Key Suggestions

The top suggestions for improving Breese Street were as follows:

1. More greenery and trees (70%)
2. Changes to parking (39%)
3. Traffic calming (32%)
4. Making Breese Street one way (25%)
5. Improving footpaths (24%)

The most popular response by a significant margin was to increase greenery and tree planting in the precinct. Similarly, we heard that Bulleke-Bek park is the feature of the precinct most enjoyed by respondents. Requests for greenery came in many different forms, from additional tree planting in the road to provide shade for pedestrians, to revisiting the proposed park at 1-9 Breese Street (8%).

Requests to changes for parking was also a common theme. In addition to the bottlenecking issues caused by car parking on weekends, issues were raised with regards to loading zones and food delivery riders and drivers. Suggestions for improving parking included removing parking on the western side of Breese Street (20% - a higher-than-expected percentage) and introducing permitted parking.

Similarly, some form of traffic calming was also suggested frequently by respondents.

Approximately a quarter of respondents mentioned making Breese Street a one-way street. This is consistent with the advocacy work done by the Better Breese Block - a local Breese precinct advocacy group.

Lastly, respondents asked for footpath improvements and other pedestrian upgrades. Outside of improving footpath related ideas, the following improvements were commonly raised in the survey

- More pedestrian crossings or other pedestrian improvements (20%)
- Pedestrianisation or making Breese Street a shared zone (20%). The Council project at Albert Street Brunswick was frequently mentioned as an example.
- Improving the intersection of Breese Street and Hope Street (12%), including making it safer for people to cross all of Breese, Hope and Oven Streets.
- More seating or benches (6%)

Proposed designs

Council produced 2 different concept designs to make these improvements to the Breese Street Precinct. Each design has its own unique approach to addressing community feedback and achieving project goals, though there are some proposed changes that are the same across both designs

Option 1 – South Bound One way

During the first round of engagement and conversations with key stakeholders, a one-way treatment to increase road space and calm traffic was mentioned frequently. A one-way treatment allows the road carriageway to be reduced to 3.5m which maximises on road planting space, while maintaining parking along Breese Street. A northbound option was investigated, however, due to the existing volume of traffic along Albion Street, a southbound option is preferred.

This design would allow for bicycles to travel in both directions (contraflow) due to the low traffic speeds. This type of treatment is already present extensively and successfully through Fitzroy.

The community were informed that for a southbound one-way treatment to function it is possible that additional changes to Hope Street could be required. Some of these changes include changes to how Sydney Road operates, which is under control of the Department of Transport and Planning. It is also a major tram route, and subsequently any changes will require external approvals. If this is the preferred option from the community Council will investigate and advocate to the State Government for changes.

Option 2 – Central Shared Zone

During the first round of engagement Council heard that Bulleke-bek is considered the centre of the precinct. This design options focuses on creating an area around the park that prioritises people and greenery, while having road conditions that create calmer, safer traffic movement. In a shared zone drivers must yield to people walking allowing pedestrians to cross in any direction.

The shared zone at Albert and Victoria Streets was frequently referenced as inspiration during the community engagement. During the design process several versions of shared zones were investigated, and the proposed design is a balance of pedestrian needs with the requirements for parking in the precinct.

Council also heard that having parking on both sides of the street was not working due to increased congestion, particularly on weekends. As part of this design option, Council is proposing a change to parking on one side of the street only to improve traffic flow while accommodating two-way flow of vehicles and increased planting opportunities.

Improvements to the streetscape across both design options

Both the design options feature the following improvements

- Additional greenery along Breese Street
- A Shared Zone on West Street
- Footpaths widened where possible to improve the walking environment
- One-way circuit to access the car park behind 36 Breese Street
- Removal of redundant vehicle crossings to improve the pedestrian environment
- A proposed pocket park at the end of Florence Street (to be delivered by developers)
- Additional east west crossings opportunities

Results

The following section summarises the result of the 2025 community engagement

During the community engagement council received 226 responses to the survey via our conversations Merri-bek platform. Across both community engagements we spoke to 112 community members who relayed their thoughts about the two designs that have been proposed.

Results

Both design were well received by the community, with nearly 80 per cent of respondents agreeing Option 1 “would improve the Breese Street precinct?” and 76 per cent of respondents saying the same for Option 2.

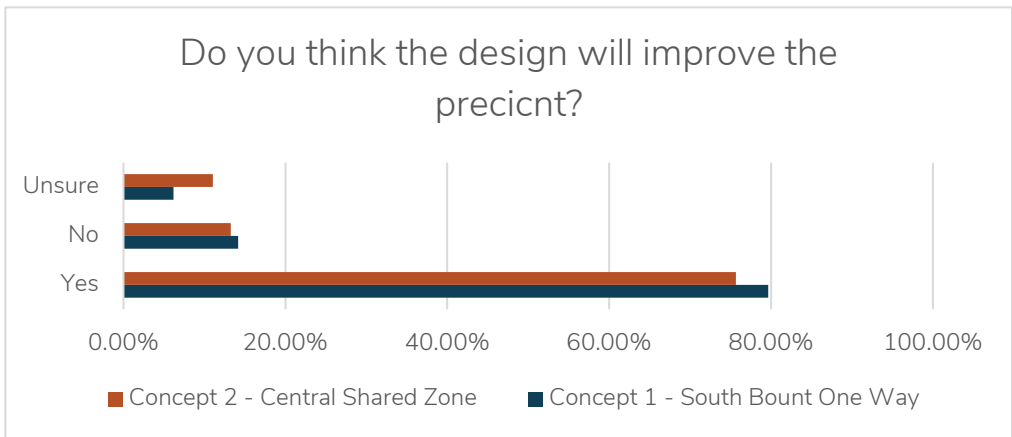


Figure 1 - Do you think this design would improve the precinct?

Respondents felt positively about both designs, with a slight preference for Option 1. Figure 2 outlines the community sentiment. 75 per cent of respondents thought that Option 1 was either Very Good (49%) or Good (26%) and 68 per cent of respondents thought that Option 2 was either Very Good (37%) or Good (31%)

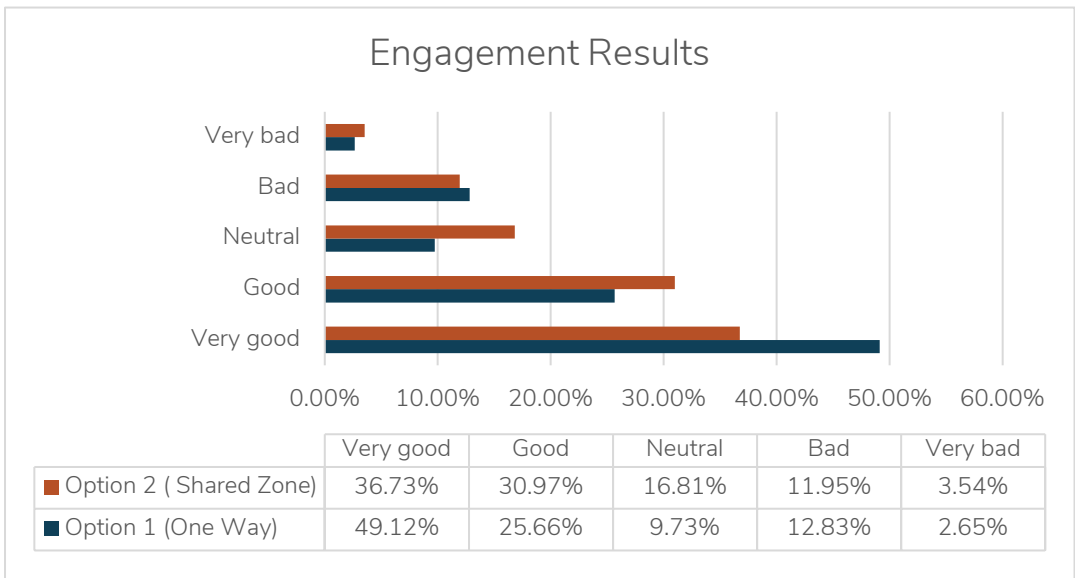


Figure 2 - How do you feel about the designs?

Lastly, when asked which was their preferred design, the community noted a preference for Option 1 – Southbound one-way. 54 per cent of respondents indicated that the preferred Option 1, and 37 per cent indicated they preferred Option 2. 5 per cent of respondents had no preference and 4 per cent were unsure of their preference.

Overall Sentiments

Both designs were positively received by the community with a majority indicating that they thought both designs would improve the precinct. Residents did raise concerns about the impact of construction and the level crossing removal project.

Option 1 was often seen as the most transformative option. Respondents appreciated its potential to reduce congestion, increase pedestrian safety, and allow the planting of more street trees and greenery. It was frequently identified as the preferred option if Council could deliver it quickly. However, concerns were raised about the potential for higher vehicle speeds, reduced access to Sydney Road and Hope Street, and complex, external approval processes that could delay the project. Some respondents indicated they would accept Option 2 instead, preferring timely delivery over waiting for external approvals.

Option 2 received more pragmatic support. Many liked that it could slow traffic, retain full vehicle access, and be delivered more easily. It was often viewed as a more achievable solution. Nonetheless, respondents worried it wouldn't be as effective as Option 1 in reducing congestion, offered less space for pedestrians and greenery, and expressed doubts on the efficacy of shared zones in Australian contexts, with cars often failing to yield to pedestrians.

Parking feedback was mixed. Some residents supported the removal of parking to make way for improvements to the street, while others believed Council should maintain existing levels of parking or supply better parking options. It was often noted that nearby apartment developments lack dedicated parking, leading to a greater reliance on street spaces.

Specific Feedback on Option 1 – One-way Southbound

Positive feedback

Respondents thought positively about this design, noting its potential for:

- Reducing congestion
- Maximising planting space for trees due to narrowed carriageway
- Increasing pedestrian safety

Comments often mentioned that the one-way option was their preferred option if it was something that Council could deliver in a timely manner.

Negative feedback

Respondents mentioned some concerns about this design, including:

- The one-way treatment potentially increasing vehicle speeds
- Decreased vehicle access to and from the precinct and Sydney Road
- Impact to traffic on Hope Street
- Project delivery timelines due to external approvals

Respondents mentioned concerns on the function of Hope Street and Sydney Road should this design go ahead. Many commented that they felt it would make it more difficult to access their properties on Breese Street via vehicles.

Although there were many comments supporting Option 1, respondents also mentioned they felt it was less likely to go ahead to delivery due to the external approvals required. Some commented that although their preference was Options 1, they would be happy to see Option 2 delivered rather than wait longer for approvals for Option 1.

Specific Feedback on Option 2 – Central Shared Zone

Positive Feedback

Respondents saw the benefits of this design, noting:

- A shared zone may work better to slow vehicles than a one-way treatment
- Maintenance of vehicle access to and from the precinct to Sydney Road and Hope Street
- It is easier to implement and deliver than Option 1

Many commentators believed that Option 2 was more likely to proceed to design and delivery in a reasonable timeframe in comparison to Option 1.

Respondents often mentioned that Option 2 provided better access for vehicles getting into and out of the precinct.

Negative Feedback

Respondents mentioned some concerns about this design which included:

- Congestion may persist without more radical changes
- Less space for pedestrians
- Less room for greening
- Shared zone isn't big enough and should be made bigger

Many of the comments indicated that they thought shared zones do not work in Australia for various reasons. Respondents noted concerns with vehicles not giving way to pedestrians, as well as issues with visibility when crossing the road.

Respondents also noted that they felt that cars didn't slow down in shared zones in Brunswick/Melbourne, and they felt that surface treatments do not provide an adequate level of protection or indication of priority for pedestrians.

It is noted that many respondents felt that Option 2 did little to address the issue of congestion and non-local traffic rat-running through the precinct.

Parking

Analysis was also undertaken to highlight when respondents mentioned parking. Like the other analysis the feedback was mixed.

Several respondents indicated that they supported removing on-street parking if it led to better tree canopy and improved traffic outcomes. Similarly, respondents stated they would support a reduction in parking to enable more walking, riding and other active transport improvements.

Respondents mentioned the need for on-street parking as some of the new apartments in this area do not provide car parking. There was a noted perception that some residents in the zero car developments were using the on-street parking.

Appendix

Option 1 - South Bound One Way - Design



Option 2 – Central Shared Zone - Design

