

Evaluation and Monitoring Report

Public Piazza Pilot Project

Project monitoring and evaluation

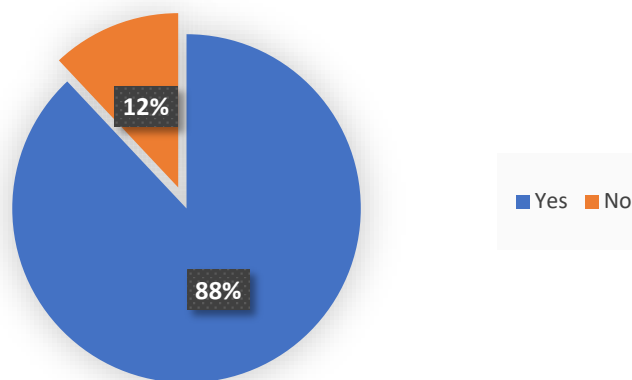
The project was monitored and evaluated through a number of channels, namely an ongoing public survey; business surveys, class surveys at Merredin College and daily usage logs taken by Shire staff.

A summary of the results from this exercise is provided within.

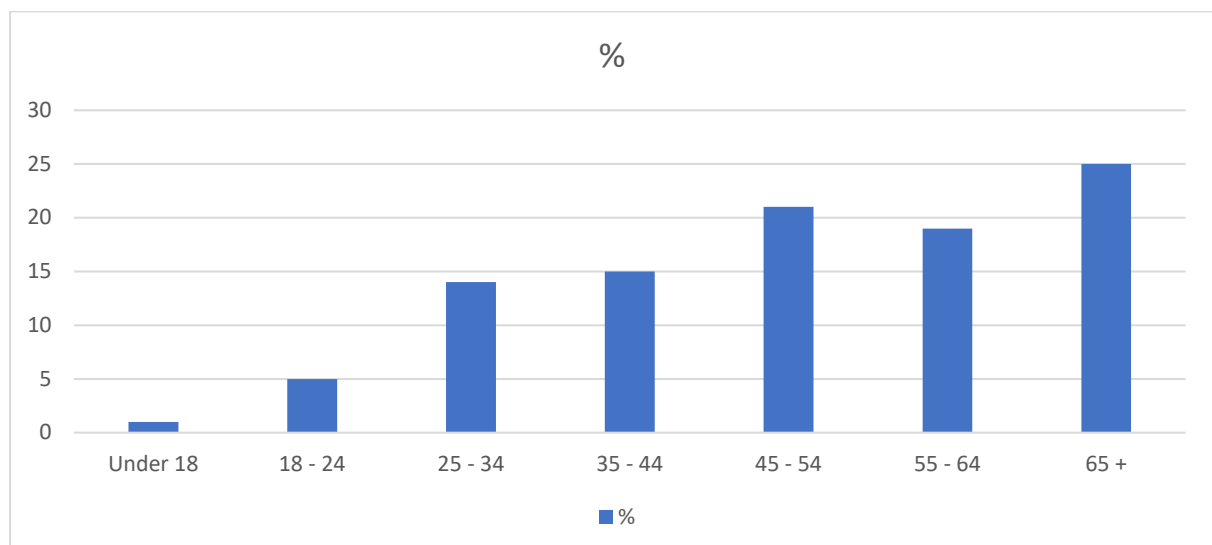
Public Survey

The public survey— made easy and accessible via digital channels and also via QR codes displayed on all precinct signage. A total of 618 surveys were received. With 88% of respondents residing within the Shire of Merredin, this was approximately 17% of the local government’s population, being one of the Shire’s most highly represented surveys. The results of this survey are provided below:

Question 1: Are you a resident in the Shire of Merredin? (611 responses)



Question 2: What is your age range? (486 responses)



Under 18: 1%
18 – 24: 5%
25 – 34: 14%
35 – 44: 15%
45 – 54: 21%
55 – 64: 19%
65+: 25%

Question 3: What features did you find most enjoyable about this space? (565 responses)

Safety Crossing Barrack Street: 170 (31%)
Opportunity to sit and relax: 134 (23.89%)
Artwork: 114 (20.32%)
Greenery: 97 (17.29%)
Place to meet with friends: 81 (14.44%)
Evening hang out space: 66 (11.76%)
Somewhere to dine: 59 (10.52%)
Play elements: 49 (8.73%)
Other: 285 (50.80%)

Of the 285 “Other” responses to this question, 185 people said they didn’t enjoy any of the features. New “Other” responses included.

1. It wasn’t beneficial as the elderly had to park over the other side in the parking lot and they had further to walk in the heat and rain.
2. Broke up the boring streetscape
3. I found it was inconvenient and a danger. I witnessed a lady fall heavily carrying her shopping as the green grass product had lifted and created a hazard.
4. Nice idea but should be back on lawn areas (tourist bureau)
5. Not suitable on main road
6. IT SUCKS I HATE IT SO MUCH AAAAAAHHH
7. Intrusive to those who want to get to the shops.
8. Put back to original.
9. Like the concept
10. Nuisance value! Less parking! Convoluting driving to access town!
11. Although I wasn't there for Gala Night, I support this setting for various reasons.
12. Honestly hate the thing, inconvenience to traffic and shoppers, around 3-3.30 in the afternoon of a school day a congregation of seedy men gather to watch the school kids come down the street.
13. If I were younger I would no doubt appreciate the above but as i am 83 years of age and disabled it has only caused me stress!!
14. Not dodging cars, ACROD spaces, closed road, and revitalizing town.

Question 4: What features could be improved on, should we be able to complete such initiatives again? (537 responses)

Of the 537 responses received to this question, 202 said to move the piazza to another location. 60 people had issues with the car park (this does not include the issues regarding parking out front of the shops).

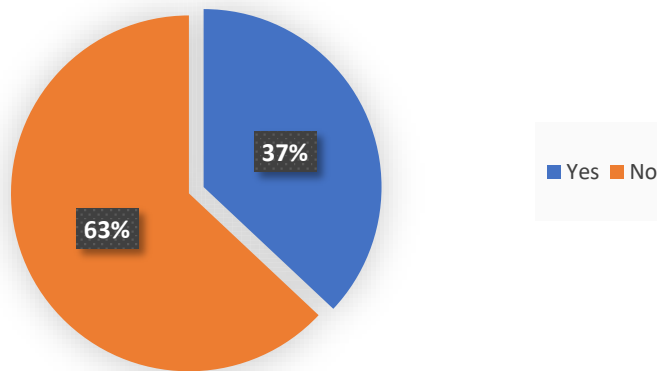
Other issues included;

- Open the Road: 90
- Shading: 75
- Concern over Elements: 54
- Disability Access: 21
- Different time of year: 10
- More seating: 6

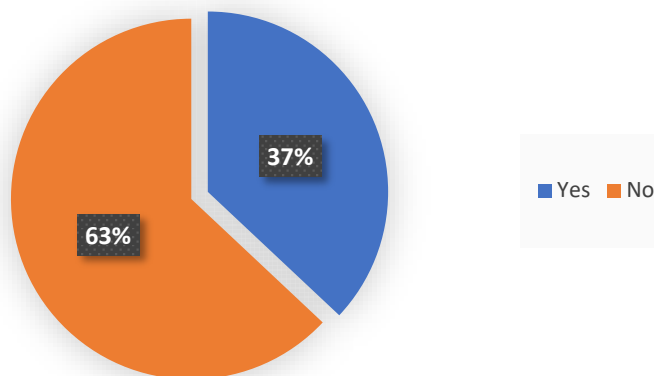
Other responses included;

1. Hold more events to utilise that area more effectively. Ideal for spring and autumn.
2. Artwork on the road is fine but such space that impede traffic flow can be detrimental to the town centre.
3. Get some food trucks/street food shops/shacks around that place!
4. Not having it would be a big improvement.
5. Don't do it.
6. Because it is supposed to be a walking area the footpath needs to be more level and more crossings to connect carpark.
7. Better parking and speed signs:
8. There needs to be Container Alfresco units outside of food outlets like the ones in Bunbury.
9. Nothing, it was a waste of money.
10. Make it permanent.
11. Making the signage look neater, maybe using a couple of poles to stop cars going through instead of looking like they were doing roadworks.
12. Weekly activities.
13. Good idea for Gala Night, then remove!
14. Take it away after an event.
15. It's a great space to sit with a coffee and observe the town and immerse in the culture.
16. More permanent
17. Fantastic initiative, long term would be great.
18. I loved it.
19. I seriously think it should be left as it is.
20. none it's an eyesore has no atmosphere, and you have made shopping a nightmare for elderly people.
21. better maintenance.

Question 5: Would you like to see the public piazza as a permanent feature of the CBD? (597 responses)



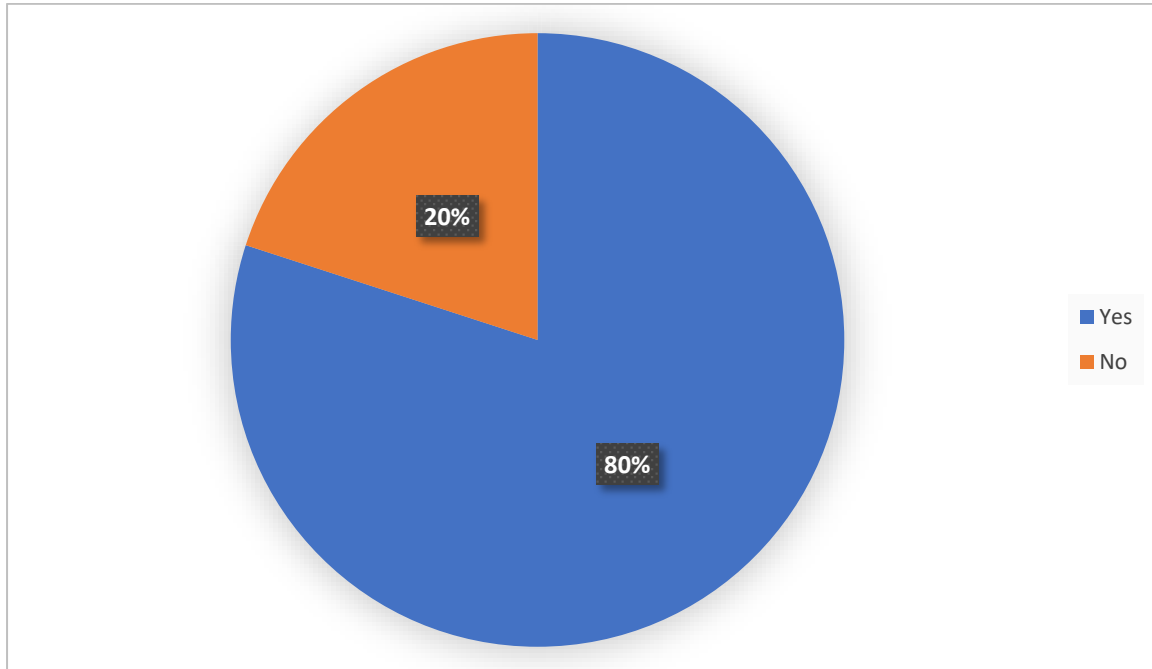
Question 6: Do you believe the Public Piazza provides an active community space in the Merredin CBD? (589 responses)



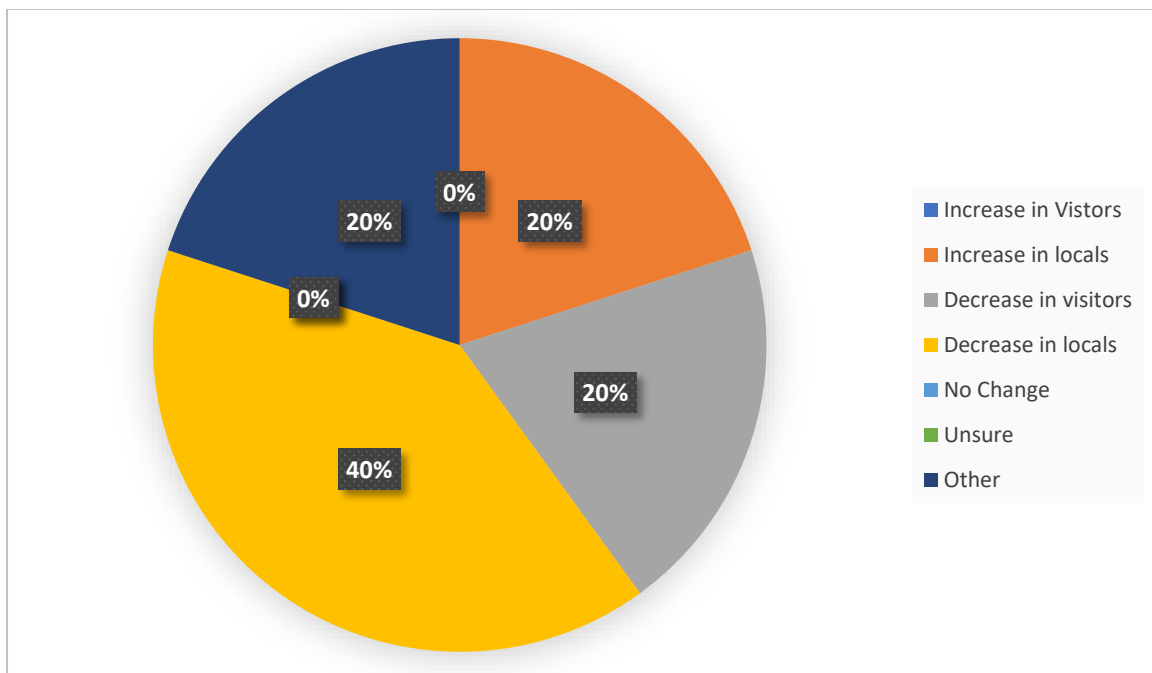
Business Survey

A survey was circulated with the business community twice through the duration of the trial period. The following represents a summary of the results received.

Question 1: Is your business or shop front facing the Piazza?

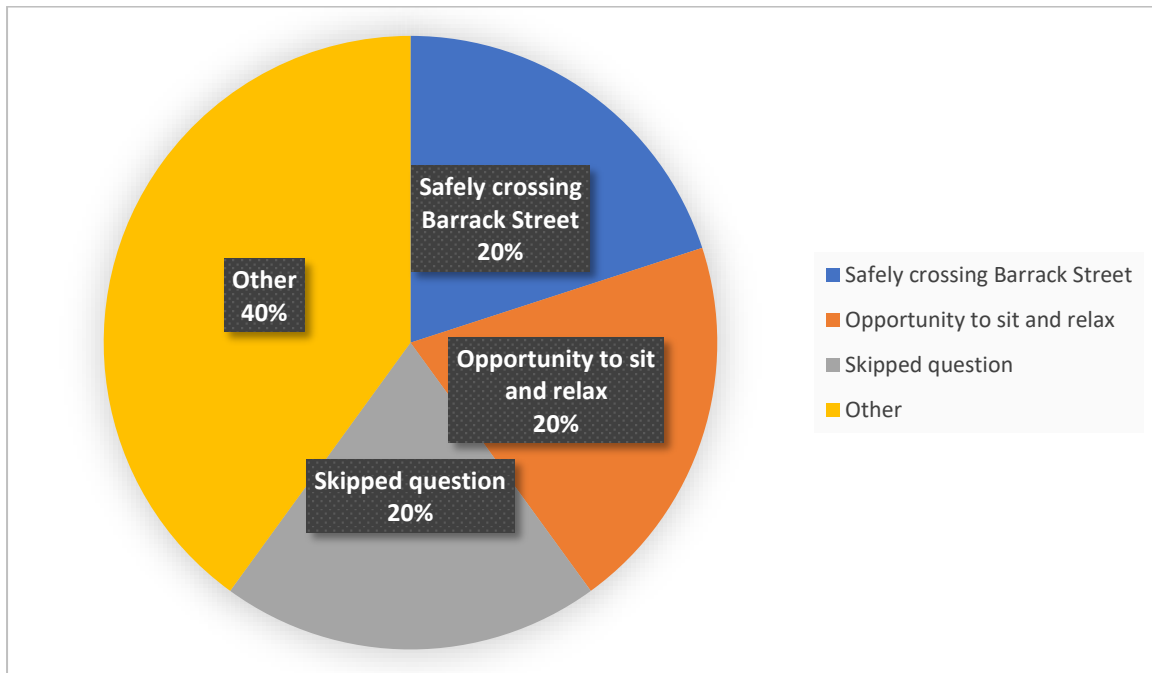


Question 2: Have you noticed a change in visitation to your shop since the Piazza launch on 17 December?



- The respondent who answered 'Other' advised: They are not coming in as often. Just making one trip and if they've forgotten something, unless it's absolutely necessary, they aren't coming back in until they really need to

Question 3: Through general observation and customer feedback, which of the Piazza features has been the most popular?



- none - continuous customer complaints
- A few sit but most just walk to get to either the shops or the carpark

Question 4: Have you received any other feedback from your customers regarding the Piazza?

- Always. None of it good. Most like the idea but not where it is. Shops are too far from the carpark for those who have problems walking. Not all people who have those sorts of problems are bad enough to qualify for an ACROD sticker. Some just have other health problems and general aging problems that ACROD don't cover.
- mixed opinions
- Just passing comments, some really like it, others hate it. The number of disabled bays need to be reduced, as parking is an issue.
- inconvenient, dangerous - had several falls, poor use of space taken, not well maintained (plants continuously dying then being replaced), poor traffic flow
- Waste of space an enjoyable area to relax would be better on the lawn

Question 5: If willing to share, have you seen changes to your revenue in comparison to this time last year and/or the months leading to the pilot?

- 4 respondents skipped question

- 1 respondent advised – not available.

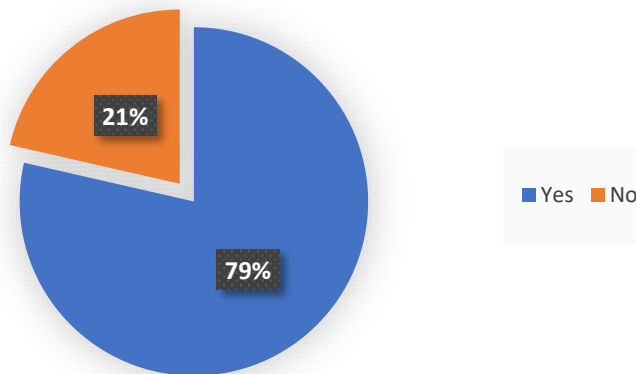
Question 6: How would you rate the scale of uplift to the town centre in comparison to improvement activities undertaken by the Shire this time twelve months ago?

- I like the concept of the Piazza, but there is room for improvement in the design.
- Improved
- More foot traffic than last year
- Two respondents either skipped this question or advised ‘no comment’

School Survey

In consideration of the lack of representation in the under 18’s age bracket, the Shire decided to conduct a separate survey with school aged students, just prior to the completion of the trial. A survey was conducted with a range of year 4 and 5 students aged between 9 and 11. A summary of the results is provided below:

1. Do you live in the Shire of Merredin?



Those who indicated no, reside in the neighbouring Shires of Westonia, Nungarin and Yilgarn.

2. What do you enjoy most at this space?

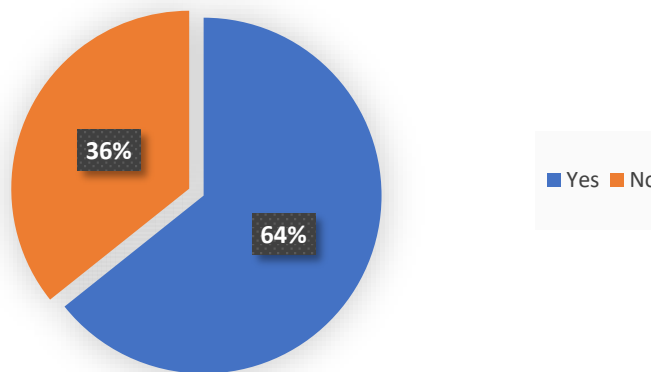
- Opportunity to sit and relax - 28.5%
- Place to meet with friends – 14.3%
- Somewhere to dine - <1%
- Evening hang out space Nil
- Playing – 18%
- Artwork - Nil
- Greenery - Nil

- Safety crossing Barrack St – 21.5%
- Other Nil

3. What features could be improved on next time?

- A more creative playground with more features to play on.
- More artwork that could be interactive, sculptures etc
- Improve seating by increasing the shade.
- Make the grassed area larger
- More seating under the umbrellas.
- Less logs.
- Make basketball lines for the organised event on Friday night.
- The plastic material that is not shaded gets VERY hot and is hard to sit on or use.

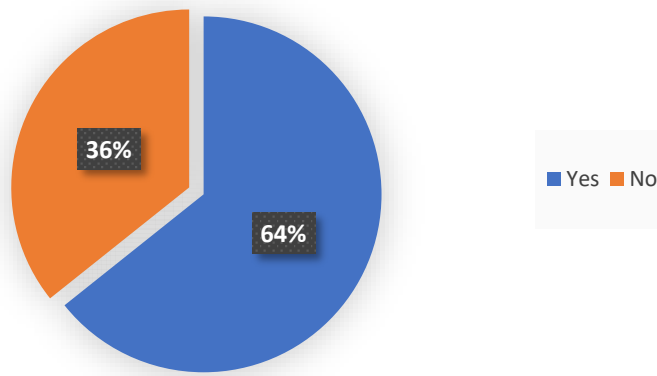
4. Would you like to see a public piazza permanently in Merredin?



5. If no, how about during events like Gala Night or others?

- Yes, that would be great to hang out with friends and meet people.
- In a different place would be good. In car park opposite the old Target.

6. Does the piazza provide a space that is active (e.g. where people want to meet, relax, eat....)



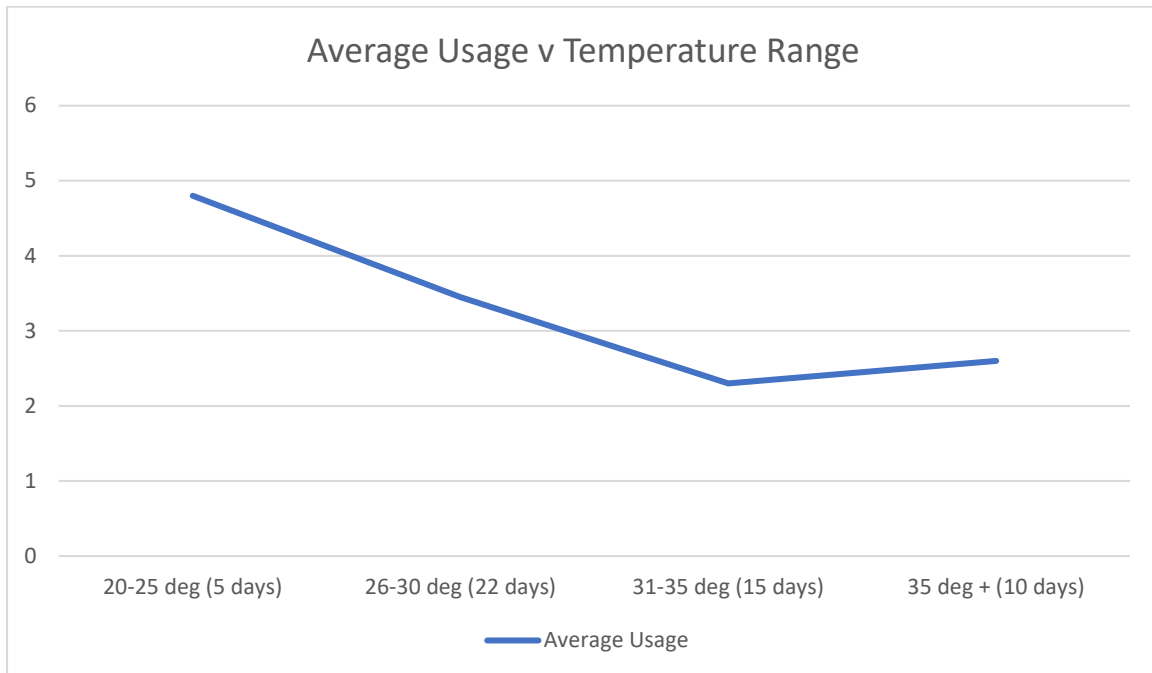
Daily Monitoring

Shire staff conducted a daily monitor of the general usage of the piazza. Logging was limited to once a day, due to resourcing. Although ad hoc, the logs captured usage at various times of the day.

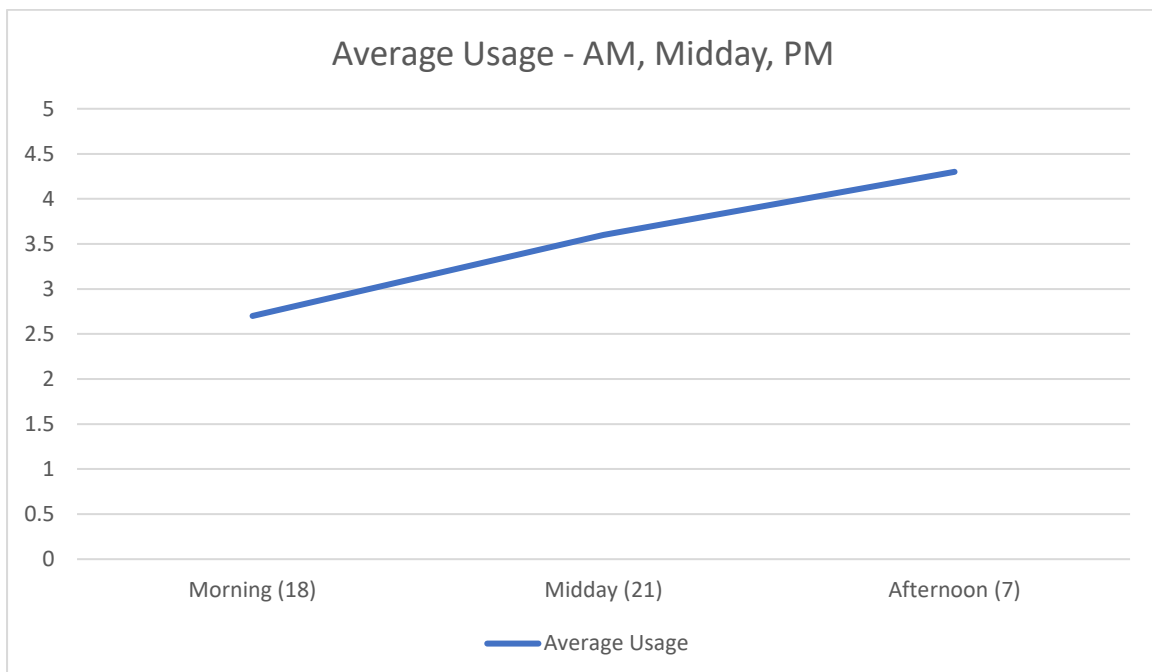
	Jan-21	Max Temp	Time of day	Number
Mon 11		33	midday	2
Tue 12		34.8	morning	1
Wed 13		33		0
Thu 14		33	midday	2
Fri 15		30	morning	1
Mon 18		32	morning	1
Tue 19		36.6		0
Wed 20		39		0
Thu 21		37.4	morning	2
Fri 22		39.5		0
Mon 25				
Tue 26		32.8	midday	1
Wed 27		30.2	morning	4
Thu 28		31.5	morning	1
Fri 29		31.8	morning	0
	Feb-21	Max Temp	Time of day	Number
Mon 01		34	midday	3
Tue 02		27	midday	5
Wed 03		27.1	afternoon	2
Thu 04		25.5	afternoon	4
Fri 05		25.5	midday	2
Mon 08		27	morning	2
Tue 09		28.4		0

Wed 10	27.6	midday	1
Thu 11	28.5	midday	2
Fri 12	31	morning	1
Mon 15	37.5	morning	2
Tue 16	40	early morning	3
Wed 17	38.6	morning	5
Thu 18	26	midday	9
Fri 19	31	midday	2
Mon 22	37	morning	7
Tue 23	38	midday	4
Wed 24	36	morning	3
Thu 25	26	midday	5
Fri 26	28	afternoon	1
	Mar-21	Max Temp	Time of day
			Number
Mon 01	25	Public Hol	
Tue 02	28	morning	4
Wed 03	24	afternoon	3
Thu 04	28	midday	4
Fri 05	27	midday	2
Mon 08	29	morning	6
Tue 09	28	midday	2
Wed 10	24	afternoon	
Thu 11	28	midday	3
Fri 12	27	midday	2
Mon 15	29	morning	4
Tue 16	32	morning	3
Wed 17	32	midday	8
Thu 18	35	midday	3
Fri 19	27	afternoon	5
Mon 22	28	midday	
Tue 23	34	afternoon	
Wed 24	24.5	midday	11
Thu 25	34	late afternoon	
Fri 26	27	late afternoon	8
Mon 29	35	late afternoon	7
Tue 30	23	midday	4
Wed 31	26		4

The log captured a total of 57 weekdays. The following chart indicates usage correlation to daily temperatures (number of people observed v temperature range).



The below chart indicates average usage during various times of the day (number of persons observed).



It was evident that general usage was limited during the hot summer days, but as the temperature cooled off, usage became more frequent. The trial commenced at the end of the school year and across the quiet month of January, many residents leave the area to head for cooler coastal

temperature. It was also observed that as school returned, many teenagers would frequent the space after school – as an opportunity to hang out with a milkshake or snack from the local café.

Community sentiment and general project outcomes

The general community sentiment was positive with many using social media to voice their affirmation in seeing colour, vibrancy and new ideas being brought into the town centre. Despite the inconveniences caused and clear expression around the time of year and location – many were supportive of the type of initiative ie. Encouraging people to come together, reconnect and to create vibrancy once again in the streets of Merredin.

The infrastructure is still well used, some months after the trial period has closed – indicating a need for better seating and outdoor infrastructure to connect locals and visitors in the CBD.

The exercise indicated that the regional community members, such as those in Merredin, value the convenience of being able to pull up outside local stores and go about their business – they are not interested in big box shopping centres or having to walk large distances with their shopping. Many farming families shop in bulk as they are located remotely. These shoppers appreciate not having to cart large shopping loads for long distances and the temperatures over a long summer period did not assist the sentiment of this project.

The local CRC embraced the space and chose to run their community markets within the precinct. They were excited and enthusiastic to use the space however, the feedback received was that it was a difficult market to run. Many typical stallholders declined as they felt the community feedback / sentiment around the project would have a negative impact on their business.

The local police came on board with a regular Three Point Friday program which was well attended by youth and local businesses supported the initiative by providing power etc. Again, having people in the space with high level of activity brought vibrance into the centre – another type of activity that the Shire would like to replicate in the future.

The high attendance at community events held within the precinct indicated that the community enjoyed the ability to come together in a safe space for their children to roam freely. Community members of all ages were seen to enjoy relaxing, wondering and even dancing in the streets! The Merredin community embrace special times to come together and this exercise has indicated the desire to see aesthetically pleasing, vibrant spaces where they can do this. The use of colour and most importantly spaces to gather in small or large groups, will be considered a key element for future CBD projects.