

11.1 Victoria Street Precinct update and place activation opportunities

Trim Record Number: D18/162286

Responsible Officer: Director Community Wellbeing

Purpose

1. To provide an update on activities relating to public health, economic development, urban design, traffic management, cleaning and amenity, and information and communications relating to the Victoria Street Precinct.
2. To outline potential place activation opportunities for the corner of Victoria and Lennox Streets and the Victoria Street precinct that could be discussed and further developed with the local community and other stakeholders.

Background

3. Council endorsed the Victoria Street Streetscape Masterplan in September 2015. A key element of the masterplan included the Lennox Street/Nicholson Street intersection upgrade. Council received a grant from the Department of Justice and Regulation as part of the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund to support part of the funding for these works. The works include new seating, paving, lighting, plantings, and improvements for cyclists and pedestrians. The works are to be completed towards the end of September.
4. At its meeting on 7 August 2018 Council passed the following motion:

That Council Officers provide advice to Councillors on options for “place activation” of the area bounded by Lennox/Nicholson and Victoria Street upon completion of the urban design works, considering:

 - (a) *a range of activation options that may be suited to this space – for example, performance art, food and beverage, cultural tourism and community activities;*
 - (b) *identify which options are most feasibly delivered in either the short, medium or longer term;*
 - (c) *explore how the community – residential, business and visitor – could be engaged to help design and deliver the different options; and*
 - (d) *provide an indication of the resources required to deliver the options provided.*
5. At its meeting on 19 December 2017, Council received a report on matters relating to the Victoria Street precinct. The report outlined the suite of activities to enhance the precinct and respond to community aspirations articulated through the Reimagining Victoria Street engagement. The significant efforts of numerous organisations and individuals that participated in the campaign to establish a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) in North Richmond were acknowledged and Council reaffirmed its commitment to providing, supporting and advocating for evidence-based harm reduction measures.
6. This report provides further updates on a number of initiatives outlined within the 19 December 2017 Council report and also outlines some of the place activation opportunities for the Victoria Street precinct.

Victoria Street precinct update

Communications

7. Victoria Street was featured recently within Yarra Life and the August-September edition of Yarra News. A short video has also been produced and circulated on social media. These communications included information on:
 - (a) shopfront improvements;
 - (b) roller shutter artwork;
 - (c) Victoria and Lennox/Nicholson street upgrade;

- (d) furniture and streetscape upgrade, and
- (e) graffiti management and street cleaning.

8. More information on these activities are provided within this report.

Urban design works

9. A key project within the Victoria Street Streetscape Masterplan is upgrades to the Lennox Street/Nicholson Street intersections. The Nicholson Street corner has been completed and includes new paving, seating and planting. The works on the corner of Lennox Street include new seating, paving, lighting, plantings, and improvements for cyclists and pedestrians. The works are to be completed towards the end of September. These upgrades were partly funded by a grant from the Department of Justice and Regulation as part of the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund (PSIF).
10. A condition of the PSIF grant was to undertake an evaluation of the work's impact upon public amenity and community safety. The evaluation involves pre and post observational studies, street intercept surveys and analysis of various data sets. As part of the evaluation the following are to be considered:
- (a) an increase in the number and diversity of people visiting, accessing and utilising the space;
 - (b) a reduction in criminal offences recorded across the different crime categories;
 - (c) decreases in drug activity;
 - (d) increases in perceptions of safety; and
 - (e) positive feedback from the community.

Shopfront improvement program

Audit of existing shopfronts and trader intercept surveys

11. Another condition of the PSIF grant is to undertake a shopfront improvement program. Following an audit of the existing shopfronts (i.e. field data capture, mapping and analysis) and intercept surveys with traders to understand challenges and gauge opinion on different strategies, several initiatives have now commenced.

Visual merchandising, shopfront cleaning/maintenance

12. A pilot program has involved working in close partnership with business/property owners on Victoria Street to improve shopfronts. To maximise program impact, the pilot has centred on the area between Church and Lennox Streets on the southern side of Victoria Street. A visual merchandising and design specialist was engaged to provide one-on-one, tailored advice to participating businesses on improving their shopfront in a short time and for little cost. Four shops participating in the pilot with shopfronts upgraded in July 2018.
13. Participating businesses paid for any works over and above the \$1,000 contribution that Council provided. This excluded the design and consultation costs which Council also provided.
14. Businesses are expected to maintain the upkeep of their shopfronts to the standard provided to them at the close of the program. Each participating business will also be provided with a shopfront cleaning/maintenance kit and a shopfront maintenance checklist at the close of the program.
15. It is envisaged that this program will run over a three-year period. The program will be evaluated to inform the implementation of a further roll out over the additional two-year period. Implementation for year two of the project will commence in September 2018.
16. The participants of the pilot will be encouraged to become champions of the program and help promote the benefits to other businesses in the street.

Aesthetic improvements to the roller shutters

17. Vinyl wraps with colourful graphic designs using local children's artwork will be applied to 16 roller shutters on the southern side of Victoria Street. These works will be completed by early October.
18. A range of options to treat the roller shutters were investigated including cleaning only, block single colour painting, painted murals/artwork, vinyl cut out decals, and full graphic vinyl wrap. Criteria that were considered included longevity and sustainability of the treatment, aesthetics, graffiti resistant surfaces, ease of cleaning and past experience of graffiti in Victoria Street.
19. The vinyl wraps are graffiti resistant and traders will be issued with appropriate cleaning products and instructions on maintaining these shutters in a graffiti free condition.
20. At its meeting on 26 June (as part of the 2018/19 budget resolution) Council resolved to progress further roller shutter improvements in the form of a grant to the Victoria Street Business Association, with agreement guidelines to be established.

Cleaning blitz on shopfronts

21. Shopfronts on Victoria Street between Church and Lennox Streets will be cleaned during month of October 2018. As this involves private property, businesses will be given the opportunity to opt out of having their property included as part of the clean. Once cleaned and painted the shop fronts will be coated with a new anti-graffiti coating which will make cleaning graffiti very easy for the shopkeepers and others involved in graffiti removal.

Graffiti, litter and syringe management

22. Council is continuing to work with businesses in Victoria Street to address the issue of bins being left on the street. The area is checked and cleaned every day by the litter control crews and litterbins are emptied daily.
23. Posters and graffiti are cleaned daily from Council assets on a night shift by graffiti management crews. Council has established five areas where various new graffiti management methods will be trialled as a partnership between Council and the community to find the optimal means to manage graffiti. Victoria Street will be added as another trial area and data will be collected after the clean-up.
24. Council contracts Innerspace (cohealth) to provide syringe management services. Syringe management services include removal of discarded syringes and related litter from public and private spaces in the City of Yarra via sweeps and also by requests through the Yarra Syringe Disposal Hotline. Innerspace also regularly clear and monitor syringe disposal units, and collect any discarded syringes and related litter in the immediate area surrounding the units.

Capital works

25. Council has approved capital works funding in 2018/19 to upgrade furniture, plantings, signage, tactiles and some pavement treatments along the full length of Victoria Street.

Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

26. In October 2017, the State Government announced support for a two-year trial of a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) at North Richmond Community Health (NRCH). A transitional Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) is now operating in a refurbished space within the existing North Richmond Community Health building. The transitional facility is expected to operate until mid-2019, after which operations will move to a purpose-built facility on the NRCH site.
27. Media reports indicate that a significant number of people are using the facility and that a number of lives have been saved to date. An extensive evaluation of the facility is being undertaken as part of the trial. This includes monitoring any shifts in drug-related activity as a result of the MSIR including changes to locations and numbers of unsafely disposed syringes.

28. Evaluations of the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Sydney show that this facility is saving lives, improving public amenity (through a significant reduction in unsafely discarded needles and syringes), reducing ambulance call outs and providing valuable outreach and service pathways for people who inject drugs.
29. Council is a member of The MSIR Local Reference Group has been established by the Victorian Government to facilitate dialogue with key local stakeholders and provide information on the operation of the facility.

Health, safety and wellbeing protocol (information for local residents, traders and visitors) and improving outreach services

30. In 2012 Council, in partnership with several agencies, developed the *Protocol for the Management of Illicit Drug Use Issues in Yarra*. The protocol provided guidance on who to contact for a range of matters including but not limited to the removal of syringes, public injecting and threats to personal safety.
31. As a result of the MSIR being introduced, a functional review of the protocol was undertaken by officers from Council and DHHS. This review included a thematic analysis of health and safety data from customer relations management systems and recent community consultations, interviews with staff from front line agencies and production of a new interim factsheet – published in time for the opening of the MSIR – titled *Community health, safety and wellbeing in Richmond - Information for local residents, traders and visitors* (included at attachment 1). This factsheet outlines information for the following:
 - (a) disposal of discarded needle syringes and related litter;
 - (b) neglected property, cleaning and maintenance;
 - (c) emergency assistance;
 - (d) illegal activity and personal safety;
 - (e) public injecting and drug affected people; and
 - (f) alcohol and other drug counselling, advice and referral.
32. Council officers and staff from DHHS are continuing the dialogue with frontline agencies on strategies to enhance the delivery of outreach within the City of Yarra.
33. Work is also progressing on new communications materials, both hard and soft copy, to inform the community on who to contact, as well as how, for the range of issues arising from drug use (i.e. health & welfare responses, law enforcement & public safety and amenity promotion). Strategies will be developed for both proactive and reactive dissemination to the whole-of-community.
34. Several client cohorts are not eligible to access the MSIR – as prescribed by legislation and facility management protocols – and others may seek additional information prior to using the MSIR. The outreach services provided by various agencies in the City of Yarra (funded by DHHS) play a key role in assisting these people. Agencies that provide outreach also have a key role in talking to the broader community in the course of doing outreach activities.
35. Within the interim factsheet is a section on *public injecting and drug affected people* which lists the contact details for drug safety and outreach workers who can assist drug affected people outside of the MSIR. Like the MSIR, this is a health and wellbeing response for people who inject drugs and provides the community with an alternative to calling the police or an ambulance where people have concerns of the welfare of people in non-emergency situations.

Support to traders and upcoming marketing campaign

36. Council's Economic Development team works closely with local businesses to support growth and development.
37. Council is committed to supporting the Victoria Street Business Association to become an effective and transparent business association and to promote Victoria Street as a visitor destination.

38. In late 2018 a campaign developed by Council's Economic Development and Communications units will be launched to promote and support Victoria Street. The campaign will be titled *Rediscover Victoria Street* and is likely to include footpath decals, posters and online marketing. This is discussed further in the potential place activation opportunities section of this report.

Support to community groups

39. Council also provides opportunities for cultural celebrations including the Lunar Festival which is funded through the Celebrate Yarra Triennial Funding Grant.
40. Council has issued several other community grants to organisations that contribute to the local community, including to those who provide services to vulnerable groups.

Parking and traffic

41. Consultation has concluded on the draft plan for the Local Area Place Making study in Abbotsford precinct (LAPM 13 bounded by Johnston Street, Hoddle Street, Victoria Street and Yarra River). The project team is reviewing the feedback and results are to be presented to the working group in September/October 2018. A recommended plan will be then be prepared for Council endorsement in late 2018.

Potential place activation opportunities

42. As outlined in this report, there have been substantial physical infrastructure investments made in relation to the Victoria Street precinct. While these are anticipated to have positive impacts, there is a limit on what physical infrastructure can achieve when it comes to supporting a cohesive and resilient community and building community capacity. Place activation provides an opportunity to facilitate the social interactions and connections upon which community is developed.
43. At an internal cross-organisational workshop, officers explored a range of potential place activation opportunities for the corner of Victoria and Lennox Streets and the Victoria Street precinct more broadly. The opportunities identified varied by theme, with some relating to food and beverage, tourism, performance and visual arts and community events. Opportunities also varied in terms of duration (i.e. once off or repeatable, short-lived to maintainable longer-term); anticipated risks; level of community-engagement (i.e. from support through to actually co-owning and/or driving initiatives); resources (i.e. staff, materials and vendors, within or outside of operational budget); and likely timeframes for implementation.
44. There are a number of initiatives identified that have potential to draw people to the area and encourage them to linger and socialise, these include:
- (a) graffiti removal information sessions;
 - (b) pavement art program;
 - (c) busking or commissioning of street performers;
 - (d) Yarra Libraries outreach through the Book Bike;
 - (e) street art and murals;
 - (f) intimate open air DJ sets;
 - (g) mobile coffee cart;
 - (h) walking food tour;
 - (i) heritage and culture walks;
 - (j) community BBQs in Butler Park;
 - (k) community safety pop-up consultations;
 - (l) The Rediscover Victoria Street marketing campaign; and
 - (m) grant stream for community-led place making in the Victoria Street Precinct.

45. Some of the opportunities could be implemented within existing resources and in the shorter term. There are two key longer-term opportunities which have been identified that would require Council to invest further resources as part of the 2019/20 budget:
- (a) Economic development and tourism: As previously mentioned, the Rediscover Victoria Street Campaign will commence shortly. If an evaluation of this program were to demonstrate that it has promise, additional resources could be committed to its expansion. Such a program would be led by Council and would require the active involvement of the broader community; and
 - (b) A new grant stream: There are several community groups that operate within or nearby the Victoria Street precinct and there is an opportunity to facilitate their active use of public spaces such as the Lennox Street/Nicholson Street intersection through additional resourcing. This stream would be specifically for place activation and community capacity building. Appropriate grant guidelines would need to be developed.
46. Progressing any of these or other opportunities will, by necessity, require thorough consideration of likely costs, benefits and risks. Furthermore, as successful place making requires community support and ownership, thoughtful consultation and engagement with local businesses, community and other stakeholders is paramount.

External Consultation

47. External consultation was outside of the scope of this exercise. However, external consultation on the range of activation options will be explored in the next phase.

Internal Consultation (One Yarra)

48. Updates were sought from relevant staff across the organisation, including from those that form part of the Reimagining Victoria Street internal working group.
49. Various staff from relevant Council work units have provided feedback relating to the potential place activation opportunities outlined.

Financial Implications

50. Funding has been allocated to several existing initiatives outlined in this report.
51. No funding has been allocated for the potential place activation opportunities outlined. It is anticipated that some of these can be achieved at no financial cost (officer time only), through existing budgets (at low cost and with officer time), or through future new initiatives as part of the budget process.

Economic Implications

52. The improvements to the Victoria Street Precinct aim to have positive economic benefits for the area.

Sustainability Implications

53. Not applicable.

Social Implications

54. Improvements to the Victoria Street Precinct aim to have a positive impact on the social environment.

Human Rights Implications

55. Not applicable.

Communications with CALD Communities Implications

56. It is anticipated that several of the proposed place activation opportunities will involve engagement community groups from CALD background.

Council Plan, Strategy and Policy Implications

Council Plan (incorporating the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan)

57. The Council Plan 2017-2021 identifies higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, and lower perceptions of safety in some parts of Yarra as key issues. It notes that the drug trade and associated health behaviours and outcomes affect the community from both a community safety perspective and a health and wellbeing perspective. Relevant strategies include:
- (a) *promote a community that is inclusive, resilient, connected and enjoys strong mental and physical health and wellbeing; and*
 - (b) *assist to reduce the harms from alcohol and drugs on individuals and the community in partnership with state agencies and key service providers.*
58. The Council Plan also includes actions to:
- (a) *advocate to the state government for a medically supervised injecting facility and other harm minimisation measures in the Victoria Street precinct; and*
 - (b) *work with local partners and agencies to increase health and education, community partnerships and harm minimisation from the abuse of drugs and alcohol.*

Community Infrastructure Plan

59. Council plays a direct role in the planning and delivery of community infrastructure and an indirect role by coordinating other providers in this space. The provision of flexible and well-designed community infrastructure, that addresses community needs, will contribute to generating the best outcomes for our community. Council's vision for community infrastructure planning is: *To identify current and future needs so that Council can deliver and influence the provision of quality, flexible and responsive community infrastructure to support a prosperous, liveable and sustainable City of Yarra.*
60. Council's three goals of community infrastructure planning are to:
- (a) *build and support a safe, healthy and cohesive community;*
 - (b) *create a sustainable city with responsive and flexible community infrastructure; and*
 - (c) *embed a holistic approach in planning and delivery.*
61. The Community Infrastructure Plan notes an opportunity *to achieve good public space (or public realm) outcomes through forming partnerships between Council, community, businesses, service authorities and developers. Building strong relationships with key stakeholders will support public space improvements and emerging public spaces. For example, encourage improvements of shopfronts, encourage building design to support public places and curate legal street art where relevant.*

Legal Implications

62. Not applicable.

Other Issues

63. Not applicable.

Options

64. Not applicable.

Conclusion

65. There have been substantial physical infrastructure investments made in relation to the Victoria Street precinct. The place activation opportunities outlined could complement these works and be a catalyst for achieving an increase in the number and diversity of people visiting, accessing and utilising the precinct and subsequent improvements in economic activity, social life and perceptions of local amenity and safety.
66. Further consultation is required with local businesses, community and other stakeholders to obtain their perspective on these (or other) place making opportunities and their interest in supporting or delivering these initiatives in the Victoria Street precinct.

67. Consideration will need to be given to the frequency of any future initiatives and the length of time that initiatives are in place. The limitations associated with only having a small number of temporary initiatives are apparent when considering the objectives of the urban design works, particularly achieving an increase in the number and diversity of people visiting, accessing and utilising the area. To have a substantial impact on the precinct, and to support the physical infrastructure investments, longer-term initiatives could be required.
68. Subsequent to consultation, officers will further inform Council of the identified preferred options from the community and provide recommendations for resourcing, should it be required.
69. Consultation with key stakeholders will include but not be limited to: traders, residents, residents associations and key local community agencies. Consultation will consist of a mix of face to face individual and group based discussions. Consultation will also provide further opportunities for stakeholders to suggest additional activation options for consideration. Further surveying of stakeholders may also be required should options be identified that require limited additional Council resources, in order to assist in identify priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council:
 - (a) notes the update provided on activities relating to public health, economic development, urban design, traffic management, cleaning and amenity, and information and communications relating to the Victoria Street Precinct;
 - (b) notes the opportunities for place activation that have been identified in this report and that progressing any of these (or other) opportunities will require a systematic assessment of costs, benefits, risks and impacts;
 - (c) notes and considers a new initiative bid as part of the 2019/20 budget for a new grant stream for place activation and community capacity building in the Victoria Street precinct;
 - (d) notes and considers a new initiative bid as part of the 2019/20 budget for ongoing promotion of the Victoria Street precinct through economic development and tourism opportunities and through the Rediscover Victoria Street campaign; and
 - (e) authorises officers to consult with identified stakeholders from local businesses, community and other groups to obtain their opinion on opportunities for place activation at the intersections of Victoria and Lennox Streets and the Victoria Street precinct more broadly and establish the level of engagement.

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Attachments

- 1 [↓](#) Interim factsheet - Community health, safety and wellbeing in Richmond - Information for local residents, traders and visitors

Attachment 1 - Interim factsheet - Community health, safety and wellbeing in Richmond - Information for local residents, traders and visitors



Community health, safety and wellbeing in Richmond Information for local residents, traders and visitors

Request disposal of discarded needle syringes and related litter

If you find a needle syringe you can call and leave a message to have it collected within 24 hours.

Needles found in public spaces

Telephone: Yarra Syringe Disposal Hotline (03) 9417 5125

Email: yarrasyringe.disposal@cohealth.org.au

Needles found near North Richmond Community Health

Telephone: North Richmond Community Health (03) 9418 9800

9:00am – 5:00pm, Monday - Friday

Needles found on public housing grounds

Telephone: Richmond Local Housing Office (03) 9429 5174

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Neglected property, cleaning and maintenance

Requesting Yarra City Council cleaning and maintenance

You can help Yarra City Council maintain cleanliness by requesting a cleaning service or reporting maintenance issues such as street cleaning, overflowing bins, or damaged play equipment and park furniture.

Telephone: Yarra City Council (03) 9205 5555

Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Website: www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/cleaningrequests

Requesting Department of Health and Human Services public housing cleaning and maintenance

You can help the Department of Health and Human Services maintain public housing cleanliness by requesting a cleaning service or reporting maintenance issues to the Local Housing Office.

Telephone: Richmond Local Housing Office (03) 9429 5174

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Reporting graffiti

You are encouraged to contact the police when your property has been vandalised or graffitied. This ensures the police have accurate statistics about the level of vandalism and graffiti in the local area.

Street Address: 217 Church Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Telephone: Victoria Police (03) 8420 3600

Attachment 1 - Interim factsheet - Community health, safety and wellbeing in Richmond - Information for local residents, traders and visitors

Emergency assistance

Please call Triple Zero (000) when an immediate response is required, if someone is in need of urgent medical help, in immediate danger or if a crime is happening.

Telephone: Triple Zero (000)
24 hours a day, seven days a week

Illegal activity and personal safety

Reporting crime or antisocial behaviour

If you have any information regarding a crime, criminal activity, or antisocial behaviour you can contact Crime Stoppers Victoria and confidentially report what you know.

Telephone: Crime Stoppers Victoria 1800 333 000
Website: www.crimestoppersvic.com.au/report-a-crime

Reporting non-emergency crime incidents

Contact your local police station via phone or in person to report non-emergency crime incidents.

Street Address: 217 Church Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121
24 hours a day, seven days a week

Telephone: Victoria Police (03) 8420 3600

Public injecting and drug affected people

Requesting daytime mobile drug safety and outreach workers

Telephone: North Richmond Community Health (03) 9418 9800
Monday - Friday: 9.00am to 5.00pm
Email: ourcentre@nrch.com.au

Requesting youth outreach workers

Telephone: Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) (03) 9415 1698
Tuesday - Thursday 12:00pm – 5.30pm, Friday 12:00pm – 7.30pm, Saturday 12:00pm – 8:00pm

Alcohol and other drug counselling, advice and referral

Requesting confidential alcohol and other drug information, advice, counselling and referral services

Telephone: Directline 1800 888 236
24 hours a day, seven days a week

Requesting youth alcohol and other drug information, advice, counselling and referral services

Telephone: Youth drug and alcohol advice service (YoDAA) 1800 458 685
9:00am – 8:00pm, Monday to Friday