



**CITY OF
PARRAMATTA**

Charles Street Square Upgrade Draft Concept Design Public Exhibition

Consultation Report

April 2020

01: Executive Summary

In February/March 2020, the City of Parramatta placed on public exhibition the draft concept design for a proposed upgrade to Charles Street Square, Parramatta. The objective of the community consultation was to seek feedback from key stakeholders and the community on the proposed changes to the square. Findings from the engagement during the public exhibition period are summarised in this report.

Overall, it is estimated that more than 880,000 people across the local government area and beyond received information about the draft concept design and the opportunity to provide feedback.

Media coverage, including two television news stories on Channel 9, eight news print articles and four online news articles, was positive.

As part of the engagement program, more than 1,000 post cards were distributed, 2,200 direct mail letters were sent to residential and commercial properties and a range of digital and social media channels were used.

There were 2,155 visits to Council's engagement portal 'our say' and 1,294 visits to project webpages on Council's website. A4 brochures explaining the project were produced in English and four community languages. Approximately 300 brochures were distributed and 322 brochures were downloaded from the engagement portal.

In terms of feedback, the City of Parramatta received eight email submissions (three from residents, three from businesses/adjoining landholders and three from utility providers/NSW Government agencies).

Via its engagement portal, the City of Parramatta received more than 100 survey responses. The community also provided responses via social media and by sharing their views at community drop-ins and a stakeholder briefing – where more than 450 interactions took place.

Three main themes emerged from the feedback, in addition to an understanding of current perceptions of Charles Street Square. People were generally positive about what is proposed, and many expressed enthusiasm about the improved amenity that will be delivered by the project. The main themes and findings are summarised below.

Current experience of the square

More than half the people surveyed said they had an "OK" experience of the square as it is today, and indicated they believe the square is in need of an upgrade. For those who said they had a poor experience of the square, the main reasons given were that the space is dated, degraded and boring, i.e. there is not much to do there.

Access

This theme related to how the draft concept design will improve the way that people move around the square. More than three quarters of respondents (77%) felt that the draft design would make it easy for everyone to access the area and the transport options available (i.e. the ferry and interconnecting bus services).

People said they liked the fact that there are wide walkways, ramps and stairs to allow for various modes of travel (i.e. walking, cycling, running), and that access for prams, wheelchairs and people with limited mobility has been improved. They also liked the improved connectivity to a widened Parramatta River loop. People also said that maintaining access to local businesses during construction and operation was important.

Use and experience

This theme related to what people will do in the upgraded space. An overwhelming majority of respondents (79%) felt that the public spaces shown in the draft concept design looked like places they would like to spend their time. People liked the variety and flexibility of seating and furniture, and that the provision of amenities like water bubblers, public toilets, bike parking, bike pump station, play equipment, and bins would improve the overall experience. They also liked the increased shade and would like more of it.

More than half of respondents suggested improved signage, for example to and from nearby entertainment venues or events, would improve their experience.

Character and identity

Within Council's engagement portal, people responding to the Charles Street Square project were able to use a variety of tools to indicate how they felt about the proposed character and identity of the draft concept design. As well as responding to survey questions and indicating reactions on a sliding scale, people had the opportunity to indicate design features they liked on a photo-montage of the proposed upgrade.

The majority of survey respondents (83%) said they could see the space becoming a nice place to wait for the ferry and meet friends. Most respondents liked the terraced seating, sheltered seating, ferry wharf ramp and mature trees.

There was a positive response to the opportunities for art installations and representations of Parramatta's identity. People also supported design elements which would see the space becoming a more welcoming place for families, with amenities and play equipment.

There was general agreement on the need to increase safety through the design, and for the proposed landscaping to include the use of native species. Many people expressed the need for a robust maintenance regime to prevent rubbish and graffiti, and a number of people thought that there should be renovations or upgrades to the adjacent retail and commercial tenancies.

Feedback was also provided in the following ways:

- stakeholder briefings – invitation only (attended by nine business owners and tenants)
- community drop-in sessions (three sessions with more than 450 in-person interactions)
- email submissions (eight were received – residents, businesses/adjoining landholders, utility providers/NSW Government agencies)
- online survey via Council's engagement portal 'Our Say' (more than 240 people partially completed the survey and 115 completed the survey).

02: Feedback Snapshot

From 115 survey responses, we know:



Most people (77%) felt that the new design would make it easy for everyone in the community to access the area and the transport options available in that space

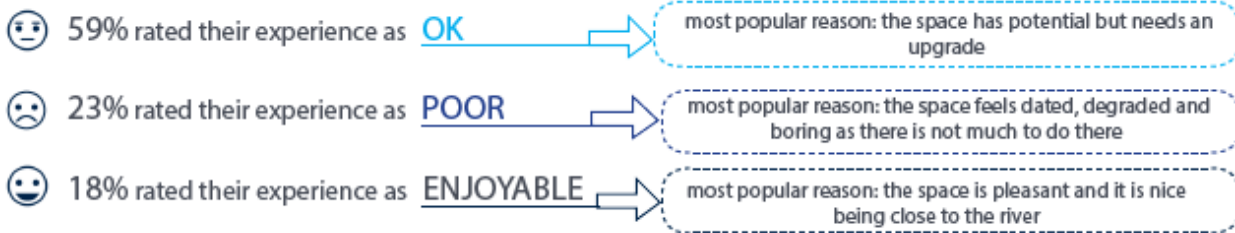


Most people (79%) felt that the public places depicted in the proposed design looked like spaces where they would like to spend their time.

From online and face to face engagement, this is what people said about the existing square:



CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE SQUARE



From online and face to face engagement, this is what people said about the proposed concept design for the square:



ACCESS - how people access and navigate the space

- 61% of those surveyed (that gave a reason) said the new wide walkways and paths allows for various modes of traveling (i.e. walking, cycling, running)
- liked the increased connectivity to the larger Parramatta River loop
- liked improved access for prams and wheelchairs and people with mobility disabilities
- wanted maintained access to local business during construction and operation



USE & EXPERIENCE - what people will do in the space

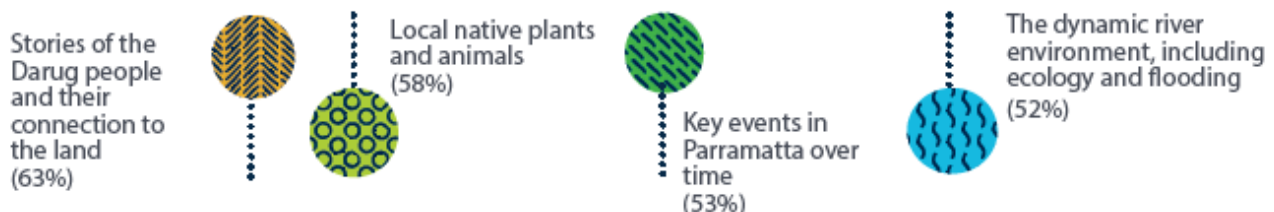
- 57% of those surveyed wanted clear directional signage to help get to and from the square
- More than 50% of those surveyed felt that entertainment / events would improve their experience
- liked the variety and flexibility of proposed seating and furniture
- liked the increased shaded area and wanted see more of it



CHARACTER & IDENTITY - how people feel about the space

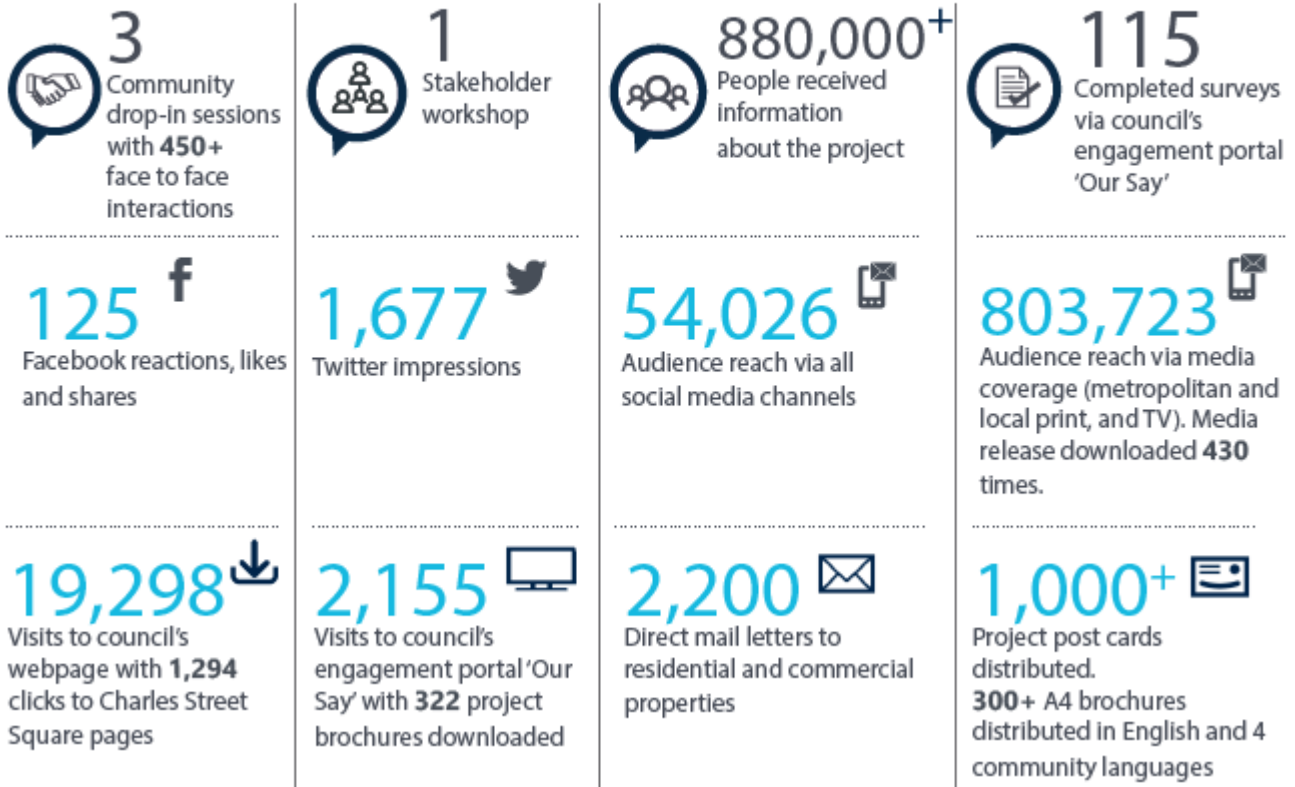
- 84% of those surveyed thought the design provided pleasant places to sit and watch activities on the river or to meet friends
- 40% of those surveyed liked the opportunities for art installations/representations of Parramatta's identity
- wanted the upgrade to increase safety
- wanted the space to become more welcoming for families with amenities and play equipment

For public art and interpretation in the space, those surveyed would like it to represent:

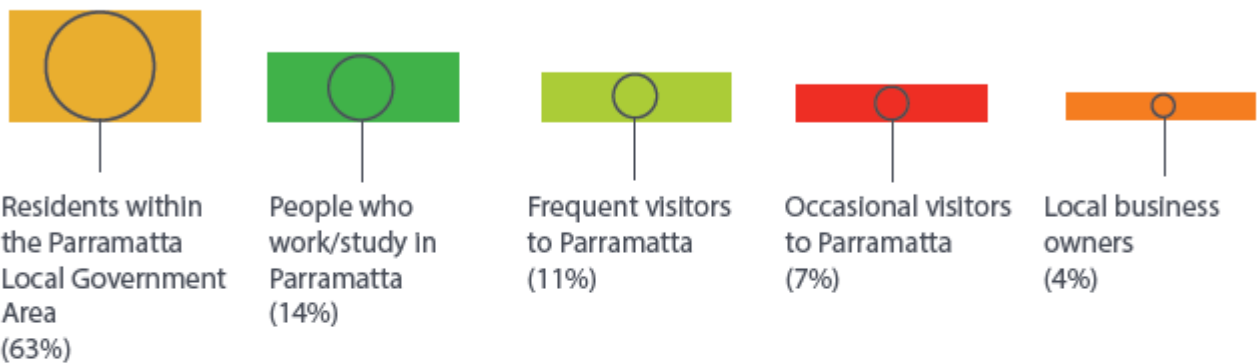


03: Consultation Snapshot

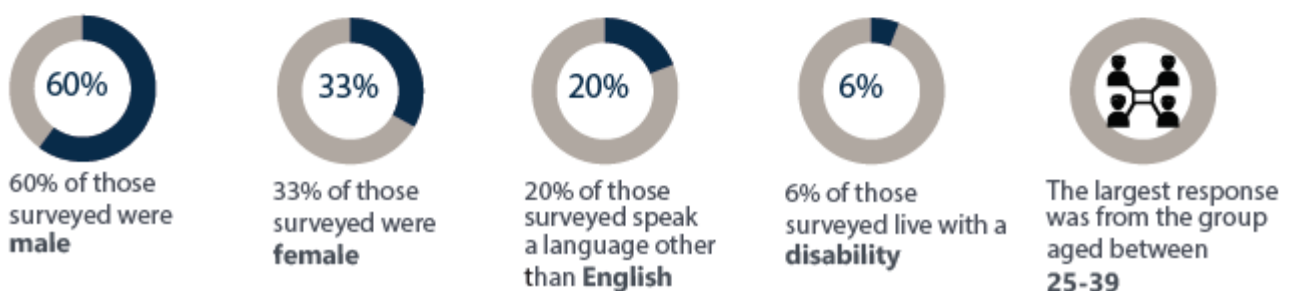
The engagement program involved consulting with key stakeholders and the community in a variety of ways, including:



Of those who completed the survey, we heard from:



What else do we know about the people surveyed?





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