

Project overview

In May 2013, Moreland City Council was awarded \$210,000 under the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund (PSIF) Grants Program for the 'Jewell of Brunswick' project to build a new public space and urban bouldering wall (climbing wall) on the corner of Wilson Avenue and Sydney Road, Brunswick to address local crime and safety issues.

The original total budget for this project was \$325,000, including Council's co-contribution of \$114,350 and the \$210,000 grant from the Community Crime Prevention Unit.

Using a place making approach, Council conducted extensive community consultation from planning through to implementation. Through the consultation process, the project achieved significant community support, resulting in the expansion of the project to the permanent closure of a section of Wilson Avenue to create a new people-friendly public space.

Construction of the permanent public space commenced on 2 February 2015 with the project scheduled for completion mid-2015.

The project has achieved a significant profile within the community and is now considered Moreland City Council's biggest project for 2015.



February 2014, Activities held at the Pop-up Park



Looking towards Sydney Rd from Wilson Avenue

A road space

Wilson Avenue, Brunswick is a short street of 160m which leads from Jewell Railway Station to Sydney Road. The strategic importance of Wilson Avenue as a key pedestrian connector to Jewell Station has long been recognised in Council's *Brunswick Structure Plan 2010*.

The intersection of Wilson Avenue and Sydney Road near the entrance to Barkly shopping centre has a history of public safety issues such as assault, robbery, intimidation, property damage and graffiti. Victoria Police identified the intersection as the 'number one hotspot for crime' within the City of Moreland.

Within the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund application, Council proposed to transform the corner of Wilson Avenue and Sydney Road into an actively used public space by expanding the existing pedestrian kerb with new seating, lighting, planting and a bouldering wall. A shared pedestrian and vehicle road space was also included within the original proposal.

The public space revitalisation is strongly supported by Victoria Police, the Brunswick Residents Network, Sydney Road Brunswick Traders Association, Barkly Square Shopping Centre Management, Victorian Climbing Club, Jane Garrett MP, State Member for Brunswick and Kelvin Thomson MP, Federal Member for Wills.

A petition of 687 signatures supported Council's application for a Public Safety Infrastructure Fund grant.

From road space to public space

Council conducted robust community consultation through a series of initiatives called 'Better Block Brunswick.' A two day 'Parking Day' event was also held where community members had an opportunity to speak with student volunteers from RMIT about the plans for the area.

Following the Parking Day, a one day event for community members to celebrate place and community was organised. Volunteers painted the street and there was live music and dance. Participants from the community included youth groups, the local secondary school, local artists, student groups, local traders and local politicians.



20-21 September 2013, Parking Day

After this successful event, Councillors and the community began to ask whether it was possible to close the street and make it a permanent public space.

Pop- up Park

In order to test the wider community's support of a full road closure of Wilson Avenue, Council temporarily closed the road and created a temporary public space using a 'Pop-Up Park' concept. The Pop-Up Park was used for a program of community events over a 56 day period in early 2014.

An open invitation was extended to community groups to participate in the 56-day trial period during which a number of performers, community groups and members of the public came forward and offered assistance to engage members of the public.

Community Correctional Services within the Department of Justice and Regulation supported the Pop-Up Park by providing a team of nine 'low risk' offenders who helped make temporary seating furniture from recycled palettes. Other features included planter boxes, trees, shade umbrellas and fake turf to help 'green' the road space.



February 2014, Pop- Up Park

Council decision

During the trial period, Council's project team conducted face to face consultations with local stakeholders. Ward Councillors listened to community members concerns and suggestions for a permanent public space.

Over 10,000 community members were engaged and local police reported a clear reduction in local crime.

Council sought written submissions and of the 356 submissions received, an overwhelming 94% voted to permanently close part of the street and establish a brand new public space. Given that road closure proposals are notoriously contentious, particularly those which reduce parking in a major retail precinct, this is a remarkable result and illustrates the effectiveness of the approach Council undertook.

In July 2014, Moreland City Council formally voted to permanently close part of Wilson Avenue and establish a larger public space than originally proposed within the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund application.

Council invested a further \$450,650 to support the expanded project and secured an additional \$50,000 from Melbourne Water. This almost tripled the total value of the project to \$865,000.

Award recognition

Moreland City Council's work on the project has been recognised on three occasions. Once through the Place Leaders Inaugural Asia-Pacific with a 'Place Practice' Award and twice through the Planning Institute of Australia, winning the 'Best Planning Ideas, Small Project' for Victoria as well as a National Commendation.



May 2015 , the bouldering wall is lowered into place

Other funding initiatives

The 'Jewell of Brunswick' public space project is one part of a range of community safety initiatives in the Jewell Precinct, including community safety audit and action planning, and increased liaison between the police, licensed premises, Council and the community.

At the request of Council and police, Council received a direct grant of \$250,000 from the Community Crime Prevention program funding towards the purchase and installation of CCTV infrastructure in and around the Sydney Road precinct. This project was completed in October 2014.

In September 2014, Moreland City Council was also awarded \$14,600 under the Graffiti Prevention and Removal Program to install a mural at the junction of Sydney Road and Wilson Avenue. This mural will complement the Wilson Avenue public space project and is scheduled for completion in August 2015.

The public space project also complements a significant revitalisation of Jewell St Station precinct led by VicTrack, which aims to encourage a mix of social enterprise, creative focused commercial space, innovative housing and flexible parkland.