

## Jonas Street Plaza Trial

### Evaluation Report

Prepared by:

Mark Gebbie  
Public Space Designer  
City of Yarra

27.07.2016



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In January 2016 Council closed a section of Jonas Street in Richmond to vehicular traffic in order to trial a proposed public plaza. The trial was in place from 22 January 2016 through to 30 June 2016.

The purpose of the evaluation was to monitor public reaction of the transformation of a road to a green pedestrian orientated space, the public's use of the plaza and the effect of the plaza on traffic flows in and around the immediate area.

Observations and feedback received throughout the life of the trial were recorded to provide strategic evidence for Council to make an informed recommendation whether to proceed with a permanent pedestrian plaza or retain the road as a vehicular thoroughfare.

This Evaluation Report provides the methodology used to assess the success of the Jonas Street Plaza trial, results recorded during the trial period and the recommendation of officers.

## **2. BACKGROUND / RATIONALE**

The development of a public plaza in Jonas Street is a major project identified in the Victoria Street Streetscape Masterplan (adopted 15 September 2015). The objective of the project is to create an attractive, vibrant and safe community space with an improved connected transport interchange.

The Open Space Strategy identifies the need to provide additional open space based on increasing residential densities in both the west and eastern precincts along Victoria Street.

Furthermore, a key objective of the Victoria Street Structure Plan is to develop improved networks of parks and urban spaces. The creation of public space is very restricted in Yarra, but can be implemented through strategic transformation of roadscape.

Prior to the plaza trial, Jonas Street was a one-way thoroughfare leading from Elizabeth Street north to Victoria Street. It was predominantly used as a 'rat-run' for vehicles accessing Victoria Street.

Car parking is provided along the western side of Jonas Street under the train station access ramps.

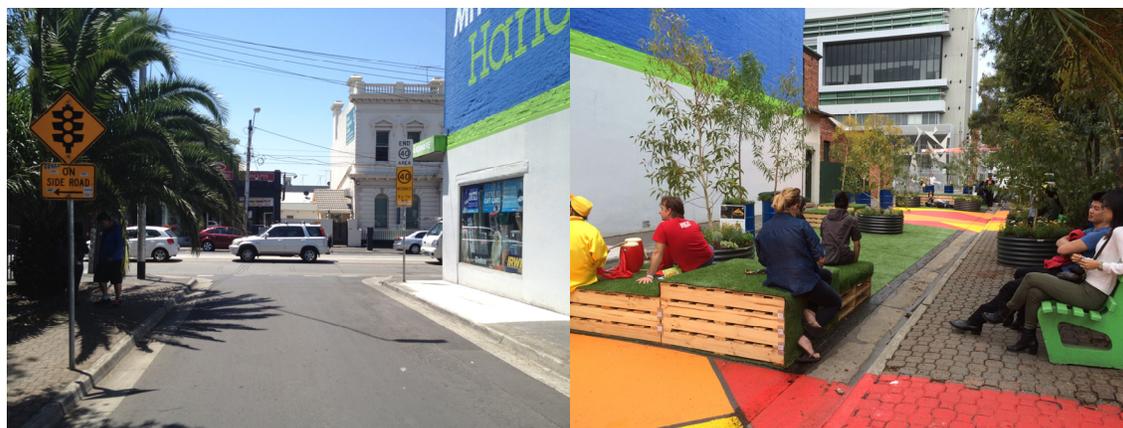
## **3. PROJECT INITIATIVE**

The trial plaza was installed at the intersection of Jonas Street and Victoria Street adjacent to the North Richmond Railway Station.

The northern section of Jonas Street was closed to vehicular traffic but remained open for pedestrian movement and slow speed bicycle use.

The space was transformed through the installation of a pop-up park comprising Eucalypt trees, flower beds, seating, artificial turf, bicycle parking, a performance stage and a fun colourful surface treatment.

Loss of car parking under the access ramps was restricted to only one car park. A loading zone on the eastern side was moved further south.



Before the trial

During the trial

#### 4. STAKEHOLDERS / COMMUNICATION

- Stakeholders identified in having an interest/input into the Jonas Street Plaza project are:
  - Yarra Council
  - Victoria Street Business Association (VSBA)
  - Local businesses
  - Community
  - VicRoads
  - VicTrack
  - Metro Trains
  - Yarra Trams
  - Internal project team
  - Victoria Police
- The stakeholders were engaged at various stages in collecting and collating data, providing input to discussions, providing expert advice and advising of viable options (please see table below).

**Table 1. Stakeholder Assessment and Engagement Plan**

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Category	Interest or Perspective	Role in the Evaluation	How and When Engaged
	<i>Primary, Secondary, Tertiary</i>		<i>Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, Informed</i>	
Yarra Council	Primary	High interest High influence	RA	Regular updates through Communications unit.
Victoria Street Business Association	Primary	High interest High influence	CIS	Briefing sessions at association meetings.
Local businesses	Primary	High interest High influence	CIS	Regular updates through Communications unit. Invitation to provide feedback on

				concept.
Community	Primary	High interest High influence	IS	Regular updates through Communications unit. Invitation to provide feedback on concept.
VicRoads	Tertiary	Low interest High influence	I	Informed.
VicTrack	Tertiary	High interest High influence	SCI	Should Council decide to construct plaza immediate discussions will need to be initiated. Stakeholder will need to receive regular updates from Project Control Group.
Metro Trains	Primary	High interest High influence	SCI	Should Council decide to construct plaza immediate discussions will need to be initiated. Stakeholder will need to receive regular updates from Project Control Group.
Yarra Trams	Secondary	High interest Low influence	RASCI	Informed.
Richmond Police	Secondary	High interest Low influence	SCI	Informed.
Internal Project Team	Primary	High interest High influence	RA	Involvement in Project Control Group. Regular updates.

## 5. KEY SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success of the Jonas Street Plaza trial was measured against the following criteria:

- Whether the plaza addressed the lack of quality pedestrian space in the vicinity by providing a safe and inviting space for the public;
- Whether the plaza was successful in improving the public realm, providing a green space in which to sit, eat and relax in proximity to public transport, local shopping and offices; and
- Whether perceptions of safety were improved.

## 6. METHODS USED TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Success was measured through both quantitative and qualitative data:

- An online forum on the Yarra website was open to the public for feedback during the trial of the plaza, providing data to help determine stakeholder satisfaction with the plaza, and whether it is a viable project for Council to pursue.
- An online survey was another tool available to the public to provide feedback directly to Council's website.
- The public were invited to submit feedback via emails to the public space designer managing the project.
- Discussions with local traders and the Victoria Street Business Association (VSBA) were held prior to the trial to help determine the level of support for a plaza within the retail community.
- Vox-pop (One on one) surveys were conducted within the plaza space to directly capture public opinions.
- A time lapse camera was installed to monitor use of the plaza. Data collected by Co-Design Studio from the camera indicated the numbers of people that occupied the space, the times at which it was occupied, whether there was any drug or alcohol related activity, and ultimately whether the plaza provided a safe and inviting space used by the public as intended.
- Vehicle counts and queue length observation surveys on Shelley Street and other potentially impacted streets were conducted over a week to provide data relating to the changed conditions.

## 7. RESULTS / FINDINGS

- Results from the City of Yarra's online forum can be viewed in detail: *Attachment 1: Project Report: Yarra Conversation Forum.*

In summary a number of participants contributed several times. One person appears to have written seven times in the negative. Another responded five times in the positive. Overall 16 separate people appear to have responded. Six voted against the park (two of those through concerns over increased traffic congestion), and ten voted in favour of the park.

- Results from the City of Yarra's online survey can be viewed in detail: *Attachment 2: Project Report: Yarra Conversation Survey.*
- Results from the vox-pop (one on one) surveys can be viewed in detail: *Attachment 3: Jonas Street Parklet: Monitoring and Evaluation Data.*

In summary 41 on-site surveys were held at the parklet on 14 May, 30 May, 3 June and 6 June respectively. 68% had used the park before, 71% felt safe in the space, and 81% wanted the space to become permanent.

- Time-lapse data was captured by camera before, during and after the trial installation had been completed. Recordings were observed on mornings and evenings, between 18 January and 05 February 2016. Data collected by Co-Design Studio clearly

indicates increased pedestrian use post-installation. Results from the time-lapse camera can be viewed in detail: *Attachment 3: Jonas Street Parklet: Monitoring and Evaluation Data*.

- Yarra Council received 16 written submissions regarding the trial plaza. A summary of the submissions can be viewed in detail: *Attachment 4: Jonas Street Trial: Written Submissions Summary*.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FINDINGS**

- The majority of survey comments were positive towards a future public space at Jonas Street, citing shade, greenery and bicycle parking as things they would like to see in a proposed design.
- The space was used by many for meeting, so the application of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles would be an important overarching objective in a proposed design.
- From another perspective, a number of applicants were concerned about drugs, loitering and drinking in the space making it unsafe. Officers would again apply the principles of CPTED to ensure a very open and well-lit space that would appeal to the majority of the public and focus attention on the space at all times.
- Concerns over traffic congestion can be mitigated through a number of options to be investigated further by Council's Traffic unit.
- A number of applicants have suggested the park is extended further down the street. This option can be investigated through the concept brief and further consultation.
- Despite the concerns around drug use and traffic, the consultation showed that a public space at Jonas Street, at the intersection of Victoria Street, Richmond, would predominantly be supported as a permanent feature. With that said, it is critical that the design be closely conceived working with, and for the local community.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The development of a pedestrian plaza at Jonas Street can be beneficial in promoting the cultural identity of Victoria Street, and providing an attractive, welcoming, distinctive and safe public space for visitors and the local community.

Officers will seek Council's endorsement and approval to proceed with concept design for a new public plaza and community consultation on the draft design.