

Chapman Road Activation CBD Pilot Project

Project Review and Recommendations



Project background

In early 2021, the City of Greater Geraldton (the City) embarked on a new approach to revitalising its City Centre. As part of a successful RAC Reconnect WA grant funding and using 'tactical urbanism', the City tested temporary changes to Chapman Road, a service road located in central Geraldton, with the objective of creating a safer, more pedestrian friendly and vibrant streetscape.

Tactical urbanism is an approach, which values community-led, low-cost, temporary changes to test ideas and open up place management to the wider community. The project was intended from its inception to be an innovative pilot that would push the boundaries of city-making processes for the City. Drawing from an iterative design process, learnings from the trial will be used to inform the next stage of the project. The City, with the support of placemaking consultancy Village Well, has assessed the project. This executive summary and recommendations are based on the results of the Final Report and Evaluation produced for RAC which explores in detail the successful and challenging elements of the projects and documents important learnings for both the City and the wider tactical urbanism and placemaking movement.

Project process and outcomes

An Action Plan was developed by a Working Party comprised of diverse stakeholders in early 2021. The objective of this Action Plan was to lower traffic speeds on Chapman Road, while improving pedestrian amenity and experience, ultimately connecting Chapman Road to Marine Terrace and making it an attractive destination for locals and tourists.

Despite challenges including COVID-19, timing, resourcing and budget restraints, City delivered the project, with local consultant support. The City was successful in installing temporary changes to the road and various activation activities took place throughout the year which included:

- Narrowing of the street and formalisation of two lanes of two-way traffic
- Reduction of speed limit from 50km/h to 30 km/h
- Widening of pedestrian area
- Installation of planter boxes, seating and artworks



Installation of the streetscape changes; attendees at the Midwest Art Prize event; participants in the Critter Trail; winners of the Midwest Art Prize

Key impact

Positive outcomes



30%

Decrease in average
vehicle speed

+213%

Increase in visitors (post-
lockdown)

+11%

Increase in dwell time
(post-lockdown)

+19

Planter boxes

+6

Art walls



+5 Public seats

+1 Parklet

+22m²

Shade

+187%

Increase in cyclist use
(post-lockdown)



Areas for improvement

80%

Business owners or workers surveyed did not think the pedestrian experience had improved

89%

Business owners or workers surveyed rated the community as very unsupportive of the project

50%

Reduction in outdoor dining tables

76%

Business owners or workers surveyed did not experience an increase in foot traffic

43%

Business owners and workers surveyed thought that Chapman Road is now less safe

Top learnings

- Formalising two lanes of two-way traffic on Chapman Road did not result in increased congestion on Chapman Road or other streets in the CBD despite a 10% increase in traffic in the area.
- The formalisation of two lanes of two-way traffic successfully slowed traffic on Chapman Road.
- Placemaking is a strengths-based approach and Chapman Road's greatest strength was proven to be GRAG, which delivered community and cultural events and activities, attracted visitation and were very well received by the community.
- The community must be brought along in the journey every step of the way. This required greater resourcing to unlock good-will and volunteerism.
- The City was over-ambitious with its limited budget. Concentrating on a smaller stretch of road and therefore directing spending towards higher quality physical improvements (e.g. larger trees) and community capacity building could have achieved greater impact.
- The timeline was too compressed. Transitioning a service road to a lively pedestrian streetscape destination is a long-term project. However, these process learnings have now set the scene to pilot alternate approaches to other projects across the CBD.

Recommendations

As part of the impact evaluation of the Chapman Road CBD Activation Pilot Project, 13 recommendations for the City have been developed. These will assist the City in determining the future of this section of Chapman Road and future placemaking and tactical urbanism projects in the CBD.

Strategic

1. Host a casual, virtual learning circle/summit with other recipients of the Reconnect WA funding. Each local government could present on the successes and learnings from their projects and establish supportive relationships.
2. Conduct a review of the City Centre Revitalisation Plan to investigate opportunities for sensitive integration of mixed-used zones, a strengthened link between the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery (GRAG) and Marine Terrace and support for more residents to live in the City Centre.
3. Investigate opportunities to convert under-utilised spaces or buildings into residential units or apartments. A City Centre Living Design Guide would illustrate the process of converting under-utilised space, guiding owners, developers, investors, building professionals and real estate agents through the process and associated regulations and compliance requirements.
4. Continue to foster a City culture of pilots, innovation, adaptation and learning, ensuring testing and trialing becomes 'business as usual'. More importantly, pilots should continue to undergo in-depth evaluation to consolidate learnings which can be shared across the organisation.
5. Invest in staff capacity building in placemaking, tactical urbanism and community development principles.

Future placemaking projects

6. Remain realistic about project expectations when it comes to budget and staff resourcing. Expect that physical street improvements may be more expensive than originally projected and plan for adequate resourcing to ensure staff do not become burnt out by the process.
7. "Go where the energy is". The most successful placemaking projects start with an engaged trader or community and grow from strengths rather than starting from scratch. Marine Terrace traders in the Working Party expressed an interest in tactical urbanism on their street this could present a good location for the next trial.
8. Prioritise community buy-in. An important learning has been that volunteer hours equal project success and value. Future projects must bring community members along in the journey. This extends to relationship building with traders, which must be continually prioritised rather than being stop-start.
9. Throughout any project, regular face-to-face meetings and social events should be held with Working Party members.
10. Continue to involve Year 12 students in designing and evaluating projects. This is a productive relationship which will build long-term ownership and pride.
11. Make use of the parklet purchased for this trial by testing it in different locations around the CBD (i.e. Marine Terrace). Add shading to the structure and incorporate activations or better amenity (plants, cushions) to ensure it becomes a comfortable and usable structure.
12. Geraldton has a driver-centric approach to streets. In order to shift perceptions around how vibrant, healthy and walkable cities are created, a Design Series/Festival could be hosted in the new GRAG Park (with some hybrid events). Other cities have had great success in delivering panels with thought leaders in the urban design space, as this is often a field that

local people do not regularly engage with. Speakers could include City staff, Town Team representatives and other built environment professionals.

13. To build community capacity, a small placemaking grants program could be established to activate GRAG Park, Marine Terrace and other activity centres. GRAG could play a role in upskilling locals to deliver or expand art trails such as the Critter Trail.

Next steps for Chapman Road

The Chapman Road CBD Activation Pilot Project enabled the City to understand which elements in the action plan worked well and which were not well received by the Community. The evaluation informs the next steps of the trial where the aspirations of the broader community should be considered and mechanisms put in place for engaged community members who want to take action to do so.

Trial Extension

The City is looking at an extension of the trial (12-months) to test the actions suggested by the community, some of the changes to the Chapman Road CBD Activation Pilot Project includes:

1. Retain the two lanes of two-way traffic but remove the snaked geometry that the community strongly disliked.
2. Install on-street parking and plant street trees to improve access and amenity. This will encourage visitation to the existing businesses and attract new businesses and investment.
3. Retain the expanded pedestrian zone and ensure that there are clear, physical boundaries (i.e. kerbing) between pedestrian and car spaces so pedestrians feel safe and cars know where they can drive. While reducing traffic speeds has been met, the reclaimed space must feel safe for pedestrians to use.
4. Adjust the merging/demerging sections to the street to improve driver safety.
5. Review the City of Greater Geraldton City Centre Revitalisation Plan

Permanent implementation and future design

The lesson learnt and recommendations acquired from the Chapman Road CBD Activation Pilot Project will continue to inform the City on future CBD Activation projects.

The trial extension on Chapman Road will allow for some quick wins action to be undertaken on Chapman Road while the City conceptualise and design some more permanent changes the road, these includes:

- Add cycle lanes on each side of the road.
- Work with Main Roads WA to implement a right turn-only lane into Durlacher Street heading south on Chapman Road. This will eliminate congestion caused by the merging two lanes of traffic into one in front of GRAG and improve overall road safety.
- Extend the Activation to the next section of Chapman Road between Durlacher Street and Forrest Street, which is also too narrow for four lanes of two-way traffic, ensuring lessons learned in the first trial are adhered to.

Appendix 1 – Evaluation Report

Evaluation Methodology

The approach taken to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the tactical urbanism pilot was informed by the impact indicators originally outlined in the measurement framework.

Data gathering technique	Data points	Notes
Localis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Average number of pedestrians ● Average time spent on Chapman Road (linger time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q1 2021 was measured against Q2 2022 for both indicators
Traffic count data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Average speed of vehicles ● Maximum speed of vehicles ● Number of vehicles ● Number of reported incidents on Chapman Road ● Types of vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traffic counts taken 106m south of Durlacher Street and 50m south of Durlacher Street in April 2021 and March/April 2022 respectively were used to determine changes in speed and number of vehicles ● Main Roads WA were unable to provide incident reports ● Types of vehicles was determined to not be a relevant data point
Place audits* (15 minutes each spent at 4 sections of Chapman Rd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of cyclists ● Number of pedestrian activities/behaviours ● Number public seats ● Number of outdoor dining seats ● m² shade (verandas, overhang and trees) ● Number of art walls/pieces of public art ● Pedestrian demographics ● Pedestrian group sizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We were unable to obtain post-pilot demographic and group size data
Survey and stakeholder workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived improvement in pedestrian experience ● Perceived community support ● Perceived impact to trader's foot traffic and number customers ● Perceived increase in safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Qualitative data from workshops was tested against quantitative survey data

Evaluation Limitations

As mentioned above, some data points were irrelevant or unable to be obtained due to limited capacity. COVID-19 restrictions in place in 2021 significantly impacted the results. It is therefore difficult to determine the isolated impact of the tactical urbanism pilot in creating changes in pedestrian and driver behavior.

Additionally, the 56m difference in where traffic counts were taken pre- and post-pilot could have impacted the data quality. It should also be noted that objectives such as safety are based on perception rather than traffic incident reports and may not reflect pedestrian behaviours.

Due to staffing capacity, data was obtained pre- and post- pilot rather than a mid-project assessment being undertaken. In future projects, a six-monthly assessment would be preferable.

Action Plan Evaluation

The Action Plan was a list of concrete actions the Working Party developed to help achieve the project objectives. The Action Plan was themed into three categories: Movement; Amenity and Experience; and Creativity and Activation.



Figure 8: Before and after aerial views of the Chapman Road Pilot Project

The table below lists Action Plan items and their status.

Action	Achieved	Outcome
Movement		

1. Formalise two lanes of two-way traffic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was achieved
2. Reduce lane width	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was achieved
3. Snaking road geometry to reduce sight lines and vehicle speed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was achieved. The outcome of some drivers becoming frustrated and not following the lines.
4. Reduce speed limit to 30km/h	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was achieved
5. Install bike maintenance tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It was determined that bike infrastructure would be better used in other parts of the City
6. Install bike parking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Amenity & Experience		
7. Install planter boxes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	19 repurposed planter boxes were used for the project
8. Create artworks on planter boxes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The artworks were created in collaboration with local students who came up with the designs in a workshop and were then transferred to the planter boxes. Much of the feedback on the planter boxes was that people loved that they brought more colour to the street but they could have had larger trees with more shade or have been placed to create a more obvious pedestrian edge
9. Install solar lighting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved
10. Install parklet and/or seating benches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was achieved. Feedback included that benches should not be made of metal in unshaded areas, and the parklet could have included extra shade.
11. Provide activity and amenity nodes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Three 'nodes' were created through the mural sections and placement of benches
12. Attract food and beverage businesses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved and may be a longer-term strategy for the City. COVID-19 restrictions may have also inhibited new food businesses from opening
13. Promote use of WIFI on street	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved as there is no free WIFI on Chapman Road
14. Visual merchandising training for traders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved
15. Install outdoor furniture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	While the parklet and benches were installed, traders did not install any additional furniture
16. Cultural/themed nights by hospitality traders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved due to lack of engagement from hospitality traders
Creativity & Activation		
17. Community road mural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rather than being painted by community members, this was contracted and three areas were painted based on the themes of: Fields of Gold, Botanical Wonders and Ship to Shore
18. 'Edutainment' talks/workshops in GRAG park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Renovations to GRAG Park started soon after the pilot began and so the space was unable to be fully utilized. However, before the renovations

		began, on Saturday 27 November 2021, two months after the official launch of the Tactical Urbanism Pilot GRAG hosted the prestigious Midwest Art Prize Opening Night. The event involved closing part of Chapman Road to accommodate attendees, light projections on the Gallery, live music, the awards ceremony and buffet. This type of event demonstrated what was possible with street closures and fostered a sense of fun and community
19. Pavement chalk art activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved
20. Interpretive storytelling trail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The 'Critter Trail' was a collection of six artworks of mischievous, art-loving critters 'running loose' on Chapman Road. Participants in the trail had to find the six artworks by exploring Chapman Road and return an entry form to GRAG to go into the draw to win 1 of 4 art packs valued at \$100 drawn at the end of each school holiday period. The hashtag #CritterTrailonChapman was used by the City and the local artists to promote the project. The trail was used for school excursions, attracting a lot of foot traffic to the activated section of Chapman Road
21. Mural walls	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
22. Knit bombing competition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved
23. Establish new Town Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved - Chapman Road is not a residential area and Town Teams are dependent on team members who live locally
24. Attract markets to Chapman Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This was not achieved
25. Regular meetings with Chapman Road traders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Working Party and/or traders did not meet regularly during the trial. The Working Party believed they were listened to in initial stages, but felt that small tweaks throughout the trial could have improved learnings

Impacts and Outcomes

Positive impacts



30%

Decrease in average
vehicle speed

+213%

Increase in visitors (post-
lockdown)

+11%

Increase in dwell time
(post-lockdown)

+19

Planter boxes

+6

Art walls



+5 Public seats

+1 Parklet

+22m²

Shade

+187%

Increase in cyclist use
(post-lockdown)



Areas for improvement

80%

Business owners or workers surveyed did not think the pedestrian experience had improved

50%

Reduction in outdoor dining tables

89%

Business owners or workers surveyed rated the community as very unsupportive of the project

76%

Business owners or workers surveyed did not experience an increase in foot traffic

43%

Business owners or workers surveyed thought that Chapman Road is now less safe

Critter Trail

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49 Participants

2219 Facebook users reached by a Critter Trail post

916 Views of the Critter Trail video

"The Critter Trail felt very local and relevant." - Workshop participant.

"People loved the Critter Trail - not just kids, but grandparents too. There was a sense of 'wow!'" - Workshop participant.

Midwest Art Prize Opening Night

On Saturday 27 November 2021, two months after the official launch of the Tactical Urbanism Pilot, GRAG hosted the prestigious Midwest Art Prize Opening Night. The event involved closing part of Chapman Road to accommodate attendees, light projections on the Gallery, live music, the awards ceremony and buffet. Attendees highly appreciated this opportunity to ‘just have a party’. This type of event demonstrated what was possible with street closures and fostered a sense of fun and community.

512 Attendees

“The Art Prize Opening Night showed what is possible in Chapman Road.” - Workshop participant.

Place Audits

A place audit is an on-the-ground technique of observation used in placemaking or tactical urbanism projects to give insight into pedestrian behaviours and amenity. In 2021, these audits were conducted by local high school geography students and was repeated in 2022.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of cyclists ● Number of pedestrian activities/behaviours ● Number public seats ● Number of outdoor dining seats ● m² shade (verandas, overhang and trees) ● Number of art walls/pieces of public art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 187% increase in cyclists using the space in 3 x 1 hour periods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↑15 cyclists ● +1 pedestrian behaviours: jaywalking ● 250% increase in public seats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↑5 public seats ● 50% reduction in outdoor dining tables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↓2 tables ● 1.2% increase in shade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↑22m² of shade ● +19 planter boxes with artwork added ● +6 art walls
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Visitation Reporting

Localis, a location analytics company, were able to provide data on visitation to Chapman Road via the measurement of the number of mobile phone signals.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Average number of pedestrians ● Average time spent on Chapman Road (linger time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 213% increase in number of visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↑ 22,295 (from 10,470 to 32,765 visitors) ● 11% increase in dwell time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ↑ 7 minutes (62 mins to 69 mins) ● Wednesdays - Fridays became more popular for visitors and Saturdays - Tuesdays became less popular
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Traffic Reporting

Traffic data was provided by The City of Greater Geraldton. See methodology above for detail on traffic count locations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Average speed of vehicles● Maximum speed of vehicles● Number of vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 30% decrease in average vehicle speed<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ↓ 14.5 km/h (from 47.5km/h to 33km/h)● 2% decrease in maximum vehicle speed<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ↓ 3.3 km/h (from 160km/h to 156.7km/h)● 11% increase in average number of vehicles/day<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ↑ 842 vehicles (from 7,637 to 8,479)
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Community sentiment

The project received a lot of attention on social media. A commentary review revealed:

- Many people saw Chapman Road as a very busy street that exists primarily for people to get from A to B, rather than a space for potential revitalisation.
- Many people indicated that the benefits of spaces being created for pedestrians on this stretch of road were not understood by the broader community and that they were not brought along on the journey.
- Many people indicated they did not understand that the project was a trial or that it had been funded by a RAC grant rather than purely by tax-payers.

“Looks good, but not sure if it’s practical for traffic.”- Facebook user

“This is just making a congested part of town 100x worse” - Facebook user

“It’s a road... it’s meant for cars?” - Facebook user

“Just holding more events at the art gallery (and closing the street for one) and having more kids hanging around waiting for parents in the pub does not make this a success” - Facebook user

“If you want to revitalise an area... concentrate on Marine Terrace and that shopping precinct. Encourage more cafes etc. so it becomes a coffee strip. ATM it’s barren and uninspiring.” - Facebook user

The planters, artwork and the pilot approach were positively received.

“It’s interesting the comments here are generally judging the project from the viewpoint of a car user. Shouldn’t we get out of our cars, overlord that they are, and maybe experience the multi user concept? You know as humans on legs” - Facebook user

“If it doesn't work then it can be removed easily with a minimal investment lost. Sounds like a responsible process to me as a rate payer.” - Facebook user

Stakeholder Engagement

During September and October, Village Well conducted a stakeholder survey and held two workshops: one with internal City staff and one with external stakeholder of the project including Working Party members and business owners/workers. Additionally, Facebook comments were analysed.

Workshops

Two workshops were undertaken with internal and external stakeholders. The purpose of these workshops was to provide an opportunity for those involved in the project to reflect on the successes and learnings of the project and for the evaluation team to better understand the project outcomes. These workshops were held digitally with the use of a shared interactive whiteboard where participants could use sticky notes to capture ideas. In each workshop, the agenda followed the format of reviewing the actions for each of the three themes: Movement, Amenity and Creativity, and then discussion of the successes and learnings. These have been summarised throughout the report, with raw data included below.

Internal and External stakeholder workshop

The below images show the post-it note responses to the question, 'For this theme [Movement/Amenity Experience/Creativity and Activation], what did you feel were the biggest successes and the biggest learnings?'

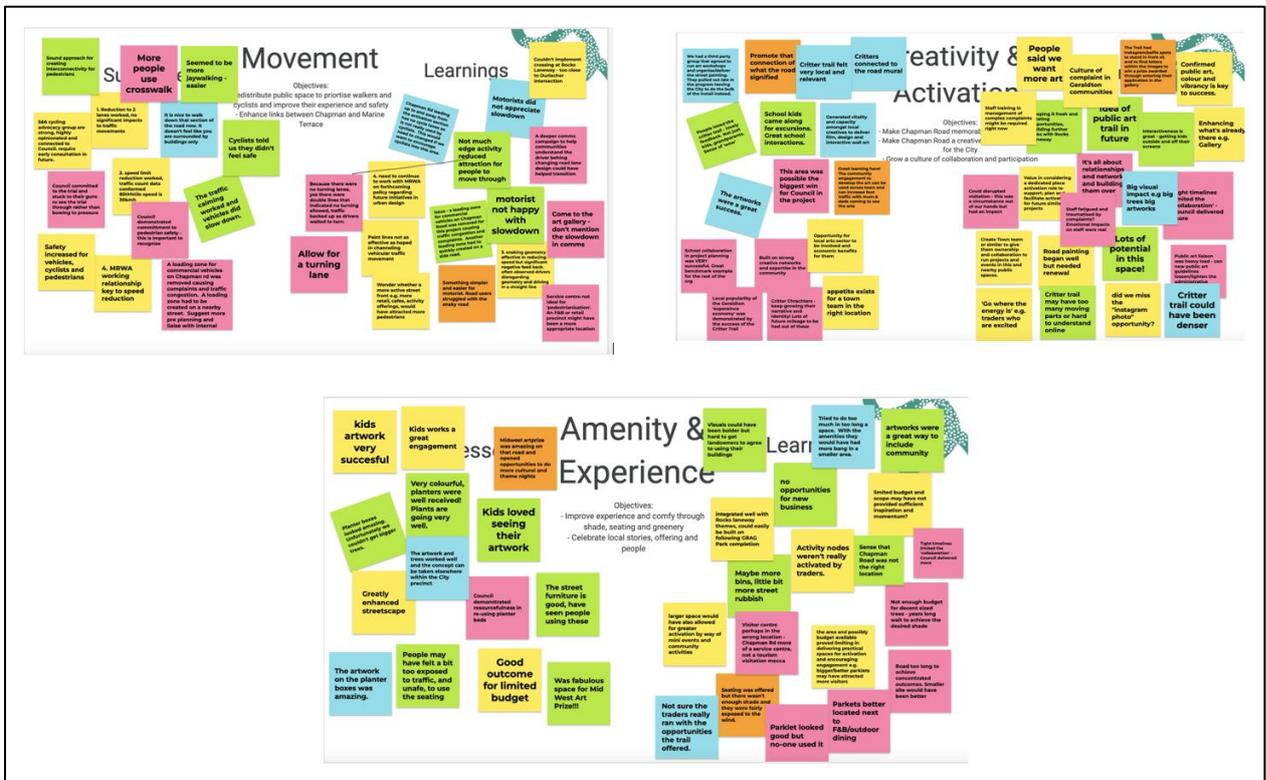


Figure 9: Internal stakeholder workshop responses

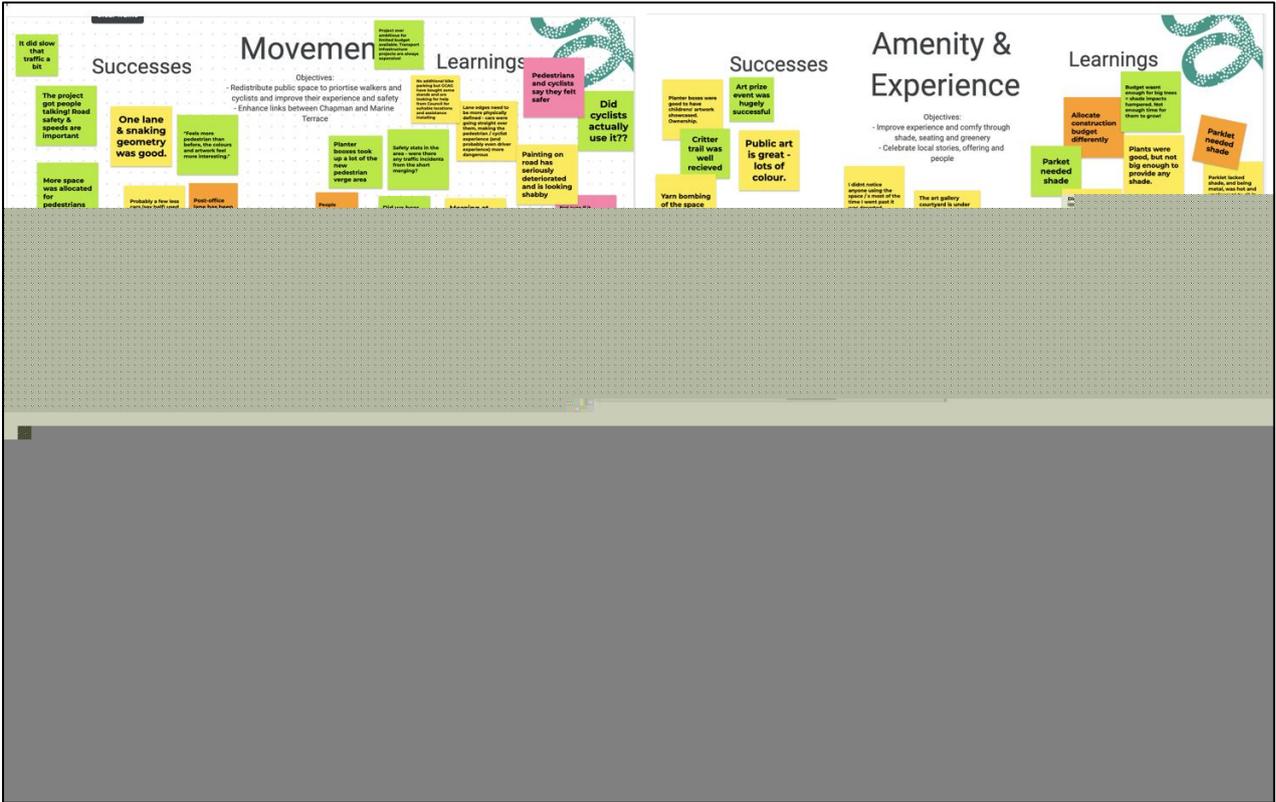


Figure 10: External stakeholder workshop responses

Stakeholder Survey Outcomes

A survey of City staff, Councillors and Chapman Road business owners and workers received 46 responses. Of these, seven were City staff members or Councilors, ten were members of the Working Party and 29 worked at or owned a business on Chapman Road. 65% of respondents rated their personal level of support for the Tactical Urbanism Project as unsupportive or very unsupportive. 17% rated their level of support as neutral, and 17% rated their level of support as supportive or very supportive. Only two people responded to the question regarding the number of volunteer’s hours they had contributed to the project. One stated they had contributed 25 volunteer hours and the other was unsure of their contribution. This speaks to the lack of community involvement in the project beyond the initial Working Party.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived improvement in pedestrian experience ● Perceived community support ● Perceived impact to trader’s foot traffic and number customers ● Perceived increase in safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 80% of respondents did not think the pedestrian experienced had improved; 13% thought that it had and 7% were unsure ● 89% rated the community as very unsupportive of the project; 9% rated it the community as neutral; 2% rated the community as supportive ● 76% of business owners or workers did not experience an increase in foot traffic; 24% were unsure ● 43% of respondents thought that Chapman Road is now less safe; 39% of respondents thought pedestrian safety as about the same; 17.39% thought it was safer
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