

FLOUR MILL MARKETS REPORT

The Sunday Market, the Food Festival and outdoor activations

2 NOV 2026 | Sarah Mathews

The Sunday Market, the Food Festival and outdoor activations review 2026

95.0%
FLOUR MILL RESIDENTS

92.0%
WIDER COMMUNITY

Supports the continuation of the Sunday Market and the Food Festival.

This report sets out what 322 survey respondents told us in 2026, with Flour Mill residents reported separately from the wider community throughout, alongside two independent place audits of the markets and the published research on markets and public space.



SUPPORT FOR THE MARKETS

Both groups (Flour Mill residents and the wider community) support the markets and the Food Festival continuing, and the difference between them is small.

Flour Mill residents are more emphatic about it: 93.1% strongly agree, against 83.1% of the wider community.

Disagreement is identical in both groups at 2.0%.

That matters for the question people usually ask about markets in a residential precinct: the residents living closest are no more opposed/negatively impacted than anyone else. This report shows that they are markedly more enthusiastic. For the Flour Mill sample in this report, disagreement sits with just two individual respondents.

Within the wider community the pattern is consistent. The three neighbouring suburbs agree at 95.6% and the wider Inner West at 94.6%. Those who did not state where they live also agree at 83.6%.

FLOUR MILL RESIDENTS ARE MORE EMPHATIC ABOUT IT: 93.1% STRONGLY AGREE, AGAINST 83.1% OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

RESPONSE TO C28	FLOUR MILL (N=101)	WIDER COMMUNITY (n=201)
Strongly agree	93.1%	83.1%
Somewhat agree	2.0%	8.9%
Agree, total	**95.0%**	**92.0%**
Neither agree nor disagree	3.0%	6.0%
Disagree, total	2.0%	2.0%



ATTENDANCE AND REACH

Nearly everyone responding from the Flour Mill has indicated that they like to attend the precinct events.

98.0% of Flour Mill residents went to at least one precinct event in the last year, compared with 71.4% of the wider community, showing that they are the most keen group. When we asked why they chose the events they did:

On every measure currently tracked, Flour Mill residents value precinct activity more than anyone else.

93.1%

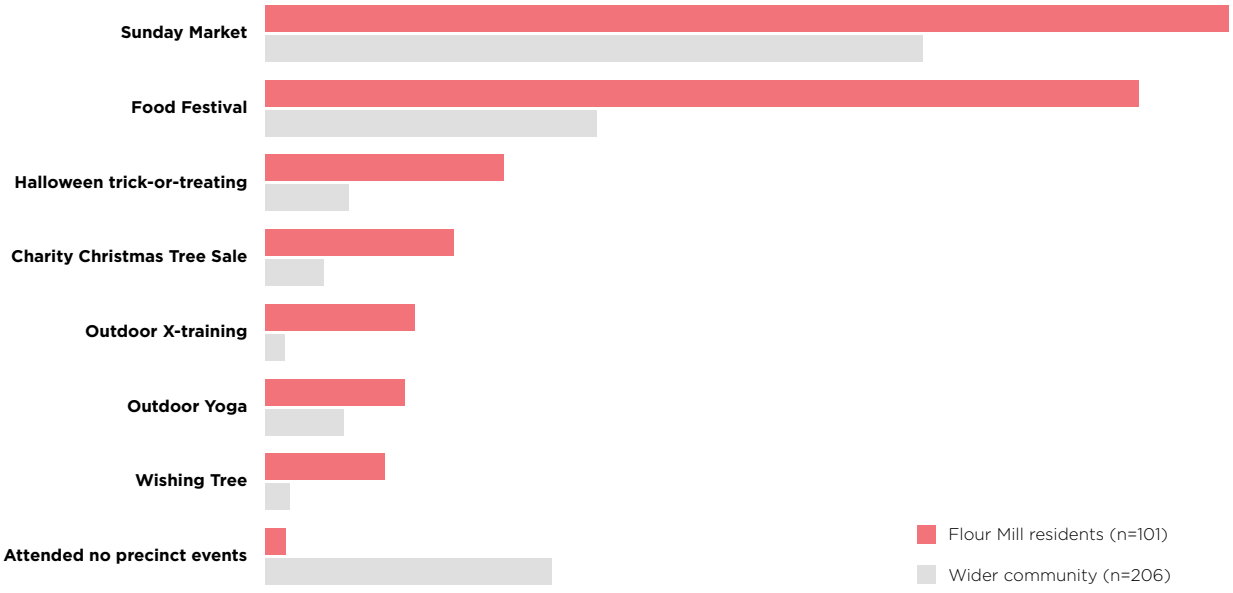
STRONGLY WANT THE MARKETS TO CONTINUE

33.3%

BROUGHT THE MARKETS UP UNPROMPTED

FLOUR MILL RESIDENTS ATTEND AT FAR HIGHER RATES, BUT THE SUNDAY MARKET REACHES BOTH GROUPS

Share of each group attending each precinct event in the last 12 months, 2026



Respondents could select more than one event, so shares do not sum to 100%.

Little BIG Foundation community survey 2026, question C14b · n = 307

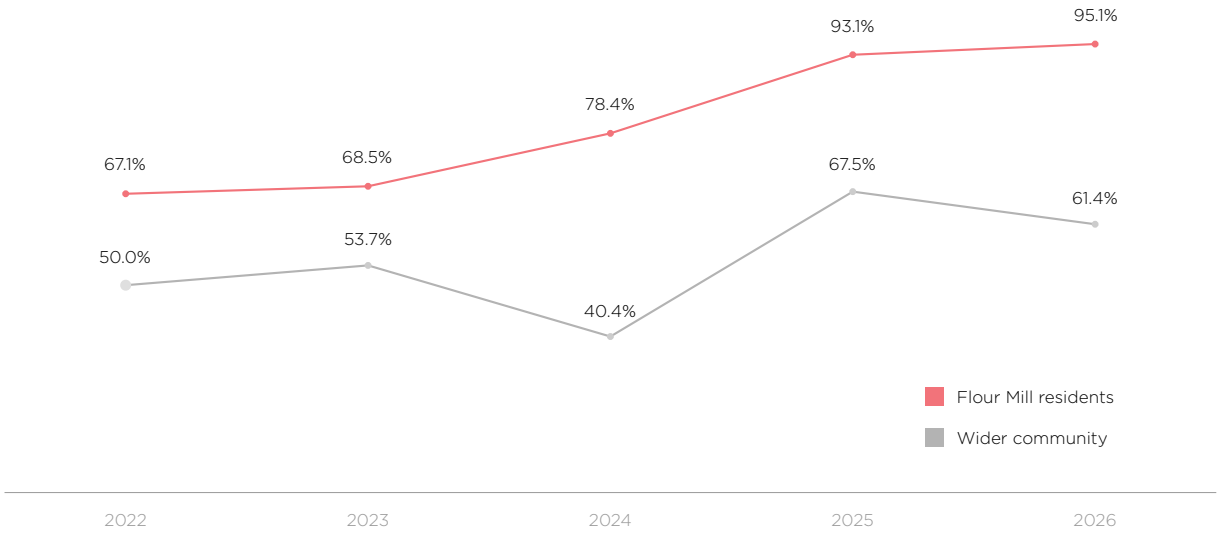
HOW THE MARKETS AND FOOD FESTIVALS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED OVER TIME

SUNDAY MARKET

When looking at historical data available, we can see that attendance has risen for both groups across the five years it has been collected. The rise is much steeper and more positive among Flour Mill residents. We note that positive engagement for these events grows each year.

SUNDAY MARKET ATTENDANCE HAS RISEN FOR BOTH GROUPS, MOST SHARPLY IN THE FLOUR MILL

Share of each year's survey respondents who attended the Sunday Market



Flour Mill attendance has gone from 67.1% in 2022 to 95.1% in 2026. The wider community has moved from 50.0% to 61.4%, with a dip in 2024, so the overall direction is up but the year-to-year movement is not smooth.

> The markets add incalculably to the lifestyle and sheer joy of our precinct."
>
> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

> My kids like to catch up with other kids at the markets specifically and good opportunity to meet and make new friends.
>
> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

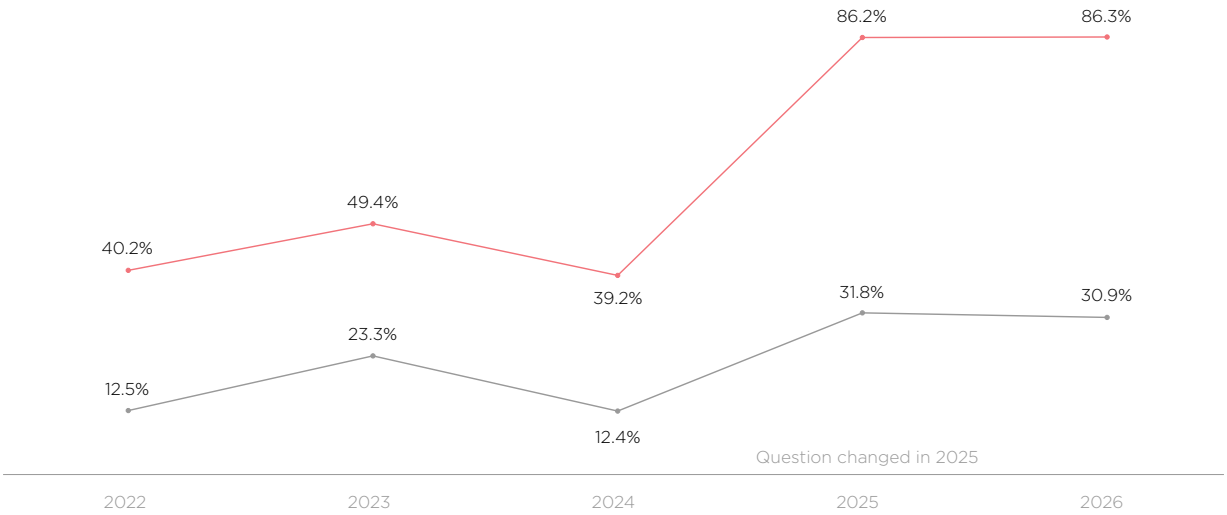
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> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

FOOD FESTIVAL

The Food Festival shows the same shape more sharply. Among Flour Mill residents it ran at 40.2% in 2022, 49.4% in 2023 and 39.2% in 2024, then stepped up to 86.2% in 2025 and 86.3% in 2026.

THE FOOD FESTIVAL GREW INSIDE THE PRECINCT, FAR LESS BEYOND IT

Share of each year's survey respondents who attended the Food Festival. Same scale as the Sunday Market chart above.



The difference between the two charts is the Flour Mill resident responses. Positive reception to the Sunday Markets has grown for everyone. The Food Festival grew almost entirely inside the Flour Mill, where it now reaches 86.3%, while the wider community has sat between 30.9% and 31.8% since 2025.

The Sunday Market is the precinct's front door; the Food Festival is largely a residents' event.

Respondents rarely use the words "Food Festival" themselves. In the survey they call it the "night markets".

> The night markets are my favorite because everyone is relaxed after a long day, enjoying yummy food and great music. Even in instances when my kids are sick and I can't attend, I open the balcony and enjoy the atmosphere and music. The community just comes together, from young kids to elderly people.
>
> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

> The night markets feel like attending an event (with the live music) but you can spend as little or as much money as you like.
>
> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

> Met through friends at the night market event and turned out they were our neighbours and have stayed in touch since and our kids have begun to play together
>
> Summer Hill, Lewisham and Dulwich Hill resident, 2026 survey

The first quote is worth noting for the noise feedback markets typically receive. This resident describes hearing the music from their balcony as part of the appeal rather than a nuisance.





HAS THE RECEPTION CHANGED?

On the evidence we have, it has strengthened rather than cooled.

- Unprompted mentions have risen - among Flour Mill residents who answered any open-text question, those raising the markets of their own accord went from 17.5% in 2022 and 15.1% in 2023 to 25.0% in 2024 and 2025, and 39.2% in 2026. Over the same period the all-respondent figure moved from 14.0% to 19.2%.
- The question explicitly asking whether people support the markets continuing was first asked in 2026, so there is no earlier figure to compare the 93.0% against.

WHAT THE MARKETS DO FOR CONNECTION

Attendance alone does not prove the events build community. Two further strands of evidence speak to that.

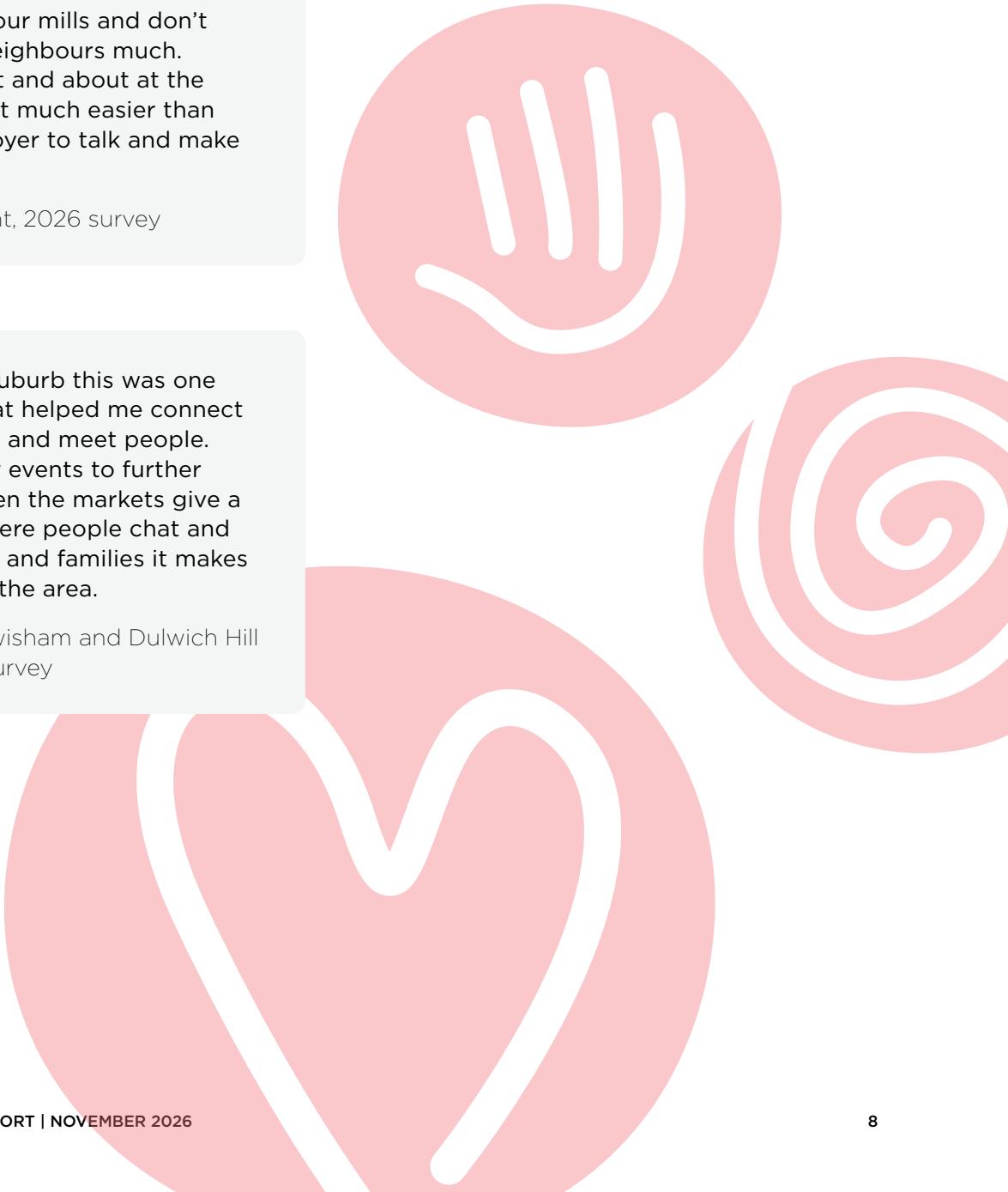
- **Ranked contribution.** When respondents ranked which events best contributed to their sense of community and friendships, the Sunday Market placed second (17.2%) , with the Food Festival ranked equal fourth. The gap between the top responses is well inside what a sample this size can distinguish, so the fair reading is that both events sit among the top contributors rather than at a precise rank order.
- **What people say unprompted.** Of the people who explained why they chose the events they did, 33.3% of Flour Mill residents mentioned the markets or the Food Festival without being asked (n = 90), against 8.0% of the wider community (n = 176).

One in three of our closest neighbours in the Flour Mill raised the markets of their own accord.

The recurring theme is recognition. The markets convert people you pass in a lift into people you greet and spend time with.

> We live in the flour mills and don't really see our neighbours much. Seeing them out and about at the markets makes it much easier than passing in the foyer to talk and make connections.
>
> Flour Mill resident, 2026 survey

> Moving to this suburb this was one of the things that helped me connect with community and meet people. I always look for events to further meet people even the markets give a friendly vibe where people chat and bring their dogs and families it makes you feel part of the area.
>
> Summer Hill, Lewisham and Dulwich Hill resident, 2026 survey



SUPPORT FOR THE MARKETS

Two place audits by Inhabit Place, using the Gehl Institute's Public Life and Public Space method, observed the markets directly. They count what people actually did rather than what they remember, which is a different kind of evidence.

	SUNDAY MARKET	FOOD FESTIVAL
Date observed	07/06/2026, 9am–1pm	21/11/2025, 4PM–8PM
Total people	2,014	2,109
Had a conversation	68.2%	45.5%
Recognised someone	54.5%	45.5%
Felt safe	100.0%	81.8%
First-time visitors	30.4%	9.1%

- **Both markets draw around 2,000 people in a four-hour window.** That is roughly six times the entire survey sample, which puts the reach findings above in perspective.
- **The Sunday Market is where conversation happens.** 68.2% of those interviewed had a conversation with someone, and 54.5% recognised someone. This is the clearest external evidence for what residents describe in their own words: the markets turn proximity into recognition.
- **The two markets do different jobs.** The Sunday Market brought in 30.4% first-time visitors, against 9.1% on the Food Festival. The Food Festival is the regulars'/Flour Mill local's event, with 54.5% engaging with the Flour Mill precinct monthly and 18.2% daily.
- **Summer Hill (2130) is the postcode to watch, but it cannot be narrowed to the Flour Mill.** 81% of those interviewed at the Sunday Market preferred not to say which complex they live in, so postcode is as close as the audits get. Summer Hill (2130) is the postcode that contains the Flour Mill, and it accounted for 17.4% of Sunday Market interviewees, which is 4 of the 23 people interviewed, level with Lewisham (2049) and Dulwich Hill (2203). About half of those interviewed came from these three local postcodes and about half from further afield. At the Food Festival, Summer Hill (2130) accounted for 9.1% and Lewisham (2049) for 36.4%, which on a base of 11 interviews is 1 person and 4 people.





WHAT THE WIDER RESEARCH SAYS

Our findings line up closely with the independent evidence, and in two places that research is stronger than our own data can be.

MARKETS AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The largest recent study of market-goers surveyed 5,141 United States residents and found that 47.7% had spent time with family or friends at a market, 29.4% had met a new person there, 25.4% had learned something new about their community, and 12.4% had made a friend (Witzling, Shaw & Wolnik, 2025). Our open-text responses describe the same pattern, and like that study we find the common experience is light contact rather than new friendship.

A follow-up by the same team found that the more often people attended, the stronger their reported community participation and sense of community, on a graded scale rather than a threshold (Shaw, Shea, Witzling & Wolnik, 2026). That supports something our data hints at but cannot prove: frequency matters. The authors are explicit that this is association, not cause, and so are we.

APARTMENT LIVING SPECIFICALLY

This is the research most relevant to the Flour Mill. A study of 113 apartment developments in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth found that greater use of communal outdoor areas was positively associated with neighbouring, that residents who did not use communal areas were more likely to be lonely, and that neighbouring itself was protective against loneliness (Kleeman, Giles-Corti, Gunn, Hooper & Foster, 2023). The chain runs from design, to use, to neighbouring, to lower loneliness. The markets are the mechanism that gets Flour Mill residents using their outdoor space, and 96.0% of them attend.

PLACEMAKING PRACTICE

Australian guidance holds that people need freely accessible, welcoming places in order to connect (Farmer, Rowe, De Cotta & Savic, 2024), and a placemaking framework built for Australian master-planned communities treats Programme as equal in weight to Place (Bajracharya & Khanjanasthiti, 2022). Transport for NSW treats temporary activation as a low-risk way to test ideas before permanent investment, while noting its own evidence base is still being built (Transport for NSW, 2025).

MIXED AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES

There are fewer of these than the strength of the positive response might lead you to expect, and they belong in the record.

- **Disagreement is 2.0% in both groups.** Flour Mill residents (n = 101) and the wider community (n = 201) alike. Neutral responses run at 3.0% among Flour Mill residents and 6.0% in the wider community. On bases this size the true figure could sit anywhere between roughly 1% and 4%, so opposition is small but it exists.
- **Practical suggestions rather than complaints.** Responders often suggest a later finish time, to around 3pm. In addition, in 2026 several responders asked for stallholders to set up earlier. These both point to a desire for longer hours overall.
- **Awareness of opposition.** Several 2026 responses refer to the markets being under threat, using words like “naysayers” and “those who take objection”. The survey cannot tell us how widely those objections are held, only that supporters are aware of them. It can be difficult to get naysayers to engage in a dialogue about continuous improvement.
- **Outdoor activations beyond the markets barely reach the wider community.** Outdoor X-training reached 14.9% of Flour Mill residents but 1.9% of the wider community, and Outdoor Yoga 13.9% against 7.8%. If the precinct wants outdoor programming beyond the markets, there is opportunity and interest here.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Extend the Sunday Market finish time. The market currently runs 9am to 1pm (with 45 minutes of bump in and bump-out time) and closes while people are ordering their lunch.

Extending the finish would let the market carry through lunchtime, which is the demand the current window cuts off. Three other pieces of evidence point the same way:

- In the June 2026 audit, movement through the precinct was at its highest in the final half-hour observed, and time spent in place peaked between 11.30am and 12.30pm and was still well above the morning level at the close. This report shows that the market is being shut at its busiest point.
- Both audits recorded requests for longer hours and more time among the improvements visitors named unprompted.
- In the Little BIG House individuals availability grid shows that weekend demand sits at around 70% and is concentrated in mid-morning and afternoon:



Sunday demand continues after the market closes

37.7% chose Sunday noon to 2pm and 47.3% chose 2pm to 5pm, against 42.5% mid-morning.
Share of 292 respondents naming each slot for a community activity, 2026 survey.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Early (6am-8am)	15%	13%	15%	14%	13%	14%	12%
9am-noon	21%	14%	13%	14%	15%	40%	42%
Noon-2pm	14%	9%	12%	10%	12%	34%	38%
2pm-5pm	16%	11%	13%	14%	13%	48%	47%
5pm-7pm	49%	35%	37%	39%	38%	32%	28%
7pm-9pm	39%	32%	36%	34%	34%	21%	16%

LBF Community Impact Survey 2026, question C16 · 292 respondents

What a longer window would be expected to do. Spreading the same 2,014 visitors across a longer period lowers the peak density rather than the total. That should reduce both the noise generated at any one moment and the congestion people perceive, which is the substance of the one noise objection recorded in five years of open text. It would also widen the bump-in and bump-out window, which in turn makes the site workable for stallholders who cannot meet a compressed set-up, and gives those who can more time to set up well. Visitors in both audits asked for more variety in the stall mix.

Be clear about which part of this is evidenced. The attendance pattern, the requests for longer hours and the stall-mix feedback are all in the data. The onward effects on noise, perceived congestion, set-up quality and stallholder diversity are a reasoned expectation, not something this evidence measures. If the change is made, we recommend a further audit on the new hours and compare the attendance curve, the congestion impressions and the stall mix against June 2026.

Any change to operating hours is a matter for the operator, the landowner and the owners corporation together. This section sets out what the evidence supports, not what has been agreed.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY, SCOPE AND ASSUMPTIONS

This analysis draws on two sources: the Little BIG Foundation consolidated community survey dataset covering 2022 to 2026, and two independent place audits of the markets commissioned from Inhabit Place.

Every figure is a percentage of those who answered that question, with the base stated. Percentages are given to one decimal place because the sample is small enough that whole numbers would overstate precision.

The 2026 survey had 322 respondents. 31.7% live in the Flour Mill itself. The remaining 68.3% are what this report calls the wider community: the three neighbouring suburbs of Summer Hill (2130), Lewisham (2049) and Dulwich Hill (2203), the wider Inner West, and those who did not say where they live.

Every result below is given for both groups. Base sizes differ by question because not everyone answered every question, so each table states its own.

HOW THE SURVEY REACHED PEOPLE

The survey was open to everyone and was promoted through every channel available to Little BIG Foundation (email database, in venue, vis hosts, word-of-month, posters, flyers).

To reach Flour Mill residents specifically, three further methods were used:

- A letterbox drop to every household in the development, excluding those with a “no junk mail” notice
- Sharing in Flour Mill specific channels: the resident WhatsApp group and the Flour Mill Facebook page
- Posters on site at the Flour Mill

THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

CODE	QUESTION	YEARS	BASE (2026)
C14b	Which Flour Mill precinct events did you attend in the last 12 months?	2025, 2026	307
C28	"I support the continuation of The Flour Mill Markets and Flour Mill Night Food Festival in our community"	2026	302
C14c	Of the events you attended, which BEST contributed to your sense of community?	2025, 2026	180 (2025)
C27	Why did you select the events in the previous question? (open text)	2025, 2026	266
C23	Testimonial: how Little BIG improves living at the Flour Mill (open text)	2024–2026	60

Two further open-text questions provide context: C19a, on what influenced people to stay in the area, and C13a, on how people met someone new.

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- Inhabit Place 2026, Flour Mill Precinct, Summer Hill: Place Audit Report, Sunday Market, observed 07/06/2026, 9am–1pm. 2,014 people counted, 23 interviews. Method: Gehl Institute Public Life and Public Space tools.
- Little BIG Foundation survey data: consolidated Flour Mill community survey dataset, 2022 to 2026. The 2026 wave had 322 respondents.