



Case Studies Series 2025

**Sunshine Energy Park – Creating
a shared vision and seeding
partnerships for a ‘Central Park of
Melbourne’s West’
Brimbank City Council**



The Engagement Institute Case Study Series aims to provide members with access to factual stories which demonstrate successes, challenges and insights from completed public participation and community engagement projects. This free resource aims to increase practitioner knowledge, improve engagement practices and the experience of public participation and community engagement.

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1.0 Highlights at a Glance

An integral piece of a major transformation in the West of Melbourne

Sunshine Energy Park is a priority project of the broader Sunshine Priority Precinct Vision 2050, and complements major Victorian Government infrastructure investment in rail (Sunshine and Albion Stations) and land-use (Albion Quarter Commercial and Residential Precinct) to support the needs of 70,000 residents and 45,000 workers by 2050.

Sunshine Energy Park (SEP) is an ambitious, once-in-a-generation project to transform a 74-hectare closed landfill and former quarry in Melbourne's west into a landmark public space. Led by Brimbank City Council the vision is for SEP to become the 'Central Park' of the west – a catalyst for environmental innovation, inclusive wellbeing, economic opportunity, sports excellence and Caring for Country.

Over six months, Council's coordinated engagement program tested and refined a Draft Vision Plan with the community and stakeholders. Critically, it seeded partnerships, uncovered shared goals, and set the groundwork for the public, private and community collaboration needed to realise the \$500 million, 30-year transformation.

Key highlights:

- A cross-organisational working group involving more than 10 Council teams and the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) informed a comprehensive stakeholder and risk analysis at the outset. The group remained central throughout, informing engagement design, monitoring risks, leveraging key relationships and shaping decisions across the project.
- Three-streams of engagement successfully involved Traditional Custodians, nearby landowners and tenants, community groups, internal teams, potential partners (eg. sport, health, education, sustainability), the broader community and all levels of government.
- Flexible engagement methods within each stream were adapted to participants' influence, interest and proximity to the site.
- Complex stakeholder coordination involved six distinct stakeholder categories. Supported by independent consultants, Council tailored messaging and engagement opportunities to suit.

- A place-focussed collaboration with DTP ensured relevant stakeholders received a joined-up view of overlapping projects (eg. Albion Quarter, Sunshine Station), and the ability to influence multiple projects at the same time (rather than separate processes and meetings).
- Eight amendments were made to the Draft Vision Plan in response to feedback, including a significant expansion of the site footprint (54 to 74 hectares), improved accessibility and reconfigures site features.
- Final Vision Plan includes a solar farm, walking and cycling tracks, a sustainability hub, new sportsgrounds and large stadium, community play spaces, and an urban forest and wetland system.
- Visible and broad support was demonstrated with 74% of community participants agreeing the Plan reflected their needs, 13 stakeholders providing public endorsements, Traditional Custodians contributing a Foreword, and several organisations lodging unsolicited partnership proposals.
- Momentum and recognition followed, with strong stakeholder backing helping secure \$500,000 in Federal Government funding for the business case and feasibility study.



2.0 Objectives

Recognising the site's scale, complexity and history, Brimbank City Council undertook a comprehensive engagement process with three primary goals:

1. To gather feedback to inform the Final Vision Plan;
2. To seed the long-term collaboration needed to bring the vision to life; and
3. To generate visible community and stakeholder endorsement of the Vision Plan to support advocacy.

The objectives of the engagement were to:

- Raise awareness and generate interest in the overall transformation of the Albion precinct (including SEP, Albion Quarter, Albion Station) – and create a sense of optimism and opportunity;
- Reach, inform and engage the community and key identified stakeholders on the Draft SEP Vision Plan;
- Gather feedback on the Draft Vision Plan to inform the Final Vision Plan;
- Identify shared goals and potential collaboration opportunities with private, public and community stakeholders;
- Provide a positive, professional engagement experience (in partnership with DTP where relevant) to build trusted, ongoing relationships; and
- Capture and document input and support to demonstrate stakeholder sentiment and inform Council's decision-making and advocacy.

3.0 Challenges

Transforming a closed landfill into a \$500 million urban park posed significant challenges. A detailed and rigorous risk and stakeholder analysis helped inform the engagement design:

- Uncertainty about delivery: With a 30-year staged transformation to achieve the Vision and no guaranteed funding, expectations had to be managed while also building excitement and buy-in.
- Historic landfill concerns: Community fears and a misinformation campaign about safety required transparent, sensitive communication and independent technical reviews to validate feasibility.
- Overlapping major projects: SEP engagement took place alongside other major Victorian Government projects (eg. Albion Station, Sunshine Station, Albion Quarter Precinct), creating potential confusion about roles and responsibilities. Joint sessions with DTP and clear communication helped stakeholders understand how SEP fitted into the bigger picture.
- Varied stakeholder relationships: Different teams across Council and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) held key relationships with stakeholders. To leverage those relationships and ensure a consistent experience, a comprehensive mapping exercise and coordinated engagement approach were used, supported by independent engagement consultants (Activate Consulting).
- Competing interests and plans: Some adjacent landowners had development plans (some with live planning permit applications) that conflicted with the Vision, requiring direct dialogue to seek alignment or compromise.
- Sensitive timing: Engagement coincided with a review and uncertainty about State and Federal funding in key projects (eg. Sunshine Station), making close coordination with DTP critical.
- Potential perceptions of exclusivity: The enthusiasm for the SEP Vision sparked unsolicited partnership proposals from some organisations (eg. elite sports clubs). These were welcomed but managed transparently, and referred to future open, EOI processes.
- Political uncertainty: Some Councillors held concerns about technical aspects of landfill transformation which were addressed through an independent technical review to validate feasibility, regular briefings (including on site).



4.0 Methodology

From June to November 2023, a tailored three-stream engagement program shaped the Final Sunshine Energy Park (SEP) Vision Plan. Each stream had a distinct purpose and contribution to decision making.

| Purpose | Key Methods | Contribution to decisions |
|--|---|---|
| Stream 1: Internal Engagement | | |
| Secure cross-organisational and political support; ensure alignment with other Council strategies; inform and coordinate stakeholder engagement. | <p>Cross-disciplinary working group (Council planning, sports, design, environment, economic development and more; and DTP planning, engagement).</p> <p>Regular Executive/Councillor briefings and site visits (including with independent experts as required).</p> <p>Gender Impact Assessment.</p> | <p>Critical in stakeholder and risk mapping, ensuring coordinated, consistent contact with key stakeholders.</p> <p>Shaped feasibility of sports fields and sustainability initiatives, and embedded inclusive design in the final Vision Plan.</p> |
| Stream 2: Stakeholder Engagement | | |
| Build trust with landowners, tenants, Traditional Custodians, potential partners and government; identify opportunities and risks; seed ongoing collaboration. | <p>Comprehensive stakeholder mapping, analysis and categorisation by type (6 types in total) and overlaid by risk (priority, red flag).</p> <p>Online and in-person engagement and messaging tailored to each different stakeholder type, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explainer video • Online info sessions • Individual 'Pitch it' sessions for Type 1 landowners and potential partners to explore opportunities (DTP and Council) • Individual 'Feedback and ideas' sessions • Site visits with Traditional owner groups, and current site tenants • Advocacy meetings with elected officials and departments • Meetings with others who have delivered similar key elements (open space on former landfill, solar energy farms, sustainability hubs) • Written submissions, and follow up emails and phone calls to confirm support or surface concerns. | <p>Informed the plan's proposed staging, technical feasibility and shared space design.</p> <p>Identified potential private, public and community delivery partnerships, and opportunities to align differing landowner priorities.</p> <p>Also informed draft vision, principles and emerging ideas in DTP's Albion Quarter Discussion Paper released in May 2024.</p> |
| Stream 3: Broad Community Engagement | | |
| Raise awareness of the Draft Vision Plan and ensure alignment with community aspirations. | <p>Your Say' webpage with explainer video and interactive site map.</p> <p>Online feedback form .</p> <p>Two public info sessions (varied days/times).</p> | <p>Refinements to play space design, walking/cycling routes, and environmental features.</p> |

Officers clearly mapped each aspect of the feedback received, providing an officer response, and (if relevant) the suggested refinement to the Vision Plan. The refinements to the Final Vision Plan were clearly articulated in the report to Council, and the outcomes reported back to participants via:

- Direct email to participating stakeholders and community members
- Via Council's 'Your Say' project page and Transformation webpage
- Media and promotion through Council's communication channels
- Ongoing working group, DTP and stakeholder liaison.

"The WPF executive committee thoroughly enjoyed meeting you both. We particularly liked your enthusiasm and passion for improving the Western suburbs bringing a world-class sporting and community hub was encouraging and we are proud to support such a remarkable initiative"

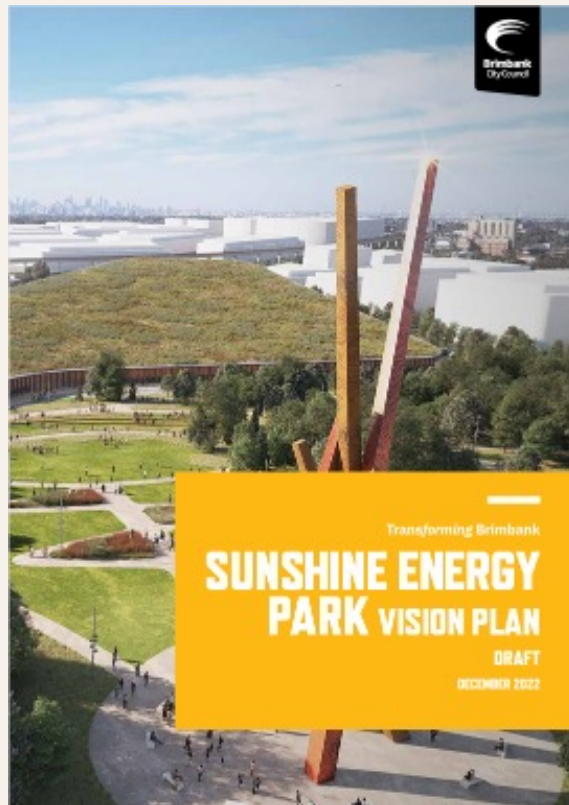
– Western Pigeon Federation of Victoria (tenants on the SEP site)

"We have appreciated the opportunities to meet with Council staff and representatives of the relevant Government departments to discuss the vision for Sunshine Energy Park and to consider the relationship between the future Park and Victoria University, which we consider to be one of great potential."

– Victoria University (next to the SEP site)



Online hotspot interactive map



Explainer Video
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw1PnOKfngA&t=4s

5.0 Alignment with IAP2 Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

| IAP2 Core Values | Example or evidence from this project |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process</p> | <p>A comprehensive stakeholder mapping and segmentation process (with input from Council's cross-organisational working group and DTP) ensured no stakeholders were overlooked.</p> <p>The three-stream engagement program engaged all target communities and stakeholders the right way and at the right time.</p> <p>Engagement was more than 'feedback collection'; it invited ongoing collaboration and investment to shape future stages of delivery through partnerships and advocacy.</p> |
| <p>2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision</p> | <p>Participants were engaged at the 'consult' to 'collaborate' level reflecting their relationship to the site, with a clear commitment that feedback would inform the final Vision Plan, potential partnerships, and DTP's early planning for Albion Quarter (where relevant).</p> <p>Eight amendments were made to the Final Vision Plan in response to feedback – this was clearly reported back to close the loop and maintain accountability.</p> <p>Feedback from stakeholders adjacent to the Albion Quarter also helped shape the draft vision, principles and emerging ideas in the Victorian Government's Albion Quarter Discussion Paper.</p> |
| <p>3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers</p> | <p>Council cannot deliver the \$500 million SEP vision alone. Engagement therefore focused on aligning priorities and identifying shared goals across sectors.</p> <p>Feedback from Traditional Custodians, community groups and stakeholders in health, education, sport, sustainability and transport shaped a Vision Plan balancing economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes. An internal cross-disciplinary working group and a Gender Impact Assessment ensured feasibility, safety and inclusion.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with elected officials and State Government agencies secured alignment across levels of government and helped manage conflicting landowner interests constructively.</p> |
| <p>4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision</p> | <p>The engagement program was grounded in a clear understanding of who would be affected or interested – geographically, socially, economically or culturally – and delivered through three tailored streams. Each was designed to meet different stakeholder needs and levels of influence, with particular care for those most directly impacted – site tenants, adjacent landowners and Traditional Custodians.</p> <p>Independent consultants (Activate Consulting) coordinated the complex stakeholder stream to ensure a positive experience and build trust.</p> |
| <p>5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate</p> | <p>The engagement approach responded to a detailed assessment of risks, preferences and communication needs, ensuring engagement felt relevant and manageable to participants.</p> <p>Methods were deliberately flexible, allowing participants to choose how and when to contribute – through online forms, one-on-one meetings, site visits, group sessions, phone calls or written submissions.</p> <p>'Pitch it' and 'Feedback and ideas' sessions invited stakeholders to shape the structure of future partnerships and collaboration.</p> <p>Coordinated sessions with Council and DTP allowed stakeholder ideas to be presented holistically without needing to fit them into the right project 'box' or repeat themselves across meetings.</p> |

| IAP2 Core Values | Example or evidence from this project |
|--|---|
| <p>6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way</p> | <p>Information was provided in clear, accessible formats to suit different needs, including a full Draft Vision Plan, summary, explainer video, fact sheets and an interactive map. Q&A sessions, briefings and technical explanations supported understanding of complex issues such as landfill rehabilitation, audit requirements and staging.</p> <p>Participants received materials in advance to prepare meaningful contributions, and context about the Sunshine Priority Precinct and Albion Quarter planning helped stakeholders see SEP's role in the broader vision.</p> <p>Regular briefings for Internal staff and DTP partners enabled them to respond consistently and confidently across community and stakeholder touchpoints.</p> |
| <p>7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision</p> | <p>Officers used the findings reports to clearly map each aspect of the feedback (using a 'you said, we did' structure), providing an officer response, and (if relevant) the suggested refinement to the Vision Plan.</p> <p>Changes to the Vision Plan were clearly attributed to stakeholder or community input and shared through Council reports, email updates, the Your Say platform, and other public channels – helping to build trust and momentum for the next stages.</p> <p>Several stakeholders publicly endorsed the final plan or requested ongoing involvement, demonstrating they felt respected and valued.</p> |

6.0 Satisfaction

The Sunshine Energy Park Vision Plan was formally adopted by Brimbank City Council in May 2024, with wide and strong support from community members, stakeholders, Traditional Custodians, and partner organisations:

- 74% of community respondents agreed the Draft Vision Plan reflected the needs and aspirations of the community.
- Across the 18 detailed stakeholder submissions most described it as transformative, strategic, well-planned, exciting, clever, impressive and innovative.
- Stakeholders from across health, sport, education and government sectors expressed strong support for the plan's intent and ambition, with several requesting to remain involved in future phases of planning and delivery.

Strong satisfaction was also evident for the engagement process itself:

- Traditional Owners wrote the Foreword for the final Vision Plan.
- Several key stakeholders are exploring potential partnerships and some submitted unsolicited formal proposals (including Victorian state sporting associations/ peak bodies, Sunshine public and private hospitals, Victoria University and key adjacent landowners).
- 13 stakeholders publicly shared their formal submissions and support for the Vision Plan.
- Improved relationships, or new relationships were established with more complex 'red flag' stakeholders.
- Improvement in the tone and quality of interactions between Council and stakeholders since the engagement – many stakeholders have moved from being observers to active contributors or champions of the project.
- Absence of any participant-led media issues or advocacy.
- Council confidence in the engagement process and its adoption of the Final Vision Plan in May 2024.
- Positive feedback from DTP about the collaborative engagement approach, and DTP endorsement of Council's funding application to the Federal Government.
- Securing \$500k Federal Government grant to progress a detailed business case and feasibility study, on the back of strong stakeholder support for the SEP Vision Plan.
- Within Council, the engagement approach was also recognised as best practice. The staff member who managed the project received a staff excellence award.

The success of the engagement was not the result of a single activity, but of a well-planned, inclusive and respectful process that gave participants confidence in the Vision Plan – and in Council's ability to facilitate it.

“The Brimbank council has established a coalition of partners, including neighbouring residents, stakeholders, advisors, government department and agencies, elected government officials, and the Brimbank Youth Council”

- The Hon Catherine King MP, Media Release announcing \$500k funding, 24 Jan 2025

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

Yoursay Brimbank And Key Stakeholders Workshops

In December 2022, Council endorsed for consultation a Draft Vision Plan for Sunshine Energy Park (SEP). It is a long-term Draft Vision that, once approved, will require partnerships and investment from government, business and community to bring this to life over the next 30 years.

A comprehensive stakeholder engagement program ran from 21 June to 31 August 2023 alongside broad community engagement.

The engagement program sought feedback on the Draft Vision Plan and to identify ideas and potential opportunities from the following:

- Properties (landowners and tenants) adjacent to SEP and the Albion Quarter Precinct
- Properties (landowners and tenants) adjacent to SEP only
- Stakeholders, both local and outside the City of Brimbank with a potential interest in SEP
- Advisors - organisations and government with experience of similar projects or related expertise
- Government departments and agencies
- Elected government officials
- Brimbank Youth Council
- General community



A range of methods were used to promote the consultation:



Social media posts



YourSay Brimbank



One on one meeting



Direct emails and phone calls to stakeholders



Face to face workshops



Flyer mail drop to over 500 owner/occupiers within or adjacent to the Sunshine Energy Park

74%

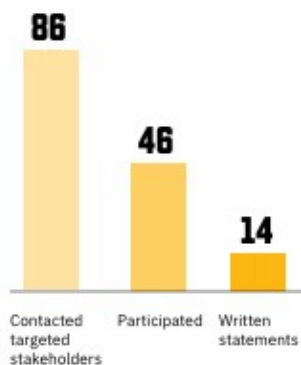
The draft Vision Plan will meet the needs and aspirations of the community.

“It’s truly exciting. Great multi-purposing of the site. Great inclusivity. Great vision. Bring it on - can’t happen soon enough. Thanks to everyone involved with this ambitious plan. It will really give the Sunshine area a great public open space, which everyone will be able to access, use and enjoy.”

“The Energy Park appears to be a fantastic opportunity for more green space in the West! The variety of precincts within the Park and the new indoor space will be much appreciated by local residents.”

“It is an ambitious and yet achievable plan which will benefit the local community and generations to come.” It will provide job opportunities for all ages and will become a destination”

Key Stakeholders Participation



Formal written statements from:



7.0 Innovation

The SEP engagement program was innovative in both design and delivery. It went beyond traditional consultation, using tailored methods to build trust, broaden participation, and influence decision making across multiple levels of government.

Innovative approaches included:

- Cross-organisational stakeholder mapping and coordinated management: A comprehensive analysis segmented and prioritised hundreds of stakeholders. This enabled tailored conversations and processes, led by the key relationship holders either in Brimbank Council or DTP. This provided clear roles and a seamless experience for participants. Managing six distinct categories of stakeholders – each requiring bespoke methods – demanded intensive internal coordination. Dedicated governance structures, support from an independent engagement consultancy, and cross-team communication ensured the process remained coherent and professional.
- Carefully coordinated and staged three-stream engagement program: This approach ensured that information about the SEP project and opportunities for provide input flowed in a strategic and respectful way, so that those more impacted were first to hear about the project, and that Councillors were kept well-briefed throughout the progress of the program to ensure there were no surprises.
- Place-based collaborative engagement with DTP: Coordinated sessions provided stakeholders with a single, streamlined experience across related projects. This allowed stakeholder ideas to be presented and discussed holistically without needing to fit them into the right project 'box' or repeat themselves across meetings.
- Influence across governments: Feedback from relevant stakeholders directly shaped two government plans – the SEP Vision Plan and the Victorian Government's Albion Quarter Discussion Paper – a rare example of local voices influencing multi-level planning.
- 'Pitch it' sessions: Stakeholders were informed of the broader vision for Sunshine/Albion project area and invited to pitch their ideas for partnerships and future opportunities, moving beyond feedback collection to genuine collaboration.
- Accessible communication: Layered materials – from an explainer video, summary documents, and interactive maps, right through to site briefings, detailed reports and technical feasibility studies – made complex issues such as landfill rehabilitation and staging understandable for different audiences.

Together, these approaches created an engagement program that was inclusive by design, genuinely collaborative and built trust between Council, stakeholders, community and DTP. Participants were not simply consulted, but engaged as partners in shaping a once-in-a-generation transformation for Melbourne's west.

“As this vision continues to evolve, I eagerly anticipate its ongoing engagement with stakeholders, its pursuit to securing funding, and ultimately effecting the transformation that will resonate for generations to come. Thank you for Council’s dedication to creating a brighter, more sustainable future for the Brimbank community.”

– Cadence Property Group (landowners next to the SEP site)



Acknowledgements and to find out more

We would like to thank Brimbank City Council, the Department of Transport and Planning and Actiate Consulting for agreeing to share this case study and insights to advance engagement practice. This case study was authored/co-authored by Activate Consulting and peer reviewed by Brimbank City Council and the Department of Transport and Planning.

For more information about this project see:
www.yoursay.brimbank.vic.gov.au/sunshine-energy-park

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(NZ) 0800 436 424

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