

Special Reports of the Director of Organisational Services**Monday 25 November 2024**

24SP075	Adoption of the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan
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Key focus area	7. Shared decision-making
Objective	7.1 Our community influences decisions that shape our city
File	F2024/01327 - D11525986
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Responsible manager	Manager Communications and Corporate Strategy - Jacqueline Smith
Previous items	24SP058 - Public exhibition of the draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan - Ordinary Council - 26 Aug 2024 6.30pm 22OS028 - Community Engagement Strategy for adoption - Organisational Services Standing Committee - 14 Nov 2022 6.30pm

Executive summary

On 26 August 2024, Council resolved (24SP058) to place the draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 on public exhibition.

Public exhibition took place from 27 August to 11 October 2024 and three submissions were received.

This report presents the community feedback received during public exhibition and proposed changes to the strategy as a result of the feedback. The report also seeks a resolution from Council to adopt the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028.

Recommendation

Council:

- A. adopts the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 (Attachment 1),
- B. notes the issues raised during public exhibition (Attachment 2), and
- C. notifies those who made a submission during public exhibition of Council's decision.

Context

Council adopted its current Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan on 14 November 2022 (22OS028).

The strategy identifies relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outlines when, how and why each group will be able to provide input into Council's long-term planning and decision-making activities.

The *Local Government Act 1993* states Council must establish and implement a Community Engagement Strategy. The Community Engagement Strategy must be exhibited for at least 28 days if it is combined with a Community Participation Plan, as per the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Under this legislation, Council is required to:

- engage with the community to prepare a draft Community Engagement Strategy by 31 December in the year of a local government election and review the strategy at least every four years
- publicly exhibit the draft Community Engagement Strategy for at least 28 days and invite submissions.

Discussion

The Lake Macquarie community has the right to be informed and have a say on projects that are important to them or may impact on their daily lives. Community engagement gives Council a better understanding of community views and values, and helps us make more informed decisions and deliver better projects and services.

In 2021, the NSW Office of Local Government introduced a requirement that councils prepare a Community Engagement Strategy to support all of their plans, policies, programs and key activities, including those relating to Integrated Planning and Reporting as well as strategic plans and programs required under other legislation. Before this updated advice, councils were only required to develop a Community Engagement Strategy to support the Community Strategic Plan.

Council's community engagement activities pre-date this strategic advice. However, in response to this directive, Council developed its Let's Shape Lake Mac Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) 2022-2024, which was endorsed for public exhibition in August 2022 and subsequently adopted in November 2022.

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines when, how and with whom Council will engage on our projects, noting the level of engagement required may vary depending on the stakeholder groups involved, and the scope and purpose of the project.

Preparation and implementation of a Community Engagement Strategy is required under the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*, which incorporates the NSW Office of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Handbook for Local Councils in NSW.

The NSW Office of Local Government recommends the Community Engagement Strategy be incorporated with the Community Participation Plan. The Community Participation Plan identifies how and when we will engage with our community on the development and planning functions Council performs under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

As per advice from the NSW Office of Local Government, Council's draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 is based on the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights. The strategy has been drafted to align with best-practice advice provided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia, the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector.

Community engagement and internal consultation

The draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 was on public exhibition from 27 August to 11 October 2024, with three submissions received. A summary of submissions received is available in Attachment 2. Two submissions were supportive of the draft strategy, and one was unsupportive.

The submission that was unsupportive raised concerns that the draft strategy did not include a dispute resolution process for volunteers/community and Council. Dispute resolution between volunteers/community and Council is managed under Council's Feedback Management Policy and is outside the scope of the draft strategy. A dispute resolution process between Council volunteers and staff will be considered for inclusion in the upcoming draft Council's Code of Conduct for Volunteers.

Public exhibition was promoted at Council's Living Smart Festival on 21 September 2024 and through Council e-newsletters and social media platforms, resulting in 2336 project page views at Shape Lake Mac and 248 downloads of the draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028. Hard copies of the draft strategy were also available to view at Council's Customer Service Centre at Speers Point and library branches city-wide throughout the public exhibition period.

Internal consultation was also undertaken during the public exhibition period with Council's Communications and Corporate Strategy, Integrated Planning, and Development Assessment and Certification departments. Briefings and workshops were provided to Councillors on 8 October and 4 November 2024.

The draft strategy has been updated following public exhibition, with feedback from the community and stakeholders incorporated. Changes include:

- an updated Mayor's message (p.3)
- additional information about how we will engage the community and what data (for example, age and location information) we may collect (p.15)
- clearer guidance on how Council staff manage duplicate submissions received during public exhibition (p.21)
- updating the Public Participation Spectrum to indicate that a resolution of Council is required to use the 'empower' level of participation (p.10)
- adding a hyperlink to improve access to the 'Council committees' webpage at lakemac.com.au (p.15)
- adding emails alongside letters as a landowner notification method for development and planning projects (p.17-19)
- additional information encouraging stakeholders to keep contact details updated with Council to ensure they can be notified about development and planning projects (p.20)
- developing a complementary strategy summary, aimed at making it easier for the community to understand how we will engage with them (Attachment 3).

Assessment of options

The report recommends that Council adopts the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028, and notifies authors of external submissions of

this outcome. This will enable Council to meet its legislated obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Council could alternatively resolve to amend the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028. However, this is not recommended because in developing the strategy, Council staff have ensured it meets legislative requirements and reflects Councillor and community feedback, where appropriate. Substantial amendments would require re-exhibition of the strategy, which would see Council fail to meet its obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Council may resolve not to adopt the Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028. This option is not recommended as it would see Council fail to meet its obligations under the previously mentioned Acts.

Key considerations

Economic

The Community Participation Plan, included as part of the Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028, provides a framework for how Council will engage with the community on matters relating to planning and development, such as development applications, contribution plans and master plans, and amendments to the Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014. Supporting our community to provide feedback on such matters allows Council to make more informed decisions that support sustainable development and economic activity in Lake Macquarie.

Environment

The Community Participation Plan, included as part of the Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028, provides a framework for how Council will engage with the community on matters relating to planning and the environment, such as development applications, reclassification of land and amendments to the *Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014*. Supporting our community to provide feedback on such matters allows Council to make more informed decisions that protect and enhance the natural environment.

Community

The Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for inclusive community engagement that enables the Lake Macquarie community to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. Community engagement informs the vision and direction of Council, as outlined in our Community Strategic Plan.

Civic leadership

Effective and meaningful engagement is at the heart of local government and the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. The Community Engagement Strategy will guide our approach to community engagement to support the development of plans, policies, programs and key activities relating to Integrated Planning and Reporting, as well as the planning functions Council performs under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The strategy supports good governance by demonstrating transparency and fairness in Council's approach to engagement.

Financial

Implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy can be accommodated in existing budgets and forecasts in Council's Long-term Financial Plan.

Infrastructure

The Community Engagement Strategy will support the provision of quality infrastructure across Lake Macquarie by providing a framework for community feedback to be collected and incorporated into capital works projects. Seeking community feedback as part of the capital works planning and design process helps ensure built infrastructure meets community needs.

Compliance

The Community Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and government guidelines.

Legislative and policy considerations

Lake Macquarie City Council Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2024

Lake Macquarie City Council Code of Meeting Practice

Local Government Act 1993

Local Government (General) Regulation 2021

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

NSW Office of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Handbook for Local Councils in NSW

Attachments

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 1. | Draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 | D11790823 |
| 2. | Draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 submissions | D11757659 |
| 3. | Draft Community Engagement Strategy including Community Participation Plan 2024-2028 summary | D11792899 |



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Lake Macquarie City Council dhumaan Awabakala ngarrakal yalawaa, yalawan, yalawanan.
Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges the Awabakal people and Elders past, present and future.

Dhumaan ngayin ngarrakalu kirraanan barayidin.
We remember and respect the Ancestors who cared for and nurtured this Country.

Ngarrakalumba yuludaka bibayilin barayida baaduka.
It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.

Wording by the Aboriginal Reference Group and translated by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Our latest Community Engagement Strategy reflects our primary mission to serve and enrich the lives of the people who live, work and have fun in stunning Lake Macquarie.

At Lake Macquarie City Council, we strive to ensure engagement with us is both meaningful and accessible.

The Community Engagement Strategy places community feedback at its core.

It recognises the challenges faced by our residents in providing feedback and offers a framework to overcome those barriers.

We want to make it easier for everyone to help shape our city's future.

This strategy is built with the community and from their voices.

We want to ensure community engagement in Lake Macquarie is not just about getting constructive input and feedback, but ensuring those voices are at the heart of our decision-making process.

This strategy is designed to foster trust, enhance transparency and strengthen our connection with our unique communities.

It represents our commitment to making Lake Macquarie a better place for everyone.

Together we can build a future that reflects the needs, aspirations and priorities of our diverse city.

Mayor Adam Shultz

YOUR FEEDBACK HAS SHAPED THIS STRATEGY

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN AND LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT

From February to May 2024, Council engaged widely with the Lake Macquarie community as part of our work to update Council's Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement.

Through this engagement, the community told us how they'd like Council to engage them about our projects. This feedback has informed development of our Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028.

WHAT YOU TOLD US:



Consult and listen to very young children through early education settings and families.

Consider specific workshops to target priority populations.

Engage with community and social groups face-to-face.

Gaining and keeping community trust [is important].

Target engagement to people or groups that the project or plans relate to.

Age can sometimes be a barrier to engagement (e.g. have to be a certain age to complete a petition or enter a competition).

Acknowledge there are some people who are happy not to engage with Council facilities and services but it's important they are still given the opportunity to.

[Increase] awareness of and access to Shape Lake Mac.



LET'S SHAPE LAKE MAC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2028

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH PRIORITY POPULATIONS

As well as incorporating feedback gathered through engagement for Council's Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement, development of our Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 has also been informed by feedback collected through development of our internal guidelines for engaging with priority populations.

Council acknowledges that some groups in our community can experience barriers to engagement and the factors that may contribute to this are diverse.

These guidelines provide advice to Council staff on planning and delivering effective and meaningful engagement with:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with disability
- culturally and linguistically diverse people
- over 55s
- children and families
- young people.

The guidelines were developed with input from representatives of the above groups.



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INTRODUCTION

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines our approach to engaging with the community and stakeholders. It provides transparency and clarity for all stakeholders so they can understand their role in the decision-making process. The strategy outlines who, when and how we will engage on plans and policies. The level of community involvement varies depending on the project and the potential impact of the decision.

Engaging with our stakeholders and community allows us to gather feedback, which may include views, needs, issues and aspirations, and use this information to make effective, robust and sustainable decisions.

While engagement does not replace the final decision-making of Council, community engagement plays an important role, ensuring the final recommendations made by staff are equitable and well-informed.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is the process of involving people in the decisions that affect their lives and their city. It is proactive and ongoing, promoting open discussion and shared responsibilities for decisions.

Community engagement can involve a broad variety of activities. One way to understand the different types of engagement is through a continuum from informing (reflecting a low level of engagement) through to empowering (reflecting a high level of engagement).

Council recognises that people have a right to be informed and to have a say on projects that are important to them or may impact on their daily lives. Community engagement gives Council a better understanding of community views and values, and helps us make more informed decisions and deliver better services.

PRINCIPLES

Our Community Strategic Plan guides the future direction of our city for the next 10 years, and this strategy will assist in delivering the vision and aspirations for the future of Lake Macquarie City. Council adopted the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals to guide all its activities. This strategy will help Council make progress on UN Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



Our approach reflects the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.

Council's community engagement principles aim to ensure our engagement:

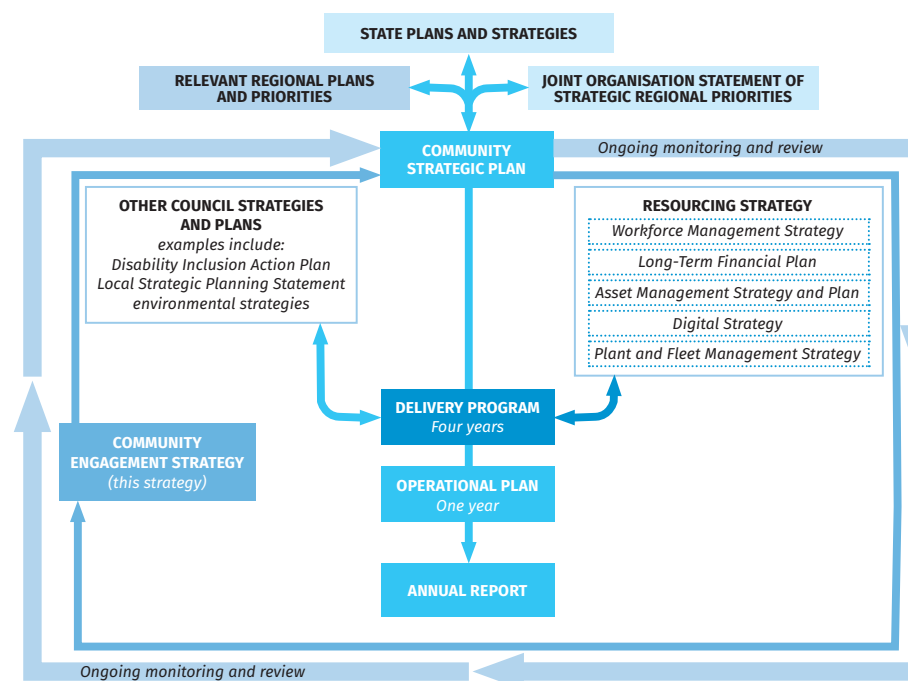
-  has a clear purpose, objectives and approach
-  is easy for the community to access and participate in
-  is clear and simple
-  builds trust and understanding
-  is meaningful, authentic and adds value
-  is evaluated and improved.

Council must comply with several pieces of legislation that set out when we must initiate consultation. The *Local Government Act 1993* requires that Council establish and implement a strategy (its Community Engagement Strategy) for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs, and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

Our Community Engagement Strategy has been developed in accordance with these requirements, as well as those set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*.

It will be reviewed every four years at a minimum and made available at **lakemac.com.au**.

Our engagement is usually linked to plans, strategies and work outlined in our Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. This framework shows how often we engage around those plans and strategies. Community engagement and the feedback people provide influence every part of what we do, including our day-to-day activities and overarching goals and strategies.



PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

Public exhibition plays an important role in enabling the community to participate in the planning process. Public exhibition is the official period in which draft documents or certain development applications are made available for feedback.

Some public exhibitions, particularly those that are related to planning and development, have legislated minimum exhibition periods.

Draft documents on public exhibition are often first endorsed by Council before being made available for public comment.

Publicly exhibited plans, planning and development applications and other matters cannot be made, determined or finalised until after the endorsed period of public exhibition.

Anyone is welcome to make a submission. Submissions by the community, with respect to a plan, planning or development application or other matter, may be made during the period of its public exhibition.

Information on public exhibitions can be found at shape.lakemac.com.au, lakemac.com.au/our-Council/Public-notices and/or property.lakemac.com.au.



WHAT IS OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?


Meaningful engagement helps shape the strategic direction of our city, as well as informing the various policies and plans that support this vision.

Our engagement is governed by the requirements specified in the *Local Government Act 1993*.

When Council can control the outcomes of a decision, we are committed to providing best practice engagement. We have chosen to follow the internationally recognised International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the framework for determining how we engage and on what issues.

Our engagement approach can vary depending on the need and impact of the project. Legislation sets the minimum requirements for planning-related projects. You can find more information about this in the 'How we engage' section of this strategy (page 16).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

	Increased impact on the decision 				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER*
GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
PROMISE	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
EXAMPLE TECHNIQUES	Website e-newsletters	Public exhibitions Surveys	Workshops Drop-in sessions	Community-centred Council committees Community and stakeholder reference groups	Deliberative processes

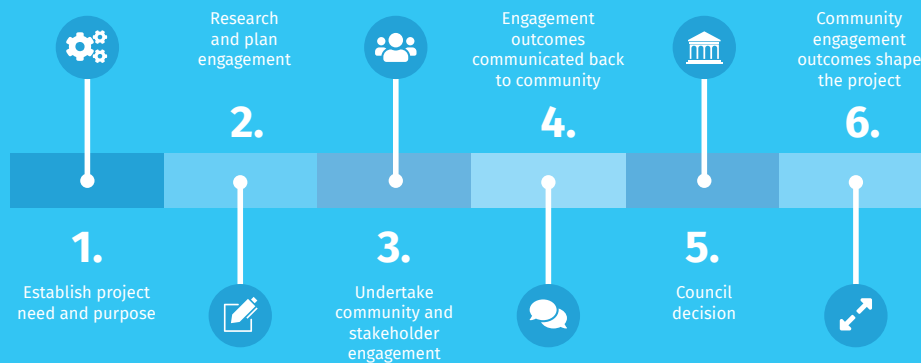
Source: IAP2 International Federation

* Empower will only be recommended for specific complex projects as part of a broader engagement plan endorsed by Council resolution.

KEY OBJECTIVES


This strategy will guide how we plan and undertake engagement. Successful engagement programs are underpinned by careful preparation and thorough planning. Planning for engagement considers a range of factors including who the project will impact, how much impact the project will have and how interested the community might be in the project. The requirements for community engagement will also be considered (e.g. minimum or maximum exhibition timeframes) to ensure the community can provide input. It is important we prepare ourselves effectively to deliver best practice community engagement. The general process for starting community engagement, and how it works within Council, is shown in the diagram.

THE PROCESS




**CHALLENGES TO ENGAGEMENT
(RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES)**

Council will need to consider the following challenges when undertaking engagement activities:




LIMITED PARTICIPATION: Engagement needs to be broadly promoted to ensure all members of the community can actively participate.



ACCESSIBILITY: Engagement needs to take place in accessible locations across the city and use both technology and traditional methods.




FAILURE TO ENGAGE HARD TO REACH GROUPS: Targeted engagement is needed to reach priority population groups.




RESOURCE AND TIMING CONSTRAINTS: We must ensure there are a range of opportunities and sufficient information available to enable a high level of public participation.



SCOPE CREEP* AND EXPECTATIONS: It is important to provide context and scope to help manage community expectations and define engagement aims.



LACK OF INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT: Start the conversation early with Council staff around the opportunities for involvement.



CONSULTATION FATIGUE: Stagger engagement to reduce the risk of the community and key stakeholders feeling overwhelmed.

* the definition of scope creep is when a project's scope changes, the project work starts to extend or 'creep', beyond what was originally agreed





LET'S SHAPE LAKE MAC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2028

STAKEHOLDERS

Community engagement is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to play in participatory decision-making that shapes the places where we live, work, play and create. There are roles for both Council and the community in initiating, leading, participating in and delivering engagement activities.

A vital component of the community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key stakeholders who will be impacted by or who have an interest in a decision. Key stakeholders include:

- Lake Macquarie City residents and ratepayers
- State and Federal Members
- relevant government agencies (including NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, NSW Environment and Heritage, Transport for NSW, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, Office of Local Government, Destination NSW, Create NSW, NSW Office of Sport, Hunter Central Coast Development Corporation, NSW Department of Education)
- community-centred committees, such as Lake Macquarie Youth Council and Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel
- local business community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- interest and industry groups
- sporting clubs and bodies
- community and multicultural groups (e.g. progress associations, Men's Sheds, Rotary, U3A, etc.).



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ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COUNCIL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
The Mayor	Act as the spokesperson for the Council to promote engagement on key strategic plans including developing the Community Strategic Plan. Promote partnerships between Council and key stakeholders.
Mayor and Councillors	Promote engagement on key strategic plans including supporting and participating in community engagement for the development of the Community Strategic Plan. Participate in the development of Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, including the Community Strategic Plan. Endorse the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the community and approve the remaining component Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. Participate in community engagement activities, alongside Council staff.
Council staff	Oversee preparation of the Community Strategic Plan and Integrated Planning and Reporting documents and endorsement by the elected Council. Ensure that community members are given enough information to participate in the Integrated Planning and Reporting process in a meaningful way. Development of the strategy and plans to engage the community. Implement the Community Engagement Strategy and provide timely advice on community views. Ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between Council and the local community.

HOW WILL WE ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY?

We use a range of channels to inform our community about opportunities to engage with our projects and gather their feedback. As well as capturing project-related feedback, we may also collect relevant demographic information, such as stakeholders' age and location, to help us better understand community feedback and how it might shape our work.

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION	CHANNEL OF INFORMATION	IN PRACTICE
Inform	Website, social media and e-newsletters	Provide information via: - Council's websites, including shape.lakemac.com.au - social media including Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube - e-newsletters including Shape Lake Mac and Your City.
	Advertisements, public notices, signs, letters, postcards, ground stickers and Your City newsletter	This information could include: - inviting the community to participate in engagement - describing the matter, project or issue - outlining how people can find out information - advising how to make a comment or be involved - outlining the timeframe for consultation.
	Customer Service Centre and Lake Mac Libraries	Information may be accessed during public exhibition at both the Customer Service Centre and Lake Mac Libraries.
Consult and Involve	Shape Lake Mac	Shape Lake Mac, Council's online engagement platform, where the community can provide feedback on community engagement projects via discussion forums, mapping tools, idea walls, surveys, question and answers, polls and submissions.
	Community meetings and workshops	Meetings (in person, online or hybrid) with community members and stakeholders to provide an opportunity to work through an issue or gather feedback on particular aspects of a project.
	Council meetings	Members of the community can participate in Council's formal meeting process prior to a decision being made, as outlined in Council's Code of Meeting Practice. This can include speaking at Public Forum or submitting a petition.
	Public exhibitions	The exhibition process seeks online or written community and stakeholder feedback on a plan, development application, policy or project.
	Surveys	Using market research software for telephone, online and offline surveys, such as the biennial Community Satisfaction Survey. Demographic information may also be collected.
	Drop-in sessions and pop-up stalls	Provide a face-to-face opportunity for the community to attend a drop-in session or a pop-up stall to gather information and provide feedback on an issue or project/policy-related decision. Depending on project need, drop-in sessions and pop-up stalls may be held outside business hours, including on weekends, and at high-traffic locations (such as markets, recreation areas or Council facilities) to increase accessibility.
Collaborate	Community-centred Council committees	To support community engagement, Council may establish committees in accordance with relevant laws and Council policies and procedures, to assist in achieving objectives under the Community Strategic Plan. Membership can be made up of Councillors, Council staff, external agencies and skilled community members. Information on Councillor representation on community-centred Council committees is available at lakemac.com.au .
	Community and stakeholder reference groups	Groups of community and stakeholders that meet with staff, Councillors, or others to work through an issue, determine a decision for a project, policy or plan and provide advice.
Empower (will only be recommended for specific complex projects as part of a broader engagement plan endorsed by Council resolution)	Deliberative processes	Deliberative forums are used for in-depth consideration of an issue by a cross-section of the community to provide well-informed feedback on a particular issue.

HOW WE ENGAGE

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The following table explains how we will engage with our community about plans and strategies, as well as other work we do, so our community knows what to expect from us. Planning-related projects have specific exhibition timeframes that must be met, which are outlined in the following pages.

PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	HOW	WHAT TO EXPECT	EXHIBITION PERIOD
Council's key long-term plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Strategic Plan Delivery Program Resourcing Strategy Community Engagement Strategy Local Strategic Planning Statement other plans and strategies 	Involve	<p>Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision.</p> <p>Provide a range of opportunities/channels for the community to share their views. Prior to public exhibition there may be multiple rounds of engagement undertaken to develop a draft plan.</p>	Reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan.	28 days
Council's annual Operational Plan, budget and fees and charges	Involve	<p>Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision.</p> <p>Provide a range of opportunities/channels for the community to share their views.</p>	Reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan.	28 days
New capital works (for example, skate parks and playgrounds and consultation to prepare draft master plans prior to exhibition)	Involve	<p>Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision.</p> <p>Provide a range of opportunities/channels for the community to share their views.</p>	Reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan.	Minimum 21 days
Key Council policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of Meeting Practice Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Councillors Policy others as required 	Consult	Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days or 42 days as specified by legislative requirements or Council resolution.

PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	HOW	WHAT TO EXPECT	EXHIBITION PERIOD
Planning proposals for local environmental plans, subject to a Gateway Determination Planning proposals can be prepared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rezone land to change the uses allowed on the land make other amendments to the <i>Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014</i> (for example, changes to building heights or lot sizes, adding heritage items, changes to permitted land use in certain zones, updates to clauses and maps). 	Consult	For site-specific amendments, a letter/email will be sent to landowners and adjoining landowners. Minor amendments or general amendments that do not affect a specific site may not be notified by letter/email. Council's website. NSW planning portal.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days (or as specified by the Gateway Determination, which may find that no exhibition is required for a minor proposal).
Reclassification of land Land in Council ownership must be classified for either community or operational use under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> . Community land is for land designated for community use such as community halls, libraries and recreational facilities. Operational land serves a commercial or operational function such as offices, work depots or land being retained for strategic reasons. When land comes into community ownership, for example, new sportsgrounds, they need to be classified correctly. In addition, Council sometimes reclassifies land it no longer requires for community use to allow leasing or sale of land. For example, reclassification of community land to operational land at various sites across the city.	Consult	Council's website. Letter/Email.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days or as specified by the Gateway Determination and a public hearing scheduled for at least 21 days after the public exhibition occurs.
Local Approvals Policy The Local Approvals Policy identifies low-impact activities that can be undertaken without approval from Council such as community events, footway dining and mobile vending, provided they meet certain criteria.	Consult	Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	42 days
Draft development control plans and guidelines The Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014 and Guidelines provide controls to guide new development, which are considered in the assessment of development applications.	Consult	Council's website. If the Development Control Plan amendment is site-specific (for example, area plans which only apply to certain sites in the city) we notify landowners and adjoining landowners by letter/email. Minor amendments or general amendments that do not affect a specific site may not be notified by letter/email.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days



PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	HOW	WHAT TO EXPECT	EXHIBITION PERIOD
Draft development contribution plans A plan that levies new development for facilities such as transport, community and recreational facilities required to service new development. For example, Belmont Development Contributions Plan.	Consult	Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days
Draft planning agreements Planning agreements entered into between Council and a developer. The planning agreement allows contributions for land dedication, recreation, community and transport facilities in lieu of development contributions under the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EPA) 1979</i> . For example, North Cooranbong Voluntary Planning Agreement.	Consult	Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide feedback on how public input was considered in the decision.	28 days
Development application Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for State Significant Development) Examples include development applications for some residential, commercial, retail and industrial development and some applications for modification.	Consult	Council's website. Letter/Email. See information on page 20 for when notification is not required.	Consider points raised and provide information on how public input was considered in the assessment.	14 days* *Council may extend the public exhibition period without further notification to those already notified.
Development application consent for designated development Designated developments are higher impact developments that are detailed in Schedule 3 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i> and include activities such as aquaculture, coalmines, chemical storage facilities, extractive industries, electricity generating stations and marinas. These developments need to be supported by an environmental impact statement.	Consult	Letter/Email. Council's website. Site notice.	Consider points raised and provide information on how public input was considered in the assessment.	28 days

PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	HOW	WHAT TO EXPECT	EXHIBITION PERIOD
Development application for nominated integrated development, threatened species development and Class 1 aquaculture development	Consult	Letter/Email. Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide information on how public input was considered in the assessment.	28 days
Council-related development applications Council has a policy which sets out how to publicly exhibit Council-related development applications, which is available on Council's website.	Consult	Letter/Email. Council's website.	Consider points raised and provide information on how public input was considered in the assessment.	28 days* * Council may extend the public exhibition period without further notification to those already notified.
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – obtained under Division 5.1 EIS's prepared for development under Part 5 of the <i>EPA Act</i> for certain development such as State Significant Development.	As required by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.	These are managed by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and will be viewable on the department's website.	As required by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.	As required by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

Disclaimer: For any inconsistencies, refer the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*.

There may be some occasions where a government priority or administrative requirement demands immediate action on proposals that prevents the implementation of our usual community engagement process.

In certain circumstances, Council may dispense with notification. Notification is not required, except in relation to heritage items or heritage conservation areas nominated within *Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP) 2014*, when:

1. Council is of the opinion an amended or substituted application, including applications under s4.55 or s8.3 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, varies in a minor respect from the original application that was previously notified
2. Council is of the opinion the development is of a minor nature and/or will not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining land or the locality
3. the application is for a temporary use as detailed in LMLEP 2014 and in the opinion of Council will not adversely affect the amenity of the locality
4. development is for a new residential dwelling house, or additions to a residential dwelling house provided the development:
 - a) is a maximum of two storeys and
 - b) has a maximum height of 8.5m measured from the existing ground level and
 - c) the external wall of the building is not built within 900mm of the lot boundary
5. development is for a new attached or detached ancillary development to a residential dwelling house, provided the development:
 - a) has a maximum height of 4.5m measured from the existing ground level
 - b) the external wall of the building is not built within 900mm of the lot boundary

6. The application is under 4.55(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. This provision applies even if the application is a Council-related development application and/or in relation to heritage items or heritage conservation areas nominated within the *LMLEP 2024*.

For site-specific Planning Proposals and draft Development Control Plans, affected landowners and adjoining landowners are notified where amendments will affect their property. Minor amendments or general amendments that do not affect a site may not be notified by letter/email.

HOW WE NOTIFY

Written notice of the development application is sent to the person(s) as appear to:

- a) own land that adjoins the land to which the development application relates
- b) own land that in the opinion of the assessing officer may be affected by the application.

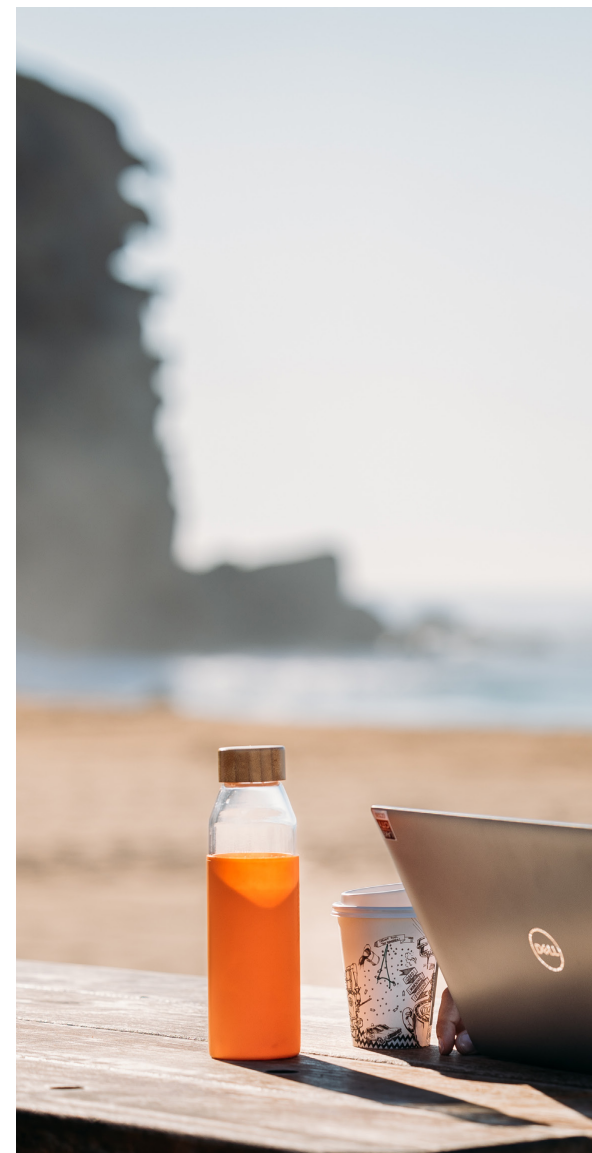
Where the land is a parcel created under the *Community Land Development Act*, *Strata titles*, or *Strata Titles (Leasehold) Acts*, a written notice to the Governing Association is taken to be the owner.

Where more than one person is listed as the owner, a written notice to one of the owners is taken to be a notice to the owner.

We will notify landowners as per the details recorded in our systems. It is important you ensure your details are up to date to enable us to notify the correct landowner.

EXEMPT AND COMPLYING DEVELOPMENT

Some development, such as exempt and complying development under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008*, may not allow opportunities for community engagement.





SUBMISSIONS

Public exhibitions play an important role in enabling the community to participate in the planning process, and anyone is welcome to make a submission regarding a plan, planning and development application or other matter during the period of its public exhibition.

Submissions may be received online (at shape.lakemac.com.au or by email) or in writing (by post or in-person submission at Council's Customer Service Centre).

While it is not a requirement, submitters are encouraged to include their name, suburb and a contact (email, phone or address) with their submission. This allows Council staff to keep submitters informed as the plan, planning and development application or matter progresses.

Form letters (i.e. templated letters with standardised content) will be considered as individual submissions. If form letters are received during public exhibition, the number of form letters received will be included in the Council report and/or assessment report alongside the total number of submissions received.

Multiple submissions received from the same person during the same exhibition period are considered as a single submission. Duplicate submissions will be counted as a single submission even if received across several notification periods.

Petitions, including e-petitions, will be considered as a single submission. Refer to Council's Code of Meeting Practice for more information on submitting a petition to Council.



RESPONDING TO YOUR FEEDBACK

We want to ensure the feedback of people we engage with is considered when decisions are made. Once feedback has been considered, Council staff will recommend next steps or outcomes. As part of the process to close the loop, we will:



update the Shape Lake Mac project page outlining engagement outcomes and next steps



email those who provided feedback with the outcomes of the consultation and link to the project page. Prior to the elected Council considering the matter, we will also email everyone who has provided feedback (and requested updates), that the item/report has been placed on the Council meeting agenda.

When an item has been placed on public exhibition or has been out for community consultation, any resulting report to Council will present the findings of the community engagement undertaken including statistics and data. The Council report will include a high-level summary of engagement including:



what engagement and communication methods were used



statistics of participation and promotion, including the location and age of contributors



information about submissions/feedback received.

The report will also include an attachment that summarises the submissions received and provides a staff response.





Following a Council resolution, we will email everyone who has provided feedback (and requested updates) of the outcome, update the Shape Lake Mac project page and include the outcome in the Shape Lake Mac newsletter.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

We will acknowledge submissions at the end of the exhibition period. We will consider the matters raised in submissions received during public exhibition in the assessment of the application, and details will be published on Council's website.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

To measure and evaluate the effectiveness of our engagement, we assess:

-  participation levels in engagement activities, considering the nature of the project
-  the quality of responses in terms of relevance to the program or project
-  assessment of relevant engagement methods appropriate to stakeholders
-  verbal and written feedback from the community on the effectiveness of engagement activities
-  achievement of the identified engagement principles objectives within the Community Engagement Strategy
-  inclusive community representation.

These evaluation results will be used to improve future engagement strategies and methods.

This strategy will be considered within three months of local government elections, as part of the broader review of the Community Strategic Plan, or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements.





Attachment: Summary of submissions received

Submission from resident	Summary of submission	Comments
Mount Hutton	Supportive of the draft strategy, and enquired about representation on community-centred Council committees.	<p>The draft strategy increases visibility of community-centred Council committees and advises that additional information is available on Council's website.</p> <p>Outcome: A hyperlink to a new Council committees webpage has been added to the draft strategy to improve access to information, including committee Councillor representatives.</p>
Toronto	Concerns that the draft strategy does not include a dispute resolution process for volunteers/community and Council.	<p>Dispute resolution between volunteers/community and Council is outside of the scope of the draft strategy. These matters are managed under Council's Feedback Management Policy.</p> <p>A dispute resolution process between Council volunteers and staff will be considered for inclusion in Council's upcoming draft Code of Conduct for Volunteers.</p> <p>Outcome: No change to draft strategy.</p>
Blackalls Park	Supportive of the draft strategy, particularly its underpinning principles. Suggested in-person community engagement sessions for targeted demographics, such as seniors, at Council facilities.	<p>The draft strategy identifies limited participation, accessibility and failure to engage 'hard to reach' groups as challenges to engagement, and recommends a targeted approach to overcome such barriers.</p> <p>The draft strategy includes a range of in-person and digital methodologies to engage with our diverse community, and Council's internal Guidelines for Engaging with Priority Populations provides further targeted advice.</p> <p>Outcome: No change to draft strategy.</p>



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN 2024-2028

Strategy summary

Our community has the right to be informed and have a say on projects that are important to them or may impact on their daily lives.

Community engagement gives Council a better understanding of community views and values, and helps us make more informed decisions and deliver better projects and services.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- has a clear purpose, objectives and approach
- is easy for the community to access and participate in
- is clear and simple
- builds trust and understanding
- is meaningful, authentic and adds value
- is evaluated and improved.

THE TOOLS

We use a range of channels to inform our community about opportunities to engage with our projects and gather their feedback, including:



COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:

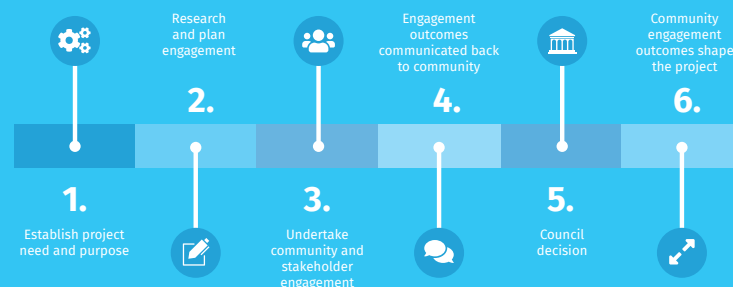
- Project information at Shape Lake Mac
- Monthly Shape Lake Mac e-newsletter
- Council's social media platforms
- Letter/postcard mailouts to residents and businesses
- Stakeholder emails
- Signage across the city
- Digital and print advertising
- Hard copy project information and documents at Council facilities



ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS:

- Online discussion forums, mapping tools, idea walls, surveys, polls and submissions at Shape Lake Mac
- Drop-in sessions and pop-up stalls outside of business hours or on weekends and in easily accessible locations
- Workshops
- Submissions during public exhibitions
- Community-centred Council committees

THE PROCESS



REPORTING BACK

After community engagement, to close the loop, we will:

UPDATE SHAPE LAKE MAC

We'll upload an engagement summary outlining:

- what communications and engagement methods were used
- statistics of promotion and participation, including the location and age of contributors
- information about feedback received
- next steps.

CONTACT CONTRIBUTORS

We'll email contributors to keep them updated as the project progress. This includes when engagement summaries are published and ahead of Council decisions.

STAY IN THE LOOP



REGISTER:

at Shape Lake Mac to receive our monthly e-newsletter with opportunities to engage with our projects.



CONTACT US:

to update your details and receive post or email notifications about planning and development projects in your area.

shape.lakemac.com.au council@lakemac.nsw.gov.au 02 4921 0333