

1.8 FOOTPATH ENHANCEMENTS FOR OUTDOOR DINING IN OAKLEIGH

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION*That Council:*

- 1. Notes the report and its findings regarding options to maximise the width of footpaths to facilitate permanent outdoor dining in the areas identified in the attached plan (Attachment 1, Appendix A).*
- 2. Notes and agrees that Option 1 with brick infill kerb outstands offers a mid-range cost outcome that fits with the existing character of Chester and Portman Streets and is the most suitable option in the current circumstances.*
- 3. Notes that implementing wider footpaths to facilitate permanent outdoor dining areas results in the permanent loss of approximately 55 kerbside car parking spaces.*
- 4. Notes that officers recommend that if Council were to proceed with these works that it is preferable to commence with one location in the first instance where the outcomes can be fully realised before considering other locations. That the most opportune location to undertake these works initially are at Portman street west between Eaton Mall and Station Street. Other locations can be considered in future years as part of Council's annual budget process.*
- 5. Refers consideration of option 1 with brick infill kerb outstands focussed on the west section of Portman Street to the 22/23 budget process, inclusive of the need to undertake detailed design work and consultation which will explore the opportunity to maintain some loading bay presence in this location or propose alternative locations should they be necessary understanding that there may be a loss of additional car spaces to accommodate this.*
- 6. Notes that the recommended option if implemented in the western section of Portman Street would remove 14 car spaces and 4 loading zones (where an additional 6 vehicles can park when the loading zones are not in operation).*
- 7. Notes that whilst it may be appropriate to implement option 1 in certain locations across the Activity Centre, it does rely on other locations remaining unchanged so as to provide for parking and loading and unloading. Further notes that should Council wish to increase these types of enhancements across the Activity Centre that detailed design plans for entire streets and the Activity Centre would need to be prepared.*

8. Directs officers to utilise the remaining funds of \$55,000 from the 2021/22 budget and allocate a further \$20,000 (total \$75,000) from the 2021/22 budget to commence and proceed with further planning and detailed design work focussed on the west section of Portman Street so that full costs of the works can be considered in the 22/23 budget process.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Council with the findings of preliminary design works and approximate costings for footpath widening to facilitate permanent outdoor dining in the Oakleigh Activity Centre in areas identified in the attached plan (Attachment 1, Appendix A).

BACKGROUND

In the report considered by Council at its meeting on 27 April 2021, it was noted that temporary enhancements for outdoor dining afforded to traders on roadways in response to the pandemic have been embraced by traders and their patrons and caused a rethink on how such spaces may be utilised for outdoor dining. The report also identified that some areas currently used for temporary outdoor dining could be made permanent by extending footpaths.

The Council resolution directed officers to prepare preliminary designs and costings to maximise footpath widths to facilitate outdoor dining in identified areas so that any proposed works could be referred to the 2022/23 budget process should Council wish to do so.

This report sets out the findings of an assessment of two design options undertaken by officers. The two design options were based on low-cost and high-cost scenarios:

- Option 1 (Low-cost) – The minimum works required to deliver increased footpath width for outdoor dining in identified areas.
- Option 2 (High-cost) – The ultimate design for footpath widening.

The premise for both options remains similar with regard to road width and area remaining available for use as footpath and trading areas.

Each option was assessed against the benefits sought and potential impacts.

The resolution from the Council meeting held 27 April 2021 was:

That Council:

1. *Notes that the enhancements to outdoor dining opportunities afforded to traders in response to the pandemic, and the restrictions associated with it, have been embraced by traders and their patrons.*
2. *Notes that the temporary outdoor dining opportunities occurring on roadways had never before been contemplated but have now caused a rethink on how such spaces may be utilised for outdoor dining.*
3. *Notes that there is potential for some areas of road currently being used to temporarily accommodate outdoor dining, to be made permanent outdoor dining areas by extending footpaths.*
4. *Notes that a separate motion will be put to Council to consider either timed or permanent closure of Chester Street around Eaton Mall which needs to be fully investigated prior to looking at outdoor dining extensions in that street.*
5. *Notes that in its draft 2021/2022 budget, Council has allocated funds for traffic studies around the Oakleigh Station Precinct as a follow-up to its 2018 Oakleigh Activity Centre Transport Interchange Design and that it is appropriate to carry out this work prior to looking at outdoor dining extensions in Portman Street to the west of Eaton Mall.*
6. *Directs officers to undertake preliminary design works that maximise the width of the footpath to facilitate outdoor dining in the areas identified in the plan attached to this report.*
7. *Directs officers to provide the costs required to deliver the widened footpaths identified and referred to in point 6 above.*
8. *Directs officers to provide a report to Council prior to 31 October 2021 so that the proposed works can be referred to the 2022/23 budget process should Council decide to do so.*
9. *Allocates \$60k required for the implementation of points 7 & 8 of this recommendation.*

DISCUSSION

The areas identified for preliminary design works for permanent outdoor dining are shown in the attached plan (Attachment 1, Appendix A). Two design options were considered for these areas based on low and high-cost scenarios, as described below. Option 1 evolved to include 2 sub options being the difference being the use of asphalt or brick material options. An assessment of risks and benefits associated with the two scenarios is explored in the analysis that follows.

Options

Refer to Attachment 1, Appendix C and D for typical plans and sections.

The two options achieve the same narrowed road width (understanding that option 1 could be reduced in width (leaving a wider road) to further reduce cost. As advised earlier, the delivery of option 2 would require for entire streets to be designed so as to achieve the necessary outcomes and in particular the levels that would be required so as to ensure that the works did not require modification should additional areas be enhanced in a similar way.

Option 1 (including asphalt and brick material options.): Low cost.

Option 1 delivers widened pavements for permanent outdoor dining at the lowest cost by keeping construction works to a minimum, using low-cost materials. Cost can be reduced by limiting the works to the width of parking bays, but if this option is adopted it is recommended that it be implemented to the fullest extent as it can act to inform how the solution works should the ultimate solution *option 2 be considered into the future. Two paving infill material options are considered: brick (to match the existing brick paving in Chester and Portman Streets) and asphalt (lowest cost).

Option 1 may not deliver the best long-term public realm outcome, which is seen to be of a material and standard to those seen in Eaton mall and the more recent Atherton Road reconstruction. Understanding this, a second scenario (Option 2) was investigated.

Option 2: High Cost

Option 2 delivers (subject to detailed design after considering any parking and loading zone needs) essentially the same outcome with regard to road width, footpath and outdoor dining areas. It however provides for a bluestone paver material like that in Eaton Mall and Atherton road, consistent with what would be envisaged for the activity centre as a whole and also offers a high level of amenity, with the inclusion of new street tree planting and furniture.

This design if undertaken in detail would set out principles for a high quality, pedestrian focused public realm – a vision exemplified by the Eaton Mall and Atherton Road flagship projects.

While Option 2 is the highest cost option, it best represents Council's aspiration for the public realm, based on the works already undertaken in the Activity Centre as mentioned above.

It is an option however that is not feasible to implement in a piece-meal manner without resolving the entire streetscape as the final design including finished levels and road treatment need to be considered and resolved. This is a far more comprehensive piece of work.

A major difference between the two options, is that option 1 can be considered and introduced in a limited way, and whilst option 2 could be delivered, it would require far more comprehensive analysis and design of entire streets within the Activity Centre. This would be necessary as not only the surface levels change, but kerbs are likely to be removed, and footpaths would be more seamless with the roadway. Further, the plans and designs would require exploration and consider the

retention of some convenience parking and loading zones in some locations within these streets. This would have some effect the roadway and the areas available for specific purposes be they parking, loading, footpath, or trading.

As option 1 retains the balance amounts of carparking and loading facilities (or the ability to accommodate them) within the balance of the streets, this more detailed assessment is not seen as critical in the limited application of this option in the Activity Centre.

A comparison of the scope of works for the two options is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Comparison of Scope of Works

Item	Scope – Option 1 (including asphalt and brick materials)	Scope - Option 2
Extent of works	Footpath is extended from both sides to leave an approximate 3 metre road width. Existing footpath is retained, and new materials are placed into the additional area and kerbs are reconstructed. Essentially materials and construction only.	Footpath is fully reconstructed from building line to proposed new kerb alignment to the same dimension narrowed vehicle carriageway, i.e., 5-7m width reconstruction.
Pavement profile and drainage	Minimal change to existing drainage and gradings resulting in a 'V' shaped pavement profile.	Reconstruct and regrade from building edge to new kerb alignment to achieve a constant crossfall. Includes new drainage infrastructure.
Paving materials	Two infill materials considered:) asphalt as the lowest cost but least aesthetically pleasing outcome and brick to match existing brick paving on Chester and Portman streets.	Granite paving material which is consistent with granite paving at Eaton Mall and Atherton Road.
Existing Trees	Minimal works around existing trees and no water sensitive design infrastructure to support long term health of trees.	Allowance for water sensitive design infrastructure to support long term health of existing trees as installed in other street scape improvements.
New street trees	No new street trees included.	Includes new street tree planting and associated water sensitive design infrastructure.

New street furniture	No new street furniture included. Allowance to relocate existing furniture as required.	Allowance for new street furniture to replace and supplement existing furniture.
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Comparison of Cost

Note that the cost estimates prepared for this report are high level only and are included in Attachment 1, Appendix B.

With option 1, asphalt is the cheapest with brick being more expensive and Option 2 (in granite) is significantly higher than the other options.

Analysis of options

The following comparison of risks and opportunities provides an analysis of impacts that may arise from the design options considered.

There are a number of issues common to both options, as follows:

Risks

- Public consultation has not yet occurred and feedback from traders and the community the permanent loss of approximately 55 kerbside parking spaces. This number does not include loading zones or motorcycle parking.
- Constructing footpath extensions in some sections of street while leaving other areas unfinished will result in a disjointed streetscape outcome. It is preferable, and ultimately more efficient, to reconstruct entire sections of a street at one time. In addition to overall effect of delivering what are considered more completed works, this is why it is recommended that consideration be given to *Portman street west between Eaton Mall and Station Street*.
- Some areas proposed for footpath extensions do not have existing food outlet frontages and may be under-utilised for outdoor dining.
- Other traders, including those who currently enjoy enhanced outdoor dining areas may not understand why they have been excluded from this opportunity, and as a result of commencing this, Council may need to consider and respond to requests for this same enhancements to be provided right across the Activity Centre as well as in other Activity Centres within the Municipality.
- The red areas in Chester Street as shown in Attachment 1, Appendix A are subject to planned installation of road humps between Hanover Street and Station Street in 2021/22 and preliminary planning and consultation for a 20km/h Shared Zone trial on Chester at Eaton Mall.
- The yellow areas at the west end of Portman Street as shown in Attachment 1, Appendix A are subject to Oakleigh Station precinct traffic studies to be undertaken in 2021/2022.

Opportunities

- Increased trading area available for outdoor dining will support business recovery post Covid.
- Traffic congestion will be reduced, and pedestrian footfall will increase, leading to improved economic activity and vitality of activity centre.

- The ability to deliver a complete albeit partial streetscape enhancement and gauge how it functions, how it is utilised and the ability for it to inform other interventions in a similar way or as a complete streetscape redesign and improvement.

Additional risks and opportunities pertaining to each option include the following:

Option 1: Low Cost

Risks

- As the design proposals do not deliver the long-term vision for the public realm there may be aborted works in the future to achieve the ultimate streetscape design.
- The construction of new pavements over existing tree root zones may negatively impact the long-term health of existing mature street trees. Consideration will need to be given to making an allowance in any resolved budget for provision of water sensitive infrastructure to mitigate this risk.
- Asphalt paving in option 1 does not match the existing adjacent brick pavement material in Chester and Portman Streets and will have a road-like appearance.
- Brick paving as the alternative in option 1 will have the highest maintenance life cycle costs of all options as past experience has shown the need for regular reinstatement of bricks to maintain an even pavement.
- The design caters exclusively to commercial outdoor dining in the widened footpath areas. It does not include new street tree planting, additional street furniture or support other non-commercial uses that enhance the amenity and enjoyment of the public realm by all visitors.
- The kerb build-out designs result in a pavement depression at the interface between the existing footpath and footpath extension. This may hold water and accumulate debris (refer typical section in Attachment 1, Appendix C), which is an undesirable outcome for outdoor dining areas.
- Traders and the community may expect a superior outcome with materials and appearance as opposed to an expansion of the existing materials that have been replaced in other locations.

Opportunities

- Asphalt paving option 1 is the lowest cost option to deliver the outcomes sought.
- Brick paving as the alternative in option 1 is an intermediate cost option that matches the existing brick paving treatment on Chester and Portman Streets.
- Both options are relatively straightforward to design and deliver and will:
 - o facilitate enhanced outdoor dining in the short term while allowing further planning of the ultimate long term streetscape design,
 - o minimise impacts to traders and pedestrian activity during construction due to shorter construction timeframe compared to Option 2 and retention of the existing pedestrian pavement.

Option 2: High Cost

Risks

- Very high cost for delivery of only partial streetscape reconstructions in each street, resulting in a 'patchwork' appearance.

- Greater disruption to the street during construction compared to Option 1 due to the longer construction timeframe for larger extent of works and full reconstruction of the pedestrian pavement from the building line.
- Would need to be considered and potentially delivered following a holistic streetscape design process.

Opportunities

- Supports the long-term vision for the public realm and delivers a level of quality consistent with that established at Eaton Mall and Atherton Road.
- Compared to Option 1, the layout offers a more complete and modern solution. While this increases the area available for permanent outdoor dining, it is offset by provision of possible limited carparking and loading zones as well as new tree planting and street furniture. The area for footpath trading whilst increased significantly over the existing is less than offered by Option 1, understanding that it is a superior and complete outcome.
- High quality of streetscape upgrade including footpath widening, granite pavements, new trees and furniture will provide increased amenity not just for outdoor dining patrons but for all visitors to the activity centre. It may also provide a catalyst for urban renewal.

Ranking of options

Based on the above review, a ranking of the design options against key outcomes is provided at Table 3 for consideration.

Table 3 – Ranking of options

Performance Criteria	Option 1 (inclusive both material types.)	Option 2
Footpath width maximised for outdoor dining	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Enhanced amenity for outdoor dining	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Enhanced urban amenity in precinct	✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Cost efficient	✓ ✓ ✓	✓
Minimal disruption caused by works	✗	✗ ✗
Supports long term urban design vision for activity centre	✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Car parking retained	✗ ✗ ✗	✗ ✗
Catalyst for future redevelopment	✓	✓ ✓
Score	6	11

Ideally, it would be beneficial to undertake further planning studies and consultation to support a holistic approach to the design of the public realm and inform the footpath enhancement proposals for outdoor dining. This would include consideration of the role and function of each street, the public realm as well as movement, parking, transport and increased activation. It would allow any wider implications of the proposed street layout changes, such as permanent removal of kerbside parking and kerb realignments, to be fully considered. This would lead to a superior and uniform outcome with an integrated fully informed design.

It is however acknowledged that this level of further work is not necessary to deliver option 1 (with either material if that is how Council decides to proceed. Any works that are implemented under option 1 utilising brick paving would more reflect the current streetscape and its appearance which is an advantage, but the brick paving whilst functional is not modern and consistent with newer streetscape improvements. It does however forge new ground to demonstrate what is possible and how the activity centre may change.

It should also be noted that if Council in the future moved to designing and constructing the complete streetscapes as envisaged by option 2, it is likely that these enhancements would be removed and reconstructed so as to be consistent with any ultimate solution that is resolved upon to be delivered.

Accordingly, and consistent with this, officers recommend that if Council were to proceed with any works, it should look to option 1 with the brick paving material and seek to implement this in the western section of Portman Street between Eaton Mall and Station Street. This would allow a complete section of a road to be improved and provide an opportunity to assess the effectiveness and utilisation of the enhancement. In doing this, it is noted that Council's traffic engineers would need to consider the effect of the removal of the parking space and loading zones. As part of a detailed design the opportunity to maintain some loading zones would be explored for consideration by Council. Alternatively, other locations with the likely displacement of additional carparking spaces may be required.

The delivery of this option would however provide an improved environment for pedestrians from the railway station/bus interchange walking east to and through the Activity Centre.

In responding to Council's resolution and having regard to the opportunities and risks that have been identified, it is considered that option 1, utilising the brick paving best responds to the intent of what Council asked officers to explore and make recommendations on. Further, officers recommend that if this is accepted that implementation of this option for best effect and outcome should be at Portman street west between Eaton Mall and Station Street.

It should be further noted that these options in the identified part of Portman Street, would remove 14 car spaces and 4 loading zones, noting that the loading zones allow for the parking of vehicles at various times when they are not required for loading zone purposes. There are a further 6 cars that park within these zones when allowed having regard to the marked bays within them.

It is recommended that this option and location is referred for consideration as part of Council's 22/23 budget process.

Should Council allocate budget to this project as part of this annual budget process the design and evaluation process would include community and trader consultation before a final recommendation is made to Council.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy issues arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Option 1 design proposal caters exclusively to commercial outdoor dining. It does not support the provision of non-commercial outdoor seating and dining, greening and activation, limiting the opportunity for enhanced urban amenity and for visitors to enjoy the activity centre without spending money, but it will enhance the opportunity for superior outdoor dining opportunities outside of Eaton mall.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no apparent human rights implications under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

GENDER EQUITY ASSESSMENT

As the Oakleigh Outdoor Dining project is considered to have direct and significant impact on the Monash community, a gender impact assessment will be undertaken as part of this work.

CONSULTATION

No external consultation has been undertaken in preparing this report. Consultation will occur should Council resolve to proceed to a detailed design process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To be considered as part of the 22/23 budget process.

There is a remaining balance of \$55,000 for this initial assessment. Should Council resolve in accordance with the recommendations of this report, this balance amount plus an additional allocated \$20,000, (total amount being \$75,000) would be used to progress detailed design work, including exploration of including or providing loading bays elsewhere and any design or traffic engineering information that may be required to inform any detailed design process that Council may choose to fund as part of its budget process.

CONCLUSION

The report demonstrates that there are a number of options available for consideration. In responding to the intent of Council's resolution, Option 1 with the proposed brick infill material offers a mid-range cost option that matches the existing character of the activity centre. However, it does not deliver the long-term vision for the activity centre's public realm and may need to be replaced in the future.

Option 1 minimises disruption during construction as it retains the existing footpath and has a shorter construction timeframe compared to Option 2. Consultation has not been undertaken and will form part of the process should Council resolve to include this project in its 22-23 budget.

If Council were considering an ultimate solution to enhance the streetscape and entire streets, officers would recommend that a detailed strategic planning study that builds on the public realm objectives of the structure plan, to inform integrated designs for footpath enhancements for permanent outdoor dining across the entire activity centre to ensure a uniform and considered design response be undertaken.