

CATEGORY

Project of the Year

City of Sydney

Planning for 2050

Commencing in 2018, the City of Sydney undertook an extensive community engagement program to support the development of a new Community Strategic Plan to 2050. The objectives of the Sydney 2050 engagement were to:

1. Share with the community what we have planned for the decade in Sustainable Sydney 2030 (our current plan) and confirm if we are still heading in the right direction.
2. Share future trends and workshop new ways of thinking about 2050 to inform and identify long-term community values and priorities.

The engagement program needed to capture the breadth of our community – the 1.3 million people who live, work, visit, do business or study in the city every day. It also needed to delve deeply into the challenges of city-making. The process was iterative as we developed a community vision through values, future trends, challenges and ideas for action. Throughout the process, the insights from the community informed the research and vice-versa.

The first step was to work with Councillors and our expert advisory panels to develop our approach which focused on gaining clarity on engagement outcomes and aligning these with the City's engagement principles. Desired engagement outcomes included achieving strong participation from people under 30, bringing experts and community together and increasing civic efficacy and empathy.

Early engagement with the community allowed us to test approaches and to understand hopes and concerns for the future. These insights were used to shape the questions we asked in the broad engagement phase. We also asked, 'how will we know the engagement has been a success?' to inform our evaluation framework.

Like many community strategic plan projects, we sought broad input across the community through:

- a survey of over 5,000 people
- 33 pop-ups at events in our villages and libraries
- 12 community sessions including 2 in Mandarin, 1 in Spanish
- 23 workshops with children and young people in schools and universities
- creative writing and leadership programs – I am Sydney and Emerging Civic Leaders
- workshops with First Peoples, small business, cultural and nightlife sectors and our advisory panels
- community and business group briefings.

We made our data available through data-story maps and VR experiences to help inform community feedback. We then tested our research and broad community engagement findings at a stakeholder workshop attended by 300 stakeholders from government, business and the community.

A deliberative program that included a Youth Summit, a Children's Summit and a Citizens' Jury took a deeper look at how Sydney could be transformed in the future. 100 students deliberated on the outcomes of the school workshops and presented their transformative ideas to the Lord Mayor. The 3-month long Citizens' Jury considered the engagement and research findings along with 2000 ideas generated by the stakeholder workshop, youth and children's summit and those submitted by the community online. They sought expert advice and recommend eight concepts that will transform Sydney.

The outcomes of the Sydney 2050 engagement are now online and have been reported to Council and back to participants. Updates to Council on the proposed directions of the plan and how these respond to the community engagement outcomes have commenced. However, the Covid-19 crisis has delayed the finalisation of the plan. The City will now also use the insights from the Sydney 2050 engagement as we map out the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

While the engagement program included a mix of engagement approaches designed to bring different people into a meaningful conversation about the future, we always ensured the purpose and outcomes of each activity aligned, and the findings could be synthesised into a coherent community voice. We ensured that the overall program had a purposeful trajectory from exploring community values to developing transformative concepts. We hope the result will be a Community Strategic Plan with a clear community vision and priorities that we are confident are supported by evidence.