

Community Engagement Findings Report - Charlotte Street Proposed Pocket Park

Charlotte Street Pocket Park Proposal Community Engagement Stage 1

Overall Project Goal

To create a public open space on the roadway in Charlotte Street (between Church Street and St Crispin Street) Richmond.

Project Overview

The Charlotte Street Pocket Park is a multiyear project. This report focuses on the outcomes of the community engagement for Stage 1 alone and the implications for the next stages in the project.

Engagement purpose as stated in the Engagement Plan

The main objectives of the proposal are to:

- Deliver a green open space for local residents and visitors alike which offers places to sit, shade, and respite from the busy main streets;
- Create a space that will address the climate emergency, reduce the urban heat island effect, increase biodiversity in the area and encourage walking in the precinct;
- Provide a flexible space for the community that can be programmable by the library;
- Respond to the feedback gathered in the Swan Street Streetscape Masterplan for more open spaces and treed areas; and
- Given its proximity to the Richmond Library building, and the Richmond RSL, create a welcoming space for all ages and abilities, that is safe for all.

PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

- To gauge community support to build a park in this location, and to understand what elements they would like to see in the park.
- To ensure that internal stakeholders are aware of the project, that the project aligns with other works undertaken by Yarra, and as best as possible, meets the range of internal stakeholders' priorities for the project
- To ensure that utility providers, Yarra Trams, Department of Transport (DoT) have provided input into the project, are aware of timelines and impacts, and that efficiencies are made

Project Background

The Open Space Strategy 2021 has identified the need for more green open space in Richmond.

The Swan Street Streetscape Masterplan was endorsed by Council in early 2022. Within the Masterplan was a proposal for the western block of Charlotte Street (between Church Street and St Crispin Street) to be turned into a public park. Feedback on this proposal was largely supportive, though some locals were concerned that this would push 'rat running' drivers into the parallel Elm Grove.

Given high levels of initial support, the project has been progressed in 2022/23 to carry out further feasibility, consultation, and design work.

The building on the northern corner of Charlotte Street and Church Streets is owned by the Richmond RSL and they have an old but active planning permit for the site, to convert the existing building to include apartments and to accommodate community use.

The success of this project will depend on the collaboration of many teams within Council, and officers have engaged with many internal teams, and will continue to work together for the duration of this project.

Charlotte Street Pocket Park Proposal Community Engagement Stage 1

As part of Stage 1 of this project, in October and November of 2022 we asked the community if they supported a park in Charlotte Street, and, if they did, what elements they would like to see in the park, and how they imagined they might use a park in the future. We also asked a range of demographic data.

We reached out to the community through a range of activities as set out in the Communications and Engagement Activities table at the end of this report, generating a good representation of community input.

Other inputs

In addition to the 197 online surveys and 59 paper surveys received by Council, we also heard from the community via:

- One petition to the CEO from local residents in the neighbouring streets who oppose the proposal, largely because of the assumed increase in traffic and reduction in parking availability that they anticipate. The petition was signed by 52 local residents who all live in the neighbouring Elm Grove, Charles Street, Mary Street, McNamara Street and three from Charlotte Street. The majority of petitioners are Elm Grove residents.
- Nine emails via oracle requests. Three were supportive of the proposal. Six objected to the proposal including one addressed to Councillors. All of these objectors also signed the petition.
- One drawing from a child showing how they would like to play in the space.

What did we ask?

Participants were asked:

1. 'Do you support the proposal to close part of Charlotte Street to create a pocket park?'
2. 'Please tell us why'
3. 'When you imagine a pocket park in Charlotte Street, what would you be doing there?'
4. 'What would you like to see in the space?'
5. A series of demographic questions*

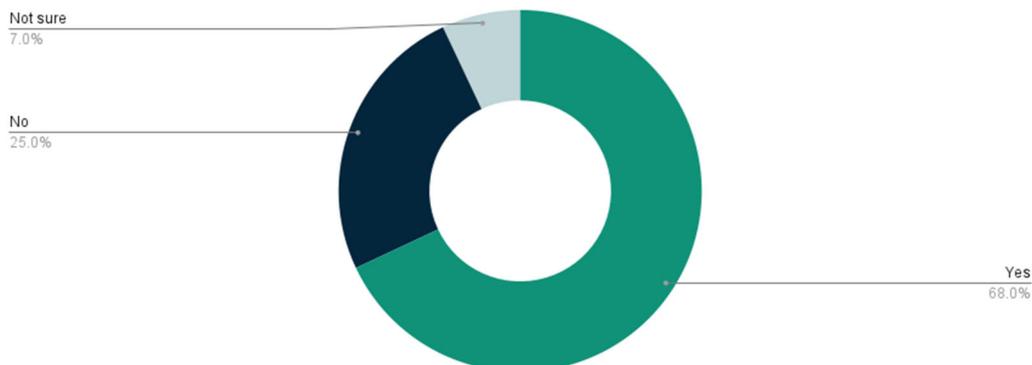
Council received 256 contributions across online and paper survey forms.

*Roughly a quarter of respondents used a paper survey, and few of these consistently completed the demographic questions. That said, there was a good mix of ages and gender represented, and most respondents were locals.

'Do you support the proposal to close part of Charlotte Street to create a pocket park?'

There were 68% of respondents who were in favour of the proposed pocket park in Charlotte Street. 7% percentage was unsure and 25% objected to the proposal.

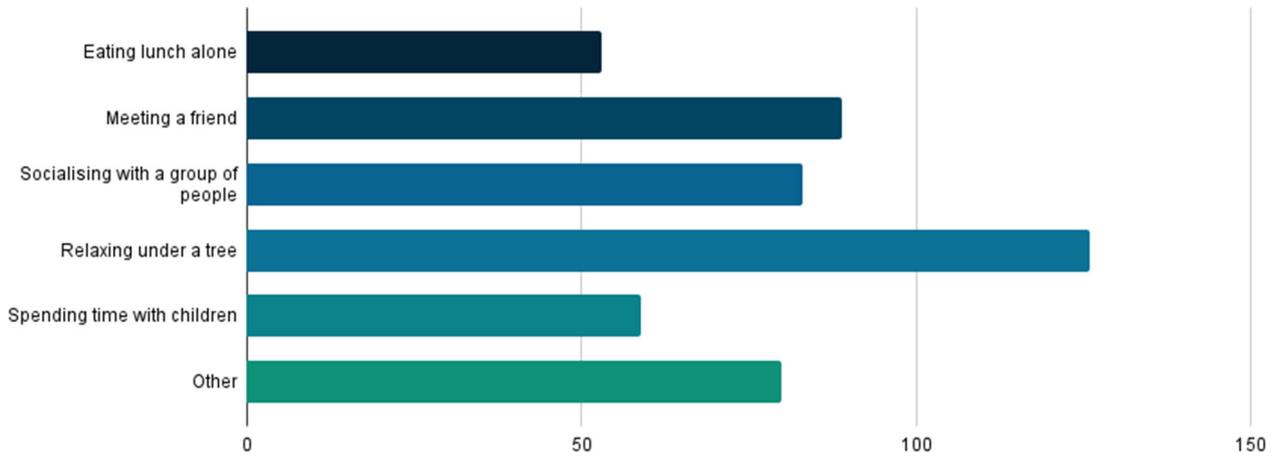
Do you support the proposal to close part of Charlotte Street to create a pocket park?



‘When you imagine a pocket park in Charlotte Street, what would you be doing there?’

For people who ticked ‘Other’ a common response was ‘reading a book’ though there were some responses such as “Weeds, needles, windblown trash and the downward spiral of humanity“

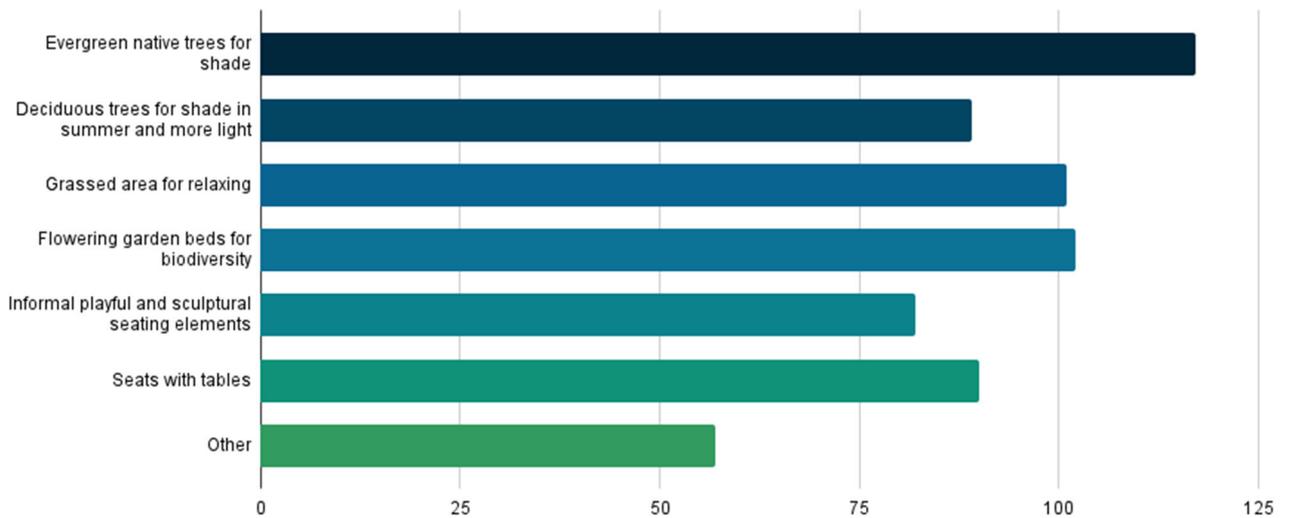
When you imagine a pocket park in Charlotte Street, what would you be doing there?



‘What would you like to see in the space?’

For people who ticked ‘Other’ a common response was ‘leave it as a road’ from respondents who objected to the park, as well as provide WIFI and consider water play for children.

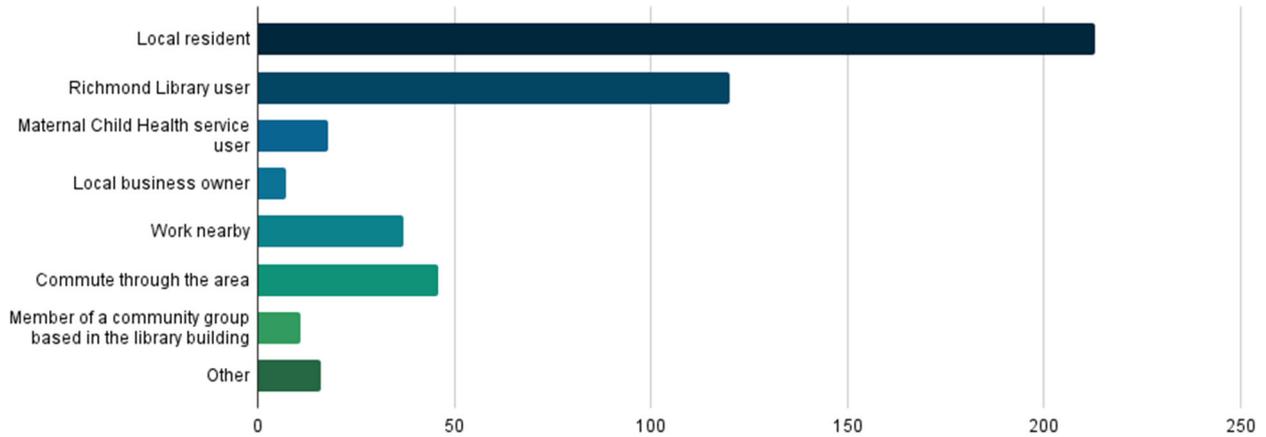
What would you like to see in the space?



‘What is your connection to the area?’

By far, the most common response was that survey participants were local residents.

What is your connection to the area?



Five key themes

From the responses to the open ended questions, five key themes emerged. In order of prevalence, they were:

Green space	The desire from the community for plants, shade, and nature.
Library integration	The opportunity to borrow a book and read it outside, or take a break in the Pocket Park after a visit to the library.
Traffic	Concerns about the impact of the proposed road closure on the traffic in neighbouring streets
Parking & Accessibility	Concerns that the proposal would lead to greater competition for the remaining parking bays, and noting that the library’s accessibility for people with a disability, for families with prams, or for people wishing to quickly return library books were important.
Children & Community	Many parents of children welcomed the opportunity for a place to gather and have a snack, while some noted the need to design the space so that it discouraged children from running close to Church Street.

In the table below are some responses that typified each theme, and our response to these comments.

What we heard	Our response
Theme 1 : Green Space	
<i>“I live nearby and absolutely love the idea of having more green space. It’ll open up the</i>	The design will consider optimal planting approach and garden bed areas including

library and hopefully lead to further utilisation of that space as well.”

“The need for additional green + community spaces is evident, especially given the exponential growth in Richmond”

“People are happier in nature. More parks the more accessible it is for people to enjoy the benefits. It’s nice to wind down afterwork, hang out with a friend & it’s great for the ecosystem - attract more birds, bees which is good for us & planet”

choice of tree species, shrubs and low plants to increase shade and mitigate the heat island effect, create more biodiversity, and permeable areas to further mitigate the impact of climate change.

The approach will be underpinned by Council’s:

- Open Space Strategy
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy

Theme 2 : Library Integration

“Our neighbourhood needs more spaces for community like this, that have no incentive to consume and people can just exist there and enjoy the space.”

“It’s important to have more green spaces. It increases socialisation. The pocket park on Docker Street is very popular. Will increase access to library & capacity for community outdoor events“

“Green space is really important! Especially near public places. While I love and use the library a lot, the area outside of it is not particularly welcoming. there are also few green spaces near the busy Swan St shopping precinct”.

Officers will work with Libraries/Building maintenance units to determine if the proposal could complement a renovated entrance to the Library which increases accessibility and integration to the park.

Officers will work with Libraries to consider how the proposed pocket park may have a spatial layout and elements that can be programmed by the Library.

Theme 3 : Traffic

“I live in the area and would welcome more pedestrian friendly & green spaces. To ensure Elm Grove & surrounding streets are not impacted by traffic, changes, traffic signs/rules need to be ENFORCED. eg no turn right up the hill into Elm Gve”

“Charlotte Street Park is possibly a lovely idea if it was not that Elm Grove, the adjacent street would attract all the traffic that previously used Charlotte Street as a cut through street. This does not seem right/fair.”

“Road Traffic which uses Charlotte St at present as a thoroughfare or for parking (workers from outside of Richmond) will possibly use Elm Grv (where I live) instead,

While the Traffic Impact Assessment shows an expected increase to traffic in neighbouring streets, the projected numbers do not automatically trigger a need for local traffic treatments.

Once the park is constructed it is recommended that Council monitor potential changes to traffic conditions in neighbouring streets, and where there is an evidence basis, local traffic treatments will then be considered.

turning it from a quiet street to a very busy street”

Theme 4 : Parking & Accessibility

“I think this pocket park would enhance the area and encourage people, to take a break outdoors. HOWEVER , I am concerned re the need to retain easy access for disabled people to the library”

“It will add to the limited parking strain in the area. As Charlotte Street has permit parking, there are limited areas to park a vehicle when needing to visit or work within the library”.

“I rarely use my car, esp locally around Richmond. The regular occasion we do use our car is for our monthly pick up and drop off of library books at Richmond library and toys from the toy library. The books/toys are far too heavy to haul on my bike.”

- Officers will provide accessible parking that meets current DDA standards.
- While it is proposed four parking bays will be removed, officers will investigate opportunities replacing some of these in suitable locations.
- Current parking restrictions in Charlotte Street are standard across similar type of streets in Yarra, and are considered appropriate for the area.
- Officers will investigate providing 15 minute parking bays to allow for people returning books and toys.

Theme 5 : Children & Community

“Need more green spaces for children + something that gives the neighbourhood a personality + show off its beauty”

“New community space is a good thing, esp next to an important cultural institution such as the library”

“I love coming to the library with my 3 young children and to have a meeting/snack/relax space out the front sounds wonderful. I'm also very supportive of anything that adds more greenery to our area and our planet.”

- While the proposed park will not include a playground, playful elements that engage children will be considered.
- Seating will be configured so that small groups can sit together, as well as individuals enjoying the park.
- The proposal will include design features to discourage children from easily running towards Church Street.

What did the petition tell us?

The petition was signed by 52 local residents who all lived in the neighbouring Elm Grove, Charles Street, Mary Street, McNamara Street and three from Charlotte Street. The majority of petitioners are Elm Grove residents.

The main points raised in the petition included:

- Significant increase in traffic in Elm Grove
- Frustrated drivers who haven't noted that Charlotte Street is closed at Church Street
- The narrowness of Elm Grove means that vehicles travelling in opposite directions need to accommodate each other when passing
- Risk to cars being side-swiped in Elm Grove
- Increase pressure on remaining parking bays with the removal of parking in Charlotte Street
- The area is well-served by parks

Response to the petition;

Council officers note that there is also significant support for the proposal for residents in the same neighbouring streets.

Increased traffic concerns

Council commissioned Traffix Group to undertake a Traffic Impact Assessment of the area during March 2022 associated with the proposed road closure in Charlotte Street to create an open space. The report '*Traffic Impact Assessment Proposed Road Closure Assessment Charlotte Street, Richmond May 2022*' can be found on <https://yoursayyarra.com.au/charlottestreet>

The Traffic Impact Assessment report notes that, while there is a projected increase to traffic in some of the neighbouring streets to the proposed park in Charlotte Street, the overall traffic increase is still expected to be well below 50% of the environmental capacity of the road.

- Further, in the sections of the streets most impacted by the increase in traffic, the conservative projection is for:
 - an increase of one vehicle every 4-6 minutes during the morning peak; and
 - an increase of one vehicle every 1.25-8 minutes during the evening peak.

The Traffic Impact Assessment report notes:

- *"The additional traffic volume along Elm Grove is expected to peak at 76 vehicle movements during the weekday PM peak hour. At a rate of just over 1 vehicle per 1 minute, this impact will not be noticeable."* (page 29 '*Traffic Impact Assessment*' by Traffix Group May 2022)

Should the park go ahead, Council can monitor traffic in the surrounding streets during the construction period, and, where there is an evidence base, measures can be taken to reduce rat running in neighbouring streets.

Increased parking demand

The Traffic Impact Assessment report states the following

- *"Charlotte Street generally has sufficient parking vacancies to accommodate the displaced parking demands (the spaces lost as a result of the closure) during the weekday morning, midday, afternoon and weekday midday periods."* (page 34 '*Traffic Impact Assessment*' by Traffix Group May 2022)

Council is committed to ensuring DDA compliant parking options, and short-term parking to allow for quick visits to the Library. Officers will investigate the opportunity to provide any compensatory parking bays.

Open Space availability in Central Richmond

The Yarra Open Space Strategy has identified this location as a 'gap' area, meaning that that the area is not well-served by parks.

Communications and engagement activities

Activity	Details	Audience	Timing	Result
Your Say Yarra (YSY) page	<p>Landing page for all online engagement. Provided information on the purpose of the consultation and how to provide feedback.</p> <p>The page also provided details on the Pop-Up event, how to request an interpreter and how to contact the project team directly.</p> <p>The survey to provide feedback was also located on this page.</p>	The whole Yarra community could access this page.	The page was published at 9am on Monday 31 October. It is still available but is no longer open for feedback.	Visitors – 590 Visits - 781
Online YSY feedback survey	Community members had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed pocket park.	The whole Yarra community could access this survey.	The survey was launched at 9am on Monday 31 October and closed at 9am on Monday 28 November.	Contributions - 256
Corporate website news item	The news item outlined the purpose of the consultation and redirected readers to the YSY site for more information and to provide their feedback.	The whole Yarra community could read this news item.	The news item was published on our website on Wednesday 2 November.	409 unique page views
Zoom meeting and email notices to library building tenants	Online meeting and subsequent emails sent to tenants of the library building inviting them to provide their feedback, participate in the Pop-Up event, and requesting that they forward the information to their networks	Tenants of the library building and their networks	October – November	Tenants such as the Toy Library reposted Council's Instagram post and participated in the Pop-Up.
Letterbox drop	An addressed letter was delivered to all residents, non-resident owners and businesses in the areas around Charlotte Street notifying them of the road closure for the Pop-Up event.	Approx. 300 local residents and businesses in the area	Letters were delivered on Thursday 20 October	
Postcard letterbox drop	A postcard detailing the consultation and the Pop-Up event was distributed to residents and businesses in the area.	Approx. 300 local residents and businesses in the area	Postcards were delivered on Monday 31 October	70 QR code usages (across all postcard and corflute poster outputs)

Email sent through YSY site	An automatic email was sent to YSY members who had requested to receive information on consultations taking place in Richmond and/or were to do with open space.	YSY members	Email was sent at the launch of the consultation on Monday 31 October.	The email was sent to 444 email addresses. 218 emails were opened leading to 22 people clicking through to the YSY page.
Email sent to YSY email subscribers	An email campaign was sent to our YSY email subscriber list.	YSY email subscribers	Email was sent at the launch of the consultation on Monday 31 October.	The email was sent to 2180 email addresses. 1,354 emails were opened which resulted in 100 recipients clicking through to the YSY page.
Social media post	A social post advertising the launch of the consultation and linking back to the YSY page was sent on Facebook.	Social media followers	Thursday 3 November	The Facebook post reached 966 people with 20 reactions and 9 people clicking through to the YSY page.
	A social post on Instagram announcing the launch.	Social media followers	Thursday 3 November	43 engagements and 40 reactions
Social media post	A social post advertising the pop-up events and linking back to the YSY page was sent on Facebook and Instagram	Social media followers	Tuesday 15 November	The Facebook post reached 3,032 people with 44 reactions and 31 clicks through to the YSY site. The Instagram post reached 2,545 people with 94 reactions
Social media post	A last chance social post	Social media followers	Wednesday 23 November	The Facebook post reached

				1,725 people, 8 reactions and 7 clicks through to the YSY page. The Instagram post reached 1,464 people and had 43 reactions.
Yarra Life – detailing consultation and linking back to YSY page	Email newsletter to approx. 13,000 subscribers	Broad Yarra community	Friday 18 November	26 clicks on link to consultation page
Richmond Library postcards	Postcards promoting pop-up events and QR code link to YSY page	Richmond community	Available from Monday 31 October	70 QR code usages (across all postcard and corflute poster outputs)
Signage outside Richmond Library	A1 corflute promoting pop-up events and QR code link to YSY page	Richmond community	Available from Monday 31 October	70 QR code usages (across all postcard and corflute poster outputs)
Additional Council e-newsletters – Libraries	Email newsletter to subscribers	Broad Yarra community		27 unique clicks to YSY page
Direct outreach to RSL	Two emails and one phone call to the Richmond RSL to ensure they were aware of the consultation	RSL President was asked to share the consultation with his networks		
Meetings with key utility providers	As part of the feasibility for the project, officers contacted and met with some representatives from: key service providers/	Greater Western Water Citi Power APA Gas		
Key service providers	Informing relevant authorities about the temporary road	Police Ambulance		

	closer associated with the Pop-Up event	Fire PTV		
Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA)	Traffix Group conducted a comprehensive TIA of the area and the findings were published on Council's website, next to the survey	Broad Yarra community	TIA available online since November 2022	
Outreach to underrepresented cohorts				
Translated posters in library	Chinese and Vietnamese translated posters in the relevant library sections, promoting Pop-Up events and QR code linking to YSY page	Richmond CALD community	Available from Monday 31 October	
Pop-Up event	<p>A fun day event was held in the proposed park location, outside the Richmond Library to ensure community members who had not received the postcard or knew about the consultation had the opportunity to find out more about it.</p> <p>It was also an opportunity for people who did know about the consultation to come and speak to officers in person.</p> <p>Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese BLOs were in attendance to speak with our CALD community.</p>	People from a CALD background, people who work/visit/live in the Richmond Library area	Saturday 19 November	59 surveys were filled in and an estimated 120 people attended.