

Investingating Affordable Housing at Curzon Street.

Engagement Findings Report

**Prepared by Global Research: Turning Information into insight.**

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# Executive summary

* The Participate Melbourne webpage received 3,400 views, 2,129 visits and 86 people participated in the drop-in sessions.
* In total, 308 surveys were completed and four written submissions were received.
* Of those who participated in the survey,
	+ Live near the Curzon Street car park (52 per cent, 162 respondents).
	+ Live outside the study area (15 per cent, 45 respondents),
	+ A trader or work at a business/service on or near Errol St (13 per cent, 39 respondents)
	+ Visit someone who lives in this area (11 per cent, 33 respondents).
	+ Shop or attend services on or near Errol Street (45 per cent, 138 respondents),
	+ Currently park their car in the car park (13 per cent, 41 respondents),

Note: Almost half of respondents had more than one connection to the area- for example. Some people identified that they lived and worked in the area, or worked and used the car park, or lived locally and visited the shops etc. Therefore these numbers do not add to 100 per cent and exceed 308.

* The intent of the engagement process was to inform and consult with the local community.
* The goal of the community engagement process is to understand community sentiment around the use of the site for a pilot affordable housing projects in the neighbourhood and to understand the likely benefits and impacts to the local community and economy by changing the use of the site.
* Overall, participant broadly supported affordable housing and want to see more affordable housing integrated throughout the City of Melbourne however, they reported dual concerns about the availability of parking in the Curzon Street area and about the negative social impacts that an affordable housing development could have on the area.
* The main benefits that respondents saw arising from an affordable housing development in Curzon Street are that it could help address the broader need for lower cost rents.
* Respondents’ parking concerns were for residents and their visitors, and some comments from local businesses such as those on Errol Street where existing parking pressure is said to already being experienced.
* The greatest levels of strong support for an affordable housing project located in Curzon Street were from those who live outside the area (59 per cent) and those who shop or attend services on or near Errol St (47 per cent). The greatest levels of strong opposition came from those who currently park their car in the car park (85 per cent).
* Respondents agreed that affordable housing should be close to public transport and amenities such as shops, supermarkets, and services. Being close to employment, study and childcare was also viewed as essential for an affordable housing development. Opinions on suitable locations varied

## Participate Melbourne: Engagement approach

A stakeholder analysis was undertaken to explore who would be impacted by a potential change of use on this site, and how they could best be consulted. This included internal contacts at the City of Melbourne as well as external contacts such as traders, residents, shoppers and those who use the car park.

 A wide range of engagement activities were used to inform and consult with the community. This included:

* Targeted emails to key community group leaders
* On-site posters
* A letterbox drop to all residents and businesses within 500m of the site
* A project page on ‘Participate Melbourne
* Updates in local media, social media updates
* Invitations to meet for small group or one-on-one discussions
* Phone conversations
* Six drop-in sessions outside the North Melbourne Library.

## Methodology

### Quantitative analysis

Eleven (11) quantitative questions were asked of those who submitted feedback via the Participate Melbourne website:

* What is your connection to Curzon St and/or Errol Street Shopping area?
* When you visit Curzon Street/ Errol St area for shopping, services, entertainment, work or to visit, how do you normally travel there?
* How often do you or your visitors use the Curzon St car park?
* How many hours at a time do you or your visitors park your car there?
* What time of the day do you or your visitors normally park at the car park?
* What are you or your visitors doing when you use the car park?
* If you live locally - do your visitors use the Curzon Street carpark?
* If the car park was full or not available to use, would you; (respondents select response from a list of actions)
* If the car park wasn’t available for you to use, how many parking hours would you need?
* City of Melbourne has committed to supporting affordable housing projects in the city. Please indicate your level of support for these projects below.
* If the affordable housing project went ahead, Council is committed to making this an exemplar project where we are maximizing community benefit from the project. Any project would go through a planning process to ensure it satisfactorily meets design and planning requirements. Please rate the importance of these elements of an affordable housing project on this site: (respondents to rate importance of 5 factors).

### Qualitative analysis

Three (3) qualitative questions were asked in the survey. Written comments were received through an online survey via the Participate Melbourne website. All written feedback received throughout this engagement has been read and coded (sorted) into themes and topics by analysts and discussed in the following sections of this report. The following open-ended questions were asked, the initial two were coded into the same coding framework due to the similarities in responses.

* Do you have any thoughts you would like to share about a potential affordable housing project?
* What do you think are the benefits of an affordable housing project in this local neighbourhood?
* Please provide ideas of other locations where you think affordable housing might be suitable within the City of Melbourne.

# Key Findings

## Quantitative results

### How respondents currently use the area

* Over half of respondents (53 per cent) reported that they travel around the area on foot; a third drive (33 per cent), 7 per cent use public transport and 4 per cent stated they cycle.
* Just over half of respondents (51 per cent) stated they never use the Curzon Street car park.
* Most of those who do use the Curzon Street car park (33 per cent) do so for less than 2 hours at a time and tend to use it more in the afternoons than at other times of day (23 per cent).
* The most common reason respondents use the Curzon Street car park is to go shopping or visit a hospitality business on or near Errol Street (36 per cent).
* If the Curzon Street car park is unavailable to use, respondents will most often park in a nearby street (50 per cent) or drive around until a space becomes available for them (33 per cent).

### Support for affordable housing projects in the area

* Over half of respondents (59 per cent) strongly support affordable housing projects within the city.
* Around half of respondents (50 per cent) strongly support an affordable housing project being located in West and/or North Melbourne neighbourhoods.
* Half of respondents (50 per cent) either strongly or somewhat support the Curzon Street car park location for affordable housing, and almost half (45 per cent) either strongly or somewhat oppose it. The majority of sentiment from both groups was strong, indicating polarized views.
* The greatest levels of strong support for an affordable housing project located in Curzon Street were from those who live outside the area (59 per cent) and those who shop or attend services on or near Errol St (47 per cent). The greatest levels of strong opposition came from those who currently park their car in the car park (85 per cent).

### Importance of considering various factors when building an affordable housing project

* A majority of respondents (82 per cent) felt that it is very important to have a high quality building that is safe and enjoyable for the future residents.
* Over half of respondents (53 per cent) felt it is very important to include a community benefit such as seating or a small park in this affordable housing project.
* Over two-thirds of respondents (80 per cent) felt that it is very important or somewhat important to have a building design that retains the heritage feel and scale of the neighbourhood.
* Under half of respondents (43 per cent) consider a building design that retains some car spaces for community use to be very important. Respondents who currently park their car in the car park were the most likely to rate this as very important (87 per cent).

### What respondents told us…

* The most commonly made point in support of affordable housing in Curzon Street was that it would contribute to the diversity of the area. Where people were specific, they reported support for communities of mixed economic and social status, and that all types of people should be able to live in the area.
* There was considerable support for affordable housing in Curzon Street based simply on the need that is present in the city. An additional similar number of people stated that the benefits of this project would be that residents would be close to work, study and transport.
* Non-specific support for affordable housing was offered by a considerable number of respondents, and a similar additional number stated that benefits would be found for future residents/tenants of the development, noting in many cases that secure and affordable housing is a right and that it could potentially change people’s lives in profound ways.
* The most often reported concern about the affordable housing proposed for Curzon Street was the pressure on car parking that it would bring. This was mainly of concern for people who use the car park and for the local businesses whose customers rely on being able to access parking.
* While similar numbers of respondents each offered either simple opposition to the proposed development or criticisms of the chosen site, a range of impassioned comments were made by respondents who feared what impacts such a housing scheme would bring; that is, people did not want to see increased crime in the area, particularly those who use or sell drugs.
* People were concerned about an increase in the antisocial behaviours they see that naturally follows when affordable housing is located close by.
* Suggested locations for affordable housing indicated that respondents want this type of development to both occupy currently under-utilised space, and in that these spaces be well connected to transport and amenities.

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