

Altona – Seaholme Neighbourhood Profile

May 2015

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Altona-Seaholme Neighbourhood Profile

Consultation Summary

L. Introduction

The Altona-Seaholme Neighbourhood Profile provides an overview of the history and development of the area, data about the characteristics of residents and information about the types of services and facilities available in the neighbourhood.

In addition to this information, a number of community consultations took place in order to gain a better understanding of how people feel about Altona-Seaholme as a place to live, learn, visit or work.

M. Methodology

Consultation took place during December 2014 and involved a combination of groups and individual interviews including:

- interviews with four residents and one former resident
- interview with a local trader who is also a resident
- focus group with grade five and six students from Seaholme Primary School

Each session lasted for approximately one hour. The questions used in the consultations are included in Appendix 1.

N. Summary notes

The consultations were framed around several key questions, focusing on what people think about Altona-Seaholme as a place to live, work, learn and recreate, its attributes and what could be improved. In addition some local history and memories have been included from several long term residents. Below is a summary of the findings.

How would you describe Altona-Seaholme and what are some of the things you like about the neighbourhood?

Distinctive features

The neighbourhood is described as being “just like a big country town, basically everyone knows everyone and I’d say the majority are long term residents who have been here 50 years plus or certainly up around that mark”. While there has been increased residential development over the last few years which has attracted new residents, that sense of community connection remains. “I know it’s said a lot but there is a community-village type feel.” These views were shared by a one of the children who participated in the consultation. “It’s a friendly environment, I mean the people. I’ve lived here since I was born.”

Another feature of the neighbourhood is the peace and quiet. The fact that it is a destination rather than being on a traffic route is seen as a real asset. As one long term resident put it, “It’s just a beautiful little hidden gem ... people have to drive into it, you don’t drive through it. When they’ve discovered it I’ve given up counting how many times I’ve heard visitors say, “Wow how long has this place existed?” This view was shared by a former resident. “No one really comes through to get anywhere except people coming to the beach.”

Being so close to the coast and the unspoiled nature of the area are appealing aspects of living in Altona-Seaholme. “Our beach is our greatest attraction – no if, but, maybes about that. Also that relaxed atmosphere that’s still here. We haven’t gone all upmarket and become ‘yuppieville’.” Another resident commented that “it’s a great thing to be so close to the water, probably more so than the other side of Melbourne. The way that Pier Street and that area go all the way down to the water – it’s really well integrated. The park, the beach, the shops and cafes are linked. It’s not like that at other beaches.”

Proximity to the coast was one of the attractions for a recently returned resident, when talking about what had brought her back to the area where she was born. “We’re in a cul-de-sac and you can see across to the bay and the boat ramp and it’s a quiet little spot and I just love it.” Another positive about the areas is the relatively low scale development along the foreshore. “It’s still unspoilt...along the Esplanade. At this point in time there isn’t a conference centre or a big hotel – it’s still got that seaside village feel about it.”

Several somewhat unexpected distinctive features that one resident mentioned were no large fast food chains and a lot of roundabouts! “The fact that we don’t have any fast food outlets is good. I don’t know if that’s just luck or if there’s been any kind of direction behind that... I mean there’s pizza shops but all the big chains aren’t here.”

Natural environment

With around half of the neighbourhood’s geographical boundary formed by the coast, having access to the sea makes a big impression on people’s daily life. “We often go for a drive and before we go home we’ll go for a drive down Pier Street to see what’s happening for the fun of it and then along the beach. And then in winter it’s really different – there’s no one around.” For younger children there is an element of independence going to the beach, “I can just walk to the beach and don’t have to drive [with my parents].”

Proximity to the coast, Cherry Lake and large tracts of open space mean the neighbourhood has a wide range of wildlife that is valued by residents. One local loves the wildlife, but not all of it! “The birdlife – the pelicans; sitting outside in the backyard, you see them going over, and the sunsets. I feed the birds every morning and you can stand in the middle of the running track near us and the array of birds is just amazing. It’s magnificent to see a flock of parrots, pelicans and ducks. I love the wildlife but not the snake kind!”

Affordable housing

Affordable housing was an important factor which first attracted some people to the neighbourhood. Talking about their decision to buy in Altona-Seaholme, a long term resident said, “We came because it was affordable and central and my wife’s from here. We weren’t going to come here because of the refineries but it ended up being the ideal spot because we could afford it...When we looked around at everywhere else it was either too far from work or too far to commute and too expensive.” The pressure of needing to find larger accommodation that they could afford brought another young family to the neighbourhood. “We were renting in Port Melbourne and at that time we had a new baby and we wanted something that wasn’t an apartment and being first home buyers there’s not much choice as to what you can buy. But we knew Altona was still affordable for like a two bedroom unit so that was our foothold into the market.”

But as in other parts of the municipality and across metropolitan Melbourne, house prices in Altona-Seaholme have been escalating. “We couldn’t afford to (buy) now. When we moved here prices were half those in Essendon. When Kennett (a former Premier of Victoria) approved dual occupancies, that’s when things started to kick off around here because there’s such big blocks.”

Those who’ve left the neighbourhood and want to return are finding the cost of housing quite prohibitive. “A lot of people my age, that baby boomer age and a little bit older, as Point Cook and Altona Meadows were developing, they sold their houses here and still had \$200,000-300,000 left over which was their retirement nest egg. They got a brand new house down there but I believe 75 per cent of them that I’ve spoken to since say we now want to come back to Altona but we can’t afford to. So we are spoilt with a lot of things that we take for granted here.”

However, for one younger resident who is looking for somewhere to rent, the cost needs to be kept in context. “I want to stay close to work and I don’t have my license, so I can catch public transport...I’ve been looking [in Altona-Seaholme] and it is more expensive than Werribee but it’s worth it and I think when you keep that in mind, you find the money.”

New development

Like other parts of the municipality, there has been new development, particularly around the Pier Street precinct. While there was some comment about not wanting the area to become overdeveloped, the benefits were also acknowledged. “It’s really changed in the last five years I’ve been here – with higher density housing going in and a few more cafes. I think that’s been a good thing having more people around. It makes things feel safer.” There was however some wariness about the increased density and how that could change the neighbourhood. “Everyone has that concern or worry about three units going up. See, Altona blocks when they were first sold they were the old quarter acre lots. They’re a developers’ delight now so certainly as the old places are being demolished they’re being replaced by units.”

The local trader welcomed the development of Pier Street, but also noted that the extent of new development needs to be balanced. “A lot of people, their gut reaction is ‘oh no we don’t want high rise’ and certainly I wouldn’t want them any higher than they are. But with the development we’ve been able to gain a second supermarket. That part of Pier Street [the northern end] was almost semi industrial – it was not attractive. In support of the high rise development there – that’s our welcoming gate to the shopping centre and it’s made the whole streetscape a hell of a lot better. It’s more attractive, it’s more inviting.” These views were echoed by another person. “I remember before the higher density went in, it always looked a bit derelict, a bit underwhelming; but I think it’s springing to life now. It just needs better quality buildings. It’s added some life to that northern end of Pier Street which it really needed.”

Others were not so convinced. “I don’t like it. I don’t like the big building [down Pier Street]. I don’t mind that they’re adding in new shops. That’s OK, but I don’t like the big buildings. They’re a bit of an eyesore. I don’t like the modern look.” Some felt that while the new development served a purpose, there were too many coffee shops. Speaking about the higher density development, one local had some reservations. “It’s just one of those things that’s going to happen. I wouldn’t like it behind my house obviously but it’s one of those things that you’ve got to populate the area more to bring more business for the street. But I’m a bit over all the cafes; it would be nice to have some other types of shops but then they might find it hard to survive because they haven’t got the numbers.”

What activities do you do locally and what facilities do you use?

Shopping

The main type of shopping that residents do locally is at the supermarket, although in general most tend to shop outside of the neighbourhood. While some do their ‘big shop’ locally, most travel to supermarkets in the larger complexes at Altona Meadows and Altona North. Some also mentioned shopping at the local milk bar which was within walking distance for ‘bits and pieces’.

The local trader suggested that having a relatively small population makes it difficult for local businesses to compete with the larger centres. “Our biggest competitors from a shopping point of view are the hardtop places like Altona Gate and Werribee Plaza, where they’ve got the variety. We never compete with that. What we do offer I guess is a unique experience to come here.”

Recognising that Pier Street needed to be reinvigorated to improve its commercial viability, the traders group took the initiative to start a weekly street market. “Just over 10 years ago, on a Tuesday, Altona was just a ghost town. Nobody was coming in. We looked at Mornington Market and started one here. Tuesday is now probably our busiest day. It [the market] doesn’t compete with existing shop keepers and as a result the market has grown and grown and today we have about 80 stall holders.”

Children's services and education

A parent of a young baby whose family uses the local Maternal and Child Health centre commented, "That's been really good. We can walk to the centre in David Street so that's been really handy." However, with a partner preparing to return to work, finding local childcare may be more difficult. "I think there's only one which I guess is better than none. Childcare in the municipality has long waiting lists. [When my wife returns to work] it will mean driving to a centre. We're on the waiting list for the local one but if we don't get in we'll need to coordinate it."

When both parents are working, finding an appropriate early years centre for their preschool children can be difficult. "It's really, really hard to find a kinder that does long day care programs and there's only a handful in the municipality." However for those only needing kindergarten, finding a centre was simpler. One parent liked having a kindergarten nearby and now that his son was at primary school, he appreciated that it was close enough to ride a bike.

There were no participants in the consultation with secondary school aged children. One parent, however, whose child had initially attended the former Altona High School, spoke of their disappointment when it became a Prep-Year 9 school. As a result, they moved him to a school in an adjacent municipality which offered classes through to Year 12. "It was a shame and I think it still is a shame that there isn't a public secondary school that goes to Year 12 [in the neighbourhood]. But it's a small school and I don't know if it would get any bigger if it went to Year 12 because it's not where the [population] growth is."

Health services

The main health service used by residents is medical, with most having a local doctor. People talked about liking having a doctor who is close to home and, for those employed locally, to their work. On the whole people felt there is an adequate supply of GPs, although one person said that initially they were on a patient waiting list at a local practice. "I've got a fabulous GP. We did have to go on a waiting list and I don't know if that's changed ...They closed their books a couple of years ago but I'm not sure what the situation is now."

One person mentioned that it is usually not too difficult to get emergency medical appointment but there may be a wait for standard appointments, "Yeah I find it really easy because they allocate emergency slots so you just phone up on the day and there's always a space but not necessarily with your doctor. If you need to do that [get an appointment with your doctor] it's always a two week wait".

Beyond having a local GP, another resident noted the benefit of having a hospital in the municipality. "We've got Williamstown Hospital. It's always been a great standby for my family."

Open space, recreation and sport

Access to local parks, in particular Logan Reserve, was mentioned by a number of the adult participants in the consultation who enjoyed its location near the Pier Street shops and the beach.

The park is well used for picnics and small and large events including the regular Tuesday market on Pier Street. One enthusiastic resident said, “I sit in Logan Reserve all the time, I love it. I’ve gone down and had a look at a few events there and a lot have been for kids but we’ve walked around and had a look. It’s quiet but there’s still people around you. There’s kids, there’s the ocean and you can see the boats go by, it’s lovely. People really utilise the space”.

While people appreciated that “we’ve got more open space than any other council”, it is the school children who appear to use parks the most. Some of things they enjoyed were the half basketball courts and having trees to climb. In general though, there was a sense that the local parks didn’t present enough challenges and adventure to cater for young children. A student commented that “I take my younger brothers to the park but I don’t think there are many parks around for our aged kids. When I want to go to a park for myself...I go further out to a park near Werribee. They’ve got some pretty steep slides and it’s not very ‘kiddie’. When you go to parks [in the neighbourhood] they’re very small and the slides are small and tight.” Along with bigger slides, the more adventurous things they’d like in their parks were swings that are appropriate for older children i.e. that swing higher and one student talked about the fun of having a park with a flying fox.

Physically active residents spoke of the broad range of infrastructure that is available for those who like to walk, run and cycle. These include the shared paths along the foreshore and around Cherry Lake. According to a former resident, “We used to go out on family bike rides with a bike trailer and it’s perfect because it’s all flat and the off road tracks are really good as well. We’d often head down to Altona Meadows on the coastal trail.”

The dog parks and beach were also popular with the young and old, enabling them to combine recreation with exercise. “We just recently got a dog so we just love that the dog beach is across the road. Now my husband and my daughter take the dog there every day. We’ve got a park just around the corner and we often walk over to the other park where the soccer is and let the dog run around – we use that a lot.”

While some people are no longer active in local sporting clubs, they talked about being involved when their children were younger. “[Our kids] were all in sporting clubs, the local footy club; all my boys played footy and I was heavily involved.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, it was children who were more involved in formal sports. They are members of a wide range clubs in the neighbourhood and play football, netball, rugby, soccer, basketball, cricket, tennis and hockey, while another is the nippers group at the Altona Lifesaving Club.

Libraries and community centres

Libraries are popular with a wide range of age groups. One mother talked about taking her young children to programs such as Rhyme Time and sing-alongs at the library where she would “meet up

with a friend and combine it with a coffee date". Now a student at university, she uses the library for her study.

Others spoke about the library providing a place where they could concentrate, away from the distractions of home. "I really like the library. I've been to Altona, Altona Meadows and Williamstown libraries so yeah I really enjoy spending time at the library. Whenever I've got work or anything, I go to the library to get away from home and focus on what I need to do, so I really use libraries a lot. When I've been at the library I've seen a lot of kids coming in. It's probably the service I really use."

Along with using the library, another resident mentioned visiting exhibitions at the Louis Joel Centre and also "attending some workshops there with my parents about dementia...there's plenty on, a variety of things to do".

Social connections

Both young and older participants in the consultation mentioned catching up in each other's home but more often somewhere in Pier Street. One young parent commented that she met up with members of the mothers' group to have a coffee in Pier Street. However, she went on to say that there were limited places that catered for children.

The new cafes were also welcomed by those wanting to have a meal or coffee with their partner and with friends. Children also talked about having lunch with friends in Pier Street, with one mentioning the fish and chip shop near the beach as a good place to go. Other places they meet up with friends are local parks and the beach.

Another location that one resident enjoyed for catch-ups was the local sports club at Seaholme. "You can have a meal and you're 10 metres from Port Phillip Bay."

What things do you regularly do outside the neighbourhood?

Shopping

As mentioned previously, the relatively small size of the local population is reflected in the neighbourhood's small number and variety of shops. As a result, participants in the consultation tend to shop in larger centres.

While some residents said they do use the local supermarkets either for their main shopping or for bits and pieces, on the whole, most people preferred to use supermarkets at either Altona Meadows or Altona Gate; both are outside the neighbourhood but within the municipality. "We tend to go out of the area but I think that's probably us, my family. It's just easy to go somewhere like Altona Gate. You can do it all in the one spot."

While a former resident noted the increased number of local businesses and improvement in what was on offer, “Shops and cafes are still a little bit behind. You find yourself going out of the area for those. It’s gotten a bit better but a few years ago it was still lacking in choice so we used to go probably to Point Cook and maybe Kororoit Creek Road [to shop].”

There are only a limited number of clothing stores in the neighbourhood and as a result people spoke of travelling further afield for clothing purchases. While centres in the west such as Werribee, Highpoint and Werribee Plaza were popular, others mentioned shopping in the city, Docklands, Chadstone and direct outlet centres. In addition, some shopped at places like Richmond and South Melbourne for gifts and specialist items.

Recreation, sport and socialising

Among the most common activities which took residents outside both the neighbourhood and the municipality were to watch a film or catch up with friends. Several people mentioned that they like to see films and usually go to centres at Sunshine or Highpoint, with the games arcade at Highpoint being an additional attraction for one younger adult.

While catching up with friends sometimes happens locally, people also like to meet up in bars or cafes that are not readily available from the neighbourhood. “Places to go at night around here are definitely lacking – most are for daytime.”

Playing sport, often outside of the municipality, was also common among school children. In addition to local sports they participated, children travelled to the indoor swimming at the centre at Altona North, gymnastics in Footscray, boxing in Werribee and rugby in Dandenong.

How do you normally get about?

The methods used to get about the neighbourhood varied, although using the car is either the preferred method or the most convenient. Travel by car was particularly common among school children. While some ride a bike or scooter to school and some travel by public transport, most are dropped off and picked up by car. While not discussed in detail at the consultation, factors such as convenience and time limitations for working parents were mentioned by students as the reason for this. But moving on to secondary school will require an increased level of independent travel and some confidence. “From next year because I’ll be in high school, some of us will be taking public transport... I don’t feel like it’s going to be unsafe. I have witnessed some pretty weird things on public transport but I’m not scared.”

Adult residents talked about varying degrees of car dependence to get about. On one hand, one person said they only ever use their car while others combine walking, cycling and public transport with some car use when required. “We use the car when we have loads to transport.”

For some, it is the contained size of the neighbourhood that makes getting about fairly easy and encourages non-car methods. "It is such a reasonably compact little area. For those that are into it, you can get around on a bike and most things are walking distance unless you're a little bit older". A number of people in the consultation were active walkers. "We do a lot of walking; we walk to the supermarket at the weekend." However once children arrive, walking is not always a practical option, as parents juggle the demands of family and work. "For a bit, I walked to work but then when I started using childcare I had to drive which felt a bit funny."

However walking and cycling are not without hazards and negotiating roundabouts on the neighbourhood's busier roads was an issue for several residents. In talking about the roundabout at Civic Parade and Millers Road, one person who walks that way daily described it as, "A nightmare. There's an underpass but I don't even feel safe using it and the school seems to lock gates to it...I get there about 8am and it's open and it's closed about 5pm at night. They've put a school crossing in [on Millers Rd] which helps me... I feel safer cos cars are more aware [of pedestrians]." The lack of a continuous pathway through roundabouts was an issue for a regular cyclist. "It would nice if the bike lanes could continue through [the roundabout] and also for cars to know that they don't have the whole space – it's the most dangerous point."

Using public transport, mainly the train, is a popular option and a convenient method for some people to get about. "In all the time I've lived here, I've never had to drive to work. I've always been able to catch the train to the city or the train and bus [to a previous job]. There's a few issues with the Altona loop that are well documented but being able to jump on the train is really handy."

The issues referred to by this resident include a reduction in the number of trains on the Altona section of the line, train cancellations and the non-direct services during off-peak times. For those not dependent on the service, these issues are an annoyance that they tolerate. "If we go into the city quite often we'll use the trains. It's pretty good. Most of the time it's for socialising so we do it off-peak. We haven't had problems. We've just found the stop where you have to change trains [passengers must change at Newport during off peak periods] is a pain at times."

For daily commuters, changes to the train service have had greater impacts. "I used to work in the city and ... catch the train at Westona. That was before they stopped it at Flinders St and it went right through the loop. It was crowded and you couldn't get a seat but you didn't have to get off at Newport – I don't like that at all."

The train service also has problems for those travelling in the opposite direction to Werribee. "I usually travel to Werribee because I've got family there. I have to change trains at Laverton – it's a headache. If you go at the wrong time it can take you close to two hours to get where you're going. You can wait 20 minutes for the trainI think it drastically affects people coming to Altona as well."

Do you think Altona-Seaholme is a safe place?

Residents generally described the neighbourhood as a safe place to live, although there are places where they avoid, this was particularly common among children and women. While several women agreed that on the whole it is a safe area they went on to mention several assaults in recent years that had made them wary about some areas, especially those with poor natural surveillance. “In all honesty I think it’s a fantastic place. It’s beautiful, it’s quiet, there’s not much going on. I’m a walker, so I really enjoy walking. Sometimes if I can’t sleep I’ll get up. I’ve never been able to wake up in the middle of the night and feel safe enough to walk around the block and go back to bed but I do that here.” However, she also mentioned walking at Cherry Lake where one incident had occurred. “I have been going through Cherry Lake a little bit more. I’m just picking my times of the day. Should I walk home at lunchtime, I’m more than happy to walk through Cherry Lake but early in the morning and after work I’d rather walk along the road. Where I walk is probably the safest part of the lake and in all honesty I don’t feel there is anything negative there. It’s just precaution.” Some school children were also cautious about the Cherry Lake for the same reason and were avoiding it, at least for now.

In terms of day to day living though, people tended to be confident about the safety of the neighbourhood. “I think it’s pretty safe. I think safety is in knowing your neighbours – people keeping their eyes open. We’ve had a few burglaries and break-ins but we take normal precautions. I’ve worked all over Melbourne and it’s no different to anywhere else.” This person went on to say that instilling a sense of community in children also helped with safety. “Safety for kids is in walking in groups. We see the kids walking home [from school] and we know who they are – they know who we are if there’s anything wrong.”

This view about community connection and safety was shared by the local trader. “Now I think it’s a pretty safe place, certainly from a trader’s point of view we look out for one another; keep an eye open for one another. But because of the fact that so many people know one another there’s that nice feeling that ‘hey if something did happen I’m surrounded by friends or acquaintances’.”

Safety for children varied. Some were reasonably confident, although their parents had introduced measures to manage safety concerns. After dark was clearly a time when some children were less likely to feel safe and several mentioned that their parents don’t allow them to be out when it gets dark unless they’re with an adult. Safety on public transport was also an issue for some who were concerned about the behaviour of some other passengers.

Proximity to the beach and the warmer weather are also factors that can impact feelings of safety. “I have to admit sometimes later at night maybe on those warmer nights [around the foreshore area] when you’ve got a lot of people who are a bit drunk or young people who are a bit fired up – I don’t think I’d be wanting to hang about.”

Comparing the safety the neighbourhood now to times gone by, a long-time resident noted. “We’ve had a couple of incidents but on the whole I think it’s a very, very safe place. Every now and then you’ll have a little bit of an outbreak over the summer months and you might have the odd brawl. But I can go back to many years ago when it was the regular thing for the Newport boys would jump on the train to fight the Altona boys.”

What would make it a better place to live / work / visit?

People talked about the limitations of the shopping precinct and what could be done to make it more vibrant. “I think there are a few gaps – probably fresh food other than at the supermarket ...we don’t have a funky little bar, that would be good.” Despite a number of new cafes having opened, quality was still seen to be lacking. “The cafes – the new ones that do open are always a bit disappointing – what they offer and the quality of coffee. Yeah and just some more meeting spaces if you’ve got kids or cafes that have got room to take kids.”

A better distribution of cafes was mentioned by a resident of Seaholme. “It would be amazing to have cafes down the Seaholme end where there are city views. I love the city view and you don’t get that in Altona. It’s nice walking down to Pier St on the weekend and grabbing a coffee but I just love to have the city views and it’s beautiful there.”

Beach maintenance away from the main beach was also noted as something that could be improved. There was a sense that most of the works undertaken in the neighbourhood are focussed around the Pier Street precinct. “The beach gets a bit smelly sometimes. They’ve done a great job up to Romawi Street and then it stops. For people living a bit further down at the other end you feel like they’ve forgotten about you. I think in general there’s like a grid; there’s Pier Street at the centre and it’s close to the action and then there’s the outlying areas. There’s a bit of a divide in terms of how the money is spent and whether you’re really ‘Altona’.” Further to this, there was also some concern about pollution in the bay. “The condition of the beach and pollution and stuff are an issue. I’ve been to the beach occasionally and seen dead fish floating around where the storm water goes.”

Public transport, as previously outlined, was a common complaint and residents felt that improvements were needed. As mentioned, the main concerns were around having to change trains at Newport, train cancellations and poor timetabling between the Altona loop and connecting services. Children also felt that safety on trains and cleanliness could be improved.

Another issue for children was the amount of graffiti they see. “There is a lot of graffiti and every now and then I see people doing it and also my dad talks a lot about it. Usually it’s on those places like abandoned buildings and on people’s fences and sometimes when I ride down this [local] bike track there’s loads of graffiti on people’s fences. It’s ridiculous – people are just painting on people’s property for no reason.”

As outlined earlier in the section on recreation, children highlighted the lack of suitable play spaces and equipment that catered for more adventurous play for older children.

Some issues around road traffic and safety have also referred to earlier, however people also mentioned traffic due to increased development in the neighbourhood. “Traffic coming into Civic Parade now at night is busy. Parking is becoming an issue, not necessarily though the week but on a Saturday it’s chockers. You’ve got the swim school and the new apartments [at the northern end of Pier Street] and people trying to shop at the new supermarket... and the beach. So it has increased [traffic] but what can you do.”

The second largest shopping centre in Altona-Seaholme is Harrington Square. It was talked about as having a lot of potential, but needing a revamp. “You just want it to come to life and there’s not any cafes... It’s just a sort of come and go place. It’s very concrete and not very inviting but it’s got potential.” One local offered the following solution. “I’d be more than happy if they put in a medium density development with shops on the street [like Pier St]. It’s brought more people in and it activates the site with more shops and vibrancy.”

There were also concerns about the close proximity to heavy industry, although there was recognition that it is part of the history of the neighbourhood and offered employment. “If there’s one thing I could change...it would be to get rid of the heavy industry. You sort of forget about it and then you drive past and go wow – there’s some pretty serious stuff going on here. But I don’t lie awake and night worrying about it and I guess it’s part of the history of the area.”

Do you plan to stay in Altona-Seaholme?

Most people indicated they intend or would like to stay living in Altona-Seaholme. As one long-time resident of Altona commented, “If we moved we would move to Altona. We’d just move to somewhere smaller”. Similarly, a recently returned resident saw the neighbourhood as home. “My husband loves it here and so we’re not going anywhere”.

A younger resident who is preparing to move out of home would like to stay living in the neighbourhood, despite the cost relative to some other areas. “I don’t think [buying a house] is going to be attainable in five years... we’re just starting to get to a point where we’re putting money away now so I think it’s going to take a while and we’ll need to get out and rent for a little while.”

While wanting to remain living in the area, several residents raised issues that might influence them to consider moving, including family and schooling. “My intention, at this stage while my dad is alive, is that we’re not going anywhere. We may have to move in with my dad [who lives elsewhere in the municipality] but I would be reluctant to give up my lifestyle here. I love it.”

Finding the right secondary school could mean a move for one resident. “Most likely [we’re] staying unless schools become an issue; that would be the only real thing... It’s good to live near the beach but then you don’t always have the facilities.

While they weren't thinking about whether they were likely to remain living in the neighbourhood, primary school children in the consultation were making plans for secondary school. While some indicated they would be going to high schools in other parts of the municipality, other children were intending to go to schools in Wyndham and Maribyrnong.

Schooling and housing costs were important factors for a former resident deciding to move to Williamstown. "We moved primarily for schooling but we did consider buying in Altona if we could have bought a bigger house with a nice back garden. But you can't do that anymore because the prices are on par with Williamstown and it's all marketed for developers."

The pull of wanting to live in a location which was more vibrant, balanced with housing affordability, were being weighed up by one resident. "I enjoy living here but there are probably places I'd prefer to live... I've always preferred inner city living. A lot of people really like the open space here but I kinda like the bustle like in Yarraville where the houses are closer together and the streets are a bit narrower and it's older and there's a bit more going on...but affordability might be an issue. So I could quite possibly be living here in ten years and I'd be pretty happy with that situation. Having a child now, your priorities change."

Remembering Altona-Seaholme

A long term resident who grew up in the neighbourhood gave some lovely insights into what life was like in the 1950s and 60s.

"Most of the people who settled here were people who worked at our local refineries and they brought their families to be close to their work...I can remember as a teenager living here, on a Saturday morning –again that country town feel – everyone came to Pier Street to do shopping. We didn't have late night shopping so they all came to do their shopping, catch up, have a chat, see who was in the local footy team in the shop windows, and whilst we've lost that now because of extended shopping hours etc that's how I remember it."

"People used to do all their shopping in Altona. There was no such thing as Highpoint, Werribee Plaza or Altona Gate so they had to shop locally and we had our local butchers and we had the iconic Noonan's pie shop. They're iconic in Altona and they only closed their doors in 2001. Everyone came here [to shop]".

Consultation Questions

What's your connection with Altona-Seaholme?

Local resident HB resident Work here Visitor

Other _____

1. If you were describing Altona-Seaholme what are some of the area's distinctive features?
(what makes it different to other places)

2. What are the things that make it a good place to live / work / visit?

Prompts

- The facilities (eg parks, open space, leisure facilities)
- Access to shops; shops have what you need
- Access to services (doctors dentists etc, childcare/MCH, schools)
- Affordable housing
- Close to work

3. What sort of activities do you do locally?

Prompts

- Member of club / group
- Play sport
- Socialise / meet with friends
- Volunteer
- Shop
- Work

4. What are some of the facilities you use in the local area?

Prompts

- Childcare/MCH/preschool/schools
- Sports/ recreation
- Neighbourhood
- Community centre/halls
- Seniors centre

5. What things do you regularly do outside the area eg in other parts of Hobsons Bay or beyond?

Prompts

- library
- shop
- go to school
- access services health
- Sport/leisure activities
- Catch up with friends / socialise

6. How do you normally get about the area?

Prompts

- public transport
- drive
- walk
- ride a bike)

7. Is it easy / safe to get about?

8. What would make it a better place to live / work / visit?

Prompts

- sport/leisure places
- meeting /socialising opportunities
- transport
- shops
- services
- safety
- work

9. Do you expect to still be living here in the next 5 years – if yes – how do you think your needs will change?

- facilities
- services



Title: Altona – Cold and stormy, unlike Australian Christmas Weather (Monday, 1 January, 1945)
Source: State Library Victoria [Sketchbook no. 7, containing water colours, photographs and newspaper clippings] [art original] / Charlie Hammond Date(s): ca. 1913 - ca. 1946.