

# Vibrant Brunswick Interim Engagement Report

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# Executive Summary

Moreland City Council is currently reviewing the planning controls for the Brunswick Activity Centre. An engagement process was delivered in September and October 2021 to understand community and business sentiment about the area and the potential for increased business activity.

The engagement included an online survey (55 responses), an online ideas board (62 responses) and an online workshop (15 attendees). The results of the engagement activities were analysed and themed. A consistent theme throughout the engagement activities was a desire for the Brunswick Activity Centre to be

**a vibrant, creative hub that meets the needs of local residents and visitors to the area.**

Respondents from all engagement activities suggested ideas for how the area should look and feel. These have been themed into a set of principles.

Principle	What this would look like
Inclusive and diverse	Spaces that are suitable for a range of users
Creative	Spaces that support the growth of areas and creative activities
Local destination	An activity centre that provides for the needs of locals
Walkable	An activity centre that is easy and pleasant to access on foot
Meeting spaces	Places to gather, meet and linger both green and other spaces
Sustainable	A place that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable
Green and beautiful	A place that is well cared for, attractive and green

To truly activate the area these principles would need to be supported by projects to encourage people to use the area. This could include a range of events and activities, access to street dining, investment and promotion.

# Introduction

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## BACKGROUND

Moreland City Council wants to encourage business investment and jobs in the Brunswick Activity Centre to ensure the vibrancy of the area does not decline. Job growth is not keeping up with population increases in the area. Increasing numbers of residents need to travel outside the area for work. Working locally provides a number of benefits including shorter commutes providing extra hours with family & friends and more time for exercise & sleep, workers spending locally can establish a cycle of growth and an overall support for the local business economy.

Council is currently reviewing the planning controls for the Brunswick Activity Centre.

The purpose of the review is to evaluate how the planning controls can help create an activity centre that is vibrant and viable in the longer term and will help to increase employment in the municipality. The current controls are confusing, with a mixture of zones and overlays affecting properties in multiple combinations.

There is already community interest in planning issues in this area. This is both in relation to this project and issues relating to specific controversial planning decisions. This current review is specific to the Brunswick Activity Centre planning controls but will not examine building heights or parking however these may be ongoing concerns for community members.

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

While some community members have a good understanding of planning process many find it confusing and the language can be alienating. As a result, the community engagement did not focus on the planning scheme but on the place itself. The aim of the engagement was to encourage community members to think about what the Brunswick Activity Centre needs to enhance employment and vibrancy. This was achieved by asking how people currently use the area, how they would like to use the area and what would make it easier for them to use the area.

Three key research questions were developed to guide the engagement process. These are the questions that should be answered by the process, they are not necessarily the questions asked of community. The key research questions were:

1. What goods and services are needed in the area?
2. What would make Brunswick Activity Centre more Vibrant?
3. How could Planning help increase vibrancy and employment in the area?

## METHODOLOGY

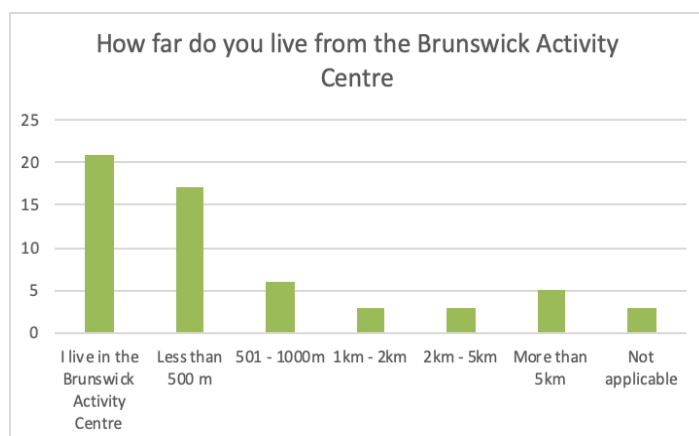
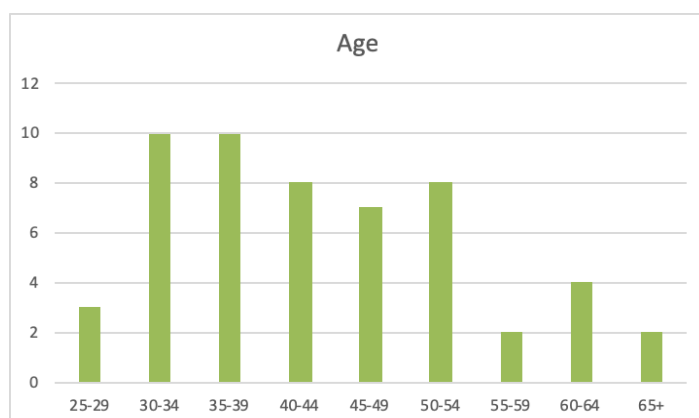
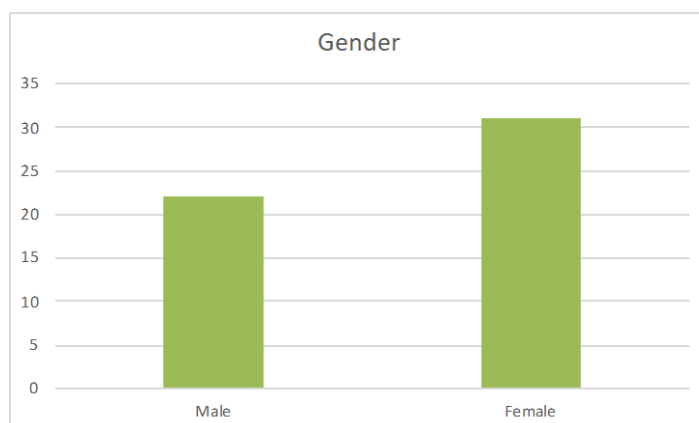
COVID-19 restrictions did not allow for face to face engagement so all engagement was conducted online. The engagement opportunities consisted of:

1. An online survey on the Conversations Moreland website which received 55 responses.
2. An ideas board on the Conversations Moreland website which received 62 responses.

3. An online meeting for businesses, community representatives and people working in the creative sector with 15 participants.

## Demographics

Demographic information was only gathered from people completing the online survey. There was a good range of people completing the survey with the majority living in or close to the activity centre.



# Results

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The results of all engagement activities have been analysed in relation to the key research questions, the results are provided below.

## WHAT GOODS AND SERVICES ARE NEEDED IN THE AREA?

By asking what goods and services are currently used both inside and outside the Brunswick Activity Centre, and which ones are missing and desired for the area, a picture can be created of potential future businesses to plan spaces for and to encourage through the planning controls. An indication of how often residents imagine working from home in the future also supports the future picture.

### **What goods and services are currently accessed within the Brunswick Activity Centre?**

The majority of survey respondents visited the Brunswick Activity Centre regularly to access services. Over 45% visited the area daily and 36% visit a few times a week. The services that were most likely to be visited daily were

- Public outdoor spaces (35%)
- Hospitality (11%)
- Wellness/health and fitness services (7%).

The services that were most likely to be visited on a weekly basis were

- Hospitality (82%)
- Public outdoor space (45%)
- Wellness/health and fitness (36%).
- Post office (28%)
- Entertainment (22%).

Some services were visited less regularly but were utilised by a large percentage of the people surveyed. The services visited at least annually were medical (87%) hair and beauty (65%) and fixing things (bikes, clothes and technology) (76%).

The goods that were most likely to be purchased from business in the activity centre were groceries (100%) take away (100%) and retail goods such as books and gifts (70%).

## **What goods and services are currently accessed outside the Brunswick Activity Centre?**

Services regularly visited outside the activity centre were similar to those accessed within the activity centre including:

- Wellbeing/ health and fitness (24%)
- Hospitality (41%)
- Entertainment (20%)
- Public outdoor space (53%).

## **What goods and services are missing from the Brunswick Activity Centre?**

21 people indicated that there were shops and services they could not access within the activity centre. The most commonly cited were cinema (5 people) arts and creative spaces (5), bookshops (4), community space including informal meeting spaces (4), bars (3) and music and performance spaces (3). A number of respondents indicated the need for more 'speciality shops' including deli, clothing shops, sports shops, a toy shop, a music shop, bespoke retailers and speciality cakes.

A number of respondents indicated a desire for more community/ open or public space with an emphasis on it being a place that can be accessed at no cost. One person indicated the need for a night market and farmers markets and one suggested a greengrocer. Only one respondent indicated the need for a service, specifically the need for dementia advice. Only one person mentioned manufacturing indicating the need for industrial spaces.

## **How do you expect to work in the future?**

The pandemic has changed how many people currently work. People who work from home and live in and around the Brunswick Activity Centre will increase employment in the area and are also likely to spend more money in local businesses. When asked how they think they will work into the future, 53% indicated they intended to work from home 2-3 days a week and a further 21% indicated they intended working from home 4-5 days a week. Only 5% indicated they would never or rarely work from home.

## WHAT WOULD MAKE BRUNSWICK ACTIVITY CENTRE MORE VIBRANT?

Respondents to the online ideas board were invited to suggest what would make the Brunswick Activity Centre more vibrant. These answers will help Council with priorities to be covered by the planning controls, and other themes that can be addressed through different mechanisms. Respondents had the opportunity to vote on the ideas provided. The ideas have been themed and presented in the table below.

Theme	Popularity	Examples
Beautify the area	13 suggestions 88 votes of support	'clean up graffiti' 'make it greener' 'remove rubbish'.
Activate the area including less focus on cars and with a focus on outdoor dining	7 suggestions 67 votes of support	'revitalise the market – make it a destination like South Melbourne' 'turn it into Melbourne's largest arts hub'.
Active transport/ space for people	11 suggestions 95 votes	'cycling and pedestrian paths from east to west', 'remove cars and car parking... more bikes and pedestrians will make people stay longer and spend more'
Greening	8 suggestions 66 votes	'urban greening projects to make a place you want to go' 'plant street trees along Sydney Road'. 'visible outdoor dining/ bars, not hidden or tucked away'.
Accessibility	5 suggestions 42 votes	'make the area more wheelchair accessible' 'make the area and surrounds more walkable so access is easier'.
Business support	4 suggestions 36 votes	'increase business opportunities along the Upfield line' 'support grants for people opening up businesses in the area'.

Other ideas included promoting the arts, encouraging retail diversity and preventing the increase of large residential developments.



## HOW COULD PLANNING HELP INCREASE VIBRANCY AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE AREA?

Increasing vibrancy and employment in the Brunswick Activity Centre was linked to some key design and management approaches to the space and its use. Within the workshop there was an interest in developing a space that promoted a range of business and community needs.

Physically the Brunswick Activity Centre should be:

**Inclusive and diverse** – in broad terms including cultural diversity, making it a space that is welcoming to a range of people including more established residents and newer residents. This requires spaces that are suitable for a range of uses.

**Creative** – a place that supports the growth of creative spaces for a range of arts activities. This could provide a focal point this area – a place for people to visit and linger. Some artistic groups have been priced out of the area, to return they will require sufficient space to work and promote their work at affordable process.

**Have a local focus** – the area needs access to services, shops and facilities to meet local requirements and to allow people to live locally. This requires a mix of spaces that can be easily accessed by all people.

**Sustainable** – this needs to be a core concept in all work – it needs to be social, economically and ecologically sustainable.

**Walkable** – any new development should be used as an opportunity to improve permeability and walkability for the activity centre.

**Have good access to open space** – open space, either green or other needs to be available to encourage people to linger in the area, meet friends and stay for an extended time.

This should be supported by:

**Information and promotion** – there is a lack of information and promotion about what is happening in the area. Providing a comprehensive guide to services and opportunities will encourage people to visit.

**Investment** – the local infrastructure requires investment and so does the social capital – there are many untapped resources in the area.

**Creative responses for ground floor spaces in new developments** – this is an underutilised resource, currently these are often dead spaces but they have the potential to be used by a range of business, arts practitioners or social enterprises.

## What businesses are particularly suited to the area?

The area is particularly suited to creative, health, medical, small to medium businesses, professional services and internet-based services. Services that meet the needs of the current residents include community services, Maternal and Child Health, Neighbourhood Houses, support services.

Businesses such as logistics and big box retailers are less suitable as they attract heavy traffic.

Some businesses may be suitable in certain areas such as music venues, but there is a tension between the needs of residents and the needs of music venues. Housing built near existing music venues should be acoustically appropriate.

### **What do these businesses need?**

Businesses need a range of spaces and services to succeed. Some elements that should be considered are outlined below.

- Flexible collaboration spaces and hubs – for creative and manufacturing, the hub has a multiplier effect by bringing people together.
- Commercial space (within developments) needs to be fit for purpose, large concrete shells might be too expensive for tenants to fit out. These need to be designed with the needs of business in mind.
- Commercial space should not just be used for cafes – too many cafes is not sustainable from a business perspective – more variety needs to be considered.
- Support for businesses to navigate the planning scheme.
- Opportunities for business to meet and share ideas potentially with community and RMIT Place Lab.
- An opportunity fund that can be used to realise good ideas in the area that is easy to access.