



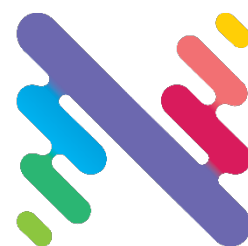
Newcastle 2040

Community engagement report

Prepared by City of Newcastle

September 2021

newcastle.nsw.gov.au



City of
Newcastle

Executive summary

Newcastle 2040, our next Community Strategic Plan (CSP), represents the highest level of strategic planning carried out by local government. *Newcastle 2040* will support City of Newcastle (CN) to draw various strategic plans together, understand how they interact and help us plan holistically for our future.

With this in mind, CN designed and implemented a comprehensive community engagement program over 16 months from early 2020 to August 2021 to consult people who don't usually participate in community discussions. Our objective was clear, we wanted to listen to as many viewpoints and people as possible.

Through an array of in-person and online engagement activities, over 4,500 people shared their aspirations and priorities for Newcastle's future with us between early 2020 and August 2021. From these activities, it was clear our communities want strong leadership, engaged citizens, and places and spaces that support an active lifestyle.

People value Newcastle as an inclusive, liveable city with everything in close proximity, but would like to see improved transport options, access to affordable housing options for all, and expanded cycleways and footpaths. Environmental sustainability is important, particularly to young people, with a consensus that we should be protecting our natural areas and coastline and providing adequate greenspaces. Our communities would like to see more opportunities for activations and events, more job opportunities and support for a vibrant arts and culture scene. Underpinning all these things, people want to see long-term, deliberate planning for our city.

This report outlines the key findings from our *Newcastle 2040* community engagement activities. We're using these insights to help draft *Newcastle 2040*, which will be available for further community input from early 2022.



Contents

Background.....	4
Communication and promotion	5
What we did	6
In-person engagement activities	6
Online engagement activities.....	7
In-person engagement activities	8
Who we spoke to.....	9
Age profile.....	9
Location profile	9
Data handling	10
What we heard	10
Transport options.....	12
Activation and events.....	13
Prosperous Neighbourhoods.....	13
Deliberate planning.....	14
Trees and natural spaces.....	14
Cycleways and footpaths.....	15
Inclusive.....	15
Affordable housing	16
Arts and culture.....	16
Jobs opportunities.....	17
Online engagement activities	18
Who we heard from.....	19
Age profile.....	19
Location profile	19
Key findings.....	20
Progress on Newcastle 2030.....	20
Values and vision underpinning our Community Strategic Plan	21
Newcastle's identity and community priorities for the future.....	22
What's next?.....	26

Background

Newcastle 2040, our next Community Strategic Plan (CSP), will be based on the long-term aspirations, knowledge and values of the Newcastle community. It represents the highest level of strategic planning carried out by local government and will support City of Newcastle (CN) to draw various strategic plans together, understand how they interact and get the maximum leverage from their efforts by planning holistically for the future.

As a core planning document, setting out to reflect a shared community vision and to inform actions over the next 10 years, *Newcastle 2040* considers the delivery of social outcomes for Newcastle based on social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.



With this in mind, CN designed and implemented a comprehensive community engagement program over 16 months from early 2020 to August 2021 that sought to consult people who don't usually participate in community discussions.

We started engaging with our communities in February 2020, however our engagement program was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A new engagement program was then developed and implemented, starting in February 2021.








As a whole-of-community strategic plan, our challenge was to reach a diverse range of people who not only live, work, study in Newcastle but also visit the CN local government area (LGA). Significant effort was put into creating multiple opportunities for people to get involved across Newcastle through a range of engagement activities.

One of the key engagement strategies applied was framed by an 'agile engagement methodology'. This involved working closely with community service providers and key stakeholders who had established relationships and programs with the community, along with CN's own analysts and strategists to closely monitor whom was being engaged against ABS population demographics.

Our focus was clear, let us aim to listen to as many viewpoints and people as possible. We heard from over 4,500 people across our range of engagement activities.

Communication and promotion

A communications plan was developed to elevate the profile of the CSP and encourage community and stakeholder participation throughout the engagement program. Overall reach throughout the engagement program is estimated to be about 40,000. This included:

Channel	Description	Reach
 Have Your Say webpage	Dedicated CN Have Your Say for as the key platform for consultation and engagement	7,757 visits across 2020 and 2021
 Billboard	Billboard on Hannell Street, Wickham (city bound)	n/a
 Social media	Mix of native and paid posts predominantly on Facebook.	Reach = 38,446
 Newsletters	e-newsletters were distributed to: CN community panel – 8 Dec 2020 + 29 Apr and 4 May 2021 City e-news – 2 May 2021	6,000+
 Advertising	Print, digital and social advertising across various publications and platforms including Newcastle Herald, Swell Magazine, Newcastle Live , Newcastle Weekly and Hunter Headline	n/a
 Media release	A media release was issued on 1 April 2021, City calls on the community to shape 2040 vision.	n/a
 Podcasts and videos	Your Newcastle podcast – Shaping Newcastle's future (season 1, episode 4) City of Newcastle YouTube channel – Newcastle 2040 and Newcastle 2040 – Lord Mayor with students	112 downloads 642 views

What we did

We carried out a range of in-person and online engagement activities to hear from our communities.

In-person engagement activities

Workshops

12 workshops with over 200 people

External workshops:

City Talk
Plattsburg Public School
IQ Innovation Event
Guide Dogs Newcastle
Waratah High School Leaders
New Local Workshop x 2
Young Futurepreneurs
Newcastle 2040 Champions Session 1 – IP&R

Internal workshops:

Councillor Strategic Workshop
Liveable Cities Advisory Committee
CN Library Staff

Listening posts and pop-up information stalls

We attended 19 events and engaged over 2050 people

External events:

Newcastle TAFE
Library summer stories event LGBTQIA+
Count Us In – Launch event
Seniors Week – The Hive
Count Us In – pop-up library at Hunter Multicultural Centre
Jesmond Harmony Day
Wallsend Skate Park
Jesmond Central
Wallsend Shopping Centre
Marketown
Beresfield Local Centre
Dixon Park
Wollotuka Institute
ATSI Network Event
Newcastle Show
Seniors Week at Hunter Multicultural Centre

Internal events:

City Administration Centre Walls
City Administration Centre BBQ
CN Depot BBQ

Online engagement activities

Online forms

2 online forms with over 650 responses.

Topics explored included:

Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan:

Do you think we are on track?

Is there anything missing?

What could we be doing better? (n267)"

Newcastle 2040 Community Strategic Plan:

In 10 years Newcastle will be....

Biggest concerns about the future

What would you like to see more of?

Online surveys

4 online surveys with over 2,200 responses

Topics explored included:

Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan

Values, vision and perceptions of Newcastle

Newcastle's identity

Community priorities for Newcastle 2040

Online ideas wall

1 online ideas wall with 250+ responses

Feedback on 12 ideas for Newcastle's future



In-person engagement activities

We carried out a series of in-person engagement activities including workshops, pop-up information stalls and 'listening posts' in early 2021 across the Newcastle LGA to hear from a broad cross-section of our community about their aspirations for Newcastle's future.

Questions focussed on:

- *What do you want Newcastle to look like in 2040?*
- *What do you want to see more of in Newcastle?*
- *What do you love / excites you about Newcastle?*
- *What's missing or concerns you?*
- *Have we been on the right track or be doing anything better?*
- *I would like Newcastle to have more...*



Who we spoke to

We heard from over 2,300 people across our range of in-person engagement events, from a diverse mix of ages and locations:

Age profile

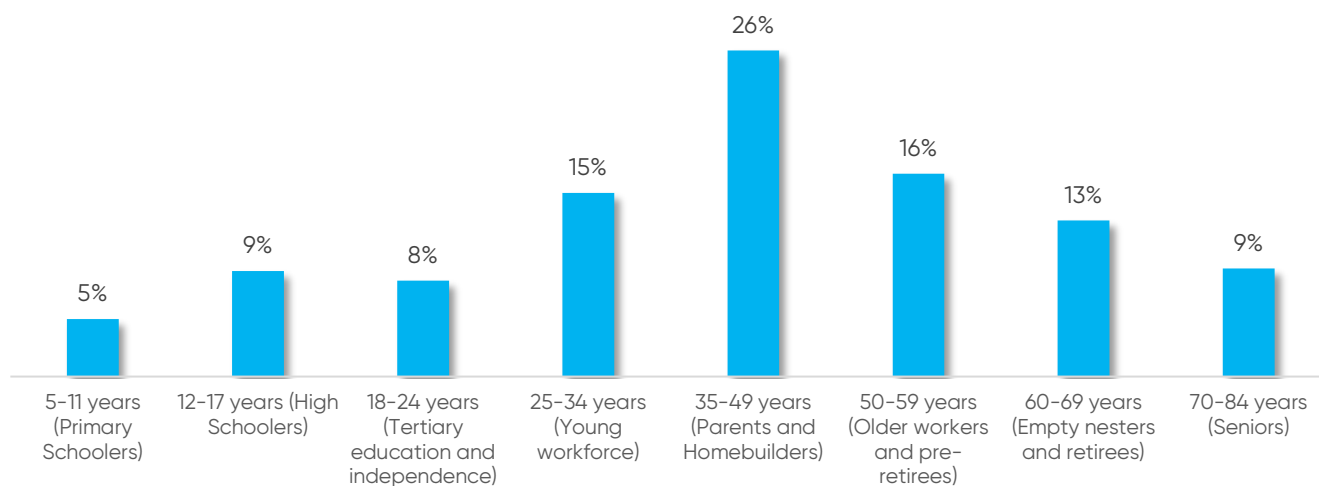


Figure 1: In person engagement activities - age profile

Location profile

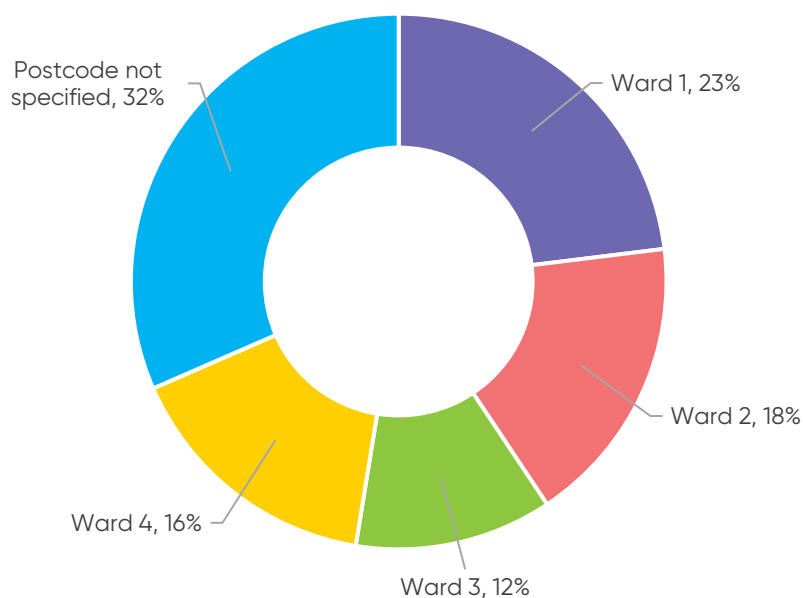


Figure 2: In person engagement activities - location profile

Data handling

From the 2,300 people we spoke to at our various events, we received over 4,500 pieces of feedback with ideas for Newcastle's future. To manage and draw insights from such a large data set, we created a business intelligence dashboard to help visualise and analyse the data.

Each and every piece of feedback was categorised as by theme, and then by sentiment as follows:

Focus	areas to invest or investigate
Improve	not good enough, fix it
Expand	not enough, need more
Reduce	too much of this
Maintain	not too bad, keep doing

... as well as general positive and general negative comments.

What we heard

Thanks to community involvement, we've gained strong insight that will be used to shape a new vision, priority areas and values for Newcastle's future.

When asked from across our local government four wards, individuals responded to:

In 10 years Newcastle will be...

16 years,
Ward 1

Connected. We love the light rail, just wish it went to more destinations

40 years,
Ward 2

A successful example of a green city that values it's diverse culture that gives our kids something to be proud of

55 years,
Ward 3

A place that people want to travel to for its arts and cultural life, the beaches and the wine

25 years,
Ward 4

Thriving, environmentally friendly and with the same sense of humour. We should be a small town that knows who they are

The top ten themes to emerge across our in-person engagement activities were:

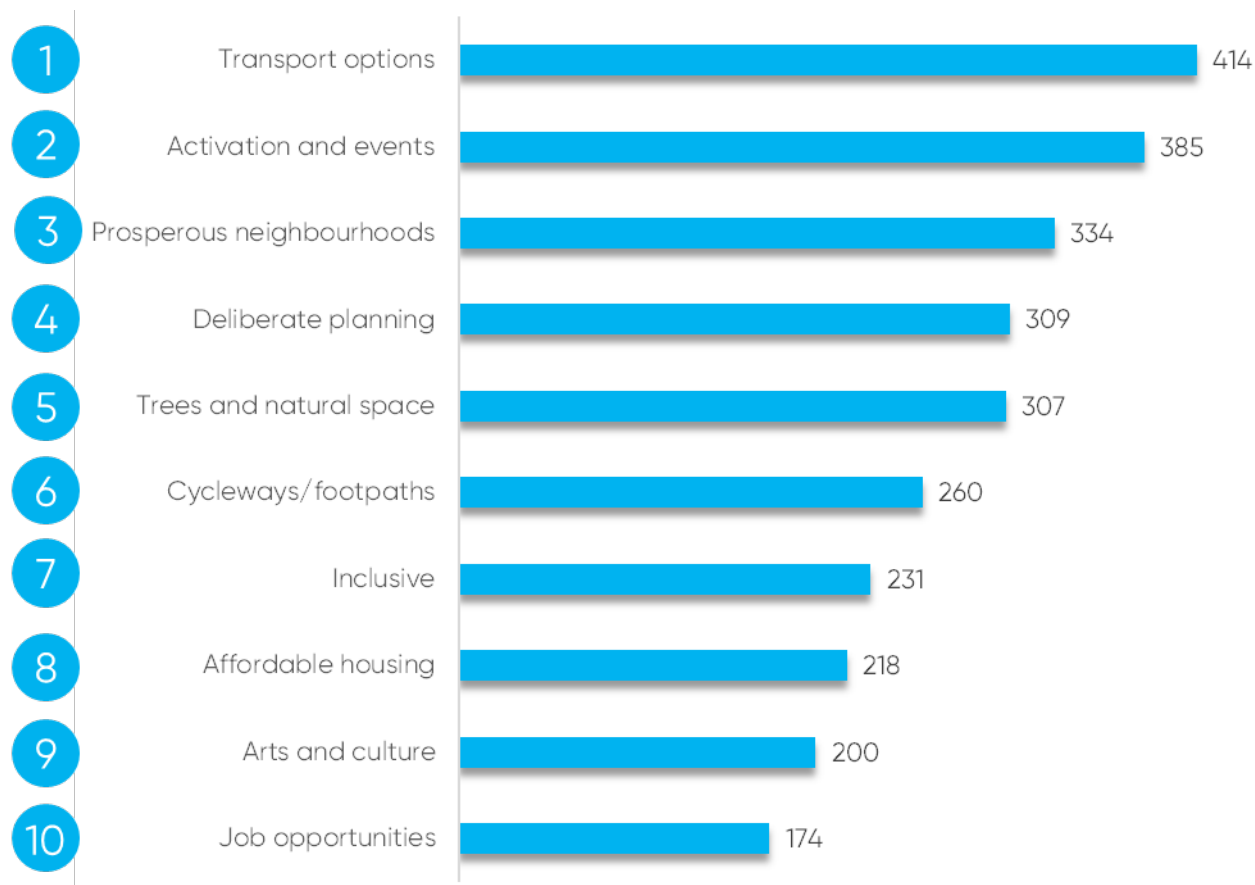


Figure 3: In person engagement activities – Key themes (number of comments)

Most of the feedback received outlined areas where CN should focus, followed by areas to expand or improve on:

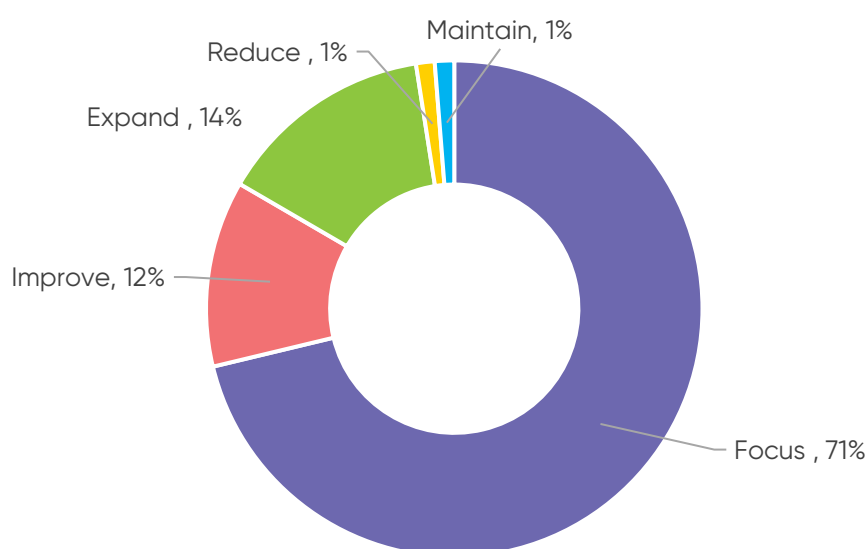


Figure 4: In person engagement activities – Sentiment

Transport options

We heard you value how we get around for work, school, shopping and entertainment. Overall, you want us to focus on transport connections, with improved public transport and traffic congestion, and an expanded light rail network and parking options.

There were a number of sub-themes related to transport:

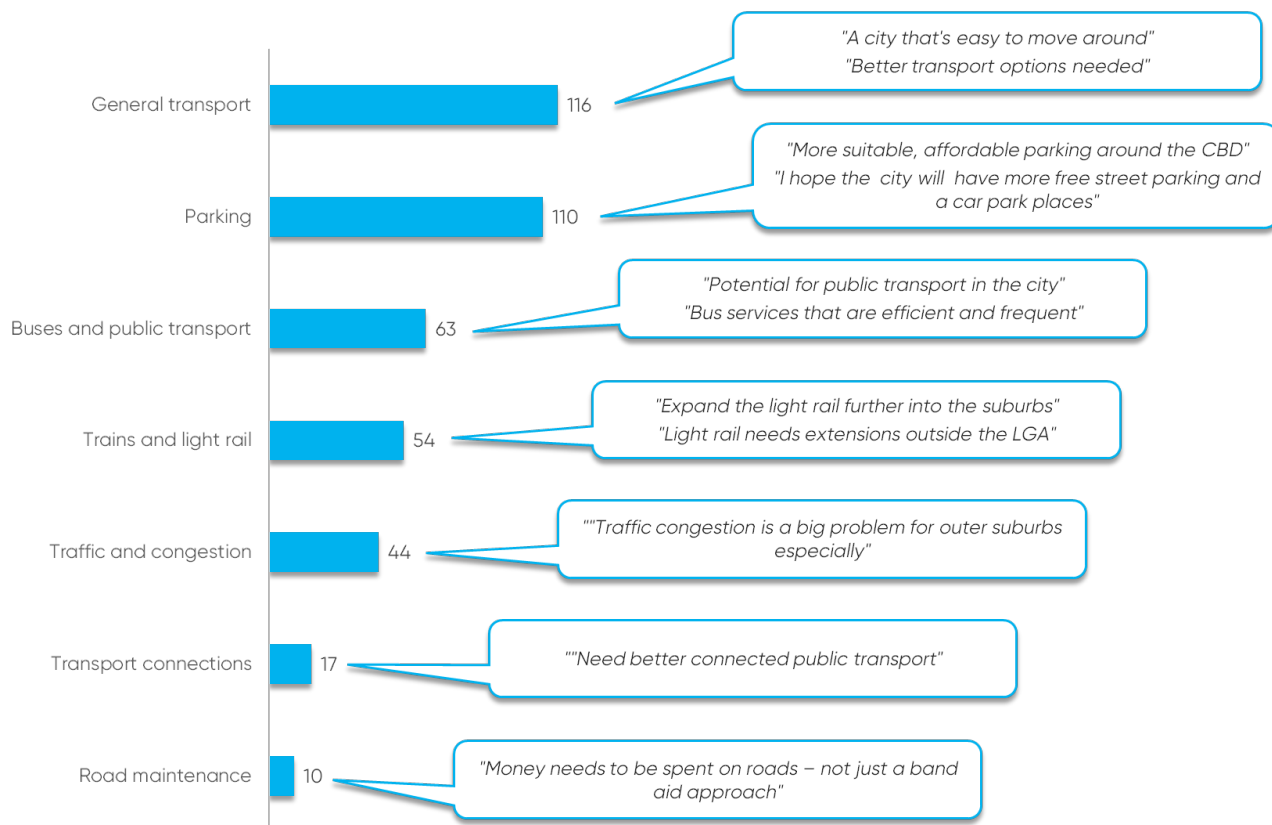


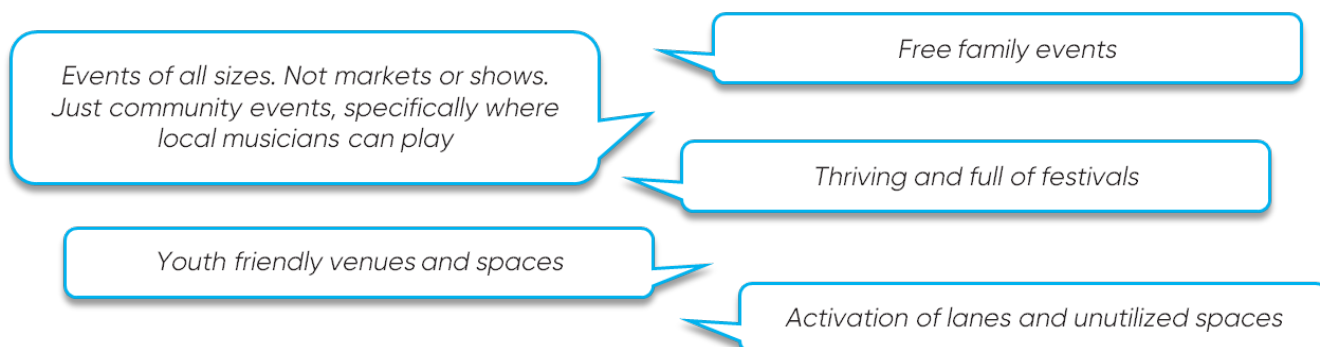
Figure 5: In-person engagement activities – Transport related themes (number of comments)

Sentiment

n= 414 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
General transport	74%	15%	6%	4%	1%
Parking	19%	31%	50%		
Buses and public transport	37%	41%	21%		2%
Trains and light rail	22%	7%	59%	2%	9%
Traffic and congestion	16%	73%	5%	7%	
Transport connections	53%	35%	12%		
Road maintenance	20%	30%	30%		20%

Activation and events

Activation and events was the second most common theme mentioned in 385 comments. People called for a focus by CN on vibrant local neighbourhoods with events that happen day and night that showcase Newcastle's people, places, and culture.



Sentiment

n= 385 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Maintain	Other
Activations & events	74%	4%	17%	0%	1%	4%

Prosperous Neighbourhoods

Newcastle neighbourhoods are valued for having everything easily accessible, with a great lifestyle, and that should remain a focus moving forward

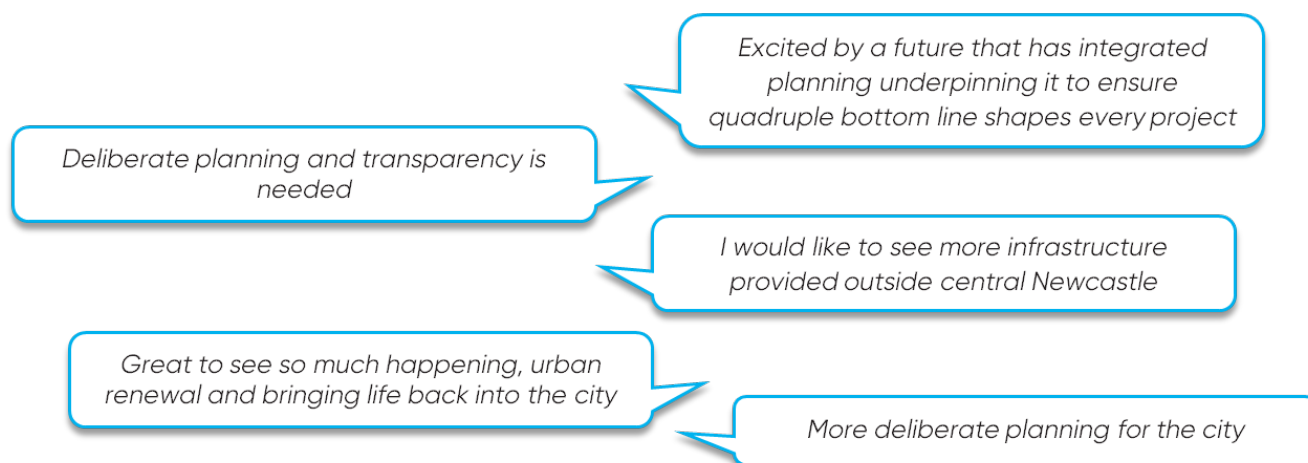


Sentiment

n= 334 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Prosperous neighbourhoods	54%	9%	11%	0%	25%

Deliberate planning

When it comes to thinking about the future, integrated, sustainable long-term planning for Newcastle and the region using evidence-based decision-making rated highly.



Sentiment

n= 309 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Deliberate planning	65%	17%	8%	6%	4%

Trees and natural spaces

Our communities told us to focus on the value of open, green spaces to enhance the beauty and environmental quality of neighbourhoods and to offer recreation space for the community.

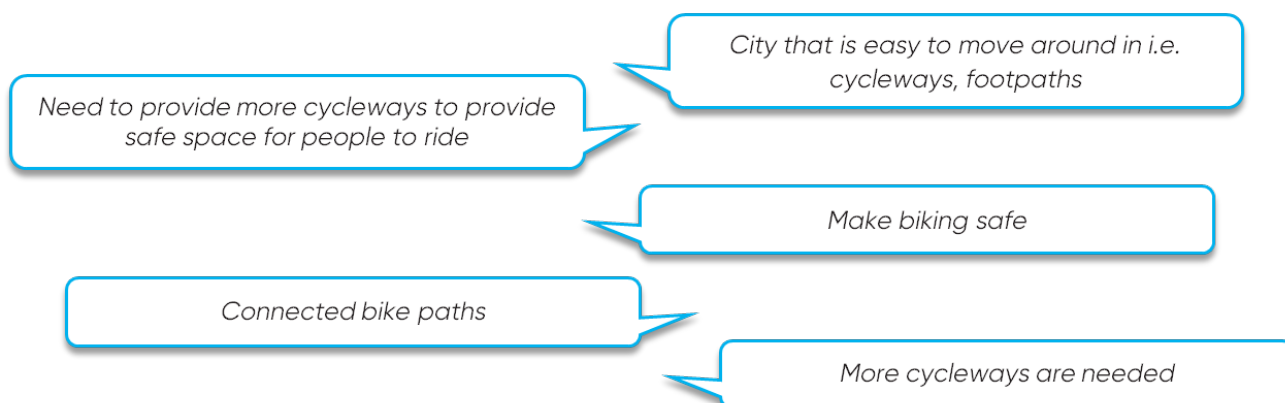


Sentiment

n= 307 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Trees and natural spaces	76%	2%	21%	1%	1%

Cycleways and footpaths

A focus on expanding linked pathways that provide for safe cycling and pedestrian use and encourage people to actively move around their neighbourhoods.



Sentiment

n= 260	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Cycleways and footpaths	51%	11%	37%	0%	1%

Inclusive

We heard people want Newcastle to be a diverse, inclusive community with a real sense of belonging for all residents and visitors

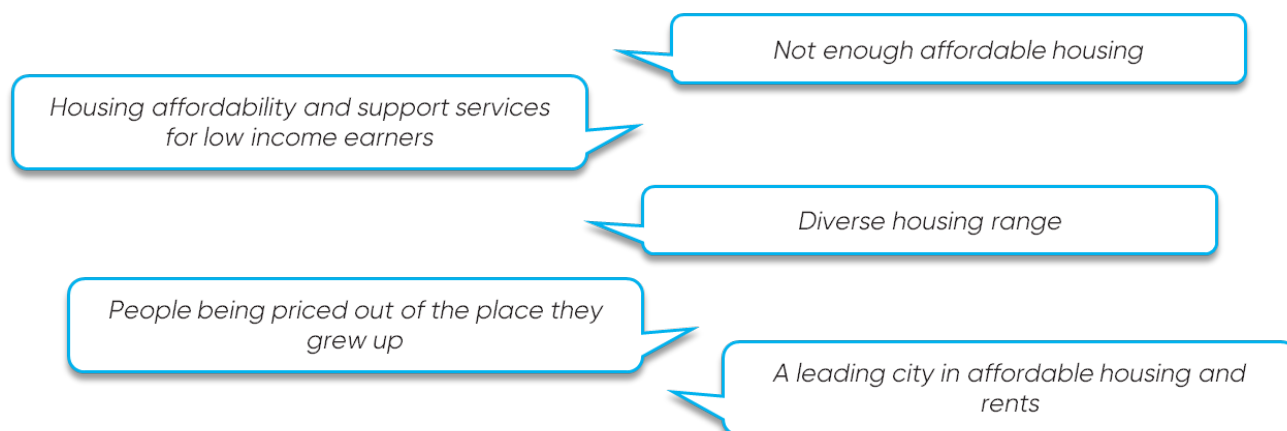


Sentiment

n= 231 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Inclusive	77%	9%	9%	2%	4%

Affordable housing

The community would like to see improvements in the availability of housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of households.

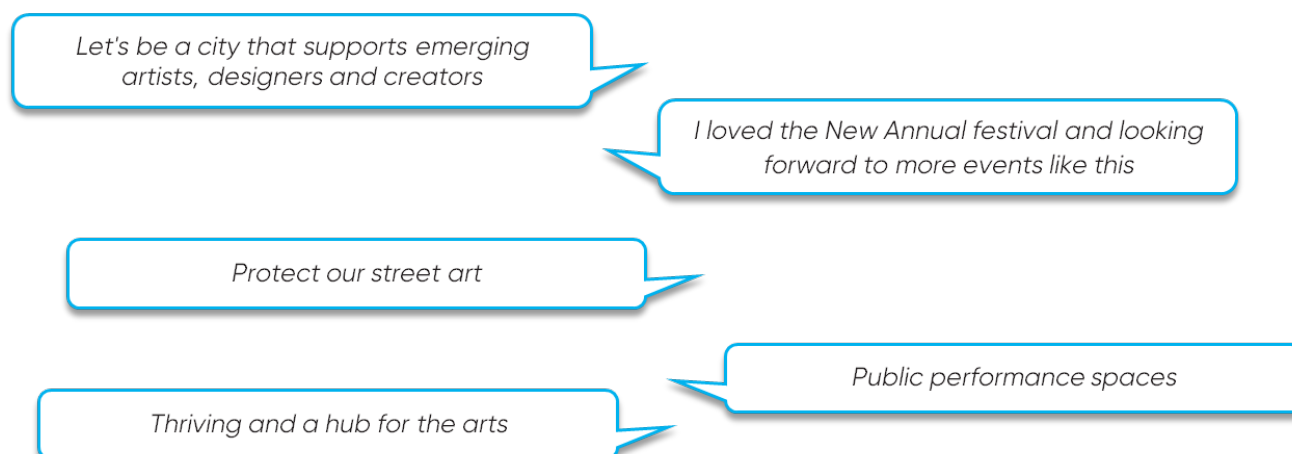


Sentiment

n= 218 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Affordable housing	35%	55%	6%	1%	4%

Arts and culture

People want to Newcastle to be a city that supports and encourages arts and culture.



Sentiment

n= 200 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Arts and culture	76%	7%	14%	0%	4%

Jobs opportunities

The community want to see expanded job opportunities in Newcastle.

Diverse employment opportunities

A great place for small businesses

Jobs needed for young people

Have to move away to get jobs in certain industries. Would like it all to be available here

Encourage small creative sustainable businesses that bring people to town

Sentiment

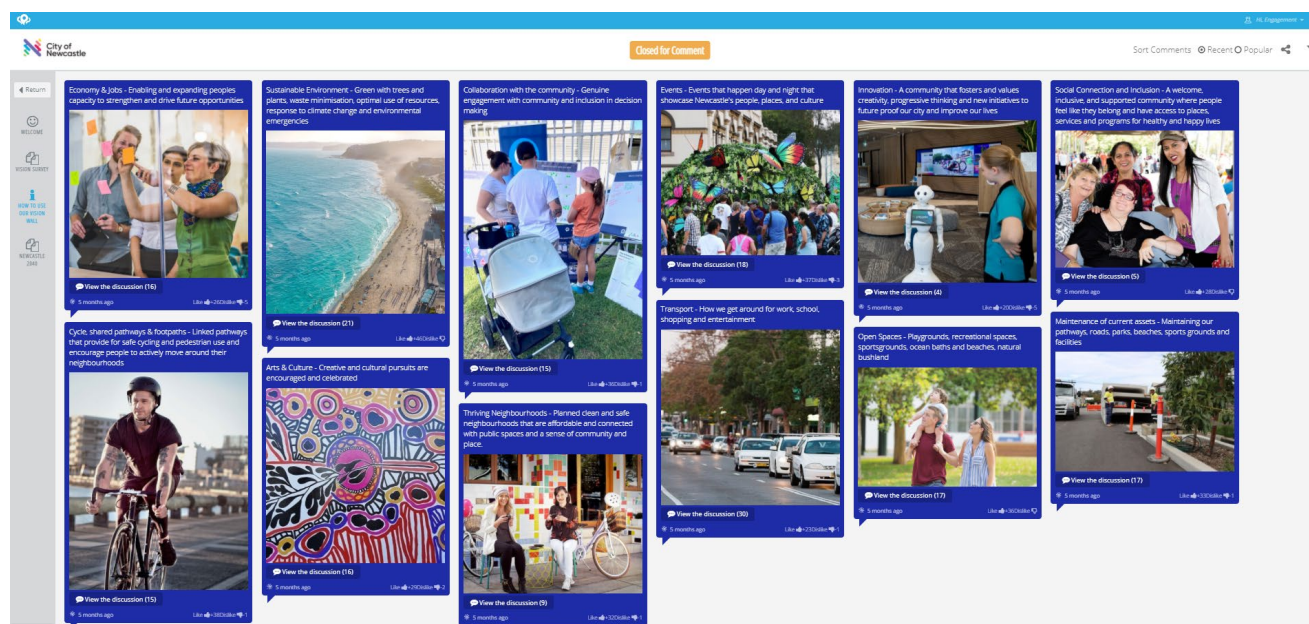
n= 174 comments	Focus	Improve	Expand	Reduce	Other
Job opportunities	80%	5%	14%	1%	1%

Online engagement activities

A series of online engagement activities including feedback forms, surveys and an ideas wall were carried out across 2020 and 2021 to engage with a broad cross-section of our community about the values and priorities important for Newcastle's future.

These activities sought to better understand:

- awareness, overall community sentiment and perceptions towards our progress in meeting the Newcastle 2030 CSP goals,
- the values and vision underpinning our current CSP,
- our identity and community priorities around the pillars supporting *Newcastle 2040*.



Who we heard from

Across our online engagement activities, we heard from over 2,200 people from a diverse mix of ages and locations.

Age profile

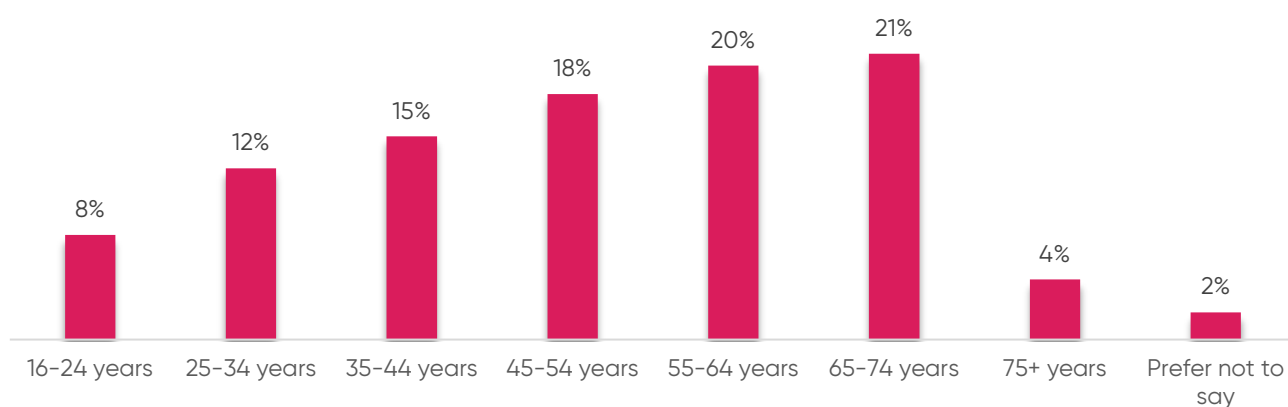


Figure 6: Online engagement activities – Age profile

Location profile

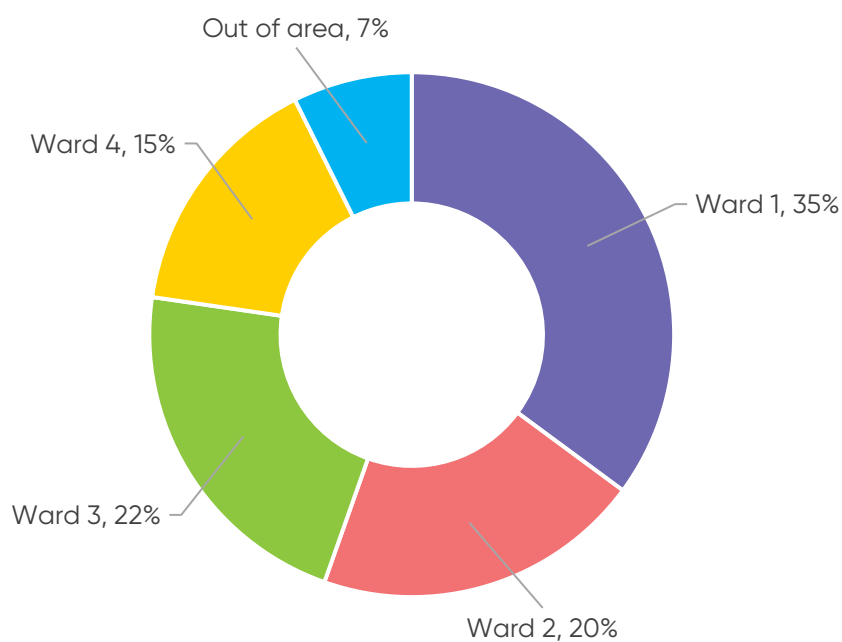


Figure 7: Online engagement activities – Location profile

Key findings

Progress on Newcastle 2030

The initial pre-COVID-19 survey was the Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2030 check-in. This survey covered the CSP's objectives, what was working (or not) and missing from the plan, what was considered important to younger people, awareness and what SDG's were viewed as important.

The online survey was open from Tuesday 25 February to Wednesday 8 April 2020 and 446 people took part. More than one-in-three survey respondents were aged between 65+ years of age, and as such, the findings from this survey are not considered representative of the local government area (LGA) and are indicative only.

Feelings towards the vision for Newcastle 2030:

In 2030, Newcastle will be a smart, liveable and sustainable global city.



Progress towards strategic directions:

A thriving community where diversity is embraced, everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute and belong.	★★★★☆	3.1
A city of great public places and neighbourhoods promoting people's health, happiness and wellbeing.	★★★★☆	3.1
An attractive city that is built around people and reflects our sense of identity	★★★★☆	3.0
A leader in smart innovations with a prosperous, diverse and resilient economy	★★★★☆	2.9
Our unique environment will be understood, maintained and protected.	★★★☆☆	2.7
A strong local democracy with an actively engaged community and effective partnerships	★★★☆☆	2.6
Transport networks and services will be well connected and convenient. Walking, cycling and public transport will be viable options for the majority of our trips.	★★★☆☆	2.3

Mean score out of five, where higher scores indicate stronger performance

Top three issues facing younger people:

- 1 Local employment opportunities 43%
- 2 Infrastructure to support our population 32%
- 3 Housing affordability 23%

To learn more, [download the full survey report](#).

Values and vision underpinning our Community Strategic Plan

Leveraging the community survey that CN carries on a quarterly basis to better understand key issues, community needs and priorities about the services and facilities provided by the City, the Summer 2020 quarterly community survey asked people a series of questions about our CSP.

The online survey was open from 1 to 18 December 2020 and 552 people took part. Data was weighted post-collection to be representative of our LGA in terms of age and location.

Vision for Newcastle

51% said the vision contained in the CSP – In 2030, Newcastle will be a smart, liveable and sustainable global city – reflects their hopes for Newcastle's future extremely or very well.



Community values

To help inform future planning, respondents were asked to rate the importance of, and CN performance on, each of the ten values that underpin our CSP.

The most important values were:

1. **Leadership – 88%**
rated as extremely or very important
2. **Engaged citizens – 86%**
3. **Active lifestyle and Environmental sustainability – 85%**

The values where CN performs most strongly:

1. **Active lifestyle – 47%** rated as performing extremely or very well
2. **Innovation – 38%**
3. **Resilience and Diversity – 34%**

Perceptions of Newcastle

Most respondents agreed that Newcastle is:

78% Liveable **66%** Safe **53%** Welcoming/connected

Agreement that Newcastle is **Vibrant and Active** was lower in comparison (42%)



To learn more, [download the full survey report](#).

Again, leveraging our quarterly community survey, the Autumn 2021 survey asked people about Newcastle's identity and for their priorities for Newcastle's future regarding four areas: liveability, environmental sustainability, place of opportunity and togetherness.

This survey was also incentivised resulting in two winners of \$250 vouchers. The incentives contributed significantly to increased participation in the survey and made promoting the activities to sections of the community who don't usually take part in CN engagement activities much more effective.

To gain community insight on Newcastle's identity, we asked people to describe in a few words or phrases what they love about Newcastle and the local area they live in. This question intended to provide insight into people's high-level priorities for Newcastle and into community-friendly language for use in *Newcastle 2040*. The most common words and phrases are depicted below:



Some differences to note include those aged under 35 years valuing Newcastle's variety, cafes, events and laid-back vibes. For respondents aged over 55 years, facilities, services and access were noted in the key things people love about Newcastle.

Newcastle 2040 – Community engagement report – 22

Priorities for the future

Liveability

Top three priorities to support a liveable Newcastle:

1. Supporting local living – everything is within 20 minutes **(43%)**
2. Providing trees, gardens, gardens and plantings **(40%)**
3. Walkable neighbourhoods **(39%)**
3. Convenient options for active and public transport **(39%)**



While **supporting local living** received generally strong levels of endorsement across all groups, it was more important to those in western parts of the LGA (wards 3 and 4). For those in the eastern parts of the LGA (wards 1 and 2), **city greening** and having **walkable neighbourhoods** was more important.

Similarly, having **walkable neighbourhoods** was more important to those aged 35 – 74 years than other age groups, with **easy access to services and facilities** of greater importance to those aged 55+ years.

Having **affordable and diverse housing options** was more important to those aged 18–34yrs (56%), and those in Ward 4 (43%).

Environmental sustainability

Top three priorities to support Newcastle's future environmental sustainability:

1. Protecting our natural areas and coastline **(55%)**
2. Providing green spaces with trees and plants **(40%)**
3. Reducing waste through reducing consumption, recycling and reuse **(36%)**



When it came to environmental sustainability, **protecting our natural areas and coastline** was the most priority across all groups.

Providing green spaces was the next most strongly endorsed priority among all groups, **except for those aged 18–34 years** where an ongoing commitment to using 100% renewable energy, taking a strong response to climate change, a commitment to moving towards zero emissions and reducing waste through reducing consumption, recycling and reuse were more important.

Other age-related differences are also noted for showing **respect for Traditional Custodians** of the land and commitment to **moving towards zero emissions**, both of which decrease with age. Conversely the importance of our ability to **manage future emergency events** increases with age.

The other notable difference was for respondents from Ward 4, who placed greater importance on **reducing waste** and **using technology to manage waste and recycle more efficiently**.

Place of opportunity

Top three priorities for making Newcastle a place full of opportunities by 2040:

1. Building a strong local economy with low unemployment **(53%)**
2. Supporting vibrant, cultural and creative communities and a thriving arts scene **(38%)**
3. Attracting and keeping skilled people **(37%)**

In terms of ensuring Newcastle is a place of opportunity, **building a strong local economy with low unemployment** was the most strongly endorsed priority across all groups.

The next most important area, for those aged under 55 years and in the eastern parts of the LGA (wards 1 and 2) was **supporting vibrant, cultural and creative communities/activities and a thriving arts scene**.

For those aged 55 - 74 years and in western parts of the LGA (wards 3 and 4), **attracting and keeping skilled workers** was the second most important area. **Valuing Newcastle's culture and heritage** came in at second place for those aged 75+ years, though this was less important for younger respondents.

Togetherness

Top three things that contribute to a welcoming, accessible and inclusive community:

1. Promoting good long term and deliberate planning **(47%)**
2. Efficient and effective provision of services to the community **(46%)**
3. Promoting genuine community and stakeholder engagement **(42%)**



Promoting good long-term and deliberate planning and efficient and effective provision of services to the community were in the top two most important items for all groups, except for respondents aged under 35 years, where providing positive community experiences and promoting genuine community and stakeholder engagement were more important than providing efficient services.

To learn more about the survey findings, [download the full survey report](#).

We also explored community priorities for the future via an online ideas wall, where people could like or dislike 12 ideas for our future. The online ideas wall was open from 26 March to 31 May 2021 and 254 people expressed likes and/or dislikes for the 12 ideas:

	Likes	Dislikes
Sustainable environment – Green with trees and plants, waste minimisation, optimal use of resources response to climate change and environmental emergencies	46	0
Cycle, shared pathways & footpaths – Linked pathways that provide for safe cycling and pedestrian use and encourage people to actively move around their neighbourhoods	38	1
Events – Events that happen day and night that showcase Newcastle's people, places, and culture	37	3
Open Spaces – Playgrounds, recreational spaces, sportsgrounds, ocean baths and beaches, natural bushland	36	0
Collaboration with the community – Genuine engagement with community and inclusion in decision making	36	1
Maintenance of current assets – Maintaining our pathways, roads, parks, beaches, sports grounds and facilities.	33	1
Thriving Neighbourhoods – Planned clean and safe neighbourhoods that are affordable and connected with public spaces and a sense of community and place	32	1
Arts & Culture – Creative and cultural pursuits are encouraged and celebrated	29	2
Social Connection and Inclusion – A welcome, inclusive, and supported community where people feel like they belong and have access to places, services and programs for healthy and happy lives	28	0
Economy & Jobs – Enabling and expanding people's capacity to strengthen and drive future opportunities	26	5
Transport – How we get around for work, school, shopping and entertainment	23	1
Innovation – A community that fosters and values creativity, progressive thinking and new initiatives to future proof our city and improve our lives	20	5

What's next?

The draft *Newcastle 2040* will be presented back to the community and staff for review and comment. Feedback will be reviewed after the public exhibition period, with the final document potentially updated and then formally endorsed by the Council on behalf of the community.

