

How well were community aspirations achieved in the 2013 to 2023 Strategy and how well can St Albans Residents Association (SARA) ensure community values are fed into decisions in the next 10 years.

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Table of contents

1.0) Introduction.....	4
2.0) Theory/concepts/literature review.....	5-6
3.0) Methods.....	6-7
4.0) Results and Discussion.....	8-18
5.0) Limitations and Challenges.....	18-19
6.0) Conclusions.....	19-20
7.0) Acknowledgements.....	20
8.0) References.....	21

Executive Summary

This research seeks to critically evaluate the St Albans 2013 to 2023 Strategy focusing on community engagement and utilisation. The goal is to draw insightful conclusions and provide strategic guidance for the future endeavors of SARA, specifically for their 2024-2033 Strategy.

Our research question is; How well were community aspirations achieved in the 2013 to 2023 strategy? And how well can St Albans Residents Association ensure community ownership of the future strategy values are fed into decisions in the next 10 years.

Our approach involved regular consultations with SARA, the development and distribution of surveys, conducting interviews, data analysis, and feedback sharing to facilitate a comprehensive study.

The key findings were that majority of the community picked up, and utilised the 2013 to 2023 Strategy reasonably well. However, improvements of bridging knowledge gaps, inclusivity of St Alban's diverse population, enhancing communication, and maintaining community interest could be better adopted for the next decades strategy.

Major shortcomings and limitations included; time, small group size, lack of interviewees, and sampling selection methods.

In the future, we recommend efficient time management as we fell short on survey research and there are several intricacies involved in survey creation. Incorporating more open-ended questions in surveys and giving priority to interviews as a valuable source of qualitative data would have enriched our project and ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

1.0) Introduction

In this report, we undertake a comprehensive review of a collaborative group project, involving contributors Emma Illerbrun, Olivia Paterson, Alita Penner, our community supervisor Ritodhi Chakraborty, and our community partner, the St Albans Residents Association (SARA), represented by Emma Twaddell and Shamani Gill. The primary objective of this collaborative project was to critically assess the level of engagement with, and the effectiveness of the St Albans Community Strategy 2013 to 2023, hereafter referred to as "the Strategy." To guide our inquiry, we formulated a research question, which was then divided into three distinct subtopics for our literature review.

Research question:

- How well were community aspirations achieved in the 2013 to 2023 Strategy? and how well can St Albans Residents Association (SARA) ensure community ownership of the future strategy values are fed into decisions in the next 10 years.

Subtopics:

- Evaluation of the actual strategy
- Relationship between the community and the strategy
- Finding tools to improve community strategies and address potential issues

Our report aims to answer our research question. In doing so, the following structure will be adhered to; introduction, theory/concepts/literature review, methods, results and discussion, limitations and challenges and conclusions.

Our overarching goal is to gather data and draw conclusions on the current strategy then use this information to ensure SARA can implement a successful strategy for the next ten years. That way, decisions about future projects and possible solutions for any potential problems can be made by the people of the local community. This process, we anticipate, will result in a more engaged, active, and empowered St Albans community, aligned with the shared goals and values of SARA.

2.0) Theory/concepts/literature review

As stated earlier in this report, our main research topic question was broken down into three subtopics in which our group took one each to find relevant articles and literature.

The first subtopic is ‘evaluation of community strategy’s’. This literature review offers a comprehensive exploration of concepts and methodologies related to community strategy evaluation and community engagement. This review underscores the significance of varied evaluation methods, terminology, and indigenous perspectives in building community relationships. It also highlights the potential for SARA to enhance its strategy by deepening engagement with the local iwi and adopting effective participation methods (Walsh-Tapiata, 2006). Drawing from these insights, our project will be guided by these principles, contributing to a more inclusive and successful future community strategy that aligns with St Albans' diverse population's aspirations and values.

The second subtopic is ‘relationship between the community and strategy’. This review emphasises the need for grassroots, bottom-up community development (Aimers & Walker, 2016), (Larner & Craig, 2005), and highlights the importance of resilience particularly in Kaiapoi and Māori communities (Vallance & Carlton, 2015), (Kenney & Phibbs, 2014). To ensure that planning and developing strategies are efficient and not hindered by bureaucracy and centralized decision-making by a select elite group, it's vital to avoid bottlenecks. More neoliberal ways of thinking may be adopted as they foster a more narrow, profit centric way of development and strategies that look more into the short term. Lastly, the review underscores the potential impact of political shifts on local democracy and community involvement in long-term planning (Brosnan & Cheyne, 1970).

The third subtopic is ‘finding tools to improve community strategies and address potential issues’. It addresses the importance of community strategies as a bridge between organisations and their environment, highlighting common issues leading to strategy failure. Four key management tools are discussed: grassroots community engagement (O’Meara, 2007), linking the strategic framework to organizational action (Tighe, 2019), creating dashboards to monitor implementation (Allison, 2015), and the importance of leadership (Davis, 2009). These tools offer a multifaceted approach to ensure successful community strategies and may be adopted

by findings from St. Albans focus group surveys to address specific strategy issues and improve its alignment with community needs and aspirations.

In summary, our literature reviews delve into essential concepts and methodologies related to community strategy evaluation, community engagement, and strengthening strategies. It underscores the importance of indigenous perspectives, grassroots community development, and resilience in the community. These insights will guide our project to enhance community engagement, address strategy issues, and create a more inclusive and successful St Albans strategy for the future.

3.0) Methods

Our group methods are essential to understand the steps we took to address our research questions and objectives. Our approach involved regular consultations with SARA, the development and distribution of surveys, conducting interviews, data analysis, and feedback sharing to facilitate a comprehensive study.

Initial Consultation with SARA:

At the beginning of the project our group initiated a weekly meetings with SARA to ensure a clear understanding of their expectations and specific requirements for the study. This close collaboration allowed us to tailor our research methods to align with SARA's goals and objectives.

Survey Development:

Together we decided surveys would be an adequate method for collecting primary data, understand community perspectives, and address our research question effectively. We developed two distinct surveys to gather insights from different focus groups. The first survey was designed for community groups that may have utilised the Strategy, while the second was intended for contributors to the survey in 2012. These surveys were constructed collaboratively, involving input from our research group and SARA, to ensure they addressed relevant aspects. We understood the importance of having a well-designed survey to capture valuable data. This design included clear and concise questions, standardised response formats, and the option for participants to opt into in-person interviews for a deeper exploration of their responses. The

Careful construction of these surveys allowed us to systematically collect comprehensive data from our chosen stakeholder groups.

Survey Distribution:

The surveys were distributed electronically via Google Forms, streamlining the process and making it accessible to respondents on their laptops and phones.

Interviews:

Within both surveys participants had the option to opt into an interview that would take 10-15 minutes over the phone. The interview questions were crafted to delve deeper into the Strategy in comparison to the survey questions. We acknowledged interviews play a vital role in research by providing in-depth insights, context, and clarification to complement survey data. While surveys offer structured, quantitative information, interviews would enable SARA to delve deeper into participants' thoughts, emotions, and experiences with the Strategy, uncovering the 'why' behind responses. Interviews would also enable SARA to establish a personal connection with participants, and validate the survey findings as they offer a more holistic understanding of the Strategy.

Data Analysis:

The collected survey data underwent analysis, involving discussions and collaboration with SARA to gain meaningful interpretations. This process of interpretation and deriving conclusions from the data can be categorised as qualitative data analysis, where we focused on identifying patterns, themes, and key takeaways from the responses. We utilised graphical representations such as pie charts generated by Google Forms to visually depict the data. It is recognised that the figures presented in the results section are directly extracted from Google Forms, in the future, we could enhance data representation by creating alternate graphs in Excel. However, both SARA and our group collectively agreed that the existing graphs served the purpose effectively, offering clarity and conciseness in presenting the data. Additionally, they could not be exported, saving us time.

Our research methodology revolved around engaging closely with SARA, employing both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative data (interviews) collection methods ensuring a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to our study.

4.0) Results and discussion

The methods identified above have provided useful responses to benefit our group and SARA. The data collection process of the two surveys completed provided significantly more respondents than we anticipated. The survey allowed respondents to identify relevant evaluation questions and areas where the Strategy needed clear improvement. Unfortunately, due to the interviewees not wanting to proceed with interviews our primary data comprises exclusively of the results from the two completed surveys.

In the community survey we have 18 respondents out of approximately 204 people, resulting in an 8.82% respondent rate. SARA and our group believed this was an extremely successful outcome exceeding SARA's community engagement estimations.

Additionally, this was the same for the local survey, with 11 respondents out of approximately 40 people resulting in a 27.5% respondent rate. This survey produced 6 willing interviewees however, after sending though ethics report information interviewees failed to respond, leaving us without individuals to interview. This left us without individuals to interview. We understand that interviews would have been immensely beneficial for enhancing the depth and insights of our data collection and feedback on the Strategy. For future research endeavours, we will explore strategies to increase engagement and participation in interviews to maximise the richness of our data.

Survey 1: Community groups

The results presented in the 12 figures have been generated by Google Forms, for reasons discussed above. The community group survey yielded a total response rate of 18 respondents, resulting in the creation of six figures. These figures facilitate our understanding of the impact of the Strategy on the community as a whole.

Figure 1 illustrates the responses to the first survey question, which inquired about participants' awareness of the Strategy. The figure reveals that 68.8% of respondents answered "yes," indicating their awareness, while 31.3% responded with "no," signifying their lack of awareness. This high level of awareness is a positive sign for SARA, aligning with the first part of our research question focused on evaluating community aspirations' fulfilment through the Strategy. It implies that the Strategy has made an impression on the community's

consciousness, which is essential for a community-driven approach. However, the "no" responses raise questions about the Strategy's reach and effectiveness. Understanding why some community members are unaware is vital for SARA to address potential gaps in engagement, communication, or strategy implementation.

Are you aware of The St Albans Strategy?

16 responses

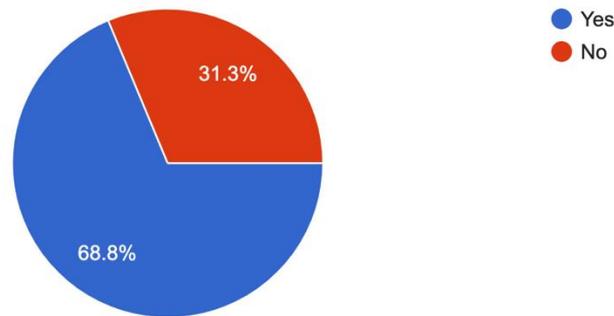


Figure 1. Pie chart showing the responses to 'are you aware of the Strategy?'.

Figure 2 provides the second question in the survey asking participants whether their organisation uses the Strategy. Among the 16 respondents, 37.5% indicated that their organisations use the strategy, while 62.5% responded with "no." The positive responses highlight a level of Strategy adoption within the community, suggesting a degree of success in aligning Strategy objectives with community aspirations. On the other hand, the majority of negative responses indicate a potential gap in engaging community organisations and fostering ownership of the Strategy. This emphasises the need for a deeper analysis of reasons why some organisations have not incorporated the Strategy. In future, our group could have gathered qualitative data by including an open-ended question in the survey, enabling participants to provide information into why they haven't utilised the Strategy. This approach would offer valuable context and a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to adoption.

Does your organisation use the St Albans Strategy?

16 responses

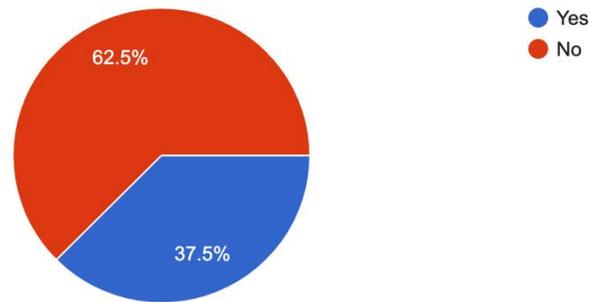


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the responses to whether the survey participants' organisations used, the Strategy or not.

The third question asked the participants of the survey to indicate what their organisation used the strategy for. *Figure 3* illustrates that while only a limited number of respondents provided answers (6 participants), there is a clear diversity in the utilisation of the Strategy. Notably, three participants indicated that they use the Strategy for planning and endorsing community projects, reflecting its role in shaping and supporting local initiatives. On the other hand, two participants specified its use in funding applications and project ideation, emphasising the Strategy's multifaceted applications in community development. However, the single "other" response with no further information represents a missed opportunity to gain deeper insights into alternative uses, highlighting the importance of encouraging respondents to elaborate on their selections for a more comprehensive understanding of the Strategy's functionalities within these organisations. These diverse applications emphasise the Strategy's adaptability and its potential to serve various community needs. In discussing these results, it is crucial to consider how this versatility could be leveraged to enhance the future Strategy's effectiveness in addressing community aspirations and how SARA might capitalise on this adaptability in its future endeavours.

If yes, what do you use it for?

6 responses

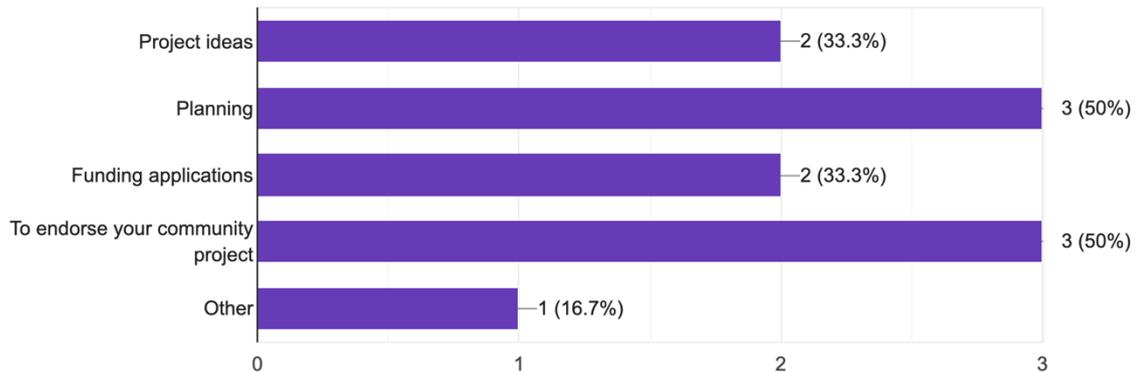


Figure 3. Multiple choice check boxes showing what organisations use the Strategy for.

Figure 4 was a linear scale asking participants to indicate how helpful the Strategy has been for their organisation, 1 being not useful, and 5 being very useful. Overall, 38.5% of participants indicated the Strategy was most helpful. 1 participant selected a '4' on the scale, while 2 participants selected both '2' and '3' on the scale, and 3 participants indicated a '1' on the scale. This suggests that a significant portion of organizations has found value in the Strategy and perceives it as beneficial for their operations. However, it is noteworthy that a proportion of participants had mixed feelings.

These mixed responses to the Strategy's usefulness underscore its varying impact on different organisations within the St Albans community. The positive feedback (ratings of '4' and '5') suggests that for a significant number of participants, the Strategy aligns well with their needs and aspirations. Conversely, the '1' ratings may signal areas where the Strategy could be improved. Understanding the specific concerns or limitations experienced by these organisations is crucial for enhancing the Strategy's applicability in the future. It is also essential for SARA to recognize the divergent perceptions within the community and work to accommodate various organisational needs, ensuring that the Strategy remains a valuable resource for as many stakeholders as possible. These results emphasise the need for ongoing communication and adaptation in the Strategy to meet the evolving demands of the community.

How useful was it for your organisation?

13 responses

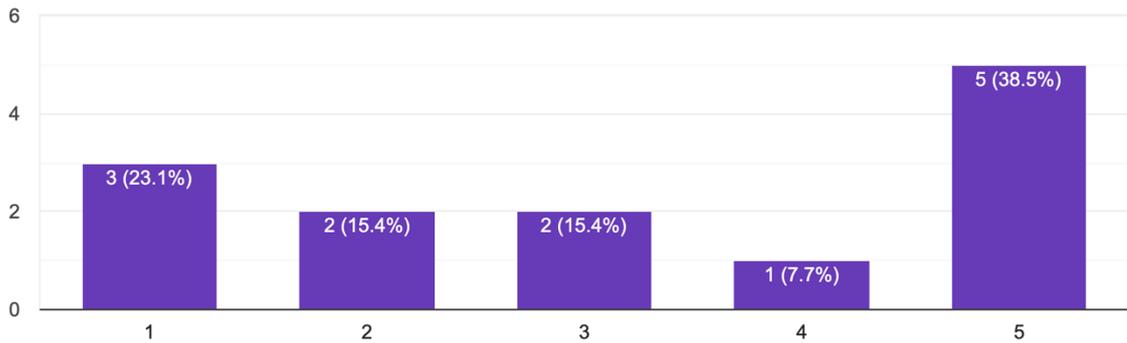


Figure 4. A linear scale asking participants how helpful the St Albans strategy has been for their organisation, '1' being least helpful and '5' being the most helpful.

Figure 5 illustrates the participants' willingness to engage in further research through interviews. This question provided 16 responders to this question, 50% indicated 'yes' and 50% indicated 'no'.

The even distribution suggests that while some participants are open to providing deeper insights and perspectives through interviews, an equal number may prefer not to engage in further research in this manner. This result underlines the need for flexibility in the research approach. As discussed interviews can provide valuable qualitative data, however, it's essential to respect the preferences of those who may not wish to participate in this way. It highlights the importance of tailoring data collection methods to accommodate varying participant comfort levels and preferences. For SARA, this result implies the need to maintain multiple channels of engagement with the community to gather a diverse range of perspectives and ensure inclusivity in the research process.

We would like to get a better understanding of how valuable the St Albans Strategy has been for the community. Would you be willing to be interviewed i... Zoom or over the phone and will require 15 mins.

16 responses

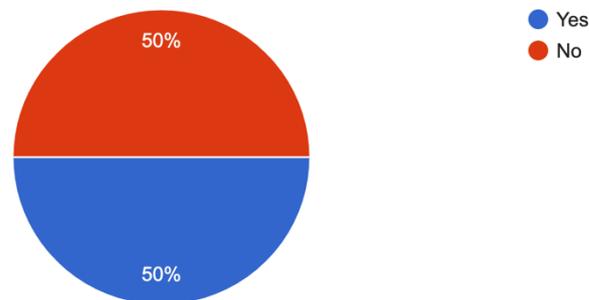


Figure 5. Pie chart showing the participants willing to be contacted to organise an interview to get a better understanding of the Strategy.

Lastly, to gain insights in interest on the future 2024-2033 Strategy we asked whether respondents would be interested in hearing about how their organisation could use the future strategy to strengthen their projects. *Figure 6* presents 56.3.8% were interested while 43.8% were not.

The majority of respondents showing interest in the upcoming strategy indicates a receptive audience eager to explore opportunities for enhancing their community projects. SARA can leverage this interest to proactively engage with these organisations, providing them with valuable information and resources to align their initiatives with the forthcoming strategy. Conversely, the 43.8% who expressed no interest shouldn't be overlooked. This group might not be receptive to information about the future Strategy at the moment, but their stance could change over time. SARA should maintain open channels of communication and periodically reassess the interest of these organisations. They might become more interested as their projects evolve or community priorities shift. Ultimately, this result highlights the importance of tailored and targeted communication strategies for SARA. By identifying and engaging with organisations that express interest, they can effectively support and guide projects that align with the community's aspirations.

This information will allow SARA to reach out to certain organisations in the future and ensure they are aware of how the strategy can be used to strengthen community projects.

Would you be interested in hearing about how your organisation could use the 2024 - 2033 strategy to strengthen your projects in the future?

16 responses

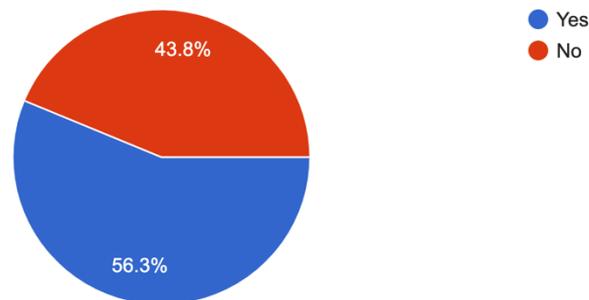


Figure 6. Pie chart showing the participants that are interested in hearing more about the future St Albans Strategy 2024-2033.

Survey 2: Survey Contributors

In the survey targeting the 2012 survey contributors, we achieved a total response rate of 11 participants. Their valuable input resulted in 7 figures that significantly contribute to our analysis of the Strategy's impact on the community.

Figure 7 provides insights into the respondents' memory of their involvement in the original 2012 community survey that contributed to shaping the Strategy. The chart reveals that a significant majority, approximately 77.8%, did not remember being involved in the 2012 survey.

The majority of respondents not recalling their participation in the 2012 survey indicates a potential disconnect between the community and the Strategy's development process. For SARA, this result emphasises the need for increased efforts in informing the community about the Strategy's history and the role they played in shaping it. It's an opportunity to re-establish connection between the community and the Strategy. By bridging this knowledge gap and reinforcing the community's role in strategy development, SARA can ensure that the next ten years of Strategy implementation are more inclusive and aligned with community aspirations. Moreover, this result highlights the significance of continuity and communication in community engagement strategies as discussed in our literature reviews. As the 2012 survey contributors have forgotten their past involvement, it underscores the importance of keeping

the community informed, engaged, and invested in the ongoing development of the St Albans Strategy.

Do you remember being involved in a community survey in 2012 asking you what you wanted to see happen in the St Albans community over the following decade?

9 responses

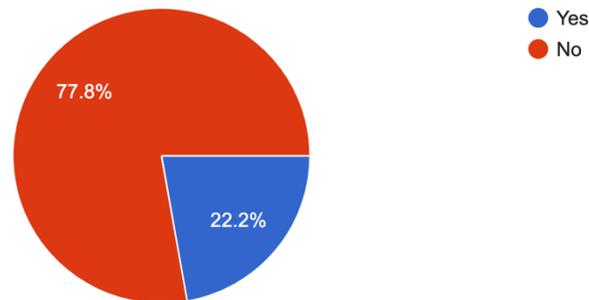


Figure 7. Pie chart showing whether or not the survey participants remember being involved in the original 2012 survey.

Figure 8 offers insights into the roles held by participants who did recall being involved in the 2012 survey. Among these participants, 66.7% identified themselves as residents, 33.3% as community panel participants, and none were affiliated with SARA. This distribution of roles among the contributors provides a clear picture of the demographic representation within the original survey group.

If yes, what was your role?

3 responses

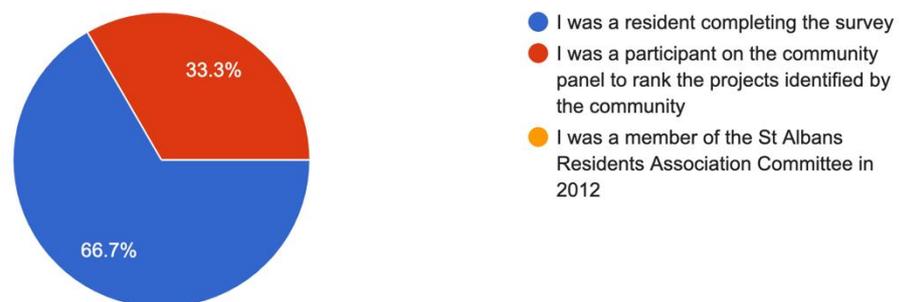


Figure 8. Pie chart showing what role the participant had in the 2012 survey that help shape the Strategy.

Figures 9 and 10 enable us to understand participants awareness of the link between the 2012 survey and the Strategy, as well as their knowledge of specific projects stemming from this strategy. In Figure 9, 55.6% of participants were not aware of the connection between the two surveys, while 44.4% recognized this linkage. Figure 10, on the other hand, revealed that 50% of participants were aware of specific projects resulting from the Strategy, while the remaining 50% were not. It is noteworthy that participants provided additional information in Figure 10, citing specific projects like the Edgeware swimming pool and the St Albans Community Centre. These results indicate variations in participants' knowledge about the strategy's origins and specific projects, providing valuable insights for SARA's efforts to enhance community awareness and understanding of the strategy.

Are you aware of The St Albans Strategy which was developed from the survey?
10 responses

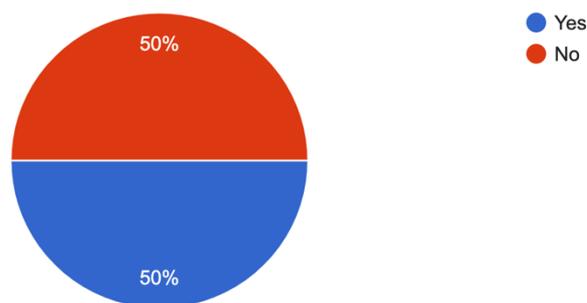


Figure 9. Pie chart showing if the participants in the 2012 survey had an understand that the Strategy was developed from this.

Are you aware of any particular projects of The St Albans Strategy?
8 responses

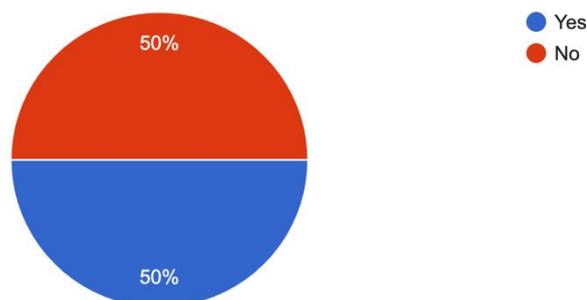


Figure 10. Pie chart showing if the participants were aware of any particular projects from the Strategy.

Figure 11 reveals participants' perceptions of whether the Strategy has added value to the St Albans community. A significant majority, 80%, expressed a positive sign by answering 'yes,' indicating that they believed the strategy has added value to the community. However, it's important to acknowledge that 20% of participants responded with 'no,'. These results underline the varying perspectives within the community regarding the impact and effectiveness of the Strategy, which is a crucial aspect for SARA to consider when planning for the future and ensuring the Strategy aligns with the community's aspirations and values.

Do you feel the St Albans Strategy has added value to the community?

6 responses

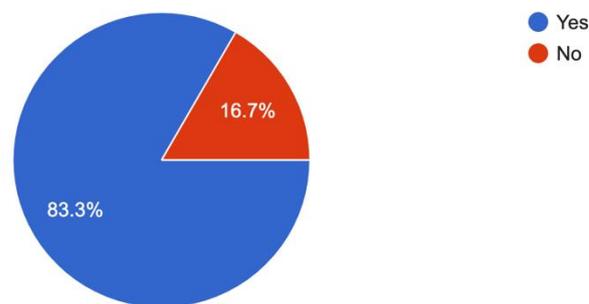


Figure 11. Pie chart showing if the participants felt if the St Albans strategy has added value to the St Albans community.

Figure 12 asked if the participant would be willing to be interviewed for further research of this project. This question had 10 responders with 77.8% indicating 'no' they wouldn't be willing, and 22.2% said 'yes', they would be willing. The majority declining interviews may reflect a range of factors, such as time constraints, preferences, or other considerations. Understanding these dynamics is valuable for SARA in planning future research and engagement strategies and ensuring they align with the community's preferences and priorities.

We would like to get a better understanding of how valuable the St Albans Strategy has been for the community. Would you be willing to be interviewed ... Zoom or over the phone and will require 15 mins.

10 responses

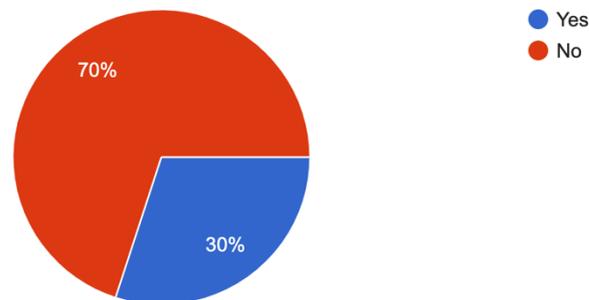


Figure 12. Pie chart showing what participants would or wouldn't be willing to be interviewed.

5.0) Limitations and challenges

During our research project, we were exposed to numerous limitations that impacted certain areas of our project.

Firstly, the process of our research has been severely affected timewise. Due to the small size of our group, we have had to make certain compromises in the research process. Additionally, the surveys were delayed in getting sent out, in the future we would have loved to keep the survey open for longer to optimise a larger sample size.

Secondly, there were limitations with our data collection methods. During the survey, we initially asked participants to express their willingness to be interviewed. However, due to community engagement commitments and time constraints, these interviews were not conducted, significantly impacting the scope of our research and qualitative data collection. Our group realised that relying on participants' willingness to be interviewed proved to be an unreliable method of data collection, especially as we were unprepared with alternative data collection approaches. Consequently, our data pool was limited due to this constraint.

Thirdly, our study encountered limitations in our sampling selection methods, which were not fully representative of the entire St Albans community. Instead, our sample was drawn from the contacts maintained by our community partners since the 2012 survey. While these contacts were suitable for addressing the specific survey questions we focused on, we recognize that a

broader representation of the entire St Albans community population could have yielded a more comprehensive dataset and deeper insights. Given the diversity of the St Albans community, as highlighted in our literature reviews, it was important to involve a wide range of perspectives. For instance, Rehua Marae is a significant presence in St Albans, and our initial project discussions acknowledged the importance of involving them. A potential strategy to overcome this limitation could have involved sending a third survey specifically to Rehua Marae members, ensuring that a broader cross-section of the community was included in the study. Although it's worth noting that some members of Rehua Marae might have been included in the original email contacts, a dedicated survey for their community could have provided a better understanding of their specific perspectives.

6.0) Conclusion

In conclusion, our collaborative research project aimed to assess the engagement and effectiveness of the Strategy and provide insights to guide the development of a successful strategy for the next decade. Through a structured approach, including literature reviews, surveys, and consultations with SARA, we gathered valuable data and drew meaningful conclusions that offer both praise and constructive insights.

Our research has provided insights into the level of community engagement with and the effectiveness of the Strategy. The key takeaway is that majority of our focus groups were aware and engaged with the Strategy. However, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in bridging knowledge gaps and addressing diverse community needs. The results indicate that by enhancing communication, understanding specific concerns, and maintaining community interest, SARA can guide the development of a more successful and community-aligned Strategy for the next decade. The results from our surveys will serve as a valuable foundation for future initiatives and improvements, helping SARA tailor the 2024-2033 strategy to meet the community's evolving requirements.

St Albans community Centre is one of the most active and successful community organisations in Christchurch. SARA offers a safe place to all of St Albans diverse population fostering a sense of cohesion and community belonging. The accomplishments made by this community are endless thanks to the dedication by SARA. Notably, the survey results paint a far more positive picture than Emma and Shamani initially anticipated. Emma is pleasantly surprised by

the extensive and successful utilisation of the Strategy by community groups and past survey participants, leading her to conclude that SARA has executed a commendable strategy.

7.0) Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Emma and Shamani for their invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout this project. Their dedicated work for the St Albans community has been immeasurable, and it has been an absolute pleasure collaborating with them.

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