TRANSPORTATION 2020 CONFERENCE

PRACTICE PAPER

Making Streets Spaces for People

(This paper has been peer reviewed)

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INTRODUCTION

Auckland city is undergoing a major transformation with more pedestrian-friendly links and a modern and efficient public transport system. Auckland Council, in conjunction with the project team, is drawing on international and national business case best practice processes to develop a business case for the Victoria Street Linear Park project which will be a vital part of this transformation.

The business case is being developed with mana whenua and a community of practice to guide and support project development. The community of practice is an innovative approach to bringing together a broad range of internal stakeholders and technical experts from diverse areas such as heritage, design, asset, cycling, transport strategy, parks and arts at the beginning of the project to define and assess the problems, opportunities, options and benefits for Victoria Street.

To enhance the Better Business Case approach and to support Auckland Plan outcomes for Māori and for the environment, the project team has also embedded practices used in regenerative thinking. The project team has been challenged to consider outcomes for Victoria Street in the context of a wider 'nested system' and to look for opportunities in the project to enhance the natural environment.

This paper focuses on the innovative processes used by the project team leading to identification of project outcomes that are broader than the transport need, better design outcomes, quicker decisions and more satisfied stakeholders in our city centre.

BACKGROUND

Auckland's city centre is experiencing significant growth with resident and commuter numbers exceeding strategic forecasts in the Auckland Plan and City Centre Masterplan (Research and Evaluation Unit, 2017). High levels of growth are expected to continue over the next 20 years. Auckland's City Centre Masterplan 2012 establishes a vision for change in Auckland's city centre. One of the key concepts in the masterplan is The Green Link which proposes a network connecting green spaces across the city, including along Victoria Street. The network is proposed to return more space to people along the road corridor to and to improve active mode connections across the city. Public Consultation on the revised City Centre Masterplan in 2019 indicated 86% of respondents supported the green link.

Figure 1: The Green Link in the City Centre Masterplan 2012

STUDY AREA

Victoria Street is a significant corridor connecting two distinct green areas in Auckland's city centre, Wai Kōkota Victoria Park and Rangipuke Albert Park. The street is home to several residential, commercial and retail developments with a diverse range of uses and demands. The street is dominated by vehicles with four lanes of traffic, two in each direction for most of the street. A typical cross section of the street allocates 34% of space to pedestrians, 47% to cars and 19% to buses. It is a key destination for tourists with the Sky Tower located half-way along the street. The street lacks character and has no significant artworks or defining features that reflect that it is an important east-west connection through the city.

Victoria Street will be home to one of the new City Rail Link station portals for the Aotea Station due to open in 2025. The City Rail Link is a major investment in Auckland's rail network providing a new connection through the city centre. The development is expected to bring an additional 13,000 pedestrians into the city centre through the Aotea Station during peak times. The growth in pedestrians cannot be accommodated within the existing road layout and the first stage of this project will support the development of the Aotea Station by reallocating more of the road corridor to pedestrians and cyclists.

Figure 2 depicts how the proposed Victoria Street Linear Park relates to the wider midtown programme area.

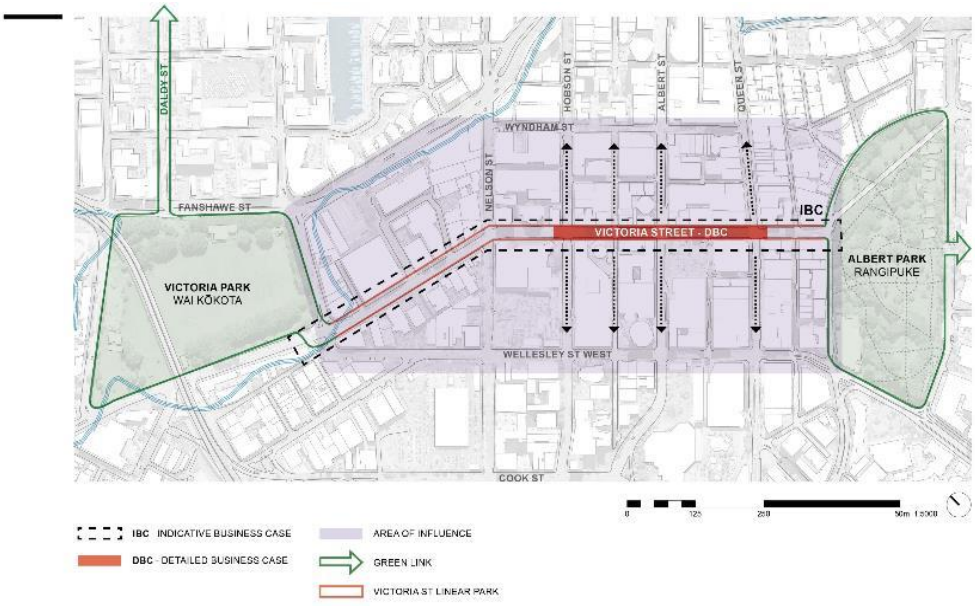


Figure 2: Extent of Study Area and proposed Detailed Business Case area

THE FRAMEWORK

Auckland Council adopted the Better Business Case Framework as the industry best practice methodology for ensuring that the best outcomes could be delivered for the project. The Better Business Case Framework is the Treasury standard for investment of public money and is being used across all transport projects in New Zealand.

The business case framework helps mitigate the risk of project failure. A recent Project Management study of projects in New Zealand (KPMG, 2017), showed that:

- 31% of projects were completed on time
- 29% on budget
- 33% met business objectives
- 34% satisfied stakeholders

The Better Business Case framework aims to mitigate some reasons for project failure by ensuring strong stakeholder engagement and clearly defined and supported project objectives.

Auckland Council, in conjunction with the project team, set out to demonstrate best practice in the developing the business case for the Victoria Street Linear Park through ensuring:

- early and varied stakeholder engagement through a 'Community of Practice'
- strong mana whenua partnership
- a clear process and programme
- robust evidence for decision makers

The Better Business case five-case model allows iterative development of a concept, building on the level of information at each business case phase.

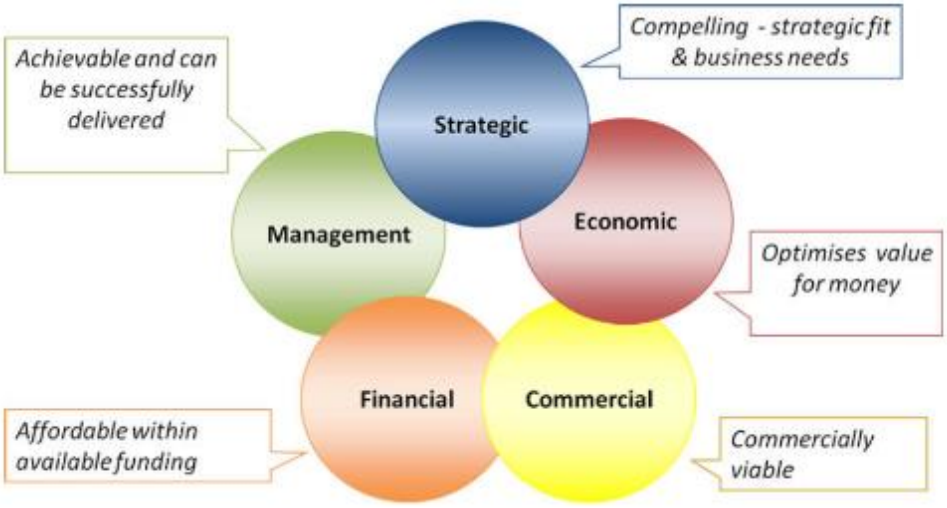


Figure 3: The 5 Case Model (Source: https://www.project-laneways.com.au/certification-courses/better-business-cases)

The Victoria Street Linear Park Business Case is beginning with the development of an Indicative Business Case (IBC). The IBC for Victoria Street Linear Park places emphasis on the development of the Strategic and Economic cases. The business case development process is shown in Figure 4.

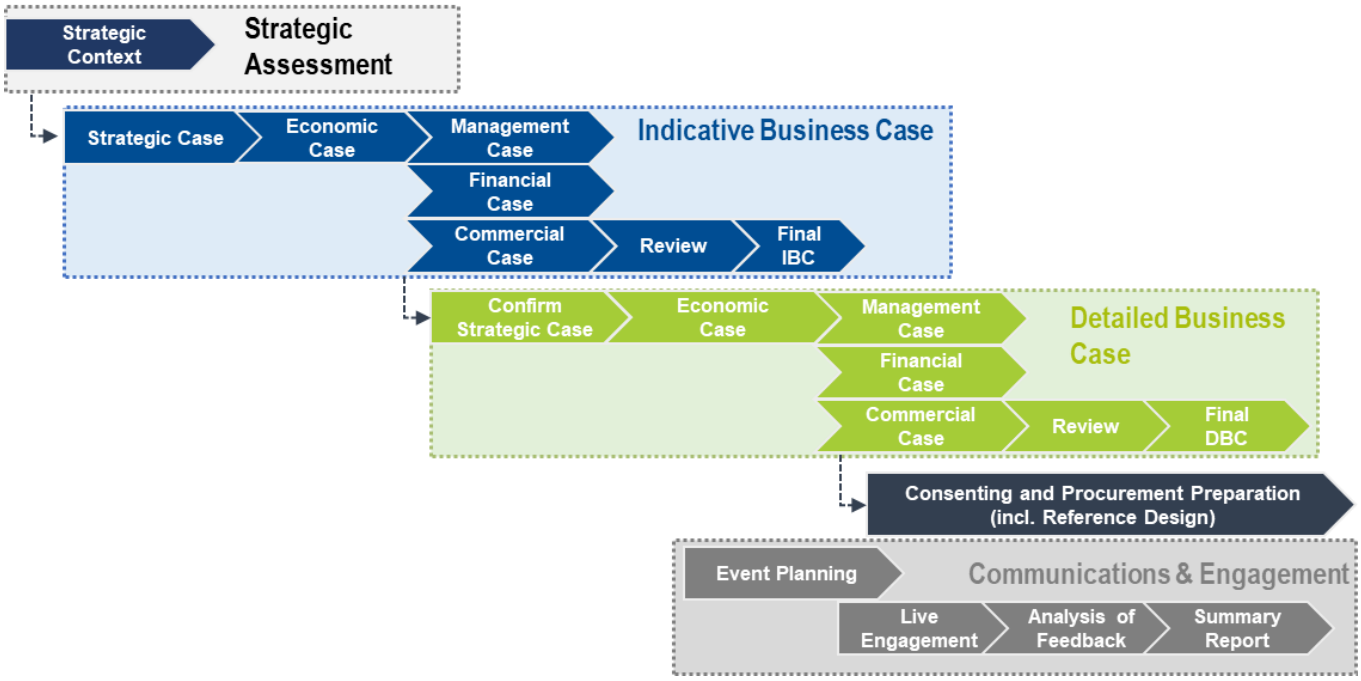


Figure 4: Business Case development steps

The Victoria Street Linear Park Indicative business case process focussed strongly on demonstrating best practice in the two key areas; stakeholder engagement and identification of agreed problems, opportunities and benefits to ensure investment decisions are robust.

THE PROJECT'S PURPOSE: LEARNING FROM THE REGENERATIVE APPROACH

To enrich the Better Business Case framework, the project team has embedded elements of regenerative practice to the process. Using aspects of regenerative thinking in the process encourages the project team and stakeholders to consider the improvements to Victoria Street in the context of the wider transportation and public realm network and the cultural and economic needs of the city. The holistic approach of regenerative thinking also aligns well with some of the concepts that are brought to the table by our mana whenua partners where the focus is on seeing Victoria Street as part of a much bigger dependant ecosystem.

Central to regenerative theory is the concept that 'a deep and practical understanding of the unique dynamics of a place is critical to planning and development'. The theory depicts four levels of work in which every living system, or entity must continually engage if it is to be sustainable in a world that is nested, dynamic, complex, interdependent and evolving. The levels form a hierarchy, with the bottom two focused on working on existence (what has already manifested), and the top two involving work on 'potential' (what exists but is not yet manifested). The framework indicates how continually to evolve the value-generating capacity of a system as a whole by revealing its potential in relationship to larger systems (Reed, 2012).

Using a systemic framework is the key to growing a successful team and project for achieving regenerative outcomes. This project is complex, as it is part of a moving and evolving living system in Auckland's city centre. Co-creating a three-part systemic purpose statement enables our thinking to be intentional rather than accidental and to ensure that we

are consistently acting in the interests of everyone in the community and for the environment. The three-part systemic purpose statement creates the:

- Function (hand) - "what" is being transformed
- Being (heart) - "how" will it be developed and
- Will (mind) - "Why" is the new value being created.

To ensure that a regenerative, systems thinking approach is considered through the project's lifecycle, the project team drew on themes emerging from the community of practice to develop the purpose statement. The regenerative framework proposes that purpose statements are developed in using three statements:

- To... (make some form of transformation)
- In a way that... (adds value in some way to the system)
- So that... (the source of motivation)

The purpose statement developed for this project is:

> *"We are transforming Victoria Street to create a thriving public space for movement, rest and recreation, in a way that reflects the unique identity of Tamaki Makaurau, to enhance the wellbeing of our people, our city and our natural environment."*

This purpose statement reflects the outcomes sought through the Investment Logic Map process in a clear high-level statement of what the project is seeking to achieve. A clear purpose statement creates a sense of shared drive to achieve defined outcomes.

The project team has started to see the benefits of incorporating regenerative thinking in the project, particularly in considering the impacts of 'project decisions' on the wider network and community. For example, asking questions prompted by regenerative thinking like "is there an opportunity on Victoria Street to make a change that might enhance the quality of the harbour?", can influence what water quality improvements could be made during the project, even though that might not be one of the initial objectives of the project.

THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Auckland Council established the concept of a community of practice, comprised of representatives from across the council group, mana whenua and the project team. Community members were invited to join the community of practice to contribute their expertise, provide varied perspectives and ask challenging questions at the beginning of the project. A community of practice was adopted to encourage robust discussions about the strategic and operational implications for the project and for the wider city network to be considered from the earliest possible point in the project. The varied backgrounds and perspectives of the community helps to avoid 'groupthink' on the project. Previous transport projects that the authors have been involved in have relied on a small number of experts form a small range of disciplines to remain actively informed and involved in decision making on projects. Extending the range and longevity of technical input as part of our process has two clear benefits for the early stage of the project:

1) It creates the opportunity for innovative solutions; and
2) this process has allowed the project team to identify 'fatal flaws' in potential longlist and shortlist options that have limited the time and cost of investigating options that cannot be implemented.

Members of the community of practice also serve as a conduit between the project and their departments and networks, influencing the project objectives and outcomes to ensure that the project delivers value from their perspective. This helps to create a much wider sense of 'ownership' and 'buy-in' for the project/. The project team anticipate that this will lead to quicker decision-making and greater alignment among stakeholders as the project progresses.

MANA WHENUA PARTNERSHIP

Project teams are often critiqued for not engaging with mana whenua early enough in the process. Auckland Council has been leading a partnership approach with mana whenua from the beginning of the business case. Expressions of interest to be part of the project reference group were communicated to all nineteen iwi that might have interest in developing and governing the outcomes of this project. Mana whenua representatives have been working alongside the project team and are part of the community of practice. The project team has received feedback that early engagement has been welcome rather that limiting the group's involvement to design and cultural narrative work.

WHY INVEST? PROBLEMS, OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS

The City Centre Masterplan 2012 outlined some high-level strategic drivers for change on Victoria Street which were largely supported in the stakeholder consultation process. Given the pace of change and scale of development in Auckland's city centre, it was essential to revaluate drivers for change and project outcomes.

The Victoria Street Linear Park Business Case Community of Practice informed the rationale for investment and benefits for the Strategic Case. During the first community of practice workshop and using a regenerative lens, members were asked to explore the potential of what Victoria Street could be for the city through a series of brainstorming exercises. The first workshop also explored what the concept of a park on a street might evoke in the wider community. This exercise generated 312 ideas centred round the following themes:

Improved Amenity	Signage	Wildlife and Nature
Sense of Place	Storage and Facilities	Activities
Routes and connectivity	Safety	Sustainability
Design	Food / Drinks	Feature

Table 1: Themes from Community of Practice: Workshop 1

The community of practice was then asked to engage in a series of exercises considering Victoria Street improvements within a 'nested systems' approach – a concept developed through regenerative thinking. They were asked to consider the project through five lenses - Social/Cultural, Infrastructure, Environment, Economy, Human Development. The nested systems approach was chosen so that the community had the opportunity to look at the wider benefits of investment beyond infrastructure street improvements.

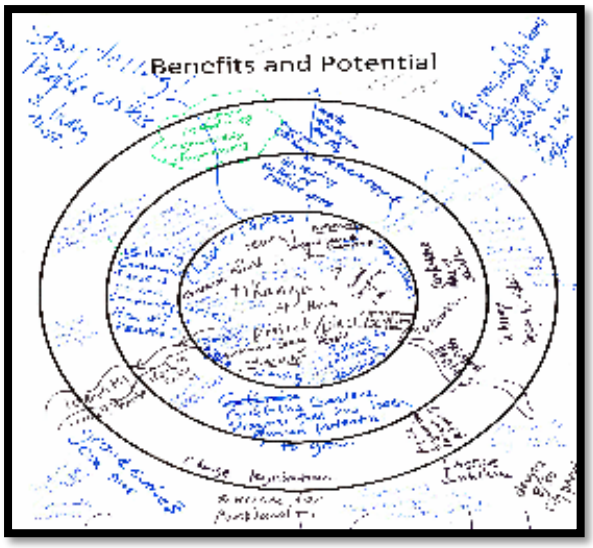


Image: Nested Systems for Victoria Street

Image: The Community of Practice and work

The ideas generated in this session were then used by the multidisciplinary project team to complete an Investment Logic Map (ILM).

INVESTMENT LOGIC MAP

The Investment Logic Map (ILM) tool visually depicts the link between the reason for investment and the benefits of investment. Under the Better Business Case Framework:

- A **problem** is an issue that should be addressed.
- An **opportunity** is a combination of factors that makes change in midtown possible.
- A benefit is a **measurable improvement** as the result of our investment.

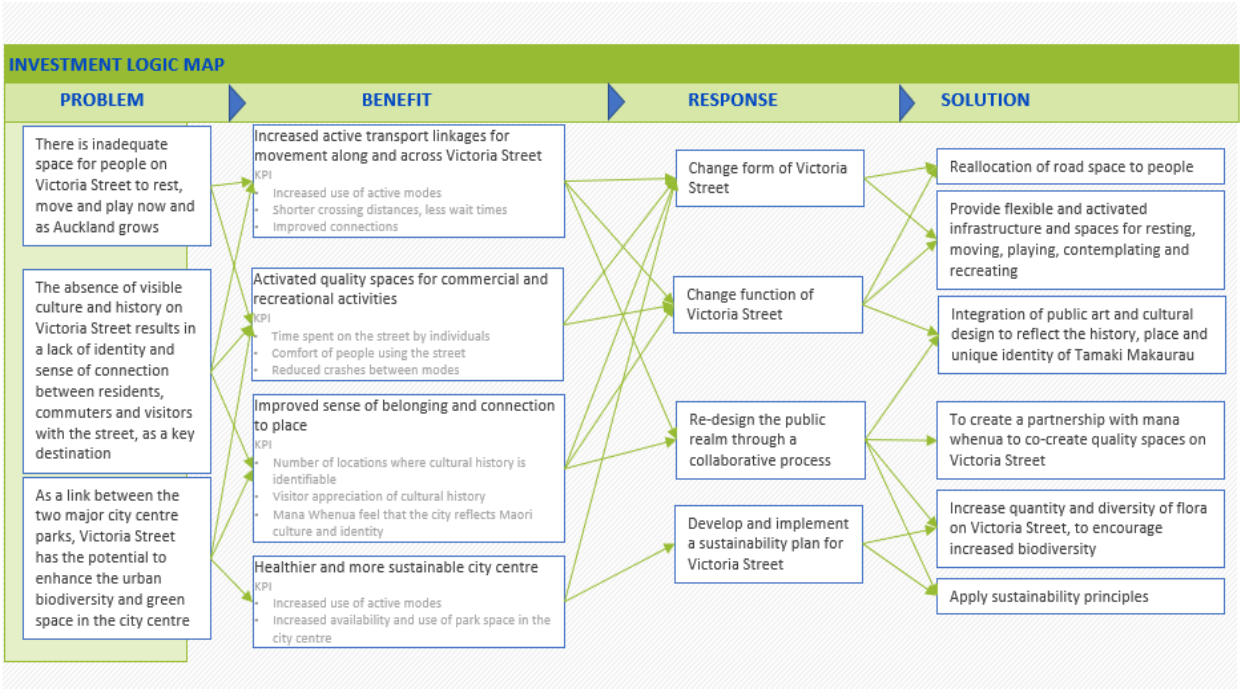


Figure 5: Investment Logic Map Victoria Street

Two clear problems and one opportunity were identified through this process. The Investment Logic Map for Victoria Street (Figure 5) was endorsed by the Project Steering Group and issued to the community of practice for feedback.

Problem 1: There is inadequate space for people on Victoria Street to rest, move and play now and as Auckland grows.

Problem 1 focusses on the current layout of Victoria Street prioritising vehicles over people. The current layout is an issue because there is not enough space available to accommodate current and growing numbers of residents, employees and visitor resulting in pedestrian congestion and a poor user experience.

Victoria Street is typical of most roads within Auckland's city centre. It is used by a wide range of transport modes including pedestrians, cyclists, micro-mobility, private vehicles and public bus transport. Typically, the cross section of the corridor provides for footpaths with between four to six lanes of traffic. Parking, loading and bus stops are located between intersections where turning lanes are not required. The footpaths are separated from the carriageway by raised kerbs with cyclists, private and commercial vehicles and buses all sharing the road.

The current layout of Victoria Street prioritises vehicles over people. Spatial allocation on the corridor is heavily weighted in favour of vehicles. As shown in Figure 6, approximately 47% of the cross section is given to car lanes and 19% to bus lanes, leaving 34% for footpaths. Footpaths along Victoria Street between Hobson Street and Queen Street are typically between 3-5m wide and include bus shelters and other street furniture inhibiting pedestrian movement along the corridor. These are generally the busiest sections of Victoria Street accommodating over 3,100 pedestrians in the peak hours and over 26,000 pedestrian trips per day and forecast to grow, particularly with the opening of the City Rail Link Aotea Station. The space provided for this volume of pedestrians is inadequate, resulting in congested footpaths and a poor user experience.

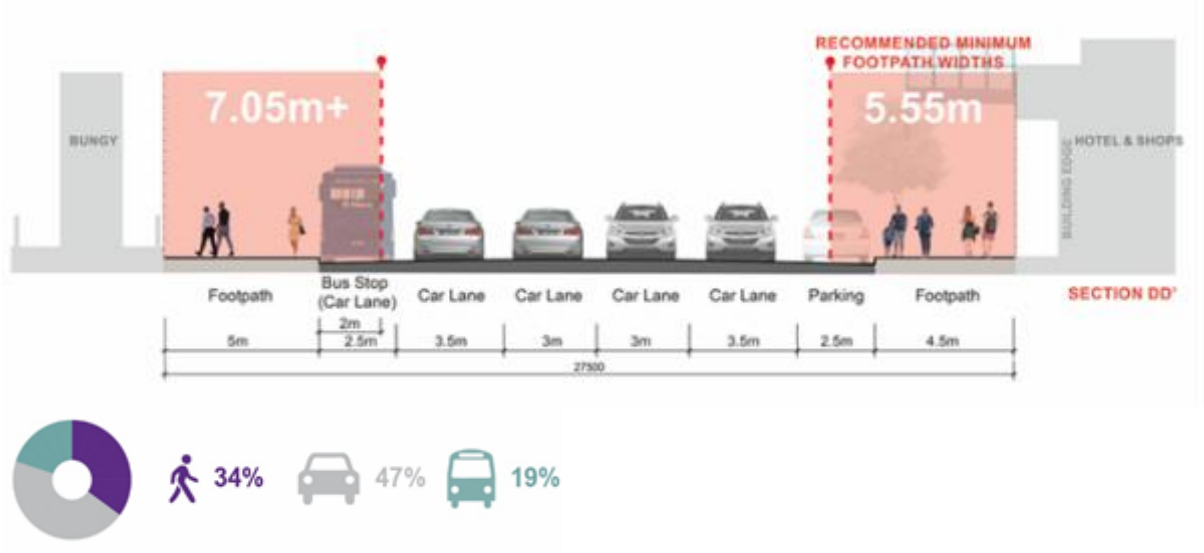
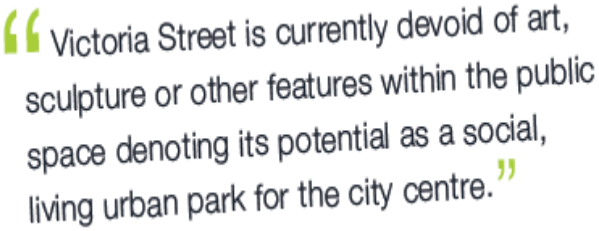


Figure 6: Cross section of Victoria Street

Problem 2: The absence of visible culture and history on Victoria Street results in a lack of identity and sense of connection between residents, commuters and visitors with the street, as a key destination.

Problem 2 focusses on Victoria Street not having a clear identity or sense of place despite having a rich history. Consequently, this has an impact on people not feeling any connection or belonging to Victoria Street affecting their interaction with other people and sense of community. The issue is not only true for Victoria Street but for many parts of Auckland. While this project cannot address this issue for the whole of Auckland, through this project we can take steps to improve outcomes for the wider nested system.



Victoria Street is a typical city centre street consisting mostly of pavement and asphalt between buildings on either side of the street. The road corridor is focused on vehicles with a significant amount of space dedicated to traffic lanes, parking and loading. Despite the Sky Tower being a key tourist destination on Victoria Street, the street does not reflect the rich history or unique culture of Auckland. Auckland’s Māori identity is its unique point of difference in the world however the city centre does not reflect Māori identity. The Auckland Plan identifies Māori Identity and Wellbeing as one of the six key outcomes of the Plan. The lack of representation was noted clearly by mana whenua representatives through the Community of Practice workshops.

Problem 2 emerged as the leading problem on Victoria Street with the following key themes identified:

- Community and connection to heritage
- Circulation and connection to site
- Interaction between park and community
- Strong connection to the land
- Culture and community and
- Create a place to engage, share and build community.

These themes emphasize that a lack of connection and identify is felt by those familiar with Victoria Street. Using a traditional project team approach in a project with a large transport infrastructure component, it is unlikely that identity and connection would have emerged as such as large strategic driver for the project. Identifying this gap as a need for the city has significantly impacted the content of the Multicriteria Analysis and therefore the assessment of the options.

Opportunity 1: As a link between the two major city centre parks, Victoria Street has the potential to enhance the urban biodiversity and green space in the city centre.

Opportunity 1 acknowledges the unique position of Victoria Street in linking two major city centre parks. Referencing the City Centre Masterplan and Green Link Concept, this opportunity investigates the potential to increase the presence of green spaces in the city centre and enrich the local biodiversity.

Currently, the Victoria Street streetscape primarily consists of concrete and glass. By understanding the natural ecosystem of this area and increasing biodiversity on Victoria Street, natural corridors can be created for birds and fauna to move through the

city and restore some of the natural habitat in the city centre. Enhancing urban biodiversity can also increase air quality and protect against urban heat island effect. High quality urban realm will provide links between two existing green spaces in an East-West direction across the city. There is real opportunity for improvements along Victoria Street to also contribute to the environmental outcomes desired for the city centre and Auckland, in line with a number of strategic plans including The Low Carbon, Strategic Action Plan, Auckland Climate Action Framework, C40 zero emissions target, Auckland Growing Greener.

DEVELOPING THE OPTIONS

The project team worked with the community of practice and the mana whenua forum on the development of the longlist and shortlist options.

A co-design, interactive approach was used to look at street elements. A diverse group of people in the room throughout this process meant that the right questions were being asked throughout the process such as ‘what would this mean for the maintenance team?’, ‘is it more important to plant trees or protect the sight lines?’. A traditional transport project experience often focuses on a design solution and the project lifecycle. The innovation of the community of practice was that much broader opportunities and constraints were identified for the project but also beyond the project’s lifecycle. Broader community implications of improvements to Victoria Street outside of infrastructure considerations were also discussed and incorporated into project outcomes.

Outputs from the community of practice were used by the project team to develop an assessment framework. The assessment framework included clear Critical Success Factors (CSFs) to inform a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) matrix which both the long list and short list options were assessed against. The development of the CSFs and MCA matrix was enriched by the participation of the community of practice and mana whenua. What emerged were criteria for analysis which the project team felt was much broader than a typical transport or streetscape upgrade project. Transport objectives were only one of the groups of assessment factors with equal weighting given to environmental and cultural outcomes.

Image: Community of Practice Workshop 2

A total of 17 long list options were assessed and discussed with mana whenua through the mana whenua forum. The process allowed the project team to rule out long list options with ‘fatal flaws’ early. Some of the project team’s more innovative concepts from a design perspective, such as delivering a park through the middle of the street, were not carried through due to feedback in the community of practice sessions from operational and maintenance experts. Without the community of practice forum, these issues may not have been raised until much later date.

A short list of three options was then assessed using both the qualitative MCA and an economic assessment. The concepts that were raised in the community of practice workshops and embedded into the critical success factors for the project allowed the project team to develop a clear assessment framework for the shortlist options. To support the qualitative assessment, the project team used Auckland Council's 'Valuing Urban Realm toolkit' combined with the New Zealand Transport Agency's Economic Evaluation Manual (EEM). The approach was used to ensure consistency with projects in the city centre that are co-funded by the Transport Agency while also being able to demonstrate and assess the benefits of urban realm improvement which the existing EEM did not capture. The EEM is now under review but this project methodology can also serve as a test case for why non infrastructure benefits need to be measured and valued within transport projects, particularly as the focus for investment moves more strongly towards supporting active modes.

The significant impact on the process was that all three options provided the adequate space to significantly address the identified problem and opportunity statements. The economic analysis was then used to determine which of the options was the best value for money in order to deliver the benefits.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The strength of the Better Business Case framework supported by regenerative concepts has led to the establishment of clear project drivers and defined the project outcomes which have been co-created with the community of practice and in partnership with mana whenua representatives. This process has led to only one of the three problem / opportunity statements being purely related to 'transport outcomes' and demonstrates the growing importance of other benefits such as opportunities to reflect the city's culture and heritage and improved sustainability outcomes,

The project team has been able to refer to the Investment Logic Map to confirm that option assessment and selection addresses the problems, opportunities and benefits shaped by the Community of Practice and mana whenua representatives. We anticipate that process will lead to the best and most acceptable design outcomes and to quicker decisions as the project moves into the next phase. Decision makers across the council group will be able to be assured that a robust process has been followed to provide confidence to decisions and project direction.

From our experience in leading this process we recommend that the infrastructure industry adopt some of the practices for large projects that have been used on this project, including:

- establish early partnership with mana whenua and engage through separate forums and as part of wider groups
- establish a community of experts that can support the project, offer advice and act as a conduit between the project and other teams, departments and stakeholders
- establish a project team that is multidisciplinary
- establish clear reasons for investment and agree benefits with your stakeholders
- have a robust qualitative and quantitative assessment framework

Support from stakeholders is important to enable the success of the project. Our next step is secure a council group decision on the reduction of lanes on Victoria Street. This will be followed by wider public engagement through creative and engaging engagement practices alongside traditional consultation to support principles of co-design along the street. We anticipate the community of practice and mana whenua representatives to keep working closely alongside the project team through the next stages.

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Liz Nicholls, principal author of the practice paper, thought leader for the community of practice, leading stakeholder engagement, client project lead.

Stephanie Spedding, project manager of project business case including data and analysis, technical transport lead, paper reviewer, leading stakeholder engagement.

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