About this plan

Parramatta is a diverse and vibrant city currently experiencing an exciting transformation. Working alongside our partners in state and federal government, we are building the cultural, health, education and transport infrastructure of the future.

A key component in driving this change is delivering a safer city. A safer city bolsters local commerce, jobs and public amenity. A safer city is one where our events attract visitors to Parramatta, delivering the promise of a positive experience. A safer city will strengthen our city’s reputation in Greater Sydney through promoting a wider shift in attitudes and perceptions.

The Draft Crime Prevention Plan 2019-2023 outlines our approach for a safer Parramatta over the next five years.

The draft plan combines new and existing initiatives such as improved street lighting, street cleaning, closed circuit television, building and maintaining parks and green spaces, waste and graffiti removal services, development assessments and strategic planning with crime prevention in mind. The plan aims to bring people together by fostering a sense of community and inclusiveness around crime prevention and safety measures.

The draft plan also acknowledges that Parramatta is made up of many different people with diverse needs, values, experiences and concerns. Through Council’s community services and programs and partnerships with other organisations, we can proactively support specific vulnerable groups including women, young people, people experiencing homelessness and social housing tenants.

Prioritising action on crime

The draft plan is focused on prioritising action on crime and safety. Under four priority areas, the draft plan outlines the ways that the City of Parramatta is proposing to implement preventative action on crime:

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- Addressing the needs of identified vulnerable groups
- Improving the look and feel of public spaces in the CBD and neighbourhoods
- Increasing sense of attachment and community involvement in our neighbourhoods.

Have your say

We welcome and encourage your feedback on this plan.

Submissions close 9am, Monday 2 September 2019.

To provide feedback on the Draft Crime Prevention Plan 2019-2023, visit Council’s engagement portal at www.oursay.org/cityofparramatta

Submissions can also be made via email to: crimeprevention@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au. Please include Crime Prevention Plan in the subject line.
Building safer and stronger communities

A forward-thinking crime prevention and community safety plan is about building on prior research and consultation, anticipating emerging problems and trends, and being prepared to take action to prevent these problems becoming entrenched.

The problems associated with crime and safety in local communities have a major impact on people’s quality of life. This draft plan allows Council and its partners to create supportive environments, reduce actual and perceived levels of crime and empower people to lead fulfilling lives.

The role of Council is to coordinate collaboration between key stakeholders such as NSW Police, NSW Government agencies, local businesses, community organisations and residents to enact this change. Through proactive and informed collaboration, a collective response can be put forward to meet diverse needs and expectations. We aim to make our community a safer and stronger place for all.

How was the Draft Crime Prevention Plan 2019-2023 developed?

Three key steps were taken in the development of this plan:

1. Compiling a Crime Profile of the key crimes in the Local Government Area (LGA)
2. Conducting a review of previous Council research around crime and safety
3. Additional research and consultation to assess safety perceptions and crime prevention measures.

Crime Profile and key trends

A Crime Profile offers an overview of current and emerging crime and safety trends in the LGA.

The Parramatta Crime Profile was informed by consultation with the five Police Area Commands that serve the Parramatta area. While there is generally a low level of crime in our community, Police identify a need to remain vigilant and develop preventative measures against emerging trends and areas of concern.

Most crimes are decreasing or remain stable

The profile ranked the total number of incidents for the sixteen major crimes occurring in the LGA. This indicated that most crimes are either decreasing or have remained stable over the past five years. Reports for crimes including assault, domestic violence and sexual offences remain stable. Reported incidents of break and enter, motor-vehicle theft and theft (steal from dwelling) are decreasing.
There is room for improvement

Areas of concern highlighted in the profile include robbery, shoplifting (steal from retail stores), theft (steal from person) and fraud. Mail theft and stealing from basement car parks were also identified as areas of concern.

Some trends are difficult to interpret

Factors such as public willingness to report crime and shifts in policing policy affect how crime statistics are captured. For example, crimes such as assaults, sexual assaults and robbery have low reporting rates making it difficult to interpret actual trends. Crime areas targeted by police such as drink and drug driving offences can lead to an increase in the frequency of detections.

Research and consultation

An important consideration for Council is to ensure the Draft Crime Prevention Plan is directly responsive to community needs, aspirations, concerns and experiences. A review of previous Council research and community consultation was necessary to progress the draft plan and create a five-year vision. The documents below extensively explore community perceptions and experiences around crime and safety in Parramatta.

- The Community Strategic Plan 2018-2038
- The Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework (2017)
- Eat Street Survey of Customers and Business Owners (2018)
- The Our City My Life Survey (2019).

These reports have identified most people believe Parramatta is a diverse community, with a strong sense of connection, offering accessibility and good facilities.

Perceptions around safety were also identified. These included a general sense of safety in libraries and neighbourhood streets and some concerns around feeling unsafe in the CBD at night and regarding anti-social behaviour.

Additional research was undertaken with various communities and residents across the LGA, encouraging an open dialogue with participants.

Around 750 people participated in online surveys, interviews and focus groups.

- 489 members of the Our City, Your Say Parramatta Panel completed online feedback
- 75 participants in Telopea and 75 participants in Constitution Hill completed face-to-face interviews
- 83 participants took part in 10 focus groups exploring safety in neighbourhoods and the CBD
- 12 participants took part in two focus groups for Wentworth Point residents
- 17 participants aged 16-21 and 21-26 took part in focus groups directed at young people’s experiences regarding crime and safety.

Participants were asked questions based on key areas of concern:

- How safe they felt both in their neighbourhoods and the CBD
- The importance of attachment to neighbours — and how this attachment differs between those who feel safe or unsafe
- Issues related to young people identified from previous research
- Questions related to trends from the Crime Profile particularly mail theft for the purposes of identity fraud and theft from basement car park storage units
- Identifying ways Council could improve perceptions of safety in neighbourhoods and in the CBD.
Key Findings
Safety in the CBD

• Around 5% of participants felt unsafe in the CBD during the day and more than 50% felt unsafe in the CBD at night.

• Residents in younger age groups generally feel safer in the CBD than older age groups, however they take precautionary measures such as travelling in groups, driving cars, avoiding public transport and staying in busier locations such as Church Street.

• The transport interchange area in Parramatta (around Parramatta Station) was the most frequently mentioned area that people avoid after dark (5%) as it was perceived as a place for anti-social behaviour and harassment.

It is unclear whether this avoidance impacts on how often people visit Parramatta via the transport interchange (carparks were also mentioned as unsafe locations due to a lack of people around). Participants also cited past experiences of harassment and intimidation.

Perceptions of safety in neighbourhoods

A strong relationship was observed between how safe people felt in their local area and their level of community attachment. Supportive environments and infrastructure, community involvement and having a sense of attachment to other people in the area were found to be the best indicators of feeling safe.

Most people (86% of participants) felt safe in their neighbourhoods during the day (at home or walking around their neighbourhood), and 32% reported feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night.

However, 28% reported feeling unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night.

Suburbs where people are most likely to feel unsafe walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark were Dundas, Telopea, Oatlands, North Rocks and Parramatta. Newington, Wentworth Point, Epping and Carlingford had the highest percentage of people who felt safe.

Specific issues related to young people

Young people reported a lack of knowledge and experience in responding or intervening when witnessing a crime.

Young people reported feeling uncomfortable reporting crime and were particularly uncomfortable making phone calls to emergency providers. This was due to feeling embarrassed that an incident may not be worth reporting. Young people come to Parramatta at night for dinner, but travelled to the Sydney CBD due to the greater number of live music and dance venues available.

Community attachment and perceptions of safety

A series of questions were put to focus groups to determine how a sense of attachment in neighbourhoods relates to how safe people felt.

Those who felt safe in all situations (67%) were compared to those who felt unsafe in at least one of the situations described, including being at home alone during the day, at home alone after dark, walking alone during the day and after dark in neighbourhoods, and walking alone during the day and after dark around local shops (32%).

There were significant links between how highly residents rated the appearance of their neighbourhoods and how safe they felt. The level of interaction they had with neighbours and their attachment to or involvement in the community also aligned with their feelings of safety.
Priority areas and strategic actions

Information and key findings were compiled from the Crime Profile, existing research and additional research. This material informed the four priority areas for the draft plan.

Below each priority area are examples of strategic actions. These actions aim to deliver improvements in actual and perceived safety for all community members.

Priority 1: Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

Rationale: Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour helps a city take an active role in shaping a safe and supportive future for its people. It is a fundamental measure in creating liveability, increasing sense of community attachment and building positive perceptions for residents and visitors alike. This priority seeks to respond to perceived and actual crime trends in both residential areas and public spaces. It will also build community and stakeholder awareness about how to address and respond to crime and safety in the LGA.

Strategic actions: There are 20 strategic actions identified in the draft plan to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (for details refer to page 34-38 of the FULL plan). Key actions include:

- Improving the planning and design of public areas and apartment buildings to increase safety and minimise opportunity for crime, including reducing and preventing mail theft and theft in basement carparks
- Working with NSW Police on how to educate residents about keeping safe in their homes
- Attending meetings and working with industry partners to keep informed and prepared for alcohol related crime
- Upgrading CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) in response to crime trends
- Sustaining a friendly and approachable Police presence in crime hotspots.
Priority 2: Addressing the needs of identified vulnerable groups - namely women, young people, people experiencing homelessness and social housing tenants

**Rationale:** When working to reduce overall levels of crime and increase safety in a city, it is important to consider the ways that crime affects different groups of people. Research and consultation with the more vulnerable and at-risk has revealed that these groups respond to crime in different ways, for example they may not be encouraged to seek help or know how to access support. Actions in the draft plan seek to address the variety of needs and experiences around crime and safety.

**Strategic actions:** There are 24 key actions identified in the draft plan to address the needs of identified vulnerable groups (for details refer to page 36-39 of the FULL plan). Key actions include:

- Exploring public art that empowers women and improves feelings of safety
- Conducting community safety audits of areas where public domain improvements can be made
- Engaging youth workers to provide support to young people in the CBD
- Providing facilities in parks and reserves that cater to older adolescents (age 13-17)
- Advocating to the NSW Government for more community mental health services in Parramatta.

Priority 3: Improving the look and feel of public spaces in the CBD and neighbourhoods

**Rationale:** Research and early consultation revealed that community satisfaction with the appearance of the local area was the leading determining factor in promoting a sense of safety and security.

Through measures that improve the look and feel of public spaces in local areas such as lighting, graffiti removal and environmental design, Council can work to create environments and public spaces that increase feelings of safety whilst actively discouraging crime.

**Strategic actions:** There are 20 key actions identified in the draft plan to improve public spaces in the CBD and surrounding neighbourhoods (for details refer to page 38-39 of the FULL plan). Key actions include:

- Constructing new public toilets to address the shortage of facilities in the LGA
- Training planners and implementing safe development through Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles (see FAQ's section for more information)
- Graffiti removal within 24 hours with a focus on hotspot areas e.g. CBD carparks
- Upgrading street lighting in key night time spaces, public areas, monuments and historical sites
- Investigating creative lighting including installations and digital projections to improve perceptions of safety.
Priority 4: Increasing sense of attachment and community involvement in our neighbourhoods.

Rationale: Research and early consultation revealed strong links between people’s level of attachment to their neighbours and community and a sense of safety and security.

Previous research also revealed people want more information about what Council is doing and desired to see a greater Council presence in the neighbourhoods, for example through events that bring families together to socialise. The draft plan offers considerable scope to assist in empowering communities, building networks and celebrating diverse groups coming together in neighbourhoods.

Strategic actions: There are 11 key actions identified in the draft plan to increase community involvement (for details refer to page 40-41 of the FULL plan). Key actions include:

- Investigate extended lighting hours in parks and sportsgrounds to improve night time usage
- Support the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on campaigns e.g. Love Where You Live, which targets illegal dumping
- Manage ‘Alcohol Prohibited Area’ signage to increase public awareness in parks and reserves
- Create and distribute a fridge magnet with information on how to report crime and unsafe conditions in the area e.g. faulty street lighting.

What happens next?

The draft plan has been based on research and collaborative work with Council, key partners, stakeholders and community groups. Council is now seeking feedback from the broader community including support for the actions proposed in the draft plan and comments on potential gaps. Council is open to hearing any concerns around the plan, and will consider suggestions made by the community for additional actions to be included in the plan.

When the feedback period has closed, further actions may be included in the final strategy and/or incorporated into other initiatives. Once endorsed by Council and the Attorney General’s Office, the strategy will be implemented in collaboration with partners and the community over a five-year period. Council will provide further information as the project progresses, including what you told us about the draft strategy, via www.oursay.org/cityofparramatta.

Have Your Say

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Please include Crime Prevention Plan in the subject line.

Submissions close 9am, Monday 2 September 2019.

More information

To read the FULL draft of the Plan visit www.oursay.org/cityofparramatta

Copies of the plan will also be available at our libraries and our customer contact centre at the City of Parramatta Council, 126 Church St, Parramatta NSW 2150.