

## Case Study

<b>Project</b>	Mount Barker Town Centre Strategy and Development Plan Amendment
<b>Organisation undertaking the engagement</b>	Town of Mount Barker
<b>Estimated cost of the engagement</b>	Approximately \$53,000
<b>Estimated person hours associated with the engagement</b>	300 hours (conservative estimate)

### What was the project?

This project involved the engagement of community, businesses and stakeholders in the development of the Mount Barker Town Centre Strategy - a plan for the structure, function and design of the Mount Barker Town Centre to accommodate growth. Subsequently it involved engagement on a Development Plan Amendment to meet the plan's objectives.

### What were the objectives of the engagement?

The objectives of the engagement were to:

- understand what community and stakeholders saw as the issues and opportunities for the future development of the Town Centre
- ensure that all those interested or affected had the ability to provide early input to inform the development of the Town Centre Strategy
- to engage with those who usually do not participate (e.g. young people and 'not the usual suspects')
- to build a sense of belonging and investment in the future development of the Town Centre
- to engage early on the Town Centre Strategy to build community understanding prior to consulting on the DPA.

### What was the 'scope of influence'?

For the Town Centre Strategy, community and stakeholders could influence aspects of the strategy such as its vision and directions around land use, character, built form, community spaces and movement.

For the DPA Council responded to community and stakeholder feedback by amending a number of policy areas to reduce building heights and improve interfaces, introducing a precinct to protect the setting of State and Local Heritage Places and introducing a new policy area (Dunn Bickle).

Engagement occurred across 3 stages:

Stage 1 - To gain early input to help shape the draft town centre strategy (INVOLVE)

Stage 2 - To obtain feedback on the draft town centre strategy (CONSULT)

Stage 3 - Following adoption of the strategy, to gather feedback on the draft DPA (CONSULT).

## How was the engagement undertaken?

The first stage of engagement sought early input to inform the draft town centre strategy through open house ('Speak Out') sessions, online and hard copy feedback forms, written submissions, stakeholder and community interviews (on request) and targeted youth activities.

The three open house 'Speak Out' sessions were held in a variety of townships, in the evenings or on weekends, to enable participation. At each session, community members were able to 'drop in' and provide comment on identified key themes associated with the Town Centre - character and built form, land use, community spaces and getting to and around the Town Centre. Participants also had the opportunity to mark on a map; areas to be protected/retained, areas needing improvement and areas that provide an opportunity to contribute to a vibrant and well-functioning centre.

A separate youth 'walk out, talk out' session was held to canvas the views of young people who tend not to traditionally engage in such processes. The session involved walking around the community in small groups to chat with council staff or consultants about the Town Centre. Following the walk, young people gathered together in the Town Hall to discuss the Town Centre over a pizza dinner.

The engagement was promoted more broadly than through traditional means to encourage participation by those other than the 'usual suspects'. Promotion took place through schools and community networks or newsletters and through working with developers to target recently developed communities.

Stage 2 of the engagement sought feedback on the draft Town Centre Strategy, developed using feedback from early engagement. The engagement was promoted broadly and engagement activities included open house sessions, letters to stakeholders and calls for written submissions.

The open house sessions again were organised to take place in a variety of townships and at various times to enable participation. People could drop in and ask questions and comment on the themes that interested them. The sessions used visual tools such as maps, plans and photo examples to demonstrate proposals.

The Town Centre Strategy proposed a Development Plan Amendment (DPA) of the Town Centre Zone to enable the strategy's implementation. Engagement on the Town Centre Strategy was essentially the early engagement for the DPA. Because development aspects had been discussed for the Town Centre Strategy, when engagement on the DPA commenced, the community already had a general level of understanding and acceptance of what it proposed.

Engagement on the DPA included, in addition to legislative requirements, open house information sessions as well as a detailed information pack. The layout of these sessions was organised into stations on different policy areas and heritage so that people could easily find their area of interest, learn more and provide comment. The information packs were available in hard copy or online and included information on the project and how to provide feedback. They also included a series of comprehensive but easy to understand fact sheets that explained what was being proposed, why and what it meant.

## How did Council 'close the loop'?

For the Town Centre Strategy, a database of contacts was established and a summary report of Stage 1. The engagement report for the Town Centre Strategy also clearly showed community feedback and how it had informed the final strategy.

For the DPA, along with an engagement report to Council, letters were sent to participants outlining the changes made to the draft DPA in response to feedback.

## How does this project demonstrate the Community Engagement Charter's principles in action?

Principle	How this project reflects this principle in action
<i>Engagement is genuine</i>	<p>A genuine effort was made to facilitate people's participation. The open house sessions were run in variety of locations and at a variety of times. Additionally, in the case of the DPA, provision of the open-house sessions was above and beyond the legislative requirements for consultation.</p> <p>The comprehensive nature and early engagement associated with the Town Centre Strategy reflected Council's genuine desire to hear from the community about issues and opportunities before drafting the DPA. Feedback gathered via the early engagement impacted the direction of the strategy, as did feedback gathered by the consultation on the draft DPA.</p>
<i>Engagement is inclusive and respectful</i>	<p>The engagement for the Town Centre Strategy sought to engage with those that do not usually participate. Special efforts were made to provide activities for young people, and promotion of engagement was extended through non-traditional avenues such as schools and community networks.</p>
<i>Engagement is fit for purpose</i>	<p>The layout of the open-house sessions was organised into themes relevant to the strategy, or zones, for the DPA. This made it easy for participants to find what they were interested in, ask questions and provide comment. It also made it easier to analyse the engagement feedback into categories relevant to the strategy and DPA.</p>
<i>Engagement is informed and transparent</i>	<p>The information pack used for the DPA was easy to understand and comprehensive. It included information on the project and how to provide feedback. It also included a series of fact sheets that explained what was being proposed, where, why and what it meant.</p>
<i>Engagement is reviewed and improved</i>	<p>No 'lessons learned' exercise was undertaken for this project.</p>

Link: [www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1108](http://www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1108)

**This type of engagement process, or elements of, could be used in relation to the following designated planning instruments:**

- regional plans
- rezoning under the Planning and Design Code
- State Planning Policies





