

Boroondara Community Plan 2025 - 2035

Youth Workshop Summary

March 2025

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1 Introduction

Every 4 years, as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council consults the community to shape the 10-year Boroondara Community Plan, Council's key strategic document. This is Council's largest community consultation, and it is broadly representative of the community with over 5,000 people telling us what's most important to them. We consult the community through a community survey and series of community workshops.

We invited the community to complete a survey during July and August 2024, with 2 questions:

- Question 1: Thinking about the next 10 years, please tell us what you think Council should focus on.
- Question 2: Of the items you mentioned, which one is most important?

For the survey, we aimed to hear from as many young people as possible, as they are often underrepresented in community consultations. To achieve this, we conducted 25 visits to local schools and 2 visits to Swinburne University during their 'Welcome Back Week'. We heard from 927 children aged 0-13 and 631 young people aged 14-24 who are part of the Boroondara community (living, working, studying or spending time here). Of the 1,558 young people surveyed a total of 1,183 were Boroondara residents.

For the workshops, we ran a series of deliberative engagement workshops for community members aged 18 years and older, alongside a separate workshop for members of Council's Youth Voice (Council's Youth Reference Group).

The youth workshop was designed to validate the priorities of young people aged 13-17 within the broader Boroondara Community Plan consultation. We engaged members of Boroondara's Youth Voice in structured activities where they analysed the insights from the survey and identified the issues most important to them. Their insights provide a youth-focused perspective on key community priorities, ensuring that young voices are meaningfully represented in the next phase of the plan.

2 Participants

In addition to the 1558 responses from young people to the community survey, Council spoke with a small but engaged group of 7 members of Boroondara's Youth Voice, aged between 12 and 17 years old, at a special Youth Voice (Council's Youth Advisory Group) session at the Youth Hub, Hawthorn Arts Centre on 10 December 2024.

While the number of participants was limited, these young people had participated in Youth Voice sessions throughout 2024, giving them a strong understanding of Council's operations, services, facilities and local issues. Their ongoing engagement enabled a deeper, more informed discussion aligned with deliberative engagement principles, which prioritise input from participants who have the context and knowledge to reflect on complex issues. To support this approach, Council provided background materials a week in advance, helping to ensure that contributions on the day were thoughtful, informed and grounded in prior experiences with Council issues. Method

The purpose of this session was to validate and expand upon the priorities identified during the Stage 1 consultation for the Boroondara Community Plan 2025 to 2035.

To ensure meaningful participation and informed discussions, workshop participants were provided with preparatory materials one week in advance. These materials included an overview of the survey insights including the 7 categories and 40 focus areas that emerged from the initial community survey.

The workshop structure included the following key components:

1. **Community survey findings:** Participants were presented with the 7 categories that emerged from the community survey consultation. They were asked to reflect on these findings and discuss whether they aligned with their own priorities and experiences.
2. **Prioritisation Exercise:** Participants ranked the 7 categories in order of importance and provided reasoning for their choices. This exercise helped highlight which areas were most significant to young people in Boroondara.
3. **Categories and focus areas - key areas of importance:** Within each category, participants identified their top focus area and discussed why it was important to them.
4. **Identifying missing focus areas:** Participants were encouraged to reflect on any gaps in the Stage 1 consultation and suggest additional areas of importance that had not been captured.
5. **Visioning Activity:** Participants were asked to imagine what their ideal Boroondara would look like in 2035

The workshop methodology was designed to facilitate an open and constructive dialogue, ensuring that young people's perspectives were meaningfully incorporated into the broader community consultation process. The qualitative insights gathered through this process, along with video highlight reels capturing key discussions, have been used to inform the development of the Boroondara Community Plan 2025–2035.

3 Findings

The workshop outputs are:

- detailed qualitative data on youth priorities, explaining why these are important for young people.
- two video highlight reels from the workshop that were shared with community workshop participants, internal stakeholders, and councillors during the decision-making process to highlight youth perspectives.

3.1 Community survey categories - order of importance

We asked workshop participants to consider the 7 categories that came out of the community survey consultation. Participants were then asked to rank these categories from most important to least important to them and to explain their reasoning.

Based on this activity, the order of importance for the categories for this group of participants was (from most important to least important):

1. Community wellbeing, services and facilities
2. Moving around
3. The environment
4. Outdoor spaces
5. Local economy
6. Leadership and governance
7. Housing and urban development.

3.2 Categories and focus areas - key areas of importance for young people

We asked participants to identify their top focus area within the categories and explain why it was important to them. Their responses are summarised under each category below:

Category	What is important?
Community wellbeing, services and facilities	- Participants emphasised the need for well-maintained community services and facilities that support wellbeing, liveability, and safety. They highlighted the importance of strong community connections, feeling safe, and having access to inclusive recreational spaces. - Ensuring accessibility to services, fostering a sense of belonging, and creating more safe and welcoming spaces for social interaction. Indicative quotes: <i>“My ideal Boroondara would be everyone participating in the community, everyone working together and everyone volunteering.”</i> <i>“I’d say community connection is the main one for me. It’s the heart. As a community, if you don’t have</i>

Category	What is important?
	<i>connection then you aren't really a community, you're just a group of people."</i> <i>"Having places where we can all connect, like places where the youth can connect, would be a good idea. It reduces loneliness."</i> <i>"It is really crucial for the Council to provide services for everyone living in Boroondara, including those who might find it a bit more difficult to access health resources that other people might just have every single day. With a healthier community, we have a community that is more productive, and that is able to be more inclusive, and more resilient towards change".</i>
Moving around	• Reliable, efficient, and sustainable transport was a top priority. Young people emphasised the need for improved public transport services, better bike lanes, and safer pedestrian infrastructure. • Addressing traffic congestion, enhancing the frequency and cleanliness of public transport, and promoting environmentally friendly transport options. Indicative quotes: <i>"A lot of people use public transport to get to work or get to school and I feel like we have to improve it because sometimes public transport isn't frequent enough."</i> <i>"Everyday when I go to school, there are always cars parked on the side of the road. It really makes going to school and returning from school much more difficult."</i>
The environment	• Implementing more initiatives to address climate change and protect the local environment. • Participants expressed concerns about environmental sustainability and climate change. Indicative quote:

Category	What is important?
	<i>"Sustainability, like more use of solar power because I feel like that's quite important. Climate change is becoming quite a big thing right now."</i>
Outdoor spaces	- Green spaces and outdoor recreational areas were valued for both physical and mental wellbeing. - Preserving and increasing green spaces, ensuring parks are safe and well-maintained. Indicative quote: <i>"My ideal Boroondara would have lots of green spaces because green spaces just make everyone happier."</i>
Local economy	- A thriving local economy with diverse shopping streets and restaurants makes the area special and exciting. Supporting local businesses helps maintain the community's unique character, foster a sense of connection, and keeps the streets lively. - Participants expressed concern that big corporations might take over and make Boroondara less unique. If small businesses struggle, the community could lose its lively streets and strong local connections. Keeping local shops and restaurants open is important to make ensure the area remains vibrant and welcoming. Indicative quote: <i>"There are many benefits to encouraging smaller businesses to thrive. They're unlike big corporations. They're a lot more unique and tie in with the identity of Boroondara."</i>
Leadership and governance	Supports the operation of everything, keeps things organised and aids in making important decisions. There is a need for strong leadership and governance to support these efforts.

Category	What is important?
	• Need to make sure things run smoothly and stay transparent. Indicative quote: <i>“People need leadership, governance to obtain safety and ensure things keep going.”</i>
Housing and urban development	• Participants recognised the growing challenge of housing affordability and its impact on young people staying in Boroondara. They also valued the unique character of the community and the need to maintain it. • The cost of housing makes it difficult for young people to live independently and ensure that development balances growth with the preservation of Boroondara’s identity. Indicative quotes: <i>“I think it’s important to find that balance between character and houses that are older, but also obviously having enough apartments for the growing population.”</i> <i>“Housing in Boroondara is pretty expensive, and so if we’re trying to stay here or maybe for other people to come and move in, it’s going to be hard to keep up with the cost of living.”</i> <i>“Development is very important to ensure greater diversity”</i>

3.3 Community survey - missing focus areas

Participants were also asked what’s missing from the stage 1 focus areas. The following ideas were shared:

- Swimming and aquatic services
- Affordability for public transport
- Multilingual services for young people
- Water bowls for dogs
- More services for cats and allowing them to be outside

- Free public transport for students.

3.4 Vision for the next 10 years

Participants were asked what their ideal Boroondara would look like in 10 years. The group expressed a desire to build on the areas existing strengths while addressing key challenges.

The following ideas were discussed:

1. Transport and Accessibility

- Affordable and reliable public transport, ensuring easy mobility across the area.
- Improved bike lanes to promote sustainable and active travel.
- More housing near public transport hubs and universities for convenience.

2. Housing Affordability and Availability

- More affordable housing options, including apartments, to support young people and students.
- Housing developments that maintain Boroondara's unique character and liveability.

3. Green Spaces and Sustainability

- More parks, open spaces, and dog-friendly areas to foster wellbeing.
- Greater use of renewable energy, such as solar power, to address climate change.

4. Community Connection and Services

- More opportunities for community participation, volunteering, and youth involvement.
- Improved access to mental health support and spaces for people to connect and share ideas.
- Well-maintained libraries and study spaces for students and lifelong learning.

5. Preserving Boroondara's Identity

- Retaining the area's distinctive character while enhancing liveability.
- Strengthening local commerce to support businesses and convenience for residents.

4 Using these insights

The insights gathered from this workshop:

- were turned into 2 summary videos that were shared with the adult Community Workshop participants to share youth perspectives.

- have been shared with internal stakeholders and councillors during the drafting process
- were used to inform the draft of the Boroondara Community Plan 2025 to 2035, and
- in future will inform initiatives and programs addressing youth priorities, alongside the 1558 responses from young people to the community survey and other ongoing engagement with young people.