

# Urban planning and connected communities survey

2019

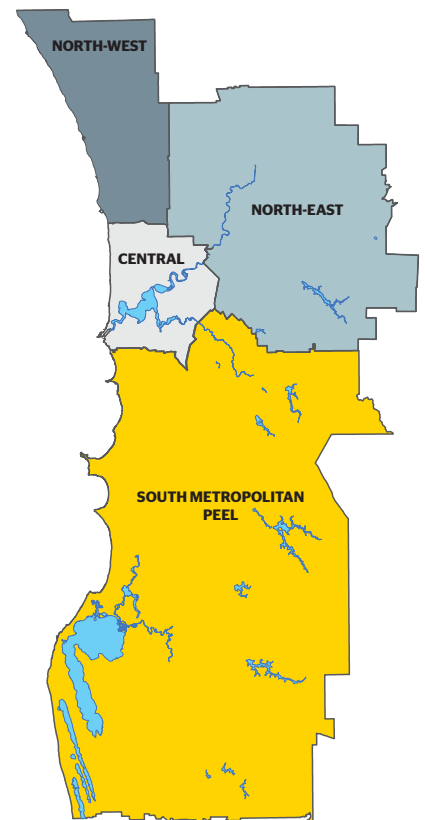
How our cities, towns and communities are planned and designed influences where we live, work and socialise, and how we move around. Understanding what Western Australians value in their communities and their feelings and opinions about the challenges and opportunities faced as Perth and Peel grows to a population of 3.5 million people will be essential to ensure planning and infrastructure decisions deliver the best outcomes.

Well-planned and designed communities enable better access to employment and education opportunities, essential services and local amenities by a range of transport options. This can influence how physically and socially 'connected' we feel (both to other people and to the places where we live and interact) as well as our general health and wellbeing, and cost of living.

With Perth and Peel needing an estimated 800,000 new homes<sup>1</sup> over the next 30 years to accommodate our growing population, the continued shift towards a more 'compact' and connected city form could see the realisation of some of these wider community benefits. However, the changes associated with more compact living, such as higher residential densities, can also prompt community concerns.

As our local areas continue to evolve to meet the needs of current and future generations, it will be important to preserve and celebrate the characteristics that give them their unique 'sense of place' and that make people want to live there.

To understand what Western Australians know, think, and feel about urban planning and associated mobility issues relating to the projected growth of Perth and Peel, RAC commissioned Painted Dog Research in November 2018 to undertake a targeted online survey. The survey was completed by 800 respondents (528 of which were RAC members and 272 non-members) from across the Perth and Peel regions. Age, gender and location<sup>2</sup> sampling quotas were applied, and the data has been post-weighted to be representative of the population of these regions<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (2018). "Perth and Peel@3.5 Million", <https://www.dph.wa.gov.au/perth-and-peel-@-3-5-million>

<sup>2</sup> The four sub-regions identified in Perth and Peel@3.5million - North-West, North-East, Central and South Metropolitan Peel - were used for location sampling.

<sup>3</sup> Based on ABS Census (2016) data.



For the better

## How we currently live and commute

The survey has revealed that more than eight in 10 respondents are satisfied with their current living situation and that affordability, proximity to shops and amenities, and access to public transport are the main reasons people choose to live where they do. These are also considered characteristics of a 'liveable' community, as is a sense of community spirit and good neighbours.

A majority (69 per cent) of respondents live in a separate house and six in 10 have at least two cars in their household.

**!** When it comes to the main factors influencing where people currently choose to live, when prompted, affordability (56 per cent ranked this in their top five reasons), proximity to shopping centres and other amenities (48 per cent), and access to public transport (36 per cent) are the top three most influential factors (Figure 1).

Unprompted, respondents said location and proximity to shopping / supermarkets and other amenities are the best things about their local area; this was consistent across all sub-regions. Respondents also noted that their local area is quiet and peaceful and is close to public transport options.

This sentiment was also echoed in their responses when asked what a 'liveable' community looks and feels like, with location and proximity to shops and amenities being the most commonly mentioned factors.

These are followed by a sense of community / good neighbours, safety and access to transport options.

When respondents were asked about the biggest changes they have seen to the look, feel and character of their local area over the past five years, unprompted, more than one-third (35 per cent) stated 'positive' changes relating to improved facilities and infrastructure (e.g. shopping areas, parks and restaurants / bars / cafes) and 14 per cent said something specifically about transport (e.g. road, public transport and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure).

Housing and development featured in relation to both positive and negative changes (10 and 17 per cent respectively), with increased density being mentioned as a negative. Other negative changes related to safety (e.g. increased crime and anti-social behaviour, 15 per cent) and transport (e.g. busier roads and insufficient public transport, 15 per cent).

When it comes to commuting, a majority (71 per cent) of respondents drive a car as their main mode of

transport to work or study, with 18 per cent using public transport. Car use was significantly lower (61 per cent) in the Central sub-region compared to the other sub-regions (78 per cent). Car travel being more convenient (58 per cent) and the quickest option (51 per cent) are the key reasons for using this mode, while affordability (62 per cent), proximity to public transport (53 per cent) and avoiding congestion / traffic (44 per cent) are the main reasons for public transport usage.

Almost one in three currently travel more than half an hour for their one-way commute but more than half would be willing to travel up to 45 minutes. Those living in the Central sub-region are more likely to have a morning commute of less than 20 minutes (48 per cent compared to 32 per cent living in other sub-regions). Those living in the North-West sub-region are more likely to have commutes of more than 30 minutes (47 per cent compared to 26 per cent living in other sub-regions) and are also more likely to be willing to travel more than an hour (40 per cent compared to 28 per cent).



## What does a liveable community look and feel like to Western Australians?

"Easy access to public transport, shops, doctors and all other places one visits on a regular basis."



"A place that caters to all my needs without forcing me to drive elsewhere."



"Clean, sustainable living, with clean roads, streets and pathways."



"A community that cares about every person and neighbour, that is multicultural, welcoming and inclusive."



"Streets that are safe for children to play / ride bikes on, so low car speeds and local cars only."



% of respondents ranking option in top five

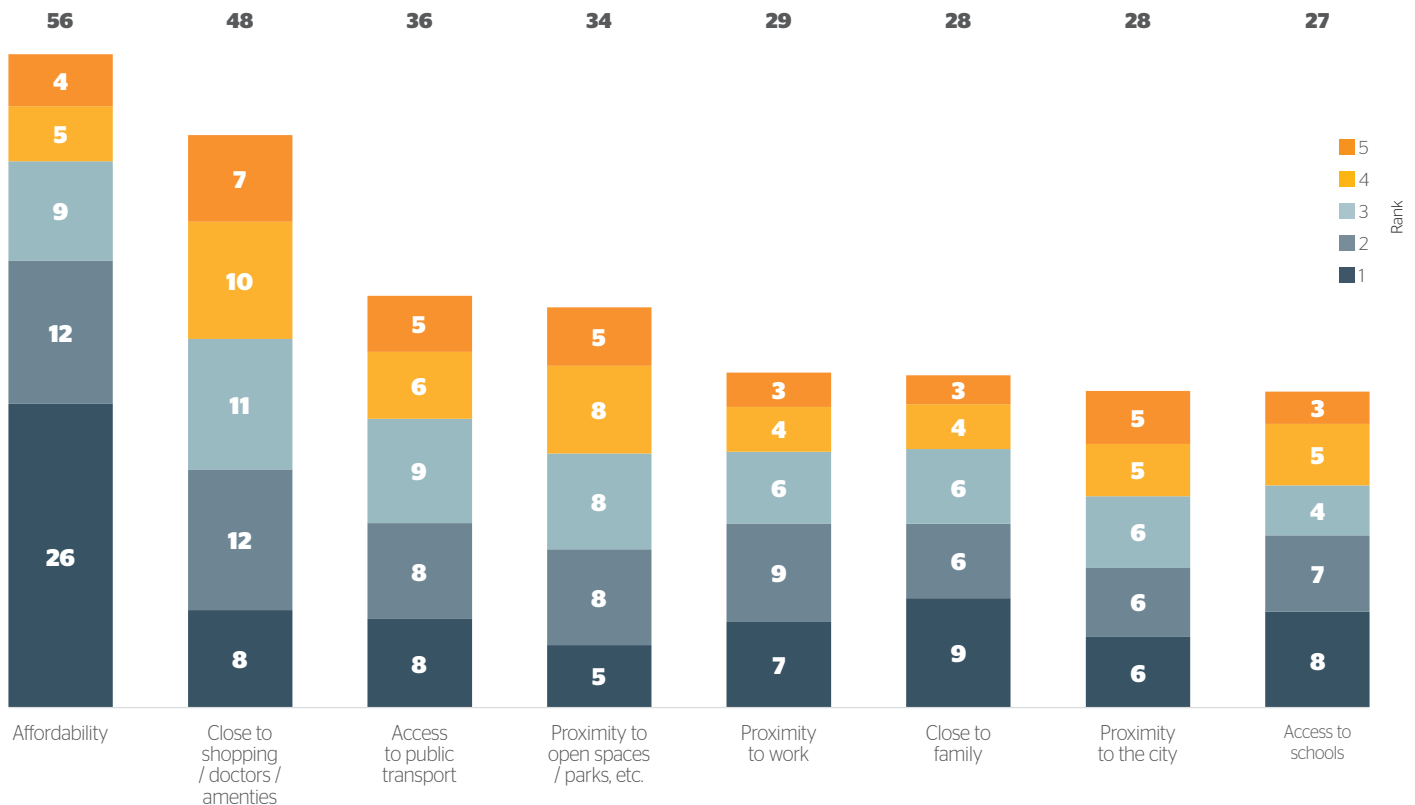


Figure 1 » Main factors influencing where people live (prompted)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Other influencing factors featured lower, with less than 19% ranking them within their top five (proximity to the beach / coast areas, safe roads for walking & cycling, sense of community, access to bars / restaurants / entertainment, city / beach / river views, live with other family members, for investment opportunities, availability of parking, and access to cycling infrastructure).

## How urban planning impacts us and our communities

Respondent's understanding of urban planning issues and the impacts on people's lives is limited. However, when prompted, there is familiarity with the concepts and implications of 'urban sprawl', 'urban infill' and 'density' and feelings are mixed on these issues.

When it comes to understanding how urban planning influences travel, 59 per cent indicated that they know 'a little' or 'nothing at all' (36 and 23 per cent respectively), while most of the remainder (32 per cent) feel they know a 'moderate amount'.

Unprompted and without a definition, just over half of the respondents (51 per cent) think that urban sprawl negatively impacts them and the broader community. One quarter (25 per cent) mentioned impacts in relation to mobility including congestion / increased traffic and longer commute distances.

When prompted with a definition and a list of potential implications of sprawl, many said they feel it negatively impacts congestion (57 per cent), natural habitats (55 per cent), car usage (51 per cent), journey times (50 per cent) and vehicle emissions / pollution (48 per cent). Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) and Builders (born 1925 to 1945) are typically more aware of the potential adverse impacts

compared to younger generations (Generation X - born 1965 to 1979, Generation Y - 1980 to 1994 and Generation Z - 1995 to 2009).

In describing what first comes to mind when thinking of 'density', many associated it with lots of people in an area and overcrowding. In terms of sentiment towards it, feelings are mixed, with a majority (69 per cent) of unprompted responses being 'neutral' comments (30 per cent are 'negative' and two per cent 'positive')<sup>5</sup>.

When prompted with a list of commonly cited concerns regarding 'urban infill' development of increasing densities (Figure 2), most respondents shared these concerns but there was a higher level of agreement with the potential for increased traffic and congestion on local roads (86 per cent), overcrowding (83 per cent), noise (83 per cent) and reduced privacy (81 per cent).

Almost four in five feel that the main benefits of well-planned and designed urban infill development of increasing

densities (Figure 3) are improved access to a range of transport options (78 per cent) and to local services, amenities and community facilities (77 per cent). Almost three-quarters (73 per cent) also agreed that it had the potential to revitalise local areas.

The responses shown across figures 2 and 3 broadly suggest that most respondents agree that well-planned and designed urban infill development is beneficial, but that they have concerns about the potential impacts when urban infill is not effectively planned.

**!** When asked what 'density done well' looks like to them, one in five respondents mentioned a WA suburb (including Joondalup, Perth CBD and East Perth); others mentioned characteristics such as housing diversity (15 per cent) and being well-designed (e.g. not being too cramped, 14 per cent and having public areas and green spaces, 13 per cent).

### What is urban sprawl, urban infill and density?

» **Urban sprawl** is the continued growth of cities through the development of previously undeveloped land (or 'greenfield' sites) on the fringes, often characterised by low-density residential housing, and communities which are more reliant on the car.

» **Urban infill** is typically the development or redevelopment of land within existing urban areas (or 'brownfield' sites) to provide medium and higher density residential development, and mixed-use development (e.g. employment, retail, etc.) around train stations, high frequency public transport corridors and in suburban activity centres.

» **Density** (in the context of planning) refers to the number of residential dwellings or people residing within a given area, often expressed as dwellings or persons per hectare.

<sup>5</sup> Total adds up to 101 per cent due to rounding.

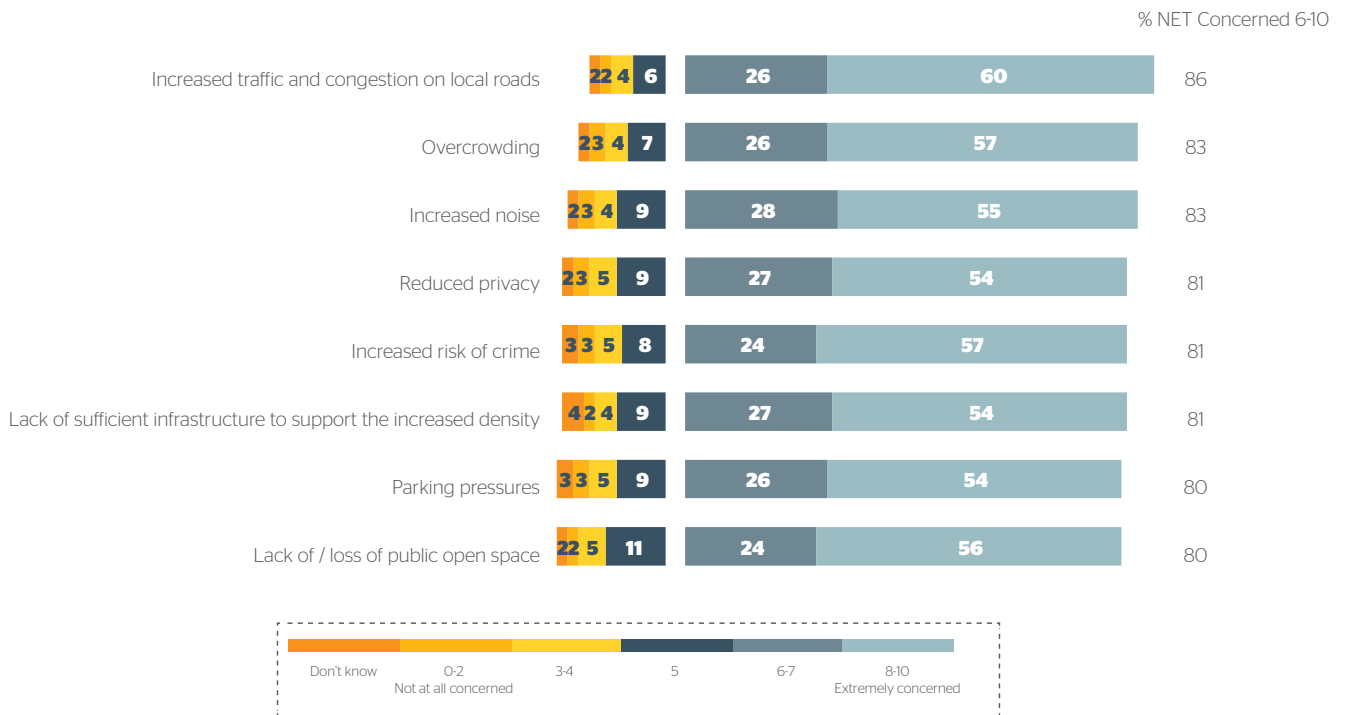


Figure 2 » Main concerns of urban infill development (prompted)<sup>6</sup>

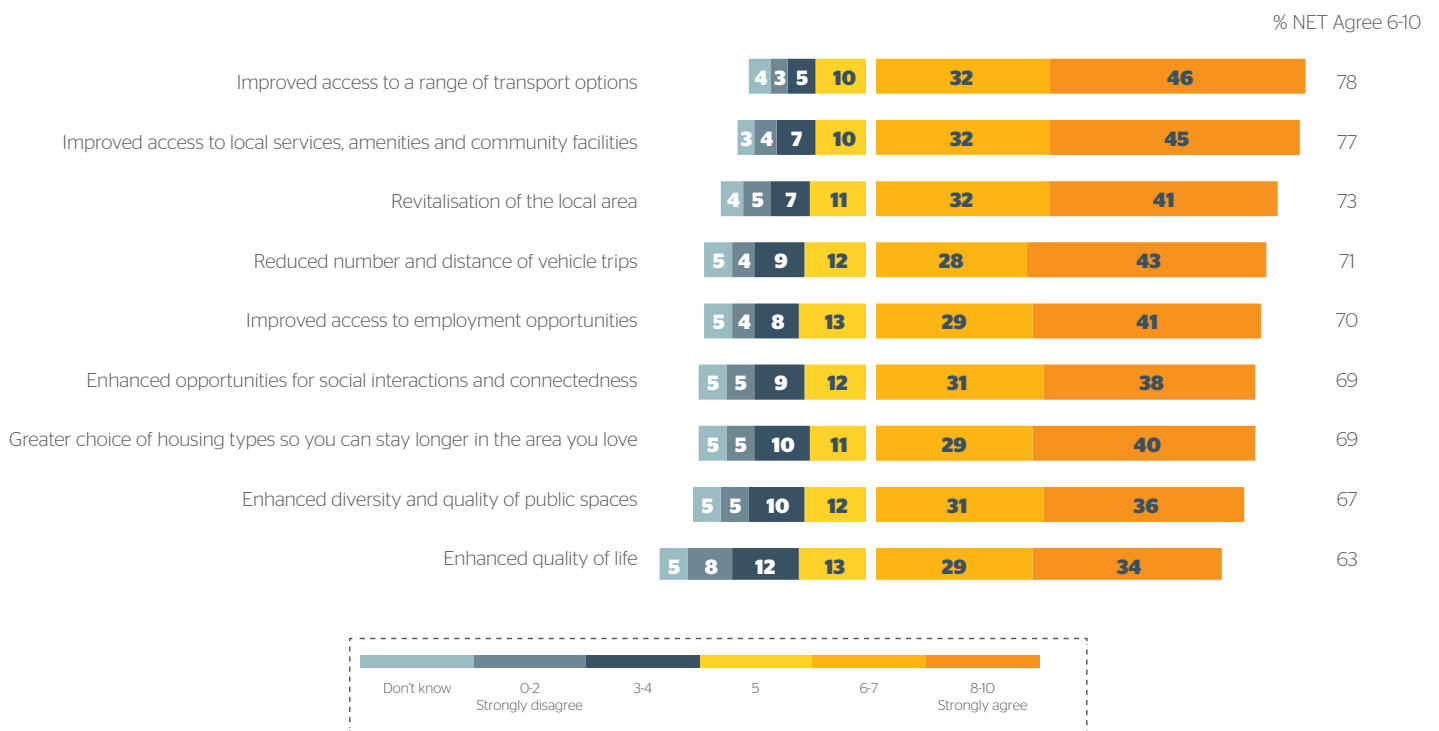


Figure 3 » Main benefits of urban infill development (prompted)

<sup>6</sup> Other prompted concerns featured lower (e.g. negative impacts on road safety, air pollution, construction activities, character of the area, property prices, and changing demographics)

## Where and how do we want to live?

While most respondents are satisfied with their current living situation, many are contemplating a move in the future for several reasons. There is a level of acceptance of the need for a range of housing options in different areas, as well as a willingness to consider various options when moving home.

Nearly one in two (49 per cent) respondents indicated that they are considering moving at some point in the near future, with 22 per cent suggesting it could be within the next three years. The main reasons for contemplating a move are for a larger property (30 per cent), for a change of scenery (28 per cent), to live in a safer suburb (18 per cent), to live closer to work (16 per cent) and to live closer to the Perth CBD (16 per cent).

Of those wishing to move, the majority (67 per cent) said a separate single storey home is most appealing, followed by a separate double (or more) storey home (25 per cent) and

then apartment / flat (19 per cent). More than two in five (43 per cent) of Generation Z respondents stated a preference for apartment / flat living compared to 14 per cent on average across all other generations.

Thinking about the housing options that they feel would be suitable in different locations (Figure 4), single homes on single lots (75 per cent), aged care housing (69 per cent) and affordable housing (65 per cent) are considered the most suitable options for 'existing / established suburbs'.

Higher density options such as modern apartments of five to eight storeys, and higher, are seen as most

suitable in and around the Perth CBD (68 per cent and 73 per cent respectively) and in large activity centres (45 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

There is however a reasonable amount of support for medium density development such as one to four storey apartment buildings, townhouses and multiple houses on the same lot in a variety of locations including around major shopping centres, smaller inner-city and suburban activity / town centres, near train stations and along high frequency transit corridors.

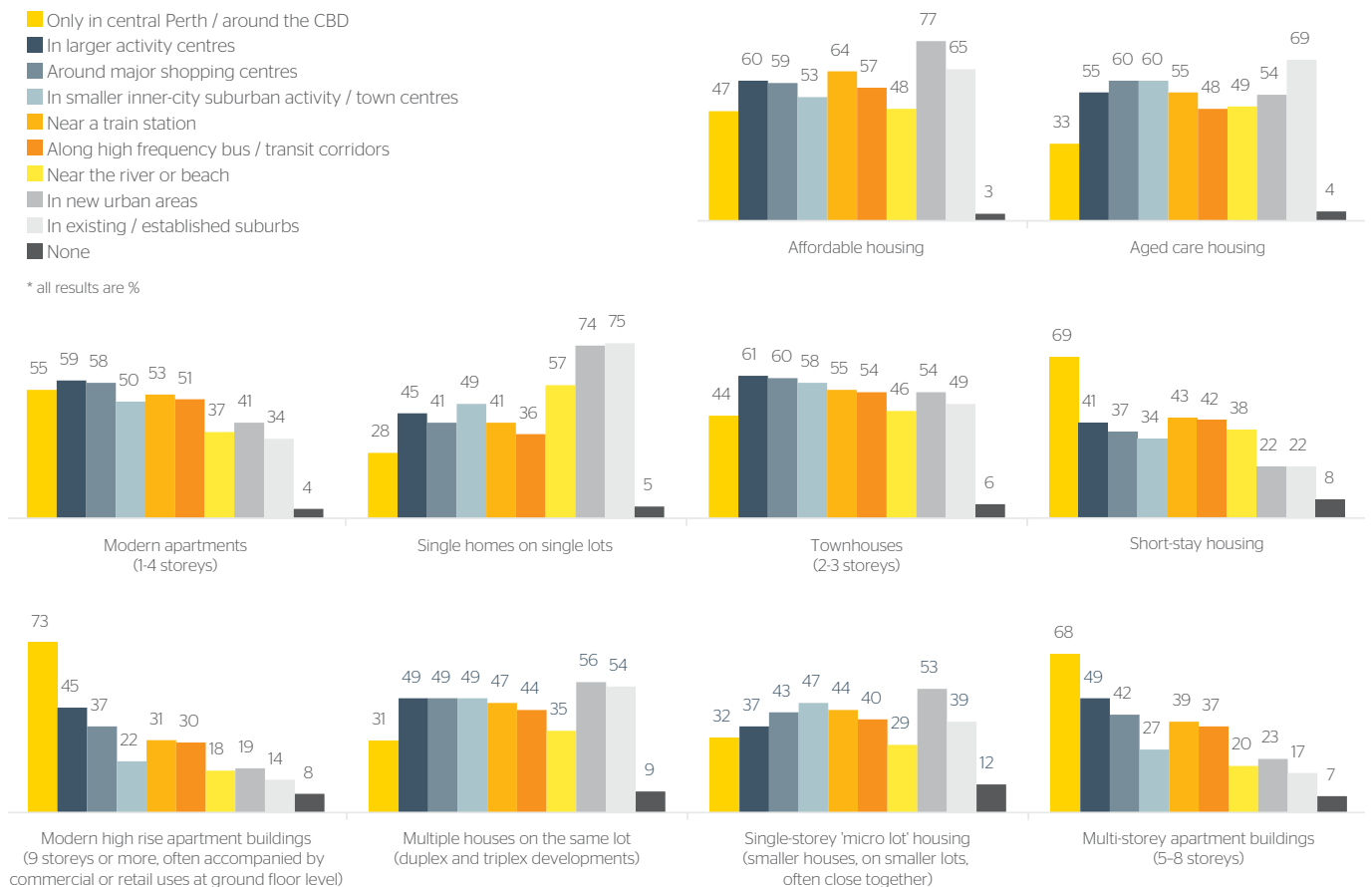


Figure 4 » Suitability of housing options in different locations (prompted)

## Future considerations

Generally speaking, there is an appetite amongst many respondents to feel part of a community and to have a say in helping to shape their local area into the future. There is also a level of acceptance that urban infill development has a role to play but that it needs to be coupled with investment in public transport to support a compact, connected city form while maintaining liveability.

Almost half (49 per cent) of respondents are satisfied with the current approach taken to engage them in the planning process when it comes to creating the vision for the future of their local area, as well as in relation to development applications and approvals. There is also clear interest for continued and further involvement, with 55 per cent saying they would like to get involved if an opportunity arises (interest is slightly greater amongst those in the Central sub-region, 58 per cent).

When it comes to feeling part of a community and getting actively involved with projects and events that help create more vibrant streets and places in their local area, while only one in 15 (6 per cent) currently are involved, one in two (49 per cent) that are not said they would like to be.

Over half of the respondents agree that a greater amount of urban infill development should be built in Perth and Peel to better manage congestion (55 per cent) and accommodate population growth (53 per cent), with Generation Y showing the highest level of agreement.

When it comes to managing the additional travel created by population growth (Figure 5), investment in public transport, both expansion of services within and around the Perth CBD (67 per cent) and more high frequency public transport corridors (66 per cent), and decentralisation of employment (64 per cent) are believed to be the top three priorities for government investment to ensure Perth remains liveable, healthy and productive.

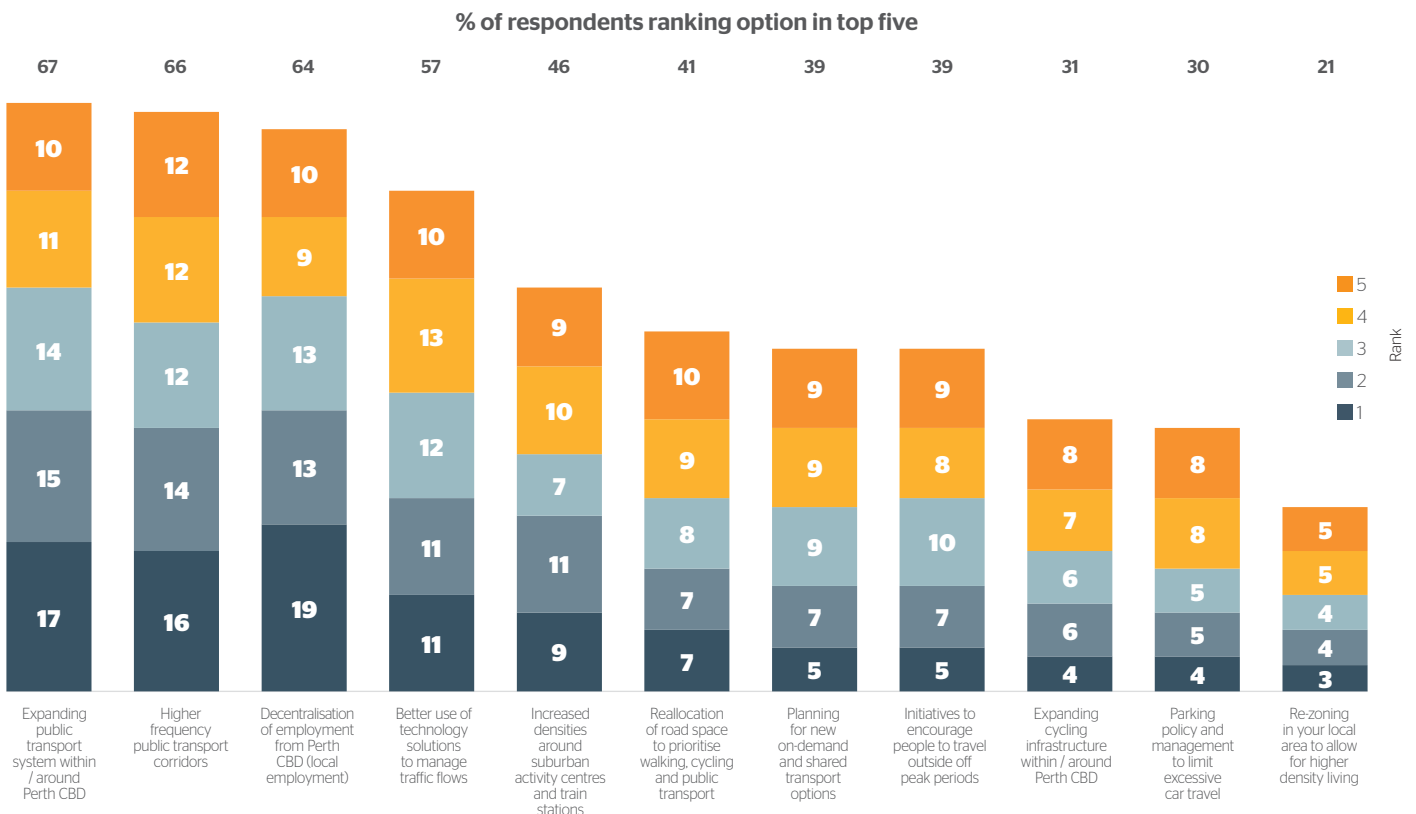


Figure 5 » Potential strategies to manage travel demand related to population growth (prompted)

For further information please  
contact [advocacy@rac.com.au](mailto:advocacy@rac.com.au)

