

UNION ROAD AND MONT ALBERT ROAD

Consultation Report

2021



Contents

Selecting the best design	3
Consultation summary	4
Feedback overview	5
Urban design guidelines summary	6
Getting around Surrey Hills and Mont Albert	7
What we've heard	8
Station design and materials	9
Station precinct and public realm	10
Screening	11
Landscaping and seating	12
Pedestrian and cyclist connections	13
Old Mont Albert Station building	14
Public art	15
Car parking	17
Refining the designs	18
Next steps	19



SELECTING THE BEST DESIGN



Mont Albert Station

In December 2020, the Victorian Government announced that the dangerous and congested Surrey Hills and Mont Albert level crossings have been fast-tracked for removal – with major construction starting in 2022 and boom gates gone in 2023.

The level crossings will be removed by lowering the tracks into an open trench and we'll build a new, safer station with premium facilities and more services.

The rail trench design and new premium station will deliver better accessibility and more train services, while avoiding impacts such as the permanent closure of local streets.

Removing the Union Road and Mont Albert Road level crossings will improve safety for tens of thousands of local drivers, pedestrians and cyclists every day. Once removed, it will mean no more level crossings between the city and Ringwood on Melbourne's second busiest rail line.

The new premium station for Mont Albert and Surrey Hills will mean:

- more trains, more often
- better safety and accessibility
- less impact from construction
- premium facilities for both communities
- station will be staffed from first train to last.

CONSULTATION SUMMARY



Between December 2020 and February 2021, we asked the community to share their ideas and feedback on various aspects of the project's concept design for the new station and surrounding precinct.

We received more than 6000 pieces of feedback via online surveys, the online engagement hub, virtual community information sessions and through the call centre.

5327

pieces of feedback received from approximately 1500 community members



487

attendees across 9 virtual community information sessions and precinct meetings



15,000+

visits to our online engagement hub

Email updates sent to over

3550 subscribers



More than

740

enquiries answered via contact centre and online engagement hub



994

design feedback surveys returned

Community update sent to about

20,000

households with over 570 properties door knocked and 333 face-to-face conversations held



We heard that:

- the look and feel of the station building and precinct is very important for many members of the community who stated they would prefer a subdued, subtle look and feel that respects and complements the existing character of the area
- the heritage and historical aspects of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert should be reflected in the design, including the use of bluestone, brick and timber materials
- people prefer patterned or perforated screening with some landscaping and vegetation
- open space, trees and greenery are important when considering the station precinct design
- cycling and pedestrian paths and connections are important to people who live in the area
- many people would like to see the old Mont Albert Station converted into a cafe or restaurant, or used for community purposes
- people were fond of integrated public art that incorporates the history of the area.

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

How your feedback is helping shape our plans so far

Reflecting heritage

The community placed a strong emphasis on keeping the general station building design subtle and want to see a number of heritage elements integrated into various parts of the station and precinct. This includes integration with the artwork, the general 'look and feel' and with the selection of some materials.

Popular materials mentioned include brick, timber, tiles, and natural stone which appeared in our design surveys and virtual community information sessions.

We're considering this feedback as we work to refine the architectural features of the station building and what goes in the surrounding precinct.

The community will also be able to provide further input as the designs are updated and refined.

Trees, vegetation and greenery

We heard that trees and greenery are highly valued by the local community, and important to the character of the area.

In response to the feedback, and although many will need to be removed, we will retain as many large trees as we can.

The project will also plant thousands of trees, shrubs and grasses at the completion of the project and we will replace every tree we remove with at least two new trees, either within the project area or elsewhere nearby.

We'll provide more detail on our landscaping plans in the coming months.

Retaining and rejuvenating Lorne Parade Reserve

The Surrey Hills station entrance will connect with Lorne Parade Reserve and we're using your recent input and suggestions to develop our plans for how the reserve will be revitalised.

We heard you want to see as much of the existing open space and grassed areas retained as possible.

In response, we will design most of the station building to sit over the tracks, with most of Lorne Parade Reserve to be returned as public open space. We will also arrange the paths and buildings to maximise the amount of open space.

Construction planning

As part of works to lower the rail line into a trench and build a new premium station, the project will need to set up areas to temporarily store equipment, machinery, material, and construction vehicles.

Through the consultation period between early December 2020 and end of February 2021, we received more than 1000 planning submissions and heard about the importance of community sport and public spaces. We also received many comments on the inclusion of sporting grounds in the draft project boundary.

Through detailed project planning we can now confirm three of the four sporting ovals initially included in the draft project boundary will not be used as part of the level crossing removal project.

At Surrey Park, the under-utilised north-west oval will be temporarily used for up to two years and the baseball diamond will be used for a shorter period, from early 2023.

Both playing surfaces will be returned in brand-new condition and we will work with the baseball club to support them in temporarily relocating to an alternative venue.

We thank the sporting clubs and the community for providing input into the draft project boundary released in December 2020.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



The project follows eight principles of urban design

 <p>Enhancing</p>	<p>1. Identity A well-defined identity and sense of place is key to creating strong and vibrant communities.</p>
 <p>Diverse</p>	<p>2. Urban integration A well-integrated environment is a fundamental framework for the successful development of a great place.</p>
 <p>Connected</p>	<p>3. Connectivity and wayfinding A well-connected and legible environment contributes significantly to a strong economy, the use of public and active transport, and an integrated community.</p>
 <p>Walkable</p>	<p>4. Accessibility A highly accessible and inclusive environment provides a positive user experience and contributes to the health and wellbeing of the community.</p>
 <p>Safe</p>	<p>5. Safety A safe environment is essential for a strong and connected community.</p>
 <p>Comfortable</p>	<p>6. Amenity High-quality urban amenity associated with the experience of a great public place contributes to a successful, equitable and prosperous community.</p>
 <p>Vibrant</p>	<p>7. Vibrancy Activation and diversity in the experience of urban places supports a prosperous and healthy community.</p>
 <p>Enduring</p>	<p>8. Resilience and environmental sustainability Places and corridors must be sustainable, enduring and resilient to support and nurture current and future generations.</p>

GETTING AROUND SURREY HILLS AND MONT ALBERT



As part of our engagement, we asked the community how they get around the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert areas.

We found that:

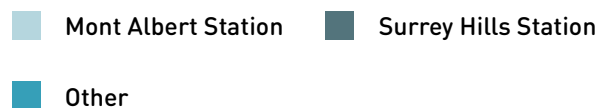
- 86% of respondents walk to Surrey Hills or Mont Albert stations
- 54% of respondents use the Belgrave–Lilydale line at least once a week

- More respondents use Surrey Hills Station than Mont Albert Station
- 25% of respondents from Mont Albert or Mont Albert North use Surrey Hills Station

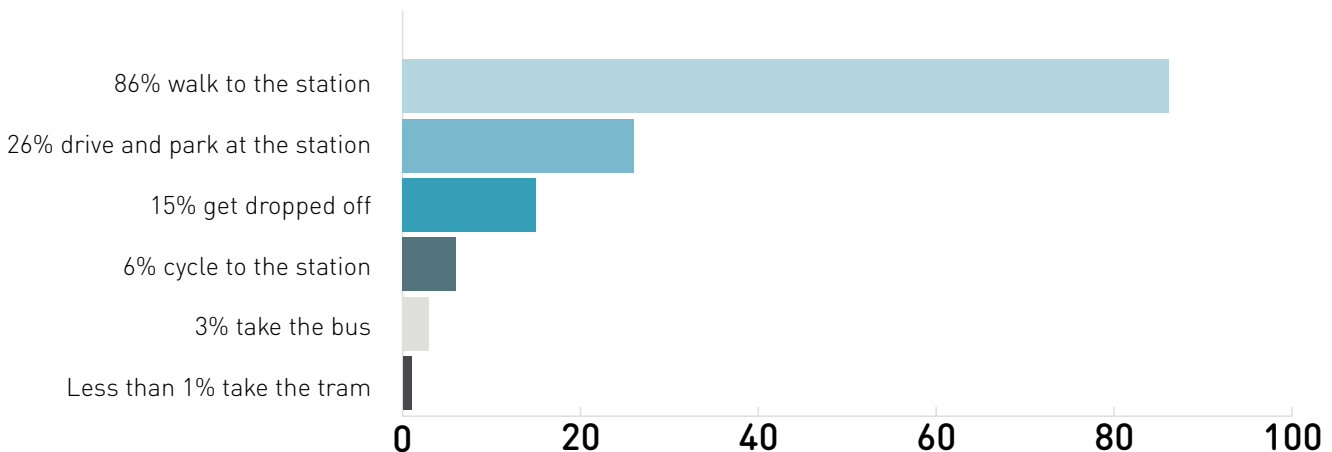
Most used station



- 57% use Surrey Hills Station
- 24% use Mont Albert Station
- 19% Other
- Total responses 956



Getting to Surrey Hills and Mont Albert stations



Total responses 781 (note that multiple selections could be made)

WHAT WE'VE HEARD



In December, January and February we asked the community for ideas and feedback on 10 elements of the station and precinct design:

- overall look and feel
- how you want to use the new station precincts
- materials used for the station and surrounding areas
- screening and barriers along the rail trench
- landscaping and seating options
- pedestrian and cycling connections
- style of the new pedestrian bridge at Mont Albert Village
- future use of the old Mont Albert Station building
- location and inspiration for public art
- provision of car parking.

Station design

Overall look and feel

The look and feel of the station building and precinct is very important for many members of the community. People prefer an understated, subtle look and feel that respects and complements the existing character of the area. A design that reflects the heritage and history of the area is also important.

- From 892 responses, there was a similar split of first preferences between two of the 'look and feel' options, with 49% selecting a contemporary feel that respects the character of the area and 43% selecting formal design that complements the character of the area.
- These results also suggest that there is little interest for a design that is vibrant and stands out from the current environment.
- 40% of respondents mentioned that it was important to incorporate heritage into the look and feel and have a design complementary to the existing environment.
- 30% of the feedback in the virtual community information sessions mentioned that people preferred a design that complemented the heritage of the area and kept a subtle profile with some suggesting neutral colours.

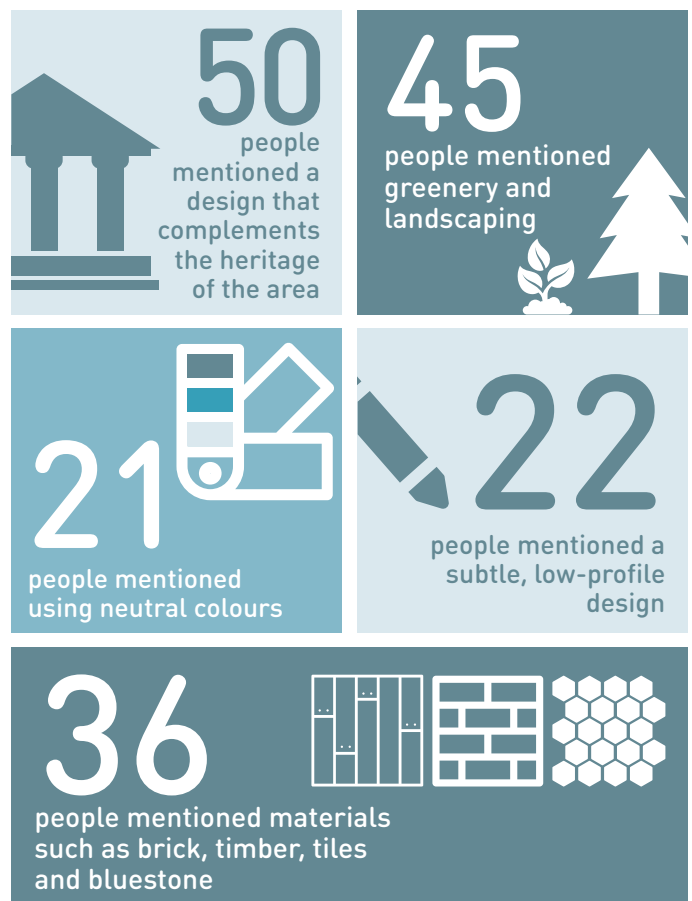
Examples of comments included:

"Discrete design which is consistent with aesthetic and materials of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert area."

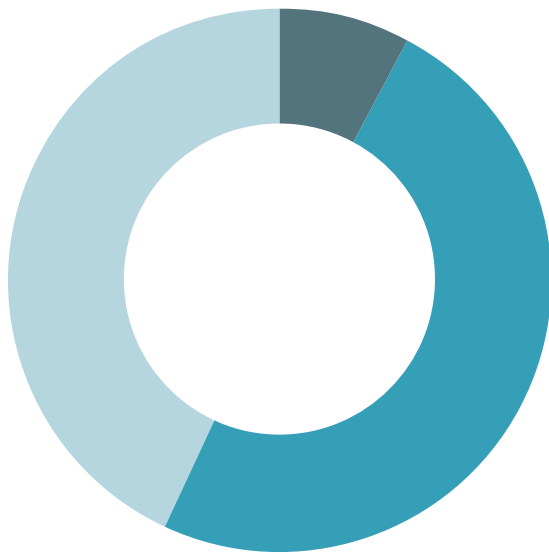
"Design should reflect or be complementary to the heritage neighbourhood."

"We would like to see a strong bias towards traditional architecture and design that reflects the look and heritage feel that the area currently has."

Station design – Top 5 themes from our virtual community information sessions



First preference for 'look and feel' of the new station and surrounding precinct



- Contemporary feel that respects the character of the area 49%
 - A formal design that complements the character of the area 43%
 - Vibrant, fresh feel that stands out from the surrounding environment 8%
- Total responses 892

Materials

Feedback received during our virtual community information sessions indicated a preference that the station be built using materials that complement the area.

With respect to materials for the new station and surrounding precinct, we heard popular suggestions for the design to include bluestone, brick, tiles and timber.

Brick, timber, tiles and natural stone (e.g. bluestone) were mentioned and selected 817 times across our design surveys and virtual community information sessions.

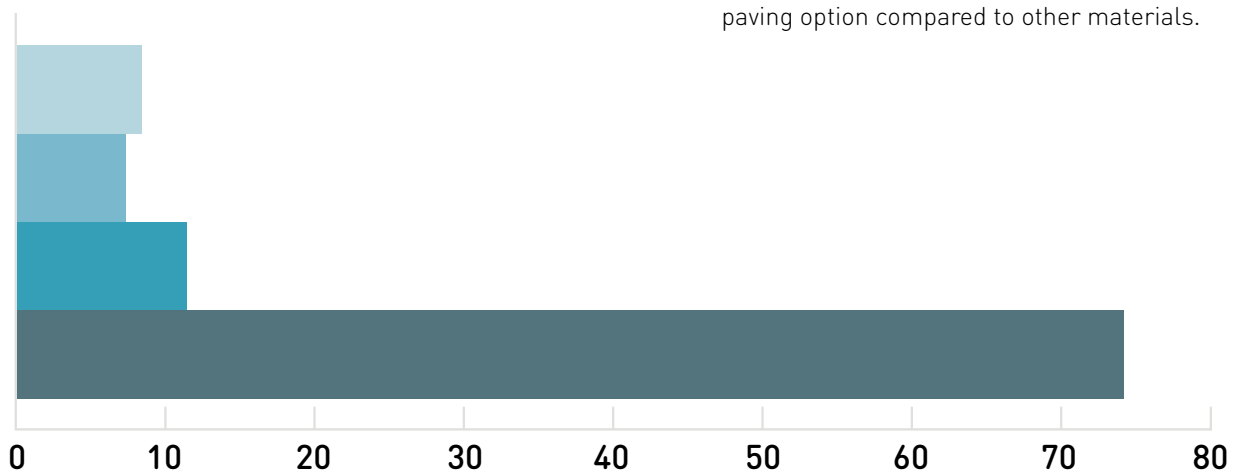
Examples of comments included:

"This may require an urban architect to consider the use of traditional materials such as brick and wood and look beyond the prefabricated products widely used in urban design today."

"A simple, durable design for the station which incorporates as much wood (over metal) as possible."

"Make sure it integrates into the character of the neighbourhood i.e. less exposed concrete, more brickwork."

There was also a strong first preference for a natural stone paving option compared to other materials.



- Natural stone 73%
 - Exposed aggregate concrete 7%
 - Brick 11%
 - Unsealed treatments 8%
- Total responses 908

STATION PRECINCT AND PUBLIC REALM

We heard many community members desire to retain or create more open space in the precinct area for purposes such as a meeting place, community gatherings, exercise and a space for children to play.

Over 90 survey responses highlighted the need for open community space in the area, with 43 people suggesting that the trench be partially covered by a deck to achieve this.

Examples of comments included:

“Retain as many existing trees as possible, and plant as many natives as possible.”

“Must have spacious parks and also allowance for a pick up or drop off point too!”

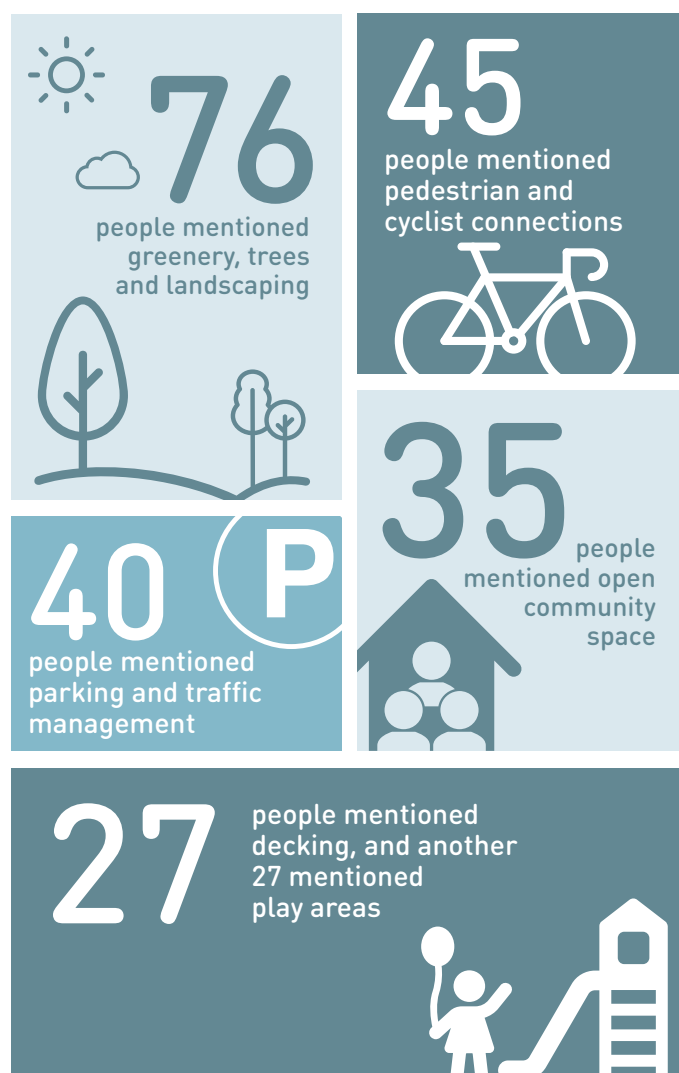
“Please try to incorporate a cycling/shared path into the works. Businesses and residents will benefit from the added “active” connection.”

“Open space must be retained for children to play, adults to exercise and pets to be exercised.”

“Make sure there is consideration for park land and play areas for local children and families with dogs etc as this is such an outdoors-loving community.”

“I agree with moving to one station and the location but believe the trench needs roof space with preferably green spaces wherever possible.”

Station precinct and public realm – Top 5 themes from our virtual community information sessions

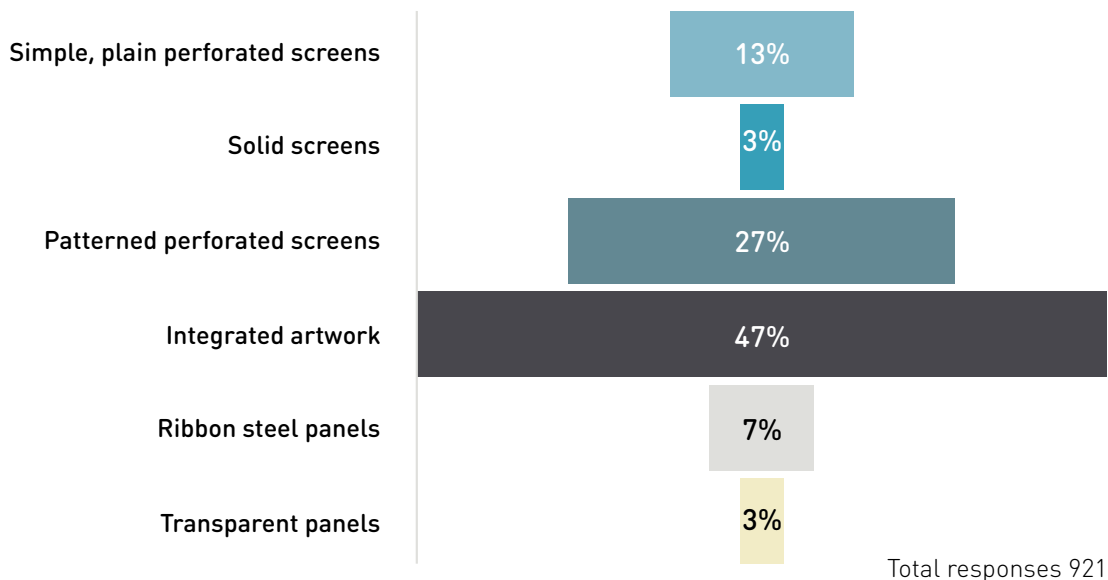


SCREENING



Most respondents said that they prefer integrated artwork and patterned or perforated screening treatments. There were also suggestions for landscaping and vegetation along the rail corridor.

First preference for screening and barriers



- People indicated they would like to see integrated artwork as their first preference for screening and barriers.
- Of the examples provided during our virtual community information sessions, the community favoured integrated historical artwork and patterned perforated screening.
- Greenery is important to the community and we had several suggestions to integrate greenery into the screening, with some favouring a 'green wall' to block the trench. Others held a view that they would prefer to see greenery across the trench.

Examples of comments included:

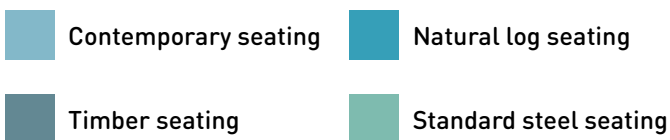
"I know trees can no longer be planted near a railway line, so it is imperative that the screening is pleasant to look at and covered as much as possible with shrubs, creepers and other plants."

"Use simple transparent mesh screening to retain views of all the trees, gardens and roofs around and across the tracks, rather than solid or distractingly patterned screens."

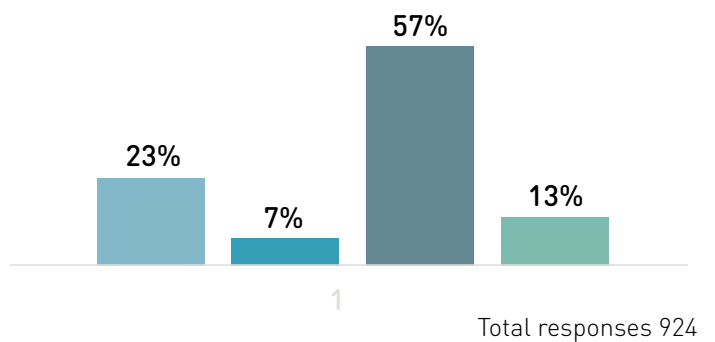
LANDSCAPING AND SEATING



- Native vegetation and landscaping: 20% of people mentioned they would like to see more trees and vegetation retained where possible and incorporated into the design.
- 40% of people also stated their first preference was for a formal landscaping style with native/indigenous species.
- There was a big first preference for timber seating in comparison to other options in the survey.



Seating style preferences

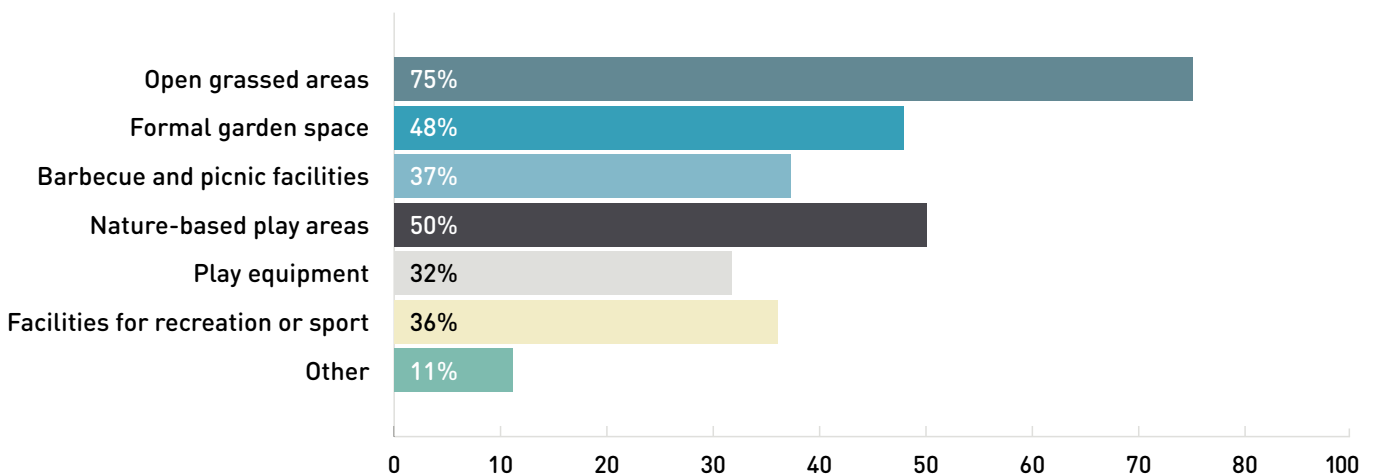


Lorne Parade Reserve

- Feedback collected during our virtual community information sessions showed the community would prefer that Lorne Parade Reserve remain as informal open space that can be used for a range of activities.
- The community put forward the importance for existing greenery to be retained or replaced in the reserve and station precinct.

- Many community members commented on the need for a new playground space in Lorne Parade Reserve.
- As part of the Lorne Parade Reserve rejuvenation, people’s preferences indicated that they would like to see open grassed areas (75% selected this option)
- There were also a number of people who indicated they would like to see a playground space, with some preferring a nature-based play area (50% selected this option).

What would you like to see in this space?



Total responses 954 (note that multiple selections could be made)

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST CONNECTIONS

- People mentioned they would like wide and separated paths for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The connections to local schools were also important.
- 28% of survey respondents said they would like to see new or improved cycling paths around the station precinct, with 11.4% mentioning they want to see provisions for the Box Hill to Hawthorn cycling corridor plan (by the Department of Transport).
- People also mentioned they want to see improved pedestrian and cycling links across Union Road and Mont Albert Road for both locals and commuters getting to the train station.
- Out of the 271 responses received regarding pedestrian and cycling connections, around 10% (29 responses) suggested that underpasses be considered at Union Road and Mont Albert Road in place of pedestrian operated signals. Pedestrian or cycling underpasses have been ruled out for technical reasons and the fact that any such underpasses would be narrow, uninviting spaces with likely impacts to private properties.

Examples of comments included:

"...Also believe that it is critical that a pedestrian crossing is installed at Union road between the car park and Coles- people jaywalk here all the time and it is quite dangerous."

"Integration of the proposed Hawthorn to Box Hill rail trail into the designs is also essential, as is safe pedestrian crossings at Mont Albert Road and Union Road."

When asked about walking and cycling links from the station precinct, 41% said the connection to the Surrey Hills shopping village was the most important to them, while 29% said that the connection to the Mont Albert shopping village was most important.



OLD MONT ALBERT STATION BUILDING

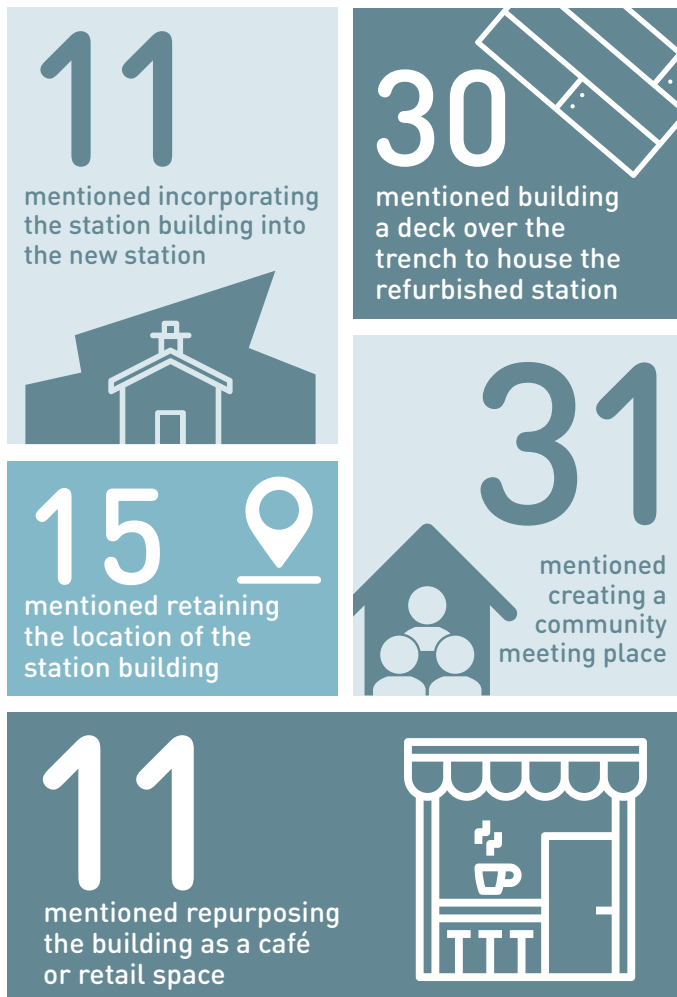


The old Mont Albert Station holds a special place in the community's heart and we heard a number of people say they would like to see the building repurposed and kept in the local area.

There were many different ideas and suggestions about how the building could be repurposed:

- 36% of people said they would like to see the building repurposed as a café or restaurant
- 35% of people said they would like to see it used as a community centre

Old Mont Albert Station Building – Top 5 themes from our virtual community information sessions



Pedestrian bridge at Mont Albert

- A suggestion was for the pedestrian bridge at Mont Albert was for it to be widened and built into a deck that connects the north side of Beresford St to Mont Albert village.

Examples of comments included:

"It would be ideal if the railway line trench was covered over adjoining the Mont Albert shopping village to create an open garden space."

"Building should be preserved. Perhaps as a community centre or cafe/restaurant, keep it as close to the old Mont Albert station as possible."

"Would like to see it retained and reused as some kind of community facility for Mont Albert Village incorporating relaxed outdoor seating and space for people to gather."

"Perhaps as a cafe or integrated into the overall local area in a plaza or similar. Definitely something unique for the community that fits into the overall character."

PUBLIC ART



Residents of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert value the rich heritage of the area and would like to see it reflected in public art as part of the new station and surrounding precinct.

Many people said that they would like the artwork to reflect some of the heritage and history of the area, and gave examples of existing artwork in the local area that they were interested in.

Examples of comments included:

"There's a lot of local artwork in Surrey Hills on walls - station precinct should incorporate art and heritage features of area."

"I like the artwork on the sides of the current main street (Union Road)."

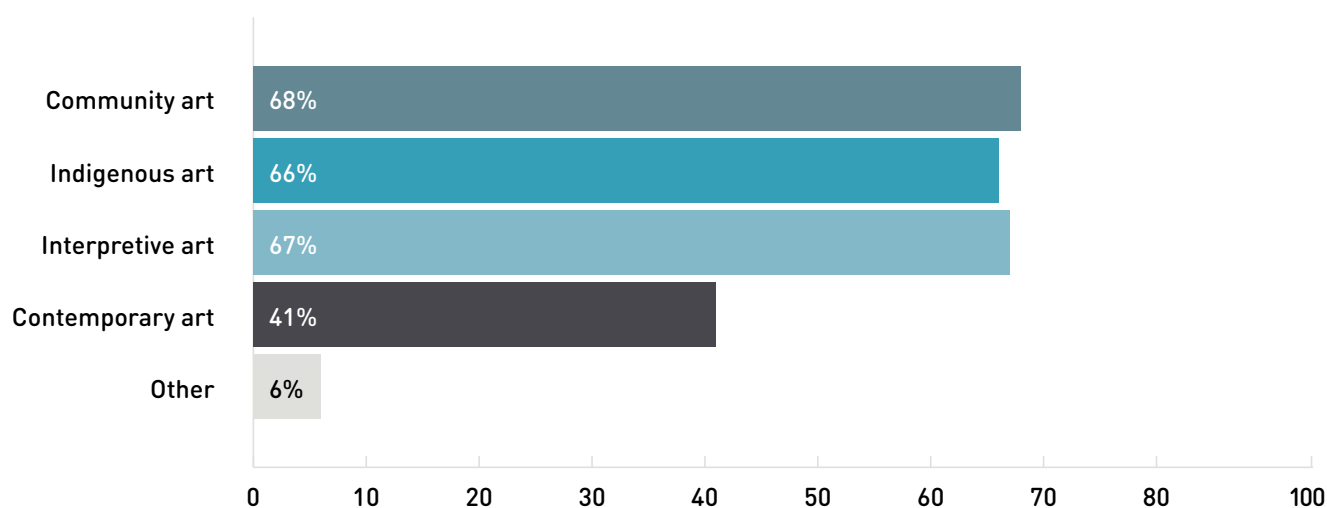
- An example of artwork in the area that people liked is the murals located in Surrey Hills, opposite Coles.
- Much like the station design, the community would like to see interpretive and integrated artwork that celebrates the heritage of the area.
- There were also preferences for Indigenous art and community art.



Public art – Top 5 themes from our virtual community information sessions

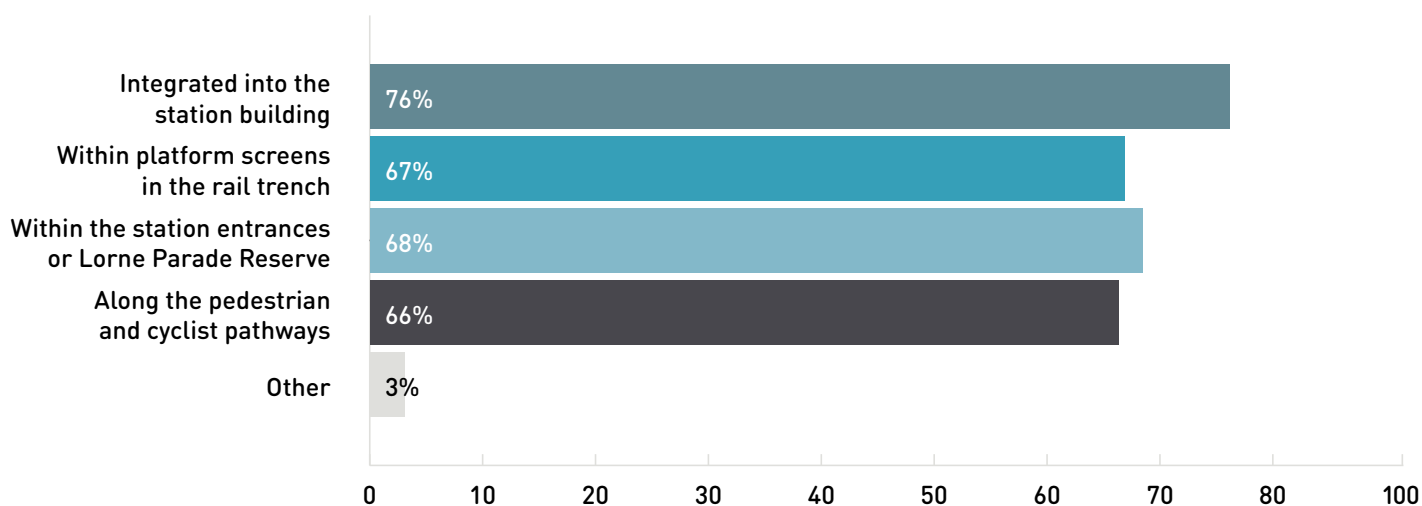


What style of public art you told us you wanted to see:



Total 950 responses (note that multiple selections could be made)

Where do you want to see artwork located around the station?



Total 923 responses (note that multiple selections could be made)

CAR PARKING



- 47% of people indicated they would like more commuter parking at the station. A number of local residents also stated that they would like to see more commuter parking to reduce the number of commuters parked in residential streets.
- Over 10% of respondents highlighted that the car park needs to be safe, accessible, and well-lit for all commuters.

Examples of comments included:

“Needs to be well lit and suitable for easy and safe access to station for all people: young, old, disabled etc.”

“Most definitely need parking that is well lit and safe at night as well as day”.



REFINING THE DESIGNS



There are a number of factors that influence the development of the design.

Considerations for design development

Technical and engineering considerations

For example:

- Topography of the site
- Narrow rail corridor and distance between existing stations
- Meeting modern rail safety standards

Community considerations

After selecting the best solution based on extensive technical and engineering investigations, the project asked for your input on aspects of the concept design.

The community will be asked for further input when the updated designs are released.

Impacts to the surrounding area

For example:

- Avoiding compulsory acquisition of local homes and businesses
- Avoiding permanent closure of local streets

Environmental considerations

For example:

- Minimising tree removal and maximising feasible open space
- Managing construction impacts

Design benefits

For example:

- Improved train services
- Improved accessibility and safety
- Avoiding compulsory acquisition
- Improved amenities

All these factors are considered when developing the updated designs, which are informed by community feedback and further detailed technical work.

NEXT STEPS

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on the initial concept designs for the Union Road and Mont Albert Road Level Crossing Removal Project.

This includes key local stakeholders and the many local community organisations, sporting clubs and other groups who provided their submissions on behalf of their members.

We will provide further opportunities for feedback as we update and refine the designs in the coming months.

We are also continuing to plan for construction. In advance of early works starting in 2021 and major works starting in 2022, we will begin preparing the site by relocating utilities and setting up facilities for the workforce.

Major construction will start in 2022 and the dangerous and congested level crossings will be gone for good in 2023.

Project timeline

- ✓ **Early 2021**
 - First phase of community engagement completed
- **Mid 2021**
 - Updated designs released
 - Further community engagement
 - Early works begin
- **2022**
 - Final designs released
 - Major construction begins
- **2023**
 - Level crossings gone for good

**Timeline above subject to change*



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